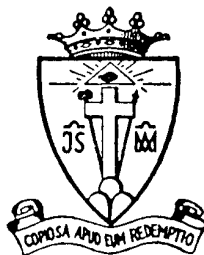


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PATRICE NYANDA, C.SS.R.

LES RÉDEMPTORISTES AU BURKINA-NIGER ENTRE  
1946 ET 1996

*INTRODUCTION; I. – PROJET DE FONDATION DES RÉDEMPTORISTES DANS LA COLONIE DU NIGER; 1. – Remarques Préliminaires; 2. – La Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon; 3. – La figure incontournable du Père Constant Quillard; 4. – L'intuition du P. Quillard; 5. – Le «Missi» Rédemptoriste; II. – TRACTATIONS DIVERSES DANS L'ÉLABORATION DU PROJET; 1. – Du côté des Rédemptoristes; 2. – Du côté des Missions Africaines de Lyon; 3. – Vers l'approbation du projet; 4. – Établissement des premiers Rédemptoristes; 5. – Vers la création d'une nouvelle Préfecture Apostolique; 6. – Fada N'Gourma et Niamey sont promus: 1959-1964; 7. – Le déploiement de l'activité missionnaire sur les deux territoires: 1965-1996; 8. – Retour à la case départ: Vice-Province du Burkina-Niger; CONCLUSION GÉNÉRALE.*

*INTRODUCTION*

Le fait le plus marquant dans l'histoire missionnaire en Afrique au cours des XIX<sup>ème</sup> et XX<sup>ème</sup> siècles est incontestablement celui de l'implication des Congrégations et Instituts religieux dans l'œuvre d'évangélisation. À la base de cette motivation, le mandat missionnaire du Christ: «Allez par le monde entier, proclamez l'Évangile à toutes les créatures» (Mt 28,19-20). La Congrégation à laquelle appartiennent les Rédemptoristes ne restera pas en marge de cette ferveur missionnaire. Fondée en vue de la mission, elle étendra ses ramifications jusque dans la «colonie du Niger», en Afrique Subsaharienne. Elle participera à cette œuvre commune de l'Église à travers sa branche française, la Province de Lyon, épaulée par sa sœur de Paris.

Les six premiers Rédemptoristes, les PP. Constant Quillard, Auguste Goldbronn, Joseph Cournault, Jean-Marie Jégu, Henri Spicht et Henri Lecomte au nom de leurs provinces respectives (Lyon et Paris) foulèrent le sol de l'Afrique subsaharienne pour y prendre part à l'œuvre de l'évangélisation. Ils ont quitté leur pays, leur culture, leur langue, leur confort pour se lancer dans cette noble et difficile entreprise qu'est l'annonce de la Bonne Nouvelle. Une sagesse africaine enseigne que: «pour savoir où on va, il faut se souvenir de là où on vient».

La présente étude veut prendre en considération les cinquante premières années de présence des Rédemptoristes dans ce qui était autrefois appelé la «Colonie du Niger». Il s'agit, de partir de 1946, de l'année où la première équipe des Rédemptoristes foulait le sol africain pour y contribuer à la mission d'évangélisation.

Notre recherche s'arrête en 1996. Ce choix n'est pas arbitraire. Il obéit à la volonté de mettre en exergue le point de départ de l'unité naguère perdue. En effet, s'il est vrai qu'en 1946, les Rédemptoristes des deux Provinces Lyon et Paris ont entrepris l'aventure missionnaire en ne formant qu'une seule entité, l'histoire retient qu'il a fallu à un moment donné procéder à la création, d'abord de deux districts, ensuite de deux Vice-Provinces dépendant des Provinces mères respectives. En décidant de se regrouper en 1996, les Rédemptoristes réhabilitaient l'histoire missionnaire et retrouvaient l'unité jadis perdue.

C'est donc ce demi-siècle de présence missionnaire qui constituera l'objet de nos investigations qui, il faut le souligner, s'étaleront sur deux pays, le Burkina Faso (plus précisément l'actuel diocèse de Fada N'Gourma) et le Niger.

## I. – PROJET DE FONDATION DES RÉDEMPTORISTES DANS LA COLONIE DU NIGER

### 1. – *Remarques Préliminaires*

Une mise au point est nécessaire dès le départ. L'expression Burkina-Niger désigne en fait l'entité où vivent et travaillent les Rédemptoristes. Il s'agit notamment de ce qu'on peut appeler aujourd'hui les diocèses de Fada N'Gourma (au Burkina Faso), de Maradi et de Niamey (au Niger).

Que ce soit au Burkina Faso ou au Niger, chaque pays dispose d'une historiographie propre et riche retraçant les heures sombres de la pénétration des puissances coloniales occidentales. Nous ne chercherons pas dans ce parcours à comprendre la formation du territoire du Niger<sup>1</sup> d'une part et d'autre part celle de la région de Fada N'Gourma au Burkina Faso<sup>2</sup>.

Toutefois, et disons le tout de suite, les Rédemptoristes, en projetant de s'établir en Afrique, visaient plutôt le Niger et, comme cette colonie englobait une bonne partie de l'Est, de ce qui était autrefois la Haute-Volta, aujourd'hui le Burkina Faso, ils se sont retrouvés dès lors établis dans deux pays différents mais guidés par la même et unique mission de l'Église et de celle de leur famille religieuse.

Le Niger est un pays enclavé d'Afrique occidentale. Il est limité au Nord par l'Algérie et la Libye, à l'Est par le Tchad, au Sud par le Nigeria et le Bénin, et à l'Ouest par le Burkina Faso et le Mali. La superficie totale du pays est estimée à 1.267.000 km<sup>2</sup>.

Situé au cœur du Sahel, le Niger se caractérise par des conditions climatiques extrêmes, un sol pauvre et une influence croissante de la désertification. Néanmoins parmi les ressources naturelles du pays on pourrait citer l'or, le fer, le charbon, l'uranium et le pétrole.

La subsistance des gens est constituée par l'élevage surtout les nomades. L'irrégularité des pluies et l'avancée du désert rendent précaire la vie des cultivateurs confrontés assez souvent à une crise alimentaire parfois violente.

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<sup>1</sup> Nous pourrions nous référer à plusieurs sources écrites: L. CAPITAINE, *Le Niger, voie ouverte à notre Empire africain*, Paris 1905, 1-9; M. ABADIE, *La Colonie du Niger*, Préface de M. le Gouverneur M. DELAFOSSE, Paris 1927, 309-346; E. SÉRÉ DE RIVIÈRES, *Le Niger*, Paris 1952; SECRÉTARIAT GÉNÉRAL DU GOUVERNEMENT, «La République du Niger», in *La documentation française*, Série outre-mer CVII, 2.638 (1960) 4-27; COMMISSION ÉCONOMIQUE POUR L'AFRIQUE (CEA), *Monographie de la République du Niger*, Addis-Abéba 1964; A. CLAIR, *Le Niger, pays à découvrir*, Paris 1965; *Vivant Univers* 273 (1971) mars-avril; P. DONAINT-F. LANGRENON, *Que sais-je? Le Niger*, Paris 1972, 45-61; AA.Vv., *Le Niger au quotidien*, Maisons-Lafitte 1992, 2-5; *Vivant Univers* 429 (1997) mai-juin.

<sup>2</sup> Sur le pays, à proprement parler, il existe toute une historiographie florissante. De nombreux travaux historiques ont été rédigés et se distinguent les uns des autres par la diversité des thèmes abordés.

Quant à la région de Fada N’Gourma (située à l’Est du Burkina Faso<sup>3</sup> et faisant frontière avec le Niger voisin), elle appartient à ce qu’on appelait autrefois les royaumes gulmanceba. Et si aujourd’hui, évoquer la région de Fada N’Gourma, située à l’Est, à deux cent trente km de Ouagadougou la capitale, ne souffre d’aucune ambiguïté, il ne faut cependant pas oublier que son histoire récente est assez compliquée, mieux, a connu des turbulences assez fortes.

En effet, depuis 1904, date à laquelle le gouvernement de l’Afrique Occidentale Française connaît une profonde réorganisation, les territoires de la future Haute-Volta étaient intégrés à une vaste colonie dénommée le Haut-Sénégal et Niger (HSN) ayant pour chef-lieu Bamako. Mais sous l’effet d’un décret en date du 1<sup>er</sup> mars 1919, les cercles de Gaoua, Bobo-Dioulasso, Dédougou, Ouagadougou, Dori, Say et Fada N’Gourma<sup>4</sup>, détachés du HSN<sup>5</sup>, formèrent la colonie autonome de Haute-Volta dont le chef-lieu est fixé à Ouagadougou. Chemin faisant, sous l’effet d’un arrêté général du 27 janvier 1927, le cercle de Say (à l’est de Fada N’Gourma) et une portion de celui de Dori passèrent définitivement sous administration du gouverneur du Niger, installé à

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<sup>3</sup> Le Burkina Faso est situé au cœur de l’Afrique occidentale. Ceinturé par le Niger (à l’est), la Côte d’Ivoire, le Ghana, le Togo et le Bénin (au sud), le Mali (au nord-ouest), le Burkina Faso est un des plus petits pays d’Afrique. Sa population est une des plus denses avec plus de douze millions d’habitants sur une superficie de 374.000km<sup>2</sup>. L’histoire de l’évangélisation du Burkina remonte aux années 1900 où les premiers missionnaires, la Société Missionnaire d’Afrique, communément appelée les Pères Blancs, ont entrepris pour la première fois l’annonce de la Bonne Nouvelle.

<sup>4</sup> Dans sa thèse soutenue à l’Université Grégorienne de Rome, Épiphan Sandwidé consacre une étude intéressante sur la conquête coloniale des peuples du Gurma. On apprend ainsi que le capitaine Baud est nommé le 29 décembre 1896 résident de France au Gurma. Le poste de Fada sera effectivement ouvert en 1897. En 1903 le cercle comprenait trois postes: Fada, Diapaga, Konkobori. Ce dernier poste fut transféré en 1908 à Pama. La subdivision manqua de titulaire à partir de 1914 et fut officiellement fermée en 1919. Elle ne sera rouverte qu’en 1947. Le cercle de Fada fait partie de la colonie du Dahomey jusqu’en 1907. Il est rattaché le premier mai 1907 au groupe des cercles civils du Haut-Sénégal et Niger. Voir E.C. SANDWIDÉ, *Histoire de l’Église au Burkina Faso, Traditio, Receptio et Re-expressio: 1899-1979*, Rome 1999, 41-55; 63.

<sup>5</sup> Le même décret de 1919 scindait le Haut-Sénégal-Niger en territoires autonomes dont le Soudan Français, le Niger et la Côte d’Ivoire.

Niamey. Plus tard, le 5 septembre 1932, un décret consacre officiellement la disparition de la Colonie de la Haute-Volta et de son partage entre le Niger, le Soudan et la Côte d'Ivoire.

Du coup, les cercles<sup>6</sup> de Fada N'Gourma et de Dori sont rattachés à la colonie du Niger. Le professeur Gnangoran en donne les raisons:

La colonie de la Haute-Volta, une fois créée, n'a pu bénéficier des moyens financiers et logistiques nécessaires à son développement. Aussi décide-t-on de la supprimer au profit des autres colonies<sup>7</sup>.

C'est donc dans cet espace géographique que les missionnaires rédemptoristes apporteront leur contribution à l'œuvre d'évangélisation. Toutefois, il faut souligner qu'ils ne sont pas arrivés sur un terrain tout vierge. Ils trouvèrent déjà sur place, les SMA, la Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon.

## 2. – *La Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon*

La SMA<sup>8</sup>, Société des Missions Africaines a été fondée le 8 décembre 1856 à Lyon (France) par Mgr Melchior de Marion Brésillac, ancien évêque missionnaire en Inde. C'est un institut spécifiquement missionnaire, destiné en priorité à l'Afrique.

Pour la mission d'évangélisation dans la Colonie du Niger, deux noms méritent d'être soulignés: il s'agit de Mgr François Steinmetz et du P. François Faroud. En effet, c'est en sa qualité de Vicaire Apostolique de Dahomey (1906-1935), que Mgr Steinmetz (1868-1952) va chercher à élargir la présence mission-

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<sup>6</sup> Dans cette perspective de partage, les cercles de Ouahigouya et la partie du cercle de Dédougou sont rattachés à la colonie du Soudan et les cercles de Tenkodogo, Ouagadougou, Koudougou, Gaoua, Batié, Bobo-Dioulasso et la partie du cercle de Dédougou sont rattachés à la colonie de Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>7</sup> Y.B. GNANGORAN, «La mise sous tutelle de la Haute-Volta, actuel Burkina Faso (1932-1944)», in *Burkina Faso, Cent ans d'histoire, 1895-1995*, T. 1 sous la direction de Y. G. MADIEGA et O. NAO, Paris 2003, 769.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.missions-africaines.net/index.php?id=histoire> visité le 30 Décembre 2011; P. GANTLY, *Histoire de la Société des Missions Africaines : De la fondation par Mgr de Marion Brésillac (1856) à la mort du Père Planque (1907)*, Paris 2011; J. ETEVENAUX, *Histoire des Missions Chrétiennes*, Saint-Maurice 2004, 146-148.

naire des SMA jusqu'à Niamey. *L'Écho des Missions Africaines* de Lyon, bulletin d'informations de la Société, retrace les différents voyages entrepris par Mgr Steinmetz. Nous apprenons ainsi qu'il effectua trois voyages importants et déterminants dans la fondation du poste de Niamey. L'intention affichée à travers ses périples était claire:

apporter lui-même les secours de la religion et le réconfort de sa visite aux nombreux chrétiens de la Côte qui y sont dispersés, prendre contact dans la mesure du possible avec les différentes tribus qui peuplent ces régions du Nord et y étudier sur place les possibilités d'ouverture de nouvelles missions<sup>9</sup>.

Le premier voyage de Mgr Steinmetz eut lieu le 11 janvier 1928 en compagnie du Père Armand Moulin, SMA. Les différents circuits du voyage sont également connus. Partie de Ouïdah, la caravane s'ébranle vers Zagnanado et Abomey avant de rejoindre Dosso où Monseigneur célébrera la messe en présence de quelques chrétiens de la Côte que des raisons professionnelles ont amenés à s'installer dans cette localité. La randonnée épiscopale se poursuit jusqu'à Niamey, à Fada N'Gourma qui fait partie de son Vicariat, pour finalement s'arrêter à Ouagadougou avant de rejoindre la case de départ, le 22 février 1928.

Cette première sortie épiscopale porte des fruits car elle va favoriser la décision de fondation de Niamey:

La décision de fonder la mission de Niamey est prise à Lyon, en France, entre le Très Révérend Père Chabert, Supérieur Général de la Société des Missions Africaines et Monseigneur Steinmetz, Vicaire Apostolique du Dahomey<sup>10</sup>.

À l'issue de cette décision, un deuxième voyage sera entrepris par Monseigneur en compagnie cette fois-ci de celui qui fut désigné pour fonder le poste de Niamey, le P. Faroud. Cette visite de prospection a lieu en janvier 1930. Il faut chercher un terrain pour la future mission.

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<sup>9</sup> Mgr Michel Cartateguy, évêque de Niamey au Niger et le P. G. Babinet, tous deux SMA font référence à ces propos de Mgr Steinmetz sans cependant préciser la source exacte: M. CARTATEGUY, *Le temps des labours, les origines de l'Église Catholique au Niger, 1919-1948*, s.d.l., 6; G. BABINET, *François Faroud, 1885-1963, Un pionnier au Sahel*, Lyon 2010, 37.

<sup>10</sup> M. CARTATEGUY, *Le temps des labours*, 7-8.



L'année d'après, en janvier 1931, pour la troisième fois, Mgr Steinmetz toujours accompagné par le P. Faroud, foule le sol de Niamey. Cette fois, il s'agit d'un voyage d'installation du premier missionnaire au Sahel. Après trois jours de vie commune au campement, Monseigneur laisse le P. Faroud, seul, entreprendre le travail de fondation du poste de Niamey. Ce dernier écrira :

Jusqu'au Sud-Algérien, je ne voyais qu'un désert au point de vue religieux; seuls chrétiens, noyés dans la masse musulmane, des Européens et des évolués, (presque tous Dahoméens et catholiques), venus de la Côte pour l'administration et le commerce<sup>11</sup>.

S'il faut attribuer à Mgr Steinmetz la paternité de la Mission au Niger, il faut reconnaître que ce fut le P. Faroud qui contribua à faire naître l'Église dans cette contrée perdue dans le Sahara. Il a joué un rôle déterminant dans les premières fondations au Niger: Douchi (1934), Fada N'Gourma (1936), Diabo (1938), Zinder (1940).

Vers 1941, on songe à demander l'érection de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey. Pour avoir le nombre suffisant de chrétiens, de postes, de missionnaires, on y attache le Nord-Dahomey comprenant d'importantes stations comme Kandi et Natitingou et des stations secondaires à savoir Djougou et Parakou. Les Vicaires et Préfets Apostoliques de Dahomey, Ouagadougou, Kadouna, Jos, Khartoum et Fouban cèdent leurs droits. La Préfecture Apostolique est ainsi érigée par le Pape Pie XII le 28 Avril 1942. Le Père Faroud est nommé Préfet Apostolique.

La guerre qui durait vint désorganiser la Mission, réduire le nombre des missionnaires et des catéchistes, arrêter l'apostolat qui démarrait. Mais dès 1941, grâce au zèle et à la persévérance d'un missionnaire Rédemptoriste hors pair, le Père Constant Quillard, la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey accueillera de nouveaux ouvriers dans son champ missionnaire.

### 3. – *La figure incontournable du Père Constant Quillard*

On ne peut pas esquisser une histoire de la mission des Rédemptoristes au Burkina Faso et au Niger sans évoquer le souvenir du P. Constant Quillard, précurseur, pionnier, puis Préfet

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<sup>11</sup> G. BABINET, *Un pionnier au Sahel...*, 42.

Apostolique. Le P. Quillard qui plus tard sera connu sous le nom de Monseigneur Quillard, reste le fondateur de la mission rédemptoriste, celui qui a élaboré et défendu le projet d'installation dans cette portion d'Afrique subsaharienne, précisément dans la colonie du Niger. N'eussent été son grand charisme missionnaire, sa persévérance et son acharnement auprès des supérieurs religieux, ce projet n'aurait certainement pas vu le jour.

De son vivant Mgr Quillard a rédigé à la demande de Mgr Hippolyte Berlier<sup>12</sup>, une autobiographie qui retrace les lignes de sa vie missionnaire en France comme en Afrique. Il rappelle également l'origine de son projet missionnaire qui a abouti à l'implantation de la Congrégation des Rédemptoristes au Niger. Il demeure pour nous une source fiable et un témoin authentique et irremplaçable.

Né en 1892, à Saint-Usuge près de Louhans en Bourgogne, le P. Constant Quillard dès son jeune âge a été séduit par l'idéal missionnaire. Il le confirme lui-même dans son Mémoire qu'il publia de son vivant:

Nous rêvions de mission et de pays lointains et d'aventures... des revues missionnaires entretenaient ces désirs. Il faut dire aussi que le curé de la paroisse et plus tard son vicaire entretenaient dans l'esprit des enfants l'idée de la mission<sup>13</sup>.

En 1905, il prit le chemin du juvénat des Rédemptoristes en bouclant tour à tour les études secondaires à Uvrier près de Saint-Léonard, dans le Valais Suisse, le noviciat à Goedenraad, dans le Limbourg hollandais, les cours de théologie à Attert dans le Luxembourg belge. Il témoigne lui-même comment, déjà étudiant, il était régulièrement informé de tout ce qui se réalisait sur l'activité missionnaire dans le monde.

Pendant le juvénat évidemment on nous parlait des missions. Le Supérieur Provincial et les missionnaires de passage nous faisaient des causeries que nous goûtions fort. Nos regards se tour-

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<sup>12</sup> Mgr Hippolyte Berlier, comme nous le verrons par la suite, fut le premier évêque de Niamey quand la Préfecture fut érigée en Diocèse. Il remplacera de ce fait Mgr Quillard.

<sup>13</sup> *Constant Quillard, Rédemptoriste, 1892-1972*, dactylographié, section Niamey, in ARCHIVES DES RÉDEMPTORISTES DE LYON-PARIS (désormais lire ARLP).

naient vers l'Asie, le Japon, l'Indochine, Madagascar, l'Afrique, les vrais pays de mission. Et l'on regrettait amèrement que nos provinces françaises n'aient pas de mission dans nos territoires d'Outre-mer<sup>14</sup>.

Mobilisé à Lille et Maubeuge, il partit ensuite dans le service de santé du Maroc et au 5<sup>e</sup> tirailleurs algériens où il porta le grade de sergent de section. Là, deux événements importants vont éveiller son enthousiasme pour la vie missionnaire.

C'est d'abord le contact avec l'Islam:

Vaguement, j'avais entendu dire que les Musulmans étaient inconvertis et je trouvais cette affirmation intolérable. Il doit y avoir un moyen de porter l'Évangile silencieusement par sa conduite, par son comportement, par le contact, le dialogue<sup>15</sup>.

Ensuite ce fut l'assassinat du Bienheureux Charles de Foucauld le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 1916. Il cherchait à savoir qui était cet homme assez original dont on pleurait et regrettait tant la mort. Au terme de sa recherche, il reste impressionné par les écrits spirituels de cet ancien soldat converti qui plus tard constitueront l'essentiel de son programme missionnaire:

Je tâche de sauver les hommes par la parole et les œuvres de miséricorde au lieu de me contenter de les sauver par la prière et la pénitence comme je le faisais à Nazareth... mon âme de zèle apparaît au dehors<sup>16</sup>.

Ordonné prêtre le 21 octobre 1923, il se lança dans la vie apostolique pour forger ses premières armes à travers des prédications de Missions paroissiales. Il est affecté à Montauban où il eut le bonheur de prêcher de nombreuses Missions. Toutefois, il était toujours habité par l'idée de voir la Congrégation implantée en dehors de la France et de préférence en pays d'Outre-mer. En 1928, il sera envoyé dans la maison de Toulouse en compagnie d'autres missionnaires rédemptoristes. Le projet de fondation de la province de Lyon à Alger, à la paroisse sainte Anne la Redoute étant bien amorcé et conclu, le P. Quillard fut naturellement dé-

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<sup>14</sup> *Constant Quillard, Rédemptoriste, 1892-1972*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

signé pour cette implantation en pays islamisé. Son séjour au Maroc comme soldat y est pour quelque chose car le peu de contact qu'il eut avec les Musulmans éveilla et confirma en lui la vocation missionnaire *ad gentes*. Il rêvait de faire connaître le Christ à ceux qui jusque-là n'avaient pas eu la chance de le rencontrer par manque de personnel et de ressources.

#### 4. – *L'intuition du P. Quillard*

En 1930, à sa grande et heureuse surprise, ses supérieurs lui demandent de rejoindre Alger où une paroisse devrait être fondée par les Rédemptoristes. Il ne pouvait y avoir de meilleur choix vu le séjour qu'il avait déjà effectué dans le Maghreb. Il disposait donc de plusieurs avantages: la connaissance du milieu, la capacité d'adaptation et les nombreuses relations qu'il avait tissées. Une fois sur le lieu de sa nouvelle Mission, il se remit à l'étude de la langue arabe et se documenta sur l'apostolat en milieu islamique en particulier et sur les pays de Mission de manière générale.

Désireux d'entrer en contact avec le monde musulman, il se fera tout à tous, il cherchera à établir des relations d'amitié, de charité, de solidarité, en un mot à réduire les distances entre Chrétiens et Musulmans. Mais il y eut des jours de découragement surtout face à l'attitude de certains de ses confrères prêtres. Voici à ce propos un témoignage très éloquent retenu lors d'une conversation avec un missionnaire de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs): «Oh! Père, vous vous donnez bien de la peine pour rien. Ils sont bouchés, abrutis, vous n'arriverez pas à en convertir un seul. Il y a cent ans que nous sommes là et pas un seul n'est venu au Christ»<sup>17</sup>.

Le moral de P. Quillard en prend un sacré coup, car de telles remarques peuvent atténuer l'ardeur du missionnaire aussi chevronné qu'il puisse paraître. Malgré le soutien de la hiérarchie, en l'occurrence Mgr Leynaud, Archevêque d'Alger, et Mgr Poggi, le P. Quillard à partir de ce jour-là connaîtra une nette baisse dans le rendement quotidien de ses activités missionnaires et apostoliques auprès des musulmans.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

C'est en fait au cours de sa présence en Algérie que le P. Constant Quillard sentit le besoin énorme de pousser pour une fondation en terre de missions, c'est-à-dire sous la dépendance de la Propagande de la Foi. Étant une Congrégation missionnaire, il souffrait de voir que les Rédemptoristes de France n'aient ne serait-ce qu'une seule mission en territoires d'Outre-mer. Il le dira en des termes plus explicites:

Une première raison nous guidait: obtenir du Gouvernement Français la reconnaissance légale, et exposer nos revendications au sujet des biens spoliés. Pour cela pas de meilleure recommandation que de faire connaître qu'avec la permission de l'Église, – outre nos missions florissantes en Amérique du Sud: Chili, Bolivie, Pérou, Équateur, Colombie, – nous avons fondé une Mission dans l'Empire colonial Français<sup>18</sup>.

Il reçut l'encouragement de ses supérieurs pour envisager cette fondation tant désirée. De 1930 à 1939, il eut à adresser au supérieur provincial, P. Etienne Duplex, huit rapports<sup>19</sup>, fruit de ses recherches, de ses orientations et de ses contacts<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> C. QUILLARD, *Lettre au Provincial de Lyon, P. E. Duplex, Lyon 22 juin 1942*, in ARLP.

<sup>19</sup> Les rapports en question étaient une liste de projets puisque présentant des possibilités d'installation des missionnaires rédemptoristes dans diverses parties d'Afrique: Projet de Mission en pays musulman; Les musulmans sont-ils inconvertissables? Projet de Mission dans le Sud Saharien; Projet de Mission à Madagascar; Projet de Mission dans l'Oubangui-Chari ou le Congo; Projet de Mission à Yaoundé (Cameroun); Projet de Mission au Niger (deux projets distincts).

<sup>20</sup> Il est à noter que le P. Constant Quillard avant d'entreprendre son voyage d'exploration, avait pris le soin de contacter certains missionnaires déjà sur le terrain. Ses correspondants les plus cités sont entre autre: Mgr Thévenoud en 1936 pendant son séjour à Maison Carrée des Pères Blancs, à Alger; Le T.R.P. Aupiais par lettre du 25 juillet 1938; Le Père Faroud dans ses lettres du 6 août 1938, 2 septembre 1938, 2 décembre 1938; Mgr Parisot de Ouidah dans ses lettres du 12 octobre 1938 et du 10 mars 1939; Mgr Steinmetz par sa lettre du 1<sup>er</sup> mai 1930; Père Schall, Supérieur du poste de Zinder, représentant la province irlandaise des Missions Africaines au Nigéria anglais; Mgr Birraux, Supérieur général des Pères Blancs à Maison-Carrée. En parcourant ses différentes correspondances, quelques idées récurrentes se dégagent: la colonie du Niger est immense et les Pères des Missions Africaines de Lyon, ne pouvant l'occuper dans toute son étendue, seront ravis d'accueillir des collaborateurs. Car il y a une possibilité de donner une petite place dans le champ de mission

Et comme il a su bien le dire:

Quand Dieu nous confie une œuvre, il ne faut pas croire que tout soit réglé, qu'il suffise de s'installer et de manœuvrer. Il faut tâtonner, chercher, faire des écarts, commettre des impairs, passer par des tunnels. Finalement on touche au but avec la grâce de Dieu<sup>21</sup>.

Après donc plusieurs tentatives, plusieurs requêtes et après un long temps d'attente et de patience, le P. Quillard reçut l'aval des autorités à envisager sérieusement une fondation en Afrique subsaharienne, plus précisément dans la colonie du Niger. Tout n'était pas gagné d'avance, car il fallait entreprendre un voyage de prospection, étape nécessaire pour une fondation durable et sérieuse.

##### 5. – *Le «Missi» Rédemptoriste*

Le P. Constant Quillard quitte Alger le 18 Avril 1941. Il est envoyé par les autorités compétentes en vue de prospecter et de contacter les Chefs de Missions de l'A.O.F (Afrique Occidentale Française) à savoir le Sahara, la Haute Côte d'Ivoire et le Dahomey. Son voyage n'était pas ignoré de la *Propaganda Fide*, puisqu'elle faisait parvenir au Père Quillard les pouvoirs d'exercer le saint ministère surtout dans les territoires les plus abandonnés.

C'est dans la colonie du Niger que débutera le voyage d'exploration, et cela avec raison car elle constituait l'objet de la démarche. Les étapes en furent: Agadez, Tanout, Zinder, Maradi, Doutchi, Niamey, Kantchari, Fada N'Gourma, Koupèla, Ouagadougou, Yako, Latoden, Koudougou, Réo, Pabré, Tenkodogo, Garango, Dosso, Malanville, Kandi, Parakou, Tchaourou, Cotonou, Ouidah, Abomey-Calvi. Le Père Quillard s'arrêtait plus ou moins longtemps, selon l'intérêt des étapes, ouvrant l'œil, posant des questions, établissant des contacts avec les populations, prenant des notes tous azimuts<sup>22</sup>.

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que constitue le grand Niger.

<sup>21</sup> *Constant Quillard, Rédemptoriste, 1892-1972, 24.*

<sup>22</sup> Le Père Quillard a laissé des documents manuscrits où sont relatées les différentes péripéties de son voyage d'exploration. Il s'agit notamment de ses cahiers de voyage d'exploration et d'information qui constitue une mine

Cette tournée missionnaire aura duré sept mois: d'avril à octobre 1941. Le P. Quillard avait rencontré les gardiens des trois postes de mission. Il s'agit de Zinder (2-12 mai) où il s'entretint avec le P. Schall, de Niamey (15-24 mai) où il rencontra les Pères Faroud et Lieutaud, et enfin Fada N'Gourma (26-27 mai) où il sympathisa avec les Pères Chazal et Bréhier. Il fallait maintenant contacter les prélats qui avaient juridiction sur les trois principales régions du Niger. Car, ne l'oublions pas, en ce temps-là, le Niger au point de vue ecclésiastique, relevait de la Préfecture Apostolique de Kadouna, avec à sa tête Mgr Thomas Hugues (Nigéria, branche irlandaise des Missions Africaines), du Vicariat apostolique de Ouagadougou (Haute-Côte d'Ivoire), confié à Mgr Joanny Thévenoud de la Société des Pères Blancs, et du Vicariat apostolique de Ouidah (Dahomey) aux soins de Mgr Louis Parisot des Missions Africaines de Lyon.

Le 11 décembre 1941, une fois sa mission accomplie, le P. Quillard écrivait au Père Général<sup>23</sup> des Rédemptoristes à Rome pour lui faire le point de son périple en Afrique Occidentale Française:

Les circonstances m'ont favorisé, j'ai pu faire le voyage d'inspection et de renseignements projeté depuis longtemps. J'ai été reçu avec une très grande charité et une très grande bienveillance par les missionnaires Pères Blancs et les Pères des Missions Africaines de Lyon, ainsi que par leurs Vicaires apostoliques. Nous vous supplions humblement, Révérendissime Père, de vous montrer favorable à notre requête quand l'heure de la Providence aura sonné. Il ne nous reste que de faire des sacrifices et de prier de tout cœur pour obtenir la bénédiction constante de Dieu et la

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précieuse d'informations. On y trouve une belle présentation de la situation missionnaire des différents postes visités. Le Père Gilbert Humbert en 1996, s'en est inspiré pour retracer une brève histoire de la mission d'évangélisation entreprise par les Pères rédemptoristes au Burkina Faso et au Niger. Cfr *Bulletin d'Information de la Province de Lyon-Paris (BIP)*, 74 (1996).

<sup>23</sup> Il faut signaler que le Supérieur Général, le Révérendissime Père Patrick Murray de l'époque était tenu au courant de toutes les démarches entreprises par le Père Quillard par l'intermédiaire du Provincial qui adressait des comptes rendus réguliers, en témoigne cette lettre: «votre Paternité apprendra probablement avec plaisir que le P. Quillard fait en ce moment un voyage d'exploration en Afrique en vue d'une mission possible dans nos colonies...». Cfr E. Duplex au P. Patrick Murray, Lyon 2 juin 1942, in manuscrit, in AGHR, IV Lyon, Vice-Province de Niamey.

grande grâce d'aller évangéliser les Noirs. Bien entendu, comme je n'étais qu'un envoyé officieux et non officiel, je n'ai rien arrangé ni rien conclu, je remets les renseignements reçus entre les mains du Provincial<sup>24</sup>.

Nous le disions, le voyage du P. Constant Quillard était officieux, même si naturellement sa présence laissait soupçonner une démarche de reconnaissance pouvant un jour aboutir à l'arrivée des missionnaires de sa Congrégation religieuse. Et la preuve qu'il ne pouvait rien décider ni entreprendre de lui-même, le P. Constant Quillard se contentera d'assister aux différentes tractations souvent difficiles et délicates au niveau des responsables concernés par le projet missionnaire.

Ce dossier est rarement abordé dans les discussions, quand on évoque cette merveilleuse aventure missionnaire des Rédemptoristes. Pourtant, dans la réalité, des tractations ont eu lieu et elles demeurent et constituent sans aucun doute une grille de lecture importante permettant de comprendre dans les détails les tenants et aboutissants ayant conduit les Rédemptoristes au Niger.

Nous envisageons d'aborder ces tractations par le début, c'est-à-dire que nous exposerons tout d'abord le projet formulé par la Congrégation des Rédemptoristes puisqu'elle en est demandeuse. Ensuite, nous nous intéresserons à la position de la Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon qui, il ne faut pas le sous-estimer, demeure capitale dans la prise des décisions ultérieures.

## II. – TRACTATIONS DIVERSES DANS L'ÉLABORATION DU PROJET

Au niveau des Rédemptoristes, trois noms reviennent de façon récurrente dans le dossier de négociation. Il s'agit notamment de Constant Quillard, du Provincial de Lyon (Etienne Duplex) et du Supérieur Général (Patrick Murray).

### 1. – *Du côté des Rédemptoristes*

#### 1.1 – *Les interventions du Père Quillard*

Après sa visite de prospection, le P. Quillard a rédigé un rapport détaillé sur sa visite d'exploration en A.O.F. C'est ce qu'il

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<sup>24</sup> C. Quillard à Murray, Alger 11 décembre 1941, in AGHR, IV Lyon, VP de Niamey, manuscrit.



a appelé le neuvième rapport<sup>25</sup>. Il écrira même des lettres significatives qui montrent sa détermination de voir l'aboutissement des négociations déjà entamées depuis son voyage de prise de contact avec les réalités missionnaires au Niger. Dans la première lettre qu'il adresse à son Provincial au mois de mai 1941, il apparaît très enthousiaste et optimiste:

Je vous ai dit avec quelle bonté le T.R.P. Aupiais, grand ami des Noirs, m'avait reçu, et avec quelle bienveillance il m'avait écouté. Il doit écrire à son Supérieur Général avant de commencer les pourparlers avec vous. Cependant, comme vous devez vous absenter vous-même pour longtemps, il serait bon de le rencontrer le plus tôt possible. Il importe de préciser qu'il ne s'agit nullement de prévenir les décisions de la Propagande, ni de faire des arrangements dont on lui demanderait simplement l'approbation dans la suite, mais d'établir des points de contact entre les deux Sociétés, et de formuler quelques propositions qui humblement et respectueusement seront présentées à la Propagande à qui appartient toute décision<sup>26</sup>.

On comprend à la lecture de cette lettre le souci du P. Quillard à ne rien négliger dans cette tractation. Il demeure l'homme qui dans l'ombre encourage et aiguillonne son supérieur à faire accélérer le dossier. Du reste, il ne manque pas non plus d'initiative puisqu'un mois plus tard il écrira de nouveau au P. E. Duplex, pour faire le point sur la situation du projet de fondation en cours. La finale de la correspondance laisse cependant planer une certaine inquiétude:

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<sup>25</sup> Rédigé à Alger, au mois de novembre 1941, ce rapport est intitulé: *Projet de Mission chez les Noirs au Niger; Compte-rendu de mon voyage d'exploration, d'information et d'étude* – avril-octobre 1941. Ce rapport d'une cinquantaine de pages dactylographiées est suivi de quatorze annexes donnant des renseignements complémentaires sur la Mission dans la colonie du Niger: Renseignements complémentaires sur le Niger. Le centre de la mission. Les postes de mission. Sœurs européennes et Sœurs indigènes. Les écoles. Les séminaires. Les catéchistes. Le catéchuménat. Le dispensaire. Hygiène. Les maladies, causes, remèdes, soins préventifs. Relations avec l'administration, avec les Blancs, avec les Noirs, colonisation. Moyens de transport et voies de communication. Subsistance du missionnaire, coutumier.

<sup>26</sup> C. Quillard à E. Duplex, Provincial de Lyon, Alger 31 mai 1942, in ARLP.

Très Révérend Père Provincial, voilà résumé l'état de la question. Il ne nous reste plus qu'à prier et à offrir nos sacrifices pour le succès de nos démarches. Ne vous semble-t-il pas que le moment est venu d'offrir positivement nos humbles services à la Propagande, par le Révérendissime Père Général? Un mot de la Sacrée Congrégation serait bien utile pour continuer et orienter nos pourparlers et nous donner les directives qu'elle jugera nécessaires<sup>27</sup>.

Les initiatives de P. Quillard s'arrêtent là compte tenu du débarquement américain qui se produisit en novembre 1942. L'Europe, de manière générale, reste très préoccupée quant au lendemain de ce débarquement et, pire, les congrégations religieuses étaient touchées de plein fouet par cette crise sans précédent qui mobilisait une partie importante de missionnaires. Il fallut surseoir au projet de tractations pour parer au plus urgent.

Pendant près de deux ans, rien ne bouge et pour cause: la guerre était déclarée et partout l'heure était à la mobilisation. Quand vient l'accalmie, les pourparlers reprirent en 1944. C'est à ce moment-là que l'intervention du Provincial de Lyon, le P. E. Duplex, dans les tractations sera décisive et salutaire.

### 1.2 – La responsabilité du Père Duplex

Bien avant que les tractations ne fussent arrêtées, en bon Provincial, le P. Duplex<sup>28</sup> avait déjà alerté son Supérieur Général à Rome:

Comme je l'ai écrit à Votre Paternité, j'avais donc permis, après le P. Nouais<sup>29</sup>, au R.P. Quillard de faire un voyage d'exploration

<sup>27</sup> Quillard à Duplex, d'Alger 22 juin 1942, in ARLP.

<sup>28</sup> Né le 16 février 1895, le P. Etienne Duplex est décédé le 6 novembre 1961. Il est le huitième Provincial de la province de Lyon formée en 1900. Son provincialat, de 1939 à 1950, fut fécond. C'est grâce à lui par exemple qu'une Maison autonome de Rédemptoristes où pourraient être donnés tous les soins nécessaires aux confrères malades fut fondée en automne 1942 à Palau dans les Pyrénées. Et un des plus beaux fleurons de sa couronne demeure sans conteste les démarches nécessaires qu'il consentira à entreprendre pour que le projet missionnaire rédemptoriste en Afrique subsaharienne voit le jour. C'est lui également qui enverra des missionnaires d'élite dans cette nouvelle mission dans la colonie du Niger: cfr ARLP, Armoire 9.

<sup>29</sup> Né à Rougé, le 6 mai 1868, le P. Nouais fut baptisé dès le lendemain et reçut les prénoms de François-Marie. À l'aube du samedi 26 avril 1941, en la fête de Notre-Dame du Bon Conseil, si chère à Saint Alphonse, de Notre-Dame

en Afrique dans la colonie du Niger. Celui-ci a terminé son voyage. Votre Paternité doit le savoir tant par une lettre que lui a écrite le R.P. Quillard que par une conversation qu'elle a dû avoir à Rome soit avec le Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines, le P. Slattery, soit avec le Supérieur Provincial de cette même Congrégation, d'après ce que m'écrit le P. Quillard. Je voudrais bien simplement prendre avis de votre Paternité sur ce sujet, car nous ne voulons rien faire que par obéissance. Pour l'instant nous ne pourrions que fonder un poste avec trois Pères: le P. Quillard et deux autres compagnons. Nous ne pouvons pas faire davantage. Avec mes consultants, je crois que cette fondation présentera des avantages: celui tout d'abord de nous faire bien voir par le Gouvernement, au moment où va peut-être se poser la question de notre approbation, celui ensuite de donner un peu plus d'idéal à notre jeunesse et de susciter des vocations. Nous n'avons pris aucun engagement envers qui ce soit. Le P. Quillard n'a été qu'un explorateur officieux, chargé de prendre des renseignements. Avant de faire quoi que ce soit, je serais heureux d'avoir la pensée de votre Paternité, qui a manifesté l'une ou l'autre fois tant de sympathie pour ce projet notamment dans sa lettre<sup>30</sup> du 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1938 au TRP Jean-Baptiste Favre<sup>31</sup>.

Dans le souci de ne rien négliger, une autre lettre du mois de mars vient apporter plus de lumière à la situation qui nécessitait plus de précisions:

Je viens de recevoir votre lettre du 17 février. Je ne puis que vous remercier. Nous nous conformerons en tout aux désirs de Votre Paternité au sujet d'une fondation éventuelle en Afrique.

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de Fourvière, si chère aux lyonnais de naissance ou d'adoption, au 75<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire du jour où Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours, tirée providentiellement de l'oubli, prit solennellement possession de son sanctuaire de Rome, s'éteignait doucement le P. Nouais. C'était après une longue maladie, entrecoupée de pénibles interventions chirurgicales, pendant laquelle sa patience, sa piété, son ardent amour du Christ et de sa croix avaient édifié profondément tous ceux qui eurent la faveur de l'approcher, in *Notice Nécrologique du R.P. François-Marie Nouais*, Lyon 1941, 1-6.

<sup>30</sup> Contenu de la lettre du 1er novembre du Révérendissime Père Murray au TRP Jean-Baptiste Favre: «J'ai été très heureux de la bonne nouvelle que le P. Quillard est hors de danger, car nous étions pleins d'anxiété pour lui et son apostolat auprès des noirs. J'espère que bientôt il sera assez rétabli pour continuer son œuvre».

<sup>31</sup> Duplex à Murray Lyon 27 janvier 1942, in AGHR, section VP Niamey.

Comme votre Paternité peut le comprendre, jusqu'ici nous n'avons fait que prendre des renseignements. Les choses ne sont pas allées plus loin; et si, dans son voyage, le P. Quillard s'est tenu sur la réserve vis à vis des Pères des Missions Africaines, c'est uniquement parce qu'il ne faisait qu'un voyage d'informations. Jamais nous n'avons eu la pensée, ni lui ni moi, d'agir sans le consentement de ces bons missionnaires. Pour l'instant je ne puis pas présenter de propositions précises à Votre Paternité tout d'abord parce que sa lettre du 17 février me fait comprendre davantage la position des Pères des Missions Africaines, et puis parce que j'ai besoin de consulter le P. Quillard avant d'entreprendre une démarche auprès du Père Provincial de cette Congrégation. Mais encore une fois, je remercie Votre Paternité d'avoir mis les choses au point. Un Père des Missions Africaines avait donné des renseignements inexacts sur ce que votre Paternité aurait dit au P. Général de leur Congrégation<sup>32</sup>.

Ayant suivi à la lettre les conseils du P. Général, le Provincial rédemptoriste de Lyon rencontre le responsable de la Société des Missions Africaines. Il a fallu attendre quelques années pour que cette rencontre ait lieu compte tenu de la guerre qui freinait toute initiative. Et quand les circonstances sont devenues propices aux pourparlers, le P. Duplex écrira à son supérieur hiérarchique pour lui rendre compte des conclusions des discussions. C'est ce qui ressort de la lettre qu'il adresse au P. Murray:

Selon le désir exprimé par votre Paternité, j'ai causé également au P. Provincial des Missions Africaines de notre projet de mission; pour agir en connaissance de cause, j'avais fait venir d'Alger le P. Quillard. Notre conversation n'a abouti encore à aucun résultat. Entretemps en effet, la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande a fait une nouvelle délimitation qui semble mettre obstacle à ce projet. Une nouvelle Préfecture Apostolique vient d'être érigée au Niger et confiée aux pères des Missions Africaines. Or c'est précisément là que nous aurions désiré nous installer. Le RP Aupiais, Provincial, m'a demandé hier de stopper. Il veut avant d'aller plus loin demander des explications à son Supérieur Général. Celui-ci a mal compris ou mal interprété la pensée de Votre Paternité. Écrivant à ses Pères il disait que nous n'avions pas du tout l'intention de prendre un territoire, alors que

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<sup>32</sup> Duplex à Murray, Lyon 1<sup>er</sup> Mars 1942, in AGHR section VP Niamey.

dans sa lettre du 17 février Votre Paternité m'écrivait lui avoir affirmé le contraire. Cependant je crois avoir compris que les Pères des Missions Africaines ne tiennent pas beaucoup à nous voir donner suite à notre projet. Il est donc en suspens. Nous attendons une réponse de leur part. Si nous sommes obligés d'abandonner ce projet, nous dirigerons nos recherches d'un autre côté, car nous croyons qu'une mission en territoire français nous serait très utile en ce moment en vue surtout d'une approbation<sup>33</sup>.

Le P. E. Duplex semble se heurter à des difficultés dans les tractations qu'il est en train d'entreprendre. La communication avec la hiérarchie romaine montre à quel point le projet missionnaire rédemptoriste a besoin d'être plus clair au risque d'être rejeté. S'agit-il de demander tout le territoire du Niger ou est-il question d'envoyer du renfort pour épauler la Société des Missions Africaines? Ce sont là autant de questions qui méritent d'être élucidées et précisées afin de donner toute la chance au projet d'aboutir. En ce sens, la médiation du Supérieur Général des Rédemptoristes fut nécessaire car elle reste la voix officielle, le répondant juridique capable de peser de tout son poids dans la négociation.

### 1.3 – *La médiation de Père Patrick Murray*

En sa qualité de premier responsable de la Congrégation des missionnaires rédemptoristes, le P. Patrick Murray<sup>34</sup> suivra avec attention les démarches devant aboutir à l'installation de ses missionnaires au Niger. Il répondra avec une fidélité toujours renouvelée aux lettres qui lui seront adressées. Ses conseils avisés et ses propositions pertinentes montrent son désir et sa volonté de s'impliquer à fond dans les démarches en cours. Ne voulant pas entreprendre les pourparlers sans maîtriser le dossier, son souci sera de toujours prendre contact avec le Supérieur Provincial de Lyon, mieux placé pour lui donner tous les renseigne-

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<sup>33</sup> E. Duplex à Murray Lyon 7 juin 1945, in AGHR section VP Niamey.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick MURRAY, né le 24 novembre 1865 à Termon, en Irlande, il fit profession le 23 octobre 1889. Il fut élu Recteur Majeur le 1er mai 1909 au Chapitre Général auquel il participait comme Supérieur Provincial d'Irlande. Il offrit sa démission le 25 avril 1947 et se retira pour aller vivre dans la maison rédemptoriste de Limerick, en Irlande, où il est mort le 4 juin 1959.

ments susceptibles de faire progresser les discussions. La lettre qu'il écrit en février 1942 en est une illustration:

Je reçus en son temps la lettre du P. Quillard, mais je n'y ai pas répondu parce que j'attendais votre lettre. Mais ni par votre lettre ni par la sienne je ne comprends le fond de la question. Est-ce que vous voulez prendre un territoire ou établir une maison missionnaire? Nous sommes prêts à approuver l'un ou l'autre projet. Mais la Société des Missions Africaines à laquelle tout le territoire visité par le P. Quillard appartient concédera difficilement un territoire. Le Père Provincial n'est pas venu me voir, mais le P. Général est venu dans un état d'alarme, en disant que la visite du P. Quillard avait alarmé ses missionnaires, parce qu'ils ne savaient pas pourquoi il était venu ni pourquoi il est resté sans dire un mot à personne du but de sa visite. Le P. Général ajoutait qu'ils considéraient ce territoire comme la pupille de leurs yeux, et il demandait qu'on ne décide rien à leur insu. Je lui ai répondu que je ne savais rien de la visite du P. Quillard ni de son but, mais que dans des cas semblables nous cherchons ou bien une maison missionnaire pour aider ses missionnaires ou bien un territoire pour nous-mêmes. Après cela il a dit qu'on pourrait peut-être arranger la chose, mais en soulignant de ne rien faire à leur insu, et j'ai promis de rien décider sans son consentement. Il faut donc traiter l'affaire d'accord avec eux, et je crois que vous pourrez arranger le tout avec le Provincial et ensuite en référer aussi à son Général. C'est tout ce que je puis en dire en ce moment<sup>35</sup>.

Les mois s'écoulaient et les tractations continuent tant au niveau des Provinciaux des deux Congrégations qu'au niveau de la haute hiérarchie, les Supérieurs Généraux. On discute, on échange, on propose. Tout le monde attend la décision finale. Dans sa lettre du mois de septembre 1942, le P. Patrick Murray se veut rassurant:

Soyez sûr que petit à petit, tout finira par s'arranger pour la fondation en Afrique. C'eût été un mauvais augure s'il n'y avait pas eu de difficultés et de retards. Rappelons-nous les débuts de l'Église et de notre Institut pour nous en convaincre. Armons-nous de patience et prions, quand le moment sera venu, la Providence nous conduira où Elle veut notre apostolat<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Patrick Murray à Etienne Duplex, Rome 17 février 1942, in AGHR.

<sup>36</sup> Murray, Supérieur Général à Duplex, Rome 9 septembre 1942, in AGHR.

Ces quelques précisions du Supérieur Général sont à lire en lien avec les réactions et les propositions émises par la Société des Missions Africaines, véritable protagoniste du projet missionnaire des Rédemptoristes en cours. Les différents échanges épistolaires du Provincial et du Général des SMA laissent deviner qu'il ne s'agissait pas de brusquer les négociations. Il s'avérait urgent de mettre tous les protagonistes au même diapason, ce qui n'exclut pas cependant des échanges de points de vue afin d'aboutir à une décision harmonieuse, consentie par tous.

## *2. – Du côté des Missions Africaines de Lyon*

Nous passerons ici en revue la prise de position des différents responsables de la Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon. Il s'agit entre autres de Mgr Faroud de Niamey, du Provincial, le Père Aupiais de Lyon et enfin du Supérieur Général, le P. Slattey de Rome.

### *2.1 – Le point de vue du Préfet Apostolique de Niamey*

Nous avons déjà parlé de Mgr Faroud au début de la fondation du poste de Niamey en 1931. Quand la Préfecture de Niamey a été érigée en 1942, il fut naturellement nommé Préfet Apostolique. Remarquons que la création de la Préfecture eut lieu une année après la visite de prospection de P. Quillard. Mgr Faroud à l'époque s'était montré accueillant vis à vis du "missi" rédemptoriste, lui prodiguant des conseils avisés. Il n'ignorait pas les intentions de son hôte même si ce dernier gardait le silence sur le but de sa visite, évitant de révéler les motivations profondes qui le guidaient.

De manière générale, et il faut le souligner, Mgr Faroud ne s'est pas opposé à la venue des missionnaires rédemptoristes dans sa Préfecture. Le champ à moissonner est vaste et nul doute que la venue d'une autre congrégation aiderait à l'évangélisation de la colonie du Niger. Sa charge de responsable de mission lui permettait de mesurer les difficultés quant à l'effectif des missionnaires. Sa propre famille religieuse rencontrait de sérieuses difficultés pour lui envoyer du renfort. N'est-ce donc pas une bénédiction du ciel que de voir une autre congrégation proposer son

aide dans l'édification du Royaume de Dieu et pour le bonheur des africains? D'ailleurs, dans sa lettre de juillet 1942, toute teintée d'humour, il affirme:

C'est ainsi que vous viendrez creuser de durs sillons, avec quelques confrères, à Maradi, Dogondoutchi ou Niamey, et, dans soixante ans ou quatre-vingt ans, les Fils de Saint Alphonse, vos petits-neveux, viendront manger le pain blanc et récolter les beaux fruits de salut<sup>37</sup>.

Du reste, il n'est pas exagéré d'affirmer son rôle quoique discret a favorisé positivement les tractations entre les supérieurs religieux concernés. La seule fausse note qu'il relèvera réside dans le fait que la hiérarchie, pour question de discrétion, ne l'ait pas consulté de manière suivie pour qu'à son tour il puisse présenter sa manière de voir cette collaboration avec la future équipe missionnaire rédemptoriste. Du reste, il aura fait preuve de bienveillance en accueillant avec bonheur et en initiant à l'œuvre d'apostolat de première évangélisation ceux que la Providence lui envoyait.

## 2.2 – *Le Provincial SMA, l'homme incontournable*

Le P. Aupiais, Provincial des Missions Africaines de Lyon, a beaucoup pesé de tout son poids dans les pourparlers, même si au départ des discussions il trouvait difficile de renoncer au territoire du Niger, du moins au titre de Niamey, vu l'importance future de cette ville. Il jouait le rôle de pont qui liait les différents protagonistes. Il accueillit chez lui le Provincial des rédemptoristes et le P. Quillard pour des discussions franches et constructives. Grâce à lui également, des contacts ont été établis avec le Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines à Rome, le P. Slaterry. Il était conscient du manque de missionnaires pour le Niger. Et c'est naturellement qu'il accéléra les démarches, proposant aux Rédemptoristes de demander à la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande de leur confier tout le territoire du Niger, c'est-à-dire toute la partie Nord de la Préfecture apostolique de Niamey. Ses propositions seront adoptées<sup>38</sup> plus tard par son suc-

<sup>37</sup> F. Faroud à C. Quillard, Niamey juillet 1942, in AGHR.

<sup>38</sup> Le P. Aupiais a suivi les tractations dès le début jusqu'à la conclusion.



cesseur le P. Boucheix. Ce dernier, pour prouver la continuité dans la négociation, écrivait:

Comme vous le savez déjà, nous sommes entièrement d'accord avec le T.R.P. Provincial des Rédemptoristes de Lyon pour la cession des territoires de la Préfecture Apostolique relevant de la colonie du Niger français. Cette cession nous permettra de ramener nos missionnaires, actuellement dans les territoires du Niger, dans le nord du Dahomey. Nous demandons que cette partie du Dahomey, comprenant les divisions politiques du cercle de Kandi, du cercle de Natitingou et du cercle de Parakou soit constituée en Préfecture Apostolique. Celle-ci débiterait avec cinq stations principales: Kandi, Natitingou, Parakou, Djougou et Tchaourou. La création des trois autres stations principales pourrait se faire dès que nos confrères seraient libérés des territoires du Niger par l'arrivée des Pères Rédemptoristes. Il conviendrait de placer le siège de cette préfecture à Parakou: elle prendrait le nom de préfecture apostolique de Parakou. D'autre part le vicariat apostolique du Dahomey pourrait prendre le nom de Ouidah qui est le siège du Vicaire apostolique. Les limites de la nouvelle préfecture apostolique de Parakou seraient au nord la colonie du Niger français, à l'est le Nigéria, à l'ouest le Togo, au sud du cercle de Savalou. Nous serons heureux qu'une décision intervienne bientôt pour cette division de la préfecture actuelle de Niamey. La partie cédée aux Rédemptoristes pourrait prendre le nom de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey<sup>39</sup>.

Cette lettre du Provincial par intérim a été décisive. Rappelons-nous, il était question dès le début que les Supérieurs Provinciaux se mettent d'accord avant d'acheminer le dossier aux plus hautes juridictions à Rome. On comprend dès lors que l'acte que venait de poser le P. Boucheix ouvrait presque la voie de la réussite des tractations. Toutefois, une étape importante restait à franchir: attendre le verdict final du Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines, le P. Slattery.

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Malheureusement, il ne verra pas l'aboutissement des négociations car il mourra avant. Mais son successeur étant un de ses collaborateurs, donc au courant des pourparlers, accélérera les procédures d'approbation de la demande des missionnaires rédemptoristes.

<sup>39</sup> N. Boucheix au Supérieur Général des Rédemptoristes, Lyon 5 avril 1946, in AGSMA, n° 10.458, rubrics n° 12/80801, 1946.

### 2.3 – *Le rôle d'arbitrage du Supérieur général SMA*

Toutes les tractations, que nous avons essayé de suivre jusqu'à présent visaient à mettre en relief le caractère collégial des décisions qui pouvaient en découler. Le principe était clair: il fallait tout d'abord un accord et une proposition des deux Supérieurs Provinciaux. Telle était aussi la pensée du P. Slattery quand il écrivit au P. Quillard en date du 7 juin 1942:

J'approuve votre résolution de soumettre vos idées missionnaires aux Provinciaux: je serai heureux d'examiner, quand le moment arrivera, le projet de votre part qui me sera soumis. Avec la grâce de Dieu, je chercherai la plus grande gloire de Dieu et j'admets d'avance que le monde missionnaire est bien grand, bien trop grand pour toutes les bonnes volontés<sup>40</sup>.

Ainsi, après avoir entendu toutes les parties et surtout son Conseil, le P. Slattery parvient à la conclusion dont la teneur se trouve dans la traduction littérale de sa lettre au P. Général des Rédemptoristes le 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 1945:

Ce matin, j'ai eu la réponse du Vicaire Général de la Société, qui demeure à Lyon. Il paraît que le Provincial et son Assistant sont tous les deux absents de Lyon, ainsi s'explique le retard de l'affaire de Niamey. Niamey peut être divisé en deux parties; l'une correspond à la colonie française du Niger, l'autre est un territoire du Dahomey. La province française, comme on le voit maintenant, désire vous passer la partie qui est dans la colonie du Niger, gardant pour elle la partie du Dahomey, afin que cette dernière puisse former la nouvelle préfecture de Mgr Faroud, quand il aura terminé votre initiation. C'était notre première intention, mais à cause du développement plus avancé de la mission nous avons mis ensemble ces deux parties, seulement d'une manière provisoire, car il ne paraît pas convenable qu'une préfecture apostolique soit à cheval sur deux colonies différentes.

Aussi, quand je vous ai offert la préfecture de Niamey, j'aurais dû être plus précis. Par un malentendu sur les intentions de la province française, je supposais qu'eux-mêmes avaient peut-être renoncé entièrement à leur droit. Il n'est pas ainsi. Mais, suffit!

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<sup>40</sup> M. Slattery, Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines de Lyon, au P. Constant Quillard, Rome 7 juin 1942, in AGHR.

Quand la division sera faite par nous et sera soumise à la Propagande, la Sacrée Congrégation n'approuvera que ce qui sera le meilleur pour vous et pour nous.

Je voudrais donc que vous acceptiez Niamey de la colonie du Niger nous laissant la colonie du Dahomey pour le très cher Mgr Faroud, qui finalement resterait sans maison et sans toit<sup>41</sup>.

Les propos contenus dans cette lettre laissent voir en perspective la finalisation du projet missionnaire rédemptoriste qui, il faut le souligner, aura duré plus de cinq ans. Les violons étant alors quasi bien accordés, on s'acheminait lentement mais sûrement vers un accord âprement<sup>42</sup> négocié.

### 3. – *Vers l'approbation du projet*

Nous l'aurons compris, l'approbation finale du projet d'implantation des missionnaires rédemptoristes dans la colonie du Niger fut un long processus. Les tractations tant à Lyon qu'à Rome ont fait l'objet d'échanges épistolaires, mieux de contacts personnels entre les différents protagonistes.

#### 3.1 – *La finalisation et l'approbation du projet*

Selon le témoignage de P. Quillard, trois signaux favorables lui sont parvenus faisant état de l'avancée des négociations

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<sup>41</sup> M. Slattery au Père Patrick Murray, Supérieur Général des Rédemptoristes, Rome 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 1945, in AGHR.

<sup>42</sup> Le projet, il faut avoir l'honnêteté de le dire, a été l'objet d'âpres négociations. Les quelques interventions que nous avons mises à jour révèlent indirectement que de part et d'autre chaque Congrégation affûtait ses armes et arguments dans les discussions. D'ailleurs, on peut comprendre aisément que la Société des Missions Africaines émette quelques réserves quant à la finalisation du projet. Elle était quand même la première à avoir pris possession de la colonie du Niger et les débuts de fondations, comme nous l'avons vu dans le premier chapitre, n'ont pas été de tout repos. Il a fallu braver les difficultés inhérentes à toute nouvelle fondation, surtout pour cette partie que constitue le Niger. Et en plus, cette famille religieuse savait bien que, tôt ou tard, il lui faudrait céder la place. C'est ici que se joue vraiment l'enjeu du projet missionnaire rédemptoriste. Et en cela il faut saluer, à sa juste valeur, la grandeur d'esprit des responsables des Missions Africaines de Lyon. L'intérêt de la mission de l'Église a pris le pas sur les intérêts individuels, voire humains. Comme quoi, par la discussion des négociations on aboutit toujours à la lumière!

au niveau de la hiérarchie. Ce fut tout d'abord l'annonce faite par le P. Duplex en date du 22 novembre 1945 qui laissait entendre que la Mission est enfin réalisée et qu'il ne s'agissait plus que d'une question de jours. Ensuite, le P. Auguste Sordet, Consultant Général, appartenant à la Province lyonnaise, donc proche de la source, confie au P. Quillard la bonne marche des pourparlers. Enfin, le Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines, dans une lettre, rassurait: «Tout cela encore une fois reste confidentiel. Je veux, en vous le confiant, vous procurer la joie que méritent ces années d'efforts persévérants pour cette œuvre magnifique»<sup>43</sup>. Du reste en janvier 1946 par la plume du P. Duplex il résultait que la Société des Missions Africaines était prête à céder la Préfecture de Niamey aux Rédemptoristes<sup>44</sup>.

La mort du P. Aupiais intervient à cette période. Mais son successeur, le P. Boucheix, écrira au Très Révérend Père Slattery dans le sens indiqué par son supérieur défunt en faveur de la cession de Niamey. Les choses désormais ne vont plus traîner. Le Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines contactera la Propagande qui, à son tour promulguera le décret d'approbation. On offrait aux Rédemptoristes français un immense territoire appelé *colonie du Niger* recouvrant l'actuelle République du Niger et la partie Est de l'actuel Burkina Faso, c'est-à-dire le diocèse de Fada N'Gourma.

Le 11 juin 1946, le Supérieur Provincial de Lyon, le Père Étienne Duplex, écrivait au P. Quillard pour lui annoncer l'heureuse nouvelle: Mission accomplie! «Mettez-vous à genoux et remerciez la Providence, les portes du Niger viennent de s'ouvrir, en date du 28 mai 1946»<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Constant Quillard, *Rédemptoriste, 1892-1972*, 50.

<sup>44</sup> E. Duplex au P. Général Murray, Lyon 16 janvier 1946, in AGHR.

<sup>45</sup> C. QUILLARD, «Départ pour la grande aventure», in *Constant Quillard, Rédemptoriste, 1892-1972*, 50. Toutefois, ajoutons qu'en attendant cette heureuse heure, une correspondance suivie eut lieu entre le P. Duplex et le P. Quillard. Toute cette correspondance se trouve dans les archives de la Province Lyon-Paris, à Champagne au Mont d'Or: 1. *Lettre du 13 janvier 1945*: «Je suis persuadé que le Bon Dieu nous veut en Afrique... Pour le moment il vous veut à Saint Charles... Entre nous, je crois savoir qu'en entreprenant votre voyage nous n'avions pas pris le bon moyen pour réussir. C'était un impair. Le P. Char-ton qui a vu le P. Aupiais me l'a dit. Mais il a ajouté que vous auriez votre mis-

C'est la fin d'un film qui aura connu de nombreux rebondissements et suscité de longs moments de suspense. Il aura fallu du temps pour mûrir sagement ce plan de mission, une première dans l'histoire de la Congrégation établie en France. Il ne restait plus qu'à attendre l'acte final d'approbation.

### 3.2 – *L'acte final d'approbation*

L'approbation du projet missionnaire des Rédemptoristes, bien qu'étant déjà faite au niveau des supérieurs hiérarchiques, devait aussi être confirmée officiellement par la *Propaganda Fide*. En effet, le 28 mai 1946, le Secrétaire de ce dicastère, le P. Celso Costantini, signait solennellement l'acte d'approbation du projet des Rédemptoristes:

Le soussigné secrétaire de la Sacrée Congrégation «de Propaganda Fide», en exécution des ordres de son Supérieur Éminentissime s'empresse de communiquer à Votre Paternité que ce Sacré Dicastère est heureux d'approuver l'envoi de ses Pères pour travailler dans la partie nord de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey. Pour le moment lesdits Pères exerceront leur ministère sous la dépendance du Préfet Apostolique en place; dans l'avenir, la région, à eux assignée, pourra être érigée en mission autonome. Celui qui écrit, pendant qu'il prie le Seigneur de toujours bénir cet Institut bien méritant, saisit l'occasion pour se conformer aux distinctes salutations<sup>46</sup>.

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sion et une belle mission»; 2. *Lettre du 1<sup>er</sup> Avril 1945*: «J'ai enfin pu rencontrer le P. Aupiais... Nous aurons, je l'espère, notre mission»; 3. *Lettre du 19 mai 1945*: «Le P. Léon Quittelier, à qui j'ai fait lire votre compte-rendu de voyage au Niger, est enchanté. Il répond avec sa Province: Présent. L'affaire est entre les mains du Révérendissime Père que j'ai prié de faire la demande au P. Slatery»; 4. *Lettre du 17 novembre 1945*: «Le Révérendissime Père m'écrit: Le Supérieur Général des Missions Africaines est prêt à nous céder la Préfecture de Niamey...Il y aurait une période de transition et d'initiation»; 5. *lettre du 13 janvier 1946*: «Les affaires sont tellement avancées que vos deux compagnons de la Province sont désignés, et que ceux de la Province de Paris (au nombre de trois) le sont aussi... Le P. Aupiais avec qui j'avais arrangé bien des choses est mort»; 6. *Lettre du 9 mars 1946*: «J'aurais désiré vous annoncer que tout était réglé. La mort du P. Aupiais a retardé bien des choses»; 7. *Lettre du 21 mars 1946*: «J'ai vu le successeur du P. Aupiais, le P. Boucheix, il m'a dit: je désire que les choses ne traînent pas».

<sup>46</sup> C. Costantini, Segretario della Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda

De ce rescrit, il ressort que l'étendue du territoire de la Préfecture Apostolique demeurait intacte et son siège, Niamey, inchangé. Ses deux composantes devaient être désormais distinctes: la partie nord, Niger, était assignée aux Rédemptoristes, la partie sud, Haut Dahomey, demeurait l'apanage de la Société des Missions Africaines. La région dévolue aux Rédemptoristes pouvait espérer dans un avenir dont l'échéance n'était pas fixée, l'octroi de son autonomie.

#### 4. – *Établissement des premiers Rédemptoristes*

Après donc de longues tractations, les missionnaires rédemptoristes pouvaient envisager sereinement l'organisation pratico-pratique en vue de faire face à la nouvelle aventure qui leur était ouverte. Il s'avérait urgent aussi de composer le personnel missionnaire à envoyer car un tel projet, on le sait pertinemment, ne s'improvise pas. Dans cette perspective, il fallait procéder au choix des Rédemptoristes qui allaient accompagner le Père Quillard au Niger.

##### 4.1 – *Configuration de la première équipe*

D'entrée de jeu, notons que la Règle rédemptoriste à l'époque stipulait que seul le Révérendissime Père Général lui-même devait faire le choix judicieux parmi les missionnaires les plus aptes, les élites, c'est-à-dire les pierres de fondation: «chaque fois qu'il s'agira d'accepter de nouvelles missions chez les païens, le

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Fide, Prot. N° 1689/46 au Rev.mo P. Patrizio Murray, Rettore Maggiore della Congregazione del SS. Redentore, Roma 28 maggio 1946, in AGHR: «Il sottoscritto Segretario della Sacra Congregazione "de Propagande Fide", in esecuzione degli ordini dell'Eminentissimo suo Superiore, si reca a premura di significare alla Paternità Vostra Reverendissima che questo S. Dicastero è ben lieto di approvare che i suoi Padri vadano lavorare nelle parte settentrionale della Prefettura Apostolica di Niamey. Per il momento i detti Padri eserciterebbero il loro ministero alle dipendenze di quel Prefetto Apostolico e in avvenire la regione, loro assegnata, potrà essere eretta in Missione autonoma. Lo scrivente, mentre prega Il Signore che benedica sempre più codesto benemerito Istituto, coglie l'occasione per confermarsì con distinto ossequio. Di Vostra Paternità Rev.ma devotissimo Celso Costantini, Segretario».

choix des missionnaires, choix qui exige de grandes précautions, sera réservé au Recteur Majeur et à lui seul»<sup>47</sup>.

#### 4.1.1 – *Le choix des missionnaires*

Bien que le choix définitif soit réservé au Supérieur Général, il revenait aussi au Provincial de Lyon de faire d'éventuelles propositions. Toutefois, comme l'attestent les nombreux courriers du P. Quillard, ce dernier avait déjà pris le soin<sup>48</sup> depuis 1938 d'élaborer une liste suggestive de noms de confrères capables de le suivre dans l'aventure missionnaire en Afrique subsaharienne: Père Innocent Rapillard, 1<sup>er</sup> vicaire à Sainte Anne, Père Joseph Cournault, Père Paul Lejeune. Il ne cache pas la source de son inspiration: «c'est le Père Rapillard qui m'a indiqué ces confrères comme remplissant les conditions: santé robuste, supportant bien les fortes chaleurs»<sup>49</sup>.

C'est ainsi qu'avant sa visite de prospection, le P. Quillard a approché quelques confrères pour leur parler de son projet et cela dans une totale discrétion et même à l'insu de son Provincial, le P. Duplex:

Cher confrère, je n'ai pas l'honneur de vous connaître, mais le très cher et très vaillant premier vicaire au sanctuaire de Sainte-Anne m'a parlé de vos aptitudes et de votre ardeur, et je me permets de vous envoyer ce mot confidentiel; seriez-vous volontaire pour aller amorcer une fondation de mission qui borde le Niger et qui est limitrophe avec le Dahomey et le Nigéria? Prenez le Larousse au mot *Afrique*, et voyez la bande de terrain qui borde le Niger et qui est limitrophe avec le Dahomey et le Nigéria. Si vous désirez quelques renseignements complémentaires, je suis à votre disposition. Bien entendu, mon appel n'a rien d'officiel. Je ne suis pas mandaté pour cela, ma démarche est offi-

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<sup>47</sup> Voir ancienne Règle des missionnaires rédemptoristes, N°137.

<sup>48</sup> En fait, ce fut le Père Auguste Sordet, consultant général à Rome, qui lui donna cette idée en le conseillant de trouver deux ou trois confrères, jeunes, ardents, de vrais apôtres, morts à eux-mêmes, décidés, très surnaturels qui partageraient ses aspirations. Cfr A. Sordet à C. Quillard, Rome le 16 Août 1939, in ARLP, section Niamey

<sup>49</sup> C. Quillard au Recteur de Lyon, Alger, le 23 décembre 1938, in ARLP, section Niamey

cieuse. Je ne suis qu'un humble et imperceptible rouage dans l'administration de la Congrégation. Je fais des travaux d'approche et je tâte le terrain. De sorte que, quand la voix de l'autorité se fera entendre officiellement, des volontaires tout préparés diront: «Présent, j'en suis!» Je vous demande à vous-même la plus entière discrétion; l'argent est le nerf de la guerre et la discrétion est la sauvegarde des entreprises; avant de vous communiquer ces projets d'apostolat, j'en ai parlé mille et une fois à Dieu, à Notre Dame, à Saint Alphonse et tous nos Saints protecteurs. Maintenant nous serons plusieurs à le faire chaque jour. La prière et le sacrifice sont notre grande force en attendant les temps héroïques<sup>50</sup>.

Des réponses favorables ne tardent pas à lui être envoyées, adhérant pleinement à son projet missionnaire. Des échanges épistolaires montrent à quel point certains confrères étaient vraiment mordus par cette aventure missionnaire chez les noirs, mieux chez les païens désireux de rentrer en contact avec l'Évangile. Le Père Joseph Cournault adressera lettre sur lettre au P. Constant Quillard. La promptitude de ses réponses mérite que nous en retenions quelques-unes:

Vous me faites un bien grand honneur en m'offrant de me joindre à vous et aux confrères heureux de fonder une mission chez les Noirs. C'est de tout cœur qu'à votre appel, je réponds *présent*; présent aujourd'hui et demain. Je n'ai qu'un vœu à former, c'est que la Providence réalise ce projet tout alphonsien. Je serais curieux de savoir quelle langue ou quel dialecte il nous faudrait connaître. Ces populations sont-elle païennes ou musulmanes? Quelles aptitudes spéciales sont requises pour ce milieu? Quelles notions ou études serait-il utile d'avoir pour s'adapter plus rapidement à ces populations et au travail qui nous y attend? Petits ou grands détails qui peuvent avoir leur importance». Avec le plaisir de faire votre connaissance, j'aurai l'honneur d'être un de vos collaborateurs<sup>51</sup>.

On le devine, un tel projet et une pareille proposition ne peuvent laisser le Père Cournault indifférent. Il émet le désir de prendre connaissance du rapport déjà établi par le P. Quillard. Deux mois plus tard, il écrira:

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<sup>50</sup> C. Quillard aux Pères J. Cournault, P. Lejeune, F.X. Willig, Alger 15 janvier 1939, in ARLP, section Niamey.

<sup>51</sup> Cournault à Quillard, 2 Février 1939, in ARLP, section Niamey.



Il est évident que je serai très heureux de prendre connaissance de vos rapports sur ce nouveau champ du Père de famille confié à notre zèle si Dieu le veut comme nous le lui demandons chaque jour. La semaine dernière, le P. Paul Lejeune était de passage à Lyon. En montant à Fourvière nous avons eu l'occasion de parler du sujet qui nous occupe assez vaguement cela va sans dire, vu notre ignorance de toutes ces régions. En tout cas nous sommes prêts à répondre présents<sup>52</sup>.

Un an plus tard, ce désir est toujours vivace et le P. Cournault ne cesse de ronger son frein, attendant avec impatience, ce jour tant souhaité:

Soyez sans crainte je n'ai pas changé de sentiment et je demeure toujours disposé à m'offrir de nouveau pour notre œuvre d'apostolat et d'évangélisation. Il est bien certain que cette guerre causera quelque retard à la réalisation de notre plan<sup>53</sup>.

De son côté, le deuxième candidat sur la liste, le P. Innocent Rapillard, multipliera les correspondances. Il réaffirme sa disponibilité et son désir de vivre cette aventure missionnaire avec enthousiasme dans une vie toute donnée aux Noirs et à l'Afrique:

Merci pour votre dernier appel: vous me trouverez toujours prêt pour l'heure H... Nous aurons sous peu la visite canonique... je ferai ma demande officielle au P. Provincial... Cher Père vous devinez mon rêve. Il reste toujours bien entendu que je suis partant pour l'établissement d'une mission chez les Noirs au Niger ou partout ailleurs... Hâtez-vous donc, selon les mesures du possible, pour que ce rêve, je l'espère, ne reste pas un rêve de jour sans lendemain<sup>54</sup>.

Le troisième candidat en lice, le P. Paul Lejeune, enchaînera lui aussi courrier sur courrier pour manifester sa joie de se voir ainsi proposé une telle aventure en terre africaine.

Père, vous m'avez écrit une lettre il y a un mois qui ne pouvait me laisser indifférent. Certes, j'étais loin de m'attendre à pareille proposition et de moi-même je n'aurais jamais osé former un rêve aussi beau! J'ai vu dans votre démarche une indication

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<sup>52</sup> J. Cournault au P. Constant Quillard, le 16 Avril 1939, in ARLP.

<sup>53</sup> J. Cournault au P. Constant Quillard, 19 janvier 1940, in ARLP.

<sup>54</sup> I. Rapillard au P. Constant Quillard, 5 juillet 1940, in ARLP.

de la Providence. Je vous félicite de tout cœur d'avoir pensé aux âmes vraiment abandonnées; par les Supérieurs, Jésus nous dira un jour s'il faut avancer. En attendant, naturellement, vous pouvez compter sur mes fraternelles prières et sur mon entière discrétion<sup>55</sup>.

Quelques mois plus tard, les sentiments du Père restent intacts. Mieux, il priaux intentions de la future fondation:

J'ai bien prié et je continue à prier pour notre projet; on en parle déjà à mi mots dans la Province. Plusieurs fois déjà, j'ai eu des échos mais je ne répons pas avec des airs entendus! Au contraire! J'ai vu à Lyon, le P. Cournault qui est dans les mêmes dispositions que moi; mais pour les nominations je laisse faire la Providence!<sup>56</sup>

Toutefois, en dehors de ces candidats ciblés, pressentis, certains se sont montrés également intéressés par le projet missionnaire du P. Quillard. Il faut dire que les rumeurs circulaient de bouche à oreille. Tous ou presque entendaient parler de la future fondation rédemptoriste en Afrique. On savait aussi que le P. Quillard pilotait le projet et était à la recherche de sujets désireux de faire équipe avec lui. Nous retenons les lettres de deux candidats «outsiders» exprimant leur détermination et leur admiration pour la mission:

Je dois vous dire que votre idée de missions vraies, en pays païens, en une de nos colonies, m'a plu énormément. C'est une honte pour nos provinces françaises de n'avoir encore aucune mission en pays de mission... nos missions en Amérique du Sud ne sont pas des missions, elles mangent nos meilleures forces, et ont peu d'avenir; nos provinces devraient avoir au moins une mission dans nos colonies. Ce serait un devoir patriotique et en même temps nous obtiendrions une reconnaissance, existence légale. Je tiens à vous avertir que je suis tout à fait à vous et à votre service. Si vous fondez une mission vraie, je suis prêt à vous aider et à vous accompagner, que ce soit au Cameroun ou à Madagascar<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> P. Lejeune au P. Constant Quillard, 20 février 1939, in ARLP

<sup>56</sup> PAUL Lejeune à Constant Quillard, 30 avril 1939, in ARLP.

<sup>57</sup> C. Weiber à Constant Quillard, 27 mars 1940, in ARLP.

D'un jeune juvéniste rédemptoriste, missionnaire prématuré:

On nous a parlé de votre mission du Tchad et cela m'a donné l'eau à la bouche. Est-il vrai que vous avez l'intention de fonder une mission rédemptoriste par là-bas? Je suis aussi heureux que vous de cette entreprise qui j'espère ne restera pas à l'état de projet. Je me permets de vous demander de me réserver une place par là-bas, en pleine jungle. Mais il faut que je me présente: j'ai actuellement dix-huit ans et je fais ma seconde. Vous voyez que j'arriverai juste à temps. Dans huit ans les projets seront bien des réalités. Aussi je prie tous les jours pour que votre affaire réussisse et surtout pour que l'on m'y envoie<sup>58</sup>.

Du même missionnaire prématuré, le 18 avril:

Mon révérend Père, je suis fou de cette Afrique! Si j'avais déjà la soutane! Ce n'est pas une folle ardeur mais quand je considère ces masses d'âmes sans prêtres et dire que par ici il y a largement de prêtres, je ne puis me faire à l'idée de rester apathique devant cet état de choses. Il me semble que vous devez déjà avoir trop de Pères qui voudraient briguer l'honneur de partir avec vous: car c'est si beau ce but!<sup>59</sup>

Comme on le voit bien, les candidats ne font pas défaut pour le départ en mission. Mais le choix définitif est laissé aux soins du P. Provincial de concert avec le Supérieur Général:

J'ai désigné avec le P. Quillard, les Pères Auguste Goldbronn et Joseph Cournault de notre Province. Le P. Léon Quitellier de la Province de Paris a aussi trois candidats pour le premier départ. Votre Paternité voudrait-elle approuver ce choix<sup>60</sup>?

Dans la même foulée, le Provincial de Lyon demandait du renfort du côté de la Province de Strasbourg, signe que la fondation était l'affaire de toute la Congrégation et non de la seule province de Lyon:

Depuis le 28 mai, répondant aux démarches entreprises depuis plusieurs années, la Sacrée Congrégation pour la Propagande vient de nous ouvrir les portes du Niger. Le Père Provincial de Paris à qui j'avais demandé il y a plusieurs années s'il lui serait

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<sup>58</sup> L. Oberson à Constant Quillard, 18 Avril 1942, Uvrier, in ARLP.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem* le 5 juillet 1942, in ARLP.

<sup>60</sup> Et. Duplex à Murray, Supérieur Général, Lyon 16 janvier 1946, in ARLP.

agréable de collaborer avec nous pour cette mission, envoie trois de ses Pères avec les trois nôtres qui vont partir. S'il vous était agréable à vous aussi d'envoyer quelques Pères dans ces régions païennes, bien volontiers nous les accueillerons<sup>61</sup>.

Le provincial de Strasbourg décline l'offre car la Province était déjà engagée dans la vice-province de Santiago. Finalement, le choix se posera sur six confrères provenant, trois de la province de Lyon et le reste de la province de Paris. Une équipe de six missionnaires, pour un premier départ, cela demeurerait un record et du coup un bon renfort pour la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey.

#### 4.1.2 – *La préparation lointaine*

La liste des missionnaires étant connue, il fallait songer à la préparation immédiate. Des stages de médecine tropicale leur sont offerts à la faculté de Lille. C'était un stage recommandé, car en terre de mission, les missionnaires devraient être aptes à faire face à tous les besoins de la population. En plus de cette formation, la préparation matérielle était importante pour le missionnaire.

Voici, pour nous donner une idée, des objets qui composaient l'essentiel du trousseau d'un missionnaire partant au Niger, en 1946:

- Un autel portatif
- 24 mouchoirs, 6 serviettes de tables, 6 serviettes de toilette
- 8 chemisettes courtes, col largement ouvert
- 6 maillots de corps ou pyjama
- 6 ceintures de flanelle
- 8 culottes, genre short, en toile blanche, avec poche
- 4 soutanes, 2 blanches en drill blanc ou en simple toile de coton, 2 kakis ou mieux grises (étoffe de blouses des employés de magasin)
- 6 paires de chaussettes blanches coton
- 2 paires de draps

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<sup>61</sup> Et. Duplex à Florent Ruffenach, Provincial de Strasbourg, Lyon 25 juin 1946, Lyon, in AGHR.

- 4 paires de spartiates
- 2 casques, un blanc, un kaki, le prendre large et plutôt grand
- 1 moustiquaire coloniale grande et si possible un petit modèle pour voyager
- 1 imperméable fermant bien
- 1 trousse de couture
- 3 bidons de militaires de 2 litres
- 1 couvert de campement
- 2 couvertures de laine (une assez forte et une légère)
- 1 matelas de camp
- 1 nécessaire de toilette (brosses à dents de rechange)
- Quelques cantines en métal
- 1 bicyclette solide avec quelques pièces: chaîne, rayons, pédales, pneus et chambres à air
- 1 machine à écrire si possible
- 1 chaise longue simple
- 1 nécessaire pour réparer rosaires
- 1 bon réveil
- 1 bonne valise
- 1 bon canif
- 2 filtres (dont un portatif)
- 2 tabliers de toile grise pour menus travaux
- 1 lampe tempête
- 1 lampe de poche
- 1 seau en toile
- 1 petit nécessaire d'outils (marteau, tenailles, rabot, scie, vilebrequin, quelques mèches, tournevis, ciseaux à bois, burin)
- 1 Novum, 1 Bible, 1 codex, 1 manuel de morale et 1 de dogme, 1 plus belles prières, 1 Dom Lefebvre ou quelque chose de semblable, guide médical africain
- 1 portefeuille en bon cuir
- 1 thermomètre médical
- 1 petite trousse médicale très simple
- le crucifix du missionnaire

Les détails matériels étant mis au point, les missionnaires novices semblent aguerris pour affronter l'inconnu de la grande aventure en Afrique Subsaharienne.

#### 4.1.3 – *Le grand départ*

Le P. Constant Quillard fut le premier à effectuer le voyage, non pas en explorateur comme ce fut le cas en 1941 ni en envoyé officieux. Cette fois-ci, il regagnait la colonie du Niger en «missi» officiel. Il quitte la France le 11 octobre 1946 avant les cinq autres missionnaires afin de leur préparer la place.

Le 27 octobre 1946, avant de rejoindre leurs compagnons de route à Marseille, point de départ, les Pères Jean-Marie Jégu, Henri Lecomte et Henri Spicht de la province de Paris confient leur voyage à Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours dans le Sanctuaire tenu par les Rédemptoristes à Ménilmontant<sup>62</sup>:

O Mère du Perpétuel Secours, voici prosternés à vos pieds, vos enfants, les Missionnaires rédemptoristes qui s'en vont porter l'Évangile aux pauvres habitants du Niger. Nous venons nous confier à vous, vous recommander d'abord notre voyage, ô Étoile de la mer. Gardez-nous des tempêtes de la Méditerranée, mais aussi des dangers du Sahara meurtrier. Veillez sur nos santé dans les sables brûlants de l'Afrique. Nous en aurons besoin pour courir la brousse à la recherche des infidèles<sup>63</sup>.

N'emportant avec eux que trente kilos de bagages et une valise chapelle, nos missionnaires embarquent à Marseille le 31 octobre 1946: la grande aventure en Afrique subsaharienne pouvait commencer.

Ils étaient un peu comme les explorateurs envoyés par Moïse en Canaan avant l'entrée en Terre promise. Ils n'avaient aucune idée exacte du pays où le Seigneur les envoyait. Le Niger, c'est là qu'ils partaient, sur la carte, c'était le fleuve des Noirs, un fleuve immense traversant le coin d'un pays aux trois quarts désertique: du sable et du soleil. Peu de littérature missionnaire sur ce

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<sup>62</sup> Les Rédemptoristes de la Province de Paris avaient en charge, à cette époque, le sanctuaire dédié à Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours. Situé à Paris dans le XI<sup>e</sup>, ce sanctuaire a connu et connaît toujours une affluence durant les services religieux. Mais avec le vieillissement des confrères et la carence des vocations rédemptoristes, le sanctuaire est maintenant confié au diocèse de Paris, depuis 1984.

<sup>63</sup> TESTIS, «Une "journée du départ" dans le Sanctuaire de Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours», in *La Sainte Famille* 67 (1946) 27-28.

pays. Les quelques missionnaires barbus rencontrés leur dirent philosophiquement: sur place seulement vous comprendrez. Ce qui, du reste, demeure vrai car les hommes ne se découvrent que dans le partage de vie et dans l'amitié.

Ils mettront exactement vingt-quatre heures pour gagner Alger. Là, la caravane se disloque. En effet, les Pères Joseph Cournault et Auguste Goldbronn partiront par le Hoggar avec le Père Henri Lecomte<sup>64</sup>. Les Pères Jean-Marie Jégu<sup>65</sup> et Henri Spicht par le chemin le plus court.

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<sup>64</sup> «Enfin depuis hier à destination. Ça n'a pas été sans de longues patiences... Ma santé n'a pas du tout souffert. Je supporte à merveille le beau soleil d'Afrique. Magnifique voyage: d'abord à travers les oasis de Laghouat, Ghardaïa, El Goléa, où nous avons bénéficié de l'accueil fraternel des Pères Blancs. Et puis, à travers le beau sable roux d'In Salah. Nous avons pu admirer ensuite les gorges pittoresques du Hoggar où l'on trouve réunies l'harmonie des vieux massifs, Ardennes et Massif Central et le grandiose des jeunes montagnes avec en plus ce cachet désolé et sévère spécial à l'Afrique. À Tamanrasset, nous avons pu suivre la trace de P. de Foucault dont l'âme vit toujours dans ce poste... entrée au Niger, la brousse commence: petite savane jaune, semée d'épines où paissent tranquillement les gazelles, où se promènent outardes, perdrix, pigeons. Le 3 décembre, avant midi, en la fête de Saint François-Xavier, arrivée à Niamey. Accueil fraternel». Cfr *Les premiers pas des missionnaires rédemptoristes au Niger, 1946-1957*, Tome 1, A, *Échos de la Sainte Famille*, «Lettre de P. Henri Lecomte», 5.

<sup>65</sup> «Voici en bref le film du voyage. Nous avons pris l'avion pour Colomb-Béchar parce que le train qui aurait pu nous y conduire n'assurait pas la correspondance de la transsaharienne. Nous étions à Colomb à midi. Le lendemain nous avons fait l'étape Colomb-Béni-Abbès (250 km). Le samedi, Béni-Adrar (480 km). Partis à 2 h du matin, nous avons dit nos messes à partir de minuit. Le dimanche nous avons fait Adrar-Reggan (145 km). À Adrar, nous avons été reçus très gentiment par un Père Blanc. À l'hôtel de Reggan nous avons eu cinq personnes qui se sont levées pour assister à la messe. Ils ne voient de prêtres que ceux qui passent. Pour terminer nous avons eu les plus longues étapes: Reggan à Bidon V, Bidon V à Aguelhoc, Aguelhoc à Gao (450 km à 500 km chacune). Ce n'est qu'à Bouren, après environ cinq mille km, que nous avons rencontré de la vraie verdure en dehors des oasis traversées. À Gao, nous avons été reçus encore par les Pères Blancs d'une charité exquise comme à Adrar. Nous sommes restés deux jours chez eux. Nous y serions encore maintenant, si nous n'avions trouvé un camion qui partait pour Niamey. À Niamey, nous n'avons trouvé que deux Pères des Missions Africaines», cfr *Les premiers pas des missionnaires rédemptoristes au Niger, 1946-1957*, Tome 1, A, *Échos de la Sainte Famille*, «Lettre de Père Henri Jégu», 4.

#### 4.2 – Répartition dans les postes de mission

Une fois à destination, les six missionnaires se séparèrent en deux groupes: Zinder, tout à l'Est du Niger, avec les PP. Auguste Goldbronn<sup>66</sup> et Joseph Cournault<sup>67</sup>; Niamey, la capitale sur le fleuve Niger, comprenait les PP. Constant Quillard et Henri Lecomte<sup>68</sup>; et Fada N'Gourma, au Sud-Est de la Haute-Volta (l'actuel Burkina Faso), les PP. Jean-Marie Jégu<sup>69</sup>, Henri Spicht<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Il faut noter que dès le départ, la Province de Lyon avait sollicité et obtenu le soutien de la Province de Paris concernant la fondation au Niger. C'est ainsi que chaque Province détacha trois confrères destinés à cette fin.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Cournault est né le 25 octobre 1909 à Heuilley dans le département de Côte d'Or (Dijon), profès le 8 septembre 1928, prêtre le 16 septembre 1934, socius Juvénat d'Uvrier 35-36, Missionnaire Lyon 36-39. Aumônier militaire à mi-temps de décembre 51 à mai 56, mars 58 à août 60, à temps plein septembre 1960. Le Père Cournault a servi respectivement à Zinder: novembre 1946 à 1956; Doutchi: octobre 1956 à 1957; Niamey: 1957 à février 1958; Agadez: mars 1958 à 1965; Malbaza: décembre 1967; Maradi; Tahoua: 1991. Il meurt le 12 novembre 1998 en France. Cfr ARLPC, fiche personnelle, Folio N° 506.

<sup>68</sup> Le Père Henri Lecomte est né le 29 décembre 1915 à Calonne-sur-la-Lys (dans le Pas-de-Calais). Il fit sa première profession dans la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur le 8 septembre 1933, la profession perpétuelle le 9 avril 1944 et ordonné le 14 avril 1944. Il débute sa vie missionnaire à Niamey avant d'être affecté à Diabo. Il occupera la charge de vice-provincial, le 14 juillet 1964. Il meurt à Diabo le 12 mai 1987, après une vie missionnaire bien remplie. Cfr ARLP, Armoire 9, fiche personnelle.

<sup>69</sup> Jean-Marie Jégu est né le 12 décembre 1902 à Plénée-Jugon, en Bretagne (Côtes-du-Nord), il fit profession chez les Rédemptoristes le 8 septembre 1928 et ordonné le 8 juillet 1937. Envoyé en mission au Niger, il regagnera la France le 6 novembre 1967. Il décède à Étrelles en Bretagne (Ille-et-Vilaine) le 24 octobre 1983. Cfr ARLP, Armoire 9, fiche personnelle.

<sup>70</sup> Le Père Henri Spicht, est né le 28 janvier 1913 à Armabouts-Cappel (Nord), a fait profession le 8 septembre 1933 et ordonné le 29 août 1939. Il fut professeur au Juvénat, puis missionnaire en France (Angers), envoyé à la mission de Haute-Volta (Fada N'gourma) en 1946, a publié quelques articles dans *La sainte Famille, Mission Chrétienne*, a publié aussi en langue Mooré les *Visites au Saint Sacrement* de Saint Alphonse. Rentré en France en 1972, il séjournera à Dunkerque où il s'occupera de la chapelle de la communauté avant d'être agréé aumônier à mi-temps dans un nouvel hôpital. En février 1980, sa santé commence à prendre un coup dur. Il est hospitalisé à Gorbio, dans un centre de pneumologie, près de Menton (Alpes-Maritimes). Sachant qu'il n'avait plus



La première prise de contact avec les réalités africaines suscite souvent de très fortes impressions. Les premiers missionnaires rédemptoristes n'échapperont pas à cette règle. Ils communiqueront leurs premières impressions à ceux qu'ils ont laissés dans la métropole et qui meurent d'impatience d'avoir des nouvelles fraîches. Nous retrouvons quelques pages savoureuses de ces récits d'impression dans le recueil<sup>71</sup> réalisé par le P. Gilbert Humbert.

Voici l'extrait d'une lettre de Père Lecomte qui livre ses sentiments à son supérieur provincial:

Le Niger est vraiment sympathique surtout en cette saison. La température ne dépasse pas 35° à l'ombre. Les gens trouvent qu'il fait froid parce que sur le matin le thermomètre marque 14. On peut se permettre ici de souper en plein air, au clair de lune. La population est d'un abord facile. Évidemment, elle est islamisée. À Dosso spécialement et à Niamey, en pays Djerma, l'islam vient de faire un effort considérable. Ce sera dur de se glisser. Nous arrivons avec vingt ans de retard. Mais il y a encore dans la brousse des îlots de population qui seraient plus accessibles<sup>72</sup>.

#### 4.3 – Temps de stage avec les Missions Africaines de Lyon

Quand les Rédemptoristes sont arrivés, Niamey était élevé au rang de Préfecture Apostolique avec Mgr Faroud comme Préfet. Ils vont donc bénéficier d'un avantage fort estimable. Ils occuperont des postes de missions équipés de l'essentiel et en état de fonctionnement. En cela ils étaient grandement redevables aux défricheurs, les Pères des Missions Africaines de Lyon (SMA) qu'ils trouvèrent déjà dans certains postes, à l'exception de Fada

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que quelques jours à vivre, il demanda de cesser les perfusions et de lui permettre de mourir comme en Afrique, à même le sol. Respectueux de sa volonté, le médecin fit étendre un matelas sur le plancher de sa chambre et c'est ainsi qu'au matin de la Transfiguration, le 6 août 1981, il rendit le dernier soupir. Cfr ARLP, *Témoignage de P.J. Gaumer*, Armoire 9, fiche personnelle.

<sup>71</sup> Ce recueil est constitué par l'ensemble des récits que les missionnaires ont envoyés à la revue *La Sainte Famille* durant les dix premières années de leur présence dans la colonie du Niger.

<sup>72</sup> *Les premiers pas des missionnaires rédemptoristes au Niger, 1946-1957*, Tome 1, A, *Échos de la Sainte Famille*, «Lettre de P. Henri Lecomte», 7.

où ils restèrent seuls et durent se former sur le tas<sup>73</sup>, comptant sur les expériences de la vie de tous les jours<sup>74</sup>.

Rappelons que les consignes données aux nouveaux missionnaires étaient on ne peut plus claires. Ils devaient se mettre à l'école des anciens, c'est-à-dire les Missions Africaines de Lyon pour se forger l'âme missionnaire. Ils devaient se considérer comme des auxiliaires. Nous sommes en présence d'une expérience inédite car c'était une première pour la Congrégation qui jusque-là était habituée à des zones déjà évangélisées qu'il fallait dynamiser à travers les missions populaires. Ici, les Rédemptoristes partaient presque de zéro avec une communauté naissante qui s'ouvrait petit à petit à l'évangélisation. Concrètement dans les postes de missions, les Rédemptoristes ne chômaient effectivement pas.

À Niamey, le P. Henri Lecomte s'occupe du matin au soir. L'étude de la langue djerma remplit d'abord tous les vides de la journée. Il fait le catéchisme et prêche à son tour, s'occupe de la sacristie et des autels, dirige le chant à l'église et a pour cela deux chœurs de chant. Il met en place un cercle d'études et se fait vraiment tout à tous. Il entreprend des tournées de visite et la plus célèbre demeure cette visite dominicale et pascale à la ville voisine de Tillabéry à cent quatre kilomètres de Niamey. Il revient très satisfait de cette première visite à des chrétiens, blancs et noirs, isolés dans la brousse.

À Zinder, les Pères Joseph Cournault et Auguste Goldbronn se montrent rudes travailleurs qu'il faut de temps à autre modérer. Pour attirer la jeunesse, même musulmane, ils ont installé dans la cour de la Mission des balançoires géantes, ils construisent fosse septique et douches en béton armé. Ils ont décoré

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<sup>73</sup> Toutefois, nous remarquons qu'ils n'étaient pas initiés à ce genre de mission de première évangélisation. Et il est intéressant de savoir que c'est par une mission paroissiale à l'alphonsienne que les pères Joseph Cournault et Auguste Goldbronn ont entamé leur pastorale auprès du petit groupe de chrétiens que comptait Zinder. Mais au fil des années, ils se forgeront l'âme missionnaire à travers diverses expériences et surtout en partant de la réalité concrète du milieu.

<sup>74</sup> CURIE GÉNÉRALE CSSR, Lettre à son Éminence le Cardinal P. Fumasoni Biondi, Préfet de la S. Cong. de la Propagande, s.l., s.d., VP Niamey, dactylographié, in AGHR.

le chœur de l'église et ont prêché une mission pour préparer la fête de Noël. Le P. Goldbronn est spécialement chargé de suivre le poste militaire de Myriah à vingt-cinq kilomètres de Zinder où il y a du beau travail à faire. Il y va tous les quinze jours. Le P. Cournault de son côté pousse ses visites jusqu'à Agadès qu'il connaît déjà, en n'oubliant pas d'atteindre Bilma.

À Fada, les Pères J.M. Jégu et Henri Spicht sont aussi à pied d'œuvre. Par la mauvaise volonté de l'ancien supérieur<sup>75</sup> des Missions Africaines de Lyon qui n'a pas voulu rejoindre son poste lorsque son ancien vicaire et remplaçant a été rappelé en France par la Province, ces deux Rédemptoristes se sont retrouvés seuls<sup>76</sup>. Au point de vue spirituel, pas trop de difficultés car les Rédemptoristes savent prêcher et faire le catéchisme. Mais au point de vue matériel, cuisine, personnel, fonctionnement de la maison, ils ont été un peu débordés. Mais depuis ils ont cherché et ont eu le temps de se mettre au courant. D'ailleurs rien de tel que de se jeter à l'eau pour apprendre à nager. Ils ont été éprouvés tous les deux, le Père Spicht un peu plus que le P. Jégu, à la suite d'un voyage à cheval un peu imprudent, de soixante-dix kilomètres, de Kantchari à Diapaga<sup>77</sup>.

Ainsi, pendant donc presque deux ans, précisément vingt-deux mois, les Rédemptoristes vont collaborer avec les Missions Africaines de Lyon selon le contrat qui les liait et aussi eu égard aux dispositions prises par la *Propaganda Fide*. Une telle collaboration ne va pas sans difficultés. Car quoi qu'on en dise, jamais

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<sup>75</sup> Il s'agit ici du Père Chazal, curé de Fada à l'époque, celui qui construisit l'église. En fait, il a très bien reçu les Rédemptoristes qu'il devait former à l'apostolat local, pour ensuite leur céder la place. Mais il se retira très vite, pour l'amour de la paix, car il s'aperçut que le Père Jégu, rédemptoriste, n'était plus d'un caractère assez souple pour se laisser former, et que des disputes étaient à prévoir.

<sup>76</sup> Ils ont dû apprendre seuls la langue avec une grammaire et un lexique de fortune.

<sup>77</sup> Dans les années 1948, les missionnaires rédemptoristes, bien qu'étant à Fada sillonnaient déjà Bogandé, Piéla, Bilanga, Diapaga et Kantchari pour visiter les quelques chrétiens qui y étaient et surtout faire le catéchisme aux catéchumènes résidents. Ils profitaient pour ce déplacement qui de la voiture du docteur qui en compagnie du Commandant du Cercle. C'est le lieu de noter ici la bonne entente qui régnait entre les missionnaires et les autorités administratives au début de la Mission.

dans l'histoire des Missions on n'a vu deux congrégations différentes être sur le même territoire. Des tensions apparaissent de part et d'autre si bien qu'il faudrait envisager un nouveau découpage de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey.

### 5. – *Vers la création d'une nouvelle Préfecture Apostolique*

#### 5.1 – *Propositions de découpage par Mgr Faroud*

Dans une première lettre<sup>78</sup> qu'il adresse au Secrétaire Général de la Propagande, Mgr Costantini, Mgr Faroud reconnaît que le temps est venu de rendre les Rédemptoristes autonomes, le plus tôt possible et, pour cela, il convenait de diviser l'actuelle Préfecture en deux.

D'après sa première proposition qui en fait avait été déjà approuvée par les Supérieurs majeurs, il y aurait la création de la Préfecture de Parakou qui comprendrait la partie septentrionale de la colonie du Dahomey, c'est-à-dire les trois Cercles de Parakou, Natitingou et Kandi. La deuxième Préfecture Apostolique, du nom de Niamey, comprendrait tout le reste de l'actuelle Préfecture, c'est-à-dire la colonie du Niger d'avant 1947 jusqu'à la 20° latitude nord soit 1.270.000 km<sup>2</sup> avec 1.700.000 habitants.

Toutefois Mgr Faroud reconnaît qu'avec la première solution la future Préfecture de Parakou est réduite pour de longues années à l'état de squelette. Elle ne comprendra que trois Cercles ou divisions administratives avec quatre-vingt-six mille km<sup>2</sup> et environ trente-cinq mille habitants, dont un groupe musulman, les Dendit, et un autre en partie touché par l'Islam, les Baribas. À titre indicatif, le Vicariat apostolique du Dahomey conserve huit cent mille habitants. Les territoires cédés au contraire, soit tout le Niger français, comprennent quatorze Cercles qui représentent 1.293.000 km<sup>2</sup> et une population d'environ 1.720.260 habitants. La différence est vraiment trop sensible, d'où la deuxième proposition<sup>79</sup> envisagée par Mgr Faroud.

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<sup>78</sup> «Comme je l'ai promis à Votre Excellence, je viens lui faire un exposé de la situation créée par l'arrivée des Pères Rédemptoristes pour la demande d'érection des deux nouvelles Préfectures...». Cfr F. Faroud (Mgr) a Mgr Costantini, 10.450, Rubrics 12/80801, 1947, in AGSMA.

<sup>79</sup> Selon les affirmations du Provincial des SMA, le P. Boucheix, «[...]

Un partage plus rationnel, semble-t-il, serait de donner aux Pères Rédemptoristes les deux tiers Est de la colonie du Niger français, de Dogondoutchi inclus à N'Guigmi sur le lac Tchad, ce qui représente une ligne de territoire d'environ 1305 km de longueur, de même langue haoussa. Les deux nouvelles Préfectures seraient alors:

- Zinder: Rédemptoristes: la première comprend neuf cercles et une subdivision (de langue haoussa). Elle aurait une superficie d'environ 1.141.000 km<sup>2</sup> et une population de 1.020.000 habitants environ.
- Niamey: Missions Africaines: la deuxième comprendrait huit cercles moins une subdivision (Dogondoutchi) avec seulement 238.000 km<sup>2</sup> et 1.025.000 habitants.

La seule difficulté apparente que l'on pourrait alléguer c'est que la deuxième Préfecture chevaucherait comme actuellement sur deux colonies, mais ce sont deux colonies françaises, et pour la Préfecture actuelle, depuis cinq ans, comme pour le Vicariat du Dahomey depuis dix-sept ans, cela n'a jamais occasionné une difficulté ni un ennui quelconque. La même situation a existé pendant longtemps dans le Vicariat de Bobo-Dioulasso et existe encore dans celui de Ouagadougou<sup>80</sup>.

Peu de temps après, Mgr Faroud émettra une troisième proposition au Secrétaire Général de la Propagande, Mgr Costantini. Il s'agirait dans ce cas précis de prendre le fleuve Niger comme ligne de séparation. D'après toujours ce troisième projet, la Préfecture de Parakou n'aurait pas les Cercles de Niamey et Dosso, mais au sud du fleuve ceux de Fada N'Gourma et Dori<sup>81</sup>.

Comme on le voit à travers ces différentes propositions, on sent un certain malaise, un peu sournois certes mais qui dénote

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C'est seulement après son retour dans sa Préfecture, qu'ayant eu quelques démêlés avec le R.P. Quillard, il envoya directement à Rome les rapports [...] proposant une nouvelle répartition du territoire et demandant à garder Niamey et Fada N'Gourma», cfr N. Boucheix à Joseph Guerin, Vicaire Général. - Renseignements relatifs à la cession du Territoire du Niger aux RR. PP. Rédemptoristes, Rubrics 12/8086, 1947, in AGSMA.

<sup>80</sup> Faroud à Mgr Costantini, secrétaire général de la S.C. de la Propagande, Rubrics12/80801, 1947, in AGSMA.

<sup>81</sup> Faroud à Mgr Costantini, Rubrics12/80801, Niamey 30 mars 1947, in AGSMA.

l'état d'esprit qui prévaut dans la Préfecture de Niamey où travaillent deux Instituts religieux d'obédience différente.

### 5.2 – Réactions des Rédemptoristes

Du côté des Rédemptoristes, la future division de la Préfecture de Niamey n'était pas ignorée tant par le P. Quillard que par son Provincial. Le premier comme il fallait s'y attendre écrira de nombreuses lettres à son Supérieur pour qu'on laisse aux Rédemptoristes l'actuelle Préfecture de Niamey selon la première proposition déjà approuvée par la haute hiérarchie. La rencontre du P. Etienne Duplex avec le P. Boucheix résume bien la situation:

[...] le R.P. Provincial de Lyon des Rédemptoristes, présent à Rome pour le Chapitre qui se tenait en même temps que le nôtre, vint me trouver à la Maison Généralice pour me représenter assez vivement ce qu'avait de déraisonnable la nouvelle proposition de Mgr Faroud de garder Niamey et Fada et de leur céder seulement Dogondoutchi, Zinder et tout le bled. Il me dit qu'il savait parfaitement que ces régions étaient islamisées et ajouta que les Rédemptoristes n'avaient accepté le Niger qu'en raison de Fada N'Gourma, que sans la région des Gourma, il ne pouvait pas accepter de fonder une Préfecture Apostolique et que cette solution d'une Préfecture à cheval sur plusieurs colonies n'était pas viable. Je ne pus lui répondre qu'une seule chose: puisque Mgr Faroud a fait valoir ses arguments directement à la S.C., ainsi que ses nouvelles propositions pour une division, vous êtes libres de présenter les Vôtres. La S.C. en jugera<sup>82</sup>.

Le Supérieur Général des Rédemptoristes, le P. Buys<sup>83</sup>, de son côté, en s'adressant au Préfet Cardinal de la Propagande, Fumasoni Biondi, reconnaît que la séparation et la constitution d'une Mission autonome seraient souhaitable pour le bien des uns et des autres et que la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propa-

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<sup>82</sup> N. Boucheix à Joseph Guérin, Vicaire Général, Renseignements relatifs à la cession du Territoire du Niger aux RR. PP. Rédemptoristes, Rubrics 12/8086, 1947, in AGSMA.

<sup>83</sup> Leonard Buys (1947-1953), né le 8 décembre 1896 à Sommelsdijk en Hollande (Zélande), il fit profession le 29 septembre 1916. Il fut élu Recteur Majeur le 30 avril 1947 au Chapitre Général auquel il participait à titre de Vocal de la Province hollandaise. Il mourut le 27 juin 1953 à Innsbruck, en Autriche. Cfr *SHCSR* 1 (1953) 11-58.

gande, si elle le juge bon, laisse aux Rédemptoristes le territoire prévu par la lettre de la même Congrégation, c'est-à-dire toute la partie Nord du territoire dans laquelle se trouvent les postes de Niamey, Zinder et Fada.

L'objectif étant de garantir dans la plus fraternelle intelligence une vie pacifique avec les Pères des Missions Africaines, et aussi de ne pas décourager les nouveaux missionnaires (Rédemptoristes). Et pour ce faire, il paraît nécessaire de ne pas distraire Fada N'Gourma, la seule région encore fétichiste où le travail est relativement plus facile, d'une vaste contrée islamisée où le ministère est extrêmement ardu. La région de Fada est ainsi vue comme un bon point d'appui pour initier les Rédemptoristes aux Missions Africaines auxquelles ils sont résolus d'apporter toutes les forces vives et toute leur bonne volonté. Ce serait donc une déception très grosse s'ils en étaient privés<sup>84</sup>.

Dans la même perspective, le Supérieur Général s'adresse à son homologue des Missions Africaines et lui rappelle les points sur lesquels ils s'étaient accordés:

Je tiens par les présentes à confirmer ce sur quoi nous étions déjà tombés d'accord dans nos entretiens préliminaires de ces derniers jours: la division entre votre Société et notre Congrégation du territoire de Mission formant actuellement la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey, et ce en exécution de la décision de la S.C. de la Propagande en date du 28 mai 1946 (n. 1689/46).

Après avoir pris l'avis de ma Consulte, je donne mon plein consentement aux propositions que vous avez bien voulu me faire:

Le territoire en dessous du Cercle de Fada, c'est-à-dire les trois «Cercles» de Parakou, Natitingou et Kandi, conformes aux limites administratives civiles, demeurent territoire propre de la Société des Missions Africaines, sous la juridiction de Mgr Faroud.

Tout le reste de l'actuelle Préfecture de Niamey est réservé à la Mission que la S.C. de la Propagande a confiée à la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur.

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<sup>84</sup> Curia Generalizia CSSR à son Éminence Le Cardinal P. Fumasoni Biondi, Préfet de la sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande, in AGHR.

Dieu veuille que l'heureuse division ainsi réalisée de ce champ apostolique aide puissamment à l'extension du règne de Jésus-Christ.

Vous remerciant encore de la parfaite objectivité et du noble désintéressement avec lesquels vous avez bien voulu traiter cette affaire, je me redis, très révérend Père Général, votre dévoué serviteur<sup>85</sup>.

### 5.3 – *Décision de la Propaganda Fide*

La décision de la S.C.P.F. intervient après que les Supérieurs Majeurs aient accordé leur violon, et se soient entendus sur la répartition à proposer. Toutefois, soulignons que la reconstitution en 1947 de la Colonie de la Haute-Volta (Burkina-Faso) qui autrefois relevait administrativement du Niger a constitué un facteur favorable aux prises de décisions des différents protagonistes.

Le décret de la création de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey confiée aux Rédemptoristes sera promulgué au mois de mai 1948 par la Propaganda Fide:

En exécution des ordres de mon Eminentissime Supérieur, je m'empresse de notifier à Votre Paternité Révérendissime, que le Saint Père, dans son audience du 13 mai courant a daigné diviser l'actuelle Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey en deux, dont la première conservera le nom de Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey et comprendra les districts civils de Zinder, Niamey et Fada N'Gourma: cette Préfecture est confiée à cette Congrégation Religieuse. L'autre Préfecture Apostolique qui comprendra les districts civils de Kandi, Parakou, Djougou et Natitingou et sera appelée Parakou, elle, reste confiée à la Société des Missions Africaines. En outre, Mgr Faroud a été transféré de Niamey à Parakou.

La rédaction de la Bulle relative à cet objet est en cours, elle sera prête au plus tôt. Entretemps, Votre Paternité pourra envoyer avec une bienveillante sollicitude trois noms de candidats pour la nomination du Préfet Apostolique de Niamey. Quand sera nommé le nouveau titulaire, on donnera exécution aux souveraines dispositions du Saint Siège.

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<sup>85</sup> Redentoristi, Sant'Alfonso, Curia Generalizia, au Très Révérend Père Général des S.M.A, Rome 4 mars 1948, in AGHR.



Cette Congrégation forme des vœux pour que vos zélés Pères puissent recueillir des fruits toujours plus abondants, et tandis que je vous bénis de tout cœur je profite de la présente rencontre pour Vous assurer de mes salutations les plus distinguées<sup>86</sup>.

#### 5.4 – *La Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey aux Rédemptoristes*

L'immense Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey (Niger), confiée aux Missions Africaines de Lyon, vient d'être démembrée par le Saint Siège par la décision du 22 mai 1948. La partie Sud, sous le nom de Préfecture Apostolique de Parakou, reste confiée aux Missions Africaines de Lyon et Mgr Faroud, précédemment Préfet apostolique de Niamey, y est transféré. Quant à la Préfecture de Niamey, réduite aux districts de Zinder, Niamey et de Fada N'Gourma, elle devient officiellement territoire de missions confié aux Rédemptoristes des Provinces de Lyon et de Paris.

Malgré quelques tiraillements qui ont précédé cette nouvelle division, les Rédemptoristes n'ont pas manqué d'exprimer leur reconnaissance à leurs devanciers, les Missions Africaines de Lyon.

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<sup>86</sup> C. COSTANTINI (Mgr), Secrétaire de la Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, au P. Général Leonardo Buys, Rome 2 mai 1948, Prot. N° 2028/48:

Reverendissimo Padre,

In esecuzione degli ordini del mio Em.mo Superiore mi reco a premura di significare alla P.V.Rev.ma che il Santo Padre, nella Udienza del 13 maggio c.m. si è degnata di dividere l'attuale Prefettura Apostolica di Niamey in due, di cui la prima conserverà il nome di Prefettura Apostolica di Niamey e comprenderà i distretti civili di Zinder, Niamey, e Fada N'Gourma: questa Prefettura è affidata a codesta Congregazione religiosa. L'altra Prefettura Apostolica comprenderà i distretti civili di Kandi, Parakou, Djougou e Natitingou e sarà chiamata di Parakou e rimane affidata alla Società delle Missioni Africane. Inoltre Monsignor Faroud è stato trasferito da Niamey a Parakou. E' in corso la stesura della relativa Bolla, che sarà pronta al più presto. Nel frattempo V.P. potrà inviare con cortese sollecitudine la terna dei candidati per la nomina del Prefetto Apostolico della ridotta Prefettura Apostolica di Niamey. Quando sarà nominato il nuovo titolare si darà esecuzione alla sovrana disposizione del Santo Padre. Questa Sacra Congregazione fa voti che i Suoi zelanti Padri possano raccogliere frutti sempre più abbondanti e mentre La benedico di cuore, approfitto del presente incontro per raffermarmi con sensi distinto ossequio.

Di Vostra Paternità Rev.ma devotissimo.

#### 5.4.1 – Mgr Quillard aux commandes

On se rappelle qu'à la division de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey, le 22 mai 1948 par décret 2028/48, la Congrégation de Propaganda Fide demandait au Supérieur Général des Rédemptoristes de soumettre une *terna* (une liste de trois Pères jugés «dignes») pour la nomination du nouveau Préfet Apostolique.

En cette année 1948, le nombre des missionnaires rédemptoristes, sous l'autorité de P. Quillard, s'élevait à treize<sup>87</sup>. Il fallait choisir parmi ces intrépides missionnaires celui qui présidera à la destinée de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey en remplacement de Mgr Faroud, ce missionnaire d'un grand mérite et d'un dévouement inlassable. C'est donc sans surprise, on pourrait être tenté de le dire, qu'à la fin de la consulte, le choix se soit porté sur le P. Constant Quillard. Rome a vu juste en lui conférant cette dignité car il est le pionnier de la première heure. C'est lui, comme nous l'avons vu au deuxième chapitre, l'instigateur de l'entrée des missionnaires rédemptoristes au Niger. Tout le monde reconnaît son zèle ardent d'apôtre de Jésus-Christ, sa merveilleuse adaptation aux populations noires.

La nomination du P. Quillard est rendue publique par le décret du 22 juillet 1948 que la Congrégation de Propaganda Fide adressait au Très Révérend P. Général Leonardo Buys:

Le soussigné secrétaire de la Sacrée Congrégation «De Propaganda Fide», en exécution des ordres de son Éminentissime Supérieur, s'empresse de communiquer à Votre Révérendissime que le Révérend Père Constant Quillard est nommé Préfet Apostolique de Niamey et vous prie de faire parvenir à ce dernier la formule du serment et les facultés. Tout en vous priant d'exprimer les vives félicitations du Dicastère au P. Quillard pour un apostolat fécond, nous profitons de l'opportunité pour vous exprimer nos sentiments les plus distingués<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> La première équipe de 1946 était composée de six missionnaires. La deuxième de 1947, quatre missionnaires, PP. Francis Ménard et Louis Clairet du côté de Paris, Pierre Rion et Romain Araud pour Lyon. En 1948, Lyon envoya trois missionnaires: Gérard Protain (qui quittera la Congrégation en 1967), Claude Matrat et Michel Millet (plus tard celui-ci se fera incardiner dans le diocèse de Tulle).

<sup>88</sup> Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, Prot. N° 2897/48, Mgr Co-

Six mois après sa nomination à la tête de la Préfecture Apostolique, Mgr Quillard, comme il en avait l'habitude, donne des nouvelles de son espace missionnaire:

La Préfecture, immense, deux fois plus grande que la France, comprend la colonie du Niger dans ses anciennes limites, c'est-à-dire: le Niger actuel avec le cercle de Fada (et Dori) rattaché récemment à la Haute-Volta. Elle comprend cinq Stations principales, plus deux en construction, toutes sur (ou à proximité) la route impériale, Dakar le Tchad. Ses limites vont de la Haute-Volta au lac Tchad, et du Sahara au Nigéria. Quatre races principales: Mossis, Gourmantchés, Djermas, Haoussas. Plus de deux millions d'habitants. Ajouter à cela une vingtaine d'autres races de moindre importance avec leur langue ou leur dialecte<sup>89</sup>.

#### 5.4.2 – *Évolution de la mission d'évangélisation: 1948-1958*

Sous la direction de Mgr Constant Quillard, les premières dix années (1948-1958) seront débordantes d'activités: multiplication des postes de mission, constructions diverses et présence continuelle auprès des populations. C'est également durant cette période que les renforts missionnaires envoyés<sup>90</sup> par les Provin-

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stantini au P. Leonardo Buys, Superiore Generale dei Redentoristi, Roma 22 Luglio 1948, in AGHR: «Il sottoscritto Segretario della Sacra Congregazione "de Propaganda Fide", in esecuzione degli ordini dell'Eminentissimo suo Superiore, si reca a premura di trasmettere alla P.V. Reverendissima il qui accluso Decreto con cui il Rev. P. Costante Quillard viene nominato Prefetto Apostolico di Niamey con preghiera di farlo recapitare a destinazione insieme alle formule di giuramento e delle facoltà. Lo scrivente, mentre la prega di voler esprimere al sullodato Padre Quillard gli auguri più sentiti da parte di questo Sacro Dicastero per un fecondo apostolato, approfitta dell'incontro per esprimere i sensi del suo distinto ossequio».

<sup>89</sup> C. QUILLARD (Mgr), *Lettre du mois de janvier*, Section Niamey, Niamey 1949, in ARLP.

<sup>90</sup> Une reconstitution des envois en mission durant la période 1948-1958, aboutit à des remarques très intéressantes. Durant cette décennie, la Province de Lyon aurait envoyé en tout quatorze missionnaires rédemptoristes dans la Préfecture de Niamey et la Province de Paris dix-sept: 1948: PP. Gérard Protain, Claude Matrat, Michel Millet (Province lyonnaise); 1949: PP. Paul Sage, Paul Pellier, Urbain Vautey; pour la Province parisienne: PP. Omer Sérot, René Balluet; 1950: P. Robert D'Halluin, Fr. Edouard/ Pierre Jouin pour Paris; 1951: PP. Jean-Marie Ducroz, Hippolyte Berlier (Lyon); PP. Clément Lucas, Alphonse Chantoux (Paris); 1952: PP. Julien Désille, Marcel Pencolé (Paris);

ces françaises seront significatifs et salutaires.

Depuis la loi-cadre du 4 septembre 1947, une nouvelle configuration voit le jour dans la colonie du Niger. En effet, la Haute-Volta qui jusque-là était démembrée au profit de la Côte d'Ivoire et du Niger est reconstituée en entité autonome. Les Cercles de Fada N'Gourma et Dori dépendront désormais de Ouagadougou au point de vue administratif tout en relevant de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey sur le plan ecclésiastique. Du coup, les Rédemptoristes se trouvent à cheval sur deux colonies<sup>91</sup> distinctes: le Niger et la Haute-Volta. Cette nouvelle donne aura de fortes implications dans l'organisation interne de la Préfecture de Niamey: une division s'avérait nécessaire.

La première alerte est donnée lors de la visite canonique du Père Albert Van Biervliet Secrétaire Général de la Congrégation des Rédemptoristes en 1949. Après avoir parcouru la Préfecture Apostolique, le visiteur canonique, dans son recessus<sup>92</sup>, militait en faveur d'une division du territoire missionnaire. Ses propositions visaient à séparer les missionnaires de Lyon et de Paris afin d'éviter une confusion administrative qui souvent peut être source de complications.

Une telle hypothèse, on le voit, entraînerait dans un premier temps la nomination de deux supérieurs religieux agissant au même titre que des Vices-Provinceaux. Dans un second temps, deux Vice-Provinces laisseraient entrevoir naturellement deux Préfectures Apostoliques, vu que celle de Niamey est évidemment démesurée. Par exemple certains postes comme Diabo et Zinder sont distants de plus de treize cents kilomètres, sans mentionner les extensions vers l'Est et le Nord.

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1953: PP. Gabriel Tournier, Georges Bermond (Lyon); Fr. Jean-Louis Lebreton, PP. Maximilien de Maisonneuve, Jean-Marie Ploussard, Francis Chauvel (Paris); 1954: PP. Marcel Chauvin, Alexandre Gontier, Gérard Cériez, Aimé Collérie (Paris); 1955: PP. Jean-Baptiste Ploussard, Michel Antoine (Lyon); P. Jean-Poisson (Paris); 1956: PP. Robert Grenier, Guy Collet (Lyon) .

<sup>91</sup> En effet, nous retombons à la situation de départ, quand la Préfecture Apostolique était confiée aux Pères des Missions Africaines. Elle chevauchait sur deux pays en ce moment, le Niger et le Dahomey.

<sup>92</sup> Albert Van Biervliet, Recessus envoyé au Provincial de Paris, Père Jean de Saint Martin, Rome 5 novembre 1949, in ARLP, section Burkina Faso

Ces propositions rencontrent l'assentiment des Provinciaux de Lyon, P. Etienne Duplex, et de Paris, le P. Jean de Saint Martin<sup>93</sup>. On en arrive alors à la conclusion qu'il serait souhaitable de demander au Saint Siège de détacher de la Préfecture de Niamey la partie de son territoire qui s'étend sur la Haute-Volta et d'ériger cette portion en Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma, confiée à la Province de Paris.

La demande est aussitôt envoyée à la Propaganda Fide pour approbation. Mais contre toute attente, la requête est rejetée et les raisons avancées sont suffisamment fondées comme le prouve la lettre<sup>94</sup> adressée à cet effet aux différents responsables:

Dans sa requête du 4 février dernier, Votre Révérence a demandé que la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey soit divisée afin d'ériger une nouvelle Préfecture Apostolique qui serait confiée aux Pères d'une autre Province religieuse française de la même Congrégation.

Tous les documents présentés ont fait l'objet d'un examen attentif, et finalement ce Sacré Dicastère est venu à la conclusion que pour le moment il ne semble pas opportun de procéder à la division proposée. À ce propos on a noté que la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey n'a été confiée à cette Congrégation religieuse que le 13 mai 1948. Deux ans ne se sont pas encore écoulés. En outre le nombre des missionnaires et le développement de la Mission n'ont pas encore pu atteindre un niveau qui requerrait une division du territoire. Que les missionnaires appartiennent à des Provinces religieuses différentes mais en France même, ne semble pas non plus une raison suffisante. Car pour la *Propaganda* cette difficulté est facilement surmontable.

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<sup>93</sup> Le Père de Saint Martin à son tour consultera ses conseillers les Pères Joseph Hossard et Maximilien de Maisonneuve qui, tous les deux, adhèrent à cette proposition. Père Hossard dans sa lettre du 22 novembre 1949 au Provincial: «j'applaudis à ce projet de séparer au Niger les Pères des provinces de Lyon et de Paris, ainsi qu'à la constitution de deux Préfectures apostoliques. Tout le monde, je crois, s'en trouvera bien. En particulier, pour notre province la question sera bien plus nette; nous saurons mieux ce que nous ferons». Père de Maisonneuve dans sa lettre du 22 novembre 1949: «Je suis absolument d'accord pour la division en deux Préfectures du Niger et de la Haute-Volta. Territorialement et spirituellement cela se justifie», in Lettre du Père Jean de Saint Martin, Supérieur provincial de Paris, au Provincial de Lyon, Paris 29 novembre 1949, in ARLP, section Paris.

L'avenir donnera à vos Pères l'opportunité de travailler avec ce zèle qui distingue les fils de St Alphonse M. de Liguori. Et quand les missionnaires et les catholiques auront atteint un nombre proportionné, la division de la Préfecture deviendra nécessaire pour des motifs découlant de la consolante floraison de la mission elle-même. Entretemps, tout en vous exprimant mon estime, je profite de cette circonstance pour vous présenter mes salutations distinguées<sup>95</sup>.

De votre Paternité votre dévoué dans le Seigneur

Card. Fumasoni-Biondi, Préfet C. Costantini, secrétaire.

Cependant devant ce refus et vu que la séparation de Fada N'Gourma serait très avantageuse au point de vue administratif, par décret du 15 mars 1950, les missionnaires de la Province de Paris qui se trouvaient au Niger vont rejoindre le nouveau district de Fada N'Gourma. Mais il faudra attendre le mois d'octobre pour que le décret entre en vigueur. Toutefois, la perspective

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<sup>95</sup> Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, au P. Leonard Buys, Recteur Majeur de la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur, Rome 7 Mars 1950, in AGHR:

Reverendissimo Padre,

Con domanda del 4 Febbraio u.s. la P.V.Rev.ma ha chiesto che la Prefettura Apostolica di Niamey sia divisa per erigere una nuova Prefettura Apostolica da affidarsi ai Padri di altra Provincia religiosa francese di codesta Congregazione.

Tutti i documenti presentati sono stati oggetto di attento esame e alla fine questo Sacro Dicastero è venuto alla conclusione che per il momento non sembra opportuno di procedere alla proposta divisione. Al riguardo si fa notare che la Prefettura Apostolica di Niamey è stata affidata a codesta Congregazione religiosa solo il 13 maggio 1948. Non sono ancora passati due anni. Inoltre il numero dei missionari e lo sviluppo della Missione non hanno potuto ancora raggiungere quel limite che richiede una divisione del territorio. Ne sembra sufficiente la ragione che i missionari appartengono a diverse province religiose della medesima Francia. Per Propaganda questa difficoltà è facilmente superabile.

L'avvenire darà ai suoi Padri opportunità di lavorare con quello zelo che distingue i figli di S. Alfonso M. de' Liguori e allorché i missionari e i cattolici avranno raggiunto un numero proporzionato la divisione della Prefettura si renderà necessaria per motivi derivanti dalla consolante fioritura della missione stessa. Frattanto, mentre Le esprimo i sensi della mia stima, approfitto della presente circostanza per porgerLe distinti ossequi.

Della Paternità Vostra Rev.ma Dev.mo nel Signore

P. Card. Fumasoni-Biondi, Pref. C. Costantini, Segret.

de la création de la Préfecture de Fada N’Gourma étant lancée, Mgr Quillard multipliera les fondations de postes de mission, aussi bien à Fada N’Gourma qu’au Niger. Cette initiative est largement soutenue par l’envoi<sup>96</sup> d’un certain nombre de missionnaires qui viennent renforcer le rang des effectifs jusque-là squelettiques.

Une vue panoramique donne les fondations suivantes: Kantchari (1950); Tikonti (1951); Manni (1953); Tambaga (1954); Maradi (1955); Fantio-Dolbel (1957); Piéla (1958).

#### 6. – *Fada N’Gourma et Niamey sont promus: 1959-1964*

La Préfecture Apostolique, au stade où nous sommes parvenus, compte douze postes de missions. On ne parlait pas de paroisses en ce temps-là mais plutôt de stations principales. Le district, quant à lui, englobait plusieurs stations importantes. Le dictionnaire de droit canonique (article *mission*) nous dit que l’évangélisation commence par une mission ou station de mission dirigée par un supérieur et que, lorsque la religion catholique a obtenu un certain nombre d’adhésion, le pays est érigé en Préfecture Apostolique, sous l’autorité d’un Préfet. Concrètement, dans le district de Fada N’Gourma, on totalisait en tout sept stations principales tandis que le Niger en comptait cinq. Mgr Quillard, Préfet Apostolique, avait à sa charge tous ces postes de mission. Avouons-le, c’était un véritable parcours de combattant que de faire la visite canonique de toutes ces unités vues les distances qui les séparaient. C’est dans cette optique, que les démarches vont être faites pour diviser la Préfecture Apostolique en en créant une nouvelle, Fada N’Gourma.

##### 6.1 – *Fada N’Gourma devient Préfecture Apostolique*

On se souvient qu’une demande de division de la Préfecture de Niamey avait été adressée à la *Propaganda Fide* en février 1949, soit à peine après un an et demi d’existence. Ce

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<sup>96</sup> C’est une nouvelle étape de la mission qui va s’ouvrir. Des renforts seront envoyés à Mgr Quillard, que ce soit de Paris ou de Lyon. C’est une initiative grandement saluée par tous les confrères qui voyaient leur effectif s’agrandir.

même dicastère, dans une correspondance rendue publique en mars 1950, rejetait la requête sous prétexte que la Préfecture de Niamey venait d'être créée et qu'il n'y avait pas urgence d'en créer une autre. Dix ans plus tard, les responsables reviennent à la charge avec des motifs plus persuasifs et demandent l'érection de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma. La démarche ici consistera à exposer les arguments de base et à parcourir les interventions diverses qui ont constitué le fond du dossier.

Des raisons objectives ou tirées *ex natura rerum* sont mises au-devant de la scène. Des différences existent à tout point de vue entre les deux parties de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey telle qu'elle existe actuellement. D'une part, le district du Niger proprement dit comporte déjà un immense territoire qui suffit à l'activité d'un Préfet Apostolique: les cinq Postes du Niger sont repartis sur des distances immenses. La région du Niger est islamisée beaucoup plus que le territoire de Fada avec de grandes villes et des races multiples. Il est certain, l'apostolat ne se présente pas du tout de la même manière.

D'autre part, le territoire du Cercle de Fada et de Dori forme le pays gourmantché, qui est un tout assez homogène caractérisé par la religion traditionnelle où les croyances et les coutumes se recourent à certain moment.

D'autres arguments peuvent être avancés. Il s'agit notamment des progrès des deux districts en écoles, dispensaires, internats, ouvriers, catéchistes, catéchumènes, chrétiens. Il serait donc plus avantageux de considérer séparément les problèmes qui se posent différemment dans les deux districts, ce qui fait que le même homme peut difficilement suivre les deux catégories de missionnaires. S'ajoute aussi la nécessité de faire face aux Protestants qui possèdent une quinzaine de postes le long de la ligne qui va de Zinder à Koupèla. En plus dans la mentalité des missionnaires de l'époque, il y avait urgence à faire face à l'islamisation qui tente d'absorber un pays gourmantché qui, depuis des siècles, n'a pas voulu accepter la loi du Coran. Enfin il faut prendre en compte la différence de colonies: le district de Niamey est dans le Niger et celui de Fada dans la colonie de la «Haute Volta» et cela ne va pas sans inconvénients.



Vu toutes ces raisons, l'érection de Fada N'Gourma en Préfecture Apostolique semble donc normale dans la grande histoire des missions: c'est comme une cellule qui se divise en deux, c'est la loi de la vie: la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada est déjà inscrite dans la nature des choses.

Des raisons *ex auctoritate* ou d'autorité sont celles qui souvent se fondent sur les avis donnés par la haute hiérarchie. C'est ainsi que Son Excellence, Mgr Marcel Lefèbvre, archevêque de Dakar et délégué apostolique connaissant bien la région de Fada N'Gourma et ses environs, pour l'avoir visitée à plusieurs reprises, semble être d'avis que le district de Fada devienne Préfecture Apostolique. Il en a même donné l'assurance formelle<sup>97</sup>.

Le Provincial de Paris, le P. Pierre Dambre<sup>98</sup> jouera un rôle déterminant dans ce processus. Cela se comprend dans la mesure où, étant le répondant juridique du district de Fada N'Gourma, il avait ses points de vue à donner dans l'accélération des tractations déjà amorcées.

Le 8 Avril 1955, le Père Dambre adressera une correspondance au délégué apostolique de Dakar, Mgr Lefèbvre:

Je me permets de vous le demander, Excellence, en toute humilité et simplicité, parce qu'il y va, non pas de tel petit avantage extérieur, mais vraiment de la gloire du Bon Dieu et du salut de ces Gourmantchés qui ont déjà attendu si longtemps l'évangélisation<sup>99</sup>.

La réponse de Mgr Lefèbvre ne se fit pas attendre, puisqu'en date du 13 avril 1955, il réagissait:

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<sup>97</sup> P. Dambre, Rapport envoyé au P. Général, 23 Novembre 1956, in ARLP, Section Burkina Faso

<sup>98</sup> Le Père Pierre Louis Etienne Dambre, est né le 10 septembre 1907 à Brouckerque (Nord). Baptisé le 12 septembre de la même année, il fit sa profession religieuse chez les Rédemptoristes le 22 septembre 1927 à Glimes, en Belgique. Il est ordonné prêtre le 28 septembre 1933. Il a occupé les fonctions suivantes: neuf mois: *socius* au noviciat en Mayenne; trois ans: professeur de 6<sup>ème</sup> et 5<sup>ème</sup> à Mouscron ; Missionnaire à Paris, à Lille, à Boulogne-sur-Mer, à Dunkerque; Il fut Provincial de Paris de 1952 à 1959. De 1970 jusqu'à sa mort en 2004, il était membre de la communauté des rédemptoristes de Montparnasse (Paris).

<sup>99</sup> P. Dambre, au délégué apostolique de Dakar, 8 avril 1955, in ARLP.

Avec vous je suis complètement d'accord pour la division de Niamey et la création d'une nouvelle Préfecture à Fada N'Gourma. Le retard que demande la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande ne saurait être de longue durée, l'établissement de la hiérarchie en Afrique étant envisagé pour ces mois-ci<sup>100</sup>.

De son côté le P. Perraud, secrétaire de la délégation apostolique de Dakar, le 28 novembre 1955 rassurait le Provincial de Paris sur l'évolution du dossier de la création de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma:

À Rome, d'où nous arrivons, Mgr le Délégué a voulu travailler pour vous et à la *Propagande* il a insisté pour que soit divisée la Préfecture de Niamey. Mais les rapports laissés par Votre Congrégation datent de trop longtemps et la *Propagande* en veut de récents. Aussi Monseigneur Lefèbvre a-t-il demandé à votre Supérieur Général de faire présenter un nouveau rapport. Il semble, pour le bien des populations qui vous sont confiées, qu'il ne faudrait pas trop tarder pour demander cette division. L'accord de la Délégation Apostolique est déjà donné à la Propagande et sera renouvelé aussitôt que votre demande sera déposée.<sup>101</sup>

À ces raisons avancées, tout à fait fondées, la création de la nouvelle Préfecture de Fada N'Gourma devait faire objet d'interventions diverses.

Pour accélérer la finalisation du projet<sup>102</sup> de création de la nouvelle Préfecture de Fada N'Gourma, de nombreuses interventions ont été nécessaires, de la base jusqu'au sommet.

Monseigneur Quillard lui-même<sup>103</sup>, dans son rapport de 1957

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<sup>100</sup> Mgr Marcel Lefebvre, Délégué Apostolique à Dakar au Provincial de Paris, P. Dambre, Prot n° 213/55/, Dakar 1955.

<sup>101</sup> Perraud, Secrétaire de la Délégation apostolique de Dakar au Provincial de Paris, Pierre Dambre, Prot n° 679/55/S, Dakar 1955.

<sup>102</sup> On prévoit même la division de la préfecture de Niamey: la Préfecture du Niger-Ouest avec Niamey comme centre et celle du Niger-est comme centre Zinder ou Maradi. Dans Rapport du P. René Billiet, Lyon janvier 1957.

<sup>103</sup> Il faut noter que déjà en novembre 1952, lors de son passage à la Propagande, Mgr Quillard avait rencontré son Excellence Mgr Costantini (qui deviendra plus tard cardinal) et ce dernier avait exigé un rapport circonstancié sur le district de Fada dans le but de demander son élévation au rang de Préfecture Apostolique. Ce que Mgr avait fait et attendait les décisions de la *Propagande* qui furent un non catégorique avec des justifications à l'appui: la Pré-

adressé à la Congrégation pour la Propagande de la Foi, faisait remarquer, en reprenant les raisons déjà avancées:

La Préfecture peut être divisée pour les raisons suivantes: quatorze postes de Pères et sept postes de Sœurs échelonnés sur 1.800 km; nous sommes trente-cinq missionnaires et vingt-huit Sœurs; le territoire de la Préfecture actuelle est démesuré... le Niger et la Haute-Volta sont administrativement distincts... Ces deux pays ont des langues totalement différentes... les problèmes d'apostolat ne sont pas les mêmes<sup>104</sup>.

Du côté du Gouvernement Général à Rome, la question de la division et de la création de la nouvelle Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma était à l'ordre du jour et suivie avec attention.

Depuis le mois de novembre il est question d'élever la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey au rang de Vicariat et d'élever en même temps le district de Fada au rang de Préfecture. Le Vicariat de Niamey resterait à la Province de Lyon et la Préfecture de Fada à la Province de Paris<sup>105</sup>.

Ainsi il était demandé aux deux Provinciaux de donner leurs avis.

En date du 25 mai 1957, le Père Théophile Roth<sup>106</sup>, Provincial de Lyon répondait:

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fecture de Niamey n'avait qu'un an et demi d'existence.

<sup>104</sup> C. Quillard (Mgr), *Rapport sur la Mission du Niger, Vice-Province de Niamey IV*, dactylographié, Niamey Janvier 1957, in AGHR.

<sup>105</sup> W. Gaudreau à Pierre Dambre, Provincial de Paris, février 1957, in AGHR section Burkina Faso,

<sup>106</sup> Le Père Théophile Roth est né à Kruth le 25 août 1896 dans le Haut-Rhin (Alsace). Baptisé le 28 août de la même année, il fit profession chez les Rédemptoristes, la première le 9 septembre 1920 et la perpétuelle le 23 septembre 1923 avant d'être ordonné prêtre le 11 octobre 1925. Les fonctions occupées au sein de la Province: consultant local 1936 à 1942; 1945 à 1948; 1956-1964; il exerça également le rôle de socius (1926-1927), missionnaire au Pérou (1927-1936), professeur au Studendat (1936-1948), archiviste provincial (1956-1964), membre de la commission Révision de la Règle. Son provincialat dura de 1950-1956. La mission du Niger lui tenait à cœur: à preuve le nombre et la qualité de jeunes qu'il envoya, entre autres les anciens du maquis. Il avait fait le projet de s'y rendre pour une visite canonique lorsque, en janvier 1956, il fut déchargé du Provincialat. Il écrivit dans son carnet de note: «Limogé comme Provincial, Dieu soit béni!» Il meurt le 25 novembre 1975. Cfr ARLPC, Armoire 9, fiche personnelle.

Votre Paternité me demande mon avis et celui de mes consultants au sujet de l'élévation de la Préfecture apostolique de Niamey au rang de Vicariat, et de la division de cette Préfecture. Je ne vois aucune objection à cette division qui est justifiée territorialement et ethnologiquement.

Mais le Père Roth ajoutait des observations:

Vicariat de Niamey: à ce sujet, je me permets de faire les observations suivantes: Un Vicariat est établi normalement lorsque l'organisation de la Préfecture est déjà fortement amorcée, avec une chrétienté stable et des œuvres éprouvées de pénétration chrétienne. Or, d'après les lettres que je reçois, il me semble que ce stade n'est pas encore atteint. Le district de la Province de Lyon (district de Niamey) ne compte actuellement que onze missionnaires. Or étant donné la faiblesse de notre recrutement actuel, il ne nous sera pas possible, dans les dix ans qui viennent, de renforcer sérieusement le groupe missionnaire<sup>107</sup>.

Le 28 mai 1957, le Père Pierre Dambre, provincial de Paris donne également suite à la lettre qui lui est envoyée de Rome.

Mes consultants et moi, avec le RP Louis Clair et ses deux consultants, sommes tout à fait d'accord pour que notre district de Fada devienne Préfecture Apostolique. Les raisons qui appuient cette demande sont les suivantes: le nombre de Rédemptoristes: dix-sept Pères et deux Frères: beaucoup de préfectures n'en ont pas autant. Le territoire qui est bien grand et comporte un apostolat différent de celui du district de Niamey, où les «islamisés» sont beaucoup plus nombreux; ils sont relativement rares dans notre district de Fada, où il y a surtout des fétichistes. La colonie est différente: Fada dépend administrativement de la Haute-Volta; Niamey dépend de la colonie du Niger. Avantage financier: les subsides sont alloués par la Congrégation de la Propagande de la Foi par préfecture apostolique: ainsi nous ne recevons que la moitié des subsides alloués pour l'ensemble de cet immense territoire qui groupe les deux districts<sup>108</sup>.

La Congrégation à l'époque était fortement centralisée. Toutes les tractations se déroulaient en tandem avec le Père Gé-

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<sup>107</sup> Th. Roth au Père Général des Rédemptoristes, Lyon 25 Mai 1957, Vice-Province de Niamey, IV Lyon dactylographié, in AGHR.

<sup>108</sup> Pierre Dambre au Général des Rédemptoristes, Paris, 28 Mai 1957, IV Lyon, Vice-Province de Niamey, dactylographié, in AGHR.

néral et son conseil qui suivaient attentivement l'évolution du dossier auprès de la Propaganda Fide.

Dans ma réponse du 8 novembre dernier je vous ai promis de vous tenir au courant des démarches et recherches au sujet du dossier sur la question de l'érection de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma. Le TRP Van Biervliet s'est adressé directement à Monseigneur Clementi, de la Congrégation de la *Propaganda Fide*, chargé plus spécialement de l'Afrique. Voici le rapport que notre Père Procureur Général m'a transmis sur cette entrevue. «La Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande ne s'oppose pas du tout systématiquement, pour un motif qu'elle ne voudrait pas déclarer, à l'érection d'une Préfecture Apostolique à Fada». Elle ne s'en est pas occupée, a avoué Mgr Clementi au TRP Van Biervliet, mais c'est uniquement à cause de l'encombrement des affaires, et nullement parce qu'il manquerait quelque chose au dossier.

L'érection d'une Préfecture est une cause majeure réservée «à la Plénière» des Cardinaux; or celle-ci ne se réunit qu'une fois par mois, et encore pas à Noël et durant les mois de vacances. Mgr Clementi est tout disposé à faire imprimer le rapport sur la «question qui doit être distribuée aux membres de la «Plénière». Pour cela il nous demande de faire une nouvelle édition du rapport que vous avez présenté l'année dernière, en le mettant au point d'après les divers renseignements reçus depuis un an. Si vous jugez préférable de vous borner à le compléter, sans le refaire entièrement, par les renseignements et chiffres qui feront connaître l'état actuel du district de Fada, ayez soin de me l'envoyer dans les plus brefs délais<sup>109</sup>.

Les tractations semblent augurer une fin heureuse. Les différents protagonistes s'étant prononcés, il ne reste plus qu'à attendre la décision finale de Rome. Elle ne tardera pas en effet à tomber.

## 6.2 – *La création de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma*

Le 12 février 1959, Rome constituait la nouvelle Préfecture de Fada N'Gourma des régions communément appelées Dori et Fada et les détachait de la Préfecture de Niamey.

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<sup>109</sup> Supérieur Général W. Gaudreau au Provincial de Paris, Pierre Dambre, 11 Novembre 1956, XIV P. Fa, n° 2958/56, in AGHR.

Elle est comprise entre le méridien Greenwich (0) et le deuxième degré de latitude Nord. Elle est limitée à l'est, par la colonie du Niger, au Nord par la colonie du Soudan, au Sud, par le Dahomey et le Togo, à l'Ouest par les Cercles de Ouagadougou, Kaya, Tenkodogo qui font partie également de la colonie de la Haute-Volta et sont évangélisés par les missionnaires d'Afrique, Pères Blancs (Vicariat Apostolique de Ouagadougou).

La nouvelle Préfecture Apostolique s'étend sur les quatre cercles suivants: Fada N'Gourma, Diapaga, Bogandé et Dori. La superficie totale est de 73.430 km<sup>2</sup> et la population compte 356.485 habitants.

Trois ethnies dominent la nouvelle Préfecture: les Gourmantchés, (plus de deux cent mille), les Peulh, (à peu près cent mille) et les Mossé. Les premiers occupent les Cercles de Fada, Bogandé, Diapaga. Ils forment un bloc homogène et sont essentiellement cultivateurs, ont une chefferie très structurée avec un roi à Fada. Ils sont en majorité fétichistes. On le voit, pour l'évangélisation, il y aura trois régions bien distinctes: Fada (les Gourmantché); Diabo (les Mossé); Dori (les Peulh).

Le 29 Mai de la même année, un décret de la sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande nommait le Révérend Père Alphonse Chantoux, de la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur, premier ordinaire, Préfet Apostolique après huit ans d'absence<sup>110</sup>. C'est à Fada qu'il a commencé ses premiers pas de missionnaire.

La proclamation de l'érection de cette Préfecture et l'installation du nouveau Préfet ont lieu le 2 août 1959 par les soins de son Excellence Monseigneur Socquet qui était alors archevêque métropolitain de la Province Ecclésiastique de Ouagadougou.

À la tête de la Préfecture, Monseigneur retrouvera sept postes principaux de mission avec résidence de missionnaires<sup>111</sup>: Fada N'Gourma, Diabo, Kantchari, Manni et Piéla. On y dénombre plus de trente-quatre postes secondaires où les missionnaires

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<sup>110</sup> C'est de Niamey, où il était chargé de l'animation des œuvres catholiques que Mgr Alphonse Chantoux sera nommé directeur des œuvres avec résidence à Dakar.

<sup>111</sup> Mgr retrouva dix huit missionnaires rédemptoristes répartis dans sept postes, dix sept Sœurs dans cinq stations, tous dévoués et prêts à s'user jusqu'à la corde.

passent régulièrement. Les six postes principaux sont répartis dans les trois Cercles de Fada, Diapaga, Bogandé, soit deux postes par Cercle. Seul le Cercle de Dori n'a aucune mission.

### 6.3 – *La création de deux Vice-Provinces*

La création de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma au niveau ecclésiastique entraînait nécessairement une nouvelle configuration de la présence des missionnaires rédemptoristes au niveau de la Congrégation, en procédant à la création de deux vice-provinces. Engagées ensemble dès le début de la mission dans la colonie du Niger, les Provinces de Lyon et de Paris vont désormais fonctionner en entité indépendante. L'objectif est de promouvoir d'une façon plus efficace l'observance régulière et le salut des âmes.

#### 6.3.1 – *Vice-Province de Niamey*

La vie des rédemptoristes était jusqu'ici mêlée, confondue à celle de la Préfecture Apostolique. L'heure est venue de séparer l'administration de la Préfecture de celle de la Congrégation. Ainsi, le 29 mai 1960, par décret du Père Général William Gaudreau<sup>112</sup>, la Mission du Niger devient la Vice-Province<sup>113</sup> de Nia-

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<sup>112</sup> William Gaudreau (1954-1967), né le 24 septembre 1897 à South Braintree, aux États-Unis, fit profession le 2 août 1922. Il fut élu Recteur Majeur le 6 février 1954 au Chapitre Général auquel il participait comme Vocal de la Province de Baltimore. Il mourut à Lewiston, Maine, U.S.A., le 29 novembre 1968. Cfr Les Supérieurs Généraux des Rédemptoristes, in <http://www.cssr.com/francais> (25 janvier 2012).

<sup>113</sup> Le décret de création de la Vice-province: Congregatio SS. Redemptoris, Superior Generalis, IV-L/Ni, N. 5162/60 «plur. Reverende Pater Provincialis, Divino auxilio implorato, auditis quoque Consultoribus nostris, de potestate a Regula et Constitutionibus nobis concessa, Missionem de Niamey, eodem retento nomine, ad gradum Vice-Provinciae erigimus eamque rite erectam declaramus. Itemque pro hac nova Vice-Provincia de Niamey (Ni), has quae sequentur, nominationes constituimus:

Superior Vice-Provincialis: Plur. R. P. Hippolytus Berlier

Consultor-Admonitor: Adm. R.P. Petrus Rion

Consultor-Secretarius: Adm. R.P. Joannes Ploussard

Hanc igitur novam vice-provinciam, a provincia Lugdunensi dependentem, Deus benignus ac propitius benedicat, eamque Beata Virgo Maria modo

mey et le Père Hippolyte Berlier fut nommé premier<sup>114</sup> vice-provincial, aidé dans cette nouvelle fonction par les PP. Pierre Rion (Consulteur admoniteur) et Jean Ploussard (secrétaire admoniteur). Les Statuts seront approuvés par Rome le 8 décembre 1960. Cette nouvelle juridiction relèverait de la Province Mère, Lyon, et demanderait une certaine organisation interne. Le nouveau vice-provincial devrait être à l'écoute des confrères et être l'âme de la mission. Père Berlier ne restera pas longtemps dans sa fonction de Vice-Provincial puisque, par décret, la *Propaganda Fide* venait de créer le diocèse de Niamey dont il sera le premier évêque.

### 6.3.2 – Vice-Province de Fada N’Gourma

À la suite de Niamey, Fada N’Gourma devient aussi une vice-province autonome relevant de la Province Mère de Paris. Comme la coutume l'exige, le Provincial de Paris en fit d'abord la demande au Supérieur Général qui, à son tour, réunit son conseil et décide de la création de la vice-province.

Selon votre demande je vous fais savoir que je suis très favorable à ce que notre mission de Fada devienne une vice-province et je me réjouis de la décision que vous prendrez à ce sujet et qui renforcera l'autorité du supérieur religieux, pour un juste équilibre avec celle du supérieur ecclésiastique. Je pense que le Révérend Père Provincial de Lyon partagera le même sentiment<sup>115</sup>.

Quelques jours après, le décret de la création de la vice-province de Fada N’Gourma est promulgué, par la formule<sup>116</sup>

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particulari jugiter defendat et protegat.

Datum Roma, apud S. Alfonso, die 29 Maji 1960. Cfr ARLP

<sup>114</sup> Jusqu'à la création de la Vice-province de Niamey, on parlait plus de district créé officiellement depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1950. Plusieurs supérieurs religieux se sont succédés: de 1946 à 1949: Constant Quillard; 1949-1950: Louis Clairret; après la division en deux districts: district de Niamey: 1950-1953: Auguste Goldbronn; 1953-1956: Paul Sage; 1956-1960: Hippolyte Berlier. Pour le district de Fada N’Gourma: Louis Clairret, Henri Lecomte et Marcel Chauvin.

<sup>115</sup> M. Boisson, Lettre du 26 Mai 1960, in AGHR.

<sup>116</sup> Notre traduction: «Révérend Père Provincial, Après avoir imploré l'aide divine et entendu l'avis de nos consultants, en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont concédés par la Règle et les Constitutions, nous érigeons la Mission de Fada n’Gourma au grade de Vice-Province, en lui conservant le même nom,



consacrée rédigée par le Père Général:

Révérend Père Provincial,

Après avoir imploré l'aide divine et entendu l'avis de nos consultants, en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont concédés par la Règle et les Constitutions, nous érigeons la Mission de Fada n'Gourma au grade de Vice-Province, en lui conservant le même nom, et nous la déclarons canoniquement érigée. En outre pour cette nouvelle Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma, nous procédons aux nominations suivantes: le R.P. Marcel Chauvin Supérieur Vice-Provincial; le R.P. Henri Lecomte Consultant-admoniteur et le R.P. Louis Clairret consultant-secrétaire.

Que Dieu miséricordieux bénisse cette nouvelle Vice-Province dépendante de la Province de Paris, et que la Vierge Marie la défende et la protège toujours d'une manière particulière.

Donné à Rome *apud S. Alfonsum* le 29 mai 1960.

Le Père Marcel Chauvin fut nommé premier Vice-Provincial. En plus de la nomination du Vice-Provincial, deux consultants furent désignés par le Père Général: les PP. Henri Lecomte (consulteur-admoniteur) et Louis Clairret (consulteur secrétaire).

#### 6.4 – *La création du diocèse de Niamey*

Naturellement, après la création de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma, celle de Niamey<sup>117</sup>, vieille de quinze ans, devait s'attendre à une promotion bien méritée. En effet, la *Propaganda Fide*<sup>118</sup> a décidé de l'élever au rang de diocèse. Par le

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et nous la déclarons canoniquement érigée. En outre pour cette nouvelle Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma, nous procédons aux nominations suivantes: le R.P. Marcel Chauvin Supérieur Vice-Provincial; le R.P. Henri Lecomte Consultant-admoniteur et le R.P. Louis Clairret consultant-secrétaire.

Que Dieu miséricordieux bénisse cette nouvelle Vice-Province dépendante de la Province de Paris, et que la Vierge Marie la défende et la protège toujours d'une manière particulière.

Donné à Rome *apud S. Alfonsum* le 29 mai 1960.

<sup>117</sup> Déjà en novembre 1952, Mgr Constantini avait demandé un rapport circonstancié à Mgr Quillard pour montrer le progrès de la Préfecture et l'élever au rang de Vicariat Apostolique si la Propagande le jugeait bon.

<sup>118</sup> Par une lettre officielle, la *Propaganda Fide*, en date du 27 mars 1961, écrivait au Préfet apostolique, Mgr Quillard, pour lui annoncer la Bonne Nou-

canal de la Délégation Apostolique pour l'Afrique Occidentale basée à Dakar, Mgr Quillard eut la primeur de cette bonne nouvelle:

Son Éminence le Cardinal Agagianian me prie de vous transmettre la lettre paternelle qu'il vous adresse pour vous annoncer l'érection de la Préfecture apostolique de Niamey en diocèse. Le Cardinal vous manifeste la gratitude profonde de l'Église pour le dévouement apostolique qui a été le vôtre pendant de si longues années au Niger. Je sais que cette décision vous causera beaucoup de peine puisque vous êtes en réalité le fondateur et l'organisateur de l'Église catholique au Niger. Le Saint Père a pensé qu'en raison des circonstances actuelles, bien délicates partout, il fallait remettre en des mains plus jeunes le gouvernement du nouveau diocèse.

Soyez assuré que je m'unis de tout cœur et bien fraternellement aux sentiments qui sont les vôtres; mais je connais trop votre esprit surnaturel et votre sens religieux pour douter un seul instant que malgré la souffrance que vous éprouverez, vous direz un *Amen* fervent à l'expression de la Volonté de Dieu<sup>119</sup>.

Mgr Quillard, en sa qualité de Préfet Apostolique rendra publique la nouvelle en soulignant le caractère solennel de l'événement:

Le Souverain Pontife a daigné accorder deux faveurs extraordinaires à la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey. Elles sont publiées aujourd'hui même dans l'*Osservatore Romano* et le Cardinal Agagianian nous les communique dans une lettre spéciale datée du 27 mars dernier. Premièrement: l'élévation de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey au rang de diocèse, deuxièmement, la nomination du premier évêque de Niamey en la personne du TRP Berlier actuellement Vice-Provincial<sup>120</sup>.

Mgr Quillard fera diffuser la nouvelle dans toute la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey à travers une lettre officielle du 15

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velle: «... il est de mon devoir de vous communiquer une nouvelle, notamment celle de l'élévation de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey au rang de Diocèse...» Signé le Cardinal Agagianian Préfet de la SCPF.

<sup>119</sup> Mgr J-M Maury, Délégué Apostolique pour l'Afrique Occidentale, à Mgr Quillard, Préfet Apostolique de Niamey, Prot. 426/61, Dakar 5 avril 1961, in AGHR.

<sup>120</sup> *Le Préfet Apostolique de Niamey, Monseigneur Quillard vous parle*, Radio-Niger le 15 avril 1961, Lettre circulaire n° 147, in ARLP.

avril 1961. C'est une lettre qui rend compte de la décision prise par Rome<sup>121</sup>. De Lyon, où il se trouvait, il écrit une lettre<sup>122</sup> à

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<sup>121</sup> Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey, *communication de Mgr Quillard, Préfet Apostolique de Niamey, à toutes les Stations de la Préfecture*; à lire le dimanche 16 avril, à toutes les Messes, lettre circulaire du 16 avril 1961, N° 146, in ARLP.

<sup>122</sup> S'il est vrai que la création d'un nouveau diocèse est une joie immense pour Mgr Quillard, il faut reconnaître que le fait de ne pas être reconduit à la tête de la mission lui causa une profonde peine. Bien avant la date d'érection, plusieurs tentatives ont été menées à son endroit pour qu'il écrive une lettre de démission au Saint Père. Pour preuve cette lettre écrite le 17 avril 1960 mettant en relief l'opinion générale de la Préfecture Apostolique: «c'est après réflexion que nous avons décidé de vous présenter cette lettre. C'est une lettre personnelle, en ce sens que nous n'avons fait à nos confrères aucune allusion à notre présente démarche. Toutefois, nous pouvons vous assurer qu'elle reflète l'opinion commune de nos confrères de la Préfecture. Nous savons, Monseigneur, combien vous avez travaillé depuis quinze ans sur ce champ que le Seigneur vous a confié (et déjà bien des années auparavant pour la préparation). Nous qui sommes depuis des années vos collaborateurs directs, nous savons mieux que d'autres à quel point vous vous êtes consacré et sacrifié à cette œuvre; nous savons l'énergie dont vous avez fait preuve, mais plus souvent encore la délicatesse, le tact, l'abnégation qui vous furent nécessaires pour agir selon les circonstances, selon le caractère et les dispositions de chacun. Vous avez créé la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey avec vos sueurs, votre sang et vos larmes. Personne d'autre que vous n'aurait eu le courage et la persévérance d'entreprendre et de continuer ce travail dans des circonstances si difficiles. C'est parce que vous avez mené à bien cette œuvre que nous pensons, en notre conscience de prêtres, de religieux et de missionnaires, qu'il est temps pour vous de passer la main... Nous savons qu'un scrupule très noble peut vous faire hésiter à offrir votre démission, celui de remettre à votre successeur une œuvre inachevée. Vous avez fait tout votre possible et plus que votre possible. Le temps n'arrangerait pas les choses et nous sommes certains que dans quelques mois ou quelques années la situation serait encore plus détériorée». Cfr P. Rion (Vicaire général) et H. Berlier (Supérieur religieux), *lettre à Monseigneur Quillard, Niamey 17 avril 1960* in ARLP. Un mois plus tard, c'est au tour du Provincial de Lyon, le Père René Billiet d'écrire à Mgr Quillard: «... Cher Monseigneur croyez que c'est avec le plus de charité possible et même d'affection que je viens vous dire: pour le bien de la mission du Niger et de vos confrères, le moment est venu pour vous de démissionner de votre charge de Préfet apostolique... avec Vous, je prierai l'Esprit-Saint pour qu'Il vous conseille et qu'Il vous aide». [Cfr R. Billiet à Mgr Quillard, 25 mai 1960, in ARLP]. Cette initiative ne lui a jamais plu et il voyait là des tentatives de manœuvre pour l'évincer. Il parlera de coup monté! C'est certain, après avoir été un des premiers missionnaires, et aussi sûr de sa longue expérience aux affaires, il était de bon sens que Mgr Quillard espère être nommé premier évêque. Tout compte fait, il a fait

tous les Missionnaires, à toutes les Religieuses du Niger.

Permettez-moi de vous adresser cette dernière circulaire avant de voir expirer mon mandat. Ce n'est pas sans un serrement de cœur que je quitte cette Mission qui m'était si chère et pour laquelle nous avons versé ensemble tant de sueurs, parfois du sang et des larmes. En passant le gouvernail en des mains plus jeunes, je suis déchargé d'une grande responsabilité. Que la volonté de Dieu soit faite et que ce dernier sacrifice profite à la Mission, aux Pères, aux Sœurs, aux Chrétiens, à tous les Nigériens<sup>123</sup>.

Et Monseigneur de continuer sa lettre circulaire en faisant une sorte de bilan de ses quinze ans de service à la tête de la Préfecture Apostolique. Il retrace les débuts, combien difficiles, de la mission, les joies et les peines sont bien mises en exergue. Les différentes réalisations et les différents échecs sont bien ciblés. En somme, ce fut une mission réussie.

Mgr Berlier sera sacré à Rome à la Pentecôte 1961 par le pape Jean XXIII dans la Basilique Saint Pierre. La délégation nigérienne sera impressionnante avec à sa tête le Président de la République, Hamani Diori.

#### 7. – *Le déploiement de l'activité missionnaire sur les deux territoires: 1965-1996*

À partir des années soixante, on assiste donc à une nouvelle configuration de l'espace missionnaire confié aux Rédemptoristes. De Niamey à Fada N'Gourma, d'énormes progrès ont été réalisés par les vaillants missionnaires. Ce déploiement missionnaire connaîtra sa vitesse de croisière avec les deux responsables de Mission: Mgr Hippolyte Berlier et Alphonse Chantoux. C'est également l'époque où l'envoi des renforts sera important et visible<sup>124</sup>.

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preuve d'un esprit surnaturel et a accepté humblement de s'éclipser de la scène missionnaire, tout en demandant la faveur de rester encore et même de mourir dans ce beau Niger. Il sera admis dans la communauté de Zinder et par la suite à Niamey. Il mourra rassasié d'ans, après avoir célébré son quatre-vingtième anniversaire. Il repose au cimetière de Niamey auprès de ses nombreux compagnons morts, eux- aussi, à la tâche.

<sup>123</sup> C. Quillard, *Lettre circulaire, Lyon 1<sup>er</sup> Juin 1961*, in ARLP.

<sup>124</sup> Du côté du Niger: 1959: Louis Pitiot; Fr Jacques Marty; 1960: Etienne Segalen; Elie Pascal; 1961: Jean Albertini; Eugène Brosse; Pierre Lhomme;

## 7.1 – Création du diocèse de Fada N’Gourma

La création du diocèse de Fada N’Gourma ne s’est pas faite du jour au lendemain. En effet, selon les normes de la Propagande, on ne pouvait élever une Préfecture Apostolique en évêché qu’après au moins dix ans d’existence. Or, on se souvient que ce fut en 1959 que le district de Fada N’Gourma devenait Préfecture Apostolique. C’est dire qu’il fallait ici aussi apporter des arguments convaincants qui montrent le bien-fondé d’une telle entreprise. Et pour ce faire, les arguments percutants furent exhibés. En témoignent ces propos du Préfet Apostolique lui-même, Mgr Chantoux :

Un vœu respectueux: le 8 décembre 1961, nous fêtons le vingt-cinquième anniversaire de l’arrivée des premiers missionnaires au pays gourmantché. Depuis lors, malgré la période de la guerre, la chrétienté n’a cessé de se développer. En 1948, nous avons trois cent soixante-cinq chrétiens. En 1961 nous comptons 3661 baptisés et la progression continue régulièrement malgré de nombreuses difficultés et le manque de renfort. Nous avons 2.108 catéchumènes et nous avons cette année notre petit séminaire. Ce serait une grande consolation pour les chrétiens du pays gourma et pour leurs missionnaires de voir leur Préfecture érigée en diocèse. De toutes les juridictions ecclésiastiques de Haute-Volta qui sont surtout dans le pays mossi, c’est la seule qui soit encore Préfecture Apostolique et c’est la plus étendue. Aussi je demande humblement s’il ne serait pas possible, après l’élévation de Niamey, confiée à nos Confrères Rédemptoristes de la Province de Lyon, d’ériger de même Fada N’Gourma en diocèse<sup>125</sup>.

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Louis Deroux; 1962: André Monnet; Jean-Daniel Benoit; 1964: Pierre Dupérier; Pierre Prévot; François Dondeynaz; Bernard Larivière; André Oriol; 1965: Yves Bernard; 1966: Roger Desbos; Guy Romano; Jacques Pardon; 1971: François Morque; Georges Arnoux; 1973: José Collado; Jean-Marc Cornier; 1975: Roger Michel; Michel Defourd; 1981: Georges Imberdisse.

Du côté de Fada N’Gourma: 1959: Pierre Ackermann; Étienne Provost; 1960: Jean Bonny; Arsène Garnier; 1962: Lucien Bidaud; Michel Jobin; Guy Marolleau; 1965: Frère Maurice Froc; Alphonse de Tavernier; 1967: Jean-Marie Asselin; François Vannier; 1968: Philippe Coudreau; René Picavet; Louis Lemarié; Jean-Claude Joly; 1971: Noël Wickers; 1972: Gérard Riblier.

<sup>125</sup> Mgr Alphonse Chantoux, *Rapport annuel de la Préfecture de Fada*

À cette plaidoirie de Mgr Chantoux, il convient de mentionner le contexte socio-politique de l'époque. En Afrique de manière générale, le vent de l'indépendance soufflait sur la plupart des colonies. Afin de se mettre en harmonie avec cet idéal des africains eux-mêmes, la politique du Saint Siège consistera aussi à élever systématiquement les Préfectures apostoliques en diocèses et à nommer à leur tête des évêques natifs là où cela était possible.

C'est ainsi que pour ce qui concerne la Préfecture de Fada N'Gourma, le Père Marcel Chauvin Vice-Provincial de Fada N'Gourma, est nommé premier évêque du nouveau diocèse par la Bulle *Quod Sanctissimum* du 16 juin 1964. Sa nomination a été faite pendant qu'il était en vacances en France. Selon les témoignages, le P. Chauvin a beaucoup hésité avant d'accepter sa nomination. Il aurait même refusé mais il fut contraint par le Saint Siège de faire allégeance. Il a accepté cette nomination par obéissance religieuse<sup>126</sup>.

L'ordination épiscopale<sup>127</sup> de Mgr Chauvin eut lieu à Fada N'Gourma le 20 décembre 1964 en présence de Mgr Maury, Archevêque titulaire de Laodicée en Phrygie et Délégué Apostolique en Afrique occidentale à Dakar qui présidera le rite d'intronisation, le lendemain 21 décembre. Le Cardinal Paul Zoungrana, de vénérée mémoire, fut le consécrateur principal entouré de l'évêque de Niamey (Mgr Berlier) et de celui de Koupèla (Mgr Dieudonné Yougbaré). C'est un symbole fort de l'union de l'Église noire et de la Congrégation des Rédemptoristes.

### 7.2 – La fondation de la Maison Saint Alphonse

Elle a déjà été amorcée en 1966, lors de la visite du Père Alfred Zipper<sup>128</sup>, envoyé par le Père Général à Fada N'Gourma.

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*N'Gourma, 15 Août 1961*, in ARLP.

<sup>126</sup> En fait, comme Mgr Chauvin lui-même le dira, on ne lui a pas demandé son consentement, parce que le Saint Père ne le demandait jamais aux religieux qui ont fait vœu d'obéissance.

<sup>127</sup> On notait aussi à cette ordination épiscopale, la présence de Mr Maurice Yaméogo, président de la Haute-Volta, aujourd'hui Burkina Faso, et de quelques ministres et personnalités du pays. C'est après l'intronisation qu'eurent lieu la bénédiction et la pose de la première pierre de la future cathédrale, la cathédrale actuelle.

<sup>128</sup> Cette Visite canonique extraordinaire de la Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma s'est étalée du 19 décembre 1965 au 24 janvier 1966.

Ce dernier invitait les confrères à construire une maison appartenant à la Vice-Province (*domus formata*) où résideraient le Supérieur Religieux et éventuellement quelques confrères désireux de prendre quelques jours de repos. Mais cela n'a pas abouti parce que la motivation n'apparaissait pas convaincante pour la plupart des confrères. Dans un diocèse dirigé par un Évêque rédemptoriste, où les implantations avaient toutes été faites par des Rédemptoristes, l'utilité d'une nouvelle maison ne paraissait pas évidente. Mais la nomination d'un évêque africain à la tête du diocèse et l'ordination de quatre prêtres africains fit ressortir la distinction entre diocèse et vice-province. Dans la grande famille des missionnaires d'Afrique, devant un clergé autochtone devenu responsable de l'Église locale, il y eut une prise de conscience de l'identité rédemptoriste.

La visite des PP. Juan Lasso et Gaspar de Almeida allait aider à resserrer les rangs. «Vous voulez que votre Vice-Province non seulement survive mais se rajeunisse et s'accroisse? Cherchez les vocations sur place. Vous voulez des rédemptoristes? Faites-en!». Telles sont les observations pertinentes des visiteurs de Rome.

Et la Vice-Province est d'accord pour relever le défi. Le P. Noël Wickers, permanent à Fada à cette époque, fut délégué par le Vice-Provincial, Philippe Coudreau, pour trouver un emplacement.

### *7.3 – Les Rédemptoristes polonais au secours de la Vice-Province*

L'arrivée des missionnaires rédemptoristes polonais fait suite à une demande conjuguée entre le Vice-Provincial de Fada N'Gourma, le P. Philippe Coudreau, et le Provincial de Paris, le P. Jean Letournel. En 1987, ils effectueront un voyage en Pologne en vue de solliciter une aide en renfort missionnaire.

Ce fut un voyage à succès puisque le 18 décembre 1987, le provincial polonais, le P. Stanisław Kuczek et son économiste le P. Stanisław Wróbel, entreprenaient une visite de reconnaissance de la Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma.

En juillet 1988, deux Pères polonais, Władysław Juszczak et Bogdan Bańdur<sup>129</sup> se rendent à Paris pour étudier le français.

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<sup>129</sup> Le P. Bogdan Bańdur n'arrivera jamais à s'adapter à l'Afrique et re-

En juin 1989, ils arrivent au Burkina Faso, vivent d'abord à la maison Saint Alphonse avant de rejoindre vers Pâques 1990 les postes de Manni et Piéla.

En juin 1990, deux autres rédemptoristes polonais, les Pères Janusz Dołbakowski et Marek Marszałek rejoignent Paris où ils s'initient à la langue de Molière avant de fouler le sol africain en octobre 1990<sup>130</sup>. Ils sont respectivement nommés à Diapaga et à Diabo.

En 1991, les Pères Zbigniew Majewski et Zdzisław Stanula, après l'apprentissage du français à Paris, arrivent au Burkina Faso en février 1991 et sont nommés à Tibga.

Le dernier de l'équipe polonaise s'appelle Tomasz Jońca. Arrivé en 1996 et nommé à Diabo, il ne restera que quelques mois n'ayant pas pu s'adapter à la vie missionnaire en Afrique.

Soulignons pour terminer cette coopération entre «Varsovie et Fada N'Gourma» que seul le P. Marek Marszałek continue l'aventure missionnaire. Les autres ont rejoint leur province d'origine après avoir, reconnaissons-le, abattu un travail missionnaire immense.

C'est également dans cette perspective de renforcement des équipes missionnaires que le P. Gabriel Boudreault de la Vice-Province de Tokyo prêta ses services à la Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma. En février 1985, il écrit une lettre au Père Général de l'époque, Lasso de la Vega:

Je vous écris en réponse à la lettre des Rédemptoristes d'Afrique à toute la Congrégation du 28 janvier 1984. Avec l'assentiment du P. Irénée Lemay, vice-provincial de la Vice Province de

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gagnera sa Pologne natale après un bref séjour dans la Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma.

<sup>130</sup> C'est avec l'arrivée de cette deuxième caravane des missionnaires polonais que la signature d'un contrat entre le Provincial de Varsovie et le Vice-Provincial de Fada N'Gourma vit le jour le 31 décembre 1991. Ce contrat stipulait que «les rédemptoristes polonais demeurent membres de la Province de Varsovie, mais sans droit de vote dans cette province durant leur séjour dans la Vice-Province de Fada. Durant leur séjour dans la Vice-Province de Fada ils sont sous la juridiction du supérieur local de la maison à laquelle le Vice-Provincial les aura nommés et sous celle du Vice-Provincial». Cfr Contrat entre Supérieur Provincial de Varsovie et le Vice-Provincial de Fada, in AMSAF (Archives Maison Saint Alphonse de Fada).



Tokyo, j'offre mes services d'une façon temporaire et ponctuelle, pour venir en aide à l'encadrement et à la formation de ces jeunes africains<sup>131</sup>.

Le 15 mars 1986, un contrat est signé entre les Supérieurs Vice-Provinceaux de Tokyo (Irénée Lemay) et de Fada N'Gourma (Philippe Coudreau). Le P. Boudreault demeure membre de la Vice-Province de Tokyo, mais sera sous la juridiction du supérieur local de la maison à laquelle le Vice-Provinceal de Fada N'Gourma l'aura nommé. Le contrat vaut pour deux ans à partir du 15 novembre 1986 et pourra être renouvelé. Le 16 novembre 1986, à l'âge de 63 ans, le Père arrive au Burkina Faso et y restera deux ans avant de regagner Rome où il fut appelé pour une autre mission auprès de l'Ambassade du Japon près le Saint Siège, tout en offrant ses services de traducteur attitré auprès du Gouvernement Général des Rédemptoristes.

#### 7.4 – Dans le diocèse de Niamey

##### 7.4.1 – Nomination de Mgr Guy Romano

L'épiscopat de Mgr Berlier a donné une orientation nouvelle à l'activité missionnaire. En 1974 après quinze ans d'épiscopat il écrit une lettre de démission au saint Père:

Je viens, Très Saint Père, vous présenter ma démission d'Évêque de Niamey et vous prier humblement mais très instamment de bien vouloir «l'accepter» en donnant les raisons suivantes: «à la suite des Indépendances et à la suite du Concile, l'accélération de l'histoire a été extraordinaire en Afrique et dans les Missions. Il importe qu'un homme jeune et ouvert à tous ces problèmes puisse accueillir cet «esprit nouveau» et en témoigner auprès des hommes, sinon ce serait mettre le vin nouveau dans une outre vieille, avec le danger de tout perdre<sup>132</sup>.

Mais il lui faudra encore attendre des années pour voir sa lettre de démission acceptée par le Saint Siège. C'est ainsi que le

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<sup>131</sup> Boudreault au P. Général Juan Lasso, Tokyo 10 février 1985, in AM-SAF.

<sup>132</sup> Mgr H. Berlier, évêque démissionnaire de Niamey, à Sa Sainteté le Pape Paul VI, Niamey le 14 Mars 1976, in AADN.

26 juin 1984, le P. Guy Romano<sup>133</sup>, Rédemptoriste, a été nommé Administrateur Apostolique du diocèse de Niamey. C'était une solution en attendant de trouver un évêque africain pour prendre la tête du diocèse. Il sera ordonné le 30 septembre 1984 à Niamey par le Cardinal Zoungana. Entre temps, Mgr Romano sera nommé évêque titulaire (résidentiel) le 19 mars 1987.

#### 7.4.2 – La maison Saint Clément de Niamey

C'est en 1991 que le projet de construction d'une maison rédemptoriste à Niamey prenait finalement corps. Présents dans le diocèse depuis 1946, les rédemptoristes de la Vice-Province ne possédaient aucun bien immobilier car toutes les maisons qu'ils habitaient étaient la propriété du diocèse. L'urgence d'avoir une maison d'accueil à Niamey, la capitale du Niger, ne pouvait attendre. Pour mieux comprendre la nécessité et le bien-fondé de cette construction, il faut l'entrevoir à travers quatre objectifs.

Une résidence pour les confrères travaillant dans la ville de Niamey, une maison permettant l'accueil des confrères venant de l'intérieur du pays, une maison pouvant recevoir des confrères âgés, après des années d'apostolat en brousse et désirant rester au Niger, enfin une maison susceptible d'accueillir de jeunes postulants ou étudiants et d'organiser des sessions de formation.

Il faut noter que la Vice-Province avait déjà acheté une concession dans le quartier de Garbado<sup>134</sup>, où deux confrères assurent la permanence de la paroisse Saint Gabriel. Leur habitation exigüe ne pouvant en aucun cas répondre aux objectifs ci-dessus, il fut décidé la construction d'une maison qui serait par le fait même la seule et l'unique maison rédemptoriste de la Vice-Province.

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<sup>133</sup> Né en 1937, à Arc-en-Barroy (Haute-Marne) d'une famille émigrée italienne, il a été ordonné prêtre en 1964. Il demeure à Zinder chez les Haousas de 1969 à 1975. À cette date, Mgr Berlier, l'appelle pour en faire son vicaire général. Après dix-neuf ans d'épiscopat, Mgr Guy Romano, est devenu Évêque émérite et aumônier du centre *Silolé*, situé à dix-huit km de Niamey.

<sup>134</sup> Rappelons que le quartier s'appelait autrefois la Poudrière. C'est là qu'en 1984 fut fondé un poste de mission confié aux Rédemptoristes. La première messe y a été célébrée le 4 octobre 1984.

Le projet fit son chemin et fut financé par plusieurs partenaires: la Vice-Province elle-même, la Province de Lyon, la communauté de Champagne-au-Mont-d'Or, un grand nombre de confrères et d'amis et le Gouvernement Général à travers sa cellule de solidarité. Le 20 mai 1993, la maison Saint Clément est canoniquement érigée par le décret<sup>135</sup> du Gouvernement Général.

#### 7.4.3 – *Du renfort pour la Vice-Province de Niamey*

La Vice-Province de Niamey bénéficiera également de l'arrivée des Rédemptoristes d'autres Provinces de la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur. L'objectif de ce renfort est de consolider les postes missionnaires car à cette époque les confrères prenant de l'âge ont dû rentrer en France, créant ainsi des vides dans les rangs. Trois confrères de l'Amérique Latine se porteront volontaires pour la mission au Niger, en réponse à une demande missionnaire provenant de deux sources.

D'une part, la voix du pape Jean-Paul II demandant aux Églises d'Amérique latine d'envoyer en Afrique des missionnaires à l'occasion de la célébration des cinq cents ans de l'évangélisation du continent. D'autre part, la voix persistante et courageuse du Père Général de l'époque, le P. Juan Lasso qui, grâce à son grand amour pour l'Afrique, a été un visionnaire. Bien avant la restructuration de la Congrégation, il avait demandé à la Province de San Juan, nouvellement érigée, de donner deux missionnaires à la Province de Lyon pour la mission du Niger.

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<sup>135</sup> «Après avoir pris dûment connaissance de la demande faite par le supérieur majeur compétent ainsi que toutes les autres questions qui s'y rapportent, après avoir reçu le consentement écrit de l'Ordinaire du lieu et après avoir obtenu le consentement du conseil général, Moi, Supérieur Général, j'érige comme maison religieuse canonique conformément à la norme du canon 609 § 1 du Code de Droit Canonique ainsi qu'à la Constitution 135 de la loi particulière de notre Congrégation, avec tous les droits accordés par la loi générale et par notre loi particulière à ces maisons ainsi érigées canoniquement, la maison désignée comme suit: *Saint Clément, Niamey* et qui est actuellement située à Niamey (Niger) dans la (V) Province de Niamey. Cette érection est effective à partir du 20 mai 1993», *Décret d'érection de la maison Saint Clément de Niamey, Rome le 7 mai 1993*, in ARLP.

Ils étaient deux de la Province de San Juan (Puerto Rico), les PP. Rafael Torres Oliver et Miguel Orta Rosado<sup>136</sup>, et de la Province de Mexique, le P. Rubén Jaime Carrasco à rejoindre la Vice-Province le 12 octobre 1992 après trois mois d'étude de la langue française à Lyon avec résidence à Champagne-au-Mont-d'Or.

#### 8. – *Retour à la case départ: Vice-Province du Burkina-Niger*

Cinquante ans après la création de deux Vice-Provinces, Niamey et Fada N’Gourma, le regroupement en une seule entité religieuse est vivement souhaité et ardemment désiré. La réunion en Chapitre des Rédemptoristes du Niger et du Burkina Faso, en janvier 1996, autour du Père Général et de son Vicaire (Conseiller pour l’Afrique), le P. Georges Darlix, scella cette volonté d’unification. On remarquait la présence, combien symbolique, des Provinciaux des deux Provinces-Mères, les Pères Jean-Louis Pourcelot (Lyon) et Joseph Gaumer (Paris). Quelques héros survivants des premières équipes ne manquèrent pas à l’appel: Joseph Cournault (seul rescapé du débarquement de 1946), Francis Ménard de la deuxième caravane et apôtre du gulmu pendant quarante-ans ans, le Frère Jean-Louis Lebreton de la septième équipe et François Morque de la dix-huitième caravane.

#### 8.1 – *Préparation lointaine de la fusion*

Depuis un certain nombre d’années, voyant la faiblesse numérique des missionnaires rédemptoristes dans les deux Vice-Provinces et la carence des vocations au niveau des provinces mères, l’heure était venue de penser à l’avenir de la présence rédemptoriste au Burkina Faso et au Niger. L’idée a germé et chemin faisant, on est arrivé à un accord qui permettrait aux deux vice-Provinces de se regrouper pour ne former qu’une seule.

Des réunions préparatoires ont eu lieu, cherchant à mettre en commun certaines institutions. C’est ainsi qu’il a été décidé

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<sup>136</sup> Après une année de présence missionnaire au Niger (Bermo), le P. Miguel Orta, n’ayant pas pu s’adapter aux réalités de l’Afrique, rejoindra sa Province d’origine. Il quitte Niamey le 28 octobre 1993.

de commencer par la formation qui est une priorité pour tous. Un secrétariat commun voit le jour.

Des assemblées<sup>137</sup> conjointes eurent lieu pour discuter des statuts de la nouvelle Vice-Province et surtout donner des orientations nouvelles capables de dynamiser la mission rédemptoriste. Ces différents travaux ont abouti à la convocation du Chapitre unique qui devra choisir les nouveaux responsables à la tête de la future Vice-Province.

## 8.2 – Chapitre de l'unité

Tenu à Niamey en 1996, ce chapitre réunit tous les Rédemptoristes des deux Vice-Provinces. Y étaient présents à cette grande rencontre le Supérieur Général de la Congrégation, le P. Juan Lasso de la Vega<sup>138</sup>, le Conseiller pour l'Afrique, le P. Georges Darlix, le Supérieur Provincial de Lyon, P. Jean-Louis Pourcelot et de nombreux confrères.

L'acte important de ce Chapitre fut la fusion des deux entités religieuses, mais aussi le choix des responsables devant présider à la destinée de la nouvelle Vice-Province Burkina-Niger. La conclusion des travaux permit de connaître les résultats des votes. Le P. Pierre Prévôt fut élu nouveau Vice-Provincial et son vicaire élu du côté du Burkina, le P. René Picavet. Les deux conseillers élus sont: les Pères Mathias Doamba et Marek Marszałek.

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<sup>137</sup> Notons celle de septembre 1992 qui permit aux rédemptoristes des deux Vice-Provinces de se rencontrer en carrefour pour discuter des expériences apostoliques, des priorités au regard de l'identité rédemptoriste et des échanges libres. De cette assemblée, la décision fut prise qu'au moins une rencontre annuelle de tous les confrères des deux Vices-Provinces ait lieu. Les deux Conseils devraient également se rencontrer une fois par an.

<sup>138</sup> Dans son allocution d'ouverture, le P. Général disait en substance: «ce chapitre est un moment historique pour toute la Congrégation. Pour la première fois de toute notre histoire, deux Vice-Provinces sont supprimées pour en créer une nouvelle. Pendant cette année 1996, il y aura d'autres unités qui feront la même démarche. C'est un moment prophétique qui manifeste la fidélité à la mission rédemptoriste et la solidarité dans la réalisation de cette mission», dans *Chapitre Vice-Provincial Burkina-Niger, Janvier 1996, Annexe 1, p. 9, Allocution du P. Général*, in AMSAF.

*Décret concernant l'avenir des Vice-Provinces de Niamey (0404)  
et de Fada N'Gourma (1402) N°. Prot. 0240/93*

Après avoir dûment consulté les membres et le gouvernement des Vice-Provinces de Niamey (0404) et de Fada N'Gourma (1402) ainsi que l'assemblée des capitulaires des deux Vice-Provinces et le gouvernement des Provinces de Lyon (0400) et de Paris (1400) et en accord avec les normes de la Constitution 97, le Conseil Général

DÉCRÈTE

La Vice-Province de Niamey (0404) et la Vice-Province de Fada N'Gourma (1402) sont supprimées à la date du 3 Janvier 1996.

À la date du 3 Janvier 1996, est érigée la Vice-Province Burkina-Niger (4401). La nouvelle Vice-Province dépend directement du Gouvernement Général jusqu'à la date d'érection de la nouvelle Province Lyon-Paris en avril 1996, dont elle sera la Vice-Province.

Les membres des Vice-Provinces de Niamey et de Fada N'Gourma deviennent membres de la Vice-Province Burkina-Niger à la date du 3 janvier 1996.

Les maisons des Vice-Provinces de Niamey et de Fada N'Gourma deviennent maisons de la Vice-Province Burkina-Niger.

Les Statuts vice-provinciaux approuvés le 9 mars deviennent les Statuts de la Vice-Province Burkina-Niger et seront observés à la place des statuts des deux Vice-Provinces actuelles<sup>139</sup>.

8.3 – *Tournés vers l'avenir*

Dans un diocèse où il n'y a encore que quatre prêtres diocésains et l'espoir d'autres ordinations assez éloigné, il est normal que l'évêque ait quelque crainte d'avoir aiguillé vers un autre champ que le sien les prêtres dont il a si cruellement besoin. Monseigneur Compaoré a donc été assez réticent quand, avec les Pères Visiteurs, les Rédemptoristes lui ont présenté le projet de formation de futurs Rédemptoristes. Mais ils lui ont dit qu'il ne serait pas perdant puisque les Rédemptoristes resteraient dans

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<sup>139</sup> Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur, décret de création de la nouvelle Vice-Province Burkina-Niger, Rome le 8 septembre 1995, le supérieur général, Lasso de la Vega, in AGHR.

leur Vice-Province et donc en priorité affectés aux tâches apostoliques du diocèse, et puis ce serait pour lui le moyen de conserver les Rédemptoristes, le seul moyen de survie de la Vice-Province. Et il a donné son accord.

Le projet étant nettement profilé, il restait à passer à l'exécution. C'est là qu'intervient la construction d'une maison rédemptoriste. Elle serait la base d'une structure d'accueil pour favoriser l'éclosion des vocations sacerdotales et religieuses. Elle serait d'abord un lieu de rencontre des rédemptoristes de la Vice-Province et de repos, de recyclage court et pourquoi pas de retraite pour les missionnaires pas pressés de rentrer en France. Mais surtout elle serait un lieu de rencontre des jeunes, mais pas uniquement des scolaires. Ils pourraient se retrouver pour des week-ends de réflexion, rencontrer des Frères et des Pères vivant en communauté et échanger surtout sur tous les sujets de leur vie, y compris la possibilité d'une vocation sacerdotale et religieuse. En troisième temps, cette maison peut-être un lieu de formation pour les candidats déjà bien décidés à poursuivre leur réponse à un appel du Seigneur. Accueillant dès le départ des jeunes soucieux de mûrir leur vocation à la vie religieuse sous la houlette de P. Noël Wickers et du Frère Jean Joly, cette maison sera érigée en noviciat en 1991. Le noviciat de Fada N'Gourma ouvrira ses portes en 1992 pour recevoir les tout premiers novices (Samaïla Sani, Boukari Aristide Gnada, Paul Wendyam Sandwidi) sous l'œil bienveillant de P. Georges Arnoux comme Maître des novices et P. Pierre Duperrier en tant que *socius*.

Mais il faut souligner que la Vice-Province de Niamey à l'époque avait déjà amorcé la formation de futurs Rédemptoristes. Le P. Mathias Doamba, d'origine burkinabè, après un séjour à Niamey, a été séduit par le charisme des missionnaires rédemptoristes. Il fera son noviciat<sup>140</sup> en 1986 à Zinder avec l'équipe en place et en 1987 il émettra sa première profession religieuse. Il sera ordonné prêtre en 1992 et deviendra ainsi le premier rédemptoriste africain de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Des jeunes vont suivre ses pas. Les maisons communes de formation des deux Vice-Provinces seront érigées à Ouagadougou

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<sup>140</sup> C'est le P. Michel Defourd qui assurera le rôle de maître de novice.

et à Fada N’Gourma. À Ouagadougou, la première expérience débutera d’abord à Gounghin sous la houlette de P. John O’Neill<sup>141</sup> puis transplantée à Dassasgho où les Pères André Oriol et John O’Neill insuffleront aux jeunes la joie d’être Rédemptoriste. C’était en 1991. Depuis cette date, la maison a formé des générations de Rédemptoristes et a même donné naissance à la maison de Kossogê abritant les étudiants en cycle de philosophie.

Désormais, il faut regarder l’avenir avec beaucoup d’espérance. Les structures sont mises en place. Des secrétariats à la formation, à la vie apostolique, justice et paix, économique, régulent la vie de la Vice-Province.

#### CONCLUSION GÉNÉRALE

Le Christ après sa Résurrection dit à ses disciples: «Vous serez alors mes témoins à Jérusalem, dans toute la Judée et la Samarie, et jusqu’aux extrémités de la terre» (Ac 1,8). Ainsi nous assistons à un grand mouvement des congrégations religieuses qui, déjà amorcé au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, connaîtra son apogée au XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Plus que jamais, l’aventure missionnaire des Instituts religieux atteindra un tel degré d’intensité dans l’exploration des terres inconnues en vue d’y porter le message de la Bonne Nouvelle, c’est-à-dire l’Évangile du Christ. La Congrégation à laquelle appartiennent les Rédemptoristes ne restera pas en marge de cette ferveur missionnaire. Fondée en vue de la mission, elle étendra

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<sup>141</sup> Missionnaire rédemptoriste originaire de l’Australie, le P. John O’Neill, s’est porté volontaire pour aider la Vice-Province de Fada N’Gourma. Ce désir est né de la rencontre avec le P. Noël Wickers lors d’une réunion des rédemptoristes en Irlande, en 1985, au sujet des nouveaux statuts de la Congrégation des CSsR. Profitant de cette rencontre, le P. Wickers fit une intervention remarquable dans le but de demander des volontaires pour la Vice-Province de Fada N’Gourma. Aussitôt après, le P. John se mit en contact avec le P. Lasso en ce moment consultant à la Curie générale. Il était volontaire! Il foule le sol du Burkina Faso le 6 janvier 1986, accueilli par le Fr. Maurice Froc et le Vice-Provincial, le P. Philippe Coudreau. Il servit d’abord à Manni avant de rejoindre les communautés de formation sises à Gounghin (1988-1992), Saint Gérard (1992-1994), le Noviciat Saint Alphonse (1996-2000), Tampouy (2001-2002), de nouveau Saint Gérard (2002-2006) et Saint Jean-Neuman (2006-2007). Il quittera la Vice-Province pour son Australie natale le 8 octobre suite à des problèmes de santé.



ses ramifications jusque dans la colonie du Niger, en Afrique Subsaharienne.

Une sagesse africaine enseigne que «pour savoir où on va, il faut se souvenir de là où on vient». Elle rejoint cet autre proverbe *gulmancema* qui affirme: «nous sommes les héritiers de nos prédécesseurs, les collaborateurs de nos contemporains et la providence de ceux qui naîtront». En d'autres termes, la jeune génération des Rédemptoristes de ce XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle ne saurait faire fi de l'expérience des aînés, ces missionnaires de la première heure. C'est en s'appropriant et en assimilant leur courage que la nouvelle génération rédemptoriste sera à mesure de continuer l'œuvre d'évangélisation au cœur du monde et dans les structures diocésaines qui l'accueillent. Nous touchons ici l'objectif visé par cette étude sur la mission des Rédemptoristes dans l'espace Burkina-Niger, entre 1946 et 1996. Il s'agissait de prendre conscience de la nécessité de connaître ses racines en revisitant le passé, en investiguant sur le patrimoine missionnaire afin de mieux comprendre et apprécier tout l'héritage qui a été légué en vue d'une lecture toujours renouvelée de la mission.

Cette recherche étendue sur un demi-siècle nous aura permis de remarquer que la mission obéit elle aussi à la loi générale de la nature qui exige un temps de naissance et de croissance. Tout a pris naissance grâce à Mgr Constant Quillard, qui depuis 1936, entreprit, avec la bénédiction de son Supérieur Provincial, des contacts pour une éventuelle installation des Rédemptoristes au Niger. Ce qui adviendra effectivement en 1946. Comme nous l'avons souligné au début de notre recherche, les Rédemptoristes ne sont pas arrivés sur un terrain missionnaire inexploré. À leur arrivée, Niamey était déjà érigé en Préfecture Apostolique sous la juridiction des Missions Africaines de Lyon, et Mgr Faroud en était le Préfet Apostolique.

C'est ainsi qu'après une année et demie d'apprentissage missionnaire auprès des SMA, le Souverain Pontife, le 13 mai 1948, confiait aux Rédemptoristes la nouvelle Préfecture de Niamey qui comprenait tout le territoire du Niger, plus les Cercles de Fada N'Gourma et de Dori. Le 15 juillet 1948, le P. Constant Quillard de la Province de Lyon recevait sa nomination en tant que Préfet Apostolique, tandis que Mgr Faroud devenait Préfet apostolique de Parakou avec le Haut Dahomey comme territoire.

Dès 1948, des renforts arrivaient assez régulièrement de la Province de Lyon et de la Province de Paris. L'activité missionnaire dans la Préfecture Apostolique connaît une telle intensité qu'elle sera divisée en deux districts en 1950 pour permettre un meilleur accompagnement de la chrétienté naissante et également insuffler plus de régularité dans l'observance de la vie religieuse rédemptoriste. Le District de Niamey comprenait cinq postes avec 2.220.000 habitants, dont environ 500.000 de la religion traditionnelle, le reste étant musulmans. Le district de Fada N'Gourma comptait 220.000 habitants dans le Cercle de Fada en majorité adepte de la religion traditionnelle et 112.000 habitants dans le Cercle de Dori, tous musulmans.

C'est à travers cette marche lente mais sûre de l'évangélisation qu'interviendront des événements marquants de la vie de la Préfecture Apostolique de Niamey. Il s'agit d'abord de la création de la Préfecture Apostolique de Fada N'Gourma en 1959, suivie en 1960 de la création de deux Vice-Provinces (Niamey et Fada) et enfin en 1961, nous assistons à la création du diocèse de Niamey et en 1964 à celle du diocèse de Fada N'Gourma.

Depuis 1996, le nombre de missionnaire allant décroissant et avec l'arrivée de prêtres autochtones (pour Fada), les Rédemptoristes tentent de se regrouper pour former de vraies communautés en vue de la mission spécifiquement rédemptoriste. Il faut souligner qu'en se lançant dans cette grande aventure tracée par le vent de la mission entreprise partout en Afrique, ils ont donné la priorité à la fondation des postes de mission. Ce qui les a amenés souvent à ne vivre qu'à deux, parfois même seuls en dépit de leur statut de religieux appelés à la vie communautaire. C'est en 1996 que les deux Vice-Provinces, Niamey et Fada N'Gourma se regrouperont pour former la nouvelle Vice-Province Burkina-Niger, scellant ainsi l'unité de 1946.

En jetant un regard rétrospectif sur la mission des Rédemptoristes entre 1946 et 1996, il résulte que le Burkina-Niger aura accueilli environ quatre-vingt-dix-sept missionnaires provenant de plusieurs pays dont la France, l'Espagne, la Suisse, la Pologne, l'Australie, le Mexique et le Porto Rico. Aujourd'hui, de ce grand groupe, il ne reste que neuf qui continuent l'aventure missionnaire auprès des Rédemptoristes africains dont le nombre ne

cesse de croître. En suivant l'évolution, on se rend compte qu'au bout d'un demi-siècle de présence, seulement six africains ont rejoint l'équipe des Rédemptoristes. Cette situation, il ne faut pas l'oublier, est liée à la politique missionnaire de l'époque, comme nous l'avons souligné dans notre étude qui encourageait plus la formation d'un clergé autochtone. Ce n'est qu'en 1987 que les Rédemptoristes songeront à accueillir des jeunes désirant expérimenter leur vie religieuse.

Commencée il y a cinquante, la mission des Rédemptoristes dans l'espace Burkina-Niger loin d'être révolue doit continuer à atteindre ces nombreuses populations qui attendent que la Bonne Nouvelle leur soit annoncée. C'est dire qu'au-delà de cette histoire missionnaire, se profile à l'horizon une invitation à aller au large. Car, si aujourd'hui, nous sommes en mesure de parler de mission rédemptoriste, c'est parce que d'autres avant ont su mener à bien au milieu de circonstances ecclésiales variées, la mission que Jésus a confiée à son Église: «Allez dans le monde entier, proclamez l'Évangile» (Mc 16,5).

#### RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur se propose de retracer les cinquante premières années de la mission que les Rédemptoristes de Lyon et de Paris ont fondée au Niger et au Burkina Faso. Gloire est d'abord rendue au pionnier le P. Constant Quillard qui mettra dix ans pour introduire les Rédemptoristes dans ces pays, sans froisser les Missions Africaines de Lyon qui y étaient déjà. Au départ, les deux Provinces de Lyon et Paris unirent les efforts en envoyant chacune un certain nombre de missionnaires. Puis la *Propaganda Fide* sépara cet immense territoire, chaque Province recevant une partie bien délimitée. Près de quarante ans plus tard, la roue de l'histoire tournant, les autorités supérieures créèrent à nouveau une seule vice-Province du Burkina Niger. L'auteur rend hommage aux quatre-vingt-dix-sept missionnaires Rédemptoristes qui ont œuvré là-bas (dont neuf y sont encore), et non seulement des Français, mais aussi des Espagnols, des Suisses, des Polonais, des Portoricains, même un Mexicain, un Australien un Québécois.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Verfasser zeichnet die ersten fünfzig Jahre der von den Redemptoristen der Provinzen von Lyon und Paris in Niger und in Burkina Faso begründeten Mission nach. Besondere Anerkennung zollt er dabei dem Pionier P. Constant Quillard, der sich zehn Jahre lang bemühte, die Redemptoristen in diesen Ländern einzuführen, jedoch ohne die Tätigkeit der Weißen Väter von Lyon, die dort schon seit längerer Zeit wirkten, in irgend einer Weise zu beeinträchtigen. Von Beginn an vereinigten die Provinzen von Lyon und Paris ihre Kräfte, indem jede der beiden eine gewisse Anzahl von Missionaren in das Missionsgebiet schickte. Nachdem dann die römische Kongregation für die Glaubensverbreitung (*de propaganda Fide*) dieses riesige Gebiet aufteilte, wurde jeder Provinz ein genau umschriebener Bereich zugewiesen. Etwa vierzig Jahre später jedoch wurden beide Bereiche in der Vizeprovinz Burkina-Niger wieder zusammengelegt. Der Verfasser würdigt die Tätigkeit von 97 Redemptoristen-Missionaren in dieser afrikanischen Mission (heute arbeiten dort noch neun Missionare), und es sind nicht nur Franzosen, sondern auch Spanier, Polen, Portorikaner, dazu ein Missionar aus Mexiko, ein aus Australien e ein anderer aus Québec (Kanada).

GILBERT A. ENDERLE, C.SS.R.

LOUIS F. GILLET (1813-1892),  
REDEMPTORIST IN IMMIGRANT AMERICA,  
FOUNDER OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS, CISTERCIAN MONK (\*)

*AN OVERVIEW*

The year 2013 marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Louis Florent Gillet, Frontier Redemptorist missionary in America, founder of a major group of Religious Sisters, and eventually a beloved Cistercian Monk.

Technically he came into the world a French subject. For when he was born in Antwerp on January 13, 1813, Napoleon's empire still reached into the Low Countries. Belgium was still seventeen years away from realizing independence.

Gillet was the eighth novice in the history of the Redemptorists of Belgium. In 1843, when he had been professed for eight years and ordained for five, he was chosen to serve in the mission of America. There, as his many confrères were ministering to *German* immigrants, Gillet's explicit dream was for the Redemptorists to have a "French foundation." With the blessing of superiors, he saw this dream come to life in the state of Michigan, in the upper portion of the midwestern United States. But the foundation had a short lifespan. Huge misunderstandings between Gillet and his Redemptorist superiors developed, but not before he had founded (or co-founded)<sup>1</sup> the distinguished group of women religious who continue to this day. After more misun-

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(\*) This article represents, in digest form, the complete biography of Father Louis Gillet: Gilbert Ahr ENDERLE, *I Desire to be Everywhere, Louis Florent Gillet, Frontier Missionary, Founder, and Contemplative Monk*, OSP/IHM Board of Directors, Monroe, Michigan 2012, 550 pp.

<sup>1</sup> It may well be that *cofounded* is the more correct term, as Gillet and Sister Theresa Maxis Duchemin depended much on one another in establishing the community of Sisters. In fact, the term *cofounded* is the more common usage.

derstandings, in 1850 he was officially dismissed from the Redemptorists, although his dismissal, in his mind, was not finally confirmed until January 1855.

By 1858 he was accepted into a new group of Cistercian monks in France. Among them he was a revered member, holding a number of important posts, including Abbot of the famous Hautecombe monastery in the Savoy region of France where he died in 1892. Only one year before his death he learned that the Sisters whom he began in Michigan in 1845 were now a large, well-known group of American educators.

### *Back to beginnings*

Louis was the son of Florent Gillet and Barbara Mercier. He was baptized in Antwerp's St. Anthony Church on the day of his birth, January 12, 1813, and then he lived in Antwerp until the Gillets moved to an *area* called Neutral Moresnet, close to the intersection of today's Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands. Moresnet was a tiny wedge of disputed land, desirable because of its large zinc deposits. Declared "neutral" by an 1815 international agreement, it offered employment to many, and this may have been what attracted the Gillet family. The date of their move to Moresnet is uncertain, but it is definite that when Louis Gillet was nine, his only sibling, Anne-Catherine, was born there on April 23, 1822.

The earliest indication of Louis Gillet's schooling comes from a letter by him in which he indicates that at the age of fifteen he was a student in Liège, in his native Belgium.<sup>2</sup> According to the current educational system, he would have been pursuing the study of languages, history, and rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> The first verified academic

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<sup>2</sup> Gillet to Leonard Poilvache, Feb. 11, 1848, original in AGHR, Gillet Dossier; Gillet says he and Francis Poilvache were students together in Liège seventeen years previously. – It is believed that this was at the *Royal Collège/l'Athénée* of Liège. The basis for this belief is an original but unsigned two-page letter in French in AGHR, Gillet Dossier, which provide a number of reminiscences about the Poilvache family and "Matthias" Poilvache (the name used by the family for Francis) in particular. It states that "Matthias" studied first at the "college de Vise, ensuite à l'Athénée de Liège."

<sup>3</sup> This system is basically what is followed in Belgium to this day.

records of Gillet discovered to date, however, are from the *Petit Séminaire* (preparatory seminary) of the Liège diocese at Rolduc.

Studying with Gillet at the Rolduc seminary was a young man named Francis Poilvache who had also been a fellow student of Louis Gillet in Liège.<sup>4</sup> During a retreat in 1833 at Rolduc these two young seminarians were introduced to the Redemptorists in the person of Father Joseph Berset.<sup>5</sup> They were so much impressed that they decided that they wanted to be members of these missionaries founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori.

September of 1834 found Gillet and Poilvache entering the Redemptorist community located in St. Trond, Belgium. After a few weeks of an introductory postulancy, they were invested with the Redemptorist habit along with two other candidates. Then began their official year as novices, which was not to be a wholly pleasant experience. The novice director was also superior of the entire community of about thirty, which, besides the novices, included several active parish mission preachers, philosophy and theology students along with their instructors, a handful of Redemptorists recently exiled from Portugal, and several support staff. The St. Trond building (a former Franciscan monastery) was undergoing renovations for which there were not enough funds. The novice master, Johann Baptist Pilat, was much in demand as a preacher and confessor, and so was often absent from the community. Also, during this year Gillet's friend Francis Poilvache became seriously ill.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Matthias François Poilvache, b. Jan. 27, 1812 at Eben Emal near Liège; prof. Sept. 04, 1835; ord. July 03, 1842, d. Jan. 27, 1848. Among friends he was called "Père François" but his family used his baptismal name of Matthias.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Berset, b. Nov. 11, 1794; prof. May 18, 1818; ord. Mar. 25, 1819. Some authors say, without reference, that Berset was accompanied on this retreat by Father Frederick De Held. Joseph WUEST, *Annales Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris, Provinciae Americanae*, Typis Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris, Ilchester, Maryland 1903, Vol. I, 207. Hereinafter this multi-volume work will be indicated as J. WUEST, *Annales*, followed by the pertinent volume number and page.

<sup>6</sup> Poilvache's illness was so serious that he was allowed to make an "early profession" of vows after only ten months and sixteen days of novitiate. The illness, in effect, put Poilvache and Gillet on different "time-tracks" for the rest of their seminary days. It would not be until 1843 when, after Poilvache's delayed priestly ordination, the two friends would be really together again as

This disjointed situation called for a Visitation by Father Joseph Passerat, the superior of all Redemptorists north of the Alps. Opting to name a new novice master, Passerat chose Father Alois Dobisch, aged only twenty-five, who immediately and thereafter clashed with Father Pilat, who was retained as rector of the St. Trond community.

Such was the turmoil during the novitiate year of Louis Gillet. But due notice must be taken of the fact that, as a whole, the Belgian Redemptorists were themselves still in the early stages of their history and development. It would take some time for them to grow into the vibrant part of the Congregation they eventually would be.

Following his profession of vows as a Redemptorist on October 20, 1835, Gillet moved from the novitiate to the student section, or division, of St. Trond as he again pursued the study of theology. Suddenly, however, the St. Trond stage of his academic life came to an end. On Christmas Day, 1835, a stunning announcement was made to the community. A new student residence had been purchased. It was a former Capuchin monastery in Wittem, about forty miles to the east of St. Trond in the province of Limburg.<sup>7</sup>

On January 12, 1836, Gillet was among the group of fourteen Redemptorists who set out on the historic forty-mile trek to their new home. Several who were ill went by carriage; the rest had to plod the whole distance on foot, in one day. Heavy rains, winter cold, and a forced detour at the Meuse River in Maastricht were just some of their trials en route.<sup>8</sup>

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confrères and companions.

<sup>7</sup> The village of Wittem in 1835 was in Belgium. By the 1839 Treaty of London, it was to pass over into the Netherlands. To be noted is that in St. Trond, Gillet had his first acquaintance with two famous Redemptorists, Victor Dechamps and Bernard Hafkenscheid. The former taught him Scripture and theology and later became Cardinal Primate of Belgium. The latter would be his mentor in the preaching ministry in Tournai, and his conflictual superior in the American mission.

<sup>8</sup> A full description of this famously hard trip is in AGHR, *Chronica Provinciae et Collegiorum, Provincia Belgica*, Vol. I, 170-174; see also Jean BECO, "Les Rédemptoristes en Belgique, Les Débuts, 1ere partie, in: *SHCSR* 55 (2007) 35f.



Nevertheless, this was a remarkable group of Redemptorists. Some of Gillet's companions were: Father Alexander Czvitkovicz, slated as the first rector of Wittem and a future superior of the American mission; Father Michael Heilig, a future provincial of Belgium, 1848-1851; Father Marc Andreas Hugues, who was to translate St. Alphonsus' works into German; and Father Gabriel Rumpler, who would also serve with distinction in America.

Although the Wittem house was in a run-down condition, the students resumed classes just one week after their arrival. Louis Gillet continued his study of theology and related subjects there until 1838. His ordination to the priesthood came on March 10, 1838, in the Cathedral of St. Paul in Liège, the ordaining prelate being Bishop Cornelius van Bommel, a great friend of the Redemptorists.<sup>9</sup> Gillet's longtime companion, Francis Poilvache, meanwhile, had suffered periodic bouts of illness. He was at last able to join the others at Wittem in the summer of 1836, but would not be ordained until July 3, 1842.

*The young priest Louis Florent Gillet*

After his ordination, Gillet still had to complete several months of theology at Wittem. Then on September 13, 1838, he left for what was to be a short six-month assignment in Liège, at the Redemptorist Church of Ste-Catherine.<sup>10</sup> The house chronicles of Ste-Catherine mention no ministries in which Gillet took part during his stay. However, from a letter of Father Frederick De Held, superior in Liège, we learn that Gillet received permission in 1838 "to help in preaching parish missions" even though he was short of the requisite age of thirty for such ministry. This permission had one condition, namely that Gillet would not be "employed to hear women's confessions."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the same day three other Redemptorists were ordained with Gillet: Gabriel Rumpler, Marc Andreas Hugues, and Joseph Arnold.

<sup>10</sup> It was not until 1839 that the Redemptorists took up residence at Liège's Church of the Immaculate Conception on Hors Chateau where they would remain for the next 125 years.

<sup>11</sup> Passerat to De Held, Dec. 16, 1838, original in Redemptorist Archives, Köln; photocopy AGHR 30060001,83868. According to a long-standing Redemptorist custom, the months which followed soon after ordination were

On March 21, 1839, the young Gillet was transferred some 100 miles to the west, to the Redemptorist house in Tournai, Belgium. At this picturesque location, on the bank of the River Scheldt (or, in French, *Escaut*), he was to have a rich experience as a preacher of parish missions and retreats.

Detailed information is lacking about these missions and retreats which he preached in the next four years.<sup>12</sup> But fortunately there is a basic listing of where and when this missionary work took place. It is an impressive list, and even more impressive is the high quality of older Redemptorists with whom he labored. One of them was Father Joseph Berset who had inspired Gillet's vocation back at the Rolduc seminary. Another was Father John Kaltenbach,<sup>13</sup> who had known and loved the Redemptorist Saint Clement Hofbauer when the latter headed the Redemptorist community in Triberg, Kaltenbach's native place in Germany's Black Forest.

One of Louis Gillet's last missionary efforts while in Tournai had to have been a special joy. His schoolmate and friend, Francis Poilvache, who was now in better health, came to be a member of the Tournai community in early November 1842.<sup>14</sup> Soon, in January 1843, the two of them were teamed together for a parish mission near Tournai, January 23 until February 3. Within a year's time they would be conducting similar missions together in far-off America.

#### *The call to the American frontier*

At this time, the dynamic Redemptorist Father Alexander Czvitkovicz was working with his customary vigor to gather missionaries for America. This excellent religious, as mentioned, had been superior of the band who trekked to Wittem in early 1836,

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usually used by a new priest to compose his mission and retreat sermons under the direction of an older missionary.

<sup>12</sup> During World War II, May 22-24, 1940, air strikes during the Battle of Tournai, destroyed many valuable records of the Redemptorist community.

<sup>13</sup> Johann Baptist Kaltenbach, b. June 30, 1791; prof. Sept. 20, 1813; ord. Sept. 19, 1814, d. Dec. 19, 1875.

<sup>14</sup> Poilvache, having dealt with persistent health issues, had finally been ordained priest on July 3, 1842.

and then served as the new seminary's first rector. Now, seven years later he had been appointed vicegerent in America.

Czvitkovicz's personal diary entry for March 30, 1843, contains these succinct words, "Fathers Gillet and Poilvache got ready for the voyage to America."<sup>15</sup> It seems that Czvitkovicz had actually asked for Gillet and *another Redemptorist* named Peter Renand,<sup>16</sup> and, for some unknown reason, Renand did not join the group bound for America. But Father Francis Poilvache did, perhaps as a late substitute for Renand.

Whatever the case, Louis Gillet and Poilvache were soon in London after a short trip from Belgium across the Strait of Dover. On Easter Tuesday, April 18, they, along with Czvitkovicz and four more of his newly-recruited Redemptorists, went aboard the three-masted packet ship *Philadelphia* which was docked on the River Thames. That afternoon the ship weighed anchor and was towed down to the Thames Estuary at the North Sea, and soon the passengers were in the English Channel, bound westward for their American destination, New York City.<sup>17</sup>

Father Czvitkovicz had decided that the Redemptorists would be "cabin passengers" rather than among the people who paid the lowest fare and traveled in "steerage class." Czvitkovicz had personally witnessed, and in his diary described, the pitiful, crowded conditions of steerage which he had seen on a previous trip in 1841, concluding that "Decency would not have permitted a priest to room in this compartment."<sup>18</sup>

Delays caused at times by storms, and at other times by contrary wind conditions, lengthened their journey to four weeks and two days, with arrival in New York being on May 18, 1843.

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<sup>15</sup> Diary of Alexander CZVITKOVICZ, within Joseph WUEST, *Annales Supplementum ad I, II, III*, 448. This separate volume is part of the multi-volume series of J. WUEST, as indicated in FN 5 above. Hereinafter this supplemental volume will be indicated simply as J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, with pertinent *Pars* (I or II), and page numbers.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Passerat to Frederick De Held, Feb. 18, 1843. Original in Redemptorist Archives, Köln. Photocopy AGHR, 30060001,84312.

<sup>17</sup> Diary of A. CZVITKOVICZ, within J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars I, 449-450.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

*Gillet preaching a mission within days*

One of the missionaries, Father Peter Cronenberg was immediately assigned by the American superior Czvitkovicz to be the assistant of Father Gabriel Rumpler, the Redemptorist pastor at the German parish of St. Nicholas in New York. Father Gillet, however, within days made contact with a French community at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Lower Manhattan Island and was given permission immediately to conduct a mission there. This was a historic event, being the first-ever Redemptorist mission preached in the city of New York.<sup>19</sup>

*On to Baltimore, Maryland*

It is unclear exactly when Gillet traveled south about one-hundred and ninety miles to the city of Baltimore, Maryland. But just four weeks after his arrival in America, he was listed on June 19, 1843, as one of the guests at the birthday observance of the rector of the Baltimore's St. Mary Seminary.<sup>20</sup> This may have well been an enjoyable gathering for Gillet, as most of the other guests could speak French. But, in general, his brief stay in Baltimore in the summer of 1843 was, at best, a mixed experience. The least pleasant part of his weeks in Baltimore was his interaction with the German-speaking Redemptorists at their residence, then located at the Church of St. James, Aisquith and Eager Streets. A few months later he would write back to Belgium, "I have no further inclination whatever to reside in a German house, as I did in Baltimore; I would rather return to Europe."<sup>21</sup> One must note, however, that at St. James there were then present some outstanding Redemptorists, among whom was

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<sup>19</sup> J. WUEST, *Annales* I, 445.

<sup>20</sup> Thus the Diary of Louis Deluol, S.S., the St. Mary Seminary Rector, under date of June 19, 1843. This diary is found in the Deluol Papers, Associated Archives of St. Mary's Seminary and University, 5400 Roland Ave., Baltimore, MD, 21219, USA.

<sup>21</sup> Gillet to De Held, Oct. 12, 1843, as quoted in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars I, 488. Gillet's aversion to Germans was not just a matter of language. In fact, he could communicate in German and later ministered to Germans in their native language in Michigan.

Father Francis Xavier Seelos (now declared *Blessed Francis Seelos* in the Church calendar) who made his profession of vows at St. James on July 16, 1843.<sup>22</sup>

Very gratifying and noteworthy among Gillet's 1843 Baltimore experiences was his coming to know the sixteen Oblate Sisters of Providence. They had been founded in 1829 and their distinction was, and is, that they were the first American congregation of women religious of African descent. Their early growth had been slow partly due to the prejudice and racial tensions surrounding them as they served the African-American Baltimore community, especially the French-speaking refugees from the slave revolts in Haiti (1793-1810). They were delighted when Gillet celebrated Mass and preached for them in French.

Among these Sisters of Providence was, significantly, Sister Theresa Maxis Duchemin. This woman of deep faith, gifted intelligence, and strength of personality was to figure prominently into Gillet's missionary experience in the State of Michigan.

#### *Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere and the call to Michigan*

The Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, attended by the bishops of the United States and other invited clergy, had concluded on May 21, 1843, when Father Louis Gillet had barely landed in New York. Afterwards, in order to attend to various business matters, certain bishops remained in Baltimore and among these was Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere of Detroit, Michigan, a frontier diocese with few priests.

Strangely, Lefevere and Gillet previously had become acquainted with one another in Tournai when, during 1841, Lefevere had been to his native Belgium for a rest, and shortly after the day when he had learned of his appointment to be a bishop in Detroit.<sup>23</sup> And, according to Lefevere, he and Gillet had at that

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<sup>22</sup> Other members of the community were Fathers Joseph Helmprecht, Joseph Mueller, Albert Schaeffler, Joseph Glaunach (the novice master), and Brother Louis Kenning.

<sup>23</sup> This meeting is attested in Lefevere to Alexander Czvitkovicz, Mar. 6, 1844, to be found in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Detroit, Letterbook of Bishop Lefevere.

time made unspecified “reciprocal promises.” Whatever the nature of these promises, they most likely included a general agreement that Gillet might perhaps one day serve in Lefevere’s diocese in America. Now their meeting face to face in Baltimore fleshed out that possibility and made it a reality.

Surely Father Gillet would have first needed the approval of his superior, Father Alexander Cvitkovicz, in order to go off as a missionary to Michigan which lay far to the west of Baltimore. Apparently the permission was forthcoming, for on or about July 20, 1843, Bishop Lefevere and Gillet were on their way to Michigan. The route they followed first took them north by train to New York City, and onward by a Hudson River steamer to Albany, New York. From there they went west to Buffalo, New York, possibly by horse-drawn canal boat. And the last portion of their trip was by steamboat across Lake Erie to Detroit. This necessarily indirect route covered almost 1000 miles and required ten days. Gillet was so impressed by the two days and two nights on Lake Erie that he exclaimed, “...it is a veritable sea. And still, all of that massive stretch is fresh water.”<sup>24</sup>

#### *Early days in the Diocese of Detroit*

Once in Detroit Father Gillet was housed in the rectory next to Old St. Anne’s Church which then served as the diocesan cathedral. (Accustomed to the grand cathedrals of Europe, Gillet referred to St. Anne’s as *la pauvre cathédral de Détroit*). Already two days after his arrival, he presided at the funeral of an infant, Catherine Tromblé, who had lived only eleven days from birth.<sup>25</sup> Then within only five days of his arrival, he had enlisted the vicar general of the diocese, Father Peter Kindekins to team with him in preaching a parish mission not far from Detroit in Grosse Pointe which they began on August 6.

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<sup>24</sup> Details from Gillet to Frederick De Held, Oct. 12, 1843. The original of this letter cannot be located. But it is quoted in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplémentum* I, and also in Pierre KERSTEN, ed., *Journal Historique et Littéraire*, Liège, Vol. X, février, 1847, 487-494.

<sup>25</sup> Old St. Anne Church, Detroit, burial records, under date of Aug. 3, 1843.

The anchor point of this mission was the small chapel of St. Paul, “five steps away from Lake St. Clair,” and in the opposite direction was “the forest inhabited by bear and wolves.”<sup>26</sup> The Catholics who lived in this huge area north of Detroit had been without priestly ministry for so long that the mission involved instructing children for First Communion, blessing marriages, and arranging baptisms of many young folk (some as old as seventeen). Somewhat stunned, Gillet said this was “completely new for [him as] a European.”<sup>27</sup>

From this, his first Redemptorist mission in Michigan, there eventually ensued a distinct, providential grace. The St. Paul Chapel was located on property farmed by the Renauld family. The twenty-one year-old daughter of this family, Theresa, told Father Gillet of her desire to dedicate her life to God. Within two years she was among the founding members of the religious sisters he established; and later a second Renauld daughter, Isabelle, followed her.<sup>28</sup>

After the Grosse Pointe mission, Gillet and Kindekens moved more than a hundred miles farther north, in the area of Saginaw Bay. In two different locations they engaged in basic evangelization, discovering adult French-speaking believers who had never experienced Reconciliation or Eucharist.<sup>29</sup> Before the frigid winter set in, there was also time to minister at an encampment of a thousand members of the Native American Chippewa tribe. This ministry met with only limited results, but Gillet left a fascinating, vivid description of these people and their way of life “among deer, wolves, bears, and rattlesnakes.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Gillet to De Held, Oct. 12, 1843. Cf. our FN 24 above. To be noted is that Grosse Pointe, Michigan, is nowadays (2013) a beautiful suburb of Detroit, and St. Paul’s continues as a most distinguished parish community.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Sister Rosalita KELLY, I.H.M., *No Greater Service, the History of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan* : Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 1945, 55-58, and 760, FN 32. In religious life, the younger Renauld sister was called Sister Celestine, and her elder sibling, Sister Frances. Hereinafter, this work will be cited as R. KELLY, *No Greater Service*.

<sup>29</sup> Gillet to De Held, Oct. 12, 1843. Cf. our FN 24 above.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Back at the pro-cathedral of St. Anne, Father Gillet settled into somewhat routine parish work for several weeks. But then in December, with the arrival in Detroit of Father Francis Poilvache,<sup>31</sup> the two long-time friends began a mission at St. Anne's on December 16. Bishop Lefevre himself announced this mission beforehand, and then was himself present for it. On the opening night the prelate symbolically "commissioned" the two preachers by placing stoles on their shoulders, and later assisted by spending long hours in a confessional.<sup>32</sup>

In the early months of 1844 the burial and marriage records of St. Anne Church show that Gillet continued to be busy in parish ministry in Detroit. But he was also involved in his first experience of "circuit riding." That is, these same records show that he traveled with some frequency to outlying districts both north and south of Detroit.

*Monroe, Michigan: a Redemptorist French-language foundation begins*

Bishop Lefevre liked what he saw of Redemptorist ministry. By early March 1844 he was petitioning the Redemptorist American superior, Father Alexander Cvitkovicz, for "a permanent house of your Order... because there would be missions to give everywhere." The bishop mentioned that the city of Monroe, some forty miles south of Detroit and "the most important place after Detroit," seemed suitable for this foundation.<sup>33</sup>

Consultations and serious negotiations moved swiftly, for within three months the foundation came to be, indeed in Monroe, at the church of St. Antoine, or St. Anthony.<sup>34</sup> On June 16,

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<sup>31</sup> Poilvache had first been sent to Rochester, New York, but having no ability in German, he was not fit to serve there. See J. WUEST, *Annales* I, 137.

<sup>32</sup> This mission is described in length in Pierre KERSTEN, *Journal Historique et Littéraire*, XI (1843), 102-103.

<sup>33</sup> Bishop Peter Paul Lefevre to Alexander Czvitkovicz, March 6, 1844, Archives of Archdiocese of Detroit, Letterbook of Bishop Lefevre.

<sup>34</sup> St. Antoine was a historic parish dating back to 1788; some of its previous pastors were Father Gabriel Richard (co-founder of the University of Michigan and the first priest to serve in the U.S. Congress); also, Father Stephen Badin, the first priest ordained in the U.S.A., and donor of the land on



1844, all official parties gathered to sign the contract. Father Louis F. Gillet was authorized to act for the Redemptorists, and added below his signature, “Superior of the Redemptorists at Monroe,” a confirmation that by now he officially held this office. Most amazing about this contract was that its validity was to be for “the space of three-hundred years.”<sup>35</sup>

The first parishioners of St. Antoine’s in the late 1700s have been described as happy-go-lucky French-speaking people from Canada who lived from day to day. But in the 1800s Irish and German immigrants were added to the local population, and gradually substantial homes stood in place of the log cabins of earlier days. The city of Monroe in the 1840s knew a relative prosperity along with a fair number of respected merchants and educated professionals.<sup>36</sup>

The ministry assigned to Gillet and Poilvache was not only within Monroe, but stretched in three directions as much as one-hundred miles. In general, Father Poilvache cared for the French-speaking Monroe parish, and Gillet went out to nine mission stations in which the necessary languages were French, German, and English. Already capable in the first two languages, Father Gillet soon learned and ministered in English. He traveled either by horse or by horse-drawn buggy.

And yet many Catholics remained without proper pastoral care. To his European superior, Frederick De Held, Gillet wrote in 1845, “I desire to be everywhere – when I think of so many people in need.”<sup>37</sup>

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which is built Notre Dame (Indiana) University, and Francis V. Badin, brother to Stephen, who also was a well-known frontier missionary in America.

<sup>35</sup> Copies of this contract can be found in various archives, two notable ones being the Archives of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Monroe, MI, (these archives hereinafter cited as IHM Archives Monroe) and the Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province (these archives hereinafter cited as RABP).

<sup>36</sup> Descriptions of the people and their environment in early Monroe can be found in Ghislaine PIETERS BARTOLO, and Lynn WAYBRIGHT REAUME, *The Cross Leads Generations On, A Bicentennial Retrospect, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Formerly Known as St. Antoine at the River Raisin, Monroe, Michigan*, Custombook, Inc., Tappan, NY 1988. Also, Craig E. and Kimberly A. HUTCHINSON, *Monroe, the Early Years*, Charleston, South Carolina, et alibi: Arcadia 2004, 97.

<sup>37</sup> Gillet to Frederick De Held, April 13, 1845; see our FN 24 above.

*A strategic trip back to the East Coast of the U.S.A.*

In July of 1844 Father Gillet found it necessary to travel back east. He went to New York City in search of (and eventually finding) a shipment of valuable goods from Belgium. It had lain abandoned in a corner of a government customs office. Days later, after the trip south to Philadelphia, he was a witness to the famous 1844 religious riots in which Catholic churches were set afire. When leaving Philadelphia for Baltimore, fearing an attack from “nativists,” he chose not to dress as a priest and instead used a white coat as part of his disguise.

The main purpose of this trip back east was to have his recent contract negotiations ratified by his vice-gerent Czvitkovicz. But, in addition to finding his lost shipping crate of goods, other notable benefits came his way. In Baltimore he was able to have serious talks with Sister Theresa Maxis Duchemin and Sister Ann Shaaff of the Oblate Sisters of Providence about joining him in Michigan to begin a school for girls. Also, he convinced a Philadelphia Redemptorist, Father Louis Cartuyvels, to return with him in order to oversee a building project he had in mind.

*Building projects in Monroe*

The project contemplated by Father Gillet at first was simply to have a decent residence for a Redemptorist community. In itself, this was a rather major undertaking. But it seems that, at the instigation of Father Cartuyvels, this one project grew into two. Soon they were busy also with enlarging the parish church. This endeavor called for the addition of a new sanctuary and altar area at the north end of the former worship space. Thus the pew area for the parishioners could be greater—better able to accommodate a congregation that had grown with the advent of the Redemptorists.

With the help of Cartuyvels and much volunteer labor, everything progressed so well that in a little over a year, plans could be made for a grand day of blessing and dedication.

This day came on December 8, 1845. Bishop Lefevere agreed to preside at the occasion, with a number of diocesan priests at-

tending and with one of their number, Casimir Mouret, being chosen to preach with his booming voice. With his usual flare for ceremony, Gillet arranged to have a long banner unfurled from the church tower as the bells pealed and cannon shots echoed over the immense crowd that had gathered. In all it was a six-hour ceremony as the bishop consecrated the church and blessed the new Redemptorist house under the title and protection of St. Joseph. And there seems to have been no objection to Gillet's renaming of the church; it was no longer St. Antoine—but St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>38</sup>

*The religious sisters are founded at Monroe*

Even before the two building projects had gotten underway, Father Gillet was determined to offer Christian education in the Monroe parish, something that for him was a matter of conscience. Toward this end, as already seen, when he was in Baltimore in 1844, he had serious conversations with two women religious, both of them belonging to the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Theresa Maxis Duchemin and Charlotte Shaaff. At the time they tentatively expressed a desire to join him in far-off Michigan.

Suddenly in late summer 1845 “Mother” Theresa (as she was later to be known), became convinced that it was the Will of God that she go to Michigan. With the consent of her confessor, and carrying his letters of recommendation, she set out on the ten-day trip, arriving on September 17. The first thing she did was to write back to Baltimore that Sister Ann Shaaff should follow her. Sister Ann agreed to do so immediately, and by mid-October she had arrived.

This precipitate action on the part of Mother Theresa seems to have delighted Father Gillet, and it also took him by surprise. The new Redemptorist house was not yet finished. He was in charge of St. Mary's parish and nine outstations. He had no firm

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<sup>38</sup> Gillet to Frederick De Held, January 27, 1846. The original letter cannot be located; it is quoted in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars I, 506ff; also, it was published in Liège in Pierre KERSTEN, ed., *Journal Historique et Littéraire*, vol. XIII, mai, 1846, 10ff. (A full set of this journal is in the Accademia Alfonsiana library, Via Merulana, 31, 00185, Roma, Italia).

financial resources. And now he had to provide for two additional personnel and also be serious about starting up a school.

By God's Providence everything fell into place. The Redemptorists moved into their unfinished building. The two sisters, after being temporarily housed by a generous married couple of the parish, moved into the primitive log cabins vacated by the priests. On November 9 a third member of the "sisters' community" arrived; this was Theresa Renauld from the Grosse Pointe family where Fathers Gillet and Kindekins had preached their inaugural Michigan mission in August 1843. Completely fluent in English and French, the intrepid Mother Theresa flew wholeheartedly into laying plans for a girls school. On Christmas Day the local newspaper gave notice of a new "Young Ladies Academy," due to open on January 15, 1846.

Meanwhile Father Louis Gillet, on November 10, with the approval of Bishop Lefevere, had proceeded formally to "establish" the two religious sisters from Baltimore and Theresa Renauld, their novice. He created a ritual for this occasion, resting a stole on the shoulder of each, which to the three pioneers signified cooperation in the work of the Church.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the thirty-two year-old Redemptorist Father Louis Florent Gillet launched one of the most outstanding congregations of Women Religious in the United States. First known as the *Sisters of Providence*, some two years later they opted to be known as *Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*.

#### *A growing community and ministry in Monroe*

Within a year Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere of Detroit named Father Gillet as the delegated "Director" of the sisters, meaning that the Redemptorist had certain discretionary jurisdiction regarding the nascent community of sisters and that he would

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<sup>39</sup> R. KELLY, *No Greater Service*, 58, drawing also on Sister Celestine RE-NAULD, *Historical Chronology of the Beginning of Our Community*, (unpaged ms), to be found in the Archives of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 610 West Elm Ave., Monroe, MI, 48162. Hereinafter these archives will be cited IHM Archives Monroe.

“take care and provide for it.”<sup>40</sup> Whenever possible he gave them a weekly spiritual “conference” (or sermon on their life as women religious) and provided liturgies for them.

Gillet also continued to conduct parish missions, sometimes teaming with Father Poilvache, and, of course, he had responsibility for the Redemptorist community, which itself was growing. Their new building had been built large enough to serve as a formation center for prospective members. Several young men came as “Brother Candidates,” aiming to profess vows but not aspiring to priestly ordination. Records show that only one of these Brothers persevered. In 1846, however, a third Redemptorist priest, Father Simon Sänderl, came to Monroe and was an outstanding addition in the year and a half he was in Michigan.<sup>41</sup> Because of his language abilities Sänderl was able to care especially for Germans and the (English-speaking) Irish in the large territory embraced by the Monroe parish. (The further story of Father Sänderl will be taken up later).

As for the sisters, their number increased by one in April of 1846 when the young widow, Mrs. Josette Godfroy-Smith, joined them. Although she was to be their last applicant for three years, the sisters could give thanks that their little school for girls had taken firm root with forty pupils—and then had the joy of beginning the school’s second year with an enrollment of eighty.

*The year 1847 began well, and then...*

Besides the success of the “The Young Ladies Academy,” St. Mary’s Parish and its outlying mission stations were being served well as the first weeks of 1847 advanced. Nevertheless, one concern tugged at the mind of Father Louis Gillet: the sisters needed better accommodations for themselves and for their

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<sup>40</sup> Peter Paul Lefevere to Mother Theresa M. Duchemin, December 6, 1846. Original in IHM Archives Monroe.

<sup>41</sup> Simon Sänderl, b. Sept. 30, 1800; ord. May 28, 1825; prof. July 18, 1829; he had been the first superior of the Redemptorist mission to America in 1832. Fluent in his native German, and in English, he had also mastered Chippewa and ministered among this Native American tribe. His Chippewa dictionary and his sermons in that language remain in RABP, Special Collections.

teaching. He had already been refused financial help from the Redemptorists at their Baltimore headquarters. "No more debts" was the constant refrain coming out of Europe from Father Frederick De Held, the provincial in Liège, Belgium.

Nonetheless, Gillet knew that he had to have funds, and he looked in the direction of New Orleans, Louisiana, at that time the third largest city in the nation. It had a thriving economy, a large Catholic population, and was where clergymen often turned when in need. With an invitation from Bishop Antoine Blanc to conduct a series of Lenten sermons in his New Orleans Cathedral of St. Louis, King of France, Gillet left Michigan for Louisiana in early February. His preaching was well received and he decided to remain "nearly two months" after Easter to oblige those who sought him as a confessor.

In May he returned north with \$835.00 and "thirteen large crates" filled with furnishings of all kinds. Later he wrote, "I was rich at that moment...the condition of the sisters was better...our Redemptorist house was finished. There remained for me only to enjoy in peace the realization of my plans." But he woefully concluded, "The consolation was not to be mine."<sup>42</sup>

Two unrelated, false accusations against Father Gillet occurred between July and September of 1847. The first was made by a woman parishioner, a Mrs. Livingston, who claimed that he had seduced her. She filed suit against him which came to public trial in Monroe on August 17. The verdict went against Mrs. Livingston when Gillet's defender caught her in a perjured statement that "[Gillet]conducted her into an adjoining room, of which there was none."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Louis F. GILLET, "Historical Account of the Founding of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary," page 5 of (unnumbered) original ms. in French. This original is preserved in the Archives of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters, Immaculata, PA. Hereinafter these archives will be cited as IHM Archives Immaculata.

<sup>43</sup> Letter of Simon Sänderl to Bishop Lefevre, August 17, 1847, University of Notre Dame Archives, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA, III-2-h-A.L.S. (Hereinafter these Archives cited as: UNDA). A number of people have made extensive searches for the trial records, all to no avail. There were two extensive fires in the Monroe County (Michigan) Court House, one in 1879 and another in 1992; these fires destroyed an unknown quantity of court records and the

Barely able to breathe in relief, a second false accusation came two weeks after his acquittal, originating from within his own Redemptorist community. This event was to end in Gillet's sudden and definitive removal from Monroe.

The basic facts, as recalled by Father Egidius Smulders who succeeded Gillet as Redemptorist superior in Monroe, were as follows: "[Father Gillet] was accused by F[ather Martin] Hasslinger to Rev. F[ather] Neumann of improper conduct with a widow woman, who swept the church. [Gillet] had sent away a novice and a postulant [of the Redemptorists]; these went to Detroit and F[ather] Hasslinger took their testimony and made most of circumstantial evidence. I was sent to replace [Gillet] and found him innocent. F[ather] G[illet] was a pure man and kept scrupulously our rules of modesty."<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, further details of the second false accusation against Gillet were sent by to Vienna by Father Hasslinger of Detroit. This priest was an Austrian Redemptorist practically unknown to Gillet. He was in Detroit in order to found a new Redemptorist house. The two "Redemptorist Brothers" who "reported to Hasslinger about the widow woman in Gillet's room" were a novice and a pre-novice or postulant. A portion of the Hasslinger report follows:

As regards the Brothers, on his authority [Gillet] had dismissed one of them on account of his constant fault-finding [which] caused bitterness in the [Monroe] house. Because I conditionally took this Brother in, Father Gillet conceived a deadly hatred of me... Later he took this Brother back, and shortly afterwards he threw him and another Brother headlong out of the house. He was guilty of imprudence in taking into his room a woman (she being about thirty-eight years old and usually swept the church) for the purpose of scrubbing his room, as he afterwards said. As

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Gillet trial records may well have been lost in these fires. – A strange twist to this story is that the "defense attorney," James B. Sheeran, was not an attorney at all, but a tailor. Furthermore, the very intelligent Sheeran, after his wife died, became a Redemptorist priest and a rather famous chaplain in the USA Civil War, 1861-1865. He later left the Redemptorists and died a diocesan priest in New Jersey.

<sup>44</sup> Egidius Smulders to Joseph Wuest, April 6, 1888. Original in RABP, SMULDERS, *Personalia*, reprinted in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 97.

there was already a suspicion in the house in this regard, the Brothers went to his door and sought to enter his room, but the door was locked. He opened it and drove them away, and soon afterwards he put them out of the house. That the woman was in his room, Father Gillet himself admitted to Father Sänderl. Whether there was ground for the suspicion, as they conceived the situation, cannot be proved to evidence... It would be a pity if he were to leave the Congregation; under good and firm guidance he could do much work; only the American freedom is somewhat dangerous for him...<sup>45</sup>

Two other incidents in September and October 1847 caused additional pain to Father Louis Gillet. One was that the Redemptorist authorities in Vienna had ordered another Visitation of the American Mission, only two years after a previous Visitation. They were concerned about several issues not to their liking. When the two Visitors, Fathers Martin Stark and Charles Kannamüller, came to Monroe they clashed with Gillet, who judged that Stark employed “merciless and unjust procedures” and “took steps by which [my] reputation in all of North America [was] called into question...on account simply of suspicion without sufficient proof.”<sup>46</sup> Whereas, about Kannamüller, who was specifically delegated to “investigate” Gillet, the Belgian provincial Frederick De Held commented later, “The choice of Father Kannamüller was unfortunate, and the procedure itself had to provoke Father Gillet, without its being able to produce anything good.”<sup>47</sup>

The other painful event was the September 1847 loss from

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<sup>45</sup> Martin Hasslinger to Joseph Passerat, Jan. 14, 1848. See Johannes NORDMANN, *Die Liguorianer! Ihre Constitution und Correspondenz*, von Lechner's Universitätsbuchhandlung, Wien 1849, 183-184. This rare Nordmann work constitutes an anthology of letters salvaged and published by revolutionaries who destroyed the Redemptorist archives of Vienna in 1848. What they saved was deemed savory evidence against “the Ultramontane Redemptorists,” this Hasslinger letter being a prime example. (Nordmann is most probably a pseudonym). The complete work can be found in the library of the Accademia Alfonsiana, as in our FN 38 above.

<sup>46</sup> Gillet to Nicolas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, AGHR, Baltimore Province, *Personalia*, Gillet dossier.

<sup>47</sup> Frederick De Held to John Neumann, Nov. 3, 1847. Original in RABP, Letters from Europe, Neumann Collection, Photocopy in AGHR, 30060001,84782, p. 3.



the Monroe community of Father Simon Sänderl. This loss was caused by a combination of misinformation and disillusionment. When Sänderl came in 1846, it was under a cloud of suspicion. He had been ousted from Baltimore by the local archbishop, Samuel Eccleston, over a difference of opinion. After working briefly in Canada, he was ordered by the Redemptorist vice-gerent Peter Czackert to report to Monroe by a given deadline. En route to Monroe, his horse fell on him and broke his leg, causing him to miss the deadline. In Baltimore Czackert, after learning that Sänderl was not yet in Monroe, angrily expelled him from the Redemptorists. The expulsion notice, which was probably invalid and illegal, had come to Gillet, and he quietly slipped it into a drawer, but eventually told Sänderl of it. This fine man, who had been the first superior of the American mission and an outstanding missionary, simply lost heart and departed from Monroe.<sup>48</sup>

Sometime in mid-October Father Louis Gillet left Monroe for the Redemptorist headquarters in Baltimore, to which location he had been summoned. His departure came after the arrival in Monroe of his young replacement, Father Egidius Smulders, and after he had decided to petition Pope Pius IX for a dispensation from his Redemptorist vows. The text of this petition has only rather recently been discovered in the Archives of Propaganda Fide in Rome.<sup>49</sup> It reveals the pain Gillet suffered at the time. In general he felt betrayed by his fellow Redemptorists who seemingly had no regard for “my very honorable life thus far as a priest of fourteen years.” This sense of betrayal extended even to his vice-provincial, Father (and, later, Saint) John Neumann who had suspended Gillet from all public ministry.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Father Simon Sänderl entered the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in the state of Kentucky in March 1852, professed vows there on Mar. 27, 1853, lived as a devout Cistercian Monk and died there on Feb. 22, 1879. See BOLAND, 334.

<sup>49</sup> Gillet to Pope Pius IX, Archives of Propaganda Fide, Rome, Scritt. Ref. Nei Congressi America Centrale, Vol. 14 (1845-1848), 610v. A copy of the original Latin is in possession of the author.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* – St. John Neumann, b. in Bohemia, Mar. 28, 1811; came to U.S.A. and ordained diocesan priest in New York City, June 25, 1836; met Redemptorists in New York State, and professed as Redemptorist, Jan. 16, 1842, first C.S.S.R. to be professed in America; became American superior of Redemp-

*Baltimore and New York: the beginning of years of wandering*

Father Gillet arrived in Baltimore sometime in the latter half of September 1847. It is reasonable to assume that he then had an interview with John Neumann. This would have given the vice-provincial an opportunity to hear Gillet's side of the story about what Martin Hasslinger had reported.

On October 24 Father Gabriel Rumpler, Gillet's ordination classmate, wrote to Father Neumann from Holy Redeemer Church in New York, "If you find that it is a good thing to do, send Rev. Fr. Gillet here. I am content with your stipulations."<sup>51</sup> Nothing can be found to explain these stipulations. But it seems clear that Gillet was still in Baltimore in late October, and that Neumann was willing to allow Gillet to reside in New York. Another important fact is that there is evidence that soon after arriving in Baltimore Father Gillet revoked his request for dispensation from his Redemptorist vows. This was probably soon after meeting with Neumann.<sup>52</sup>

The chronicles of the Redemptorist house in Baltimore do not even mention Gillet's presence, nor his departure, whereas the official roster of Holy Redeemer in New York, drawn up at the beginning of January 1848, states that Gillet was living in the community of Holy Redeemer, although apparently not active in any ministry.

While residing at Holy Redeemer in New York on East Third Street, Gillet received dreadful news. He learned of the sudden death of Father Francis Poilvache on February 11, 1847. This longtime friend, companion, and Redemptorist confrère had been stricken two weeks earlier in Monroe, Michigan, with spotted fever. He died in less than twelve hours. How much this death affected Gillet is evident from the poignant letter which he addressed back to Belgium, to Poilvache's father. In very tender terms he offered his condolences to the Poilvache family.<sup>53</sup>

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torists in 1847; chosen bishop of Philadelphia, 1852; died suddenly Jan. 5, 1860; beatified 1963 by Paul VI and canonized by same 1977.

<sup>51</sup> Gabriel Rumpler to John Neumann, Oct. 24, 1847, as found in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 170-171.

<sup>52</sup> Martin Stark to Frederick De Held, Jan. 10, 1848; original in Redemptorist Archives, Köln; photocopy in AGHR, 30060001,84804a, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> This original letter to the elder Poilvache is in AGHR, Baltimore Prov-

It is certain that Gillet remained in New York until at least mid-to-late March 1848.<sup>54</sup> After that there is no definite information of his whereabouts until September of 1848.<sup>55</sup> It was then that he preached a parish mission in the historic location of Kaskaskia, in southern Illinois. Teaming with him was a beloved diocesan priest of the area, Vital Van Cloostere, and a Vincentian, Father Angelo Gandolfo.

The Church of St. Mary's Immaculate Conception dated back to 1693, to a time when Kaskaskia was a flourishing trading post on the Mississippi River. In 1818 the town had even served briefly as the capital city of the state of Illinois. Now thirty years later, the parish still had hundreds of parishioners who flocked to the ten-day mission preached in both English and French. The closing on September 14 was in the ceremonious style of Father Gillet, as attested by an article that later appeared in New York's *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register*. Among other pageantry, eighty-men carried the mission cross meant to commemorate the event; at the top of the cross was a time capsule made of lead and containing a proclamation signed by church and civic officials.<sup>56</sup>

As a matter of fact, Father Gillet stayed at Kaskaskia during most of the month of September, and perhaps longer. His name appears in extant baptismal and marriage records as late as September 28, and in the official United States *Catholic Almanac, 1849*, which holds data gathered in 1848, "V. Rev. Father

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ince, *Personalia*, Gillet dossier, under date of Feb. 11, 1848. How the letter found its way to the AGHR in Rome cannot be explained.

<sup>54</sup> See Michael Heilig to John Neumann, Apr. 30, 1848, RABP, Letters from Europe; [photocopy is in AGHR, 07 X E 2721], this letter reads, in part, "Father Gillet has written me from New York." Given that a letter took four to six weeks to reach Europe, one can surmise that Gillet was still in New York in the latter weeks of March.

<sup>55</sup> Seven years later, in Gillet to Superior General Nicholas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, AGHR, Baltimore Province, Gillet dossier, Gillet made vague references to preaching at this time in Missouri, and to "the Indians in the North." But no further details have clearly surfaced.

<sup>56</sup> *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register*, Sept. 21, 1848, James Alphonsus McMASTER, editor, p. 6. – Other records of Gillet's ministry in Kaskaskia are found in the sacramental records located under various September 1848 dates in the Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Belleville, Illinois. Photocopies in possession of author.

*Louis*” is listed as the official priest in Kaskaskia. This could indicate that he was there earlier than September and at least into November, at the end of which month he went to New Orleans.

*Briefly in New Orleans*

Yellow Fever was raging in New Orleans. On the very day that Gillet and his team had begun the mission in Kaskaskia, the Redemptorist Father Peter Czackert died of the fever. He had been the vice-gerent superior in the American mission, immediately prior to the term of John Neumann. Then, to his delight, Czackert was able to return to New Orleans, where he had previously served. In the summer of 1848 he was day and night at the side of Yellow Fever victims, and then he was stricken himself, dying four days later. Meanwhile two other Redemptorists became ill.

Somehow word of the crisis reached Father Gillet, who agreed to go to New Orleans, arriving on November 26. The sacramental records of St. Mary’s Assumption show that he was active in this parish until his departure on December 23, 1848.

Research has not yielded the reason for Gillet’s leaving after only one month. But these were disturbed times for Redemptorists on both sides of the Atlantic. Revolutions sent shock waves through 1848 Europe, Redemptorist superiors in Vienna were driven into exile, and waves of this turmoil reached over to America. John Neumann’s status as the American superior was, for a time, in doubt, which led some of his subjects to claim that his decisions were invalid. Neumann repeatedly offered to resign and Michael Heilig, the new Belgian provincial, at one time suggested that would be a good idea. Then, hoping to stabilize matters in America, Heilig chose to replace Neumann with Father Bernard Hafkenschaid. This announcement of this man to be in the top leadership position in America would prove to be dire news in the life of Father Louis Gillet. Hafkenschaid arrived in New York on January 9, 1849.

*A meeting in St. Louis with Bernard Hafkenschaid*

Bernard Hafkenschaid (who now validly held the title of “vice-provincial of the American vice-province”) was a man who

faithfully kept a diary which has come down to us. It is only in this diary that we learn of a meeting between himself and Father Louis Gillet in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, some 680 miles north of New Orleans.<sup>57</sup> Gillet was very likely in St. Louis at this time to attend the episcopal ordination of James Oliver Van de Velde, on February 11, 1849. This Belgian Jesuit friend of Gillet had been chosen to be bishop of Chicago.<sup>58</sup> A story that surfaced only later was that, without Gillet's permission, Van de Velde had named Gillet to be his Vicar General in Chicago, an appointment immediately declined by Gillet when he learned of it.<sup>59</sup>

A later statement by Bernard Hafkenschied claimed that when he came to America he had a mind to "put an end to the affair of Father Gillet."<sup>60</sup> Beyond that general indication, no clue has been discovered as to specific discussions during his St. Louis meeting with Gillet. Moreover, there is a time lapse of about six weeks, until the end of March, in which the whereabouts of Father Gillet are not known.

*The critical meeting, Hafkenschied and Gillet, Philadelphia, March 25, 1849*

The second meeting of 1849 between Father Gillet and his American superior is problematic, the reason being that are three lengthy versions of what took place, two by Hafkenschied and the third by Gillet himself. As an introduction to these versions,

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<sup>57</sup> Diary of B. Hafkenschied, Jan. 8-Feb. 5: *Actes Authentiques de Bernard Hafkenschied*, original in AGHR, X-E, 07XE2732. Reprint in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 184-185. This meeting is mentioned under the diary entry of Jan. 26, 1849, but the meeting was probably around Feb. 5, judging from a letter written by Hafkenschied to all Redemptorists in America, and the heading on the letter states, "St. Louis, Feb. 5, 1849." See J. WUEST, *Annales*, Vol. II, 20-24.

<sup>58</sup> James Oliver Van de Velde, b. Apr. 3, 1875; prof. vows as a Jesuit, 1809; ord. priest Sept. 16, 1827; taught at Jesuits' University of St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, became its president 1840-1843; ordained bishop of Chicago in St. Louis, Feb. 11, 1849.

<sup>59</sup> Gillet to Nicholas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, AGHR, Baltimore Province *Personalia*, Gillet dossier.

<sup>60</sup> Hafkenschied to (Roman Consultor) Theodore Lelouchier, C.Ss.R., Dec. 22, 1855, AGHR, Province of Baltimore, *Personalia*, Gillet dossier.

we present the brief diary entry by Hafkenschaid for March 25, 1849. It reads: “Father Gilet [sic] arrived at Philadelphia. After a long and serious conversation I persuaded him to request from his superiors the dispensation from his vows, rather than be dismissed. He took up my proposal by a letter in his own hand and dated the same day.”

The first lengthy version of this Philadelphia meeting is a letter which Hafkenschaid wrote to Archbishop Peter R. Kenrick of St. Louis. It is full of superlatives, such as stating<sup>61</sup> that he is *fully convinced* that Gillet is *entirely changed* and his spirit of religious life is *extinguished*. Moreover, Hafkenschaid seems unctuous and patronizing about his own *long and fervent prayer* as he has advised Gillet to leave the Redemptorists *for his own happiness*. This letter to Kenrick was written in the hope that the archbishop would accept Gillet into his own archdiocese since he has convinced Gillet to seek a dispensation from Redemptorist vows, and he has consented. Most important in this letter to Kenrick was a statement, “... I can positively assure your Episcopal Grace, that...Father Lewis [sic]...by no means [can] be charged with any fault as would render any bishop unwilling to receive him into his diocese.”<sup>62</sup>

The second lengthy version, also by Hafkenschaid, was written seven and one-half years after the Philadelphia encounter (i.e., in December 1855); further, it was composed when Hafkenschaid was urging Roman authorities not to readmit Gillet into the Redemptorists. He stated to a member of the General Council in Rome that he had called Gillet *to Baltimore* in 1849, and gave him a chance to justify himself, which Gillet could not do. Moreover, Hafkenschaid claimed that he had used “a delicate approach,” urging Gillet to ask for a dispensation to ask for a dispensation from vows, and he agreed to do so.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Use of italics here is this author’s, not the emphasis of Hafkenschaid.

<sup>62</sup> Hafkenschaid to Archbishop [name not given, but internal evidence makes clear that it was Peter Richard Kenrick of St. Louis, Missouri], March 1849, as found in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 256-258. In this letter Hafkenschaid claims a long knowledge of Gillet and “I loved him always sincerely.” Yet he misspells both Louis Gillet’s baptismal name and surname as “Lewis Gilet.”

<sup>63</sup> Hafkenschaid to General Consultor Theodore Lelouchier, as in FN 59

The third version of the 1849 encounter between Gillet and Hafkenschaid was written in November 1855, and this is by Gillet himself. He said their discussion in Philadelphia began with a scolding by Hafkenschaid who said Gillet had lost his religious spirit when he had served in Chicago as the vicar general to Bishop Van de Velde. Gillet responded that the Jesuit bishop of Chicago had appointed him without his knowledge or consent, and he had rejected the role of vicar general immediately when he heard of it. Then Gillet said Hafkenschaid pressured him to request a dispensation from vows based on his delicate health—and Gillet refused outright. But the badgering continued, Hafkenschaid trying to get Gillet to ask for his dispensation—until, in a fit of indignation, Gillet agreed to do so. However, he reconsidered what he had done, and wrote a retraction that very night. The retraction was met with “a very discouraging and imprecise answer” from Hafkenschaid.<sup>64</sup>

Whatever the facts, Gillet was then ordered to Baltimore to be kept under observation by Hafkenschaid.<sup>65</sup> He remained not at Old St. James, but in the new Redemptorist residence at St. Alphonsus Parish, from April 13 until July 17, 1849. During this time he celebrated some liturgies for the Oblate Sisters of Providence, served as a chanter for liturgies during the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore, and had occasional visits with his Sulpician friend Father Louis Deluol, the president of St. Mary’s (Archdiocesan) Seminary.<sup>66</sup> But by mid-July Gillet went to Hafkenschaid and said, among other things, that he had to get away from Baltimore, that he could no longer live among Germans. In addition he maintained that he had been the “butt of daily humiliations,” and that his health was declining, as he alluded to the

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above. Hafkenschaid mistakenly says the meeting was *in Baltimore*; his own diary (see our FN 56 above) says it was in Philadelphia.

<sup>64</sup> Gillet to Superior General Nicholas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, as in our FN 46 above.

<sup>65</sup> Hafkenschaid to Theodore Lelouchier, as in FN 59 above.

<sup>66</sup> See *Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence*, Baltimore, s.d. Apr. 29, 1849. Also Peter GUILDAY, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore, (1791-1884)*, Macmillan, New York 1932, 156. Also, *Diary of Father Louis Deluol, S.S.*, Deluol Papers, Associated Archives, St. Mary Seminary and University, Baltimore, s.d. May 6, 1849.

“the advice and decision of three doctors.” In the end Hafkenschaid put conditions on his leaving: that he could not enter any Redemptorist house, but he could, if he wished, “take a congregation”; that he should write the vice-provincial from wherever he stayed, and return whenever called by Hafkenschaid.<sup>67</sup> – Thus began the final five and one-half years of Father Louis Gillet’s life in America.

*Mid-1849 until early 1855: Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ontario, and expulsion from the Redemptorists*

When Father Louis Gillet was in Monroe, Michigan, he had become friends with a French priest by the name of Louis Amadeus Rappe, who served a parish about twenty miles south of Monroe, in Toledo, Ohio. In 1847 Rappe was named the first bishop of Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>68</sup> After leaving Baltimore in the summer of 1849, it was to Rappe’s diocese that Gillet traveled. We cannot be certain of his date of arrival or of his length of stay. In fact, only indirectly do we know of Gillet’s presence in the small hamlet of Harrisburg, Ohio, this information being in a letter written by Father Louis de Goesbriand, Bishop Rappe’s vicar general. De Goesbriand makes mention of Gillet conducting missions in Harrisburg and elsewhere in the Cleveland diocese.<sup>69</sup>

After this interlude in the Cleveland diocese, Gillet can next be located serving in a region of western Ohio. However, before following him there, it must be noted that soon after his departure from Baltimore, the vice-provincial Hafkenschaid made his move to have Gillet expelled from the Redemptorists. On September 15, the Belgian provincial, Michael Heilig, at the request of Bernard Hafkenschaid, applied to the Redemptorist General Headquarters, then in Pagani, Italy, for Gillet’s expulsion.<sup>70</sup> Allow-

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<sup>67</sup> The details in this paragraph are based on two documents: Gillet to Superior General Mauron as in our FN 46 above; and, Bernard Hafkenschaid to Theodore Lelouchier, as in our FN 63 above.

<sup>68</sup> Louis Amadeus Rappe, b. Feb. 2, 1801; ord. priest Mar. 14, 1829; ord. bishop, Oct. 10, 1847; d. Sept. 8, 1877.

<sup>69</sup> Louis de Goesbriand to Bishop John B. Purcell, Jan. 8, 1850, UNDA, II-4-K.

<sup>70</sup> This formal request, Heilig to Vincenzo Trapanese, Sept. 15, 1849, is to be found in AGHR, 07 XII 3265. Trapanese at that time was vicar general of the Redemptorists, but was acting in the capacity of superior general, due to the



ing at least a month for a letter's America-to-Europe crossing, this means that Hafkenschied's move to expel Gillet ensued only three weeks, and perhaps less, after Gillet's departure. The dismissal from the Redemptorists was issued on January 8, 1850, but for more than five years Gillet was steadfast in saying that while in America he never received official notice of dismissal.<sup>71</sup>

Having applied for permission to minister in the Cincinnati, Ohio, diocese, Father Gillet was accepted by the bishop of Cincinnati, John Baptist Purcell, who sent him to serve the French-speaking people in Darke and Shelby Counties, a district of farms, forests and swamps. On Christmas Eve 1850 he made first contact with Father Louis Navarron, a humble and dedicated man who had singlehandedly cared for the Catholics of that area for a number of years. Navarron directed Gillet to a hamlet sometimes called Frenchtown, and at other times Champagne, where there was a small log church. As a kind of introduction, within days of his arrival he preached a well-received mission for the people.

About six months after Gillet's arrival, Father Navarron, whose health was not good, was transferred to a new location closer to Cincinnati. Gillet was now responsible for all the Catholics in Darke and Shelby counties. He continued, however, to use Frenchtown as his base of operation, and enlisted the help of the people to enlarge Holy Family Church and also to build a rectory.<sup>72</sup> Farther to the east, in Shelby County, it is certain that he did a certain amount of circuit riding, caring for a community of faithful in Newport (on the Miami-Erie Canal),<sup>73</sup> and very likely at St. Remy Church in a town named Russia.

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serious illness of Superior General Giancamillo Ripoli. Ripoli soon died and Trapanese was shortly thereafter declared superior general by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. See BOLAND, 393.

<sup>71</sup> In Hafkenschied's diary he said he sent the notice to "Park County, Ohio" whereas Gillet was in Darke County. This may well have caused the expulsion notice to go astray.

<sup>72</sup> Gillet to Bishop Purcell, undated, but internal evidence places the date as May 31, 1850, or early June, UNDA, II-4-k-A.L.S. – This rectory, or priest's residence, in Frenchtown, though much renovated through more than a century and a half, is still standing in 2013.

<sup>73</sup> This is attested by Fielding LUCAS, Jr., ed., *The Catholic Almanac*, Baltimore, 1851 and 1852 editions.

Gillet continued in this area of western Ohio until at least March 1852. His departure, however, leaves one with a rather mysterious set of facts. His last ministry in the Holy Family Church records in Frenchtown indicate that he conducted a funeral there on March 2, 1852. Thereafter all Holy Family records were entered by his priest-successor, Father Arnold Pinkers.<sup>74</sup> However, we also have a letter written by Gillet to Bishop John Baptist Purcell on the following June 21 saying that he had left Frenchtown three weeks before. He added that he was now staying with a private family in Piqua, Ohio, and that soon there was “a long journey” lying before him (to where he does not say). Also, he had to sell his horse, buggy, and some personal items to pay for the journey. Moreover, he had been robbed of “sixty dollars property” and the people of Frenchtown had not paid him all of their promised support. Furthermore, he was “expecting dayly (sic) letters about [his] destination.”<sup>75</sup>

Then, by late summer of 1852 it is clear that Father Gillet was in Fort Wayne, Indiana, only 150 miles north of Piqua, Ohio, from where he had written his June 1852 letter. So it is not likely that this was the “long journey” which he had anticipated. He lived at the Church of St. Augustine in Fort Wayne according to the 1853 *Catholic Almanac*. However a search of sacramental records in what is now the Fort Wayne diocese show that he ministered in the village of Hessen Cassel, Indiana, at St. Joseph Church in mid-September of 1852.<sup>76</sup> Significantly he signed the records as “P. Louis, C.Ss.R.”, (the C.Ss.R. indicating his bonafide Redemptorist status). Seeming he truly thought he was still a Redemptorist even two and one-half years after he had technically been expelled. Probably Gillet was in the Fort Wayne area

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<sup>74</sup> Sacramental records of Holy Family, Frenchtown, now preserved at St. Denis Church, Versailles, Ohio. See also, “History of St. Denis, Versailles” a ms. preserved at St. Denis, Versailles, OH, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Gillet to Archbishop Purcell, June 21, 1852, UNDA, II-4-1-A.L.S. Cincinnati had become an archdiocese on July 19, 1850; hence, Purcell was now an archbishop.

<sup>76</sup> Microfilm records, Fort Wayne Diocesan Archives, 915 Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the reel containing the sacramental records of St. Joseph Church, Hessen Cassel, IN. See baptismal records, s.d. Sept. 11, 1852, and marriage records, s.d. Sept. 16, 1852.

only six months at most, from September until sometime in February 1853.

Only rather recently (in 2007) has it come to light that in the late winter of 1853 Father Gillet “gave a try” to the contemplative life of a monk. This previously unknown information can be found in a letter preserved in the archives of the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. The author of the letter was Bishop Jean Marie Odin of the Diocese of Texas. After first telling of a letter which he had received from Father Gillet, Odin reported on March 11, 1853, to his friend Bishop Antoine Blanc of New Orleans, Louisiana: “Recently he gave the life of the Trappists a try, but he could not bear up under their regimen.”<sup>77</sup> Odin was seeking Blanc’s opinion of Gillet, saying that, after finding the Trappist “regimen” too difficult, Gillet was thinking of working somewhere in the huge expanse of Texas, in the mid-southwestern United States. (No evidence has surfaced to indicate whether Blanc recommended Gillet or not, nor that Gillet ever went to Texas). As for the “Trappists,” they were almost surely those at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, fifty miles south of Louisville, Kentucky, where the former Redemptorist, Father Simon Sänderl, had been accepted and was soon to make his profession of vows.<sup>78</sup>

Gillet next sought ministry in the Archdiocese of New York. At least this can be gleaned from a letter of Bernard Hafkenschaid to Archbishop John J. Hughes dated May 8, 1853. The Redemptorist vice-provincial warns Hughes that, although expelled, Gillet continues to present himself as a Redemptorist. Hafkenschaid claims Gillet does this in bad faith. Yet, he has no objection to “his being incorporated” into the New York diocese. More importantly the American superior says, “Did he (Gillet) receive [his expulsion notice] I cannot decide.” This is contrary

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<sup>77</sup> Bishop Jean Marie Odin to Archbishop Antoine Blanc, March 11, 1853, UNDA, VI-I-e-A.L.S.

<sup>78</sup> It can be noted that there were other Trappists in North America, but at distant locations in Nova Scotia and Iowa, and Gillet had no connections with either group. Moreover, a search in the archival records of Gethsemani yielded no mention of Gillet’s brief stay, but an archivist in 2008 explained that record keeping was not as precise in those years as it was later on.

to what Hafkenschaid would formally avow two years later to his Redemptorist Superior General Nicholas Mauron, "It is impossible that Gillet was ignorant of his formal exclusion from the Congregation." No evidence has been found that Gillet was ever accepted for ministry in New York.<sup>79</sup>

The last place within the United States where Father Gillet sought to serve was in the diocese of Albany, New York. He had written such a request to Albany's Bishop John McCloskey, who in turn wrote to Archbishop Purcell in Cincinnati on May 23, 1853, asking Purcell's opinion.<sup>80</sup> It is apparent that nothing came of Gillet's request to exercise priestly ministry in the Albany diocese.

However, he was soon welcomed across the border in Canada, into the diocese of Kingston, Ontario. In his own words, "I accepted the offer of the Bishop of Kingston. He appointed me Head of his seminary and teacher of theology. I held the post for nearly a year."<sup>81</sup> In 2007 permission was granted the author of this article to search the Kingston archdiocesan archives for any evidence of Gillet's presence. After hours of searching, in a financial account book of Regiopolis (Seminary) College there appeared a notice from February 1854 of payment having been made to Father Gillet: 12 pounds, 10 shillings, and no pence. The entry was confirmed as being the handwriting of Bishop Patrick Phelan, Administrator of the diocese. Later, in the baptismal registry of Kingston's Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and recorded in the unmistakable handwriting and signature of Father Gillet, it was found that he had baptized two children, one in October, and another in November, 1853.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Hafkenschaid to Bishop John J. Hughes, May 8, 1853, handwritten copy in RAPB, Gillet, *Personalia*; and Gillet to Nicholas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, as in our FN 46 above.

<sup>80</sup> Bishop John McCloskey to Archbishop John B. Purcell, May 23, 1853, UNDA, II-4-1-A.L.S.

<sup>81</sup> Gillet to Nicholas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, as in our FN 46 above.

<sup>82</sup> In the Public Library of Kingston a volume was discovered which spoke, sadly, of the old seminary records of Regiopolis College, stating that they "...were lost or destroyed, apparently around 1890, when alterations were being made to the old building." See Lt. Col. L.J. FLYNN, *At School in Kingston 1850-1973*, Tercentenary Project Kingston, Ontario 1973, 23-25. Hence no academic records exist from the one year of Gillet's stay.

Louis Gillet was to spend about five months more in North America. But definite information on how he was occupied, or where he spent those final months has not been discovered.

*Return to Europe in 1855, and his petition for reinstatement*

Sometime in January 1855 Father Louis Gillet returned to Europe. He was now forty-two years old. His intention was “to hear something definite on his situation” which, presumably, meant his status as a Redemptorist.

First he went to visit his seventy-four year-old mother. Then he went to see the Redemptorists at Liège, among whom was Father Frederick De Held who brought him up to date on Redemptorist events. There was a kind of interregnum at that time, with the election of a new superior general soon to take place.<sup>83</sup> In the meantime, on the advice of the bishop of Liège, Father Gillet agreed to serve for some months as a parish priest near Liège. When the time seemed right, on November 29, 1855, Gillet wrote his petition for readmission into the Redemptorists (as he was now rather sure that he had been dismissed, even though he had received no document as proof). As noted earlier, this petition was addressed to the new superior general, Nicholas Mauron.

Within about five weeks, he received word that his petition had been denied. Mauron had sought the counsel of Bernard Hafkenschied, whom he knew personally, and Hafkenschied wrote a very condemnatory, negative opinion about Father Gillet. The main reason which Mauron ultimately gave (for denial of readmittance), through his consultor Theodore Lelouchier, was that “[Gillet] had knowledge of his exclusion [from the Congregation] and that he had behaved accordingly.” The decision was rendered *in absentia*. Hafkenschied’s condemnation of Gillet as having a “false and lying spirit,” “drinking quantities of brandy,” and being “insolent,”<sup>84</sup> won the day. Of course such condemnation stood in great contrast to what Hafkenschied had once written to St. Louis Archbishop Kenrick, that “I can positively assure

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<sup>83</sup> Gillet to Nicholas Mauron, Nov. 29, 1855, as in our FN 46 above.

<sup>84</sup> Bernard Hafkenschied to Theodore Lelouchier, as in FN 59 above.

your Episcopal Grace, that...Father Lewis [sic]...by no means can be charged with any fault as would render any bishop unwilling to receive him into his diocese.”<sup>85</sup>

*A new life, 1856-1858: parish priest in France and a sea voyage*

Upon receipt of the decision of Superior General Mauron, Father Louis Gillet accepted that his life as a Redemptorist was over. He then turned to Bishop Paul de Garsignies in the diocese of Soissons-Laon, France, who was in need of French-speaking clergy. Garsignies assigned him to the care of two small villages, Bièvres and Chérêt, in a farming district some eighty-five miles northeast of Paris. He remained there until the beginning of 1858. Other than relatively few records of his ministry in these places, there is only one other certain detail about this time of his life, namely, his preaching during the Lenten season at the stately Cathedral of Notre Dame in Laon. The commentary on his preaching is that he spoke “with startling and eloquent success.”<sup>86</sup>

After leaving the Soissons-Laon diocese, Gillet, for whatever reason, went on an extended sea voyage. In 1891 he wrote succinctly of that trip, “...then I left for South America, passing through Africa, ...a voyage of four entire months on the ocean.”<sup>87</sup> What prompted this trip no one knows. Conjecture may prompt that his long voyage was a kind of discernment and preparation for what was his next step in life.

*A novice at Sénanque, and then a move to Fontfroide, near Spain*

At the end of his voyage, having returned northward, he disembarked at the French seaport of Lorient and then traveled some six-hundred miles to southeastern France, to Avignon. Here

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<sup>85</sup> Bernard Hafkenschied to Archbishop [Peter Richard Kenrick], as in FN 62 above.

<sup>86</sup> Father Marie-Symphorien GAILLEMIN, C.I.C., “*Relatio circa vitam P. Gillet*,” as found in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 101.

<sup>87</sup> “*Notice sur l’origine de la Congrégation...*,” p. 5, to be found in translation as “Historical Account of the Origin of the Congregation of Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary...” in Sister Maria ALMA, C.I.M., *The Reverend Louis Florent Gillet, His Life, Letters and Conferences*, Dolphin, Philadelphia 1946, 131ff; this brief citation, p. 138. The Original French of this document is in the IHM Archives Immaculata.

he met with Archbishop Jean-Marie Debelay who urged him to go where God was calling him. Shortly thereafter he was received as a novice into a very new branch of the Cistercian Order at Sénanque, not far from Avignon.<sup>88</sup> This group, as he had learned, was “a little less austere than the Trappists,” and, because he was accepted immediately, it may be argued that he had some kind of previous contact with these Cistercians.

As a Cistercian novice, Louis Florent Gillet took on a new name; for the rest of his days he was to be known as *Père Marie-Célestin*. He remained at Sénanque for one year and a few days. Then, after his profession of religious vows on September 8, 1859, two days later he made his way to the Abbey of Fontfroide, which was located in western France, only seventy-five miles north of the Spanish border.

His new home at Fontfroide was actually a collection of buildings dating back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was situated on twelve-hundred acres of land, most of it uncultivated. Conditions were difficult, hard labor was the order of the day. As a small accommodation to the forty-six year-old Father Marie-Célestin Gillet, he was assigned to bring the food cart to the fields for the noon meal. Only after a few years did things begin physically to improve when the order was growing and a number of younger monks were being sent to Fontfroide.<sup>89</sup>

*Living and dying at Hautecombe monastery, Savoy region of France*

In May 1864 Father Marie-Célestin experienced another major change in his life. He was chosen to be among the founding group who moved into the historic monastery of Hautecombe, whose existence could be traced back to the year 1137. Overlooking Lake Bourget in the Savoy region of southeastern France, this beautifully located monastery had known a turbulent history

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> These details are from Sister R. Kelly, *No Greater Service*, 189, 191, quoting the biography of Edouard CAPELLE, *Un moine, le père Jean, abbé de Fontfroide*, Victor Retaux, Paris 1903, 173. This outstanding priest, *Le Père Jean [Leonard]*, was superior of Fontfroide during Gillet's stay there.

during the region's revolutions and power-grabs by various political entities. For a time the monastery even served as a pottery factory. But its church was also well-known as the burial place of Counts and Dukes of the Family of Savoy, and the 1815 Treaty of Vienna finally restored Hautecombe to that noble family. With Vatican approval and that of King Victor Emmanuel II (whose lineage was of the Family of Savoy), an 1862 decree then handed over Hautecombe to Gillet's order of Cistercians.<sup>90</sup>

Between 1864 and 1891, Gillet served his monastery as Secretary, Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Novice Master (twice), Sub-prior, and Prior. During these years he was allowed to make several trips outside the monastery.<sup>91</sup>

One of these trips was in 1866 to visit his mother in Louvain, Belgium, and this instance deserves special mention. While in Louvain he met a priest who was from Monroe, Michigan, in the United States of America. The priest spoke of the community of women religious in Monroe and said that it has spread far and wide. Gillet was surprised, but in his own words written later in 1891 he remarked, "Thinking [they] were all Americans, and did not know me, I remained in silence." It is clear that Father Marie-Célestin Gillet did not fully grasp the identity of this priest whom he had met. He was none other than Father Edward Joos whom Bishop Lefevere had appointed as diocesan director of the Sisters whom Gillet had begun in 1845. Perhaps his confusion was compounded by the fact that in 1847 the Sisters had changed their name from *Sisters of Providence*, to *Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Anonymous, *The Abbé of Hautecombe, Savoy-France*, Hautecombe, Monastery Publication, St. Pierre de Curtille: Fondation d'Hautecombe, n.d., 2-4. See also, *The New Britannica Encyclopedia, Micropedia*, Vol. VIII, 15th ed., Benton, Chicago, etc., 1974, 930-932, s.v. "Savoy," and "House of Savoy."

<sup>91</sup> Cistercian Father Marie-Symphorien Gaillemain to Mother Mary de Chantal Hayes, I.H.M., December [no day], 1892, original in IHM Archives Immaculata; translation found in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 99-104. – Other details are from Marie-Célestin Gillet to "Very Reverend Mother" [M. de Chantal Hayes, I.H.M.], Feb. 9, 1891, and to Sister Clotilde Rouillot, May 4, 1891; originals in IHM Archives Immaculata.

<sup>92</sup> Father Marie-Célestin Gillet to "Very Reverend Mother [de Chantal Hayes]", Feb. 9, 1891. Original in IHM Archives Immaculata.



Another trip outside of his Hautecombe monastery by Father Marie-Célestin involved his own sibling, Anne-Catherine. In 1866 she had left the Sisters of Charity in St. Trond, Belgium, in order to become a contemplative Cistercian. And her new Cistercian Community, in which she took the name of Sister Marie-Célestine, was “the women’s branch” of her brother’s “less austere” Cistercian Order. It had been founded in 1865 in southern France by the same monk who had begun the men’s group, namely, Père Marie-Bernard Barnoin. When it came time for her simple profession of Cistercian vows in 1868, her brother came to the convent in the town of Mane in order to preach for the occasion and then remained to conduct a retreat for the entire community.<sup>93</sup>

From April 1875 until October 1876 Gillet was again with his sister’s community of Cistercian nuns, this time at their new convent of Notre Dame de Prés in Reillane. He had received permission to serve as their chaplain for a period of eighteen months. This must have been a special joy for the two Gillet siblings since they had never had an extended experience of knowing one another as adults. Sadly, in less than a year after Father Gillet had served as the Cistercian nuns’ chaplain, Sister Marie-Célestine died of cancer, in late August 1877.<sup>94</sup>

Once back at Hautecombe, Gillet was appointed to serve as novice master; fifteen months later he was elected to be Sub-prior of the monastery. In office as Sub-prior for only five months, he was then elected at age sixty-five to succeed the Prior when the latter died. His term of office was marked with the pressure brought on by officials of France’s Third Republic which was intent on destroying religious congregations. Heavy taxes were placed on monasteries and convents and other measures were taken to impede the acceptance of new members.<sup>95</sup> In addition,

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<sup>93</sup> Annals of the Monastery of Notre-Dame des Prés, under date of February 19, 1868. Excerpts from these Annals are in copied form in the IHM Archives, Immaculata.

<sup>94</sup> Letter of Father Marie-Symphorien Gaillemain to Mother M. de Chantal Hayes, as in our FN 91 above; also Father Marie-Célestin Gillet to “Rev. Mother” of the Sisters of Charity of St. Trond, Belgium; a copy of the original is found in French, and an English translation, IHM Archives, Immaculata.

<sup>95</sup> Marie-Célestin Gillet to Sister Clotilde Rouillot, Dec. 20, 1891. Original in IHM Archives Immaculata.

a year after becoming Prior, Gillet suffered the loss of his mother who died in Namur, Belgium, at the age of ninety-eight.<sup>96</sup> After serving five years as Prior, he was again asked to serve as novice master in 1883 and remained in that role until 1889. It was during this time that Father Gillet conducted “numerous retreats of the [diocesan] clergy” at the Hautecombe monastery. About these retreats it was remarked, “It can truly be said that the direction of these retreats was, during his last years, his work of predilection.”<sup>97</sup>

*In early 1891, renewed contact with the sisters he founded*

In forty-four years Father Gillet had no personal contact with the women religious he had begun (along with Sister Theresa Maxis Duchemin) in Monroe, Michigan. How this contact was reestablished is a story which some would say was filled with marvelous convergence. Believers would say it was the working of God’s Providence. The basic details follow, starting in the region of Moselle in northeastern France.

As the Franco-Prussian war loomed to the east of Moselle, a convent of the Visitation Sisters had to close, its members scattered. But, before their dispersion, the former superior of that convent, Sister Clotilde Rouillot, promised her friend Sister Stanislaus that they would somehow faithfully manage to write one another. But, as Sister Clotilde fled from France, she carried with her a unique secret. Before she left France, she had gone to confession to St. John Vianney, the Curé of Ars, and the Curé, without knowing any of her background, told her about her future life. He had said that she would go to America, join another group of women religious who wore a blue habit, and they would be dedicated to *Marie Immaculée*.

And so it took place that Clotilde decided to take refuge in 1868 at her brother’s home in America. She came in contact with and was received into the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in Pennsylvania...whose habit was blue. Meanwhile her friend

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Letter of Very Rev. Marie-Symphorien Gaillemain to IHM Sisters, West Chester, Pennsylvania, December [no day specified], 1892. Original in IHM Archives, Immaculata, PA. See also J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 102.

Sister Stanislaus found her way to southern France and was received into the group of Cistercians nuns among whom was Father Gillet's sister.<sup>98</sup>

The two former Visitation Sisters, Clotilde and Stanislaus, as they had promised, wrote regularly to one another as some twenty years passed, with the name "*Père Gillet*" occasionally appearing in the letters from Sister Stanislaus. But it was not until May 1889 that those involved began to suspect that the true identity of this Cistercian "*Père Gillet*" in France – was the same as the "Father Louis Gillet" who had founded Sister Clotilde's American community in Monroe, Michigan.<sup>99</sup>

And here enters another Providential item of the story. Sister Clotilde's nephew in France (named *Père Césaire*) had entered the same Cistercians as Father Louis/Célestin Gillet. Sometime in January 1891 Sister Clotilde in Pennsylvania sent a packet to *Père Césaire*, her nephew, which contained a letter along with the December 25, 1890, issue of the *Michigan Catholic*<sup>100</sup>; this issue commemorated the 1845 founding in Monroe, Michigan, of the IHM Sisters community by "Father Louis." Clotilde requested that her nephew *Père Césaire* forward the packet to Hautecombe and to *Père Célestin Gillet*.

When the packet arrived, the elderly Gillet was puzzled. And then the truth dawned. In his return-letter he said, "I began to understand... I little thought that far away across the ocean there was still some remembrance of me... and that the little grain which I planted long ago, has produced a great tree under whose shadow numberless souls have been sheltered, have been saved!"<sup>101</sup>

In the same letter he was able to confirm that the story of the founding as told in the *Michigan Catholic* was accurate, and he began to reminisce about the first members of the Congregation, marveling that Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin was still

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<sup>98</sup> See Sister Maria ALMA, C.I.M., *Louis Florent Gillet*, as in our FN 87 above, 105-106.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107

<sup>100</sup> Marie-Célestin Gillet to "Very Reverend Mother [de Chantal Hayes]," Feb. 9, 1991, original in IHM Archives Immaculata.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

alive, aged eighty-one. He believed that the existence of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in the Church of the United States was God's work, while their "...remarkable expansion [was] a striking miracle and their life a lasting Apostleship."<sup>102</sup>

Not long after reestablishing contact with the IHM Sisters, *Père Célestin* acceded to their request to compose a history of their 1845 foundation in Michigan. It took him several months to complete the beautiful work, a treasured heritage-piece of the Sisters to this day. Although he gave it a long title in its original French, in English its reference is often simply "The Historical Account." In the final section of this account he spoke tenderly of his affection for the Sisters and asked a remembrance of him as his death approached. He signed it not "Father" – but "Brother [*Frère*] Marie-Célestin."<sup>103</sup>

#### *Father Gillet's final days*

When his "reunion" with the IHM Sisters took place in 1891, he was just past his seventy-eighth birthday and was the oldest among his congregation of Cistercians. He had been a Cistercian for over thirty-one years. Soon his health began to deteriorate and he was often confined to his room, especially in the winter. He was delighted in receiving letters from the sisters in America, but for some reason in a ten-month period no letters reached him, which puzzled him. In January 1892 he wrote that he believed his end was near. However, he survived into autumn when he wrote to Sister Clotilde about how the French government continued its harsh treatment of religious: "...everything opposes vocations, the military law, the infidel education offered to the young, the hatred of everything religious... God alone knows where it will end! ...How happy you are in the free land of America." But on a lighter note he remarked how he rejoiced to receive the updated, and finely bound, edition of the Constitutions of the Sisters, remarking how they were clearly based on the Rule of St. Alphonsus de Liguori and the Redemptorists.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> See our FN 42 above for a full reference of this "Historical Account."

<sup>104</sup> Père Célestin-Marie to Sister Clotilde, Sept. [no day], 1892, original

His final letter to the Sisters was composed on November 4, 1892, just ten days before his death, in which he said he was sending “my last Adieu,” begging them to remember “your father in Jesus Christ.”<sup>105</sup>

Death came on November 14. His burial was the next day in Hautecombe’s abbey cemetery, attended by friends, penitents, and many priests.<sup>106</sup>

#### *Homecoming to Monroe, Michigan*

The life story of Father Louis/Marie-Célestin Gillet would be incomplete if left simply with his funeral and burial. For he had the privilege of “a second burial,” or, perhaps, better to call it a *Homecoming*. This part of the story revolves around a very determined historian among the IHM Sisters in Monroe, Michigan, named Sister Rosalita Kelly. One day in 1926 she had the brilliant idea of writing to the Hautecombe monastery to see if any “personal effects” of Father Gillet remained, and she asked if the monks might donate these items. She had in mind any manuscripts, photographs of places he frequented in the monastery, articles he used—and, especially, a photograph of his grave. The first answer received from Cistercian Father Bernard Girardy was in some ways disappointing, for, as he pointed out Gillet had been deceased thirty-four years. (Later, however, Girardy did find and send many personal items owned or used by Gillet). As for a photo of the gravesite, he said he wanted first to give the grave a tidy appearance; then he would take a photograph and send it to Michigan. The encouraging aspect of Girardy’s letter was that its tone was quite cordial.<sup>107</sup>

Encouraged by this letter, Sister Rosalita pushed onward. With her superior’s permission, in July 1926, she dared to ask Father Girardy if the Monroe IHM Sisters might have *the remains of Father Gillet* – back in Monroe!

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in IHM Archives, Immaculata, PA.

<sup>105</sup> This letter of Nov. 4, 1892 was addressed not just to Sister Clotilde, but to “My very dear Sisters in Our Lord.” Original in IHM Archives Immaculata.

<sup>106</sup> Father Marie-Symphorien GAILLEMIN, C.I.C., “*Relatio circa vitam P. Gillet*,” as found in J. WUEST, *Annales Supplementum*, Pars II, 101.

<sup>107</sup> Bernard Girardy to Mother Domitilla [Donahue], Apr. 26, 1926, Archives IHM Monroe, RG 1:10:04, Box 4.

As it turned out, Father Girardy was facing, as Gillet had faced, problematic relationships between monasteries and the French government officials. He said he would try to get the necessary permits for an exhumation, but that he had to *be prudent, very prudent*. There was also a civil law about respecting the next of kin; moreover, Girardy said that *perhaps there were no remains, given soil conditions and the fact that monks were typically buried in soft pine boxes*.<sup>108</sup>

Undaunted, Sister Rosalita built a strong argument that, as Gillet lacked any relatives (which was true), his “next of kin” were 1200 IHM Sisters. Father Girardy’s approach with the French government involved a bit of a subterfuge. He waited until another elderly Cistercian died, and then gave orders to his workmen to exhume Gillet’s remains carefully and put them in another container. Then the workmen were to prepare the same spot for the burial of the recently deceased; thus the government officials would never know of the cunning “substitution.”<sup>109</sup>

A surprise came next: Father Gillet had been buried, providentially, not in soft pinewood, but in a hardwood casket (it was chestnut!). Under Girardy’s direction, some trustworthy colleagues carefully removed Gillet’s remains and then put them in the smaller container ready for shipment to Monroe, Michigan, U.S.A. All of this had been executed in stages. One of the final steps was then taken, owing to the genius of Sister Rosalita Kelly. She succeeded in having both the French Ambassador to the United States, and the American Ambassador to France come to an agreement that the IHM Sisters were truly Gillet’s “next of kin.”<sup>110</sup>

On Sunday, March 10, 1929, a group of IHM Sisters met their founder’s remains at the Monroe rail station. Not long af-

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<sup>108</sup> Bernard Girardy to Mother Domitilla [Donahue], June 28, 1927, Archives IHM, Monroe, RG 1.10:4, Box 4.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> These details can be found in a monograph by Sister Rosalita KELLY entitled “*Exaltavit Humiles*.” [The Latin means, “(God) has raised up the lowly.”] – in IHM Archives Monroe, Gillet papers, Box 4, Series 10, 11, 12. – The American Ambassador to France was Myron T. Herrick (1829-1929), well beloved in France because he had not fled his post during World War I, as other envoys did. Herrick’s opposite number as French Ambassador to the U.S.A. was the famous poet/dramatist Paul Claudel.

terwards these remains were reburied, and they lie today beneath the marble altar in the beautiful Gillet Memorial Chapel on the property of the Monroe IHM Motherhouse. A solemn Dedication and Consecration of this Chapel took place on August 2, 1929, in the presence of a large gathering of IHM Sisters, their friends and benefactors. Significant among those participating was a delegation of Redemptorists from St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>111</sup>

There had been a final, thoughtful gesture on the part of the kindly old monk of Hautecombe, Father Bernard Girardy. Along with Father Gillet's remains, Girardy included the heart-shaped metal grave marker from Gillet's resting place in France. With its bit of rust and dents it is now displayed in the Memorial Chapel, still a herald and sign of Gillet's missionary love that stretched from the shores of Lake Erie in Michigan to the shores of Savoy's Lake Bourget. And back again!

#### CONCLUSION

The life of Father Louis Gillet offers a reflection on several aspects of Redemptorist history in the nineteenth century. He entered Redemptorist life only fourteen years after the death of St. Clement Hofbauer, at a time when this religious congregation was entering the first stages of its worldwide expansion. Many members, both superiors and subjects faced baffling new circumstances, with attendant pressures. Once in America, all Redemptorists (including Gillet) and the people he served were parties to a burgeoning "immigrant nation," as the Europe they left behind exploded in successive revolutions. In short, the times were troubled.

After the false accusations against him, brought on in part by Father Gillet's admitted imprudence, and the spread of subsequent rumors about him, he experienced comparatively few of his previous pastoral successes, not aware that arguably his greatest achievement, the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was flourishing. As Archbishop Joseph Tobin has written, Gillet's life does not present us with "a saccharine tale... a

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

feel-good story.” But it does resemble “what happened to Jesus of Nazareth...seen in his risen glory” and “recognizable by the wounds of his passion.”<sup>112</sup>

It is heartwarming to reflect on Louis Gillet’s words in 1847, written to Pope Pius IX, “I came to North America urged on by no other motive than the salvation of souls.” Likewise, to recall that when expelled from the Redemptorists, he was blessed with the courage and strength to follow a second call to serve, namely, as a Cistercian, among whom he still retained a love of St. Alphonsus Liguori and a strain of his Redemptorist spirit.

In times closer to our own, Redemptorist historians (such as Michael Curley, John Byrne, Carl Hoegerl, and Joseph Oppitz) came to believe that the time was ripe for presenting Father Gillet in a new light, and that a vindication of him should come from us Redemptorists.

#### SUMMARY

The French-speaking Belgian, Louis F. Gillet, was the eighth novice in the history of the Belgian Redemptorists. Professed in 1835, and ordained in 1838, he was trained for parish missions by former companions of St. Clement Hofbauer. Gillet himself preached missions for five years in Belgium and France. Recruited for America in 1843, as other Redemptorists served German immigrants, Gillet labored among French-speaking immigrants in Michigan, founding the Redemptorist house in Monroe, near Detroit. There, in 1845, he was co-founder of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, known today as eminent women religious in the U.S.A. and beyond. Falsely accused of misconduct, Gillet was removed from Michigan in 1847. Painful strife and rumors ensued. Expelled from the Redemptorists in 1850, his appeal for reentry was denied. In 1858 he joined the Sènanque Cister-

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<sup>112</sup> Foreword, Gilbert A. ENDERLE, *I Desire to be Everywhere, Louis Florent Gillet, Frontier Missionary, Founder, and Contemplative Monk*, OSP/IHM Board of Directors, Monroe, MI 2012, p. xi. When Archbishop Tobin wrote this he was the Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Prior to that he was for twelve years the Superior General of the Redemptorists, and in 2012 was appointed the Archbishop of Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.



cians in France, holding key posts among them, including that of Abbot at the famed Hautecombe Abbey. He died there in 1892, but in 1891, after forty-four years, contact was again established with the Sisters he had begun in America. In 1929 the Sisters returned his remains to Monroe, Michigan, where they lie in a beautiful Memorial Chapel.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Le belge francophone Louis Gillet fut le huitième novice dans l'histoire des Rédemptoristes belges. Profès en 1835 et prêtre en 1838, il fut formé à la vie missionnaire paroissiale par d'anciens disciples de Saint Clément Hofbauer. Lui-même, pendant cinq ans, prêcha des missions en Belgique et en France. Choisi pour partir aux États-Unis en 1843, alors que d'autres Rédemptoristes s'occupaient des émigrés germanophones, Gillet travailla parmi les francophones vivant dans le Michigan, fondant une maison rédemptoriste à Monroe près de Detroit. En 1845 il y fut cofondateur des Sœurs Servantes du Cœur Immaculé de Marie, reconnues de nos jours comme une Congrégation féminine importante aux États-Unis et au-delà. Accusé faussement de méconduite, il fut éloigné du Michigan en 1847. S'en suivirent des frictions et des rumeurs pénibles. Expulsé de la Congrégation des Rédemptoristes en 1850, sa demande d'y être réadmis fut rejetée. En 1858 il rejoignit les Moines Cisterciens de Sénanque en France, y occupa des postes importants, y compris celui de Père Abbé en la fameuse abbaye de Hautecombe en Savoie. Il y mourut en 1892, mais un année auparavant et après quarante-quatre ans de silence, il rétablit le contact avec la Congrégation qu'il avait co-fondée aux États-Unis. En 1929 ces Religieuses ramenèrent sa dépouille mortelle à Monroe Michigan où elle repose à présent dans une belle chapelle-mémorial.





MACIEJ SADOWSKI, C.SS.R.

AN ARISTOCRAT AMONG MISSIONARIES – A MISSIONARY  
AMONG ARISTOCRATS

FATHER BERNARD ŁUBIEŃSKI (1846-1933)  
IN THE SERVICE TO ABUNDANT REDEMPTION

*Biographical sketch; Tireless missionary – «Poland's Apostle»; Esteemed retreat preacher for clergy and laity; Epilogue.*

With his characteristic wisdom Gilbert Keith Chesterton once said that «tradition does not mean that the living are dead, but that the dead are alive».

Such an alive icon of the Redemptorists' apostolic zeal is the Servant of God Father Bernard Łubieński. This year marks the eightieth anniversary of his death. It was thanks to him that the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer was able officially to return to the Polish lands 130 years ago.

In his long and eventful life, and in an extraordinary manner, Łubieński combined his aristocratic heritage and upbringing with sincere and fervent piety. Moreover, his untiring pastoral diligence was tempered with a humility of both soul and body, as he suffered for more than fifty years from a crippling disability.

He was a Redemptorist priest whose versatile apostolic activity contributed remarkably to the spiritual life in Polish lands during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This article attempts to address only one element of his activities, namely his preaching of parish missions and retreats which lies close to the heart of the Redemptorist charism.

*Biographical sketch*

The permanent presence of the Redemptorists in the Polish lands has been inseparably connected with the person of their confrere, Bernard Alojzy Łubieński. He was born into a family of

landed gentry, his parents being Thomas Wentworth and Adelajda Łempicka of Guzów, near the city of Warsaw, on 9 December, 1846.<sup>1</sup> Wanting to provide a thorough education for their son, they sent him to England, to the elite College of St. Cuthbert, for his humanities in September 1858. This college was located in Ushaw, Durham.<sup>2</sup>

The religious retreats conducted in the school by the Redemptorist Father Robert Aston Coffin in 1860 acquainted the young Polish aristocrat with the spirituality of St. Alphonsus Liguori for the first time. This spirituality made an indelible impression on him.<sup>3</sup> At first, he intended to take up a career as a diocesan priest, being fascinated by the famous St. John Vianney, the Curé of Ars. However, upon graduating from the English college, he decided to dedicate his life to God within a religious order.

He knocked at doors of both the Dominicans and Jesuits, but neither of these communities wanted to accept him. The Jesuits advised him to go to the Redemptorists; and it was these men founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori who gave a kindly consideration to his request.<sup>4</sup> In 1864, young Count Łubieński began a brief period of postulancy, and then followed his canonical novitiate in the Bishop Eton community, near Liverpool. Despite the disapproval of his father, and of his uncle, Bishop Konstancy Łubieński of Sejny, he professed his religious vows as a Redemp-

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<sup>1</sup> B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Wspomnienia. Mościska 1908 – Warszawa 1918* [*Memories. Mościska 1908 – Warszawa 1918*], ed. S. Pawłowicz, Kraków 2009, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> The young count's insufficient knowledge of English and his initial lack of diligence, caused him to fail his final graduate examinations in 1864; cf. M. PIROZYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński (1846-1933)*, Wrocław 1946, 31-32.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Aston Coffin (1819–1885), an English Redemptorist, outstanding missionary and preacher. In the years 1865-1883, he was the superior of the English Province of the Redemptorists. During the period of *Kulturkampf* he helped his German confreres who had been expelled from Bavaria. In 1883-1885, he was the Bishop of Southwark; cf. S.J. BOLAND, *R.A. Coffin and the English Oratory*, in: *SHCSR* 28 (1980) 147-174.

<sup>4</sup> The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer was suggested to him by the esteemed English Jesuit, Provincial Alfred Weld; cf. B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Wspomnienia...*, 56-58; M. BRUDZISZ, *Łubieński Bernard (1846-1933)*, in: *Słownik Polskich Teologów Katolickich* [*Dictionary of Polish Theologians*], vol. 6, p. 377.

torist in May 1866. Then for a year he continued his philosophical studies.

In September 1867, he began a four-year program of theology, together with sixteen other seminarians from the provinces of England, Holland and Belgium, at the international Redemptorist seminary in Wittem, in the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup> Devotion to Jesus' Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, frequent reception of the Eucharist, and prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help all were important features of his seminary formation. Bernard Łubieński received the Sacrament of Holy Orders from Bishop Johann Theodor Laurent on 29 December, 1870, in Aachen.<sup>6</sup>

In September 1871, Father Łubieński was sent to the Redemptorist residence in Clapham, a district in southwest London. There he was engaged in the local ministry with the other Redemptorists. One special aspect of his apostolic work was to reach out to the abandoned poor, and another was to care for Polish-speaking immigrants. As he himself mentioned later, this work was «a perfect school of life in which I learned the art of approaching souls both in the pulpit and in the confessional».<sup>7</sup> When he had free moments, he prepared sermons and furthered his theological education, because in those days there were restrictions in the Redemptorist Rule which forbade priests under age thirty to conduct missions or other apostolic work «on their own», but only with a «senior father».

In 1872 Łubieński completed the so-called Second Novitiate (a kind of transition-to-ministry program lasting about six-months) in the Scottish town of Perth, which prepared him for future missionary work. In 1873, the Provincial Father Coffin appointed him as secretary, archivist and chronicler of the English Province. This service allowed him to become better acquainted with the Redemptorist Congregation as well as with the Catholic Church of England and Ireland. During that time, he had the joy of help-

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<sup>5</sup> *Catalogus Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris 1867*, 55, 73.

<sup>6</sup> Bishop Johann Theodor Laurent (1804-1884) – born in Aachen, from 1839 Vicar Apostolic for the Nordic Missions and Titular Bishop of Chersonesus, and from 1841 Vicar Apostolic of Luxemburg. Cf. AWPR, without call number, M. PIROZYŃSKI, *Articuli ad processum informativum*, Wrocław 1956, 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Wspomnienia...*, 198-199.

ing fellow Redemptorists conduct about twenty parish missions, mainly in industrial areas of England.<sup>8</sup>

Almost from the very beginning of his priestly life Father Łubieński was occupied with thoughts of how the Redemptorist Congregation might return to Polish-speaking lands. They had been present in Poland after 1787 when St. Clement Hofbauer and Father Thaddeus Hübl founded the first Redemptorist house beyond the Alps. This was at the Church of St. Benno in Warsaw,<sup>9</sup> where Clement and his companions were popularly known as «Bennonites». They conducted intensive pastoral activities for some twenty years, utilizing a pioneer pastoral model which they described as a «Perpetual Mission».<sup>10</sup>

After these fruitful years of both religious and social ministry in the Polish capital, Napoleon ordered the Redemptorists expelled from Warsaw in June 1808. However, this expulsion of the Warsaw community did not signal an absolute and permanent end to Redemptorist activity in Polish territory. Some disci-

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<sup>8</sup> Archives of the Redemptorist Province of Warsaw (hereinafter cited as AWPR), call number BŁ, E 97, Father Bernard Łubieński to Bishop Anatol Nowak, Kraków, 17 October 1921, col. 32; cf. J. SHARP, *The Alphonsian Mission in Britain and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, in: SHCSR 45 (1997) 292-306.

<sup>9</sup> A. OW CZARSKI, *Le relazioni tra il vicariato transalpino (di Varsavia) e il governo generale dei Redentoristi durante il soggiorno di S. Clemente M. Hofbauer a Varsavia (1778-1808)*, in: SHCSR 46 (1998) 311-323; W. SZOŁDRSKI, *Redemptoryści w Polsce [The Redemptorists in Poland]*, vol. 3, [Wrocław 1953] 4-6, (manuscript copies in the Archives of the Redemptorist Province of Warsaw); M. SADOWSKI, *Wierni dziedzictwu św. Klemensa – otwarci na znaki czasów [Faithful to St Clement's Legacy – open to the signs of the times]. Geneza i początki Polskiej Prowincji Redemptorystów (1883-1909) [The origin and beginnings of the Polish Redemptorist Province (1883-1909)]*, in: *Wierni Tradycji – otwarci na znaki czasu. Materiały Sympozjum na Stulecie Warszawskiej Prowincji Redemptorystów i kanonizacji Św. Klemensa Marii Hofbauera, Tuchów 9-10 października 2009 [Faithful to the Tradition – Open to the Signs of the Times. Proceedings of the Symposium on the Centenary of the Redemptorist Province of Warsaw and the Canonization of St. Clement Maria Hofbauer, Tuchów 9-10 October 2009]*, ed. M. SADOWSKI, Kraków 2009, 177-178 (Studia do dziejów redemptorystów polskich [Studies of the History of the Polish Redemptorists], vol. 1).

<sup>10</sup> J. HEINZMANN, *Der „Homo apostolicus” Klemens Maria Hofbauer*, in: SHCSR 34 (1986) 357-378; cf. A. OW CZARSKI, *Redemptoryści Benonici w Warszawie 1787-1808 [The Redemptorists Bennonites in Warsaw 1787-1808]*, Kraków 2003<sup>2</sup>, 157-183.

ples of St. Clement were able to return to these lands under the Russian partition and, with time, they once again were doing ministry as diocesan priests. This took place, for example, in Pruszyń in the region of Podlasie.

An attempt to establish a Redemptorist community in the village of Janów Podolski did not succeed. However, in the years 1824-1834 Father Jan Podgórski (1755-1847), together with five brothers, experienced limited success in living Redemptorist community life in a secret residence in Piotrkowice near Kielce.<sup>11</sup> However, this episode in the history of the Redemptorists turned out to be relatively short-lived.

Throughout his seminary formation, and then after his ordination Łubieński, carried on a lively correspondence with his family. It was his younger brother Roger who in 1872 made various attempts to bring the Redemptorists back to the lands of the former Polish Commonwealth.<sup>12</sup> However, in those times the superiors of the Congregation showed no interest in such plans.

It was only in 1879 that there came a new ray of hope. First, the English Provincial Father Robert Coffin supported Łubieński's desire to attend a family meeting which was to be held in the village of Babica. Furthermore, the provincial contacted the Superior General in Rome, Father Nicholas Mauron, suggesting that he consider this trip by Łubieński as a kind of «reconnais-

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<sup>11</sup> B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *O. Jan Podgórski, redemptorysta towarzysz św. Klemensa* [Father Jan Podgórski, Redemptorist and Companion of St. Clement], Kraków 1913, 93-97; cf. K. SZRANT, *Redemptoristi in Polonia dispersi post suppressionem conventus S. Bennonis an. 1808*, in: *SHCSR* 7 (1959) 134-144; M. BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze i w tajnym klasztorze w Piotrkowicach 1808-1834 (1841). Karta z dziejów redemptorystów-benonitów w Polsce* [In the Diaspora and the Secret Monastery in Piotrkowice 1808-1834 (1841). A Chapter from the History of the Redemptorists-Bennonites in Poland], Kraków 1994, 21-25, 45-47.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Łubieński (1849-1930), Member of Parliament in the Diet of Galicia, historian, publicist and Catholic activist. In 1871, he entered the seminary in Poznań, sent to Rome where he took part in a retreat under the spiritual guidance of Father Piotr Semenenko, C.R., who made him leave the seminary. He married Countess Aleksandryna Dunin-Borkowska, owner of the estate in Babica near Rzeszów. He died on 13 September, 1930 and was buried in Wiskitki; cf. J. ZDRADA, *Roger Łubieński (1849-1930)*, in *Polish Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 18, pp. 473-474; M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 63-73.



sance mission» to see if the conditions were favorable for a possible Alphonsian foundation in the Polish lands.<sup>13</sup>

Thanks to the support of numerous religious and laity, Father Łubieński succeeded in establishing a foundation in Mościska, in the diocese of Przemyśl in 1883. This residence became the motherhouse for the «third generation» of the Redemptorist Congregation in Polish lands.<sup>14</sup> Before his final arrival in Mościska, Łubieński wrote to his sisters, «Thank God, my [...] wandering is about to finish and it seems to me that I will reach the aim of my life, that is, I will see a house of our Congregation in Poland. But I should expect a lot of work and suffering».<sup>15</sup>

These words turned out to be prophetic since, as 1884 turned into 1885, Father Bernard Łubieński was paralyzed as a result of his stressful life and working conditions. After several months of treatment and convalescence in Baden-bei-Wien, Austria, and in Katzelsdorf, Austria, he partially recovered. But within a short time, he had changed from being a very energetic man in his prime and glowing with health, into a disabled man who had to use a walking stick till the end of his life. However, «The more he lost in body, the more he gained in spirit», his biographer Father Marian Pirożyński has discerned correctly.<sup>16</sup>

The extraordinary personality of the aristocrat wearing a humble missionary habit, his knowledge of the affairs of the Polish Church as well as his personal contacts with the spiritual elite brought it about that in 1908 Łubieński was a serious candidate for the vacant Metropolitan See of Mohilev, Belarus. He refused this proposal directly because of his disability, although the proposal matched well the Łubieński family history and tradition. He preferred the Gospel's imperative, *Evangelizare paupe-*

<sup>13</sup> B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *O powrocie Kongregacji Najświętszego Odkupiciela do Polski* [On the Return of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to Poland], p. 3 (manuscript copies in AWPR).

<sup>14</sup> Archives of the John Paul II Pontifical University in Kraków (hereinafter cited as AUPJPIIKr), call number H-308; M. SOJKA, *Dzieje redemptorystów polskich w latach 1883-1939* [The History of the Polish Redemptorists in the Years 1883-1939], Kraków 2004, 34-35 (manuscript copies).

<sup>15</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ E 98, Father Bernard Łubieński to Sister M. Amata and Sister M. Irena Łubieńska, Babica, 15 June 1883, col. 8.

<sup>16</sup> M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 99.

*ribus misit me*,<sup>17</sup> to privileges and authority. Besides, through his parish mission and retreat activities, as well as through his fruitful writings, Father Bernard Łubieński was contributing to Polish religious life in general, and to devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in particular. At the beginning of the 1900s he was well known as the one who introduced the faithful to the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In fact, he brought from Rome the first copy of this icon that was placed in the Redemptorist residence of Mościska.<sup>18</sup>

In restored Poland «the lame missionary», as he was called, eventually had to forego the strenuous effort of parish missions because of his deteriorating health. He decided to give only closed retreats, at first in the residence in Kraków, and then after 1926, in Warsaw. A sign of respect that the leading figure among Polish Redemptorists enjoyed in the Polish Church was the retreat which he conducted for the entire episcopate of all rites in Gniezno in September 1928.<sup>19</sup> «Poland's Apostle» – as Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski called him in his letter of condolence – died in Warsaw on 10 September, 1933.<sup>20</sup>

*Tireless missionary – «Poland's Apostle»*

The apostolic zeal of the Servant of God, Father Bernard Łubieński, was expressed in dozens of parish missions and retreats

<sup>17</sup> S. RYZNAR, *Śługa Boży o. Bernard Łubieński CSsR* [The Servant of God Father Bernard Łubieński CSsR], in: *Nasze Wiadomości* 37 (1982) 15; cf. M. BRUDZISZ, *Łubieński Bernard...*, 378. The Scripture quotation is from Lk. 4:18.

<sup>18</sup> A. BAZIELICH, *Śługa Boży O. Bernard Łubieński apostoł kultu Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy* [The Servant of God Father Bernard Łubieński – apostle of the cult of Our Lady of Perpetual Help], Tuchów 1995, 32-41; cf. S. PIECH, *Kult Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w Polsce* [The Veneration of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Poland], in: „Uczyńcie Ją znaną całemu światu”. *Kult i symbolika ikony Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w zarysie* [„Make her known to the whole world.” An outline of the cult and symbolism of Our Lady of Perpetual Help], ed. M. SADOWSKI, Kraków 2011, 58-60.

<sup>19</sup> AUPJPIIKr, call number H-308; M. SOJKA, *Dzieje redemptorystów polskich...*, 180.

<sup>20</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ E 104, Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski to the Provincial Father Franciszek Marcinek, Częstochowa, 19 September 1933, col. 1-2; *Episkopat polski o śp. O. Łubieńskim* [Polish Episcopate about the late Father Łubieński], in: *Wiadomości Diecezjalne Lubelskie* 16 (1934) no. 1, p. 31.

conducted in all of the three partitions of Poland, and then in the independent Second Polish Republic. From the beginning of their presence in the Polish lands, the Redemptorists were seen through their service of the Word of God. The first Polish sons of St. Alphon-sus based their activities on the system of parish missions and the traditions that they had learned and in which they were formed.<sup>21</sup>

Both Łubieński and his Polish confreres adjusted the various methods and formats taken from the Redemptorist missionary traditions of England, Belgium, Holland and Austria. However, they took into account the local religious and social conditions of their native land.<sup>22</sup> Łubieński, whose training represented the English tradition, himself admitted that the version of his Austrian confreres, being part of the Galician tradition, was more suitable in Polish lands.<sup>23</sup> Thus the first parish mission in Kulików in the Archdiocese of Lvov (23 October – 1 November 1886) was conducted, Łubieński wrote, «according to the traditional Austrian way of giving a mission, according to the spirit of St Alphon-sus, yet adjusted to the needs and relationships of the local people in Galicia, i.e., to the Polish people».<sup>24</sup>

A significant difficulty (even for Łubieński) in this initial stage of Polish Redemptorists' missionary activities, was the fact that «...the first missionaries [at this time] were either foreigners

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<sup>21</sup> A. SCHEDL, *Das Ringen um eine zeitgerechte Volksmission in Österreich. Eine historische Besinnung (1823-1985)*, in: *SHCSR* 33 (1985) 229-241; cf. S. BOLAND, *Early Redemptorist Missions in England and Ireland (1848-1865)*, in: *SHCSR* 33 (1985) 283-320.

<sup>22</sup> AWPR, BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, České Budějovice 12 August 1890, col. 64; *ibid.*, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Amsterdam 10 July 1891, col. 99-101.

<sup>23</sup> An example of the adaptation of the English missions introduced into the practice of the Polish Redemptorists by Father Bernard Łubieński was the exposition of the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Łubieński initiated this practice during the famous missions conducted in Borysław (28 September–10 October 1888). Cf. E. NOCUN, *Kult Matki Bożej Nieustającej Pomocy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku [The Veneration of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century]*, in: *Niepokalana. Kult Matki Bożej na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku [Immaculate. The Veneration of Our Lady in the Polish Lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century]*, ed. B. PYLAK and Cz. KRAKOWIAK, Lublin 1988, 616-620.

<sup>24</sup> AWPR, without call number, *Kronika domu mościskiego [The chronicle of the House in Mościska]*, vol. 1, p. 129.

or had been educated abroad. Although they were great preachers and missionaries, they spoke Polish badly or incorrectly». <sup>25</sup> This was the reason why they had to delay the first mission in Kuliaków for three years after their arrival in Mościska. The next missionary work in Laszki (14-23 November, 1886) involved Father Antoni Jedek, Father Józef Drobisz and Łubieński himself who delivered five talks to the local intelligentsia. <sup>26</sup> It should be remembered that the Redemptorists brought their method to the lands where other congregations, including the Jesuits, Capuchins, Bernardines, Reformed Franciscans and the Missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul worked with success. <sup>27</sup> Facing into the doubts that arose about the Redemptorists as newcomers, Łubieński himself gave the following significant answer to the Jesuit Provincial Father Henryk Jackowski,

If we conduct our parish missions in a different way, may you, Reverend Father, at your earliest convenience tell your missionaries that we do not condemn the method which the Society of Jesus has been using. Nor do we do think that our way is better; it is the best way for us because we have it from our holy founder. <sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the Redemptorist missions became increasingly more popular, and increasingly more parish priests liked them and spoke in favor of them to other priests. Among the Redemptorist missionaries Father Łubieński gained great fame as an excellent, although a «physically handicapped» preacher, and his visible disability made a great impression on his listeners. Suffice it to

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<sup>25</sup> AUPJPIIKr, call number H-308; M. SOJKA, *Dzieje redemptorystów polskich...*, 142.

<sup>26</sup> E. NOCUN, *Misje parafialne Redemptorystów polskich w latach 1886-1918* [*The Parish Missions of the Polish Redemptorists in the Years 1886-1918*], Kraków 1998, 82-84.

<sup>27</sup> APWR, call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Vienna, 21 January 1899, col. 134-136; call number BŁ, E 104, Father Bernard Łubieński to Sister Teresa Małgorzata of the Blessed Sacrament and to other Carmelite sisters, Kraków, 1 September 1925, col. 69; cf. K. DRZYMAŁA, *Ks. Karol Antoniewicz TJ* [*Father Karol Antoniewicz, S.J.*], in: *Homo Dei* 27 (1958) 21-27.

<sup>28</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 97, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Henryk Jackowski, Mościska 29 March 1887, col. 86.

state that in 1894 alone the small Redemptorist group of missionaries conducted twenty-four parish missions, eleven mission renewals, twenty series of retreats for laity, and two series of retreats for the clergy and seminarians.<sup>29</sup>

The leader of these apostolic activities was the tireless Father Bernard Łubieński. Deserving special attention were the missions conducted in Kraków in the churches of St. Mary, Corpus Christi and Sts. Peter and Paul. Łubieński wrote about the latter,

Among the faithful were neither senators nor people of high social rank, but only our beloved folk who did not care to listen to Skarga's words,<sup>30</sup> and yet, by God's grace, these folks were deeply moved, and after a few days the confessionals were crowded.<sup>31</sup>

With such apostolic zeal, despite the difficulties mounting because of the *Kulturkampf*, the Servant of God conducted dozens of parish missions and retreats, both open and closed, in the lands under the Prussian partition. The missions were preached in Polish and German. At first, referring to the «May decrees», the Prussian authorities did not allow the Redemptorists to conduct their activities in the territory of the Reich. The German police especially disliked missionaries from Galicia. They often interrupted the Redemptorists' activities and expelled the missionaries from those places where the missions were being conducted (even though the missions were supported by the local authorities). Consequently, in 1889 Father Bernard Łubieński, and then the other confreres, disguised as diocesan priests, went to Poznań. After receiving canonical faculties from Archbishop Edward Lisowski, they began a series of missions in his archdiocese, in such places as Rzegocin, Sobótka, Zbąszyn and Kościan. It happened with a silent permission of the Diocesan Curia, which had no official knowledge of the missionaries' activities in its territory and even reprimanded some parish priests for having invited «foreign» preachers.

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<sup>29</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ E 100, Father Bernard Łubieński to Sister Marie Marguerite Josephine Busschots, Mościska, 8 January, 1895, col. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Piotr Skarga was the famous Jesuit preacher who worked in the Church of St. Peter and St Paul in Kraków.

<sup>31</sup> W. SZOŁDRSKI, *Redemptoryści...*, vol. 2, p. 15.

In order to keep their presence a secret, the missionaries moved from parish to parish in hired carriages. Despite all precautions, the missions conducted by Father Łubieński and his confreres were made public through local newspapers. As a result, the missionaries had to depart from Greater Poland earlier than they intended. After several months, having again obtained confidential permission of Archbishop Edward Likowski, the Redemptorists were again able to undertake their missionary activities provided news of them were kept out of the press.

However, these conditions turned out to be impossible since the mission conducted in St. Mary Magdalen Parish in Poznań in December 1889 by Fathers Łubieński, Jedek and Drobisz drew so many people that the local police became curious about the event. As a result the missions were curtailed. Nevertheless, Łubieński remained in Greater Poland for two more months, conducting more missions and retreats «as a diocesan priest». He also returned there in the years 1890-1891.

After having preached in Greater Poland, Łubieński was accused of instigating his listeners to rebel against the legitimate authorities and of making political statements. He himself answered the accusations made after the missions in Mielec, writing to the Governor of Galicia, Kazimierz Badeni, that those exercises aimed at improving the morals of the local community. He told Badeni, «Those who know me better think of me as much too high an aristocrat, and they say that I preach to the higher classes too delicately and cautiously. So I do not have any inborn inclination to incite the lower class against the higher one».<sup>32</sup> In his arguments to the governor, the Servant of God stressed the threats that were flowing from the spread of socialism. Moreover, he firmly asked the governor to «discipline his officials regarding their religious shortcomings, and to oblige them to take part in the missions and retreats».<sup>33</sup>

Other accusations about Łubieński's making political statements were made after the missions he had conducted in Strzelce

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<sup>32</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 103, Rough copy of the letter of Father Bernard Łubieński to Kazimierz Badeni, the Governor of Galicia, Sułkowice 17 June 1893, col. 70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 72-73.

Opolskie in 1905. In this instance he was accused of reprimanding those Poles who had sold their estates, and this led to another ban on Redemptorist apostolic work in the lands under the Prussian partition.<sup>34</sup> Łubieński, however, always maintained good relationships with the local bishops, in a spirit of ecclesiastical and religious obedience. Before undertaking the next missions in Greater Poland the Servant of God wrote, «As for politics, patriotism and polemics with Protestants, etc., we will follow the advice we have been given, with the most faithful obedience».<sup>35</sup>

Despite his physical limitations Father Łubieński did not hesitate to accept the invitation of the German Redemptorists from the Province of Cologne to join the common missions that would embrace the numerous Polish immigrants who were doing seasonal work in Westphalia. The missions organised in Barop near Dortmund, Braubauerschaft and Gelsenkirchen in the summer of 1891 were preached in both Polish and German.<sup>36</sup> During the missions in Gelsenkirchen

...not only the local Poles – about one thousand – but also those living in remote areas came for the missions. Sermons for men were given twice because of the day and night shifts in the mines. Since bestiality was more prevalent here than elsewhere, our work was not easy.<sup>37</sup>

The Fathers from the community in Glanerburg conducted missions for German Catholics, and Fathers Łubieński, Jedek and Paweł Meissner did the same for the Polish immigrants.<sup>38</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 97, Rough copy of the letter of Father Bernard Łubieński to the Consistory of the Archdiocese of Poznań, [Mościska] 5 December 1905, col. 53-55.

<sup>35</sup> APWR, call number E 97, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Walerian Strykowski, Kraków 26 March 1897, col. 77.

<sup>36</sup> AGHR, call number 30160109.0024, Father Engelbert Janeček to Father Maksymilian Rau, Mościska 6 March 1891, col. 1-4.

<sup>37</sup> APWR, call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Langendreer 28 June 1891, col. 89-90; call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Langendreer 3 July 1891, col. 91-93; call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Glauerbrück 9 July 1891, col. 94-97; cf. W. SZOŁDRSKI, *Redemptoryści...*, vol. 2, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Litterae Annales de Rebus Gestis Provinciae Austriacae Congregationis*

German Fathers were pleasantly surprised seeing so many Poles listening to the sermons delivered in Polish and German in Bochum. They admired the Polish immigrants' patience as they had to wait in long lines outside confessionals, and in the evenings they also had to contend with similar lines before receiving Holy Communion and after having fasted for the entire day.

For Father Łubieński the work in Bochum was a special experience. He reported that the church «was packed with Polish workers. This was a wonderful sight and inspiring for the one standing at the pulpit. However, St Alphonsus held me back from any national outbursts. I spoke about heaven and getting oneself prepared to life for heaven».<sup>39</sup> The church in Bochum became the center of the ministry conducted by the German Redemptorists for the Polish immigrants.<sup>40</sup>

A special form of the missionary endeavour by this Redemptorist known as the «Lame Count» was to visit Polish aristocratic families at their estates. These families included the Stadnickis, the Sapiehas, the Zamoyskis, the Branickis and the Potockis. He used these meetings as a kind of retreat for both the nobles and their servants. It saddened him when he noticed religious negligence among most of the Polish aristocrats. In his opinion the laxity was caused partly by clergymen themselves.

During his mission for the local gentry conducted in Sokółów Gostyński in 1910, at the end of his sermon concerning the need for improving one's spiritual life, he explained the reasons for his uncompromising attitude, «I apologize to you, Gentlemen and Ladies, for having spoken so openly, but I carry the scent of a count myself, and I know your lives very well. I have stated all these things to save your precious souls».<sup>41</sup> Łubieński, a well-bred, educated aristocrat, fluent in several languages and having lived abroad for almost twenty-five years, combined his elegant

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*Ss. Redemptoris 1891*, 35-37.

<sup>39</sup> APWR, call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Amsterdam 10 July 1891, p. 101; call number BŁ, B 28, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Rekolekcje dla kapłanów* [*Retreats for priests*]. *Parate Viam Domini*, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> H.J. BRANDT, *Das Kloster der Redemptoristen in Bochum und die Polen-seelsorge im weatfälischen Industriegebiet*, in: *SHCSR 23* (1975) 146-199.

<sup>41</sup> M. PIROZYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 263.



manners with thorough theological knowledge and sincere asceticism. Thus he was perceived by the elite as a trustworthy and respectful priest, which allowed him to effect positive changes.<sup>42</sup>

Łubieński's style of preaching abounded in numerous images and similes, and even dialogues. He was a man of superb skill when depicting the truths of faith. Moreover, he had an extraordinary ability of dramatizing, and his words were laden with emotion. Łubieński might not have been a master of literary language, and although he made some grammatical mistakes he had the gift of winning people's hearts. Despite his disability, he was the most active Polish Redemptorist missionary. After the Servant of God had returned to Poland he participated in 244 parish missions and 58 mission renewals. By any standard, these are impressive numbers.

*Esteemed retreat preacher for clergy and laity*

Father Bernard Łubieński proved himself to be an active and extremely respected retreat preacher for both clergy and laity. His ministry was conducted in the period of the revival and popularization of closed retreats in Polish lands. The bishops played an important role in this since they encouraged priests to participate in monthly days of recollection and annual retreats.<sup>43</sup> From the beginning of their presence in Polish lands the Redemptorists wanted to follow their time-honored tradition. In this area Łubieński was also «a pioneer of retreats for priests and seminarians which were relatively little known under the Austrian parti-

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<sup>42</sup> Father Łubieński wrote a pointed note after the mission in Sucha Beskidzka, which he had conducted with three confreres, 17-24 October, 1896, «The sons of St Alphonsus also bless those who were absent at the end of the Mission, and therefore, I, the superior of the Mission bless my Aunt [Anna Hołyńska Branicka] and Cousin [Władysław Michał Branicki] and my confreres also bless them», Cf. *The Library of the Ossolińskis National Institute in Wrocław*, call number 17746, Commemorative book of the castle in Sucha, 1882-1898, col. 89.

<sup>43</sup> PIUS XI, *O znaczeniu rekolekcji zamkniętych. Orędzie z dnia 20 grudnia 1929 r.* [About the significance of closed retreats. Message of 20 December, 1929], Kraków 1931, 5-8, 23-34; cf. AUPJPIIKr, call number H-308; M. Sojka, *Dzieje redemptorystów polskich...*, 171.

tion, and completely unknown under the Prussian and Russian partitions.»<sup>44</sup>

The difficulties connected with retreats were similar to those of missions. The prevailing problem was the lack of churches, or chapels, large enough to accommodate the numbers of the faithful. Therefore retreats were frequently held in adapted venues, even inside barns. Whereas, Masses were often celebrated outdoors at field altars.

The retreats conducted in 1911 by Łubieński in the Church of Holy Savior in Warsaw had wide repercussions.<sup>45</sup> The friendly priests, including Father Michał Tokarski from Rzeszów and Father Józef Leja from Maków Podhalański, invited the Redemptorist preachers to give retreats in their parishes.<sup>46</sup> Father Łubieński, as the superior of the monastery in Mościska, declared that

...although we have been asked to preach in the Kingdom [under the Russian partition], in the year 1918 we will continue to serve in Rzeszów during Lent as long as I am the rector of this place; for I feel obliged to return to those places where we have already conducted missions, not only because I am a son of St. Alphonsus but also because the region of Rzeszów has been especially dear to me since 1879 when I found myself there after I had left England for the first time.<sup>47</sup>

Łubieński also conducted retreats aiming at discerning one's vocation. Attendance at them was, of course, voluntary. The participants of these retreats included the following men who later became diocesan priests: Adam Woroniecki, Władysław Kornilowicz, Antoni Marsylski and Antoni Tencer. And those who attended such retreats and eventually joined the Redemptorists

<sup>44</sup> M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *Articuli ad processum...*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> *Kronika miejscowa* [Local chronicle], in: *Wiadomości Archidiecezjalne Warszawskie* 1:1911, p. 311; J. DANIŁOWICZ, *Ambona i życie. Parafialne rekolekcje wielkopostne. Próba rozwiązania trudności* [The pulpit and life. Lenten parish retreats. An attempt to solve difficulties], in: *Przegląd Homiletyczny* 9 (1931) 269-277.

<sup>46</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 103, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Michał Tokarski, Mościska, 30 December, 1913, col. 51; *ibid.*, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Michał Tokarski, Mościska, 12 January, 1916, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 103, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Michał Tokarski, Mościska 15 December 1917, col. 56.

were Marian Pirożyński and Witold Czaplinski.<sup>48</sup> Some other participants were Count Stanisław Rostworowski, Count Jan Tarnowski and Count Paweł Dzieduszycki; about them Łubieński wrote later: They «left without having decided to join the congregation; their callings must have not been mature».<sup>49</sup>

Łubieński developed a strong reputation as a retreat preacher for priests. In his introduction to the published retreat teachings of the Servant of God, Father Marian Pirożyński has stated that «under the influence of his retreats, the hearts of the priests underwent serious change, vices were banished, and the priests resolved to soar to divine heights».<sup>50</sup> In his sermons he

...depicted priestly ideals in lofty fashion, demanding that priests should offer such great sacrifices which seemed almost beyond them, and at the same time he led priests to have confidence in God's help and the sweet protection of Our Most Holy Mother.<sup>51</sup>

The Servant of God provided retreats for priests for almost fifty years. Some of the *first* participants of his retreats in Mościska were: the Resurrectionist Father Adolf Bakanowski, known for his pastoral ministry among the Polish community in America; also Father Bronisław Markiewicz, who was the founder of the Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel; and also Bishops Jan Puzyna, and Henryk Kossowski.<sup>52</sup>

In the following years among those who flocked to Łubieński's retreats could be found the Apostolic delegate to India,

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<sup>48</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 93, Father Bernard Łubieński to the Provincial Father Emanuel Trzemeski, Mościska 25 January 1921, col. 8-9; The Archives of the Redemptorist Monastery in Kraków (hereinafter cited as AKRK), *The chronicle of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help House of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Kraków, the district of Podgórze*, vol. 2, col. 405-449, 480; vol. 3, col. 148.

<sup>49</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, B 26, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Retreats and talks for priests*, col. 14, 19; AKRK, *The Chronicle of the monastery in Kraków*, vol. 2, col. 230, 349-394.

<sup>50</sup> B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Pastor Bonus. Trzydniowe ćwiczenia duchowne dla kapłanów* [*Pastor Bonus. Three-day spiritual exercises for priests*], Wrocław 1949, 3.

<sup>51</sup> M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 271.

<sup>52</sup> *Litterae Annales de Rebus Gestis Provinciae Austriacae Congregationis Ss. Redemptoris 1895*, 54.

Archbishop Władysław Zaleski, and the Archbishop of Warsaw, Vincent Teofil Popiel.

In fact, it is recorded that five cardinals (Albin Dunajewski, Jan Puzyna, Aleksander Kakowski, August Hlond, Adam Sapieha) and almost two dozen then-current and future bishops<sup>53</sup> chose to take part in the retreats preached by the Servant of God Łubieński. After the retreats some of these prelates sought him out for advice in ecclesiastical affairs or matters of conscience. Most of the men who were chosen to be Poland's bishops between 1900 and 1939 counted themselves as Łubieński's friends.

It can also be shown that a large number of those bishops in Poland arranged for Father Łubieński to preach group retreats for the priests of their dioceses. The retreats were held either in seminaries or in religious houses able to accommodate large groups. He conducted such a series of retreats for the priests of the Archdiocese of Lvov in March 1887.<sup>54</sup>

The themes of his retreats varied, but two favorite themes were the virtue of charity in a priest's life, and the qualities of a Good Shepherd. He also preached on the final and particular judgement, spiritual direction, the faults and punishment of immoral priests, the obligation for priests to instruct their people and faithfully care for them, and, of course, on love of the Blessed Mother.<sup>55</sup> In the years between 1895 and 1902 Łubieński preached sixteen such retreats for priests.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The names of these current/future archbishops and bishops which can be verified are: Szczęsny, Feliński, Teodorowicz, Twardowski, Wałęga, [Anatol] Nowak, Stablewski, Bilczewski, Cieplak, Teodorowicz, Gall, Szlagowski, Komara, Tymieniecki, Jełowiecki, Niemira, Wetmański, Tomczak, and Choromański.

<sup>54</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, B 17, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Retreats*, part I, col. 2-124, 197-252; cf. *Rekolekcje dla kapłanów [Retreats for priests]*, in: *Homo Dei* 8 (1939) 193. – An interesting detail is that in 1909 when Łubieński was about to preach a retreat in Vilnius, Lithuania, to Polish-speaking priests, the arrival of so many retreatants brought on an investigation by the local police as to what was going on.

<sup>55</sup> For more details on these retreats, see AWPR, call number BŁ, B 17, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Retreats*, part I, col. 2-124, 197-252; cf. *Rekolekcje dla kapłanów [Retreats for priests]*, in: *Homo Dei* 8 (1939) 193.

<sup>56</sup> AWPR, without call number, *Official Journal of the Board of the Polish Redemptorist Province 1895-1945*, col. 13; *Rekolekcje dla kapłanów O. Bernarda*

Another frequent pastoral involvement of Father Łubieński was retreats for seminarians.<sup>57</sup>

During [these] retreats, Łubieński's appearance and teaching were impressive. He had 'to carry' his paralysed leg loudly up the stairs to the pulpit. Then he blessed the gathering with his missionary cross...; he spoke strongly about death and eternal things; he moved our conscience very deeply. He put the scapular on us, gave us prayer books, and urged us cordially to serve the Virgin, Mother of Perpetual Help.<sup>58</sup>

Łubieński's radical approach made some «bishops afraid that his words spoken to some seminarian, 'Little soul, you have no vocation!' would empty their seminaries».<sup>59</sup>

Three generations of priests of all the Polish dioceses and numerous religious congregations cherished vivid memories of the spiritual exercises given by Father Bernard, as Bishop Ignacy Świrski of Podlasie recalled: «I, like many others, am indebted to Father Bernard because I, too, was fortunate to make retreats under his direction, and I still feel the wholesome power of his spirit».<sup>60</sup>

As best as can be determined, Father Bernard Łubieński conducted a total of 208 retreats for diocesan priests, fifty-one

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*Łubieńskiego w 1893 r. (według zapisków X. abp. L. Wałęgi)* [Retreats for priests of Father Bernard Łubieński in 1893 (according to the notes of Archbishop L. Wałęga)], in: *Homo Dei* 6 (1937) 192-203.

<sup>57</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 100, Father Bernard Łubieński to Mother Norberta Zajączek, Warsaw 13 March 1907, col. 81; call number BŁ, B 27, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Retreats and talks for seminarians and priests. Projects and sketches*, col. 191-211; call number BŁ, E 104, Father Bernard Łubieński to Sister Maria Weronika of the Most Holy Face, Lvov 12 April 1917, col. 63; call number BŁ, E 97, Father Bernard Łubieński to Bishop Anatol Nowak, Kraków 17 October 1921, col. 32.

<sup>58</sup> W. URBAN, *O wpływie o. Bernarda Łubieńskiego na duchowość ks. prof. Szczepana Szydelskiego* [On the influence of Father Bernard Łubieński on the spirituality of Rev. Prof. Szczepan Szydelski], in: *Homo Dei* 37(1968) 60-61.

<sup>59</sup> S. RYZNAR, *Sługa Boży o. Bernard Łubieński CSsR (1846-1933)* [The Servant of God Father Bernard Łubieński, CSsR (1846-1933)], in: *Nasze Wiadomości* 37 (1982) 19.

<sup>60</sup> A. BAZIELICH, *Biskupi polscy o Słudze Bożym Bernardzie Łubieńskim* [Polish Bishops about the Servant of God Father Bernard Łubieński], Tuchów 1982, 20.

for seminarians and thirty for religious.<sup>61</sup> As mentioned previously, the culmination and appreciation of his activities was an invitation to preach to the Polish Bishops' Conference in Gniezno on 14-17 September, 1928.<sup>62</sup> The participants of the retreat included thirty-six bishops. He gave ten talks based on the parable of the Good Shepherd.<sup>63</sup>

From the very beginning of their «return» to Poland, the Redemptorists were engaged in closed retreats for groups of women and men religious. During his six-month stay in Kraków in 1833 Łubieński led days of reflection and gave ascetical talks to the local Visitations, the Augustinian Nuns, the Felician Sisters, the Norbertines and the Ursulines. In the years 1889-1902, Łubieński led retreats for nuns in Galicia: for the Franciscan Sisters of Kęty, the Felician novices in Kraków and the Good Shepherd Sisters.<sup>64</sup> The Redemptorists also conducted this ministry in the land under the Russian partition in 1905. The first series of retreats was conducted by Father Łubieński for eighty Sisters of the Our Lady of Mercy in Warsaw. It was a great feast for them because «since the [1850s] the sisters have never had more than one talk a day during their retreats and the talks have been given by diocesan priests. However, Father Łubieński delivered four talks each day for eight days».<sup>65</sup>

Despite his disability, Łubieński gave retreats for women religious in other European countries, including the retreats for the Little Sisters of Saint Clare in Rotterwas, England, in 1891 and for the Redemptoristine Sisters in Bruges, whereas in 1911 he conducted two series of retreats for the Sisters of Maria Tere-

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<sup>61</sup> M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 252.

<sup>62</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 104, Father Bernard Łubieński to Sister Maria Antonina of Jesus, Warsaw 2 September 1928, col. 36.

<sup>63</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 93, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Emanuel Trzemeski, Toruń 17 September 1928, col. 85-86; AWPR, Chronicle... of the house in Tuchów, vol. 1, col. 52; *Provincia Polonica. Exercitia spiritualia pro Episcopis*, in: ACSR 8 (1929) 35-36.

<sup>64</sup> [B. Łubieński], *Wszystko z Bogiem i dla Boga przez Maryję. Pamiątka rekolekcji odprawianych roku 1889* [All things with God and for God through Mary. A memento of the retreats conducted in 1889], Przemyśl 1890, (passim).

<sup>65</sup> M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 174.

sa Ledóchowska in Petersburg and in Mariastadte, Finland.<sup>66</sup> The Servant of God conducted a total of 119 retreat series for women religious and thirty for congregations of men.<sup>67</sup>

Besides the retreats for religious, the Redemptorists were also available for retreats to various lay groups. The precursor of such retreats was Bernard Łubieński who preached to «the intelligentsia, students, children, men teachers, women teachers, those working in orphanages, military men, Marian Sodalities, the Societies of St. Vincent de Paul, nurses, women factory workers, the Children of Mary, governesses, and the residents of publicly supported poorhouses».<sup>68</sup> In the Polish lands, he conducted retreats for the family of Prince Adam Stefan Sapieha in Krasiczyn as early as 1887 as well as for the family and household of Prince Władysław Sapieha in Oleszyce.<sup>69</sup> Being invited by Princess Helena Sanguszko, he conducted a three-day retreat in Gumniska for the Sanguszko family, their guests and servants (1924). He also preached for the gentry in the estate of the Szeptyckis in Łaszczów and for the caregivers in Feliks Sobański's House in Warsaw (1908).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Rotherwas 24 July 1891, col. 118-119; call number BŁ, E 91, Father Bernard Łubieński to Father Engelbert Janeček, Gillingham Hall-Beales 30 July 1891, col. 123-130; call number BŁ, B 19, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Retreats*, part II, vol. 2, col. 224-235; call number BŁ, E 99, Father Bernard Łubieński to Maria Karłowska, Warsaw 3 September 1911, col. 126; cf. M. SOJKA, *Apostolat redemptorystów polskich wśród męskich i żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w latach 1883-1939* [The apostolate of the Polish Redemptorists among men's and women's congregations in the years 1883-1939], in: *Wierni Tradycji – otwarci na znaki czasu. Materiały Sympozjum na Stulecie Warszawskiej Prowincji Redemptorystów i kanonizacji Św. Klemensa Marii Hofbauera, Tuchów 9-10 Października 2009* [Faithful to the Tradition – Open to the Signs of the Times. Proceedings of the Symposium on the Centenary of the Redemptorist Province of Warsaw and the Canonisation of St. Clement Maria Hofbauer, Tuchów 9-10 October 2009], ed. M. SADOWSKI, Kraków 2009, 158.

<sup>67</sup> M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 252.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>69</sup> *Litterae Annales de Rebus Gestis Provinciae Austriacae Congregationis Ss. Redemptoris 1887*, 42.

<sup>70</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, B 17, B. ŁUBIEŃSKI, *Retreats*, part I, col. 281-284; call number BŁ, E 97, Father Bernard Łubieński to Bishop Ignacy Łobos, Roznów 16 February 1888, col. 45; J. PALEWSKI, *Dostojny czciciel Matki Boskiej*

*Epilogue*

Apostolic zeal in preaching Abundant Redemption is one of the most important arguments for the sanctity of Father Bernard Łubieński, a man whom Polish historiography includes among the most esteemed servants within the Church in modern times.<sup>71</sup> He himself clearly said, «If I seek the cross and fall into its arms, He will make miracles but not without my activity. God connected the salvation of souls with my work. If I do not do it, they will be lost».<sup>72</sup>

Despite his disability, from which he suffered almost all his life, he demanded much of himself in his missionary evangelization but he also challenged his listeners to demand much of themselves, at the same time showing them helpful ways and means to meet these Christian aspirations. The scale of his involvement is testified by the numbers. He began his missionary-retreat activities in England with over thirty apostolic works during twelve years. In the Polish lands, he took part in 244 parish missions and fifty-eight mission renewals. He conducted a total of 508 retreats. After Father Łubieński's death in 1933, many important figures of the Church's life and numerous ordinary believers submitted their recollections and opinions of his sanctity. All these statements are summarized in the testimony of Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski, Metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw, who wrote on behalf of the Polish Bishops' Conference,

Ever since a religious priest of great and invaluable merits died in the common opinion of sanctity: *in odore sanctitatis*; and since this faithful priest 'who kept my commandments and laws' (1 Kings 11:35) died; and ever since this missionary, Poland's apostle, died; we can affirm that in all districts of our country his inspired voice resounded for several dozen years; all strata of our society benefited from his fervent ministry in the confessional and in the pulpit.<sup>73</sup>

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N[ieustającej] Pomocy, *śp. Książę Paweł Sapieha (+31. V. 1934)* [Distinguished Worshipper of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the Late Prince Paweł Sapieha (+31 May 1934)], in: *Chorażew Maryi* 31 (1935) 149-150.

<sup>71</sup> A. SAPIEHA, [Foreword], in: M. PIROŻYŃSKI, *O. Bernard Łubieński...*, 5.

<sup>72</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ, C 35, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> AWPR, call number BŁ E 104, Cardinal Aleksander Kakowski to Fa-



For successive generations Father Bernard Łubieński, a true aristocrat although wearing his religious habit and at the same time, a tireless missionary and servant of Abundant Redemption, has remained a vivid symbol of tradition ... which does not mean that the living are dead, but that the dead are alive.

#### SUMMARY

The subject of this article is the leading figure and icon of the Polish Redemptorists' missionary zeal, the Servant of God Father Bernard Łubieński (1846-1933), whose eightieth anniversary of death anniversary occurs this year. He is connected with the return of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to the Polish lands and the foundation of the Polish Province 130 years ago. The article presents his mission and retreat activities. Łubieński, educated in the Province of London, participated in over thirty apostolic works in England during twelve years. In the Polish lands, he took part in 244 parish missions and fifty-eight mission renewals, having conducted 508 retreats for laity, clergy and religious. Despite a severe physical disability, this tireless missionary worked in various environments and won the deserved name of «Poland's apostle». His process for beatification is progressing now through the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

#### RESUMEN

Este artículo trata de la figura más destacada e icono del celo misionero de los Redentoristas polacos, el Siervo de Dios p. Bernard Łubieński (1846-1933), al cumplirse el 80 aniversario de su muerte. De él dependió el regreso de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor a Polonia y la fundación de la Provincia polaca hace 130 años. El artículo presenta su actividad como predicador de misiones y ejercicios. Łubieński, educado en la Provincia de Londres, participó en más de 30 actividades apostólicas en Inglaterra durante doce años. En Polonia predicó 244 misiones parroquiales, 58 renovaciones de misión y 508 retiros a laicos, al clero y a religiosos/as. A pesar de una grave incapacidad física este misionero infatigable trabajó en ambientes muy diversos y mereció el nombre de "apóstol de Polonia". El proceso de beatificación va adelante en la Congregación de las causas de los santos.

STEFANIA NANNI

THE SPIRITUAL SONGS OF  
SAINT ALPHONSUS M. LIGUORI (\*)

In 1801, the popular songbook published in Naples, edited by the famous *Maestro* Mattia del Piano, introduced to the public the «many beautiful and devout songs in the Tuscan language and the Neapolitan dialect» that St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori «taught people everywhere to sing»<sup>1</sup>. It had been thirteen years since the death of the great bishop, missionary and reformer of moral theology. Thanks to the publication of various biographies and the beginning of the canonical process for Alphonsus' beatification and eventual canonization, new evidence surfaced to celebrate his fame «not only as a saint but also as a literary man» and as a «connoisseur of fine music».

In that pastoral and apostolic life of Saint Alphonsus, musical expression was a forthright language of spiritual conversion, capable of renewing practices previously established (by Oratorians, Jesuits, and the Pious Workers<sup>2</sup>). Gradually Alphonsus had expanded his repertoire of spiritual songs and greatly increased the scope of their use.

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(\*) The present essays constitutes a revisiting of the article: *La musica dei poveri* by S. Nanni and P. Saturno, published in *La musica dei semplici. L'altra Controriforma*, ed. by S. Nanni, Roma 2012, 261-275.

<sup>1</sup> Mattia DEL PIANO, *Canzoncine da aggiungersi al manual canzoniere intitolato Il freno della lingua ovvero Laudi Spirituali composte nell'idioma toscano, e napoletano per lo popolo oltre a quelle aggiunte nella seconda edizione*, Napoli 1801. (This was an enlarged version of a work by the same author and title published in Naples in 1729 and in 1788).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview on the strategies and musical repertoires addressed to the people to whom the apostolate was directed, see: *La musica dei semplici*, as indicated above at FN (\*); Oreste GREGORIO, *Canzoniere alfonsiano. Studio critico ed estetico del testo*, Angri (SA) 1933, shows how the Alphonsian songs recall the medieval hymns and the laudistic heritage of Saint Philip Neri. Note: hereinafter this work by O. GREGORIO will be cited often, but simply by the author's name followed by *op. cit.*

In this aspect of his missionary work, the poetic, literary and musical formation received early in life had proved to be a great asset. Antonio M. Tannoia, who had been Alphonsus disciple and a fellow member of the missionary congregation which the saint founded, was to be the first to describe these studies of young *Alfonso* in 1798. Tannoia grew effusive in highlighting his founder's talents. He portrayed Alphonsus as «excellent in poetry... since he was a child». He marveled at Alphonsus' compositions as an old man (when «little things had a special influence on him... and were enough truly to touch his heart»).

Tannoia also maintained that Alphonsus' poetic tendency never withered, for when he was «sick, humiliated, and decrepit he still found in the depths of his soul a wealth of wonderful feelings to celebrate the magnificence of creation»<sup>3</sup>. Certainly, in Alphonsus Liguori music and singing were not simply the result of a «sensitivity of temperament», or of an «inclination for music, and an admiration for nature». Rather music and singing took on a depth of spirit and meaning *within his mission*. Tannoia narrates how his *maestro*, fully convinced of the moral and spiritually renewing function of religious poetry, used a number of «devout songs» in his rounds of preaching to the people of the countryside and in the poorest districts of Naples, among the struggling artisans and *Lazzaroni*<sup>4</sup> who attended the *Cappelle Serotine*<sup>5</sup>. The disciple Tannoia depicts his teacher and founder

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<sup>3</sup> Tannoia reports of the first musical studies by Alphonsus as a teenager, his touching «the cymbal as an expert» under the guide of Gaetano Greco, the performances of sacred dramas in music, the practice of interspersing «holy meditations» with «tender hymns and songs» experienced during his withdrawal from legal practice in 1726 in the aftermath of his priestly ordination. (Antonio Maria TANNIOIA, *Della Vita ed Istituto del venerabile servo di Dio Alfonso M. Liguori vescovo di S. Agata de Goti e fondatore della Congregazione de Preti Missionari del SS. Redentore*, Vincenzo Orsini, Napoli 1798-1802, reprint of this work, Materdomini 1982).

<sup>4</sup> *Lazzaroni*, has various translations, but generally: a member of the poor working class of Neapolitan society, some of ill repute. See *History of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*, Francesco CHIOVARO, ed., J. Robert FENILL, trans., Liguori (MO) 1996, 104.

<sup>5</sup> Literally, «Evening Chapels». – More information on how Alphonsus believed in the spiritual effectiveness of spiritual songs can be found in: O. GREGORIO, *op. cit.*, passim; Théodule REY-MERMET, *Il Santo del secolo dei lumi:*

as «accustomed to gather the children, holding high a Crucifix and singing songs, leading them to the church, and teaching them the rudiments of Christianity, as if he were an elder parishioner». Tannoia also speaks of the practice of Alphonsus who, before the sermon, would chant his hymn *Gesù mio, con dure funi...* (*My Jesus, with harsh ropes...*). He did so with such devotion and plaintive tones that the people burst into tears. In the opinion of some of the other missionaries, his song yielded more benefit than the sermon<sup>6</sup>.

With that allusion to Alphonsus' singing, Tannoia introduces his readers to issues that have been concerning the historiographers about the compositions of Alphonsus for over a century. These issues deal with both their authorship, and the relationship between his poems and their translation into music<sup>7</sup>. The compendium of Alphonsian spiritual songs certainly lies within the corpus of his oratory, poetry and music, all of which were addressed in distinct ways to both aristocrats and to common folk. A double track can be seen, even in liturgical pieces, depending on whether what he composed was meant for the erudite or for those of more humble state<sup>8</sup>.

However, later in the life of Alphonsus, his hymns were directed toward a broad populace, rather than to distinct pastoral environments. In doing this he achieved a synthesis between learned and common modes of language so as to reach out to every

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*Alfonso de Liguori*, Roma 1983 (1° ed. Parigi 1982), 110-111; Rey-Mermey offers certain emphatic points, especially about the *Cappelle serotine*: Giuseppe ORLANDI, *S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori e i laici. La fondazione delle «Cappelle serotine» di Napoli*, in: *SHCSR* 35 (1987) 393-414, and *Il Regno di Napoli nel Settecento. Il mondo di s. Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, in: *SHCSR* 44 (1996) 205.

<sup>6</sup> TANNIOIA, *Della Vita ed Istituto*, see I, Ch. 9, 31, and III, Ch. 17, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Paolo SATURNO, *Un musicista sconosciuto del '700 napoletano, S. Alfonso Liguori*, mimeograph edition, Pagani 1977; also, Paolo SATURNO, *La tradizione musicale alfonsiana*, in: *Alfonso M. de Liguori e la società civile del suo tempo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale per il Bicentenario della morte del Santo (1787-1987)*, Napoli, S. Agata dei Goti, Salerno, Pagani, 15-19 maggio, 1988 (Biblioteca dell'«Archivum Romanicum» fondata da Giulio Bertoni, Serie I – Storia, Letteratura – Paleografia, Vol. 243), a cura di Pompeo GIANANTONIO, Part II, Firenze 1990, 577-590.

<sup>8</sup> A radical reform of these trends in sacred music and chant is identifiable in the *Motu Proprio on Musica sacra* of Pius X, 1903.

person of faith. One can see that his approach was leveling out with a uniform attitude and tone suitable to the many differences of social class, gender, and age.

The formal spiritual composition by Alphonsus called «*Il Duetto tra l'Anima e Gesù Cristo*» («Duet between the Soul and Jesus Christ»), is a key example of the pastoral and social orientation of Alphonsus, as well as of his desire to impart divine values. It is a composition of verses with musical accompaniment, performed as an «intermezzo» between a catechetical session and the major sermon. The occasion was a retreat directed by Liguori in Naples at the Church of the *Trinità dei Pellegrini* on March 16, 1760. Regrettably, the manuscript of the *Duetto* was lost. But a note written at the bottom of a precious copy now in England states that it was composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori. This copy is considered reliable, and was purchased between 1841-1845 by the Royal Library of London, at that time located within the British Museum<sup>9</sup>.

Liguori wrote this spiritual cantata when he was sixty-four years old, during a period of his very intense and often requested pastoral activity. For this retreat he was called upon to preach the Lenten spiritual exercises in the well-known Neapolitan Church of the *Trinità*. He meant the *Duetto* as an interlude in place of the type of musical pieces that customarily came between an Instruction on the Commandments and the so-called «Great Sermon». By means of one steady bass voice and two other parallel voices, Alphonsus staged the bloody drama of the Crucifixion, and a «contest of love between creature and Creator»<sup>10</sup>. After a short and majestic introduction by the orchestra, the Soul enters

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<sup>9</sup> The London copy is titled *Cantata on the Passion of Jesus Christ, the words and music by S. A. M. Liguori*. It was published in 1860 shortly after its discovery by Frederick Liguori, musician and descendant within the Liguori family; second and third editions followed in 1887 and 1898 (ed. by Father Joseph C. Heidenreich, C.Ss.R.). In 1905 the *Duetto* was published (in Italian, French, English and German) in the Italian magazine «*Santa Cecilia*». DE MEULEMEESTER, I, 176.

<sup>10</sup> The quotation is from Antonio DI COSTE, *Le melodie di S. Alfonso M. de Liguori in alcuni suoi canti popolari e Duetto tra l'Anima e Gesù Cristo*, Roma 1932; O. GREGORIO, *op. cit.*, 146ff., (on which the on-line edition of the *Canzoncine spirituali* is based: [http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITASA0000/\\_IDX032.HTM](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITASA0000/_IDX032.HTM)).

the scene, first rebuking Pilate with an intense recital which ends with a heart-rending exclamation poured out about Christ Himself, the «King of Scorn and Pain». Meanwhile the orchestra, with a doleful progression, announces that Christ is now almost on the scene. And then He slowly enters, head crowned with thorns, while the «divine blood marks the earth wherever his steps fall». The Soul rushes towards him and with gentle voice asks, «Where are you going, Jesus?». «I am going to die... for you», he says in soft reply. The verses of Alphonsus are beautifully blended into this «contest of love», fused into «this *Duet* of superbly pure emotions».

The verses, too, adapted themselves to the style of melodies written earlier in this time period<sup>11</sup> – melodies which traced the musical paths created by the Neapolitan School (and, in particular, those of Francesco Durante, Alessandro Sebastiano Speranza, and Gaetano Greco) and thus were charged with additional pathos and sheer poignancy. The tone was «immediate», addressed to the core of the meditative theme, namely, one's felt-compassion for the death of Christ<sup>12</sup>.

For sentiment within a prayer experience was, and is, the overriding theme of the spirituality of Alphonsus; it was also indicative of the kind of religious language used in eighteenth-century Italy. Through the melody and the rather erudite form of the composition, the cantata could speak to the cultured audience of the capital city. However, it could also touch the heart of the popular audience that gathered to worship at the Church of the *Trinità*.

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<sup>11</sup> The *Duet* appears to be relatively independent from the guidelines still based on the profane style linked to Monteverdi (Paolo SATURNO, *Le canzoncine-laude di A. de Liguori. Sviluppo storico-artistico; Duetto(i) tra l'Anima e Gesù Cristo di Alfonso Liguori*, in: *La poesia e la musica di Alfonso Liguori e la tradizione missionaria redentorista*, ed. by Alfonso Amarante, Materdomini (AV) 2006, 21-42; 73-82); see also Renato NICODEMO, ed. by, in: S. Alfonso LIGUORI, *Canti dell'anima. Canzoncine spirituali*, Materdomini (AV) 1996, 52.

<sup>12</sup> In the wide historiography about Alphonsian spirituality: *Alfonso M. de Liguori e la società civile del suo tempo*, Part. I-II, *passim* (as in FN 7 above); *La recezione del pensiero alfonsiano nella Chiesa. Atti del Congresso in occasione del terzo centenario della nascita di S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, Roma 5-7 marzo 1997, Roma 1998.

Here we can clearly find ourselves within the pattern of devotional (and often anonymous) songs used in the celebrations for Christmas, the Passion, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary, and in such devotions as the Way of the Cross, the *Tre ore* of Jesus' Good Friday sufferings, the rosary and the novenas honoring saints. Moreover, we follow along in the wake of the language which urged a conversion of heart. This had already been tested for efficacy in the long-revered Alphonsian apostolate among the people of hamlets and villages.

An intentional «disciplinary element» also played a central role in this genre of sacred music as, in fact, it did in all the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century devotional hymns. This element tended to denounce any «infantile conceit and selfishness, frivolity, the overuse of cosmetics, and general spiritual lethargy». For these things would not nourish the spirit. The spiritual songs likewise disparaged any profanely suggestive songs and «saccharine, often licentious, romances»<sup>13</sup>.

Therefore the poetic component, accompanied by music, was designed to be a pastoral activity. This pastoral moment was capable of using word, gesture, exemplary conduct, chant and instrumental music so as to «substitute with good songs those bad songs», such as those which resonated during work in the farmlands. It was an attempt to oppose the «great evil that came from filthy songs common among young men and young women». In short, the purpose was to facilitate the redemptive process of the most derelict people of the countryside.

The devotional songs which came from St. Alphonsus, or were borrowed and revised by him, enjoy a quiet style that is rarely redundant. They use «lithe and soft lines of verse, each with five syllables<sup>14</sup> and then are blended with longer lines of verse called *hendecasyllabic*<sup>15</sup>. This, in itself, gives the composi-

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<sup>13</sup> The mention of softness and frivolities shows the distance between what Alphonsus composed and promoted and that hymnography said to have a «*Pietro Metastasio*» style which was «voluptuous in content and conventional in form». See O. GREGORIO, *Canzoniere alfonsiano* (as in FN 2 above), V-IX; 3-29.

<sup>14</sup> In Italian these are referred to as *Quinari*.

<sup>15</sup> Originally in classical Greek or Latin poetry the *hendecasyllabic* was a metrical line consisting of eleven syllables. In Liguori's era it was very popular

tion an almost epic solemnity; and then lines of seven syllables<sup>16</sup>, when placed next to the meek and humble lines of eight syllables<sup>17</sup>, move along very quickly. From a cheerful tone of a pleasant idyllic work, there follows a change to a more pensive section with eight lines of verse<sup>18</sup>. The result is that, instead of experiencing just a grim motif as in an epistolary poem, one now finds a style having a hopeful, Biblical flavor.

The verses alternate «to break up the monotony», being composed in a way that leaves them open to *further* rearrangement from the modal sign to the tonal sign, from polytonality<sup>19</sup> to dodecaphony<sup>20</sup>. As time passed, such adaptability of texts and melodies allowed for the intermingling of new contributions, often grafted onto the achievement attributed to Saint Alphonsus by his contemporary Redemptorists and their successors. However, such «adaptability» did enable Liguori, because of his vast cultural and artistic training, to leave *his* mark on works which he wanted to improve. At the same time, that same adaptability had resulted from a vast and anonymous heritage of texts and music already used in popular missions and by many spiritual confraternities.

The devotional songs written or used during the earliest missions of the Redemptorist founder – which came from his «poetic soul» and from his vibrant apostolic zeal – and which were first tested out during these rural missions – have not been found among his extant signed manuscripts. Instead these songs have come to us by way of the oral tradition of the Redemptorist

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in Italian poetry.

<sup>16</sup> These are lines of metric verse referred to in Italian as *Septinari*.

<sup>17</sup> These are lines of metric verse referred to in Italian as *Ottolari*.

<sup>18</sup> An *octava* was a grouping of eight lines of poetry, suggestive of the first eight lines of a sonnet by Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), (1304-1374).

<sup>19</sup> Polytonality is the use of more than one key simultaneously.

<sup>20</sup> Dodecaphony is a method of musical composition ascribed to Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951). This technique ensures that all twelve notes of the chromatic scale are sounded as often as one another in a given piece, yet preventing the emphasis on any one note through the use of «tone rows», an ordering of the twelve pitches. Thus the music avoids being in a given key. – Also, other authoritative composers as Perosi, Fugazzola, Voices, Bonnet, Di Martino express themselves in this tone. See also the notes by R. NICODEMO, in: S. Alfonso LIGUORI, *Canti dell'anima, Canzoncine spirituali*, 52.



congregation, and after that from the wider Italian clergy. Thus we witness all the problems related to the authorship of the texts and to the authenticity of the melodies.

But the most important fact is that this repertoire has spread among the Christian people, passing from generation to generation (a practice among the «most holy and sweet ones of the Christian populace of the Southern Italy»<sup>21</sup>). This is clearly shown in the most successful selection from this repertoire, namely, the hymn *Tu scendi dalle stelle*<sup>22</sup>. It is believed to have been composed in 1755 for the Christmas Novena at Nola, an important town about twenty-seven km. from Naples<sup>23</sup>. Documentary sources do not allow us to attribute this lively hymn to Saint Alphonsus. For the biographies of St. Alphonsus, along with certain other memoirs and the editorial information on his hymns, have all contributed to confusion about the dates, the authenticity, the origin and even the number of so-called Alphonsian musical compositions. The total count of these compositions has even appeared to «grow along with the year of publishing». The author Maurice De Meulemeester, C.Ss.R., has pointed out that the 1758 edition of these compositions listed twenty-eight pieces – and this number had grown to forty-five in the 1896 edition!<sup>24</sup>

However it is possible to establish some definite facts about the authorship of the songs. The first *Canzoncine* were composed by Saint Alphonsus (or he was at least acquainted with and made

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<sup>21</sup> See Giuseppe DE LUCA, *Sant'Alfonso, il mio maestro di vita cristiana*, ed. by Oreste GREGORIO, Roma 1983 (reprint of the first edition, 1963), 62, 90-92, 106.

<sup>22</sup> Often translated into English as: «From Starry Skies Descending».

<sup>23</sup> About this song see A. PARISOTTIE and A. TONIZZA, *Il duetto di sant'Alfonso* (quoted in P. SATURNO, *Le canzoncine-laude*; see FN 11 above); see also Gaetano VALENTE, *S. Alfonso, mons. Felice de Paù e la nenia natalizia «Tu scendi dalle stelle»*, in: «Rivista di Scienze Religiose» 14 (2000) 17-53. The composition has been translated all over the world since the publication of Jacob BOGAERS, *S. Alphonse Liguori musicien et la réforme du chant sacré*, Paris 1899.

<sup>24</sup> Some editions appeared while the author was alive, and about fifteen editions after his death; to these must be added the many partial publications. In 1769 a comprehensive collection was printed in Naples with the title of *Canzoncine Spirituali dell'Ill.mo e Rev.mo Monsignor Don Alfonso Liguori* (presented as seventh edition). FRANZ X. REUSS, *Carmina sacra S. Alphonsi M. de Liguori*, Romae 1896, 253-264. See DE MEULEMEESTER, I, 50.

use of them, sometimes rewriting the lyrics) in the period not long after of his priestly ordination. We are aware of this because he alludes to them in a letter which he wrote to a group of women religious. Specifically, in a kind of spiritual direction letter written on October 29, 1730, to Sister Maria Angiola del Cielo, superior of the monastery in Scala, he speaks of a song composed in honor of the Virgin Mary. Rather informally he refers to the structure of a certain spiritual hymn and allows us to hypothesize that «other rhymes had preceded or followed» and that the composition of words and music for spiritual songs had now entered «the regular routine of the priestly apostolate of Alphonsus, who was then thirty-four years old»<sup>25</sup>.

Two years later, in July 1732, the first publication of his early musical compositions appeared in a «very modest edition, at a price of thirty-three grains<sup>26</sup> for every one-hundred copies, which undoubtedly was, ... a kind of leaflet distributed during the missions»<sup>27</sup>. On April 22, 1737, Alphonsus sent a letter to Sister Maria Giovanna della Croce stating that he was sending her a packet of «devotional booklets which contain some *canzoncine* composed by me». Some commentators identify these *canzoncine*/spiritual songs as the nine compositions which can be found in «*La via facile e sicura del Paradiso*» («The Easy and Safe way to Paradise»). This work was published anonymously in 1737, although it is now believed that Gennaro Maria Sarnelli was responsible for its appearance<sup>28</sup>. Sarnelli had entered the Redemptorists in 1733, and within the Neapolitan church he then became a prominent advocate for the poor. In addition, he was a leader of the eighteenth-century religious reform in Italy, and

<sup>25</sup> This is the opinion of Father O. GREGORIO, C.Ss.R., *op. cit.*, 18.

<sup>26</sup> To grasp some idea of this monetary worth, we learn that a carpenter in those days earned about thirty grains (*grana* in Italian) per day. See ORLANDI, *Il Regno di Napoli nel Settecento*, p. 298, n. 219.

<sup>27</sup> DE MEULEMEESTER, I, 50.

<sup>28</sup> The printer Giovanni RICCIO, who published *La via facile e sicura del Paradiso*, in 1737 (the same year of Alphonsus' letter to Sister Giovanna della Croce) commissioned the Canon Fontana to do the revision of Sarnelli's work, *La Via facile e sicura del Paradiso*. For clarification of this fact, and the evidence regarding the juxtaposition of Alphonsus' and Sarnelli's compositions poems in the *Canzoniere*, see O. GREGORIO, *op. cit.*, 18.

possibly the one who had inspired the first Alphonsian collection of spiritual songs in 1732<sup>29</sup>.

Liguori and Sarnelli shared much in common. Neapolitans by birth, they both came from a background in law, both had a talent for writing, and both possessed a keen pastoral sensitivity. In later years this led to a confusion about which of these two men authored certain devotional musical pieces. In fact, there are some books published after 1737 by Sarnelli which contain works undoubtedly by Sarnelli himself, but accompanied by several unsigned *canzoncine* which certain commentators have without hesitation ascribed to Liguori<sup>30</sup>. These latter compositions (believed to be Liguori's) are listed in the index of the books published by Sarnelli all with the same typeface, and are presented under the heading *Canzoncine Divote in lode della Gran Trinità, di Gesù Cristo, del SS. Sacramento e della Divina Madre: da cantarsi nelle dottrine, nella vita divota, nelle scuole de' fanciulli e delle fanciulle, nelle campagne, nei monasteri e nei lavori*<sup>31</sup>.

Therefore, as other scholars believe, these same compositions may have been published *previously* and erroneously included in the songbooks of Sarnelli. Judged as a whole, these compositions point to the confusion one finds when determining which works can be ascribed to Alphonsus, and when verifying the authorship, date, etc., of spiritual compositions which in those days were used to aid priests in their apostolates.

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<sup>29</sup> DE MEULEMEESTER, I, 50.

<sup>30</sup> The overlap between the spiritual *canzoncine* of the two religious men is also shown by a reference to some «*Canzoncine divote*» in two of Sarnelli's unpublished letters of July 1732. See Candido M. ROMANO, *Delle opere di S. Alfonso. Saggio storico*, Roma 1896, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Translation: «Devotional Hymns in Praise of the Holy Trinity, of Jesus Christ, of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of the Divine Mother: To be sung in Catechetical Classes, in Devout Live, in Boys' and Girls' Schools, in the Countryside, in Monasteries, and at Work». – On this matter, see again the already mentioned study (cfr. our FN 2 above) by Father O. GREGORIO, *op. cit.*, 19. – On p. LIV of the *Introduzione* to the *Opere ascetiche di sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, IX, *Apparecchio alla morte e opuscoli affini*, Roma 1965, see extracts from letters of Sarnelli dated 1738. For an outline and notes about the various editions of the spiritual songs by Alphonsus during his lifetime can be found in DE MEULEMEESTER, I, 50f.

Also, in actual practice, there was considerable pastoral and apostolic adaptation going on. That is, the many religious orders and missionary congregations of the Naples region all adjusted their approach to the situations they met. Thus they overlapped one another, losing their «family identity» in favor of one common aim: converting souls and transforming behavior.

It was a usual thing in parish missions to use devotional hymns which had diverse origins and authors, modifying them according to the need of the moment. It was common practice to distribute the lyrics, sometimes in handwritten copies, and at other times in printed form, to the local clergy, to confraternities, and even to local churchgoers who were able to read and teach them to others. The usage of words and music composed by others was widespread (and, apparently, unchallenged) among Neapolitans in their urban and rural ministries. This was Sarnelli's course of action in his 1733 publication of «*librettini e canzoncine*» [booklets and hymns] which were works supposedly authored by Alphonsus. Sarnelli did the same with his 1737 publication of «*La Via facile e sicura del Paradiso*» [«The Easy and Sure Way to Heaven»] in which he included not only other songs attributed to Alphonsus, but also much older compositions like «*Ama il tuo Dio con disamar te stesso*» [«Have less self-love and more love of God»]. These revered songs had been seen as far back as 1680 in a book called *Sacred and Spiritual Poems* by Cardinal Pier Matteo Petrucci<sup>32</sup>.

There was also the instance of a 1749 anonymous collection (later attributed to a Jesuit priest) entitled «*L'Arpa di Sacre Laudi e Divozioni ad uso delle Missioni de' PP. Gesuiti, delle chiese parrocchiali, delle case private, e di ogni stato di persone per tutto l'anno*» («The Harp of Sacred Praises and Devotions for the Use

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<sup>32</sup> CARTEGGIO, I, 272 and 280. In two letters from Gennaro M. Sarnelli to Alfonso Liguori, there are references to «your *canzoncine*», to the cost for purchasing «your booklets», and to his intention of «printing immediately the *Vera sapienza* by Segneri, with *canzoncine*» as a supplement. – Inspiration for the lyrics of Alphonsus arose from the poetry of Cardinal Pier Matteo Petrucci (1636-1701), and similar inspiration can be felt in the works of Don Matteo Coferati. Father Coferati was from Florence, was choir director at S. Maria del Fiore, and was also a theorist and author of the work *Corone di sacre laudi*. See *Alfonso M. de' Liguori e la società civile...* (as in our FN 12 above), 402ff., and *Introduzione*.

of the Missions of the Jesuit Fathers, of Parish Churches, of Private Homes, and of People of Every State of Life Throughout the Year»). Published in Naples, this anonymous collection contained the hymn «*Gesù mio con dure funi*» («My Jesus, with Harsh Ropes»). But this work was (at least in part) by Alphonsus Liguori and had already been published by Sarnelli eight years earlier (1741) in a booklet, *A Gesù Appassionato (To Jesus Fervent with Love)*. Sarnelli had placed it in a section of Alphonsus' *Canzoncine Spirituali!* Not only that, but this «Alphonsian hymn» had appeared repeatedly in reprint editions of Sarnelli's booklet.

Alphonsus himself is said to have taken part in this «open and carefree interchange» of lyrics and basic melodies, a situation characterized by «spontaneity and pleasant sentiment». At the beginning of April 1740, he informs Gennaro Maria Sarnelli that he had told the Redemptorist Brother Gennaro<sup>33</sup> to make copies of some songs for which he himself would undertake a revision once his missionary campaign at Nocera was finished. In addition, he asked Sarnelli to modify certain other compositions, giving Sarnelli the responsibility of inserting «affective qualities into both the hymns and religious poetry». Alphonsus singles out the hymn: «*Anima Desolata*» [«The Desolate Soul»], saying that it would be enough to revise just the one strophe which [the Canon Giacomo] Fontana had rearranged.

Above all, he wanted Sarnelli to insert into this set of songs two more compositions: «*O bello Dio, Signor del Paradiso*» [«O God of Loveliness»], and «*Quando penso alla mia sorte*» [«When I Ponder my Fate»]. The first of these two compositions is attributed to Thomas Falcoia (a member of the Pious Workers and also Alphonsus' spiritual director); the second was attributed to Bishop Carlo Majello [Maielli]<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> See *Carteggio* (as in our FN 32 above), 558, where G. Orlandi identifies this confrere as Brother Gennaro Rendina, C.Ss.R. (1708-1789).

<sup>34</sup> See O. GREGORIO, *op. cit.*, 20, and 34, where these two songs are attributed to Falcoia and «Majello» respectively in 1756 and 1769. «Majello» is most probably Bishop Carlo Maielli, b. Naples, Mar. 18, 1669; ord. priest Mar. 21, 1693; was rector in, and taught at Naples theological seminary, was for some years director of the Vatican Library; ord. as bishop Sept. 21, 1724; d. Jan. 3, 1739. See Remigius RITZLER and Pirminus SEFRIN, ed. by, *Hierarchia Ca-*

The Alphonsian poetic-musical production therefore lies within a repertoire meant for apostolic-pastoral settings. Its usage required ongoing textual adjustment and melodic variations to suit the different contexts of liturgical and devotional events. It summoned and encouraged the emotional involvement of the devotees who lived in a number of cultural and linguistic venues. Due to this flexible situation, it is widely believed among historians that the Alphonsian hymns

have been [largely] inspired by his hearing religious hymns already in use in the places visited during his constant apostolic journeys...; then, duly trimmed of their secular elements and any words or phrases from «foreign» local dialects, these hymns were revised in literary and poetic style. Finally the content of these hymns was expanded according to their specific topic with the result that they formed *in toto* a sizeable pedagogical handbook to educate and build up the faith of [predominantly] rural people<sup>35</sup>.

As mentioned, the Alphonsian spiritual songs were revised to fit the sacred themes of various liturgical and devotional ceremonies, and they were refashioned in simple poetry patterns. This gave them «expressive immediacy in accord with popular language and they were cast in the easy-to-learn and highly evocative choral chant». So they played an important role, not only in the Alphonsian strategy toward conversion of one's life, but also within the more general piety which was encouraged by varied apostolic means of expression in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Alphonsian compositions can be viewed as part of a large production of anthologies of devotion for the use of the people. With the songs there were allied meditation readings and prayers. The books used for *Visits* to Jesus and Mary often had an appendix of some hymns composed in such a way that all the people were able to take part in the customary devotional practices<sup>36</sup>.

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*tholica Medii et Recentioris Aevi*, V, Patavii 1952, 195. In this source, the surname Maielli is alternately given as «Maiella».

<sup>35</sup> Gaetano VALENTE, *S. Alfonso, Mons. Felice de Paù, e la nenia natalizia «Tu Scendi dalle Stelle»*, in: «Rivista delle Scienze Religiose» 14 (2000) 44. This entire article provides further insight into St. Alphonsus' use of spiritual songs in his missionary activity.

<sup>36</sup> Karl KEUSCH, *Dottrina Spirituale di S. Alfonso*, Milano 1931, 47. Of spe-

At least since the early twentieth century, Alphonsian historiography has been almost obsessed by the question of «whether all of the songs published in various editions under the name of Saint Alphonsus were really composed by him»<sup>37</sup>. More recently, however, there has been a growing awareness that «the time and place of original composition has remained shrouded in a veil of silence, perhaps lastingly impenetrable for a good number of the these works». It has become popular to state that the texts are the «result of an autonomous plurality, founded on a single poetic text»<sup>38</sup>. Scholars are now oriented in another direction. The proposal «to defend the validity» of the *Canzoniere alfonsiano* has moved instead into research about «the more authentic melody»<sup>39</sup>. In this instance, «more authentic» means a concentration on the melody's aptitude relative to the «music of the poems» and «the adherence between words and music».

The biographies of Saint Alphonsus dedicate only fleeting paragraphs to the theme of the melodies of the spiritual songs, hinting at Liguori's reliability on expert composers for the music which accompanied his verses. This documentary vagueness opened the way to three lines of interpretation. The most prevalent, existing mainly in the Redemptorist province of southern

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cial interest on this topic is: Mario ROSA, *Settecento religioso: politica della ragione e religione del cuore*, Venezia 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Mario PALLADINO, *Sant'Alfonso poeta*, s.l., 1917, 28. On meager hints of the historiography about the time of the composition of the Alphonsian songs: TANNOIA, *Vita ed Istituto*, vol. 1, at pages 8 and 185; ROMANO, *Delle opere di S. Alfonso*; REUSS, *Carmina sacra*, 253-264.

<sup>38</sup> Father O. Gregorio (in the 1930s) knew that definitive research had not been done and, deferring to the wishes of Cardinal Willem Van Rossum, C.Ss.R. at the beginning of the twentieth century, he presents an edition capable of «establishing authority» or, at least, «stemming the editorial freedom, which profited by citing the name of St. Alphonsus». – See also Gullielmo M. VAN ROSSUM, *S. Alphonsus et Immaculata Conceptio b. Mariae Virginis.*, Ex Typ. Polyglotta S. C. De Propaganda Fide, Romae 1904, 221.

<sup>39</sup> P. SATURNO, *Le canzoncine-laude*, Section 3; see FN 11 above. – The expression «*Canzoniere alfonsiano*» derives from Father O. Gregorio; it was intended to indicate the entire corpus of Alphonsus' poems and musical compositions, which expressed the single inspiration which led Alphonsus to help people celebrate the Mystery of Salvation. See O. GREGORIO, *op. cit.*, *Introduzione*, V-IX.

Italy, was convinced that the melodies used in the apostolate remained unchanged since the time of the founder – and became widespread throughout the Redemptorists in the nineteenth century. The second line of interpretation, by [Vito] Domenico Scaligina, C.Ss.R.,<sup>40</sup> and then by Antonio Di Coste, C.Ss.R.<sup>41</sup> favored a «codification» (according to original authorship, date, etc.), developed by the second generation of Redemptorists, some of whom were contemporaries of St. Alphonsus. Finally, a third line of interpretation insisted that such a codification was possible, but only through the Redemptorist novitiates and houses of study, in which a continuous oral tradition was traceable back to the teaching given by Alphonsus to young clerics.

Given these different interpretations – and considering the confusion among genuine and spurious melodies derived from oral tradition – the comparison of the musical variants of the Alphonsian poetic-musical production was abandoned by the critics; or, rather, it was absorbed into two tracks. The first track, favored by many diocesan priests and religious communities<sup>42</sup>, took into consideration the «way in which parish missions were organized»; this was their primary gauge for the production and use of spiritual hymns. The second track preferred to clearly identify a single uniqueness of style for parish missions dating back to one and only one source, namely, St. Alphonsus. They believed that this pure style was capable of creating through Redemptorist missionaries a «global musical tradition» in this field of apostolic labor<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Vito Domenico Scaligina, C.Ss.R., b. Feb. 5, 1839; prof. Feb. 2, 1858; ord. Apr. 5, 1862; d. May 9, 1929.

<sup>41</sup> Antonio Di Coste, C.Ss.R., b. May 1, 1865; prof. Nov. 9, 1883; ord. Nov. 20, 1887; d. July 13, 1944.

<sup>42</sup> Very significant, from this point of view, are the studies presented at the international conference of 1997 about *Alfonso Maria Liguori e la società civile del suo tempo*; and Giuseppe ORLANDI, *Il rapporto tra s. Alfonso e il Venerabile Lentini*, in: *Il Venerabile Lentini nella storia sociale e religiosa della Basilicata*, ed. by Gabriele DE ROSA and Francesco VOLPE, Roma 1987, 125-153. A general framework in S. NANNI and P. SATURNO in: *La musica dei semplici*, and important notes about the geography of the devotional songs (and about the origin of «*Tu scendi dalle stelle*») in: G. VALENTE, *S. Alfonso, Mons. Felice de Paù e la nenia natalizia «Tu scendi dalle stelle»*, as in FN 35 above.

<sup>43</sup> P. SATURNO, *La tradizione musicale*, as in FN 7 above.



The fact remains that, setting aside all questions of firm authorship, the «Alphonsian *canzoncine*», have been welcomed and loved in many lands for over 270 years. They played an extraordinary role in forming Catholic identity in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Then, through time, these spiritual songs were enriched by new themes and further interpretative effort by the Redemptorists. Also, professional musicians and trained liturgists, with unique charisms and with great success, introduced them as a pattern of sacred music for devout people. They have represented a vast Alphonsian repertoire for Christmas, Easter, Marian feasts and devotions, and for Eucharistic celebrations<sup>44</sup>. Some of them were recognized for the subtle appeal of their mystical content.

And so, for ordinary people of genuine faith, as they have sung his hymns, there has been left a keen impression of the figure of St. Alphonsus Liguori. More so than his moral or ascetical works, more so than his exhortations or devotional writings, these hymns which he produced, ...or adapted, ...or revised, invoked the image of a man with an ardent charism to be an apostolic missionary close to the people<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> ID., *Le canzoncine-laude*, passim. See FN 11 above. – This work provides information about twentieth-century developments of the cantatas and about the musical contribution of the Redemptorist congregation toward the circulation of the «Alphonsus-Redemptorist repertoire» (in Europe, Canada, Mexico). During the twentieth century, some composers and musicians such as Lorenzo Perosi, Licinio Refice, and Alfonso Vitale have applied their own music to lyrics by Alphonsus. At times they also altered the melodies and the texts. For further clarification, see NANNI and SATURNO, *La musica dei poveri*, as above at the beginning of this article, FN (\*).

<sup>45</sup> About the role of the musical expression within the overall pastoral and doctrinal works of Saint Alphonsus, see also: Antonio DI COSTE, *Le melodie di S. Alfonso M. Liguori in alcuni suoi canti popolari e Duetto tra l'anima e Gesù Cristo*, Roma 1932; Domenico CAPONE, *S. Alfonso missionario con i suoi redentoristi nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia dal 1732 al 1982*, Napoli 1987; Emelindo MASONE and Alfonso AMARANTE, *S. Alfonso Liguori e la sua opera. Testimonianze bibliografiche*, Pagani-Napoli 1987; Marina MAYROFER, *Devozione e teatro nelle melodie alfonsiane*, in: *Alfonso M. De Liguori e la società civile* (see FN 7 above), 541-562; Ezio MARCELLI and Santino RAPONI, *Un umanista del '700 italiano, Alfonso M. de Liguori*, Verona-Roma 1992.

SUMMARY

This article traces the role that musical expression played in the pastoral and apostolic life of St. Alphonsus. It was his belief that music and song constituted a true and proper language of conversion. Hence he used devotional songs with a moral and catechetical purpose in mind. The poetic and musical talent of Alphonsus had been refined by the expert artistic training of his formative years. This article first takes us back to the period which preceded Alphonsus, when the Oratorians, Jesuits, and Pious Workers developed verses and music texts for use in their missions. Then we are shown how Alphonsus took those older texts, reworked and adapted them, and added some of his own, but always with pastoral objectives in mind. The songbook produced by Alphonsus was addressed to the heart of both the educated and the general populace. His aim was to reach the heart of all devout people, even as his special predilection was for those in the vast areas of countryside and in the poorest districts of Naples. By means of his spiritual songs he succeeded in providing a «solid pedagogical instrument for instructing and building up the faith of people».

SOMMARIO

L'articolo ripercorre il ruolo che l'espressione musicale svolge nell'azione pastorale e apostolica di sant'Alfonso, dando forma ad un vero e proprio linguaggio di conversione che usa le «divote canzoni» a fini morali e di catechesi. Il linguaggio poetico-musicale alfonsiano – nato da una specifica formazione artistica acquisita in gioventù dal fondatore – rivista in patrimonio di testi in parole e musica già usato nelle missioni (particolarmente di Oratoriani, Gesuiti, Pii Operai) e lo rielabora adattandolo ai contesti dell'apostolato. Continuamente rinnovato sulla base degli obiettivi pastorali, il canzoniere di sant'Alfonso si indirizza ai colti e ai semplici e mira a raggiungere l'insieme del popolo devoto, ma è soprattutto rivolto alle genti delle campagne e dei rioni napoletani più poveri come un «solido sussidiario pedagogico per l'istruzione e l'edificazione delle popolazioni».

PATRICK J. HAYES, PH.D. (\*)

THE FRANCIS XAVIER MURPHY, C.SS.R., (1914-2002)  
COLLECTION OF THE BALTIMORE PROVINCE ARCHIVES:  
A BIBLIOGRAPHY

Of all twentieth century Redemptorists, two *periti* of the Second Vatican Council remain in the popular mindset. One is Bernard Häring (1912-1998), the widely read moral theologian, and the other is his colorful contemporary, the puckish Francis Xavier Murphy (1914-2002) of the Baltimore Province. Known better to English speakers as Xavier Rynne, he was as prodigious as those who sought to lionize him, keep up with him, or skewer him. From the extensive archival matter he bequeathed to the Baltimore Province Archives, there are a number of humorous and light-hearted jabs at Murphy's pen name. For instance, a cartoon caption echoes the words emanating from a confessional: «Forgive me Father for I have Rynned!» As «FX» Murphy (also, «Murph»), a member of the Congregation for nearly six decades, he was a tattler, of sorts, but one who held an abiding love for the Church, in part because he believed it was so fascinating, so Spirit-filled and so truly human. For this he garnered the respect (or disdain) of all who read him. If one happened to dwell in his inner circle, he was the inspiration for friendly banter. Any contestant gave as good as he got. To take one example, the eminent English prelate John Cardinal Heenan, who admired Murphy's verve, wrote him in 1971, «I am just off to the Synod where I hope to denounce people like YOU and [other] organized clerical anarchists».<sup>1</sup> Murphy relished this repartee, heaped praise on those skilled at it, and was allergic to the pedant or dullard to the end of his days.

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(\*) Doctor Hayes is the Archivist for the Redemptorist Baltimore Province, Brooklyn, New York.

<sup>1</sup> See the notes of the transcribed letter from Heenan to Murphy, dated October 1971, in the James J. Galvin, C.Ss.R., Papers, Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province: *Chronicle Material*.

By the onset of the Council in the early 1960s, Murphy had already led a storied life. But it was through the use of the Rynne pseudonym that his legend grew. As Rynne, Murphy was able to avoid ecclesiastical censure for publishing accounts of the inner workings of the closed sessions of the Second Vatican Council, all of which were to be conducted under pontifical secrecy.<sup>2</sup> In a typical exchange on the question of whether he was the infamous Rynne, Murphy would simply reply, «No, I am Francis Murphy». This «bit of casuistry», as he called it, disclosed a truthful reply and at the same time protected his identity by tricking his interrogator into believing he was not the alleged author. There can be little doubt that his ability to skirt the rules also led to new ventures on his career path, including the holding of prestigious fellowships and openings to print venues such as *The New York Times*.

His career path was not always well planned, but seemed altogether providential. Murphy's vocational interests went in many different directions—from parish priest, to army chaplain, to social worker, to patristics scholar, to Vatican gadfly, to journalist, to Ivy-League professor. He was a globe trotter—logging hundreds of thousands of miles around the world. He never shirked the apostolic life, doing weekend parish work where necessary and preaching before all who would listen. Whether he was ultimately an asset or hindrance to the Redemptorists in the United States, and specifically to the Baltimore Province, will be a question left to future historians. What this essay aims to do is bring his life and the scope of his literary output to the attention of his confreres as well as to a wider public.

### *Content of the Murphy Papers*

Murphy left a long paper trail beyond his several books on the council, which themselves appeared in a number of editions.

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<sup>2</sup> For the regulations governing the Council, see Pope John XXIII, *Motu Proprio, Appropinquante Concilio* (August 6, 1962), accessed via the Internet March 30, 2011, at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_motu-proprio\\_19620806\\_appropinquante-concilio\\_lt.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/motu_proprio/documents/hf_j-xxiii_motu-proprio_19620806_appropinquante-concilio_lt.html). Article 11.1 of the regulations governs secrecy.

The literary legacy has been conserved, as much as possible, by the Baltimore Province and is presently housed at the community's Shore Road archives in Brooklyn, New York. Many boxes of unsorted papers came into the possession of the Province Archives and were left fallow before the author of this essay began a slow organization which now forms the present collection. The material constitutes a largely untapped and highly valuable source for scholarly research on the Catholic Church in the twentieth century. The Murphy papers encompass letters, manuscripts, notebooks, scholarly and popular articles, photographs, video, film and sound recordings dating from 1896 to Murphy's death in 2002.

If there is one thing that shows through the collection's documents, it is that Murphy took the craft of writing very seriously. He was assiduous in the clarity of his prose, practicing every day, often going through numerous drafts for even the shortest articles or speeches. Further, he was a copious letter writer. There are twenty-six large files of correspondence within the collection. It is perhaps not an overstatement, either, to say that Murphy loved words—not merely as his bread and butter—but also as a wellspring for thought. While he redacted his own words over and over, he also took a wide interest in a number of subjects, collecting scores of files of news clippings.

The archives are also in possession of several of Murphy's books. The papers are housed in six file cabinet drawers of varying dimensions. Murphy's personnel files are located in the alpha files, in a separate cabinet drawer. Some material that appears in the personnel files is also available in the Murphy papers. Among these records are copies of letters which seem to be of an official nature relating the interest of the Holy Office in the publication of a series of *The New Yorker* articles issued by Xavier Rynne, together with Murphy's own rather provocative essays on population questions. The collection itself is subdivided into several sections, though researchers are cautioned that there is frequent overlap of material between sections or within sections, whether by duplication or as adjunct subject matter. The entirety of the collection is open to qualified researchers, with some exceptions, particularly in the subject files related to personal matters in cases of ecclesiastical correspondence, adoption, or

student records. Consultation of these materials will be at the discretion of the Province Archivist. The Murphy papers also contain unpublished manuscripts that are attributable to other authors. Researchers who intend to quote from these materials should seek the permission of the copyright holder—either the author or his or her estate. Before providing Murphy's extensive bibliography, a more thorough biographical sketch will help situate the man and his times.

*Biographical data*

Born June 26, 1914, in the Bronx, Francis X. Murphy was raised by loving parents—Dennis and Anna «Nano» (Rynne) Murphy who had eloped from Ireland. They raised three children, including Patricia (b. 1918) and Annabelle (b. 1923), both of whom survived their elder brother. He was baptized in the Church of St. Angela Merici on Morris Avenue in the Bronx, July 6, 1914. Murphy attended Immaculate Conception Church and School, from which he received the sacraments. At the age of eight he was confirmed in this Church by Archbishop Patrick Hayes of New York and it was then that Murphy began to hear «the first whisperings of the call of God». In 1928, he began the juvenate at North East, Pennsylvania. Upon the death of his father in September 1932, Murphy applied for and was granted permission by the Rector to return home and assist his mother. While home in the Bronx, he was able to continue studies at Fordham University, where he remained until the end of the fall term. He returned to North East in January 1933, graduating in May 1934. He followed the normal course for Redemptorist studies, entering the novitiate at St. Mary's, Ilchester, Maryland, and completing his theological training at Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus, New York. He made his first profession in August 1935 and final profession in September 1938. Murphy was ordained at Esopus on June 23, 1940.

Already while at Esopus, Murphy displayed affinities for writing and historical narrative. His first major work, «The Irascible Hermit» – a treatise on the temperament of St. Jerome – was published by *The Catholic World* in 1937, but he had been

editing or contributing to student or Redemptorist publications in the months prior to this. After he was ordained, Murphy's superiors sent the young priest to the Catholic University of America for further studies. He obtained a master's degree (1942) and doctorate (1944) in medieval history there, writing a thesis under the direction of Dr. Martin R. P. McGuire on Rufinus of Aquileia, an erstwhile contemporary of St. Jerome. The period and controversies that arose among these two thinkers would serve as a touch point for much of Murphy's future work, especially in view of limitations on his freedom. He frequently took the late patristics as giving guidance and supporting the practical elements of human decision making. Upon graduation he took up pastoral duties as a chaplain to the midshipmen at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and immersed himself in the work, conducting conferences and parish activities for the «mid-dies» and their superiors at the Academy. By all accounts, the future naval officers enjoyed the young priest as someone who brought high intellectual caliber with a street-smart, Bronx accent. This ministry began an abiding interest by Murphy in the life and work of those in the armed forces and he felt a special obligation to see to their spiritual care. Through the attachments that he cultivated at the Academy he set to work on a biography of Rear Admiral Daniel «Uncle Dan» Callaghan, a former aide to Franklin Roosevelt and a devout Catholic, whose ship went down in the Solomon Islands during the Second World War. Murphy was stationed at St. Mary's Parish in Annapolis until 1947, when he returned to Esopus to teach and organize the library, but this assignment was short-lived. In the summer of 1948 he was sent to Sant'Alfonso in Rome to assist in the task of collecting and microfilming Redemptorist records in European libraries.

The Roman experience was perhaps determinative of Murphy's future outlook. Not only was he able to do research work for the Redemptorist Generalate, which taught him how to move in the echelons of ecclesiastical power, he managed to undertake two further assignments: as correspondent for the National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service, for which he covered the Italian elections of 1948, as well as the pastoral care he was able to provide for displaced persons languishing in camps in

Germany as a result of the Second World War. As a supply chaplain for Redemptorists engaged in army service, he would often move through occupied territories and give comfort to encamped Catholics wherever he found them. Back in Rome, he was a well-disciplined scholar. For his research, he often went to the Vatican Library and acquainted himself with the staff who warmed to his playfulness and intellect. For his coverage of Italian politics, he made contact with important members of the Vatican Secretariat of State, including Monsignor Giovanni Batista Montini, who would become Pope Paul VI. He was a confidant of other Americans stationed or visiting in Rome. And for his work on the plight of displaced persons and refugees, he developed close ties with the heads of Catholic War Relief Services. Thus an admixture of the scholarly, the journalistic, and the apostolic began to coalesce.

Murphy returned to the United States in 1949 to do parish work at Immaculate Conception Parish in the Bronx, an assignment he kept until 1951 when he volunteered to become a chaplain in the United States Army. He was initially assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas, where he shared pastoral duties with Jesuits from nearby St. Mary's Seminary. It was at Fort Riley that Murphy often confronted a disturbing, if latent, racism within the ranks of the enlisted men he served and made repeated overtures on behalf of African-American soldiers to the Army's headquarters in Washington. Eventually Murphy was deployed to the Korean theater, saw action on the battle front, and earned the Bronze Star. During this time he advocated on behalf of chaplains and edited a short-lived series of pamphlets called «God's F.O.». (Forward Officer) for the instruction and entertainment of the enlisted men. Conflicts with his commanding officers forced an application for re-assignment, which was readily granted, and Murphy took up his new duties between France and Germany. It was in France that Murphy first encountered Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, and renewed an important acquaintance in the person of Giovanni Benelli, the future archbishop of Florence. Eventually, Murphy returned to the United States and was assigned briefly to Fort Dix in New Jersey and Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, New York.



Upon his discharge in 1958, Murphy returned to parochial duties at Immaculate Conception, but it was not long before he was informed that an instructor at the Accademia Alfonsiana had taken ill and that Murphy would return to Rome to teach courses in Patristic Moral Theology. The timing was fortuitous—Pope John had announced the convening of an ecumenical council and Murphy, in addition to teaching duties, would serve as *peritus* for Redemptorist Bishop Aloysius Willinger of Monterey-Fresno, providing him with ready access to all the conciliar proceedings, major participants, and press briefings.<sup>3</sup> During Vatican II, Murphy would alter the nature and substance of the proceedings considerably with his own running commentaries which he filed under the pseudonym «Xavier Rynne» for *The New Yorker* magazine. Murphy believed in a more democratic principle of transparency and openness, a perspective shared among many English-speaking bishops who found in *The New Yorker* articles a chance at bringing conciliar business more immediately to the reading public. The articles themselves emboldened more liberal bishops to speak up and made those intransigent voices in the council hall sound shrill by comparison. Needless to say, the long articles for *The New Yorker* raised the ire of the Holy Office and an internal investigation began. Murphy's continued denials that he was Xavier Rynne became the stuff of legend, though gradually it became, in the words of Lawrence Cunningham, «the worst kept secret in Catholicism». An insider's voice was established, and Murphy's contacts and fame grew wider. Much of his writing was reworked from pages and pages of notes or his personal diary entries, all of which are now archived. Drafts and some correspondence related to the publication of Murphy's articles in this magazine are also found in a separate archival collection at the New York Public Library, with open access, though the bulk of this material is routine business correspondence with *The New Yorker* and sheds little light on the development of the articles themselves.

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<sup>3</sup> In his recent book on Vatican II, the Jesuit historian John O'Malley, notes that Murphy was appointed a *peritus* after the first session. For the record, Murphy attended all four sessions as Bishop Willinger's theological advisor. See O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

His friendships with journalists led him to assignments for a variety of American and Italian newspapers and magazines, and he continued to file for these in the years following the Council on topics ranging from Vatican politics, papal elections, and social questions seen from the perspective of the Catholic Church both at home and abroad. After 1968, with the publication of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (On the Regulation of Births), he wrote numerous articles for the religious and secular press on fertility, married life, population control, and sexual ethics. He supplemented his writing with a number of speaking engagements that frequently caused disquiet among members of the Catholic hierarchy as well as among his own confreres, including presentations before local meetings of Planned Parenthood. He had maintained that in approaching groups like this he was always acting as a priest in dialogue with those of a different view, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of his interlocutors, he wished to be the spokesperson for the authentic teaching of the Church. As a professor of moral theology he believed his credentials for this work were in order, though many of his confreres saw in these associations a source for confusion, no matter how Murphy chose to style himself.

With his extensive travel Murphy was able to make many helpful contacts around the globe. Before Vatican II he trekked throughout Western Europe for War Relief Services, and was a sometime vacationer in Ireland; later he found himself on assignment in Japan while an Army chaplain based in Korea. After the Council, he served as guest commentator or reporter at two of the Synods of Bishops that took place in Rome, accompanied Sargent Shriver's entourage to the old Soviet Union, lectured in Oxford and the Augustinianum at numerous patristic congresses, made visits to slums and clinics throughout Latin America, and could be found passing through India and Egypt. During the Council itself, in addition to all his other work, he played a small but faithful role in assembling the historical matter that was presented to Pope Paul for the beatification of America's first Redemptorist saint, Bishop John Nepomucene Neumann, in 1963. During his professorship in Rome he also served as a subject area editor of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1968 edition) for all

matters related to Patristic and Byzantine studies. His own contribution of over 100 separate articles was integral to the encyclopedia's quality and depth. His duties as editor frequently forced his return to the United States for consultative meetings at the Catholic University of America, where the editorial offices were based. All of these experiences rounded out a career which diminished the spacing often felt by Catholics with each other, with the wider world, and with deceased historical figures.

As will be evident from his lengthy bibliography, Murphy's publication output has few rivals in religious journalism or scholarship. His writing cast him as a decided member of the progressive camp in the aftermath of the Council, and he saw this «apostolate of the pen» as intrinsic to his own priestly life, an avocation that he could not confine to teaching alone. To wit, he was granted an extended leave of absence from the Accademia Alfonsiana to take up a fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, and teaching assignments that included stints at Princeton University, the Johns Hopkins University, and Union Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, his journalism appeared week to week, if not day to day, in American and British journals. He organized academic conferences on patristic and Renaissance thought. And he attached himself to social causes such as Bread for the World and the Population Reference Bureau, both of which put him at the center of controversies surrounding Vatican policies at the United Nations on questions related to population control. In 1974 he was a delegate to the United Nations Symposium on Population and Human Rights in Amsterdam, writing one of the key papers for that event entitled «The Impact of Fertility on Human Rights». From 1977-1981 he served as Rector of Holy Redeemer College in Washington, DC, the Redemptorist house of studies at the Catholic University of America. His lecturing and writing continued into the mid-1980s relatively unabated, but a heart attack on December 23, 1979, and a continued bout with Parkinson's disease since 1987, slowed his productivity. From 1985 until his death on April 12, 2002, Murphy resided with his brother Redemptorists as the «writer-in-residence» at the parish community of St. Mary's in Annapolis.

Murphy lived somewhat larger than life, that is, he typically played the Oxford don, *rapporteur*, and bon vivant. He dined with cardinals, chief executive officers, and government officials. But hidden from the limelight, he was dedicated to priestly service, often daring to improve the lives of others when it meant that his own reputation could suffer. He was a friend to unwed mothers and abandoned children, giving consolation and material assistance to those in need of a home. He showed how a street tough from the Bronx could teach the virtues of the mind and right conduct to members of the Naval Academy. And he brought the Church into vital contact with the ideas and personalities of the Second Vatican Council on a scale that reached well beyond the more academic theology of his day. Murphy's character displayed gentility, but also a biting invective against incompetence, particularly against those who he thought should know better. These remarks hardly sum up a life and it would be a mistake to cast Murphy in a particular political camp. While he leaned toward progressivism within the Church, often advocating mercy instead of rebuke, he was nevertheless a fiercely vocal proponent of moral rectitude and accountability, maintaining a reserved and sober attitude toward sexual ethics. Similarly, while he pled for information sharing and transparency within the Church, he was adamant about the primacy of conscience. Murphy's *oeuvre* is matched by few American Catholics of the twentieth century and it deserves a careful study on a number of fronts, biographical, moral, patristic, ecclesial. It is hoped that this bibliography, with no pretence to being complete, will serve future investigators of this remarkable man.

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LA TRISTE VICENDA DEL P. VINCENZO TRAPANESE  
(1801-1856)

I. – LA SITUAZIONE STORICA IN CUI VISSE IL P. V. TRAPANESE

Mentre la Congregazione in Sicilia con i successi militari del Satriano stava per uscire dal grande disagio della dispersione dei soggetti e dell'incameramento dei beni materiali, in cui era stata posta dalla rivoluzione del 1848, nel napoletano, invece, i redentoristi entrarono in una situazione di confusione a causa del rifiuto che alcuni soggetti mostrarono nell'accogliere la decisione presa dalla Santa Sede per dare una gestione unitaria a tutta la Congregazione.

Vari erano stati i tentativi che i redentoristi transalpini avevano fatto presso la Santa Sede per avere un riconoscimento alla pari con i confratelli del Regno delle Due Sicilie, visto che il loro numero era abbastanza consistente. Un forte impulso venne dalla canonizzazione di sant'Alfonso, che portò a Roma una larga rappresentanza di transalpini, guidati dal vicario generale padre Giuseppe Passerat. Vi furono incontri con le competenti autorità vaticane, che promisero che avrebbero risolto il caso.

Il grande movimento per una gestione unitaria di tutta la Congregazione incominciò il 3 aprile del 1849 a causa della malattia del reverendissimo Giancamillo Ripoli. Infatti il cardinale Prefetto della Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari chiese che si convocasse la Consulta generale per presentare alla Santa Sede un nominativo per coadiuvare il Rettore Maggiore *a motivo della sua salute acciacciosa*. Al primo scrutinio segreto il consiglio scelse il padre Francesco Ansalone, consultore generale, mentre poi nella stessa seduta fu votato un soggetto fuori della consulta con maggioranza di voti: il padre Vincenzo Trapanese<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> APNR, *Libro delle Consulte generali del Rettor Maggiore 1783-1859*, fol. 183. Cf. *Series moderatorum generalium eorumque vicariorum et consultorum*, SHCSR 2 (1954) 9-51.

La Sacra Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari, avuto i due nomi, scelse il Trapanese, un siciliano aperto alle novità. Con il decreto del 14 aprile 1849 il Trapanese fu nominato vicario del Rettore Maggiore Ripoli e poi con lettera del 20 aprile 1849 il cardinale Prefetto Orioli gli assegnò temporaneamente lo stesso consiglio generale del Ripoli. Il 14 maggio 1849 si ebbe il *regio exequatur* sia per il Trapanese che per i consultori. Non passò nemmeno un mese che il cardinal Orioli il 10 giugno 1849 conferì al Trapanese la piena potestà di rettore maggiore con lettera indirizzata a lui e al Ripoli<sup>2</sup>.

Il Trapanese era nato in Aragona, provincia e diocesi di Girgenti, il 13 marzo 1801. Vestì l'abito religioso il 18 febbraio 1818, emise i voti nelle mani del maestro dei Novizi il padre Francescantonio De Paola il 29 settembre 1820 e fu ordinato sacerdote a Napoli dal vescovo di Bova, il redentorista Nicola Laudisio il 13 marzo 1824<sup>3</sup>.

Il Trapanese non fu mai di residenza in Sicilia, ma venne due volte dopo la sua ordinazione. Una prima volta per affari di famiglia nel 1835 e in questa circostanza predicò nella chiesa dell'Itria, gestita dai redentoristi di Girgenti per la lacrimazione dell'immagine della Madonna dipinta su vetro a Chiusa Sclafani, allora in diocesi di Girgenti<sup>4</sup>. Una seconda volta quando nell'ottobre del 1842 venne nella veste di visitatore straordinario, essendo consigliere generale<sup>5</sup>.

Non si conosce la motivazione perché nel dicembre del 1846 il Trapanese rinunziò alla carica di consultore generale<sup>6</sup>. Per contrasto di idee? I verbali del consiglio generali sono poveri di notizie.

Facilmente il Trapanese fu scelto dalla Santa Sede, perché credeva giuste le idee dei transalpini. Resosi vacante il vicariato generale di Vienna si pensò di sopprimerlo, poiché era di impedimento per una direzione unica. Allora propose una consulta

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. MINERVINO I, 179.

<sup>4</sup> AGHR, VIII C 25; Archivio della Provincia Palermitana C.SS.R. (APPR), VI C 25. *Copia stampata del Processo delle cinque lacrimazioni...*, Palermo 1935.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. APPR, IV A 31.

<sup>6</sup> SHCSR 2 (1954) 50.

internazionale formata da tre consultori napoletani e da tre transalpini, che fu eletta con il decreto del 5 agosto del 1849. I tre padri esteri scelti furono Michele Heilig<sup>7</sup> della provincia gallico-elvetica, Andrea Hugues<sup>8</sup> della provincia germanica e Vittorio Dechamps<sup>9</sup> della provincia belga. Questi subito capirono che le buone intenzioni del Trapanese, che poi erano quelle della Santa Sede, non potevano avere una buona riuscita, poiché i consultori napoletani non nascondevano pubblicamente la loro opposizione radicale e pervicace al trasferimento della sede del Rettore Maggiore a Roma.

Non meno diversa era la posizione della casa reale borbonica, ove si praticava un governo accentratore. Infatti Ferdinando II, ricevendo in udienza i nuovi consultori a Caserta, dichiarò che “S. Alfonso ha fondato la sua Congregazione anzitutto per il mio regno; e qui che Dio la benedirà”. Ripeté la frase poi in francese e disse al Trapanese: “Spero che questi padri ne saranno convinti, quanto me”<sup>10</sup>.

Dopo tre anni di infermità viene a morire d'infarto replicato a Pagani il 18 febbraio 1850 il padre Ripoli<sup>11</sup> e il Trapanese con lettera circolare il 6 marzo comunica il decesso ed anche che era stato a Portici presso il Prefetto della Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari per convocare il capitolo generale elettivo. Ma la risposta fu di rimandare tutto a quando il papa sarebbe ritornato a Roma<sup>12</sup>.

Ritornato il papa a Roma, si ricordò della Congregazione. Infatti con Decreto dalla Congregazione dei Vescovi e Regolari, emanato il 20 giugno 1850, nominò il Trapanese rettore maggiore di tutta la Congregazione a causa della difficoltà dei tempi<sup>13</sup>.

La nomina del Trapanese provocò una dura reazione da parte di alcuni napoletani, influenti presso il re, che rifiutò di

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 52. Nel libro delle messe di Pagani si riscontra che il solo padre Heilig ha celebrato per un giorno, mentre degli altri due non vi è traccia.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Cf. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Histoire*, 152.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. MINERVINO I, 151.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. APPR, I D 13.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. SHCSR 2 (1954) 52.

dare l'*exequatur*, ma il papa *pro bono pacis* cambiò la nomina del Trapanese data *in perpetuum* con *ad Sanctitatis Suae, et Apostolicae Sedis beneplacitum* e così il re diede il *regio exequatur*.

Entrato nel suo ufficio con tutti i crismi, essendo vicino il periodo dei bagni termali, il 3 giugno 1851 inviò una circolare, dando le dovute disposizioni<sup>14</sup>. A distanza di poco più di un mese, il 5 luglio 1851, inviò un'altra circolare per mettere a conoscenza dei provvedimenti presi contro i ribelli, e tra questi il padre Raffaele Fusco, rettore del collegio di Caposele<sup>15</sup>. Chiudeva la circolare annunciando che quanto *prima sarà possibile, vi notificheremo anche tutte quelle provvidenze, che si stimeranno necessarie pel buon governo e andamento del nostro Istituto*<sup>16</sup>. Difatti dieci giorni dopo, il 15 luglio 1851, pubblicò la Circolare, che consta di 17 paragrafi, ove si raffronta la Regola con la Tradizione per richiamare tutti indistintamente al proprio dovere. Vi è anche un forte accenno di non parlare con i secolari delle cose della Congregazione<sup>17</sup>.

Questa circolare incoraggiò i soggetti che condividevano le disposizioni della Santa Sede, ma la lotta aperta contro il Trapanese divenne più agguerrita, rendendogli il governo più difficile. Venne allora alla decisione di trasferirsi a Roma nella casa di Monterone. Partì verso la fine del 1852, lasciando il consiglio generale a Pagani, dopo di aver nominato vicario generale il padre Giuseppe Vaiano<sup>18</sup>. Subito vi fu chi avvisò Ferdinando II del passo fatto. Il re si reputò offeso del gesto del Trapanese per non avergli chiesto il suo beneplacito. Allora comminò contro di lui il bando di esilio, proibendogli di mettere piede nel Regno delle Due Sicilie<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. APPR, I D 4.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 79. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Histoire*, 154.

<sup>16</sup> APPR, I D 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *SHCSR* 2 (1954) 52-54.

<sup>19</sup> Nonostante tutti i concordati restavano in vigore a Napoli tutti gli antichi e pesanti controlli sulla Chiesa. I vescovi venivano nominati dal governo e per l'ingresso dei giovani negli istituti religiosi maschili e femminili era necessario il *regio exequatur*. Questa ingerenza statale in modo speciale favoriva i soggetti irrequieti, scontenti e addirittura ribelli. Nelle provincie e nelle case religiose esistevano due partiti irriducibili a causa dell'interpretazione del-

Quello che fu definito il *caso Trapanese* aveva raggiunto i limiti dell'insopportabilità. Il papa Pio IX nel decreto del 6 settembre 1853 dirà: *Benché il detto Rettore Maggiore si fosse ben comportato nella carica, tuttavia i nemici del genere umano hanno seminato la zizzania nel campo del Signore, donde sono derivate discordie con scandalo dei cristiani.* A questo punto fu necessario prendere dei provvedimenti drastici. E continua: *Pertanto desiderando Sua Santità portare in quanto è in se la pace e la tranquillità alla detta Congregazione, ha creduto opportuno di sottomettere temporaneamente per speciali motivi a Visita Apostolica le case della Congregazione del SS. Redentore esistenti nel Regno delle Due Sicilie, affinché frattanto placati gli animi, i vocali possano addivenire all'elezione del Rettore Maggiore delle suddette case. Perciò Sua Santità con il presente decreto deputa e costituisce l'Em.mo Signor Cardinale Cosenza, arcivescovo di Capua Visitatore Apostolico della Congregazione del SS. Redentore esistente nel Regno delle Due Sicilie*<sup>20</sup>. Così fu decretata la divisione in due tronconi, una nel Regno delle Due Sicilie con sede a Pagani e l'altra con sede a Roma.

Il mandato dato al cardinale Cosenza era per otto mesi da computarsi dalla data del decreto del 6 settembre 1853. Il cardinale frattanto godeva delle facoltà di Rettore Maggiore e Consulta, di visitare personalmente le case dell'Istituto nelle Regno delle Due Sicilie o di deputare persone idonee e ben viste dal Clero secolare e regolare. Il capitolo doveva celebrarsi a Pagani sotto la sua presidenza<sup>21</sup>.

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la vita comune e del voto di povertà. Di questa situazione non erano esenti i Redentoristi di Napoli.

<sup>20</sup> Il Decreto del 6 settembre 1853 comincia: *Sanctissimus D. N. Pius IX omnem adhibuit curam ut Congregationi.* Il testo si può leggere in *Acta integra*, 303-304.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

## II. – L'ELOGIO FUNEBRE DEL P. FRANCESCO CITARELLA

Questo Necrologico recitato a Frosinone nella chiesa di S. Maria delle Grazie da P. Francesco Citarella, nativo di Pagani, nel trigesimo della dipartita del Rev.mo P. Vincenzo Trapanese, non è altro che una breve biografia e un mettere dei punti sugli i, proclamando la rettitudine, l'amore alla Congregazione e il grande senso di servizio verso la Chiesa sino quasi al martirio del padre.

Il P. Citarella non scende in polemica con i seminatori di zizzania, ma presenta il Trapanese, quale ottimo religioso, missionario fervoroso, superiore zelante e riformatore della vita comune.

Il Citarella conobbe il Trapanese da ragazzo durante la missione di Pagani, ove operò portenti, e poi nello Stato Pontificio. È interessante il colloquio che i Padri di Frosinone ebbero con S.S. Pio IX quando era di ritorno a Roma.

Il documento è preceduto da due attestati di P. Michele Haringer e P. Adam Pfab.

Il documento è stato trascritto integralmente senza alcuna correzione. Se sono state fatte delle correzioni sono state fatte attraverso note.

/5/

Cenno Necrologico<sup>22</sup>  
Sopra il Rev.mo P. D. Vincenzo Trapanese  
Ex Generale della Cong.ne del SS.mo Red.re  
Composto  
dal R. P. D. Francesco M<sup>a</sup>. Citarella<sup>23</sup> della medesima  
Cong.ne.

/6/

Note del P. Michele Haringer e del P. Adam Pfab.

Rev.mus Vinc(entius) Trapanese R(ector) M(ajor)  
natus 1801. + 1856. 17 Ian.<sup>24</sup>.

P. Haringer ita scribit de eo:

“Ab anno 1849 qua Vic(arius) g(enera)lis, mox qua R(ector) M(ajor) a S(ancta) Sede nominatus usque ad annum 1853 Cong(rega)tione)m universam gubernavit. Tempus sui gubernii erat plenum miseriis internis et externis; patres enim neapolitani minime contenti erant, quod a S(ancta) Sede nominatus, non ab ipsis electus fuerit; rex vero vix eum agnoscere voluit. Inde exortae sunt discordiae gravissimae, recursus ad regem et ad Papam, ingratis lites et accusationes ac recriminationes. Tandem S(ancta) Sedes mense Sept(em)bri 1853 Patrem Trapanese munere suo amovit, visitationem ap(osto)licam (per Card(inalem) Cosenza, Archiep(isco)p(u)m Capuannum) et novam

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<sup>22</sup> AGHR, 07XIV, 3652. (Segnatura antica XIV D f 24 bis).

<sup>23</sup> MINERVINO I, 38-39: Citarella Francesco Antonio Domenico, di Aniello (possidente) e Viscardi Maria Giuseppa. Nato il 12 luglio 1813 a Nocera Inferiore (SA). Battezzato il 12 luglio 1813. Fece la vestizione religiosa il 13 novembre 1829. Ha professato il 3 ottobre 1830 a Ciorani, essendo maestro dei novizi p. Papa Giuseppe. Fu ordinato sacerdote il 5 novembre 1837 a Nocera Inferiore da mons. D'Auria Agnello Giuseppe, vescovo di Nocera. Morì il 22 maggio 1861 a Frosinone.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 176: Trapanese Vincenzo Domenico Raffaele Gerlando Maria, Rettore Maggiore, di Domenico (possidente) e Gandolfo Giuseppa. Nata il 13 marzo 1801 ad Aragona (AG). Battesimo: 13 marzo 1801. Vestizione: 8 febbraio 1818. Professione: 29 settembre 1820 a Pagani (Maestro: p. De Paola Francescantonio). Sacerdote: 13 marzo 1824 a Napoli, da mons. Laudisio Nicola, vesc. di Bova. Consultore Generale dal 14 maggio 1844 al 19 dicembre 1846 (M.R.P. Ripoli). Vicario Generale: dal 3 o 14 aprile 1849 al 16 febbraio 1850 (M.R.P. Ripoli). Rettore Maggiore dal 20 giugno 1850 al 6 maggio 1854 per l'intera Congregazione; e fino al 2 maggio 1855 per le Province Transalpine. Titolo di ex Generale: 28 aprile 1854. Morì il 17 gennaio 1856 a Roma (Monterone).

electionem Rect(oris) Majoris instituit, domos vero transalpinas immediate S. Sedi submitit, praescribens, ut Sup(erio)r g(enera)lis Transalpinorum Romae residentiam suam figat, celebrato antea in Urbe capitulo gen(era)li pro electione Rectoris Major(is).

P. Trapanese tantis miseriis afflicto et nimis humiliatus aegrotare coepit; remansit cum Transalpinis quibus aggregari voluit, dolores infirmitatis patienter pertulit, omnibus condonavit et in pace obdormivit die 17 Ian(uarii) 1856 in domo nostra ad S. Mariam Assumptam in Monterone, accepta benedictione Rmi P. Generalis et assistente ac ultima Sacramenta ministrante R. P. Provinciali Douglas. R. i. p.

P. Carmelus Carbone (et ipse Neapolitanus qui vero post sejunctionem nobiscum remansit) saepius narravit, Patrem Trapanese facta canonica visitatione Collegii Aquilani non recta via rediisse Neapolim, sed Romam petiisse, ubi varia in Curia tractaret negotia, post paucos autem dies a gubernio neapolitano accepisse mandatum, ut Romae remaneret, quum eo accessisset sine Regis licentia! Nec redire potuit Neapolim, sed in Urbe post quatuor annos moerore confectus obiit ejusque ossa prope P. Ios. Mautone in Ecclesia B. M. V. de Monterone requiescunt. (P. Adam Pfab C.SS.R. 15 Iun. 1899).

/7/

#### Necrologia

del R(everendissi)mo P. D. Vincenzo Trapanese  
ex G(enera)le della Cong(regazio)ne del SS.mo Red.re

*In mortuum produc lacrymas, et quasi dira passus incipe plorare...  
Fac luctum secundum meritum ejus... In requie mortui requiescere fac  
memoriam Eius. Eccl. 38, 16.18.24.*

Se v'ha più giusto dolore, più ragionevole, e legittimo, dal quale dobbiam esser grandemente penetrati, e compresi, è quello al certo, che ora tutto occupa il nostro spirito, e tutte le membra investe del nostro corpo. Tristissimo ufficio egli è per noi dunque dover rinnovare la memoria della perdita irreparabile di un'Uomo veramente illustre, il ricordo delle cui virtù è per noi argomento di novelle lagrime<sup>25</sup>.

Egli è il Rev.mo P. D. Vincenzo Trapanese ex Generale della Congregazione del SS.mo Redentore, il quale nel dì 17 Gennaio dell'anno 1856 si addormiva<sup>26</sup> per sempre nel bacio del Signore in Roma

<sup>25</sup> Leggasi: lacrime.

<sup>26</sup> Leggasi: si addormentava.



nella Casa della Procura G.le della Congr.ne del SS.mo Redentore a Santa Maria in Monterone nell'anno 54<sup>27</sup> di sua età, avendone già spesi 39 nella Congregazione.

Il debito, che sentiamo vivissimo di spargere un fiore sulla tomba di quest'Uomo così grande, verso cui nutriamo per tanti riguardi affetto, ed obbligazione, ci ha spinto a comporre questo cenno Necrologico.

Avremmo desiderato, che uno Scrittore di spirito, e genio superiore assai di gran lunga al nostro avesse intrapreso con uno stile più acconcio, più puro, ed elegante la storia dell'illustre defonto<sup>28</sup>, volendo lo Spirito Santo, che il lutto, il dolore, e la lode medesima sia /8/ proporzionata al merito della persona, che si deplora. *Fac luctum secundum meritum Ejus* (Eccl. 38,18).

Eravamo già noi senza dubbio abbastanza consci della pochezza del nostro ingegno, e mancanza di uno stile nitido, e terso, per cui non avremmo al certo osati accingerci a una tale impresa: ma il timore che non si smarrissero, e non si perdessero all'intutto le memorie di questo grand'Uomo ce ne diè la spinta, non che le premurose istanze di chi tutto il dritto ha sopra di noi di essere obbedito.

La impresa è ardua, e difficile, poiché nella vita di questo illustro defonto toccar debbasi punti così delicati, che nel mentre mostrano l'eroismo della virtù del Trapanese, tornerebbero ad altrui confusione; noi però senz'offender la Cristiana Carità, metteremo in luce tutto ciò che di eroico praticò il P. Trapanese, e nasconderemo sotto le tenebre i suoi contraddittori, e tutto ciò che questi operarono contro di Lui. Giacché Egli fu una vittima sacrificata dalla ingiustizia, dalla prepotenza, e dalla ingratitudine, in pochi termini, terminò sua vita al pari del suo Fondatore Alfonso M.a Liguori calunniato, perseguitato, e deposto dalla sua carica. I lettori ci doneranno un benigno compatimento.

Nel principio di questo secolo, cioè nel 1802<sup>29</sup> nacque il P. D. Vincenzo Trapanese da Genitori, che alla loro antica civiltà univano già una non comune pietà, e devozione. L'antichissima, e famosa Città di Aragona in Sicilia, celebre per i tanti Re dati al Regno di Napoli, ne fu la fortunatissima Patria, che benignamente lo accolse nel suo seno in nascendo<sup>30</sup>. Nel Battesimo imposto gli venne il nome di Vincenzo in

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<sup>27</sup> In MINERVINO I, 76 si legge che è nato il 13 marzo 1801, dunque è morto a 54 anni e dieci mesi, così anche in SHCSR 2 (1954) 40, 50, 276.

<sup>28</sup> Leggasi: defunto.

<sup>29</sup> 13 marzo 1801. Cf. MINERVINO I, 176.

<sup>30</sup> Aragona è un comune distante 12 Km di Agrigento, che fu fondato nel 1606 nel feudo di Diesi da Baldassarre Naselli, al quale fu concessa dal re

onore di S. Vin- /9/ cenzo Ferreri, cui fu Egli sempre devoto in tutto il corso di sua vita. La piissima Genitrice tutta la sollecitudine si prese di allevare questo tenero bambolo, perché crescesse siccome negli anni così nella pietà si avanzasse, nella devozione, e nel timor santo di Dio. Ella medesima lo andava instruendo ne' primi rudimenti della Cristiana Religione, e ad esempio della Madre di Samuele per ottenere grazie, e benedizioni sul figlio, porgeva al Signore continue fervide preghiere, perché lo tenesse lontano sempre dal peccato, ed è perciò, che a Lui lo offeriva. Cresceva il piccolo Vincenzo nelle gioje delle domestiche mura, e fra le cure amorevoli de' parenti, ed a proporzione, che si andava avanzando (sic) negli anni della puerizia, tenerissimo ancora mostrava un ingegno tutto pieghevole alla virtù, discoprendosi in Lui un aspetto tutto serio, lontano da' puerili trastulli, anzi accompagnato da sì virtuose inclinazioni, che pareva la Grazia averlo formato tutto per se.

Gli accorti, e prudenti Genitori osservando nel loro piccolo Figliuolo principj così belli, concepirono speranze, che sarebbe per riuscire un giorno Vincenzo di onore, lustro, e decoro, non che di gran giovamento, ed utile alla di lor Famiglia. Quindi posero ogni studio, tutta la diligenza usarono perché questo di lor figlio bene, e pulitamente si educasse, affinché la natura fomentata dall'arte, ed arricchita dalla cultura potesse produrre a suo tempo quel molto di frutto che prognosticati avevano, e che quasi con sicurezza promettevansi da un tal figlio.

Sotto la guida perciò di un pio, prudente, e saggio Maestro lo collocarono, il quale dopo di averlo instruito ne' primi elementari rudimenti, apparate<sup>31</sup> tutte le regole grammaticali, lo applicava già alle latine sapienze, e nelle amenità delle graziose lettere, nelle quali per la vivacità del suo spirito congiunto a matura, e seria attenzione, che /10/ gli era per così dire naturale, vi fece rapidi progressi.

Non è da dire qui, quale rispetto, ed obbedienza Vincenzo professava verso i suoi Superiori, e Maestro, cui fu Egli mai sempre sottomesso, ed ossequioso, caro, dolce, e cordiale con tutti, modesto, e verecondo in maniera, che il cuor si guadagnava di chiunque rimirato lo avesse.

Ammesso la prima volta alla SS.ma Comunione tanto da Lui sospirata, disporsisi volle con lunga, e straordinaria preparazione, moltiplicando le orazioni, e gli atti di ogni cristiana virtù. Era solito indi in poi di accostarsi alla sacra mensa per lo più in ogni otto giorni per reficiarsi<sup>32</sup> col pane degl'angeli, e vi si avvicinava sempre con un indicibile

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Filippo II la *licenza populandi*. Dunque Aragona non diede i natali ai re di Napoli. L'Aragona dei re di Napoli si trova in Spagna ed era un reame spagnolo.

<sup>31</sup> Leggasi: apprestate.

<sup>32</sup> Sta per rinvigorire.

raccoglimento e fervore di spirito, che era spettacolo d'ammirazione, e stupore a' circostanti.

Con questo vivere così regolato il giovinetto Vincenzo sensibilmente disponevasi di giorno in giorno a ricevere grazie maggiori, per essere lo strumento designato dalla Provvidenza alla manifestazione di sua Gloria. E di fatti Iddio, che già negli eterni divini consigli scelto lo avea per se, e determinato avea a farlo ricalcar provetto le orme del suo Unigenito in traccia de' traviati, giunto appena all'età di tre lustri, lo chiamava a ritirarsi dal mondo, dalla patria, e dalla Casa paterna per rinchiudersi nel sacro ritiro di un Chiostro, ed Egli il giovinetto Vincenzo, quell'altro Samuele, prestando attento l'orecchio alla voce del Signore prontamente obbedì, e senza curare le lusinghiere attrattive della Carne e del sangue, disprezzando le tenere carezze, e lagrime de' suoi parenti, ed abbandonando i comodi, gli agi, gli onori, e quanto il mondo mai gli prometteva, frettoloso corse nella nostra Casa di Girgenti<sup>33</sup> in Sicilia, ove fece calde premurose istanze presso quei Padri, i quali ivi in quel tempo dimoravano, perché accettare lo volessero tra /11/ di loro, giacché Egli a tutto costo abbracciar voleva l'Istituto del SS.mo Redentore, fondato dal Liguori, allora Beato<sup>34</sup>.

Quei Padri osservando una meravigliosa vivezza di spirito nel giovanetto Trapanese, congiunta ad una gentile, e graziosa indole, dopo di averlo provato nella vocazione, ed esaminatolo nello studio delle lettere umane, ne parteciparono notizia al Rev.mo P. D. Nicola Mansion<sup>35</sup>, il quale si trovava allora a Capo nel governo della Congregazione nel Collegio di Nocera de' Pagani. Questi sulle ottime relazioni dategli da quei Padri di Sicilia, non esitò punto un momento ad am-

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<sup>33</sup> Nella sua storia millenaria la città di Agrigento ha avuto ben quattro nomi con questo: Akkracas per i Greci, Agrigentum per i Romani, Kerkent o Gergent per gli Arabi; per i Normanni era Girgenti, nome ufficiale della città fino al 1929, quando, durante il periodo fascista, venne utilizzata un'italianizzazione del nome che aveva durante il periodo romano, Agrigento assunse l'attuale denominazione col regio decreto legislativo n. 1143 del 16 giugno 1927.

<sup>34</sup> S. Alfonso fu beatificato il 15 settembre 1816. Facilmente il giovane Trapanese si portò a Girgenti nel 1817, essendo superiore della casa il P. Camillo Picone, uomo di carattere, grande missionario e zio dello storico agrigentino Giuseppe Picone. Cf. S. GIAMMUSSO, *I Redentoristi in Sicilia*, Palermo 1960, 242, e *Arredi e collezioni dei Padri Liguorini di Agrigento. Tutela e conservazione*. Catalogo della mostra a cura di Gabriella COSTANTINO e Giuseppe CIPOLLA, Caltanissetta 2010, 81.

<sup>35</sup> MINERVINO I, 108. Il Mansion fu di residenza in Sicilia ad Agrigento e a Palermo. Cf. G. RUSSO, *L'Uditore e i Redentoristi*, Palermo 1977; Id., *I Redentoristi ad Agrigento*, Agrigento 2005.

metterlo, quindi fattogli costituire il Sacro Patrimonio dal suo Genitore, lo fece entrare in Noviziato.

Svincolato così il giovinetto Vincenzo da' legami del mondo, vedendosi libero, e sicuro ripeter poteva con Davide: *Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi, hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam*<sup>36</sup>. Esprimersi non può con qual fervore di Spirito il novello Novizio mettesse mano all'opera della sua perfezione con percorrere la Carriera di tutte le virtù. Che se Egli nel Secolo era obbediente, docile, sottomesso, modesto, fervente nella divozione, oh quanto più queste virtù si consolidarono, si perfezionarono, e si accrebbero in Lui nel tempo del Noviziato.

Eravi legge in quell' Epoca cioè nel 1818 emanata dal Governo di non potere in conto veruno proferire voti Religiosi in Sicilia quei giovini, i quali non ancora pervenuti erano all'età di anni 21 compiuti: si fu allora che il Rev.mo P. Mansionone lo chiamava con gli altri compagni in Napoli a compiere l'anno di pruova nel Collegio di Nocera de' Pagani, ove riposa la venerata salma del S. Fondatore, e nel primo metter piede il Novizio Trapanese<sup>37</sup> in quella Casa santificata da' passi, dalle parole, dalle penitenze, dai sudori del Santo Fondatore, e di tanti Venerabili vecchi Padri compagni del medesimo, oh come si dovè accendere il suo Cuore di santo desiderio, e di brama fervente per la perfezione! Quale gioja, e consolazione non si trasfuse /12/ allora nel suo Spirito? Spesso lo si vedeva prostrarsi d'innanzi alla Sacra Urna, ove le Ossa giacevano del S. Padre, esposte alla venerazione de' Credenti, e quivi sfogava il Trapanese gli amorosi, e caldi suoi affetti, pregandolo ad ottenergli grazie di corrispondete (sic) alla sua Vocazione Religiosa<sup>38</sup>.

La vita esemplare del virtuoso giovine Novizio tenuta in tutto il tempo di pruova<sup>39</sup>, la modestia degli occhi, che non fissò mai in volto a chicchessia, la esteriore compostezza nel suo portamento, che mostrava l'interno raccoglimento di spirito, di ch'era rivestito, non che la obbedienza esatta ad ogni benche menoma regola del Direttorio de' Novizj ad ogni semplicissimo cenno de' Superiori, gli meritavano la stima, e l'affetto di tutti.

Terminato l'anno di pruova, fu ammesso alla professione de' tre voti semplici di Povertà, Castità, ed Obbedienza diuniti (sic)<sup>40</sup> al voto, e

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<sup>36</sup> Ps 131,14.

<sup>37</sup> MINERVINO I, 176: Dice che il Trapanese vestì l'abito religioso l'8 febbraio 1818 e fece la professione religiosa il 29 settembre 1820 a Pagani essendo maestro dei novizi il P. Francescantonio De Paola.

<sup>38</sup> Leggi: grazie rispondenti alla sua vita religiosa.

<sup>39</sup> Leggi: prova.

<sup>40</sup> Leggi: riuniti.

giuramento di perseveranza di vivere sino alla morte nella Congregazione, soliti a proferirsi da quei che abbracciar vogliono l'Istituto del SS.mo Red.re. A quali voti si preparò il Trapanese col rigoroso ritiro, e silenzio profondo di quindici giorni, e che in fine Egli proferì con infinita gioja del suo cuore, e con tutto il fervore del suo spirito.

Ligatosi<sup>41</sup> quindi, e stretto con Dio, e colla Congregazione, quale sempre riguardò, come sua tenerissima, ed affettuosa Madre, tantosto fu messo sotto la scorta de' Lettori, i quali pria gli fecero ripassare lo studio delle lettere Umane, e della Rettorica: indi volgeva poi mente alle severe Scienze, cioè alla Metafisica, alle Matematiche ed alla Fisica, avendo in quest'ultima facoltà a maestro il P. D. Celestino M.a Cocale<sup>42</sup>, che nel 1824 venne eletto a Rettore Maggiore della Congr.ne, e che poi nel 1831 fu eletto alla Dignità di Arcivescovo di Patrasso nelle parti degl'Infedeli, essendo già moderatore dello Spirito del Re delle due Sicilie, Ferdinando II. Percorse lo studio della Teologia Dommatica sotto il Magistero del celebratissimo P. D. Felice M.a Cassese<sup>43</sup>, uomo versatissimo in tale Dommatiche dottrine /13/ per i tanti giovini che allevò alla Congr.ne, in simili materie. Rimarcar si deve ancora per onore del Trapanese, essere stato il P. Cassese uno degli assistenti alla morte del S. Fondatore, trovandosi in quel tempo giovine studente nella Casa di Nocera, il quale corse per ricevervi l'ultima benedizione del Santo, e che poi occupò le prime Cariche nella Congr.ne or di Vicario Generale, or di Consultore Maggiore.

Si applicava finalmente il Trapanese allo studio della Morale Teologia, che fece sotto la guida del P. D. Biagio Panzuti<sup>44</sup> rinomatissimo in questa materia, per la sua opera data alla luce de' torchi, e che in oggi per le molteplici edizioni, che si son fatte, trovansi nelle mani quasi di tutti gli Ecclesiastici secolari, e Regolari, ed anche son penetrati in Regni stranieri. Questo P. Panzuti dopo di essere stato più volte Consultore Magg.re e Vicario Generale, negl'ultimi di sua vita fu eletto a Pro.re G.le della Congr.e a Roma, fu il medesimo P. Panzuti nella sua gioventù Maestro di Teologia Dommatica, e Morale al sopraccennato Monsignor Cocale<sup>45</sup>.

E qui è da notarsi, che nella Carriera di tutti questi studi mostrò il giovine Trapanese mai sempre l'acutezza, e perspicacia del suo ingegno, di sorta che non solamente le cose più scabrose, e difficili Egli to-

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<sup>41</sup> Leggasi: legatosi.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. MINERVINO I, 39-40.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie*, II, 302.

sto intendeva chiaramente con un solo sguardo della sua mente, e la spiega<sup>46</sup> sola del Maestro gli bastava senz'altro studio a ripetere con maestrevole, e nobile torna<sup>47</sup> la quotidiana lezione; ma ciò, ch'è più, non vedendosi mai pago, e contento di sempre più sapere, tutto giorno faceva delle giustissime, e sagge interrogazioni a' suoi maestri, proponendo di più loro forti difficoltà. Il Signore dotato lo avea di una nobile quadratura di mente, e d'intelletto congiunta a una tenace memoria, che tutte le questioni le più confuse, ed imbrogliate con un piano tutto ordinato, ch'era suo proprio, le riduceva più chiare della luce del giorno. Era poi Egli sì dedito allo studio, che giammai non perdeva alcun momento di tempo conservandolo giusta il comando del Savio: Fili, conserva tempo<sup>48</sup>, e ne faceva buon uso, talché a Lui ben poteva appropriarsi, ciò che una volta alcuni compagni di studio dissero /14/ al Sales con una certa allusione: *Bos assuetus aratro*.

Queste scientifiche occupazioni però lungi del raffreddarlo nello spirito della devozione, e della pietà, erano anzi a Lui piuttosto di giovamento a progredire sempre più nella via della Religiosa perfezione, poiché da ogni cosa Egli ricavava motivo di levare la sua mente al Signore, e ringraziarlo con fervorose, e frequenti giaculatorie.

Sono Statuti del nostro Santo Fondatore, che i giovini, terminato l'anno del Noviziato, star debbono in luogo a parte, e separato da tutti gli altri della comunità, assegnando loro un Padre Spirituale, che appellasi Prefetto. Questi impegnar si deve a far camminare nella via dello spirito, e della perfezione Religiosa i giovani studenti in tutto il tempo della Carriera degli studi, affinché nel tempo medesimo, che si adorni l'intelletto di tutte le scientifiche cognizioni necessarie pur troppo ad un Missionario Apostolico sotto la scorta de' Lettori, si rivesti lo spirito sotto la direzione Spirituale de' Prefetti di tutte le virtù, che più essenziali sono ad un Operajo della Vigna del Signore, giacché a detta di un grande Operajo Apostolico (P. Baldinucci nella Vita lib. IV. c. 11) il Missionario per essere veramente tale dovrebbe essere un Serafino.

Sotto la direzione dunque de' Prefetti Spirituali il giovine Studente Trapanese di giorno in giorno faceva acquisto di nuove virtù, e finché ascese al Sacerdozio, Egli sempre eguale a se stesso, sempre fervoroso, sempre obbediente, modesto, e virtuoso di sprono era, e d'incitamento agli altri giovini suoi compagni nel Cammino della Virtù, e della Perfezione.

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<sup>46</sup> Leggasi: spiegazione

<sup>47</sup> Leggasi: ritorno.

<sup>48</sup> Fili, conserva tempus: Eccl. 4, 23.

Fissa avendo nella mente la sentenza dell'Ecclesiaste 3,1 Omnia tempus habent, ogni cosa eseguiva esattamente, e con ordine giusta il prescritto delle sue Regole Religiose, a secondo ordinato gli veniva da' Superiori, facendosi scrupolo di preterirne eziandio una /15/ semplicissima virgola: la è perciò, ch'Egli nel tempo delle comuni ricreazioni, e sollievi, santamente si sollevava, offrendo tutto al Signore: s'era tempo di studio camerale, a questo con tutto l'impegno si applicava; s'erano ore di silenzio piccolo, o grande, che fosse stato, Egli faceva scrupolo di romperlo eziandio con semplicissima sillaba proferita colla bocca: sicché ripeteva a se stesso quell'antico detto: *Age quod agis*, tutto era attenzione in Lui nell'eseguire le cose. Sempre assiduo alle Comuni meditazioni, frequente, e devoto nell'avvicinarsi a ricevere i SS. Sacramenti, sempre pronto a tutti gli atti della Comunità, senza mai chiederne esenzione alcuna. Aveva in abominazione la particolarità, come peste delle Comunità, assai cara perciò eragli la massima del V. Bercmans (sic), cioè che tutta la sua perfezione era la osservanza della vita Comune, e questa aveva Egli pure il Trapanese preso di mira, e si fissò per iscopo nel suo ingresso in Congr.ne.

Nient'altro più studiò, che di rendersi fedele in fare esattamente tutte quelle cose, che nella via della virtù conobbe di dovere, e di poter fare, non trascurando parte alcuna, che coll'ajuto della grazia potesse acquistare, dicendo col Sales "che l'esser perfetto nella sua vocazione altro non è, che fare i doveri, e gli uffici propri, che uno per sua condizione è obbligato di fare, ma farli bene, per l'onore, ed amore di Dio, con riferire tutto alla gloria di Lui".

Il suo più grande contentamento<sup>49</sup>, la sua più cara gioja, e delizia era il leggere, e rileggere le vite dei Santi, e il considerarne le gesta, di modo che non faceva passare giorno senza gustarne alcuno almeno per qualche mezz'ora, onde potere dare pascolo al suo spirito. Questi ultimi anni del viver suo tra le amarissime tribolazioni, calunnie, persecuzioni, e per così dire martirj, ch'ebbe a soffrire per opera di maligni seminatori di zizzania, un giorno, che con noi si accompagnava, ci disse: "La lettura della vita del S. Fondatore, e del Calasanzio forma il mio più dolce conforto, /16/ poiché mi veggo<sup>50</sup> trattato in qualche modo al pari di costoro, bramarei però il loro spirito".

Dato termine appena al corso de' suoi studi il P. Trapanese, tantosto il Rev. mo P. Cogle allora Rettore Maggiore lo fe ascendere per gradi a tutti gli ordini della Chiesa, e nel 1826<sup>51</sup> gli fe conferire il pre-

<sup>49</sup> Leggasi: contento.

<sup>50</sup> Leggasi: mi vedo.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. In MINERVINO (I, 176), si legge che ricevette il sacerdozio per le

sbiterato per le mani di Monsignor D. Silvestro Graniti, Vescovo della Città di Cava, cui allora la diocesi di Nocera andava soggetta, perché da varii anni soppressa erane la sede Episcopale, e che nel 1834 di 20 gennaio di bel nuovo si ripristinò per impegno di Monsignor Celestino M.a Cocle, Confessore del Re di Napoli.

A prepararsi, come si conveniva, alla più augusta delle funzioni, in cui ricever si dovea la dignità più eccelsa, la podestà più sublime sul corpo reale e mistico di nostro Signor Gesù Cristo, dignità, e podestà, che arreca ammirazione, e spavento insieme agli stessi Serafini celesti, il P. Trapanese fe precedere dieci giorni di rigoroso silenzio, e ritiro, separandosi in tal tempo da ogni altra estranea faccenda, intento unicamente ad invocare lo Spirito Settiforme, perché discendesse sopra di Lui coll'abbondanza delle sue grazie, e de' doni suoi, onde rendersi idoneo ministro del Santuario; la è perciò, che per tanto ottenere il suo corpo mortificava con digiuni, catenette di ferro, e discipline. Con queste sì belle disposizioni, e preparamenti già consacrato Sacerdote si accostò all'altare per offrirvi la prima volta l'incruento Divin Sacrificio all'Eterno nella Chiesa di S. Michele Arcangelo del Collegio di Pagani. Per la qual cosa può ciascuno ben comprendere quali fossero stati in tal tempo i suoi sentimenti di umiltà, e di desiderio, di amore, e di gratitudine, non che gli atti di viva fede per questo tremendo augusto mistero. Né fu passeggero solamente, e momentaneo questo primo fervore del P. Trapanese di modo che venisse poi a mancare, e svanire, ma fu durevole, e sempre più di giorno in giorno si accrebbe. Egli non celebrava mai senza premettere un fervoroso preparazione, e senza fare dopo un bel lungo rendimento di grazie. Quindi non è da recar gran meraviglia, se ne conseguisse sem-pre singolari grazie per se, ed abbondanti ajuti pel suo prossimo.

I Superiori impertanto stimarono impiegarlo subito ad evangelizzare a' popoli bisognosi la divina parola, e ad amministrare loro il Sacramento della penitenza, acciò con il tuono della voce atterrisse i peccatori traviati, e li riducesse a penitenza, colla confessione lavasse le loro anime col sangue di Gesù Cristo, e le riconciliasse con Dio. Oh il bello, e prezioso ufficio che si affidò al Trapanese! Vedendosi Egli adunque così sublimato alla gran dignità di essere Cooperatore di Dio, giusta la espressione dell'Apostolo (1 a' Cor. cap. 3, v. 9) nella opera più importante, e sacra della Redenzione, qual è quella della salute delle anime redente dal Sangue preziosissimo di Gesù Cristo, intrapre-

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mani di mons. Nicola Laudisio, vescovo di Bova, a Napoli il 13 marzo 1824. Cf. *SHCSR* 2 (1954) 50. Altri invece, come il Citarella dicono che è stato ordinato nel 1826 a Cava.



se questa Apostolica Carriera con tutta la cura, sollecitudine, e zelo indefesso, che si conveniva a questo difficile, e scabroso Ministero.

Laonde tutto ripieno di santo fervore Apostolico si dié a percorrere cogli altri compagni Missionarj le Città, i paesi, le terre, ed i casali del Regno di Napoli or colle SS. Missioni, or cogli Spirituali Esercizj, ed or colle Novene, in cui i Superiori quasi sempre il peso gli addossavano della predicazione formale<sup>52</sup>, nella quale vi riusciva a maraviglia, tanta era la grazia, la robustezza, e la maestria nel predicare, che nel tempo stesso che compungeva i cuori più impietriti di ostinati peccatori, facendo loro perfino versar dagli occhi copiose lagrime, e convertiva le anime invecchiate nel peccato, ma riscuoteva /18/ pure l'applauso, e l'ammirazione di tutti. Perciò tutti a folla concorrevano a' suoi piedi per deporre le loro colpe più criminose, e lavare le loro anime nel sangue di Gesù Cristo mediante la sacramentale assoluzione, ed Egli tutti animava con maniere dolci, e soavi alla confidenza, ed alla sincerità nel Confessarsi. Questi modi tutti proprj del P. Trapanese erano a molti, e molti motivi d'incitamento a manifestargli ciò, che per anni avevano tenuto sacrilegamente nascosto, con Lui facendo poi una general confessione. Oh quanti frutti di conversioni strepitose raccolse così il P. Trapanese!

Noi stessi nella nostra fanciullesca età fummo testimonj oculari delle tante conversioni di peccatori, e peccatrici incallite nel vizio, avvenute nella tanto celebre Missione del 1828 nella patria nostra di Pagani, Città circa di 17 mila abitanti, ove Egli il P. Trapanese fu destinato a fare la predica formale nella Chiesa di Maria SS.ma del Carmine, volgarmente detta la Madonna delle Galline. Esprimere non possiamo colla penna i sospiri, le lagrime, i singulti, i gemiti, che da tutti gli ascoltanti si tramandavano, allorché specialmente dava principio alle commoventissime sue perorazioni alla fine delle prediche, o che prendeva la grossa fune per disciplinarsi. Ricordiamo ancora ora con sentimenti di tenerezza, e consolazione i tanti peccatori, che lasciarono di battere le vie dell'iniquità, e del vizio, e si diedero a seguire quelle della virtù sotto la spirituale Direzione del P. Trapanese. Oh quante giovinette libertine, tutte amiche del mondo, e delle vanità amanti si diedero a seguir Gesù Cristo, col disprezzo delle mondane cose, indossando vesti oscure, e modeste, e consacrandosi tutte allo Sposo Celeste chi tra stretta Clausura /19/ di Religiosi Chiostrì, e chi nella solitudine delle proprie private Case. Tra le tante conversioni avvenute per opera della Predicazione del P. Trapanese tre sole ne rammemoriamo per amore della brevità, e delle quali fummo noi testimonj oculari di una donna, e

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<sup>52</sup> Si legga: predica grande o meglio la predicazione delle massime.

di due uomini. La prima era una donna che da 21 anni manteneva una pubblica pratica scandalosa d'incontinenza con un Gentiluomo, il cui nome passiamo sotto silenzio: or Costei alle prediche del P. Trapanese talmente si commosse, e si dolse dei suoi scandali, e della mala vita passata, che per dare al pubblico una certa riparazione del male commesso, troncatasi la superba chioma, di cui faceva tanta pompa, la sospese nelle mani della statua di Maria SS.ma situata al fianco del palco, ove il Padre predicava, in attestazione di avere all'intutto da se troncato il peccato, e la peccaminosa corrispondenza. L'altro era un uomo che aveva annidati nel suo cuore corrotto tutti i sette vizi capitali in grado eminentemente maggiore, ma soprattutto in Lui primeggiavano la ubriachezza, la bestemmia esecranda, e la disonestà con pubblico scandalo di tutti, e tanto più era in Lui per così dire difficile la conversione, e 'l ravvedimento, in quanto che era stato per lo passato più inflessibile a tutte le prove della grazia, sempre lontano dalla Chiesa, e lontano da molti anni da' sacramenti, e per dirla in poche parole, era uno della plebe più vile, e disonorato. Or codest'uomo così lordo di peccati all'udire le prediche del P. Trapanese si scosse talmente, come di un profondo letargo, che vincendo ogni umano riguardo, per mostrare a tutti il suo sincero ravvedimento, e riparare in qualche modo gli scandali da Lui dati, pregò, e scongiurò il detto Padre a permettergli, che con grossa fune al collo appesa chieder potesse perdono, e misericordia da sopra il palco a tutto il popolo /20/ allora radunato in Chiesa, e poi con la stessa fune al collo girasse per le strade più popolate della Città, fermandosi per le bettole da Lui frequentate, fortemente si disciplinasse, come di fatti eseguì con edificazione di tutti, e ne fummo noi testimonj. Il terzo fu un giovinastro in una Città dello Stato Pontificio, il quale quantunque di civile condizione, ed educato alle lettere, era però guasto di massime perverse, e spesso prendeva piacere a calunniare con libelli infamatori le persone più probe, ed oneste, specialmente le persone Ecclesiastiche. Or questi mosso dalle Istruzioni del P. Trapanese, che nella Missione del 1839 nella di Lui Città faceva da Catechista, in pubblica Chiesa lo vedemmo noi stessi disdire da tutti i libelli suoi infamatori e chieder perdono agl'Ecclesiastici, baciando loro rispettosamente la mano.

Era il Trapanese in tale stima, e venerazione, e specialmente nella Città di Nocera de' Pagani, che allora quando era costretto ad assentarsene per causa delle Missioni co' proprj occhi noi stessi vedemmo moltitudine di gentiluomini suoi penitenti di ogni età affollarsi d'attorno a Lui con lagrime di affetto sincero, e di rispetto baciargli la mano, e chiedergli la benedizione. Egli sempre uguale a se stesso, senza essere affatto tocco da eziandio leggiero solleticamento di vana compiacenza,

tutti animando al bene operare, e ad essere persone veramente onorate, perché le azioni virtuose, lor diceva, formano il vero galantuomo, né darsi mai vero galantuomismo senza la Religione.

Qual meraviglia dunque, se a vista di tante belle, e nobili virtù, e doti singolari del P. Trapanese il Rev.mo P. Cocle Rettore Maggiore nel 1830 lo destinasse al governo della Casa di Aquila in qualità di Rettore, essendo /21/ giovine ancora dell'età di soli anni 28?<sup>53</sup> ed il Rev.mo P. Ripoli<sup>54</sup> del Cocle successore, per varj altri anni lo confermasse nella stessa Rettoriale qualifica nel medesimo Collegio? Tutti ben sanno la prudenza, e la saggezza, che fe spiccare il P. Trapanese nel tempo del governo di quella Casa. Contenti, ed allegri bramava, che fossero i suoi sudditi, lor dicendo: Servite Domino in laetitia, quoniam suavis est Dominus (in Ps. 93), ma esigea nel tempo stesso da essi loro la più minuta, ed esatta osservanza delle Regole, e Costituzioni; sopra tutto poi gli era sommamente a cuore, e a tutti caldamente lo raccomandava l'esterno decoro de' Congregati, cioè desiderava, che questi fossero il buono odore di Gesù Cristo co' loro santi esempj, e che sparso avessero intorno per tutto un soave profumo, che fortificato avesse il cuore de' fedeli contro l'infezione degli esempj malvagi. La è perciò, che Egli lor poneva sott'occhio ciò che a tal proposito inculcava il S. Fondatore nella Regola alla Parte I. cap. I n. IV: "Sopra tutto vivan gelosi i Soggetti di quest'Istituto di non dar ombra ancorché menoma di mal'esempio, e si conducano in modo, che siano sempre in venerazione, e stima appresso de' popoli". "I missionarj – diceva altra volta – devono essere i luminari del mondo, e debbano perciò brillare come gli astri nel Cielo della Chiesa per le loro eroiche virtù, debbano esser quindi così pieni di Dio, che sembrino qualche cosa di divino in tutta la loro condotta; le loro maniere devono essere sì gravi, e sante, che la loro sola presenza ispiri rispetto, e chiuda la bocca ai libertini". Persuaso Egli pur troppo che l'esempio è più efficace, e più persuasivo delle parole, come dice S. Agostino: Plus clamat vita, quam lingua, tutti i suoi sudditi precedeva il P. Trapanese coll'esempio nella regolare osservanza, laonde Lo si vedeva sempre il primo a tutti gli atti della Comunità, il primo a tutte le Apostoliche fatiche. Si dié a scorrere co' suoi sudditi le tre vastissime /22/ Provincie degl'Abbruzzi, cioè di Aquila, di Teramo, e di Chieti or colle Missioni, or cogli esercizj, or colle novene. Quanto frutto raccollesse il P. Trapanese da messe così grande lo immagini ciascuno al solo riflesso, ch'Egli col continuo esercizio del predicare, acquistato aveva altre nuove cognizioni nell'Arte Oratoria del Pulpito, quindi nuo-

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<sup>53</sup> Nel 1830 il Trapanese contava ventinove anni. Cf. MINERVINO I, 176.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

va vivacità di frasi, e d'immagini adatte alla comune intelligenza con una dicitura fluida, e purgata senza mai uscire dalla semplicità dello stile chiaro dal S. Fondatore ordinato, e voluto. Sicché le sue parole accompagnate dalla vivezza dell'espressione, e dell'azione con un tuono di voce sonora, e chiara erano dardi lanciati al cuore degl'ascoltanti, che *non poterant resistere sapientiae, et spiritui qui loquebatur*<sup>55</sup> per l'organo della sua voce.

Frattanto che il P. Trapanese tutto intento si vedeva, ed occupato a coltivare il popolo Abruzzese coll'annunziargli il Vangelo di Gesù Cristo, inaspettatamente eletto si vide nel 1842<sup>56</sup> a Consultore Generale della Congregazione per la morte avvenuta nel maggio dello stesso anno del Consultore P. D. Vincenzo Fusco<sup>57</sup>, alla quale carica mal volentieri il Trapanese chinò dovè il capo per le premurose istanze di tutta la Consulta G.le, e de' Congregati, che per lo benessere della Cong.ne ardentemente lo bramavano. Tutti giubilavano a così fatta elezione, Egli solo afflitto, e scontento si vedeva, e nel mentre che tutti si congratulavano seco Lui: Egli lor rispondeva, È questo un tristo pensiero, che viene pur troppo importuno a turbarmi la pace, e tranquillità del mio spirito: Dio solo conosce la ragionevolezza di ciò, che sta nel mio pensiero, e nulla più proferiva. Nondimeno con tutto zelo, e studio s'impegnava per il bene della Cong.ne verso cui nutriva un amore grande, e sincero. La saggezza dei suoi consigli era sempre accompagnata da una delicata e sopraffina prudenza in tutte le consulte, che tenevansi per gli affari della Congregazione. E quantunque una tale carica in certo modo sopra gli altri lo elevava, non ismarriva mai Egli dalla sua mente la idea del suo nulla; sicché sempre umile, e rispettoso non solo col Rettore Maggiore, e co' Rettori Locali, ma cogli'uguali ed inferiori ancora; sempre affabile, ed educato mostravasi, simile all'Apostolo facevasi tutto a tutti.

Nel tempo medesimo che il P. Trapanese esercitava la Carica di Consultore Generale della Congregazione, se gli addossò pur anche quella d'insegnare a' Giovini studenti la Teologia Morale nel Collegio di Nocera de' Pagani. Con quanta maestria, e chiarezza spiegò una tale facoltà il Padre Trapanese, ce ne accertarono i giovini stessi suoi discepoli, i quali oltre la virtù, che ne ammiravano senza verun fasto, od affettazione, ma attoniti rimanevano mai sempre, e maravigliati per la profonda dottrina, di ch'era adorno il loro Maestro, e per la valentia nel porger loro con tanta chiarezza materie sì difficili, ed astruse. A noi

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<sup>55</sup> At 6,10.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. MINERVINO I, 176. 14 maggio 1842.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 79. P. Vincenzo Maria Fusco morì il 5 maggio 1842.

non reca affatto ciò alcuna meraviglia, giacché siamo stati le molte fiate con Lui in varie Missioni, specialmente in Alatri, ed in Chieti, ove la consolazione avemmo noi di ascoltarlo, che sminuzzava al popolo le morali dottrine, alle cui catechistiche Istruzioni a folla accorrevano per ascoltarlo gli Ecclesiastici, ed i Regolari, nonché i più eruditi gentiluomini per conoscere il retto giudizio tra tante svariate opinioni di Teologi moralisti, e con questo regolare la di loro coscienza. Sono già scorsi venti anni, e l'Alatrino Clero ricorda ancora con gran lode le Istruzioni del Trapanese, la cui memoria in quella Città non sarà per perire, ma si tramanderà di generazione in generazione. Troppo vivamente restò impressa nella mente di quegl'abitanti la Dottrina del nostro illustre Defonto.

Il P. Trapanese poco si rimase nella Carica di Consultore Generale della Cong.ne /24/ né deve ad alcuno fare meraviglia, poiché se sembri a taluno, che un'Uomo cui nessuna mondana avventura moveva dalla rettitudine del suo operare avesse dovuto darci prove maggiori di zelo per la sua Congregazione col non cercare di sottrarsi dalla sua Carica, sappia però che quando le circostanze lo avessero esatto<sup>58</sup> a costo anche della vita ei fermo sarebbesi rimasto nel suo posto, come più appresso lo vedremo. Il Superiore Maggiore col resto della Generale Consulta dopo di avere esaminato maturamente tutte le ragioni dal Trapanese addotte, ond'esonerarsi da una cotal carica, accettò la rinunzia, ch'ei fece del Consultorato<sup>59</sup>!

Vedendosi poi già così libero, inerte non si rimase, ed inoperoso, ma ripigliando tantosto con più fervore le sue Apostoliche fatiche girar lo si vedeva or per i Monasteri, e Conservatorj, or per i Collegi, e i Licei, or per quartieri, e caserme di soldati, or per Confraternite, e Pie Adunanze dispensando a tutti il pane della divina parola: e tutti presi dalla grazia del suo dire, rientravano in se stessi, s'infiammavano nell'amore verso Dio, nella carità verso il prossimo, e con più d'impegno s'applicavano nell'adempimento de' propri doveri. Dapoiché ei secondo l'avviso dell'Apostolo a Timoteo (II Tim. 5)<sup>60</sup> "si studiò di piacere a Dio senz'arrossire giammai del Vangelo, col trattare rettamente la parola di verità".

Tante fatiche gli cagionarono una infermità così grave, dalla quale dopo lunghe cure, e rimedi dell'arte medica a fatica poté liberarsene, quindi recuperato dopo alquanti mesi di convalescenza perfettamente la sanità trovò il P. Trapanese nella sua guarigione un più forte motivo di esercitare l'Apostolico ministero; laonde richiesto da' Vescovi

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<sup>58</sup> Parola poco leggibile all'interpretazione.

<sup>59</sup> MINERVINO I, 176. La rinunzia a consultore fu accolta il 19 dicembre 1846.

<sup>60</sup> II Tim. 2,15.

a dare particolari Esercizj ad Ecclesiastici, ed a Monasteri di sacre vergini nelle loro Diocesi di buon grado vi si conduceva per raddrizzare a tutti il sentiero, che in qualche modo avean torto della perfezione, cui per vo- /25/ cazione eran chiamati.

Ma Iddio che altri disegni stabilito aveva nel P. Trapanese, di renderlo cioè in qualche modo simile al suo divin Figliuolo, che soffrì ogni sorta di obbrobrj, e di miserie: *Improperium expectavit cor meum, et miseriam* (Ps. 68, 21) che fu il bersaglio delle contraddizioni degl'uomini ingrati, dispose, che rendutosi impotente al governo della Congregazione il Rev.mo P. D. Gio. Camillo Ripoli per i replicati colpi di Apoplessia venisse dal Sommo Pontefice Pio IX per l'organo dell'E.mo Cardinale Orioli Prefetto della S. C. de' VV. e RR. nel Giugno del 1849<sup>61</sup> eletto a Vicario Generale della Cong.ne del SS.mo Redentore con tutte le facoltà di un Superiore G.le effettivo. Difatti un ordine pressantissimo tantosto usciva da Napoli, che premurosamente richiamava il Padre Trapanese, il quale trovavasi in allora in Sulmona dando alle Claustrali di quella Città i SS. Esercizj. Ignorando Ei la causa di un così imponente, e subitaneo comando, prontamente ubbidisce, si conduce nel Collegio di Napoli, ove trovavasi di residenza, e gli venne annunciata la elezione sua al Vicariato G.le della Cong.ne. Si accorò ad una tale notizia per Lui si funestante, poiché ben conosceva quello aveva scritto S. Bernardo (serm. 2. de Dv.) *Ducem te constituerunt, vide si non iudicandus es ab omnibus, ab omnibus spectandus, ab omnibus lacerandus.*<sup>62</sup> Conosceva bene che un Superiore per adempiere i doveri della sua Carica,

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<sup>61</sup> Minervino I, 176. Dal 3 o 14 aprile 1849. Nel *Libro delle Consulte generali del Rettor Maggiore 1783-1859*, fol. 183-184v., conservato in APN, si legge il seguente verbale stilato dal P. Domenico De Vivo Consultore e Segretario Generale: "Nel giorno 3 di Aprile di questo stesso anno 1849 il P. D. Gio. Camillo Ripoli, Rettore Maggiore di questa nostra Congregazione del SS:mo Redentore, ha convocata la Consulta Generale, composta de' PP. D. Claudio Ripoli, D. Giuseppe Papa, D. Domenico De Vivo, D. Alfonso Nigri, D. Francesco Ansalone, e D. Francesco Saverio Menechini, e fatte le solite preci, ha proposto essere desiderio dell'E.mo Cardinal Prefetto della Congregazione de' Vescovi e Regolari, che a motivo della salute acciacciosa di esso Rettore Maggiore, si eleggesse un Coadiutore. Raccolti i Voti, è risultato a maggioranza il P. D. Francesco Ansalone, Consultore Generale.

"Nella stessa Consulta si è detto, che se il Cardinal Prefetto volesse per Coadiutore un Soggetto fuori la Consulta, si è nominato, anche a maggioranza di voti, il P. D. Vincenzo Trapanese. Pagani, 3 Aprile 1849". Fu scelto il P. Trapanese con la *nomina formale* di Vicario generale con il decreto della S. C. dei VV. e RR. del 20 aprile 1849 e il regio exequatur il 19 maggio 1849.

<sup>62</sup> S. BERNARDUS, *Sermones de diversis*, Sermo XLII, PL 182, 0662C-D.

e non avvenirgli ciò che accadde a Mosè e ad Aronne, che condussero il popolo d'Israele nella terra di promessa, eglino non vi entrarono, bisognava rendersi l'oggetto delle censure de' sudditi, delle loro mormorazioni, della loro avversione, e del loro disprezzo, e ad altro di peggiore. Tutto ciò prevedeva il P. Trapanese, e temendo molto di se, senza perdita di tempo si condusse dall'E.mo Prefetto Orioli; che non disse? che non fece per esonerarsi da un /26/ tale peso? Ragionò, perorò, scongiurò fin colle lagrime, ma nulla ottenne. Esposegli la sua insufficienza, la gravezza di una tale carica, i molti doveri, che vi vanno annessi, l'amarissimo calice, che avrebbe trangugiato sino all'ultima feccia, ma l'E.mo Porporato inflessibile a tutte le ragioni, che da Lui si adducevano, duro immobile al par di un macigno a tutte le preghiere di Lui, altro non fece che farlo genuflettere a' suoi piedi, indi con tuono imperioso gli disse: Eh bene, mi riconoscete voi per vostro vero, legittimo Superiore, e così genuflesso rispondendogli con tutta umiltà il P. Trapanese: Sì, Eminenza. Allora ripigliò subito il Cardinale, io come vostro Superiore v'impongo in virtù di S. Ubbidienza di accettare la Carica di Vicario Generale della Congregazione del SS.mo Red.re sino alla morte del Rev.mo P. Ripoli; detto ciò formalmente lo benedisse. Non potendo più altro replicare il Trapanese, licenziosii col baciare all'E.mo la Sacra porpora, e tutto confuso, e sbalordito pel grave peso, che se gli era addossato se ne ritirò in Collegio, tra se dicendo: Oh quante croci sono già preparate per queste mie spalle! ma mio Signore, e Dio date-mi la forza a soffrirle con rassegnazione; Voi così avete voluto, *non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat*.

Nel giorno stabilito si portò nel Collegio di Nocera de' Pagani a prenderne il possesso, non è da dirsi l'allegrezza, la gioja, le festose acclamazioni di tutti gli abitanti di quella Città; tutte le campane delle Chiese si suonavano a festa, brillando i Cittadini gli buttavano d'innanti<sup>63</sup> dalle finestre de' fiori in segno di esultamento. Tutti i Padri e F.lli della Comunità di Pagani con allegrezza lo riceverono. Si celebrò messa solenne, e si cantò l'inno Ambrosiano di ringraziamento al Signore.

Non v'ha alcuno, che ignori la valentia, che spiegò il Rev.mo P. Trapanese già divenuto Vicario G.le nell'arte malagevole del governare tutto /27/ l'intero Istituto, lo zelo che mostrò per serbare intatto il sacro deposito della Regolare osservanza. Scrisse lettere Circolari per tutti i Collegi, emanò ordini salutari, che di giovamento fossero allo Spirituale profitto de' soggetti, e al decoro di tutta la intiera Congregazione, di cui fattosi sostegno s'impegnava a tutt'uomo sollevarne le decadute condizioni per l'altrui non curanza, e debolezza.

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<sup>63</sup> Leggi: davanti.

In una lettera circolare del 6 Marzo 1850 così si espresse:

PP. e F.lli dilettezzissimi in G. C. Benché siamo tutt'ora dolenti della perdita del nostro Rev.mo P. Rett.e Magg.e di ottima ricordanza, nondimeno nell'affligente nostra amarezza sentiamo tutto il bisogno di volgere seriamente il pensiero alle cure più rilevanti dell'Istituto. Animati da vivo impegno di procurare allo stesso quello splendore, e floridezza necessaria a renderlo sempre più importante a' progressi dell'Ortodossa Credenza, ed all'incremento della Evangelica probità in questo secolo di esagerato incivilimento, e di Ateismo signoreggiante, premurosi ad un tempo di esonerarci di una carica, cui ci riputiamo indegni sotto tutti i rapporti, non abbiamo tardato un momento a preparare gli elementi costitutivi, e necessari sotto tutte le forme alla Convocazione del Capitolo G.le, onde venire nel più breve termine possibile all'elezione del nuovo Superiore G.le<sup>64</sup>.

Fu il P. Trapanese sempre fermo nel suo proponimento, e ove vedeva positive inosservanze di Regola ne' soggetti, diveniva tutto fuoco di santo zelo in punire severamente i delinquenti fin ad espellere dalla Cong.ne gl'incorreggibili, siccome per lo contrario teneramente amava i virtuosi, ed in gran stima aveva gl'osservanti. Questo zelo, e fermezza del P. Trapanese nello esigere da tutti la osservanza delle Regole diè motivo al Pontefice Pio IX di dire a' PP. delle Case di Frosinone, e di Scifelli, allorché reduce da Napoli nel Maggio 1850 per restituirsi nella sua Sede in Roma, e transitando per Frosinone, ove si fermò per tre giorni, nel baciargli quei PP. il Piede lor disse il Pontefice: "Voi avete un ottimo Vicario, ch'è il P. Trapanese /28/ io gli voglio bene", cui i PP. risposero: "Tutto è bontà della Santità sua", ed il Papa ripigliò: "Sì, io gli voglio bene, perché se lo merita. Ei è un bravo Chirurgo, che taglia per sanare e fa molto bene". Dalle quali parole del Pontefice i PP. animati dissero: "Beatissimo Padre, noi ce lo auguriamo a Superiore G.le di tutto l'Istituto" (poiché era già morto il Rev.mo P. Ripoli). Ed il Papa tantosto lor rispose: "Fatevelo, ed io ve lo confermerò". Al che uno de' PP. riprese: "Un suo volere, un suo comando può tutto". Ed il Papa ripeté: "Sì, sì, fatelo, che io volentieri lo confermerò".

La morte del Rev.mo P. Ripoli seguita già nel 16 Febbraio 1850 fa decidere al Vicario Trapanese a convocare la Consulta G.le per stabilire d'accordo quai<sup>65</sup> mezzi dovean tenere per la convocazione del Capi-

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. APPR I D 13.

<sup>65</sup> Leggi: quali.



tolo G.le; ecco come scrisse nella Circolare del 6 Marzo 1850 a tutte le Case della Cong.ne:

Appena ci fu dato di toglierci alquanto da quell'affanno opprimente in cui era sentitamente il nostro spirito per la morte del Comune Padre, e Reggitore tanto benemerito, dopo di aver praticati gli estremi uffici, e resi i funebri onori all'illustre Spoglia del Chiarissimo defunto, che lamentiamo, la principal nostra sollecitudine si fu di convocare la Consulta G.le affin di stabilire d'accordo quai mezzi doveansi da noi con maturo consiglio, e ponderato accorgimento prescegliere per asseguire un fine di sì grave rilievo. Discussa pertanto in pien'adunanza la quistione di cui è parola, tutti i Consultori furono di parere con noi, che in conseguenza del Decreto del 1841 emanato dalla S. C. de' VV. e RR. nelle vertenze dell'Istituto, nulla poteasi decidere da noi sulla intimazione del Capitolo G.le *more solito*, si stabilì perciò essere necessario di avanzare le nostre umili istanze alla Santità di N. S. Pio IX supplicandolo a farci noto il suo Oracolo definitivo sul modo di convocare il prossimo /29/ Capitolo, che ci riguarda. Ammesso da' nostri Consultori come unico espediente l'enunciato divisamento a raggiungere lo scopo, cui sinceramente aspiriamo, risolvemmo ad unanime consentimento di recarci immanentemente in Napoli, affin di presentare all'E.mo Cardinale Orioli Prefetto de' VV. e RR. impegnandolo a rassegnare le nostre domande al S. Padre in rapporto all'unione Capitolare, e pregandolo a risolvere colla suprema Autorità Pontificia le difficoltà insormontabili a tener la Generale Adunanza. A queste nostre petizioni rispose l'E.mo Porporato da interprete fedele della volontà del Sommo Pontefice, che nelle attuali vicende Politiche, in cui trovasi il Capo della Chiesa, non potea nella Reggia di Portici occuparsi di noi, per cui faceva d'uopo attendere il prossimo ritorno alla sua Sede, ed allora avrebbe sollecitamente chiamati noi e i nostri consultori Transalpini, ed Italiani in Roma per conciliare in piena Cong.ne de' VV. e RR. nel modo più plausibile, ed utile all'interesse dell'Istituto intero le divergenze di regime esistenti tutt'ora nelle due parti di Oltremonte ed Italia. Fissato, che sarà precisamente con vicendevole armonia il modo di convocazione che ne forma al presente l'ostacolo imperioso, si verrà senza ritardo all'intimazione del Capitolo sotto quelle forme, ed eccezioni che verranno dettate dall'alta Saggezza dell'E.mo Prefetto, e de' Componenti la S. Cong.ne surriferita. Ecco PP. e F.lli miei dilettezzissimi nel Signore quanto avevamo nel dovere di ma-

nifestarvi in continuazione delle nostre premure a quest'Obbietto, e non dubitiamo che ognun di voi rimarrà pienamente soddisfatto di quanto abbiamo operato, convincendosi dell'efficacia de' nostri sforzi, con cui ci attiviamo a realizzare la convocazione del Capitolo nel termine prefisso della nostra Regola e nel modo più desiderevole a' comuni vantaggi dell'Istituto. Tali sono i voti ardenti dell'animo nostro, e de' Consultori G.li, sicuri essere questa l'unica via di vederci liberi del presente giogo sotto di cui gemiamo, e per mirare al più presto ridente, ed ornata del novello suo Capo la nostra Cong.ne vedova /30/ e gemente dell'egregio suo moderatore. Noi intanto animiamoci tutti di un santo fervore, e prostrati profondamente al cospetto del Dio vivente imploriamo con caldissime preci dalla Sua Clemenza il termine della furente procella, che ha turbato e non cessa di minacciare la pace della Chiesa Ortodossa<sup>66</sup>.

Appena giunto il Sommo Pontefice in Roma, che subito venne chiamato in quella Dominante il Rev.mo P. Trapanese, ed ecco quanto si rileva da una circolare prodotta da Napoli nel dì 17 Maggio 1850.

“Dilettissimi PP. e F.lli nel Signore: L'E.mo Card. Orioli per l'organo del n.tro P.re G.le ci ordina di recarci sollecitamente in Roma per assistere co' n.ri Cons. G.li all'importante discussione delle note vertenze che ci riguardano. Per quanto ci sia grave un tale movimento ponderato seriamente sotto tutti i rapporti, nondimeno riconoscendo negli ordinamenti del Supremo Pontefice gli alti voleri dell'Eterno Moderatore degli Umani destini, non tarderemo a metterci in viaggio per la Dominante affin di cooperare nella stessa nostra pochezza al maggior bene, ed al più brillante splendore dell'Istituto. Voglia il Cielo secondare la rettitudine delle nostre intenzioni unicamente dirette ad un obbietto di tanto momento e che c'ispira a ragione il più vivo interesse”.

Indi scende ad inculcare a tutti preghiere al Signore, e a togliere da tutti ogni divergenza di sentimento, volendo che tutti tendessero all'incremento dell'Ordine, e del vero Spirito dell'Istituto, consolidandone sempre più sotto le vere forme l'unità sospirata, e la regolare osservanza.

Nel medesimo mese di maggio dello stesso anno muoveva il Rev.mo P. Trapanese per la volta di Roma accompagnato da due suoi Consultori G.li P. D. Liberatore Luciano<sup>67</sup>, e P. D. Giuseppe Lordi<sup>68</sup> e l'

<sup>66</sup> Cf. APPR I D 13.

<sup>67</sup> MINERVINO I, 104. Sulle opere spirituali e ascetiche del Liberatore cf.

Segretario particolare P. D. Giuseppe Ruspino<sup>69</sup>. S'incominciarono in Roma le trattative, ma che? il Pontefice, che pria sembrava inclinato a conceder loro la facoltà di convocare il Capitolo G.le, a condizione che si fosse celebrato in Roma sotto la presidenza /31/ dell'E.mo Prefetto della Cong.ne de' VV. RR. *Re melius perpensa* considerando non essersi ancora bene rasserenati i torbidi delle vicende politiche, e la difficoltà di portarsi nella Capitale i Capitolari, specialmente Transalpini da diversi, e distantissimi luoghi in cui si trovavano, di moto proprio, e volontà emanò un decreto con cui eligeva lo stesso Vicario P. Trapanese alla carica di Rettore maggiore della Cong.ne con obbedienza a tutti i soggetti della medesima di riconoscerlo per tale, e di prestargli tutta la obbedienza e rispetto come se fosse stato dal medesimo Capitolo G.le eletto. Un tale decreto non piacque ad alcuni, stimandolo lesivo a' dritti, che lor dava la Regola, e di disonore per essi (sciocchi non sapevano che chi bolla sbolla, cioè che il Pontefice per la sua potestà ben poteva ciò fare) ricorsero al Sovrano di Napoli per metterlo a mezzano in questo affare, il quale credendo di favorire la buona causa della Cong.ne, negò il Regio exequatur alla nomina del Padre Trapanese, e spedì intanto il Marchese del Vasto per trattare di conciliare alla meglio detto affare dopo tante proposte, e risposte dell'una, e dell'altra corte, dopo tanti antirivieni da Napoli a Roma, e da Roma a Napoli del succennato Marchese, Roma per non distruggere ciò, che maturamente avea deciso, e darla per vinta a' Contradittori, cercò di mitigare con qualche formula, senza nulla togliere al decreto primiero: sicché fatto al Trapanese rinunciare la carica di Rett.e Maggiore (per la quale fu Egli sempre contrario, e per la sola obbedienza vi ci si trovava), il Pontefice Pio IX emanò un altro decreto in data del dì 7 8bre 1850 col quale lo confermava nella Carica di Rettore Maggiore della Cong.ne ad Sanctitatis suae, et Apostolicae Sedis beneplacitum. Pervenuto nelle mani del Re Ferdinando II un tal decreto, lieto disse alla sua Regia Consorte M.a Teresa: "Abbiamo finalmente contentato Santo /32/ Alfonso", e senza dar tempo al tempo diede il Regio exequatur al Decreto Pontificio.

Ecco come in una lettera Circolare data da Napoli nel dì 23 Gennaio 1851 scrisse il medesimo P. Trapanese:

L'augusto nostro Sovrano (D. G.) s'è degnato di accordare l'Exequatur al Decreto Pontificio, con cui la Santità di N. S. Papa Pio IX sin del giorno 7 dello scorso Ottobre si compiaceva con-

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DE MEULEMEESTER, *Bibliographie* II, 249.

<sup>68</sup> MINERVINO I, 104.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

fermarci nella carica di Rett.e Magg.e di n.tra Congregazione ad Sanctitatis Suae, et Apostolicae Sedis beneplacitum. Ci diamo perciò la premura di annunziarvi un tale avvenimento per ordinario governo, incaricandovi in pari tempo di leggere questa n.tra lettera Circolare a codesta v.tra Comunità capitolarmente convocata all'oggetto in parola.

Preclusa così la via a' contraddittori di più riclamare dritti perduti, Realie lese ed altre scioccherie da muovere lo stomaco di chi le ascoltasse, si diedero al partito esecrando, e diabolico delle calunnie disonoranti, e delle criminose accuse presso il Sovrano di Napoli, e presso la Santa Sede, ossia di renderlo così odioso ed abominevole a queste due Corti. Quello che dissero, scrissero, ed operarono i Calunniatori contro il P. Trapanese non si può affatto esprimere colla penna, ne anco immaginar colla mente, il Demonio solo poteva lor suggerire tante nere trame; nel giorno dell'universal rendiconto de' conti tutto si manifesterà, allora si conoscerà bene il grand'Eroismo del P. Trapanese<sup>70</sup>.

Quantunque però tanto il Re Ferdinando, quanto il Pontefice Pio IX per la grande stima, che avevano del P. Trapanese, non avessero mai prestati credenza alle vane fole, agl'inutili cicalecci, ed a' furenti sarcasmi de' Calunniatori, pure lusingandosi di poter render pace, e tranquillità alla Cong.ne vennero ad uno spiacevolissimo partito, *Divide et impera*, come si espresse co' Deputati PP. Napoletani il Sommo Pontefice, alla decisione cioè di dividere /33/ le Case del Regno di Napoli da quelle dello Stato Pontificio, e da quelle Oltramontane ancora. Di fatti un decreto usciva dalla Sacra Cong.ne de' VV. e RR. in nome di Sua Santità in data del 6 7bre dell'anno 1856<sup>71</sup> di cui un brano solo qui trascriveremo, che fa al nostro proposito.

SS.mus D. N. Pius PP. IX omnem adhibuit curam, ut Congregationi Presbyterorum Saecularium Sanctissimi Redemptoris in utriusque Siciliae Regno prospiceret, etenim dolendum profecto

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<sup>70</sup> In Archivio Generale a Roma si conservano due lettere dettate, ma con firma autografa di S. E. Mons. Celestino Cocle al P. Trapanese, ove mostra stima e nello stesso tempo ringrazia "della premura con cui assume l'incarico di fare le sue parti di attaccamento, di riconoscenza e di devozione alla santità di N.S.E. (Pio IX)...". Cf. AGHR, XXXV A. 60 e XIV B.70, e un attestato firmato da lui e dai suoi parenti, ove viene scagionato il Trapanese da calunnie espresse da alcuni confratelli. Cf. AGHR, XIV B.70.

<sup>71</sup> Archivio Curia Vescovile Agrigento (ACVA) in carpetta p. Trapanese: DECRETUM, stampa originale, che è del 6 settembre del 1853 e non del 1856. Il Decreto è firmato dal cardinale G. De Genga praef. e da A. Bizzarri secretarius. Cf. *Acta integra*, 303-304.

erat ob diuturnam Camilli Ripoli Rectoris Majoris infirmitatem vigorem observantiae, et disciplinae in ea remissum fuisse. Hac plane de causa in Vicarium Generalem Presbyterum Vincentium Trapanese elegit, et deinceps mortuo Rectore Majore cum Capitulum Generale in universa Congregatione ob nonnullas difficultates inter Cisalpinos, et Transalpinos exortas haud celebrari potuerit, eundem Presbyterum Vincentium Trapanese ad nutum Sanctae Sedis Rectorem maiorem constituit. Licet autem novus Rector Maior auctoritatem sua ab Apostolica Sede, a qua Religiosae Familiae iurisdictionem et privilegia unice habent, legitime obtinuerit, eamque nemo absque piaculo impugnare posset. Licet ipse Rector Major in Officio obeundo bene se gereret, tamen humani generis hostes zizania in agro Dominico superseminarunt, unde exortae sunt dissentiones non sine Christifidelium offensione.

Da un tale decreto si rileva chiaro l'elogio, che il sommo Pontefice faceva della ottima condotta tenuta dal P. Trapanese nel suo governo: *In Officio obeundo bene se gereret*. Se qualcuno voglia accertarsi della realtà delle cose, cioè dello zelo, premura, e sollecitudine del P. Trapanese per lo bene della Cong.ne, e de' Soggetti, legga la Circolare del 15 Luglio 1851 scritta dal Collegio di Nocera de' Pagani a tutte le case, la quale così incomincia:

“Carissimi PP. e F.lli in G. C. Sin dal primo momento, in cui piacque al Signore di chiamarmi al governo generale del nostro Istituto, fummo altamente compresi dall'ardente desiderio di veder sempre più prosperata fra noi la regolare osservanza ed il vero spirito del nostro S. Fondatore. Ad ottenere quindi quest'altissimo scopo eravamo risoluti di eseguire personalmente la Visita Canonica in tutti i Collegi affidati alla nostra Sorveglianza. Sopraggiunte però varie imperiose circostanze, abbiamo dovuto differire a tempo migliore il nostro movimento, di cui è parola. Persuasi intanto del tremendo giudizio, che sta riserbato a tutti coloro, che sono stati incaricati da Dio del reggimento de' loro simili, ci crediamo nel dovere di attuarci a tutt'uomo a promuovere nella n.tra Cong.ne le virtù, ed allontanarne in pari tempo /34/ ogni discordia con divellere dalla sua radice qualunque abuso, che siasi infaustamente introdotto. Animati da questo sentimento non cessiamo di dare da questa nostra residenza quelle analoghe provvidenze, che possano tornare al meglio del nostro Istituto, e prendere quelle energiche misure, che stimiamo espedienti all'incremento di quella evangelica perfezione, cui dobbiamo tendere in forza delle nostre giurate promesse, e dall'Altezza

stessa dell'Apostolico Ministero. Or non ignorando che coll'elasso degl'anni alcuni punti importanti delle nostre Regole e Costituzioni non si osservano affatto, o almeno hanno sofferto una notevole lesione, a richiamarli in vigore abbiamo stimato di assoluta necessità emettere col parere de' n.tri Consultori G.li gli ordini seguenti, che sono in n. di 17 tutti basati sulle Regole, e lettere circolari di S. Alfonso".<sup>72</sup>

Ecco il governo del P. Trapanese bersagliato, e contraddetto (sic) da tutti, da tutti abbandonato anche da coloro, che lo avevano posto sul candelabro. Che se il P. Trapanese ambito avesse la Carica di Superiore Maggiore non avrebbe mai dato, (come saggiamente rifletté il Vescovo di Sora l'Ill.mo Mons. Montieri e con noi si espresse) non avrebbe mai dato da Vic. G.le quei passi forti, ed energici per amore dell'osservanza, o avrebbe almeno almeno presi degli impegni a sostenersi in una tale carica. Egli appena ebbe l'anzidetto decreto della S. C. che tutto uniformato a' Divini voleri riceveva come dalle mani del Signore questa umiliazione. "Sì, sì, disse a noi le tante volte, che avemmo la sorte di essere a parte di sue confidenze, sì, sì sino all'ultima feccia devovere l'amarissimo Calice della tribolazione, Iddio così vuole, e così voglio io". Nient'altro compiangeva che la sola separazione della Cong.ne, per riunire la quale versato avrebbe tutto il suo sangue. Adorava nel più profondo del suo spirito gl'imperscrutabili divini giudizj, e benediceva sempre quella mano, che beneficamente lo percuoteva. Spesso spesso tra 'l giorno pregava per la Congregazione, e per i suoi contraddittori, che un tanto bene gli operavano, di esercitarlo cioè nella virtù. Si rimase in Roma nella casa della Procura G.le della Cong.ne, ove ammirabile era l'osservare come approfittasse del tanto riposo della sua Carica concedutagli dalla Provvidenza col dividere le ore tra la lettura de' Sacri libri, e la meditazione delle cose celesti, come attendesse ad andare da virtù in virtù, rinnovandosi di giorno in giorno. Le due, e tre volte la settimana si prostrava a' piedi del Confessore per ricevervi la S. Assoluzione, onde acquistare nuova forza ne' travagli. Frequentava le adunanze de' Casi Morali, che si tenevano nell'Apollinare, e quelle de' Casi liturgici in Monte Citorio nella Casa di Missione, ed in queste Adunanze faceva rifulgere la profonda sua dottrina in tali materie con ammirazione di tutti quelli che vi concorrevano; una volta /35/ ne fummo noi spettatori con grande n.tra consolazione.

Essendo stato invitato a dare i SS. Esercizi alle Religiose Claustrali in Campo Marzio, ben volentieri vi ci si portò, e quelle Venerabili

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<sup>72</sup> APPR I D 16.

Religiose rimasero sì vivamente colpite da' suoi sermoni, che mostrarono desiderio di spesso ascoltarlo. Tanta fu la sua efficacia in accendere in quei verginali petti il fuoco del Divino amore, e lo zelo della propria perfezione, e santità.

Le tante fatiche Apostoliche, le tante pene sofferte, e per così dire martirj gli cagionarono una infermità ne' visceri, che rendendosi di giorno in giorno più grave e per l'inesperienza de' medici, che ignoravano precisamente il di Lui vero male, o per l'aria, che non più gli confaceva dopo di averne molte sperimentato, tutti i rimedj dell'arte gli riuscivano inutili. Intanto andavansi così scemando le forze di un corpo logoro dalle fatiche, dalle afflizioni, e da' patimenti sofferti di tante contraddizioni. Così ben si poteva applicare in qualche modo quello disse il vecchio Simeone del Figliuol di Dio *Ecce positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur* (Lc. 2,34). Poiché la Cristiana fortezza non è insensibilità, o stordimento. Egli ch'aveva un cuore nobile, e sensibile, quantunque con la continua virtù, e con atti frequenti di rassegnazione tutto vinceva, non per questo non sentiva ciò ch'è proprio dell'umano. Vendendosi già presso al suo termine, e vicino a disciogliersi dal suo corpo, incominciò a disporsi più prossimamente al gran passaggio per l'eternità. Quindi ricevuti gli estremi conforti della Religione nell'amplesso del Signore, nella pace, e serenità di sua coscienza chiudeva gli occhi per sempre alla luce di questa terra, assistito dal Superiore, e da' PP. e F.lli della Casa di S. Maria in Monterone, nonché dal Molto Rev.do P. Provinciale D. Eduardo Douglas<sup>73</sup>. Così terminò di vivere il Rev.mo P. D. Vincenzo Trapanese, il quale se la legge di morire non fosse stata universale, non doveva mai partire da questa terra.

/36/ Il Rev.mo P. D. Nicola Mauron Rett.e Maggiore della Cong.ne del SS. Redentore essendosi portato a visitare dal Collegio di sua residenza l'illustre Infermo già presso a morire gli disse che sarebbesi condotto da Sua Santità Pio IX a chiedergli a suo nome l'Apostolica Benedizione, e quegli accennando colla testa di sì, immediatamente verso le ore 10 di Francia il Rev.mo P. Mauron trovavasi già d'innanzi al Som-

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Catalogus C.SS.R. medio anno MDCCCLVI concinnatus et publicatus*, Romae, Typis S. C. De Propaganda Fide. La comunità di S. Maria Assunta in Monterone, sede del superiore provinciale della Provincia Romana dopo la divisione della Congregazione e l'elezione del 2 maggio 1855 a superiore generale del P. Nicola Mauron era a metà anno del 1856 composta da P. Eduardo Douglas, Consigliere Generale e Superiore Provinciale; P. Giuseppe Pigioli, Superiore della casa e Consigliere Ammonitore Provinciale; P. Bixio Costantino Queloz, Procuratore Generale; P. Antonio Timmermans, Consigliere Segretario del Provinciale e dal Fratello Laico Professo Giovanni Leenaerts. Questi assistettero fraternamente il P. Trapanese.

mo Pontefice per un tale oggetto, il Papa con rammarico ricevè una tale notizia funestante, indi alzando la mano e levando gli occhi al Cielo con tutta la effusione del suo Spirito lo benediceva, e circa le undici di Francia spirò, rendendo l'anima sua al Creatore il nostro Eroe, che deplorato abbiamo.

Nel dopo pranzo lo stesso Rev.mo P. Rettore Maggiore Mauron con la Comunità di Villa Caserta sull'Esquilino, e co' novizj si portò in Monterone, ove vestita degl'Abiti Sacerdotali la illustre spoglia del defonto, e condotta in Chiesa processionalmente gli resero gli ultimi uffici. Nella mattina del seguente giorno, 18 Gennaio, si celebrarono sontuosi funerali, celebrando messa solenne di Requie lo stesso Rev.mo P. Rett.e Maggiore D. Nicola Mauron, cui assistarono tutti i PP., F.lli, e Novizj. In ultimo si concluse col canto della *libera* ed assoluzione trovandosi il Cadavere in mezzo della Chiesa circondato da una quantità di grossi Ceri.

Nel giorno settimo poi nella stessa Chiesa di S. M.a in Monterone si solennizzarono con più pompa i funerali per suffragare l'anima dell'Illustre defonto, celebrando la Messa il Superiore di quella Casa il P. D. Giuseppe Pigioli<sup>74</sup>, la quale messa fu accompagnata dal Canto, e suono di scelta musica con infine il canto della *Libera*, ed assoluzione intorno al Catafalco, che magnificamente si ergeva in mezzo della Chiesa ricco ed adornato di grandi luminarj.

Un altro nobile funerale con messa solenne e musica veniva celebrato /37/ in suffragio della stessa anima in un'altra Chiesa per ordine di Monsignor Cannella Aquilano intimo amico del nostro defonto<sup>75</sup>.

Le Case della Cong.ne nel Regno di Napoli, e di Sicilia non furono le ultime a suffragare l'anima del Rev.mo P. Trapanese colla celebrazione di solennissimi funerali. Il Rev.mo P. Berruti di quelle Rett.e Maggiore ordinò a tutti i Collegj di Napoli, e di Sicilia con apposita Circolare di distinguersi in fare un funerale giusta la qualità, e merito del defunto, cioè di ex Generale della Cong.ne<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> MINERVINO I, 142.

<sup>75</sup> Aquilano, cioè originario de L'Aquila, certamente conosciuto nella sua residenza in questa città.

<sup>76</sup> Nel "Libro delle Messe 3° che cominciano al p.mo Settembre 1841" nel "Breve ragguaglio delle notizie di morte dei nostri Padri dal 1841 in poi non che delle Messe, e suffragi adempiuti in questa casa" (di Uditore) si legge a pag. 504: "In Roma passò agli ultimi riposi il nostro fu P. Rett. Mag.re Trapanese nato in Aragona da Giovane entrò in Cong.ne ove spiccò il suo bel fare, e l'ottimo suo buon dire dopo aver occupato diverse cariche in Cong.ne finalmente dal Papa fu fatto Vicario e poi Rett. Mag.re della medesima usque ad nostrum beneplacitum, che poi terminò accordando al Capitolo la scelta che



Tutte le Case ultramontane, non che quelle dell'Inghilterra, dell'America, del Belgio fecero a gara in distinguersi in celebrando i funerali al loro antico Padre.

La Casa di Frosinone appena ricevuta notizia della seguita morte del Rev.mo Padre Trapanese, che tantosto s'ergera nel mezzo della Chiesa un superbo Catafalco fatto a disegno, e bellamente dipinto da ottimo artista, circondato da molti, e grossi ceri e d'apposite Iscrizioni denotanti le qualità ammirabili del defunto, le quali in ultimo di questo Cenno Necrologico si leggeranno.

Nella sera antecedente a' solenni funerali per più di un ora si suonarono le campane che davano segno a tutta la Città la funebre funzione che celebrar si dovea nel dì susseguente.

Nel dì appresso l'Ill.mo, e Rev.mo Monsignor [Aretini-]Sillani già vescovo di Piperno, Terracina, e Sezze diunito a' Parroci, e Clero Regolare, e secolare della Città interveniva alla funebre pompa. Tutti, in capo il prelodato Vescovo, divisi con tutti i Padri della medesima Casa in due ali *hinc stante* al Catafalco cantarono l'ufficio de' defunti; indi accompagnata dal flebile suono dell'Organo si cantò messa solenne di Requie in suffragio di quell'illustre defonto, infine tutta la lugubre cerimonia si compiva col canto della Libera me Domine, dandosi dal medesimo prelodato Vescovo l'assoluzione d'intorno al Catafalco.

Neve liturarum pudeat, qui viderit illas,  
De lacrymis factas sentiet esse meis. Ovid(ius)

/38/

Sopra la porta della Chiesa  
di Santa M.a delle Grazie di Frosinone

D. O. M.

Vincentio . Trapanese . Olim . Universae . Cong.nis  
Sanctissimi . Redemptoris  
Rectori . Maiori. At . Que Superiori Generali  
Contra . Omnium . Spem . E . Vivis. Sublato  
Ligoriani . Patres . Lacrimis . Iusta . Funeris . Officia

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cadde su di un altro rimanendogli il solo titolo poco prima della sua morte che accadde in '56. Si sono fatti i suff.gi come Rett. Magg." A pag. 290 gennaio 1856 si legge: "Fu(neral)e pel fu P. Vincenzo Trapanese" e a pag. 291 febbraio 1856 si legge che per il P. Trapanese sono state celebrate 42 SS. Messe. ACA. La calligrafia di queste due annotazioni è del P. Carmelo Valenti, che il 27 settembre 1858 fu eletto vescovo di Mazara del Vallo (Trapani).

Persolvunt  
 Civis . Hospes Quis . Quois . Ingredieris . Adesto  
 Piacularibus . Sacris  
 Mente . Pura . At . Que . Integra  
 Tanto . Patri . De . Que . Se . Optime . Merito  
 Aeternam . Securitatem . Pacem . Que  
 Exspocito

Al lato sinistro

Cives  
 Tanti . Eros . Animae  
 Vota . Preces . Que . Rependito  
 Qui  
 Deo . Charus . et . Hominibus  
 Sanctitate . Iustitia . Prudentia . At . Que . Doctrina  
 Ter . Inclytus .  
 Cui . Que  
 Ingenium . erat . Mens . Divinior

/39/

Al lato destro

Vir  
 Semper . Fortissimus  
 Non . Minus . In . Prosperis . Quam . In . Adversis  
 Sibi . Pax  
 Uttram . Que . Fortunam  
 Perpetua . Aequanimitate . Tulit  
 Haud . Humanae . Prudentiae . Vanitati  
 Sed . Divinae . Sapientiae . Placitis  
 Obsequutus

Nella Parte d'avanti al Catafalco

Lacrimas . Effundite . Cives  
 Eheu . Perit . Vir  
 Qui . Aut . Nasci Nunquam . Aut Nunquam . Mori  
 Oportuisset  
 Vincentius . Trapanese . Siculus Natione  
 Congnis . SSmi . Redris .

Sacerdos  
Formali . Obedientia . A . Summo . Pontifice . Pio . PP. IX  
Feliciter . Regnante  
Coactus  
Munus . Supremi . Rectoratus . Suae . Congnis . Suscepit  
Quam . Brevi . Temporis . Curriculo  
Relligiosarum . Omni . Genere . Virtutum . At . Que . Splendore  
Illustravit  
/40/ Inter . Saevissimas . Suae . Congnis . Procellas  
Et . Fraudulentorum . Hominum . Insidias  
Immotus . Semper . Stetit  
Post . Multa . Perpressus  
Summa . Animi . Tranquillitate  
Mortalem . Hanc . Vitam . Cum Beatissima . Immortalitate  
Commutavit  
Vixit . Annos LIV . Relligiosae . Vitae . XXXIX  
Obiit . Romae . Apud . Sanctam . Mariam . In . Monterone  
XVI Kalendas Februarii  
Ann. R. S. MDCCCLVI



P. GIUSEPPE ORLANDI, C.S.S.R.  
1935-2013

#### IN MEMORIAM

Verso le ore 14.00 dell'11 agosto 2013 – dopo alcune settimane dalle prime manifestazioni di un male rivelatosi ben presto incurabile – è morto nella Casa di S. Alfonso a Roma il p. Giuseppe Orlandi, membro dell'Istituto Storico Redentorista.

Nato a Modena l'8 luglio 1935, ha emesso la professione religiosa nella Congregazione del SS. Redentore il 29 settembre 1954, ed è stato ordinato sacerdote il 25 ottobre 1959.

Ha conseguito la laurea in Storia Ecclesiastica presso la Pontificia Università Gregoriana (1966), e i diplomi in Archivistica presso la Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia (1961) e in Archeologia Cristiana presso il Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana (1962).

E' stato professore di Storia Ecclesiastica nello Studentato Teologico di Cortona (1963-1967), e dal 1985 era professore di Agiografia nella Facoltà di Teologia della Pontificia Università Lateranense.

Dal 1968 faceva parte dell'Istituto Storico, del quale è stato segretario dal 1968 al 1985. Svolse anche l'incarico del direttore responsabile di «Spicilegium Historicum C.S.S.R.», organo del medesimo Istituto.

Era membro dell'Accademia Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Modena. Nel 1997 è stato nominato Consultore della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi.

Ha pubblicato vari libri e numerosi saggi, specialmente sulla storia religiosa del Sette e Ottocento. La sua opera più importante è l'edizione critica del *Carteggio di s. Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, di cui ha pubblicato il primo volume (2004).

Non è nostra intenzione tracciare un quadro dettagliato della vita del p. Giuseppe Orlandi. In questa sede ci limitiamo a presentare la sua attività letteraria, esprimendogli tutta la nostra gratitudine, specialmente per la collaborazione a «Spicilegium Historicum C.S.S.R.», dove ha pubblicato ben 77 articoli.



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Dinanzi a testi come il *Lexikon of Redemptorist* è spontaneo dire: è un'opera che mancava! In questo caso, non si cade nella trappola del luogo comune. Per quel che mi risulta, le sue pagine vengono a colmare un vuoto: un aiuto per comprendere meglio l'identità spirituale Redentorista. Messa in mano ad un giovane incuriosito dalla vocazione Redentorista, ad un candidato in formazione, ad un laico che già condivide qualcosa o molto della missione e spiritualità Redentorista, l'opera aiuta a conoscere di più, ad avere uno sguardo di sintesi, a cogliere lo specifico di una Congregazione sorta nel 1732, grazie al cuore di Alfonso de Liguori. È uno strumento prezioso per i formatori nel loro difficile lavoro, ma anche per un confratello che debba trattare un determinato tema teologico o spirituale dal punto di vista Redentorista. Si presta anche per una condivisione comunitaria, come giustamente raccomanda il Superiore Generale P. Michael Brehl nella prefazione.

A questi e altri bisogni risponde il *Lexikon*, con 94 voci<sup>1</sup> che vanno da “abbandonati” a “zelo”. Secondo i casi, si tratta di

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<sup>1</sup> Nell'edizione spagnola e portoghese le voci salgono a 100, con l'aggiunta di “Ecologia”, “Esodo”, “Obbedienza”, “Parlare al Cuore”, “Povertà”, “Profetismo”.

temi esplicitamente spirituali (come “Distacco”, “Meditazione”, “Carisma”, “Volontà di Dio”), teologici (ad es. “Trinità”, “Ecclesiologia”, “Teologia Morale”), agiografici (c'è una singola voce per ogni santo Redentorista, una comprensiva di tutti i Beati e un'altra per i Martiri), pastorali (vedi “Missioni popolari”, “Parrocchia”, “Santuario”, “Collaborazione con i laici”), altri collegati a Costituzioni e Statuti CSSR (“Governò”, “Comunità”, “Vita apostolica”), o quelli di tipo più storico (“Virtù del mese”, “Testi classici di sant'Alfonso”), ecc. Ogni voce occupa da un minimo di due a un massimo di otto pagine, ma la media è di tre o quattro; segue una nota bibliografica e poi domande per il confronto e l'approfondimento.

Per meglio comprendere il valore specifico di quest'opera, vale la pena collocarla in un contesto più ampio: quello della spiritualità in primo luogo, e quello propriamente Redentorista in secondo luogo.

È fuor di dubbio che oggi la spiritualità sia un “tema maggiore” nell'orizzonte ecclesiale e religioso in genere. Essa sembra una panacea a tanti mali, e il riempitivo di tanti vuoti. Magari la frequenza alla liturgia fa registrare medie preoccupanti verso il basso, ma la gente vanta di avere una sua “spiritualità”. Il dialogo con altre religioni e confessioni stagna, però c'è interesse a conoscerne la spiritualità. Anche chi ignora – nella teoria e nella pratica – gli elementi base della vita morale e dello stesso catechismo, pur tuttavia esibisce una sua spiritualità.

Forse il successo di questa parola è direttamente proporzionale al fatto di essere astratta. La Bibbia, che come si sa non ama molto l'astratto, non conosce il termine spiritualità. C'è chi sostiene che esso si sia affermato a partire dal secolo XVIII, guarda caso il secolo dei lumi (e ... di sant'Alfonso): un modo per proiettare in un'idea qualcosa o Qualcuno che veniva a mancare dentro. In realtà troviamo questa parola per la prima volta in Pelagio (360-420 d.C.), anche se per errore fu attribuita a san Girolamo suo contemporaneo. Pelagio dice: “comportati in modo da progredire nella spiritualità” (*Age, ut in spiritualitate proficias*). È ovvio che qui la spiritualità non ha niente di ideologico, corrisponde più o meno al “camminare nello Spirito” (Gal 5,16), questo sì più consono al linguaggio neotestamentario.

La spiritualità come l'intendiamo oggi si afferma sempre più a partire dal Medioevo, quando occupa gradualmente spazio la cosiddetta "spiritualità del genitivo": cioè l'insieme dei tratti carismatici ed esistenziali che caratterizzano un Ordine da un altro; è la stessa che oggi per esteso si applica ad un santo, ad uno stato di vita, ad un movimento, persino ad un'età anagrafica. Abbiamo dunque la spiritualità dei francescani, quella della terza età, quella dei focolarini, o dei laici.

Nel caso di un santo fondatore, questa operazione è non solo legittima, ma utile se aiuta a definire la "firma" che egli – o la Congregazione che ne è nata – hanno apposto sulla storia. Ma in questo come in altri casi non si deve assolutamente dimenticare che spiritualità è innanzitutto vita nello Spirito e non operazione accademica; per di più, in quanto vita nello Spirito, non dà adito a pretesti per isolarsi, distinguersi, ancor meno inorgogliarsi. Non deve portare a chiudersi alla ricerca disperata della propria identità, bensì a confrontarsi con altri credenti, con cui si ha in comune il centro unificante ed essenziale del Vangelo. A rigor di termini, abbiamo a che fare con un'unica e indivisibile spiritualità. E la prova del nove per una vera spiritualità è il servizio alla Chiesa, è in qualche modo "dimenticarsi" nel popolo di Dio come fa il lievito con la massa, il sale col cibo. Il criterio primo ed ultimo di ogni vita nello Spirito rimane la carità.

Spero che tutto ciò aiuti a comprendere in quale senso e contesto parliamo di spiritualità Redentorista. In essa è compresa non solo quella "intuizione nello Spirito" che corrisponde al carisma, al "perché" di questo nuovo Istituto nella Chiesa, ma anche le costanti della tradizione che ne è seguita e che si incarna nei santi e nei beati, nella cui biografia il carisma ha una sua traduzione visibile e di volta in volta singolare. Troviamo anche le linee ispiratrici di Costituzioni e Statuti, e il linguaggio con cui esse si esprimono. Cogliamo uno stile di vita e un modo di essere. Comprendiamo le priorità apostoliche nelle quali si espleta il dinamismo missionario tipico dei Redentoristi. E altro ancora.

Ne consegue che una spiritualità come quella Redentorista è realtà variegata, difficile da cogliere da un unico punto di vista. Oltretutto, quasi tre secoli di vita hanno finito col dare dello stesso carisma letture spirituali diverse, a volte creando vere e



proprie polarizzazioni. Alla spiritualità Redentorista si può applicare pari pari quanto è stato detto della storia della Congregazione<sup>2</sup>: una storia in qualche passaggio complessa, “tormentata”, non solo per alcuni fatti che l’hanno marchiata – si pensi al pasticcio del Regolamento, alla divisione della Congregazione in napoletana e transalpina ecc. – ma anche per le letture differenti e non sempre armonizzabili tra loro, a cui essa è stata sottoposta. Inevitabile il riflesso di tutto ciò sulla spiritualità Redentorista. Da qui si percepisce il bisogno di fare sintesi. O almeno di conoscere lo *statu quo*.

In realtà di questo bisogno si potrebbe già scrivere... la storia, essendo stato sollevato più volte. Un articolo di Santino Raponi<sup>3</sup> in questo senso è illuminante. Fin dal titolo lascia intravedere le tappe nelle quali questo desiderio di sintesi e formazione è stato formulato nella Congregazione. Tappe che potremo far risalire a due istanze soprattutto:

#### I. – UN DIRETTORIO DI SPIRITUALITÀ REDENTORISTA

a) In coincidenza col Capitolo Generale del 1963, viene sollecitato un *Direttorio*, cioè un testo che aiuti i Redentoristi a comprendere meglio la loro identità. È un bisogno più che legittimo: ad ogni livello in quegli anni si parla di “cambio epocale”, anche se solo in parte si presagisce ciò che avverrà. Intanto il Concilio Vaticano II ha inizio, e un nuovo vento soffia nella Chiesa. I Redentoristi avvertono il bisogno di attingere all’eredità spirituale del passato e al contempo di chiarificarla. Da un lato si parla di ritorno alle fonti, dall’altro della revisione ormai imminente di Costituzioni e Statuti. Cosa rimane di valido per definire l’identità Redentorista? Uno strumento si rende necessario, ma nello stesso tempo se ne percepisce la difficoltà: a partire dai contenuti che dovrebbero farne parte. Si opta – tentazione di sempre – per affidarlo ad una Commissione. Ne nasce un febbrile lavoro, che però rimane incompiuto. Per fortuna, diventa sempre

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<sup>2</sup> F. CHIOVARO, *Introduzione*, in *Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore*, I: *Le origini (1732-1793)*, I/I, a cura di F. CHIOVARO, Roma 1993, 11-48.

<sup>3</sup> S. RAPONI, *Direttorio*, *Scuola di Spiritualità e Spiritualità Redentorista*, in *SHCSR* 39 (1991) 187-245.

più chiaro per tutti che le nascenti Costituzioni sono il “manuale” della spiritualità Redentorista. Il velo di silenzio che il Capitolo speciale (1967-1969), convocato per rinnovare le Costituzioni, stende sul “Direttorio”, ne è la controprova.

b) Nel 1973 il Capitolo Generale risolveva la questione: con una risicata maggioranza di voti in favore (segno del notevole scetticismo serpeggiante nel Capitolo) “raccomanda” al Governo Generale di provvedere al Direttorio. La cosa ha un seguito, ma non esattamente nella direzione voluta dai Capitolari. Ancora una volta ci si scontra con l'intrinseca difficoltà dell'opera, fatto sta che si adempie a quella raccomandazione in altro modo: Commissioni, Segretariati e via via altri confratelli, questi più a titolo personale che “ufficiale”, redigono testi di tipo storico e spirituale, commentari alle Costituzioni, agiografie. Basti citare per tutte la collana *Readings in Redemptorist Spirituality* (edizione spagnola: *Espiritualidad Redentorista*) per dare un'idea. Lo stesso *Spicilegium Historicum CSSR* più volte affronta tematiche spirituali, pur se ovviamente con un taglio storico.

## II. – UNA SCUOLA DI SPIRITUALITÀ REDENTORISTA

a) Si sa che non basta produrre libri per assicurare una effettiva formazione e suscitare un vero interesse. Già sotto il generalato di P. Leonardo Buijs (1947-1953) si parla di una “Scuola di spiritualità Redentorista” per formatori e missionari, la si chiama “Corso romano” perché collegato all'Accademia Alfonsiana. Varie vicissitudini, tra cui la prematura morte dello stesso Superiore Generale Buijs, ne procrastinano l'attuazione, salvo poi tornare sull'argomento nel Capitolo del 1963. Quando è Superiore Generale il P. Guglielmo Gaudreau (1954-1967) si torna a ipotizzare un Istituto di spiritualità Redentorista. Più in là ancora (Capitolo Generale del 1973) si parla di “Corsi di spiritualità” da tenere presso l'Accademia Alfonsiana.

b) Tutti gli auspici appena accennati rimangono sulla carta: almeno fino agli anni 1977-1978, quando il Segretariato generale per la formazione comincia a organizzare Corsi su Storia e Spiritualità Redentorista, ciascuno della durata di un mese.

c) L'ultima tappa è quella che stiamo vivendo tuttora, e che può essere fatta partire dal 1997, quando il Capitolo Generale torna a ipotizzare una struttura stabile o almeno un *team* mobile, e comunque auspica la proposta di Corsi di spiritualità, "possibilmente sui luoghi di origine della Congregazione"<sup>4</sup>. È la soluzione tuttora in vigore, con il ruolo svolto dal Centro Spiritualità Redentorista, e la proposta di Corsi annuali in più lingue.

Questo *excursus* potrà risultare ozioso o fuori luogo. È invece importante, per delineare un bisogno ricorrente e più volte emerso: un bisogno che ovviamente né i Corsi né il *Lexikon* potranno soddisfare, quanto piuttosto un'attenzione costante e una sinergia a più livelli.

Pur tuttavia, proprio questo *excursus* aiuta a comprendere meglio il valore di "strumento", rappresentato proprio dal *Lexikon*. Aiuta a focalizzare uno sguardo più critico.

Il suo merito principale, come già detto, è quello di dare una prima introduzione, sufficientemente documentata anche se volutamente priva di note, mirante a dare un'idea su ogni singola "voce" del Dizionario. Non si tratta di un'opera scientifica, con l'approfondimento che solo un Dizionario in più volumi può assicurare, né troveremo in essa la composizione delle su citate polarizzazioni. In attesa che questo sogno possa un giorno realizzarsi, il *Lexikon* permette una prima conoscenza e un approccio sintetico.

Altro merito di quest'opera è il vasto raggio dei suoi contenuti. Abbiamo già menzionato le aree tematiche, che in qualche modo meritano al *Lexikon* il titolo di opera interdisciplinare. Le voci principali ci sono, anche se ovviamente ci sarà chi noterà qualche assenza vistosa. Ad esempio richiama la mia attenzione la presenza di "zelo" e l'assenza di "dinamismo apostolico". Ancora più evidente risulta la presenza di "amicizia" (o "ecologia" nell'edizione spagnola) e l'assenza di "Costituzioni e Statuti": almeno una voce sulle "Categorie chiave delle Costituzioni" sarebbe stata opportuna. È vero che certi contenuti pertinenti ad una voce sono recuperati in altre: accade con l'assente "Crostarosa", che in qualche modo ritroviamo in "Viva memoria", e "Gesù Cristo" in "Redentore". Ma l'assenza di qualche voce già nell'in-

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<sup>4</sup> XXI Capitolo Generale CSSR (1997), Postulati, n. 4.

dice può suscitare perplessità. È vero comunque che i criteri di selezione di voci o lemmi, in opere simili, non sempre possono essere condivisi da tutti.

Indiscutibile nota a favore è aver coinvolto un gran numero di autori nella redazione delle varie voci: in tutto sono 77, massima parte dei quali Redentoristi, cui si aggiungono una Monaca dell'Ordine del Santissimo Redentore e una Missionaria del Santissimo Redentore. Oltre ad essere opera corale, rappresentante dei cinque continenti nelle quali la Congregazione porta avanti la sua missione, il *Lexikon* testimonia uno sforzo di studio e di ricerca in un settore di competenza che non sempre era quello specifico dei vari collaboratori.

Questo punto a favore indubbiamente ne comporta uno solo apparentemente meno positivo: è evidente la diversità di stile, di impostazione e di approfondimento tra un autore e l'altro. Resta il fatto che simili testi esprimono la differenza di formazione, cultura, tradizione e sensibilità: e questa è indubbiamente una ricchezza.

In diverse voci, è piuttosto evidente un'altra lacuna. Mi riferisco al debole "filtro" Redentorista attraverso il quale sono passati determinati temi. Cerco di spiegarmi meglio. Dovendosi trattare tematiche complesse e profonde nel giro di poche pagine, sarebbe stato meglio ridurre al minimo la trattazione generale della tematica nel corso della storia o dal punto di vista teologico, per dare maggiore spazio a come quella determinata "voce" si sia incarnata nella vita del fondatore o in senso più ampio nel carisma Redentorista. Si tratta di uno sbilanciamento di spazi, e accade in qualche voce del *Lexikon*. Un'opera, però, che rimane di grande valore nel suo complesso, e di cui bisogna essere grati ai vari collaboratori e ancor prima ai due curatori Redentoristi Sean Wales e Dennis Billy.

Termino con un auspicio: che l'opera sia tradotta al più presto in altre lingue. Ne trarranno benefici tutti i potenziali destinatari, non solo tra i membri della Congregazione, ma anche tra chi ha imparato ad apprezzare il carisma Redentorista e a capire quanto sia prezioso questo dono per la Chiesa.

Serafino Fiore, C.SS.R.

*Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore, II: Prima espansione (1793-1855), II/II: Periodo secondo: Lo Sviluppo (1820-1841)* (= *Studia et Monumenta Congregationis SS. Redemptoris series prima*), a cura di Otto Weiss, Tipografia Valsele, Materdomini (AV) 2012, 349 pp.

Il presente volume fa parte del progetto generale dei Redentoristi sulla loro storia, e comprende dalla morte di San Clemente Hofbauer (1820) fino alla creazione delle Province (1841). Proseguendo l'argomento dell'espansione (1793-1855), il sottotitolo corrispondente non può essere altro che: II/II: *Periodo secondo Lo Sviluppo (1820-1841)*, diviso in due capitoli: Capitolo III: I Redentoristi in Italia, Capitolo IV: I Redentoristi transalpini.

Si tratta di un periodo nel quale l'Istituto Alfonsiano affonda le sue radici per la prima volta in diversi paesi, il Beato Alfonso è dichiarato Santo, si celebrano due capitoli generali, tre Rettori Maggiori prendono le redini, e un vicario (Passerat) fronteggia le sfide nell'area transalpina. Sia in Italia che oltre le Alpi, la nota di spicco dei Redentoristi è la pastorale nei diversi campi, particolarmente nelle missioni.

#### *Capitolo III: I Redentoristi in Italia*

1. Giovanni VICIDOMINI (Redentorista italiano), «La Congregazione nel Regno di Napoli» (p. 11-56): si tratta di un articolo con dati e fonti abbondanti che riguardano la ripresa della vita missionaria; il ruolo di Celestino Cocle (Rettore Maggiore tra il 1824 e il 1831), il quale incrementò i rapporti col governo civile napoletano, favorendo così le due istituzioni; Cocle fu nominato confessore dei figli del re ed informò sull'andamento e la moltiplicazione delle missioni redentoriste. Vicidomini descrive anche gli orientamenti e le attività di Giovanni Camillo Ripoli (Rettore Maggiore tra il 1832 e il 1849) ed il suo rapporto con il re Ferdinando II.

2. Giuseppe ORLANDI (Redentorista italiano), «I Redentoristi nello Stato Pontificio» (p. 57-83): presenta la condizione dell'Istituto Alfonsiano con dei successi e le difficoltà; queste provenivano specialmente dalla scarsità del personale. L'autore de-

scrive la situazione della formazione in quel periodo. L'articolo si presenta ben documentato e con abbondanti note a piè di pagina.

3. Giuseppe RUSSO (Redentorista italiano), «I Redentoristi in Sicilia, 1817-1841» (p. 85-134): nel 1818 venne nominato un vicario redentorista per Sicilia, con diverse facoltà. Russo descrive la situazione delle comunità alfonsiane, le visite canoniche, le difficoltà interne ed esterne, e i risultati del lavoro apostolico.

#### *Capitolo IV: I Redentoristi Transalpini*

1. Otto WEISS (storico), «I Redentoristi di Vienna dall'ammissione in Austria alla divisione in Province» (p. 135-178): l'autore descrive l'insediamento dei Redentoristi nell'impero austriaco; il ruolo di Amando Passerat come vicario e successore di Clemente Hofbauer; la pastorale; le fondazioni dei Redentoristi in Austria, nel Portogallo, negli Stati Uniti d'America, nel Belgio, in Bulgaria, e in Baviera.

2. Marian BRUDZISZ (Redentorista polacco), «I Redentoristi nel Regno di Polonia durante l'occupazione russa, 1824-1841», (p. 179-216): Brudzisz, esaustivo nei dati, offre una descrizione storica della casa segreta dei redentoristi a Piotrkowice; la situazione giuridica e materiale della comunità; la vita della comunità; le tappe della formazione; la pastorale parrocchiale; le missioni; le attività patriottiche ed educative; la soppressione del convento e del seminario; il ruolo di padre Podgórski; l'inimicizia delle autorità civili. L'autore sottolinea la volontà dei figli di Alfonso di difendere la chiesa cattolica e i missionari dai persecutori sia interni che esterni.

3. Jean BECO (Redentorista belga), «Gli inizi in Belgio (1831-1841)», (p. 217-253): l'autore descrive i primi dieci anni dei Redentoristi nel Belgio, dove Sant'Alfonso era ormai conosciuto per i suoi scritti. Fra gli argomenti presentati, troviamo: la separazione politica del Belgio; i primi contatti per far venire i Redentoristi in questo paese; le prime comunità fino all'anno 1835 (Tournai, Liegi, Saint-Trond); Wittem; progressi e difficoltà fra gli anni 1836-1841; l'attività apostolica; gli ostacoli e le soluzioni; situazione delle comunità di Wittem, Tournai, Liegi e Saint-Trond; persone favorevoli e contrarie alla CSSR.

4. Gilbert HUMBERT (Redentorista francese), «La Congregazione in Alsazia 1820-1841», (p. 255-267): il primo argomento sviluppato dall'autore si riferisce alla casa di Bischenberg. Poi presenta: l'ambiente religioso in Francia; le missioni (difficoltà e possibilità); la missione di Haguenau; la chiusura della casa di Bischenberg; Alsazia e Lorena.

5. Otto WEISS (storico), «Dalla diffusione al consolidamento in Svizzera» (p. 269-275): Weiss scrive in poche pagine su diversi argomenti: l'insegnamento e le parrocchie (proibite dalla regola dei Redentoristi, ma che dovevano accettarsi per forza); i primi tentativi di fondazione redentorista in Svizzera; nel vecchio Seminario di Friburgo; l'atteggiamento favorevole delle autorità statali.

6. Karl HOEGERL (Redentorista statunitense), «La Congregazione nell'America del Nord. Il periodo pionieristico» (p. 277-324): usando una vasta documentazione, Hoegerl offre elementi utili su: Clemente Hofbauer e il Nuovo Mondo; l'idea di stabilirsi nel Canada o negli Stati Uniti; progetti di andare negli Stati Uniti; i contatti iniziati da Passerat, assecondato da Cocle; eventi a Vienna e nella CSSR; Fredrick Held, superiore a Liegi; Simon Saenderl, superiore della missione americana; Francis Xavier Hetcher; Francis Xavier Tschenhens; James Kohler; Aloysius Schuh; Wenceslaus Wittcopil; viaggio e arrivo nell'America del Nord; arrivo a Cincinnati; a Detroit; i primi progressi; Green Bay; la prima comunità nel Nuovo Mondo; i missionari si ritrovano abbandonati; privazioni materiali; a Sault Ste. Marie; tentativo a Norwalk (Ohio); perché non ebbero successo nei primi anni; aiuto della Fondazione Leopoldina.

7. Giuseppe ORLANDI (Redentorista italiano), «La canonizzazione di Sant'Alfonso (26 maggio 1839)» (p. 325-345): l'autore ha scritto anteriormente sull'argomento. Nel presente contributo presenta: l'iter della causa; l'interesse della C.SS.R.; le difficoltà; la questua o colletta dei fondi per pagare le spese della canonizzazione; gli altri quattro candidati a diventare santi; il concistoro semipubblico; la cerimonia di canonizzazione (26 maggio 1839); i festeggiamenti; speciale rilevanza del procuratore, padre Mautione; le ripercussioni.

*Álvaro Córdoba Chaves, C.SS.R.*

MISIONEROS REDENTORISTAS, *Los Redentoristas en España. Primera fundación (1863-1879)*, Editorial El Perpetuo Socorro, Madrid 2013, 256 pp.

Los Redentoristas llegaron a España en el año 1863. Para recordarlo, se publicó la presente recopilación. En su mayor parte son artículos del redentorista Manuel Gómez Ríos editados en la revista *Spicilegium Historicum Congregationis Ssmi Redemptoris – SHCSR* – de Roma. Las fuentes principales son la correspondencia con Roma y *La Crónica* de Huete y Alhama; las ideas principales: el establecimiento, los trabajos y la expulsión de los redentoristas de España. Finaliza en 1879, cuando ya están incorporados a la Provincia CSSR de Francia llamada Galohelvética.

Siguiendo el orden del libro, encontramos:

La presentación (páginas 5-6) del superior provincial Pedro López Calvo.

I. PRIMERA COMUNICACIÓN EPISTOLAR (p. 7-13): se trata de dos cartas (no figura el traductor): la primera, de los padres Víctor Lojodice y Egidio Zanoni a Nicolás Mauron (superior General en Roma), Madrid, 16 de febrero de 1863: describen su viaje de Roma a Madrid y la acogida del sacerdote Andrés Martínez Noboa (quien invitó a los redentoristas y fue su principal apoyo). La segunda carta es de Nicolás Mauron, Roma, 25 febrero 1863: indica a Lojodice y a Zanoni las explicaciones que deben dar a don Andrés Martínez y al cardenal acerca de la división interna que sufre el Instituto. Por ahora, la intención inmediata es tener congregados que aprendan la lengua española.

II. PRIMERA CRÓNICA DE LOS REDENTORISTAS EN ESPAÑA (1863-1868) (p. 15-147): Manuel Gómez Ríos hace una introducción y sigue con el texto de *La Crónica* traducido al español; no se indica el traductor.

En la *introducción* (p. 15-24) (Cf. Manuel GÓMEZ RÍOS, «Primera crónica de los Redentoristas en España, 1863-1868», en *SHCSR* 40 (1992) 83-88), se alude a la llegada de los redentoristas a España en febrero de 1863 y al decreto por el cual se suprimieron los conventos en España; las casas redentoristas de Huete y Alhama se cerraron el 18 de octubre de 1868; los hijos de San



Alfonso pasaron a Madrid y allí se hospedaron algunos hasta el 12 de enero de 1869, tiempo que aprovecharon Lojodice y Zanoni para redactar *La Crónica*.

*La Crónica* (p. 25-147) lleva un título latino, añadido por el archivista general Eduardo Bührel: *Chronica domus Huetensis a primis foundationum temporibus in Hispania usque ad rerum publicarum eversionem 1863-1868 dictata a P. Vit. Lojodice ac scripta a P. Aeg. Zanoni. Matrivi 1868*, (Cf. Manuel GÓMEZ RÍOS, «Primera crónica de los Redentoristas en España (1863-1868)», en *SHCSR* 40 (1992) 88-125, 339-407: la transcribe en italiano y hace los comentarios en español).

*La Crónica* explica quién era el sacerdote Andrés Martínez de Noboa y cómo éste logró que los redentoristas se establecieran en España. Describe la vida común de los primeros redentoristas, la oración, apostolados, primera misión (1864), las incomodidades, el conocimiento de Antonia de Oviedo y la llegada de nuevos refuerzos (Joaquín Pasquali y José Bivona). El arzobispo Ignacio Moreno les ofrece una casa en Medina del Campo (arquidiócesis de Valladolid).

*Fundación en Huete* (p. 55 ss.): la comunicación con Nicolás Mauron fue permanente; don Andrés Martínez estuvo pendiente de todo. El 29 de junio de 1864 llegan a Huete (p. 67), donde realizan actividades pastorales y se adaptan a las necesidades del pueblo agrícola (alguna vez, por atenderlos, les celebraron misa a las 3,15 de la mañana). La respuesta de la gente es muy positiva y pronto predicán la misión en Huete. En diciembre de 1864, integraban la comunidad redentorista los padres Lojodice, Bivona, Zanoni, Pasquali, Etienne (belga), y los hermanos Luis Zanichelli y Francisco (Ignacio) Knipschild (belga). Los párrocos colaboraron en las misiones, que se caracterizaban por la gran concurrencia de gente, las predicaciones e instrucciones, la conmoción y las lágrimas, la confesión y las reconciliaciones, la plantación de la cruz y la renovación de la misión. Se hizo conocer a San Alfonso y se le hizo una nueva estatua. En diciembre de 1865 se trasladan al convento de La Merced (p. 89).

Año 1866

Las misiones redentoristas se dieron en ambiente campesino, donde la gente tenía más dificultades debidas a la pobreza, el

abandono y la incomunicación. Inicialmente, los misioneros tienen que dedicarse al arreglo del convento y de la iglesia que les asignaron en Huete. Piden a Roma una copia del icono del Perpetuo Socorro que Pío IX acaba de confiar a la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor; reciben dos copias. Llegan más refuerzos para la comunidad en España: los padres José Pattaccini, José Chierici, Pedro López, Tomás Genaro Carpentieri, Luis María Palliola, Félix Grisar, con lo que queda integrada por once sacerdotes y cinco hermanos coadjutores. En diciembre de 1866, el hospicio de Huete es creado *Collegium*, con Celestino Etienne como superior.

Año 1867

*Fundación en Alhama (21 de enero de 1867)*

Con la aprobación de Bienvenido Monzón (arzobispo de Granada), el apoyo de José Oliver (vicario general de Granada), la aportación económica del amigo José de Toledo y Muñoz y el permiso de Nicolás Mauron (superior General CSSR), se procede al establecimiento de los redentoristas en Alhama, población agrícola de unos ocho mil habitantes, situada en la provincia y diócesis de Granada. Integraban el grupo misionero de Alhama los padres Víctor Lojodice (superior), Luis Palliola, José Chierici y Pedro López y los hermanos Luis Zanichelli y Álvaro Tornero (novicio) (p. 107). Se instalan en una casa cedida por José de Toledo y toman posesión de la iglesia del Carmen. En febrero predicán la misión en Alhama. Es palpable la religiosidad andaluza centrada en devociones y cofradías (p. 113). En Laujar de Andarax se aprecia cómo era una auténtica misión redentorista (p. 116-117).

Con ocasión del centenario de la muerte de San Pedro y la canonización de varios beatos, Mauron autoriza a Lojodice para acompañar al arzobispo de Granada a Roma; se hospedan en la casa general CSSR; salen de Madrid el 7 de junio junto con el cardenal de Sevilla, tres arzobispos, veinte obispos y noventa sacerdotes. A Roma llegan el 13 de junio (p. 119) y parte de Roma para España el 13 de julio.

En octubre llegan a España los padres Antonio Jenger y Luis Cagiano de Azevedo, y luego el hermano Pío y el sacerdote Francisco Machín Mina. El 12 de noviembre de 1867 se expide

el decreto real por el que la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor es aprobada en España; sus miembros son misioneros con destino a las colonias de Ultramar (p. 124). Por este tiempo, Lojodice dio los pasos para una *fundación en Antequera* (provincia y diócesis de Málaga) y recibió la autorización. Pero la gente de Alhama reclamó y no se pudo aceptar.

Año 1868

*La Crónica* presenta abundantes noticias sobre las misiones. El obispo pide dos sacerdotes para que le ayuden en la visita pastoral (p. 142). Se comienza la construcción de una iglesia nueva para los redentoristas en Alhama y se remodela la casa. La revolución obligará a dejar estos trabajos en septiembre de 1868, cuando triunfa el gobierno revolucionario y cae Isabel II; en Cádiz se rebelaron algunos militares de la Armada contra el Gobierno establecido (p. 144). En octubre llega a Alhama el aviso que obliga a los redentoristas a salir de ese lugar. Dos padres llegan a casa del señor Toledo en Madrid; Jenger y López van a Granada; Lojodice y Cagiano pasan a la casa del señor Mariano Puerta y figuran como sacerdotes seculares; los hermanos coadjutores permanecen en la casa, sin sotana (p. 145). Presionado por el presidente del comité de Alhama, Lojodice salió hacia Granada y después a Madrid, donde encontró otros compañeros de Huete y se enteró de que cuatro días antes (el 18 de octubre/69) el Gobierno había suprimido todos los conventos de España. En acuerdo con el superior General, envió a los cohermanos sobre todo a Francia, Italia e Inglaterra. En España solo quedaron los padres Lojodice, Zanoni, López y Machín Mina, y los hermanos coadjutores. 'Y aquí termina *La Crónica*'.

### III. FINAL DE LAS COMUNIDADES DE HUETE Y ALHAMA (p. 149-168)

En esta sección se transcriben algunas cartas y un relato en los que se da cuenta de la supresión de los redentoristas en sus dos fundaciones españolas.

Final de Huete

– En octubre de 1868, Celestino Etienne escribe tres cartas al superior General para pedirle instrucciones. El 4 de octubre el comité de Cuenca decretó la supresión de la casa redentorista de

Huete. El comité de Huete (integrado por 28 miembros) pidió no ejecutar el decreto. La autoridad se portó bien y la gente estaba consternada. Pero, el 19 de octubre se promulgó el decreto de supresión de las comunidades religiosas en España y la confiscación de sus bienes. Entonces, los redentoristas comienzan a salir del país.

– Miguel Payá y Rico (obispo de Cuenca), escribe e Etienne: la junta revolucionaria de Cuenca informa que el 4 de octubre se decidió la supresión de todos los establecimientos religiosos de hombres y mujeres en el término de tres días. Consejos: no entregar nada y distribuirse por los pueblos en las casas de los curas.

#### Final de Alhama

– Antonio Jenger relata cómo fue la supresión de la casa de Alhama (p. 156-166): el 9 de octubre llegó la orden de abandonar el convento. Despedida. Salen los padres Jenger, López, Lojodice, y Cagiano; estos y otros de Huete llegan a Madrid. Carpentieri va a Roma; Jenger y Bivona a Francia; a Jenger lo deja el tren en Miranda. Pattacini, Chierici, Palliola, y Bivona fueron destinados a Inglaterra. Bollmann viajó a Landser; Didier a Contamine (Francia); Grisar, con siete novicios españoles pasó a Châteauroux. Etienne regresó a Bélgica. Lojodice, Pasquali, Machín Mina, Zanoni, y López permanecen en casas particulares. La gente es muy ignorante en asuntos de religión y los sacerdotes muy negligentes en formarla (p. 165).

– Víctor Lojodice escribe al superior General (Madrid, 30 enero 1869) (p. 166-168): Zanoni viajó a Bussolengo (Italia); la turba se lanza contra la Nunciatura, en Madrid; un gobernador es asesinado; se declara la guerra al clero; yo iré a la casa de un amigo seglar; López vendrá a Madrid; Machín permanecerá en su país natal. ¿Qué hacer?

#### IV. LA COMUNIDAD REDENTORISTA MADRILEÑA (p. 169-196).

(Cf. Manuel GÓMEZ RÍOS, «Los Redentoristas en España: de la revolución a la restauración, 1868-1878», en *SHCSR* 42 (1994) 345-367).

Permaneció en Madrid una pequeña comunidad redentorista, restaurada en 1878 e incorporada a la Provincia Redento-

rista Galohelvéctica, cuyo provincial (Aquiles Desurmont), en sintonía con el superior General (Nicolás Mauron), trazaron las líneas de acción. Lojodice perdió protagonismo.

En abril de 1869, los padres Lojodice y López y el hermano Álvaro, se trasladaron a vivir en una casa cercana a la Capilla del Obispo. En noviembre de 1869, Lojodice acompaña al arzobispo de Granada (Bienvenido Monzón), quien, con motivo de la celebración del Concilio Vaticano I viaja a Roma y se hospeda en Villa Caserta, la casa General de los redentoristas. Lojodice regresa a Madrid en febrero de 1870. En este año se establecen por primera vez los Redentoristas en Ecuador y a ella son destinados los padres López, Machín, Grisar, y los hermanos coadjutores Pío y Álvaro. A España llega el p. Luis Cagiano de Azevedo.

#### *Contactos con la Provincia Galohelvéctica*

En 1875, Mauron y Desurmont comienzan los contactos para restaurar la CSSR en España; Lojodice será desplazado poco a poco. La primera idea fue crear un noviciado en los Pirineos, y una casa de estudiantado común (seminario mayor) en Francia. Lojodice no cree en estos planes y presenta otro alternativo. Mauron prefiere la unión con la Provincia francesa, Lojodice con la Provincia romana (p. 179). Mientras se encuentra una casa al norte de España, se establecerá un jovenado (seminario menor) en Pau; noviciado y estudiantado se harán en Francia. Alusión al espíritu nacional español.

#### *La Provincia Galohelvéctica asume la dirección*

Desde el año 1878, el provincial Desurmont asume la dirección de la restauración CSSR en España. Propone a Meinraldo Jost para dirigir la obra y lo envía; no confía en Lojodice ni en Cagiano. Sus planes para España se apoyaban en la firme autoridad respaldada por un visitador, el espíritu de familia y la figura de San Alfonso. En diciembre de 1878 llega Jost como visitador y va a residir a Granada. Para evitar dudas, Mauron afirmaba que todas las casas de la CSSR dependían de él, así como todas las de España debían depender de la Provincia CSSR francesa (p. 192, nota 86). Las diferencias entre italianos y franceses sobre autoridad, observancia y severidad, hicieron que Lojodice pidiera cambio para otra Unidad, por lo que viajó a Argentina en 1884.

## V. APÉNDICES

Para completar el libro, se añaden cinco apéndices alusivos a diversos asuntos de relacionados con España: aprobación de la CSSR, llegada del icono del Perpetuo Socorro, fundadores, contexto histórico y revolución.

*Apéndice 1: Aprobación de la CSSR en España* (p. 197-199) (Cf. Manuel GÓMEZ RÍOS, «Primera crónica de los Redentoristas en España, 1863-1868», en *SHCSR* 40 (1992) 348-349): la aprobación se logra el 12 de noviembre de 1867.

*Apéndice 2: Llegada del icono del Perpetuo Socorro a España* (p. 200-203: dos cartas de Etienne): en mayo de 1867 llega una copia del icono a Huete. Se hace una novena. La devoción se difunde rápidamente.

*Apéndice 3: Los fundadores* (p. 204-213, sin autor): lista con el nombre y algunos datos de los redentoristas que fundaron el Instituto Alfonsiano en España: P. Víctor Lojodice (italiano, 1834-1916), P. Egidio Zanoni (italiano, 1824-1895), H. Luis Zanichelli (italiano, 1825-1891), P. José Bivona (italiano, 1836-1902), P. Joaquín Pasquali (italiano, 1820-1899), P. Celestino Etienne (belga, 1832-1885), H. Francisco (Ignacio) Knipschild (alemán, 1820-1893), P. Luis María Francisco de Paola Palliola (italiano, 1842-1916), P. Félix María Grisar (alemán, 1831-1895), P. José Chierici (italiano, 1838-1914), P. José Pattacini (italiano, 1831-salió de la CSSR en 1871), P. Antonio Jenger (alsaciano, 1838-1904), P. Luis Cagianio de Acevedo (italiano, 1842-1929), H. Enrique (Pío) Plietzsch (alemán, 1846-salió de la CSSR en 1872), P. Francisco Javier Bollmann (alemán, 1828-1891), P. Juan Pedro Didier (luxemburgués, 1837-1896), P. Pedro Celestino López (español, 1836-1919), P. Francisco Javier Machín Mina (español, 1822-1879), H. Álvaro Tornero (español, 1844-1916), H. Antonio Ortiz (español, 1836-1900).

Aparece otra lista en la que figuran los redentoristas distribuidos en las comunidades de Huete y Alhama, al estallar la revolución en 1868.

*Apéndice 4: Aproximación al contexto histórico de la Revolución (continuación)* (p. 213-229) (Cf. Manuel GÓMEZ RÍOS, «Pri-

mera crónica de los Redentoristas en España, 1863-1868», en *SHCSR* 40 (1992) 340-348).

– Aproximación al contexto histórico: por decreto del 18 de octubre de 1868, quedaban cerrados todos los monasterios, conventos, colegios y congregaciones de religiosos fundados en España a partir del 9 de julio de 1837 (p. 213). Los redentoristas tuvieron que abandonar sus dos casas y salir del país. Sólo quedaron en Madrid hasta el año 1877 los padres Víctor Lojodice y Luis Cagiano de Azevedo, con el hermano Eugenio (no profesos). Vivieron en una casa contigua a San Pascual, de las religiosas francesas.

– Antecedentes de la supresión: la supresión violenta de las casas religiosas en España comenzó en 1808 con Napoleón. Se describen las coyunturas políticas hasta octubre de 1868.

– Las juntas revolucionarias. Situación política y religiosa, según *La Crónica*.

*Apéndice 5: Aproximación al contexto histórico: de la Revolución a la República* (p. 230-246) (Cf. Manuel GÓMEZ RÍOS, «Los Redentoristas en España: de la Revolución a la Restauración, 1868-1878», en *SHCSR* 42 (1994) 368-381).

En este apéndice se describen: las acciones gubernamentales, correspondencia de Lojodice en la que señala sus puntos de vista sobre la política y la situación de España. La Primera República comenzó en febrero de 1873, luego de abdicar el rey Amadeo de Saboya (1871-1873).

El libro termina con 14 fotografías y un índice (247-256).

*Se puede concluir* diciendo que el libro no es exhaustivo, pero da una idea panorámica del establecimiento de los hijos de San Alfonso en España, de sus trabajos y su empatía con el pueblo sencillo demostrada en las misiones. La revolución de 1868 interrumpió por breve tiempo los primeros frutos. No obstante, ahí quedó la semilla, la marca redentorista. Bien dice Pedro López: «El trabajo de aquellos primeros redentoristas hizo de España una de las Provincias más florecientes y con mayor proyección misionera de la Congregación, haciéndose presente por numerosos países de Asia, África y, sobre todo, de América Latina» (Presentación, p. 5-6).

Álvaro Córdoba Chaves, C.SS.R.

SZOPINSKI Emilio, C.S.S.R., *La perla del sudoeste chaqueño: Charata, la cuna de la evangelización de los redentoristas polacos, madre de la Diócesis de San Roque*, Cathedra Jurídica, Buenos Aires 2013, 160 pp.

Los Redentoristas de la Provincia de Varsovia llegaron al Chaco en 1938, comenzando su actividad misionera con el nombramiento del P. Alfredo Müller como párroco de la recién creada parroquia de Charata. Al cumplirse los 75 años de la parroquia, el autor, misionero en Argentina desde 1967, hace una breve historia de la inmensa labor realizada en el vastísimo territorio que entonces fue confiado a los redentoristas polacos. Pertenecía entonces Charata a la diócesis de Santa Fe que un año después se dividió para formar la nueva diócesis de Resistencia y de la cual nacería, en 1957, la diócesis de Formosa y, en 1963, la diócesis de San Roque de Presidencia a la que desde entonces pertenece Charata. La celebración de los 50 años de esta diócesis ha sido ocasión para exaltar el apostolado de los redentoristas, que, en palabras del actual obispo, «con un trabajo misionero constante y abnegado, abrieron brecha en pueblos y parajes de un extenso territorio que hoy constituye buena parte de la diócesis». A partir de Charata, los redentoristas fueron creando nuevas parroquias, 13 en los 25 primeros años. «Gracias al trabajo de los redentoristas, Charata tiene el honor de ser: *Madre de la diócesis de San Roque de Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña*» (p. 27).

No sólo parroquias: numerosísimas capillas y escuelas se fueron creando por la acción de los misioneros. El elenco completo de las iglesias y capillas, urbanas y rurales, llena más de 20 páginas (pp. 37-47; 97-117). La indiferencia religiosa reinaba entre la población, formada en gran parte por emigrantes de Europa, que, por falta de sacerdotes, limitaban su vida cristiana al bautizo de sus hijos y a la participación ocasional en las fiestas patronales. Poco a poco, la presencia de los misioneros en los diversos poblados, con la construcción de capillas y escuelas, fue renovando la vida cristiana, junto con la promoción humana y social de los habitantes de aquella inmensa región. Los misioneros, con escasísimos recursos, supieron llegar a los lugares más apartados, para atender a la población diseminada por los cam-



pos, a los aborígenes con el Centro Mocoví Santa Rosa, y a las comunidades de emigrantes, principalmente las alemanas y polacas.

El autor habla también de otras actividades de los misioneros: el apostolado de la pluma en diversos periódicos (pp. 29-30) y de la radio y televisión (pp. 132-134), la catequesis en las escuelas y la formación de catequistas (pp. 118-122), las comunidades de religiosas (pp. 123-127) y diversas obras sociales.

La biografía de los 18 párrocos redentoristas que se han sucedido en Charata desde 1938, sin olvidar a los demás Padres y Hermanos que les acompañaron, ocupa más de 50 páginas. Su lectura confirma los merecidos elogios (del nuncio apostólico, del obispo diocesano, del Padre General y del Padre Viceprovincial C.SS.R.) por los frutos cosechados con tanta abnegación y sacrificio.

El libro termina con unas páginas de “homenaje” a la Iglesia de Alemania y a la Iglesia de Polonia por su ayuda y colaboración a la obra de los misioneros.

*Emilio Lage, C.SS.R.*

*Ciorani e i Sarnelli. Una terra, una storia. Nascita della Baronia Sarnelli (1712-2012). Atti del Convegno di studi per il terzo centenario della fondazione della Baronia di Ciorani. Ciorani – Mercato San Severino 18-19 ottobre 2012, (Cospia Redemptio, 6), a cura di A. M. Proietto – A. V. Amante, Editrice San Gerardo, Materdomini 2013, 284 pp.*

Il volume, *Ciorani e i Sarnelli. Una terra, una storia*, è inserito nella Collana scientifica dei Missionari Redentoristi dell'Italia Meridionale, e raccoglie gli atti del convegno dedicato allo studio della fondazione della Baronia di Ciorani, a trecento anni dalla sua istituzione (1712-2012), e luogo in cui è sorta la prima comunità redentorista. Il convegno scientifico, organizzato dalla stessa comunità dei Missionari Redentoristi di Ciorani, si è svolto nei giorni 18-19 ottobre 2012 e ha coinvolto, oltre la comunità dei Padri, l'Università degli studi della città di Salerno. Nel set-

tembre 2013, a distanza di un anno dal Convegno di studio, è stato pubblicato e presentato il volume scientifico-commemorativo curato dai redentoristi Alfonso V. Amarante e Antonio M. Proietto.

Il testo raccoglie sette interventi. Propone un percorso storico critico che ripercorrere la storia della fondazione della Baronìa dei Sarnelli (1712) attraverso la disamina delle vicissitudini del feudo. A tale storia si intreccia la vita e lo sviluppo della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore. A dare testimonianza di tale intreccio vitale, tra gli altri studi, vi è l'esame critico dell'archivio storico della famiglia Sarnelli conservato nell'archivio provinciale dei redentoristi.

Il prof. Luigi Rossi, Preside della Facoltà di Scienze politiche dell'Università di Salerno, apre il volume con un'ampia e articolata presentazione. Lo studioso oltre a presentare i contributi dei vari autori, sottolinea l'importanza di tali ricerche. Egli scrive che: «le vicende evocate inducono a ritenere che i fatti si sono trasformati in una esperienza che ha lasciato una traccia significativa nel profondo di una comunità. Già da sola, questa constatazione consente di affermare che l'esperienza di promozione sociale e culturale coniugata con il credo religioso, del quale sono stati testimoni, ha fatto dei figli di Sant'Alfonso un elemento imprescindibile nel panorama della Valle dell'Irno» (p. 22) e in contempo per la stessa storia dei Missionari Redentoristi.

Il primo contributo curato dal prof. Giuseppe Cirillo, *Lo Stato di Mercato Sanseverino. Un profilo istituzionale-amministrativo*, ha il merito di ricostruire con acribia l'Istituto feudatario così come si è sviluppato in età moderna e particolarmente nella valle dell'Irno. Dallo studio emerge come "lo Stato feudale territoriale è un istituto moderno non medievale che contraddistingue il barone come *iudex ordinarius loci* in riferimento alla distinzione tra titolarità ed esercizio dei poteri giurisdizionali, divenendo un ufficiale regio". La stessa città di Mercato San Severino ha questi privilegi in quanto è uno Stato composto da 44 casali strutturati in quattro quartieri che compongono un'unica università. All'interno di queste università si afferma gradualmente una nuova classe dirigente, composta per lo più da avvocati, che gradualmente rivendicano una propria posizione socia-

le e in alcuni casi sono capaci di comprare un feudo con il titolo annesso. Questo è il caso della famiglia Sarnelli che deve la sua fortuna proprio alla pratica dell'avvocatura e all'amministrazione di beni appartenenti a terzi.

A partire da queste premesse il prof. Giuseppe Rescigno esamina nel suo studio *I Sarnelli di Ciorani: una Baronìa, un feudo* la scalata sociale di questa famiglia. Il ceppo originario dei Sarnelli è da rintracciarsi in un quartiere di lignaggio di Bracigliano (SA). L'esercizio dell'avvocatura e alcune abili speculazioni consentono alla *casata* l'acquisizione del feudo di Ciorani. Alla fortuna economica della famiglia, contribuiscono sia il lascito di Andrea Sarnelli (1655-1707) dapprima amministratore dei Sali di Puglia, d'Otranto, di Monte di Calabria e dall'arrendamento "dell'oglio e sapone", successivamente, dal 1703, vescovo di Muro Lucano (PZ) sia il capitale accumulato da Angelo Sarnelli (1666-1748), primo Barone di Ciorani, avvocato e legale di fiducia del duca di Girifalco (Calabria) nonché possessore di alcune quote negli arrendamenti di sale, olio e sapone.

È proprio lui, il barone Angelo Sarnelli, all'apice della sua fortuna economica, a comprare nel 1712 il feudo di proprietà di Eleonora Antinori appartenente alla nobiltà di Mercato San Severino. Negli anni del suo governo, il borgo feudale, è valorizzato con la costruzione di nuovo palazzo baronale che ridisegna interamente l'aspetto urbanistico dell'abitato. Alla morte del barone, per vicissitudini interne alla stessa famiglia, la baronia è ereditata dall'ultimo degli otto figli di Angelo, Nicola Maria (1713-1785).

Se il primo barone, con i suoi due figli Andrea Maria († 1755) e Gennaro Maria (1702-1744), aveva accolto e spronato la fondazione della prima casa dei redentoristi, il nuovo barone, Nicola Maria sarà invece una spina nel fianco per la comunità dei padri, i quali, a causa di alcuni lasciti ricevuti da Andrea M., per anni si scontreranno nelle aule dei tribunale con il nuovo barone. Lo studio del prof. Rescigno ricostruisce tutta la complessa vicenda giudiziaria.

Su quest'impianto storico-descrittivo si inserisce lo studio di p. Serafino Fiore, responsabile del centro di spiritualità redentorista. Nella sua relazione, *Sant'Alfonso e la famiglia Sarnelli*,

l'autore, ricostruisce particolarmente il legame di amicizia che unisce Alfonso (1696-1787) a Gennaro M. Sarnelli. I due si conoscono presumibilmente nel 1728. Hanno in comune, oltre gli studi giuridici, l'amore per le anime più bisognose di aiuti spirituali e materiali.

Nel 1729, vivono insieme da convittori presso il collegio dei Cinesi di Matteo Ripa (1682-1746). In comune, per un tratto di strada, hanno inoltre lo stesso direttore spirituale, e quando i primi compagni lasciano la nascente Congregazione del Santissimo Salvatore, proprio Gennaro M., con la sua presenza a Scala (SA), sostiene la nascita della nuova famiglia religiosa aderendo al progetto apostolico.

Lo studio del p. Serafino Fiore pone in evidenza il ruolo cruciale di Gennaro M. nella fondazione della comunità redentorista nella baronia di suo padre. Il testo ricostruisce i momenti salienti della fondazione ma anche gli scontri successivi alla morte di Gennaro M. tra suo fratello Nicola, nuovo Barone e i redentoristi.

In continuità con il contributo del p. Fiore, lo studio del prof. Alfonso V. Amarante, *I Redentoristi a Ciorani dal 1736 ad oggi*, si preoccupa di ricostruire gli eventi storici che hanno portato alla fondazione della comunità redentorista di Ciorani avvenuta con atto notarile nel 1736 e di descriverne le successive vicissitudini storiche.

L'autore descrive, dapprima la complessità della fondazione, poi le difficoltà economiche della prima comunità redentorista e i dissidi relazionali tra questa e la famiglia Sarnelli. Successivamente, divide il suo studio in due periodi: l'Ottocento e il Novecento, apponendo a tale minuzioso esame alcune annotazioni riguardanti i nostri giorni. Particolarmente stimolante è la storia della casa di Ciorani nel diciannovesimo secolo periodo caratterizzato dall'unità d'Italia.

Se per la prima parte dell'Ottocento i padri "cioranisti" sono considerati *longa manus* dei re di Napoli, nella seconda metà del medesimo secolo subiscono la soppressione la dispersione dei consacrati per editto reale. Proprio la dispersione dei membri appartenenti alle case italiane ha influito in negativo sul metodo missionario redentorista dell'origini mantenuto vivo fino al 1861.

Il Novecento, invece, rappresenta un momento di forte rinascita per i redentoristi del Sud Italia; una ripresa che trova, proprio nella fondazione dell'educandato per i futuri seminaristi a Ciorani, il segno del nuovo inizio.

Il prof. Amarante spingendosi fin alla soglia dei nostri giorni, evidenzia, nel suo studio, altri momenti topici caratterizzanti la vita *quotidiana* della comunità redentorista dimostrando come questa va intrecciandosi, quasi confondendosi, con quella di Ciorani e del suo popolo. Di notevole interesse è la documentazione riportata in appendice. Merita particolare menzione l'allegato che descrive l'elenco dei beni incamerati dallo Stato Sabaudo al momento della soppressione e un documento di metà Settecento che descrive lo stato del feudo.

Il p. Giovanni Vicidomini, archivista della Provincia religiosa dei Missionari Redentoristi del Sud Italia, presenta lo studio su *I Redentoristi nel Mezzogiorno*. Lo scritto si preoccupa di esaminare e descrivere i processi storici che hanno portato alla diffusione dei redentoristi nel Sud Italia. Sono tre, a giudizio dell'autore, i periodi della storia caratterizzanti di detto processo: gli anni del fondatore (1732-1787); l'espansione in Calabria dal 1790; ed infine gli anni della restaurazione (1815-1841). Il saggio, con dovizia di particolari, mostra le motivazioni storiche e pastorali che inducono il successore di sant'Alfonso, il p. Andrea Villani (1706-1792), a fondare tre case in Calabria. A seguito del devastante terremoto del 1783 sorge l'esigenza di fondare nuove case nella terra calabrese al fine di risollevarne spiritualmente le popolazioni così duramente colpite dal sisma. Tale necessità è richiesta formalmente del re di Napoli a cui le comunità redentoriste ogni anno presentano un elenco di lavori apostolici al fine di ricevere i 1200 ducati concessi dalla stessa corona. Tali elenchi detti "mappe delle missioni", offrono uno spaccato dell'attività apostolica dei redentoristi e fanno emergere una testimonianza preziosa del clima politico e religioso degli anni della Restaurazione post napoleonica. Di particolare interesse e di importanza storica sono gli elenchi che coprono il periodo 1815-1831.

L'ultimo contributo, *Il fondo della casa di Ciorani nell'archivio storico dei padri redentoristi di Pagani*, è curato dalla Dottoressa in Archivistica Concetta Falivene. Nella sua relazione la

dottorssa Falivene evidenzia i passaggi fondamentali che hanno portato all'attuale sistemazione del "fondo Ciorani" conservato presso l'archivio provinciale degli stessi redentoristi dell'Italia Meridionale. Nel testo, l'autrice, restringe la presentazione del fondo a quattro sezioni: *Amministrazione*, contenente 22 documenti relativi alle proprietà dette "la Vigna" e il "Castagneto"; *Cronistoria* divisa a sua volta in due fascicoli concernenti la donazione del barone Angelo Sarnelli: la prima sezione (a) composta da 58 documenti e la seconda sezione (b) contenete 56 documenti; *Controversie* tra il barone Angelo Sarnelli e la comunità di Ciorani di cui il materiale è diviso in tre sezioni: la prima (a) contiene 33 documenti, la seconda (b) 29 documenti, la terza (c) 16 documenti; infine troviamo la sezione *Proprietà* in cui ritroviamo fascicoli contenenti documenti relativi alla proprietà Sarnelli e alcuni suoi eredi donata a sant'Alfonso. Il materiale è organizzato in due fascicoli. La prima sezione (a) contiene 38 documenti. La seconda sezione (b), contenente atti notarili e prospetti amministrativi, è formata da 74 documenti. La ricchezza del contributo presente permette una lettura d'insieme di tutto il materiale relativo al tema sviluppato dal Convegno, materiale cartaceo bisognoso ancora di essere studiato in profondità.

Il testo si chiude con una ricca appendice fotografica e con gli utilissimi indici dei nomi e dei luoghi che in un libro a carattere scientifico sono sempre graditi. Ci sembra doveroso segnalare infine vari refusi – alcuni attribuibili alla stampa ed altri ad una non perfetta revisione del vasto materiale prodotto – che certamente passano in secondo piano davanti ad un'opera così preziosa.

L'articolazione dei contributi con la loro ricchezza hanno il merito di tracciare uno spaccato di storia locale che si inserisce nel contesto della storia universale. In alcuni momenti è impossibile dividere nettamente la storia della Baronìa di Ciorani da quella dei Redentoristi perché a partire dalla fondazione della comunità dei missionari le due storie diventano una sola. Infatti la relazione istauratasi tra i Sarnelli e i Redentoristi contribuisce alla lettura di una pagina di storia fondamentale per le origini della Congregazione dei Missionari Redentoristi. Sarebbe stato auspicabile inserire in questo ricco contributo storico una rela-

zione riguardante non solo le vicende dei ricchi e dei forti ma la storia del popolo minuto. Gli abitanti della Baronìa sono chiamati a vivere in un contesto feudale fatto di vincoli verso il padrone e poco propenso al distacco da istituti secolari. In contempo lo stesso popolo è immerso in un modo chiuso fatto di pratiche religiose e tradizioni tramandate attraverso alcuni lavori tipici come l'uso della creta di cui oggi si sta perdendo la memoria.

*Antonio Donato, C.S.S.R.*

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