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THE REDEMPTORISTS, AN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

SUMMARY

Evolution of Redemptorist Apostolic Life; - The First Redemptorists; - The Expanding Congregation; - The Redemptorists in the Twentieth Century.

The Constitutions of the Redemptorists, as finally formulated after the soul-searching demanded by the Second Vatican Council and subsequent legislation, proposed a vision of their life that is new and rich in inspiration¹. They offer rules for what they call the Apostolic Life of the Redemptorists. The new name was a happy choice; and after thorough exploration and reflection was accepted by the general chapter held in 1967 - 69². The formula embraced both the external pastoral activity of the Congregation and the personal and community life of the members. A persuasive argument

¹ *Constitutiones et statuta Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris*, Rome, 1986. ET *Constitutions and Statutes*, Rome 1988.

² Father S. RAPONI has published some thorough studies of present Redemptorist legislation, he having been involved in the process of its formulation. For what pertains to present purposes particularly relevant is his «Categorie-chiave nelle Costituzioni rinnovate C.SS.R.» in *SH* 34 (1986) 31-89. He treats the emergence of the "Apostolic life" formula on 34-53. See also S. RAPONI, *Il Carisma dei Redentoristi nella Chiesa*, Romae 1993, 51-70.

for adopting the expression was the need to express that unity of life Vatican II had described so clearly and so succinctly in treating of religious or Apostolic life³. The name Apostolic Life was particularly fortunate in that it avoided the dichotomy inherent in such traditional terms as religious life and ministry, a dichotomy in terminology not entirely avoided even by the Council. The expression as now used by the Redemptorists implies that unity of life visualised by the Council: everything was to be inspired and coloured by the pastoral activity of the institute.

That is a vision surely to be expected of the followers of St. Alphonsus. The voice he heard at the Hospital of the Incurables challenged him: "Leave the world and give yourself to Me"; and his response was to plunge into that phenomenally busy pastoral activity in which he pledged himself not to lose a moment of time⁴.

In the present article we concentrate on the community life of the Redemptorists, the Apostolic Community, as this section is entitled in the Constitutions. The story of the name and the explanation of its significance have been treated by Father Raponi with his customary thoroughness⁵. It is helpful to see that the notion of a Redemptorist community oriented towards the pastoral activity of the members and itself a vigorous centre of apostolic work is far from being a novelty. From the beginning, at least under the direction and impetus given by St. Alphonsus, care for the spiritually abandoned was the basic consideration. In his day and under his leadership there was little doubt about the unity of Redemptorist life. So much is clear from his circular letters, in which the missions are given as the principal reason for his exhortations to prayer, obedience and poverty. After him, his thought was well preserved in the communities of southern Italy. But beyond the Alps, where strangers were struggling to cope with his vision, a tendency to formalism somewhat obscured that unity between the prayerful, studious life of the religious house and the bustling activity among the people.

³ Cf *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W.M. ABBOTT S.J., London, 1966, (*Perfectae caritatis*, 8).

⁴ Cf TH. REY-MERMET, *St. Alphonsus Liguori, Tireless Worker for the Most Abandoned*, New City Press, Brooklyn, 1989, p. 122; F.M. JONES, *Alphonsus Liguori, the Saint of Bourbon Naples, 1696-1787*, Gill & MacMillan, Dublin, 1992, 38-39; H. ARBOLEDA VALENCIA, «S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori racconta la storia della sua vocazione» in *SH* 39(1991) 259-267.

⁵ S. RAPONI, «La Comunità Apostolica Redentorista nelle Costituzioni rinnovate» in *SH* 35(1987) 312-337.

I. - EVOLUTION OF REDEMPTORIST APOSTOLIC LIFE

In the mind of St. Alphonsus the starting point was the pastoral care of those in need. That was his thinking right from the time of that experience at the Hospital of the Incurables, which he was later to call his conversion. When in pursuance of that call he embraced the clerical state, he gave himself particularly to the sort of people we would now call "marginalised". The *Cappelle serotina* which he guided in a more fervent Christian life survived him for more than a hundred years or so, a monument to a compassionate and truly apostolic spirit⁶. That same ready sympathy was stirred profoundly when he and his holiday companions met the goatherds in the lonely Tramonti region above Scala⁷. In Scala he was to discover his true destiny.

Sister Maria Celeste Crostarosa, whose reports of heavenly guidance had led to the establishment of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, was soon speaking of further revelations. There was to be an institute of missionaries to spread the message of redemption among the people. And Alphonsus, she announced, was the one chosen by God to be their leader. Together with the excellent concept of missionaries preaching the message of God's redeeming love there were other suggestions that spoke more of the Sister's enthusiasms than of inspiration from on high. The preachers were to wear red and blue like the nuns; they were to lead a contemplative style of life that looked like prevailing over their pastoral activity; and they were to practise absolute poverty according to the primitive Franciscan ideal.

Alphonsus prudently reflected for a long time and sought competent advice before he yielded to the urging of Mgr. Thomas Falcoia, Bishop of Castellammare, who was spiritual director of the nuns in Scala and had eagerly embraced the scheme for the missionary institute. When the founding members came together in 1732 there were serious elements of disunion among them. Some of them, influenced especially by the preposterous Tosquez, clamoured for the acceptance of the Crostarosan proposals with little thought for practicalities. The unhappy result was that even after

⁶ For an excellent treatment of the *Cappelle serotina* see G. ORLANDI, «S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori e i laici. La fondazione delle 'Cappelle serotina' a Napoli» in *SH* 35(1987) 393-414.

⁷ Cf TH. REY-MERMET, 214; F.M. JONES, 74-76.

a highly successful campaign of missions in the Tramonti region⁸, the group split, leaving Alphonsus and Brother Vito Curzio alone to follow the original plan under the direction of Mgr. Falcoia.

New men came to replace the disgruntled spirits; the small community moved to the Casa Anastasio, a short distance up the hill from the nuns; and there in a more harmonious atmosphere set about fashioning the Redemptorist identity.

In those early days everything depended on Falcoia. He was the Director, in effect the major superior. He did not exaggerate when he said, speaking of the rule of life: "*Io penserò a tutto*"⁹. The Bishop of Castellammare was also working on the rules of the nuns as well as attending to the affairs of the missionaries, even to the extent of appointing the domestic officials of the new community in Ciorani. It is not surprising that at his death in 1743 the rules of the institute were incomplete. That is not to say that the Congregation was without some sort of legislation. There were various formulations of the nature of the institute and its manner of life. These earliest documents bear the unmistakable stamp of Falcoia's thinking and expression.

The Marchese di Montecallegre

Early in 1736 circumstances seemed to favour an attempt to gain from the regalist Bourbon court of Naples approval for the new institute. Encouraged by sympathisers, who seemed to know the still new rulers, Falcoia and Alphonsus addressed a Memorial to the Marchese di Montecallegre, chief minister of the regime¹⁰. The author is not indicated, but the influence of Falcoia is beyond question. The purpose of the institute is expressed briefly.

Their chief aim is to imitate closely the life and virtues of Our Lord Jesus Christ - as much as possible with the help of grace - both for their own spiritual profit and that of the whole people of the kingdom, especially those who are most destitute of help.

⁸ For the missions in Tramonti see TH. REY-MERMET, 272-273; F.M. JONES, 117-119.

⁹ Falcoia to Alphonsus, 8th June 1733 in *Mgr. Tommaso Falcoia, Lettere a S. Alfonso de Liguori, Ripa, Sportelli, Crostarosa*, ed. O. GREGORIO, Rome, 1963, 157.

¹⁰ The text of the document is in *Lettere di S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori*, Rome, 1887, p. 48. We quote from the English translation made by C. HOEGERL, *Founding Texts of the Redemptorists. Early Rules and other Documents*, Rome 1986, 70-72.

The purpose appears as twofold, linked under the heading of the imitation of Christ. That formulation with the apparently stronger emphasis on "their own spiritual profit" is close to the rule of the nuns. That remained more characteristic of Falcoia than of Alphonsus. The petition failed when it fell into the hands of Celestino Galiani, *Cappellano maggiore*, a dyed in the wool regalist. He rejected it with contemptuous remarks about a visionary nun, simple and discontented priests and the already too many orders directed to the holy work of the missions.

The Compendio of Bovino

During the eleven years, interminable as they must have seemed, that Falcoia worked at elaborating his rules the members of the Congregation were not entirely left without guidance. The editors of the documents concerned with Redemptorist legislation have identified four texts of a *Compendio della regola*¹¹. We use the text submitted to the Bishop of Bovino on the occasion of the foundation at Iliceto towards the end of 1744¹². Whatever about the authorship, it is the thought of Falcoia, as is evident from the opening sentence describing what entitled "The Idea of the Institute".

The purpose of this new and least Institute of the Disciples of the Most Holy Saviour is none other than to imitate, as much as possible with Divine grace, this Divine Master and Model; and to help souls most in need, especially those in country towns and in the midst of the dioceses.

Once again the purpose is twofold; and it adheres so closely to the rule of the nuns that the care of souls in need seems to be merely secondary. Falcoia thought like that. It was not so much that he failed in zeal for the abandoned souls; but he had taken over the revelations of Maria Celeste with such enthusiasm as to suggest that the missionaries were contemplatives who gave what attention they could spare to pastoral works. Perhaps it is not quite fair to the man to put it that way; but in the later text of Conza the dichotomy is still more strongly marked.

¹¹ O. GREGORIO and A. SAMPERS, *Documenti intorno alla regola della Congregazione del SS. Redentore* (Biblioteca Historica C.SS.R. IV), Rome 1969, 288-289.

¹² We quote from the translation of C. HOEGERL, 156-174.

The Text of Conza

This document identifies itself. The manuscript in the Redemptorist archives of the Naples province bears the title *Regole della Congregazione del SS Salvatore per la casa di S. Maria Materdomini di Caposele*, and it carries the seal of Mgr. Giuseppe Nicolai of Conza with the date 24th January 1748¹³. It is more formal than the *Compendio*, having been discussed and approved by the general congregation held in the previous year¹⁴. Falcoia's verbosity has been tempered, by Alphonsus almost certainly, perhaps in consultation with others. It is still, however, very much the thought of Falcoia with his marked dependence on the rule of the nuns. That is particularly so in the way the purpose of the institute is described. Once again we quote from Father Hoegerl's translation¹⁵.

The purpose of the Institute is that of the closest imitation of the most holy life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ and of His most adorable virtues. These are to be reproduced in the life of each one of the subjects, so that they may fulfil in their own persons the plan of His Divine Majesty, who came into the world in our flesh to be imitated by us; and so that each one may become a model for others and can say with the Apostle: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 4:16).

The rules that follow are less wordy in formulation than this effusion, which retains even the expression of Falcoia after his death. In this description of the purpose there is not even a mention of the ministry of the members. By the time the Archbishop of Conza was sent the copy of the rules Alphonsus had been elected Rector Major; and he would soon have occasion to prepare his own formulae of the life of the missionaries with a view to gaining their stability. The first of these texts of his inspiration independently of Falcoia is named by its editors the *Ristretto*¹⁶.

¹³ *Documenti*, 289.

¹⁴ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines de la Congrégation du Très Saint Rédempteur*, Louvain, II, 1957, 143.

¹⁵ C. HOEGERL, 179.

¹⁶ *Documenti*, 289.

Ristretto della Regola

There are two manuscripts of the text in the general archives of the Redemptorists¹⁷, one of them unmistakably in the hand of Alphonsus. The formula can be dated safely as of 1747-48, a time when Alphonsus was in Naples trying to exploit what he thought a favourable opportunity of gaining the invaluable royal approbation. There is reason, however, to know that he had been tentatively working on such a formula as early as 1743, after the death of Falcoia¹⁸.

The *Ristretto* is clearly the work of a new mentality. Not only is it clearer and more concise, but now the pastoral ministry receives prominence to the extent of becoming the determining factor in the life of the Congregation. It becomes now almost the same as the expression used in the text submitted to Rome for approbation and so happily incorporated into Redemptorist legislation in 1967-69. It is the formula of the Apostolic life as it is now understood in the Congregation¹⁹.

The purpose of the priests of the Most Holy Saviour is to follow the example of our common Saviour Jesus Christ by devoting themselves, under obedience to the ordinaries of the places, principally to helping areas of the countryside most devoid of spiritual help.

Following Christ is now said to be by working for those in need. From this starting point is derived the way of life to be followed by the missionaries. The same expression recurs in the text submitted to the Holy See for approval in 1748.

The Transcription of Cossali

The manuscript text of the rule sent by Alphonsus to Rome for approval is in the Vatican archives among the papers of the Sacred Congregation of the Council²⁰. Each page carries the signature Gianfrancesco M. Cossali, Segretario del Em.mo Spinelli, which explains the title given to the document by its editors.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ C. HOEGERL, 228.

¹⁹ Our quotation from the *Ristretto* is from C. HOEGERL, 230.

²⁰ *Documenti*, 290. There is a Latin translation in *Documenti miscellanea ad Regulam et Spiritum Congregationis nostrae illustranda*, Rome, 1904, 58-74.

The text has so much in common with the *Ristretto* that a reading suggests that it represents an editing of the earlier text. That impression is confirmed by what is known of its composition. Early in 1748, Alphonsus had addressed to Pope Benedict XIV a request for the approbation of the Institute. Handed on to the Sacred Congregation of the Council, it came back to Cardinal Spinelli, Archbishop of Naples, for comment. He asked Alphonsus to come to Naples and work with his own experts on a draft to be forwarded to Rome. Our present text is the fruit of their collaboration²¹. Three of the archbishop's *periti* were friends and sympathisers of Alphonsus and their agreeable assistance produced a text that can be used with satisfaction by a Redemptorist today. In this text of 1748 we have the best expression of how Alphonsus envisaged the institute that looks to him as its founder²².

The sole purpose of this Congregation will be to follow the example of Our Saviour Jesus Christ in preaching the Divine word to the poor, as the Lord already said of Himself: "He has sent Me to bring glad tidings to the poor" (Luke 4:18).

It is tempting to see the phrase "the sole purpose" as intending to avoid the sort of dichotomy that later eventuated. In any case, this text of Cossali is seen by present Redemptorists as eloquently expressing that unity of apostolic life, which is such a basic concept²³.

The Pontifical Rule

The application was successful. On 25th February 1749, a Brief of Benedict XIV approved the institute and the attached rule. It was now a different text from the Cossali manuscript which had been submitted. The canonists of the Curia had manipulated the text to suit Roman usages. There was no essential change; but that admirable formulation of the purpose of the Congregation was slightly altered in a way that was not an improvement²⁴.

Since the purpose of the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer is no other than to unite secular priests to live together and ear-

²¹ *Documenti*, 283.

²² C. HOEGERL, 266.

²³ Constitution 1.

²⁴ C. HOEGERL, 298-299.

nestly strive to imitate the virtues and examples of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, devoting themselves especially to the preaching of the word of God to the poor...

Sadly missed are the terseness and clarity of Alphonsus; and, what is more to be regretted, is that the text, without saying it in as many words, seems to presuppose the religious life and the apostolate as two distinct spheres. In the years that followed the admirable concept of Redemptorist life expressed in the text of Cosali became obscured. Those closest to Alphonsus and his influence were less affected than those at a distance in time and place. Now the original vision is being recaptured.

II. - THE FIRST REDEMPTORISTS

It is instinctive, one would say, for religious to look to their founding members to see what their lives should be. In the case of the Redemptorists there are particularly strong reasons for venerating their earliest confrères. Gathered about St. Alphonsus there was an unusually distinguished group of venerable and servants of God, men like Sarnelli, Sportelli, Blasucci and Cafaro, not to mention the two canonised saints. After 1743, under the leadership of Alphonsus, there was a clear vision of Redemptorist life, which was shared by the outstanding men we have named and by those others whose names are familiar to one who knows the story of the founder. In the case of Redemptorists, too, the personality of Alphonsus was decisive and formative, so that reflection on his companions cannot fail to be enlightening.

A happy turn of phrase calls the general congregation that met in 1743 and elected Alphonsus Rector Major "the Redemptorist Pentecost"²⁵. It was, beyond doubt, a relief to be free of the inhibitions of the Falcoia regime, as the bishop juggled, not always successfully, with his multiple responsibilities. It was so much like the rush of air that heralded the coming of the Holy Spirit. Within a matter of weeks of their director's death his subjects had not only elected a successor, but had braved the regalists by adopting the vows of religion and formally declared their status in law²⁶. The

²⁵ TH. REY-MERMET, 379, quoting D. Capone.

²⁶ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines*, II, 51-63 describes the congregation of 1743.

statement of Redemptorist identity then formulated has remained unchanged down to the present, through later elaborations.

It is not an Order (*religione*), but a Congregation of priests like the Fathers of the Mission and the Pii Operarii, but with this distinction that the Fathers of our least of Congregations should give themselves more particularly to the care of country people; and therefore they should always live outside the cities and in the midst of the dioceses²⁷.

That formulation, made probably with the Bourbon court in mind and possible future negotiations, agrees with the expression of purpose made in the *Ristretto*. It was an institute that existed for the benefit of those in need of spiritual help. And it is clearly suggested that the community itself, living, outside the cities, have that same pastoral orientation. It could well be that the declaration was carefully worded so as not to offend regalist sensibilities, but what is described is definitely an apostolic community. The same concept of communities available to the people in need is expressed again in the appeal Alphonsus made to the Holy See for approbation.

In his formal petition or *libellus supplex* Alphonsus spells out what was stated so succinctly by the general congregation²⁸.

After describing the establishment of the institute under Mgr. Falcoia, the petition goes on:

Their purpose was to dedicate themselves to helping the souls of the poor of the countryside with missions, instructions and other exercises, there often being no one to administer the sacraments and the Divine word to them; so much so that many of them, through lack of labourers came to die without even knowing the necessary mysteries of the Faith.

Having described the extensive mission work already achieved and the general satisfaction of the bishops and even of the king, the petition goes on to speak of the communities. It seems useful to quote this part at some length, describing as it does genuine apostolic communities.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 240.

²⁸ The *Libellus supplex* has been studied and edited by A. SAMPERS, «Duo libelli supplices a S. Alfonso sociisque Summo Pontifici porrecti ad Institutum et Regularum approbationem impetrandam et ad Breve Apostolicum obtinendum» in *SH* 17(1969) 215-224. Our quotation is from C. HOEGERL, 249-252.

For this purpose the petitioners, with the canonical approbation of the ordinaries and also with the approval of the king, have come together in certain houses, or rather retreats, situated outside populated places in various locations of the kingdom...

In these houses, besides the missions, which the petitioners have continually gone out to conduct, the country people have also been offered the opportunity to come from their settlements, in which the missions have been given, to renew their confessions and to be strengthened with devout sermons. Furthermore, in the houses, many times a year private spiritual exercises are given to ordinands, pastors and priests sent by their bishops, and also to seculars, something which has redounded to the great benefit of the participants and others, since, because of these spiritual exercises the priests, going from them reformed, have become worthy ministers of the sanctuary to the benefit of their people. And all this continues to be done, and the concourse of the people as well as their well-being is constantly increasing.

These early Redemptorists, as they described themselves to the Holy See, lived in extraordinarily busy communities. In the very beginning they had been occupied to an even greater extent than was described in the *libellus supplex*. In the first houses, Scala and Villa degli Schiavi, they had also maintained schools. It was in Villa that the work of enclosed retreats was initiated with such success that it came to be taken for granted in later foundations. A well-informed student of the life of St. Alphonsus has written: "The Redemptorist house and community were to be conceived and established in such a way as to offer themselves as centres of permanent mission in the territory and diocese where they were situated"²⁹.

It was not at all far-fetched to speak of those first Redemptorist houses as in "permanent mission". They were not just places where the missionaries rested after their exertions and prepared for those to come. They were situated among the people who needed their help; and provision was made for a demanding round of preaching and instruction as well as confessions, together with the enclosed retreats. The activities in the churches were enumerated in detail by the general chapter of 1764, which formulated the first constitutions, or statutes as they are now called, of the Congrega-

²⁹ D. CAPONE, *Sant'Alfonso missionario*, Naples, 1987, 26.

tion. The Pontifical Rule of 1749 had already mentioned the care of the people in the neighbourhood of the houses.

In order not to neglect the souls of the people in the place where the houses of the Institute are established, the subjects will do what they can to care for them. For this reason there will be preaching in their churches every Sunday, and every Saturday they will have a sermon on the Blessed Virgin Mary. In addition in their houses they will give the spiritual exercises to the ecclesiastics and seculars who come there, especially at the times of the sacred ordinations³⁰.

In 1764 the new constitutions spelled that out in rather more detail.

It can be gathered from the Rule that the missions are the most important occupation of the Fathers of Most Holy Redeemer; but in addition to the missions they should devote themselves with all diligence to the caring for the souls of the places where their houses are established, namely by making themselves available in the churches by hearing confessions, by the practice of the devout life, by preaching, by the protestation for a happy death, by retreats, sodalities and so on³¹.

A programme like that could not fail to constitute a community in a state of permanent mission. The biographers of Alphonsus have described this busy life he and his companions followed. This pattern of home life had been attempted in Scala and more earnestly in Villa; but it was in Ciorani that the domestic apostolate took on its more definitive shape. Tannoia, the first biographer of the saint, speaks of the almost constant retreat work right from the beginning, with half a dozen or so dioceses sending their clergy and ordinands, at times as many as ninety in number³². The confessionals seem never to have been idle, with Alphonsus and even more so Father Rossi proving indefatigable³³. The Saturday sermon on Our Lady was taken seriously, as was discovered by the hapless de Meo. Preaching one Saturday after too little notice and too little

³⁰ *Codex Regularum et Constitutionum C.S.S.R.*, Roma, 1896, 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

³² D. CAPONE, 35.

³³ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines*, I, 170.

preparation, he meandered through Sybils and Argonauts, until Alphonsus, unable to endure more, ordered him out of the pulpit. The most recent biographer expresses the pious hope that the saint mentioned the incident in confession³⁴.

The missions, described in 1764 as "the most important occupation", in those earliest years certainly lived up to that description. They started immediately after the foundation with the campaign in the Tramonti region. Up to 1740, Alphonsus kept a record of the missions, and after him diligent students have compiled supplementary lists³⁵. Those first Redemptorists said of themselves that they were born on the missions. Though said in the language of southern Italy, that boast was hardly exaggerated. Father Cafaro, for example, had no sooner applied to be admitted than he was swept up into the general mission in Naples led by Alphonsus³⁶. And his was not an isolated case. Even St. Gerard Majella, the model of Redemptorist Brothers, as his first biographer, Father Gasparo Caione has shown, proved himself a genuine and effective missionary by his prayers and mortifications for sinners and most markedly by his divinely enlightened direction³⁷. The Brothers not uncommonly accompanied the mission bands, and they not only cared for the rented accommodation of the missionaries but greatly edified the parishioners.

The Brothers, St. Gerard and his companions, proved themselves most helpful in their generous support of the missionaries. But the same must be said of the houses and entire communities, whether at home or preaching to the people. They were genuinely apostolic communities. The members were expected to prepare themselves by prayer and study for their preaching ministry. The houses in which they lived provided a congenial atmosphere and the means for their preparation. In particular there were libraries in those early house well supplied with biblical, patristic and theological material³⁸. The fine collection of books in Pagani even today commands respect.

Not only the communities but all of their members ordered their personal lives according to the pastoral commitment of the in-

³⁴ F.M. JONES, 259.

³⁵ D. CAPONE, 68-72.

³⁶ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines*, II, 9.

³⁷ Cf D. CAPONE, 81-82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

stitute. The ideal of an authentically apostolic life was evident from the beginning, even under Falcoia.

A clear indication of this pastoral orientation of Redemptorist life is their characteristic vow and oath of perseverance. The vow was introduced in 1740. The missions, conducted according to the method perfected by Alphonsus, had already proved their worth. There was a steady flow of requests for the Fathers' services; but there was also serious uncertainty as to personnel. Without any guarantee of stability it was becoming increasingly difficult to organise the missions. Even the amiable Pietro Romano of Scala, who had after his own comfortable fashion stood by Alphonsus and Vito Curzio when the rest went off with Mannarini, remained in Scala after the house there was relinquished. In the following years there was a succession of follow workers who helped in one or other mission and lived for a time in the community, but then went on their several ways. There was a real possibility that the missions would suffer, even to the extent of complete collapse. It was to remedy this instability that in July 1740, inspired it could well be by the example of Falcoia's *Pii Operarii*, the remaining members bound themselves to the institute by the vow of perseverance³⁹. It seems correct to see the vow (and later the oath) as binding the members for the sake of their apostolic commitment.

After 1743, when the leadership passed to Alphonsus, the pastoral direction of the institute became more distinctly marked. Much of the legislation made by the general congregation of that year is eloquent of the apostolic spirit of the members. For the present it is enough to single out two instances which are emphatically apostolic.

This seems to be the way to interpret the vow of poverty, introduced at this time and later to experience so tortured a history⁴⁰. In the seventeenth century simple religious vows were still rather a novelty in the Church, so that the first Redemptorists had to grope their way towards a formula of their obligations. In the matter of poverty some guidelines could be gathered from the provisions made by Gregory XIII for the Jesuits prior to their solemn

³⁹ The vow of perseverance is treated at some length in M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines*, I, 251-264.

⁴⁰ Cf S.J. BOLAND, «The Vow of Poverty among the Redemptorists» in *SH* 21(1983) 85-102.

profession⁴¹. The members of the new institute went their own way, with the result that their observance of poverty remains different from that of other religious. In the beginning their poverty was linked to their living together in order to devote themselves to their preaching vocation. That is how they expressed themselves as early as 1736 in the memorial to the Marquis of Monteallegre⁴².

They live a perfect community life, under obedience to their own superiors, giving of themselves for the people; some in school, some in the confessional, some in instructions and sermons, confraternities, oratories and other ways.

The connection with the obligation to poverty is put more explicitly in the *Compendio*⁴³.

No one shall be able to possess anything as his own, since they must live a most perfectly common life, in clothing, in room and in food.

In that sense must be understood the terms of the vow of poverty as it was intended by those who formulated it in the general congregation of 1743⁴⁴.

Therefore, when each makes his profession, in addition to the simple vows of chastity and obedience he shall make the vow of poverty, but in the following form: that as long as he remains in the Congregation, he may not have, hold, possess, claim or acquire anything, no matter how small, for his personal use or convenience, in no circumstances and under no pretext, neither directly nor indirectly. And in this rule and vow not even the Rector Major may dispense or interpret.

That is a very comprehensive statement of what it meant to live "a most perfectly common life", as the *Compendio* put it. In the Pontifical Rule of 1749 the rule of poverty begins with the declaration, "The subjects of the Congregation shall live perfectly in common and shall be uniform in all things"⁴⁵. In 1764 the general chap-

⁴¹ *Bullarium Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, Taurinensis editio, VIII, 1863, 460-461.

⁴² C. HOEGERL, 71.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴⁴ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines*, II, 240.

⁴⁵ *Codex Regularum*.

ter was extraordinarily detailed in explaining what living perfectly in common implied, no fewer than 67 constitutions⁴⁶. The Redemptorists, it must be remembered, undertook to live in this perfectly common life in order to devote themselves to the care of the most neglected. It is necessary that we remind ourselves of that. Legislation concerning poverty became so detailed and occasioned such disputes, continuing even to the twentieth century, that the original rich concept has become too much obscured.

The orientation of Redemptorist life to their apostolate was the reason for introducing the vow to renounce offices outside the Congregation⁴⁷. This was one of the additional vows (*voti annessi*) introduced by the general congregation of 1743, together with the vow to go on mission to the unbelievers. The Pontifical Rule linked the vow to renounce offices to the vow of poverty. It had been spelled out in detail in 1743.

In the profession, which is to be made by the Fathers after a year's novitiate and by the Brothers after one of two years, each must make besides the simple vows of chastity, obedience and poverty in the prescribed form, the vow of perseverance and the vow to go on the missions, even to unbelievers, when they are sent by the Supreme Pontiff or by the Rector Major with the knowledge of the Supreme Pontiff; and in addition with regard to ecclesiastical or civil dignities or offices outside the Congregation, as well as benefices, with or without pastoral care attached, each will take the vow not only not to seek them, but positively to resist them and to renounce them unless required to accept by a formal precept of obedience by the Pontiff or by the Rector Major.

As with the vow (and oath) of perseverance, the renunciation of distracting offices was clearly required in order to prevent the members from being withdrawn from the missions. The earliest legislation concerning Redemptorist life was admirably apostolic in conception. If we were to find fault with it, it could only be that it was somewhat laboured in stressing that orientation. But that fault, if it is fair to call it so, serves to show how emphatically Alphonsus and his companions saw their lives as totally dedicated to the care of those in need. It would not be labouring the point too

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 107-135

⁴⁷ M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines*, II, 240-241.

tediously, one hopes, to look briefly at how Alphonsus in his guidance of his companions insisted strongly on their lives as being apostolic.

He summed up his expectations of his subjects in his circular letter of October 1776. "If we preserve the true spirit of this work, the work will preserve us"⁴⁸. The English translation is too cumbersome to do justice to the pithy expression used by Alphonsus: *Se noi custodiamo l'opera, l'opera custodirà noi*. It would be hard to find a better formulation of what was meant by the Second Vatican Council on Institutes of Apostolic Life or what Redemptorists mean nowadays when they describe their religious commitment. That was the burden of all Alphonsus' exhortations. It is significant that he introduced that telling injunction by referring to the beginning of the mission season. "As the time of opening the mission season approaches, I thought I should give you some good advice, no less for your own good than for the good of souls".

It is noticeable that from the time he was removed from the more personal sharing in the ministry of the institute, after he became bishop and during his retirement at Pagani, his circulars show an urgency and even anxiety. That written from Arienzo on 29th July 1774 is very much like that; and for that reason adds emphasis to his call for an obedience that is clearly apostolic⁴⁹.

Next I recommend obedience to superiors on the missions. Obedience keeps up the good order of the missions; and even when something the superior orders might be better arranged, nevertheless when you obey punctually and without murmuring, all goes well. God lends His aid and the mission has a great success.

Exhortations to poverty, especially on the missions, are more frequent in the circulars. Alphonsus was particularly concerned about the table of the missionaries and the possible scandal of the people whom they were evangelising. That of 10th July 1779, probably his last, is especially insistent and may be seen as representative of a recurrent theme⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ *Letters of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, General Correspondence* (Centenary edition) ed. E. Grimm, III, New York, 1894, 164.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 298-299.

Thus, to begin with the missions, I beg the superiors as well as the subjects scrupulously to observe the ancient custom in regard to food and drink [...] It is known to all that we hold in abhorrence the eating of poultry, dainties and the drinking of exquisite and costly beverages; now I hear with great sorrow that this is but little or not at all observed. I have even heard that some have gone so far as to seek for that which gratifies the palate, and that more than once they have changed the wine or sent for wine from a distance: this has been done to the great surprise of the people.

That same circular, written when his strength was failing, contains an exhortation to mental prayer, for which is proposed a motivation that is apostolic⁵¹.

They shall never give a dispensation from the half-hour's mental prayer; for the labourer must himself be enlightened if he wishes to enlighten others; and in order to enkindle in the hearts of others the fire of divine love, he himself should be inflamed with it. Now, all this is found in prayer.

The circular letters of St. Alphonsus are not very numerous⁵². Their themes vary little from the examples quoted. The style is familiar, almost colloquial, and often vigorous according to the warm southern character of the writer. They represent a clear and forceful statement of what he expected of those who shared with him the beginnings of the institute. And the ideals he proposed all look to the good of the people who needed the Redemptorists.

The closing years of the founder's life were clouded by the unhappy affair of the *regolamento*. Looking back from the security of the twentieth century, it all looks like a storm in a teacup; but it split the still young Congregation into three obediences. To a later generation there is an air of absurdity in a religious rule imposed by the Bourbon regalists; but it appears all the more ridiculous when a further erastian measure pompously and self-righteously required religious to live faithfully according to their profession. The astute Pietro Paolo Blasucci in Sicily was quick to gain an official interpretation that was in effect that Redemptorists should live according to the Pontifical Rule of Benedict XIV⁵³.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁵² For a brief discussion of the circular letters and how they should be read cf. F.M. JONES, 328.

⁵³ D. CAPONE, 106.

From that beginning the healing of the breach was assured. In 1793 the three branches met in a general chapter, which elected Father Blasucci Rector Major.

In restoring a common practice the chapter took special notice of a development in the Papal States. A chapter held in Scifelli in 1785 had authorised the establishment of schools for seculars⁵⁴. The capitulars judged that teaching grammar, literature and the sciences was not compatible with the rule, which declared that the missions were one of the principal duties of the Congregation. The chapter declared emphatically that in order that the members of the Congregation might not be distracted from their principal duty of the missions, it would never be lawful to educate in a Redemptorist house any but novices and professed members of the Congregation. And from this prohibition not even the Rector Major could dispense⁵⁵.

That very explicit formulation of the apostolic orientation of the Redemptorists was made by men who had lived with the founder and been trained under his influence. The vigour of their expression is worthy of himself. Their declaration may justly be interpreted as revealing the apostolic spirit of the first Redemptorists gathered around the founder.

III. - THE EXPANDING CONGREGATION

By 1793 the Redemptorists had extended their presence outside Italy. In 1784 St. Clement Hofbauer and his inseparable companion, Thaddeus Hübl, had been received as novices in San Giuliano, Rome. Three years later they had established themselves in the unfriendly soil of northern Europe. Under the energetic "second founder" the Warsaw foundation had quickly become an important element in the Redemptorist world. By 1793 its dynamic apostolate was already being maintained by an expanding membership. At the same time their confrères in the land of their origin were showing signs of renewed life, now that the principal cause of tension had been removed.

Development in southern Italy was by no means a smooth passage. The king, Ferdinand IV, was a thorough-going regalist,

⁵⁴ *Acta integra Capitulum generalium C.S.S.R.*, Rome 1899, 67.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

and his heavy-handed manner did not make things easy for religious in his domains, especially during and after the threat from the troops of Napoleon. In 1799 he had deposed and imprisoned the Rector Major, Father Blasucci, for having burst out in his Neapolitan fashion: "Good God! Why don't the French come and let us have a little peace?"

The chapter of reunion in 1793 in its revision of the excessively diffuse constitutions of 1764 had reiterated what had been said about the activities of the communities and their churches⁵⁶. Each day there was to be a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the *vita divota*, "that is to say a half hour of mental prayer with the people". In addition there were introduced new features. There was to be each year in the church a week of exercises - a sort of mission with a sermon and instruction each day and special provision for confession. And the *quarant'ore* was to be celebrated at carnival time.

As the Congregation entered the new century it showed a fidelity to the ideals of its beginning. The communities were to be actively apostolic. They were to offer to the country people among whom they were established a permanent mission as it had always been.

The Bourbon regime, after its peculiar fashion, encouraged the growth of the Congregation. Ferdinand IV had discovered that the missions promoted good order in the kingdom; and he his successor, Francis I, showed their eagerness by having reports of the missions sent to the court. This regalist favour was described by Father Giuseppe Di Paola as "a persecution more harmful than those of the past"⁵⁷. Irksome as it undoubtedly must have been, this government favour occasioned considerable expansion, especially in the region of Calabria. By the 1860's the number of house had grown to twenty. Then, when everything seemed to be prospering, disaster struck. In 1866 the Garibaldians suppressed the Redemptorist communities; and their members, to the number of more than 200 Fathers and 60 Brothers were dispersed⁵⁸. It was a particularly sad time for the Redemptorists of southern Italy. Since 1853 the communities under the Bourbons had been cut off from the rest of the Congregation, owing to differences in observance.

⁵⁶ D. CAPONE, 134.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

The foundations in the Papal States continued an uncertain existence. In the south the story was a tragic one. The coming of the Garibaldians had signalled the disappearance of more than one religious institute in the old Kingdom of Naples; and it could have been the end of the Neapolitan Redemptorists.

By that time, however, the Congregation was achieving great things outside Italy. The Warsaw foundation of St. Clement Hofbauer, from the beginning showed itself an apostolic community to rival and even outshine Ciorani and Pagani in the days of the institute's first fervour. St. Clement in 1802 reported to the Nuncio Severoli in Vienna the activity at St. Benno's⁵⁹. Each day there were five sermons, three in Polish and two in German, with, in addition, two instructions on Sundays. There were also visits, the Way of the Cross and night prayers for the people in the little church. One might be tempted to ask, suggests Clement's biographer, if this were not overdoing a good thing.

Some had already been asking that very question. The venerable Joseph Passerat and his friend, Father Jacques Vannelet, had entrusted to the Nuncio, Mgr. Litta, a letter for Father Blasucci complaining about the excessive activity in St. Benno's. The Rector Major was alarmed at the picture presented by the two Fathers of almost continuous functions in the church, and that in a house which, small as it was, held novices and students as well and provided a school for boys⁶⁰. He was particularly concerned about the frequent sung Masses, a thing unheard of in his experience apart from the more solemn feasts.

St. Clement replied in his characteristically robust Latin, describing the sorry state of religion in Poland. In a country where the politico-ecclesiastical authorities were "*faex generis humani*, not only non-Catholic but professing no religion at all", it was necessary to act with extraordinary vigour⁶¹. There followed an exchange of letters describing the observances of each. St. Clement was able to show that, in spite of the demanding activity in the church, the community in St. Benno's followed each day the routine or prayers and duties familiar in far-off Pagani⁶². Faced with the

⁵⁹ J. HOFER, *St. Clement Maria Hofbauer. A Biography*, translated by J.B. HAAS, New York, 1926, 99-100.

⁶⁰ Blasucci to St. Clement, 15th February 1800 in *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, VIII, Torun, 1936, 67-69.

⁶¹ St. Clement to Blasucci, 12th June 1800, *ibid.*, 69-76.

⁶² St. Clement to Blasucci, 1st October 1801, *ibid.*, 87-90.

evidence, the Rector Major graciously declared that he had received the information from Warsaw "with great consolation of soul hearing that, considering the circumstances of the country, you have not neglected or lightly changed anything in regular observance"⁶³. The biographer of St. Clement sees this happy outcome of the misunderstanding as a successful defence of the "perpetual mission", the dissolution of which would have spelled disaster for the Catholic population of Warsaw⁶⁴. The "second founder" had shown himself fully in the tradition of St. Alphonsus in establishing a genuinely apostolic community caring for the people among whom its members lived.

The community of St. Benno's, however, differed in one very significant respect from those of southern Italy. Far from being among the country people, it was in a large and noisy city. If we are to agree with St. Clement's defence of his busy regime, it must be admitted that it was among people in very great need. To a less dramatic degree the same might be claimed for the house of Maria am Gestade in Vienna, granted to the Redemptorists in 1820, the Josephist authorities unbending to that extent. The community under Father Passerat was composed largely of disciples of St. Clement, imbued with his tireless zeal. When new foundations were made in Styria, Frohnleiten in 1826⁶⁵ and Marburg in 1833⁶⁶, the Vicar General was able to report that even though missions properly speaking could not be held, the whole year was "a continual mission"⁶⁷. The community in Marburg served the otherwise neglected Slav population of the district. Both houses so won the esteem and affection of the people that, when the Redemptorists were suppressed in Austria in 1848, they insisted successfully that the Fathers be permitted to remain with them.

A further difference must be noted about these first Austrian foundations. They were parishes, where the Redemptorists replaced other religious no longer able to serve. With the missions forbidden by the Josephists, the parishes were a very reasonable pastoral work for those who cared for the most neglected. Once begun, parishes were accepted with little or no hesitation⁶⁸. The

⁶³ Blasucci to St. Clement, 8th January 1802, *ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁴ J. HOFER, 176.

⁶⁵ *SH* 12(1964) 145-148.

⁶⁶ *SH* 13(1965) 166-214.

⁶⁷ D. CAPONE, 173.

⁶⁸ S.J. BOLAND, «The Redemptorists in the Parish Ministry», in *SH* 34(1986) 3-30.

Congregation came to England by way of the parish ministry. In the United States the rapid expansion of the Congregation was conditioned by the acceptance of parishes. No doubt it could not have been said of all, as Father Passerat said of the first houses in Styria, that the whole year was a continuous mission; but there is evidence enough of the zeal the Redemptorists brought to their parish ministry.

From about the middle of the century there was an official reaction against the parishes, as forbidden by the rules. In England the Redemptorists were gathered into two communities, both to be devoted solely to the missions. In America an attempt was made, unsuccessfully, to establish similar communities in Boston and St. Louis⁶⁹; but in a short time both of these "mission churches" became parish churches, as in the rest of the United States. Apart from them the houses outside Italy were residences for missionaries. Their public churches, situated for the most part in large cities, were not always at the service of neglected people. In what one is sorely tempted to call a legalistic way of thinking, most of the functions mentioned in the constitutions were maintained; but their contribution to the spiritual profit of the neighborhood was open to question: they could not be compared in this respect with that house of Ciorani in the days of its foundation. The communities merited to be called apostolic, not so much for their work in the places where they were established, as for the support in resources and prayer they provided for the missionary bands.

IV. - THE REDEMPTORISTS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It is evident that in the course of the nineteenth century Redemptorist houses outside Italy looked rather different from those of the founding years. The most significant thing was that they were so often not among country folk. But in their new setting the communities tried to continue the same functions in their churches. They had been listed in the constitutions of 1764, which had been reaffirmed with some emphasis by a general chapter in 1855. If we were to call this sort of thing formalism, it would not be unfair: formalism was the besetting weakness of the nineteenth

⁶⁹ M.J. CURLEY, *The Provincial Story*, New York, 1963, 158-160.

century Churches, Protestant as well as Catholic. The Century of Revolution was a time of uncertainty for religion. Church leaders looked for security in what had been tried and proven, just as Redemptorists tented to hold fast to their Rule. It was a mentality that was extraordinarily durable, lasting well into the following century. There remained much in Redemptorist community life and ministry which must be called formalistic. This is not by any means to say that the Congregation had become ineffectual. Their saints and blessed suffice to prove otherwise. But the development and due adaptation of their apostolic community life was seriously inhibited.

As was surely to be expected, the tradition of St. Alphonsus seems to have survived most recognisably in southern Italy. It was a tradition which had been rudely interrupted by the Garibaldian suppression. The members of what was now the Neapolitan province began cautiously, almost surreptitiously, to come together from 1872. Their condition was graphically revealed in the general catalogue published in 1884. Of the 260 Fathers and Brothers dispersed in 1866 there were now 69 Fathers and fourteen Brothers listed as living in a dozen or so houses, most of them new foundations⁷⁰. The same catalogue lists some 92 Fathers and Brothers as living apart. Some had commitments to dioceses where they had found refuge; and others were prevented from returning by age, sickness or other reasons. What it all came to, was that the province had to resume its life with drastically diminished numbers.

With a vigorous missionary apostolate, which began immediately, and the necessity of staffing the houses of formation, the resources of personnel were severely strained. What could be accomplished in the churches depended very much on the initiative and leadership of the superiors in using the few men available; and that was not lacking. Outstanding was Father Alfonso De Feo, rector of the Naples community. Regular devotions were established in the church with novenas and special attention to the months of May and June: very much in the tradition of Ciorani. A special feature was the introduction of confraternities, so much a characteristic of Catholic life in the early twentieth century⁷¹. The same ener-

⁷⁰ D. CAPONE, 186.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

getic rector was later to initiate the spectacular development of the sanctuary of St. Gerard at Materdomini.

Redemptorists communities ministering to pilgrims became an important work in other places where they found themselves. This was the case notably in Czechoslovakia from a early date. In 1861 Cardinal Schwarzenberg of Prague entrusted to the Austrian province care of the renowned shrine of Svata Hora (Holy Mountain). Within a short time the community had made the sanctuary a real mission activity, according to one of its historians⁷². Under Father Andreas Hamerle the Austrian province took over the care of the pilgrimage churches of Grulich and Philippsdorf towards the end of the century; and in 1924 the vice-province of Karlsbad assumed charge of the shrine of Svatky Kámen (Our Lady of the Snow) near Budweis. The pastoral care of these shrines was an excellent example of genuinely apostolic communities. Needless to say, it was all unhappily cut short by the hostile regime after World War II; but improved conditions give reason to hope that the province of Prague will recommence a ministry of so much profit for the faithful.

In 1879 a community from Belgium accepted responsibility for the shrine of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré, already about three centuries old and greatly venerated by Canadians. At that time somewhere between thirty and forty thousand visited the shrine each year. Under the Redemptorists the pilgrims increased in numbers, so that fifty years later they had become about a million a year⁷³. A similar story emerged in the shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida near São Paulo in Brazil. The pilgrimage church, built in 1747, had been in the charge of the parish clergy, who late in the nineteenth century had come to oppose such popular piety and were unwilling to preach or administer the sacraments in the sanctuary. To remedy the situation the coadjutor bishop of São Paulo appealed to the Redemptorists; and in 1894 a community from the Bavarian province took over the care of the shrine. From that date its fortunes changed dramatically; and about twenty years later Pope Pius XI declared Our Lady of Aparecida Patroness of Brazil⁷⁴. As with Ste-

⁷² E. HOSP, *Weltweite Erlösung*, Innsbruck, 1961, 125.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 138; G. BÉLANGER, *Sainte-Anne chez-nous*, Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré, 1945; G. LEFEBVRE, *A land of miracles*, Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré, 1958.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 153-154; J. BRUSTOLONI, *A Senhora da Conceição Aparecida*, Aparecida, 1979.

Anne-de-Beaupré the church of the sanctuary is eloquent testimony to a community truly apostolic.

The same is to be said of the surprising growth of the perpetual novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. From its tentative beginning in the Rock church in St. Louis in 1922 the practice spread rapidly throughout the United States, and after the second World War to other countries. The devotion has always appealed by simple preaching, participation of the people and a generous availability of confession. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Redemptorist church of Baclaran, on Manila Bay in the Philippines. Each week the numbers coming to the novena come to more than 100,000⁷⁵. The large church, accomodating 12,000 people makes it inevitable that, especially on the novena day, the community be apostolic.

A recent venture, reminiscent of the time of St. Alphonsus, has been the establishment of retreat houses. From the time he was appointed local superior in Villa degli Schiavi, Alphonsus had received retreatants into the house. The first permanent foundation, Ciorani, made provision in its construction for regular enclosed retreats. Tannoia speaks of their success in enthusiastic terms which at times lead one to fear he may be exaggerating. There was an impetus to a revival of the practice when Pius XI, a great admirer of the Jesuits, praised the spiritual exercises and in particular as conducted in suitable locations for the laity as well as for the clergy and religious. By then the Dutch province already had five houses expressly to provide for enclosed retreats. After the encouragement given by the Pope retreat houses multiplied in other provinces as well. It could well be that they were not as demanding on their communities as had been Ciorani at its beginning; but they certainly do represent a pastoral ministry exercised by Redemptorist communities; and of necessity they left their mark on the life of the members.

A very recent development which to some extents is affecting Redemptorist life is the appearance, in fairly significant numbers, of confrères who live and work outside the community. These *soliviventes* greatly exercised the capitulars who met in 1973⁷⁶. It is not merely a matter of disgruntled individuals: there were too

⁷⁵ Cf SH 39(1992) 291-294.

⁷⁶ Cf S. RAPONI, «La Comunità Apostolica», 314.

many of them, indeed, after the sixties, but they do not of themselves explain the phenomenon. Some men, full of zeal and concern for the plight of the working classes, joined the Priest-Worker movement; and since that time others have undertaken, often enough at the request of superiors, pastoral activities, especially on the foreign missions, which necessitated their living apart from the communities; and others again have found themselves in that situation by reason of studies they have undertaken with due approval or even direction. Whatever the reason, these "isolated" Redemptorists seem to be a peculiarly modern phenomenon. The measures they have occasioned aim at helping and encouraging them to recognise and maintain their links with the regular community. That is something to which the communities themselves and especially their superiors need to contribute; but it obviously demands a great measure of good will on the part of the individuals. It is quite a new image of the apostolic community.

In the two centuries and a half of their existence the Redemptorists have seen the apostolic orientation of their communities somewhat altered. What has been said of the changed attitudes of southern Italy⁷⁷ applies quite generally. To this change certain identifiable factors have contributed.

The exacting round of activities in Ciorani was codified in 1764 and remained in legislation until very recent years. Two hundred years, however, have dimmed the charm of the devotions and practices. Popular piety in the twentieth century has looked for other ways; and apart from the perpetual novena few experiments have met with success. It is true that in the churches there is still offered and appreciated opportunity for confession. In general, however, it must be said that the service in the churches are far from demanding.

The community themselves do not seem to be as closely involved in the missions as in earlier times. It has become a common enough practice for missions to be given by bands drawn from several communities; and it is not unusual for individual missionaries to arrange their own works. The helpful resources once provided in the communities, such as the common study in the "academies" of theology, liturgy and mission practice have vanished. And it is

⁷⁷ D. CAPONE, 226.

questionable whether the domestic libraries are of much help to the preachers, who probably tend to provide for themselves. The fine libraries of Pagani and Scifelli have become rather the domain of scholars.

Another recent factor in Redemptorist pastoral activity which has affected the communities is the involvement of lay people and others in the works, especially in the missions. These new ventures, where they have been tried, seem generally to have been encouraging, so that one must expect to see them develop even further. An inevitable consequence is that the mission bands form new communities whose members work and pray together, and that must affect the bonds of the Redemptorist community. It would be too much to say that the bonds are broken, but the relationship between the missionaries and their confrères do experience some strain. It is another and important factor affecting Redemptorist communities at the present time. If there are tensions, then one can justly say that they are no more than what is being experienced in the Church generally in the expanded sense of ministry.

In describing their lives as apostolic and their communities as apostolic Redemptorists are rediscovering that vision admirably expressed by St. Alphonsus in the text of the rule and the *libellus supplex* he submitted for papal approbation in 1748. His energetic leadership gave reality to the vision; but time since his day has misted it over. For that the cause is to be sought in the changing world, but more especially in the timid formalism of nineteenth century religious. Pope Paul VI's encouragement to return to one's roots has given a healthy impetus to the recovery of the early ideal. In these days things must be done differently; but there is a wealth of inspiration to be found in Ciorani, that first permanent Redemptorist house. That exacting round of sermons, instructions and meditations in the church, to say nothing of the long hours in the confessional of Father Rossi and others, must assuredly be seen as apostolic. So too was the succession of retreats conducted throughout the years in the new monastery. It would be unrealistic, of course, to expect that we do the same things; but for our times Ciorani remains as the inspiration of the genuine apostolic community.