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A TWOFOLD INSTITUTE:
COMPLEMENTARITY IN MARIA CELESTE
CROSTAROSA'S RELIGIOUS FAMILY

1. – *The Tensions of Her Time*; 2. – *A Sign of Contradiction*; 3. – *Celeste's Religious Family*; 4. – *The Centrality of Prayer*; 5. – *Models of Complementarity*; *Conclusion*

Blessed Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755), the Italian mystic, spiritual author, foundress of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer, and the visionary nun whose presence looms large in the background and founding of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, lived at a time in Church history when mystics were carefully scrutinized and generally looked upon with suspicion. The Church's ongoing struggles with the moral rigorism of the Jansenists, the passive mysticism of the Quietists, and the spiritual antagonism of "Enlightened" Rationalists led it to look askance at those who dared claim direct personal experience of God through private revelations or promote a spirituality emphasizing anything beyond the scope of normal Catholic ascetical and devotional practice.

Although time would prove her mystical experiences and private revelations authentic, Celeste suffered from this general atmosphere of mistrust and disfavor toward those claiming exceptional spiritual experiences. Ridiculed as delusional and unstable by many in the Neapolitan clergy, reprimanded by her one-time spiritual director, Bishop Thomas Falcoia, and scolded by her saintly friend, Alphonsus de Liguori, she held fast to her convictions and set out on a path of intimate communion with Jesus, the Redeemer, through a loving embrace of the cross and the way humble self-abnegation. The Church is much the richer for the witness of her life, the profundity of her spiritual doctrine, and the complementary spirit of the religious family she inspires to this day.¹

¹ An earlier and much shorter version of this article appears as, "The Rela-

1. – *The Tensions of Her Time*

Although the practice of the Catholic faith and devotional piety remained largely intact in eighteenth-century Neapolitan culture, the Church struggled at the time against remnant pockets of Jansenist rigorism and Quietist pseudo-mysticism, each of which had its roots in the previous century, as well as the expanding ideological reach of Enlightened thought. Its reaction to these influences resulted in a heightened sensitivity and more tempered approach to many of the spiritual and moral issues of the day, especially those related to claims related to mysticism and inspired visions.

Jansenism represented a subtle blending of Calvinistic thought with Catholic theology by its emphasis on the total corruption of human nature and the irresistibility of grace. It criticized the nuanced moral casuistry of the day, promoted a rigid interpretation of the moral code, looked down on frequent Communion, and speculated that few would be saved from the torments of hell. Catholics responded by maintaining humanity's wounded (but not entirely corrupted) nature, the freedom to resist the transforming power of God's grace, the place of moral reasoning in making practical judgments concerning the moral life, the important role of frequent communion in the spiritual and moral lives of the faithful, and God's will for everyone to be saved.²

Quietism taught that the soul should remain completely passive before God, so much so that it should no longer desire its own salvation, but instead seek a total annihilation of self. A soul in such a state could no longer sin, even if its external actions transgressed the commandments of God and the Church; nor would it need to engage in practices of prayer and mortification, or even resist the onslaught of temptation. A soul totally passive before God was thought to have reached a state of complete submission and to be led by the internal promptings of the Spirit rather than by traditional moral

tionship between the Redemptorists and the Redemptoristines: Models of Complementarity," *Spiritus Patris* 37 (no. 2, 2001): 35-39. All Scripture quotations come from *The New American Bible, Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

² See K. BIHLMAYER and H. TÜCKLE, *Church History*, vol. 3, *Modern and Recent Times*, trans; V. E. Mills and F. J. Muller (Westminster: Newman Press, 1966), 236-43; H. JEDIN, ed., *History of the Church*, vol. 6, *The Church in the Age of Absolutism and Enlightenment*, trans. Gunther J. Holst (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 24-57.

guidelines, which it could at times even be called to transgress. The Church reacted strongly to these Quietist currents. It grew suspicious of anyone claiming to have private revelations from God, scrutinized them with care, and subjected them and to strict controls. It recognized the corrosive effect of Quietist thought and practices, and sought to root out any hint of its presence from Catholic life.³

Enlightenment thought exalted human reason and placed it in an antagonistic relationship to the faith. It narrowed the scope of rational argument, making logic and empirical verification the sole arbiters of correct theoretical and moral judgment. It embraced a Deistic God, who created the world from afar, but would not intervene in its affairs through miracles or divine revelation. It looked down on the popular religion of the masses and the authorities who perpetuated belief in their contrived (and unenlightened) superstitions. It was antagonistic to Catholic hierarchy and believed that the Christian faith needed to be stripped of anything that could not undergo intense rational scrutiny. The Church defended itself against these rationalistic arguments by emphasizing the compatibility between faith and reason, the possibility of divine revelation, and a proper understanding of God's providential intervention in human affairs.⁴

Although Jansenism, Quietism, and Enlightened thought did not have their origins in the Italian peninsula, they affected the mindset of its people—especially the nobility and regalist court of Bourbon Naples—either directly or by way of negative reaction. Against Jansenism, systems of moral casuistry evolved that steered clear of the loose moral standards of the laxists, on the one hand, and the extreme moral rigorism of the Jansenists, on the other. Within the spectrum of Catholic orthodoxy, theologians veered toward one of three systems of moral casuistry: the probabilism promoted by the Jesuits, the probabiliorism as championed by the Dominicans, or the equiprobabilist position developed by Alphonsus de Liguori and promulgated by the Redemptorists. Against Quietism, the Church looked with suspicion on claims of mysticism and private revelations and generally promoted an ascetical spirituality that focused on the acquisition of virtue, adherence to the commandments of God and

³ See K. BIHLMAYER and H. TÜCKLE, *Church History*, 3:243-45; JEDIN, ed., *History of the Church*, 6:88-93.

⁴ See K. BIHLMAYER and H. TÜCKLE, *Church History*, 3:245-53, 259-66; JEDIN, ed., *History of the Church*, 6:342-80.

the Church, frequent reception of the sacraments, and the practice of popular devotions. Against the Enlightenment, the Church emphasized that Christianity, while not contrary to the dictates of reason, was essentially a revealed religion and that the Church magisterium was the authority ordained by God to preserve the deposit of the faith and scrutinize the orthodoxy of all claims to the truths necessary for salvation. In the face of such challenges, Catholicism withdrew further into the defensive posture it had assumed toward new ideas and modes of thought since the days of the Reformation.⁵

2. – *A Sign of Contradiction*

These cultural forces affected Celeste both in how she understood and conveyed her spiritual experiences, and in how others perceived her. Although she sometimes employed vocabulary resembling that used by these movements to express her own spiritual experiences, her spirituality generally represents a vigorous Catholic response to these heretical extremes. As for the reception of her spiritual message, many members of the Neapolitan clergy looked askance at it, because it differed from traditional ascetical practices that tempered Jansenist extremes with a more moderate emphasis on mortification and the acquisition of virtue. Others discounted her mystical experiences out of an overabundance of caution, desiring to steer clear of even the slightest hint of pseudo-mysticism and thus insuring that the faithful were kept safe from the private (and likely false) revelations of powerful charismatic figures. Still others wrote her off as a delusionary religious fanatic whose mystic claims would not withstand intense rational scrutiny. Despite such opposition to her message, she remained true to her inner convictions and, in the face of great opposition from within the Church and outside of it, dedicated her life to implementing her vision. A faithful daughter of the Church, she did not let her message become sidelined by the moral rigorism, pseudo-mysticism, and growing rationalism of the day, but instead embraced wholeheartedly her call to being a living memory of God's merciful, redeeming love.⁶

⁵ See K. BIHLMAYER and H. TÜCKLE, *Church History*, 3:266-84; JEDIN, ed., *History of the Church*, 6:369-70, 430-33, 534-35.

⁶ See F. M. JONES, *Alphonsus de Liguori: The Saint of Bourbon Naples 1696-1787* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 77-85, 91-107, 120-27. See also G.

As she articulated her spiritual message, Celeste navigated these turbulent waters with the tools at her disposal. She was not highly educated and wrote in a popular style more akin to the patterns of her eighteenth-century Neapolitan dialect than the standard rules of Italian composition. Her spelling, grammar, and sentence construction reflected her modest Neapolitan upbringing and appeared crude and perhaps even distasteful to the learned circles of her day. Despite her ill-equipped literary background, her writings reflect a deep Catholic faith and embody a deep intimacy and genuine, childlike trust in God that was evident in her from a very early age. This intimacy with God manifested itself in a love of the Redeeming Christ and a heartfelt embrace of his kenotic process of humble self-emptying. A single-hearted, loving embrace of the cross was an essential feature of her spiritual message. She took the words of Christ seriously, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."⁷

Celeste sought to lose herself in Christ. She conveyed her message not by means of an abstract theory, but by sharing her intimate experience of her journey with God in a unique and highly personal way. Her writings are rife with images and metaphors that seek to convey God's words spoken quietly to her in the depths of her heart. At the center of this message is a deep sense of the intent of the Father and his salvific will for humanity.⁸ This loving plan of redemption is centered on the mysteries of Christ's incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection, on the one hand, and the transforming, divinizing grace of the Holy Spirit, on the other. Key to her spirituality is the understanding that Christ continues to live out these mysteries in the members of the faithful and that his Spirit is the principal means by which

DESROCHERS, *Maria Celeste: Religious, Founder, Mystic: An Extraordinary Woman*, trans. S. Plante Killian (St. Anne de Beaupre: The Secretariat of the Shrine, 2000), 21-22.

⁷ Mk 8:34-35. For Celeste's spiritual message, see S. MAJORANO, *The Imitation through the Memoria of the Saviour: The Spiritual Message of Sr. Maria Celeste Crostarosa*, trans. J. Oppitz (Rome: St. Alphonsus, 1978), 49-108. See also J. OPPITZ, *The Mystic Who Remembered: The Life and Message of Sister Maria Celeste Crostarosa, O.Ss.R.*, 2d ed. (Esopus, NY: Redemptoristine Nuns, 2003), 57-109.

⁸ See Maria Celeste CROSTAROSA, *Le nove regole e lo spirito dell'ordine*, Introduction by D. Capone (1980, for private use by the Redemptoristine Nuns), 33-35; MAJORANO, *The Imitation through the Memoria of the Saviour*, 55-58; OPPITZ, *The Mystic Who Remembered*, 65-70.

this transformation takes root in the lives of the faithful. Her spirituality involves not a mere external imitation of the attitudes, dispositions, and actions of Jesus, but an actual participation in his life and substance which makes the believer a *viva memoria* (or “living memory”) of the Redeeming Christ. Celeste uses ontological categories to describe the intimate union of creator and creature effected by this transforming process. As a *viva memoria* of this redeeming love, the believer makes present in the here-and-now the very person of Christ himself. Through this “living memory” Christ continues his universal, redeeming mission through time and space.⁹

In the midst of the many tensions faced by the Church in the first half of the eighteenth century, God broke through the spiritual and intellectual sophistications of the age and spoke through the humble voice of a simple, contemplative nun. To counter the Jansenist focus on human depravity and moral rigorism, he inspired Celeste to write of the transforming power of God’s grace that divinized a person so Christ could continue to live out his paschal mystery. To offset the Quietist focus on self-annihilation and complete passivity before God, he gave her a message of total self-abnegation intimately tied to the following of Christ and carrying out the Father’s will through a heartfelt, loving embrace of his cross. In response to the Enlightenment’s emphasis on the purely rational, he spoke to her through inner voices, dreams, and visions to remind believers and non-believers alike that Christianity is fundamentally a revealed religion and cannot be confined to the narrow confines of the empirical reasoning. Celeste’s message, in short, was a sign of contradiction to her age. It is to be seen not (as some would have it) as an anachronistic throwback to an earlier, less sophisticated time, when visions and miracles were commonly accepted as a part of the fabric of daily life, but as a prophetic challenge to an age in grave danger of losing sight of the intent the Father had in sending his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us and transform us through the power of his Spirit. Although the tensions have changed, the religious family she founded remains, to this day, a prophetic challenge and sign of contradiction to a world in desperate need of experiencing the love of the Redeeming Lord.

3. – *Celeste’s Religious Family*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 118-60; 71-80.

God revealed to Celeste the need to establish a new religious institute, one dedicated to the person of Jesus the Redeemer and consisting of a single trunk bearing two branches: an order of women dedicated to life of contemplating the mysteries of the redeeming Lord by way of the *viva memoria*, and a missionary congregation of men dedicated to following him by the preaching of the Gospel of plentiful redemption to the poor and most abandoned.¹⁰ The goal of the women's order would be transformation in Christ by becoming "living memories" of him in a contemplative community through the virtues imparted to them by his living presence. The goal of the men's congregation would be union with God through Christ by the practice of conformity to God's will and imitating Christ as missionary preachers dedicated to a life of apostolic virtue that closely identified with the poor and spiritually marginalized.¹¹

Together, the two branches of this new institute would represent two facets of a single religious family, with each in its own distinct way being, at one and the same time, both contemplative and missionary in outlook. The women's order would focus on following the Redeeming Lord by cultivating an interior life dedicated to purity of intention through obedience, recollection, silence, and prayer, and self-abnegation through mortification, humility, and poverty.¹² They would embrace the cross of Christ by annihilating all self-will so that the living presence of Jesus himself might take root in their hearts and the intent of the Father might vivify their souls. The men's congregation, in turn, would engage in the following of Christ by focusing on the preaching of radical conversion. United by a single motto: *Copiosa apud eum redemptio* ("With him is plentiful redemption"), their love of the Redeeming Lord would lead them to follow him in complementary albeit mutually affirming ways.

The relationship between the two branches has often been described in terms of their complementary roles in their service to Christ and his body, the Church. Even today, the Rules of each community point out this close relationship of complementarity. Statute 08 of

¹⁰ Originally named after the Most Holy Savior, the two branches would later be dedicated to the Most Holy Redeemer.

¹¹ See OPPITZ, *The Mystic Who Remembered*, 147.

¹² Of these nine virtues, Celeste gives special emphasis to self-abnegation and purity. See Maria Celeste CROSTAROSA, *Le nove regole e lo spirit dell'ordine*, 54-74; MAJORANO, *The Imitation through the Memoria of the Saviour*, 64-83; OPPITZ, *The Mystic Who Remembered*, 80-97.

the Redemptorist *Constitutions and Statutes* states that the Redemptoristines "... have a common origin with us, are dedicated to the same purpose and participate in the ministry of the Congregation."¹³ Constitution 13 of the Redemptoristine *Constitutions and Statutes*, in turn, states: "The Order is, in fact, closely linked by its origins, name and spirituality, with the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. The twofold Institute is called to achieve a common goal in a complementary fashion."¹⁴ It goes on to explain the complementary nature of this relationship in the following way: "The apostolate of the Redemptorists is sustained by the contemplative life of the Nuns and their ministry gives incentive to the life of prayer and contemplation of the Nuns who are themselves fully missionary."¹⁵

If the Redemptoristines are "fully missionary" by virtue of their life of cloistered contemplation, then perhaps the Redemptorists can be thought of as being "fully contemplative" in their active missionary endeavors. That is not to say that they are called to the cloister (Alphonsus would have had a fit at such a suggestion), but that the good of the apostolate bids them to foster a contemplative attitude toward life and in all they do.¹⁶ It is for this reason that they are called to "cultivate the spirit of contemplation which deepens and strengthens their faith"¹⁷ and why they are encouraged to direct their mental prayer "... principally to the contemplation of the mysteries of redemption."¹⁸ It is also why they are asked to "...value highly the contemplative apostolate of the nuns of the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer."¹⁹

When seen in this light, the complementary role played by the branches of Celeste's religious family in their service to Christ and his body makes the Church more vibrant and dynamic. Both communities can be thought of as apostolic *and* contemplative in spirit. The relationship between the two is merely construed differently in the concrete expression they give to religious life. For the Redemptoristines,

¹³ CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER, *Constitutions and Statutes* (Rome: C.Ss.R. General Curia, 2002), 120.

¹⁴ ORDER OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER, *Constitutions and Statutes*, trans. Sean Wales and Ronald McAinsh (Rome: C.Ss.R. General Curia, 1986), 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See OPPITZ, *The Mystic Who Remembered*, 142-43.

¹⁷ See CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER, *Constitutions and Statutes*, 48-49 (Constitution 24).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 52 (Constitution 31).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120 (Statute 08).

prayer itself is an apostolic activity that gently draws others to encounter the person of Christ. For the Redemptorists, apostolic action flows from prayer and does not properly exist without it. The bond between the two communities is the redeeming love of Christ and the mission they have been given as his disciples to proclaim that love through preaching and the ongoing conversion of their lives. Here, the word “preaching” is to be taken in the wider sense that would understand a life totally dedicated to prayer as a profound announcement of Christ’s redeeming Word. The motto they share, moreover, reminds members of both communities of the plentiful redemption offered to all who seek Christ with a sincere heart.

4. – *The Centrality of Prayer*

With the Apostle Paul, each branch of Celeste’s religious family believes, “Life is Christ.”²⁰ Prayer, for them, is a kind of spiritual breathing: it keeps them alive in Christ and roots them in his Spirit. It is at the center of the redemptive mission of this twofold Institute and, like breathing itself, cannot be simply put aside. For Celeste, prayer had a twofold purpose: to liberate the soul from sin and to unite it to God.²¹ To be “a living memory” of Christ meant remembering that his entire life was a prayer and that he sought nothing else than to love the Father as the Father loved him.²² Alphonsus, in turn, called prayer “the great means of salvation.”²³ He did so because of his keen awareness of its importance for helping people to deepen their relationship with Christ, “If you pray, you will be saved,” he liked to say. “If you do not pray,” he continued, “you will certainly be

²⁰ Phil 1:21.

²¹ Mother Maria Celeste CROSTAROSA, *Florilegium of Texts*, selected by Sabatino Majorano, ed., Margaret Bannville, trans. Michael Bailey and Joseph Oppitz (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, unidentified date), 97; See also, *Istituto e Regole de SS.mo Salvatore condennate nei Santi Evangelii*, – secondo la versione del codice Foggiano II e la trascrizione di S. Majorano Rules, 185-186 (Prayer 8v-9r).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Alphonsus de LIGUORI, *Prayer, The Great Means of Obtaining Salvation and all the Graces Which We Desire of God in The Complete Works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori*, ed. Eugene Grimm, vol. 3, *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection* (Brooklyn: Redemptorist Fathers, 1927), 19. See also IDEM, *Opere ascetiche*, ed. Giuseppe Cacciatore, vol. 2, *De gran mezzo della preghiera e opuscoli affini* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letterature, 1962), 7.

lost.”²⁴

Teaching people how to pray was an essential part of the Redemptorist missionary apostolate. Nothing was more important – not then and certainly not now. Just as Jesus taught his disciples to pray, so must Redemptorists pass on what they have learned to others. For this reason, they need to be familiar with the various kinds of prayer forms encouraged by the Church and find creative ways of introducing them to the people they serve. Authentic prayer engages the whole person: the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social. It puts people in touch with their radical dependency on God and of their need to foster a deep, intimate relationship with him.

Intimacy with another is directly proportionate to the amount of reciprocal self-disclosure involved in the relationship. People become intimate with God by opening their hearts and minds to him and by sharing with him their every concern. God, in turn, becomes intimate with them by drawing them into himself and allowing them to share in the inner life of the Trinity. The more people participate in that life, the more “Godlike” they become. This process of divinization enables people to commune with God on ever deeper levels of their being. Because of Jesus’ paschal mystery, this process of mutual indwelling can begin in them even now. Contemplative prayer is nothing more than the recognition of and resting in this relationship of mutual indwelling. Although not everyone is called to the cloistered life, all are called to live in God contemplatively. The cloistered life lived by the Redemptoristines is a concrete reminder to Redemptorists of the contemplative dimension of their apostolic life. Without this “living memory” of the Redeemer to support them, Redemptorists would find the following of Christ much more difficult, if not impossible, to carry out.

5. – *Models of Complementarity*

To speak of “complementarity” in one’s *Constitutions and Statutes*, however, or to emphasize the centrality of prayer in the ongoing redemptive mission of the twofold Institute, does not necessarily mean that members will understand this relationship in exactly the same way. This relationship has been construed through a variety of

²⁴ IDEM, *Prayer*, 49; IDEM, *Del gran mezzo della preghiera*, 32.

“models of complementarity” spanning a wide spectrum of opinion. Each of these models is a mental construct that carries with it various attitudinal and emotional stances toward the second party in the relationship.

1. *Theoretical Union/Practical Division*. On one end of the spectrum is a tendency to accept a theoretical union of the spirit and work of the two communities, but to maintain a strict practical division in their ongoing daily affairs. This understanding of the relationship occurs for two reasons. First, one of the communities may be experiencing a widening gap between the ideal set down in its *Constitutions and Statutes* and its lived experience. The growing separation between theory and practice permits the members to espouse positions that never become incarnated in their daily lives. As a result, they gradually lose touch with their community's founding charism, and they tend to view their relationship to their partner in “the twofold Institute” as functionally irrelevant or merely peripheral to their own. A second reason for this attitudinal mindset occurs when prayer is no longer perceived as an essential ingredient of the ongoing redemptive mission in which they share and the fragile continuum between active contemplation and contemplative action is broken up. In such a scenario, members of the active missionary community lose touch with the contemplative dimension of their vocation and justify their existence solely in terms of the active works in which they are involved. Members of the contemplative community, in turn, lose touch with the apostolic dimension of their vocation and forget the underlying social and ecclesial dimensions of their call to contemplation.

2. *The Merging of Vision and Charism*. On the other end of the spectrum would be a tendency to water down the distinctive charism of each community and to merge them with the common motivating vision of carrying on the work of the redeeming Christ. The appeal of this approach to certain members of “the twofold Institute” should not be underestimated. Its aim is to create a single, all-encompassing spirituality satisfying to all. It commonly asserts that there is no substantial difference between the Redemptorist and Redemptoristine spirituality and that their differences of expression in the living out of their religious commitments are of a secondary nature. Belonging to the same religious family is all that matters. Nothing else counts or has any lasting relevance, at least as far as living the consecrated life is concerned. The proponents of this approach have

many good intentions, but seem to overlook a number of serious difficulties. To begin with, an authentic Christian spirituality must posit a fundamental continuity between theory and practice in the lives of its adherents. To insist that the practical expressions of a religious community are inconsequential or of a secondary nature does not take into account the underlying incarnational principle that should permeate all aspects of an authentic Christian spirituality. This holds true especially for Redemptorist and Redemptoristine spiritualities, which have traditionally emphasized “practice” as a way of inculcating their fundamental values in the hearts and minds of their members. In addition to disregarding the importance of “practice” in the lives of professed religious, this approach also blurs the distinction between “vision” and “charism” for the communities in question. Redemptorists and Redemptoristines alike are motivated by a common *vision* (i.e., to carry on the work of the redeeming Christ), but do so by means of very different communal *charisms* (i.e., following Christ in an active missionary apostolate as opposed to being a “living memory” of Christ in the hidden life of the cloister). Merging the concepts of “vision” and “charism” would have a diverse effect on the internal life of each community and, in some cases, unleash forces that would try to mold them into something they were never meant to be (e. g., imposing C.Ss.R. spirituality on the O.Ss.Rs. – or vice versa). Redemptorists and Redemptoristines are motivated by a common *vision* that embraces complementary *charisms* that manifest themselves in concrete differences in *practice*. Their spiritualities differ because the specific combination of “*charism*,” “*vision*,” and “*practice*” in each community has distinctive traits that make them unique.

3. *Hierarchical Participation*. A third way of rendering the complementary roles of the Redemptorist and Redemptoristine communities is to place them in hierarchical relationship to each other and to emphasize the participatory role of one in the other’s ongoing implementation of Christ’s redemptive mission. This model typically has two expressions. In the first, Redemptorist spirituality is considered superior to Redemptoristine spirit and way of life. The proponents of this approach (mostly Redemptorists) consider their spirituality more practical and apostolically effective. It caters, moreover, to the action-oriented, problem-solving character of Western culture and has little patience with the seemingly passive, reclusive tendencies of the Christian monastic tradition. Christ, the proponents of this

position claim, came "to bring glad tidings to the poor... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."²⁵ While they recognize the importance of prayer (even the contemplative kind) for continuing this redemptive mission in the name of Christ, they consider it only ancillary in nature and not something at the very heart of their apostolate. This holds true for their own prayer, as well as that of the Redemptoristines. Important as prayer is for the good of the apostolate, it always remains for them something of only secondary importance. The other expression of this hierarchical model focuses on the superiority traditionally attributed by the Church to the monastic life over the active apostolic life. According to this scenario, the Redemptoristines have chosen the better part in their decision to dedicate themselves totally to a life of prayer.²⁶ By plumbing the depths of their own hearts and seeking to walk through the various stages of purgation, illumination, and union they not only draw closer to God themselves, but contribute to the release of the necessary graces that will enable others to do the same. According to this understanding of complementarity, the active works of the Redemptorist missionaries are sustained by the contemplative life of the Redemptoristines and would bear little, if any, fruit without it. In each of these expressions, the participatory role given the other half of "the twofold Institute" is limited and secondary. It must also be admitted that, at times, this approach has probably been hampered by patriarchal prejudices on the part of Redemptorists and a latent touch of spiritual pride on the part of Redemptoristines.

4. *Division of Labor.* Another model used to describe the complementary roles of the two communities is based on the concept of division of labor. This approach is not interested in ranking one spirit and way or life over another, but in the practical task of assigning different tasks to appropriate groups possessing the needed competence. It understands what a certain degree of specialization can bring to the important task of carrying out Christ's redemptive mission and structures this insight accordingly in the Redemptorist and Redemptoristine communities. That is to say that the Redemptorists concern themselves primarily (but not exclusively) with the active

²⁵ Lk 4:18 (See also Is 61:1).

²⁶ Lk 11:38-42.

works of the apostolate, while the Redemptoristines devote all their energies to the apostolate of prayer in a contemplative, cloistered setting. The theological basis for this approach is the Apostle Paul's doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ, where different members of the believing community are recognized as performing certain functions for the good of the whole.²⁷ In the case of the Redemptorists and Redemptoristines, entire communities are recognized by the Church as specially endowed with complementary charisms that further the work of the redeeming Christ in preaching the Good News to the poor and most abandoned. An interesting insight into this approach concerns the psychological ramifications of having "brother and sister" communities divide their labors respectively according to the active apostolate and the contemplative life. Jungian theory asserts the androgynous composition of the human psyche. In men, the *animus* (or male component) is normally conscious, while the *anima* (or feminine component) remains unconscious. The reverse is true for women. According to Jung, the process of individuation begins when a person gets in touch with the unconscious element in his or her psyche and allows it to come forth. Interestingly enough, these psychological dynamics can also be at work in communities of men and women such as the Redemptorists and Redemptoristines. It therefore seems quite natural that the male partner in "the twofold Institute" would consciously take on a role more closely associated with an *animus* activity (i.e., the active missionary apostolate), while the female partner would consciously associate itself with an *anima* activity (i.e., the life of contemplation). According to the principle of individuation, however, every Redemptorist eventually needs to get in touch with his call to *contemplation* (coming from his unconscious *anima*), while every Redemptoristine must similarly become aware of the deep *apostolic* ramifications of her life of prayer (coming from her unconscious *animus*). When seen in this light, the complementary roles of the two communities should be explained in such a way that they foster rather than inhibit the ongoing process of personal and communal individuation.

5. *Collaborative Equals*. A final model used for explaining the complementary roles of the two communities understands participation as a collaborative effort of equals. According to this approach, Redemptorists and Redemptoristines share equally in the ongoing re-

²⁷ See, for example, Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:12-26.

demptive mission of Christ. The focus here is not on hierarchical relationships or on the division of labor, and still less on a dichotomy between theory and practice or on the merging of vision of charism. In this model, the emphasis falls squarely on the mutual bond shared by the two communities in their attempt to carry out the mission entrusted to them by Christ. All disciples are one in Christ. As the Apostle Paul so eloquently states: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female."²⁸ It is from this radical equality before God that the two branches work together in the Spirit with the freedom of sons and daughters of God to proclaim with their lives the Good News of plentiful redemption. In this collaborative effort, both communities are fully apostolic and fully contemplative (albeit in different ways). They share the fruits of each other's endeavors and receive from the other what is lacking in their own storehouse of spiritual benefits. What is more, they enjoy an extended continuum that celebrates both the apostolic *and* contemplative dimensions of each vocation. When seen in this light, the contemplative apostolic community of one branch is intimately linked to the apostolic contemplative community of the other. United by Christ's Spirit, each partner in this "twofold Institute" serves the other by virtue of the charism entrusted to it by Christ and his body, the Church. This quality of service rests at the heart of each community's spirituality and draws them even closer to one another as men and women who have dedicated themselves totally to the Christ's missionary apostolate. The two branches are called to be both "missionaries" *and* "contemplatives" in the fullest sense of the terms. Their collaborative efforts for the sake of the kingdom generates an ever-deepening sense of the magnitude of God's love for humanity and of the copiousness of redemption for all who ask for it. To paraphrase St. Alphonsus: "Paradise for God is to dwell in the human heart.

To one degree or another, each of these models is operative in the daily functioning of the communities, if not on an official level, then where it ultimately counts – in hearts and minds of Celeste's religious family. This plurality of models may explain, at least in part, the strong sense of ambiguity that pervades much of the discussion of the relationship between the two branches. It may also explain the complexity of the relationship and of the great need for each branch to make strong efforts to understand each other's spirit and

²⁸ Gal 3:28.

way of life. These efforts may be compounded by the fact that, at any given time, various (even conflicting) models may be operative in any given community and even in particular individuals. It may also be compounded by the ongoing changes in the relationship itself which, through the course of history, has often broken through static and seemingly unchanging structures in a vital, dynamic way.

Although Celeste would most likely have found valuable insights in each of these models, her understanding of the relationship between the two branches of her religious family most closely resembles the last. In her mind, each branch of the institute has a unique focus and plays a pivotal role in the work of the Redeemer: one by making him present to others by way of *viva memoria*; the other, by proclaiming his message of plentiful redemption to the poor and most abandoned. Since Jesus himself said, "I am the vine, you are the branches,"²⁹ separating the branches from the vine or emphasizing the importance of one over the other, detracts from Celeste's vision and fails to capture the full complementarity of her project.

Conclusion

The Church today faces different challenges from those of the eighteenth century. Jansenism, Quietism, and Enlightened rationalism have receded from the center stage of history and no longer present the threats they once did. Today's challenges come not from moral rigorism, but from a cultural relativity that gives rise to moral laxism. Rather than emphasizing the depravity of human nature, many today call into question the very existence of human nature itself. In much of the world, people have lost touch with the divine and given themselves over to an unmoored social activism. Many say the Enlightenment project has failed, calling the very foundations of reason itself into question and leaving in its wake nothing but a sea of postmodern uncertainties. What can Celeste's spiritual message say in the face of such daunting challenges? Does it have any relevance for believers today? If so, just what might it be and how can it be construed and communicated?

First and foremost, her message focuses entirely on Jesus the Redeemer: he alone can save; he alone can rescue humanity from evil's snare; he alone can transform human beings and make them

²⁹ Jn 15:15.

fully alive with the love of the Trinitarian God. Celeste emphasizes the one thing that matters. Her single-hearted devotion to Christ challenges believers to embrace the fundamental Gospel truth of Jesus' Redeeming love and to recognize the Father's intent at work in the world today through Christ and in the Spirit. Her love of the cross by means of *viva memoria* reminds believers that the suffering of the cross is part of the cost of discipleship. The cross gives meaning to human suffering. By embracing it, and loving it as Jesus did, human beings come to discover its transformative value.

Celeste's spiritual message continues to remain a sign of contradiction to the world. In following her message, both branches of her religious family must keep their eyes fixed on the work of the redeeming Christ by being faithful to their respective charisms and establishing relevant structures and practices that will respond to the needs of their time. Like Celeste, they are called to set out on a spiritual journey that will root out latent prejudices, enable them to grow in mutual understanding, and draw them even closer in the project they have undertaken for the sake of their Redeeming Lord. Only then will they be able to step out of the way and allow the Spirit to perform its liberating and transforming work in their midst.