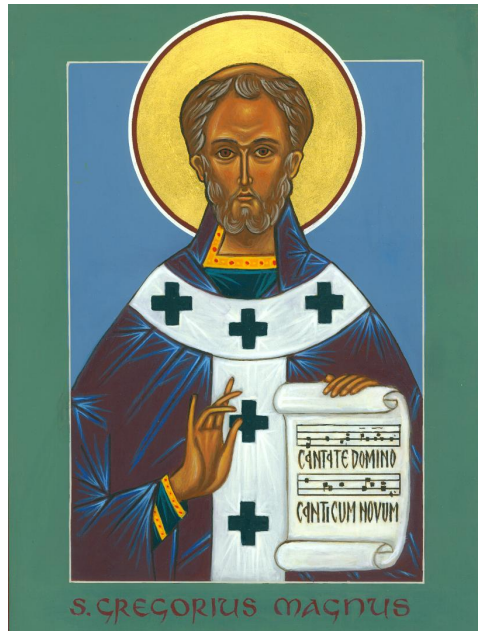


**ST. GASPAR BERTONI'S**  
**COMMENTARY ON**  
**THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS [SAMUEL]**



**Gregory the Great, 64<sup>th</sup> Pope**  
**[590-604]**  
**Doctor of the Church**



**St. Gaspar Bertoni, Diocesan**  
**Priest [1777 – 1753]**  
**Founder of the Stigmatines**

**INFLUENCED BY**  
**ST. GREGORY, THE GREAT**

**[1 K: cc. 1- 16 – Preached as Spiritual Director to the Seminarians**  
**of the Diocese of Verona, Italy, every Sunday for 30 months –**  
**November 1810 - Easter 1813]**

**A Reflection for**  
**THE STIGMATINE LAITY'S DAY OF RECOLLECTION**

**by Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS**

**Waltham, MA – June 21, 2014**  
**Electronic Edition: Tereza Lopes [Lay Stigmatine]**



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every Sunday for 30 months – November 1810- Easter 1813]

[Five themes in these Chapters – Vocation Reflections]

- [1] **1 K 1-3**: Vocation of Samuel; the End of the old Priesthood of Shiloh – the Song of Hannah
- [2] **1 K 4-7**: The Ark of the Covenant narrative - this precious relic of desert times, lost in battle [2 battles in EBENEZER], eventually recovered [a grand-son of Eli is born in all that death: ICHABOD – cf. 1 S 4:21].
- [3] **1 K 9-11**: The Rise of the Kingship
- [4] **1 K 13-15**: Saul's Battles – loses the kingship, for not trusting in God.
- [5] **1 K 16**: The Rise of David, Chosen by God and Coronation to serve.

**TEACHING**

**Section I [I, 1-84]**: Spouse of Church, Ideal of Monk

**Section 2 [I, 85-II, 28]**: Eventual Victory & Loving Soul

**Section 3 [II, 29-75]**: Old & New Priesthoods

**Section 4 [III, 1-37]**: Obedience: from Meditation to Contemplation

**Section 5 [III, 38-157]**: Word of God & His Grace

**Section 6 [IV, 1-78]**: Good & Bad Shepherds

**Section 7: IV, 79-217**: Initiation into Pastoral Mission

**Section 8 [V, 1-212]**: Bishop & Priest

**Section 9 [VI, 1-61]**: Failed Prelate

**Section 10 [VI, 62-115]**: Ordination of New Shepherd:

**Principal Task**: Preach [Teach] Jesus Christ by Word and Learning!

□ □ □

**Two Major Themes**:

- 1.] The Monastic Life
- 2.] The Priesthood

□ □ □

## St. GREGORY the GREAT

### In St. GASPAR BERTONI'S *ORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONS*

There are two direct quotes and both of which fall in that area which St. Gaspar found in his favorite author for these Constitutions, Francis Suarez, SJ and his *De Religione Societatis Iesu* :

**CF # 186 :** *Furthermore, no one will contrive to be sent in one place rather than in another, but each will allow himself to be transferred, although it is not wrong to show oneself prepared for some undertaking. For Isaiah [6:6, ff] offered himself, and Jeremiah [1:6] excused himself. However, Jeremiah did not resist God sending him, nor did Isaiah presume to go before being purified by the coal of the altar. As Gregory has said, no one should dare to undertake the sacred ministries without first being purified, nor should anyone chosen by a superior grace, proudly refuse to go, under the pretext of humility .*

This Constitution is actually the Conclusion of the very central Part IX of St. Gaspar's Constitutions, in its Chapter 7: ***Concerning the Principal Scope of the 'Professed' Fathers***. This Constitution is taken *verbatim* from Fr. Suarez' Book VI [*'De Professione quae in Societate fit...*'], regarding the Jesuit Fourth Vow, Chapter 4<sup>1</sup>.

### §§§

The other Constitution is taken from Part XI, Chapter IV of St. Gaspar's ***Original Constitutions # 288*** - 'Concerning the two conditions through which the means of Conversation might be an accommodated ministry of the Religious State':

**CF # 288:** *There are two principles by which there can be ascertained the decency of such familiar conversation, or the lack of decency for the whole matter.*

*The first principle would be if this activity was already prohibited, either because of itself it is evil, or because it is prohibited to clerics by common law, and religious are comparable to them in this matter [cf. II-II, q. 187, a. 2], or, if it is forbidden by one's own institute and special law.*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Suarez, p. 862 a & b.

Another principle is whether this endeavor is of such a nature that it could hardly be undertaken without danger of sin, as St. Gregory has said [Hom. 24, in Evangelia]. This same principle holds with due proportion if the undertaking would excessively occupy the spirit with the care and solicitude of temporal matters.

However, since there can be such latitude in this matter, therefore, having put aside any legislation in this regard, obedience to the Superior, no certain rule can be prescribed. There has to be employed here prudent judgment, and the custom of the observant and respectful religious is to be observed, as well as the common sense of those rightly considering and judging what this whole enterprise is, and that it is not in their view, alien to the religious state.

This Constitution # 288 is taken practically *verbatim* from Suarez' Book IX, Chapter VIII [*De Medio iuvandi proximos, conversando familiariter, etc.*], n. 13: [*Quibus regulis dignoscatur dicta indecentia*]. St. Gregory's **Forty Gospel Homilies** have been translated into English<sup>2</sup>. Homily 24 is a reflection on Jn 21:1-14, 'Jesus Standing on the Shore'. **Jesus' tribulations led to comparing Him as a broiled fish to be consumed! Gregory concludes:**

***Jesus ate the honeycomb and the broiled fish because those who endure affliction for the sake of the truth are satisfied there with true delight... Act upon these things, my friends...***<sup>3</sup>

†††

It might be of interest to offer an insight derived from a great modern Benedictine Scholar – which might shed some light on the phenomenon of Fr. Bertoni's copying vast segments from other authors. Fr. Jean Leclercq, OSB, already quoted above, has noted in the old monasteries, regarding "**The Monastic Scriptorium**":

**... The task of the copyist was an authentic form of asceticism...It was work that was both manual and intellectual...copying a book was, like prayer and fasting, a means [of asceticism]... When the book was completed, offering it to God was, at times, a kind of Liturgy: *Suscipe, sancta Trinitas, oblationem huius codicis*... it was also a way to exercise an apostolate in the Church... [For those unable to take to the plow], Then let him take up the pen, he will sow the seeds of the divine words...He will preach without opening his**

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<sup>2</sup> Cistercian Publication. Kalamazoo MI. Homily 24 is on pages 179 – 186.

<sup>3</sup> o.c. pp. 184,f.

**mouth; without breaking silence...The transcribed books are so many proclamations of the truth....<sup>4</sup>**

Fr. Bertoni often used what he copied for the instruction of others, and was more at ease using other people's words than his own. This phenomenon has been noted by Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, the Stigmatine Founder's most important biographer:

**... [Fr. Cesari] gave to Fr. Bertoni a copy of the *Spiritual exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. He studied them night and day, and indeed, even copied them entirely in his very neat hand-writing. He would then preach these retreats to the Clergy with such enthusiasm and unction of piety, that this produced extraordinary fruit in those who heard them...<sup>5</sup>**

**... [For his continuing meditations to the Clerics of the seminary, Fr. Bertoni] ... transcribed St. John Chrysostom's Commentaries on Matthew, without adding any of his own reflections. He delivered 41 such meditations, which correspond to the 28 Homilies of the Holy Doctor of the Church. Thus he felt much more secure in nourishing his clerics with a totally heavenly doctrine without mixing into it anything of himself...<sup>6</sup>**

**... After these 73 Meditations on the First Book of Kings, and the 41 Meditations on St. Matthew, Fr. Bertoni believed that his seminarians were now ready to take on a deepening of their understanding of Genesis [and once more, from St. John Chrysostom's Commentary]...<sup>7</sup>**

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†††  
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<sup>4</sup> cf. Jean Leclercq, OSB, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. A Study of Monastic Culture*. NY: Fordham 1994

<sup>5</sup> cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Vita e pensiero del Beato Gaspare Bertoni aglio albori dell'800 veronese*. Roma Stigmatini, 1977, p. 108. [It is worthwhile noting here that clergy formation was long a privileged Stigmatine Ministry, legislated by the Founder – cf. CF # 164 - where Fr. Bertoni considers the 'Grade' of the 'Professed Apostolic Missionaries'.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nello, o.c., p. 391.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nello, o.c., pp. 606, f.

## **AN APPENDIX: Summary of Stigmatic Vocation**

### **4998: Obedience to the Church in her Prelates<sup>8</sup>.**

*And Elcana her husband said to her: Do what seems good to you and stay till you wean him. v. 23.*

Hannah's counsel was then strengthened by the authority of her husband, because the proposal of the holy Church does not presume a mere human judgment, but a divine one. For whatever the holy Church wished to dispose regarding the subjected nations, she would then have as approved, when she recognized from the judgment of internal truth whatever was to be disposed.

### **4999: Confidence in Christ.**

*And I pray that the Lord might fulfill His word. v. 23.*

*We have an advocate with the Father, and He is the propitiation for us [1 Jn 2:1].*

*His Word, v. 23, is to be carried out as the conversion of the gentility is predestined.*

*And I pray that the Lord might fulfill His word, v. 23.* Because through His blood we are reconciled to God, He is beseeched for the carrying out of His word, and when this is obtained our salvation is perfected.

*And I pray, v. 23.*

Christ is beseeched when in His assumed humanity, **He continuously exhibits to the eternal Father for our salvation; since then He does not give up offering Himself**<sup>9</sup>, He opens up the entrance to life for our reception...

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<sup>8</sup> **Translator's Note:** A characteristic of Fr. Bertoni's first Constitution, introducing the *Compendium Rude*, [CF # 1] in *obsequium Episcoporum*. And this is then developed further in CF # 185 [the *Compendium Rude* put into complete sentences]: *Cum ejusdem Sodalitatis scopus sit, Ecclesiae sub dependentia Episcoporum directione, obsequium praestare per varia et propria suae vocationis munera...* In Mss #

Perhaps a word on Gregory's understanding of preaching is appropriate here: it refers to an activity that is far more encompassing than preaching understood as the delivering of a sermon. To preach is to proclaim and teach the Christian gospel by one's words, actions and example. God preached the knowledge of himself through the entirety of his incarnate existence in Christ Jesus; a priest preaches the gospel by his words, by his deeds and by the moral character of his life. This understanding of preaching may help one understand the unusual use of 'preaching' in the commentary. [Cassian DelCogliano, ocsa – cf. English Translation of St. Gregory's Commentary on the *Canticle of Canticles*.

<sup>9</sup> **Translator's Note:** Is this a hint of the eternal mentality in Christ of the *obsequium* [oblation] of the glorified Christ as noted in Hebrews? [Based on the Latin Vulgate – cf. *Rm 12*; f.: *Obsecro itaque vos, frateres, per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum*]. The Latin text here [Mss # 4999] of St. Gaspar Bertoni is: [*Christo precari est*] *se in humanitate assumpta, pro salute nostra aeterno Patri continue exhibere; quod dum sic se offerre non desinit, receptioni nostrae aditum ad vitam facit...*