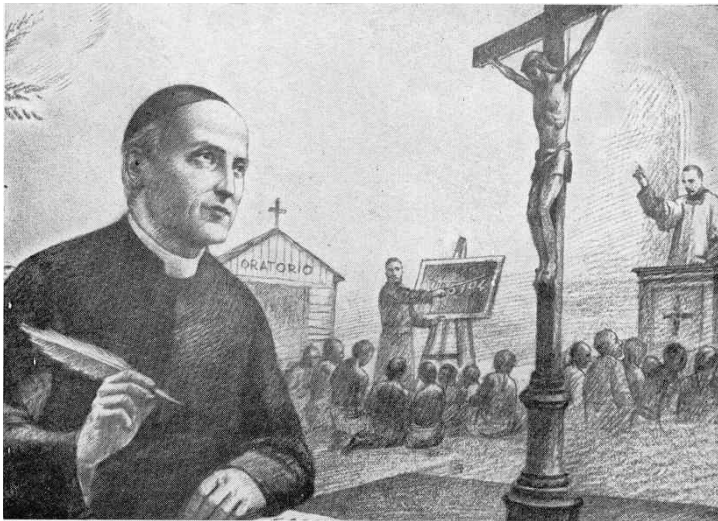
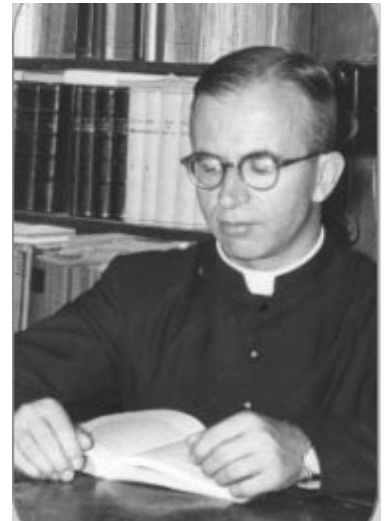


# FATHER CORNELIO FABRO



St. Gaspar Bertoni, Stigmatine Founder  
1777 - † 1853



Father Cornelio Fabro, CSS  
1911 - † 1995

## STIGMATINE – DEVOTEE OF HIS FOUNDER

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Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS  
Lent, 2016

For FABRO SYMPOSIUM – April 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016  
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**Fr. CORNELIO FABRO**  
**STIGMATINE – DEVOTEE OF HIS FOUNDER**

**Presentation**

**One of St. Gaspar Bertoni's most gifted sons**

On November 4, 1816, Fr. Gaspar Louis Denis Bertoni founded the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Verona Italy, at the Church of the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. For us Stigmatines, this second centenary year is a very blessed occurrence, and we are happy to see the publication of Fr. Cornelio Fabro's voluminous works now well under way. It is a consolation to see one of St. Gaspar Bertoni's most gifted sons being remembered in this way in our centennial year<sup>1</sup>.



The Church, House and Convent of the Stigmata in  
Verona Italy: birth-place of the Stigmatine Congregation

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<sup>1</sup> In a very personal way, in this 2<sup>nd</sup> centenary year for the Stigmatine Congregation, my own entrance anniversary took place Jan 6, 1946, 70 years ago! And on July 1<sup>st</sup> it will be 60 years since my priestly ordination.

## I. STIGMATINE

Most of us ‘younger’ Stigmatines remember Fr. Fabro as a weekend assistant at Santa Croce Parish at the Ponte Milvio in Rome. His regular Sunday Mass there was much attended also to benefit from his convincing preaching ability. From witnesses to these events, it was noted that Fr. Fabro’s pulpit tone was of a different style than his long years in the Professor’s chair. There was, unmistakable evidence of the same fiery address, inspiring his listeners to hear and heed the word of God. He also served the Parish as a Confessor and spiritual director.

It is of great interest, too, for us to remember his participation in the sports of the parish, being remembered as a very enthusiastic soccer player! He gave no ground, and certainly covered his position well. Fr. Fabro was revered as a Professor and much respected as a soccer player!

My introduction to Fr. Fabro took place at a community festival [maybe the Espousals of January 23rd of 1953] in our Stigmatine General House, Rome, adjoined to the Church of St. Agatha of the Goths on Via Mazzarino – a Church with a long Christian history, having served as the old Irish College [from 1837-1927] and much earlier had been dedicated by Pope St Gregory the Great – whose account of that ceremony has survived in our own time<sup>2</sup>.

In accord with community customs of the era, the festive meal was a very informal recreation and fraternal time – Fr. Fabro at the time was still a relatively a young priest, but already a much revered Professor, and he took a very active part in the community banter. The elderly and much revered Fr. General-emeritus [1911-1922], Fr. G. B. Tomasi<sup>3</sup>, was present – and he and Fr. Fabro took part in a truly lively exchange. During this, Fr. Tomasi joked with Fr. Fabro saying that in the professor’s philosophical efforts, he ‘obfuscated what was very clear’! Fr. Fabro bantered with his retorts in the lively discussion that ensued much to the enjoyment of all, and surely, of the participants themselves. This provided something of a hint of Fr. Fabro’s lively

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great*. Ed. by Edmund G. Gardner. Christian Roman Empire Series, Vol. 9. Merchantville NJ: Evolution Publishing 2010. Pp. 153, ff.: “C. 30: how a Church of the Arians in Rome was hallowed according to the Catholic Manner:... in that part of the city which is called Subura...we brought with us thither the relics of the blessed Martyrs, St. Stephen and St. Agatha ... that place was from darkness translated to light ... the strange miracles , which God vouchsafeth to work, do plainly declare that he hath not utterly forsaken and given us over ...

<sup>3</sup> When Chiara Lubich received her early inspiration, a Stigmatine, + Carlo DeFerrari, CSS, was Archbishop of Trent. He enlisted Fr. Tomasi as an early spiritual director in her life.

presence at community meals over the years, always including the younger confreres at table, sometimes somewhat in awe of his presence.

The second time I met Fr. Fabro was perhaps about a year later, at the Rome airport when his fellow '*Friulan*' - Monsignor Tarcisio Martina - was returning to Italy after some years in a communist prison<sup>4</sup>.

When I was still relatively young priest, Fr. Fabro telephoned me to congratulate me for the successful defense of my own doctoral thesis at the Angelicum, to wish me well – and directing me always to be faithful to the Magisterium and to St. Thomas Aquinas! A further contact I had with him, more indirectly was when I served as Moderator of a confrere's doctoral thesis on the influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of St. Gaspar Bertoni – a theme suggested by Fr. Fabro himself. I found him most interested and most encouraging to what the younger Stigmatines were doing in their commitment to study.

We all knew of the important assistance he offered the Holy See and were proud of his appointment to such vital work in the Church at its highest level. Along with this resume' of his community commitment, Fr. Fabro has also made a real contribution to the understanding of the Stigmatine Founder, St. Gaspar Bertoni.

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<sup>4</sup> The old Chronicle of the Community of St. Agatha recorded this event: '26 dicembre 1954: Il 26 dicembre, inaspettata, sebbene molto a lungo desiderata, la notizia che il carissimo Monsignore Tarcisio Martina, e' giunto a Hong-Kong, libero finalmente... Deo gratias!

We all greeted his arrival a few weeks later at Ciampino airport in January 1955. [The Chronicle reads: "... in more solito, la festa Patronale dei santi Sposi e passata, la Casa e in grande attesa dell'arrivo di Monsignore Martina. L attendiamo al aeroporto di Ciampino al 16 gennaio 1955, invaso per l'occasione dai Padri e Fratelli delle case vicine...']

Monsignore Martina [1897-1961] is remembered in the Community Necrology: After his studies in Verona, he went to Rome where he obtained the degree in theology at the Apollinaris university. He served as a captain during the First World War, receiving several decorations for his heroic courage.

In 1923 he was elected provost of Milan's S. Croce Parish, but in 1925 he gave up the post to go on mission to China. During his 30 years in that mission he manifested all his best personal gifts, and gained the esteem of the Chinese and of the ecclesiastical superiors.

In 1936 he was elected Prefect Apostolic.

He founded a religious congregation of Chinese sisters: "The Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" and formed also 15 Chinese diocesan priests.

In 1951 he was accused by the communists of conspiring against the regime and was condemned to life imprisonment. He was subsequently "benignly" expelled from his mission service in 1955.

During his last years he was spiritual father of the Stigmatine students in Verona's S. Leonardo.

## II. DEVOTEE OF HIS FOUNDER

**Fr. Fabro, Devotee of His Founder, offered three 'internal' documents honoring St. Gaspar Bertoni**

St. Gaspar [for his Grand-father] Louis [for his Father] Denis [for the Saint of his birth-date] Bertoni was born in Verona, October 9, 1777. He was ordained a Priest in September 1800 – founded the Stigmatines on November 4, 1816 and died on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1853. He was beatified by Paul VI on November 1, 1975; and canonized a Saint by Pope John Paul II, November 1, 1989.

Fr. Fabro composed three insightful articles to commemorate some major events during the process of his Canonization:

[1] “Un sacerdote ecclesiale: Beato Gaspare Bertoni”, in: *Momenti dello Spirito* vol. 1. Edizioni Sala Francescana di Cultura. Collana: Repara Domum Meam. Assisi: S. Damiano, 1982, pp. 327-343.

This reflection seems to have been inspired on the occasion of St. Gaspar's Heroicity of Virtues, officially proclaimed by the Church, and his Beatification by Pope Paul VI, November 1, 1975

[2] “Gaspare Bertoni, testimone del soprannaturale”, in *Symposium Bertonianum – 28 ottobre 1989*. Verona: ed. Stimmgraf. 1990, pp. 36-60. This was presented by Fr. Fabro at the Angelicum a few days before St. Gaspar's Canonization by Pope John Paul II, November 1, 1989.

[3] “Gaspare Bertoni, Una vita illuminata dal soprannaturale”, *Ed. Ta Stigmata*. Collaboratori Bertoniani, Roma: October 2009. [This was published by a lay group associated with the Stigmatines, some 14 years after Fr. Fabro's death in 1995.

These three studies are presented in an unofficial English translation that remains unpublished as a community document, as follows:

[1] “A Church Centered Priest: Blessed Gaspar Bertoni. The Faithful Service of Witness for the Church”

[2] “Heroic Witness of the Suffering Servant – clarifying the ‘Model-Principle’. The Model-Principle involves: Assimilation- Conformation-

Copy - Example – Following – Heir- Icon – Image - Imitation – Reflection –  
Renewal – Transformation : Model - Principle”

[3] “St. Gaspar Bertoni A life illumined by the Supernatural. An ‘Every Day’ witness illumined in Prayer.”

In the unique and sublime ‘Fabro-Style’, these reflections are indeed a contemplative study, rich in content and sublime in inspiration:

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### A. CHURCH CENTERED

#### “A Church-centered Priest: The Faithful Service of Witness for the Church”

In ecclesial service, Jesus’ Personal Mission received from His Father becomes that of all the baptized followers of Christ. In several religious families, the ‘apostolic mission’, however, is interpreted in accord with the special graces received by the Founders of each. The Constitutions of both St. Alphonsus Liguori and the Redemptorists, as well as those of St. Paul of the Cross and the Passionists, have extensive rules on how this Apostolic Mission is fulfilled primarily in conducting Parish Missions.

St. Ignatius, however, seems to have considered the Apostolic Mission to be that deferential oblation service to the Church according to her varying and changing needs, through a special 4<sup>th</sup> vow of obedience to the Pope, in a broad sweep of apostolates. Fr. Fabro seems to be aware of a broad sense of the Apostolic Mission of St. Gaspar in these words: ... [Fr. Bertoni] showed himself ready and ‘available’ – as is said today - for the apostolate in response to even the hints and suggestions of his superiors...’ Fr. Fabro specifies this idea a bit more minutely in the paragraphs which follow: St. Gaspar was “the Founder of the ‘Apostolic Missionaries’ - While he was still a young priest, on the occasion of a Parish Mission preached in St. Firmus Major Parish [from May 4 to the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1816] by the celebrated parish missionary, Msgr. Pacifico Pacetti of ‘Fermo’. He was ably assisted by Fr. Bertoni and other collaborators. In composing his Constitutions, [Fr. Bertoni] was directly inspired by ‘that outstanding model’ which is the Company of Jesus’. As for its ministries of the Word of God he did not exclude any: “To go anywhere in the Diocese or the world”<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Translator’s Note: once again as above, Fr. Fabro seems to espouse the broader idea for the ‘Apostolic Mission’ of St. Gaspar Bertoni. [...la sua opera non si qualifica per un'attività e forma singola di apostolato da



Fr. Fabro continues saying that St. Gaspar further developed the title he envisioned for his community, *Apostolic Missionaries*. As a result, over these past 200 years, his sons have hastened everywhere to which the voice of the Church summoned them: in various forms of preaching, teaching school, retreats, missions [*quodcumque Verbi Dei ministerium*] in Italy and beyond, and now in Asia, in America, in Africa...'

After establishing St. Gaspar's total commitment to the needs of the Church, Fr. Fabro continues in his description of the dynamism of St. Gaspar's spiritual life. The illustrious philosopher and theologian describes incisively the path of humility, that of the daily Cross, that St. Gaspar lived to the hilt. Truly St. Gaspar himself – after thinking of the Church herself in these terms<sup>6</sup> – has been described in a doctoral thesis as 'The Model of Holy Abandonment'<sup>7</sup>. As these reflections continue, St. Gaspar made broad use of terms such as model, copy, imitate, mirror in pursuing the lived example of his special Saint [Ignatius of Loyola] in the paths of holiness.

## B. MODEL-PRINCIPLE

### "Heroic Witness of the Suffering Servant in the 'Model-Principle'.

The Model-Principle: Assimilation- Conformation - Copy - Example – Following – Heir- Icon – Image - Imitation – Mirror - Reflection – Renewal – Transformation:

In presenting this aspect of St. Gaspar Bertoni's personal charism for the Church, Fr. Fabro was much moved by his Founder's own spiritual writings – his personal diary, parish sermons, conferences and letters –all of which provide a fairly good record of St. Gaspar's spiritual inspirations in his heroic following of Christ - from 1808 through the ideals presented under these titles:

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cui penetrare le istanze dell'epoca e salire alla sua redenzione spirituale: egli e' pronto e disponibile — come oggi si dice — a tutte le forme di apostolato secondo il cenno di Dio e dei superiori. Dedizione e distacco, potremmo chiamare l'orizzonte della sua azione: pronto ad impegnarsi con tutte le forze, era disposto a lasciare tutto, quando l'obbedienza o la voce segreta di Dio gli faceva cenno di passare ad altra ...].

<sup>6</sup> *Epistolario del ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni*. Verona Stimmattini 1954, Letter 38 to L. Naudet, October 26, 1813, p. 99

<sup>7</sup> Nello Dalle Vedove, *Il modello di Sant'Abbandono*. Verona 1951 [a doctoral thesis, moderated by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange OP.



## 1] COPY

St. Gaspar described this principle in his Letter 4 to his companion, and confidant, Fr. Louis Bragato, dated June 4, 1836<sup>8</sup>. The Stigmatine Founder suggested to his companion and friend to ponder prayerfully the Jesuit ideal and the life of Christ, in order to find the means to reproducing a 'copy' masterfully in oneself as would an artist present a portrait. Fr. John Lenotti, the first 'official' Novice Master of the Congregation appointed by St. Gaspar, compiled these lines for his novitiate Conferences on St. Gaspar's Original Constitutions:

The End – The Manner: As the Company of Jesus is with regard to the Pope, we are we towards the Bishops, without binding ourselves by vow to individual Bishops. – *Prepared for all* - The Weapons: the sword of the Word of God and the armament of Prayer. The saying of Fr. Carafa – Exhortation.

Beginning to read our *Original Constitutions*, we read that which our Saintly Founder puts at the forefront.

It is seen clearly that Fr. Bertoni's intention would have to have been that of instituting a Congregation, which like the Company of Jesus is in a special manner dedicated, directed toward the assistance and the dispositions of the Roman Pontiff, would be that of being dedicated and determined in a very special and outstanding manner to the service of Bishops: however, with this difference, that while the professed of the Company of Jesus make a Vow of Obedience to the Pope, our Members do not make the Vow of Obedience to any single Bishop, but seek in every way that they can, to help him, to assist obsequiously, and in a particular manner to be dedicated to him. Since it is one matter to vow oneself to the Pope who has the administration of the entire Catholic Church, it is another to be committed to a Bishop in this way. For, by dedicating oneself to a single diocese would mean to restrict also the sphere of our ministry. We would then be *Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance of a Bishop*, and not of the *Bishops*: indeed a single Bishop could, in such a case, by sending us here and there, now one confrere, and then another, this would destroy us and consume us...

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<sup>8</sup> cf. *Epistolario* p 314: ...Volete anche una bella copia, come fanno in principianti in pittura per addestrarsi al disegno. Prendete la vita di S. Francesco Borgia, del P. Bartoli, e ne avrete di vantaggio per confortarvi e condurvi sino alla perfetta destrezza di formare il vostro disegno sul Prototipo, cioè nella vita di Cristo...

This, then, is the essence of our Institute, its end and the manner of obtaining it<sup>9</sup>.

In the long juridical journey of seeking the Church's official approval of St. Gaspar's Original Constitutions<sup>10</sup>, abundant use was made of such terms as Model and Copy: in his marvelous introduction to the initial printing of the Founder's Constitutions in 1950, the Stigmatine scholar, Fr. Joseph Stofella, offered a number of comments still valid today. In describing the fonts of the Founder's Constitutions, Fr. Stofella wrote that as far as the substance of the Original Constitutions is concerned, St. Gaspar drew on that excellent Model, the Company of Jesus, through the classic, *De Religione Societatis Iesu*, of Fr. Francis Suarez, SJ. St. Gaspar in his chosen hidden way of abandonment, preferred the formulations of others when he found them responding to his own inspiration. St. Gaspar hoped that the community would be able hold on to that good model, which the Company of Jesus is. A well-known Jesuit Consulter to the Holy See offered his view of the Constitutions as a copy of the Company of Jesus, except for a few accidental differences...<sup>11</sup>

## 2] PORTRAIT

**26th FEBRUARY 1809<sup>12</sup>:** 'We must make in ourselves a portrait of Jesus Christ.' ...This entry could very well have been inspired by a text of Fr. Da Ponte in a Meditation on the Incarnation<sup>13</sup>:

*... God showed, in the last days, His Holiness and all His Virtues by impressing them on the God-made-man. He wanted Him to be a visible portrait of them all, so that*

<sup>9</sup> This is a very important text: the model for Fr. Bertoni's *Compendium Rude* seems to have been comparable to the *Formula* of the Society of Jesus. The nine numbers of this *Formula*, contain 'Five Chapters', perhaps in the original Ignatian notes: 1. the End of the Company and its Fundamental Regimen; 2. The Special Obedience to the Supreme Pontiff; 3. Community Obedience within the Company; 4. The Poverty of the Company; 5. Miscellaneous : no specific habit; no service in Choir, etc. Fr. Lenotti's emphasis in this comparison makes of the special obedience that deferential service the Stigmatine owes to Bishops [in the plural]. This is the *Stigmatine Modus*, [customary manner of working] - there is an interesting study on the Ignatian *Modus*: *Appunti di Spiritualità* 12. *El modo nuestro de proceder – il nostro modo d'agire*. [Conference of the Jesuit Fr. General, January 18, 1979] Fr. Stofella has noted that the Founder's CF # 185 articulates the headings left as incomplete sentences in the *Compendium Rude*. It seems that for Fr. Lenotti the essence of the Stigmatine Community is this qualified *obsequium* – service of the Bishops.

<sup>10</sup> *Costituzioni del ven. S. di Dio*, D.Gaspard Bertoni. Verona 1950

<sup>11</sup> *Costituzioni Originali*. , Introduction, pp. 18, ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Memoriale Privato*.

<sup>13</sup> Fr. DaPonte, I, of Part 2, n. 3.

*we may be stimulated by His example to imitate them while he helps us by His grace to acquire them. In this way nobody can excuse himself from doing it...*

*... What is needed is the image of Jesus Christ. It is this divine portrait which we have to draw in our hearts...*<sup>14</sup>

The Jesuit Formula, then, represented a synopsis of their Form of Life, their Manner of Living, the manner of the image of their Profession. This was their self-portrait of their understanding of the “evangelical man”: in order to be this, these words opened up a certain itinerary - it would only come to be understood by living it, by following this way.

This is the self-portrait<sup>15</sup> of men who do not have any other point of view than the Lord Himself, no other objective than the Gospel lived and announced. There are described here those necessary traits for this way of life, exemplified by the men who lived it. ... The goal was that this composition would reproduce in those who would join the condition of one being the Envoy of Jesus Christ. The ideal of the One Sent is that one who commits himself entirely to the One Who sends him, and who is totally for those to whom he is sent.

### 3] MODEL/MIRROR

#### a] St. Gaspar's Diary continues: 30th JULY 1808

For the examination of conscience one should choose a Saint of the same vocation as a mirror. In this way one finds matter for confession every day. Whatever falls short of that Saint's perfection is faulty.

The original idea of modeling his life on that of a Saint could have come to Fr Bertoni (after his boyhood practice of imitating Saint Aloysius Gonzaga), from the *Imitation of Christ* where he read: *Look at the living examples of the Holy Fathers*<sup>16</sup>. He found inspiration also in Fr. L. Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat*:

*... Compare your works with those of the Saints and other servants of God. In comparison with theirs you will know that your best and greatest works are of very*

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Surin, *Lettres Spirituelles*. Tome I, Letter 24. Lyon 1843.

<sup>15</sup> St. Gaspar Bertoni used this image of the need of drawing a portrait of Christ within us, in his *Memoriale Privato* : Feb. 26, 1809

<sup>16</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Book I, c. 18.

*low quality and worth. If you then compare them with those of Christ... you will see that yours are insignificant...* <sup>17</sup>

The sign of signs which shines forth in the life of St Ignatius is a total abandonment of self in God.<sup>18</sup> Is this not making oneself above all lesser things? And he wanted the same attitude from his sons.

It is interesting to note, that the ideal of a 'spiritual mirror' for Monks was an old-time classic: A Mirror for Monks (*Speculum Monachorum*)<sup>19</sup>:

## **b) Mirror for Monks" [*Speculum Monachorum*]**

[This old-time classic]

May remind the modern believer of the classic *Imitation of Christ*, or, on a deeper level, of the biblical quest for Jesus, *the ICON of the Invisible God* [*Col 1:15*] – a window into the Trinity – *whoever sees Me, sees the Father!* [*Jn 12:45*] – a Mirror for Christianity.

[This idea seems to have resulted from a contemplation of God's Word –that of St. Thomas is a genuine possibility]:

**[1.]** As an **ICON** of the Invisible God [extensively commented upon by St. Thomas]:

*15 He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, 16 for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

<sup>17</sup> Scupoli *Spiritual Combat*, c. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Book 3, p. 204.

<sup>19</sup> Louis de Blois, Published 1926. [NB: this image of SPECULUM/ MIRROR is quite common in Church spiritual literature. The Liturgy of Hours for the Thursday and Friday of the first full week of Lent, offers two separate readings for the second reading for those days – one from the Greek East and the other from the Latin West:

- The Latin Liturgy of Hours, Vol. II, Vatican 2000, p. 100, f., offers this: Ex Homiliis Asteri Amanseni, episcopi: "... *Evangelia contemplemur; ibique, tamquam in speculo, diligentiae et benignitatis exemplum intuentes, eas perdiscamus...* [Hom. 13: PG 40, 355-358, 361].
- The English Liturgy of the Hours, English edition – Vol. II, Catholic Book Publishing Co., NY: 1976, pp. 130-132, where St. Aelred, Abbot, is quoted: *From the Mirror of Love*, Lib. 3 5: PL 195-582]: "... *keep the eyes of one's soul always fixed on the serene patience of his beloved Lord and Savior...*" ].

... 31. – Let us now see in what way the Son is called the image [ICON] of God, and why he is said to be invisible. The notion of an image includes three things. First, an image must be a likeness; secondly, it must be derived or drawn from the thing of which it is a likeness; and thirdly, it must be derived with respect to something that pertains to the species or to a sign of the species...

... 42. – For one thing can participate in another in three ways: first, it can receive what is proper to the nature of what it is participating in; secondly, it can receive a thing insofar as it knows it; and thirdly, it can somehow serve the power of a thing. For example, a doctor participates in the art of medicine either because he possesses in himself the art of medicine, or because he has received a knowledge of the art, or because he serves or devotes himself to the medical art.

**[2.]** A second text from St. Paul to the Colossians bears reflection considering **Christ the Head' of the Church**, in Whom all is 're-capitulated': Col 1:18-23:

*18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 21 And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, 23 provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven.*

... The Church is called a body because of its likeness to a single human being. This likeness is twofold: first, in that it has distinct members: "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11);

.... secondly, because the members of the Church serve each other in ways that are different: "The members may have the same care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25); "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Again, just as a body is one because its soul is one, so the Church is one because the Spirit is one: "There is one body and one Spirit" (Eph 4:4); "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17).

... 48. – The Church exists in two states: the state of grace in the present time, and the state of glory in the future. But it is the same Church, and Christ is its head in both states, because he is the first in grace and the first in glory...

... 50. – Then (v. 19), he shows the dignity of the head with respect to the fullness of all graces. For some saints had particular graces, but Christ had all graces; and so he says, that in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell [it seems that Thomas' version lacked the words "of God"]. Each word has its own force...

He says, all, because some have one gift and others different ones; but [with Christ] "The Father had given all things into his hands" (Jn 13:3).

He says, fullness, because one can have a gift without having the fullness of it or of its power, because perhaps one lacks something unwillingly.

But John says that Christ was "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14), "My abode is in the fullness of the saints" (Sir 24:16).

... 57. – What God requires of us is that we be firm in faith and hope. And so Paul continues, provided that you continue in the faith, stable. For faith is a foundation; if it is firm the entire structure of the Church is firm.

And steadfast in hope, not weakening themselves from within; not shifting by allowing others to shake that hope. This hope, I say, is the hope of the gospel, that is, the hope that the Gospel gives for the good things of the kingdom of heaven: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17)...

**[3.]** And still another text of Paul to the Colossians – the believer, in union with Christ, **makes up for any 'lack' of Christ' sufferings** [cf. Col 1: 23b-29]:

23b And of which I, Paul, became a minister. 24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

... 60. ...First, he shows his attitude toward his sufferings; secondly, the fruit of his suffering (v. 24b).

His attitude was one of joy, because Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, that is, for your benefit: "If we are afflicted it is for your comfort and salvation; and if

we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer" (2 Cor. 1:6).

He also rejoices because of the joy of eternal life which he expects from them, and which is the fruit of his ministry: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testimony of your faith produces steadfastness" (Jas 1:2), "Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all" (Phil 2:17).

... In the same way all the saints suffer for the Church, which receives strength from their example. The Gloss says that "afflictions are still lacking, because the treasure house of the Church's merits is not full, and it will not be full until the end of the world."

68. – He says that this mystery is now made manifest, that is, in this time of grace: "Behold now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). This is the knowledge of the saints: "She gave him knowledge of holy things" (Wis 10:10); "He showed his friend that it belongs to him, and that he can approach it" (Job 36:33) [Vulgate].

**[4.]** St. John's Gospel – sublimely commented upon by St. Thomas Aquinas [in his commentary on John] - also proclaims a principle of our oneness with Christ: Jn 12:45: '... **whoever sees Me sees the Father...**!'

42 Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 for they loved the praise [glory] of men more than the praise [glory] of God. 44 And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And he who sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

... 1712 Then when he says, and he who sees me sees him who sent me, he treats of vision. In regard to this we should note that just as the Father sent the Son to convert the Jews, so Christ also sent his disciples: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (20:21)...

The seeing which is referred to here is not a physical vision, but a consideration of the truth by the mind. And the reason why one who sees the Son also sees the Father is that the Father is in the Son by a unity of essence. For one thing is said to be seen in another either because they are the same, or they are entirely conformed. But the Father and the Son are the same in nature and entirely conformed: because the Son is



the image of the Father and unlike in nothing, for "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15)...

And so, just as one believes in the Father, so also he believes in me: "He who has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" (14:9). It is as though he said: The reason why one who sees me sees the Father also, is that the Father is in me and I in the Father. Thus it is clear what faith should be: faith should be in Christ, as God, just as it is in the Father.

1714 Secondly, he continues, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. To become enlightened, therefore, is an effect of faith: "He who follows me will not walk in darkness" (8:12). May not remain in darkness: that is, the darkness of ignorance, of unbelief and eternal damnation.

### c] BIBLICAL MIRROR: Image/Imitate

The Image in the Mirror is to be imitated in one's life of faith:

This doctrine serves as a biblical background for St. Gaspar, much admired and commented upon by Fr. Fabro - the Mirror serves as an apt image: Christ is the Mirror for the Christian way of Life!

*Ws 7:26, ff.: ... For [wisdom] is the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God, the Image of His goodness. And she, who is one, can do all things, and renewal everything while herself perduring and passing into holy souls...*

*1 Cor 13:12: At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully as I am known ...*

*Jas 1:22-26: Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect Law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such shall a one shall be blessed in what he does...*

*2 Co 4:18 [NAB]: All of us, with unveiled face [referring to Israelites from whom the veil has been removed] – are like Moses, standing in God's presence, beholding and reflecting His glory. Gazing the verb may also be translated as contemplating in a mirror. 2 Co 4:6 would suggest that the mirror is Christ Himself. All are being transformed: Paul speaks here of transformation, conformity to Jesus, God's image – this is a reality of the end-time, and v. 12 speaks of glory as an object of hope. But, the*

life-giving Spirit, the distinctive gift of the New Covenant, is already present in the New Community [cf. 2 Co 1:22, the 'first installment']. The process of transformation has already begun: into the same Image of God, which is Christ [2 Co 4:4].

The old classic, *Speculum Monachorum*<sup>20</sup>, seems to have been one source for this image, offers these points:

As the '*Imitation of Christ*' seems to some interpreters, to have had a Franciscan background, this *Mirror for Monks* seems to be a practical manual on how to live some aspect of the Benedictine Rule. The document emphasizes prayer of the Scriptures always more than its study. The comparison is constant contact compared to flowing water that always cleanses. The Document emphasizes the major importance of Christ's Passion— we are all Disciples of the Crucified. Much reflection on the Lord's Passion is encouraged, especially Gethsemane. There is a need to remember that our divine Judge is also our Advocate. Much profit can be derived from the examples of the Virgin Mary, and Mary Magdalene. There is a great need to 'live the solemnities' [through the Liturgy]. Prepare yourself – if book- reading helps – continue it, otherwise set it aside.

In the final chapter, there is much emphasis on one's own practice of Mortification. We are not bound to perfection, but rather each is bound to the endeavor to reach it ['the pursuit of perfect charity']. If you fall, renew the overthrown work – better than before. If this happens twice – ten – 100 or 1000 times, repair it as often as you have fallen. Never despair of God's Mercy – seems to be the central message].

For the modern reader, there may be a bit of excessive insistence on what each monk has to do – rather than on the Lord's work. No mention of the Eucharist which seems unusual. The main image is the Crucified Lord. The concluding principle: Never despair of God's Mercy. Therefore, 'To follow/imitate [put on His mind] the Lord' contemplating the MIRROR – this means to COPY Him, His Word in one's spiritual life: *a lamp unto our feet*:

... have a copy of this Scroll ...keep it... read it all the days of one's life that each day learn to fear the Lord.. to heed and fulfill all the words of this Law and statutes... [Dt. 17:18]

.... Joshua inscribed upon the stones a copy of the Law written by Moses... [Jos 8:32].

<sup>20</sup> Louis de Blois – published in 1926

... You have made me built a temple on your holy mountain and an altar in the city that is your dwelling place, a copy of the holy tabernacle which you had established from of old ... [Ws 9:8].

... Moses was warned ... see that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the holy mountain. Now He has obtained so much more excellent a ministry as he is mediator of a [NEW] – [cf. Jr 31:31-33] and better covenant... [Heb 8:5].

... Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified by these rites, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a copy of the true one, but heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf... [Heb 9:24].

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### C. 'EVERY-DAY' WITNESS in DAILY PRAYER

#### "Gaspare Bertoni, Una vita illuminata dal soprannaturale"

This third reflection by Fr. Fabro emphasizes the Founder's lowly state, his hidden life, his every-day living of holy abandonment and witnessing to this in rewarding apostolic service as well as in his own atrocious physical sufferings – as Pope Paul VI referred to them in his Beatification address regarding Gaspar Bertoni. Regarding Saints, Fr. Fabro returns several times to the title: Witness of the Supernatural [of God; of the Gospel].<sup>21</sup>

This third study was published after Fr. Fabro's death. It seems that this meditation can be interpreted as analyzing the 'every-day' witness of spiritual illumination through his personal prayer. St. Gaspar lived in an era, like our own in some respects, as God being a 'problem' – and many theories of testifying to the Risen Lord, after His Passion and Death.

Fr. Fabro comments on the 'Tabernacle of Witness' [Ex 25:20] – Moses and the Prophets – the Baptism of Christ [cf. Mk 9:7; Mt 3:17] – the Church Martyrs and all witnesses of Christ: the extraordinary ones, and the spectacular miracle workers - but most especially the 'every-day-ness', routine of most saints. St. Gaspar seems to have experienced some ecstasies, at least in his view – but there is absolutely no

<sup>21</sup>C. Fabro, *Pascal –Testimone di Dio* in: [Momenti dello Spirito, I, pp.106,ff.; *Don Titta Zara – testimone del vangelo* [Momenti dello Spirito, II, pp. 17,ff.; Fr. Fabro also composed a sublime study regarding St. Gemma Galgani: *Gemma Galgani. Testimone del soprannaturale*. ROMA: CIPI 1989.

doubt about how lacerated his body was before dying after a life-long lived martyrdom, freely accepted.

Fr. Fabro summarizes quite incisively the various elements of St. Gaspar Bertoni's rich spirituality. St. Gaspar was deeply devoted to the Trinity – in seeing a painting in St. Joseph's Convent, the Saint immediately thinks of the Trinitarian missions, and the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission in the light of this central mystery of our own hope-filled faith. And St. Gaspar's charism was truly Christological – while immersed in the sufferings of Christ, St. Gaspar had an integral understanding of the Stigmata: both sorrowful as in the mystery of Good Friday and redemption – as well as the Glorious Wounds, preserved in His risen Body, and manifested in the Cenacle room, revealing the mission to be that of Himself: *as the Father sent Me, so I also send you!* [Jn 20].

The Stigmatine charism is eminently Eucharistic, with the Founder's insistence on obsequium, from Rm 12:1: *...Make of your bodies an oblation to God's Mercy!* This is translated as a deferential ecclesial service.

All of this is celebrated, believed and lived in St. Gaspar and often made clear to him in the Eucharist – celebrated and adored. It is before the Eucharist that St. Gaspar often contemplated what he would then hand on to the seminarians, religious and priests in his conferences: *contemplata aliis tradere* [CF # 49]. St. Gaspar was not a 'spectacular' Saint – and his growth does not follow any neat pattern. His expressions of it were spasmodic, bursting onto the scene suddenly, shedding marvelous light, far and wide. Neither did he, nor his early companions make any attempt to chronicle the manifestations of his wonderful spirit.

Fr. Fabro chose to close his third reflection with the same few lines of adoration used by St. Thomas Aquinas, in the presentation of the Creed: *To this blessed life - May the Lord Jesus Christ – blessed God forever – bring us! Amen!*

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### III. TWO SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

#### Two specific contributions of Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS to the Understanding and Living of the Spirit of the Stigmatine Founder, St. Gaspar Bertoni

#### A. HIS “CONTEMPORANEITY”

##### Introduction

[1] This present theme is not so much one of ‘Missiology’ [as developed by JP II, *Redemptoris Missio*], or ecclesiology [cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, as the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of Vatican II] – but seems to be an ever deeper response to the theology of Grace, Vocation, Witness. While the updating [*aggiornamento*] of the Church is an on-going process of supreme importance of assisting the Church to be ‘contemporary’ with its members, needs to go until the end of time. However, there is likewise an immediate challenge to live daily the *Contemporaneity* of Jesus Christ in the lives of us all. This is a concrete effort to respond to the universal call to Holiness, that challenge echoing down through the ages, through Vatican II in such eloquent fashion. There is an urgency to become ‘Christian’ more in deed, and not just in name: to reveal and not conceal the Face of God. A challenge attributed to Gandhi is: the doctrine of Christ has flowed and not fully penetrated!

[2] The role of the Church in the Modern World [GS, Introd.] needs to understand more deeply the Solidarity of the Church with the human family – and Jesus with every person [cf. GS 22] inviting deep-seated changes in the social order, attitudes, morals and religion, and greater shared effort to respond to the many questions of human beings. While the full dignity of a human being is infused within each one, implanted as a seed, is a task to be performed, a vocation to be followed, a gift to be developed. Responsibility needs to be accepted for the plague of modern atheism, and a concerted effort to develop the common good. The quest for the essential quality of all is not a campaign phrase, but the program of each one’s life. No authentic apostle can live as a ‘loner’ but Baptism calls each to transcend individualistic morality and spirituality and respond to the Lord: where is your brother sister? This is the day the Lord has made – now is the Hour!

[3] The Church both offers and receives from the world. In her dialogue with the world, the Church is invited to draw it to herself – and not to succumb to the reverse temptation – the arguments of which at times seem to be stronger! The Church has a role in assisting in the development of culture, authored by men and women of succeeding creations.

[4] The Gospel reminds all that each is to seek the reign of God today – and not to be overwhelmed by fears of the morrow – for the philosopher as tomorrow is ‘not yet, it is really ‘non-being’. Our essential choice is that of Eternity and the Absolute – and this renders eternity present here and now. For Fr. Fabro, this is the ‘metaphysical moment’. The choice of the Absolute must be made here and now, in the development of the image of God within needs to be intensified in each by the daily quest for God and the fulfillment of His Plan.

[5] The Incarnation is the salvific event – which challenges each person with a ‘crisis’ situation. Christ has become the MODEL, the MIRROR to be imitated here and now. A gnawing inclination draws one toward an imitation of the Model constitutes the contemporaneity of existence. Whoever chooses not to imitate Christ, or neglects seriously to do so, Christ never becomes ‘contemporary’ to him/her. The imitator of Christ is not one who merely admires Him, but rather is the one who feels a sense of some urgency in conforming oneself to Him in response to grace with which each cooperates in this life-long vocation.

[6] The Imitation of Christ is looked upon as a certain existential urgency – it is only with the help of Grace that there can be actuated in the Believer who seeks to be Faithful, as one seeking that conformity with the Paschal Mystery in daily living. The call is to live eternity with each passing day. The challenge is to make of this metaphysical moment one of existential renewal – we can do, be better. Today the faithful witness to Christ is urgent right now - as ‘tomorrow’ is not yet. Contemporaneity for the Christian means to respond to that God-given energy, to stimulate, intensify further one’s interiority. The Church is not made up of a ‘mass’ in the formal sense – but a united body of ‘Singles’, individuals of committed Faith. Those who attend the consolation of the Gospel cannot wait for tomorrow. The Christian call is to be docile to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in aspiring to live the Passion of Christ in His eternal self-giving, ‘immolation’ to the Father. Aimless

thinking, or wishful thinking, day-dreaming can never suffocate the genuinely spiritual person, the Faithful, who is constantly amazed at the Mercy of God.<sup>22</sup>

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1. 'Participation' in the nature of God, the Person [Mission, His Integral Paschal Mystery] of Jesus, the con-joined instrument of the Holy Trinity might be summed up as being one with Christ, sharing in his person, life, destiny and mission. Origen came close to this idea [*In Lev.* VII, § 2]. As the above texts consider in trying to understand how it is that Jesus here and now is suffering, handing over His broken body, pouring forth His Most precious Blood, still weeping over the Jerusalem of this time with its sins, for the daily rejection of His grace.<sup>23</sup>

a. As the Good Shepherd 'looks over us' – 'seeks us out' – in every moment, in the Merciful Redeemer 'sees' all our sins. With the Resurrection and with each Holy Communion, we receive Christ in glory, already at the right hand of the Father. On the Cross in His infused vision, He sees all who He willed to redeem. Our present should not be separated from our past and future – in God's eyes, *a thousand years are like a watch in the night* [cf. Ps 89; 2 P 3:8].

b. In some way, Christ renews mystically, shares [enables us to participate] to this day, in a real way, a share in the nature of God, in the dolor of His Passion and Death and the joys of his resurrection and ascension. The three elements of time [Past, Present, Future] coexist as distinct, but simultaneously in the human consciousness of the risen Christ – he sees all in the ark of eternity.

c. May Christ be said to continue suffering mystically, but also really - It is not as though Christ were distant, separated from us, on a high hill watching the movie of human history unfold - but in some mysterious manner He remains a part of it, offers a participation in His nature [cf. 2P 1:4], and presents Himself in it at every moment [GS 22]. Continuously Christ is present in His power, His grace, His Presence in and through grace in each human being to whom these extraordinary gifts are continuously offered.

d. This mystery cannot be presented in absolute clarity. However, Pascal in his contemplation of the Garden of Gethsemane does take a stab at it. He noted that

<sup>22</sup> For these thoughts, cf. Maurizio Schoepflin, *Fabro nei suoi scritti spirituali*, Segni [Rm]: EDIVI 2008, pp. 42, ffs., 89, ff.

<sup>23</sup> Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS, treats this matter at some length in his: *Gemma Galgani, testimone del soprannaturale*. Roma: CIPI [Passionists of Sts. John and Paul] 1989, pp. 64, ff. 144 - 149, etc.



Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world – and unlike the Apostles, we should not fall asleep in this perspective.

2. While His Agony in the Garden was localized in space and time, its effects and bearing, remain co-extensive to all the history of humanity. Christ suffered in these this 'Last Times'. With Fr. Fabro, we know that we in some way 'participate' in the great mystery of salvation – in some way, Christ still suffers in His flock. This actual presence of Christ in suffering does remain in some mysterious manner, in these ways:

a. The Contemporary Presence of Christ in Today's Church: Jesus suffers for, in and with us until the end of the world when the Son of Man will pronounce judgment on the Prince of this World – Satan will be eternally cast out, Babylon the Great will be defeated forever and the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven [cf. Rv 18:2, ff.; 21:1, ff.]

b. The Contemporary Presence of Believers, the Faithful, of each of us in the Paschal Mystery, presently in the sufferings Christ has offered for the salvation of the world. There is much evidence of a contemporaneity of solidarity and of Mercy for the sins of the world. This is a kind of existential continuation, a real-mystical on-going continuance, shared in His Passion, offered once and for all. In the Faithful there will be for all time a Contemporaneity of Repentance and of Expiation for all the sins in the entire world. There is an on-going actual conformity of the Passion of the Lord – in other words, our participation in the Lord's on-going and active reparation.

3. The Three Masses of Christ offer an on-going Contemplative theological reflection on the divine transcendence, and yet the impassibility of God - in these three aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation:

- in the mid-night Mass, the presence of Jesus Christ as the Eternal Word in his Eternal Birth, His 'pre-existence' [Jn 1:1];
- His Birth from Mary at Dawn, in the virginal of the Eternal Son – and the initial beginning of His Church;
- The on-going birth of Christ each day in the minds and hearts of the Faithful open through Divine Grace to His coming until the Second Advent. Here the divine transcendence and imminence come into contact and almost inter-twine but 'without confusion. In this on-going birth of Christ is

the passing over of each of the Faithful from sin to life – believing in Him is an initial realized eschatology.

4. There is no creature that could have this empowerment independently of offering the active capacity of this total out-pouring of the life of Christ into his/her heart, in which Christ spiritually generates Himself in the soul by grace. Each person is naturally capable of God, in a passivity that can only be activated by the First Cause. And only God knows what He would do in each of us were He not hindered by us in His Plan. This generation of God in each faithful soul is nothing other than His coming within us in a new manner.

5. With the Incarnation, and through all the mysteries of his Earthly Sojourn, the Eternal Word has contracted in Christ a particular situation of belonging to time. In some way, He pervades human history, is immersed in it. All of these ‘last Times’ are the opportune moment, the *kairos*, for salvation: NOW is the hour! This “New Situation” is a novelty with the Incarnate Word, pre-destined for “the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension” in order to save humanity.” This is achieved through a divinely chosen and freely accepted life-long, on-going, participation in the Paschal Mystery. It is through the Faithful’s life-long participation in the *Christus patiens* that one is saved for all eternity.

6. As is taught so convincingly in Fr. Fabro’s *Profili di Santi*<sup>24</sup>, the martyrs, mystics and saints all through the ages of the Church serve as teachers. Their way of life – often a contradiction to our own, a reproof [cf. Ws 2:14] – is a continuing teaching for a deeper grasp of the traditional catechesis. All of this is an opening up toward, and entering into a ‘new space for human freedom’. The philosophers remind us that ‘contingent’ verities are never capacitated so that a genuine believer could base decision for eternity upon them. The events of Sacred History, though, bring together a providential encounter between divine freedom and human liberty – the Man-God-Redeemer meets sinful hum is a novelty manner on His own terms and grounds – each instant in this unfolding of Providence, this is the ‘opportune moment’.

7. The question rightfully comes up: will the presence of Christ in this unique manner be with us even unto the consummation of this world? While “the world of the past is gone” [cf. Rv 21:4] – yet, Christ came to us in the supreme manner united hypostatically to a Divine Person. Thus, these are the “last times”. Hence, in ‘some

<sup>24</sup> Cornelio FABRO, *Profili di Santi*, Opere Complete 14. Roma: EDIVI 2008

mysterious manner” there is a meeting of the active in this present instant, and in each one that passes. The Paschal mystery in its integral dimensions continues making of each passing moment, something ‘new’. Sacred History is a constant ‘becoming’, ‘renewing’, ‘new creation’, in the Divine Plan of Salvation: each is the day that God has made, let us rejoice in it! Freedom sees to it that for every human being each person has the alternative possibility of being ‘for’ or ‘against’ God and His Word.

8. Would not this ‘real, mystical, special’ Divine perennial presence of the risen Lord not imply that in some way He rejoices in those who live His word, and is effected by those who do not in His body? With the astronomic distances, age and speed of the stars and planets above and around us, does not all this help to allow us to make these distinctions, and ponder them in depth through analogies, metaphors?

- physical time and historical time;
- cosmic time and human time –next to a light year a century is the blink of an eye – as is a period of time like the Babylonian Captivity – a thousand years and an hour in the night [cf. Ps 89];
- natural time and supernatural time.

9. With the first Advent of Christ – inwardly united to His Second Coming - this ‘Final Time’ seems to acquire a new interior relationship – this implies a real insertion of eternity, proper to time and the divinity – into the passing time of the earthly sojourn of the Incarnate Eternal Word of human nature. With the passing of His exterior historical, terrestrial presence, He does not disappear with the Resurrection, Ascension. The temporal ‘now’ seems to mimic in some distant manner, eternity – it is always ‘now’ as each moment passes! In the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, on the soteriological level, He offers to each one a new and real participation in His integral Paschal Mystery.

10. Even in His Resurrection and Ascension, Jesus ‘remains’ in an abiding, perennial presence in the Church, all days, even unto the consummation of this world [cf. Mt 28:10] . Is it too much to think that He is still able to suffer, grieve, weep with humanity [as in Auschwitz: Eli Weisel asks: ‘where is God????, as the 11 year old was hung, but proved to be too light to terminate his execution]. Is God ‘absent’ from victims of terrorism, kidnapping, violence??? Is He not specially present in the soul of the ‘Little Ones’ – especially those making their First Confession prior to their First

Communion – from this sacramental experience they will not necessarily acquire a guilty conscience – but the Communion of Saints might indeed be nourished by their Holy Innocence<sup>25</sup>. Each human being is born on a date in history – but through grace ascends beyond history into the eon of Christianity.

**11.** The risen Christ now in glory, is beyond all suffering – even though theologians [like Origen, might be convinced that there is ‘suffering in God’ – wherever there is Love, there is pain – and God IS love]. In the sorrowful mysteries, Jesus suffered once and for all and mercy now super-abounds [Rm 5] – where sin is present, mercy is super-abundant. He suffered once and for all, shedding the last drop of His blood; hence, He no longer suffers as man. While the seeds of the Resurrection and Ascension are already planted in the human soul by the Eucharistic-health giving antidote healing the venom of the snake [cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch], time and destiny in God’s grace leads that to fruition. In the knowledge of vision – Christ foresaw His own Passion and Death – and in the vision flowing from His hypostatic union<sup>26</sup>, He sees all whom He has redeemed.

**12.** As He suffered in his humanity once and for all – the Saints, Mystics, Martyrs and graced human beings – may ‘experience’ some of that awesome suffering. The risen Christ is present in each of the suffering, in all in the state of grace – and asking to come into all others. One of the early revelations of God’s Name has been: Emmanuel – ‘God is with us’ right now. This world is present to Jesus in an extensive and intensive manner – every action is present to Him in the quality of the ‘present’ moment – He is present in all the passing moments of time.

**13.** The continuing ‘mystical phenomenon’ is a testimony of present reality: where sin abounds, grace super-abounds! There is an intimate bond between the interior sacrifice and the external ritual, and this carries through life – making of our lives an oblation to the Mercy of God [cf. Rm 12:1]. While the struggle between appearance and reality goes on in the lived Spiritual Combat, this is true as well of the present moment and the eternal ‘Now’. The ‘Mystical Phenomenon’ while its persistence in our won time and history is surprising, it is of a supernatural reality, superior to most other phenomena in present day history – theology wonders about the ontological Intentionality. It is necessary for the frenetic presence remain interiorly connected to, bonded with Eternal Peace. We cannot doubt that the glorified humanity of Jesus

<sup>25</sup> Fr. Fabro offers a profound reflection on Peguy’s Holy Innocents’ [“ch. Peguy: Il mistero dei Santi Innocenti”], in: *Momenti dello Spirito*. Vol II. Assisi: Sala Franciscana di Cultura. ‘*Repara domum Mea*’, pp. 212-218

<sup>26</sup> cf. CCC # 468 – Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, 1943, D-S # 3812

remains still a Participant in all the eschatological tension of Salvation History. St. Thomas offers this line:

**Reply to Objection 2:** Although corporeal things are said to be in another as in that which contains them, nevertheless, spiritual things contain those things in which they are; as the soul contains the body. Hence also God is in things containing them; nevertheless, by a certain similitude to corporeal things, it is said that all things are in God; inasmuch as they are contained by Him. [cf. I, q. 8, a. 1 ad 2 um]

**14.** This divine presence in all things is said by St. Thomas to be most immediate! [cf. I Sent., d. 27, q.1, a 1, spec. ad 4]. St. Thomas adds two new manners of God's presence in souls – that of grace and that of the special presence of Christ by a certain union, i.e., according to the *esse* of the hypostasis of the Passion of the Word. The Principle of Participation which has been called conformity, contemporaneity, with Christ finds its most awesome, perhaps even terrifying component in the phenomenon which Catholic Mystical theology called the Dark Night of the Soul<sup>27</sup>.

**15. Eucharistic Dimensions:** while there is a 'reserved' kind of participation in the sins of the Church in those rare recipients of the stigmata of Christ – all of the baptized are baptized 'into' the integral mystery of the Incarnation. While there are truly special vocations, charisms in the Church – and these recipients of en become 'Models of the living Faith.' Their lives are exemplary – so often in different ways and means, they have experienced a unique participation, an existential actuation of Christ's Passion. For so many of the Faithful, in different ways, the mystery of salvation truly is translated into the lived mystery of the Cross.

**16.** The cooperating believers experience a particular 'presence' of Christ in the bosom of the Church, a presence that is renewed, continued, of the suffering Christ. We often need to remember the formulae of the Creed: *He suffered and died and was resurrected on account of our sins*. There is no known formula of all this has proved 'total' – the ocean cannot fit into the hole in the beach! There is a kind of example drawn by philosophical intentionality - that most immanent, intimate touch of the suffering Christ – this is always an exception witness of the supernatural. to serve as a 'Model' 'example' for the rest of the faithful as with the aluminum maker, he must be able to see his image in the metal before it is ready. There is in all this a persevering re-living, a re-taking, re-presenting a constant continuation of Christ in a

<sup>27</sup> cf. Doctoral Thesis of Fr. Karol Wojtyła, *Faith in John of the Cross*. Ignatius

human life. Due to the integral Paschal Mystery lived by the Lord, humanity is offered a 'qualitative leap' ahead – we are lead by a well trained Son of God, exegete of the Father, His '*Rabbi*'. His translator in the Eternal Word incarnate in time – Who has provided the Church with the measure of God in a human nature<sup>28</sup>.

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## B. THE 'MODEL-PRINCIPLE'

### St. Gaspar Bertoni's 'Model-Principle' – a closer look

Fr. Fabro studied deeply The 'Contemporaneity', or Imitation as the Principle of Christian 'Model' according to Kierkegaard: this is the 'Single' person before God and Christ

Here the reflection is on the strictly Christological principle: the Christian ought to become a contemporary in life with Christ, and each one ought to witness this against the 'Mob' [*Maengde*] who condemned Christ. The Christian must be the 'Single' person, in opposition to the 'others' and to the 'Mass' [crowd] and to being a 'number'<sup>29</sup>.

The 'Mob' is, in human life, the principle of evil. The 'Single' person turns toward the Crowd in order to break it up, to reduce it to 'Singles', and their communication is for the 'Single' person<sup>30</sup>. To hold on to the Mob as a valid source, is to deny God. The 'Single' can [and should] be every person – this is the Christian principle and to the 'Singles', was dedicated, the '*Edifying Discourses*', the only writings that Kierkegaard published in his own name. It is the 'Single' person who, in the masses, constitutes the qualitative difference'. For this reason, Kierkegaard admires and esteems in the Catholic Church the worship of the Saints [those glorious men and women, *de Hellege*]. They are the ones who provide the exact criterion of that which the New Testament Christianity really is. It is for this reason that merely mortal humanity would like to put them to death [4056]<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS, treats this matter at some length in his: *Gemma Galgani, testimone del soprannaturale*. Roma: CIPI [Passionists of Sts. John and Paul] 1989, pp. 64, ff. 144 - 149, etc.

<sup>29</sup> On the existential level, these are all synonyms. (Cfr. N.J. Cappelorn, *Index dei «Papirer»*, Copenhagen 1976, Bd. XV, pp. 234b-235a, 312a-315a.

<sup>30</sup> *Det Enkelte*.

<sup>31</sup> These bracketed numbers refer to the Italian Edition, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of the *Papirer* (Brescia 1981 ss.).

### **The 'Model Principle' in Fr. Bertoni's Spiritual Diary [July 1808-June 1813]:**

However, it is above all, in the thirty years and more of his last illness, that Fr. Bertoni was ascending 'the Ladder of Paradise' which for him consisted in the total immolation of himself with his attention riveted continuously on his divine Model fixed to the Cross. Christ, the Incarnate and Crucified, drew him forward in 'that thirst for suffering'. He, too, confined to his bed of real suffering for a thirty year period, he lived his mission in that segregation of love, day in and day out, engaged in 'repeating' and copying within himself the pathway of immolation and of similarity with his Divine Model. It is true, as is seen, that he had recommended, for the profit of his own soul, the choice of his Model', which he found in 'a saint of his own vocation' and it seems that he had chosen above all through the admonition he experienced in ecstasy, at the altar of St. Ignatius, a model of universal commitment for Christ in building up and defending the Church from her enemies of yesterday and today, outside and within the Church.

But, Fr. Bertoni's 'witness' has a special character, all his own. His recurring serious illnesses which took up almost the entire space of his long life, give testimony to this. During all this, he entertained visits from people in powerful positions, prelates, humble priests and people of the world ... none of these visits could interrupt the testimony of the Cross in his body lacerated as the 'Suffering Servant of the Lord', described by Isaiah. In all of this, he kept his attention riveted on the Martyr-Saints, whom he had proposed for himself that of imitating them with that fullness and totality of spirit, the amazes us. At the same time, this witness of his exalts us in filial joy and the special light that was shed on the mystery of the pilgrim Church in a *wicked world*.

The river of Fr. Bertoni's life and grace had been God, one and only, and totally in the lived Mirror of the Word. The texts of his Spiritual Diary authorize one to speak of spiritual, authentic experiences, but endowed with surprising characteristics. They did not follow some fixed trajectory, and they present themselves right away on a rather sublime level. And they flow along in fits and starts as sudden bursts of flames from a volcano. As these texts proceed along, rather than pausing to take delight in them, they seem to explode on the scene and at the end, even his very words seem to have been interrupted. Would this be the effect of the divine wave overflowing its banks into his spirit? And, as we have noted, divine communications pertain to a period that is relatively brief and they follow, as was pointed out, a clear trajectory of a clear expression.



For almost fifty years, Fr. Bertoni would hide in silence, the recurring phenomena of his interior life; it is true that this would burst forth in his sermons, in his correspondence, and in the guidance to souls of every age and social level – from the young men in the Oratory, to priests and bishops, from those condemned to death as well as the founders of religious families, including the great Anthony Rosmini. The last mentioned was able to declare that at the beginning of the foundation of his Institutes, he went to see Fr. Bertoni who: ... *after having seen the rules, he provided me with a most efficacious encouragement, dissipating my every doubt. So it is that in some manner, this enterprise has also been born in their house*<sup>32</sup>. For reasons such as this, Fr. Bertoni was called an ‘angel of counsel.’

Such experiences were most vibrant, much like spurts and flames, which reached the depths of one’s soul. In this, our conclusion to these reflections may serve as a kind of a confirmation, just a few brief hints would suffice: the characteristic is that they have as their center the Eucharistic mystery, was though his life something like an expansion, or indeed, an effect of the Real Presence. The forms of this ‘divine contact’ are many and varied. Here are some examples: “... many tears of compunction and affections” – ‘a most vivid sentiment in the presence of our Lord [after Mass] and the sentiment further of offering myself to suffer with Him... experiencing very sublime reflections concerning God, but a profound recognition of myself.’

In ecstasy at the altar of St. Ignatius [September 15, 1808] he wrote”... much devotion and recollection with a great internal sweetness and some tears...” – and this was followed by energetic references of invitation addressed to the Saint. He experienced a powerful stimulus to work with perfection and a vivid sentiment of the fragility of human existence. He wrote: “... I experienced a strong movement to follow more closely our Lord at the cost of my own life for His poverty and shame He endured. During his teaching of Catechism he felt that ... there were opened for him those paths even to being able to arrive at a persuasive lesson. This almost seems like the level of a rapture.

The visit to St. Ignatius’ altar was decisive for the foundation of his Congregation: “... Onward soldiers of Christ, bind yourselves with boldness.’ There follows then a powerful thought on death. His catechism experience of September was strong ‘union with the divine Son.’ As a kind of preamble there were opened for

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<sup>32</sup> Written from Stresa, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1846. Cfr. C. Fabro, *L'enigma Rosmini*, Napoli 1988, p. 68.

him very easily those paths even to providing a most persuasive lesson. There followed then certain thrusts of 'suffering and being rejected for Him'. And he experienced an understanding what a great gift it was to suffer something for the love of God.' The most intense, though, seems to be that of October 9<sup>th</sup>, which needs to be reread often in its entirety for the depths of his experience of the supernatural in this young priest already having reached a high point in loving contemplation.

Likewise, for the intensity of the impression these stimuli toward holiness inundated his soul reached even to the ultimate purification of consuming love. It is just something of a pity and a real loss and disappointment for us to find his very sudden interruption [actually in the middle of a word] of that 'Story of a Soul' of this excellent testimony of his, enraptured by grace toward that two – fold and contemporaneous giving of himself to the priestly ministries and to that union with his beloved Model.

Also the life of Fr. Bertoni, like that of not a few other Saints, followed on the supernatural destruction of that school of English deism and of French Illuminism, of the 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This life of this Saint is rather the source of much light and comfort for Catholic piety. It is particularly relevant today for the Church which is hemmed in on every side by blatant secularism, even of the most delicate fibers of theology and ascetical practice.

We can recollect the supernatural experience of our Founder in a few words, which he pronounced very close to his death and after an entire lifetime spent in a real laceration of his flesh, in a response he gave to the Infirmarian who was taking care of him: *I need to suffer!*<sup>33</sup>

This remark implies a total conformity to Christ crucified. This is not simple acceptance, nor resignation, nor passive acceptance. This rather is an expression of his desire to suffer anew an increase, an intensification, to descend into the very depths of suffering and love for Christ Crucified. This is the supreme testimony on the part of a soul regarding the supernatural reality which, at its culmination, is the Folly of the Cross.

And here concludes our salutary, fragmentary analysis of the Saint from his own documents. This is certainly not self-seeking, reticent or vague comments – they

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<sup>33</sup> This particular is taken from the first biography of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni: : «Notizie biografiche intorno al sacerdote don Gaspare Bertoni» di don Gaetano Giacobbe » (Proc. Apost., vol. II, p. 644).

are rather rich and splendid in character. Fr. Bertoni could indeed say with the Apostle: *And I make up for what is lacking to the passion of Christ* [Col 1:24] - And this would be complemented by this other line, *our conversation is in heaven* [Ph 3:20]. These would be all part of that mysterious halo provided by that formula cited at the beginning, of Pseudo-Denis, for the disciple Hierotheus: ... 'He is taught not only by learning, but also suffering the divine realities...'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> S. Th. I-II, 68, a. 6 ad 3um; a. 2. This is the theological reflection on the texts from 'Etica Eudemia'.

## CONCLUSION

**Today – This Day – Now is the Hour!**

**Meditation. Death. The past no longer exists. The Future has not yet come.**

Only the Present is here and it is in my power. To live from day to day, even from the morning until noon, and from noontime until the evening, and to do everything with the greatest possible perfection. Perhaps there will be no other time to glorify God.”[p. 214].

**May 24, 1810:**

*Today, therefore, if you shall hear His voice... harden not your hearts as those ones did, to whom He swore in His wrath... if they will enter into His rest.* <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. also MP Sept. 17, 1808; May 17, 1809.