

Mundelein Seminary
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Our Lady of Good Counsel
April 26, 2016

Dear Stigmatine Lay Member,

This year, Pentecost will be celebrated on May 15, 2016. After taking some counsel on this, it seemed like sharing Fr. José Alberto Moura's doctoral these, *The Holy Spirit in the Chartism of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni* could be a help for all of us Stigmatines, to prepare spiritually for Pentecost. Father Moura was the youngest confrere in our Stigmatine history ever to be elected Father General. He is presently the Archbishop of Montes Claros, MG in Brazil.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers very briefly to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and just mentions the Gift of Counsel, [cf. CCC ## 1830, f.] - a heart to hear conversation first with God in contemplation, and then a heart to heart exchange of God's Word which has been contemplated, is another way of expressing St. Gaspar's ideal only to hand on only what we have first prayed over ourselves. This particular liturgical commemoration of Our Lady [often invoked through the month of May] is chosen also remembering an experience of long years ago – in the spring of 1953 - the American Stigmatine Students studying in Rome went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel, in Genazzano, Italy near Rome.

St. Thomas Aquinas provides a rather lengthy treatment of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit¹ - in one classical study, the treatment of the Gift of Counsel covers from pp. 155-171. For St. Thomas, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are among the effects of the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit². Counsel is that Gift which perfects the virtue of Prudence. This Gift of the Spirit is a habit of the soul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, helping one to judge rightly that which must be done in view of the goal that God sets for us all, viz., eternal life with Him³.

Giving counsel is a prime Stigmatine apostolate of God's word, "evangelical conversation", as St. Ignatius referred to it. There is an excellent and truly inspiring biography of St. Gaspar Bertoni, has not yet been published – but hopefully, soon will be. In this magnificent work, Professor Ruggero Simonato entitles his

¹ John of St. Thomas, *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, Sheed & Ward 1951.

² Barthelemy Froget, OP, *The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*. Newman Press 1952, pp. 263, ff.

³ Antonio Royo Marín, OP, *The Theology of Christian Perfection* NY: Christian Perfection 1962, pp. 373, ff.

biographical study as: *With Meekness and Joy: A Profile of Gaspar Bertoni a Man of Counsel*.

In this wonderful work, Professor Simonato⁴ speaks of St. Gaspar as being available as best he could to the very last days of his life, to the Church in his “Any Ministry of the Word of God Whatsoever” [a formula derived from St. Ignatius by St. Gaspar]. Spiritual Direction was just about the last aspect of the Apostolic Mission that St. Gaspar could offer just prior to his death on Jun 12, 1853.

From his bed of almost daily atrocious pain and discomfort, St. Gaspar continued to read – or to have someone read to him. He would listen and meditate in the depths of his soul, even when he could no longer write. When even movement in bed became difficult for him, he would still welcome anyone who needed his help, or anyone who had just wanted to visit. He proved to be something of a ray of light on the night of those needing some direction and encouragement, emitting the light of his biblical and spiritual counsel.

His spiritual direction was modeled primarily on that of St. Ignatius of Loyola through his classical *Spiritual Exercises*. The experts who have studied St. Gaspar in this aspect of his Apostolic Mission, also noted a similarity in his approach to offering spiritual direction, also much in accord with the gentle loving method of St. Francis de Sales. St. Gaspar’s discourse was highly seasoned with biblical and patristic insights – he seemed to strive to lead those willing to follow his advice into the very depths of their own humanity. He always maintained that *in the depths of one’s nothingness, one will always find God*.

St. Gaspar is described in this phase of his life with his loving, learned style of spiritual paternity, with great cordiality and much humor in his face to face meetings. As a spiritual father, St. Gaspar numbered some outstanding directees both men and women. Among the women were the foundresses such as Leopoldina Naudet, Teresa Compostrina, St. Magdalene of Canossa and others. The future Cardinal of Verona, Luigi di Canossa – a contemporary of the English Cardinal Newman even as an old man, nourished a high esteem for St. Gaspar who so nourished the old Cardinal’s boyhood years. There would be St. Daniel Comboni, Founder of the African Missionary Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Verona - and also the renowned philosopher, Fr. Anthony Rosmini⁵. Fr. Bertoni’s message was always one that inspired inner peace, and encouraged holiness in all who came to him.

⁴ *Con mtezza e gioia. Profilo di Gaspare Bertoni, uomo di consiglio*. To be published – Part V. *Nel cuore della città*, # 3.

⁵ All the women and men mentioned in this paragraph are briefly presented in Appendix I.

So, this year, for our month of Mary reflection, we offer the wonderful doctoral thesis of Archbishop José Alberto Moura, CSS. From this brilliant work, we will see the workings of the Holy Spirit in St. Gaspar – his deep interior instincts of the Spirit – and the awesome sense of hope that he expressed by his long life, as one steeped in hope for the Mercy of God. Let us ask our Lady of Good Counsel for help in being attentive to the whispered insights of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely yours in the Healing Stigmata of Jesus Christ,

Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS
Acting Spiritual Director

Appendix I:

Brief Biographies

Appendix II:

The Holy Spirit in the Charism of Father Gaspar Bertoni – doctoral thesis of Fr. José Alberto Moura, CSS – 1988.

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