

Mundelein Seminary
1000 East Maple Avenue
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July 22, 2016
In Celebration of the New Feast
of St. Mary Magdalene!

Dear Stigmatine Laity,

On this date, July 22nd, 2016, for the first time, the Liturgical commemoration in this Year of Mercy, of St. Mary Magdalene has been raised to the level of a liturgical “feast’. This converted sinner was the first one to be informed by the Lord Himself that He had risen unto the remission of our sins [Rm 4:25], and that she was to communicate that Good News with the Church – of which she was a privileged member, due to her unique presence as part of the “Christological Constellation” of New Testament saints, drawn ever toward the center of gravity, the Merciful Redeemer. She was personally chosen for a Mission of Mercy and Hope by the Lord Himself – as He had first risen in her heart by her conversion and informed her before anyone else.

And once again, this is a date vitally meaningful for me personally – as, on this date 60 years ago, I celebrated my First Solemn Mass at St Anthony’s Church in North Woburn MA. My own vocation and that of several of my contemporaries - [3 of us of those years who served as altar boys there are still serving as active priests!] - were one of the visible results, it seems to me, - of the challenging priestly ministry of some wonderful parish priests assigned there over the late war years of the 1940’s, of our growing up there in that parish. [Hoping that I am not “over-doing it” in observing personal memories and anniversaries, the Stigmatine priesthood has been a great gift to me! My only reason for my many observances of all these anniversaries is a request for your continuing kind prayers for me!].

As these wonderful memories succeed one another, I am reminded of the Stigmatine Vocation in itself. As I am reminded of my first coming to the community – and the gradual understanding taught to me of the inspiring elements of St. Gaspar Bertoni’s wonderful ideal of the merciful Apostolic Mission for the Assistance service] of Bishops. As we all strive to appreciate more this great gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, I have been much inspired in recent months by a yet unpublished biography of St. Gaspar, a thoroughly researched document, now awaiting publication in Italy, written by a renowned Professor Ruggero Simonato – he is not a Stigmatine but one much inspired by St. Gaspar! His work is entitled: *With*

Meekness and Joy – A Profile of Gaspar Bertoni. A Man of Counsel. In this voluminous manuscript, Professor Simonato offers well over 10 pages dedicated to the theme: 'Along the Challenging Path of a Common Life: (the writing of) the Constitutions' by St. Gaspar.

Professor Simonato points out that for anyone reading the Original Constitutions of St. Gaspar, it would immediately become evident that this work is truly a tight web of sublime citations, an analytical mosaic of inspiration, summarizing the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Alphonsus Liguori. From Stigmatine sources we know that Fr. Bertoni wrote these 315 Constitutions during the last phase of his life, culminating a lived a community experience of nearly 25 years of Stigmatine life together with his companions. This small booklet bears much study and prayer for us, as it is a compendium of a life of atrocious physical suffering and his undying hope in Gods healing mercy.

In his rather long life of 76 years - 37 years of which were in the Stigmatine community - for so much of this time, he was a quiet inspiration behind a wide variety of competent apostolates – beginning with teaching school, preparing the way for the word of God in the hearts of the many poor student who came – also in preparing future priests and religious – assisting the bishops through a very broad, but qualified ministry of the Word of God, these early were much dedicated in inspiring children toward their responsible presence in the future Church. Among these, was a young John Lenotti [the future second Superior General of the Stigmatines - trained personally and with much loving care, by his Founder. Jesus' words' and his challenging words found now in the Stigmatine Coat of Arms are Euntes Docete – in the Last chapter of Matthew's Gospel, this is Jesus' Apostolic Missionary Discourse after His Resurrection – *go forth and communicate God's word!* All of this was geared toward drawing in one's own life a portrait of Jesus Christ.

When it came to providing a description of the 'content' of the Apostolic Mission, Professor Simonato notes [Foot=note # 1177] that there have been two opinions: that of Fr. Marani who saw in his time the need to emphasize more the preaching of Parish Missions - while Fr. Lenotti [the first Novice Master after St. Gaspar himself], in his discourses to future Stigmatines, broadened the range of the Apostolic Mission in the light of St. Gaspar's own use of a phrase taken verbally from the Formula of St. Ignatius of Loyola: *Quodcumque Verbi Dei Ministerium .. quocumque in diocese et mundo* ["any ministry of the word of God whatsoever, and anywhere in the diocese and world"].

Professor Simonato's summary of all this is his view that in the final analysis, Fr. Gaspar's Original Constitutions were meant to provide the spiritual substance of St. Gaspar's modus vivendi, way of life, in the following an evangelical Model – rather than being a juridical booklet that was specify its activities in a fixed manner. St. Gaspar emphasized the on-going interior spiritual formation and conversion typical of a committed Follower of Jesus Christ, ever open, docile and “abandoned” to the most abundant inspirations of the Holy Spirit. In St. Gaspar's Original Constitutions, in this booklet was drawn out for the adherents the main points involved in this manner of living, its “spirituality’.

In the Stigmatine document for this month (enclosed), I will offer my own much studied reflections on St. Gaspar's development of the “Apostolic Mission” in the Introductory section – followed by a fresh approach of the same [in Italian] offered by Fr. Bruno Facciotti, present Vicar General of the Stigmatines. Let us pray for and with one another – through the intercession of St. Gaspar Bertoni – and of St. Mary Magdalene – for our deeper commitment to the Mercy of God in our own acceptance of God's will.

Sincerely yours in the Mercy of God,

Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS
Acting Spiritual Director

Appendices:

- *Compendium Rude* – study by Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS
- *Compendium Rude* – study by P. Bruno Facciotti, CSS (in Italian)