

Mundelein Seminary  
1000 East Maple Avenue  
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September 30, 2016  
64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our departure for Rome!

Dear Stigmatine Laity,

On this date in 1952, the North American Professed students left New York by boat [AN OLD Italian liner, the SATURNIA – mentioned by Winston Churchill in his classic history of the World War II years!] for Rome and our studies there! By a strange happenstance, we landed first in Genoa – from which Christopher Columbus has been reputed to have departed in 1492 – to discover America! We had it backward but for many of us, the Roman years were indeed a blessing to which we often look back with much nostalgia. There were 26 of us who sailed from New York on that date, with the late Fr. Charles Egan, who had been appointed the 'Prefect of the Professed Students.'

During these recent weeks, we all rejoiced in hearing of the accounts of the meeting of the Stigmatine Lay Members in Rome, Verona and Milan, and the royal retreatment they received from our Italian confreres who hosted them all. What we have all learned in all this history and sharing with one another is that St. Gaspar Bertoni used Eucharistic terminology in writing his Original Constitutions. He said the Stigmatine is called to work, serving the Bishops, for the Church, anywhere in the diocese and world [CF # 5], striving to develop as a community some real expertise in some aspect of the very broad field For any service of the word of God whatsoever [cf. CF # 185]. The term St. Gaspar [CF # 2] used to express his own total. This like the offertory of the Host, offered for the Consecration of God's power, and the Holy Communion with God and our fellow human beings. Abandonment to God through the Church as *obsequium* from Rm 12:1: makes of your bodies [i.e., lives] an *oblation* to God's Mercy!].

The documents of the Second Vatican Council reminded us that there is one Priesthood of Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ – but two ways of sharing in it:

- on the one hand, there is the Priesthood of the Baptized – empowering each of the baptized to make an oblation of their own lives through their own self-giving in life;
- then there is the Priesthood Holy Orders, in which the ordained priest acts in the Name of Jesus Himself especially in Eucharistic Consecration, and Sacramental Absolution in the sacrament of Penance: - My Body – My Blood – I absolve you.

During the international gathering of the Stigmatine Laity earlier this month, our historians remind us that St. Gaspar was ordained a priest on September 20, 1800. As a rather lowly contribution to this second centenary year of Stigmatine life – and to call to mind these dates in our Stigmatine history, with this letter I submit two documents for your reflection:

- the actual, official Minutes of the meetings of the first 18 General Chapters from 1871-1911. These Minutes were translated some years ago from the Stigmatine General Archives in Rome and I do not think they have every appeared before in any language for those interested in Stigmatine History - [It is interesting to note that the great Jesuit Society did this some years ago, and published their Minutes, as: "For Matters of Greater Moment" - an expression from St. Ignatius' written Constitutions] - The First 30 - A Brief History of a Translation of the Decrees -1994];
- the second document we are sending is a study on these Chapter Minutes, zeroing in on two points: CF # 5; # 185 – epitomized in Latin as quocumque [anywhere] and quodcumque – any ministry of the word of God whatsoever. Three good men left the Stigmatines at the time in an around the 12<sup>th</sup> General Chapter [of 1890]. They assumed some prominence in other communities: Francis Sogaro [Archbishop], Joseph Sembianti [Director General of the Comboni Missionaries] and Dominic Vicentini [Superior General of the Scalabrini community]. That period was a difficult one in our history.

With this letter, we send to you the Minutes of all the General Chapters from 1871-1911 – and also the reflections on the History of the 12<sup>th</sup> General Chapter and its trials. This is sent not so much for your information, but your good prayer that we Stigmatines might continue seeking a fuller way of seeking the perfect work of the Priesthood [cf. CF # 7].

In these gigantic tasks of Stigmatine History, I owe a debt of gratitude to the Stigmatine Laity member, Mrs. Tereza Lopes, of Plano, Texas.

Respectfully submitted:

Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS  
Acting Spiritual Director