

Mundelein Seminary
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October 28 2016
Sts. Simon & Jude, Apostles & Missionaries

Very dear Stigmatine Lay Member,

In less than two weeks – this coming November 4th, 2016, the Stigmatine Community will celebrate its 200th birthday. As a grateful souvenir of this happy occurrence, we submit for this month's Stigmatine reflection, our "Stigmatine Calendar" – that notes some events [major and minor!] of the community from 1777-1911. These community diary notes were jotted down over the years, with remarks for almost every day of the month, for every day of the year. One example is as follows – On what happened on other November 4'ths over the years:

NOVEMBER 4

- 1794:** Francis Peter Faber Pacificus Leonard Cartolari was born, the son of Peter [future Stigmatine].
- 1816:** The birthday of the Congregation. On this day, Fr. Bertoni, Fr. John Mary Marani and Brother Paul Zanoli came to the Stimate to take up residence. The beginnings of the Congregation.
- 1862:** The Novitiate was transferred from the Stimate to the *Trinità* for the second time. Fr. Marani, Superior General, blessed the House, that had been renovated. Fr. Vincent Vignola celebrated the Mass. The *Triinità* had been vacant for the past three years due to the work going on there. There were three Professed Students: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro and Louis Morando [these last two would pass away as Consecrated Bishops]. There were four Novice Students: Andrew Sterza, Joseph DeVai, Joseph Sembianti and one other. There were also several Brothers there: Bro. Zanoli, Infirmarian and laundry; Bro. Nicora, Porter and tailor; Bro. Reali, Cook. Among the Aspirants were Anthony Caucigh, Pio Gurisatti and James Marini.
- 1866:** This was the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation. It was the first Sunday of November. The day was celebrated both at the Stimate and at Villazzano, Trent, where the Students of the Congregation were living 'in exile.'
- 1885:** On this date, Bishop Riboldi [later Cardinal], welcomed the Congregation of the Stimate into his Diocese. The Congregation had come to Pavia to assist with the Oratory of St. Aloysius; to conduct a

night school for workers' and to preach Missions throughout the Diocese as long as this did not conflict with the other functions there.

In writing [over 50 years ago] his very authoritative biography of St. Gaspar Bertoni, Fr. Joseph Stofella [one of our greatest community biographers and historians] noted a minor characteristic shift in life. He underwent a kind of "character" change that brought him from a "happy-go-lucky" lad, to one who was more reflective and pensive. In Fr. Stofella's view this change seems to have been occasioned by domestic difficulties of his parents, and by a number of deaths in the Bertoni household, during St. Gaspar's early teen years. One death in particular might have been included here – that of a three years old sister, Matilde, who died of miliary fever- which afflicted the Founder himself for years to come . The term Fr. Stofella used to describe St. Gaspar's early shift, was "fugacità", meaning a keen awareness of the passing nature of time – as noted in a well-known Latin saying: *Tempus fugit!* The Saint's spiritual writings offer us a reflection:

17th SEPTEMBER 1808

[49.] Meditation. Death. The past is no more. The future has not yet arrived. Only the present is here. And it is in my hands. Let me live day after day, or rather from morning to midday and from midday to evening. Let me do every single thing with all possible perfection. Perhaps I will have no more time in which to glorify God.

This is a reflection on the Meditation of the day during this course of Retreat which lasted 8 days. The previous day he had meditated on the *Foundation* (the Purpose of Human Life) and on Sin. On the 17th he meditated on the *Last Things* and first: on Death. After the text which he heard from the Retreat Master and ended with: *only the present is here - it is in my hands!* He then added his personal resolution. This resolution has its source in a reading of 'Rodriguez':

... Do not take into account anything except TODAY. It is the usual temptation of the Devil to frighten us with the prospect of having to persevere for the whole stretch of a long life. This happened to St. Ignatius at Manresa. But who is not able to make an effort only for one day?

To this he adds a charming text from Genesis, about Jacob trying to win Rachel to himself. This could become a norm of life and it is chosen as a conclusion of the whole chapter. This is the text [These seven years were] seemed to him but a few days, *because of the greatness of his love!* (Gen 29, 20)...¹

¹ Rodriguez, Part I, Tract 2, c. 6.

To come to practical conclusions, Fr. Gaspar restricted his terms to half a day... which is also a suggestion of St. Ignatius for the practice of the *Particular Examen*. As far as the original text to which Fr. Gaspar referred, it is from St. Augustine's *Confessions*:

... This is what is called time. The past is not ours, nor can it be recalled. The future is not yet and will perhaps never be. Only the present belongs to us. But, alas! We scarcely have it, because it runs away even though we can keep it for ourselves. In fact in the same time that it starts to be it passes or rather it has passed away...²

The good use of time! Fr. Gaspar makes a practical resolution for holiness in the spirit of the most pure love. What matters for him is only the greater glory of God.

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28th APRIL 1811

[167.] Watch and pray: This summarizes all the advices of Scripture and of the Gospel.

WATCH: This means we have to be fully awake and strong: but without weapons. One could not resist if attacked: we shall be conquered.

PRAY: This means to be well armed, but asleep. If we are to be attacked we shall be stripped of our arms and killed by treachery.

Watch and pray! This is a man who is strong, awake and well armed. He won't be conquered.

Along with being our bicentenary, November is also the Month of the Holy Souls! Let us pray for our deceased, relatives and benefactors – and Stigmatine Lay members.

Respectfully in the Merciful Lord,

Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS
[Acting Spiritual Director]

² Fr. Stofella found this text of Augustine's *Confessions* 11, in: Fr. Vincent Houdry, SJ, *Preacher's Library*. Remondini: Venice - a book much used by our early Confreres.