



## LIVING OUR INDENTITY OF BROTHERS IN CREATIVE FIDELITY

### INTRODUCTION

You examined during this month the identity of the Brother's vocation, which is always an identity to build, but which is mostly an appeal addressed to a person or persons by God, a call that waits for a response. It is this response that concerns us. In some way, I think you have better perceived this identity because of your experience of community life. This experience of ecclesial communion lived between Brothers from various Institutes is unique and will be fruitful. It is already for you, a better education that all the words heard and exchanged.

I was asked to talk about how we can build our Brother's identity in creative fidelity in a word of constant change. No doubt you have already addressed this issue, in one day or another. For it is at the heart of our vocation as Brothers. I cannot bring something new about the media, digital culture in which we live. No doubt, you know better than me the languages of our time, the languages you use in your own mission. What I'll try to bring you therefore is, with the help of my reading, my own way of understanding what we, Brothers, must do today to be faithful to our mission and our vocation.

My point is mainly related to the consecrated Life, especially that of the Brothers. In doing so, I will try to suggest a ways for you make your own analysis in order to be truly Brothers, like Jésus, in the heart of this world.

Before I finish my introduction, I would also insist on the reality of faith in which you are immersed. For it seems to me the most important experience here. Upon you, as upon his disciples, he prayed that you be deeply united (Jn 17:21-23) :

*"May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I in you.  
So that they also be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.  
And I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one.  
With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will recognise that it was you who sent me, and that you have loved them, as you have loved me."*

This text is a real lesson for us this morning as we approach the subject of the identity of the Brother in creative fidelity. It focuses on the fundamental identity of the disciples: To be Brothers, being part of a brotherly people, an image of the Trinity. But this is not a static and aimless identity. The purpose of this unity is that the world may believe that Jesus is Lord.

### **Plan of my intervention :**

- A. What do we mean by creative fidelity to our vocation as Brothers ?
- B. Some fundamental issues in the light of the World of God and the texts of the Church.
- C. Consecrated Life in the modern world.  
    The digital culture  
    The world  
    The experience.
- D. Conclusion in the form of some attitudes to build our identity of Brothers in creative fidelity.

## 1. WHAT DO MEAN BY CREATIVE FIDELITY TO OUR IDENTITY AS BROTHERS?

When we speak of creative fidelity, two important aspects of our vocation, like every vocation, are highlighted:

The first one is the adaptation to the circumstances of life, the ability to do something new, not focus on fixed and immutable attitudes, but rather to know how to open ourselves to calls of the world around us, and to the Spirit who speaks through the signs of the times.

The second aspect is that of fidelity to the original inspiration coming from our founders, from our roots, from our charism that has been given to the Church for the salvation of the world through the foundation of our Institutes, but also through our identity of religious-Brothers. This or these charisms are therefore to be better known. We need to understand the heart of this "living tradition" that we have received.

We shall meet some religious who will focus on creativity, at the risk of forgetting loyalty a little. We shall speak of the urgency of creativity without which we would not be able to live our mission today. We might assume, perhaps too quickly, that we are in faithfulness.

In response, others may have reactionary attitudes, persisting on the practices of another age that can no longer allow the charism to bear fruit.

We must ask ourselves, in short, how we can be faithful today – not that of yesterday, nor of tomorrow – to the Spirit who calls us and sends us.

We must live our vocation in a constant process of discernment of spirits, with the sole aim of "doing the Father's will", following Jesus. Our way of being faithful in creativity is our way of following Christ today in the way of our founder.

Before trying to live our vocation of Brothers, we must first take note of the fact that we are, ourselves, in the heart of the changes taking place without us, and in which we participate even without realizing it. Suffice it to make a quick return on our personal history to understand how the world in which we live is different from the one in which we grew up.

Our world is a globalized world. In all countries, we face challenges that are similar. Yet, when we have the opportunity to live an experience like yours, we can realize that we are different, our analysis can be various, sometimes conflicting. Our cultures have accents that single us out. Planet Earth is a large village. But there are still many ways to live in this village, to understand it, and to give it life. Creative fidelity implies therefore that we know how to reflect this diversity.

Today, our consecrated life puts us in constant contact, or nearly so, with this world, especially thanks to the new technologies. We are marked by these new ways to communicate, create, and being in the world. We know that this, in some way, facilitates and gives endless possibilities to be linked, to be known, to go to the other, and so it is an opportunity for evangelization. We are aware, however, of the pitfalls these new technologies entail. To be faithful in creativity, we must be very careful, vigilant, but without failing into the fear or rejection. These means, in themselves, are neither good or bad. They offer new opportunities to do good or to do evil! They are also opportunities to witness to the Gospel, to be Brothers to all in the name of Jesus. We will therefore examine how Consecrated life should behave in this world.

Being faithful is not running a program planned in advance, it is to engage oneself fully in loving response to the gift from the Holy Spirit. Our identity is not taken for granted. It is a gift to fructify. It is therefore a becoming, a journey to make in fidelity to the One from whom I receive life and being.

Being creative or creator is to be vigilant. We can remember the parable of the wise virgins and the foolish virgins. Those who are wise are not those who are merely being faithful to the practices, or forms of life. These are those that were inhabited by love. They maintained that love. They have not buried it under tons of small sterile loyalties. They had but one desire expressed by a prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Who says fidelity says love. "The law of the invisible origins says the truth, the truth precisely present in the act of God in history:" It is not because you're great that I chose you, on the contrary, you are the smallest of the peoples, I've chosen you because I love you ... "God said to the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

Being faithful in creativity, it is a struggle. We should ask ourselves the question: "what do we want: the apparent success, the mere appearance? Are we willing to live in the tears of true love?" Are we ready to take up the cross to follow Jesus?

To be faithful, there are pitfalls into which we must not fall:

- Reacting against what does not suit me in the society or in the congregation and propose innovations without having had a real personal and communal discernment.
- Confusing prophecy and one's own will. It is not I who am a prophet, it is consecrated life that is prophetic, it is my community in the Church.
- Confusing fidelity and ultra-conservatism! Or creative fidelity and indiscriminate innovations! Taking any novelty as progress!
- Taking my insatiable desire for change for a gift of the Spirit. I then seek to share my ideas, sometimes even in a pressing way, rather than listening to my Brothers, humbly, trying to understand what they mean by entering into their ways of seeing.
- Believing that you can be faithful without engaging in personal and communitarian response to the new challenges of the mission.

## 2. SOME CHURCH DOCUMENTS AND THE WORD OF GOD.

### A. VITA CONSECRATA

#### VC 37 : Creative Fidelity.

*"Institutes of Consecrated Life are thus invited courageously to propose anew **the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their men and women founders**, in response to the **signs of the times** emerging in today's world.."*

- Finding the entrepreneurial spirit and holiness of their founders.

The founders of our Institutes are our models in terms of creative fidelity. They were faithful and that fidelity led them to take risky initiatives, regardless of what we may say about them, and without fear for their reputation. Their aim was always that of charity, communion, and seeking the will of God with humility.

You can examine your own founders. For my part, I will start with the experience of our institute, not as an example, but because it will help me explain what I mean by a model that I know a little more.

Small schools in rural areas: a brother, with only a vow of obedience, leaving for the West Indies, etc..

Humility: not to go where others have already gone, not to come into conflict with those who do good, and not to impose ourselves on others. Not to talk about ourselves, and being poor for the service of the poor.

His evolution, his attention to changes, his concern for adaptation,

A sole objective: to give Christian education to all children and youth, and especially to those for whom nothing is proposed.

And to achieve this objective: Brothers.

- Finding the entrepreneurial spirit of their founders, in answer to the signs of the times. Let us hear again this text of Luke's Gospel:

*"He said again to the crowds: When you see a cloud looming up in the west you say at once that rain is coming, and so it does. And when the wind is from the south you say it's going to be hot, and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is upright?" (Lk 12: 54-57)*

To discern the signs of the times requires the ability to look and to feel oneself to be in tune with the Spirit of charity in line with the charism of the Congregation. It also requires a good understanding of what it means to "do the will of God" today.

It is to be able to decide for yourself, deep inside, in favour of Jesus, and the call he addresses to us today. For, the "signs of the times" referred to here are signs of the coming of God's kingdom. Any decision then must be taken in the sense of welcoming the Kingdom of God which is coming. But we cannot properly interpret the signs of the times unless our heart and mind are transformed by the Spirit, unless our ability to see, feel, and interpret are in communion with the ability of Jesus. This means that our mind and heart are transformed by the attendance of the Word. It shapes us so that, little by little, we are better able to relate to the world with the look of Christ. But this is a long journey.

We must humbly receive the word of Jesus: "You hypocrites!" Our thoughts are not his thoughts. We have come from far. Maybe we backtracked; we are far from the Truth we neglect. Loyalty requires constant nearness to God, in order to "judge for ourselves what is right."

That is why the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* launches "a call to perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life." This is not to confuse creative fidelity with the charism, and more or less conscious submission to the various currents that stir the world today. In reality we are either under the influence of the Spirit or that of a particular way of thinking. For if we are sent into the world, we belong to the Spirit ... and not to the world.

*"It is also a call to pursue competence in personal work and to develop a dynamic fidelity to their mission, adapting forms, if need be, to new situations and different needs, in complete openness to God's inspiration and to the Church's discernment."*

One can recognize in this sentence all the elements of an authentic discernment

- Competence in the work that corresponds to the mission received, including work to acquire it, and expertise. This is the basis of all serious human and Christian activity.
- Insight on new situations, needs, and calls. This insight is not a simple human ability to see and understand, but that feeling by the Holy Spirit, which means that this capacity is transformed by the Spirit. This is what St. Paul said:: "Do not model your behaviour on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God: what is good and acceptable and mature." (Rm 12 : 2) Another text of St. Paul expresses well his thought : "It is my prayer that your love for one another may grow more and more with the knowledge and complete understanding that will help to come to true discernment, so that you will be innocent and free of any trace of guilt when the Day of Christ comes." (Ph 1: 9-10) The Greek terms used (épignôsis = perceptiveness; aisthêsis = sensitivity) signify some knowledge of the heart indicating at once the fact of knowing, meeting, experiencing, and possessing. This knowledge, the fruit of discernment can only be obtained by a transformation of the heart that is a gift of God, the fruit of prayer. It does not produce a theoretical knowledge, but leads to Christian conduct.
- Ecclesiastical discernment. "We are from God; whoever recognises God listens to us; anyone who is not from God refuses to listen to us. This is how we can distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood." (1 Jn 4:6). The false spirit is the one which is opposed to the faith of the Apostles. It is therefore the one which is opposed to the unity of the Body.

*"In this spirit there is a pressing need today for every Institute to return to the Rule, since the Rule and Constitutions provide a map for the whole journey of discipleship, in accordance with a specific charism confirmed by the Church. A greater regard for the Rule will not fail to offer consecrated persons a reliable criterion in their search for the appropriate forms of a witness which is capable of responding to the needs of the times without departing from an Institute's initial inspiration."*

This is a fundamental point: Having a true understanding of the Rule enables one to overcome one's own point of view, however legitimate it may be. It opens the heart to the Spirit who speaks to me personally and who speaks to all my Brothers, of whatever culture, continent, and personal history. All must be included in the basic choices that the Rule presents to me.

This Rule, I receive it from the Spirit today. It is by knowing, loving, and following it well that I will be able to understand the signs of the times, and to create, invent, and arouse new responses in fidelity to the original inspiration. It is not opposed to creativity. It invites me to it in faithfulness to the charism. It is a way of life. Itself, through adaptations, proofreading, documents made by Chapters is on itself a work of fidelity to the charism lived today.

Of course, you can make a narrow reading of the Rule, opposing any initiative, any proofreading, and understanding, focusing more on the letter than the spirit. Rather, it is to do the reading with a heart "transfigured". I repeat here what was said earlier about discernment: a perceptive reading with some knowledge of the heart that goes to meet the Lord through the Rule in its entirety and in detail, to feel personally what the Spirit tells me, to take full ownership of this document which is my concrete commitment and that of the community to follow Christ in truth.

### **VC 73: Creative fidelity at the service of God and humanity.**

*"The consecrated life has the prophetic task of recalling and serving the divine plan for humanity ... To carry out this service appropriately, consecrated persons must have a profound experience of God and be aware of the challenges of their time, understanding the profound theological meaning of these challenges through a discernment made with the help of the Spirit. In fact, it is often through historical events that we discern God's hidden call to work according to his plan by active and effective involvement in the events of our time."*

This number somehow explains No. 37 that we just read. This "prophetic mission" that we received as Brothers, we live it through our identity of Brothers sent on mission. The experience of God to which the text of VC invites us is a prerequisite for understanding the theological sense of the challenges of our time, that is to say, to have a look, an analysis, animated by faith in Jesus the Saviour. The Gospel in its entirety, permits us to identify in the history the signs of the Spirit who works and invites us to enter the fruitfulness of his action.

*"It is necessary, therefore, to be open to the interior promptings of the Holy Spirit, who invites us to understand in depth the designs of Providence. He calls consecrated men and women to present new answers to the new problems of today's world... Only souls accustomed to following God's will in everything can assimilate faithfully and then translate courageously into choices which are consistent with the original charism and which correspond to the demands of the concrete historical situation"*

This mission is not easy and cannot be done automatically. When we speak of community discernment, it means a personal discernment that is made in community. Everyone must make their own judgment. Each must become a soul accustomed to do the will of God in everything. The Brothers who have developed these skills can then discern together, in mutual listening, and with the specific grace of those who received the service of authority.

*"Clearly, their dedication must be guided by supernatural discernment, which distinguishes what is of the Spirit from that which is contrary to him (cf. Gal 5:16-17, 22; 1 Jn 4:6). By means of fidelity to the Rules and Constitutions, this discernment safeguards full communion with the Church."*

We feel here the importance of knowing the basic rules of spiritual discernment that allow us to distinguish between what comes from the Spirit and what does not come from him. The text continues, so that we may appreciate the importance of finding new ways for the mission.

It is,

*"... not be limited to reading the signs of the times but will also contribute to elaborating and putting into effect new initiatives of evangelization for present-day situations. All this will be done in the certainty of faith that the Spirit can give satisfactory replies even to the most difficult questions."*

Finally, this number ends with a well known rule of spiritual life, but also, difficult to practise: *"we need to trust in God as if everything depended on him and, at the same time, to work generously as if everything depended on us."*

To be bold in the responses given, with a look and a certainty of faith, on condition that it is the Spirit that we listen to, and not our own interests. Do not be afraid, be bold. Not alone, but with your Brothers.

## **B. SERVICE AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE**

I would like to briefly present this text we would do well to know and to study in community, for it tells very well how to live in community, in fidelity and creativity, our vocation and mission of Brothers .

This text from 2008, begins by presenting the consecrated life as a search for God. However, when we speak of creative fidelity, or identity of the Brother, we do not want something else: Our identity is that of the son, and the son says to the Father: In your will is my peace. What the Brother seeks is what the Son wants. And what the Son wants is what the Father wants.

We should reread, in this sense, the three numbers of the introduction. Of course, we get there in the context of the meaning of the vow of obedience and service of authority. This means that the creative fidelity to our identity, our mission, and our vocation as Brothers concerns our daily life, as we have already seen. It also covers policies and decisions that can be taken at the local community, but also Provinces, and of course, the whole congregation.

### **N° 4 Searching for God's will.**

*"The Lord asks the first disciples, who, perhaps, still uncertain and doubtful begin to follow a new Rabbi: "What are you looking for?" (Jn 1:38). We can read into this question other radical questions: What does your heart seek? What concerns you? Are you looking for yourself or are you looking for the Lord your God?". Then the text continues with the quotation from St-Bernard: "In this world of dissimilarity, with what do we need to be concerned, Lord God? From the rising of the sun to its setting I see men overwhelmed by the turmoil of this world: some look for riches, others, privilege, others yet again the satisfactions of popularity,"*

This text, and then others in this document that we should read in their entirety, means that being faithful to our mission has something to do with our vow of obedience. One does not go without the other. Otherwise, we would be torn between two diametrically opposed realities. There are none.

*"Many today tend to consider any kind of dependence humiliating, but the status of creature in itself implies being dependent on an Other and, therefore, as a being in relation, dependent on others."(n° 4)*

But this presupposes a good understanding of who that Other is.

*"To seek the will of God means to seek a friendly and benevolent will, which desires our fulfilment, that desires, above all, a free response in love to its love, in order to make of us instruments of divine love".*

Therefore, let us learn from this number that what is important is our fundamental search for the will of God, to know how to answer in truth the question: Who are you looking for? It is to understand that it is in the unity of our being, marked by religious consecration, with its requirements (the vows, the Rule), that we will experience true liberation that will make us find new ways of fidelity to our vocation.

It is, of course, obedience, well-understood obedience through which we are living images of Jesus, the beloved Son.

### **N° 8 Following Jesus the well-beloved Son**

*"In him everything is a listening to and acceptance of the Father;... He also lived obedience when it presented a difficult chalice to drink. ... This is the dramatic aspect of the obedience of the Son wrapped in a mystery which we can never totally penetrate..."*

☒ We, Brothers, we are sons in the Son. We would not be true to our identity without imitating the loving obedience of the Son. So we must enter into this mystery before being creative, for it would only be creativity, but not fidelity.

The surest way to be true, it is to imitate Christ in his obedience. This obedience is creative obedience. The thoughts and intentions of the Father are his. His creativity is the result of his intimacy. He is sure of the total trust of the Father. He communes with His will to the Father.

That's our model. Today, like yesterday, and tomorrow, we will always ensure that deep communion with the Father's will, like the Son ...

Our founders are an eloquent testimony.

**No. 20 c) This presupposes sharing one's talents.**

We have already said, we cannot be faithful and creative alone. It is not for me alone to make the effort. And the importance of my effort, that of the superior, of course, but also of every Brother of the community is seeking to develop the gifts of each so that everyone is faithful and creative.

*"The essential: stimulating and motivating a contribution from every person so that each one feels the duty to contribute his or her own charity, competence and creativity will be fundamental. In fact, all the human resources are strengthened and brought together in the community project, motivating and respecting them."*

*"It is not enough to place material goods in common, but still more significant is the communion of goods and personal abilities of endowments and talents, of intuitions and inspirations, and still more fundamental, and to be promoted, is the sharing of spiritual goods, of listening to the Word of God, of faith".*

This implies - and then the text adds - perseverance, for it cannot be obtained immediately. There may be resistance. It is necessary to encourage, but also to wait and not pretend to collect immediately the fruits of our efforts.

**N° 20 e) And this demands that we know to discern.**

*"Even if true and appropriate discernment is reserved to the most important decisions, the spirit of discernment ought to characterize every decision-making process that involves the community."*

Here are some of the attitudes to have in order to be able to discern:

Against human logic seeking success, effectiveness and recognition, we must be willing to let ourselves be inspired by the Gospel and the charism of the Institute expressed by our Rule of Life, not seeking to impose our own personal views.

We must be able to recognize that the ideas of others are better than ours. We will avoid exacerbating differences of perspective, knowing to detach ourselves from what we think of ourselves.

We try to be attentive to the signs of the times, the needs of the poor, the urgencies of evangelization, the guidelines of Chapters and of Superiors ...

We must have the courage to open up to new perspectives.

Lastly, we must have the intention to maintain unity in all circumstances.

**I conclude this brief talk with the story of Nicodemus (John 3: 1-8)**

How to live our identity as Brother? How to be a Brother today, in creative fidelity? How to speak and understand the languages of the world?

- We must be born again of water and the Spirit.

- But we can not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth

It is therefore not a matter of "making" or "building " something for ourselves, but to welcome a gift that we cannot possess, it is inaccessible to us (we do not know where it comes from or where it goes) ...

We must therefore make ourselves free and available to receive.

It is to live in a "mystical passivity" to receive from God. This is not easy in a world where everything is programmed and where, we ourselves want to draw up plans of animation, with specific projects.

To receive ourselves from God, is to be caught by him. This means being vigilant, alert, attentive to God and to his calls. This is not laziness. Rather, it is about love. I let myself be carried away by one who loves me, wherever he wants me to go.

To respond to the invitation that Jesus makes to Nicodemus, we must be animated by a great love. This is the conclusion of the second part.



### **3. CONSECRATED LIFE IN TODAY'S WORLD.**

I would now like to discuss some aspects of digital, multi-ethnic, and multi-media culture in which we live our vocation as a Brother. I will examine them using, among other things, a recent study by religious superiors in France. So there are other ways of approaching our world and its impact on the Consecrated Life. Here is one of them. It is up to you to do your own analysis and seek with your Brothers to be faithful to your mission and your vocation.

#### **a) Culture of communication.**

– **The current digital culture goes across our Institutes.**

We are challenged to live our vocation in this world of ours, in this world of globalization, of pluralism, and of digital. Technology

We could start by asking ourselves: does the current digital revolution change us, and how? What influences does it exert on us? Without falling into the demonization or the sanctification of new technologies, the Internet, cell phone, etc. .... it is important to understand what they convey that is positive, or negative.

For, one thing is certain, it is that the religious, like everyone else who has the capability, use the new means offered by the new communication technologies.

Today, look at the way we use mobile phones, computers, internet, the Video, and social networks , etc ... When organizing a session, it is essential to have a room to connect to the Internet. As soon as we arrive in another country, we seek to find the telephone network allowing us to be reachable by phone or by internet. Once you organize an event, it must be observed almost simultaneously on the Internet.

In the Provinces, in the communities of our Institutes, the mobile phone is ubiquitous. Sometimes we even hear it during the community prayer. We communicate, yes, but perhaps more with the Brothers of our "network of friends" than with those of the Community.

It can be seen also as a certain race for best presentation in terms of web sites for congregations. The best presenter will be the most "attractive"!

The bigger problem lies in the fact that the criteria that make a congregation "attractive" through the web may be different from those that signify and communicate an authentic "call" to consecrated life.

In fact, there is a real tension between the rules of the current means of communication and what the consecrated Life, what the Brothers want to communicate about themselves. And so they can be caught by the game of communication. It takes real discernment, and pay attention to what we want to show.

It would be interesting, for example, to see how we perceive through the sites of our congregations

- Listening to the Word of God, Community Prayer, and also private prayer. All this contrasts with the staging of the "I" or the "we."
- The mystical passivity, the act of receiving from God opposes a culture of performance.
- The desert experience, sacrifices, and trials of life that promote growth contrary to the requirements of profitability.
- The concern of the coming and the growth of the Kingdom, of waiting for the Kingdom to come, is opposed to an individualistic culture that seeks to live here and now according to our own will, and according to a program, a career.
- The desire to "stay" in the consecrated life is devalued in relation to the immediacy of knowledge, speed, novelty and the continual need to adapt.

- The transmission of the memory of the consecrated life, its charism, is realized through special charisms, while the culture of the current means of communication claims to wield power over the masses. Look, for example, at the experience of "mass appetizers" by invitations on face book or on any other social network.
- To this can be added all that has been said in the perception of the virtual to the real.
  - The virtual may suggest that the anonymity (social networks) is better than responsibility.
  - That it is easier (like the web permits), not to be yourself, but to suggest you are another.
  - That we can enter into relationship while hiding or claiming to be other than oneself.
  - There is a way of not being responsible for yourself, to be another ... virtual ... not real. And suggest that the virtual is better than the real. Nay, that we can live without a body that puts us in contact with other people. That the virtual relationship protects us.... but it isolates, takes away our sense of responsibility and deceives us.

Given this logic, how must we, Brothers, locate ourselves? That is the question for which, today, we must find an answer. No doubt, all this affects the young people more. But this begs the question, exactly, young religious who come to our Institutes.

– **What consequences on the consecrated life?**

Gradually, new communication technologies lead to new ways of thinking and writing (by association of ideas rather than in a systematic way: the research of a topic on the internet zaps us ... and therefore build a text that is not reflected upstream, even if based on a definite plan. Watch how you prepare a course, a conference, etc ...)

They also bring new ways of getting information (writing has less authority, the newspaper is read less, we are in a world of more interactivity than in search of a tradition). This is the power of immediacy and of the individual.

New practices around the time spent at the computer, at the Internet, also induce an intensification of research, zapping for oneself. Then we lose contact with reality which also undermines the call to work for the Kingdom. There is a risk of the apostolic concern falling asleep due to the remoteness of the real, of the encounter with the neighbour in search of personal information, culture, entertainment, etc ...

We observe even in communities:

the need to be informed rather than to be together.

the need to communicate rather than to dialogue .

the choice of a network of relationships to recharge between "close friends" and no concern to do the same with the Brothers of one's own community.

– **Successful use of the Internet for the mission.**

Concerning the use of the Internet by our Institutes, I give you these remarks, which I find interesting - taken from a speech by Bishop Di Falco in the commission of the Bishops of Europe responsible for media, under the title: " Communication - even digital - always starts by listening "(see DC p. 67, No. 3438, January 17, 2010):

A friend made the study of the most consulted Christian sites in French. It appears that the Catholic sites in France come far away after the sites of evangelists even though evangelicals are a minority compared to Catholics in our country. How is this done? For him, the reasons are as follows:

The first is that "Evangelicals listen and Catholics talk." By this he means that evangelists go out of themselves in order to put themselves first in the place of others. They meet their needs. "What do you want?" Jesus asked the paralytic, and the man born blind. In other words, "What do you need? \What is your deepest desire? I can answer that. Communication always begins with listening. Hence his question:

Would the Catholic Church speak of herself without taking sufficiently into account what the people live? The second reason for the success of Evangelical sites compared to Catholic sites is that "the Catholic websites focus on themselves" and "regarded as tools and not as a world to evangelize." By this he means that our sites are extensions or duplicates of our parish papers, our diocesan bulletins. They are for internal use. They speak the language of the initiates for the exclusive use of initiates. Evangelical sites, however, want to reach users, using the Internet as a tool and a vehicle of evangelization. Agree or disagree with this analysis, it remains that we can take to our account the need to listen to the world in order to love it better and speak to it..

These various considerations may be taken into account, I think, from the perspective of a creative fidelity. We have to be familiar with who we are, but also know that in order to realize this today, we must listen to the world to which we speak and love it.

This reminds us that creativity involves

- fidelity to the gift of the Spirit, which is brought to us by the Word (Gospel, Christ, Charism, Rule of Life)
- careful listening to the world of our time where is said also a word that challenges us, and by which we listen to the Spirit who calls us to be Brothers in the name of Jesus.

## **b) Relationship with the Word in the consecrated life.**

In the context of digital communication, how do we maintain or re-establish a pedagogy of speech?

- **- the status and function of speech?**

A specialist in the anthropology speech and communication techniques, Philippe Breton, provides interesting details in a conference given in June 2009. I reproduce here some elements.

Speech is a skill to express ourselves, to defend a point of view, and to inform.

### **Three areas for speech:**

Express oneself, it is poetic, a subjective expression.

Argue, defend one's point of view, it is rhetoric, an. opinion that we share, we argue with others.

Information, it is analytical, an objective information, an ability to describe reality.

**The ability to form an opinion and to expose it** is an essential skill today:

It is positioning ourselves in relation to others,

Get into position to convince

But also try to be open to the opinions of others.

When speech is absent, the door is open to violence. For, violence comes when we can no longer be understood, when the contact is broken.

In our societies, what is the situation like? A quick tour of the world can allow us to realize where we are in the progress of our expertise in this field.

Professor Breton, by way of experiment, put this question to young people: "How do we manage to convince?" Many young people think that to convince, you must persuade. It seems that the relations revolves around the word appeal or impose. It is therefore normal to think that to convince, you must appeal. Perhaps do we think the same thing?

That is to say, to convince, we take the register which is that of self-expression, and not the argument. There is confusion of kinds.

Example: advertising! How do adults convince the youth? They seduce them! It would be interesting to

examine the advertisements, and even see how we ourselves are trying to convince: we play on: enjoy yourself? Or are we trying to provide arguments that demonstrate the merits of this or that? How do we present, for example, our fraternal life? What methods do we use? What is our speech like?

The "virtual" world promotes expression. On the other hand, it does not so easily permit the sense of the development of the argument. For, the argument assumes that the other is there. We must experience the other. To transfer the communication towards indirect means alienates in some way the learning and the use of argumentation.

New technologies will facilitate the description and information. Modernity has developed the skills of analysis and description. This is what is worth all the technological advances of our time.

In conclusion, our world then favors the expression, the description, and the information, but less than the argument and therefore the dialogue (searching for the truth together). What happens in our communities, what happens in our pastoral and educational practices?

It is therefore important to say, first, that the word gives the possibility of self-expression. Listening is thus recognition of the other in its otherness. Dialogue is the location of the reciprocal construction of identity of each and the opportunity to enrich myself with the otherness of the other that I recognize as different. The absence of speech and communication undermines the identity, and therefore the freedom of the individual.

The word also has a special status in different cultures. And that we can discover in our communities, in our way of being Brothers to each other.

How is the word allotted in the group, in the community?

Who has the right to speak? Who speaks? On what subject?

In this, we must also distinguish the time for informal exchanges (casual)

semi-formal (meals, table layout, number of guests, uses and rules of courtesy, of hospitality, use of silence, etc.), formal (accompaniment, meetings, sharing of Lectio Divina, etc.)..

Everyone brings in their community conventions of his own family culture, ethnicity, etc..

For example, depending on the culture, the expression of disagreement is authorized verbally or not. The rules of respect to elders or authority are different according to cultures. They can sometimes impose silence. Conflict resolution can sometimes only be done by third parties.

Spaces for dialogue and speaking time need also to be clarified: the respect for silence and the privacy of the room within the community contrasts with the family use.

Similarly, some cultures require taking the meal in silence, giving thanks for the food, and making the expression after the meal.

Different cultural backgrounds effectively reveal and demonstrate that we never hear without interpreting. There is always a gap between what I say and what is understood.

We should also speak of the expression by the body. Body language also has its rituals in different cultures. Each culture has its own codes that can read a closed or open position at the meeting: the look, the tone of voice, etc..

Similarly, the relationship in respect of another through respect for the time and place of silence also shows how we relate with each other or if we live in an overly individualistic way, regardless of the other.

#### – **Consequences in the consecrated life.**

These reflections on the status of speech in our communities of Brothers must now question our practices if we want to live our vocation in fidelity:

The need to communicate, as we have said, (telephone, Internet, communication networks, etc.) projects us into any kind of relationships.

But it is very often about a single person, not a community.

There is therefore the risk of isolating ourselves and dissipating our energies in the use of the means of communication that may be at our disposal.

It is therefore necessary that in community, we can criticize our practices, and that we put in place common rules so that the word is exchanged above all in the community.

The community must be able to establish a balance of closeness and distance. Community spaces, the layout of the community, meeting time, place for the computer, all this should be examined in the community today if we want to live in fidelity to our community life as Brothers

There is also a community practice today that needs to be questioned and guided, that is, everything related to community meetings, including those that can give rise to communal discernment for decisions on the common mission, and the way of living our community.

This is an area where we are called today to grow, if we want to be fully faithful to our vocation. There are issues regarding personal training, generations and cultures. But there is an important issue for the future of our identity as Brothers. How can we speak the languages of the world, if we cannot really speak the same language between Brothers, if we cannot really understand the language of each of our Brothers?

Finally, we cannot speak of the status of the word in the consecrated life, without mentioning the Word of God. If there is one word that should have a special place in our communities, it is this one. It is a challenge today in the consecrated life, to allow everyone to take the time to listen, to frequent the Word of God. Personal reading is indispensable to let it challenge us. Communitarian reading is also essential to build community in Christ.

The shared Word becomes food, the sacrament of Christ's presence.

In fact, the reception of the Word in community guarantees for the community to keep the right distance that regulates the practice of the word in community and in the mission.

I refer here on Enzo Bianchi's article written in 2008:

"God is communication .... The Word of God is creative and it creates a story. For us Christians, the word of God becomes the " Thou "of the Father, the eternal Son continuously generated. The encounter with Scripture is for us a living encounter a regular attendance with the Lord. "

"The word that takes place between God and man, between man and man, is the place of sweetness. And this word which intervenes, which takes place between, is the dialogue. Christ as the Word which places itself between God and humanity is the place of dialogue and encounter between God and humans. As Word made flesh, it is also gentleness made person. The gentleness of Christ as the Word made flesh is the indication of an essential method for the Church in her mission of evangelization: the dialogue. "

### **c) The relationship with experience**

This topic on experience is extremely broad. Experience mobilizes the body and mind. It promotes learning. It engages the whole person. It thus allows a movement of Internalization, of personalization.

Internalization focuses on the human individual.

We know that the interactivity that generates new communication technologies develops socialization, while internalizing focuses on the individual.

Internalization allows the individual to spread inside him, engage contacts with others, and to protect himself against currents of influence.

Interactivity weaves permanent links between people. However, it can become collectivist. It can only promote socialization if it preserves internalization.

- **What is happening today?**

**Impact of new communication technologies on young people:**

There is a reduction in the scope of legitimate experience. It is devalued.

The virtual highlights the experience that does not touch the body, which seems to be interested only in the mind.

A sign is the valuation of extreme experience. This is a false alternative: virtual experience or extreme experience?

Experience extreme is the practice of risk: alcohol, drugs. The drug problem is that of the relationship experience.

For, the drug modifies the field of experience in such a way as to disconnect self-responsibility.

So there is a decline from experience to the extreme experiences, that bring one closer to the risk of death, mutilation, and suicide. And this decline is experienced, paradoxically, as an attempt to reconnect with the real experience.

The risk then - and it is the discourse that often accompanies the enhancement of the virtual - is to believe in a better world that takes us away from reality. The virtual is better than real. The material world is bad. One enters a dangerous dualism.

### **And in the consecrated life?**

With regard to experience, what do we talk about?

Experience, is a means of dialogue of the human mind with the reality that surrounds it, with the real (nature, world, the others, etc.).

What I live, what challenges me obliges me to think, to analyze, to understand what happens to us too abruptly, too unexpectedly.

We need to take a step back from the lived experience in order to understand the message.

We live events that mark us, some more than others. Sometimes it takes a long time to grasp the message therein. Sometimes we can be marked without being aware. These events become "experiences", strictly speaking, when we have told the story. To make an experience presupposes then to be able to recount, to narrate it.

This ability to tell enables us to relate events, and to understand the frame of a lifetime. The ability to tell, is also a chance to enroll in a story built with others. The experience puts us in touch with others. This implies the ability to read one's life ... and so silence, some solitude, but also listen to others and the world. We see at once the importance of the practice of rereading our life in order to be faithful in creativity. It is this rereading that will enable us to understand the challenges and appeals that come our way. This is also the rereading that we will make us hear the cry of the poor, by whom we can pass without realizing, if we do not know how to stop.

But we must also talk about the experience of God.

Here we enter into another reality. Jesus, through his experience of the Father, went also through the experience of temptation. He had to make a discernment to say where the lie was on the Word. Satan quotes the Scriptures making them lie. Jesus interprets them to extent of his filiation, his total openness to the Father, his open freedom to Love, a freedom that loves and which manifests itself in him as a permanent creativity and not as a static programming.

The experience of God is singular. It is not like the other experiences.

Thus the Apostles are experiencing the resurrection of Jesus in the interior of an absence. They experience the empty tomb!

It belongs to God, to Christ, to manifest this to us .... according to his good pleasure and make us to experience His presence and His love.

This experience of God, by his own will, makes sense to us only through the Word, the sacraments, the Tradition (the transmission of the word to the interior of the Church, through the saints, the charisma ...)

– **Consequences for our lives as Brothers.**

- Do not rely solely on the accumulation of life experiences to understand from the inside what are the things, who is the other, what is the mystery of life.
- "If multiple operations can qualify a surgeon, multiple partners do not qualify a good spouse." It takes an inner listening supported by study, training, silent prayer. Internalization is essential.
- Today, faith in God seeks to be experienced as personal and not inherited ... but the weight of subjectivity to validate an authentic experience costs a heavy price sometimes. We know that modern psychological pathologies are essentially narcissistic. It is the "I" that imposes itself, not the "we" with all that it implies according to tradition, heritage, and membership to a body. There is a force at play of an authentic fraternal life that knows how to value the person but which enrolls him in a body, like the persons in the Trinity.
- When trying to understand our particular path, the calls of the Spirit to the way we live our vocation and mission, it is good to remember that we are not totally masters of our choices, or our thoughts, or our destiny. Experiencing God is an act of unreserved abandonment into the unknown, knowing that this unknown is known as Love, Providence! And we must walk with Him in humility and trust.
- In the life of faith experience is precarious. It does not capitalize itself! It would be seeking to domesticate God. God gives when he wants, as he wants. All the prophets of the Bible were witnesses to this. In the manner of the manna in the desert, it's every day that we count on God. We can never be self-sufficient, otherwise we would not have to say Our Father ... give us our daily bread ... We will always ask! This means that fidelity in creativity is the fight of a lifetime. We have never definitively won it. We will always be begging for it. We will never finish trying to be faithful. We will never finish to watch, and therefore to love actively, to be creative.
- We can follow the path of Paul or Peter, or our founder, looking at how the experiences they made helped them understand the promptings of the Spirit. We would see how they learned, by walking, to follow the footsteps of Jesus and to serve his loving will. When we are mindful, in faith, in love, we experience a God who comes to us, to everyone in a special way ... to each institute in a specific way. It would be very rewarding to reread the life of our Institute in this regard. Tell the story of the experience of God in the body that is a particular institute. How God spoke to it, and how we have been faithful ... or not enough. How we have been creative ... or not enough. Thus, we would know better how to be faithful today, the way of God, by the grace of the Spirit for our time.
- In the image of Jesus, we also need to be able to discern lies. That is to say, to understand if the experience lived makes the Word of God lie or not. Is it contrary to the Beatitudes, for example? Any lie tears humanity. Any lie distorts the truth and love. Every lie creates division, creates bitterness, arouses vindictiveness, is based on pride, and seeks to suppress a Brother.
- Through our experience of the world and our daily lives, we must be attentive to God who opens our eyes and makes us heed his calls, which are but calls to love, peace, joy and happiness.
- Faithfulness is God's work, not ours. The cross of Jesus shows us that this fidelity, this love is lived in the fight against falsehood and in favour of forgiveness and mercy.
- Experience is the place of intimacy where our whole being is awakened to the truth and the life. But it is fleeting. Without ceasing, the experience of a day can be undermined by that of another day: bereavement, a trying event, a situation difficult to live, even obedience... What appeared true yesterday is no longer of the same clarity today. Evidence may become obscure, uncertain. Life teaches us constantly that we are not gods, but fragile and mortal humans. We will therefore not absolutize experiences. We shall not oppose them with violence to others. We shall receive them with humility of heart.



## CONCLUSION:

Here, finally, are some attitudes that seem to me to be definitely essential to building our identity as Brothers in creative fidelity in our world today.

1. The charism of the Institute does not depend on any particular period of time. It is based on the Gospel. It is a free gift to welcome and fructify. We are Brothers in a world of brothers and sisters, children of the same Father in the only- begotten Son. We are all brothers.
2. To love and know well the charism of our Institute, to make it ours, and understand how and what each of us must do to make it produce fruit, together WITH his Brothers.
3. To cultivate within the Church the attitude of a Brother who lives his vocation, his mission, his way of life WITH, and never alone, ,.
4. Learning. We never finish forming ourselves. Opening our eyes to understand and follow the will of Christ. And for that we need a lot of time and a lot of humility.
5. To love this world saved by Christ, this world of ours, a world to which we are sent to discern the seeds of the Gospel and the mirages that can deceive it.
6. To know oneself. We may be more prone to stagnation or innovation. We must not confuse our interior dispositions that can fit our temperament, with what the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish in us. So we need a proper self-knowledge through the help of a spiritual guide.
7. Understanding the importance of the vow of obedience and the role of authority. One and the other are together seeking God's will. The one and the other must be evangelized for the community to be attentive to the signs of the Spirit and respond with generosity.
8. To understand well the language of our time, we must grasp the interior language of the Spirit. He alone can speak various languages of those to whom he sends us. The universal language is that of Charity. This language makes possible humble listening, loving care, and joyful vigilance that we must adopt as a priority.
9. Knowing how to risk initiatives discerned in common, without fear, with joy, but also with patience, waiting for the fruit in God's time. We should not fall into the temptation of impatience, or the quest for success - "Success is not a name of God" -. Let us love to sow the mustard seed that must die before bearing fruit. Let us engage ourselves to sow what others will reap.
10. Let us remember that "to talk about God and to talk with God" must always go hand in hand. Proclamation of God leads us to communion with God in fellowship, founded and vivified in Christ" (Benedict XVI). Loyalty can not be lived without prayer. All creativity must be based on prayer.

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