

CLERICS OF SAINT VIATOR

28th

GENERAL CHAPTER

Viatorian Spirituality

ROME 2007

TO THE VIATORIAN COMMUNITY

In July of 2006 the first General Assembly of the Viatorian Community marked a turning point in the history of the Viatorians. Both religious and associates came together to discuss major areas of common interest for the first time on the international level. The General Assembly was followed by the General Chapter at which religious dealt with themes raised by the Assembly and other matters pertinent to the Viatorian consecrated life. You will recall that the Extraordinary General Council, at our meeting in February 2004 established the overall theme of the Assembly and Chapter of 2006 as: "The Renewed Viatorian Community: Hearing the call of the Gospel in the midst of a changing world."

The enclosed document entitled "Viatorian Spirituality" was a preparatory document for these meetings. The last General Chapter requested that the General Council prepare a kind of *status quaestionis* on Viatorian spirituality to serve as a resource at the next General Chapter (CD 2000: 16, 4). This document, prepared by a superb team composed of Fr. Jose Maria Legaretaetxebarria (S) (chair), Fr. Pierre Laur (F), and Br. Maurice Marcotte (C) underwent several revisions, taking into account the comments from various confreres who read the initial draft text. This document was submitted to the whole Viatorian Community for study and comment prior to the General Assembly in 2006. It was received by the General Chapter which in turn recommended that it become a tool for the formation of all Viatorians (CD 2006:3). A reading guide has also been included to help you discuss this document in local communities.

It is the hope of Chapter that this document will continue to serve as an impetus for the whole Community's renewed appreciation for those particularly Viatorian elements of our spirituality. I would like extend my thanks and that of the whole Community to the authors of this document for the wonderful work that have accomplished in offering us a kind of "spiritual mirror" on the Community.

May Jesus by adored and loved,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark R. Francis, CSV". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Mark R. Francis, CSV
Superior General

VIATORIAN SPIRITUALITY

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VIATORIAN SPIRITUALITY

1. General Definition of Spirituality

Spirituality is a dynamic process, the result of a relationship with God, with people, and with the cosmos, a dynamic process that deeply unifies the corporal, affective, and intelligent aspects of the person. It brings about an integration of *eros*, friendship, and *agapè*¹. That is why everything in spiritual men and women is filled with God, who is love.

Based upon his personal, family, social, cultural, and religious roots, spirituality marks the total identity of every person. Influencing people in their ways of thinking and acting, spirituality is at the heart of the objectives and vocation adopted by every person. For Christians, the source of that unity lies in the Trinity. Thus, Christian spirituality has salvific, Christological, and pneumatological dimensions. We discover ourselves as – and, indeed, we are – children of the Father and, therefore, brothers and sisters of Christ, members of one and the same divine and human family. The Spirit of the Risen Jesus helps us to recognize him as a man for God and as a man for others. Based on that double dimension, discovered and meditated upon through the Word received in the Church, Christians enter into contemplation and become involved in mission.

Viatorian Spirituality, without being at the origin of any special current of thought, is nourished by Father Querbes' spirituality, by his charism as our Founder, and, especially, by the Spirit, who guided his personal history. It perpetuates certain traits particular to its origins: a spirituality of the laity and a spirituality of consecrated life. It is deeply marked by faith and the dimension of mission.

¹ **Eros**: desire for and pleasure of the other, body and spirit. As in the case of babies and their mothers, the case of lovers. Eros is seeking and satisfying. Once it is satisfied, eros disappears until it is reborn. **Agapè**: love that is not self-centered, that is freely given, that needs no justification. As in the case of Christ's love for us, the case of a mother who loves an errant child.

2. The Major Orientations of our Founder's Spirituality

Imbued with Sacred Scripture, Father Querbes lived a biblical spirituality. Jesus continues extending an invitation to faith, responsibility, and giving. Our Founder responded to that invitation, truly blending together adoration and love, which leads to involvement in mission.

2.1 The Foundations of Querbesian Spirituality

The Gospel according to Saint John expresses and summarizes Christian life in two verbs – believing and loving. Father Querbes deeply lived out those two verbs, with faith and love characterizing his entire life.

2.1.1 A *“lively and enlightened faith”*

The element of Father Querbes' spirituality that can be considered of primary importance is undoubtedly a “lively and enlightened faith,” which he recommended in a special way to his disciples and of which he himself gave brilliant testimony.

Faith leads to a “sense of the presence of God,” which is the foundation of contemplative life. “Through the holy exercise of the presence of God and through the contemplation of the mysteries of the life and death of Jesus Christ, the Viatorian will enliven and increase his faith.”²

Faith engenders a search for the will of God and submissiveness to that will. Father Querbes wished to live “in blind submission to the holy will of God.”³ He indicated to what extent he was “resigned to the divine will” ... and how he remained so “in order to consecrate what remained of [his] strength and life to the good of [his] institute.”⁴ He wished “to taste nothing more than the will of God ... and to serve only as an instrument at God's service.”⁵

Faith must mirror the image of the poor in the Bible, which engenders a dependency with respect to God – not that of a slave, but that of a son who shares in the love of the Father. Faith must include an attitude of praise and recognition.

² DQ 547 8.83.

³ DQ S 308 14.79.

⁴ DQ 546 8.51.

⁵ DQ S 308 14.79.

It is a faith that takes reality into account. Such an interpretation of the human reality, carried out in faith, is a reading of the signs of the times. "I consider this circumstance as a means by which God manifests his will to me."⁶ Such faith impels a person to advance in prayer and reflection. In that way, it becomes realistic and humble in its adaptation to events. Whence flows forth an adult obedience according to life's requirements. It is a faith that, in faithfulness to God, moves a person to renouncement and manifests itself in a spirit of availability.

We are talking here about an enlightened faith – a faith, one might say, that has constant recourse to in-depth studies of the Word of God. That Word is a word of truth that makes it possible for people to deal with an age that is rife with rationalism and that provides assurance that the catechesis to be presented will receive adequate preparation.

That faith reveals something about the spiritual experiences of Father Querbes. The "sense of the presence of God" brings about interior peace, a spirit of abandonment, and absolute confidence in God, because, as he says:

2.1.2 "God will provide."

We will discover, in that expression, the hope held by Father Querbes. Even though, at the time he lived, hope was not often spoken of, our Founder lived that virtue in depth. He expressed his faith in terms of "confidence in Providence," not for the purpose of finding therein an easy explanation for events, but [for discovering] God's attentiveness to people, which in turn leads to both involvement and prudence.

We must "place ourselves, more than ever, in his hands,"⁷ [for] "God protects his children." It is God "who leads us, by the hand, through circumstances."⁸ "If God is for us, who can be against us?"⁹

⁶ DQ 56 1.84.

⁷ DQ 444 7.57.

⁸ DQ 452 7.52.

⁹ DQ 181 4.49.

When he was in Rome, weakened by disease, in 1838, Father Querbes wrote: "It is now that obstacles are piling up higher than the mountains ... and it is now that God is giving me the grace to be more firmly resolved than ever. In te, Domine, speravi."¹⁰

Trials and tribulations of all sorts – financial, physical, and moral – grew and grew. Nevertheless, the same constant reaction was always found: "But, above all, have confidence in Providence."¹¹ "God must nourish his children."¹² "God will not fail us."¹³

His hope was evident in the confidence that he placed in people. "He would never lose hope in anyone."¹⁴ And certain people found that he exaggerated somewhat, even to the point of labeling him as ingenuous. But that hope was not at all naïve, neither with respect to Providence nor with respect to his religious. "A person must neither defy nor tempt Providence."¹⁵ With respect to his brothers, he was too "good-hearted. Could anyone blame him for that?"¹⁶

Hope is the result of a faith-filled interpretation of life. "You see that, thus far, Providence has never failed you."¹⁷ Hope is an abandonment [of self] in "holy indifference" to the will of God. "Take courage; having nothing, seeking nothing, we will have God with us."¹⁸ This hope, lived out in a spirit of indifference, is an attitude of abandonment and confidence. It is not to be confused with negligence, laziness, or passivity. It is an invitation to do battle. "It is on the day of battle that the real soldier is recognized."¹⁹ For it is only "after having

¹⁰ DQ 198 4.133.

¹¹ DQ 444 7.57.

¹² DQ 151 3.142.

¹³ DQ 377 6.106.

¹⁴ François Favre, *Querbesian Notebooks*, No. 44, p. 475.

¹⁵ DQ 341 6.66.

¹⁶ Anonymous, *Querbesian Notebooks*, No. 53, p. 606.

¹⁷ DQ 495a 7.121.

¹⁸ DQ 147 4.6.

¹⁹ DQ 444 7.57.

used the human means placed at your disposal”²⁰ that “God will provide.”

In times of trial, the strong – those who do not permit themselves to fall into despair – come to the fore. “We will arise, with a knapsack on our back, and we will go forth, guided by Providence, to seek out new challenges.”²¹

2.1.3 An “ardent and disinterested zeal”

The term “zeal,” as used in Father Querbes’ time, signified “charity.” “Look at zeal; it is love that is more intense, more alive, more ardent; it is yours. Zeal is nothing less than divine love set in motion. Zeal, like charity, which is its principle, has its own characteristics and rules; it is obedient in all things to the good pleasure of God. [Zeal is] tenderness, compassion, humility.”²²

This zeal is charity in its fullest expression; it is agapé, which is characterized by a spirit of gratuitousness and detachment. By reason of his temperament, Father Querbes’ ardor “never acted routinely or begrudgingly.” And, given his simplicity and humility, that zeal “had no other end than the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He was indifferent to words of praise and honorary distinctions; he undertook, without becoming discouraged or fatigued, the tasks imposed upon him.”²³ The result of all this was that it was practically impossible for Father Querbes to refuse requests for assistance of whatever nature they might be, even those coming from foreign lands. The religious indifference prevalent in his world brought forth in him a willingness to serve, not in a state of confusion but in response to a reading of the signs of the times. His way of being mirrored what was said by Saint Francis de Sales: “Love must grow and evolve into zeal.”

His apostolic enthusiasm led him at times, to the detriment of a certain understanding of fraternal charity, to urge on his confreres in

²⁰ DQ 374 6.103.

²¹ DQ 164 4.9.

²² DQ S 285 13.190.

²³ DQ 530 8.100.

too lively of a manner. "Don't be content with staring at yourselves; get to work,"²⁴ he remarked. Rather than taking pity on them, he encouraged vacillating wills: "People are bolder when they dream that they are doing God's work."²⁵ "Thus life goes on to foresee the future and to let go of the present, which is the only time that we have."²⁶ "But be careful and use your time well. You will have enough time for everything and you will derive, from this continuing state of keeping occupied, the advantage of being less often a burden to yourself."²⁷

Such a vigorous stance did not prevent Father Querbes from deeply loving his brothers. On the contrary, he showed affection for them "as his very own children, to such a point that he fell ill whenever he lost any one of them."²⁸ But his charity toward people was more obvious in his attitudes than in his words. "You know me; come back to me if you wish. You will find me exactly the same, that is, filled with tenderness for you and hopeful that you will not squander what God has confided to you."²⁹ His zeal, then, became an attitude of solicitousness, of which there exist numerous examples. It is only with those closest to him – his collaborators, confreres, and other friends – that Father Querbes openly expressed his friendship. But, with time, an evolution took place in his expression of friendship. The maturity that he acquired allowed him to express himself more warmly. That was the result of his growth in expressing his affections.

And the zeal that devoured him was the same zeal that he recommended to his catechists as their fundamental virtue, immediately after a lively and enlightened faith. That is the concrete application of what he wanted them to discover in faith.

²⁴ DQ 330 6.53.

²⁵ DQ 3.142 (24.06.1836).

²⁶ DQ 420 7.31.

²⁷ DQ 426 7.39.

²⁸ Anonymous, *Querbesian Notebooks*, No. 53.

²⁹ To Damoiseil.

2.2 “Adored and Loved be Jesus”

This cornerstone motto, which seems to have been created by our Founder, appears as the expression of the maturation and unification of a spiritual experience. By entering into the Christological movement of his time, Father Querbes centered his life and defined the mission that he was going to give to his catechists: adoration and action, prayer and mission, liturgy and catechesis. The invitation to “zeal” is very much the result of the “sense of the Presence of God.” And we are in the purest biblical tradition: “You will adore the Lord, your God, and him alone will you serve” (Mt 4:10).

We find that expression in his writings as early as 1830, which would indicate to us that the relationship between adoration and love of Jesus was a reality early in the life of our Founder and was present at the birth of the Society. That Christological orientation would, little by little, overshadow his insistence on the missionary vision expressed in the words: “Let the little children come unto me.” Contemplation replaced action. Father Querbes lived so that Jesus might be adored and loved.

Contemplation takes place through meeting God in people who are poor and insignificant, in the reality of everyday events. Contemplation grows deeper through listening to the Word of God. Everything is anchored in faith. Everything is nurtured through love, which leads us to serve God and our brothers and sisters in the mission of Catechist.

2.3 Mission

Father Querbes, filled with apostolic zeal, was very much aware of the religious and ecclesial needs of his time. His sense of Church led him to respond to urgent situations.

2.3.1 At the Service of the Church through the poor of his time

Father Querbes saw very clearly that children living in the smaller, more isolated villages were the poorest and most abandoned. Priests in those areas lived, of necessity, in poverty and solitude. He wanted his apostolic undertaking to reach those places that were devoid of other

institutions. That is why he wanted “to see to it that religious teaching penetrated into the heart of the furthest removed rural villages.”³⁰ He issued an invitation “to not neglect any opportunity for announcing Jesus Christ, especially to the poor.”³¹

His determination in founding his Society brought about certain difficult and painful situations for him. He had to make great sacrifices. It was in such moments that his confidence in God – the God of the weak and the helpless – was most evident.

His sense of Church showed through in his commitment to the world of the poor. Father Querbes also wanted to restore the Church in that sector of poor and needy peasant people. He would listen – and respond – to the urgent requests of bishops and priests, even to the point of sacrificing, sometimes imprudently, the formation of his catechists.

The relationships that he hoped for – and that he proposed to his parochial clerics – presupposed a great sense of Church and community. He invited his parochial clerics to live in relationship with pastors, very strongly suggesting and requesting weekly and annual meetings for formation and life balance. Through his correspondence, oftentimes filled with confidence, he directed and encouraged them.

That collaboration on the local level, joined with his respect for the hierarchy of particular churches, made him available to those churches. On the contrary, it became part of his vision of the Universal Church, to which our Founder, as “one from the other side of the mountains,” was particularly sensitive.

2.3.2 “The Teaching of Christian Doctrine”

The foundations of the Church had to be rebuilt. Religious instruction of children had been abandoned. One of the responses consisted in training catechists, who would provide the poor with solid Christian instruction.

³⁰ DQ 314 6.36.

³¹ DQ 127 3.10.

Father Querbes loved the function of catechist so much that, at times, he signed himself: “Querbes - catechist priest.”³²

For him the Word of God was central. “God speaks to us ... especially in the reading of Sacred Scripture. We must therefore listen to that divine voice, with humility and simplicity, accepting the pure truth religiously, but without transforming, into work and study, that sweet occupation, which must provide nourishment for our soul and our spirit.”³³ That Word is a constant point of reference in his correspondence, in his sermons, and in his recommendations. His courageous, positive, and hope-filled stance in various events and reversals came from the presence of the Word in his life. That was also what he desired for his catechists.

The practice of the “Legend,” with readings from both Testaments, from The Catechism of the Council of Trent (the official catechism of the Church at that time), and from The Imitation of Christ, would provide a daily source of nourishment for the hearts and souls of his catechists. It would be an important part of their lives and their formation.

2.3.3 “The Service of the Holy Altar”

For Father Querbes, catechists were also at the service of the celebrating Christian community. That is why they were called “parochial clerics.”

Our Founder – and this was a novelty in his day and age – was involved in liturgical renewal. He wanted liturgies to be vibrant and to reflect the active participation of the entire assembly.

Father Querbes emphasized the importance of singing, through which Christians proclaim their faith and evolve from an amorphous mass into a believing people. Our Founder promoted a liturgical style that reflected a sense of the sacred. But, at the same time, there was

³² DQ 199 5.21 ss.

³³ DQ 550 8.98b.

something deeper in him. He wanted to transform life in its entirety into a liturgy that both gave and received. "Do not ask for anything. Do not refuse anything. That is the holocaust most acceptable to God."³⁴

The Eucharist, for Father Querbes, was the high point of the liturgy and would become the distinguishing mark of his personal life and the life of his catechists. It is significant that he saved a souvenir of his First Holy Communion. It was in front of the altar that he would have the first inspirations about his apostolic work. He recommended to his catechists that they visit the Blessed Sacrament and receive Communion frequently, which was not the custom at that time. His was the experience of giving day after day.

3. The Major Orientations of Viatorian Spirituality Today

Introduction

Since the Second Vatican Council, Viatorians have made considerable efforts to rediscover the inspiration of their Founder.

The Viatorian community is evolving, today, in a period of major changes. But it must retain the imprint of our Founder. "Adored and loved be Jesus" is our motto. As it did for Father Querbes, that motto should help us to unify our interior lives and our apostolic lives.

In a world that is moving towards globalization, towards a pluralistic, secular, and materialistic society, that motto invites us to be and to live as witnesses of that Kingdom that has Christ at its center. Above and beyond appearances, we can only discover that through a careful reading of the signs of the times. Young people who discover the values of subjectivity are very often searching for meaning and answers. The Viatorian vocation, if it takes the time to become inculturated, will delve more deeply into the spirituality that is lived by different peoples and generations. We Viatorians are catechists. Will

³⁴ DQ 547 8.81 Commentary on the Statutes.

our desire to transmit the message and to bear witness to the Gospel help us to discover ways of attracting men and women in the modern world?

3.1 Contemplation

Over the course of our Viatorian history, the motto “Praised and loved be Jesus” has led us to accentuate the importance of active love in order to make our actions effective.

The present day and age leads us to adopt a more humble vision and to change our emphasis. We wish to give priority to “... loved be Jesus.” We wish to restore adoration and the contemplative dimension to the places of honor that they deserve. We are women and men who want to be God’s. We will rediscover such important concepts as presence and watchfulness, as liturgy and self-giving, as thanksgiving and joy, as silence and listening. Our stance of faith invites us to discover that God who gives because he wishes to save us. And we repeat our admiration in the presence of everything created – the cosmos, men and women in our world, and the Risen Christ present to us through his Spirit.

Contemplation is a gift from God. Contemplation means taking “a long and loving look at reality.”³⁵ It means seeing the cosmos as God sees it. “And God saw that everything was good.”³⁶ It means seeing men and women in today’s world as God sees them. “And it was very good.”³⁷ It means looking at today’s Christ as God looks at him. “You are my beloved Son; upon you, my favor rests.”³⁸ And the Spirit prompts us to say: Abba - Father.”³⁹ She invites us to say “brothers and sisters” and to look upon our world with compassion and mercy.

Contemplation means looking at ourselves as God sees us. It helps me to discover, in the very depths of my being, the presence of the

³⁵ Quoted by Father Mark Francis, *Contemplation for Non-Contemplatives*, p. 5.

³⁶ Gn 1,25.

³⁷ Gn 1,31.

³⁸ Mk 1,11.

³⁹ Gal 4,6.

Spirit, of the one who urges me on and leads me to be more myself than even myself. And I discover that, in spite of my sinfulness, I enjoy the full dignity of the children of God.

Contemplation cannot help but to be for us a moment of truth – a discovery of God's action in the world, in people, in events, and in history. That discovery will necessarily lead us to a time of justice and love.

Today we are invited to return contemplation to its rightful place, not only as an “exercise of piety,” but also as a personal encounter with God in a time of silence, celebration, and self-giving. In that way, contemplation nourishes our action, strengthening it and making it fruitful.

3.2 The Poor

3.2.1 “Those who are accounted of no importance in our world”

If we wish to see the world as God sees it, reality invites us to look again at Jesus and the Kingdom that he announced. God's gratuitous choice is extended to those whom the world despises. They are not such by their own merits. That was also our Founder's choice ... and must be ours as well.

Viatorians have adopted means, not only for becoming more aware of justice and various roads to liberation, but also for making a Gospel option that leaves its imprint on their spiritual life.

An awareness of the reality of the poor helps us to discover our own poverty. For the poor have their own way of evangelizing us. Poor people live in a spirit of gratuitousness. They strive to enter into contact with others without using material things. That is why the poor have a sense of the other and are open to the other, to welcoming and valuing every person. The poor have a spirit of celebration and joy because life and people are more important than material goods.

The rich, attached as they are to material, intellectual, and spiritual goods, find it difficult to accept reality. The poor, for their part, accept and embrace reality in whatever form it presents itself.

The poor live out a kind of stubbornness as an expression of life's strength. They must struggle to live; they do not become discouraged at the first obstacle. It is thus that they nourish their hope. They do battle against whatever destroys people and, in that regard, we must accompany them – in their organizations, in their sense of solidarity, and in their respect for every person.

The poor live out of a spiritual foundation that also characterized our Founder.

3.2.2 The Young

Amongst the poor, our preferential option as Viatorians is for the young. We know that Jesus presented the young as our model for entering the Kingdom. And our Founder offered us another Gospel-inspired motto: "Let the little children come unto me." If Jesus gives us such an invitation, it is not only by reason of tenderness toward their child-like freshness and candor, but because he did not accept the way in which children were shunted aside in the Jewish community. Jesus wished to make children part of the community.

We are very much aware that, among the young, all is not well in the best of worlds. It is not because they are perfect that we opt in their favor! There are young people who have been destroyed by material, affective, or social deprivation. Many young people, in uncounted numbers of gangs, are searching for their way through the world, a way that they find closed. Oftentimes they choose the path of violence and death. How can we open for them the path of love and solidarity?

Young people, like the poor, also have something to say to us. In their own way, they invite us to conversion. As the world of tomorrow, they invite us to be open to the future and to hope. With them, new things are coming to life.

We find, in the young, an invitation to be daring, creative, imaginative, life-giving. The young invite us to be happy and to live in peace, not to live in security. They inspire in us a commitment to create what is good, to alleviate suffering, and to cure whatever is sick in us and in them.

The young invite us to enter into the movement of an ever-changing life.

3.2.3 New Foundations

It is certainly an entirely youthful spirit of boldness that invites us to respond, in our new foundations, to the call of the poor in the Third World, to open ourselves to meeting people from other cultures and to learning to appreciate differences. It is quite evident that we cannot simply work with imported models. We must become inculturated – that is, we must be open to innovation and to different persons, as a movement of the Spirit.

On the other hand, our new foundations, not having lived a Christianity that is enslaved to history, can enter more easily into the new wave of evangelization.

We see, in our new foundations, a challenge on behalf of the Kingdom that can tear us away from our sterile complaints. In spite of all our weaknesses, our new foundations are a sign of fruitfulness and a source of hope. How often, in the Bible, do we not see life come forth from women who are sterile or beyond their child-bearing years?

Our new foundations are a challenge from the great masses of humanity, with whom the world of the rich does not always readily share its bread.

Along the lines of our General Chapters, we are redirected to the essential questions: modern-day prophesying, openness to the world, liberation from oppression, working to promote peace,⁴⁰ struggling for Human Rights. With our new foundations, our mission takes on a new image. With those foundations, the Viatorian family finds new vitality and new and dynamic ways of acting. Our new foundations serve as a catalyst in the revitalization of our charism, a breath of fresh air for all our communities. We can discover, in those new foundations, the action of the Holy Spirit, who is not impeded by borders and who breathes when and where She wishes.

⁴⁰ 1972 General Chapter

The preferential option for the poor thus becomes an essential dimension of our mission. It serves as the determining factor in many of our personal and community commitments. It invites us to be open to the first sacrament, as defined clearly by Jesus in the Gospel. That Gospel option truly leaves its mark upon our entire spirituality.

3.3 Viatorian Brotherly Life

Brotherhood is an expression of charity lived in imitation of Jesus with his disciples and of the first Christian communities in the Acts of the Apostles. There are no longer Greeks nor Jews,⁴¹ but a communion of life, in a spirit of reciprocal welcoming, in mutual support, solidarity in trying times, and a sharing of roles in the building up of the Church. Father Querbes wanted such brotherhood to be present in his catechists. While he did recruit them, first of all, in light of a mission, he wanted them to live with the pastor and his assistants, within the framework of a rural parish. That first form of fraternal life, marked with special moments amongst them, later evolved into various expressions dictated either by our mission or by our life together.

In a Church that had taken on highly hierarchical structures, Vatican II restored honor to the People of God. That Church movement gave back to the laity the role that they should play, motivated as they are by the same Gospel values.

Along those lines, the Congregation, by establishing Association, has tried to return to the original intuition that brought it into being. The Viatorians thus become a community in which lay men and women, along with priests and brothers, wish to live together in a spirit of Gospel brotherhood. All of them, together, are heirs of and responsible for the Viatorian charism. By making it possible for us to develop our sense of welcoming things that are different, diversity offers us new opportunities for our charism.

⁴¹ Gal 3,28.

The rebirth of Association appears as an undeniable grace. It enriches religious life with elements that are proper to lay spirituality and that distinguish those persons who are more directly involved in the challenges presented by the modern world. Additionally – and this is important – our masculine spirituality will be given a feminine imprint. Thus, our common spirituality is re-affirmed as a spirituality of baptized men and women united in a common ministry, that of Catechists. We are not talking here about the fusion of two different entities, but about mutual enrichment through their differences.

This Viatorian brotherly/sisterly life is a new hope in which religious and lay people, as a reflection of the People of God, project a testimony that is particularly meaningful in a Church that is trying to reconstitute its Christian heritage.

3.4 Service of the Word

This pluralistic, alive, and brotherly community⁴² intent on following and announcing Jesus Christ.

3.4.1 The Word of God

The Word of God is the source and center of Viatorian spirituality. As a perduring Viatorian trait from the very beginning, Father Querbes invited – and even obliged – his religious to read Sacred Scripture by providing them with an adapted form of the breviary called the Legend. Viatorians must find therein their deep unity made possible by their discovery of and encounter with Jesus Christ in his historical signs – the Bible, the Sacraments, and our brothers and sisters. We are servants of the Word in its two major dimensions – listening and announcing.

Listening is part of the dialogue with God in contemplation. According to the inspiration of Father Querbes, Viatorian prayer is completely biblical. And it is through listening to the Word that we can discern as a community.

⁴² Letter to Viatorian Communities. 1994 General Chapter.

3.4.2 The Catechesis

Preaching the Word turns us into catechists, a ministry that is inseparable from the Viatorian charism, the permanent mandate given to every Viatorian and to the whole Viatorian Community.⁴³ We are disciples of Jesus who draw our inspiration from his way of teaching; we are mediators who facilitate communication between people and God's mystery. Our being as catechists must inspire our entire being.⁴⁴

The Word of God, read, meditated upon, and shared, will turn our communities into living communities, into places that can be joyfully recommended to others. Faithfulness to the Word and to our lives and responsibilities as catechists will invite us to continue our formation process and to lovingly listen to and interpret history. Perhaps it would be good to invent a "*New Legend*," through which our reading of the Word would help us, as religious and associates, in our sharing. Scripture is not closed. Revelation continues. Our vocation as prophets invites us to discover how God is speaking to us today. God's Word always remains alive and active.

3.5 Celebration of Faith

3.5.1 The Liturgy

Viatorians have always been identified as persons closely connected with the liturgy. The expression used by our Founder, "the service of the holy altar," has been translated in our Constitution as "to raise up communities where faith is lived, deepened, and celebrated."⁴⁵ The joyful sense of celebrating our faith is made manifest in the liturgy, which is much more a celebration of life and of faith than simply a rite. The liturgy truly consists of praising God's glory and welcoming God's love.

⁴³ 2000 General Chapter, Question 5.

⁴⁴ 2000 General Chapter, Question 5.

⁴⁵ Constitution, Article 8.

The liturgy is just as much an expression, an updating, and a celebration of the Word as it is life-giving catechesis. Promoting active and joy-filled participation in every liturgical action will serve as an experience – and as a celebration – of faith. Our new foundations are introducing us to liturgical inculturation and inviting us to express our faith in festive ways. Our new foundations remind us that it is more important to help promote life and participation than to preserve a rite whose original meaning needs to be rediscovered. Additionally, with their audio-visual and leisure-based culture, young people are constantly questioning us.

3.5.2 The Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist, the summit and the center of our life, truly provides a privileged opportunity for renewing our commitment to Christ, our pastoral service, and our identity as Viatorians. The Eucharist is a celebration and a renewal of the Paschal Mystery – the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, which glorifies God the Father. Invited, united, and gathered together as a people, we participate in agapé – communion, practice of social justice, and solidarity with all the men and women in today's world. The sincerity of our eucharistic worship commits us, as individuals and as a community, to search for the unity of all our brothers and sisters in Jesus⁴⁶ and to make of ourselves an offering to God and to others.

⁴⁶ 1969 General Chapter, No. 337.

Conclusion

We, as Viatorians, have a future filled with hope. To follow Jesus as a Viatorian has certain specific characteristics. The Church is embellished and enriched with who we are and what we do. The Viatorian vocation today can provide a model of what it means to be persons for God and persons for others. Our family, even though growing older, is experiencing rebirth through Father Querbes' original idea of Association. Old olive trees are blooming again in our new foundations. The poor and the young are knocking on our doors. Interiority, the Word, and catechetical instruction can serve to slake our thirst and to provide direction for that immense desire to live. Life lived as brothers and sisters and faith celebrated together can bring renewed fervor and joy into our families and religious communities.

The Viatorian Community as such is responding within the overall framework of spirituality. Every Viatorian, based upon his/her personal history and current situation, will live out one or another of the above-mentioned traits with greater or lesser intensity. The total picture is obtained within the mosaic of all the different parts ... and each and every part plays its role in forming the final complete mosaic.

“Adored and loved be Jesus” in our Viatorian mosaic.

VIATORIAN SPIRITUALITY READING GUIDE

COMMUNITY REFLECTION

Preliminary questions

1. Is the definition of term "Spirituality" provided by the document adequate?
2. Does this document help to clarify the spirituality of the Founder and the Viatorian Community? If so, what does it help clarify? Are there aspects of our spirituality that are missing?

A. "ADORED . . . BE JESUS"

Pillar of Querbesian spirituality: a lively and enlightened faith. How does this understanding of faith influence us today? In our formation? In how we carry out our mission?

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VIATORIAN SPIRITUALITY TODAY

Contemplation

How do we understand contemplation? How can it be better integrated in our lives?

The Word of God

"Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ," wrote Saint Ambrose. The Word of God has always had pride of place in Viatorian life and formation through "Legend" and Scripture study inspired by the Council. Do we still give it enough emphasis today?

Celebration of the Faith

Christians depend on celebrations of the faith that effectively communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ through sign, symbols, poetry, music and movement. The emphasis on worthy liturgical celebrations comes to us from the Founder. How would we evaluate liturgical celebrations, in our parishes... in the Viatorian community?

Steadfast Confidence in God who is Provident

A defining characteristic of Fr. Querbes spirituality was a belief in God's Provident care of the world and humanity. Do we do enough to promote this notion among us?

B. "...LOVED BE JESUS"

Pillar of Viatorian Spirituality: **LOVE**

The foundation of Viatorian mission is love—reaching out to other to catechize, to celebrate, to offer hope.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VIATORIAN SPIRITUALITY TODAY

The Poor: Abandoned of the Society

Do you have experience of being "evangelized by the poor" as a Viatorian?

Do our local communities live out a commitment to the poor?

Do we consciously work for the equality of women in society and in the Church?

Could we do something more in our educational work and in our other ministries to fight against injustice?

Are Viatorians prophetic witnesses for the other people of their society, especially the young?

What do the New Foundations mean for the life of the international Viatorian Community?

Catechesis

We are educators of the faith. How does our particular understanding of Faith in a God who is Provident affect our overall ministry (in schools, parishes, etc.)?

Viatorian Community Life

What particular kind of witness does our community of religious and associates give?

How does our community life sustain us in the ways we carry out the mission of the Community?