

# St. Gaspar Bertoni



His *Mode of Serving* the Church

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What was in the depths of St. Gaspar Bertoni's heart in founding the Stigmatines might be intensified by praying over some of these texts that follow – they seem to make much sense in thinking of him and his hopes of a **qualified service** for the Church through us:

***God did not spare His only [Unigenitus] Son, but handed Him over for the sake of us all ... [cf. Rm 8:32] - God so loved the world that He gave up His most beloved [agapetos] Son... [cf. Jn 3:16].***

1. ***Jesus Himself is the ICON of the Invisible God [Col 1:15]*** - this is the *modus operandi*, the **mode** of Jesus' entire earthly sojourn. ***Whoever sees Me, sees the Father*** [Jn 14:9] - ***This Son is the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being...*** [cf. Heb 1:2, f.]. Furthermore, this describes Jesus' Being, His Divine Filiation – and this is what He **is** and **does** in His unique Filiation:

***Ga 1:4: ... the Lord Jesus Christ, Who in order to rescue us from the present wicked world, sacrificed Himself for our sins...***

***The Son of Man has loved me and sacrificed Himself for my sake... [cf. Ga 2:20].***

***Ep 5:1,f: Try, then, to imitate God as children of His that He loves and follow Christ by loving as He loved you, giving Himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God ...***

***... Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed Himself for her, to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words ... This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church ...*** [Ep 5:25, ff.].

***1 Tm 2:5, 6: ... For there is only one God and there is only one Mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, Who sacrificed Himself as a ransom for them all...***

***Tt 2:11-14: ...You see, God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race, and taught us what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly***

***ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. He sacrificed Himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be His very own and would have no ambition except for doing good ...***

It can be said that Paul made much of the formula: ***Jesus Christ handed himself over for us*** as the revealed brand of ***total oblativ, immolative love*** - in every one of the periods of his literary activity. Indeed, St. Paul's statements on the salvific charity of Jesus Christ appear in his '***Great Epistles***' [cf. Rm; Ga; 1 Co] – they are found in what some interpreters call his ***Letters of Captivity*** [ cf. Ph; Ep] and are discovered as well in his, or 'the' ***Pastoral Epistles*** [cf. 1 Tm; Tt]. This suggests the hypothesis that the formula is not the effect of some evolution of Pauline theology, but that it ***pertains, both from the perspective of its content, as well as for its form, to the very foundations of Paul's Gospel.*** To these texts, we might add also this one from Hebrews:

***... You Who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me ... then I said: just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book: 'God, here I am! I am coming to obey your will.' ... I am coming to obey Your will. He is abolishing the first sort [of empty ritual sacrifice] - to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of His body made once and for all by Jesus Christ... [cf. Heb 10:5-9].***

**2. *Your will be done!* [Mt 6:10]** – for all the Baptized, the central Petition of the ***Lord's Prayer*** needs to be worked out in life's choices, by each of the Faithful. As this is the perfect prayer of Jesus Himself, it is placed as the conclusion of the ***Beatitudes*** offered by Jesus Christ. There has been in history a broad diversity of opinion on the interpretation of the Beatitudes - they are: [1] Absolutist; [2] Modification; [3] Hyperbole; [4] General Principles; [5] Attitudes- not acts; [6] Double Standard; [7] Two kingdoms; [8] Analogy of Scripture; [9] Interim Ethic; [10] Modern Dispensationalist; [11] Repentance; [12] Unconditional Divine will.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, one might see these ***Beatitudes*** as the ***manner intended by Jesus Himself as His desired response to the Commandments in the Church's universal vocation to Holiness, the Christian mode of living, the manner of following after, imitating Jesus Christ, the modus operandi*** for all believers, following the Law of

<sup>1</sup> Warren S. Kissinger, *The Sermon on the Mount. A History of Interpretation and Bibliography.* The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Medtuchen NJ & The American Theological Association. 1975, pp. 1, ff.

Progress. This is how one **puts on the mind of Christ Jesus** [cf. Ph 2:5]; through life-long Growth and Development, responding to grace.

This is the **manner**, the **mode**, suggested by Jesus for all of the Baptized to hand over their existence as **a living Holocaust [obsequium]** to a higher power, which the Mercy of God is [cf. Rm 12:1, f.]. St. Thomas would teach us that the closer the instrument is to the hand of the Master, the more divine, perfect – Christ-like, will be the master-piece, the work of art. The Beatitudes are not out of reach as some distant ideal. With God's grace – they are the conduct suggested by Jesus Christ Himself for the Church – as the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** teaches us:

**1716:** The Beatitudes are **at the heart of Jesus' preaching**. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of a territory, but to **the Kingdom of Heaven**.

... [cf. Mt 5:3-12].

**1717:** The Beatitudes **depict the countenance of Jesus Christ** and **portray His charity**:

- they **express the vocation of the faithful** associated with the glory of His Passion and resurrection;

- they shed light on the actions and attitudes **characteristic of the Christian life**;

- they are the paradoxical promises that **sustain hope in the midst of tribulations**;

- they proclaim **the blessings and rewards already secured**, however dimly, for Christ's disciples;

- they have **begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints**.

**2546** ***Blessed are the poor in spirit*** [Mt 5:3]. The Beatitudes reveal **an order of happiness and grace, of beauty and peace**. Jesus celebrates the joy of the poor, to whom the **kingdom** already belongs [cf. Lk 6:20].

The Word speaks of **voluntary humility** as ***poverty in spirit***; the Apostle gives **an example of God's poverty** when he says: ***For your sake He became poor*** [St. Greg. Of Nyssa, ***De Beatitudinibus***, 1].

**2547:** ... **Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees from anxiety about tomorrow** [cf. Mt 6: 25-34]. **Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor**. ***They shall see God***.

A modern Protestant theologian has taught with no little eloquence: that the original sin was not so much the titanic desire to be like God – but **the refusal to be what God likes!** St. Gaspar Bertoni put it this way, following St. Ignatius: **Only God knows what He would do in certain souls if only He were not impeded in His work!**

3. **Fr. Bertoni's Mode of Serving the Church** [cf. **CF # 2**]: each saint, and particular each Founder, has worked out his own *modus* of following Jesus Christ.

In the *Formula* of St. Ignatius, the Jesuit Founder established **Five Chapters, or Headings for the Life-style** that those in His 'Company', 'Society' are asked to live: [1] the **Purpose** of the Community; [2] its **manner, mode of proceeding,** of living this established end; [3] a life of **apostolic poverty** and a [4] **corporate obedience,** governing the community life – and [5] an **apostolic obedience, spelled out by a Fourth Vow to God to serve the Pope, who chooses their specific service in their Mission to the Church.**

The vocation, special grace for the 'Company' of Jesus was a **loving, obediential relationship regarding the Missions of the Society** [cf. Part VII, **CSJ**] to the Pope, much as Christ lived his own Divine Filiation toward His Heavenly Father. Fr. Jerome Nadal, the first theologian of the Jesuit Constitutions, developed this idea:

### **Jesus Christ is the Model**

*The Ignatian choice of the institutional elements concerning **noster modus procedendi,** has a clearly **Christological** inspiration. The **radicality** without conditions which the fact of following Christ implies, **determines** the apostolic parameters of the Company. **And the contemplation of the Person of Christ arouses the desire to imitate His life. The Model is always Jesus Christ, and precisely Christ as He is presented in the Spiritual Exercises.** It is not stated without a good reason that the Company is, in the final analysis, **an institutional tradition of the Spiritual Exercises.**<sup>2</sup>*

It seems that St. Gaspar Bertoni adapted a similar *manner of serving the Church* according to this Model. To explain the call to be ***Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance [Service - obsequium]***<sup>3</sup> **of Bishops** - comparable to a **Eucharistic Offertory**. Fr. Bertoni did not legislate a Fourth Vow, but developed the Diocesan's

<sup>2</sup> El nuestro Modo de Proceder [Il Nostro Modo d'agire ] Forma Vivendi – Institutum Vitae *The Ignatian "Manner" [Modus ] of Proceeding.* P. Pedro ARRUPE, SJ, A Conference delivered by the Jesuit Father General to the English Course on Ignatian Spirituality - January 18, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Rm 12:1

promise of obedience to his Bishop. In his second Constitution, St. Gaspar describes how this is to be done:

2. The Manner [*Modus*] of achieving this goal: [the Apostolic Missionaries are] *to work under the direction of, and in dependence on the Ordinaries of those places in which the Missions may be offered. The Missionaries are to be totally submissive to these Bishops, concerning all that pertains to the exercise of their Apostolic Endeavor. The Missionaries are to receive their permission beforehand from them, along with the necessary faculties, always observing the guidelines set down by these Ordinaries concerning the places and the time in the exercise of their apostolate. [From **the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation**, December 20, 1817].*

The underlined six or seven words here interpret **the Stigmatine obediential service to the Church**. The will of God, for St. Gaspar, is incarnate in the varied and changing needs of Bishops, a development of his own personal service to his bishop as a diocesan priest – whom St. Gaspar simply, but deeply [with **Act 20:26**] believed were chosen through the Holy Spirit [**CF # 185**].

### Reflection

However, as for all believers, due to the intimate solidarity that reigns between the Head and all His Members of the Mystical Body, it was necessary [to perpetuate for the Church on earth and in Heaven. This one Sacrifice [flowing from Christ's life-long, His immolative will] culminated on the Cross. While this Sacrifice on the Cross remains unique and absolute, once and for all, it was decreed to pass into the daily living of the life of the Church. It is thus to be rendered co-extensive to all times and to all places, without ever being multiplied. [cf. Col 1:24]. This is achieved by the daily celebration of the Eucharist. For the **Church in Glory**, it is eternally manifest in **the Glorious Wounds** preserved forever in His Resurrected Sacred Body.

None of the elements of the Cross of Jesus Christ can be missing on the Altar if theology wishes to establish a continuity and an organic unity between these two moments of the one drama of Redemption. As a result, in the **Eucharistic Sacrifice** it is necessary [in accord with this divine decree of salvation] in some *manner, or mode*, to find the **same Victim, the same Oblation, the same Immolation**, as on **Calvary**, as expressly affirmed by the Council of Trent [DS 1743]:

- 1.] *One and the same Host;*
- 2.] *The same offering now by the ministry of Priests, who made of Himself an oblation then on the Cross, only the manner of offering is different;*
- 3.] *In the divine sacrifice which is enacted in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, Who once on the altar of the Cross offered Himself in a bloody manner.*

[And since in this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who on the altar of the Cross once offered Himself in a bloody manner [Heb 9:27], the holy Synod teaches that this is truly propitiatory [can. 3], and has this effect, that if contrite and penitent we approach God with a sincere heart and right faith, with fear and reverence we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid [Heb 4:16]. For appeased by this oblation, the Lord, granting grace and gift of penitence, pardons crimes and even great sins. For, it is one and the same Victim, the same one now offering by the ministry of priests as He then offered Himself on the Cross, the manner of offering along being different. The fruits of that oblation [bloody, that is] are received most abundantly through this unbloody one... DS 1743].

In that culminating moment in which from the depths of Golgotha – the Savior, in a panoramic view, was clarified already by the beatific vision in His human nature [according to Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*]. Jesus came to know one by one all the memorials, re-presentations of this one immolation, oblation that the Church would ever offer of this expiating death in the Eucharistic ritual – and would have appropriated them all as one in presenting them to the Father: in that moment, there ceased for Jesus Christ His *state of wayfarer* and there began for him His *state of glory*. As a result, that which had been a disposition nourished by continuous acts of offering, was changed at that instant into a state of perennial immolation [a perpetual state of oblation ], as though crystallized into that participated immutability of Glory: with this disposition of His Divine Heart Jesus is rendered present on the Altar.<sup>4</sup>

This Eucharistic **oblation** is said to be **identical** to that of the Cross, because it is reflected in the perpetual priestly orientation of the earthy existence of Jesus Christ and continued in eternity. On earth, this concluded in His expiating death – perpetuated here in the daily Mass, and in heaven, in the **preservation of the Glorious Stigmata** in His RISEN BODY. The Faithful live this by living their baptismal graces [cf. Rm 6: 1, ff.] – and the saints contemplate it forever. It is to be held that

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, in: *Angelicum* 19 [1942], pp. 105-118 –as quoted by Piolanti.

each Liturgy is subordinated to that of Golgotha, since if in the limited period of His earthly appearance, Jesus **tended from the beginning to satisfaction for sin and to merit**, in the instant in which He entered into **the glorious phase** of His offering to God. In order to use an image dear to Pope Pius XII<sup>5</sup> - prior to reaching His death, Jesus Christ, manifested a **constant attitude of spirit: of holocaust, immolation, total oblation and Self-giving**. He understood He was preparing **a reservoir of salvific streams of saving water** [cf. **Jn 7: 37, ff.; Is 12: 1, ff.**] that would **flow from His sacred side** for the entire human race, from the moment of His appearance *before the face of God*, He asked the Father to immerse in those salvific streams all the children of Adam in order to strengthen them in their new life.

This **life-long oblation** of Jesus Christ is **the very soul** and **the form of the Eucharistic Immolation**. With the cruel death inflicted on Jesus, this also had a **satisfactory** merit because of His great love and the **internal dedication** with which the Redeemer made of those sufferings – so, on the Altar, the **unique and immutable interior oblation of the Heart of Jesus Christ** provide worth and a religious meaning to that **mystical-sacramental immolation** that is achieved in each Mass.

This **complexity of these Christological mysteries** is memorialized in the ***anamnesis*** of the Mass, [imitated: (*imitamini quod tractatis!*) ] by many as their professed **Missionary obsequium** - the Mass can also well be defined as the ***Sacrament of the Pasch***. The reason is that in this, there is celebrated and commemorated **the death AND the resurrection of the Redeemer**. This constitutes the ***zikkaron*** [the *Memorial*] of what occurred irrevocably over two millennia ago.

At the same time, the Eucharist has the virtue of giving us *here and now* the **glorious Christ** crowned with the signs of His victory. Notwithstanding the humble external signs, the Lord exercises His authority over souls, over the Church and over the universe. **His life-long oblation, incarnate and celebrated in symbolic elements**, is totally transformed into the perfect religion of the prime Adorer of His Father. A **Eucharistic obsequium** is the Stigmatine Missionary ideal.

In that moment the whole Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, comes **joined into a espousals with the Head**, and becomes in act, that which it already had been through Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Order, i.e., **Priest, Victim, mystically offered and offering, immolated and immolating together with her Head – who actually serves**, according to a felicitous ancient expression as **the catholic priest of His Father**. Jesus Christ is the **universal priest** because He pours in His Precious

<sup>5</sup> *Mediator Dei*, November 30, 1947.



Blood, the impetus of His love and of **His religious obsequiousness toward God** in the hearts of all the faithful.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, Jesus is a Priest forever! –

**[1] Concerning His Dignity**: because His priestly **character** [Heb 1:1,ff.], based on the Hypostatic Union, lasts forever.

**[2] Concerning its Effects**: because the results of His Priesthood will last forever in grace and in glory obtained by the Elect. St. Thomas writes in this regard: In the office of priest two realities come under consideration: the first the **oblation of the sacrifice**; secondly, the **consummation of the sacrifice** which exists in this that those for whom the sacrifice is offered, achieve the purpose of the sacrifice. His passion and death are not to be repeated, nonetheless, **the virtue of the Host of His body, offered once and for all, lasts forever**<sup>7</sup>.

**[3] Concerning the Affections**: because **the interior disposition** of honoring the Father with the **oblation of His Priesthood** is **eternally present** and actual in the Heart of Jesus. He offers in eternity, in the odor of all sweetness, His **adoration** and His **thanksgiving** to the Most Holy Trinity, together with the entire created universe<sup>8</sup>.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us:

**112 1. Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture." Different as the books which comprise it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.**

**The phrase "heart of Christ" can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.**

The following text offers its own explanation of this mystery:

<sup>6</sup> A. Piolanti, *Il Mistero Eucaristico*. 4a ed. Liberia Editrice Vatican 1966. 485-554, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 22 a. 5 & ad 2 m.

<sup>8</sup> A. Piolanti, *Il Mistero Eucaristico*. 4a ed. Liberia Editrice Vatican 1966. 498-505, *passim*.

***...You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals of it because you were sacrificed and with your blood you bought men for God of every race, language, people and nation, and made them a line of kings and priests, to serve our God and to rule the world... [cf. Rv. 5]***

But he shows how we may have confidence in persevering in our vocations, since Christ dedicated, i.e., began, a new and living way for us through His own blood. **Mi 2:13:** He shall go up that shall open the way before them. **Jn 14:3:** If I shall go, and prepare a place for you, etc. [**Is 35:8**]: It shall be called a holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it. **'this, then, is the way of entering heaven. And it is new, since before Christ no one found it,** since no man has ascended into heaven, but He that descended from heaven, **as it says in Jn 3:13. And so, he who wants to ascend must first adhere to the Head as one of His members.** **Rv 2:7:** to him, that overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of My God. **Again, 3:12:** I will write upon him that name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, **for they are brought in anew.** Living, i.e., always persevering, in which appeared the power of the God-head, since He always lives.

And he shows what this was by adding, through the veil, i.e., His flesh. For just as the priest enters through the Veil into the Holy of Holies, so if we want to enter the Holies of Glory, **we must enter through the Body of Christ**, which was **the Veil of His divinity**. **Is 45:15:** To pass through the veil, is **to pass through His Body** given to us under the veil of the species of bread in the Blessed Sacrament. For He is not proposed to us under His human appearance on account of the horror [of cannibalism] and for the merit of faith.<sup>9</sup> For St. Thomas, **the Temple Veil** in John's Gospel is **Jesus' Sacred Side, Pierced** by the Roman soldier, opening the tabernacle of the Trinity – and a broad symbolism for the Church's contemplation through the centuries<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. o.c., pp. 210-213.

<sup>10</sup> St. Thomas' Gospel Commentary Gospel of Saint Mark *Catena Aurea*. **CHAPTER XV 38. And the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.**

PSEUDO-JEROME; The veil of the temple is rent, that is, **the heaven is opened**.

THEOPHYL. Again, God by **the rending of the veil implied that the grace of the Holy Spirit goes away and is rent from the temple**, so that the Holy of Holies might be seen by all ...

This also is **a figure of the living temple, that is, the body of Christ, in whose Passion His 'garment' is torn, that is, His flesh**.

Again, it means another thing; for the flesh is **the veil of our temple**, that is, of our **mind**. But the power of the flesh is torn in the Passion of Christ, from the top to the bottom, that is, **from Adam even down to the latest man**; for **also Adam was made whole by the Passion of Christ**, and his flesh does not remain under the curse, nor does it deserve corruption, but we all are gifted with incorruption.

The **daily Mass** for the Pilgrim Church – and the eternal retention in His Risen Body of His **Glorious Wounds** for the Communion of Saints already celebrating the Glory of God in the Heavenly Sanctuary: these serve as the perpetual memorial. Thus, God's offering of His Son [**obsequium**] from all eternity [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16] are lived in some way, in the Stigmatine **obsequium Episcoporum**. Our **Amen** at each Eucharist – echoes the **Fiat** of Mary and Joseph in their holy Espousals.

Thus, the Stigmatine is called to imitate also St. Joseph's **husband's gift to His Bride**<sup>11</sup> – which is the Church. St. Gaspar described it this way:

**We must make in ourselves a portrait of Jesus Christ...**<sup>12</sup>

We ask for your prayers to persevere in this quest!

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<sup>11</sup> cf. John Paul II, St. Joseph, *Redemptoris Custos*, Aug. 15, 1989: **20**. In the Liturgy, Mary is celebrated as "united to Joseph, the just man, by a bond of marital and virginal love." There are really two kinds of love here, both of which together represent **the mystery of the Church-virgin and spouse - as symbolized in the marriage of Mary and Joseph**. "**Virginité or celibacy** for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes and confirms it. **Marriage and virginity** are **two ways** of expressing and living **the one mystery** of the Covenant of God with his people." the Covenant which is a communion of love between God and human beings. **Through his complete self-sacrifice, Joseph expressed his generous love for the Mother of God, and gave her a husband's "gift of self."**

<sup>12</sup> St. Gaspar Bertoni, *Memoriale Privato* [Spiritual Diary], Feb.26, 1809.