

Edith Stein Institute
Believers' private Association
for Formation
in Humanities
in Consecrated Life and
Educational Church Communities

Edi.S.I.



Head Office
Via Curtatone 2 int. 5 - 16122 Genova - Italy
tel. 010-81.11.56 (9 AM-12 and 3:00 PM- 5:00 PM)
cell. 338-280.76.23 and 338-50.75.610
e-mail istedisi@tin.it
and edisi.segreteria@gmail.com
www.edisi.eu

**Seminar on Permanent
Formatori Passionisti
Roma
25 – 26 ottobre 2016**

**From personal affective maturity
to “positive” relations in the Community**

Edited by **dr. Grazia Maria Costa** – Medico chirurgo Igienista, Pneumologo e Dr. in Psicologia della Comunicazione – Dipl. di Esperto in Teologia Pastorale (PUL) – Presidente dell'Istituto Edith Stein Edi.S.I. - Vice Presidente di Diaconia, Associazione Nazionale del Counseling di Ispirazione Cristiana - Animatore di Modulo Formativo nel Programma FSP (= Formazione permanente specifica) Edi.S.I. Raffael - Preside, Insegnante e Counselor Trainer nella Scuola Edi.S.I. per Consulenti di Formazione in Scienze umane nella Vita Consacrata e Comunità Educative Ecclesiali – Genova



Introduction

To realise a Seminar on Permanent Formation in order to reflect on one's own capacity of relation, to create and support "positive" relations within the Community, namely to be witnesses of relationships in one's own community or in the Inter-congregational Community, seems to be very positive.

Thus, we shall see the shadows, which do not help the construction of "positive relations", the lights that help to build them up, and the specific modalities of relation that could be of a Community.

1 - "At the beginning there was the relation"

The relation is not a technique: it is an existential fact embracing the whole of our life. The verse from John "*In the beginning was the Word*" is "*In the beginning was the relation*", because the Word is the privileged instrument for the relation. God creates through the relation, entering a relation with what He creates. In the book of Genesis we read "***It is not good for man to be alone***". Therefore, the very first lines state that man is made for the relation, for communion, not only horizontal communion, namely between man and his similar being, but also vertical communion, namely, relation with God; in fact we read that "*Yahweh walks in the garden of Eden and relates with his creature*".

A deep desire is within us: the desire of encounter, of Communion. The desire of every man, the deepest one, is that of realising the encounter, the communion. Therefore, solitude, or the need of not corresponded communion, is the most radical poverty. Only one thing can satisfy this need, "to live in relation", a relation that is Communion. To arrive at this communion it is necessary to start living a true relation with God, that becomes Love towards each and everyone.

Ruber states that the fundamental fact of the human existence is ***man with man***.

The relation is not an optional fact in our existence, but an existential need. The man who is not in relation does not exist as man. This need is implicit not only in matrimony, but also in the vocation to the Consecrated Life.

The communitarian life of persons in consecrated life, without forgetting the value and motivational dimension, functions according to the same rules and natural dynamics of a group. The man who possesses a good self-knowledge as well as himself, becomes capable of going out towards the other as person, with respect of its singularity and exigencies. This presupposes the creation of positive interpersonal relations, founded on self-acceptance, trust and esteem towards the other person.

The interpersonal relation wraps a great part of our life. We have been made to communicate, for relation and our life goes on through a multiplicity of relations with ourselves, with others and with God.

Our being integrated in the apostolic life takes us to consider that a knowledge and a love "at distance towards people we are sent to or with which we are called to walk in fraternal life is not possible. Before being exterior, our stay among people is a dimensions that each of us recognises and builds up at interior and spiritual level.

In fact ***the apostolic life with its fatigues and stimuli flowing from daily life is an occasion to enter ourselves and to encounter our capacity of relation***; sometimes something ordinary helps us to take action of a diversity between an image that we have made of ourselves and the impact with the daily reality, which often goes out of our schemes and our securities just as if, on one side, the daily life stimulated us to outward openness and to relations, and on the other side, we lived in this impact the uneasiness of being unable to live the deep relations before us and the occasions of encounter at a true and mature level.

The inter-subjective relations are nurtured with frequent personal communications, "In the renewal of these late years, it appears how communication is a human factor that acquires a growing relevance for the life of the religious community The most felt exigency of incrementing the fraternal life of the community carries with itself the corresponding question of an ampler and more

intense communication...To become brothers and sisters we need to know one another, and to know one another it seems to be very important to communicate in an ampler and deeper way" (VFC 29).

This ample communication, solicited at various levels, in the respect for the specific autonomy of the Institute, normally creates closer relations, nourishes the spirit of family and the participation in the events of the entire Institute, sensitises to general problems, calls the consecrated persons around the common mission (VFC 39).s

Certainly, the relation needs an adequate milieu. If a climate of reciprocal welcome dominates, together with co-operation and, even better, with friendship and trust, then the doors of authentic exchange of ideas and service open favouring the growth of the whole Community. If, on the contrary, individualism reigns, the community remains blocked and neutralised. This proves that the cohesion of a Community depends on the way the relations and communications are effectuated. In a similar situation, according to the statement that "communicated experience is the greatest of human goods", we can establish an authentic relation which, to be successful, usually grows gradually according to the following four levels;

- it starts with an external sharing on **material goods**,
- it goes on with the co-participation in **apostolic, professional and work goods**,
- it reaches completion with the exchange of **affective-familiar goods**
- to reach the most elevated goods **of spiritual experiences**

Unluckily, the following affirmation of the document remains valid, *"In some communities the members complain the scarce quality of the fundamental communication of spiritual goods: they communicate marginal themes and problems, but they rarely share what is vital and central in the journey of consecration". "The consequences could be painful, because the spiritual experience insensibly acquires individualistic connotations" (VFC) says:*

When we say 'together', we do not say it because if we are together things turn out to be better, in the sense that if we come to be altogether we can realise more. This would be a business mentality. The operators of marketing put together the workers; the syndicates say, "Be united"; the sportive fans stay all together in the same curve of the stadium to shout louder: the voice becomes strong, the encouragement robust.

*We say 'together' not to the end of producing more, but to be an icon of the Most Holy Trinity, **We must reproduce in our life the life that is lived in heaven; Father, Son, Holy Spirit.** Three equal and distinct persons who live so deeply united as to form one God, One lives for the other: the Father for the Son and this for the Father and for the Holy Spirit.*

We must live the mystery of the Trinity not only to contemplate it: it is not only the principal mystery of our faith, but also the fundamental point of our moral life. The entire morality is reduced to this: we are equal and distinct persons, never a mass and never levelled. When we think that we are parts of the Mystical Body of Christ, it seems that our body, our intelligence, our particularity, our deep being must almost be annulled. Instead, as in the Trinity, we, too, are equal and distinct and also in the Mystical Body of Christ the deep "I" will never be reduced to zero, annulled, destroyed. Everything derives from here.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves, "What kind of icon of the Most Holy Trinity are we?"

We cause the failure of the business if we are not a peripheral agency of the Most Holy Trinity, if we are not an agency that seeks the interests of the Trinity, namely the interest of communion.

I am convinced that the winds of renewal come from the mystery of the Trinity. On the Contrary, we relegate the Trinity to the books of theology, in the academies of the scholar: it has not entered our practical life.

*The talk on this mystery does not concern only the persons employed to works: there is no other truth so very close to each of us as this. **Our first worry should be that of living communion within***

***us and our houses.** The fundamental nucleus is just this: we should be the copyright of the Most Holy Trinity. We must live in the mystery, the mystery of communion. Each of us is a person, "Eucharistic species", consecrated species, a spark from God.*

These are strong signs! Do not think that a strong sign is only that of going to the poor, discouraged people in the foot-paths.

Today, we have no more "signs of power", yet people must see the sign.

I cannot solve the problems of poverty, of marginalisation, of suffering: this is the duty of the social structures. However, we must provoke them to do it. We can solve the problem of all the turned out people. If I could stop this problem totally, I would be a prince who places many apartments at disposal of others. Then I would possess "signs of power", namely of richness. Instead, I do not possess the "signs of power" but "the power o signs"; that is, the power of locating a sign.

People can glimpse at the sign of availability and can think.

I speak of the Most Holy Trinity to each and everyone, because what urges me is the need of realising this great project of God, the project of the Trinitarian life.

How can we kill people and be violent? We cannot be violent, even when they attack us. Jesus said, "Put your sword in its custody" and "If somebody beats your right cheek show him also the left one", just as He did addressing the soldier who slapped him and who said "is this the way to answer the High Priest?". Jesus did not turn the slap, but retorted, "If I have spoken badly, say it to me; if I have spoken well, why do you beat me?" That soldier must have felt to turn into cinder.

Everything starts from here: desperation, suffering, injustice, discrimination. How far we are from the Trinitarian project!

*The Lord wants us to be ferment, yeast in the dough, in that determined community, in the parish where we work. We cannot propose given messages if we do not live this "being together" as a theological fact and not as a formula of efficiency. **This is our theological existence: to live the***

***mystery of the Most Holy Trinity as an acceptance of self and of the other.** The fact that in each of us there are diversities and that the other is different is a fact that re-innerves in the Trinity.*

The father is not the Son, but puts everything in common with the Son and with the Holy Spirit.

They put everything in common. The Father puts her richness in common, everything except one: to be Father. The Son to be Son and the Holy Spirit to be Spirit. Everything else is in common.

This is a revolutionary project, that should put fire in the veins. It is to this that we are called today.

¹

¹ See: Tonino Bello - Come vela s'inarca il grembo del mondo- Ed Insieme 2002

First Part.

**The shadows : some realities within the person
which may stop the development of the 'positive' relation**

In the apostolic reality it is noteworthy the almost constitutional effort of the person to enter in relation with others, with the far off others, with the poor, with persons of different culture.

In this effort there can be the risk that the person may channel all its energies for "the people", taking for granted that the relation in Community is something not strictly necessary or already acquired and automatic, or a symptom of weakness, just as if the person could not stand on its feet by himself and with its own autonomy.

Keeping this into account, before going through courses of growth in view of mature relations, let us see the potential breaks.

1 – The tendency to self-sufficiency

To relate has its aspect of moderation of self-sufficiency to which sometimes we tend.

To catch how another thinks, to perceive diversities or prohibitions sometimes has the scope of defending ourselves from attitudes of omnipotence, which can lead us to substitute the Creator, by not assuming our state of being creatures.

The relation, therefore, helps us to assume this human characteristic: man is a limited power and, therefore, **to relate with others with the end of moderating his self-sufficiency means fundamentally to learn how to feel himself to be a part, and not the whole.**

However, sometimes man, feeling to be a creature, perceives of not having enough value, he feels to be an inferior object, and this can finish by damaging his self-esteem quite deeply.

In moments when a man does not feel able, he experiences a strong sense of interior sadness and elaborates within himself an always more diffused conviction that he is not worthy, that he has nothing to offer, that he is unable to relate. **Thus, he tends to extend a normal sense of inadequacy, which he perceives, for instance, before new situations or difficult experiences or temporary failures, to the entire life, going towards deep uncertainty and sadness. In this way, man clings on himself and almost perceives that not only the Brothers, but not even God can help him to improve.**

Henri Nowen recommends those who experience similar moments of incapacity and insecurity to **avoid self-refusal.**

You must avoid not only of blaming others, but also of blaming yourself. You are prone to blame yourself due to the difficulties you meet; however, self-blaming is not a form of humility; it is a form of self-refusal by which you ignore or deny your very goodness and beauty.

Whenever you refuse yourself, you risk of idealising others. You want to be with those whom you consider better, stronger, more intelligent, more endowed than you. In this way you become psychologically dependent, pushing the others to feel unable of satisfying your expectations, thus causing them to part from you. This will make you to blame yourself even more, and you enter a dangerous spirit of self-refusal and sense of need.

Do avoid every form of self-refusal. Do recognise your limits, by revenging your unique gifts and live as equal among equals. ²

² See; Nowen – The voice of love – Ed Queriniana

2 – Attention to fatalism and passivity

Today's temptation could induce us to fatalism, to the conviction that before the problems of the world – and therefore also of the Congregation- we can do nothing.

This passivity could infect also the Consecrated life and one's own Congregation.

A consequence of a similar fatalism and passivity can be **a fall of the world of desires**, at personal and at institutional level.

This reduces **the capacity of concentrating – channelling one's own energies towards something important in itself and central for one's own life (=desire)**³.

This falling of the world of desires can manifest itself in the following ways:

A – tendency to **clinging on self**

B - the solitude and the desert are a burden: **a return to the onions of Egypt**

The tendency also to moments of non chastity could be an area where the person returns to the "onion" (supports and not enough clear friendships, masturbations , etc.),

C - a risk **of being satisfied with mean objectives** (ex. A friendship that fills the solitude) and underneath one's own capacity of looking up high.

D - The desires answer the **need of self-keeping and of homeostasis** (= keeping what already exists, without introducing any newness).

E - The capacity of making projects becomes aimed at **self-preservation** from new fatigues (one concentrates to save what exists and the "observance". Why should we have new vocations if they bring problems with them?)

F - if the desire weakens, the **thought** also weakens and *gets concentrated on itself* (ex. Te clinging on known relations, family, some of the Congregation) with fear of the world, of society, of the future (ex. Fear of illness).

3 – Fear of being wounded with the wounds of the co-Brothers = to give up one's life also in the community

Sometimes an attitude which harms the Brother in Community even more, is the detachment.

Persons in grave needs, who seek an attentive ear, a word of consolation, an embrace that forgives, a firm hand, a gentle smile or even a stammering confession of the incapacity of doing anything, find themselves in front of detached persons, who do not intend to dirty their hands. The paradox is in the fact that **sometimes those who want to work for "anyone" discover themselves to be unable to be near a single person, when it passes from "near" to "proximate"**.

Here it seems necessary to reiterate the principle that we cannot stay close to the Brother who is not well in Community, without running the risk of being wounded or also being partially destroyed by the process of even spiritual suffering. Thus it is the matter of giving up one's life for others. Perhaps true martyrdom means a testimony that starts with the will of weeping with those who weep, to put at disposal one's own experiences of suffering and of joy as sources of clarification and understanding.

Who can save a child from a house on fire without running the risk of being invested by the fire? Who can stay near a history of isolation and desperation without running the risk of experiencing in the heart similar sufferings and of losing also his own precious mental peace? In a few words: who can remove suffering without participating in its?

Until we think that the relation with the other in Community is an assuming responsibility towards an abstract general good, even of the Institute, we risk to forget that no God can save us if not a God who suffers and to whom no man can guide his people if not a man broken by the sins of his people. ⁴

³ Amedeo Cencini –Il mondo dei desideri- Ed. Paoline 1996

⁴ Mons. Domenico Cancian in Misericordia, volto di Dio e dell'umanità nuova. Ed Paoline 1999

4 – Aggressive behaviour and grim

It may very simply happen that in the relations within the Community, conflicts may emerge openly or be under the water.

Let us keep in mind that ***authentic relations exclude conflicts.***

It may be interesting to individuate the situations in which we particularly get angry:

- when we do not succeed in reaching a fixed objective
- when we feel humiliate and not understood
- when we feel to be with cut off wings
- when we feel contradicted
- when we feel wounded
- when a present event sends us back to a lived past
- when we feel deprived of something or of somebody (jealousy)
- when there are contingent facts with somebody's responsibility (ex it rains) and we get angry with the one who is near us...

How do we express anger:

MODALITIES acted in an explosive as well as in passive way:

- Verbal language (harsh answers, to make a scene, shouting...)
- Non verbal language (silent badly eying, harsh gestures, banging of doors, noise....)
- Superiority attitudes
- Criticism, devaluation
- Small or big vindications (I do not greet anymore, do not look at the person, am late or do not participate in some initiative where my presence would be important....)

MODALITIES acted by remaining shut up in oneself

(when one unconsciously feels inadequate to react and defends himself passively):

- remaining shut up in oneself, lingering in one's own sensation of inadequacy or in one's own feeling of having been wounded, with consequent self-destruction
- going on quarrelling with the other within oneself
- running away, feeling the other as a menace
- somatising
- harming oneself (by not eating, not sleeping...punishing oneself...sometimes penance also can become a form of self-punishment)

POSSIBLE EFFICACIOUS MANAGEMENT OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- To admit of being angry (asking oneself: what do I feel?)
- To accept of being angry
- To recognise anger and one's wounds as part and parcel of ourselves. We must not take distances from our wounds and our weaknesses (See: the elder brother who says "your son" and the father retorts, "your brother"), This weakness is mine, it belongs to me.
- To learn how to speak about the sentiment with the interested persons (we do not say that this must be done there and then). This hinders the emotion from being expressed in a disproportioned way, either against the person or against the wrong situation.
- If not expressed, the strong sentiment may assume disproportioned dimensions, internal division and generalisation, for which all the energies and interests go to hit there
- Learning to express oneself, at least with a trustful person
- To write down, trying to express one's feelings
- To seek some simple and personal modalities to loose the tension and the anger that I would otherwise express in the group – community.
- Confrontation with values and self-acceptance as person loved and wanted by God, despite one's anger.

- Relation and confrontation between humility and self-esteem.
- The way of passing from anger to meekness is not repression or keeping a smile constantly printed on the face, It consists in acknowledging realistically and humbly what one is. Meekness is not a façade, but a conquest which, according to the fathers of the desert, requires a constant purification of the heart and the acknowledgement of what inhabits it.
- To learn as community how to accept with simplicity our humours, our angers, accepting, loving and accompanying ourselves. It could be useful, also in community, to get into the habit of expressing one's own state of soul with simplicity.
- Capacity of reacting
- Capacity of defending the good
 - “ of taking position and risking
 - “ of intervening
 - “ of shaking the persons or of turning the situations
 - “ of alternative proposals.

5 – A difficulty in looking at oneself and at the other Brothers in a pacified manner: the rigorist mentality

Sometimes the person does not evaluate itself positively and does not like itself because it tends to rigorist attitudes towards itself⁵.

Today rigorist attitudes are not present only in religious areas. For instance, the Muslim fundamentalists make the world live with a suspended breath. There are groups of rigorists in many social movements. In the Church there are not only the groups who consider the orthodoxy of faith to be their monopoly, excluding all others as heretics, but also many who have set on a spiritual journey; persons who live peacefully with others and do not accuse anyone, but who are very strict with themselves and practise a self-violent kind of asceticism.

A cause of being strict with oneself and others is often to be found in the ***perception of one's own personal history***. There are persons who were wounded during their childhood. If they do not look at the received offences, and do not try to elaborate them reaching a certain resignation and reconciliation with them, they are condemned to wound continuously themselves and others. The pain experienced by the child when it was offended was so strong as the child had to suffocate it in order to survive somehow. It seems that the child unconsciously makes this oath, “The sufferings I have experienced and endured when I was still a child were such as to cover my need of pain for my whole life. Now I do not want to suffer anymore”.

The child is wounded in its sense of identity if it is not loved for what it is,

The frustrated desire of the child of being loved as a person represents the major trauma that the child can ever experience.

Thus it so happens that, after a wound, the child shuts itself interiorly and thinks that it does not need love any more. However, this is a reaction to desperation, which makes a person harder and harder at heart and interiorly empty. Thus a person excludes itself from every experience of love, of which, however, it keeps an ardent desire in the depth of its being.

To bear its suffering, the child gives up its identity, identifying itself with the aggressor. A form of this is self-punishment. We punish ourselves the same way in which we were punished when we were children. We address to ourselves the same aggressive gestures of the past, which we have not elaborated. Often self-punishment expresses itself through forms of depression or through psychopathic symptoms, such as stomach-aches, headaches or pains at the backbone. A type of self-punishment is also the self-accusation of faults.

⁵ See: Anselm Grun – Come essere in armonia con se stessi – Ed Queriniana

They humiliate themselves considering themselves as the worst of all human beings, devaluating all that they do, think and feel. Obviously this mechanism has nothing to do with humility, therefore it does not benefit one's own harmonious synthesis of life.

Another reason of a rigorist behaviour can be found ***in an unbalanced education, in which first of all the masculine qualities get accentuated, such as strictness and fight, while the sentiments are devaluated.***

If a child has the sensation that its experience and its feelings are not important, that it is not allowed to cry, that we must bear difficulties to survive, the child will be pushed to suffocate its feeling ever more to adequate itself with similar hard behaviour.

Another cause of rigourism is the ***mistrust***. It may happen that the child elaborates a scarce trust in itself and in others. Being unable to build up a solid and clear relation with its parents, it grows in the tendency of not trusting anyone and considers all people not trustworthy. And dangerous. Thus, it tries to overcome its lack of self trust by observing precise norms. These give it the certainty of living anyhow in an enough acceptable way, though in his intimate being the aggressive and emotional level constitutes an explosive compound, which can explode any moment. However, the norms protect it , at least partially against this explosion.

A further cause of being hard against oneself and the others is ***a false relation with the world of ideals***. The person feels well only if responds to determined ideals.

its self-evaluation depends on how he feels with its ideals, so much as to identify itself with the ideals it builds up and to cancel any other thing existing in itself and not corresponding to the said ideals. The imperatives become embittered, the goals grow higher and higher, and the person becomes stricter and stricter with itself.

However the ideals are not according to God's will: they are one's own ideals.

The Titans exist also in the spirituality –not only in the world of myths.

They are persons whose ideal perspectives are too high: persons who, exalted by spiritual experiences, think of climbing higher and higher, of being able to go ever closer to God and of making the unique experience of God. They try to cancel their own "shadow and are unfaithfully caught by the same shadow. Some persons think that, having opted for Jesus Christ, nothing can happen to them, they will be able to avoid any crisis because faith would never fail to come to the rescue. These "Titans" surpass their real situation and do not take their body into consideration. They do not think that they are not yet heavenly creatures, but earthly creatures.

We can ascend towards God only if we have the courage to get down to our reality, in the darkness of our shadow.

6 – Attention to a too much exposure to stress

*Though a person might have elaborated a good synthesis between its own personal harmony and the acceptance of the Brothers, we must be attentive that **a too much prolonged exposition to the stress could become an obstacle against the capacity of being acceptance.***

8.1 What does management of the stress mean?

A – meaning of the word stress = adversities, difficulties, becoming rigid, prolonged tension.

B - every stressing event is a direct challenge to self-esteem and personal control.

To feel strong is a fundamental factor to get adapted successfully to stressing conditions, which lead to have positive forms of behaviour.

C – The stress *has its origin in the mind*, in our way of looking at things, thinking of ourselves and of the world in our imagination.

D – A great part of the stress *is created by our imagination*, but its effects are anyhow real.

E – *We respond physiologically to threatening situations* in ways that put us on the condition of facing them. If the state of excitation is kept for a long time or is often primed, it leads to

somatisations (= to shift the uneasiness on to the body, (ex. Headache, stomach-ache, etc.) and to the premature deterioration of the main internal organs. It causes also high blood pressure and its diseases, such as arterial-sclerosis, coronary thrombosis, infarction, diabetes, kidney problems, dysfunctions of the immunity system.

F – ***The person may not be aware that its body is getting stressed or is already stressed, and may not know the circumstances that produce these reactions.***

G – This does not mean that the stress is beyond control. ***It is not the events that are stressing, but the way we perceive them*** and interpret them. Most of it depends on our attitude.

H – ***He who usually sees the events negatively***, like menaces, ***runs more probability the risk of being stressed*** and of getting the illnesses caused by the stress. Less prone to stress are those who see things in a positive way, like challenges. With a positive attitude we have more probability of facing the events without stress and without falling sick.

8.2 – The major part of the stress we experience is not caused by events, but by our unconscious factors, such as the ***“you must” or “you must not”*** which we have learned and interiorised in our life.

8.3 -To expose oneself to iper-control (= **too much control**) even during apostolic stressing activities, causes risks.

A. - The craving ***for exclusively individualistic satisfactions***

B - to indulge too much to gratifying friendships (the control loosens too much), or more ***forms of compensations.***

C - a ***rigid modality of relationship*** with others (the iper-control become even tighter)

D - the “who forces me to do it” in the apostolic stress sometimes leads to give up everything and in an extreme way ***to doubt about the continuity itself of the apostolic and Christian life.***

E - to carry to the extreme a non recognised ***syndrome of Burnout***, transforming the exigency of an emotive time of rest into a giving up of the apostolic activity.

F - attention ***when a person suddenly leaves a role*** (ex. A change, a transfer), even if it is caused by stress, and the person perceives emptiness.

Second part.
Lights in the communitarian relations

Courageously accepting to have positive relations within the Community and not exclusively with people externally, slowly-slowly lights start shining within us, some of which we mention herewith.

1 – Towards a positive gaze on self and on the co-Brothers

This does not mean to see only the positive, but also of placing it in an ampler context, namely in the person and in what the person is. To privilege the positive is compulsory, especially when it is about us. ***We are first of all our positive.*** This is a basic principle for a good internal health. We must believe in ourselves, in the value that we are, in all matters in hand, stopping to condemn ourselves and to feel condemned. ***We must believe in the good presences which are in us and live the best of us.***

Faith in oneself helps a lot to go a step beyond what one is, ***to transcend ourselves***, to live in the spheres of the good, the true and the beautiful.

The positive areas of our personality are the places of our most interesting and joyful existence. To return to it, with love and naturally is like visiting afresh the dear places of our infancy, finding ourselves at home where everything is familiar and where we feel happy and secure.

A right self-esteem or self-consideration is the vertebral column of every person. To know the positive that we are and we have urges us to try, to have new perspectives...

The interior life is not a constant and linear crescendo, but a process starred of ups and downs, a journey in which we make a steps forward and steps backward, where today we live the enthusiasm of love and tomorrow a getting tired of it. We have our boundaries of evil and of nothingness, we move along their coasts, constantly suspended in a precarious balance between the voices of good and those of evil.⁶

Self-esteem and esteem of our own capacity (self-esteem for what we are, not for what we do) can be obtained through giving value to the existing potentials, which need to be liberated.

It is necessary for man to become aware of his own potentialities and to free them

Of course, obscure and immature aspects are present in every person, but it is equally sure that strong points of character and personality are present, enabling the person to react, to stand on its feet, to realise itself and to realise its plans, to move towards others and to offer itself. Creativity, generosity, ductility, human virtues and spiritual gifts can unfold during the gradual acquisition or re-appropriations of the awareness to be worthy of trust, to be an object of love, to be positive; in fact the state of being positive does not identify with that of not being frail, with having a perfect history and with not having any affective dependence.

It is from the capacity of perceiving oneself with a healthy realism, therefore with a healthy self-esteem for what we are, that the passage towards the other is possible: from an ego-centred love to pass on to a love of oblation; from a defending self-centring, to save one's own image to a free and serene self-acceptance, which allows the hidden sides of one's character and personality to be expressed.

⁶ See: Colombero, A journey of interior healing

2 – To elaborate a positive relations with one's own history and with oneself

To elaborate a positive gaze with one's own human and spiritual history, we need to develop in us a certain self-appreciation, self acceptance, self-affection, self-attention.

a. Appreciation of self and of the other. This includes the positive in ourselves and in others:

talents, qualities, physical, mental and spiritual abilities...He who is appreciated rejoices in wonder, because of his own manifested qualities and knows of being able to develop also the still latent qualities. He believes that this will happen also in others. He rejoices at his success and at that of his neighbours, without presumption and without boasting, which would generally indicate feelings of inferiority.

b. Acceptance of self and of the other. This means to be tolerant and hopeful of our own limits

and of the limits of others, of weakness, of errors, of failures. He who accepts himself, recognises to be a fallible human being, like all others; he does not wonder or cries in anguish too much if he makes more or less frequent mistakes. He recognises the pleasing aspects of his own and of others personality, assumes the responsibility of his actions, without too much guilt-feeling and without finding faults with others. There is harmony between what a man really experiences or feels and what he admits, accepts with awareness to experience and feel. Thus it is a self-acceptance, with one's own limits and ideals, in a realistic vision which allows to be in front of the other without a mask. This means to be oneself and to be in relation as one is.

Sometimes, in situations of non-self-acceptance with or without awareness (more unaware than aware) we assume attitudes which, effectively, cause the weaving of false relations, which do not lead to self-truth. Only in authenticity we can enter free relations with ourselves, with others and with God.

c. Affection towards oneself and towards the other. Affection is a positive and friendly disposition, impressive and benevolent towards self and towards others, so much as to feel at peace and never at war with one's own thoughts and feelings (even when they are disagreeable), with one's imagination and body (however it is –literal or metaphoric- and defects).

d. Attention to self and to the other. This means to take loving care of one's own needs and those of others, physical and psychic, intellectual and spiritual needs (obviously we do not refer to superfluous needs artificially created by an often aggressive publicity). These four characteristics presuppose a good level of self-knowledge and especially of **self-conscience**, that is, the awareness of one's own interior life, obtainable with listening to oneself and a constant attention to all the voices that arouse from within. These attitudes seem to mirror the "perfect letitia" required by St. Francis, In this way the person embraces one's own history so that it may become salvation history.

3. To evaluate one's own capacity of getting disposed to listening

According to what Terrinoni specifies in his text⁷, to express the fundamental attitude of the obedient religious man, the complex Biblical lexicon does not use the verb "to obey" (nor the substantive "obedience"), but the verb "to listen to", which includes the vast range of "listening": from the physical availability of the acoustic perception, to the welcoming of the message, up to the docile submission and to the punctual execution of what has been received. The authentic listening is made with the whole person and it demands a total participation in the message that is given.

We hear with the hearing, but we listen to with the whole person; thus these things are involved: the ears (to receive the message), the mind (to understand it), the gaze to reduce

⁷ Ubaldo Terrinoni - Word of God and religious vows: Biblical icons on obedience – EDB 2002

the distance and to make oneself to be with the interlocutor, all the energies (to try its translation into practical life).

In the Old Testament the word “listening” appears 1159 times, and more than a personal and private listening, the listening of an assembly is required, which involves all the people: in our case we could say communitarian listening to.

“Listen, my people; I want to warn you; Israel, my people, I wish you to listen to me! But my people has not listened to my voice; Israel has not obeyed me. If my people listened to me...! (Psalm 81, 9 – 14).

The Biblical man is a person who sees, but who is a listener, wholly with pricked ears to listening. Thus, we can ask ourselves: don't our “healthy” relations among us make fundamental our reciprocal improved listening to one another?

Here we catch ***a substantial difference between vision and listening***: a vision imposes itself due to its evidence (to look at is sufficient), it allows us to catch everything and soon, leaving only a small space to personal contribution and freedom.

The listening, instead, leads the interlocutor gradually to the knowledge of the thought of the one who speaks, thus he feels free to welcome or to refuse his message, to express his trust or his mistrust.

Even in the New Testament the maximum revelation of God is the Word “who became flesh and came to live among us” (John 1, 14).

Therefore, applying what has been said above to our daily life, it is good that at the centre of our listening to one another there be the conviction that the words of a Brother, even when they sound stupid and false, contain a tiny grain of positive truth, which waits for being discovered. It is not the matter of not seconding the negative suspicion, but of picking up the positive grain.

We must learn how to listen to: here is an exercise of imagination, of intelligence, which then becomes an exercise of charity. ***We must find the time to speak among us, but with a constructive talking.*** I must dare doubting my position itself, opening my heart to the questions of the other, becoming vulnerable towards his doubts. We must do all this for an act of charity, born from our passion for the truth.

It is the matter of ***considering further perspectives of discernment besides our own.***

4 – To elaborate our trust

It is useful that each person may know how much he opens himself to ***trust*** not only towards oneself, but also towards the other, knowing also how to receive it.

The relation trust – mistrust configures in us during *our first six months of life*. We need to refer to our infancy, though not with an absolutely deterministic relevance, but with a certain weight, and to

the relation with the figure that remains more constantly near the newly-born child, namely usually the motherly figure.

To help the newly born child develop its sense of trust (according to what the psychiatrist Erikson says, who has gone particularly deep into the theme), it is necessary for him to experience a sensation of well-being and that the experience of fear and uncertainty be reduced to the minimum. On these conditions, the child will be able to extend its trust towards new experiences: physical and unsatisfying emotive experiences create a sense of mistrust, which will lead the child to prefigure as fearful the future situations and, therefore to be scared of them. Therefore, to become an adult, trustful and benevolent person, or a diffident, exigent and worried one will depend, mostly, on how the child is treated, we could say “handled” (touched, caressed, , etc.).

However, let those of us who have not had similar positive experiences in infancy ***avoid to think that similar situations would be irreversible.***

However, we can keep into account that it will have in itself a difficulty in giving or in perceiving the trust, though this difficulty can slowly and gradually be overcome.

Of course, if a person finds it difficult to trust itself, to find positive qualities within itself, to trust others, to think that others may trust him/her, the same difficulty will be there in the relation with the Lord, though the person will be in the tendency of not being aware of it.

Here are some examples of sentences that could express a kind of not trusting, “This is what the Word of the Lord says, but I will never make it up”; “If I entrust myself to God too much, He will entrap me”; I am afraid of the Lord: when I finish to be in front of Him, He will not understand me”, and so on.

Here are some examples of trust, “Though I acknowledge my limits, with the help of a guide and entrusting myself to the Lord I can succeed”; “When I pray with the Gospel, I am fully confident that the Lord will help me, though I am unworthy”; “I have tried many times to pray when I feel tired and it seems that the Lord makes up for my weakness and my weariness”, and so on.

The contact with the other and with the Word of the Lord usually helps us to improve the trustful-mistrustful relation; if the person feels useless, worthy of mistrust, the message of creation could become very important: the Lord has wanted to create us and in creating us has loved us.

In the passage of Luke 5, 1 – 11, we read that Peter succeeded to enter a trustful relation with the Lord, though his experience as a fisherman made it difficult to accept the proposal of the Lord himself, “*Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so I will pay out the net*”.

If persons elaborate trust in themselves and in others, they will feel to be together in the communitarian life..

Every Community exercises a shared responsibility for the life and mission of the Congregation. This is based on reciprocal trust.

Our being a community itself is based on trusting the Brothers. Sometimes will may be disappointed, but this is not a motive to give up a fundamental reciprocal trust. This reciprocal trust, however, must not be a pretext to neglect one another: to trust a Brother does not mean forgetting her and letting her go to her own way.

We consider that, ***from the human viewpoint, it is only by being at peace with oneself that a person can be open to trust not only towards self, but it elaborates the capacity of trusting the other, knowing also how to receive it.***

To stay together as a community of Brothers, persons of different age, mentality, culture and nationality is the very first sign of the Gospel’s newness, which we want to proclaim and an efficacious instrument for the evangelical proclamation.

To exercise trust becomes an almost indispensable element for a person to accept mediations.

Without a deep trust, the relation with God itself is difficult, because it demands trust and opening of mind and heart.

5 – To treat oneself and others with mercy

Mercy is, first of all, love towards the enemies, but it includes mercy towards oneself as an almost compulsory passage to mercy towards others...

We must treat mercifully also the enemy that lives in us. We must not hate him, we must be benevolent towards him, because even God “is benevolent towards the ungrateful and the wicked” (See Luke: 6, 35).

We are much more impatient and cruel with ourselves than God is: He wants, first of all, to show us his bounty.

Let us briefly see how the Bible uses different terms to express the concept of mercy.

The word rahamin in the Old Testament expresses the instinctive sympathy of a person towards the other, and it is compared to the delicate love of a mother.

According to this term, to treat oneself with mercy would mean to carry oneself as if one were in the womb of one’s mother; it means to grant the interior baby that each has within a protected space in which the baby can grow. Here is the trust that one’s own interior baby (=some infantile aspects which are still within us, some immaturity, stopping beats) will change and will become what it must be according to God. The same things we can say of the interior baby within the other Brothers.

The word *hesed* or *élos* in the New testament means the commotion of a person before a mishap of an innocent creature.

According to this word to be merciful towards us means to treat us with bounty, delicacy and tenderness; it means self-forgiveness.

The word *splanchnizomai*, which derives from *splanchnon* = uterus, bowels, in the New Testament is attributed to Jesus with his heartfelt compassion for the human creature who has gone astray.

He “suffers” with our humanity, opens up to human creatures and allows them to enter his feelings. About our behaviour, this word means that we can avoid getting angry with ourselves, looking at our errors with the gaze of a compassionate heart.

This is how we can remain in contact and ready to accept our wounds.

We perceive that the wounds can truly be healed by the mercy of God, sensing the tenderness of God’s love for us and consequently for the other Brothers.

The word *oiktimos* expresses a feeling of compassion, accompanied by availability to succour.

Thus, to be merciful with ourselves means not to close our heart to him who feels lonely in himself and unhappy, to the poor and miserable within self, to the unhappy and shipwrecked present in each of us, to our sensations of abandonment and solitude. Often we would like to cancel these sensations because of their being unpleasant: however, if we did it, our solitude and abandonment, our misery and fear would not get transformed and we would remain always blocked in the attitude of fleeing away at the sight of dark thoughts.

If we have, instead, a loving relation with the poor and the weak that live within us, the mentioned poverty can become a source of blessing and can open us to the secret of God’s love, of a God who nurtures sympathy for us.

6 – Towards fraternal compassion

Through communication, with good eyes towards ourselves and others, ***we reach the acceptance in fraternal compassion.***

We could ask ourselves whether compassion is humanly possible, if it does not go to the a direction opposite to our existence, which is based on competition. Compassion in its full sense, is a quality of God.

To interpret the compassionate attitude properly (using the term taken from the phenomenology – see Edith Stein – and later taken again by the psychological school of

Rogers, in which he speaks of “empathy”), we can say that ***the attitude of “compassion”*** is not sympathy or a kind of generic love: it is the capacity to be in the clothes of the other, remaining oneself. It is ***the capacity of living what the other is living, without being identified with him, otherwise, if we identified totally with the other, we would miss our value as help and support.***

This “compassion” makes us particularly attentive to what the other lives, feels, to his interior vibrations. It almost causes the creation of a ***“third ear”***, namely a ear which allows us to listen to what the other does not say. ***Often what the other does not say is more important than what he says.***

Therefore, an attitude of ‘compassion’, of real sharing, allows us to enter the life of the other even before the other speaks, and he perceives it straightaway.

The capacity of compassion is closely linked with the affective maturity. because it is freedom from our own exigencies, thus allowing us to open and to welcome the person together with its intimate reality without any perturbation.

To see with the eyes of the other does not mean to confuse ourselves with the other and getting lost into his way of perceiving; it means to understand his subjectivity and to be at his side in his

way of perceiving, which could be different from ours. It means to understand and to welcome the interior world of the other, without renouncing our own, in the awareness of the diversity.

Actually, this means entering the optics of values, not only from the intellectual but also from the existential viewpoint, thus catching the existence of the other as unique and unrepeatable before God and men.

The attitude of understanding accepts and loves the person as different from self and it is animated by sincerity and trust, besides freedom, which, once transmitted, do help persons to grow in self-trust and in personal possibilities.

7 – The power of meekness

To live truly as persons of relation, we need to realise also a journey to control our own susceptibility.

For instance, when a man knows that he easily feels offended, it would be useful for him to get into the habit of never acting under an emotional impulse, waiting until the waters within himself become calm.

Often we believe that self-control is a weakness. On the contrary, it is strength, while to get angry is weakness. To control our own strong emotions can be a sign of maturity united with the virtue of fortitude.

The emotive world is a richness of women, and it is important that they recognise and accept it; they must reconcile with their own emotions and manage them.

8 – The past comes back to the Communitarian present and can become light

In the relational and affective communitarian dynamics, the freedom of relations finds a partially conditioning space: ***the transfert.***

In its infancy, the person lived some more meaningful type of relations. When a man meets a person for the first time, he instinctively and unconsciously evaluates which of those relations is affine to that person and tends to repeat it. In his relation with that person, he lives something that he has already lived with another person.

This means that the characteristics of another person are transferred to persons who today are parts of his life.

For instance, if a Brother meets a Superior who mirrors her own mother, she operates a transfert: unconsciously she considers her as her own mother and behaves with her just as she used to behave with her mother. The result is an already lived relation, repeated with the same previous modality.

The transfert could become common and usual; in fact we tend “to save the fatigue” of inventing a new relation for each person we meet on our way. Thus we tend to live economically, saving the fatigue: we live on already experienced forms. This saves us from inventing something new and the uncertainty of the result. This mechanism allows us to live with less fatigue.

However, it becomes a trap: when we reduce the types of relations too much, the elements repeated in life increase and life becomes too much impoverished. It is important and desirable that the person be constantly available to renew its own inter-personal relations. ***The relations lived in infancy with the parents are the basis of the vertical relations, towards the height;*** the relations lived with brothers, sisters, companions are defined as horizontal relations. (if a person is a unique son and attends the nursery school, it learns horizontal relations).

There are ***the relations with the subjected persons:*** these also are experienced in infancy. From the time they are in the nursery class, the children define themselves “big” when compared with the smaller ones in nursery 1.

In the relational dynamics and in the light of what has been said about the transfert, when we meet a person whom we had never seen before, the first thing we could ask ourselves is: whom does this person call back to my memory? If it calls back an already known person, we could risk the tendency of living instinctively with that person the way we lived with the one we already knew and we project on the newly known person the behaviour we had with the previous person.

For instance, it is possible to live a relation with the superior like the relation we lived with our mother, but to presume that the superior should behave as our mother did, would take us astray. In fact we would expect from the Superior the same affection we received from our mother, but this cannot be real.

This may be repeated also among co-Brothers through different “transferts”.

We could project a fraternal figure on people around us (the figure of a sister or a brother), but we could project also a maternal or paternal figure on the co-Brothers and read it instinctively, like that of our own mother or our own father, but without being aware of it.

Therefore, the transfert leads us to the awareness of the person that has been called back to our affective memory and the type of relation we consequently tend to revive. We have seen that the

transfert does not allow us to consider the other as he actually is, but as an already known person: instead of seeing the other we see the person we already know.

The transfert starts from our own memories, from our own experiences, which finish to be projected on the other. There is a further infra-psychic mechanism: **the contra-transfert.**

The contra-transfert is what the transfert of the other awakes within us. In the transfert it is we that projects on the other. In the contra-transfert, instead, it is we to perceive the projection of the other.

The other has projected a role on us, a figure, a personage and we may feel pushed to keep that part.

The contra-transfert is a push to react in a given way, a tentative of conditioning that we receive from the other. To correspond or not depends on the way the contra-transfert, which we elaborate in us, is managed.

Here are some examples: if I make myself gregarious, I push the other to be the head. If I make myself son, I push the other to be mother. If a new Brother arrives in the community and awakes a sense of tenderness and deep motherhood, I make myself daughter and spur the superior to protect me, at least at first.

9 – The virtue of the interrogative and of the doubt

Though it is in contrast with a certain relational linearity, we consider to be useful also to interrogate ourselves and to have doubts in view of a mature relation with the other Brothers.

“The interrogation is an important virtue from which we need to start again, if we want to re-establish an authentic relation and a progressive knowledge” (Filippo Gentiloni).

Today there are many interrogations that are false, taken for granted, without answers or where any answer is good: television transmissions, interviews....

The interrogative is a son of the doubt and of the will to know: he who interrogates does not know, but desires to know.

The interrogative mark is opening, a desire, a bridge to move towards the other; it is a gesture of trust and love. To interrogate is a virtuous act if it supposes an empty space and is born from silence. Certainty and security speak of closures (security drawers), doubt opens them, so that the bank notes of the presumed truth may be made to circulate. **The companions of doubt are: discussion, dialogue and confrontation.**

Third part.
Tracks of asceticism
to realise a credible relational testimony

1 – The difficult journey from power to service

The rapport with one's own personal power could be a further break of relation if we do not make the effort of transforming power into service.

It sounds strange to speak of "power" in Religious Life, where power apparently seems to be the opposite of Kenosis to which a person is called. **However, often to transform power into service becomes a true kenosis.**

*The ex Father General of the Dominicans Timothy Radcliffe, in one of his letters⁸ says that the term power seems to be inadequate to the fraternal rapport that joins us. **However every community is signed by rapports of power.***

The life of Jesus shows a paradoxical rapport with power. He was a man with words rich of power, the man who called disciples to follow him, who healed the infirm, who chased away the devils, arose the dead and dared face the religious authorities of his time, and yet he was a man deprived of power, a man who refused the protection of Peter with the sword, a man who was hanged on a cross.

In Jesus, power always healed and gave life. He never knocked down, depreciated, humiliated and destroyed. His power was not so much on persons, as a power He would donate to them (thus it was changed into service). In reality he was richer of power by refusing to be an instrument of violence, suffering rather in his own body and allowing it to be consumed in him. He took in his hands his own passion and death, made them fruitful, transformed them into gift: the Eucharist.

*Our communities ask us to live like this our rapports of power, by giving power to our brothers and sisters, rather than weakening them. This demands from us the courage of being vulnerable. **Strength presupposes vulnerability; there is no possibility of strength without vulnerability. To be courageous means being ready to suffer a wound.** Human beings are substantially vulnerable and, therefore, they are courageous.*

We shall see now some **definitions of power**, using the contribution of human sciences, such as sociology.

The capacity of producing the wanted effects can be a definition of power: the potential of influence.

Therefore, power is a resource which allows us to influence others or to obtain their consensus. **It can become service, therefore we must not think of it as something negative.**

We must not think of it as something pertaining to a leader or to the Superiors: **each man has his area of power, even if small.**

For instance, the person with the task of distributing the clothes to the poor has its area of power (which becomes service, but the part of power is not to be excluded), the power to let the persons wait, to choose the fitting clothes for some poor persons and so on.

The true integration of the proper modalities of power is the transformation of the said modalities into service to others.

There are various types of power to be transformed into service: we shall describe some of them.

Coercion power. This is based on fear. It is the power of a person who underlines or lets us understand that the wanted compliance to its dispositions would imply punishments, such as little desirable tasks, scolding, transfers, etc.

It may happen that this type of power is exercised without being aware of it. They are moments in which, for instance, we let the other understand that if he does not follow the line of help that we propose, we may possibly no longer help them.

⁸ 10.5.1997 "Freedom and responsibility – towards a spirituality of government"

Legitimate power. It is based on the occupied position.

The person induces others to consensus for its recognised charge.

This is the power of the Superiors or of those who have an office given to them by the Institute, in the Parish, or any other institution.

Every day, continually, even beyond the communitarian life, we meet “functions” to which we must submit ourselves (ex.. the simple door-keeper who can make a person to wait in a waiting-room, a vigil can stop the traffic, a doctor orders to take a medicine and the nurse who gives it to the patient...).

Special power. It is based on the experience of a specialised man, on his experiences of work and service.

This is a good source of power, but one must be vigilant and try to share it with others.

For instance, if the person in the mission knows how to write good articles, we say that he has the power of a specialist: he can choose: either he does not reveal how to make an article to anyone (therefore, he remains attached to his power as a specialist, which cannot become service) or he shares his power with somebody else who is interested in making articles (thus losing his power as a specialist, but he shares and renders a service to another: of course, he will no longer have the prestige of being a unique person in the community in making articles, but he will have the silent satisfaction of having favoured the growth of another person through his gesture of humility and service).

Here is another simple instance. The person who in the community or in the parish is in charge of making the photocopies can delegate his specialised power in this small field by teaching other persons how to make the photocopies. He teaches them everything, except how to change the paper or the toner. Thus, the person who helps remains always dependent and must always look for the person in charge every time he has to change the paper or the toner. This implicitly means that the person in charge guarantees its own “superiority”, keeping for himself a power that leads the other person to be, though for a short time, constantly dependent on him and “inferior” to him.. These tiny examples have been chosen purposely, to help us understand how somebody can exercise powers without even being aware of it.

Exemplar power. This is based on the good example that a person gives and which almost automatically drags others along.

For instance, when we pay a visit to a sick man who bears his suffering well (= power of exemplarity) , he transmits positive values to anyone who visits him, even without speaking.

Prizing power. This is the power of a person who can offer rewards to one or to the other. This power passes away with the time and with the end of the role, ex. An aged person can no longer reward the other.

Informative power. This is a very important power in the communitarian life, and it is good if the person discovers it in itself, to be truly able of sharing it.

It is based on the possession of pieces of information, which others do not have or would have in a second time.

For instance, when a person knows the procedure an invalid must follow to obtain a prosthesis of the public structure, he can explain it to another person who can carry it ahead. However, by explaining it to others, the person “loses” the privilege of being necessary for the fulfilment of the given procedure (which becomes service). On the contrary, by refusing to give the information, a person confirms its power and superiority, almost to say: I am superior to you because I know that you do not know or will know it afterwards.

Connective power. This is based on the contacts and acquaintances possessed by a person. Often they can be contacts with influent people in the environment that the man can share with others if he is not attached to this power.

For example in view of a transfer, the person who changes can introduce the persons who help the house to the new comer, transmitting also elements of knowledge. This means sharing one's power and submitting to the services of the new person in charge,

But the person may also choose not to say anything (especially if he has not accepted willingly his transfer or change of service), perhaps giving the reason that it is good if the other discovers everything with his own eyes without being conditioned, etc. In this case, the person wants to keep his power.

2 – Self-decentring

Self-decentring is the constant exercise in which we exercise ourselves.

To individuate this, we can analyse in detail the various aspects of self decentring.

2 A – Decentring from one's own physical being

In the journey towards self-knowledge, we surely see again the relation with our body, with our physiological exigencies of alimentation, etc., with our health. Thus the first harmony is reached, which derives from the knowledge and acceptance of our own physical being.

However, in the relation with our Brothers it is required that ***each Brother may not consider herself as a criterion for the relation that the individual Brothers have with the body.***

Of course each Brother has a personal relation with her body, different from the one I have with mine.

Let us think of some novice-mistresses who, sometimes, insist that the novices must eat much, or that they must eat what the novice-mistress says to be rich in alimentation substances.

Or let us think of the automatic counsel given to the young Brothers of sleeping longer in the morning when they have painful menstruations.

Each is supposed to set on a decentring journey from one's own way of perceiving the body and its exigencies, to help the Brothers know their body by themselves, and to go together towards the value of our corporeity.

2 B – Decentring from one's cultural world

Surely each Brother has elaborated her own way of proceeding from her intellectual and cultural viewpoint; she has her own terminology in expressing herself, a modality to be more or less connected with the Country or region she comes from.

She may love study, arts; she may have a more synthetic or more analytic approach to different realities; she may be more intuitive or more deductive, etc.

If each Brother is intellectually aware of her way of being, she will be able to decentre herself from that way, so that, while remaining what she is, she will not presume that also the other Brothers must have her approach.

She will use her intellective capacity to catch from the Brothers their own type of approach. Then they are not expected to second their approach, but to confront it with the Formation Project requested from the Brothers themselves.

For instance, if a Brother intuits and has founded motives that a young woman, who is going to start some study, is not sufficiently intelligent for the given study, he cannot think of filling the blanks, of helping the young Brother with her own intelligence, so that....poor thing....she would become somebody..!! By decentring from self, this Brother can make the young woman to be aware of her intellective limit and eventually orient her towards a more practical service.

In synthesis: it is opportune to avoid some paths that could induce the intellective quality of the individual Brother to move along the wrong way.

That is:

- to avoid the moralising path. It is the question of abstaining from emitting a judgement on the other based on our own norms and on our own exclusive system of values.
- To avoid dogmatic paths. In this case it is the matter of avoiding to stay before the other as a person who teaches, a person who knows everything, a person who does not accept the other with all her difficulties.
- To avoid the interpreting path. The interpreting attitude leads to create a distance from the other and to avoid the complexity of her condition.
- To avoid the excessively directive path. In this case each tends towards not counselling or imposing determined solutions, allowing the other to take a free and personal decision.

2 C – Decentring from one's own needs

From the psycho-dynamic viewpoint, the term "need" means an inborn push that each one perceives in oneself and which can lead to action.

With the presupposition that each person has already made a journey by itself, we believe that each young Brother is able, at least partially, to change herself, to choose the needs she can keep at her own centre.

For instance, if a Superior or a responsible person in an apostolic activity keeps at her own centre the need of affective dependence and seconds it, she will try her best to be liked and appreciated by the Brothers of her community. This could become a trap because the Superior or the Responsible Brother may bind the Brothers to herself aiming at drawing affection from them (sometimes without being aware of it), thus preventing them from taking the flight towards other openings, where the formation journey would take them.

2 D – Decentring from one's own ideals

Every person looks at the transcendent values that are proposed to it and makes an idea of it, creates an image: thus the values are assumed by the single person according to one's own measure, according to one's own sensitivity, knowledge, social environment; the person turns these values into an idea, rather than into ideals. ***Each Brother creates, formulates within self ideals, goals correspondent to the Values.***

Then the Brother, in her journey towards the Consecration, proposes to herself a composite ideal of the Congregation, re-elaborated according to her own terms, her own ideas and experiences; this is the self-ideal. From the composition of these two ideals, ***the ideal is born-of-self-as-person-in-this-institution.***

This ideal power is the one that conditions the behaviour, the choices, the attitudes. The Brother desires that her attitude, her way of acting, her habits and style be as much as possible adequate to her ideals, which she imagines to be very much adherent to the Values.

If a Brother is not decentred from her ideals, ***she may desire to be more attractive than the other Brothers;*** sometimes, even unconsciously, she may desire to be a reference point for the Brothers.

In fact, if the single Brother says, "Do this because I like it"; "do this and we shall be friends"; "do this and there will be no conflict between the two of us", "do this because it has been my experience", this will cause the Brother to take her as reference point, rather than the Lord.

2 E – Decentring from one's own perception of "evil"

- ***The first aspect of a personal perception of "evil", for the individual Brother, can be that of placing at the centre one's own "evil", namely one's negative aspect, for which she feels incapable of fulfilling her task well.*** If each Brother accepts to love the Lord God with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her strength (See Deuteronomy: 6, 5) her whole history, her own culture, past and present conditionings are assumed with the answer given to God.

To feel one's own limit, one's own present and past conditionings is implicit in the apostolic service, as well as one's own desires and wonderful works with which the Lord has constellated our life. She who answers the apostolic service is in the position of a humble person that sincerely confronts itself with reality and with the programme of the Lord; she feels called by Another to a mission greater than she is and accepts to answer, though she knows her limits.

Let us think of the objection Moses made about his capacity of speaking; it is the objection of Jeremiah or of Mary; they are objections that touch the possibility of carrying on the service requested by God, "You did not choose me, no, I chose you" (John 15, 16).

- ***A second aspect to get decentred from one's own perception of "evil" could be to verify in oneself how much margin of error is left for the single Brothers in the Community.***

Sometimes a Brother can express herself on one side under a protective form, which is good but could move towards a certain protectionism: She helps, encourages to make new experiences, to explore new situations and guides this exploration, but she would guide in such a way as if she were guiding a radio-commanded robot. She somehow guides the journey of the other Brothers, invites them to step ahead, but ***she protects them too much, for which she prevents them from taking steps in which she sees the possibility of mistakes.***

This does not help. Sometimes we need ***to give the possibility of making a mistake*** to see how the person reacts.

Parents often do the same thing with their children. They let them do many new things, but all of them must be organised, foreseen journeys, without leaving any space for the unforeseen and the personal initiative. Yes, the person acquires new experiences, but not ***the experience of overcoming obstacles, where it has to react all alone***

He who succeeds in decentring himself does not abandon the other person to the chance, but warns it about what may happen, tries to make it reason, ***then he leaves it free to go:*** the person itself must react to the consequences of its own behaviour.

This does not mean to let others make all possible mistakes; it means to warn about possible mistakes and about spaces of error to be avoided. This part is important for a "positive" relation.

2 F – Decentring from one's own modalities of joy

As person, each Brother perceives moments of joy and happiness for everything that usually makes her joyful and happy: each Brother has moments of joy and happiness probably for other causes.

Therefore, it is good not to propose one's joys to the others because they may not be the same joys; moreover one's decentring helps better others to move towards Joy. We can take ***the example of the perfume.***

It is the matter of a tiny imaginative element, used and briefly developed by Paul (See 2 Cor 2, 14-16) while he describes himself in the triumphal procession of Jesus Christ.

14 "Thanks be to God who always gives us in Christ a part of his triumphal procession and through us is spreading everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of himself.

15 To God we are the fragrance of Christ, both among those who are being saved and among those who are on the way to destruction.

16 For these last ones it is the smell of death, but for the first it is the smell of life leading to life."

A perfume diffuses, enwraps and penetrates, however, each perfume differs from the other. They can be compared with Psalm 133 (“He is like a fine oil in the head” v. 2), with frequent references to the Song of songs, with the anointment in John 112 “The house was filled with the perfume of the ointment”.

2 G – Decentring from one’s own perception of prayer

It may sometimes be spontaneous, especially if we are living the “taste of the Lectio” or another type of prayer, to transmit this “taste” to the Brothers of the community.

The Brother who leads the prayer must give objective instructions, because she must be the person who has to acquire the proper way of reading the Gospel: each Brother has her style and we cannot expect the other to have the same colouring.

2 H – Decentring from one’s own Communitarian experiences

Surely each Brother has her expectations and lived experiences of the Communitarian reality, which can be different from those of the other Brothers.

It is, therefore, good to reduce a certain vision of the communitarian relations as system, as rules to be respected,

Otherwise, the Superior becomes the person who fixes the limits, the rules, the norms, the direction to be assumed; she directs the time, the sequence, the steps and all that is to be done. She invites, provokes, interrogates, suggests procedures and worries to take decisions; she becomes a kind of manager-director of the Community.

All this may render difficult the elaboration of one’s own approach to the Community, since it risks to be bound to the model of Community wanted by a few formators or by the Superior.

2 L – Decentring from one’s own sublimating channels

By sublimating channels we mean the modality used by a person to relax, to restore the balance, to get detached from an eventual stress.

A Brother might have found her modality of overcoming the stress, or she may think that she does not need it (attention!), while other Brothers may still be searching this modality, or may have already identified their modalities.

For instance, some think that with a match of foot-ball tensions are loosened, while for the young Brothers, who fear the competition, the football match is an nth exposition to tension.

2 L – Decentring to the end of collaborating with other apostolic figures

Sometimes the “zeal” for one’s own apostolic activity risks to give the perception of possessing the person, therefore, of being responsible of it.

Perhaps the ***image of the agriculturist*** may be useful to help the decentring and, thus, to collaborate with the others for a reciprocal growth in the Community.

The image of the agriculturist is found in the Old Testament, due to the fact that the occupation of that people was agriculture or agricultural-pastoral. We can see the images of the vineyard (See Is. 5 and 27), of the plantations (See Is. 61, 3) and the description of God as an agriculturist (See Psalm 65). The then farmer led a fatigued life, in strict dependence on the land,

the rain and the season. Jesus was neither a fisherman nor a farmer, but knew very well these activities. In John 15, 1, he declares "I am the vine and my Father is the vinedresser". He proposes the parable of the vinedresser (See Matthew 21, 33-46 and par.). In another passage he explains, "I sent you to reap a harvest you have not laboured for" (John 4, 38). Paul describes his service efficaciously in these terms, "I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God gave growth (1 Corinth, 3, 6).

2 M – To pray "almost without purpose", for the Brothers of one's Congregation, because the purpose is in God's hands

To reflect on the prayer of each Brother, we would need more elements, but here we underline only two of them.

The capacity of entrusting the Brothers to the Lord characterises the prayer of those who live in Community.

To entrust a person becomes almost a praying "without purpose", without asking the Lord anything, but that He may fulfil his Will in each person.

From the human viewpoint, this requires in each Brother a considerable capacity of carrying on the insecurity of the unknown, together with the capacity of trusting the Other, namely the Lord.

Sometimes prayer means "staying" with the moments of death which the person can evocate, glimpsing in it the capacity of resurrection (See the passage from 3rd and 4th Ignatian week in the EE.SS.) However, we need time for the resurrection, not the usual three days. The expression "Moments of death" signifies carrying the spiritual suffering of the person, its anguish, which is poured into prayer.

Thus, prayer can, sometimes, take the colouring of Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.

To clarify this, we quote Rayon Brown.⁹

Mark does not want simply to narrate that Jesus was gravely agitated; he calls the attention on this initial perturbation the moment Jesus faces his destiny.

In the A. T. we find several passages describing the sufferings of the just man who implores God, especially in the Psalms (22; 15; 31; 10; 39; 13; 43; 2.5; 55, 2-6; 116, 10-15). In the verse of Mark (14, 34), Jesus himself will recall a psalm of this kind, but the two words used by Mark 15, 33, to describe the anguish of Jesus, do not derive from this passages. Ekthambeisthai, "to be extremely upset", indicates a deep confusion, a perplexity, physically expressed before a terrorising event: a terrifying horror. Adēmonein, "to be dismayed", has the radical connotation of a separation from others, an isolation that flows towards anguish.

The context is in favour of a scene pivoted on a Jesus who experiences an abandonment on behalf of all those who had been close to him. Other scholars focalise the perception of Jesus on the fact that he had to suffer the death of a cursed man (Gal. 3, 13) and that he had to become sin (2 Cor 5, 21). Others see the situation in a synthetic way; the abandonment of the Son of Man who is also the "Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, 1, or a Jesus who experiences to be without the good that could have filled his life, God; or a Jesus in anguish, perplexed about the value and meaning of his death. In Mark 14, 34, Jesus expresses his anguish in a direct speech, "My soul is very sad up to death".

The interpretations suggested on this sentences include:

a) Intensity: *a sadness similar to the one caused by the awareness of an imminent death, in other terms: I am so sad as to die". Psalm 55, 5: "My heart writhes within me; the terror of death comes upon me".*

b) Consequence: *Sadness takes Jesus near death, "I am so sad as I feel killed"*

c) Final: *Sadness leads Jesus to desire death, "I am so sad as I want to die". In 1 King, 19, 4 Elias leaves his servant behind, advances towards the desert and says, "Enough...take away my life".*

d) Temporal: *A sadness that lasts until death, in other terms, "so very sad up to the end, when I shall die".*

It sends back to the model of the weary servant, who asks his liberation through death, for instance; Moses (Numbers 11, 15), Elias (1 King 19, 4) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20, 14-18).

⁹ La morte del Messia (Queriniana Collana Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea n. 108)

3 – To perceive the communion in vocation supporting oneself and struggling with it

One of the first charismatic moments and tasks of a community is that of strengthening the Brothers belonging to it to believe in their capacities of knowing what to do, more than they can imagine, and to support them when they experience uneasiness, as well as when they take a courageous position in facing some problem. Each Brother is a gift for the Community and it is an art that of welcoming and appreciating the talents of the persons whom the Lord gives to the Community.

Each person, however, has a special responsibility towards the Major Superiors normally elected or appointed. The superiors have a burden on their shoulders, therefore, it is a duty to support and encourage them. If they make mistakes they need our forgiveness; if they are inefficient or if they do not have a sound knowledge of the Congregation, we must not forget that it is we that chose them. Let us not blame them for shortcomings which were known to us when we elected them. We must help them to fulfil what they are capable of, rather than to accuse them for eventual failures.

It is useful to interrogate ourselves deeply about ***how much we struggle for the vocation of our Brothers who belong to the Community***

It is not the matter of the novice-mistress, who tries her best to help the Brothers at the beginning of their vocational journey. It is the matter of fighting against our quiet living when it is the time to help a person of the community who is in difficulty. If a person experiences a period of crisis, do I turn myself on the other side? Or do I pretend that respect for her private life justifies my negligence? Am I afraid of listening to the doubts a Brother could confide to me? How much responsibility do I delegate to my major superiors?

4 – To host the other in our own “compassionate” prayer

One of the most incisive experiences in our life of “compassion” is the expansion of our hearts in a healing space of conversion, which embraces our own community and the world, from which nobody is excluded.

When, through interior discipline, we win the power of our impatient impulses to escape or to fight, to be afraid or to get angry, we discover an unbounded space in which we can welcome people from all over the world (therefore also the Brothers of our Community).

Therefore, the prayer for others must not be considered an extraordinary exercise to be practised every now and then; it is indeed the very beat of a compassionate heart. To pray for a sick Brother of the same community or the same Congregation, for a person of the Congregation who is in crisis, to pray for persons in the prison, in hospitals or on the battle-field; for the victims of injustice who are hungry, poor and without shelter; for those who take the risk of a carrier (even within the church !), health and life; for the ***responsible*** persons of the Congregation, of the States; ***to pray for all these people is not a futile effort of influencing the will of God, but a gesture of hospitality with which we invite our neighbours to the centre of our heart.***

To pray for others means to make them part of ourselves.

To pray for others means to make their pains and sufferings, their anxiety and solitude, their confusion and fears to resound in our most intimate I.

To pray means to enter a deep interior solidarity with other human beings so that, in and through us, they may be touched by the healing power of the Spirit of God.

When we are able, as disciples of Christ, to carry the burden of our brothers and Brothers, to bear the sign of their wounds and also to be crashed by their sin, our prayer will become their prayer, our cry of mercy will become their cry.

In a “compassionate” prayer we take before God all those who suffer and are in our most intimate heart. Therefore, it is in and through us that others will be restored; it is in and through us that they receive a new light, new hope and courage; it is in and through us that the Spirit touches them with the presence of a healing God.

When I really carry my friends and all those for whom I pray in my intimate being, and share in my soul their pains, their struggles and cry, then, so to say, I leave behind myself

and become like them and then I feel compassion. This is in the heart of our prayer for other human beings,

In this experience I understand that compassion is not mine: it is a gift that God offers me. I cannot embrace the world, but God can do it. I cannot pray, but God can pray in me. When God became one of us, that is, when he allowed all of us to enter his intimate life, it became possible for us to share his infinite compassion.

*When I pray for the other I lose myself and become the other, and am found by the divine love that keeps tightly the entire humanity in a compassionate embrace.*¹⁰

5 – The fatigue of elaborating a gaze of forgiveness towards one's own wounds and towards those of the Brothers

It is important to develop in oneself **the capacity of looking at oneself with good eyes and especially with a gaze of forgiveness.**

This is valid always within the Community, and can be easier with "people".

The capacity of having a good gaze leads to **a pedagogy of what is positive**, as a constant looking for a constructive thought, in action, in the communitarian, inter-personal and social relations.

Anselm Grun, a Benedictine monk, who in his books attempts a valid synthesis between the spiritual approach and the human one, speaks of "**wounds**" that come to afflict us along our journey among others.

The thesis of St. John Chrysostom is that nobody can wound us deeply if we do not harm ourselves. **Everything depends by the relation we have with the wounds we receive.**

If we have wrong opinions of the wounds, we finish by harming ourselves. The ideas that damage us are, for instance: "Wounds should really not exist", "If we are wounded, the wounds should be healed as soon as possible so that we may no longer feel them". "The wounds are not an obstacle in life", "Until I am wounded, I can think only of myself".

John Chrysostom does not want to minimise the suffering that can afflict us in life. He wants only to invite us to a constructive relation with suffering, to transform our wounds into sources of hope.

We have a **creative relationship with our wounds** when we reconcile with them, when we take for granted that they will accompany us throughout our life. If we accept our wounds, they will no longer paralyse us. We shall no longer complain of being wounded or of seeing the wounds of others. Rather, the offence will not prevent us from standing up if somebody calls us, if somebody needs our help. The wound will make us more sensitive towards people around us. If we treat our wounds with solicitude and caution, we shall be able to bandage and to heal the wounds of our neighbours. We shall not weep on the shoulder of one another, ugly as life may look.

Cardinal Martini says to us, "*I have the impression that sometimes we deprive ourselves of the strength which derives from entering the sufferings of Christ, just because in front of them we hold our breath, close our eyes, go equally ahead, without looking at faces, particularly in prayer, in our colloquy with Christ. By acting this way, we shall not interiorise them, and the trials, as well as the wounds, remain as extraneous bodies, they are not integrated in our journey and, therefore, cannot be transformed into consolation*"¹¹.

This is, therefore, how a gradual becoming leads each of us to accept our own tribulations and thorns, moving towards proper modalities to overcome sufferings..

Even as wounded persons we shall be able to stand up if somebody stands in need of us. We shall stand up for life and for others. We shall be in our hearts doctors and nurses of wounded souls, and will stop harming ourselves, **finding in faith a way to make our wounds fruitful.**

We shall go on carrying them with us, like a precious treasure that puts us in contact with our true being, with our divine nature.¹²

¹⁰ See H, Nouwen –la sola cosa necessaria - Ed Queriniana

¹¹ C. M. Martini - Paolo nel vivo del ministero – Ancora Mi 1990 - 18

¹² See; Anselm Grun -Do not harm yourself- Ed. Queriniana

6 – “The trapezium exercitations” in “a healthy” relation with God

We can deal with this last point in the words of H. Nouwen ¹³

The Flying Rodleighs are some “trapezisti” who exhibit themselves in the German Simoneit-Barum circus. When the circus came to Freiburg, two years ago, my friends invited me and my father to watch their spectacle. I will never forget how fascinated I was when I saw for the first time the Rodleighs who threw themselves into the empty space, whirling and clutching themselves in a dance full of elegance. I went again to the circus the following day to see them again and to express my admiration. They invited me to see them practising and gave me some free thickets, inviting me for lunch. They also proposed me to accompany them on a journey of a week duration after a short time. I accepted the invitation and we became friends.

One day, while sitting with Rodleigh, the head of the troupe, in his roulette, speaking of his practice, he said to me, ‘I must have a complete trust in my companion who has to grasp me at the end of my whirling. The public could think that I am the great star of the trapezium, while the true star is my companion Joe. He must be ready to catch me with precision, catching the second, and must clutch me through the empty space when I arrive with my long flight’. ‘What is it that functions’, I asked. He said, ‘The secret is that the trapezisti ho whirl do nothing: the one who does everything is the companion who clutches them. When I fly towards Joe, he must simply stretch his arms and hands and wait until he clutches me and takes me securely to the platform behind the barrier’.

You do nothing, I exclaimed in surprise. ‘Nothing’ Rodleigh replied. The worst thing that trapezisti can do in their whirling is to try and grasp the companion. It is not foreseen that I must clutch Joe, because it is the task of Joe to clutch me. If I clutched the pulses of Joe I could break them or he could break mine: this would be the end of both of us. One must fly and the other must clutch; the first must trust when he stretches his arms towards his companion who is there ready to clutch him’.

While Rodleigh was speaking to me with much conviction, the words of Jesus came to my mind: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

To die means trusting the one who is ready to welcome us, and getting ready for the dialogue with God at death may mean telling oneself: Do not try to grasp Him: it is He who will grasp you. You must just outstretch your arms and hands and have faith, faith, faith’.

Have a safe journey !!

¹³ See H. Nouwen -la ola cosa necessaria - Ed Queriniana

Outline for group-work

1 - How do I think to introduce the Trinitarian Life in my Community?

Experiences

2 –How do I think that the Community – Institute may become a “place” to improve also self-knowledge and self-esteem, thus strengthening the persons also from the human viewpoint?

3 –Which means do I use to project and evaluate my life as a gift, as relation, as the way “of being” for my Brothers?

4 –Which positive aspects do I catch from a good exercise of power?

5 – Which “victories” can I find in me for the transformation of the power at service?

6 - How can the relation with others be of help to transform my modality of power at service?

7 - Which efforts do I succeed to make in order to share the apostolic responsibilities?

Do I find satisfaction at the sight that the Brothers share my responsibility?

Do I meet with refusals of my sharing offer?

Or do I find difficulty in sharing?

8 - Which modality of approach do I find in me before the aggressive attitude of the single Brothers and in the Community?

9 - Growing in trust. Experiences and proposals of growth in the reciprocal trust.

10- Co-responsibility in moments of crisis and difficulty (= not considering only big uneasiness, but also problems of character, of relation, etc).

Do I feel to pay attention to the difficulties of my Brothers?

Do I succeed to grow in a delicate attention to prevent moments of difficulty?

What do I think that the Congregation can actuate to the end of supporting the Brothers in difficulty?

11 – What does personally tell me the episode of Claire and Agnes?

12 - Which journeys towards mercy do I know to find in me?

Mercy towards me, mercy towards the Brothers in my Community?

Which helps do I think to receive from the Congregation to be more merciful?

13 - Do I ask myself every now and then the purpose of my journey: for whom? Towards

Whom? With whom?

14 – Which personal experience do I feel to share in order: to take care of the other, to live interpersonal relations positively, to acquire a sense of responsibility towards the other, to develop a “spirit” of solidarity?

15 – *You, man who come from abroad,*

Help us to appreciate our richness. Do not think that we are poor because we do not have what you have. Help us to discover our chains, do not think that we are slaves when you see your own chains. Be patient with our people; do not think that we are retrograded only because we do not follow your line. Be patient with our journey, do not think that we are lazy because we cannot follow your rhythm. Be patient with our symbols, do not think that we are ignorant because we do not know how to read your words. Stay with us and sing the beauty of the life which you share with us. Stay with us and know that we, too, can give you something. Accompany us along the way:

neither before, nor behind. Try to live with us in waiting God" (An African Bishop to his missionaries).

Do I feel more a lover of certainties, easily distributing advices and solutions to everybody, or a searcher of the truth, respectfully listening to what the other tells me?

Which indications seem to be made in my case?

16 – Which qualities do I perceive in me to facilitate the "positive" relations in Community?

How to develop then further?

17 – Which limits do I perceive in me that slow down the "positive" relations in Community? How can I improve?

Index

Introduction	2
1 - "At the beginning there was the relation"	2
First Part.	5
The shadows : some realities within the person	5
which may stop the development of the 'positive' relation	5
1 – The tendency to self-sufficiency	5
2 – Attention to fatalism and passivity	6
3 – Fear of being wounded with the wounds of the co-Brothers = give up one's life also in the community	6
4 – Aggressive behaviour and grim	7
5 – A difficulty in looking at oneself and at the other Brothers in a pacified manner:.....	8
the rigorist mentality	8
6 – Attention to a too much exposure to stress	9
Second part.	11
Lights in the communitarian relations	11
1 – Towards a positive gaze on self and on the co-Brothers	11
2 – To elaborate a positive relations with one's own history and with oneself.....	12
3. To evaluate one's own capacity of getting disposed to listening	12
4 – To elaborate our trust.....	13
5 – To treat oneself and others with mercy.....	14
6 – Towards fraternal compassion	15
7 – The power of meekness.....	16
8 – The past comes back to the Communitarian present and can become light	16
9 – The virtue of the interrogative and of the doubt	17
Third part.	18
Tracks of ascesis	18
to realise a credible relational testimony	18
1 – The difficult journey from power to service	18
2 – Self-decentring.....	20
2 A – Decentring from one's own physical being	20
2 B – Decentring from one's cultural world.....	20
2 C – Decentring from one's own needs	21
2 D – Decentring from one's own ideals.....	21
2 E – Decentring from one's own perception of "evil"	22
2 F – Decentring from one's own modalities of joy	22
2 G – Decentring from one's own perception of prayer	23
2 H – Decentring from one's own Communitarian experiences	23
2 L – Decentring from one's own sublimating channels.....	23
2 L – Decentring to the end of collaborating with other apostolic figures	23
2 M – To pray "almost without purpose", for the Brothers of one's Congregation,	24
because the purpose is in God's hands	24
3 – To perceive the communion in vocation supporting oneself and struggling with it	25
4 – To host the other in our own "compassionate" prayer.....	25
5 – The fatigue of elaborating a gaze of forgiveness towards one's own wounds.....	26
and towards those of the Brothers	26
6 – "The trapezium exercitations" in "a healthy" relation with God	27
Outline for group-work	28
Index.....	30