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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

REFLECTIONS ON SOME TRADITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PASSIONIST CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

PART III

SOLITUDE:

Solitude in the Christian Mystery and in St. Paul of the Cross

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Rome 1982
Passionist General Curia
Piazza SS. Giovanni e Paolo, 13

This lecture was originally delivered during the Institute of Passionist History and Spirituality held at Rome from May 24th to June 26th, 1981.

Cum permissu:
Paul M. Boyle, C.P., Sup. Gen.

Editor, English-language series: Norbert M. Dorsey, C.P.

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(*N. B.* All page references to editions of the Rules are to the collected *Regulae et Constitutiones Congregationis SS. Crucis et Passions* D. N. J. C., curante Fabiano Giorgini, "Fontes historicae C.P." 1, Romae 1958.)

- I. Rule of 1738 (Altieri text)
- II. Rule of 1741.
- III. Rule of 1746.
- IV. Rule of 1769.
- V. Passionist Nuns' Rules and Constitutions.
- VI. Rule of 1775.
- VII. Rule of 1930.
- VIII. Rule of 1959.
- IX. Chapter Document of 1970.
- X. Regulations of 1755.
- XI. Account of 1747.
- XII. Account of 1768.

PROPOSAL:

From the community of the House of Solitude in the United States, a proposed text for a new section on Solitude in the forthcoming Constitutions (1982).

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Merton wrote one time that in certain areas the cry of the age is to “emphasize the importance of active turning to the world and a secular Christianity” with the consequent rejection of the value and relevance of Christian Solitude. “Solitude is declared essentially alien to the Christian message and life which are communal” (1). But a new interest in and concern for Solitude has emerged in human consciousness with the “new realization of the meaning of the person. This in turn has produced a new awareness of the seriousness of Solitude, not simply as an expression of man’s existential plight, but as a Christian value, a challenge and even a vocation” (2).

From a psychological viewpoint, Solitude is a highly relevant subject today. In a new research study at the University of Chicago, two psychologists, Reed Larson and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, concluded that Solitude, whether it is the pain of loneliness or the pleasure of autonomy, plays an important role in adolescent life, frequently enabling teenagers to be more comfortable in dealing with others. During Solitude moments (more than a quarter of their waking hours) the adolescents enjoyed heightened attention spans and powers of concentration. By their own assessment they were better able to concentrate on their hobbies or homework when alone. After being by themselves, the students said, they returned to the company of their family or friends feeling more alert, stronger, more involved and more cheerful. In another research study at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Peter Suedfeld concluded that “research on the positive effects of Solitude is still in the fetal stage” (3). A vast literature on the whole area of solitude-loneliness is appearing, both in the human and the Christian experience (4).

As men and women we experience that solitude is an essential element of the human condition. We feel our own inalienable interior solitude, based on the uniqueness of our own individual personality which makes us ontologically and psychologically solitary. It is always in solitude that a person discovers his/her own identity and potential. We are alone in the great decisions of life. We experience the terrifying and fascinating reality of solitude in our encounter with God. Both mystically and physically, we die alone. And the modern world in which we live our Christian and religious lives is often an isolated world – a world of instant communication but almost constant alienation.

Our Holy Father Pope John Paul II speaks of “man’s original solitude.” Referring to Genesis 2:18: “it is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him,” our Holy Father observes that “the first man (Adam) created from dust from the ground is defined as a ‘male’ (is) only after the creation of the first woman. And so when God-Yahweh speaks the words about solitude, it is in reference to the solitude of ‘man’ as such, and not just to that of the male. Man was two meanings here: “one derived from man’s very nature, that is, from his humanity (and that is evident from the account of Genesis, 2) and the other derived from the male-female relationship, and that is evident, in a certain way, on the basis of the first meaning” (5).

God created each woman and each man as a unique unrepeatable person – alone in his/her personal uniqueness but in relation to all others created in the same image and likeness of God and who share our common nature (6). Our Holy Father speaks insightfully about the solitude communion aspect of persons: “... the meaning of man’s original unity, through masculinity and femininity, is expressed as an overcoming of the frontier of solitude, and at the same time as an affirmation – with regard to both human beings – of everything that constitutes “man” in solitude. In the Bible narrative, solitude is the way that leads to that unity which, following

Vatican II, we can define as *communio personarum* (Gaudium et Spes 12)... Man, in his original solitude, acquires a personal consciousness in the process of ‘distinction’ from all living things (*animalia*) and at the same time, in this solitude, opens up to a being akin to himself defined in Genesis (2:18 and 20) as a “helper fit for him.” “Man’s solitude in the Yahwist narrative is presented to us not only as the first discovery of the characteristic transcendence peculiar to the person, but also as the discovery of an adequate relationship “to” the person, and therefore as an opening and expectation of a “communion of persons... The communion of persons could be formed only on the basis of a “double Solitude” of man and of woman, that is, as their meeting in their “distinction” from the world of living beings (*animalia*) which gave them both the possibility of being and existing in a special reciprocity. The concept of “help” also expresses this reciprocity in existence, which no other living being could have ensured. Indispensable for this reciprocity was all that constituted the foundation of the solitude of each of them, and therefore also self-knowledge and self-determination, that is, subjectivity and consciousness of the meaning of one’s own body” (7).

Solitude, then, can only be fully understood in terms of communion or person, and both are deeply rooted in nature and in God’s Revelation. Merton expressed the same idea when he wrote: “The Christian life is to be seen dialectically not only as a communal effort from which solitude is ostracized nor as a lonely pilgrimage without fraternal solidarity, but as a growth in the one “Mystical Person,” the One Christ, in whom solitude and independence of the person develop together with his capacity for love and commitment. At the same time scholars have drawn attention to the importance of the wilderness theme, the desert pilgrimage in the Bible and in the whole history of theological thought” (8).

Christian solitude – about which we are concerned – is one of the profound constants of the Christian tradition. As Christians and religious we are called to share intimately in the mystery of the solitude of the Paschal Christ, Who, in Rahner’s words, accomplished the supreme act of salvation “in extreme solitude and more inaccessible void” – the act which alone brings man once again into communion with God and with one another. Christian solitude is not selfish isolation; it is not haughty alienation from society; it is a faith experience of the Paschal Christ. Withdrawal from the world for the sake of leading a more intense life of prayer in Solitude and then sharing the fruits of that solitude and prayer with the People of God is nothing other than a particular way of living and expressing the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which is death ordained to resurrection.

In this lecture I shall reflect on Solitude in the Christian Mystery and in the spiritual doctrine of St. Paul of the Cross. First I shall consider the spiritual theology of the desert in the Old Testament, then the solitude of Jesus and its prolongation in the Church, and finally, its expression, and enfleshment in Paulacrucian form.

The basic sources for this lecture are the Rule and Constitutions (9), the Regulations (10), the Letters of our Founder (11) and the Processes (12). The Appendices contain a synopsis of the doctrine on solitude in the various Rules, the Regulations of 1755 and the *Breve Notizie* (13).

CHAPTER I – SOLITUDE IN REVELATION

1. Old Testament Theology of the Desert

Solitude is an authentic element of Christian Spirituality. Every Christian is called to experience the journey of the solitary heart into God. This is a journey with Christ into the heart of the Trinity; the Mystery of the Incarnation never contradicts the Mystery of the Divine Transcendence. Jesus is the Way and no one can approach the Father save through the solitude of Christ's Passion.

As an element of the Christian Mystery, solitude finds its source in God. In a certain sense we can speak of the solitude of God, that is, His metaphysical transcendence, His very Being, His Aseity. He is Unique. Revelation presents His Solitude in terms of Total Otherness: "I am God and not man" (Hosea 11:9). He is always beyond what we can know of Him. But Revelation also joins His transcendent solitude intimately with His tender Love (Isaiah 43:1ff). "But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel, fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Hence the solitude of God is the perfection of being Infinite Love.

The roots of Christian solitude are to be found in the Old Testament theology of the Desert. In Biblical tradition, desert (*midbar-eremos*) is not only a geographical place deprived of water, vegetation and consequently uninhabited (Cfr. Exod. 3:1; 2 Sam. 15:23; John 11:54; 2 Cor. 11:26) but it is also a theological idea. Theologically desert has a negative and a positive meaning. In the negative sense, the desert is a place not blessed by God and full of deadly dangers (Isaiah 30:6). It is dwelt by demons and characterized by the disobedience of Israel (Exod. 14:11; Ezech. 20,13). In the positive sense, desert refers to the desert of Sinai as a place of salvation and revelation, the place where Moses had repeatedly asked Pharaoh to let the people go free to offer worship to God (Exod. 3:12,18) (14).

The Desert experience is linked to a three-fold symbol (which will also appear in the experience of Christ, of the Church and of our Congregation): the three-fold symbol of the Sea, the Desert and the Mountain (16).

The desert is the primal scriptural symbol of the absence of all human help and comfort, where God alone can sustain the person. It is the place reserved for the cursed and disinherited, where man's existence is constantly threatened, but it is also the place where Israel experienced the most touching manifestations of God's mighty acts of love and mercy. In Exodus theology, the desert is the place of passage chosen by God to bring His people into the Promise Land, after freeing them from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 13:21). The desert is also the place destined by God for the official birth of the chosen people through the Covenant of Sinai (Exodus 20:22; 23:19; 24), where He reveals His Name to them and remains with them in a pillar of cloud and fire.

While the chosen people did find God in the desert, it was also a painful experience for Israel, a period of struggle because of its uncertainties, where the people had to learn time and time again what it means existentially to depend upon God. Later on, when their hearts had been seduced by the riches of the Promised Land, and they again departed from the Lord, the prophets proclaimed that only a return to the desert could bring Israel back to espousal with Yahweh, which had been first consummated in the Exodus.

Hence the desert experience was one of encounter with God, struggle with the evil forces within and without, and painful, purifying passage into the Promised Land. These basic elements of desert theology will appear throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament experience.

God so often revealed His plan to a solitary servant, and, in the desert ABRAHAM was alone when he received the messengers and discovered that he encountered God. He is brought out under the night stars to be given a promise of destiny in his offspring. MOSES in the solitude of the desert stands before the theophany of Israel's God in the burning bush and later is called up the mountain alone to meet God Who made a covenant with His people.

The PROPHETS spoke about the meaning of the desert and emphasized that period of sacred history as the golden age of kinship with the Lord, the age of youth and betrothal.

ELIJAH, patron of hermits, detaches himself from the school of the prophets to make his journey into the desert to experience the Providence of God; later on he went alone in the strength of the meal provided by the angel to Mount Horeb where in the solitude of the cave he hears the voice of God in the voice of silence. Throughout the Old Testament there is an intimate link between solitude and revelation. To fulfill his role with the society of Israel, the prophet has to enter the experience of loneliness, often physical and always spiritual, so that others may enjoy communion and community.

JEREMIAH experienced the lack of human support and a deepening sense of alienation. He feels alienated by God as well: "Do you mean to be for me a deceptive stream with inconstant waters?" (15:18). And Jeremiah pleaded desperately: "Yahweh, remember me, take care of me" (15:15). The desert references in Jeremiah indicate the barrenness and emptiness he feels; he is radically alone. "Why did I ever come out of the womb to live in toil and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" (20:18) "My heart is broken within me" (23:9). At this level of loneliness, of radical Solitude, something of the mystery of God is being revealed to Jeremiah. Through the radical Solitude of experiencing God's seeming absence, Jeremiah experienced in a unique way the nearness of God: "Am I a God near at hand only, says the Lord, and not a God far off? Can a man hide in secret without my seeing him? says the Lord. Do I not fill both heaven and earth? says the Lord." (23:23,24; 24) Jeremiah learned what it meant to be rejected within his own community and from God's sanctuary – a man of total solitude. Barred from the Temple (36:3), driven from his village (11:8; 12:6) and community (20:2; 36:25), Jeremiah suffered proleptically what his people would suffer later on. The solitude of his celibacy and rejection are ultimately recognized by his people as having an important meaning and value for them (16). The solitude of Jeremiah builds up his people; it does not exist for its own sake. The solitude of Jeremiah generated hope and his example showed the intimate connection between his solitude and his preaching.

The SONG OF SONGS is the great canticle of solitude which has meaning only in terms of love. Solitude makes sense only in view of the search for and company with the Beloved, in living out the deep mystery of God's love.

This desert theology appears again in a lived way in the age near the New Testament, among the Essenes and Qumrans (17). John the Baptist, a great example of separation from the world (Matt. 3:1; 11:7-10), the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, appeared in the desert and preached there. This fact has a theological meaning in Mark's Gospel, for whom the wilderness is a theme full of theological implications. John is announcing what the prophets foretold before him: One who is to come from God will appear in the wilderness and initiate the

final work of salvation. Israel must go out to meet this one in the wilderness in an act of sincere repentance which acknowledges her whole history as one of disobedience and infidelity (18).

Finally, MARY is the culmination of Old Testament theology of solitude. She is chosen in the terrifying solitude of her heart to be Virgin-Mother of the Messiah and to prepare Him for the Pasch - through the hell-born solitude of Calvary.

The desert experience then was an experience of meeting God in the wilderness – an experience of struggle against interior and exterior forces and an experience of passage through suffering into the Promised Land (19).

2) New Testament – Redemptive Solitude of Jesus

a) Christ's experience of solitude

The desert theme appears again in the New Testament, especially in the Synoptics. The paradox of the solitary recipient of revelation, apart from and on behalf of the community, is manifested in John the Baptist who enfleshes ancient biblical prophetism. It culminates in the Person of the God-Man, Who plunged into the heart of human solitude in the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation.

The Mystery of paschal solitude in Jesus, the New Israel, is expressed, as in the Old Testament, in the symbols of the sea (image of His Baptism and Passion), the mountain where He often went to commune with His Father and to communicate His word to the people, and the desert where He struggled with the Evil One. In the New Testament, what the desert was for the Hebrews, Christ is for the Christians. He is salvation and revelation.

As the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, Jesus is Unique. There is no other like unto the God-Man, Who bears in Himself the fulness of grace and truth. Solitude was a dimension of all His experience. Luke and Mark portray Jesus as a man of solitude, “destined to be a sign that is rejected” (Luke 2:34). He lived that mysterious solitude of a hidden life for thirty years (Luke 2:51-52; 3:23); even His parents did not understand what He meant when He spoke (Luke 2:50).

Christ had no human companions with whom to share in any adequate way His unique awareness of His relationship to His Father and the Spirit and His mission to Israel. Balthasar insightfully remarks: “...the fifteen or twenty-year old Jesus is harder to know than the little child that has been depicted countless times in his mother's arms or playing with his friend John. But who is the youth's friend? To whom does he open up his shy, burning heart? The passionate friendships of that age do not prevent an almost unconquerable loneliness. The young Jesus was probably the loneliest among men. He has his Father above and His converse with Him. The clearer his approaching task becomes, the less he is able to confide even in the people closest to him. The highest hours of youth are not those of communication, but the more difficult ones, when one discovers how little of the best, most important, and most pressing can be communicated” (20).

Just as Israel, after being chosen by Yahweh to be His first-born son, had been led into the wilderness by the pillar of fire to be tempted by Satan for forty years, so Christ, proclaimed the Beloved Son at baptism, was led by the Spirit into the desert to undergo the same temptation (21). Mark expresses the paschal solitude of Jesus evangelically as a “being led – driven by the Spirit out into the wilderness for forty days to be tempted by Satan” (Mark 1:12-13). The three-

fold temptation emphasizes the true messianism willed by God; the glory of the Messiah is indissolubly linked to the glory of God and to the ignominy of the cross. Only Jesus fully recognized what it meant to go out into the wilderness; it meant the determination to live under the judgment of God. Jesus went into the wilderness as a sign that His Baptism is fully serious (22). His sojourn in the desert is not merely temporary; the forty days are not a period passed forever once Christ begins His public ministry. As in the case of Moses and Elijah, the desert retreat “sounds the keynote of his whole mission” (23).

The whole Gospel of Mark is for Dr. Mauser a development of the struggle of Jesus and Satan in the desert. To live in this state of struggle with God’s adversary and to sustain this conflict in direct and complete dependence on God himself is the wilderness of life. Alone in the desert, Jesus could only rely on the Word of God. But His experience teaches us that salvation comes out of the solitude of the desert.

During his ministry, Christ’s experience of solitude grew and deepened. His townsmen did not know what to make of him (Luke 4: 22-28); his relatives did not understand him (Mark 3:9-21); his brethren did not believe him (John 7:50).

Jesus often withdrew from the company of others in order to be alone (24). He went off to the mountain to pray to His Father about His Life, His mission, His choices, His attitudes. This is another evangelical expression of the paschal solitude of Christ (25). In the Gospel the expression “desert place” is intimately linked to the contemplative dimension of the life of Christ and the apostles. It is the privileged place of prayer and encounter with God (Mark 1:21-34). As Schweizer indicates, the ‘mountain’ and ‘sea’ are variants of the wilderness in Mark. Invariably all the stories of Jesus in Mark which have an epiphany character take place in the wilderness, that is to say, “on the mountain” or “by the sea.” Prayer and solitude were essential components of his ministry – of his service to the people, and he constantly guarded that service from over-activity as well as from indolence (26). Even the apostolic mission of the followers of Jesus is marked with the sign of the wilderness. In fact, the apostles are called “on a mountain” and this is an indication of the basic condition of their mission. Their apostolic life is characterized by “staying with Christ” and “being sent to preach” (Mark 3:14). The Twelve were constituted to live in common with Christ and to participate in His mission. Their evangelizing mission cannot be separated from their life of communion with Christ. When they are sent out to preach in Mark 8:8ff, the instructions given them are similar to those given to Israel at the beginning of the desert journey. In a word, the disciples of Christ are to be kept alive by nourishment from God, and they must not waste their time and energy caring for themselves.

Jesus counseled his disciples explicitly: “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while” (Mark 6:30-33) to receive from the Father light, fidelity and love in order to understand their uniqueness before the Father.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus experienced the solitude of rejection: “they would not accept him” (Mark 6:4-6), and his disciples offered little more than a lack of understanding (Mark 6:18; 9:32). “They found him altogether too much for them” (Matt. 14:54-58; 15:15; 16:9). In solitude Jesus was abandoned by the leaders of His people who should have known better; and his own people rejected Him.

Gethsemane Experience of Solitude

Mark introduces the disciples in Gethsemane to emphasize the utter solitude of Jesus. Jesus is left completely alone (27). God is nowhere explicitly mentioned and His action in the “handing over of the Son of Man” is only hinted at indirectly by the use of the passive. “The puzzling lack of any expression of sympathy, indeed of any reaction of the disciples reminds us that as the Suffering Servant of God, Jesus’ vicarious mission must be endured in total isolation” (28).

As Pope John Paul II expressed it when he was still Cardinal: “The apostles did not know how to respond to the appeal to share the prayer of the Redeemer, and they left him completely alone. This showed that the Mystery of Redemption required the Son to remain alone in intimate converse with the Father. This total solitude creates a dimension fully appropriate to the divine mystery, which at the same time is a human activity on the part of the Son of Man” (29).

After the agonizing experience of solitude in Gethsemane, Jesus was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, arrested and “all deserted him and fled” (Mark 14:49-50). His hour of radical solitude had come. His disciples scattered, leaving him quite alone in his hour of greatest struggle (John 16:32), as He reflected on the words of Isaiah 63:3: “I have trodden the winepress alone, and there was not one of my people with me.”

Solitude of Calvary

Led by the Spirit into the desert and often to the mountain to pray alone to the Father, Christ was finally led by the same Spirit to Calvary where in the solitude of His Passion and Death, He restored communion between sinful mankind and His Father through the great struggle with the Evil One.

Mount Calvary is the culmination of the desert experience. Mocked in His dying moments, the only sympathetic onlookers are the women (Mark 15:40-41) and even they are “looking on from a distance.” The solitude of Jesus reaches its ineffable depth in His cry: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The inclusion of the Aramaic version of these words indicates an ‘interpretation of Jesus’ sentiments, his agonizing sense of abandonment by God to suffering as He realizes the awful nature of the supreme risk He has taken. We must beware of trying to neutralize the terrible realism expressed by these words. As Schnackenburg observes: “The fact that the early community transmitted Jesus’ words in the Aramaic language with which it was familiar suggests that it not only wanted to show Jesus using that psalm as his prayer, but also took the content of this introductory verse of the psalm very seriously... No one can know what Jesus’ state of soul really was but the Church’s intention in quoting this psalm was to express deep distress of soul and abandonment by God (30). God really abandoned Jesus to the power of His enemies and did nothing to defend Him. But as Jesus experienced the Father as the One who withdraws in His very closeness, Who is totally other, His death became the source of life, the other side of the coming of the Kingdom of God, its coming in love (31).

Jesus died alone in a solitude without parallel, but His wordless cry expressed communion with the Father. In fact, His death is the culminating point of Revelation. For history, Jesus dies alone; for faith, Jesus is in communion with God in the process of inaugurating a new creation. This is the paradox of creative solitude based on tension between history and faith.

The death of Jesus demands a real type of solitude, as the author of Hebrews understood it: “Therefore Jesus died outside the gate, to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us go to him outside the camp, bearing the insult which he bore. For here we have no lasting city; we are seeking the one who is to come” (Hebr. 13:12-14). Balthasar speaks of the paradoxical reality of the community of the Cross in which there is hidden a contradiction: it presents both the most intimate solitude and the most intimate communion. It is from the solitude of the Cross that was founded, in an archetypal way, a definitive and ever new communion in the death of Jesus and consequently in the ecclesial grace (32).

With and through the death of Christ, solitude takes on a creative, paschal character. The terrifying solitude of Christ’s Passion and Death brought mankind back into communion with the Father and with one another. It has a social impact. Human salvation is accomplished by Jesus’ agonizing withdrawal in death and His triumphant return in resurrection. As He died “for the many,” He is alone and abandoned. The suffering involved in this kind of creative solitude eludes our human understanding but it does not elude our Christian faith which responds affirmatively to the question: “Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and so enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:24).

B. The Church’s Experience of Solitude

The Church is solitary because She is the only Bride of Christ; She is multiple for She must shed her light on all human persons. Her solitude is to be understood in the plural just as her diversity is to be understood in the singular (33). The solitude of the Paschal Christ is the active source of all Christian Church-Community. As Balthasar expressed it: The Christian must be not only Church-generated, but the Church co-generating, regenerating; he must be the Church in origin, the Church in solitude. This is solitude which evokes community, apostolic solitude which does not go out from the Church, but in which the Church herself goes out into the world. It is not a private existentialist solitude, for it is the most profound community in and with Christ; just as Christ’s solitude is always – even in His dereliction on the Cross – community in and with the Father... The Christian proceeds from community with Christ, from community with the Church. Bearing this two-fold community, he advances toward a community to be regenerated, but he goes his way in solitude. It is ultimately the solitude of the generating Father, the Father who is such only in relation to the Son” (34).

This solitude belongs to the Church and to every member of the Church in whatever form of life he/she may be. The struggle between the dragon (Satan) and the woman (Church) continues for the whole eschatological time, until Christ’s final victory. In the Book of Revelation (Chapter XII) the woman (Church) flees into the desert for security where she will be surrounded by a special providence. But the over-all apocalyptic vision removes any illusion of immunity from temptations and sufferings. Actually the woman struggles in the desert with continual attacks, but God is always present with His help, by Word and Sacrament. The Church then is in the world but is not of the world. As St. Augustine says, the Christian draws near to God in the measure of his leaving this world by faith and by progress in journeying into God. Therefore every Christian is called to withdraw into the desert which is tantamount to associating himself/herself more intimately with Christ’s Passion, and it enables him/her to share in a very special way in the Paschal Mystery (35).

The early Church continued this aspect of Christ's Mystery and lived in the spirit of the desert, the spirit of separation from the world (Acts 2:42; 4:32-37) (36). The desert theme flows through all of Christian Spirituality. Monasticism seeks to live the desert ideal of the Church not only on the spiritual level – as all baptized Christians are called to do – but also on the level of 'physical reality' by an heroic rupture with the world which reaches its most complete form in the hermit and recluse (37). This desert theme is gradually interiorized in the mystical literature of the Middle Ages, especially in the Victorians, and continued on in the Mendicant Orders (38).

The call to the desert, to solitude, has been a 'constant' throughout history. This call to solitude took on a rich variety of forms: purely eremitical life, cenobitical life with eremitical elements; even Active Orders which developed later included the element of solitude in some form. Today, as we know, there is a considerable resurgence of the eremitical dimension of religious life (39). Mindful of this rich expression of solitude in the Christian tradition, we shall now study the form it took in St. Paul of the Cross and his Congregation.

CHAPTER II – SOLITUDE IN THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

1. Inspiration to Solitude

Paul's special inspiration to solitude occurred in 1715 when he was twenty-one years of age. As he walked along the Genoa coast, he saw the Chapel of the Madonna del Gazzo on the Mountain above Sestri. He described the experience in his own words to Bishop di Gattinara.

“About two years ago after the good God had converted me to a life of penance, I, Paul Francis, poorest of men, a great sinner and least servant of the poor of Jesus, was going westwards along the Riviera of Genoa, when, on a hill above Sestri, I saw a small Chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Gazzo. As soon as I saw it, my heart longed for that place of solitude, but this longing could never be satisfied – though I carried it always with me – because I was occupied by the work I was doing as a matter of charity to help my relatives.

After this (I do not remember for certain either the day or the month) I remained as I was for some time but with a growing inspiration to withdraw into solitude. This inspiration was accompanied by great tenderness of heart and was given me by the good God. At the same time I had the idea of wearing a poor black tunic of coarse cloth called *arbagio*, the ordinary wool fabric found in these parts, of going barefoot, of living in very deep poverty, in short, by God's grace, leading a penitential life. This never again left my heart. I had an even greater inclination not simply to retire to the little Chapel mentioned above; it would be enough for me to withdraw into solitude either there or anywhere else. This I would do in response to God's loving invitation, for in His infinite goodness He was calling me to leave the world. However, as I was unable to follow this inspiration because my help was needed at home, that is, by father, mother and brothers, I always kept this vocation hidden in my heart, except that I confided it to my spiritual director.

I did not know what God wanted of me, so for this reason I did not think of anything further, but I tried to free myself from household matters so as to withdraw from them later on. But the Supreme Good, who in His infinite mercy wanted something further from this poor wretch, never

allowed me to disengage myself at that time, for whenever I was about to be free of everything, new difficulties arose. But my wish grew stronger all the time.

Sometimes I had another inspiration to gather companions who would live together in unity to promote the fear of God in souls (this was my main wish). Although I paid no attention to the idea of gathering companions, it always remained in my heart. Finally and in a word I shall mention how long these desires and inspirations lasted up to the time when I had the following vision. I cannot say for certain for I took no note of it; I would say about two and a half years, more or less..." (40).

The essential points contained in this letter are:

- 1) Solitude is a call from God – an inspiration experienced continually and increasingly more for solitude anywhere.
- 2) The call to Solitude is linked to a Mountain above Sestri (41) and to a Marian Chapel.
- 3) The realization of the call was deferred because of filial piety and charity.
- 4) The call to Solitude is linked to a call to Community and to Evangelization.

2. Paul's Experience of Solitude During His Life (42)

For Paul of the Cross, solitude is a dynamic experience – a journey into the human heart which finds its term however in the Heart of God, where, in turn, one finds every human heart at its Source. It is a journey of faith and love wherein one reaches the Father's heart only in and through the Suffering Humanity of Jesus. But then Paul returns to the human circle – in solitude (i.e., bringing a solitary heart with him) to remind the men and women of his time of God's great love manifested in the lonely Passion of His Son.

Paul avoided the perils and pitfalls of solitude. Instead of becoming wrapped up and narcissistically trapped in himself, he transcended himself. He avoided the peril of becoming stranded in selfish solitude by returning to God's people. He avoided the peril of erasing the line between God and self by his keen graced perception of his own nothingness; his nothingness and God; his nothingness and the worth of others.

EARLY LIFE: Paul's whole life from beginning to end was a journey into solitude, Strambi speaks of his early inclination to solitude. As a young child, his mother read to him the Lives of the Desert Fathers and the Celtic Monks. Together with his brother John Baptist he would go to the attic of their Ovada home at night to pray in solitude and "to meditate on the bitter sufferings of Christ and to commune alone with God" (43). As a young man Paul constantly sought the solitude of Eucharistic adoration. In 1715, as we saw above, Paul experienced that special call to solitude near the mountain at Sestri.

FORTY-DAY RETREAT: In 1720, impelled by the same Spirit which drove Jesus into the desert, Paul, after receiving the habit, entered his forty-day retreat at Castellazzo (44). During this time Paul lived on bread and water. At night he rose for Matins and prayer, despite the severe cold, and spent three hours communing with God. He served and assisted at all the Masses in St. Charles Church and received Communion daily. He spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. As part of His Eucharistic service, he swept the Church and cleaned the altars. He also wrote his Diary on an almost daily basis. At the end of the first ten days he began to compose the Rule for his future Institute and completed it in five days (45).

This desert experience was a symbol of his whole future life “lived in God and for God,” and then shared with the People of God. This experience will intensify the purification of his spirit through mysterious participation in the Passion of Christ. It will illumine his future life and ministry, especially in view of the signal grace of January 1, 1721. It all prepares Paul to become Father and Lawgiver of a new Congregation in the Church, destined to proclaim the Gospel of the Passion in word and deed.

The characteristic features of Paul’s spirituality all appear in the Diary. He already possesses his “way.” He was deeply aware of “being in the Immense” – of being in the solitude of God. This impression of the “Immense” sums up the theology of this Encounter.

During this retreat experience, Paul learns that Jesus Crucified is the WAY to communion with the Father and communion with men and women. His desire to be crucified with Jesus is the way to intimate communion with the Father. In his communion with the Father, Paul sees with, in and through Christ, the redemptive needs of mankind, in the heart of the Father. Thus from his experience of “crucifixion with Jesus,” Paul is called to found a congregation – to commune with men and women. There is then an intimate connection between his mystical experience and his apostolate – between his experience of solitude and his call to community and ministry.

The whole setting of the Diary (i.e., the cell of St. Charles) is a symbol of Paul’s commitment to solitude which will fructify in communion between God and man via the Cross. Stripped to essentials, Paul lived this desert experience in deep faith and love. The manifestation of solitude in the Diary is to be found principally in his abandonment and desolation on the Cross – experienced and suffered however in peace, with great confidence as he commends himself to the Father.

Father Stanislas Breton in his Preface to our commentary on the Diary (46) said: “The Diary of Paul of the Cross owes its powerful impact only to his interior fire and at the same time to the Spirit who “cries out in the desert” with “groanings” the Apostle Paul describes as “ineffable...” This text of blood and fire defies every definite category, every academic classification. It is what it is, in the image of the image of the imperative “I am who am,” which, in a crucial moment of the biblical Exodus, inscribed the transcendence and the volcanic Law of the Eternal on our daily life.

The chronological outline which arranges the vicissitudes of a spiritual nocturne over forty days evokes both the Exodus and the biblical “desert,” the Gospel of the “temptations” and desert where Christ withdraws in order to “proceed” to his ministry... The Life-Principle of the new world is under the sign of the Passion. In the beginning, in this nothingness which determines everything, the sign of the Son of Man envelops the “from nothingness” of the creation with its shadow. The soul becomes then “life-giving spirit,” on the necessary and sufficient condition of abiding in the density of the cross until the day which it will not determine... The Diary of the desert accentuates, it is true, the harshness of the negative. But we would be deceived if we saw there only a morbid predilection for suffering... We must understand that the desert account describes for us a two-fold process, in which each of the moments delineates the royal way toward the One Thing Necessary by their reciprocity, in the one same becoming.”

The desert experience of Paul recorded in the Diary was a stage in his spiritual journey which opened him up to a greater freedom and love. It enabled him to be alone with God to struggle with the Evil One and to discover his own heart. And in knowing his own heart, he came to know the human heart of every person in a deeper way. Then he was able to proceed to ministry with a heart full of love and compassion.

During this desert experience Paul wrote his Rule in five days, coloring it with an habitual desert experience (solitude in community and in ministry) so as to deepen this religious presence to the Lord and to others. He continually insisted on desert attitudes: inner silence, dwelling with God, deep detachment and self-emptying, patient acceptance of suffering in love. This desert experience helped Paul to pray “incessantly” (I Thess. 5:17) by keeping the Passion of Christ always in his heart. In his heart he experienced deeply the powerful presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as he strove to bring every thought and desire into obedience to Jesus (2 Cor. 10:50).

Like Christ, Paul sounded the keynote of his whole mission in that desert experience. Throughout the rest of his life, whether at home, or journeying or on missions and retreats, Paul lived in and with the Word in the heart of the Father. Always a devotee of St. John the Baptist, his solitude was always united with his ministry (47).

Solitude after the 40-day Desert Experience

After the forty-day experience, Paul continued to seek solitude, first at the hermitage of Trinita da Lunghi (48) and then at San Stefano (49), which he called a “paradise of holy solitude.” “I would not know where to find a more suitable and holy place, secluded from the noise of the world, apart from going into a desert. I hope that if I shall cooperate in the holy inspirations of the good God, that solitude will be precisely where God will lead me to speak to my heart”(50). Paul desires interior solitude and here he also begins to experience a strong desire to help his neighbor. So his solitude is united to ministry from the beginning. Paul probably would have stayed at San Stefano and initiated his foundation there had the Bishop supported him in this plan. But he was called into the solitude of its non-acceptance by the Bishop for the foundation.

Call to the Solitude of Monte Argentario

In September of 1721 Paul went to Rome and on the way he caught his first glimpse of Monte Argentario: “...standing on the ship I glimpsed at those grottoes and caves which are on the mountain... I thought of withdrawing into one of those caves to do penance, which perhaps were once the dwelling places of those monks, who, as St. Gregory the Great tells us (*Dialogue* Book 3, chapter 17) used to live there doing penance.” He felt a strong desire to retire into such a solitude, to lead a life of penance and prayer (51).

Paul then walked from Civita Vecchia to Rome – a long journey of fifty miles in solitude. At Rome he went first to St. Peter’s and experienced desolation and dryness. Then he proceeded to the Quirinale – the Pope’s residence – where he was thrown out and experienced the solitude of rejection. But at the same time he received a great interior light, He went immediately to St. Mary Major’s and made the Passion vow in the Borghese Chapel before the image of the Madonna. Then he returned to the solitude of Monte Argentario. During his return journey there, Paul tells us that he was inwardly desolate. When he arrived at Portofino the priest there

suggested that Paul go to the Annunziata Hermitage where he stayed several days before walking 100 miles to seek authorization from the Bishop.

After receiving authorization from the Bishop, Paul returned to Castellazzo to seek his brother John Baptist, who received the habit on November 21, 1721. They remained in solitude at the hermitage of San Stefano until the worst of the winter was over (52).

In his letter to his family before leaving Castellazzo, Paul expressed the purpose of his solitude in terms of praise and reparation. He said that he was going away in order “to act upon inspirations from heaven. I am withdrawing into solitude to invite not only all intelligent creatures but also all other living and material things to keep me company in weeping over my grievous sins and in praising with immense love our dear God Whom I have so often offended. Before leaving for this solitary place, my brothers and sisters, I want to leave with you some spiritual advice so that your fervent love for our beloved God may never cease to grow” (53). On the next day the two brothers left for the solitude of Argentario (54) where they lived at the Hermitage of the Annunziata and also gave some catechetical instructions in Orbetello.

Paul’s experience on Monte Argentario was evangelical, as we read in Strambi’s account: “... the day after Epiphany Paul retired by himself into a still more lonely part of the mountain, thereby to imitate the seclusion of Our Savior in the desert... the life of these two hermits on Monte Argentario was one of solitude and silence, penitence and prayer... Nor did Paul forget that he had been called by God to work for the salvation of souls and he therefore employed himself frequently in teaching and explaining Christian doctrine. On Feast Days he went to Portercole for this purpose, where with marvelous zeal and devotion, he preached the knowledge and love of God and the observance of His holy law” (55).

Solitude of Gaeta, Troia and Itri (1722-1726)

In the winter of 1722 Paul and John Baptist went to live in the Hermitage of Our Lady of the Chain, located one mile and a half from Gaeta, where, according to tradition, St. Nilus had once founded a monastery (56). Significantly, Paul had to leave Gaeta for a short time to return to Castellazzo to “win over one of his relatives away from sin.” At this time he waited in the Hermitage of San Stefano in Castellazzo until February of 1724 because John Baptist was ill. Upon his return to Gaeta, Paul sought even greater solitude in a cave on the mountain where he meditated on the Scriptures, especially on the Redeemer “who emptied Himself for us” (57). At this time he also left his solitude to teach catechism to the children, to care for the sick and to preach a retreat to the priests and ordinands. In one of the caves nearby Paul would spend a good part of the day immersed in study and sometimes resisting the assaults of the devil... a little like St. Anthony in the desert (58).

In August of 1724 they left Gaeta because they had not succeeded in grouping companions living with them under a common rule. Here perhaps more than anywhere else Paul tasted the joys of solitude and lived the most intense hours of his eremitical life. Here he renewed the austerity of the first anchorites of the Thebaid and of the desert of Nitria and Egypt (59).

After leaving Gaeta they went to Troia at the invitation of Bishop Cavalieri and then on to Rome in the Spring of 1725. While in Rome Pope Benedict XIII gave them viva voce permission

to gather companions. It was at this point of his life that Paul entered a new depth of solitude – the beginning of his long fifty year period of spiritual desolation.

The two brothers returned again to Gaeta to seek companions but difficulties arose. Paul and John Baptist left Gaeta at Easter of 1726 and went to Our Lady of Civita near Itri on a high mountain to seek greater solitude (60) and remained there for three months.

Solitude of San Gallicano

In August of 1726 they went to the San Gallicano Hospital in Rome and began a new form of solitude: “to sacrifice themselves totally to God’s love and worked for the spiritual welfare of the poor by teaching catechism and preaching. I went and hid myself in the hospital of San Gallicano, and even there the Lord visited me with repeated impulses, until He drew me forth” (61).

Return to the Solitude of Argentario

Early in 1727 they left San Gallicano Hospital as ordained priests and went back to the solitude at Argentario where they lived in the Hermitage of St. Anthony (62). Here again they combined solitude with apostolic ministry. Every Saturday evening Paul went down to Portercole, spent the night in prayer in the Church and early in the morning heard confessions, preached and catechized. Strambi compared Paul and John Baptist to the Lord’s precursor: “those two missionaries coming forth from their solitude... recalled the memory of the great Precursor of the desert, or the apostles of Christ who announced like them, in perils and poverty, the gospel of peace” (63).

The solitude born of calumny attacked Paul during the years 1728-1730 and he lost all five postulants he had. In 1730 he began preaching missions with three campaigns a year; the other periods were spent in total solitude, i.e., all of Lent, the period between June 25 and September 15 and all of Advent.

When the Grazi family at this time wanted to build a monastery in the city for Paul, he replied that he wanted no monastery, but rather a retreat in solitude, without artistic cloisters or sumptuous Chapter rooms. Paul had a very clear vision and very practical applications of his desert theology.

Paul always preserved his spirit of solitude even on missions. When Paul “left his material and visible solitude, he carried with him always that interior solitude of the heart, in which he conversed lovingly alone with the Lord. He made use even of his journeys to recollect himself more and more in God, and he seemed as he went, to be entirely absorbed in that Supreme Good whom he tenderly loved” (64).

Solitude of Abandonment and Struggle (1736-1759)

In 1736 Paul experienced the solitude of being denounced to the Inquisition; the solitude of abandonment by God (65); the solitude of demonic attacks, the solitude of abandonment by companions which Paul described as having “no light from God” (66) and of being “in the

darkness of hell” (67). He even foresees God engulfing him in the “profound solitude” of failure in order to save his soul (68).

In 1742 after some of his companions left (including his brother Anthony), Paul experienced the solitude of deep discouragement: “I see the Congregation practically destroyed, but I preserve peace of heart, and I am resolved to lead a very hidden life” (69). In 1745 he faced the solitude of sickness when he was bedridden for five months in Orbetello with no sleep for forty nights. The solitude of opposition from good people saddened him when the Frati opposed his new foundations. In 1749 he expressed his solitude of abandonment when he wrote: “Our ship has run aground on a sand bank. I no longer have anyone’s support. I have only the support of God’s Providence, from which I hope great things in the measure that I lack the protection of men” (70).

In 1750 amidst all his work and problems, Paul wrote: “I hope to enter into retreat for at least fifteen days and to set aside my usual duties...” (71).

Solitude after Preaching

After preaching missions, Paul would “retire joyfully into his beloved solitude, for he had deeply imprinted upon his heart those words of the Divine Redeemer: ‘Come ye apart into a desert place and rest a little.’ This quotation was very often on his lips and he instilled its spirit into all the missionaries of the Congregation. He took care that our retreats should be mostly situated in secluded spots, in order that when their labors were over, the missionaries might restore their diminished strength, and acquire a new fervor of spirit, by being entirely removed from all outward distractions. He wished them to beware, with the apostle, lest, while they preached to others, they should themselves become castaways” (72).

In 1752 Paul refused a foundation at San Stefano in Castellazzo where he lived a short while after his forty-day retreat. He refused it above all because it did not correspond to the solitude prescribed in the Rule (73).

After his mission of 1754 Paul told Thomas Fossi that he planned to retire to a little cell “without ever speaking to anyone except to the confessor. I am old, sixty-one years and I have some commitments which I shall be happy to finish at this time; when these are completed and if I am still living, then goodbye to the missions. Goodbye to everything, everything, everything, but I, dead and buried in my little cell, shall speak no more to anyone except my confessor” (74) “I shall bury myself from the eyes of all in a corner of one of our most remote retreats, and I will remain as one dead in order to prepare myself for the last tremendous passage” (75).

In 1759 Paul again made up his mind to retire “into the most profound recollection of mental prayer, I shall prepare myself for death.” But he did not do so and continued to preach. Paul advanced the date of the 1759 Chapter by one year so that he might retire into solitude sooner. The Chapter was called on February 22, 1758, and Paul was re-elected.

In 1761 the famous Amati problem arose and occasioned important letters from Paul on the question of solitude (76). The death of John Baptist in 1786 drew Paul into the solitude of loss – utter desolation and abandonment. In 1765 Paul expressed the solitude of naked suffering when he wrote: “About my very serious anxieties and calamities, I say nothing. To my mind they can’t

be explained; I let everything die in the Divine good pleasure” (77). At the same time Paul had the controversy with the Bishop of Frascati about solitude (78).

At the 1769 Chapter Paul said: “Once the new General is elected, I shall remain in the solitude of Argentario to make my novitiate.” He said that he would put a sign on the door of his cell which would read: “Paul is dead” (79). In 1773 Paul received from the Holy Father the gift of Sts. John and Paul instead of St. Andrew at Quirinale. While he was most grateful to the Pope, Paul experienced a certain uneasiness in having a house which is not outside the city, since he would have preferred to have been farther away from the noise of the world and to be able to live more freely in solitude which he loved so much (80).

During his last days Paul “loved to be left alone as much as possible, so that he might pass his days and nights in continual prayer and intimate union with his Blessed Lord. Purposely he kept his door and window shut so as to enjoy his repose in God with greater liberty and quiet of mind. He observed a profound silence toward creatures so that he might better relish the interior voice of his loving Creator” (81).

In his last testament Paul begged Superiors to see that all the future houses of the Congregation would be founded in solitude, according to the Rule and that no human respect whatever would induce them to depart from this determination (82).

After being anointed, Paul asked his infirmarian, Brother Bartholomew, to admit no one else to see him but the Religious. He wanted to pass the last moments of his life alone with God. He, who from his earliest youth had fled the society of creatures and made his heart a solitude wherein he might converse with his only Love, determined to enter into a still more perfect solitude so that he might encounter his imminent death with courage (83).

On October 8, 1775, Paul declared that he yearned for solitude more than ever. At the end of his life his vision of the Congregation had all the clarity of a saint and founder. On October 18, 1775 this great man of solitude and of mission entered the last passage to the Lord – alone – and awakened in the bosom of the Father where he gazed on the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. And he left his Congregation the legacy of the spirit of solitude as a constant. It was a ‘constant’ in his experience to the end; it was a ‘constant’ in his doctrine and he willed it to be a ‘constant’ for his Congregation as long as she exists.

CHAPTER III – PAULACRUCIAN DOCTRINE OF SOLITUDE

1. Evangelical Foundation of Paul’s Doctrine

The primary source of Paul’s doctrine on Solitude is the Word of God; it is rooted in the Gospel. He expressed the evangelical basis of his teaching on solitude in a letter to Canon Felix Pagliari of Frascati, and quotes in particular the sixth chapter of St. Mark’s Gospel.

The letter reads as follows:

“In reply to the points in your esteemed letter which I received yesterday evening, I respectfully inform you as follows.

1. According to the light which His Divine Majesty has granted me, our Congregation is founded entirely on prayer and fasting and on genuine solitude, according to the holy counsels of our Divine Savior. He wanted his Apostles to retire into solitude after their holy missions. “Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little.” And His Divine Majesty gave the example since He withdrew to the mountain alone to pray after His marvelous divine preaching. Our Congregation is established on this foundation. If this foundation is dashed to the ground, the edifice will be totally destroyed because it will be outside the vocation which God has given to her. On this reflection, our Rule obliges us after missions, retreats, etc. to withdraw immediately into the Retreats of our solitude in order to recollect our spirit in prayer and fasting. Believe me, my esteemed Canon, an evangelical worker who is a man of prayer, a friend of solitude and detached from all created things accomplishes more than a thousand others who are not such men...

Moreover, our Rule obliges those who go to teach catechism at places near the Retreat to do everything possible to return to the Retreat in the evening. Everything is so arranged in the Rule to enable the Religious to preserve the spirit of prayer and not to be wandering about...

2. ...outside the time of missions, etc., we should remain secluded and allow ourselves to be seen rarely, like the relics of the Saints; and in this way great results and reform are achieved in the people who look upon the workers as apostolic men who come out of their solitude and prayer in order to inflame their hearts with the fire of holy preaching...

...asking your protection to preserve zealously the spirit of the Institute, because in this way Holy Mother Church will always have holy and successful workers, otherwise nothing will be accomplished...” (84).

The essential points in this letter may be summed up as follows:

- The Congregation is founded on prayer, fasting and genuine solitude;
- The Congregation follows the example of Christ who went to the mountain to pray alone and who invited his Apostles to seek solitude after preaching;
- Solitude is an intrinsic part of our vocation, without which the Congregation could not continue within the ‘call’ given her by God;
- The qualities of an evangelical worker are a man of prayer; a friend of solitude; detachment from all created things;
- The purpose of solitude is to preserve the spirit of prayer;
- The witness value of solitude is expressed in terms of the people seeing the apostolic workers coming “out of their solitude and prayer in order to inflame the hearts of the people with the fire of holy preaching.”

Among some of the other Biblical references to solitude in Paul’s teaching are the following:

GENESIS 19:17: “As soon as they had been brought outside she was told, ‘Flee for your life! Don’t look back or stop anywhere on the Plain. Get off to the hills at once, or you will be swept away.’” This message was given to Lot, his wife and two daughters.

Paul, in writing to Francis Appiani about his vocation, tells him to withdraw to the Mountain, that is, to Calvary in solitude at the foot of the Cross. Paul uses the solitude of the Cross as a vocational motive for Appiani (*Letters V*, 25).

EXODUS 3:1: “Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God.”

In writing to Thomas Fossi, Paul reflects on this text and encourages Fossi “to remain alone within the desert, in the interior ground, in a pure spirit of faith and love with genuine detachment and interior nakedness of spirit, divested of joy in poverty of spirit. Oh, how secure is this way and how rich!” Paul is expressing his spiritual theology of Exodus – so rooted in the Fathers of the Church.

Paul, in writing to Father John Mary, C.P., applies the same Exodus theology to his spiritual advice when he writes: “O sacred desert, in which the soul learns the science of the saints, as Moses in the profound solitude of Mount Horeb” (*Letters I*, 587).

WISDOM 18:14-15: “When peaceful stillness compassed everything, and the night in its swift course was half spent, Your all-powerful word from heaven’s royal throne bounded, a fierce warrior into the doomed land...”

The Liturgy has accommodated this text to the Christmas Mystery and St. Paul of the Cross often reflected on this text; it was one of his favorite texts.

In writing to Father Mark Aurelius, Paul uses this text to speak about the mystical Divine Nativity to be accomplished in the soul: “I pray and I shall pray that the Sovereign Infant-God will grant you wings of fire, wings of living faith, of hope and fervent charity, so that your blessed spirit might take flight into the bosom of the Father, which is the place where He is, and where He wishes to find the sheepfold of His servants: *The Son of God Who is in the bosom of the Father, etc., and where I am, there my servant shall be*. I rejoice greatly in the Lord that you are in the darkness of midnight... since at such a time there will follow the great prodigy of love of the temporal birth of the Divine Humanized Word: *when peaceful stillness compassed everything, and the night in its swift course was half spent, Your all powerful word from heaven’s royal throne bounded, etc.* (*Letters IV*, 24). Paul is speaking here about solitude as a means for deep union with God and birth in the Divine Word.

LAMENTATIONS 3:28: “Let him sit alone and in silence, when it is laid upon him.” The “it” refers to the yoke, that is, God’s Will, the sufferings of the Prophet and his people.

Paul applies this text when he is recommending to his religious the frequent remembrance of God’s presence as a powerful means to unite the soul to God, to pray well and to do all things well. He recommended that silence and solitude were the two most efficacious and powerful means to be raised up in God and to love that sovereign Good. (Testimony of Father Dominic of St. Anthony in POR, 1741r, p.30).

MARK 6:31: “He said to them: ‘Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little.’ Paul used this Marcan text to explain the meaning of Passionist solitude based on the

evangelical teaching of Christ in a letter to the Canon of Frascati (Letter III, 417). The same quotation from Mark is found in the Brief Account of 1768.

MARK 9:29: “This kind you can drive out only by prayer.” Paul uses this text in a letter to Don Dominic Girolami, the Archpriest of Anticoli, who wanted two of his missionaries for preaching. Paul insisted on time for solitude and prayer for two of his missionaries and delayed the next appointment until later. “ ... after their work they must return home and have time for rest in solitude, prayer and fasting according to the Rule. But have no doubt; what is deferred is not taken away” (*Letters II*, 648).

MATTHEW 11:25: “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you, I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children.” Paul uses this text implicitly when writing to the Prioress of the Vetralla Carmelites (*Letters III*, 89). He encourages her to practice interior solitude; this secret is learned at the feet of the Crucified since it is only revealed to the merest children, not the learned and the clever. The secret is the inestimable value of living in interior solitude wherein one adores God in spirit and truth.

JOHN 1:18: “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed him.” In writing to sister Columba Gandolfi, Paul uses this text to encourage her to enter into the deep solitude of Christ, Who in turn will guide and lead her where He is, i.e., in the bosom of the Father – the ultimate term of solitude. (Letter II, 471; Cfr., also *Letters III*, 191; IV, 225 and II, 470).

JOHN 4:23: “Yet an hour is coming and is already here, when authentic worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” Paul uses this text implicitly when writing to his brethren in preparation for the Feast of Pentecost. He encourages his religious to remain in true interior solitude so that they may become true adorers of the Supreme God in spirit and truth (*Letters IV*, 225).

JOHN 10:11: “I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.” In writing to his brethren Paul uses this text implicitly to remind them that the Suffering Christ leads them to the Heart of the Father via interior solitude (*Letters IV*, 225).

JOHN 6:15: “At that, Jesus realized that they would come and carry him off to make him a king, so he fled back to the mountain alone.” Paul always sees Christ as the exemplar for solitude. In writing to a young Superior Paul encouraged him to remain most of the time in the Retreat because he has need of deep recollection. The missionary, like Christ, after preaching must hurry to the mountain to pray (*Letters III*, 284).

HEBREWS 11:36-38: “Still others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword’s point; they went about garbed in the skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, they dwelt in caves and in holes of the earth.” Paul accommodate this text in a letter he wrote to Francis Appiani, encouraging him to love the holy will of God in every event (*Letters ...*).

ROMANS 13:14: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul applies this text to his teaching on solitude, emphasizing the Christological nature of the solitude he promotes. Writing to Marianna

Girelli, Paul emphasizes the value of interior solitude: “Marianna, give great significance to holy interior solitude; detached from every created thing, immersed in your own real nothingness, emptied of self, poor in spirit, full of crosses, cast into nothingness, abandoned in God, and this holy abandonment in faith is made in the sacred interior desert in the sacred silence of faith and holy love, pure and clear. In this way take your sleep on the bosom of the Heavenly Father and take a long sleep; do not awaken without the permission of the Divine Bridegroom. In this way the soul is reborn to a God-like life in the Divine Word, and every time that you enter into this sacred desert with living faith, the Divine Nativity will take place in you, on condition however that in this sacred desert you do not want to have any rags or tattered clothes, but you must be well-clothed with Jesus Christ: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Letters III, 745-46*).

COLOSSIANS 3:3: “After all, you have died! Your life is hidden now with Christ in God.” Paul applies this text in a letter to the brethren in preparation for Pentecost. He encouraged them to use every effort through the grace of Christ to live continually within themselves, in true interior solitude in order to become true adorers of God in spirit and truth (Cfr. *Letters IV, 226*; he uses the same text in writing to Thomas Fossi about interior solitude, Cfr. I, 635).

The above are but some of the biblical sources Paul uses in expressing his teaching on solitude. Throughout his letters of direction we find constant implicit references to the Word of God as he guides persons to an ever deepening participation in the solitude of Christ.

2. Non-biblical Sources of Paul’s Doctrine on Solitude

Apart from the biblical sources, the main influences on Paul’s doctrine of Solitude were Salesian, Carmelite, Franciscan and Taulerian.

Salesian Teaching: St. Paul of the Cross was deeply influenced by the works of St. Francis de Sales. The Bishop of Geneva was the first author studied by St. Paul of the Cross and he shared this doctrine with other young men at Castellazzo even before 1720 (85), and later at Gaeta in 1726 (86). Paul was often compared to the Bishop of Geneva because of his peace, discretion and optimism (87). “Formed in the school of the gentle Bishop of Geneva” (88), Paul had a profound grasp of the whole doctrine of St. Francis de Sales even at Castellazzo (89). Clear signs of Francis’ influence on Paul are found throughout the Diary of 1720; the language and theological ideas often manifest their Salesian source (90).

St. Francis de Sales showed that solitude is a Christian value for everyone, and not just for Religious; this same idea is also frequently expressed by St. Paul of the Cross. In his *Introduction to a Devout Life*, St. Francis wrote a chapter on “Society and Solitude” where he said:

“We must love our neighbor as ourselves, and to prove that we love him we must not fly his company; and to testify that we love ourselves, we must remain with ourselves, when we are alone by ourselves; ‘Think first of thyself,’ says St. Bernard, ‘and then of others.’ If then nothing obliges you to go abroad into company, or to receive company at home, remain with yourself, and entertain yourself with your own heart; but if company visits you, or any just cause invites you into company, go, in God’s name, Philothea, and see your neighbor with a benevolent heart and a good intention.”

The value of both interior and exterior solitude is expressed by St. Francis when he wrote:

“...you ought also to love local and real solitude; not that you should go into the desert, as St. Mary of Egypt, St. Paul, St. Anthony, St. Arsenius and the other ancient solitaries did; but that you should remain for some time alone by yourself in your chamber or garden, or in some other place, where you may at leisure withdraw your spirit into your heart, and recreate your soul with pious meditations, holy thoughts or spiritual reading. St. Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of himself, says: ‘I walked with myself about sunset, and passed the time upon the seashore; for I am accustomed to use this recreation to refresh myself, and to shake off a little my ordinary troubles’ ...when the apostles one day had told our Lord how they preached, and how much they had done, he said to them: ‘Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest a little’” (Mark 6:31) (92).

St. Paul of the Cross also speaks of loving solitude and indicates the intimate connection between interior and exterior solitude. He also cites the same Gospel source of Mark 6:31.

Significantly, St. Francis de Sales links interior solitude to Mount Calvary or the Wounds of Our Lord, and says that the soul who feels abandoned is to imitate Christ and commend herself into the hands of the Father. In the words of St. Francis de Sales:

“...our hearts, Philothea, should choose some place every day, either on Mount Calvary or in the wounds of our Lord or in some other place near Him, as a retreat to which they may occasionally retire to refresh and recreate themselves amidst their exterior occupations, and there, as in a stronghold defend themselves against temptations. Remember, then, Philothea, to retire occasionally into the solitude of your heart while you are outwardly engaged in business or associations with others. This mental solitude cannot be prevented by the multitude of those who surround you. As they are not about your heart, but only your body, your heart may remain in the presence of God alone. This was the exercise which King David practiced amidst his various occupations. To this he himself testifies a thousand times in his Psalms, as when he says: ‘O Lord, I am always with Thee’ (72:23). ‘I set the Lord always before me in my sight’ (Ps, 16:8). ‘To thee I have lifted up my eyes, O my God, who dwellest in heaven’ (Ps. 122:1). ‘My eyes are ever toward the Lord’ (Ps. 24:16). Indeed our occupations are seldom so serious as to prevent us from withdrawing our heart occasionally from them, in order to retire into this divine solitude” (93).

St. Paul of the Cross also speaks of interior solitude in terms of entering the Wounds of Christ; he also directs people to live in interior solitude in the midst of their occupations. Further, he teaches that solitude is an evangelical value necessary for everyone. Like St. Francis de Sales, he encourages the soul who feels abandoned to look upon Christ in His Agony and say with him: “Into your hands, Father, I commend my spirit.”

Carmelite Teaching on Solitude

St. Paul of the Cross knew the doctrine of St. John of the Cross before 1720 when he wrote his Diary, which manifests such a practical command of the principles of mysticism. St. Vincent Mary Strambi attests that Paul read the works of St. John of the Cross (94). Paul refers to John of the Cross as the “mystical Doctor” (95). He counseled others to read the works of the great

Carmelite reformer (96), because he had experienced how they had helped him to interpret his own experiences and to clarify his own intuitions (97).

Paul would have resonated deeply to the teaching of St. John of the Cross on exterior solitude which assists the spirit to soar upward to God in imitation of Jesus, who frequently sought the solitude of the mountain to pray (98). Paul experienced – as did John of the Cross – that contemplation produces an inclination for the soul to remain alone and in quietude and he would have understood instinctively John’s reflections on the solitary sparrow of Psalm 101, where solitude is an abiding in God like that of the sparrow chanted by the Psalmist (99).

The spiritual reality of solitude is one of the key ideas in St. John of the Cross, Stanza 35 of the *Spiritual Canticle* is totally centered on singing the solitude of the soul as well as the solitude of God, Whom it refers to as “sounding solitude” (100). For John, solitude is the ‘disposition that the soul be truly led and moved by the Bridegroom’ as the Apostle Paul says to the Romans (8:14). Solitude is the desire to be deprived of all the goods of this world for love of the Bridegroom – and this is essential. In solitude we reach union with the Word; to remain in solitude has meaning only if it is ‘for love of Him.’ In the solitude described by Hosea the Prophet (2:14), God speaks to the heart.

The solitary soul, for love of God, refuses everything which is not God or does not lead directly to Him. Its solitude has meaning only if the soul is “alone in Him” and hence this solitude is rich with the omnipotent action of God (Cfr. *Living Flame of Love*, III, 3). The solitude of John of the Cross is not really a void; it is the concentration of all human faculties and resources for welcoming the life of God within the soul. It is not a restrictive or narrow solitude; on the contrary, it is “a remarkably deep and vast wilderness, unattainable by any human creature, into an immense unbounded desert, the more delightful, savorous and loving, the deeper, vaster and more solitary it is. He is conscious of being so much the more hidden the more he is elevated above every temporal creature” (*Dark Night of the Soul*, II, Chapter 17, n. 6).

The relationship between interior solitude and union with God, true liberty of spirit as a fruit of solitude, solitude as the way to Divine Understanding, solitude and the wound of love are all clearly and powerfully expressed by St. John of the Cross in the *Spiritual Canticle* (101). All of this rich doctrine finds a home in St. Paul of the Cross.

ST. THERESA OF AVILA: This great Carmelite mystic also had a profound influence on our Founder. He would have learned about her as a boy in Ovada where the Carmelite saints were venerated, especially at the Oratory of the Annunziata where Paul was enrolled as a member. Paul’s first teachers at Cremolino were Carmelites. As he read the works of St. Francis de Sales, he would be attracted to the works of St. Theresa whom the Bishop of Geneva refers to so often. St. Theresa is the only saint explicitly quoted in Paul’s Diary (102), and Brother Francis assures us that Paul read the works of St. Theresa ‘with delight’ (103). Paul often encourages his directees to imitate the example of St. Theresa (104). In particular Paul counseled a newly-ordained Passionist to imitate St. Theresa by cultivating the habit of “interior solitude” (105). It is important to note also how much preaching and direction Paul gave to the Carmelites of Vetralla.

St. Theresa longs for solitude and solitude consoles her (106). In her deepest mystical experience, God raised her to a vast solitude where she experienced intense spiritual pain. “I am

oblivious of everything in that anxious longing to see God; that desert and solitude seem to the soul better than all the companionship of the world” (107).

Theresa worked at creating solitude for herself. “I began to take time out for solitude,” she writes; and again, “after withdrawing into solitude to pray and read...” (108).

Beginners especially need to accustom themselves to solitude and withdrawal (109). The desire to commune in solitude with God is a great grace (110). Imitate the saints in seeking solitude (111). The soul desires, she writes, periods of solitude in order to enjoy the love of God (112). At times, God places the soul “in a desert so distant from all things that however much it labors, it does not find a creature on earth that might accompany it, nor would it want to find one; it desires only to die in that solitude... The spirit does not leave that solitude” (113). St. Theresa speaks of an extreme solitude (114) and of a solitude inflicted by God (1105).

Franciscan Teaching on Solitude

St. Paul of the Cross was deeply influenced by the Franciscan tradition of solitude. As Franciscan historians tell us, St. Francis of Assisi had a strong attraction for solitude. He was in the direct line of the earlier hermit tradition. While the First Rule of the Friars Minor does not legislate for hermitages, it does mention them in passing, e.g., First Rule, n.7. We know that Francis composed an instruction for those retiring to hermitages in the *Mirror of Perfection* (n.65). He wrote the hermitage Rule for the Friars who put themselves into a special context of prayer.

“He saw them living out the Franciscan pursuit of God’s kingdom in these conditions. For the movement nurtured a new race of man, avid of seeing and living in God’s world. It did not train a new division of efficient clerics. A plan for solitude and prayer in the name of pastoral functionalism simply does not have the book of Franciscan life open at the right page... In solitude and prayer, Francis discovered how to walk in peace before God. He began alone but soon had companions. He invited and urged them to withdraw from a life of violence and enter on a life of poverty. Francis knew the drift of life in Assisi countered his way. He knew he had to learn his way in prayer before God. Within his withdrawal from the normal ways of life in medieval Assisi and his desire to be enlightened by God, solitude and prayer sank their roots... We can read the *Sacrum commercium* as the use of solitude in settling the movement’s identity... Dame Poverty teaches in solitude. She deals with Francis and his brothers outside the city, away from wise men. I see the communication between Poverty and Francis plus the brothers as the communication of prayer in solitude. I suggest reading the *Sacrum commercium* as a lesson in solitude given by a chorus in the wings while the actors move about the stage. Solitude conditions the wisdom of Franciscan poverty” (116).

Throughout his life, Francis alternated between solitude and apostolic action. He innovated by bringing fraternal life into the hermitage and by proposing Martha-Mary alternation (117). But Francis’ predilection for solitary places is clearly manifested by his frequent and prolonged stays in the hermitages which he had founded at Carcere, Monte Casale, Alverna, Trasemeno, Rieti, Poggio Bustone, Fonte Colombo, S. Urbano, Sarteano and Celle. These would later inspire Franciscan hermitages, houses of recollection and Ritiri (118).

Francis saw solitude not only as a geographical phenomenon but more especially as a spiritual reality which was a 'constant' in one's heart. He said that the friars were to carry the hermitages and solitude in their bodies, by guarding the external senses for recollection of spirit (119).

From the beginning there were two categories of residences : Friaries and Hermitages. But there is no proof that the Founder had established a fundamental distinction between their members. One spirit, one ideal, under one and the same Rule. Francis did not want separation and division but he foresaw them as possible. History teaches us that it did produce them. In the Chapter of 1502, the Observants set up Houses of Recollection; in the Chapter of 1517 the two great currents of the Order were separated: the Conventuals and the Observants (120). In Franciscan history there were four stages of development in the Houses, namely: 1) Hermitages; 2) Houses of Recollection; 3) Sacred Ritiri and 4) Solitude.

1) Hermitages:

Francis conceived hermitage living in this way: it involved only three or four Friars, two of whom would be active and the other two contemplative. As a community they came together for formal prayer and collation, at which time there would be a short recreation. The formal prayer consisted of the Divine Office. Most of the day was spent in silence, although conversation was permitted. At times the active members exchanged places with the contemplative members, but Francis seemed to have left that up to the members themselves. St. Anthony of Padua went to Monte Pauli where he led an austere life in solitude and prayer. The General Constitutions of 1280 determined that every house would have hermit places near them. From the very beginning, two kinds of residences existed in the Order: Friaries and Hermitages (121).

2) Houses of Recollection:

These houses were opened in order to arrest the good but simple brethren from going over to the reform movements. The Houses of Recollection appeared first in Portugal around 1486 with the foundation of the so-called houses of austerity. However, after great commotions, which arose around 1500 with the new reform of Guadalupe in Portugal and Spain, this attempt lost its vigor and ceased totally.

In 1502 the General Chapter decreed Houses of Recollection for Spain, although they did not exist in practice until 1517 when Conventuals and Observants were separated. Then a new institution began to grow and evolved in the bosom of the Observants which conserved eremitical life through the House of Recollection, within however the limits of the Province, and simultaneously did away with the danger of those little reform groups whose spirit of division threatened to split the Order.

Italy established Houses of Recollection in 1519. The Statutes written for the Spaniards in 1523 were extended to Italy in 1526. Fonte Palumbae, Greccio, Nazzari and Roichae were designated as Houses of Recollection.

In 1535 Pope Paul III clarified still more the intention and purpose of Houses of Recollection so that no occasion be given for zealous friars to be transferring to the Capuchins, but would find a sufficiently austere form of life in their own provinces.

Pope Clement VIII ordered at least three Houses of Recollection for every Province. The interior constitution of these Houses comprised about fifteen men. The Divine Office was

distributed through out the hours until midnight. Two and one-half hours were devoted to mental prayer; there was almost perpetual silence, very strict poverty, and all stipends for Masses were accepted. The Holy Sacrifice was offered for the intentions Christ had on the Cross. The fast was very strict and there was notable emphasis on humility. There were three simultaneous functions of Houses of Recollection, namely: 1) it was a place for contemplation and solitude; 2) it was a seminary for the education of the youth of the Province and 8) it was a means of reformation.

The Houses of Recollection arose in the family of the Observants to conserve unity in the community, for the brethren who sought a stricter form of life, and for the community that it might have whence it could conserve austerity and contemplation in the Order. In the process of time, a pedagogical purpose is added to the Houses of Recollection; the first and second Novitiate are found in them, and thus there evolved the “seminaria perfectionis” for the Province. As time went on, Houses of Recollection which evolved principally for the young, who were obliged to live there, necessarily exercise a lesser effect on the professed members in the Province (122).

3) Sacred Ritiri:

In the second half of the seventeenth century. B. Bonaventure de Barcinone who came to Rome in 1659 where he was ascribed to the reformed Province, gradually and against the opposition of Superiors, but with the approval and authority of Cardinal Barberini, Protector of the Order, founded some solitary houses. In the beginning these houses seemed to be hermitages, especially from the petition form of B. Bonaventure, who did not intend to begin any reformation among the Reformed. But he obtained independence from the Provincial and was placed under the direct obedience of the Minister General so that the Sacred Ritiri which he founded, afterwards would form a separate custody. Among these were S. Maria Gratiarum (1666), Vicovarium (1667) and S. Bonaventure on the Palatine (1667).

St. Leonard of Port Maurice, who first sensed his Franciscan vocation in the Retreat of St. Bonaventure on the Palatine in 1697, worked his whole life that the movement begun by B. Bonaventure might be propagated. He was even more solicitous for the apostolic life and wanted to have the Ritiro as a place for missionaries to regain the peace necessary for the interior life. Other Sacred Ritiri besides the three mentioned above were: St. Francis of Civitella (Bellegra - 1686); Palumbaria (1704); Santa Virgo prope Ficecchium (1736); Monteluco in 1788. In 1741 the Minister General Cajetan a Laurino ordered such “ritiri” to be set up in every Province. In 1750 Pope Benedict XIV, instigated by Leonard of Port Maurice, committed the Minister General to prescribe the whole Order to erect at least one “sacred ritiro” in every Province.

The “Ritiri” were instituted in the Roman Province and then among the Observants, with foundations beyond those Houses of First and Second Novitiates. The “Ritiri” were considered rather as “places of spiritual quiet” where the Rule and Constitutions would be observed more exactly and thence they would shine forth in the whole community as a “mirror of seraphic perfection.”

The Ritiri demanded great severity because of the fact that their purpose was not only to observe the Rule and Constitutions but also to follow the admonitions and counsels of St. Francis. Hence only those would be admitted who spontaneously and voluntarily sought permission. The purpose of the “Ritiro” was for a life of prayer and abnegation. Since abnegation (as solitude and silence) are only means, therefore contemplation is the purpose. The Ritiri

provided for the apostolic life, at least the preaching of missions and the administration of the Sacraments, which is not found in the Houses of Recollection. Under this aspect the Ritiro exerted greater attraction for the brethren who did not want to relinquish activity totally and also for Superiors who were more favorably disposed toward it.

However, both Houses of Recollection and the Sacred Ritiri were intimately connected because of their common end, that is, a more tranquil and contemplative life, regular observance of the Rule and Constitution, and actual example in the Province of genuine Franciscan life. In 1774 the two became identified and the Province was left free to institute one or the other (123).

4) Solitude:

Just as the “Ritiri” evolved from the Houses of Recollection, bearing with them a more rigid discipline as to form of living, so the SOLITUDE fulfills the same function for the “Ritiri,” namely, to show a more austere discipline of life, totally dedicated to contemplation.

The SOLITUDE observed more common life than the ancient hermitages. It was not intended as a permanent place, but was established rather for certain periods of the year to regain the religious spirit so as to live the apostolic life. The Solitudes therefore were particular and temporary foundations, depending on some sacred “Ritiro.” Because they were never numerous, they did not exercise a broad lasting influence on the life of the Province or Order. They flourished especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries under the influence of B. Bonaventure of Barcinone, St. John Joseph of the Cross and St. Leonard of Port Maurice.

B. Bonaventure founded the Solitude S. Angeli for the religious of the sacred ‘Ritiro’ of S. Maria Gratiarum in Sabina. The place was small; first it was for four religious and later for seven religious. The cells were so small that only a tiny bed could be put there. The Brethren went there for spiritual exercises several times a year.

The Alcantarine S. John Joseph of the Cross (1654-1734) was not yet twenty when he was destined to found the SOLITUDE of Piedimonte d’Alife in Beneventano territory of Southern Italy. He built the SOLITUDE of S. Mariae Angelorum in the woods for those (especially from the “Ritiro” of S. Mariae Occorevole) who wanted to separate themselves totally from the world and consecrate themselves exclusively to serve and praise God day and night. They had five places or chapels where a very rigorous life was led. The woods were surrounded by walls in whose center were the five places, which again surrounded a small friary and Church. The friary contained four cells, refectory, sacristy, little portico, a well and a fireplace. (There was no kitchen because the food was prepared by the Brothers in the Friary of S. Mariae Occorevole and daily brought to the Solitude, where it was warmed). In the surrounding wall there was a door which was always locked. Lay people could enter there only three times a year (124).

St. Leonard of Port Maurice – a contemporary and acquaintance of St. Paul of the Cross – founded a SOLITUDE at INCONTRO in 1716. St. Leonard (1676-1751) expressed the importance of solitude in a period of reform. He was the Superior of the Reform of Florence and dreamed of a kind of hermitage where he and the other missionaries could withdraw for a time to prepare for future missionary work by a life of solitude and penance. Thanks to the generous alms and strong ecclesiastical support, his dream was realized in 1717 (Paul of the Cross was 23 years old then) when he founded Our Lady of Incontro for the use of his religious of the Sacred Ritiro of Monte alle Croci of Florence. Built on a deserted hilltop, surrounded by the natural

beauty of the Arno Valley in Incontro, near Florence, it was the hermitage Leonard had envisioned. As an expert missionary, Leonard called his brethren to imitate St. Francis who in imitation of Christ (Luke 9:10) sometimes withdrew into solitude and designated such places for the Order. With such an intention and according to the Franciscan tradition, Leonard founded the Incontro, where the brethren of the Ritiro, after some time of dwelling there, may return with greater fervor to apostolic life (125).

The Solitude at Incontro was a small building with twelve cells, very small, in imitation of the kind used by St. Peter of Alcantara. The number of Religious who led the strictly contemplative life was limited to five at a time, with the Superior, one lay Brother and a tertiary who served them. Of the twelve cells, four were reserved for guests. This life in the Solitude founded by St. Leonard began in 1717 and lasted until its suppression in 1782.

According to the norms set up by Leonard, the Solitaries were not permitted to write or to receive letters; very strict silence was observed; among themselves they were permitted to communicate only by signs and writing. The food was very simple; there was prayer at midnight, daily Communion (in the Ritiri they were allowed to communicate only three times a week), daily discipline and Spiritual Exercises four times a year for a period of ten days each time (126).

St. Leonard expressed the purpose of the Solitude as total separation from the world in order to attain intimate union with God in prayer and contemplation. In his letter to Pope Clement XI, Leonard also indicated another purpose, i.e., to offer reparation to God for the sins of the world and to implore grace for all through austere penance and the perfect observance of the Statutes of “Solitude” (127).

Leonard himself went to the Solitude twice a year. He wrote: “The Solitude of Incontro was instituted to bring us closer to St. Francis and his first companions. It is on this that depends, in great part, the maintaining of our Order in its primitive fervor. And as a matter of fact, the religious who will have stayed there for some time, in silence, prayer, and a total separation from the world, will go away from it inspirited. Upon returning to their respective residence, they will be the light and edification of them; through this alternation of retreat and preaching, through this appropriate blend of the active and contemplative life, they will more easily acquire the great perfection of which Our Lord is the archetype and the exemplar” (128).

Leonard of Port Maurice “felt the need from time to time to go apart from men and from all external things” to preach a mission to Fra Leonard, as he used to say. He also realized that the “beautiful blend of active and contemplative life, which the Seraphic Father learned from the Redeemer of the world, who, fleeing the tumult of peoples, withdrew sometimes into the desert and solitude of mountains, and coming down from the mountains, returned to converse among the people, to teach us that in this alternation of solitude and application to the salvation of the neighbor consist the highest perfection to which one can aspire in his life” (129).

“The life conceived by St. Leonard of Port Maurice for himself and his confreres, who aspired to the same perfection in the Solitude of Incontro near Florence anticipates that of St. Paul of the Cross and indeed, here and there, surpasses it in the singularity of certain austerities: nocturnal rising at midnight; nine hours of prayer in common; discipline every day for about half an hour; almost perpetual fast, with absolute prohibition of meat, fish, eggs and dairy products of any kind; short hours of sleep on bare tables with wood for pillows; perpetual and rigorous

silence in every place; prohibition to leave the cloister and to write letters; obligation to go barefooted” (130).

In a letter dated 1732 Leonard wrote: “My vocation insofar as one is competent to judge of such things, lies in mission work and solitude; mission work, that I may live for God; and solitude, that I may live in God. Everything else is vain...” Leonard is both a solitary and an apostle (131).

It is significant that Paul of the Cross had a profound respect for St. Leonard of Port Maurice (132). Father Enrico Zoffoli C.P. has stated that we cannot exclude the judgment that the idea of solitude found in St. Paul of the Cross had been suggested by St. Leonard of Port Maurice in his Solitude at Incontro near Florence (133).

It is against this background that we look at Paul of the Cross in his early years as he frequented the Capuchin Monastery in Castellazzo where he was well-known to the Friars. Among his spiritual directors were two Capuchins. After his pastor realized that he personally did not have the competence to direct Paul (134), he sent him to Father Jerome of Tortona, the Guardian of the Capuchin Monastery at Castellazzo (135).

Paul was also directed by a holy Religious and expert Director of souls, the well-known Capuchin Father Columban of Genoa. This was at the suggestion of Bishop di Gattinara (136) and also of Father Jerome of Tortona (137).

The life of experience and teaching of these Capuchins, formed in the spirit of Franciscan solitude, touched Paul of the Cross deeply. We must be mindful too that the spirituality of the Capuchins had a marked tendency toward the contemplative life and favored its development in the Ritiro and individual or collective solitude.

Taulerian Teaching on Solitude

The Strasbourg Dominican, John Tauler (1300-1361), had a profound influence on St. Paul of the Cross. As far as we know, Paul did not come into contact with Tauler’s works until later in life. Taulerian expressions appear in Paul’s letters only around 1748 when Paul was 54 years old. He read Tauler in the Latin of Surius, the 1548 edition.

Paul was influenced by Tauler in his doctrine on solitude; many of his expressions repeat the doctrine of the German Dominican. Paul often uses the expression “ground of Tauler” (138), which means the meeting place between God and the naked soul. Paul is more interested in the function of this “ground” than in its nature. For Paul, the ‘ground’ was the unity of faculties in this central point, which is also a summit, where the soul is totally related to God because it is empty of every creature. Tauler’s emphasis on living in the depths of one’s soul in interior solitude finds constant expression in Paul. In Tauler’s Sermon for the first Friday of Lent (Sermon VIII), he mentions that the second entrance to the Pool of Siloe is “to resolve to live always at home in the depths of our souls” (139). One enters into the depths of the soul, Tauler will say, in order to enter the Father’s Heart, and Christ is the door of that sheepfold (140). Paul of the Cross uses this terminology exactly as Tauler did.

When Tauler advises putting the faculties of the soul in privation and nakedness, he sometimes uses the comparison of Moses who led the flock into the depths of the desert. With Moses, he says, we must lead all our faculties so deeply into the interior of the unique solitude or desert of our tranquil heart, that we abandon and lose all multiplicity and inquietude and that we arrive at the same time with Moses in the wondrous face of God. There we await the Lord in silence” (141). St. Paul of the Cross also speaks about this desert and this solitude. He uses the same metaphor: Moses leading his flock into the depth of the desert, but he develops it in his own way (142). In writing to a Religious, Paul writes:

“O holy desert! he cries, O divine solitude! in which the soul detached from everything created loses itself in the Eternal and Infinite Good; there, in a holy silence of faith and love, it adores, suffers, and loves, all in remaining detached from all joy, having only the joy of faith and love. This consists in always being nourished by the divine will in a naked, hidden, detached suffering, because it is all absorbed by pure and holy love” (143).

For Tauler as well as for Paul of the Cross, the entering into solitude of self is the way to pass to the Other, to God. For St. Paul of the Cross, introversion or interiority is a “gentle renewal of faith by which the soul soars into the abyss of the Divinity” (144). This is no egoistic turning in on self but a discovery of God in the solitude of one’s spirit.

The Passion of Christ has a special place in the teaching of Tauler. He writes: “The Passion is the entrance door to mystical life” (145). “The five wounds, which are open until the last day, introduce us to the heritage of the Father” (146). Obviously, St. Paul of the Cross resonated to these Taulerian passages.

In Tauler, the solitude of God is that Abyss which is Agape. Birth in the Word Incarnate is the ‘loss of self’ in Infinite Charity, in that Divine Abyss which is Agape. This is where the solitude of man meets the solitude of God. Detached from every created reality, the human spirit enters alone into the depth of holy solitude, into the sacred desert. This journey into solitude is made in faith and love, in self-emptying and detachment from every sensory satisfaction. Then the soul is reborn at each instant to a new life of love in the Divine Word Who “listens to you and loves you” (147).

Tauler uses the words ‘desert’ and ‘solitude’ and they have almost the same meaning as ‘naked faith’ and ‘poverty of spirit’, which is accompanied by renunciation of the world and of passions. He calls this ‘desert’ because few persons engage in it; because here, as in solitudes, the rarest virtues appear; and because a sober and temperate life is lived there, like the Israelites in the desert (148).

The Taulerian solitude and desert are the equivalent of the Dark Night of St. John of the Cross and the Mystical Death of St. Paul of the Cross. Tauler made a distinction between Active and Passive Solitude. The soul should endeavor to create solitude and desert around itself; then God will draw it into that solitude which is Himself. The Active solitude consists in abandoning not only exterior multiplicity but also interior multiplicity, which are the imaginative faculties and their images, the imagination, and thought; it consists in turning from all forms and images and thus to abide in solitude (149).

Passive Solitude for Tauler is experienced when God draws the soul; it is nothing other than infused prayer and mystical union. He speaks of it in this way: “It is there that (i.e., the supreme part of the soul) the spirit is ravished above all the faculties, in a vast solitude, of which no mortal can speak worthily; it is a profound darkness... they call it the incomprehensible and vast solitude, because one finds there no path, no bridge, no way, since it transcends far beyond all modes... It is called the desert, there being no route of access” (150).

At times Tauler speaks of entering into this solitude as putting the soul in the ‘medium silentium’ (Wisdom 18:14-15) of which Scripture speaks. The Church uses this text in reference to the Birth of Christ and mystical authors apply it to the new birth of union of the soul with God. Tauler writes: “I ask you, O Merciful God, where then is that silence, where is the spot in which that word is uttered? As I said before, so now I say again: It is the purest place the soul can offer and the noblest; it is in the soul’s deepest depths; yes, in the essence of the soul, its most hidden part. That place it is that holds the quiet silence ministering to this Divine Birth” (151). St. John of the Cross applies the text in the same way (152). St. Paul of the Cross favored this same text of Wisdom and commented on it (153).

St. Paul of the Cross often takes the technical terms of his sources and expresses their content in evangelical language. For example, interior solitude becomes ‘the kingdom of God within us.’ The sacred desert becomes in Paul the loving abode of the Trinity where the three lamps of faith, hope and charity burn continually. The ‘ground of Tauler’ is a singing soul where one hears the ‘Holy, Holy’ and the ‘Alleluia.’ The ‘ground of the soul’ is in Paul a heaven where God dwells.

The rich doctrine of Salesian, Carmelite, Franciscan and Taulerian solitude will all find its echo in the heart and teaching of St. Paul of the Cross.

3. The Basic Theological Principles of Paul’s Spiritual Theology of Solitude

It is important to emphasize the Christological nature of Paulacrucian solitude and to enunciate his basic operational principles.

- (1) Paul of the Cross conceives the spiritual life as a RETURN TO GOD. He envisions this return dynamically as a JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF THE FATHER. The term of the journey is the HEART of the Father – what St. John the Evangelist refers to as “in sinu Patris.” This is a favorite expression of Paul of the Cross (154).
- (2) This return to the Heart of the Father takes place through UNION WITH THE PASCHAL JESUS, Who is our “way, our truth and our life” (155).
- (3) This union is rooted in the SUFFERING HUMANITY OF JESUS and especially in the Heart of Christ in the Eucharist. Paul emphasizes the effects of Communion (156), and our insertion into a Living Presence Who is the definitive Reality of everything.
- (4) This return to God through the Paschal Jesus takes place in three centers of solitude: the solitude of the human heart which enters into the solitude of the Heart of Christ through which the soul enters the Heart of the Father (157).
- (5) Paulacrucian Solitude is Paschal in nature. Solitude in St. Paul of the Cross in a paschal reality which means three things: it is initiated by God, it shares in the Self-Emptying Death

of Jesus and the consequent emerging aliveness unto God. Solitude is a permanent attitude of soul (158), wherein one is entirely hidden in Jesus Crucified (159).

(a) INITIATED BY GOD

Paul clearly states that solitude as he understood it is a GIFT FROM THE LORD (160).

(b) SHARES IN SELF-EMPTYING DEATH OF JESUS

Solitude in Paul of the Cross:

(I) participates in the Self-Emptying Death of Jesus in the following ways:

- it is a call to journey to the Heart of the Father ('in sinu Patris') in and through the Suffering Humanity of Christ: "Enter into this divine solitude through the door which is Jesus Christ, and His most Holy Passion" (161).
- it presumes a union with the sentiments of Christ toward His Father and all mankind: the 'Philippian' "let this mind be in you." Paul often speaks about "being clothed in Jesus Crucified" (162).
- it is expressed in a life 'hidden with Christ in God' (163).
- it demands a vital awareness of one's own nothingness (in the existential sense of the Apostle Paul); a deep detachment from everything not God; the evangelical 'losing all' and finding the true self in Christ.
- it is a practical theology of life which Paul expressed in terms of "work, suffer, be silent" (164).

c. SHARES IN CHRIST'S ALIVENESS UNTO GOD

(ii) Paulacrucian solitude participates in Christ's aliveness unto God, in the Pauline "power of resurrection" (165):

- by providing the way to live in deep communion with the Father through the Son and in the Spirit; experiencing in faith the Solitude-in-Communion of the Trinity; setting the atmosphere for the Divine Nativity of the Word in the soul (Paul's way of expressing the now-participation in the Resurrection of Christ); in Divine Silence, for prayer and intimate communion with Christ in the apostolate. The more one is filled with the Word, the more powerful he becomes to return to the human circle as he is sent by the Father to proclaim the Word breathing forth love.

4. Types of Solitude in Paulacrucian Doctrine

Solitude is related to space: geographical space for exterior solitude (and within that geographical space, structural space for the 'Retreat' and, within the Retreat, the space for the Cell); finally, the inner space of the heart is for interior solitude.

The basic purpose of evangelical solitude is to seek God. The means used by St. Paul of the Cross in this search for union with God is detachment, detachment from sin which turns one away from God, and detachment from whatever distracts one from attention to God.

Paul's preference obviously was for 'rural' solitude, although he did eventually accept houses in urban solitude, but with qualifications (166).

Separation from the world did not, in Paul's mind, mean seclusion. He invited men to come and share the solitude of the Retreat and he invited both men and women to come for spiritual direction. He sent his missionaries out to work at specified times.

According to Paul's vision, the theological foundation for this separation from the world is faith in the value of a contemplative search for God through the Passion of Jesus and the acceptance of the detachment inherent in this desert experience.

In this separation from the world, Paul provided prudently for relations with the world which included:

- a) welcoming persons to the Retreat, especially the poor and the needy; those who would come for spiritual assistance and the retreatants who would come to share the solitude. Paul was, at the same time, most insistent that while guests were very welcome, their presence must not disturb the regular life, the solitude and silence of the brethren.
- b) welcoming ideas: Paul insisted strongly on study and proper theological formation and preparation for preaching. Though limited in his own personal education, he wanted his religious to have a good, adequate intellectual formation. He himself read the best spiritual authors.
- c) His missionary and pastoral work brought him and his Religious into contact with the world.

Hence Paul's relationship with the world was a sharing of material and spiritual goods; sharing food with the poor and spiritual nourishment with those to whom the missionaries brought the Sacraments and the Word of God.

A. Exterior Solitude

i) Nature

Exterior, physical, geographical solitude refers to space. Paul loved the great open spaces – the mountains, the woods and the sea. Gazing on the sea, he reflected on the IMMENSITY OF GOD – an experience of that Divine Attribute which he expressed so personally in the Preface to the Rule as being “in the Immense” (167). Mountains and woods attracted him as places to ponder the Word of Creation and the Word of God.

Exterior solitude refers to geographical separation – what the Gospel calls “going apart” (168), and what St. Paul of the Cross calls “withdrawing from the noise of the world” (169), but for the ultimate purpose of deeper communion not only with God but also with men and women. Paul understood so well that solitude opens the eyes to the marvels of God's creation and contributes so much toward the humanization of mankind (170).

The exterior solitude which Paul ultimately called for was not the free solitude of the hermit but rather the regulated solitude within community, a call to ‘corporate solitude.’ Our Founder emphasized exterior solitude as a means to develop recollection, that is, concentration of all one's spiritual powers – intellect, will, imagination, psychological attention, love – on the Person of Christ, and His Father and their Spirit.

In all the Rules from 1736 until 1959, exterior solitude is referred to as “solitude in the best way possible” (1736 and 1741) (171), and foundations “in retired places, in the most convenient and best manner possible” (1746 1769, 1775, 1930, 1959) (172). Paul also refers to exterior solitude as solitude of the body (173). He admits of degrees in geographical solitude as implied for example in the Regulations of 1755 (174).

ii) Purpose of Exterior Solitude

Paul expressed the purpose of exterior solitude as he envisioned it in a variety of ways:

- TO SEEK GOD (175);
- TO WITHDRAW FROM THE NOISE OF THE WORLD (176);
- TO SEEK ONE’S TRUE IMAGE:
“Withdraw to the mountain (i.e., Calvary, in solitude at the foot of the cross), “to look at yourself in that divine mirror which “conquers the world,” i.e., Jesus Crucified (177).
 - “to remain with Jesus alone... and if it be possible, retire into some secluded place to remain a quarter of an hour with Jesus alone, and you will do what He will inspire you to do, reawaken your morning meditation” (178).
- TO SEEK A HELPFUL ATMOSPHERE:
A sacred space for immanent activity (exterior solitude is good when accompanied by virtues and prayer) (179).
 - “for peace and to be away from the noise of the world” (180)
 - for “our priests here secluded in solitude to walk as strong men toward perfection” (181).
 - “take care to remain more alone as much as you can, to maintain interior solitude” (182).
 - “to make war on hell and promote the memory of the sufferings of Jesus” (183).
 - “for prayer and fasting” (184).
- “to maintain a living spirit of recollection” (185).

iii) Solitude of the Retreat

In geographical solitude, Paul of the Cross built his Retreat (186), a place to abide in the Lord, a place to “live in God and for God,” a place to recollect one’s spirit in prayer and fasting, and to deepen one’s love for Christ and for all mankind. At certain times the Religious were sent out to “sow the seed of God’s word” and then they returned to the Retreat “away from the noise of the world” to be “occupied with God and to ponder Jesus Crucified.”

These fundamental operations of the human spirit are based on the Gospel: to ABIDE in the Retreat, to GO OUT on mission and to RETURN to deepen their lives in union with the Word (187).

iv) Solitude of the Cell

Within the Retreat, Paul insisted that each Religious have his/her own room or cell. He expressed his own theology of the cell. It is not just a place to sleep; it is a sacred space to meet God, to struggle with the evil forces within us and to pray, study, read and write. Paul wanted his

Religious to respect the solitude of each other within the cell, a solitude which only God can penetrate fully. Paul envisioned the cell as the place where we find ourselves alone and yet not alone; alone with God but in communion with the whole Congregation, the whole Church, the whole world. Paul understood well that the soul in solitude is the whole Church, and would have appreciated fully these words of St. Peter Damien:

“By the very mystery of her inward unity the whole Church is spiritually present in the person of each human being who has a share in her faith and her brotherly love. Indeed if we who are many are one in Christ, each of us possesses in him the whole, and though in our bodily solitude we seem to be far from the Church, yet we are most immediately present in her through the invisible mystery of her unity. And so it is that which belongs to all belongs to each, and conversely, that which is particular to some is common to all in the unity of faith and love. Now just as the Greeks call man a microcosm, that is to say, a little world because his body is composed of the same four elements as the universe itself, so each of the faithful is a little Church since without violation of the mystery of her inward unity, each man receives all the sacraments of human redemption which are divinely given within the Church” (188).

The PURPOSE of the Cell is expressed in terms of UNION WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST and MARY: “Let them keep before their eyes the Crucified, and often imprint tender kisses on His most loving wounds, so that the heart might often make acts of love toward our Supreme Good” (189). “On entering or leaving the cell, let them kneel before the image of the Blessed Mother asking her blessing and seeking her permission to do this action or to go that place” (190).

Paul asks his Religious to love the cell: “Let them be lovers of the cell, which they do not leave except for necessity or service; let them not go wandering around the Retreat, otherwise they will commit a thousand faults, and will put themselves in danger of a thousand transgressions against the Rule” (191).

The Cell is the place for immanent activity, the union of intellectual and interior life through love: “During the time of study let them do as when they walk, with one foot raised and the other on the ground, that is, with one’s thought on the book and one’s heart on God” (192).

The Cell is a place to seek God: “When they are thus alone, let them take care to dispel from the mind or memory whatever is not God or about God” (193). “Let them often make ejaculatory prayers, which, in time of aridity offered with the voice, help recollection in a wonderful way” (194). In moments of struggle let them seek the Heart of Christ: “When they experience some cloud of melancholy or shadow of anxiety and temptation arising, let them immediately kneel down before the Crucified and let them fly and hide themselves in the Sacred Heart of Christ with acts of love...” (195).

The Cell is a place for work: “Let them take care not to remain idle so as not to give the devil the opportunity to urge temptations and suggestions, but STUDY, WRITE, READ AND PRAY” (196).

Finally, Paul says that the cell is the place where “God speaks words of eternal life to your heart” (197). The Religious will put on Christ more and more provided that in the solitude of his room, his heart is turned toward the Father (198).

B. Interior Solitude

i) Nature

Paul of the Cross refers to this reality as solitude of the heart in the biblical sense of the term. While physical, geographical solitude separates us from men and women, interior solitude unites us intimately with them and restores the person to himself/herself.

Our Founder describes this reality of the heart in a variety of ways: it is the “solitude of the heart” (199), the “holy solitude and sacred interior desert” (200), the “ground of one’s being” (201), the “Mountain” (202), the “interior temple” (203), the “interior spirit” (204), the “depth of Tauler” (205) and the “divine solitude” (206). In other words, this interior solitude for Paul is the deepest part of the human spirit, the depth of one’s inviolable and incommunicable personality where man/woman meets God, and where God speaks His Word breathing forth Love.

Interior solitude is that inner space of the heart where we meet self at the deepest level; where we meet God in His Triune Personality; and where we meet all others at the very source of their being – the Heart of God. Interior solitude for Paul is the heart and core of physical solitude. It is the place of total encounter with God by deep detachment from every created thing. It presupposes material detachment from the world by living in “retreats.” It is an experience of the mystical dimension of life, the mystery of the All hidden in silence – the “sacred desert” of the soul’s journey on the biblical way of Exodus – and mystical death by rebirth and Godlike life. Paul refers to this interior solitude as “that very vast solitude (I am speaking about the depth and center of the soul) and lose yourself there totally in that Infinite Good. Enter here, but enter fully clothed with the holy sufferings of the Divine Bridegroom” (207).

The Christological nature of interior solitude according to St. Paul of the Cross is expressed in this way: “...pay serious attention to holy interior solitude; remain detached from every created thing, immersed in your own real nothingness, stripped of self, poor in spirit, burdened with crosses, cast into nothingness, abandoned by God. This holy abandonment of faith is made in the sacred interior desert in the holy silence of faith and love, pure and clean. In this way you sleep in the bosom of the heavenly Father and take long sleeps and do not awaken without the permission of the Divine Bridegroom, thus the soul is reborn to a God-like life in the Divine Word and every time that you enter into this sacred desert with living faith, that Divine Nativity will take place in you, provided however that in this sacred desert, you do not want to wear rags but you should be well-clothed in Jesus Christ. ‘Put on Our Lord Jesus Christ.’ You should be well-adorned with the jewels and pearls of a royal bride, which are the virtues of Jesus Christ, especially humility of heart and meekness, so precious to the Heavenly Bridegroom. Suffer and be silent: ‘Jesus however, was silent.’ Oh, holy silence, rich in every virtue” (208).

In the sacred interior desert, the soul hides herself completely in God; this reality itself is a form of preaching with a witness value (209). More is proclaimed through Love, Paul says, and through the silence of faith and charity that by words” (210).

The components of experiential interior solitude are detachment, forgetfulness of self, poverty of spirit, love of the cross, acceptance of one's nothingness, abandonment to God and mystical death from which emerges divine nativity.

Detachment is essential for interior solitude; detachment from sin which turns from God and detachment from what distracts from attention to God. Forgetfulness of self is a 'must' so that one may be continually immersed in God, the Totally Other. Poverty of spirit provides the atmosphere for interior solitude with total focus on God. Love of the cross leads one into the deepest experience of the solitude of the Passion. Acceptance of one's nothingness enables one to believe deeply that God is ALL. Abandonment to God takes place in interior solitude where one can discern how to empty self completely and thus reach full possession of self in God. Mystical death can only take place in solitude when one meets self in its poverty – in the presence of the Suffering Christ.

Interior solitude is the vital climate for contemplative prayer. In the three-fold desert of the soul (senses, heart and intellect) the soul meets God and is raised to deepest intimacy with the Divine Bridegroom.

ii) Purpose

Paul of the Cross expresses the purpose of interior solitude in terms of relationship to the Three Divine Persons. His doctrine on interior solitude always has a Trinitarian orientation. To the soul of interior solitude, God manifests His marvels and calls her to intimacy with God alone (211).

Interior solitude is a call to rest in love in the bosom of the Father by the holy solitude of faith in love (212); it is a call to lose and bury oneself completely in God (213); to adore the Father in spirit and truth (214); to remain recollected in God (215); to receive the milk of holy direction in the bosom of the Father (216); and to converse there alone with God where "you will learn great things because the Heavenly Father reveals himself to the humble of heart" (217). In other words, the soul gives attention to God alone by transcending herself endlessly in separation from and forgetfulness of every created thing, in detachment and recollection.

Interior solitude is a call to deeper union with the Son, especially in His Suffering Humanity. Jesus "calls you into solitude to speak words of eternal life to your heart" (218). "Rest your spirit at the feet of the Crucified in order to restore and strengthen it by holy recollection and prayer from the weaknesses and distractions which human frailty contracts even in the most holy works for the good of the neighbor" (219). "Remain continually in the sacred interior desert totally clothed in the faith of Jesus and of His Sufferings" (220), "fully clothed in Jesus Crucified" (221). "Fish in the sea of the Holy Passion of Christ for the jewels of the holy virtues" (222) and "be penetrated by the Sea of Christ's Sufferings" (223).

Interior solitude is a call to deeper union with the Holy Spirit who hides you ever more deeply in the interior of the desert where He will teach you everything. He will help you to acquire greater purity of intention in all your actions (224). He will teach you the science of the saints like Moses in the profound solitude of Mount Horeb (225), and you will experience mystical rebirth (226) by allowing your own nothingness to disappear in the Infinite All (227), as

you converse alone with your Supreme Good in the sacred interior desert (228). The Spirit will give you direction (229).

iii) Fruits of Interior Solitude

Paul of the Cross expresses the fruits of interior solitude in terms of the Divine Bridegroom in his heart giving that “wine of wisdom which inebriates, perfumes, strengthens, vivifies, enkindles, and raises up and hastens us toward the contemplation of God where the science of the saints is learned by the truly humble of heart” (230).

Paul says that the fruit of interior solitude is the moment-by-moment rebirth to a new Divine life in the Divine Word, Jesus Christ (231). To live for and in God and not for self is the fruit of interior solitude (232). Interior solitude fructifies in continual prayer and unites the active and contemplative life (233). Interior solitude leads to a deeper penetration of the Mystery of Christ’s Passion. Paul expressed it in this way: “The most holy Passion of Jesus is a sea of sufferings, but it is also a sea of love. Ask the Lord to teach you how to fish in this sea; immerse yourself in it and the more you plunge yourself into it, you will never find the bottom. Let yourself be penetrated totally by love and sorrow. In this way you will make all the sufferings of the Gentle Jesus your own. Fish for the pearls of Jesus’ virtues; this divine fishing is done without words; faith and love teach it. He who is the more humble is the better fisherman” (234).

iv) Types of Interior Solitude

Interior solitude may be ACTIVE, that is, acquired by human effort under God’s grace. Paul speaks of making a habit of interior solitude (235). He says that it is to be practiced (236). He counsels his directees to remain in solitude (the Johannine ‘abide’) and therefore presupposes human effort (237). This ACTIVE solitude requires strength and that strength comes, according to Paul, from prayer, the Sacraments and sacred reading (238). In his reading of John Tauler, Paul would have learned that active solitude “consists in giving up all the multiplicity of one’s outward powers; but more than that, it includes the renouncing as much as possible of multiplicity in the interior powers of the soul, namely, the images of the mind, the forms and figures of the imagination, the multiplicity of thoughts. Thus removed from forms and figures, a man’s interior life is lived in solitude” (239).

Interior solitude may also be PASSIVE, a gift infused by God, what St. Paul of the Cross so often called “divine solitude.” It is nothing other than infused prayer and mystical union. Tauler describes this divine or passive solitude when he writes:

“There, in a kind of rapturous ecstasy, the soul’s very self is lifted above all its powers into a vast solitude quite impossible to describe. It is a profound darkness... It is called a vast and incomprehensible solitude because we find there no path, no road, for it is traversed in a divinely supernatural way... It is called the desert because it is naturally inaccessible to us” (240).

Again Tauler says: “With Moses we must lead all our powers so deeply into the interior of the unique solitude or desert of our peaceful heart, that we abandon and lose all the multiplicity and inquietude and that we arrive at the same time with Moses in the wonderful face of God. There, we await, the Lord in silence” (241).

St. Paul of the Cross uses the same metaphor in his letters, that is, Moses leading his flock into the depth of the desert: “In order that the Divine Majesty may accomplish His marvels more and more in your soul, keep yourself as much as possible in a deep detachment from every created thing, in true nakedness and poverty of spirit and in true interior solitude, allowing the little sheep of the powers and feelings to go into the interior of the desert. If they are lost in God, let them be lost; for they are happily lost in their Origin. O loss infinitely rich! O sacred desert, in which the soul learns the science of the saints, like Moses in the profound solitude of Mount Horeb!” (242).

Paul speaks about interior solitude dynamically as a journey within, a process of spiritual emptying and detachment whose goal is the realization of one’s transcendent identity. This journey within brings one to the death of one’s personhood, to one’s nothingness and nakedness before God. But it does not stop there. It brings us to the Heart of Christ. It is significant that for Paul of the Cross, remaining in interior solitude is a fruit of daily Eucharist, daily contact with the Heart of Christ (243). Paul’s doctrine on interior solitude never terminates in the self but in the Heart of Christ (244). In Christ’s Heart, then, we are led into the Father’s Heart wherein we find all creation, and then return to the human circle to proclaim the love pondered in the Heart of the Father.

The culmination of solitude in Paul’s doctrine is the divine solitude of naked-suffering. The characteristic element of this divine or mystical solitude is the forgetfulness or overlooking of second causes, the total stripping of self with total attention to God (245). This is the way of naked poverty of spirit in the profound solitude of the Passion, with only faith as the guide and no other support than simple abandonment to the Father (246).

As Paul expressed it: “Remain enclosed in this divine solitude, this sacred desert, hidden to all. Do not forget to make the sufferings of your Beloved Good your own. Love is intimate life, which makes one’s own the sufferings of the Beloved who is the Loving Savior” (247).

Paul says that this journey of faith and love into the immense sea of Divinity must be made in Christ Jesus, always united to His Passion. Paul’s experience and teaching on solitude is always based on a Christological foundation. He teaches that in Jesus Crucified, God will teach you everything. Remaining always in the Heart of God, the soul will also be reborn to a new life of love in the Divine Word, Jesus (248).

This experience reached its culmination for Paul in naked suffering – an abyss without an object – a suffering which coincided only with itself (249). Paul endeavored to describe the content of his “naked suffering” as “experiential knowledge of his nothingness.” This naked suffering may be seen at three levels: psychological, metaphysical and mystical. Paul described the mystical naked suffering in three manifestations which I would suggest are his experience of the Passion-Solitude at its deepest level. The three manifestations are these:

- 1) The temptation to blasphemy; this is terrifying for him as he pondered in Jesus Crucified the greatest revelation of the Father’s love. This is an experience for Paul of hellish solitude.

- 2) The second manifestation is the radical awareness of sin. As he ponders Christ Crucified, Paul experiences his very existence fighting the kingdom of heaven and he also experiences the ever-present and ever real possibility of sin.
- 3) A final manifestation is the boredom of life; this is a kind of nonsense, meaninglessness which takes away all reasons for living, but he does not feel or experience them. He experiences only the unwanted solitude of the meaninglessness of the most meaningful Reality.

Is this not the solitude of a “buried heart,” the phrase used by Paul in his *Diary* experience? And Pere Breton has made a most beautiful reflection on the meaning of the “buried heart” when he wrote; “The detachment... must go beyond suffering and joy which are the extremes of the one same genre and which have this in common – attaching us to ourselves. Indifference and union with the Divine Will raise the soul above its ‘passions’ in a kind of kenosis which configures it to Christ on the Cross. With much finesse, this young man of twenty-seven years of age notes that the variety and multitude of sufferings experienced in this Christological spirit contribute toward balancing them in a kind of neutral point where the subject is no longer aware of what affects him. Transition point of all that it experience, the soul is indeed this *potens omnia pati*, this universality of suffering, which confers on it a kind of anonymity. This anonymity the *Diary* translates by a meaningful metaphor, that of a “buried heart” (250).

But this naked suffering, this still-point of solitude, opens us to the filial abandonment of a son to the Father. It is a paschal reality, death ordained to resurrection, mystical death opening up to Divine Nativity.

5. Relationship of Solitude to the Passionist Charism

The charism as understood by our Founder is expressed by him in the first day’s entry of his *Diary*: “I desire only to be crucified with Jesus.” To live in the memory of the love of the Passion and to share that loving memory with others was Paul’s life. Solitude is an organic part of that charism as participation in the solitude of Christ’s Passion.

The solitude aspect of our charism is but weakly expressed in the present Chapter Document. It simply states that Paul left us a spirit of solitude. While Prayer, Penance and Poverty are developed in the Document, there is no development of Solitude. Without a full development and lived experience of the total charism, we cannot make our maximal contribution to the Church.

Therefore it would seem that with the finalization of the Chapter Document in the forthcoming General Chapter, we should offer suggestions for a more complete text. Our personal suggestion is that the section devoted to solitude be centered in a Christological context, that its ecclesial value be indicated and that it be given an expression which befits a worldwide Congregation. It would also be important to indicate the organic connection between solitude and community and between solitude and ministry in the experience and teaching of St. Paul of the Cross (251).

6. Solitude and Community

i) Necessity of Solitude for Community

Paul of the Cross achieved an extraordinary balance between solitude and community. When that balance is disturbed, the charism is weakened. He provided ways in which the Religious could find time and space for themselves within the community life. His experience taught him that men who were destined to preach the Word of the Cross needed time and space to face the Lord, to face themselves and to prepare themselves to face God's people with the Word of the Cross. As the Rules clearly show, solitude is an integral part of the regular observance.

Paul had the wisdom to see that solitude was essential if communities were to survive any length of time as vital realities. Every form of life (marriage, friendship, religious life, priesthood, etc.) demands some solitude (252). The constant urge to be always together and always talking and always sharing can beget a very superficial and artificial togetherness, which becomes a kind of compulsive togetherness begetting an unhealthy dependence. Paul saw the organic unity between solitude and community. It was not a rival situation – my privacy versus community demands. He saw that solitude and community belong together. When we live the solitude of our communities in an in-depth way, we are making a great contribution to the community. In returning into community we bring with us a spirit of accepted solitude which enriches and strengthens the total community. A community without solitude can hurl us into what Bonhoeffer called a “void of words and feelings” (253).

ii) Solitude Helps to Foster Intimacy

Paul of the Cross saw that Christian solitude is meant to lead to deeper intimacy with each other. Community grows and deepens not only when we dialog and work together, but also when we are in solitude, and bring others into solitude with us. The Second Vatican Council reminded Religious that “though in some cases they have no direct relations with their contemporaries, still in a deeper way they have their fellow men present with them in the heart of Christ and cooperate with them spiritually, so that the building up of human society may always have its foundation in the Lord and have Him as its goal; otherwise, those who build it may have labored in vain” (254).

iii) Solitude Deepens Community Life

Our Founder knew that solitude could deepen community life because it would enable us to discover each other in ways which physical presence does not always achieve, as we experience the cause of our unity. Hence Paul's insistence on living in the Presence of God, that ever-living awareness of the cause of our unity. Henri Nouwen expressed this beautifully when he wrote:

“... in solitude we are given the awareness of a unity that is prior to all unifying actions, it is the place where we come to realize that we were together before we came together and that community life is not a creation of human will but an obedient response to the reality of our being united. Every time we affirm that solitude belongs to the essence of life together, we express our faith in a love which transcends our interpersonal communication and proclaim that we love each other because we have first been loved (I John 4:19). Solitude means to surrender ourselves to that greater love and to rest in the safe embrace of him whose faithfulness lasts from age to age (Ps. 118) (255).

Paul of the Cross built solitude into the regular observance of his community life. He did this by the times given to silence, study, prayer, solitary walk, which are just as important as the time given to eating together, working together, recreating together and worshipping together.

The words of Henri Nouwen would have found ready welcome in Paul's heart:

"...solitude helps us to avoid using, overusing and misusing each other. It helps us present our deepest human struggles to God and to discover in silence that we are accepted in a way and to a degree which transcend the possibilities of human interaction. Each time we enter into solitude and present ourselves to God with all our anxieties and joys, doubts and uncertainties, wounds and talents, a deepening sense of acceptance can grow in us, an acceptance which sets us free from interpersonal compulsions. This sense of basic acceptance prevents us from expecting of the members of the community more than they can offer, more insight than they have and more care than they can show, and enables us to receive the many gifts of the community in joyful gratitude. So solitude gives us a clear eye for God's unconditional love and for the many human gifts through which we can receive it" (256).

iv) Solitude Offers Clarity to the Community

Solitude begets light because it enables us to see more clearly and to discern what can be shared and what is best left unspoken. Today there is an almost limitless faith in the value of interpersonal expression. This can be of great value, but we must always recognize the limits of our ability to communicate with the Mystery of the other person. Paul of the Cross used another language but the reality he expressed is the same. His forgetfulness of second causes and concentration on the First Cause is an eminently practical and workable principle, a principle of genuine wisdom.

7. Solitude and Ministry

In the Old Testament as well as in the New, we saw that solitude and revelation are intimately linked. In Paul's experience we find an intimate connection between solitude and the proclamation of God's Word. This relationship between solitude and ministry is rooted in the Gospel. Paul always insisted that our life was like that of the Apostles (257), i.e., a life of staying with Jesus, being sent out on mission and then returning to stay once again in solitude and communion with Jesus. Paul wanted his men to imitate the Incarnate Word: to abide in the heart of the Father, to go out to proclaim the Good News and then return to abide with the Word in the Father. As he expressed it: "Christ the Lord, as soon as he preached, fled to the mountain to pray; and the apostles did likewise; what about us?" (258). In Paul's mind, the apostle owes it to the Church to be a man of solitude in the spirit of Christ. Paul says that solitude (meaning interior solitude enfolded in a man) is a form of preaching: "... in a military garrison, we must preach more by prayer, by solitude, by recollection than by words" (259). What he is saying is that a man's deeds have word-character.

Paul's idea of solitude was organically related to his idea of a poor, prayerful, apostolic life. His idea of solitude is not a romantic residue of former times, an object of historical interest but not of real imitation. Passionist solitude is a reality to be experienced in every age, as intimately related to ministry.

The spirit of solitude was to prevail also *during* ministry: "Let each one try to remain recollected and in solitude as much as possible on mission: by prayer, devout recitation of the Divine Office and fitting preparation and thanksgiving for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice" (260). The same spirit was to prevail during journeys (261). Paul was a realist and spoke about

the compatibility of interior solitude and work: “I am more and more happy that you remain in the interior of the desert even in the midst of so many occupations, which do not impede this sacred solitude; in fact, they help it” (262).

Genuine ministry for Paul flows from the transformed self, from the Christ-self. He knew the value of the desert for ministry and often reflected on it in terms of Christ’s experience. His call to solitude was accompanied by a call to ministry. And when he went out to ministry, Paul brought his solitude with him. Rather, he went out within the solitude of Church and Congregation and shared it with others. And that solitude made Paul a very compassionate man. Having come to grips with himself in the naked solitude of self-confrontation before God, he learned compassion for the human hearts of all.

8. Solitude and Formation

i) Necessity of Formation into Solitude

St. Paul of the Cross formed his men in solitude because he knew human nature; he knew man’s insatiate need to escape himself in movement, in diversion by “systematic distraction” as Pascal expressed it. Paul formed his men into solitude so that they could open out to the world and bear fruit in proclaiming the Word, which is only heard effectively in the heart.

The journey into solitude has three movements, like every journey:

- a) away from some point (via detachment);
- b) toward an end (union with God via Jesus Crucified);
- c) against obstacles (sin and attachments).

Every journey has its awayness, its againstness and its towardness. These movements are not mutually exclusive but complementary capacities.

Great emphasis is placed today on educating our youth into community. We must also educate them into solitude as Jesus did. Jesus formed his disciples not only into community but also into solitude by his example and his teaching. They experienced that formation strongly on the evening of the multiplication of the loaves, when He forcefully snatched them from the crowd, made them get into a boat and let them face the storm and their deception alone, while He went alone to the mountain to pray. He asked His Father for the grace that His disciples might cling to the faith. “Immediately afterwards he insisted that his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. When he had taken leave of them, he went off to the mountain to pray. As evening drew on, the boat was far out on the lake while He was alone on the land”(263).

When we educate our young religious, both to solitude and to community, we are simply responding to the needs of man as Abraham Heschel expressed them: “existence and co-existence – in being alone and in being with others.”

Adrian Van Kaam wrote that the “awareness of life’s meaning and value may be lost if I move away from myself into the agitation of society and fail to return to myself in solitude” (264). For this same reason St. Paul of the Cross, in forming the young Religious, insisted on their abiding in solitude in the Lord’s Presence, listening to His Word, then going out to proclaim that word and returning to listen to and surrender to the Word again. Paul would have resonated also to these words of Van Kaam: “Solitude is not reserved for moments when I am

alone. It is a lasting mode of life which redeems me from fragmentation and dispersion and invites me to return whole and fresh to my community” (265). In writing to Thomas Fossi as a layman, Paul counseled him: “I would like you to be ever more totally concentrated on God in the interior temple of your soul, and in the interior solitude even in the midst of all your business...” (266).

Paul trained his Religious to understand that interior solitude is an intense mode of activity – a union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It unites all our involvement and action to its source and inspiration. In Paul’s teaching, solitude is necessary for perseverance in one’s vocation (267).

ii) Witness Example of Community

The Community should provide an atmosphere of solitude as a lived example. Cardinal Newman said something very important when he wrote: “Solitude is to be sought not as an escape from those who are not here, but for His sake Who is.” St. Paul of the Cross taught the necessity of the community to give example of the values of solitude in terms of silence, recollection, unworldliness, and the spirit of prayer and study. This community example has a great formative effect upon the young; without it, credibility is lost.

iii) Education in Detachment

Paul of the Cross was insistent that the young be educated and formed in detachment. For Paul, detachment was a very positive reality which was meant to open the person up to love. With all its demands, detachment is a dynamic positive movement of the perpetual opening of self to God and to others. To arrive at this detachment, Paul advised continuing renunciation, following Cassian who in turn was a disciple of Evagarius. The first stage is the progressive detachment from external goods, riches and material possessions; the second stage is personal withdrawal from one’s own vices, passions and inordinate affections. The third stage is detachment from everything visible and palpable, from all that is earthly, in order to attach oneself to the invisible realities of the world to come – to God. Detachment is essential for interior solitude because the “true self, the Christ-self, and not the ‘ego’ is alone capable of union with God in Christ.

iv) Facing Boredom

The young are to be helped to face boredom by training them to be at home with themselves. Boredom is a serious problem today for some Religious and Priests. Our boredom contains everything we are looking for. If we simply know how to turn our boredom inside out, it is all there. Why are we bored with ourselves? Because we are alienated from ourselves. The self we are bored with is someone we are not at home with. Instead of running off to change one boredom for another, we simply have to be at home with ourselves. Then we do not have “to create artificial paradises. If we are constantly escaping boredom, we just simply run and run. Max Picard made an important point in his “Flight from God.” He said that we are constantly “in flight from nowhere to nowhere.” We have to learn to be at home with ourselves so that all the resources within us can be given. We have to gather it all together so that it is ours, and not alienated. St. Paul of the Cross taught his young Religious to face their “solitude, their emptiness, their nothingness. He encouraged them to face courageously their finitude – the finiteness of the creature drawn intensely toward the “Infinite by allowing themselves to be drawn into the “Immense.” Paul also speaks about that horrible nothingness which is beyond finiteness. It is the sinful experience of the creature, the feeling of alienation from God and from

self. Even without sin we have in ourselves an inclination to rebellion and sin, to falsity and evasion. We must learn to face these realities in faith and hope; we must learn to accept the absurdity that we have not lived up to our own inner truth.

v) Positive Acceptance of the Desert

To be formed in solitude, a person must accept the desert. In some letters Paul wrote to the Master of Novices, Father Peter of St. John (to whom he also sent a copy of “Mystical Death”), he showed how his teaching on interior and mystical solitude had strongly influenced his personal and community spiritual formation of the religious directors and young novices and students. While in fact Paul was pleased with the great fervor of the good novices, he said that God will grant to their Master “an ever-greater gift of prayer, recollection, interior solitude” and “that fire of charity which enables us to learn in this divine school the true knowledge of the saints, in order to communicate it to his novice sons and to help them become saints”(268).

vi) Union with the Passion of Christ

Once we fully accept the desert in union with the Passion of Christ, we accept the uncompromising sacrifice and then it becomes paradise. The breakthrough into what we already have (in the desert we have the Indwelling Trinity) is only accomplished through the total acceptance of the Cross; there is no way out of it or around it. But St. Paul of the Cross showed that it is love, which comes from the Holy Spirit, which makes the solitude creative. Paul always associates solitude with love (269).

The young are to be taught how to handle that cultural anomie of solitude which is enforced upon Christians today by a world whose media and culture reject the Christian vision of man and his/her future.

Paul of the Cross taught his Religious that they go into solitude to dwell on the Word of God, and to listen intently to that Word. He taught them that the discipline and loneliness of solitude is to be accepted because of friendship with God and others. The law of the cross entails the acceptance of solitude because solitude is a necessary condition for the attainment of friendship among men and women and between human persons and God.

Living in the spirit of the Passion prepares one for deeper solitude; in solitude we experience the truth of ourselves, the weakness of ourselves as temptations increase. This radical experience of moral poverty makes us appreciate and love the Passion of Christ. In the Passion we begin to understand human weakness and experience the strength of Christ. Personal transformation only begins when we face the Passion of Jesus in its radical solitude.

Our Founder taught that progress in self-transcendence demands death to former ways. He educated his Religious in solitude by teaching them – through word and example – how to be in contemplative presence before the Blessed Trinity within one’s heart. Man carries within him the solitude of God, the solitude-in-communion of the Trinity. And the Passionist is called to be the living memory of the solitude of Christ’s Passion.

Paul of the Cross insisted that the young Religious be formed in solitude so that they might know how to handle the sense of ‘emptiness’ as a creative experience. Solitude can help one to learn not to be too dependent on the approval of others. Solitude can help one to learn how to

forget self and not to be seeking love, but to give love, to give understanding, to give pardon and to accept others as they are.

Paul's method of formation, then, was detachment, recollection, unworldliness, serious search for God and a great love for the brethren – all gifts which come to a heart which is empty of self, full of Christ's Spirit and open to the Lord and to all others in the Lord.

The Paulacrucian principles of formation in interior solitude are Christological principles rooted in the Gospel. We may summarize them in the following way:

- 1) UNION WITH THE SENTIMENTS OF JESUS: we enter into the desert of interior solitude through the Door, i.e., the Wounds of Christ.
- 2) ALLOW SELF TO BE TOTALLY PENETRATED WITH THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, Who is the Way.
- 3) REMAIN WHERE CHRIST IS – IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, in the interior solitude of God:
 - a) ABIDE here day and night in all commitments, in every place by deep detachment and mystical death to everything which is not God (270). This means rejecting the spirit of impatience and a demanding attitude, and espousing the attitude of the anawin.
 - b) REMAIN in peaceful silence and total abandonment to the Father's Will (271).
 - c) MAKE GREAT EFFORTS and remain always in the sacred deep desert in which the soul is entirely lost in God (272).
 - d) REMAIN TOTALLY HIDDEN in JESUS CRUCIFIED (273).
 - e) NOURISH SELF ON DIVINE WILL in deep poverty of spirit and naked solitude (274).
 - f) HIDE SELF IN THE IMMENSE BOSOM OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER THROUGH AND IN CHRIST JESUS. When you are hidden with Christ, you can only be where Christ is – in the bosom of the Father. God will bring about this divine hiding and teach you in an ineffable way, provided you remain in your nothingness in a passive way (275).
- 4) MAKE EFFORT TO TAKE TIME TO REMAIN IN SOLITUDE WITHIN AND WITHOUT, and always remain so in spirit and by active faith hide yourself more and more in God (276).
- 5) BE MOST FAITHFUL IN REMAINING IN INTERIOR SOLITUDE, ALWAYS ABANDONED AND HIDDEN IN GOD AND TOTALLY CLOTHED IN JESUS CRUCIFIED, ALLOWING SELF TO BE PENETRATED BY THE SEA OF HIS SUFFERINGS (277).
- 6) THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE which Paul of the Cross speaks of so much is to be understood both as an ATTITUDE OF THE HEART and also a RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN THE SOUL. The Holy Spirit leads us into solitude as He led Christ into the desert. Paul understood this well and he would have resonated to the observation of Balthasar who wrote: "As 'supernature,' solitude has the form of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the inmost sphere of the creature's ego so that all its thoughts and desires are nourished from the deeper divine source, and the ego as a whole has become receptive for the streams of divine life passing through it. And this supernatural solitude shows yet another extension. That between the hidden mystery of grace working as it were *ex opere operato* in every Christian soul, and the flowering of this mystery into the central law of the whole personal life, such as Thomas Aquinas describes it as the development of the gifts of the Holy Ghost" (278).

CONCLUSION

St. Paul of the Cross has left us a great gift in Passionist solitude. He accepted that gift totally and accepted that Passion-solitude which is inherent in renunciation. The love-gift of the Spirit – the first principle of the Christian – made Paul's solitude creative and prevented it from ever becoming absolute, because it was rooted in and ruled by love.

Paul accepted the discipline and the loneliness of solitude on behalf of friendship with God and man. He experienced that the law of the Cross entails the joyful acceptance of solitude because it is a necessary condition for friendship among men and between God and mankind. All laws, whether human or divine, are ordained to friendship (278).

The solitude of St. Paul of the Cross is an austere but beautiful reality. It is intolerable however in a world which flees from solitude and sees no positive value in it. Flight from solitude and the desert betrays modern man. By avoiding the purifying experience of solitude, we renounce an evangelical mission – that of preceding our contemporaries, so many of whom are tragically isolated in their desperate search for God. Paul of the Cross continues to issue an invitation to run the great risk of sharing deeply in the solitude of Christ's Passion so that we may understand more deeply and more connaturally the solitude of contemporary man. If we accept the invitation, the Spirit will lead us to that depth of the Heart of the Father where the glorious beatitude of Christ's Passion shines forth in all its beauty and power. In the solitude of the All Holy Three we shall experience a Communion of Persons – the Father as He eternally utters His Word breathing forth Love.

NOTES

1. Thomas Merton, *The Monastic Journey*, edited by Brother Patrick Hart. Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, McNeel, 1977, p. 189.
2. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973, p. 251.
3. *New York Times*, August 19, 1980, "Solitude Emerges a Blessing in Research on Adolescents" pp. C1 and C4.
4. Cfr. Selected Bibliography of the "Topic of Spirituality and Desert Experience" by Carolyn Gratton in *Studies in Formative Spirituality* (Spirituality and the Desert Experience) Volume I, Number 1, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa. pp. 313-320: Cfr. Bibliography in Ronald Rolheiser, *The Loneliness Factor*, Dimension Books, Denville, New Jersey, 1979 pp. 226-235; *Humanitas*, Vol. 10, 1974. It is important to keep in mind that solitude is "due not only to human evil but also to human finiteness. There is a darkness about the world of the spirit which entails solitude. When a man reflects, no matter how bright the day, he finds himself in the darkness of the world of the spirit. He is born in darkness, lives in darkness, he dies in darkness. He is a mystery to himself" (John Navone S.J., "Dimensions of Creative Solitude" *The Way*, Supplement 18, Spring 1973, p. 96-7).
5. Pope John Paul II, *Original Unity of Man and Woman*, St. Paul Editions, Boston, Mass. 1981, P. 44.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 74: "... man is not only an image in which there is reflected the solitude of a Person who rules the world but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons."
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-73
8. Merton, *op. cit* P. 251
9. *Regulae et Constitutiones Congregationis ss. Crucis et Passionis D.N.J.C.*, curante Fabiano Giorgini, Fonte Historicae, C.P. 1, Romae 1958.
10. See Appendix X.
11. *Lettere di S. Paolo della Croce*, Annotate dal P. Amedeo, Roma 1924, Vol. I-IV; Vol. V a cura di P. Cristoforo, Roma, 1977.
12. *I processi di beatificazione e di canonizzazione di S. Paolo della Croce*. Processi informativi di Vetralla, Alessandria, Gaeta, Orbetello, Corneto, Roma, a cura di P. Gaetano Raponi, I-II-III-IV, Roma 1977.
13. See Appendix I-IX for synopsis.
14. "The cultural influence of the desert on the Bible cannot be overestimated. Like the sea, the desert is both a barrier and a means of communication. The Israelites themselves were always aware of their desert background, and certain features of the semi-nomadic life of the desert leave their traces through the entire Old Testament... The desert is a perpetual reminder of the reality of danger, hardship and death, and it is often alluded to in Hebrew imagery. The desert was a refuge of fugitives and bandits like David and his men. To lose one's way in the desert was almost certain death (Jb 6:18ff). The wrath of Yahweh turns the garden land into a desert (Je. 4:26). It is a land unsown (Je. 2:2), a parched land without water (Ho. 2:3), a haunt of demons and dangerous wild animals (Is. 13:20; 30:6). The desert is important in the religious conceptions and imagery of Israel. Israel first met Yahweh in the desert, and the story of the desert wandering remains the type of the encounter of man with God. Subsequently in Old Testament and New Testament the desert is the place where man meets God, particularly in a crisis. Israel felt that it could not have survived the

passage through the desert were it not for the protection of Yahweh (Dt. 8:14ff; Je. 2:6). It was in the desert that Israel was tested and failed, and Yahweh will lead Israel back into the desert in order to speak to her directly and recover her love (Ho 2:16). When Yahweh comes to redeem His people, the desert will rejoice and blossom (Is. 35:1ff), an illusion to the abundant flowers which carpet the desert floor after the spring rain. The New Testament allusions to the desert experience of Israel are frequent. It is mentioned as a time of testing and failure (AA 7:4ff; I Cor. 10:5; Hebr. 3:8ff). It is a type of the Christian experience (I Cor. 10:11). But the desert experience was also a time when Israel found favor with Yahweh (AA 7:38; 13:18). Elijah also met God in the desert (I K 19:8ff).” (John L. McKenzie, *S.J. Dictionary of the Bible*, Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1965, pp. 194-196).

15. On the meaning of theological symbols see Jean Danielou, S.J., *The Lord of History* (Longmans Green and Co. Ltd., London) 1958, pp. 130-146.
16. The relationship between celibacy, solitude and charity is expressed beautifully by Paul VI in *Priestly Celibacy*, n. 58: “The priest by reason of his celibacy is a solitary; that is true, but his solitude is not emptiness because it is filled with God and the brimming riches of His Kingdom. Moreover, for this solitude, which should be an internal and external plenitude of charity, he has prepared himself, if he has chosen it with full understanding and not through any proud desire to be different from the rest of men, or to withdraw himself from common responsibilities, or to alienate himself from his brothers, or to show contempt for the world. Though set apart from the world, the priest is not separated from the People of God, because he has been appointed to act on behalf of man (Hebrews 5:1) since he is consecrated completely to charity (Cfr. I Cor. 14:4ff) and to the work for which the Lord has chosen him.”
17. The Essenes went out to the physical desert near the Dead Sea in order to study the Torah and prepare for the coming of the Redeemer. Qumran was a separatist monastic movement in continuity with the desert experience tradition of the Old Testament.
18. Cfr. Ulrich W. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*; the wilderness theme in the second Gospel and its basic in the Biblical Tradition: Naperville, Ill. A.R. Allenson, 1963, 159 pp (Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 39).
19. There are four principal aspects of Desert Spirituality: 1) *God’s Love* which does not abandon the condemned in the desert but deepens the riches of His heart toward His beloved people whom He has betrothed, granting them His presence and revelation; 2) *GOD’s Power* manifested in freeing the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and in the journey through the desert to the Promised Land, a journey of salvation; 3) *Desert* is not final but only a passage, a pilgrimage to the Fatherland; 4) Desert is only a preparation for a greater future, a new and Eternal Covenant via suffering and trial. (Cfr. G. Turbessi, “Deserto” in *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Spiritualita*, Edizioni Studium - Roma - Diretto da Ermanno Ancilli, 1975, Vol. 1, p. 536).
20. Hana Urs Von Balthasar, *A Theological Anthropology* (Sheed and Ward, New York, 1967, p. 259).
21. “...the desert for Jesus is the place where nothing separates Him from God and which He therefore seeks when He wants to escape the crowds (Mt. 14:13), or when He tries to find a place of quiet for His disciples (Mk 6:31) but to which the crowds often follow Him (Mark 8:4). What He seeks there first and foremost is the stillness of prayer. This is certainly the meaning of his forty days in the desert, a period alone with God under the impulsion of the Spirit which the tempter tries to disturb. “Gerhard Kittel, Editor *Theological Dictionary of*

- the New Testament*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromley; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan 1964 Vol. II, p. 658.
22. Ulrich W. Mauser, *op. cit.*, p. 98: “The close connection between the baptism and the wilderness story indicates that we are to regard Jesus’ expulsion into the desert as the necessary outcome of his baptism the same Spirit which descends upon him at his baptism accompanied by the voice declaring him to be God’s Son, now forces him to penetrate into the wilderness even more deeply.”
 23. Mauser, *op. cit.*, p. 99. Later on in the same work, Dr. Mauser states: “Jesus after the successful performances of his teaching and healing ministry, in his withdrawals returns to the place where his mission properly began – to the desert. What happened in the stories of the forty days (1:12f) is not merely an incident among others limited to a certain period. The Spirit did not cease to drive him to the wilderness. Rather this is the leitmotif of Jesus’ whole ministry, repeated over and over again in the history which began with the baptism by John and ended at the Cross.” p. 141.
 24. Henri J. Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana) 1974, p. 14, writes: “In the lonely place Jesus finds the courage to follow God’s will and not his own; to speak God’s words and not his own; to do God’s work and not his own. He reminds us constantly: “I can do nothing by myself... my aim is to do not my own will, but the will of him who sent me”(John 5:30). And again, “The words I say to you I do not speak from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work” (John 14:10). It is in the lonely place, where Jesus enters into intimacy with the Father that his ministry is born.” Dr. Mauser points out that “Night and solitude are the setting for Jesus praying in Mark” *op. cit.*, p. 108.
 25. “In Mark ‘mountain’ serves as a place of retreat from the public, however motivated (3:13; 6:46); mountain is also associated with moments of ultimate revelation (9:2; 13:3).” Dr. Mauser, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
 26. E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to St. Mark*, Richmond, Va. 1970, p. 56. Note also that in the Program of Priestly Formation, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education speaks of Christ seeking solitude in order to pray more intensely to the Father and teaches seminarians to seek a “life hidden with Christ in God” (Cfr. Colossians 3:3). Jan. 6, 1970, 57 (or in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, No. 3, 1891). Dr. Mauser points out that, “All passages referring to the wilderness in Mark display a threefold function. They follow (1) a statement of the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus or his disciples in which a victorious battle against satanic forces takes place; (2) they imply always a withdrawal from the scene of activity; and (3) they are followed by an indication of the overpowering attraction of the multitudes to Jesus. These three points can be traced equally in the sections dealing with the mountain and the sea...” (*Op. cit.*, pp. 138-139).
 27. As Pascal expressed it: “Jesus is alone on earth, not only is there no one who feels and shares his pain, but there is no one *who* knows it. Heaven and He alone share this knowledge. While His disciples slept, Jesus accomplished their salvation. He did it for each of the just while they slept, and in the nothingness before their birth and in the sins since their birth... ‘No one is good but God alone’ (Mark 10:17), but this certitude must become a real experience for Christ in the Passion.”
 28. David Stanley, S.J., *Jesus in Gethsemane* (Paulist Press, New York 1980) p. 132. Dr. Mauser, *op. cit.*, p. 119 observes that, “In Mark 13:3ff the Mount of Olives is the scene of eschatological revelation and in 14:32 ff the associations with the themes of the wilderness are also evident.”

29. Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), *Sign of Contradiction* (Seabury Press, New York) 1979, p. 151.
30. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to Mark, II* (New York) 1970, p. 154.
31. Walter Kasper, *Jesus Christ* (Paulist Press, New York) 1976, pp. 118-119.
32. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Catholique* (Collectio Communio, Fayard, 1976) pp. 67-68.
33. Dom Andre Louf, O.C.S.O., “Solitudo Pluralis” in *Solitude and Communion*, SLG Press, Fairacres, Oxford, 1977, pp. 17-18.
34. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Church And World* (Herder and Herder, New York) 1967, p. 20.
35. See St. Augustine, *City of God*, XVIII, 18; PL 35, 2029. “This world, for all the faithful who aspire to heaven is like the desert for the people of Israel. They wandered here and there, and searched for the fatherland; but, with the guidance of God, they could not mistake it. Their way was the command of God. In fact, while they journeyed for forty years, their route was accomplished in small stages, all know this. They were delayed because they were put to the test, not because they were abandoned to themselves. What God promises us is sweetness, it is very ineffable... But we are tested by temporal trials, we are trained by temptations of the present life. If however you do not wish to die of thirst in this desert, drink charity. It is the source which God has willed to put here below so that we will not miss the way; we shall drink it to the full when we arrive in heaven.” (St. Augustine, in Ep. St. Joannis tract. VII, 1; PL 35, 2029).
36. Cfr. Roger Le Deaut and Joseph Lecuyer, “Exode” in *Dictionnaire de ‘Spiritualite*, vol. IV, 2, col. 1967-1978. For a theology of Separation from the world, so necessary when speaking about Christian solitude, see Fr. A. Motte O.P., “Theologie de la separation du monde” in *La Separation Du Monde*, Edited by Fr. Albert Ple O.P., Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1961, pp. 139-193. See also Jean Danielou, “Mepris du monde et valeurs terrestres d’apres le Concile Vatican II,” in *Revue d’Ascetique et de mystique*, Tome XLI (1965) 3, Numero 163, pp. 421-428.
37. It is important to note that “in primitive monasticism the flight to the desert in no way expressed any simple desire for tranquility or leisure for extended contemplation in the sense of Greek philosophy. The monk buried himself in the desert to fight against the devil, and for the reason that solitude seemed to be his usual dwelling place” (Louis Bouyer, *Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*, vol. I, p. 312; Cfr. Karl Heussi, *Der Ursprung des Monchtums*, Tübingen, 1936, p. 111. See also the Life of St. Anthony 13. This idea is simply the application of a Gospel fact (Matt. 4:1-15; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4, 1-10).

As Bouyer expressed it: “Behind these Gospel accounts, just as behind our oldest monastic texts, we need to perceive the concept which comes to light, a concept clarified for us by the Judaism contemporary with the origins of Christianity. Here the world appears, let us recall, as fallen into the power of the spirit of evil. Man himself had arisen as a possible savior of creation, but he had been tempted and conquered by the demon. In solitude, however, the demon rules directly, without anything to screen his presence. In the same way, he haunts tombs, because there death has definitively, it seems, assured his victory over man. To dwell in tombs, to retire into the desert then is to deliberately affront him in order to struggle with him face to face, and according to the word of the Gospel, to dislodge the “strong man” for his fortress, by the power of the “stronger man,” so as to take away his arms and reduce him to impotence.” (*op. Cit.*, vol. I, pp: 312-313)

The psychological realities and the meaning behind them are these: “... solitude alone allows man to discover and so to face all the obscure forces that he bears within himself. The man who does not know how to be alone, doesn’t know either (and secretly does not

wish to know) what conflicts there are in the depths of his heart, conflicts which he feels that he is incapable of untangling, even of touching. Solitude is a terrible trial, for it serves to crack open and burst apart the shell of our superficial securities. It opens out to us the unknown abyss that we all carry within us. And, as the tradition that we are examining affirms, solitude discloses the fact that these abysses are haunted; it is only the depths of our own soul, unknown to us, that we discover, but the obscure powers that are, as it were, lurking there, whose slaves we must inevitably remain so long as we are not aware of them. In truth, this awareness would destroy us, if we were not illuminated by the light of faith. Only Christ can open out to us with impunity “the mystery of iniquity” because he alone, *in us today as for us in the past*, can confront it successfully.” (*op. cit.*, I, p. 313).

It is interesting to note that St. Athanasius in his *Life of St. Anthony* suggests growth in virtue as correlative with the degree of solitude or separation from the world. St. Athanasius presents the spiritual ascent of St. Anthony as four consecutive degrees of radical separation from the world. He traces it as follows: (1) Anthony withdrew to a place *just outside his native village* (*Life of St. Anthony*, 3); (2) Then he dwelt in *a tomb some distance away* (*Ibid.*, 8); (3) After this, he withdrew into the *desert* settling upon the “outer mountain” in the solitude of hispir on east bank of the Nile (*Ibid.*, 12) ; (4) Finally, he penetrated into the *farthest recesses* of the *desert* between the Nile and the Red Sea and ended his days on the “inner mountain” far from any human dwelling (*Ibid.* 49-50).

38. Cfr: *La Separation du Monde* edited by Albert Ple O.P. (Les Editions du Cerf, Paris), 1961 for a theology of separation from the world and its development throughout history.
39. For a history of solitude in the Christian Church, Cfr. Peter Anson, *The Call of the Desert (S-P-C-K)*, London, 1964.
40. *Lettere IV*, 217: *Words From the Heart*, pp. 11-12.
41. Father John Mary, third General of the Congregation, informs us that Paul told him that the Chapel on Sestri and the mountain there were figures indicating Monte Argentario (PAV. 128v; *Lettere IV*, 222 note 1). Paul often experienced the call to solitude on mountains, e.g., Sestri, Argentario, Fogliano. At the time of the Sestri experience, Paul already enjoyed deep union with God, leaving him as it were in the IMMENSE, detached from everything save God (*Lettere IV*, 219).
42. Much of the following material on Paul’s personal experience of solitude is based on St. Vincent M. Strambi’s *Life of St. Paul of the Cross*. As Blessed Dominic notes in the *Introduction*: “None but a saint is qualified to draw the picture of a saint” (p. 2).
43. Strambi I, p. 37; see also pp. 31-32.
44. As Pere Breton so beautifully expresses it: “The true beginning never commences by an addition but by a subtraction. By a retreat, which is also an abiding “there where the heart dwells.” Fruitfulness is conditioned by a certain separation, a ‘step’ outside the world which is a transgression of common sense. In the word “abnegation” there is the word “negation.” But this negation, which puts us a distance from things is also a germ of being and of the world... solitude...is a mode of this negation, which is the final judgment on the world. For ever since “the world has been judged” according to the evangelical word. Ever since judged, which does not mean scorned or depreciated, but removed from that fascination which could make one forget that it remains and must remain in the immense presence which we signify by the expression ‘there is’, the trace or vestige of that ONE to whom the soul wishes to unite herself “while detaching herself from all things.” Certainly I do not exclude from this will of separation – of which SOLITUDE and SILENCE are the primordial forms – all self-delight, delight which we would express in Spinozist terms as “joy which comes from the fact that man contemplates himself as well as his power.” But

this quasi-athletic aspect of performance, if we cannot deny its presence and I think it is normal because it is necessarily linked to the sentiment of our freedom, consubstantial to all true human action, it remains subordinated to a higher will, more exactly to that movement, immanent to every being, which brings it back toward its Source, in a relation or *esse ad* which recalls the condition itself of the Word “in the beginning” (Stanislas Breton C.P., *Vers Une Theologie de la Croix* (Clamart 1979), p. 129.

45. P. Sardi PA 239v-40.
46. Silvan Rouse C.P., *The Spiritual Diary of St. Paul of the Cross* - Translation and Commentary (Preface by Rev. Stanislas Breton C.P.) Unpublished Manuscript.
47. POR 1857v. Divo Barsotti wrote that the Congregation of the Passion was born in Italy during the Enlightenment as an order which would restore in the Church the tradition of the spirituality of the desert united to an ideal of apostolic life of both mendicant and monastic type. Historians of Italian Spirituality do not hesitate to affirm that Catholic mysticism in the last two centuries is in great part linked to the Congregation of the Passion. Cfr. Divo Barsotti, *Magistero di Santita*. Saggi per una Storia della Spiritualita Italiana dell'Ottocento, Roma, 1971, p. 123 ff.
48. SS. Trinita da Lunghi was a small church about three kilometers from Castellazzo. Paul went there around January 10, 1721, and stayed about two weeks.
49. Paul went to the Hermitage of San Stefano (on the outskirts of Castellazzo) around January 25, 1721.
50. *Lettere* I, 19
51. Strambi, I, 19.
52. While Paul was still at Castellazzo, Our Lady invited him to leave for Argentario where she was lamenting because “she was alone.” “I attest that I heard from Paul’s own mouth that while taking a walk outside his own town, he heard himself called by the Madonna who said: “Paul, Paul, I am alone, come to Monte Argentario.” (Felice di Gennaro, Partercole, February 14, 1776 in A.G.C.P. Paul probably heard this call after having seen Argentario on his first trip to Rome.
53. *Lettere* I, Paul’s solitude was a state of penitential mourning. It had a prophetic and mysterious quality about it.
54. After John Baptist received the habit on November 28, 1721, he and Paul withdrew to the Hermitage of San Stefano near Castellazzo and remained there in solitude and peace until Lent. Before winter was over, driven by a burning desire for profound solitude, they left Castellazzo and went to Monte Argentario. “Paul told me that they left precisely on the day when they read at Mass the *Gospel about Jesus going into the desert and suffering temptations*. It was February 22, 1722 (POV 143v and AD. nn. 39-41).
55. Strambi, I, pp. 115-116.
56. Paul sought solitude at this hermitage (PC 248v-249r). He was drawn to this hermitage also by his fascination with the gracious Madonna whom it is said appeared around 1631 with the Child on her right arm and a chain on her left “as a sign of the liberation of her devotees from the slavery of sin.” St. Nilus Abbot also chose this place to live in desert solitude. Cfr. *Acta Sanctorum*, Vita S. Nili Abbatis, Sept. 27.
57. Strambi I, pp. 115-118. In order to be more recollected and out of love for solitude, the two brothers John and Paul chose a small grotto not too far from their hermitage near the sea, where they often withdrew to pray and do penance (PC, 361v, 435r).
58. Father John Mary, POV 149v.
59. Father John Mary, *Annali* 1724 f. 6v.
60. PC 269v.

61. Strambi I, 143.
62. “so that we can withdraw into solitude and persevere in our life” (*Lettere* I, 79).
63. Strambi, *op. cit.*, I, p. 152. It is important to note that Paul’s solitude was always rooted in love. Brother Bartholomew tells us “More than once I heard him say with great fervor of charity: ‘If through our sins the Lord should send a plague in my time, I would wish to be the first to go out from my solitude in order to help in every way and everywhere my poor neighbors infected by such an evil and I would want to help them as long as my breath and my life endure.’” POR 2273v.
64. Strambi, *op. cit.*, p. 103. One time after finishing a mission he did not want the people to follow him and begged all “to let him alone because even he needed to listen to the preaching.” Left alone, “he began to contemplate the flowers and herbs of the countryside which seemed to say to him, “Love God, serve God, glorify God” (Brother Barnabas POV 1259v). Paul had the same experience during solitary walk, a practice he made part of the observance. Cfr. Regulations I, Chapter XI, n. 67. *Lettere* I, 194-195.
65. Paul shared his experience of the solitude of abandonment one time with Thomas Struzzieri: “... I experienced a kind of pain of loss far from God, as it seemed to me, and it appeared that I was the greatest enemy of God; I experienced temptations against the theological virtues in a very violent way, temptations against patience, the urge to blaspheme, temptations to despair and above all, horrible tribulations of the spirit, which cannot be explained and all this was accompanied by the sufferings and hardships of the journey... O dear Father, how I could tell you about the loosing of the devils against me; how I could tell you about tribulations of spirit, interior abandonment suffered on this journey! But enough! From this confidence which I share with you alone you can know how much my poor heart is united with your own. Courage, dear Father. God wants you to become a saint.” (*Lettere* II. 753-754).
66. *Lettere* I, 231.
67. *Lettere* I, 232-233.
68. *Lettere* I, 265.
69. *Lettere* I, 281.
70. *Lettere* I, 688.
71. *Lettere* II, 585.
72. Strambi, *op. cit.*, vol. I, Pp. 154-155.
73. *Lettere* III, p. 117. This refusal has serious meaning for us when we consider what he wrote about the same place on January 27, 1721 (*Lettere* I, 19). This shows an evolution in Paul’s thinking regarding solitude.
74. *Lettere* I, p. 646-647.
75. *Lettere* II, 461.
76. *Lettere* IV, 199ff. Cfr. Appendix XII.
77. *Lettere* III, 571.
78. *Lettere* III, 417-420.
79. S. 3, 741, 187. Father Dominic Ferreri of St. Anthony testified in the Roman Processes as follows: “I heard Father Paul say many times that when he finished his office of governing the Congregation, which he could not then relinquish without contradicting God’s Will and which deprived him of all that solitude he desired – he wanted to withdraw and take a room in the Novitiate at St. Angelo’s. Thereafter attending choir and the other functions of the Church and community, he wanted to remain continually secluded in prayer and intimate communion with his Good God. Since he did not succeed in relinquishing the government of the Congregation, as the Religious voted for him again as General with due permissions,

he remained in solitude as much as justice, charity and prudence allowed, passing the time in mental or vocal prayer and holy reading so as to be ever more on fire with love of God and to unite himself to the Supreme Good by charity. He said the Divine Office as well as other devotions even when he became totally infirm; he did this with head uncovered and with deep devotion out of respect for the majesty of God.” (POR IV, pp. 30-31, 1741v. Father Dominic was Paul’s Secretary from 1770 until his death in 1775.

80. Domenica Bravi PAR 2644v.
81. Strambi, *op. cit.*, I, p. 326.
82. Strambi, *op. cit.*, I, p. 331; Cfr. Brother Bartholomew, POR 2434.
83. Strambi, *op. cit.*, I, p. 336-337. Cfr. Brother Francis Aloysius POR 818v.
84. *Lettere* III, p. 417-420.
85. PA 202v.
86. Cfr. PC 269v; *Lettere* I, 64.
87. S. 2, 681: 40.
88. Padre Amedea della Madre del Buon Pastore C.P., Prefazione, *Lettere* I, p. viii.
89. F.A. Capriata PO 203: POR 1041.
90. Cfr. *Commentary on the Diary of St. Paul of the Cross* by Silvan Rouse C.P. (unpublished manuscript).
91. St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (translated and edited by John K. Ryan) Harper and Brothers, New York 1950, Part. III, Chapter 24, pp. 135-136.
92. *Ibid.*, p.137.
93. *Op. Cit.*, Part II, Chapter XII, p. 54: Cfr. *The Love of God* Bk. 9, Chapter 12, pp. 386-7; Cfr. Pierre Serouet, “Francois de Sales (saint)”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, V, col. 1057-1097.
94. Strambi, *op. cit.*, II, p. 300; G. Sisti POV 66v.
95. *Lettere*, I, 808.
96. G. Sisti POV 43v.
97. Enrico Zoffoli, *S. Paolo della Croce. Storia Critica II*, Roma, 1965, p. 148. See also Basilio de San Pablo C.P., *La Espiritualidad de la Prasion en el magisterio de San Pablo de la Cruz*, Administracion de “El Pasionario” Bidasoa, 11, Madrid, 1961, p. 207.
98. St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book III, Chapter 36, n. 3; p. 277: “Our Lord frequently bestows these favors by means of images situated in remote and solitary places. The reason for this is that the effort required in journeying to these places makes the affection increase and the act of prayer more intense. Another motive is that a person may withdraw from people and noise in order to pray, as our Lord did. (Matt.14:23).” Cfr. *op. cit.* Bk. III, Chapter 42, n. 1, p. 285: “There are three different kinds of places I find, by which God usually moves the will. The first includes those sites which have pleasant variations in the arrangement of the land and the trees, and provide solitary quietude, all of which naturally awakens devotion. It is advantageous to use these places if one immediately directs the will to God in the forgetfulness of the place itself, since one should not be detained by the means and motive more than necessary for the attainment of the end. If a person strives for recreation of his appetites, and for sensory satisfaction, he will rather encounter spiritual dryness and distraction, because spiritual satisfaction and contentment is found only in interior recollection...” “The second kind of place in which God moves the will to devotion... includes those localities, whether wilderness or not, in which God usually grants some very delightful spiritual favors to particular individuals... The third kind of place comprises those in which God chooses to be invoked and worshiped, for example, Mount Sinai... Mount Garganus...” (p. 286).

“(for prayer) it is good to choose a place that is solitary, and even wild, so that the spirit may resolutely and directly soar upward to God, and not be hindered or detained by visible things... For this reason our Savior was wont to choose solitary places for prayer, and such as occupied the senses but little, in order to give us an example. He chose places that lifted up the soul to God, such as mountains, which are lifted up above the earth” (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book III, Chapter 39, 2; Cfr: *Canticle B* 35,1).

99. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night, Book III*, Chapter 9, selection 6, p. 315: “Ordinarily this contemplation, which is secret and hidden from the very one who receive it, imparts to the soul, together with the dryness and emptiness it produces in the senses, an inclination to remain alone and in quietude.”

“Besides its usual effect, this mystical wisdom will occasionally so engulf a person in its secret abyss that he will have the keen awareness of being brought into a place far removed from every creature. He will accordingly feel that he has been led into a remarkable, deep and vast wilderness, unattainable by any human creature, into an immense, unbounded desert, the more delightful, savorous and loving, the deeper, vaster and more solitary it is. He is conscious of being so much the more hidden the more he is elevated above every temporal creature.” (*op. cit.*, Book II, Chapter XVII, n. 8, p. 370).

St. John of the Cross also says that God deprives souls of consolations in prayer in order to dispose them to receive infused prayer: “Those whom God begins to lead into these desert solitudes are like the children of Israel...” (*Dark Night*; Book I, Chapter 9, n. b, p. 314. - Cfr. *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 35, p. 543-546. John of the Cross refers to the call to the desert as a call to “infused contemplation,” *Living Flame of Love*, Stanza III, verse 3, 7.

It is also interesting to note that Blessed Dominic Barberi also applies Psalm 101 to the solitude of the soul. Cfr. *Il Gemito Della Colomba* (edited by P. Federico dell’Addolorata) Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma, 1954, Chapter 5, pp. 145-147.

100. Cfr. *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 14-15, nn. 24-27, pp. 472-473: “Her Beloved is *sounding solitude*. This is almost identical with silent music, for even though that music is silent to the natural senses and faculties, it is sounding solitude for the spiritual faculties. When these spiritual faculties are alone and empty of all natural forms and apprehensions, they can receive in a most sonorous way the spiritual sound of the excellence of God, in Himself and in His creatures. We said above that St. John speaks of the spiritual vision in the Apocalypse, that is: ‘the voice of many harpers playing on their harps’ (Jn. 14:2). This vision was spiritual and had nothing to do with material harps. It involved a knowledge of the praises that each of the blessed in his own degree of glory gives continually to God. This praise is like music, for as each one possesses God’s gifts differently, each one sings his praises differently, and all of them together form a symphony of love, as of music.

In this same way the soul perceives in that tranquil wisdom that all creatures, higher and lower ones alike, according to which each in itself has received from God, raise their voice in testimony to what God is. She beholds that each in its own way, bearing God within itself according to its capacity, magnifies God. And thus all these voices form one voice of music praising the grandeur, wisdom and wonderful knowledge of God.

This is the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Wisdom when he said: Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum, et hoc quod continet omnia, scientiam habet vocis (The spirit of the Lord filled the whole world; and this world which contains all things has knowledge of the voice (Wisdom 1:7). This voice is the sonorous solitude the soul knows here, that is, the Testimony to God, which, themselves, all things give.

Since the soul does not receive this sonorous music without solitude and estrangement from all exterior things, she calls it “silent music” and “sounding solitude” which she says is her Beloved.”

101. *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 35, pp. 543-545: “The Bridegroom continues the explanation of His happiness over the blessing the bride has obtained through the solitude in which formerly she desired to live. This blessing is a stable peace and unchanging good. When the soul has become established in the quietude of solitary love of her Spouse, as has this one of whom we are speaking, she is fixed with so much delight in God, and God in her, that she has no need of other masters or means to direct her to Him, for now God is her guide and her light. He accomplishes in her what He promised through Osee: “I shall lead her into solitude and there speak to her heart” (Osee 2:14). In this promise he reveals that He communicates and unites Himself to the soul in solitude. To speak to the heart is to satisfy the heart, which is dissatisfied with anything less than God. Thus the Bridegroom continues:

She lived in solitude,
And now in solitude has built her nest;
And in solitude He guides her,
He alone, Who also bears.
In solitude the wound of love.

The Bridegroom praises solitude as a means for her to find and rejoice in her Beloved alone, withdrawn from all her former afflictions and fatigues. Since she wished to live in solitude, apart from every satisfaction, comfort and support of creatures, in order to reach companionship and union with her Beloved, she deserved to discover the possession of peaceful solitude in her Beloved, in Whom she rests alone, and isolated from all these disturbances.

Second, he states that, insofar as she desired to live apart from all created things, in solitude, for the Beloved’s sake, He himself was enamored of her because of this solitude and took care of her by accepting her in His arms, feeding her in Himself with every blessing, and guiding her to the high things of God. He asserts not only that He guides her, but that He does so alone without other means (angels, men, forms or figures) for now she possesses, through this solitude, true liberty of spirit which is not bound to any of these means.

The verse states: She lived in solitude.

The soul, represented by the turtle dove, lived in solitude before encountering the Beloved in this state of union. There is no companionship which affords comfort to the soul that longs for God; indeed, until she finds Him everything causes greater solitude.

AND NOW IN SOLITUDE HAS BUILT HER NEST:

The solitude in which she lived consisted of the desire to go without the things of the world for her Bridegroom’s sake – as we said of the turtle dove – by striving for perfection, acquiring perfect solitude in which she reached union with the Word. She consequently attains to complete refreshment and rest, signified here by the nest which refers to repose. It is similar to saying: She formerly practiced solitude, in which she lived, in trial and anguish because she was imperfect, but now she has built her nest in it and has found refreshment and repose in having acquired it perfectly in God. David, speaking spiritually, says: “truly the sparrow has found a house and the turtle dove a nest where she can nurture her young (Ps. 83:4), that is: The soul has found a place in God where she can satisfy her appetites and faculties.

5. AND IN SOLITUDE HE GUIDES HER

In this solitude, away from all things the soul is alone with God and He guides, moves, and raises her to divine things. That is: He elevates her intellect to divine understanding, because it is alone and divested of other contrary and alien knowledge; He moves her will freely to the love of God, because it is alone and freed from other affection; and He fills her memory with divine knowledge, because it is now alone and empty of other images and phantasies. Once the soul disencumbers these faculties and empties them of everything inferior and of attachment to even superior things, leaving them alone without these things, God engages them in the invisible and divine. It is God who guides her in this solitude, as St. Paul declares of the perfect: “Qui Spiritu Dei aguntur etc. (they are moved by the Spirit of God) Rom. 8:14). This is like saying: In solitude He guided her. HE ALONE, WHO ALSO BEARS

6. The meaning of this is that He not only guided her in her solitude, but that it is He alone who works in her, without any means. This is a characteristic of the union of the soul with God in spiritual marriage; God works in and communicates Himself to her through Himself alone, without the intermediary of angels or natural ability, for the exterior and interior senses, and all creatures, and even the very soul do very little toward the reception of the remarkable supernatural favors which God grants in this state. They do not fall within the province of the soul’s natural ability, or work, or diligence but God alone grants them to her. And the reason He does so is that He finds her alone and does not want to give her any other company, nor does He want her to trust in or profit by any other than Himself alone.

Since the soul has left all and passed beyond all means, ascending above them all to God, it is fitting that God Himself be the guide and means of reaching Himself. And having ascended above all things, in solitude from all things, the soul profits by no other than the Word, the Bridegroom, Who helps her to ascend further. He is taken with love for her and wants to be the only one to grant her these favors. He goes on:

HE ALONE, WHO ALSO BEARS IN SOLITUDE THE WOUND OF LOVE.

7. That is, He is wounded with love for the bride. The Bridegroom bears a great love for the solitude of the soul; but He is wounded much more by her love, since being wounded with love for Him, she desired to live alone in respect to all things. And He does not wish to leave her alone, but wounded by the solitude she embraces for His sake, and observing that she is dissatisfied with any other thing. He alone guides her, drawing her to and absorbing her in Himself. Had He not found her in spiritual solitude, He would not have wrought this in her.”

Dangers which come from the devil regarding solitude and withdrawing from it: Cfr. *Spiritual Canticle* Stanza III, n. 63, pp. 634-635. See also *Saying of Light and Love* n. 76, p. 673; and Letter 7 to Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Beas, pp. 688-889.

102. *Lettere I*, p. 8 (December 3); *Words From The Heart*, p. 22.

103. Brother Francis Aloysius POR 1041r.

104. *Lettere III*, 355; 502; 716.

105. *Lettere III*, 743.

106. *Spiritual Testimonies I*, Vol. I, p. 313, nn. 6-7.

107. *Life*, Chapter 30, sec. 13, p. 133.

108. *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, sec. 2, p. 56.

109. *Ibid.*, Chapter 11, sec. 9, p. 81.

110. *Ibid.*, Chapter 11, sec. 12, p. 83.
111. *Ibid.*, Chapter 13, sec. 7, p. 91.
112. *Ibid.*, Chapter 15, sec. 14, p. 108.
113. *Ibid.*, Chapter 20, sec. 9, p.132.
114. *Ibid.*, Chapter 20, sec. 10, p. 132.
115. *Ibid.*, Chapter 28, sec. 9, p.185.
116. David Flood, “Franciscan Solitude” in *The Cord* (26) 1976, pp. 280, 282. I am deeply indebted to the Franciscans at the *Franciscan Institute*, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., for their hospitality and assistance as I was preparing this section on Franciscan Teaching on Solitude.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
118. *Opuscola S. Francisci*, Quaracchi, 1904. De religiosa habitatione in eremo, pp. 83-84.
119. Cfr. *Speculum Perfectionis*, Paris, 1898, p. 121: “Licet enim ambuletis, tamen conversatio vestra sit ita humilis et honesta sicut in eremitorio aut in cella essetis. Nam ubicumque sumus et ambulamus habemus cellam semper nobiscum. Frater enim corpus est cella nostra et anima est eremita qui moratur intus in cella ad orandum Dominum et meditandum de ipso.”
120. Melchior De Pobladura, “Desert (Saints) 1. Les Desert Dans l’Ordre e Saint Francois”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, III, col. 539-549.
121. Father Dacian Bluma, OFM., *De Vita Recessuali in Historia et Legislatione Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* (Rome 1959) pp. 29-30. Cfr. St. Bonaventura, *Opera Omnia* VIII, Constit. Narb., p. 465.
122. Cfr. Bluma, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 41-42; 46-47; 57-58; Cfr. also Leopold de Cherance, *Saint Leonard de Port Maurice*, Paris, 1903, pp. 75-75.
123. Bluma, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-52 and 57-58.
124. *Ibid.*, pp.61-63.
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64. Cfr. Cherance, *op. cit.*, p. 74; S. Leonardo Da Portomaurizio, *Costituzione da osservarsi nella Solitudine*, pp.13-15.
126. Bluma, *op. cit.*, pp.65-67.
127. S. Leonardo Da Portomaurizio, *Lettere*, in *Opere* Vol. II, pp. 214-215.
128. De Cherance, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
129. St. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, *Massime necessarie e Regolamento*, Puccinelli, Roma, 1853, p.61.
130. S. Gori, “S. Leonardo da P.M. ed I Conventi di Ritiro” in *Studi Francescani* num. spec. p. 171.
131. Cfr. A. Cresi, “Leonardo da P.M. e l’Incontro” in *Studi Francescani*, num. spec. p. 195ff.
132. *Lettere* II, 530. In his missionary activity, St. Paul of the Cross imitated Leonard of Port Maurice, using the catechetical instruction in the morning and the sermon in the evening. See *Lettere* II, 755.
133. Zoffoli, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1621.
134. Fr. Francesco, POR 817v; P. Giammaria POV 112v-113.
135. Cfr. P. Crescenio da Cartosfo O.F.M. Cap., *I Frati Minori Cappuccini della Provincia di Alessandria*, vol. II, Biografie, Tortona, 1957, p. 196: “Of him we know nothing other than as Guardian of Tortona he was among the signers of the petition of 1691 for the erection of the future Province of Alessandria and that he was Guardian of Castellazzo when he assumed the spiritual direction of St. Paul of the Cross. We do not know the date of his death.” Cfr. also *Analecta Ordinis Cappuccinorum* vol. 39-40 (1923-24) pp. 240-243; *I Conventi ed I Cappuccini dell’antico ducato di Mitano*, Crema. 1893, vol. I, p. 26. It was

- this same Father Jerome who was called to the bedside of Paul the day following the dreadful vision of hell; Cfr. Terea Danei PA 120v-1.
136. P. Giammaria POV 128v. The name Father Columban of Genoa is found in the Necrology of the Province under the date of June 28, 1752, Finaimarina, P. Colombano da Genoa, and he was vested with the habit on March 19, 1701 (Cfr. Padre Francesco Zaveria, *I Cappuccini Genovesi, il Necrologia*, Genoa, 1921. When Paul gave his Rule to Bishop di Gattinara, the latter sent Paul to consult Father Columban of Genoa about the authenticity of his vocation. Father Columban confirmed the genuineness of Paul's call and told the Bishop such. When Father Columban read the Rule of Paul, he told the Bishop that the Rule "is truly holy and worthy of being proposed to the Holy See for confirmation." Cfr. P. Melchior A. Pobladura OFM Cap., *Historia Generalis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum*, Paris, Secund (1619-1761) Vol. II, Romae, 1948, Institutum Historicum Ord. Fr. Min. Cap., Via Sicilia 159, p. 443, n. 340: "Inter novarum congregationem institutores, qui cum Capuccinis aliquam habuerunt consuetudinem reconsendi sunt..." S. Paulus a Cruce (1694-1775); institutor Congregationis a SS. Cruce et Passione D.N.J.C., qui non solum dum in saecul degebat Capuccinos habuit spirituales moderatores, praesertim Hieronymum a Tortona, sed etiam postea, nam statuta pro nova congregatione conscripta perlegit et approbavit Columbanus a Genua (1752) "celeler spirituum discretor", qui iam antea S. Paulum a Cruce adhortatus fuerat ut in opere suscepto perseveraret."
 137. *Analecta Qrdinis Cappucinorum vol. 39-40 (1923-24)* p. 241: "Illo duce novos, faciebat progressus Paulus Franciscus, et ad altiores contemplationis gradus assurgere visus est, ita quod et ipse P. Hieronymus, ne cum illius animae discrimine deciperetur, consulere voluit quemdam fratrem suum, qui fama magistri spiritus experti illis in regionibus gaudebat. Hic erat P. Columbanus Ianuensis, huius nominis provincial alumnus, tunc Uvadae nostro in conventu degens, qui spiritum quo movebatur Paulus Franciscus probavit et confratris timores sustulit. Saepius postea Uvadam, viginti millium spatio distantem, laborem negligens, pedes repetiit pius iuvenis, boni religiosi ut consilium frueretur."
 138. *Lettere V*, 220.
 139. John Tauler, *Spiritual Conferences* (B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Mo.) 1961, p. 53.
 140. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.
 141. Tauler, Commemoration of St. Paul I, 175; Cfr. Sunday I after Easter S. 2; III Sunday of Advent, S. 2.
 142. *Lettere I*, 175.
 143. *Lettere II*, 477.
 144. *Lettere II*, 515.
 145. *Sermons II*, 376.
 146. *Sermons III*, p. 108.
 147. *Lettere TI*, 724.
 148. Cfr. III Sunday of Advent S. 2, p 29.
 149. Cfr. Fest. S. Augustini S. I, p. 595.
 150. I Sunday after Octave of Epiphany, S, I, p. 93.
 151. *Spiritual Conferences* of Tauler, p. 76.
 152. *Dark Night*, Bk, II, Chapter 24, p. 387.
 153. POR, IV, 2074r; *Lettere IV*, 24.
 154. John 1:18; Cfr. *Lettere II*, 760; 471; I, 617; 637.
 155. John XIV: 6; Cfr. *Lettere I*, B15.
 156. *Spiritual Diary, Words From the Heart*, pp. 17-33 passim.

157. *Lettere* III, 89: “Practice that interior solitude which I have suggested during the Retreat... Often bring to mind this solitude, because it is a jewel of inestimable value, rich in every good. Oh, happy those souls who remain enclosed within themselves in the interior temple of their spirit and here in pure faith adore the Most High in spirit and truth and always burn with holy love. Faith teaches us this secret humility of heart and confidence in God without the support of any creature and the burning charity which embraces all; let them learn this secret at the feet of the Crucified, since it is only revealed to little ones and is hidden from the wise and the prudent of this world (Matt. XI:25).”
158. *Lettere* I, 610.
159. *Lettere* II, 465.
160. *Lettere* I, 410.
161. *Lettere* II, 808: “Enter into this divine solitude through the door which is Jesus Christ, and His Most Holy Passion.” Cfr. *Lettere* III,193. See also *Lettere* III, 193: “In the sacred desert of interior solitude, we enter through the divine doors of the holy wounds of Jesus, our life.”
162. *Lettere* III,745.
163. Colossians 3:3; Cfr. *Lettere* IV, 226; III, 59; I, 635.
164. *Lettere* I, 241: 508; III, 811; 398; 355.
165. *Philippians* 3:10.
166. The monasteries founded by Paul were recognized as places of rural solitude, with few exceptions: Monte Argentario (Presentation -1737); Vetralla (Sant Angelo -1744); Soriano (S. Eutizio -1744); Ceccano (S. Maria di Corniano -1748); Tuscania (Madonna del Cerro -1748); Falvaterra (S. Sosio -1751); Paliano (S. Maria di Publiano -1755); Monte Cavo (SS. Trinita - 1758); Monte Argentario (S. Giuseppe -1761); Roma (Ospizio del Crocifisso -1787; the first exception to rural solitude); Tarquinia (Maria SSma. Add. -1769) and Roma (SS. Giovanni e Paolo -1773, second exception to rural solitude).
167. *Lettere* IV, 219.
168. *Mark* 6:31; *Matthew* 14:13.
169. *Lettere* V, 57.
170. Cfr. Stanislas Breton C.P., *Vers Une Theologie de la Croix*, Clamart, 1979; p. 135-36: “We must not forget that we were founded by a man who loved the great spaces and solitude; who was a hermit before being a preacher; who was sensitive to the spectacle of the sea (sensory image of the “Immense”); and who, like the great prophets, was familiar with the mountain, because one heard there the breeze of Yahweh. I also think that he loved the living water, flowers, and that, in founding a house... he thought both about its ‘poetry’ and its functionality. He loved to have things clean (was he recalling the magnificent word which Catherine of Genoa used to “define” God: *Nettezza?* Cleanliness?).”
171. See Appendix I and II.
172. See Appendix III, IV, VI, VII, and VIII.
173. *Lettere* III, 747.
174. *Regulations* 4 (n. 28), see Appendix X. It is interesting to note that Paul in writing about the possibility of accepting St. Thomas in Formis said that this foundation would not pass for an example for other foundations, but that we must always continue *juxta regulas* to make foundations in solitude and only His Holiness departs from this point of Rule, to found and establish the aforesaid mission, and also because it is necessary to have one of our Houses under the eye of the Holy See for the needs which may arise for our infant Congregation. (Cfr. *Lettere* V, 68). Before considering this as a possible foundation, Paul sent one of his men to take a good look at St. Thomas in Formis to see whether it was

sufficiently secluded or not (Cfr. *Lettere II*, 639). Paul finally describes St. Thomas in Formis as having “a large garden and solitary” (*Lettere II*, 122) and as “one of the most solitary places of Rome, a place of great silence, a little less than on a mountain” (*Lettere II*, 127). Paul’s concern for proper exterior solitude may be seen in the proposed foundations of Regno (*Lettere II*, 645); Elba (*Let. V*, 174); Corneto (“in profound solitude”) (*Let. V*, 208-09); Monte Cavo (*Let. II*, 225) and Toscanella (*Let. II*, 232; *II*; 278).

175. *Lettere I*, 19: 53.

176. *Lettere I*, 19.

177. *Lettere V*, 25.

178. *Lettere II*, 19.

179. *Lettere III*, 745.

180. *Lettere II*, 61: *V*, 57; 59-60.

181. *Lettere II*, 76; *V*, 18.

182. *Lettere II*. 30.

183. *Lettere V*, 150.

184. *Lettere I*, 237; POR 591.

185. *Lettere V*, 231.

186. Paul’s choice of the word ‘retreat’ has a rich history behind it. The Latin term is *recessum* or *secessus*; in Greek it is *anakoressis*. In the Latin profane authors we find Cicero associating *recessus* and solitude (Att. XII, 28, 2; X, 14, 10). Seneca used ‘recedere’ and ‘secedere’ to designate estrangement from business affairs (*Dial. IX*, 3, 2; IX, 14, 2) and to indicate return into self (*Dial. VII*, 2, 2). In the Gospel, *secedere* is used of Jesus when he withdrew from the crowd and went into the solitude of the desert (Mark 14:13; Luke 5:16; 9:10).

Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Hilary of Poitiers and St. Leo the Great used *seceere* to describe solitude and the desert where Jesus went to pray. Cassian uses ‘secedere’ not only to express exterior solitude in relation to men and the world but also to an intimate purification (*Conf. 18*, 6). Cassian uses *recessus* to refer to the soul, the spirit and the heart. At the end of the Patristic age we find these two meanings:

1) *anakoressis*, anchorites dwelling far from men; and 2) interior retreat (*Moral. 30*, 39; PL 76, 546).

In the Middle Ages *secedere* was used to express entrance into the contemplative life, whether monastic or eremitical. St. Bernard used the word to refer not only to withdrawing in the body, but also in the soul, intention and devotion (*Sup. Cant. 40*, 4). Cfr. Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., “Il ritiro come esercizio di vita solitaria” in *Vita Monastica*, n. 77, Aprile-Giugno 1964 (Camaldoli) pp.55-62.

187. Father Stanislas Breton C.P., has profound observations on this three-fold operation which Paul of the Cross refers to as *abiding*, *going out* and *returning*. Father Breton writes:

“Place is indeed inseparable from the ‘category’ of ‘dwelling’, so important today. But dwelling itself is inseparable from *environment*. The great modern problem at least one of the great problems, is precisely that of *dwelling*. I have the impression that, in our days, we no longer dwell in our homes. They are for us rather the place of passage or of *transit*, the springboard for the next flight. But *dwelling*, as ontological category, is a very meaningful modification of “being inasmuch as being” of former times. *Being inasmuch as being* means for us today *being-in*, *being-near*; that is to say, finally, that being inasmuch as being, in its prepositional expression, is the abstract projection of the condition of the *Logos* about

whom it is specified, in the Prologue: “that He was *in, toward* and *near* God”. These three prepositions which I have underlined define then the being inasmuch as being in its theological exemplar. The Word is thus the model of the *dwelling*. And our homes must be, according to the Rule, the diagram, or, if you prefer, the *sensitization* of this fundamental *abiding* or *dwelling*, whose secret Paul of the Cross gives us in his life as hermit. If we want to restore the metaphysical-theological context from which our houses, as Paul of the Cross conceived them, take their meaning and intelligibility, we must first of all recall the condition of the Johannine Logos which is “in God, toward God, near God”; such is the fundamental “*dwelling* or *abiding*” before the world was” ; ‘then, the condition of the hermit or solitary=prophet who reproduces this divine condition of *detachment* from all things in his *desert*, which reproduces in its way, in space, the state of *separation* of the original Word; then, the *SOLITUDE* or environment in which our houses *are situated*; finally, emerging on this global horizon of intelligibility, the *precise functions* of our houses. These functions are not mysterious. The Rule, without being metaphysical, but by a sure instinct of in declinable connections, defines the house by a quasi-group of operations. It specifies actually that it must be the place where one recollects oneself, that is to say, where the being reassembles its powers in a substantial acting, which does nothing; but which makes us be in God and near God. Moreover, the house, strange as it is, is also the place from which one must go out, under the exigency of a transitive operation which dedicates and consecrates us to the good of the neighbor. Finally; the house is the being-there to which we must unceasingly return in order to restore our strength and to take our distance from what we have done and done well. Briefly, the house, in its functionality, refers to the three fundamental operations which Neo-Platonism and subsequently Christian thought have fixed in a pithy terminology, Greek and Latin:

MONE	PROODOS	EPISTROPHE
MANERE	EXIRE	REDIRE

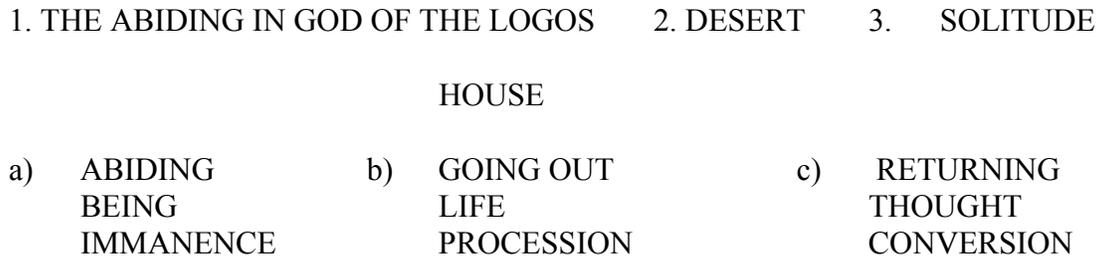
which I could translate:

ABIDE	GO OUT	RETURN
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This operating trinity, definition of the house, is also and first of all, the definition itself of spiritual being which, to take up a Proclusian formula of St. Thomas “abiding in itself, proceeds from self and returns to self in a complete return to its essence.” If one will allow me this evangelical illustration, we will find in John 13:1-5 (which we will relate to the first verse of the Prologue), the equivalent of these operations which I have just briefly analyzed: in paraphrasing slightly, we find, according to the capital indications of the different prepositions, a formula of this kind: “Jesus, knowing that He was *in* God, and that He came from God, and was going to God..., etc.” A house truly exists only if, satisfying these functions, it makes possible the three-fold operation which our ancients expressed by the three terms *being-life-thought* and which they applied as we know to

the three Divine Persons. I shall conclude by saying that a house is a trinity in earthly act.

To facilitate the reading of this development, I shall propose the following diagram, whose meaning, after these explanations, seems clear enough:



Cfr. Breton, *Vers Une Theologie de la Croix*, pp. 136-138.

188. St. Peter Damien, *Selected writing on the Spiritual Life*, trans. Patricia McNulty, Faber, 1969, pp. 63-64; PL 145, col 239. - Paul of the Cross envisioned the cell as the place where we find ourselves alone and yet not alone; alone with God but in communion with the whole Church and world. In the words of Vladimir Lossky: "In the measure in which he is a person in the true theological sense of the word, a human being is not limited by his individual nature. He is not only a part of the whole, but potentially includes the whole, having in himself the whole earthly cosmos, of which he is the hypostasis. Thus each person is an absolutely original and unique aspect of the nature common to all." (*In the Image and Likeness of God*, Mowbrays, 1975, p. 107).
189. *Regulations* of 1755. 45.
190. *Ibid.*, 43.
191. *Ibid.*, 44.
192. *Ibid.*, 47.
193. *Ibid.*, 49.
194. *Ibid.*, 48.
195. *Ibid.*, 50.
196. *Ibid.*, 52.
197. *Lettere* V, 161.
198. *Lettere* V, 189.
199. *Lettere* II, 5.
200. *Lettere* III, 610; V; 144; 200, 109.
201. *Lettere* III, 515.
202. *Lettere* V, 26.
203. *Lettere* II, 256.
204. *Lettere* III, 745.
205. *Lettere* II, 38.
206. *Lettere* III, 515.
207. *Lettere* III, 515.
208. *Lettere* 745-6.
209. *Lettere* II, 64: "...in a military garrison it is necessary to preach more by prayer, by solitude, by recollection than by words."
210. *Lettere* II, 470-472.
211. *Lettere* V, 109; II, 5.
212. *Lettere* V, 144; 214, 164, 102; II, 229, 38.

213. *Lettere* II, 454.
214. *Lettere* II, 449.
215. *Lettere* II, 41.
216. *Lettere* III, 449.
217. *Lettere* II, 260.
218. *Lettere* I, 413-14.
219. *Lettere* II, 211-212.
220. *Lettere* II, 475.
221. *Lettere* II, 477.
222. *Lettere* II, 261.
223. *Lettere* II, 477.
224. *Lettere* II, 31; IV, 226.
225. *Lettere* V, 175.
226. *Lettere* II; 35.
227. *Lettere* V, 181.
228. *Lettere* II, 47, 268.
229. *Lettere* V, 181: “The Holy Spirit will give you direction.” Cfr. *Lettere* II; 471.
230. *Lettere* I, 289.
231. *Lettere* II, 720.
232. *Lettere* II, 720.
233. *Lettere* II, 658. It is also significant that Paul of the Cross said that it is in interior solitude that a man learns to be a good Rector; solitude affects government (*Lettere* V, 220). He also relates solitude to Liturgy; “Say the psalms in choir in true interior solitude, reciting them in the Spirit of God...” (*Lettere* II, 503; 522).
234. *Lettere* III, 514.
235. *Lettere* III, 716-717.
236. *Lettere* III, 90.
237. *Lettere* II, 256.
238. *Lettere* II, 5.
239. In festo sancti Augustini S, I. p. 595 (Thauleris opera omnia, traduction Latine de Surius, Edition Coloniae et denuo Maceratae, 1697. In English edition, p. 685.
240. *Op. cit. Dominica I post octavam Epiphaniae S, 1*: p. 93. In English edition, p. 128.
241. *In Sacti Pauli Commemoratione S, 1*: p. 573.
242. *Lettere* V, 175; II; 477.
243. *Lettere* V, 154.
244. *Lettere* II, 96: “Pursue your solitude in the Divine Heart of Jesus...” St. Paul of the Cross often recommended to his Religious that silence and seclusion (‘ritiratezza’) were the two most powerful and efficacious means to raise one’s spirit to God and to love that Sovereign Goodness: “Let him sit alone and in silence, when it is laid upon him” (Lamentations 3:38): “For when the peaceful stillness compassed everything, and night in its swift course was half spent, Your all-powerful word from heaven’s royal throne bounded, a fierce warrior into the doomed land...” (Wisdom 18:14). Cfr. POR, 1741r, p. 30.
245. *Lettere* II, 477.
246. Paul’s diligent care to base his doctrine of abandonment on the example of Christ and His Cross radically preserved him from unorthodoxy.
247. *Lettere* V, 171-172.
248. *Lettere* II, 522.
249. Cfr. Stanislas Breton C.P., *La Mystique de la Passion* (Desclee, 1962) pp. 187-236.

250. *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.
251. See Appendix XIII.
252. Cfr. Dr. M. Ledoux, “La solitude dans la vie conjugale”, *La Vie Spirituelle - Le Supplement*; vol. xxiv, 96, Feb. 1971, pp. 72-77.
253. Dietrich, Bonhoeffer wrote:
 “*Let him who cannot be alone beware of community.* He will only do harm to himself and to the community. Alone you stood before God when He called you; alone you had to answer that call; alone you had to struggle and pray; and alone you will die and give an account to God. You cannot escape from yourself; for God has singled you out. If you refuse to be alone you are rejecting Christ’s call to you, and you can have no part in the community of those who are called.
 But the reverse is also true; Let him who is not in community beware of being alone. Into the community you were called, the call was not meant for you alone; in the community of the called you bear your cross, you struggle, you pray. You are not alone, even in death” (*Life Together*, pp; 87-88).
254. *Lumen Gentium*, 46.
255. Henri Nouwen, “Solitude in Community”, *Worship*, vol. 52, No. 1; Jan. 1978, p. 18.
256. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
257. Breve Notizie 1747, 3: see Appendix XI.
258. *Lettere* III, 284.
259. *Lettere* II, 64.
260. Rule of 1741, Chapter XVIII, line 26-38. See Appendix II.
261. Rule of 1741, Chapter XXXV, lines 24-26. See Appendix II.
262. *Lettere* II, 200.
263. *Mark* 6: 45-47.
264. Adrian Van Kaam, “Solitude and Communion” p. 35.
265. *Ibid.*
266. *Lettere* I, 610.
267. *Lettere* I, 200.
268. *Lettere* III, 453; 449.
269. *Lettere* III, 745.
270. *Lettere* II, 461.
271. *Lettere* II, 464.
272. *Lettere* II, 466-467.
273. *Lettere* II, 465.
274. *Lettere* II, 467-68.
275. *Lettere* II, 470-472.
276. *Lettere* II, 473.
277. *Lettere* II, 477.
278. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The God Question and Modern Man* (Seabury Press, New York), p. 116.
279. S. Thomas ST I-II, 99, 2 ad 2.

APPENDIX I

SOLITUDE in the RULE OF 1736 (Altieri Text)

CHAPTER II, line 17, uses the word RITIRI: “The Houses of this Congregation, or I mean RETREATS OF PENANCE.” (p. 4 in Giorgini)

CHAPTER III, lines 1-3: “The houses will be founded in solitude in the best way possible.” (p. 6)

CHAPTER IV, lines 1-18: “The houses shall be founded, as has been said, in solitude, so that the servants of God, after their holy apostolic labors for the salvation of the neighbor, may withdraw in solitude to recollect their spirit in prayer and fasting, and in this way to become more and more inflamed with the holy love of Jesus Christ, and better disposed to go out again with greater fervor to sow the most holy seed of God’s word, promoting in this way the devout memory of the Most Holy Passion and Death of Jesus, our true Good in the hearts of the faithful.” (p. 8)

CHAPTER V, TITLE: “HOW THE BRETHREN OF THIS CONGREGATION ARE TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES WHEN GOING OUT FROM SOLITUDE.”

lines 26-55: “The manner to be observed by the brethren in going out from the House and solitude shall be, for example, if there are twelve brethren capable of helping their neighbor, let six of them go out in twos; if need be, more of them may go together. This is the way they should labor in the precious vineyard of Jesus Christ when preaching missions, giving retreats and other exercises of this kind.

The other six shall remain at home to sing the psalmody and to praise the Lord in prayer and fasting as these Rules and Constitutions shall indicate.

When the first group are tired from their labors and have returned to solitude, they shall remain in holy solitude to devote themselves to spiritual exercises. Then the other six will go out to work in the vineyard of God. They shall continue to alternate like this, according as they shall be called by the Most Reverend Ordinaries of the dioceses. If the Apostolic See or the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation the Faith should request some of the brethren to go and promote the faith among infidels, they should obey this request with readiness, with deepest respect and humility.” (p. 8-10)

CHAPTER VI, lines 18-19: speaks of our houses as “RETREATS OF PENANCE (RITIRO DI PENITENZA). One who aspires to enter the Congregation is said to “withdraw from the concerns of the world.” (p. 10)

CHAPTER XXV, line 50: speaks of the “solitary walk” before Sext “to relieve the mind”(p. 78).
Line 13-14, (p. 80) refers to solitary walk also as a possibility before Compline.

CHAPTER X, i.e., XXXIV, lines 53-58: “Let them not go to the houses of their relatives without great necessity, as befits a genuine religious who should be dead to everything and should live only in God and for God.” (p. 130)

APPENDIX II

SOLITUDE in the RULE OF 1741

CHAPTER II, line 16 (p. 4): use of the word *Ritiri*: “The Houses or Retreats of this Congregation...”

CHAPTER III, lines 1-5 (p. 6): “The Houses *OF RETREAT* shall be founded in solitude in the best way possible.”

CHAPTER IV, lines 1-19 (p. 8): “The Retreats shall be founded in solitude so *that* the servants of God, after their holy apostolic labors for the salvation of souls, may withdraw *from the noise of the world* to recollect their spirit in prayer and fasting. In *this way*, in the holy love of *God*, they will be better disposed *to* go forth with greater fervor to sow the holy seed of God’s Word. Thus they will be able to promote, *with great zeal*, the devout remembrance of the Passion and Death of Jesus, our true Good, in the hearts of the faithful.”

CHAPTER V, lines 21-55 (p. 8): HOW THE BRETHREN ARE TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES WHEN GOING OUT FROM SOLITUDE.

“The order which the brethren ought to observe when going out from solitude shall be *this*: If, for example, there are twelve brethren capable of *working for* their neighbor, let *half of them* go out in twos, if need, *even* more of them may go together. This is the way they should labor in the precious vineyard of Jesus Christ through missions, spiritual exercises, *catechetical instructions*, etc., as has been said.

The others shall remain at home to sing psalms to the Lord in prayer and fasting, and *to attend also to necessary study*. *When the first group are tired from their labors, they shall withdraw* into holy solitude to devote themselves to spiritual exercises, and *the other group shall go out*. They shall continue to alternate like this, according as they shall be called by the Most Reverend *Bishops* of the dioceses. If *the God of Mercy should send men capable of working also for the conversion of infidels, they should go most readily to any place they may be sent by the Supreme Pontiff or the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith*.”

CHAPTER VI, lines 18-19 (p. 10) speaks of one entering the Congregation as “withdrawing himself from worldly concerns.” CHAPTER XXV, line 50 (p. 78) speaks of relieving the mind a *little* in *some* solitary walk...before Sext.”

CHAPTER XXV, lines 10-20 (p. 80): “After Vespers they shall have study as above, and after study they may relieve their minds either by getting some air or by some other licit mode of recreation so as to be better prepared for the prayer of Compline, taking care as much as possible to observe silence.”

CHAPTER XXVII, lines 26-35 (p. 88): Let each one “*strive to remain recollected and in solitude as much as possible on missions. He will do this by applying himself to prayer as usual, by the devout recitation of the Divine Office, and by fitting preparation and thanksgiving for* *the celebra*”

CHAPTER XXVII, lines 5-7 (p. 92) “If they have to stay in the home of benefactors let them ask to eat alone...”

CHAPTER XXVII, 19-37 (p. 98): “When they return to the Retreat, they shall take a little rest and recreation of spirit with the brethren there. They shall, however, follow the spiritual exercises and rules that are observed in that Retreat, not seeking to go out, but acting as if there were no inhabited place nearby. Should it happen that one of the companions returning from a mission considers it necessary to go out on some work of charity, let him consult with the Superior. The Superior shall not permit him to go out unless there is a clear necessity; thus he will have more opportunity for recollection by resting in spirit at the feet of the Crucified.”

CHAPTER XXXV, lines 24-26, (p.128): “When the brethren go on a journey, they shall be recollected and dignified...” lines 53-58 (p.130): “Let none of the brethren go to the houses of relatives without grave necessity as befits the genuine religious who should be dead to everything and should live only in God and for God.”

APPENDIX III

SOLITUDE IN THE RULE OF 1746

CHAPTER III, lines 1-4 (p. 6): “The Houses of *Religious* Retreat shall be founded in retired places, in the most convenient and best manner possible.”

CHAPTER IV, lines 1-20: (p. 8 in Giorgini): “The houses shall be founded in retired places, so that the devout brethren, after their apostolic labors undertaken for God’s glory and the salvation of souls, may withdraw far from the noise of men and of the world, to devote themselves in solitude to their own spiritual advancement, to prayers, fastings and other pious exercises, by which they may be more and more inflamed with divine love. Thus, having grown stronger in Christian virtues, they may become better qualified and more ready to preach the word of God with more abundant fruit, stirring up in every place, to the utmost of their power, the practice of piety and a grateful remembrance of and veneration for the Passion and Death of Christ the Lord.”

CHAPTER V, lines 21-54 (p. 8): How the Brethren Are to Conduct Themselves Outside Their Houses. “The brethren shall observe this order in going out. If there are twelve brethren capable of helping the neighbor, let six of them go out in twos; if need be, more than two may go together for the work. This is the way they should labor in the vineyard of the Lord, and they shall preach missions, spiritual exercises, catechetical instructions, and other exercises of this kind.

The others shall remain at home in the customary way and they shall sing psalms to the Lord and dedicate themselves to study, prayer, fasting and other spiritual works as will be indicated in these Constitutions.

When the work is finished, they shall return home, and the others will go out, continuing the work, journeying or working at another place.

The first group will take up again the customary mode of living and working and they shall do this as often as they are called by the Bishops.”

CHAPTER VI, lines 18-19 (p.10): “withdrawing himself from worldly concerns.”

CHAPTER XXIV, line 60, (p. 78) and line 13 (p. 80) refers to Solitary Walk before Sext and before Compline, indicating also that they shall not go far from home.

CHAPTER XXV, lines 26-35 (p. 86): “Let them not take on them the office of regular Lenten preachers; but leaving this to others, let them during that time be occupied with God in our solitary houses, to the end that they may, after Easter, carry on with increase of charity apostolic missions and the other customary exercises of our Institute for the good of their neighbor...”

CHAPTER XXVI, lines 4-7 (p. 92): “During Missions when they are staying in the homes of benefactors, let them eat alone...”

CHAPTER XXVI, lines 32-41 (p. 98): “After returning home from missions, let them not go out without necessity. Let the brethren gladly remain at home, giving themselves up to religious quiet and devout meditations at the feet of Jesus Christ Crucified.”

CHAPTER XXXV, lines 53-56 (p. 130): “Let them not go to houses of relatives without necessity and let them show themselves truly dead to their own and to the world, living for God alone.”

APPENDIX IV

SOLITUDE in the RULE OF 1769

CHAPTER II, line 1-5 (p.7): “The Houses of religious retreat shall be founded in retired places, in the most convenient and best manner possible...”

CHAPTER IV, Lines 1-20 (p. 9): “The houses shall be built in retired places, so that the devout brethren, after their apostolic labors undergone for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, may withdraw far from the society of men and the noise of the world, to devote themselves in solitude to their own spiritual advancement, to prayers, fastings and other pious exercises, by which they may be more and more inflamed with divine love. Thus, having grown stronger in Christian virtues, they may become better qualified and more ready to preach the word of God with more abundant fruit; stirring up in every place, to the utmost of their power, the practice of piety and a grateful remembrance of and veneration for the Passion and Death of Christ the Lord.”

CHAPTER V, lines 22-47 (p. 9): How the Brethren Are to Conduct Themselves Outside Their Houses. Same as Chapter V of 1746 Rule.

CHAPTER VI, lines 18-19 (p. 11) “withdrawing himself from worldly concerns.”

CHAPTER XXIV, lines 45-48 (p. 79) speaks of solitary walk before Sext “for relief of the mind” and in Giorgini, p. 81, lines 5-6) refers to solitary walk before Compline.

CHAPTER XXV, lines 26-35 (p. 87) refers to spending Lent “occupied with God in our solitary houses...”

CHAPTER XXVI, lines 5-11 (p. 93): refers to eating alone in the houses of benefactors and in silence, if convenient.

CHAPTER XXVI, n. 6, lines 32-42 (p. 99) recommends that the returning missionaries are not to go out without necessity and are to remain gladly at home, in the religious quiet and devout meditation at the feet of Christ Crucified.

CHAPTER XXXV, lines 37-40 (p.131): “Let them not go to houses of relatives without necessity but let them show that they are truly dead to their own and to the world, living for God alone.”

CHAPTER XXXVI, lines 16-19 (p.135): “In the more solitary retreats and in the novitiate, let them, as far as possible, not receive the confessions of women.” (Cfr. General Chapter I, 1747, decree 10; General Chapter II, 1753, sess: II, dec. 2 (Boll. III, 203; IV, IV, 20).

APPENDIX V

SOLITUDE IN THE PASSIONIST NUNS’ RULE AND CONSTITUTIONS

St. Paul of the Cross probably completed a first draft of a Rule for the Passionist Nuns in 1767. In writing their Rule, Paul drew primarily from the Rule he had written for the Passionist men religious. St. Vincent Strambi indicated Paul’s purpose in writing the Nuns’ Rule as “perfect detachment from creatures in order to live only for Christ and the ever-present remembrance of the bitter death of Him who was sacrificed on Calvary for the redemption of the world” (*The Life of Blessed Paul of the Cross*, 3 Vols. London, Thomas Richardson and Son, 1853, I, pp. 302-303).

In 1770 Paul completed the definitive writing of the text of the Rule with the help of three of his Consultors, Father Mark Aurelius, John Mary and Candidus along with some suggestions of Don Nicholas Constantini, the brother of Mother Mary Crucified. Pope Clement XIV approved the Rule on September 3, 1770.

RULE of 1770: Paul’s teaching on solitude are included in the section dealing with the vow of strict enclosure: Chapters I, VI and XI.

The spiritual principles Paul invokes here for the doctrine of solitude are:

- 1) The paschal principle of “death to the world and burial with Christ,”
- 2) The operational principles of “greater interiority and recollection.”

REVISED RULE of 1926 repeats the same doctrine – Chapters I and XI.

NEW CONSTITUTIONS of 1979 – Chapter I (2 and 7); Chapter II (39-44); Chapter III (51); Chapter V (77) and Chapter VI (92).

The basic spiritual principles indicated in the New Constitutions are:

- 1) THE EVANGELICAL AND SALVIFIC NATURE OF SOLITUDE: “Sent by His Father to save the world, Christ not only preached the Good New, but often withdrew to solitary places to pray. “He went off to a lonely place in the desert; there he was absorbed in prayer” (Mk. 1:35). In this He revealed to us that to remain in solitude and prayer before God is a work of salvation for the world. In their response to a call to contemplative life, the Passionist Nuns commit themselves to follow Christ into solitude to pray with fervor to the Father from whom comes every perfect gift (Cfr. Jas. 1:17) (39).
- 2) PARTICIPATION IN THE SOLITUDE OF THE PASSION: “As brides of the Crucified, they also wish to share more profoundly in that solitude which Christ experienced in His Passion” (40).
- 3) PARTICIPATION IN THE SOLITUDE OF THEIR CONTEMPORARIES: “They joyfully accept their separation from the world also to sustain those in our society who are isolated or overlooked in a solitude which has been imposed” (40).
- 4) FRUITS OF SOLITUDE: “This union with Jesus and His members in solitude brings forth fruits of life and joy. They trust that their prayer in solitude, as that of Jesus, may evoke in others the desire to pray (Cfr. Luke 11:1)” (41).

APPENDIX VI

SOLITUDE in the RULE OF 1775

CHAPTER II, lines 1-4 (p. 7): “The houses of religious retreat shall be founded in retired places, in the most convenient and best manner possible.”

CHAPTER III, lines 1-20 (p. 9) Same as in Rule of 1769.

CHAPTER IV, lines 17-18 (p. 11) “withdrawing himself from worldly concerns.”

CHAPTER XIX, lines 38-42 (p. 71) “before Sext and None, and also before Compline, they shall take half an hour’s recreation in silence and alone, to relieve both mind and body...”

CHAPTER XXIII, lines 26-36, p. 87: Re Lenten preaching and “spending that time... occupied with God in our solitary houses...”

CHAPTER XXIV, lines 56-57 (p. 89); speaks of going out on apostolic missions “from our solitary houses.”

CHAPTER XXIV, lines 5-10 (p. 93).”Let them eat alone unless necessity urge otherwise, but never with women and in silence unless the Superior judge it should be dispensed.”

CHAPTER XXIV, n. VI, lines 32-36 (p. 99): “Let the brethren willingly remain at home, given up to religious quiet and devout meditations at the feet of Jesus Christ Crucified.”

CHAPTER XXXIII, lines 37-40 (pg. 31) “Let them not go to houses of relatives without necessity; but show themselves truly dead to their own, and to the world living for God alone.”

CHAPTER XXXIV, lines 16-19 (p. 135) “In the more solitary retreats and in the novitiate, let them as far as possible, not receive the confessions of women.”

APPENDIX VII

SOLITUDE in RULE of 1930

CHAPTER II, n. 5 (p. 6) “The houses of religious retreat shall be founded in retired places, in the most convenient and best manner possible.”

CHAPTER III, n. 10 (p. 9) “The houses shall be constructed in retired places, so that the devout brethren, after their apostolic labors undergone for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, may withdraw far from the society of men and the noise of the world, to devote themselves in solitude to their own spiritual advancement, to prayers, fastings, and other pious exercises, by which they may be more and more inflamed with divine love. Thus, having grown stronger in Christian virtues they may become better qualified and more ready to preach the word of God with more abundant fruit, stirring up in every place, to the utmost of their power, the practice of piety and a grateful remembrance of and veneration for the Passion and Death of Christ the Lord.”

CHAPTER XXIV, n. 198: “Before the religious chosen for apostolic missions set out from the retreat” (“e domo solitaria”).

CHAPTER IV, n. 11: “Withdrawing himself from worldly affairs.”

CHAPTER XIX, n. 159: “Before Sext and None and also before Compline, they shall take half an hour’s recreation in silence and alone, to relieve both mind and body...”

CHAPTER XXIII: “let them during that time be occupied with God in our solitary houses...”

CHAPTER XXIV, n. 203: “Let them eat alone...”

CHAPTER XXIV, n. 220; “The same Superior, even though requested and strongly pressed, should not permit those who have returned from missions, to go without necessity to the neighboring towns.”

CHAPTER XXIV, n. 221: “Let the brethren, acquiescing in his wishes, willingly remain at home, given up to religious quiet and pious meditations at the feet of Jesus Christ Crucified.”

CHAPTER XXXIII, n. 296: “Let them not go to the houses of relatives without necessity; but show themselves truly dead to their own, and to the world, living to God alone.”

CHAPTER XXXIV, n. 299: “When a retreat has in it brethren who are judged fit for undertaking apostolic missions or other pious employments to procure the salvation of their neighbor; the Superior may select one of the priests or clerics to go on feast days to the neighboring

places, and instruct the people in the doctrines of Christian faith and their duties of piety, and promote among them an assiduous remembrance of the life-giving Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let this brother, however; so fulfill the charge imposed on him, as to make a point of returning home towards evening, that the brethren may, according to the brethren may, according to the prescript of their Rule, preserve the manifold good of the religious solitude which they have chosen...”

CHAPTER XXXIV, n. 300: “But in the more solitary retreats and in the novitiate; let them, as far as possible, not receive the confessions of women.”

APPENDIX VIII

SOLITUDE in the RULE OF 1959

CHAPTER II, n. 5: “The houses of the Congregation shall be founded in retired places, in the most convenient and best manner possible, so that “ the devout brethren after their apostolic Tabors undergone for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, may withdraw far from the society of men and the noise of the world to devote themselves in solitude to their own spiritual advancement, to prayer, fasting, and other pious exercises by which they may be more and more inflamed with divine love, and, thus strengthened in Christian virtues, may become better qualified and more ready to preach the word of God with more abundant fruit, promoting in every place, to the utmost of their power, the practice of virtue and a grateful remembrance of, and veneration for, the passion and death of Christ the Lord.”

CHAPTER V, n. 16: “Withdrawing himself from worldly affairs...”

CHAPTER XXII, n. 185: “In the morning and afternoon, at the appointed time, the priests and students, to rest both body and mind, may take half an hour’s recreation, alone and in silence.”

CHAPTER XXIV, n. 196: “When a solitary house has in it brethren who are judged fit for undertaking apostolic missions, etc... “returning home toward evening that the brethren may... preserve the manifold good of religious solitude... they... chose.”

CHAPTER XXV, n. 208: “While engaged on a mission, they may lodge in the private houses of benefactors. However; unless necessity or good manners demand otherwise, let them not eat with others, and especially not with women... unless the Superior deem it proper to dispense with it, let them maintain silence.”

CHAPTER XXV, SECTION VI: ON THEIR RETURN TO THE SOLITARY HOUSE n. 224: “The same Superior, even though requested and strongly pressed, should not permit those who have returned from missions to go without necessity to the neighboring towns.” n, 225: “Let the brethren, acquiescing in his wishes, willingly remain at home, given up to religious quiet and pious meditations at the feet of Jesus Crucified.”

CHAPTER XXXIV, n. 313: “Let them not go to houses of relatives without necessity, but show themselves truly dead to their own and to the world, living to God alone.” n. 315: “It shall

be allowed to each, with the permission of the Superior, to walk in the vicinity of the houses for the purpose of relieving his mind or committing something the more easily to memory, provided they do not extend their walk further than is proper, nor go out with the view that, being freed from silence, they may converse more freely among themselves or with externs.”

APPENDIX IX

SOLITUDE IN THE CHAPTER DOCUMENT OF 1970

CHAPTER I, n. 1: “He wished them to cultivate a profound spirit of prayer, penance and solitude, in order to attain intimate union with God and to become witnesses to His love:”

CHAPTER II, n. 37: “The endeavor to be open to people must be counterbalanced with that degree of privacy which is necessary for good order and for maintaining the contemplative aspect of our life. All will carefully observe the directives given by general authority as regards cloister.”

CHAPTER III, n. 59: “A province or group of provinces may establish a house or houses in which the contemplative aspect of the Passionist vocation is more intensely fostered. These houses, which are a value for the whole Congregation, would be effectively integrated with the other communities of the province and their apostolic orientation should be clearly defined:”

APPENDIX X

SOLITUDE IN THE COMMON REGULATIONS OF 1755.

Purpose of these Regulations: to guide the Religious to union of continual charity with Christ.

AUTHOR: Paul is the author but was probably assisted by Fr. Thomas Struzzieri in editing it. Paul refers to these Regulations in a letter to his own Religious (IV, p. 253 - October 14, 1755):

“Finally we inculcate on all the religious the punctual and exact observance of the Holy Rules and Decrees for their corroboration and perfect stability, as well as the continual practice of the REGULATIONS written by us and made public in all the Retreats for their spiritual advancement. It is necessary that the external observance of the Rules always be accompanied by the interior spirit of the heart.”

CONTENT; predominantly spiritual-psychological, suffused with peace, trust and encouragement.

These Regulations enable us to understand better the charism of the Congregation – how it can and should be lived.

THE DOCTRINE ON SOLITUDE IN THE REGULATIONS IS AS FOLLOWS:

I. SOLITUDE BELONGS TO THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE CONGREGATION: “the true spirit of the Congregation consists in penance, solitude and the promotion of devotion to the

most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, from whose infinite charity you take the following proofs.” (Introduction Number 28 indicate that there are degrees of geographical solitude: “In the retreat which is not located in profound solitude, the church is locked during the time of prayer which is made after Compline, in the summer only however.”

II. SOLITUDE IS ESSENTIAL FOR A LIFE OF PRAYER: “Let them be mindful that prayer will never go well unless they remain recollected during the day, lovers of interior and exterior solitude and of holy mortification, and unless they shall be punctual even in the most minute observance of the Holy Rules.” (30)

III. PAULACRUCIAN THEOLOGY OF SOLITUDE IN THE CELL:

a) PURPOSE OF SOLITUDE IN CELL: COMMUNION WITH GOD

When they are thus alone, let them take care to dispel from the mind or memory whatever is not God or about God” (49)

“Let them not bring any stranger into their cell without the special permission of Father Rector; but let them go to a room near the door to receive him and interview him.”(54)

UNION WITH JESUS

“Let them always keep the Crucified before their eyes, and often tenderly kiss His most loving wounds, so that the heart might often make acts of love toward our Supreme Good.” (45)

“Let them often make ejaculatory prayers which help recollection in a wonderful way when the voice offers them in time of aridity.” (48)

UNION WITH MARY

“In entering or leaving the cell, let them kneel before the image of the Blessed Mother, asking her blessing and seeking from her – as our Teacher – permission to do this action or go to that place.” (43)

VISITATION OF CHRIST IN THE PERSON OF THE SUPERIOR:

“If the Father Rector or other Superior comes into the room, let them stand and kneel, considering themselves honored that the Lord, whose place the Superior takes, is coming to visit them.” (46)

b) SOLITUDE AND STUDY

“During the time of study, let them do as when they walk, with one foot raised, and the other on the ground, that is, with one’s thought on the book and one’s heart on God.” (47).

c) SOLITUDE OF STRUGGLE IN THE CELL

“When they experience some cloud of melancholy or shadow of anxiety and temptation arising, let them immediately kneel down before the Crucified and hide themselves with acts of love in the Sacred Side of Christ like a child who runs to his mother, fleeing from those, who cause fear.” (50)

d) SOLITUDE AND GOOD USE OF TIME IN CELL – PLACE FOR STUDY, WRITING, READING, PRAYING

“Let them take care not to remain idle so as not to give the devil the opportunity to tempt them or offer evil suggestions, but let them study, write, read and pray.” (52)

e) FIDELITY TO SOLITUDE OF CELL

“Let them be lovers of the cell, which they do not leave save for necessity or service; let them not go wandering about the retreat; otherwise they will commit a thousand faults and will put themselves in danger of a thousand transgressions against the Rules.” (44)

f) SOLITARY WALK

i) FOR INTERIOR RECOLLECTION

“At the prescribed hour; let all go for a walk to take a little, fresh air, so as to relieve the head, that it might be more readied and disposed for interior recollection.” (72)

“Let each one go by himself and not with another, so that there will be no occasion to break silence; therefore let there be a proportionate distance between them.” (75)

“If they should meet someone passing by they shall respond courteously to the greeting but they shall not stop to initiate a conversation with them.” (79)

ii) SOLITUDE AND BEAUTY OF GOD AND HIS CREATION

“Let them not allow their eyes to wander too much, for this invites innumerable distractions; but let them reflect on the greatness, the beauty and majesty of God as they behold the beauty of the flowers, the fields, the heavens and the sun” (76). “In the open country let them pour out their hearts to God, offering heaven their burning desires and ardent acts of love” (77).

iii) SOLITUDE AND LECTIO DIVINA

“Let them take with them a spiritual book or the New Testament, so that from a word or sentiment of those books, their hearts might be enkindled with love for the Supreme Good.” (78)

g) SOLITUDE AND INTERIOR PEACE

In his general advice to all the Religious (priests, clerics and brothers), Paul says: “To enjoy interior peace, they shall not desire nor manifest any desire to go outside the Retreat under any pretext or appearance, because a wandering Religious will never have the spirit of the Congregation, since solitude is one of its characteristics. Let them remember, what is acquired in one year of solitude is lost in one day of dissipation.” (305)

APPENDIX XI

SOLITUDE IN THE ACCOUNT OF 1747

DOCTRINE ON PAULACRUCIAN SOLITUDE:

a) TYPE OF SOLITUDE: RURAL

b) Purpose of SOLITUDE:

- to offset any obstacle which might delay attainment of perfection;
- to be separated from world;
- to have every opportunity to sanctify themselves for the benefit of the neighbor;
- for missionaries to regain energy and acquire a greater spirit and rest at feet of Jesus Crucified.

“They sanctify themselves in the solitude of the ‘retreats’ for the benefit of the neighbor. In order that the members of this poor Congregation might not have any obstacle which would delay their attainment of perfection and that they might be separated from the world and have every opportunity to sanctify themselves for the benefit of the neighbor, the Rule determines that the houses be founded not in places already inhabited but rather outside the cities or villages at a distance of two or three miles. For this reason they are called Retreats; only one may be built for each diocese, or even two if the diocese is very large and extensive.” (n. 6)

“ When their ‘campaigns’ are finished, the evangelical workers should withdraw into their solitary houses, in order to regain their energy, acquire a greater spirit and rest at the feet of Jesus Crucified.” tn. 24)

c) **APOSTOLIC DIMENSION OF SOLITUDE: SHARING OUR SOLITUDE WITH OTHERS**

“But so that no stone will be unturned in favor of the neighbor, there should be a good number of poor but comfortable rooms in the same retreats, which are to be used for no other purpose than to give spiritual exercises to ecclesiastics and laymen who want to withdraw for some days to taste the sweetness of an esteemed and beloved solitude at the feet of the Crucified.” (n. 26)

APPENDIX XII

SOLITUDE IN THE ACCOUNT OF 1768

SOLITUDE – ONE OF THE FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE RULE

“... the foundation of the Rule consists in holy poverty, mortification and solitude in which the workers, after their apostolic labors, rest at the feet of the Crucified to regain greater energy and fervor as has been said above. And the Religious, totally separated from the world, prepare themselves by prayer, tears, discreet penance and fasting not only for their own perfection, but also to help their poor neighbors and prevent their eternal ruin and to encourage them to holy piety and solid devotion.” (n. 32)

SOLITUDE – A WAY TO TRUE WISDOM:

“As regards the first end, one of the impediments which delays perfection in the Religious is contact with the world and familiar dealings with lay people. This takes away interior recollection and brings disdain and discredit on the apostolic workers. To prevent this problem which can easily arise in a religious community, the Rule ordains that the houses be founded in solitude. They are called Retreats in which the Religious, effectively separated from the world and divested of its principles, are enabled to receive lights from God for acquiring true wisdom. The Religious assigned to apostolic ministries, after having toiled for the salvation of souls, can,

in those solitary houses, regain that fervor which is sometimes diminished by the external works of charity” (n. 4).

CALL TO LIFE OF INTERIOR SOLITUDE:

“The Religious should make a particular effort to recall the Presence of God so that they may remain in interior solitude as much as possible.” (n. 9)

APOSTOLIC WORKERS RETURN TO SOLITUDE:

“Returning to the Retreat after their apostolic ministries, the workers withdraw into more strict solitude in order to renew their spirit in holy spiritual exercises according to the admonition given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles: ‘Rest a little’ (Mark 6:31). All these things help in a wonderful way to prevent dissipation, to acquire the holy love of God and to maintain holy union with the Supreme Good.” (n. 11)

“The Religious are forbidden to make social visits. Only those visits are permitted which gratitude, propriety and necessity require. If time permits, they are to visit the sick in the hospitals, to console poor prisoners in jail and other works of charity” (n.16).

APOSTOLIC DIMENSION OF SOLITUDE:

“But so as to leave no stone unturned in favor of their poor neighbors, in their Retreats there should be a certain number of rooms set aside for the exclusive purpose of giving retreats to ecclesiastics who request it spontaneously or who are constrained to it by their Most Reverend Ordinaries and also to those laymen who want to enjoy the delights of a beloved solitude for some days.” (n. 27)

SOLITARY WALKS AND THEIR PURPOSE:

“...every morning and evening after study there is a solitary walk for a half-hour; each one goes by himself in the vicinity of the Retreat, getting some fresh air to relieve the mind and to acquire greater spirit and energy for holy prayer, pouring forth the affections of his heart to His Divine Majesty” (n. 18).

PROPOSED NEW SECTION *ON SOLITUDE* for the CONSTITUTIONS

REASON FOR ADDITION: The Chapter Document of 1970 and the new proposed Constitution have no treatment of SOLITUDE. This is a real lacuna, since the Passionist charism includes not only PRAYER, PENANCE and POVERTY but also SOLITUDE. There is a treatment of Prayer, Penance and Poverty in both documents, but there is no treatment of Solitude. Therefore we offer the following text on *Solitude* for inclusion in the New Constitutions.

We suggest that this section on Solitude be placed in CHAPTER THREE after No. 52 and before the section on Penance.

PROPOSED TEXT FOR ADDITION TO CONSTITUTIONS: SOLITUDE

St. Paul of the Cross was a man called by God to solitude in a faith experience of the Paschal Christ. Both by example and teaching he showed us the essential place and importance of Solitude in the Congregation.

(EVANGELICAL REALITY) Passionist solitude is rooted in the Gospel, in the saving mission of Jesus Who accomplished the act of salvation in the intense solitude and void of the Passion. St. Paul of the Cross understood clearly that remaining in solitude and prayer was an integral part of the redemptive action of Jesus, an essential component of His proclamation of the saving Word of the Cross. In the words of our Founder:

“According to the lights which God gave to me, our Congregation is based entirely *on prayer and fasting* and on genuine solitude in keeping with the holy counsels of our Savior. He wanted His apostles to retire into solitude after their missions: ‘Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little’ (Mark 6.31). And the Master gave the example when after His wonderful proclamation of the Good News, he withdrew to the mountain alone to pray. Our Congregation is established on this foundation. If the foundation is dashed to the ground, the structure will be totally destroyed because it will be entirely outside of the vocation God has given to it... According to the Rule, after concluding missions, retreats, etc., we should withdraw immediately into the Retreats of our solitude in order to recollect our spirit in *prayer and fasting*... an evangelical worker who is a man of prayer, a lover of solitude and detached from all created things is more fruitful than a thousand others who are not such men... Outside the time of missions, etc., we should remain in solitude and be seen rarely... in this way great fruit and reform is effected in the people who look at the workers as apostolic men who leave their solitude and prayer to enkindle the hearts of the people with the fire of God’s word” (*Lettere III, 417*).

(EXPERIENCED IN THE PASSION) The Spirit calls us to contemplate the mystery of the solitude of Jesus in His Passion and to enter into that evangelical solitude with Jesus. We are called into the desert of Christ’s Passion to commune with the Father, to struggle against the Evil One and to share the fruits of Christ’s solitude with others.

(LIVED IN A COMMUNITY) Passionist solitude is lived in a community of faith and love. We establish our houses in solitude to provide a quiet, prayerful atmosphere for our religious and for those who come to share our life of solitude-in-community, so that they might receive “true wisdom” (*Breve Notizie, 1768, =4*). Community grows and deepens not only when we dialog but also when we live the reality of our paschal solitude in faith.

(INTIMATELY LINKED TO MINISTRY) Within our houses we create an atmosphere of solitude and silence so that our religious, living alone with Jesus Crucified, may be able to strengthen their own brethren in community and then go out to others in ministry to communicate the fruits of their Passion-solitude. We seek solitude in order to face the truth of God, to face the truth of self and to prepare ourselves to face the People of God with the saving Word of the Cross.

(ECCLESIAL REALITY and IDENTIFICATION WITH MANKIND’S SOLITUDE) The Passionist community, living in deep interior solitude, expresses the attitude of the Church in the presence of so many forms of painful, enforced solitude in the world. The community is called to manifest the positive values of solitude in the light of Christ’s Passion wherein the Savior healed the lonely brokenness of sinful mankind by restoring communion with the Father through the solitude of His suffering Humanity.

By a special charism within the Body of Christ, we are called to enrich the Church by our Passionist solitude. As a community-in-solitude within the Church and the world, we become signs of reverence for the mystery of the solitude of the human person and signs of reverence for the mystery of the community of the Body of Christ imaging the Trinal Community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Source of all solitude and love.

Our Passionist solitude is intimately related to Community and to ministry as is evident in the life and doctrine of St. Paul of the Cross.

(NECESSITY OF FORMATION) Since solitude is an essential component of our charism, it is imperative to form our religious in a spirit of paschal solitude-in-community.

(HOUSES OF SOLITUDE) To preserve the spirit of solitude so vital in a world which misunderstands or rejects it, a province or group of provinces may establish a house or houses in which the contemplative aspect of the Passionist vocation is more intensely fostered. These houses, which are a value for the whole Congregation, should be effectively integrated with the other communities of the Province, and their apostolic orientation should be clearly defined.

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