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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

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Sources

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this very monastery of Sts. John and Paul our Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, breathed his last breath and left us his rich spirit. As part of his legacy he left us his wisdom as SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF A CONGREGATION and SPIRITUAL GUIDE of a good number of persons outside the Congregation. His final words took the form of a gesture which spoke more powerfully than all his words. He simply pointed his hand toward the Crucifix and then upward toward his head. The message is clear and profound: the reality of the Crucified is far beyond human understanding. No human word can adequately express it. As his hand points upward to the Mystery which cannot be seen or held but only received, his heart speaks. Love alone can express that reality, and it is a love always received from First Love. The mind must go down into the heart and learn there that God=s Love is found and experienced in its deepest dimension in the Passion of Jesus which contains everything (1).

As Spiritual Guide, St. Paul of the Cross simply shared his experience with others, that the Passion of Christ is the radiant light in which he saw all reality. In his spiritual direction, St. Paul of the Cross encouraged what Pope Paul VI expressed when he wrote:

A... the contemplation of the most bitter torments and death endured for men by our Saviour, who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped at, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant= (Phil. 2:6), cannot fail to enkindle a gentle and delicate fire... and motivate them to the imitation that makes man conformable to the image of God=s beloved son (Cfr. Rom. 8:29)@ (2).

In this Conference I simply want to make some reflections on St. Paul of the Cross as Spiritual Director or Guide, and to indicate some of Paul=s meaning when he wrote: A... the wonderful things that God does in human persons can be understood only through the Cross@ (8).

In a broad sense, spiritual direction includes Christ=s direction and guidelines for living given in the Gospel, the teachings of the Church along with sacramental action and moral formation. Christ continually offers this spiritual direction through His Church. And Paul=s spiritual direction was always rooted dynamically in the evangelical teaching of Christ.

In a more restricted and special sense, spiritual direction, as we understand it today, is a one-to-one (or even one-to-group) relationship between the guide and the individual seeking growth in the way of the Spirit.

Spiritual direction has a long and interesting history in Christian Spirituality, but its articulation still leaves much room for development. While the famous article in the *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualite* (4) is quite good, especially the first section by Father Hausherr, S.J. (5), the other sections are somewhat sketchy. There are two paragraphs on St. Paul of the Cross (6).

St. Paul of the Cross has much to tell us about spiritual direction. His spiritual direction flowed from his Passionist charism and mission to participate intimately in the Passion of Christ and to proclaim and interpret that saving love to others. The spiritual riches contained within Paul=s life-experience and doctrine on the assimilation of the Passion-Mystery are yet to be fully

analyzed and synthesized. My purpose is simply to indicate some of the riches found in the Paulacrucian direction.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

St. Paul of the Cross considered spiritual direction important so that a person may not be deceived on his journey in the ways of the Spirit. That is why he insisted so much on directors who would be holy, learned and prudent.

The importance of spiritual direction today is indicated in a short sentence found in the Introduction to the new Rite of Penance where it says: ADiscernment of spirits is a deep knowledge of God=s action in the hearts of men; it is a gift of the Spirit as well as the fruit of charity@ (7).

In a special way, spiritual direction is important today for these reasons:

- 1) Structural losses after Vatican II have left many persons groping for DIRECTION;
- 2) With the great emphasis on the *person* today, there is a growing accentuation on self-fulfillment which must be integrated into the total picture of *community* and the *theology of the cross*. Hence persons need help in discerning where the search for self-fulfillment militates against community and where it goes counter to the Theology of the Cross. People need help as they reject the current value system and search for personal meaning and authenticity.
- 3) There is great need today to discern the action of the Spirit in our charismatic age. Discernment is essential to determine the difference between the action of the Holy Spirit and self-induced action.

III. LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In looking at St. Paul=s spiritual direction, we should also note the problem of language. Eighteenth century language tends at times to >turn off= our contemporaries, and so we must patiently translate the reality into contemporary language without destroying the content and force of the message. In Paul=s language, >annihilation= may be understood as >self-emptying.= AMystical death@ is really a very biblical notion, involving the transcendence of the selfish Ame@ to allow the Christ-self to emerge. We must look at the realities beneath the culture-bound ideas and language, and keep the reality which may be expressed in other words. At the same time we must study the history of words and their development in a language and in an historical period. St. Paul of the Cross uses a language of many technical expressions which have their history rooted in Christian Mysticism.

IV. ST. PAUL=S SELF-APPRAISAL AS SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Paul of the Cross shuddered at the thought of being called a SPIRITUAL Director. In his very first letter of DIRECTION he expressed his basic life-long attitude: AI am sorry you are depending upon such a big sinner, an abyss of iniquity@ (8). AHow I yearn to rid myself of everything and leave this very important, exhausting and danger-filled work (i.e., directing

persons) to learned and prudent priests; what I touch with my hands turns into darkness and deformity. I am telling you like it is and how I feel about it in God... just as you write to me, why couldn't you write to some other servant of God who has light? (9). To Thomas Fossi he wrote one time: AlI thought that I knew how to direct someone, I would consider myself to be a real lucifer in the flesh; God deliver me from it. I intend to be of service to all and to give some holy advice, based on truth and on what the masters teach, to whomever asks me (10). In 1737 he wrote to Agnes Grazi: Al don't trust myself...I am not learned, nor a man of prayer, nor of great experience... I know that I am blind, ignorant, without virtue. (11). Two years earlier he had written to Mother Eleonora del Pozzo: Al am inexperienced in the way of the spirit and above all I am the greatest of sinners; what confusion I feel when I have to give those instructions to others which I myself do not practice or at least do so very imperfectly... (12). Writing to his former Spiritual Director, Canon Cerutti, Paul said: AThe direction of souls has been entrusted to me, and some of these persons are marvelously gifted by God and graced with very deep prayer... Oh! great God, who would have ever thought that this most vile sinner would walk through these ways= (13). Paul summed up his self-appraisal by writing to Agnes Grazi: Al am not capable of directing even an ant... (14). Yet Paul directed men and women in the ways of the Spirit for 54 years with a sureness and ease which ranks him among the great SPIRITUAL masters of the Christian tradition.

V. OBJECTIVE APPRAISAL BY OTHERS REGARDING PAUL=S SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Notwithstanding Paul=s lowly opinion of himself, many saints and scholars have looked toward him with awe and respect. Our own St. Vincent Mary Strambi revered him as a great SPIRITUAL guide. In his excellent study on Mystical Theology, St. Vincent concluded with these words :

But in conclusion, I blush at making myself a quasi guide in a doctrine of which I am not even a disciple. But because I desire with all my heart to satisfy your longings, I will be like those poor men who know well the place where the treasure is hidden B the treasure which they have not been able to take possession of: they discover it without envy, for one better than they, who can become rich with it.

The precious letters of the Venerable Founder are full of these riches of heaven-born doctrine. If you read them, you will have to admit that you find in these letters an excellent master of perfection and intimate union with Gad.

The great abundance of sentiments, ideas and doctrine, the vivacity of lively, touching and effective expressions, the ease in the use of examples which are accurate and appropriate, the expertise in dealing with every sublime doctrine and in going, as it were, now in one and now in another of the mystical ways, wherever the movement of the Spirit carried him or wherever the need of the souls he directed called for attention, is a source of wonder for me.

It seems to me that so often I see in his Letters one who is entrusted with precious stones from very rich mines, and presents these precious jewels in groups before one=s eyes, and each one is of inestimable value.

Above all, you may observe the sureness which the doctrine of this wise Director carries with it. He always puts the foundation of the faith in the depth of humility and self-emptying. The Door through which he wants one to enter into the tabernacle of

peace, into God=s Sanctuary, is >I am the door.= The continual nourishment of souls united

with God, is, in St. Paul=s doctrine, the most Holy Will of God. One=s Life is to be totally hidden in God with Christ Jesus, our Way, our Truth and our Life. After you have dealt at length with this man of God, who will speak to you at length in his Letters, I hope that you will say to me: >Was not my heart burning inside me as he talked to me?=
I hope that you will become a furnace of charity so that you might be totally transformed into God (15).

In his Life of the Founder, St. Vincent M. Strambi wrote: ATo give his faithful servant still more influence for the benefit of souls, Almighty God, even at the time we speak of, communicated to him the *gift of discerning spirits*, and enlightened him clearly to know the consciences of others.@ Paul would then send them Ato some *enlightened* director, that the minister of God might with charity and skill heal the wounds of the poor soul@ (16).

St. Vincent M. Strambi further on remarks :

Father Paul, in the DIRECTION of souls, as appears most clearly from his Letters, always acted with great wisdom, and sought that those whom he led should serve God in sincerity and truth, with due dependence on their SPIRITUAL superiors. He himself walked faithfully in the same path, never following his own opinion, but subjecting himself in all things to the judgment of men full of wisdom and discernment, that he might make sure of following the will of God. (17)

Paul=s confessor and Director for the last ten years of his life, Father John Mary Cioni, C.P., testified how Paul was able to explain and clarify the deepest truths of the spirit by appropriate examples, so that he made them intelligible to all (18).

Father Marcel Viller, S.J., considered Paul of the Cross Athe greatest mystic of the eighteenth century... one of the most eminent directors, not only by reason of his knowledge and prudence but also because of the perfect experience he had of mystical ways@ (19).

Father de Guilbert, S.J., saw St. Paul of the Cross in the first rank of masters of the spiritual life of the 18th century along with St. Alphonsus Liguori (20).

Father John G. Arfntero, O.P., considered St. Paul of the Cross on equal footing with St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa and St. Peter of Alcantara (21).

Our own Father Cajetan, C.P., likened our Founder to St. Francis de Sales in discretion and in the gift of inspiring others with magnanimity and confidence (22).

Finally, in recent years, Divo Barsotti has recognized Paul of the Cross as one of the Agreatest masters of Christian Spirituality@ (23). In his own words: AA school of Spirituality which has already given the Church a multitude of great souls in spiritual direction, in the teaching of a wonderful SPIRITUAL doctrine, faithful to the centrality of the Mystery of the Cross, and rich in heavenly charisms, already characterizes the lineage of that giant of holiness

who was St. Paul of the Cross of the eighteenth century (24). And again: "The correspondence of St. Paul of the Cross, is it not one of the greatest documents of Catholic Spirituality, insofar as it

gives witness not only to the mystical experience of the saint, but also, and above all, to his wisdom in directing souls to holiness?" (25)

VI. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St. Paul of the Cross and those whom he directed lived in one of the most tumultuous centuries of Western Civilization. It was a period of transition. Paul called it calamitous as the Church was attacked from without by the so-called Enlightenment and from within by Quietism and Jansenism.

Paul of the Cross was two years old when the Spaniard Miguel de Molinos, the most noted theorist of Quietism, died in Rome in 1688. Molinos taught an extreme spiritual passivity, which tended toward the destruction of the human self through absorption into God. Christian perfection for him consisted in the perfect quietude of the soul. This quietude must extend to the progressive annihilation of the faculties, to the suppression of all desire, even for holiness. Annihilated in God, the soul arrives at a mystical death. It no longer has a will nor does it need to guard against evil thoughts and desires, or even immoral actions. The soul is so purified that it is impeccable. If the soul's natural activity becomes an obstacle to grace, the soul must renounce even prayer, because it is an act of one's own will. Therefore it must renounce any discursive prayer, any pious reflection which implies an effort.

The soul should not hope for heaven nor fear hell. It should be disinterested in its own salvation. Therefore there is no need to make an examination of conscience nor to be preoccupied with its own fault. It must free itself from every particular devotion, for example, to the Humanity of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

The result of the condemnation of Quietism (28) was an unfortunate flight from mystical theology for more than a century and a return to the external phenomena as criteria for sanctity. In that anti-mystical age, when even orthodox mystical writings were suspect, St. Paul of the Cross fearlessly and with great sureness taught a strong mystical doctrine.

Paul's teaching and practice were directly opposed to Quietism. For him the human spirit is never inert; even in its most passive state, the soul is dynamically active in its free surrender to the Spirit. The soul is ever mindful of her sinfulness and would never consider herself impeccable. Paul constantly taught that the soul must never renounce prayer and always encouraged his directees to make positive acts of faith, hope and charity. The soul must hope for heaven and fear hell. Examination of conscience is imperative in order to avoid self-deceit. The soul, even in its highest degree of union, should never disregard the Humanity of Christ. Devotion to Mary and the Saints is always an integral part of the Christian experience for Paulacrucian teaching (27).

In all of this, Paul of the Cross had a deep kinship with his favored John Tauler, who once wrote these words about Quietism: "These people (those who by arbitrary, self-willed passivity

adopt a quietistic form of prayer as a matter of systematic policy, simply cultivating inertia) have come to a dead end. They put their trust in this natural intelligence and they are thoroughly proud of themselves for doing so. They know nothing of the depths and riches of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. They have not even formed their own natures by the exercises of virtue and have not advanced along the ways of true Love. They rely exclusively on the light of their reason and their bogus spiritual passivity@ (28).

The Church in Paul=s time also had to contend with Jansenism. Anti-mystical in nature, the movement was born in Belgium, matured in France and spread throughout Europe with disastrous consequences for the Church. Italy felt its repercussion especially in the area of discipline and piety.

Cornelius Jansen (1588-1638) defended the doctrinal tenets and Saint-Cyran propounded the disciplinary aspects of this error. According to the Jansenist, man is irremediably corrupt, owing to original sin, and could only be saved by grace given by God to the predestined alone. Basically Jansenism denies free will. It does not admit that Christ died to save all men and women. It generates a religion of fear. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is opposed; Communion becomes almost an impossibility; Sacramental absolution does not remit sins but simply declares them forgiven and is valid only for those who already love God perfectly (29).

Obviously, St. Paul of the Cross shares none of these views. In Paul of the Cross we find an extraordinary trust in God and a deep devotion to the Heart of Christ. He repeatedly invites every category of the faithful to more frequent and fruitful reception of the Holy Eucharist. He expressed a filial and unconditional dependence on the hierarchy. Paul looked on nature with the eye of faith as well as with the eye of the poet. He encouraged the contemplation of God in nature so as to dispose oneself for the gift of interior prayer. For Paul of the Cross, the interior life had nothing of the Jansenistic, rigoristic aversion for sense reality.

Against this historical background, Paul emerges as a strong and fearless and sure director who guided men and women in mystical ways regardless of the fears and suspicions generated in the wake of Quietism and Jansenism.

VII. THE STANCE OF ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS TOWARD SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

For St. Paul of the Cross, Aspiritual direction was a very sublime and difficult work@ (30), a work which is Atotally God=s@ (31). God is the one who guides with a wonderful providence (32). Paul realized so well Ahow difficult it is to understand and to know how to speak about interior realities...@ (33).

In normal circumstances, Paul saw the need for direction on the interior journey. Paul based this conviction on the Scriptures: ATo walk with direction is pleasing to God. >Go to Ananias= the great Divine Director said to Paul@ (34). Our Founder said this eleven years before he died, after a life-long experience of giving direction. He saw the necessity for direction in terms of Anot falling into deception@ so as to Awalk honestly on the way of holiness@ as he said a year before he died (35).

For Paul, the purpose of direction was to walk with greater freedom of spirit, without fears (36). He considered it a mistake to guide oneself according to one's own spirit as he wrote to Thomas Fossi in 1763 (37). Paul recognized so well that the human spirit at times manifests initiative impulses which are confused, equivocal, impetuous and contradictory. Therefore it needs to sort things out and objectify them through another person. Be sincere with the one who is directing you, manifesting to him the graces of God and the effects which they have in you, and your failures and do all of this candidly. You need a learned and expert director so as not to fall into any deceit and to be able to walk honestly in the way of perfection and holiness (38), as he wrote a year before he died. A director helps the person discover the Will of God for him or her (39).

Paul did not want to consider himself a Director. In a letter to Thomas Fossi, he wrote: You make me laugh, saying that you want me to have the pre-eminence; but you still don't know me. I do not want the primacy, nor have I ever thought of being director, neither yours nor anyone else's. If I thought that I knew how to direct, I would believe that I was a real lucifer in the flesh; God deliver me from it. But then Paul speaks with his usual precision: I intend to serve everyone and to offer some holy advice, based on holy truth and on what the masters teach to anyone who asks it of me (40).

On another occasion, Paul wrote: As I have neither the desire to give the title of sons to our religious, because I do not have the gifts and requisites of a father, so much the more am I ashamed to give that title to those outside the Congregation. I do not intend to make myself Director of anyone, but only not to deny advice to anyone who asks me, for his or her spiritual benefit (41).

It is interesting to hear an assessment of Paul from one of his directees, Lucy Burlini, who said: I always experienced great benefit from his Spiritual Conferences, because he had a great gift of consoling, instructing and inspiring souls... and I can give very ample testimony of this, not knowing however how to explain the gentle and prudent way in which he directed me toward eternal salvation.

a) Paul's Concept of the Spiritual Father

We find in St. Paul of the Cross a strong father-son, father-daughter relationship in his spiritual direction despite his protestations about not having the gifts of a father. He often refers to himself as the Spiritual Father of Agnes Grazi, for example (42). He assumes responsibility for the son's or daughter's life-growth in the Spirit. As Spiritual Father he participates in the role of >god-father= at Baptism. He instructs and encourages the directee by example and doctrine, and transmits the growing desire for living in God and with God and for God. His great desire and goal is to lead the directee to the full surrender to the Spirit. While Paul's approach was more directive than evocative, it appears that he did at times use the evocative approach also.

Paul's teaching on the Spiritual Father in his own Congregation indicates principles of spiritual direction which are important. In the Regulations of 1755 (43), Paul describes his idea

of the Spiritual Father, who is the Father Rector alone with another man appointed as Spiritual Father.

Paul was a very prudent and practical man. While he expected the Rector to be a Spiritual Leader, he also appointed a Spiritual Father. He realized that as soon as a Spiritual Director becomes a man who has authority, an element of threat is introduced, will it or not. The Superior always has to be concerned about the common good of the whole body. It may then become a problem for a man to be as frank and open and honest as he would be in a situation where there is no threat. Sometimes younger persons do not mind this, but others may and so Paul respected that situation.

For Paul, the Spiritual Father should be spiritual, holy, experienced in the ways of the Spirit in the technical sense of >pneumatikos=, a man totally guided and enlightened by the Divine Spirit. The >spiritual man= is totally surrendered to God Himself, and therefore guided by love and not merely by external norms.

The qualities of the Spiritual Father are piety, zeal and prudence in a special way because upon him depends in great part the good of the Retreat, the peace of consciences and the full observance of the Rule. What Paul is saying is that the Spiritual Father has an important contribution to make to the Community, to the individual and to the Congregation.

The attitude of the Spiritual Father according to Paul is expressed thus: ALet him receive all who come to confer with him with gentle graciousness, joy, manifesting externally the pleasure he experiences interiorly at the opportunity to help and console them.@

Listening during the Conference, let him remain humble, put himself in God=s Presence, actually praying that He might suggest to him what he should respond for the good guidance of that person.@

Let the person say all he wants to say, and don=t interrupt him; take care to get to the bottom of what he is talking about, so that the answer may be just, adequate, true and convincing.@

Paul expected of the Spiritual Father a responsible commitment to his ministry. In his own words: ALet him study books which treat of the direction of souls and on the souls of the person committed to him. Let him make prayer so that he can say: AI have lost none of those whom you have given to me@ (John 8:39) (44).

b) Qualities Paul Expected in the Spiritual Director

Paul expected the Spiritual Director to have learning, prayer and experience (45), holiness and prudence (46). In writing to Thomas Fossi, Paul said: AYou do not need my counsel. In any case, I am always ready to serve you in case of need, and you always have B as you have had in the past B that holy freedom to seek counsel from one you think better; however, be sure that the counselor is a holy man, learned and prudent and very experienced, one who will be able to counsel you according to God. Would that you would have one like this near you, which would be of great advantage@ (47).

In writing to Agnes Grazi, Paul speaks of a director as a man of learning, prayer experience, holiness, prudence, and that he have a great call from God (48). To Thomas Fossi he wrote: Alf such men are not available, it would be imprudent to turn your interior life over to >anyone=; it is dangerous... in fact, you should not do it... but it is a very good thing to take counsel with learned and holy persons@ (49).

By Aexperience@ Paul means vital contact with God in prayer (50). Without this kind of deep experience in prayer, the director cannot understand what God is doing in the soul. ABesides being very learned, he should also be a man of deep contemplation, while without experience the very deep and marvelous deeds which God works in the soul are not understood@ (51).

Learning is very important in a Director. But Paul is a realist too. He knows from experience that at times all these qualities may not be present in the one person. Hence he counsels Mrs. Lucretia Bastiani-Paladini: ATalk over your interior life with your confessor and hide nothing from him, if you do not want to be deceived by the devil. Take care however that he be a learned man, prudent and very good, if you can find those qualities in one man. If you cannot find a man with all these qualities, then at least let him be learned@ (52). And these words were written by Paul two years before he died. Early in his ministry he had already written to Agnes Grazi: AHow precious it is to deal with some learned, enlightened man@ (53).

In his realism Paul also knew that at times a person may not be able to find a Director. His answer then was that God will take care of that person. AI am sorry to hear that you are all upset because you have no director... I think that such distress is always born of our own self-love, which seeks personal satisfaction. The direction of the Holy Spirit is enough. I would be very happy if you had a holy and learned director; but if such a man is not available, be patient and remain very tranquil, as if you had one. God is enough. St. Theresa says that out of a thousand, hardly one good Spiritual Director will be found with expertise in the way of prayer and the whole spiritual life; and St. Francis de Sales says that we will hardly find one among ten thousand. Oh, how difficult it is to understand and to know how to speak about interior things! One who is a man of prayer and of doctrine will certainly find out by experience that God will give it to him.@ (54). This letter was written to Anna Maria Calcagnini of Gaeta in 1757. While Paul had first met Anna Iviaria in 1724 while preaching a mission in the Gaeta cathedral, their correspondence dates only from 1767.

VIII. SOURCES OF PAULACRUCIAN DOCTRINE ON SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

- a) THE CHURCH: Christ leads us through His visible Church to the Father. St. Paul of the Cross had a great sense of reverence and love for the Church and her Magisterium. In his spiritual direction he always appealed to the teaching of the Church and her sacramental action.
- b) HOLY SPIRIT: St. Paul of the Cross was keenly aware that the Holy Spirit is the first and principal Director of every soul. He guides us Ato all truth@(55). The need for the Spirit=s direction B as Paul understood it B emerges from the fact that the charity of the wayfarer is not yet quiescent but a motion toward the fulness of itself. St. Paul of the Cross was deeply

attuned to the Spirit and depended so much upon Him in the practical order, as is clear from the donal action of the Spirit in Paul. He prayed to the Holy Spirit before answering letters as well as asking for His light during the Spiritual Conferences. Paul had deep insight into the role of the Spirit as the efficacious memory of the Church B especially as regards the Passionist charism to keep alive the memory of Christ=s Passion.

- c) THE WORD OF GOD: The foundation of Paul=s wisdom in spiritual guidance is the Word of God. Writing to Thomas Fossi (now a Passionist) two years before he died, Paul said. AThe Spirit breathes where he wills and you do not know whence he comes or whither he goes= says Jesus Christ. As far as the trials and the suffocation you experience and talk about are concerned, I would like to know a little bit more about them. When St. Teresa lived, and other saints, and when their spirit was approved by one and disapproved by another, even by very learned men, how did they conduct themselves in this approval and non-approval? Were they distressed or not? We have the Sacred Scriptures from which all the theologians and moralists and mystics and dogmatic teachers and polemicists, etc., have drawn their works and have approved or disapproved the spirits as they have agreed with or disagreed with what God revealed and manifested in the Sacred Scriptures. Does your spirit harmonize with the written Word? They will also approve it there, since they read the Sacred Scripture and have read it. If it does not agree with your spirit, it will not be wise to approve what is not conformed to the Sacred Letters. However, you should not flatter yourself so easily that everything which happens to you is supernatural, since big mistakes have been made as even the Saints themselves have experienced, sometimes taking the illusion of the devil or of one=s own imagination for divine actions and lights, and they were not such@ (56).

The Word of God is the primary source of Paul=s spirituality. In all the letters of direction, we find the Word of God both explicitly and implicitly woven into his answers. Reading the Word of God and pondering it in his heart was Paul=s constant study (57). He had assimilated the Word of God so well that he used it instinctively in phrasing his sentences, both in letters and in conversations. He knew a great part of the Scriptures by heart (58). He told us that he meditated on God=s Word during sleepless nights (59), and there were many of them. In one instance he reveals that he was not able to sleep for forty successive nights.

Even in the few outlines of his sermons there are more than two hundred biblical passages with commentary. The implicit quotations are everywhere to be found in the letters. He had so deeply assimilated the Word of God by his attentive chanting of the Office, by his reading and pondering that he expressed the Scriptural message in a variety of ways. His faith in God=s Word and its power was profound. As he himself expressed it: AThey are God=s words and are imprinted more vividly on the mind of the hearers and give more spiritual nourishment and have greater power over souls@ (60).

The Old Testament preferences of Paul are the Book of Job and the Book of Psalms. In particular, the Psalms are the heart of his prayer, both personal and choral. To Father Joseph Andrew, Rector of Terracina, who was somewhat discouraged, Paul wrote: AEven if there are only two of you, never omit the choral Office because God will be glorified as if it were a thousand; and then He will provide abundantly for you@ (61). Paul had a tremendous love for the

Divine Office. It is interesting to recall that the only heritage Paul would accept was his Uncle=s Breviary, a symbol of his priorities, even in his younger days.

The New Testament preference of Paul was St. Paul the Apostle, his own beloved Paul as he referred to him. In the Apostle he found a kinship with his own vocation to suffer many things for the Lord (62). Our Founder discovered in the man from Tarsus the mystical value of death to earthly things and of a life hidden in faith; in him he found a man of zeal whom he could imitate. Again in his long Calvary of desolation, St. Paul of the Cross took consolation in the fact that he experienced with the Apostle what it meant to live again in exile after having penetrated the heavenly dwelling (63).

Paul of the Cross was also attracted to St. John the Evangelist. His mystical doctrine shows the deep influence of many Johannine themes drawn from the discourses with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and the allegory of the Good Shepherd.

The spiritual direction of Paul was always rooted in the Word of God which for him was a power unto life. So often his words of direction would begin with God=s Word as, for example: AOur loving Saviour told us in his gospel that whoever does not deny himself, carry his cross and follow Him, cannot be his disciple. All the saints who wanted to be true disciples of Jesus have continually studied this lesson and in actual fact have put it into practice@ (64).

d) The Eucharist

Paul=s personal Eucharist experience became a deep source of wisdom for him in directing others. The primary reality in Paul=s daily life (confirmed by his Spiritual Diary) is his encounter with Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the long hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. From his earliest years, Paul=s life had a strong Eucharistic orientation. As a young man he spent much time before the Blessed Sacrament (65). On Sunday mornings he would spend five hours before the Blessed Sacrament and another hour in the evening. His hunger for the Eucharist led his confessor to allow him daily communion, a practice not common in those days. Paul often expressed his desire to die as a martyr for the Blessed Sacrament (66). In the Eucharist Paul experienced the Sacrament of Christ=s Passion and this Eucharist-Passion motif characterized his whole life. Throughout his forty-day experience in the cell of Castellazzo, his emphasis on Communion and its effects reveals a union with the living Mystery of the Paschal Christ. Some of Paul=s Eucharistic experiences were mystical and deepened the light and wisdom of Christ in him. They confirmed the marvelous mystical light which shines forth from the Tabernacle. It is this Eucharistic light and wisdom which Paul shared so generously with those whom he directed.

e) Personal Mystical Experience

Paul himself had passed through all the stages of the mystical life and therefore could appreciate the difficulties and could guide other people with sureness. As a young man he had suffered much from unsympathetic and incompetent directors who failed to offer him the adequate guidance needed for one called to contemplation. Remembering this, Paul believed that contemplatives could not be properly directed except by one who had personal experience of such prayer. A priest once asked Paul to send a Passionist Father to help a person who was advanced in contemplative prayer. Paul replied: AAt the moment I cannot send you anyone. If I

can, I shall send one, but just now I have no one at hand who suffers from the same difficulty... Only those who suffer like things understand this holy experience...@ (67).

f) Mystical Authors

In his direction. Paul always echoed the best of Christian tradition B the great masters of the spiritual life. This doctrine of the masters came through especially when Paul wanted to encourage souls to ascend the heights of Divine intimacy or when he met opposition in those priests who did not understand the ways of the Spirit, or to assist those who were experiencing mystical darkness. Among his preferred authors were St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales and John Tauler, O.P.

Paul referred to the great Carmelite, St. John of the Cross, as the Amystical doctor@ (68) or the Aprince of the mystics@ (69). He advised a director of monks to Astudy St. John of the Cross@ (70). Paul himself made great use of St. John of the Cross to corroborate his own great aversion for giving too much importance to certain gifts of prayer. He also found St. John of the Cross a great help in guiding souls in the transition from meditation to contemplation (71).

Our Founder considered St. Teresa of Avila the special patroness for souls of prayer (72). He often used her metaphors to describe and characterize infused prayer.

Paul had an unusual command of the total doctrine of St. Francis de Sales. His peers tell us that as a young man, he taught them the way of prayer according to St. Francis and that he had a complete command of the doctrine. This was in Castellazzo before 1720 (73). While still a layman, Paul continued to teach the Salesian doctrine at Gaeta in 1728 (74). Paul=s great gifts of discretion and supernatural optimism were deeply influenced by the Bishop of Geneva (75).

John Tauler, O.P., the fourteenth century Dominican of Strasbourg ultimately became the great. influence in the life and teaching of St. Paul of the Cross. We know for certain that Paul was using Taulerian texts at least by 1751. His open predilection for Tauler was a very original approach for a modern mystic. During Paul=s time, Tauler was taboo because of his seeming nebulosness and the suspicion which Quietistic abuses cast on him. Paul read Tauler assiduously and recommended him to others. He reinterpreted and adapted some of the principal theses of Tauler in his own original way. The preferential themes which Paul chose from the Taulerian doctrine were the mysticism of interiority, the Adepth of Tauler@, the abyss of Divinity, the Divine Nativity and mystical death, nakedness of spirit, and the transcendence of forms and images. He reflected on all these themes and articulated them in his own language. As time went on, these themes became the principal thrust of his spiritual direction. It is also interesting to note that Blessed Dominic Barberi wrote a Mystical Discourse drawn from Tauler.

g) Spiritual Directors of Paul Himself

Among the Spiritual Directors of St. Paul of the Cross were the following:

- 1) his parish priest;
- 2) Bishop di Gattinara;
- 3) Father Jerome of Tortona, OFM. Cap., Guardian of the Capuchin Monastery at Castellazzo;

- 4) Father Columbian, OFM. Cap., of Genoa; St. Vincent M. Strambi described this director as Aa man full of the spirit of God and endowed with a rare talent for the direction of souls. Paul professed himself under deep obligation for the aid which this most worthy religious gave him, instructing and animating him to work courageously in the way of the Lord@ (76). And again: A...a great servant of God who by the great lights with which he was enriched, was well qualified to form a judgement whether the youth, who was presented to him, was guided by the Spirit of God@ (77);
- 5) Canon Cerrutti: Paul described this director in these words: AI have to inform you that two other ecclesiastics have joined us; and my former confessor, who is the grand penitentiary of our Cathedral of Alessandria, who used to direct my poor soul when I was a secular, sends me from Lombardy four other subjects examined by himself, and I can safely trust this learned servant of the Most High@ (78);
- 6) Don Tuccinardi;
- 7) Father John Baptist Daneo, C.P., brother of St. Paul of Cross who directed him until his death in 1765;
- 8) Father John Mary Cioni, C.P., who directed Paul from 1765 until his death in 1775.

Finally, it is noteworthy that Paul consulted women of extraordinary spiritual quality such as Lucy Burlini, Agnes Grazi, Anna Maria Calagnini, Sister Gerturde Gandolfi, Sister Cherubina Bresciani and Rosa Calabresi. He was aware that God can use any person to communicate his lights. And Paul certainly had read how St. Catherine of Siena and St. Theresa of Avila had exercised a spiritual maternity which was most fruitful for the Church.

Such then were the varied influences undergone by St. Paul of the Cross, all of which contributed much to the depth and finesse of his spiritual direction.

IX. TYPES OF PERSONS WHOM PAUL DIRECTED

St. Paul of the Cross began to preach before he received Sacred Orders, at the request of some Bishops. He also began to give spiritual direction long before his priesthood, especially to his family and peer group. Among the types of persons who sought his direction are the following:

- 1) *His own family*, especially his brothers John Baptist, Anthony and Joseph and his sisters Teresa and Catherine. Before leaving home he wrote a remarkable letter to his brothers and sisters. It is a compendium of directions for Christian living. In this letter he treats of the fear and love of God, frequent reception of the Sacraments and a method for receiving them, daily meditation on the Passion, recollection, devotion to Our Mother of Sorrows and the Immaculate Conception, devotion to the Angels and Saints, obedience and respect for parents, humility, fidelity to daily work and daily Mass, value of spiritual reading, spirit of penance, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and primacy of mutual charity (79).
- 2) *His Own Peer Group*: Paul had a profound impact on his peers as a young man. Through his example and influence, many of these joined Religious Orders (e.g., the Servites, Augustinians and Capuchins), while several others became diocesan priests.
- 3) *His Own Community and Congregation*: Paul formed his own religious all through his life by institutional direction (especially through his letters to Communities and the Congregation) as well as by personal direction (80).

- 4) *Many Cardinals* sought his direction: Cardinal Pallavicini and Cardinal Lanze (81); Cardinal Pallotta visited Paul every week, and Cardinal Zelada did the same (82). Cardinal Casali also sought his advice (83).
- 5) *Many Bishops* sought his advice on doubts and matters of personal conscience (84).
- 6) *Diocesan Clergy* (e.g., Don Lucattini) and *Religious* sought his counsel (85), and sought his help as they were guiding others.
- 7) *Many Nuns* asked for Paul=s direction, especially after he gave retreats in their convents. His letters to Mother Mary Crucified, the co-foundress of the Passionist Nuns, are a compendium of the Spirituality of the Passion for Passionist Nuns. Some of the Nuns who had permission to go outside the Convent would seek Paul=s direction at St. John and Paul in Rome (86).
- 8) *Laypersons*: Paul had a deep understanding of the universal call to holiness and guided many laypersons to a deep interior life. He directed men and women of ordinary tasks, and developed a spirituality of the family and for married couples. He directed the General of the Spanish Army (87) as well as soldiers of the German Army (88). One day Paul spent three days in a benefactor=s home, with people constantly coming to him for direction (89). He refers to some persons who had stupendous gifts from God and a very deep prayer (90). As St. Vincent M. Strambi noted, Paul Ahad numbers of persons constantly begging him for his spiritual counsel and direction in the affairs of their souls@ (91).

The physiognomy of these people was very complex. Paul could deal well with the sensitive-impulsive types such as his first spiritual daughter, Agnes Grazi (92) or Francis Appiani, who later became a Passionist (93). With equal ease he could direct the gentle-decisive types such as Lucy Bulini (94), Rosa Calabresi (95) and Maria Giovanna Venturi-Grazi (96). He knew how to guide the scrupulous-subtle type such as Thomas Fossi (97) and Mrs. Ercolani (98). Most interesting is Paul=s mode of direction for the firm type of person like the school teacher, Domenica Bravi (99). He also knew how to guide securely the balanced mystical. type of person like Mother Mary Crucified, the co-Foundress of the Passionist Nuns (100). Add to these the beautiful correspondence of Paul with Teresa Pallozzi (101) and the two nuns Bresciani (102) and Gandolfi (103).

X. PERSONAL QUALITIES OF PAUL AS DIRECTOR

Paul understood spiritual direction as an inter-personal dialogue in which the Director helps the directee to discern the motion of the Holy Spirit and to arrive at greater maturity in the theological life of faith, hope and charity. He saw the Director=s role as helping to unleash the hidden powers of the spirit within the directee by an ever-deepening docility to the Holy Spirit. Paul thus led them toward a deeper self-knowledge and self-acceptance and to a detachment from the ego and to find the actual Will of God (104).

What stands out most clearly in Paul is that he was an *Objectifier-Clarifier*. He never allowed vagueness to persist, never allowed vagueness just to be and to hang over a question or issue. We know that he was the sworn enemy of all vagueness and that is why he opposed Quietism so vigorously. In conferring with his directees B either personally or through mail B Paul sought to clarify ideas and issues. In conversation he would ask the person to articulate his or her experience of God. In writing to Sister Cherubina Bresciani he said by way of clarification: AWith regard to your prayer, it=s alright. The Lord teaches two lessons every day

to his servants, one of affliction and one of renewal... to make them humble and to make them strong. Don=t be over anxious about aridity which benefits the soul very much because it begets humility. Therefore don=t belittle yourself but be confident and make acts of love and resignation...@ (105).

Again, writing to the same Nun, Paul said: AThe delight you experience at Communion is mostly a sense-delight; don=t pay any attention to it. It is virtue which adorns the soul. And about those heart tremors which accompany contrition for your sins, suppress them if you can; if you can=t, cast them all into the fire of God=s love and remain at peace. In order to avoid deception, pay no attention to whatever may happen either at prayer, at Communion or any other exercise such as a kind of extraordinary delight, interior or exterior locutions, lively imaginings that produce pictures in the phantasy and so forth. You will know the true from the false by the effects which they produce@ (108).

Another example of clarification is found in a letter to Agnes Grazi:AYou say that a certain soul is visiting you and I say it=s not true; it=s your imagination. You say that you know her in God; I say that through charity we should all be united as in one single heart B but these other notions are not for you; pay no attention to them@ (107). Paul uses a theological explanation B union through charity B to offset the imaginative vision which Agnes thinks she has. It is Paul=s way of clarifying and putting a person=s spiritual experience on a solid footing.

In writing to Don Tuccinardi, Paul clarifies an issue by distinguishing between being in God=s Presence and *enjoying* God=s Presence. He writes: AThere is a big difference between *being* in God=s Presence and enjoying God=s Presence. Allow yourself to be deprived of every satisfaction and never look at the sufferings head-on; accept them with such resignation and joy in the superior part of your spirit as if they were jewels, as in fact they are. Ah, would that the loving and detached soul look neither at the suffering nor at the joy, and put her loving attention totally on her Beloved Good... What does it matter if the spirit is afflicted and that everything is in turmoil? The ship will never wreck as long as you do not lose confidence in that great Steersman who guides it to port. Therefore let your rest be a great labor. The one who is transformed into Jesus through love has no other place to rest save on His beloved cross... When will I glory in nothing other than you, most holy cross? *Mihi autem absit gloriari...*@ (108).

A final example of Paul=s power of clarifying is found in a letter to Sister Gertrude Gandolfi, a Franciscan Nun in Tuscany. Paul writes: AIn reply to your letter which I received yesterday evening, I must say that it always seems to me that your exterior conduct is in conformity with God=s Will and all the signs of it are good. This is true, but you have not explained yourself well. In fact, you have made several mistakes in your letter, e.g., that in the transforming divine embrace, the soul loses her being and lives with a divine being, who communicates his divine nature to the soul. That=s all an error, because the soul never loses its being. Rather, His Divine Majesty, in that divine embrace, unites the soul to Himself through love in such a way that it seems to be one spirit with Him (I Cor. 8,17), as St. Paul says, and he experienced this deeply... Be at peace but learn not to write or express such an error, which arises from your ignorance, without, however, any fault on your part. I know that the soul in certain transports of love speaks of mistakes, but never err in the faith@ (109).

From these few examples it is evident how concerned Paul was that matters of the spirit be expressed in as clear a way as possible.

Paul was a *knowledgeable* Director. He knew the things of the spirit. Paul felt that he never knew enough. He always kept studying. As he wrote to a secular priest of Rome in 1747 (110). To Sister Columba Gandoifi, whom he was directing, he wrote: "If you will write to me I will tell you what I have learned from the Saints and the spiritual masters" (111).

In a letter to Agnes Grazi so as to dispel the imaginary visions she thinks she is having, Paul emphasizes recalling God's Presence, Communion, prayer in pure faith, seeking only God and His glory. He writes: "I think that I know these things and that I have done some little study for the glory of God" (112). In a letter to the same Grazi, Paul distinguishes between goodness and holiness (113).

Paul was a *discerning* Director. He helped his directees to discern what the Spirit wanted. The Processes clearly attest to the great gift of discernment which Paul possessed. In a letter to Father Tuccinardi about one of his spiritual daughters, Rose of Gaeta, Paul wrote: "Her path in the way of the Lord seems to be good and without deception as the fruits are very good indeed" (114). Paul was insistent that the directee recognize God in all the events of life and not just in prayer, but in every action and reaction. He was keenly aware that God leads the whole person to Himself; hence, he had a holistic approach.

Paul *dependent upon the Spirit Himself* for help. Before answering a letter or giving direction, Paul always prayed to the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance. In all of his direction, he was deeply detached from the person he was directing, a detachment which came from his profound respect for the person. At one time he wrote to Agnes Grazi: "As regards your remark about being detached from me, believe me, it never entered my mind that you or anyone else could be attached to this mass of corruption. Thanks be to God, I walk with circumspection in this matter that I wouldn't know any more about it. And if it ever occurred to me that I had the slightest attachment to the souls whom I direct, I would not allow it to continue lest I rob the love which belongs to God alone. Believe me, I am extremely vigilant in this regard, for I seek only that the soul have a pure love for the Supreme Good and be completely stripped of all created things" (115).

The detachment which Paul practiced was not a negative thing; rather it was a detachment which opened him up to love. He received the person coming to him as coming from God alone. This attitude purified the natural eagerness which inclines one to take possession of another person. Paul made it clear at all times that the Director must be under submission to the Holy Spirit alone and that he was to meet the other person at the level at which God is uniting him to the other. When he was fifty-five years old he wrote: "I am an old man, and God has given me experience. Woe to the one who trusts himself, woe to the one who is attached, especially the unmarried women, to the Spiritual Fathers, and especially when the attachment is reciprocal. Farewell. Deliver us, O Lord. I have seen great things in spiritual persons who are too trustful of themselves; great falls, because they have not believed and put into practice this advice, etc." (116).

Christian detachment was for Paul of the Cross the true sign that everything was going according to God's way (117). Paul was like John the Baptist; he led men and women to the Bridegroom, and then stepped back out of the way. He formed disciples and then was willing to let them go...to Christ.

Paul would take no direction upon himself without a call from God (118). Detachment was for him, not repression, but a dynamic positive movement of perpetual opening of self to God and to others. It was his very detachment which made him so truly human (119). What ultimately made Paul so truly human and so utterly detached was his personal union with the Holy Spirit. "May the Holy Spirit illumine my mind so that I may give you assurance," he wrote to Agnes Grazi in 1740 (120).

Paul's direction of souls was always a journey into *freedom* — the freedom of Christ. He led men and women to serve God with a free heart. He never dominated people, His whole approach was to listen to the Holy Spirit not only in himself but also in the soul of the directee. Let us listen to his directives: "We spoke to the Reverend Prior about Rose and he is willing to accept her, but would have her come in November. She will have to make a novitiate (lasting about five years for women); this will allow time to test her vocation. I will write to her to pray about it, to seek advice, and then *to make up her own mind*" (121). On another occasion Paul wrote to a directee: "I want to leave your soul quite free to allow it to respond to the loving invitation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore I repeat what I've already written: Prayer must be made not in our way but in God's way." (122)

The Passionist Founder had a tremendous respect for such person as a unique mystery of God's creation. He was sharply attuned to the concrete history and interior dynamism of the individual. For example, he had to caution Thomas Fossi not to be passing on to others the direction he received from Paul: "A... don't give to others the direction I am giving to you. It does not fit them. The advice given for your interior life must not be used as a rule for others. We must give food to each one according to his or her stomach" (123). This directive shows Paul's great power to adapt himself to each person.

His direction was intimately personal because he realized that faith, because it is transcendent, is never actualized in the soul twice in the same way. Above all, he knew that there are varieties of graces in individuals and a variety of moments of grace. Each has his or her own special gift from God, his or her *kairos*.

Paul was a realistic Director. Keenly alive to the primacy of the First Cause, Paul always emphasizes GOD in the person's life. He takes the accent away from the self and focuses on the real world of the spirit.

Finally, Paul was a director with a critical spirit. The spiritual man who judges all things must first of all judge himself and not allow himself to believe by what he feels. Initially Paul distrusted locutions and visions. He did this from a motive of faith; God is beyond images and determinations. He also distrusted them from a motive of personal balance.

This kind of distrust is in the tradition of the great spiritual classics. Paul wrote: ADo not look for, nor love, nor desire visions, revelations, or other like favors; it is necessary even to tell them out of fear of being deceived@ (124). The passing breeze is not necessarily the Holy Spirit. Insomnia and an empty stomach sometimes are enough to conjure up enchanted phantoms@ (125). AMake nothing of that pang of love, absolutely nothing. What I want you to do is to live by faith. >The just man lives by faith,= says the Scripture@ (125).

The sure way for Paul as Spiritual Director is always the *Passion of Jesus Christ*, AThe sure way is faith: to pray with living faith and a continual remembrance of the Passion of Jesus@ (127). For the Passion of Jesus recalls the essential realities of life. Detachment from everything which is not God; refusal of consolations which are too rooted in the senses; abandonment to the Father=s Will; serenity; joy in the Lord in the midst of sufferings; patience; practical love of neighbor; these are all diverse modes of participation in the Passion and indicate the authentic in spiritual life. This is one of the essential points of Paul=s direction: AAlways bring to prayer some mystery of the life and Passion of Jesus Christ. If then, the Holy Spirit draws you into deeper recollection, follow the breath of the Spirit, but always by means of the Passion. You will thus avoid all illusion@ (128).

As Spiritual Director, St. Paul of the Cross could be all things to all persons. He had sympathetic understanding; he could accept the person without judging. He had the wisdom to relate articular problems to a broader context. He was a man who could yield to the action of the Spirit, forget himself and lead the directee to greater awareness that the Director is the Holy Spirit.

XI. PAUL=S METHOD OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

With a master=s sureness of touch, Paul directs souls at every level, both ascetical and mystical. At the beginning he usually suggested a general confession, as he did for Grazi, Venturi, Burlini, Bravi, etc. (129). Then he continued by way of Spiritual Conference or, where this was impossible, by way of correspondence. Paul also had recourse to Journal-Keeping, Rules of Life and even Poems of spiritual direction.

Spiritual Conferences

Paul taught that Spiritual Conferences were necessary Abecause we must not trust ourselves, so as not to fall into deceit...@ (130). He refused the direction of a person who could not write and was too distant to allow conferences (131).

In the Regulations of 1755, Paul wrote down his idea of Spiritual Conferences for his Religious and his observations are very enlightening. We shall summarize them as follows:

TIME: weekly or bi-weekly Conference with Father Rector or the Spiritual Father.

SENSE OF EXPECTANCY: Let them not be surprised if they are tempted to absent themselves on the score that they know what the Father must say or respond, because God is asking for HUMILITY in the members and gives efficacy to the words and grace to the Religious for putting what they know or feel into practice.

SEEK THE BLESSING: of the Rector or Spiritual Father before the Conference.

MATTER: when they experience INTERIOR ANXIETIES, DISTURBANCES OR ANYTHING WHICH TAKES AWAY PEACE OF HEART, let them go immediately and confer in order to obtain CALM immediately; otherwise they shall lose whole weeks and months without profit, since without that interior peace, either little is done or nothing at all or it is done carelessly.

OPENNESS: AEven though they had temptations against the person with whom they are to confer, let them not have any difficulty in telling him clearly, and let them be assured that it does not displease him; indeed he will have more love, seeing their candor, simplicity and confidence as long as they approach him with sincerity.@

MANIFESTATION OF INTERIOR: ALet them be sincere in conferring in detail about their interior, not brooding over some serpent in their heart without disclosing it.@

UNDERSTANDING AND ACTION: ALet them take care to understand well what is said to them, even more, let them endeavor to put it into practice, so as not to render the Conference useless.@

ATTITUDE AND APPROACH OF THE DIRECTOR: ALet them ENCOURAGE and HEARTEN all; let him OPEN HIS HEART to all and above all let him take care to instill in souls a GREAT TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD, because when these are lacking and when dejection sets in because of failures, they discontinue their efforts and fail to advance in perfection.

Let him do everything in his power to CALM INTERIOR DISTURBANCES, the grumbling of human nature, the complaints, unhealthy anxieties, the suspicions suggested by the devil against the superior and religious, so that they may remain in GREAT PEACE in order to undertake the practice of virtue with greater courage and spirit.@

Let him take care that the conferences do not become useless conversations, and that the Religious, under the pretext of a conference, do not go to him simply to have a good >gab= session, because in the end it will give way in murmuring or other considerable faults.@

CONCLUSION OF CONFERENCE PRAYER: ALet them both kneel and say the *Agimus tibi gratias*, etc. Let the Religious who had the Conference go before the Blessed Sacrament for a short time; let him offer himself to the Sacramental Lord, and resolve to observe what God is pleased to teach him, pray for His grace and help, declaring that he wants to become a saint in order to fulfill His holy Will.

Let the Religious go to his cell, ponder the teaching, write down what he must do to acquire that virtue or remedy that temptation or whatever else he will have heard.@ (132)

This rich method of Spiritual Conference which Paul specified so well for his Religious bore fruit also in his work of spiritual direction with those persons outside the Congregation who sought his counsel.

Paul would hold his Spiritual Conferences for those outside the community in the church, the sacristy, monastery parlor, convent parlor, in the confessional, in private homes of benefactors and even walking alone the street. We know that Lucy Burlini met Paul on the street one day and asked him for some direction for her spiritual life. While walking (Paul was in a hurry) he directed her to meditate on the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary. He told Lucy that she would reach that degree of prayer he had talked about some years before at Farnese, but not at this time.

The *time* which Paul gave for Spiritual Conferences differed greatly depending upon the person, the situation and the circumstances. He would confer with Bresciani every 50 or 60 days (133). He had a conference with Maria Lucattini two or three times a week (134). Rosa Calabresi saw him almost every day for about two months (135).

Journal-keeping

Paul asked some of his directees to KEEP A JOURNAL, in order to objectify in this way what was going on in their hearts. For example, he asked Agnes Grazi to keep a Prayer Journal: I am going on a mission near here and I shall be away until Lent. During this time I would ask you to write down day by day what happens in your prayer, and, if not every day, at least write down your deepest recollections, so that I can examine them, as your Spiritual Father, to see if there is any deceit or not. Up to now, everything is going well, thank God, and there is no deception.

In writing down what happens to you, you can say it this way: On such and such a day of this month, this happened to me in prayer, etc. Say everything very briefly as if you were writing a letter as if you were to your Spiritual Father, since there is no need to trust in yourself.

Write down the *desires* God gives to you, the *inspirations*, the *knowledge* and *understanding* God gives you in prayer, as if you were telling me in the confessional. During prayer, I do not want you to be thinking about what you are going to write down, but do it afterwards. It will be sufficient to write down the more special and extraordinary things; about other things you can give me general ideas about them as you do now. (136)

In this same vein, it is significant that Paul, in the 1755 Regulations for his Congregation suggests that after the Religious has finished his Spiritual Conference, he go to his cell, ponder the teaching given by the Spiritual Father. Then he suggests that he write *down* what he should do to acquire that virtue or remedy that temptation or whatever else he will have heard. (137)

This was another way Paul had to help the directee objectify what was going on in his heart.

Letters of Spiritual Direction

At the time of St. Paul of the Cross, spiritual direction by way of letters had become a literary form. Paul himself was naturally disinclined to take on letter writing. But circumstances, coupled with a sense of duty, called him to pursue this form of ministry. And he was very faithful to it. Paul wrote about thirty letters of direction every week and some of them would be equivalent to twelve or thirteen pages of our paper today.

Paul did not consider this work detrimental to his main apostolate of preaching missions and retreats and governing the Congregation. He engaged in this apostolate of spiritual direction by mail during missions, on journeys to and from missions, and often wrote late into the night.

Literary style was of little concern to Paul. The great power of Paul's letters stems from his own interior fire set aflame by the Spirit of God.

In reading a letter, Paul was not impressed by details but took the message as a whole. His replies were direct and expressed in swift language. He was usually faithful to the first intuition produced in him by the impact of his initial reading.

Paul asked his directees to write in a correct way, at least in an intelligible way. He wanted them to get right to the heart of things. Write only about necessary matters. Omit the superfluous things and useless affectionate language. I don't have time to waste (138). He wanted them to write clearly and simply; he expressed a desire for minimum correspondence.

Paul wanted Agnes Grazi to write to him every week. Paul wrote: I hope to give you more direction by letters than by word (139).

As an example of Paul's clarity and depth in letters of direction, we offer an outline of his first extant letter to Mother Mary Crucified, the Foundress of the Passionist Nuns. Paul was forty-seven when he wrote this, and Mother Crucified was twenty-eight. The direction contained in this letter is both by word and by examples from his own experience.

Paul speaks first of four areas regarding Mother Mary Crucified's life (she is still a Benedictine at this time).

1. PRIMACY OF GOD IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:

I see that the Divine Sovereign is doing HIS MERCIFUL WORK in your soul.
Paul expresses the graces of the spiritual life dynamically and evangelically as God's merciful work. For Paul, the Primal Agent in the life of the spirit is always God.

2. THE SOUL SHOULD CORRESPOND TO THE ACTION OF GOD:

How is Mother Crucified to respond? (You should correspond faithfully to His merciful action)

- a) HUMILITY - By humbling yourself ever more in your nothingness before His Divine Majesty.
- b) RENUNCIATION - Renouncing all these gifts and remaining in utter nakedness and nothingness.

- c) OFFERING HOLOCAUSTAL SACRIFICE - Aoffer a holocaustal sacrifice of all these gifts and put them in the thurible of your heart so that, enkindled by God=s charity, they may ascend as a fragrant incense before the Most High Majesty of the Supreme Good.@
- d) CONTEMPLATIVE GAZE ON GIVER - this renunciation enables the soul to remain in her true nothingness; she does not look at the gifts with attachment, but rather at the SUPREME GIVER, so as to become *enamored with Him*.@ (Paul emphasizes the need to look beyond the gift to the Giver). AIn this way the soul disposes herself for even greater graces.@

N.B. Paul concludes with a practical observation: ARead this point carefully because it will help you very much.@ He is pointing out the importance of fixing one=s gaze on GOD.

3. GUIDANCE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT:

AAbove all, let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit.@ HOW?

A) REMAIN IN YOUR NOTHINGNESS

B) OBEY THE INVITATION GOD OFFERS YOU

- totally immersed in God in HOLY SILENCE ;
- remaining totally absorbed in that DEEP, LOVING WONDER, CONTEMPLATING THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS;
- REJOICING in the DIVINE PRAISES;
- penetrated by *love and sorrow for the sufferings of Jesus*, etc. (Divine rebirth should be celebrated in the Crucified Word whose wounds are the most secure way of access to the Father).

4. NEED FOR PURE FAITH:

Atry to divest self of a too lively imagination, remaining in pure faith without images, because you will be able to walk with greater security. ADark faith is the sure guide of holy love! Oh, what delights, its certainly brings to my heart!@ (certainty begotten of dark faith and holy love).

PAUL SHARES HIS OWN NEEDS WITH MOTHER CRUCIFIED BUT IN THE PROCESS GIVES DIRECTION BY EXAMPLE

- a) POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD WORK PRESSURES AND CROSSES: AI always want to kiss them as precious pearls.@
- b) CHARITY IN JUDGING THOSE WHO AFFLICT HIM: Amy afflictions increase, both from the *fury* of the devil and from well-intentioned men.@ Charity in Paul is always delicate and strong; those who afflict him are >well-intentioned.=
- c) FEELING OF PERSONAL POWERLESSNESS COUPLED WITH RELIEF AND HOPE IN THE POWER OF GOD TO SUSTAIN HIM: AAnd if God does not give me great strength, I am afraid to remain under its weight; I mean that even my weak body will yield, and death will end everything. Therefore I hope that His Divine Majesty will welcome me in the bosom of His Divine mercies.@

- d) REALISM IN THE FACE OF FAILURE: SEES SELF AS OBSTACLE: AI see the work (i.e., founding of the Congregation) that has been born, but I also see that there is much evidence that it can die in its birth, because I do not see an opening so that the servants of God may come to be foundation stones to raise this spiritual edifice. However, it may be that when I, who am an obstacle, have been removed, His Divine Majesty will provide a way.@
- e) RESIGNATION AND ABANDONMENT TO GOD=S PLEASURE: AI am preparing myself for anything, and I simply resign and abandon myself to God=s Good Pleasure, ready to see this work done and undone, if God so wills it.@ This is a great sign of resignation and abandonment B his whole life=s work of 21 years B and a great example in action to Mother Crucified.
- f) SOMATIC EFFECTS OF DISTRESS AND PRESSURE: AMy heart is in such distress, that it seems that I have never been this way before, and it even weakens my body very much.@
- g) FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN DIRECTION: AI say all of this confidentially to my daughter in Jesus Christ; it is very fitting for the poor father to inform his own children of his needs.@
- h) POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD SUFFERING: AI gladly embrace so many troubles for the *love* of Jesus Christ.@
- I) INTERCESSORY PRAYER: by offering the Precious Blood and the Sorrows of Mary to the Eternal Father. He asks for prayers for himself, the Congregation and for vocations.

It is interesting to note also the way Paul expresses the purpose of her letters to him: Ato see how things are going in your interior life etc.@

Finally, Paul expresses his desire for Mother Crucified as her Director Athat Jesus fill you with His holy love.@ (140)

Another example of the depth and density of Paul=s letters may be found in another letter to Mother Crucified, written some thirteen years later in 1754. Paul is replying to a letter from Mother Crucified which in some way must have expressed the following problems:

- a struggle between health and sickness and she sees it in terms of playing games with her;
- afflictions of spirit and body;
- fears that God does not love her;
- fear of losing herself or any other thing;
- experience of her nothingness;
- wants proofs that she is serving God well;
- indicates some trials of her relatives and wants to know how to handle them.

PAUL=S REPLY in the form of direction is basically as follows:

1. ALLOW GOD TO PLAY HIS GAMES OF LOVE WITH YOU: Paul encourages her attitude that the Lord is playing games with her (refers to improved health) and gives a Scripture reference to the Lord playing on the earth and delighting in the sons of men. He concludes that the soul is fortunate who allows the Supreme Good to play His games of love.

Paul indicates the atmosphere for letting the Lord play His games with her:

- in silence of faith and love;
- abandoned to His Divine Good Pleasure, in health as well as in sickness, in life and in death.

2. **VALUE OF ESPOUSING GOD=S WILL IN SUFFERING:** Paul responds that the soul is fortunate who, espoused to God=s Will, cherishes the Bridegroom in naked suffering, within and without, resting on the heart of the Father and feeding on the Divine manna of God=s Will in spirit and in truth, tasting and delighting that it be fulfilled in every event, bitter though it be. Paul is pointing out that the highest degree of union with God=s WILL takes place when it becomes one=s very food B as in the example of Christ.
3. **SPIRIT OF FAITH** sweetens the bitterness, tempest and afflictions of spirit and body, which then become like joys springing from the bosom of love.
4. **VALUE OF USING YOUR MIND:** APonder these truths with mature reflection.@ There is no trace of quietistic tendencies in Paul=s teaching.
5. **POSITIVE DOCTRINE ON NOTHINGNESS:** ARemain in your dreadful nothingness, but let your nothingness disappear immediately into the INFINITE ALL, which is God. Immerse yourself there and remain there, always a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and in truth.@ Paul sees nothingness always in reference to attention to God, the Infinite All.
6. **MOTHER CRUCIFIED ASKED FOR PROOFS THAT SHE IS SERVING GOD WELL.** Paul, who has been directing her for seventeen years, suggests the following:
 - *Her constant stance:* Aalways be clothed for a feast@ (note the positive, joyful approach). HOW? ABe always clothed in your interior with the HOLY SUFFERINGS OF JESUS, Crucified and dead to every created thing and LIVING ONLY IN GOD.@ Note that death to self is for LIFE IN GOD. Note also the paschal character of this reference to sharing in the sufferings of Christ. AClothed for a feast@ suggests the Pauline theme of putting on Christ (Cfr. Romans 13:14). To be A clothed for a feast@ means in Paul of the Cross the HABITUAL REMEMBRANCE OF THE PASSION WHICH SERVES AS FUEL FOR ENKINDLING THE FIRE OF LOVE IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE. Note intimate link with spirituality of Baptism.
 - **DETACHMENT FROM EARTHLY THOUGHTS**, even trials of relatives. He tells her to recommend these matters to God and then set them aside and continue on in MYSTICAL DEATH to everything which is not God.
 - **UNCEASING PRAYER:** day and night, walking and standing, working and resting etc.
 - **PLACE** of such prayer: in deepest part of sacred interior desert, in deepest solitude, in loving interior repose in God, totally absorbed and lost in the sea of Infinite Charity.

- CONTINUAL HABITUAL SACRIFICE: Ayou should never abandon the holocaustal sacrifice of your whole being to the supreme and Infinite Good. (Note the continual, dynamic character of total self-offering). This sacrifice is made in the fire of GOD=S CHARITY, enkindled in that sacred bundle of myrrh, i.e., THE HOLY SUFFERINGS OF JESUS. All of this should be done with the door closed (Paul=s theology of cloister B >mystery hidden with Christ in God=) in pure and naked faith.@ Note how this sacrifice is intimately linked with God=s Charity manifested in the Sufferings of Christ.
 - SET ASIDE EVERY FEAR: Paul tells his directee to let all her fears, either of losing herself or anything else, to be consumed. But there is one fear *to be retained B* that PEACEFUL FEAR WHICH KEEPS HER ON GUARD SO AS NOT TO DISPLEASE THE BELOVED and enables her to avoid every occasion of offending Him. (This fear of offending God is the Spirit=s donal action of Fear.) But all other fears are to be put to death and consumed in the fire of love.
7. LIVE IN LOVE, LIVE ON HOLY LOVE, REMAIN IN YOUR NOTHINGNESS, ROB NOTHING FROM GOD. The only thing which belongs to you is your nothingness.
 8. INTERCESSORY PRAYER: for Paul, for the Congregation, for the success of his mission, for the conversion of all, that they will all abandon sin and contention and obtain true peace. Note that Paul says that this prayer must be Afrom the heart.@ (141).

Rules of Life

Paul often gave *Rules for Living* to his directees to assist them in their spiritual journey. We know for example, that he gave a Rule of life to Lucy Burlini. After an absence of three years he asked Lucy for an account of the Rules he gave her three years before. One of the rules he taught her was not to seek favors but rather to seek Acharity and humility@ (142). To Agnes Grazi, Paul gave regulations for her spirit (143) and also Rules for what he called a ADivine Monastery@ (144).

Poems of Spiritual Direction

On one occasion, Paul, because of his desolation, felt powerless to reply to Agnes Grazi concerning certain sublime mystical (mystical) poem which is a magnificent summary of the Spiritual Journey according to St. Paul of the Cross (145). In terms of the spiritual journey the poem might be summarized as follows:

TERM of the Journey the Father=s Heart.
 WAY of the Journey Jesus Crucified
 GUIDE of the Journey Holy Spirit
 LIGHT of the Journey Pure Faith
 JOY of the Journey Presence of God
 SUSTAINING POWER of Journey Hope
 PRICE of Journey Detachment and Crucifixion
 VISION during Journey Contemplation of Jesus Crucified
 RESPITE and SUPPORT during Journey Transpierced Heart of Christ

PRECIOUS PEARLS for Journey Sufferings of Christ
 REFUGE AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS Heart of Christ
 REFUGE AGAINST DARKSOME FEARS Mother of Sorrows
 WINE for the Journey Wisdom of Jesus Crucified
 SONG for the Journey Solitude
 CONVERSATION during Journey Prayer
Song at end of Journey in Heaven: AAlleluia@ and AHoly, Holy@

From this brief perusal of Paul=s method of direction, it is clear that his principal concern was to lead the person into an ever-deepening personal communion with Christ. All the methods used were Christ-oriented.

XII. MAJOR THEMES IN THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF PAUL OF THE CROSS

1) A Spiritual Journey

St. Paul of the Cross conceived the spiritual life dynamically as a journey, a >way of life= which he often described as the >royal way of the cross.= It is an interior journey to the Father within the soul (at its deepest point). The ultimate destination, the Father=s Heart, is attained only through the door of the AHUMANIZED WORD@ (146), i.e., Jesus Crucified. The true self B for Paul of the Cross B is experienced only through transformation into Jesus Crucified, whose Spirit clothes the self with the attitudes of Jesus before the Father. True transformation cannot be achieved by the self alone but only through the Spirit of Jesus Who is the Master, the Director of the interior life.

This journey of man to the Father takes place in this world. Man=s involvement in this world is not partial but local. But the Christian=s involvement in the world takes place from a new center which totally transcends the world. The spiritual man is therefore engaged totally in the world but from a center totally beyond the world. We live our spiritual, interior lives in the world but from a transcendent center. And that center is the Father transforming the world through His Son, Jesus, in the Holy Spirit.

2. Process of Journey

The spiritual journey bespeaks a three-phase process which St. Paul of the Cross describes in the biblical terms of MYSTICAL DEATH, DIVINE NATIVITY and NEW LIFE (147). The light which governs and guides this process B this ascent of Mount Calvary B is always the sapiential light of the Passion B Jesus Crucified. All of Paul=s direction flows from the perspective of the Passion.

Paul understands this three-phase process as three moments of the sublime dialectic of grace. This dynamic process progressively assimilates the graced person to God through his or her full transfiguration into the Incarnate Word, Crucified and Risen. The teaching of Paul of the Cross continuously and profoundly reechoes the great themes of Pauline theology:

MYSTICAL DEATH: The term Amystical death@ first appears in Paul=s writings in 1748, although he taught the doctrine before this time. He applies the term in various ways. First he used it to refer to religious vestition and profession. He defined it again as the Aparticular

dedication of one=s whole being to God.@ He also used the term to designate the highest degree of detachment from everything created. Finally he applied it to the life of pure love, the deiform life. We find its most profound expression in the document found in 1876 B AMYSTICAL DEATH@ (148).

For Paul, mystical death eliminates everything which is contrary to God=s Plan. It means death to what is not authentic. Paul expressed this purifying reality in a variety of ways in his letters of direction, e.g., as mortification, sacrifice, poverty, detachment, stripping, nakedness, renunciation, solitude, desert, silence, forgetfulness of self, etc.

The celebration of this death takes place for Paul in three phases; the first phase is:

1. Detachment from the External World

- a) This detachment frees the self from an inordinate love of created goods. This christian detachment is not flight from reality, in Paul=s teaching it is a positive experience. It is the constant offering of every created thing to God in order to glorify Him, to praise Him for having gifted our poor nothingness with that which is alone proper to his Son. In other words, this gift of detachment means the possibility of remaining in an attitude of continual self-donation of all one=s being to the Father and being sustained by the Loving breath of the Spirit@ (149).
- b) This detachment is also effected through the purifying action of sickness. In his direction, Paul conceived sickness as a great gift because it obliges one to remain crucified and to bear the wounds of Jesus even in the body (150).
- c) This detachment is also furthered, according to St. Paul of the Cross, by interior and exterior solitude which is such an essential facet of Paul=s spirituality. And this solitude finds its source and exemplar in the APassion-solitude@ of Jesus (151).

2. Detachment from Self (second phase of death-celebration)

- a) Mystical death frees one from self and actually interiorizes the process of death and touches the hidden zone of the person. As we face physical death, a three-fold process takes place: first, we resist; then we make a review of life; and finally, transcend it. A similar process can take place in mystical death. First we may resist it, then review our life and with God=s powerful grace transcend ourselves and accept it. Paul of the Cross helped many of his directees to face this kind of mystical death.
- b) Mystical death frees one from self by the willing acceptance of our nothingness. Paul envisioned this nothingness in a two-fold way. There is the nothingness of the creature in relation to God. When the fact of sin is added, Paul refers to that dimension as Ahorrible nothingness@ (152). When Paul speaks of Anothingness@ he is not speaking in a literal or philosophical sense. He is speaking in a scriptural sense as St. Paul the Apostle expressed it: if someone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Of ourselves we have only untruth and sin; absolutely everything else in our life is the merciful gift of God. The awareness of one=s nothingness in St. Paul of the Cross is not a

negative experience. It is the experience of truth and begets humility. This grace in turn leads one to forgetfulness of self, which overlooks second causes entirely. This is what Paul means when he uses the phrase: Annihilating everything in God.@ This forgetfulness of second causes is the characteristic element of mystical solitude and is a theologically sound truth. We find in Paul=s direction the constant effort to lead persons to accept their nothingness and to focus their full attention on God and others.

3. Indifference to the Gifts of God (third phase of death-celebration).

This form of mystical death means non-attachment to God=s gifts and is the most sublime form of mystical death.

Mystical death, then, for Paul, assimilates the person to Jesus Crucified. He distinguishes two degrees of mystical death. The first is total detachment and is a disposition for the second. The second mystical death is the immersion of self into the mystery of the Blessed Passion by means of a real change into the victim sacrificed B a work of the Holy Spirit. Paul=s direction of souls is always oriented toward that sacrificial transformation into Jesus Christ Crucified.

This doctrine of Paul of the Cross on mystical death is in perfect harmony with Christian Humanism. The only kind of humanism which Paul ignores is the kind which fails to accept the necessity of a redemption of created values Athrough the Cross and Passion.@

Divine Nativity

Death to self is never definitive in this life and the new life is never perfectly possessed. Therefore a constant rebirth to Divine Life is necessary. Divine rebirth is repeated on ever-deepening levels in proportion to the deepening action of grace and man=s increasingly unconditional surrender to the Spirit. The rebirth is mystical. It differs from the Eternal Birth of the Word in the Heart of the Father, and from the temporal birth of the Incarnate Word, when He assumed human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Divine rebirth renews both of these inasmuch as it reproduces in the creature the divine and human perfection of Christ in His Paschal experience. Paul expressed this reality in writing to the co-Foundress of the Passionists Nuns, Mother Mary Crucified: AYou must always be clothed in your interior with the most holy sufferings of Jesus, crucified and dead to every created thing and you must live alone in God...; live... in the love of holy love@ but Ain your nothingness@ (153). AMay you please God on the altar

of the cross, and there finish your dying with that mystical death of Christ which carries with it a new life of love, a deiform life, because it is united through love with the Highest Good@ (154).

The mystical Divine Nativity is the rebirth of the soul in the Word Crucified and Risen, the supreme model of perfection which the soul must imitate in order to be know and loved by the Father, as son and daughter in the Son. The human spirit must image the Word in order to be known and loved by the Father. The process is two-fold:

- 1) the rebirth of the *soul* in the *Word*: The Eternal Word, sent by the Father, returns to be reborn an infinite number of times in souls in order to communicate to them his own divine filiation (by way of adoption) and to share with them His trinitarian life. As Paul

writes: ARemain deep within your interior, in the profound knowledge of your horrible nothingness, because in this way the divine nativity of the Divine Humanized Word will be celebrated in your spirit in the silence of the night of holy faith and love@ (155). In order to celebrate this really, it is enough to Aopen the door of your heart@ because then the gentle Jesus will be born in you and the divine nativity will take place in your heart@ (156).

- 2) the rebirth of the *Word* in the *soul*: provided the soul dies more and more to self, because only in its >depth=, naked and alone, can the Father continue to generate the Son as He is, in all the ineffable light of his truth. This process of rebirth is conditioned by participation in those same vital operations which explain the Generation of the Word and the Procession of the Holy Spirit. Human participation in these two vital operations are called in Paul=s language: Apure faith and holy love.@ The soul is reborn in the bosom of the Father and becomes the living image of the Word, only by knowing and loving God as He knows and loves Himself. To the negative moment of mystical death, which assimilates one to Christ Crucified, there gradually corresponds that positive moment of Amystical divine nativity@ which transforms one into the likeness of the Risen Christ. The pure faith of Paul is a participation in the light of the Word, but always in the darkness of faith here below. Pure faith and holy love are then the positive conditions for a rebirth through which the soul, dying to self, is regenerated to the life of the Father in the Light of the Word and the fervor of the Spirit: Divine Nativity in the soul is the fruit of a pure faith in the power of Christ=s Resurrection (157).

New Life

The new life begins from the first instant in which the person, yielding to grace, dies to self and is reborn in Christ. Through innumerable rebirths (in their turn preceded by corresponding deaths, one more radical and refined than the other) the soul experiences ever-deeper union with God.

This new life is characterized by a personal relationship with the Spirit, the Son and the Father. All of Paul=s spiritual direction emphasizes the person=s intimate union with the All-Holy Three.

From the beginning of his direction, Paul emphasizes the *role of the Holy Spirit*. The human director simply helps the soul discern what the Spirit wants. The Holy Spirit is the guide of the spiritual journey (158): AThe Holy Spirit works in you the deep deeds of His eternal mercies@ (159). Paul directs persons to be disposed to receive the gifts of the Spirit in greater fulness (160), and he shows the way to docility (161).

In Paul=s mind, the ultimate role of the Holy Spirit is to fashion the soul into the likeness of Jesus. Paul saw his role as helping the person to follow the lead of the Spirit and thus be led to a vital experience of Jesus. Paul speaks of desiring to lead Agnes Grazi to the AHeart of Christ@ (162).

The experience of Christ is to be found principally in the Eucharist. In his own faith experience Paul emphasizes, for example, the *effects* of the Eucharist in his 40 day retreat. In his

direction of souls, he encourages a Eucharistic spirituality so that the person may be transformed into Christ (163). As he writes to Agnes Grazi: ATo taste Jesus truly is to immerse oneself totally in Him, to be transformed into Him through love and to become totally divinized. The gentle Saviour does this work in us...@ (164). He writes to Teresa Palozzi (a future Passionist Nun):AThe heart must always be a living tabernacle of the gentle Sacramental Jesus@ (165). Paul teaches his directees that in the Eucharist the soul is intimately united to the Divine Word, Who, in turn leads us to the heart of the Father (166). It is clear from his letters that the mysticism of Paul of the Cross is a nuptial mysticism.

The experience of Christ in the Eucharist leads souls into an ever deeper paschal life. In his efforts to lead souls into an ever deeper experience of Christ, St. Paul of the Cross always invoked paschal principles. Among the principles he invoked we would list the following:

- 1) IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU BOTH WILL AND ACCOMPLISHMENT. Paul was keenly aware on an experiential level that it is God who initiates the Paschal Mystery in the soul, a mystery contained in the Eucharist. For Paul the soul is the living tabernacle of Jesus because the Death and Resurrection of Jesus are made present in her.
- 2) A second Paschal Principle which Paul invoked for direction is the text of Philippians: ALET THIS MIND BE IN YOU WHICH WAS IN CHRIST JESUS@ (167). The Self-Emptying of Jesus is a cardinal principle of Paul=s spiritual direction. It is interesting to note that the Japanese Bible translates this as AJesus becomes nothing.@ The whole text is important to Paul; his Congregation recites it before each hour of the Liturgy of the Hours. This fact alone shows the deep faith experience Paul had of the total Paschal Mystery, and how important it was in his thinking.
- 3) A third Paschal Principle which Paul used constantly was: THE JUST MAN LIVES BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD WHO LOVED ME AND DELIVERED HIMSELF UP FOR ME. Paul realized in his direction of souls that faith gives the person a living supernatural awareness of his/her nothingness and sinfulness and at the same time a supernatural awareness of the Allness of God and His Loving Presence within us. Paul is the cantor of pure faith. To his directees he would write: AWalk in pure faith, in the Divine Presence, with loving attention to the Well-Beloved, without feeling it, without tasting His gentle presence and without understanding what it does. Strive for deep detachment in which the soul does not seek itself but God and rejoices in being crucified with Christ.@

AThe just person,@ Paul writes, A lives by faith because his life is God, and this good God finds him in the darkness of holy faith, which is for the person who loves, clearer than the day@ (168). Paul made clear in his direction that the interiority of the life of faith is linked to the way of understanding the word of the Cross as a sapiential principle. ABe interior men, and often call to mind that you have God within you! You are the temple of the Living God.@

- 4) A fourth Paschal principle of direction in Paul is the Pauline text: I BEAR ABOUT IN MY BODY THE DYING STATE OF JESUS. Paul sees this as the self-emptying attitude of the Paschal Christ B poverty, patience, obedience, charity, fidelity to the Will of the Father. The sapiential principle of Abearing about in my body the dying state of Jesus@ is found at the

source of Passion mysticism. In his direction, Paul emphasized the superiority of the Cross of Jesus over any gnosis of clear illumination or interior delight.

Through these Principles Paul led souls into an ever deeper experience of Christ. Christ in turn led these souls to the heart of the Father. In the spiritual journey Paul always emphasizes the relationship of the directee to the Father. The whole journey is a search for the Will of the Father. Abandonment to the Father is a key principle in Paul=s spiritual direction. In fact he envisions the spiritual journey at times according to three degrees of union with the Father=s Will: 1) resignation to the Father=s Will; 2) Abandonment to the Divine Good treasure; and 3) Union wherein one=s very food is to do the Will of the Father.

During the journey to the Father, with the Son, in the power of the Spirit, Paul centered on three particular areas which are meaningful in every age: the areas of PRAYER, SUFFERING (how we handle it) and HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS. Significantly Paul did not limit his direction to the prayer experience. He had a much more holistic approach to the person. In his direction, he always wanted to know how his directees handled difficulties and sufferings, and how they related to different types of people in their daily lives.

Prayer

Paul talked about the time one prays, how much time is to be given to it, where one prays, the subject matter of prayer, the method, the insights received, what affections come spontaneously, how the prayer life overflows into a person=s daily life and what effect it has on living. Paul also speaks about participation in sacramental life, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance.

Paul taught a simple prayer method to his directees. For example, he taught Thomas Fossi a method to help the lay people. He told him to use a book and not to depart from it (in leading the prayer of others) except for some sentiment of sorrow, resolution or virtue according to the state of the listeners. Encourage them in a few words to practice meditation, the presence of God and above all to fulfill the duties of their state of life.

Paul always taught a very simple prayer method. He could resonate with the Centering Prayer Form of today. Paul=s 40-day prayer experience as recorded in his Spiritual Diary has an important message for today. His basic message may be summed up as follows:

- a) Force yourself to STAY at prayer for the prescribed time;
- b) Expect temptations to run away from prayer;
- c) Expect temptations to shorten the time of prayer;
- d) Suffering-Prayer is a gift;
- e) Never leave prayer at such a painful time;
- f) It is necessary to pass through this Away of suffering in prayer@ (169).

Suffering

In his direction of souls, Paul was deeply concerned about how the persons handled suffering. His primary principle was to put the focus off personal suffering and look at Jesus Crucified and the sufferings of others. Attitude is very important in Paul=s thinking. The directee

should have some understanding about his/her suffering, his/her experience of human finitude, anxieties, day-to-day discouragement.

In his direction, Paul emphasizes union with Christ in His Passion and puts emphasis on Christ's sufferings and on the sufferings of others while forgetting one's own afflictions. This is a very important approach for us today; in our age of hypersensitivity to personal suffering, Paul sets it in a Christological focus.

In directing Thomas Fossi, Paul advises him on how to handle suffering. He writes: It is not necessary for you to look at your sufferings head-on, nor to philosophize on them minutely, nor to reflect so much on yourself to see whether the sufferings are lessening or not and taking complacency in them. Put these reflections aside and proceed in simplicity, loving the Will of God in everything and remaining at home under the Cross, without so many reflections and useless subtleties. When your mind wants to occupy itself with these reflections, cut them off immediately, because while you are reflecting on your trials, you are losing sight of the Supreme Good. It is better to remain on the cross without having any other knowledge. I don't want you to go on philosophizing whether the affliction is lessening or increasing, etc., or anything else, whether it's a good sign or not. You don't have to delay on these things, unless you want to direct yourself. Abandon yourself to the care of your Heavenly Father who directs us@ (170).

Paul encouraged his directees to seek consolation in suffering from the Scriptures. Reflect on God's word and don't think about your trials, little or big; don't desire them but love only purely the Divine Will in them, without any further thoughts...@ (171).

Human Relationship

Paul is very concerned with the way his directees relate to others. Is there an attitude of kindness, openness, patience, tolerance, cooperation or is there selfishness and manipulation? There comes into play here the whole Passion-attitude of Christ manifested in the virtues of patience, charity, humility. Paul constantly emphasizes the primacy of charity in the spiritual life.

Paul realized that daily relationships insert us deeply into the paschal mystery through the persons who in some mysterious way mediate the saving presence of Jesus. The people we deal with every day are our opportunity to die with Christ and to rise with Him in a life of unconditional and sacrificial love.

Paul gave the example in this way of >walking in love=. Under the pressure of intense opposition and persecution, he could only speak of his opponents as being >well-intentioned=. When the Congregation was maligned and persecuted, Paul told his Religious that the only response was prayer and penance. In his direction of others Paul always instructed them to forget their own hurts B to look beyond the second cause B and gaze upon Christ Crucified. His operational principle was the example of Christ during his Passion B *Jesus autem tacebat* (AJesus was silent@). He would counsel his directees to Ashow all charity and meekness toward your accuser, and think that she has done it for your good and with a right intention (172). Paul's immediate intuition in any untoward situation was the primacy of charity. He encourages his directees to look upon their accusers as Anoble instruments whom God uses to enrich your

soul@ with true humility of heart, patience, meekness and charity (173). What Paul was interested in with his directees was to foster an attitude in their hearts of genuine caring and understanding of others and forgetfulness of self. And this was always seen in the context of the Passion as the greatest manifestation of love.

CONCLUSION

It is according to these principles that St. Paul of the Cross led men and women to the Heart of the Father. Paul of the Cross is a Spiritual Guide who speaks to us today. He achieved an authentic human existence and development by his intimate participation in the Passion-Mystery of Christ, and he assisted many others in pursuing the same goal. He gave the example by surrendering his life to Christ Crucified and thus pointing out to others the ALamb of God.@ Open and docile to the Spirit, Paul taught those whom he directed a true wisdom B a wisdom which comes only from the Glorious Wounds of Christ.

B SILVAN ROUSE, C.P.

NOTES

1. Cfr. Pope Paul VI, Letter to the Vicar General of the Passionists on the Second Centenary of the Death of St. Paul of the Cross, October 14, 1975.
2. Ibid.
3. Lettere II, 497.
4. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, ADirection Spirituelle@, vol. 3, col.1002-1214.
5. P. Irenee Hausherr S.J., ADirection Spirituelle@ - AChez les spirituels orientaux@ in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, vol. 3, col. 1008-1060.
6. Charles Berthelot du Chesnay, ADirection Spirituelle en Occident@ - III. Du 17e siecle a nos jours - in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, vol. 3, col. 1134.
7. *Rite of Penance*, Introduction *10.
8. Lettere I, 24.
9. Lettere I, 176.
10. Lettere I, 632.
11. Lettere I, 177-178.
12. Lettere II, 7.
13. Lettere II, 275.
14. Lettere I, 147.
15. Cfr. *Fonti VIVE*, Glugno 1956, No. 2, pp. 252-253.
16. St. Vincent M. Strambi, *Life of Venerable Paul of the Cross I*, p. 45.
17. *Ibid*, I, p. 68.

18. *I Processi di Beatificazione e Canonizzazione di S. Paolo della Croce*, Roma 1969, Vol. I, POV, 384v.
19. Marcel Viller S.J., *La mystique de la Passion chez St. Paul de la Croix* in *Recherches de science religieuse* XL (1951-52) pp. 426, 428.
20. Joseph de Guibert S.J., *Le Journal de retraite de S. Paul de la Croix* in *Revue d'Ascetique et Mystique* VI (1925) pp. 26-48.
21. John G. Arintero O.P., *Lettere di San Paolo della Croce* in *Vida Sobrenaturel*, 1927, p. 286.
22. Gaetan du Nom de Marie C.P., *St. Paul de la Croix. Apotre et Missionaire* (Tirlemont Belgique) 1933, p. 187.
23. Divo Barsotti, *L'Eucarestia in San Paolo della Croce e Teologia della preghiera* Ricerche di storia e spiritualita Passioista, Roma, 1980, No, 18, p. 24.
24. *Spiritualita della Croce* (Antologia di profili e testi spirituali - a cura di Carmelo A. Naselli C.P., vol V (1967-1976), ECO - S. Gabriele 1980, Prefazione, p. 7.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
26. DB 2201-2268.
27. T.K. Connolly, *Quietism* in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, McGraw Hill Book Company, New York, 1967, Vol. XII, p. 26-28; Eulogio Pacho, *Quietismo* in *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Spiritualita: Edizioni Studium* Roma 1975, Vol. 2, p. 1552-1556.
28. John Tauler O.P., *Spiritual Conferences*, translated and edited by Eric Colledge and Sister M. Jane O.P., B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Missouri, 1961, p. 233.
29. L.J. Cagnet, *Jansenism* in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. VII, pp. 820-824; Eulogio Pacho, *Giansenismo* in *Dizionario enciclopedico di Spiritualita*, vol. 1, p. 840-845.
30. Lettere I, 551.
31. Lettere I, 277.
32. Lettere II, 472.
33. Lettere III, 804.
34. Lettere III, 704.
35. Lettere IV, 101.
36. Lettere II, 497.
37. Lettere I, 740.
38. Lettere IV, 101.
39. Lettere I, 256.
40. Lettere I, 932.
41. Lettere I, 706; Cfr. III, 214.
42. Lettere I, 142; 154; 206; 115.
43. *AGuida Per d'Animazione Spirituali della Vita Passionista, Regolamento Commune del 1755* a cura di F. Fabiano Giorgini C.P., Roma 1980.
44. *Op. cit.* p. 28, Reg. 3. *188-192.
45. Lettere I, 177.
46. Lettere I, 723.
47. Lettere I, 723.
48. Lettere I, 149.
49. Lettere I, 608.
50. Lettere II, 496.
51. Lettere II, 496.

52. Lettere III, 592.
53. Lettere I, 162.
54. Lettere III, 804.
55. *John* 16:13.
56. Lettere I, 819-820.
57. S.I. 492, 39; 592, 58; POR 1158v.
58. POR 1056.
59. POR 1055v.
60. POV 818.
61. Lettere III, 259-260.
62. POR, 1034.
63. POR 1146.
64. Lettere I, 33-34.
65. PA 130.
66. Lettere I, 14.
67. Lettere II, 830.
68. Lettere I, 808.
69. Lettere III, 157.
70. POV 43v; Lettere III, 157.
71. Lettere I, 144, 423, 808; II, 501; III, 540.
72. Lettere III, 716, 743; IV, 40, 156.
73. PA 202v.
74. PC 269v; Lettere I, 64.
75. S. 2, 681; 40.
76. *Life of Venerable Paul of the Cross* (St. Vincent Strambi) I, P. 52.
77. *Op. Cit.* I, p. 68.
78. *Op. Cit.* I, p. 52-53; Lettere II, 235.
79. Lettere I, 53-57; *Words From the Heart*, pp. 52-57,
80. Cfr. Lettere III, p. 340-341, p. 624-25; IV, p. 222-295; V, 192-193; 221-223; 253 and 256-258.
81. POR 1687v.
82. POR 1687v, 1688v.
83. POR 1688v.
84. POR 1690v.
85. POR 1690v.
86. Cfr. Lettere II, 288-331. Cfr. *Letters of St. Paul of the Cross to Mother Mary Crucified*, translated and annotated by Rev. Silvan Rouse C.P., 37 pages.
87. POR 1696v-1697v.
88. POR 1697v.
89. POR 1698r.
90. Lettere II, 276.
91. *Life*, I, p. 190.
92. Paul directed Agnes Grazi for 14 years. We have 165 letters of Paul to Agnes.
93. Francis Appiani was from the Isle of Elba. Paul directed him from 1733 until he entered the Passionist Congregation. There are 22 letters.
94. Paul directed Lucy Buriini for 40 years.

95. Paul directed Rosa Calabresi by mail the last ten years of his life. He met her personally only two months before he died.
96. Maria Venturi-Grazi was the sister-in-law of Agnes Grazi. She lived a very holy life as a laywoman.
97. Thomas Fossi was a wealthy married man whom Paul directed for 38 years. After his wife died, Thomas became a priest and later joined the Passionist Congregation. There are 172 extant letters.
98. Signora Ercolani was a doctor's wife and a great benefactor of the Congregation.
99. POR 2027ff.
100. We have 32 extant letters of Paul to Mother Mary Crucified.
101. Lettere III, 354-414.
102. Lettere I, 436-526.
103. Lettere II, 439-523.
104. Cfr., *Sacramentum Mundi* - An Encyclopedia of Theology edited by Karl Rahner with Corneilus Ernst and Kevin Smyth, Herder and Herder, Vol. 6, ASpiritual Direction@ by Friedrich Wulf, pp. 165-167.
105. Lettere I, 436-39.
106. Lettere I, 442-443.
107. Lettere I, 136.
108. Lettere V, 21.
109. Lettere V, 182.
110. Lettere II, 253.
111. Lettere I, 487.
112. Lettere I, 100.
113. Lettere I, 302.
114. Lettere I, 75.
115. Lettere I, 149.
116. Lettere I, 580.
117. Lettere I, 178.
118. Lettere I, 149.
119. Lettere I, 312.
120. Lettere I, 256.
121. Lettere I, 69-70 (Italics mine).
122. Lettere I, 113.
123. Lettere I, 763-764.
124. Gaetan du Nom de Maria C.P. *op. cit.* pp. 174; 188.
125. Lettere III, 237.
126. Lettere I, 437.
127. Lettere I, 443.
128. Lettere I, 791.
129. Enrico Zoffoli, C.P., *S. Paolo della Croce Storia Critica*, III, p. 353.
130. Lettere II, 511.
131. Lettere I, 595.
132. *Regolamento di 1755* - *129-137 and 193-195.
133. Lettere I, 449.
134. POC. 454
135. POR 2008v; PAR 2243.

136. Lettere I, 121.
137. Regolamento di 1755, n. 137.
138. Lettere I, 290.
139. Lettere I, 303.
140. Lettere II, 288-290.
141. Lettere II, 291-293.
142. Lettere II, 828.
143. Lettere I, 177.
144. Lettere I, 189.
145. Lettere I, 259-261; Cfr. I, 485.
146. AVerbo Umanato@ is a favored expression of Paul.
147. E. Zoffoli, *op. cit.*, vol III, pp. 607-901.
148. Lettere V, 9-17.
149. Lettere I, 306, 270; II, 72.
150. Lettere I, 277.
151. Lettere I, 278, 508; II, 509. Cfr. Silvan Rouse C.P., ASolitude in the Christian Mystery and in St. Paul of the Cross@ (Institute of Passionist Spirituality - Rome, 1981).
152. Lettere I, 471, 804; III, 761.
153. Lettere II, 292.
154. Lettere II, 306.
155. Lettere II, 297.
156. Lettere II, 299.
157. Cfr. M. Bialas C.P., APartecipare alla potenza della sua Resurrezione. ARicerche sulla presenza del Cristo risorto nella mistica della Passione in S. Paolo della Croce.@ Roma 1978.
158. Lettere III, 804.
159. Lettere V. 175.
160. Lettere II, 307.
161. Lettere II, 520; III 378, 419, 606; IV 97.
162. Lettere I, 283.
163. Lettere I, 295-297.
164. Lettere I, 140.
165. Lettere III, 360.
166. Lettere II, 466-467.
167. Philippians 2:6-7.
168. Lettere I, 472.
169. Lettere I, 9.
170. Lettere I, 542.
171. Lettere I, 543-544.
172. Lettere III, 295-296.
173. Lettere II, 296-297.