

A Search into the Origins and Evolution of the Charism of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette

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This study was done to obtain my Licentiate in Spirituality from the Gregorian University. The reaction of a number of community members who read it led me to believe that it would be worthwhile to have it duplicated and made available to those interested. There is little that is new in these pages, but the material has been pulled together and presented in a perspective that is new— the search for our charism.

This is the first step in a projected doctoral thesis on the subject of La Salette spirituality. I would greatly appreciate your observations, questions, corrections and remarks with regards this present study, and also any suggestions for the further research and writing.

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August, 1976

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INTRODUCTION

The call for the renewal of religious life sounded by the Vatican Council in the decree, *Perfectae Caritatis*, and further spelled out in Pope Paul's Motu Proprio, *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, emphasized three areas of concentration: 1) continuous return to the sources of all Christian life, 2) return to the original inspiration behind a given community, and 3) an adjustment to the changed conditions of the times. (1)

This study will concentrate on the original inspiration a given congregation, The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, "a Religious Congregation dedicated to the apostolate...made up of priests and brothers...that strives to be a sign of the grace of reconciliation offered to all by Christ and vividly recalled by the Virgin in her apparition at La Salette." (2) It is a Congregation of simple vows devoted to preaching missions and retreats, conducting shrines and centers of devotion to Our Lady, working in foreign missions, caring for parishes, doing ecumenical work, and directly youth groups and those called to the priestly and religious life. The Congregation is unique in the Church. It is the only male congregation that owes its origins and very reason for existence to a Marian apparition and draws its title from that apparition. (3)

The Congregation was founded as a society of diocesan missionaries by the Bishop of Grenoble in 1852. It became a diocesan religious congregation in 1858 and in 1879 the Laudatory Decree from Pope Leo XIII raised it to a Pontifical Institute. It gained Roman approbation in 1909 and received the definitive approval of its Constitution in 1926.

From a Grenoble-bound band of sixteen members in 1879, the Congregation grew during the next ninety-six years to its present status of 900 members, 685 of whom are priests, including four Bishops, three native Madagascans and one American serving in Burma until 1976. The Congregation is constituted of eight provinces, three vice-provinces and three mission regions. It has residences in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Poland, Spain, England, United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, the Philippines, Madagascar, Burma and Angola.

This study traces the origins, development and growing self-understanding of the Congregation as reflected in its history and official documents, especially Constitutions. There have been other and more detailed histories of the Congregation, both published and unpublished. (7) This present work organizes, synthesizes, and presents the same material, but from the specific perspective of highlighting the original, founding spirit and its progressive expressions. This study also takes the chronicles one step further by examining the movement towards renewal within the Congregation, the Special General Chapter of 1968-1969, and examining the new Constitution that emerged from that Chapter in relationship to the tradition of the Congregation.

The chapters follow an historical division: One, 1846-1852, treats of the Apparition and the Bishop calling together a band of diocesan missionaries; Two, 1852-1858, deals with the society moving towards an identity as religious; Three, 1858-1879, traces the attempt to define and give definite direction to the Congregation and also achieving Pontifical status; Four, 1879-1926, gives a quick overview of the rapid expansion of the period, the persecution in France, the influence of Roman directives on the evolution of the rule, and finally, Roman Approbation; Five, 1926 - present, touches upon the further growth in numbers, works and places, but concentrates primarily on the renewal work of the last fifteen years and the new Constitution. The Conclusion pinpoints the theological questions that arise within such an evaluation: areas needing further study and development; fidelity or infidelity to the traditions; and finally, the value of this type of work as seen within the context of the charismatic structure of the Church emphasized by Vatican II. This study, while complete in itself, is meant to contain, indicate and facilitate the direction for further research.

(Most of the sources used in this study are in French. In view of possible use of this material by readers unacquainted with French, I have translated all direct quotations.)

CHAPTER ONE: THE ACT OF LOVE AND A CONCEPTION (1846-1852)

The Apparition

On the afternoon of September 19, 1846, the mundane was flooded for a moment by the light of a special charismatic intervention as Our Blessed Lady appeared to two shepherds, a boy and girl, in the breathtaking setting of the Alps near La Salette in the diocese of Grenoble, France. Englobed in light she appeared in tears, delivered her message through tears, ended with the words, "Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people," and then departed after repeating the commission.

Her message, with prophetic echoes, dealt with a people unfaithful to God and the consequent punishments. It also contained a call to repentance, prayer and fidelity with consequent blessings. She began her discourse with an invitation, "Come near, my children, be not afraid. I am here to tell you great news." With the children standing near she continued:

If my people will not submit, I shall be forced to let fall the arm of my son. It is so strong, so heavy, that I can no longer withhold it.

For how long a time do I suffer for you. If I would not have my Son abandon you, I am compelled to pray to Him without ceasing; and as to you, you take no heed of it. However much you pray, however much you do, you will never recompense the pains I have taken for you. (1)

She then complained of the profanation of Sunday, of blasphemy. She said a spoiled harvest had been unheeded warning and now there would be famine and children dying. And yet, there is hope. "*If they are converted, the stones and rocks will change into mounds of wheat, and the potatoes will be self-sown in the land.*" A sign of conversion is prayer. "*Do you say your prayers well, my children? ...you must be sure to say them well, evening and morning. When you cannot do better, say at least Our Father and a Hail Mary; but when you have time, say more.*" She lamented that men ignore Mass or go to Mass "*only to mock at religion,*" and during Lent "*they go to the market like dogs.*"

The message ended with the words, "*Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people,*" repeated as she turned from them and was absorbed into a great light.

Mary at La Salette did not ask for a church to be built in her honor. She did not ask for a specific devotion to herself. She asked only one thing, that her message calling people back to God be made known to all her people. That very evening the message that had been spoken through material tears in Alpine isolation began to echo with the message and pilgrims began or spread through the little village. From the village the mountain side began to echo with the message and pilgrims began to flock to the site of the apparition. One year later, on September 19, 1847, there were 50,000 pilgrims at the mountain to pay homage to the gracing that had taken place there. (2)

Concomitant with the growing popular devotion there was also an extremely stringent investigation of the apparition being conducted. (3) Perhaps no apparition has been so scrutinized both civilly and ecclesiastically. After five years of silence on the matter, Philibert de Bruillard, Bishop of Grenoble, gave his approbation to the apparition on September 19, 1851, in a very lengthy document. "**We judge that the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin to two shepherds, Sept. 19, 1846, on a mountain in the Alps, in the parish of La Salette...shows all the signs of the truth, and the faithful have grounds for believing it indubitable and certain.**" (4)

A Shrine and a Diocesan Congregation

By 1851 the site of the apparition was being thronged with pilgrims. They were being ministered to by the Fathers Perrin, the pastor of the village of La Salette and his priest brother. The Bishop planned to build a church to serve the site and he was also considering the idea of a society of diocesan missionaries to serve the new sanctuary. He asked one of his vicars, Father Rousselot, one of the principle investigators of the apparition, to prepare a report on the possibility of such a society. In part, Rousselot's report suggested that:

The new sanctuary could be served in the summer by ten or twelve missionary priests, forming a diocesan congregation completely dependent on the Bishop, and joined to the Cathedral Chapter. Summers they would exercise ministry on the mountain; winters, they would give missions in the diocese. ... The missionaries would be drawn from diocesan clergy. A religious body is not dependent enough on the Bishop because they are not under his command; the services religious can render are evident in many cases; but, in many situations and especially with regards to this work, they would be less helpful than a body of diocesan missionaries. (5)

This led the Bishop to seek out men to undertake this task. (6) After much consultation and persuasion, three men eventually emerged: Fathers Burnoud, Sibillat and Denaz. The group provides an interesting combination of gifts: Burnoud, "an excellent administrator"; Sibillat, "one of the better preachers among the clergy"; and Denaz who has the "reputation of being very holy." (7)

The Bishop named Burnoud superior and one of the first things he did was draw up a rule. This first rule was actually an adaptation of the rule of the Missionaries of Lyons, called Chartreux because of the section of the city where they were located. (8) The Bishop gave his approval to this rule on March 5, 1852. The following are excerpts from this rule:

1. The Community is made up of clerics in sacred orders.
2. It has the Blessed Virgin as patroness, under the title Our Lady of La Salette.
3. The associates profess complete obedience to the Bishop of Grenoble. They will always be disposed to carry out whatever ministry he will give them.
4. The primary and principal end of the Missionaries of La Salette is to aid the pastoral ministry by missions, retreats, etc. ...It is because of this that they have the title of Diocesan Missionaries. They will also be given the care of the shrine of La Salette. They can also be given the direction of minor seminaries and of teaching youth, either in seminaries or regular schools.
9. ...An aspirant is admitted as a novice for a year. During that year, he will observe regular life with regards to prayer, obedience, and all the exercises of the priestly life. At least one month before the end of the first year, if he perseveres, he is to ask for admittance to the vow of obedience for three years.
16. ...Since the members do not make the vow of poverty...they will strive to embody the spirit of evangelical poverty ... and avoid the spirit of the world and manifest simplicity and poverty appropriate to apostolic men. (9)

On March 5th, the same day the Bishop signed the above rule, the first two missionaries, Burnoud and Sibillat, made to the Bishop a "temporary promise which will commute into a vow at a later date, to live and to work in conformity with the spirit and rule of our new vocation (here belongs an illegible word) as diocesan missionaries of our Lady of La Salette." (10)

On May 1, 1852, Bishop de Bruillard officially issued his Mandate declaring the construction of a church at the apparition site and also the establishment of diocesan missionaries. It is an important document in the history of the Congregation, looked upon as the "Charter of Foundation." (11) It merits being quoted at length.

However important be the erection of the shrine, there is yet something still more important, namely the ministers of religion destined to look after it, to receive the pious pilgrims, to preach the word of God to them, to exercise towards them the ministry of reconciliation, to administer the holy sacrament of the altar, and to be to all the faithful, dispensers of the mysteries of God and the spiritual treasures of the Church. These priests shall be called the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette; their institution and existence shall be like the shrine itself, an eternal monument and perpetual remembrance of Mary's merciful apparition.

These priests, chosen among many, are to be the models and helpers of the clergy of the cities and countryside...They will remain on the mountain during the pilgrimage season; and during the winter they will preach the gospel in the various parishes of the diocese.

It is therefore a band of diocesan missionaries that we are instituting at present. ...These missionaries will undertake the work that is beyond the scope of the religious groups that we have called and welcomed and from whom we have received such eminent service in the diocese. ...Hopefully these missionaries will soon be numerous enough so that the parishes of our diocese can enjoy every few years the inestimable benefits of a mission. Other dioceses already have such a valuable advantage.

This group of missionaries is like the seal that we want to affix to the other works which, by the grace of God, has been given us to accomplish. It is, in so many words, the last page of our testament; it is the final legacy that we wish to make to our beloved subjects. It is a living legacy that we want to bequeath to each and every one of our parishes; we want to be remembered in your midst through these worthy men, who, in speaking to you of God, will remind you to pray for us.

...This society of priests, destined to become your powerful helpers, and who have sacrificed themselves and their advantages for the future and embrace the poor, difficult and strenuous life of the apostolic man, have a right to your generous support and that of the parishioners.

...The Blessed Mother appeared at La Salette for the whole world, who can doubt it? But she appeared also in a special way for the diocese of Grenoble, which is going to benefit in two ways: a new shrine to Mary and a band of diocesan Missionaries. These two works have become possible only because of the Apparition and they will eternally perpetuate the memory of the apparition. (12)

Foundation for the Original Spirit

It is within the Mandate and the primitive, derivative rule that we first look for elements that can aid in the discovery of the "original spirit" or the "spirit of the founders, as also...the particular goals and wholesome traditions which constitute the heritage of each community. (13)

The rule is not very distinctive. It names Our Lady of La Salette as Patroness and sees the care of the shrine at La Salette as one of the ends of the Society. But its "spirit" is simply that of apostolic men, drawn basically from the first end noted, the "mission apostolate." But this cannot be seen as distinctive either, since missions were very popular and effective in France in this period and not something new. (14) And contrary to what is stated in the rule, the missionaries did not get involved in the teaching apostolate till 24 years later when they opened their first apostolic school in 1876.

The Mandate is richer than the rule. There is distinctiveness in that it sees Our Lady's apparition at La Salette as the very source of the Congregation's existence, "...possible only because of the apparition." One of its very reasons for existence is to serve as "a perpetual remembrance of Mary's merciful apparition." The Congregation is therefore a Marian society, not only because it has Mary as Patroness, but because Mary's apparition at La

Salette is the very source and inspiration of its foundation. It originated as a diocesan congregation, but distinctively Marian, specifically, La Salette.

The end is the apostolate, but here differing from the rule, the shrine work is listed first and the preaching of missions second. Yet the Bishop seems to put the greater emphasis on the mission apostolate, especially in reference to this being his gift to the diocese. It is from this apostolate that the group received the title “missionaries,” and not from the work in the foreign missions, as many mistakenly believe.

Finally, like the rule, the Mandate also stresses the spirit of “apostolic men.” The men are to serve as “models” for other priests, which indicates a call to a certain intensity of apostolic qualities. But there is nothing here to denote a distinctively Salette spirit. This would emerge only with time and reflection upon the “founding event,” the apparition itself.

Founder

(There is a note added on the notion of Founder at the end of the booklet...p.70. I will add it after the present entry and before the Conclusion.)

It is important here to deal with another aspect of these first years, the question of “founder.” “Founder” is not a simple term. One may well ask, founder of What? Of spirituality? Of the religious institute? (15) Some authors have given descriptive definitions that seem to capture what the Council had in mind when speaking of the “eminent men and women” from whom religious groups arose. (16) Such individuals were first of all moved in a unique way by the grace of God, a charismatic gifting eventually leading to the creation of new religious congregations or reformation of existing ones. “Often during a retreat or at moments of unusual prayerfulness, a profound urge to effect reforms, renewal and adaptations” stirred within these individuals and “they brought together others who were also eager for love of God and of man, and thus gave to the Church new ways of practicing the counsels or of saving and sanctifying souls, as well a new inspiration illuminating the practice of the traditional vows.” (17) The greatest among these were figures who not only called a group together but “elaborated its constitutions, developed its spirit, nourished its spirituality, and particularized its purposes and ministries.” (18)

For the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, Bishop de Bruillard, who issued the above Mandate, has often been called the “founder.” (19) And yet, a commission report for the Special General Chapter of 1968 noted: “Who is our founder? We are a bit embarrassed when someone asks us. What are we to do now that the Church orders us to rediscover his charism?” (20)

The first difficulty is that the Bishop did not found a religious congregation, as exists today, but rather a diocesan group of missionaries. The Congregation’s publication, *Reconciliare*, built a case in its December, 1966, issue arguing that the Bishop had intended to found a religious congregation. The position was supported by a recently discovered letter from the archives of the Grenoble Chancery, dated Nov. 8, 1852. The letter is signed by the five priests who were missionaries at that time and is addressed to the Bishop with regards a suggestion he had made at their recent retreat.

We have all given serious thought before God to the proposal which your Excellency made to us at the beginning of our retreat. In general, we would all be inclined to take the vow of poverty for two reasons: first, because voluntary poverty is a more perfect state, and for that reason, more pleasing to God; secondly, because it would certainly be a most effective means of stabilizing your undertaking...

It has not been foreseen that there would be a vow of poverty when our rule was drafted. Should your Excellency grant us that favor, it would be necessary to revise these rules. ...Please do not think that we are trying to obstruct the implementation of the proposition you so kindly made to us, your Excellency; on the contrary, we dare say that its realization is our heart’s most sincere and ardent desire. We have studied the event

of the apparition with too much care, and it seems to us too patently divine for us to fail to see all the hope and promise it contains for the extension of God's kingdom and the salvation of souls! We even believe that your Excellency's idea, which idea we have fondly nursed for several months, surely comes from heaven, whose merciful plan will not be fulfilled until the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette are organized in a strong and lasting manner. (21)

The question may well be asked if the fathers are speaking of establishing religious life or merely discussing the possible organizational proposition that would guarantee them a certain independence from the Bishop in terms of financial support. The terms "religious life" or "religious community" are never used. As indicated in their first rule, they had already made the promise of obedience, but there is no mention here of the vow of chastity.

The fact remains that in the Mandate the group is called "diocesan missionaries." It is the designation given in Rousselot's report cited earlier and it is also the term used by the Bishop in a letter to Father Denaz on March 5, 1852, where he writes about "establishing diocesan missionaries under the name of Our Lady of La Salette." (22) Explicitly the Bishop called together diocesan missionaries and was not founding a religious congregation.

There is the further question of whether the Bishop himself was the author of the Mandate, the "Charter of foundation." On Sept. 11, 1864, Rousselot was at a Sunday reunion of the missionaries.

He told the fathers that he had thought of the Missionaries of La Salette a long time before they existed. So that in 1852, when he was dealing with the matter, Bishop de Bruillard being sick, he, Fr. Rousselot, put down in the mandate for the laying of the first stone of the Shrine of La Salette, the ideas that are there concerning the foundation of the Missionaries, and the Bishop did not change a word of it. (23)

Furthermore, the Bishop retired and was replaced on May 7, 1853. From all documentation, it appears that he had little or nothing to do with the group after that time.

From the above facts it would appear false to look upon Bishop de Bruillard as the Congregation's "founder" in the dimensions envisioned by the calls to renewal which look to the founder as a source for understanding the spirit of a Congregation. The phrase "canonical founder" may apply, or perhaps the most apt formulation is that of Father O'Reilly:

Bishop de Bruillard, by virtue of his Mandate of May 1, 1852, laid the foundation of what after, without his being able to clearly foresee it at the time, developed into a genuine religious congregation, first of diocesan rite, then of Roman jurisdiction, thus not only fulfilling his original expectations and hopes, but going far beyond them. (24)

(Note, found on page 70 of this booklet☺)

Father Novel of the French Province, who translated this work into French, reacted to the conclusion of this section that Bishop de Bruillard should be considered "founder" simply in the "canonical sense." His observations have made me realize that I did give too little value to the actual role of the Bishop in our foundation and I would like to remedy that by presenting the following summary of Father Novel's observations.

The founding of the Congregation can be seen as the crowning point of the Bishop's whole pastoral response to the Apparition. He had been investigating, meditating and promoting the Apparition. He had seen the center of pilgrimage grow and pilgrims coming from his diocese, from all over France, for all of Europe. He had officially declared the Apparition as authentic; approved devotion to Our Lady of La Salette; allowed La Salette to be preached and the consequences of the message to be spelled out. He was convinced that La Salette was a great gift to the Church and meant to endure and be passed on. The erection of the Shrine would assure some permanence, but the Bishop felt there was something more needed. He needed men who were going to preach

the message – men to be called and sent – real apostles and missionaries. And this is why he called together his band of priests. He wanted to share with them his convictions about the Apparition and his awareness of the spiritual fruit produced from it. His conviction of the grace of La Salette was transmitted to these men, not by a written rule or by spiritual writings, but by the very title he gave them – Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. This title gave them the Apparition of La Salette as their heritage and indicated to them that the apparition was their charism, the source of their inspiration, their book of life.

Because of this Father Novel concludes that Bishop Philibert de Bruillard is indeed the Founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette and his Mandate of May 1st, 1852, is its “charter of Foundation.” While giving the Bishop his proper place in the process, Father Novel and I nevertheless agree that the basic source for reflection on our inspiration and charism is the Apparition itself, to which the Bishop himself has joined us.)

Conclusion

The origins of the Congregation do not provide us with a “founder” nor a distinctive Salettine spirit. Cardinal Tisserant quite accurately described the beginnings when he wrote:

The La Salette institute...is not born of the aspirations of a soul in search of a particular way of life not of a new form of apostolate. It is born of an administrative need, a necessity, the Bishop of Grenoble had to provide spiritual assistance for the visitors to La Salette. (25)

The initial thrust was an apostolic one. Some of the works undertaken in these first years have remained a part of the Congregation’s apostolate, the preaching of missions and caring of shrines, for example.

The most important element of the period, however, is the linking of the society directly to the Apparition of Our Lady of La Salette. The apparition thus becomes truly the “founding event” without which this Congregation would never have been called into existence. In these first years the apparition was the source for part of their apostolate. The men were responding to the final commission of Our Lady, “Well, my children, you will make this known to all my people.” In the years to follow, the apparition would also become the fount for a specific Salettine spirit, one drawn from meditation on the words and signs contained in the apparition. The link between the Congregation and the apparition is an absolutely essential one. The seeds sown by the Bishop would eventually develop into a real “perpetual remembrance of Mary’s Merciful apparition.” As the Bishop Waffelaert of Bruges once remarked to one of the Missionaries: “For me, the greatest proof of the apparition of La Salette is your Institute.” (26) This link, from the beginning, is the gift of this first period.

CHAPTER II: GESTATION AND BIRTH (1852-1858)

From 1852 to 1858 the Diocesan Society of Missionaries struggled for its identity and eventually became a Diocesan Religious Congregation. The years have a public face and a private one, both worth exploring in an attempt to reach the “spirit” of this period. The public face includes the works of the fathers and the “official” facts of their evolution. The private face deals with the fathers struggling to create a religious congregation, but caught in their own conflicting views. This conflict resulted in an impasse that was resolved when the Bishop gave the group a rule and pressured them to make a decision for or against committing themselves by vow to the Congregation. The rule that accompanied this major step is extremely valuable and its examination will bring the study of this period to a close.

Public Face

The first three missionaries, Burnoud, Sibillat and Denaz, were joined in the fall of 1852 by Bonvallet and Archier. Twelve others would join the group during this period of six years Richard in 1853, Chavirier, Berlioz and Albertin in 1854, Bossan in 1856, and Boisson and Petit in 1857. Only six would take vows on Feb. 2, 1858. These men were subject to Bishop Ginoulhiac, a distinguished theologian who succeeded Bishop de Bruillard on May 7, 1853. (1)

These dedicated men lived in a wooden cabin and endured many hardships on the mountain. (2) They were “busy with confessions, preaching, correspondence and religious exercises. “ (3) Added to all this was the very practical work of overseeing the building of the church. These pioneers greatly impressed those who came into contact with them, as can be seen in Similien’s book, *Pèlerinage à la Salette*, (4) and in the praise showered on them by Bishop Ginoulhiac on Feb. 4, 1855, when he dedicated the chapel of their residence in Grenoble. (5)

The message of Our Lady was spreading. The Fathers preached throughout the diocese and the shrine became an attraction for pilgrims from all of Europe. In 1854, on the anniversary of the apparition, there were people from Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, England, Scotland and Germany attending the devotions. It was also the occasion of the visit of Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham, England, whose visit resulted in one of the first books on La Salette written in English. (6)

Private Face: Struggle for Definition as Religious

There can be no doubt that the men who joined the Missionaries were full of zeal and deeply devoted to Our Lady of La Salette and her message. But behind the scene difficulties abounded. The group wanted greater stability and autonomy in view of more effectively pursuing their work. With this in mind they began exploring the possibility of becoming a religious congregation.

This desire of becoming religious is intimated in the letter of Nov. 8, 1852, quoted in chapter one. It is again hinted at in the letter of Oct. 15, 1853, from Burnoud, the superior of the group, to the Bishop dealing with the question of poverty and asking for a master of novices for the group. (7) But the most famous document is Denaz’s letter to the Bishop dated Aug. 4, 1855. It is usually cited as the first, clear, definite manifestation of the fathers’ desire for religious life. Unfortunately Denaz died before the missionaries took their first vows. His letter is valuable because of the link he makes between his desire for religious life and his understanding of Our Lady’s apparition. In part his letter reads:

My choice and my desire is for religious life with the three temporary vows, but with the hope and intention of eventually making perpetual vows. ... The motives which move me are:

1 – I am convinced that Our Lady of La Salette wants a congregation which will be related to the importance and the extension of the work for which she herself laid the foundations on the mountain of La Salette, Sept. 19, 1946 (sic). Consequently, she wants a congregation which has in itself the conditions for a life and continuance which would allow it to spread beyond the limits of the diocese which is the center and cradle of the congregation; it should have branches everywhere...

2 – The Congregation of Our Lady of La Salette can only offer these conditions for continuance and extension if it has the basis of the vows of obedience, poverty, etc. ...

3 – The purpose of the divine Messenger was to offer specific remedies to the evils of society. If I am not mistaken, the evils that are eating away at society are: avarice, sensuality, and rejection of all authority. The missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette should therefore oppose these by voluntary detachment, a mortified and penitential life and absolute obedience – virtues which can only exist to perfection in the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. (8)

In response to the letter the Bishop told the group to wait. But the fathers were getting impatient. Burnoud, the superior, had been working on a rule and saw the taking of vows as a step that would facilitate the approval of his rule. It must be noted that his rule was formed under the influence of a “visionary” of the area, Rosalie Prodeau, called “la Solitaire.” (9) Burnoud was also getting nervous because there was tension in the group because of his sister who was at the mountain helping to care for the pilgrims. She looked upon the other missionaries as servants more than as missionaries and took it upon herself to command them and treat them as inferiors. (10) Although she was a dedicated soul, the fathers had no great fondness for “la Grande supérieure” and asked the Bishop to demand her departure. When the Bishop wrote to Burnoud about the matter Burnoud fired back with a list of conditions which he demanded if he was expected to stay with the missionaries: that his rule be approved, that he be allowed to keep his sister, and that Sibillat be sent away. (11) The Bishop followed through by assigning Burnoud elsewhere. From the start, therefore, obstacles were put in the path of the faltering steps towards religious life.

At the departure of Burnoud, Chavier was named superior. His term was a short one, only six months. Chavier also wanted the society to become a religious congregation with a rule distinctly its own. Strangely enough, the rule Chavier was proposing also came from a “visionary,” Adele Chevalier, a postulant in a community of religious women who were at La Salette. “She believed that she had received a revelation, and that under the guidance of the Holy Virgin, she had written a rule for the religious women of La Salette and for the Missionaries.” (12) Chavier incurred the displeasure of the Bishop when he pronounced that the rule of Adele was a revealed one and that he approved of it. Undoubtedly because of the strange circumstances surrounding these proposed rules, the Bishop became more adamant in not granting his approval and in delaying the granting of vows.

In May, 1856, Archier was appointed the new superior. The choice was not well received by the fathers and conditions got worse. We get a vivid description of the situation from Bossan’s notes, which he kept from the time he joined the missionaries in September of that year.

I arrived at La Salette at the beginning of September, not knowing what the situation was – troubled, clashing, scandalizing conduct of missionaries greatly divided – complaining about each other, criticizing one another. Everything was kept mysterious by everyone, no one wanted to tell me a thing, not even to let me know what was going on; they all seemed like people who put up with one another only with reluctance. Since the arrival of Fr. Burnoud in 1852 things have always declined and gone from bad to worse ... they have neither rule nor regulation except for a little daily routine ...I find that everything is just about as bad as it could be. (13)

Basically the problem was in the manner that each member perceived the congregation taking. “The missionaries have never been able to agree concerning the end and the rule. Each wanted things his way and no

one wanted to make concessions. Everybody believed himself called to make this foundation personally and regarded the others as obstacles.” (14) As early as winter of 1855, Burnoud called the missionaries together to discuss the rule he was working on. They had not been able to come to any conclusions about the end of the group and Sibillat exclaimed, “By dint of searching for an end we ended up losing our heads.” (15) The fathers were actually divided into little camps. Chavier and Albertin claimed that the Adele rule was revealed and was what the Virgin wanted. Berlioz, remaining faithful to Burnoud’s ideas, said the Virgin’s will was revealed to “la solitaire” and that the Virgin wanted them to follow the rule of the Third Order of Francis. Bossan had his own ideas that he had been nurturing for some time about a congregation to be composed of missionaries, religious women and teaching brothers. The new superior, Archier, displayed the sanest position. He held that the rule would evolve little by little through the cooperation of the Bishop, the Bishop’s vicar, Fr. Orcel, and the missionaries. (16) Unfortunately Archier did not have the strength of personality to bring this attitude effectively to the group.

As superior of this factioned community Archier encountered strong opposition. Berlioz saw him as a disagreeable rival; Chavier and Albertin as an informer to the Bishop; Sibillat as a zero; and Bossan as a man without energy or a will of his own. They all viewed him as a puppet of the Bishop and had little respect for him. (17) The situation was so trying that Archier asked to be relieved of the position, but Orcel, the Bishop’s vicar and also the former spiritual director of Archier, encouraged him with the words: “The more a tree is buffeted by the storm, the deeper it sinks its roots in order to grow with more vigor.” (18) Serving as Superior General for two separate periods, covering 22 years in all, Archier guided the community through some of the most flourishing years of the congregation and history has proven him to be a much greater man than his confreres of this period considered him. (19)

In an attempt to be of help to the group and its struggles, Orcel wrote an interesting letter to Archier in June, 1856, where he gives a very sound principle. “See a bit what experience will teach you and then after consultation with your confreres ... propose to the Bishop the results of your reflections and your experience.” (20) The principle is sound for evolving a rule, but the problem was that the situation in the group militated against any real exchange and any merging of vision and experience. As Bossan observed, “There are as many factions as there are individuals.” (21) Each member, with the best of intentions, was unfortunately tunneled within his own vision. They were individuals obsessed with their own ideas and ideals and it was their zeal that was actually frustrating their own goals. The foundation work eventually pass out of their own hands and into the hands of the Bishop.

During the fathers’ retreat in Feb., 1857, the Bishop read some ideas from a rule he had been working on at the time. It was not warmly received. In April the Bishop gave Archier a rule to present to the group for consideration. Again the reception was negative. The end result was that their reputation in the eyes of the Bishop was losing its luster. Bossan reports that in the summer of 1857 the missionaries were viewed by the Bishop as “mud, imbeciles, big children who don’t know what they’re doing.” (22) It had been the Bishop’s desire to stay out of the situation and allow the group to evolve on its own in terms of its vowed commitment and the definition of the commitment by rule. When it became apparent that this was not going to happen, Bishop Ginoulhiac sent the missionaries a letter on Oct. 8, 1857, calling for a definite decision by the following Feb. 2. “I believe that the taking vows for a year would definitely establish the community. These vows are to be taken no later than Feb. 2nd. On the same day ... the community will be constituted in conformity to the prescriptions of the rule.” He then added a little clout to his message, making his meaning clear. “You are not unaware that there are religious groups who would be happy to be given the work of La Salette. I do not believe that would be the will of God, nor the intention of Mary; nor is it what I want.” (23)

On January 27th the fathers gathered for retreat. On the first evening Orcel explained the nature of the vows they would be taking, that they would not be strictly vows, but rather should be considered as the beginning of a serious novitiate. They would be only for one year and then would be reconsidered. (24) On Feb. 2, 1858, six missionaries took vows at the hands of the Bishop: Archier, Berlioz, Albertin, Buisson, Petit and Bossan.

Chavrier and Sibillat did not. With these vows the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette passed over from a Diocesan Institute to a Diocesan Religious Congregation with a rule given them by their Bishop.

These Vowed Men and the “Spirit”

From the point of view of “spirit,” it must be observed that the rule of 1852 was inadequate to elicit a strong unity among these early fathers. This rule did not clearly enough define a spirit or give an end. As Bossan observed, “Priests who came to be missionaries came without knowing what they were going to do. No one had a determined end.” (25) It was a period of gestation, a gestation towards the beginning of identity; almost like an amorphous grouping seeking its shape and face, but being defeated by constant inner distrust, the critical spirit, the lack of exchange, all these elements reflect the fact that the Congregation definitely emerged from the community of sinners as well as the community of saints.

The men involved should not be faulted for their attitudes. They were men extremely dedicated to their own vision. Time merely proved that they were not gifted with the charism of being part of the “founding group.” Many of these men, even after leaving the group, continued to be strong supporters and promoters of the message of La Salette. Sibillat, for example, under the independent and personal title of “apostolic missionary” made La Salette known to remote regions where years later devotion to Our Lady of La Salette still existed due to his work. (26)

Of those who joined before 1857, only Archier remained a member of the Congregation till his death. This would certainly remove these men from being considered the “core group” of the Congregation. A “core group” is one which draws from its shared experience and vision in order to shape a rule and life style that incarnates this and gives an identity which future members can recognize. It would appear that the only man whose “spirit” played a role was Archier, “a man of humility, great obedience and fidelity to Church authority, of rare flexibility of character, of tremendous zeal.” (27) As mentioned earlier, his influence, although rather undefined, was to be felt for many years as he steered the congregation through its early growth.

The 1858 Rule and the “Original Spirit”

If the period does not yield a treasure trove of “spirit sources” within the men themselves, it certainly does offer a great wealth in the rule that was given to the Missionaries, one that did not evolve from the group itself, but was drawn up by Orcel and signed by Bishop Ginoulhiac. (28) This rule contains the foundation for future rules and also the basis for the evolution of a distinctively Salettine spirit and character. The text is almost word for word that of the rule the Bishop gave Archier in April, 1857.

The first notable aspect of this rule is the explicit link between the Missionaries and the apparition of Our Lady, “the marvelous event to which they owe their origin and which name they carry.” (29) The missionaries are defined with reference to the apparition, both in terms of the work they are called to do and the type of life they are to live. “The missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette should view themselves as the Messengers of the Queen of Heaven, called upon to spread and make known to men, even more by their example than by their words, the divine warnings that She Herself deigned to bring to earth.” (I, 1) Their specific work is again ministering to the pilgrims of La Salette and preaching missions in the diocese and elsewhere, but they are “useful missionaries” III, 6) with a special mission, “to multiply and spread the fruits of the apparition.” (VI, 1).

Their spirit, which in the earlier rule was simply that of apostolic men, is now drawn specifically from the “words and acts of the Blessed Virgin appearing on the holy mountain” and is a spirit of “prayer, zeal and expiation.” (IV, 1) Each of these attitudes is understood and motivated by the light of the Apparition of itself. The missionaries will be primarily men of prayer, not only like all priests should be, but more so. Moved by the complaints of the Blessed Virgin and the blindness of guilty men, they will strive in union with this divine

Intercession of sinners, to hold and to appease the arm of Jesus Christ so justly angered, and also lead the faithful to this salutary practice. ...

Secondly, men of zeal, entrusted with the task of awakening sinners to their fatal negligence, and to make them aware of the warning brought from heaven by the merciful Mother. They will teach forcefully and soundly all the Christian truths, but they will especially insist on the practical points contained in the divine warnings, which have a character singularly applicable to the present evils in Christian society, and which cannot fail, in the heavenly plan, to have a special quality to touch and convert men.

Thirdly, men of expiation, by their prayer and by their zeal. Their whole lives cannot be anything else than one of great austerity because of the difficulty of their ministry. Nevertheless, in order to respond in a definite way to the moving invitation and to the tears of the Blessed Mother, the missionaries of La Salette will distinguish their days, their weeks and months by some light sacrifices. ...In constantly practicing this self-abnegation...they will truly be victims of expiation, always in the state of efficaciously beseeching with Mary grace and mercy for poor sinners. (IV, 2)

We have in this rule the ingredients for a distinctive Salettine identity in work and spirit. The distinctiveness arises from using the apparition as the source of understanding and inspiration. The “founding event” has taken a new dimension in this rule, it no longer serves merely as the occasion for the existence of the Congregation, but it serves as the source of its mission and the shaping of its spirit. The distinctiveness is also symbolized by the prescription that the missionaries will wear the crucifix of Our Lady of La Salette, fashioned after the one she had on her breast during the apparition with the hammer on the right and the pincer on the left. This crucifix “will remind them without ceasing of the end and spirit proper to their vocation.” (I, 4) (30)

Finally, it is worthy of note that the rule says the congregation will expand “more or less as Providence directs them.” (I, 3) History will prove these words to have been prophetic.

Conclusion

The period of gestation was a very difficult one. The men who made up the diocesan society of the missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette were not graced, apparently, with a “founding charism.” It is not possible to see their lives as the source of inspiration for the distinctive character of the religious congregation that was born, with the exception perhaps of their devotion to Our Lady of La Salette and their dedication to making her message known. The Rule of 1858, imposed from outside the group, does provide, however, a source for examining the primitive spirit. This rule explicitly links the congregation to the apparition for its work and its spirit or life style. Because of Our Lady’s message the missionaries must be men of prayer, zeal and expiation. Although this formula seems clear and will reappear in later rules, at the moment it was still merely a written text, and as the following period will demonstrate, reality was quite another matter.

CHAPTER III: INFANCY TO ADOLESCENCE (1858-1879)

With the Rule of 1858, the religious Congregation was born. The following twenty-one years, the infancy and beginning of adolescence, were fraught with all the problems inherent in groping for identity.

The period brought the Congregation into relationships with three Bishops: Bishop Ginoulhiac, who remained in Grenoble till 1870 and became rather distant and cool towards the Congregation; Bishop Paulinier, from 1870 to 1875, who was more encouraging and urged the fathers to formulate a new rule; and finally, Bishop Fava, who took over in 1875 and who really gave the impetus that led to the drawing up of a new rule and eventually gaining Roman recognition.

The Congregation itself evolved in many aspects during this period. A novitiate was established; lay brothers were admitted to the community and given a rule; (1) the periodical, *Annales of Our Lady of La Salette*, was inaugurated; the Chapter of 1876 gave the Congregation a specific end and spirit in a new rule; an apostolic school was opened in 1876; a call to the mission of Norway was accepted; and finally in 1879, the Congregation received the Laudatory Decree from Rome which established it as Pontifical rather than Diocesan. Throughout all this activity one person dominated, Father Sylvain-Marie Giraud, the most widely known member of the La Salette Congregation and the one most responsible for the productive interaction that characterized the last half of this period.

Giraud Enters a Community in Conflict

In November, 1858, Giraud, twenty-eight years old, arrived at La Salette. Ordained in 1853, he had been a professor at the minor seminary in his diocese of Aix-en-Provence and was renowned as a preacher and a man of holiness and learning. (2) In January, 1857, he had expressed his growing interest in religious life, having considered the Jesuits, the Marists, but finally giving the Capuchins his most serious attention. (3) During the summer of 1857, however, he made a retreat at the mountain of La Salette. He approached the retreat with a sense of expectancy. "I glimpse that my vocations going to be decided on the mountain of Mary's tears." (4) His premonition was confirmed for he wrote at the end of his retreat, "the answer to my poor prayers...the Blessed Virgin, my good Mother, wants me to become a missionary of her tears and sorrows. I have never been so deeply convinced...Finally all my incertitude is ended." (5) His Bishop would not release him until the following year.

When this gifted and deeply spiritual priest arrived at La Salette, he entered a situation that did not exactly meet his expectations. The community was still very much in the throes that had marked the previous period. "The cross is already being felt by your poor child...This is my vocation, it is impossible to doubt it for an instant; but, my God, how we would love to find things different than they are! Of the seven fathers who founded the community five or six years ago, there remains only one or two...and then, my God, this life is not any more religious life than that led by many priests in the world." (6) Giraud was getting his first look at the Congregation's "private face."

Giraud walked into what Bossan, in his usual pointed way, described as a "veritable hell." (7) The first impressions were strong enough to nearly drive him back to Aix. (8) There was no unity among the priests. The bone of contention at this point was the Rule of 1858. The fathers said that it was not clear with regards to their aim and spirit. It is perhaps more a case of the fathers being unable to agree on how to interpret the rule which had some rather clear indications as to their aim and spirit. But the Rule did contain a basic lacuna; namely, who had the role of determining, clarifying and reforming the Rule, the fathers or the Bishop? The question came to the fore in their retreat of January, 1858. Archier, the superior, felt that it was clear enough that the Bishop had left it to the group to work out. Buisson said their own interpretation would merely be an arbitrary one since the

Rule had been given by the Bishop and therefore was his responsibility to interpret. Berlioz was very adamant in his position that the Bishop was wrong in the first place to give them the Rule and impose vows on them. He held it would have been better if the matter had been left to the fathers themselves. Archier countered that the Bishop and his vicar, Orcel, did not want to interfere with the Congregation. But the others felt that they, the Bishop and his vicar, were avoiding the whole situation because they did not want to be embarrassed by the group's inevitable fall and ruin. (9)

This situation, the "veritable hell" of Bossan, was seen as a crucible by Giraud. He wrote to a friend encouraging him to join the missionaries, but he admitted that he was not encouraging him to join from the same motives that novices of other communities so often invite their friends to join them. Other novices do this because they are usually filled with joy and want others to share in this. On the contrary, Giraud pointed out that the "vocation to La Salette is the vocation to Calvary...God is throwing the community into a crucible." (10)

Two Tendencies: Active and Contemplative / Strict and Moderate

The crucible that was taking shape was not merely that of disagreement, but a stronger polarization was emerging and it became more manifest as the group tried to establish a novitiate for the new members. Giraud himself had asked the Bishop to provide him with such a training period when he joined the community, but the problem was the direction this training was to take.

There emerged two dominant tendencies in the community: one favored a very strict, austere, penitential life, believing this to be what Our Lady demanded in her message; the other put a greater emphasis on apostolic work and believed religious life should be accommodated to suit the demands of active ministry. Bossan was the champion of the austere position; Buisson of the moderate. Both of these men had their turn as Master of Novices.

Bossan was named Master in May, 1859. In preparation for the work he visited many communities, especially the Benedictines and the Trappists. He would have wanted to have founded an institute as austere as the Chartreuse and as silent as a Trappe. (11) He was "the most austere representative of the ascetical tendency...extremely splenetic and seemed to delight in having the will of another in his hands." (12) He introduced the novices to perpetual abstinence and glories that he pushed "as much as I can towards a very penitential life." (13)

Giraud's own response to Bossan's first conference on the life of penance and austerity reveals that even this dedicated soul found it difficult to accept the extremes proposed. "It was like a cup of poison for me, numbing my every nerve." (14) He initially tried to give himself over to the direction given, reasoning, "We have to let it be, it is not to the victim to reason on the means used to conduct it to its end which is immolation of its total being." (15) But eventually the novices protested and the tendency to extremes even drew criticism from the Bishop, diocesan officials and other priests. (16) There were valid grounds for this reaction and concern. The type of austerities required by Bossan seem extremely imprudent in view of the poor health record of the fathers. Bossan's own notes frequently record their pitiful condition, and yet he never seemed capable of taking this concrete fact into consideration when he was so strongly beating the penitential drum. (17)

The conflict abetted a bit when Bossan was removed from the position and Buisson took over in February, 1860. His preparation had consisted in visiting Marist and Jesuit communities. There continued to be problems when he took over, but now they were at the opposite end of the spectrum. Buisson encountered opposition from the novices because they considered him too lax. And yet, his seeming laxness was an attempt to counteract the spirit of indiscreet austerity that Bossan had instilled. Buisson himself was replaced by Giraud in 1862.

It was in this atmosphere of conflicting tendencies that Giraud, with many tears, took his vows on February 2, 1860, adding two personal vows, that of devotion to the Holy Father, and fidelity to the work of Our Lady of La Salette. (19)

This eventual result of the push and pull of the divergent tendencies was a state of apathy. "All the projects of foundation are completely vanished...we live like simply priests with an easy enough rule of life, each keeping his own ideas," (20) By 1863 things had continued to regress. "If you only knew in what a poor state the community is...the state of powerlessness in which we find ourselves with regards to creating this little work of missionaries. After 12 years of existence we are eight, and as many different spirits as there are persons." (21)

Always keeping Bossan's opinions within their context, we can nevertheless get an interesting summary of the situation from his notes of August, 1863. It seemed as if nothing had been accomplished since their foundation.

It seems to me that the missionaries don't have any of the elements that are considered constitutive. I don't find among us any of the things one finds in all naissant communities: 1. the same and unique end, one that is known and determined; 2. a founding idea; 3. true union of hearts, generosity, a spirit of sacrifice; 4. joy in the members because of the community, a family spirit; 5. poverty and love of poverty;... It is all the opposite here. Hearts are closed, everyone keeps his thoughts to himself ... lacking in nothing ... everyone wanting another state of affairs, but no one bothering to do anything about it ... we vegetate. ... A provisory rule without any value since there is never any reference to it ... also stranger yet, Orcel and the Bishop who created it never speak of the rule, never ask about it or its observance. (22)

It was truly the type of situation that seemed resolvable only through drastic measures. "It is not modifications that are necessary," exclaimed Giraud in 1864, "it is a complete overthrowing of what exists and a completely new beginning from another basis. We can never make anything out of what exists now." (23)

External Problems

Problems were not restricted to internal matters. The group's reputation with Bishop Ginoulhiac during these years was not very high. There were complaints about the fathers' preaching material. They were even told to stop preaching La Salette, to stop scheduling a daily public Mass for the Pope, to stop wasting part of their day in the chapel slowly reciting the office, to stop drawing people away from their own parishes with the evening prayer and instruction services held at the missionaries' chapel in Grenoble. With the Church-State relationship very tenuous in France at this time, the fathers were frequently under surveillance with regards to what they were preaching. The police feared that a radical preaching of Our Lady's message with its prophecies of impending disasters could be used politically and be inflammatory. The diocesan officials were also aware of this. Further insult came at Bishop de Bruillard's funeral when the fathers were told not to wear their distinctive habit and that they were to either get behind the priests of the diocese or simply mix in with them. Their visit to the Bishop, as was customary of New Year's day, was a very rushed and cold one. There were also apparent difficulties with priests applying for admission. Throughout the years they would receive letters from men who planned to join the group, and yet somehow, the applicants never appeared. It was believed that the Bishop discouraged them. (24)

It must be kept in mind, however, that at the center of a great deal of the difficulty, is the chronicler himself, Bossan. A number of things that Bossan had done had displeased the Bishop. Without approval or permission, he was working at establishing a community of religious women whom he wanted to bring to the mountain to care for the pilgrims. He had also bought property in Corps, the little village near La Salette, without permission and in his own name, hoping to use it as a residence for his religious women or eventually for the Missionaries. The Bishop thought Bossan to be devious and at one point had decided to refuse him the renewal of his vows. The Bishop relented, however, on the evening before the actual renewal. (25) Bossan did eventually leave the

Congregation, however, in 1868. His was the case of an individual with good intentions, but with personal lacks that created more problems and hindrance than benefits for the struggling congregation.

Giraud: Unifying Influence and Creator of New Rule

In the midst of this most unpromising situation a force was quietly at work. This force was Giraud. In 1862 he was named Master of novices. By temperament he leaned towards a life of penance and was contemplative in spirit. His teaching was not less demanding than that of his predecessor, Bossan, but it was transformed by the light of the gospel. He knew that prayer and mortification were the foundations of all Christian perfection; but for him the important goal was not an externally very austere life, but more important was the death of the old man through the transformation of the heart. (26) His work as master of novices was extremely valuable for it provided a common basis of thought that would eventually flower into the group's capacity to create a rule from an exchange based on the experience and theological understanding that they shared.

On February 2, 1865, Giraud was elected superior, a post he held for eleven years. Bossan in his notes makes it appear as if Giraud was elected simply because the fathers absolutely wanted to remove Archier. Beaup is kinder and points out that Giraud was the man for the position because he had a very high reputation in the diocese and would do a great deal of good for the Missionaries. (27) For Giraud himself, the job was "the heaviest cross in the community." (28) He was not yet thirty-five years old.

With Giraud in charge, the quarrels began to disappear. One extreme position after another was abandoned and an effective community began to emerge with shared ideals and works. It was truly by his example that each threw himself into his immediate work and for the time being left aside the theoretical problems. (29)

As superior, Giraud gave the community its yearly retreat. At the retreat of 1868 he told them that the time had arrived to end the period of experimentation and diocesan identity. They should seek Pontifical approbation. (30) The Bishop agreed with the Congregation's desire to adopt a definitive rule, but he did not commit himself with regards their desire to become a Pontifical Institute.

First on the agenda for the developing Congregation was the rule. The question was whether to write a new rule or adopt the rule of another congregation. The fathers did not believe the Bishop would approve a new rule; Giraud therefore suggested that they adopt the constitution of the Jesuits, with modifications necessitated by the specific Salettine vocation. The problem then was, who would make the modifications. The older members wanted the work to be done in common. The younger men favored giving the work to Giraud with complete freedom. It was finally agreed to let Giraud take care of the matter. (31)

By the end of 1868 Giraud had drawn up a rule proposing a two-branch institute. The Religious of Our Lady of La Salette, made up of "priest-victims" and "priest-missionaries." (32) It was an attempt to bring together in one institute the two divergent tendencies in the Congregation, while at the same time allowing for a free development of each. It was a solution Giraud drew from the apparition itself. He drew his contemplative-victim notion, a deep part of his own spirituality which predated his entry to the Congregation, from the sign of Our Lady seated and weeping. The missionary aspect was reflected in Our Lady standing and delivering her message with the commission to make it known to all her people.

The Congregation would have a single superior, who would always be a priest-victim. He would have four assistants, two from each branch. The priest-victims would be contemplative and their ministry would be the education and sanctification of the clergy and religious. The priest-missionaries would continue the work already initiated by the missionaries of La Salette and the diocese of Grenoble and bring it to the world. They would consider themselves messengers of the Queen of Heaven. The Rule for both branches would be that of the Jesuits, with a few modification. There would be a single novitiate and scholasticate. During that formation

period the individual would discern whether he was called to one branch or the other. Both branches would also make the vow of special devotion to Rome and the vow of victim. (33)

Giraud showed the project to many trusted friends. Response was very reserved and most people told him the idea as not a viable one. He himself began to doubt the merits of the approach. In 1870 he wrote to a friend who wanted to join the congregation as envisioned in this proposed rule, "I pray and do so without ceasing; I call with all my might for this blessed foundation; but not a single ray of light comes to me. Finally, I feel very deeply that I am just not the worker called to begin this work. ...I believe that it is necessary to leave this in the shadows, like a grain that must be allowed to fall into the dust." (34) He gave his friend very little hope that the project would ever become a reality. By 1872 he abandoned the idea on the advice of Fr. Lucas, the superior of the major seminary of Aix. Never reaching the light of day, the project nevertheless gives us an insight into Giraud and a growing reflection on the apparition, the founding event.

On March 5, 1870, Bishop Paulinier succeeded Ginoulhiac in Grenoble. (35) In his first meeting with the fathers he gave them great encouragement and offered to have their rules revised if they felt it necessary. He did not seem to favor their independence at this point, but he wanted to broaden the scope of their work within the diocese. (36) In 1872 he asked Giraud for a summary of the rule they were working on. The rule that Giraud gave him was not that of 1868, but a new one he had drawn up in which the idea of the two branches had been eliminated. It was a rule still steeped in the victim idea and will be examined more closely when we look at the rule of 1876 which was based on the rule Giraud presented to the Bishop. The Bishop, however, would approve this new rule submitted in 1872 only on the condition that Giraud accept the direction of an institute of religious women recently founded to serve La Salette, the Soeurs Réparatrices. Giraud would not accept. "The direction of this work ... is beyond all my meager capacities." (37) Realizing that he was the apparent obstacle to the Bishop's approval of the rule, he offered his resignation, but it was not accepted. (38)

In 1875 Bishop Fava, a missionary Bishop, replaced Paulinier. With him came a renewed burst of encouragement. At the annual retreat he told them that his predecessors had established the fact of La Salette on solid ground and now he himself desired to place on a solid base the community of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette and to make of it a true religious congregation governing itself. He assured them a temporal future and then encouraged the men to share their insights and their experience to determine the end of the Congregation and the means to attain it. (39)

Decisive Chapter of 1876

The fathers lost no time and got to work immediately convoking the Chapter of 1876 with eleven missionaries attending. In order to give the group total freedom in their deliberation, Giraud resigned as superior. Unfortunately, there are no minutes of the meetings and very little information with regards the deliberations. The Register of Profession merely states the procedure they followed: "Accepting as a guide for their deliberations the work of Fr. Giraud which he had already presented to the Bishop, they examined point by point each article of the project. Where opinions differed, they voted secretly and accepted or rejected the controversial article, abiding by the majority decision." (40) The only other source of information are Giraud's letters.

On January 31, he wrote that the deliberations were going well and his project "was adopted, except, up to now, some rare and little important modifications ...The more difficult will be the spirit of the community and the vows. That is going to be the last thing considered." (41)

It was in those very final considerations on the spirit and the vows that a decisive moment in the history of the Congregation occurred. The 1872 rule of Giraud had abandoned the two-branch idea, but it had retained the basic victim-spirit idea with an emphasis on a more contemplative, rather than an active community. But the majority of the fathers favored a more active and apostolic life. The spirit of the apostolate won the day.

Founded as an active missionary society, the Chapter of 1876 recognized and defined the Congregation as missionary by its end and in its spirit. (42)

It was a very difficult moment for Giraud, yet he wrote about the sessions, “Basically the intentions have been good, and I am not irreproachable either.” (43) He insisted that he could not take the superior’s role which they offered him. It would have been an impossible task in view of the depth of his feelings with regards La Salette and the spirit of victimhood which was now apparently rejected. Archier was elected superior.

Giraud reflected on the experience in letters of the days following the chapter. “I made the sacrifice for Mary and the good of my soul; but I must admit that in that moment it was as if I had died ...How the heart suffered: I am convinced of having done the will of God; but the good and merciful Master used means which were sad for me ... The trial was, by moments, terrible; but there is now the profound serenity of the soul. (44)

The greatest victim at the moment was definitely Giraud and one recalls his words written almost ten years earlier: “Oh, it seems to me that if the grain of wheat falls to the earth and truly dies (I mean myself), it will result in a real good.” (45) The rather amazing future history of the Congregation’s growth would seem to give credence to the view that Giraud’s sacrifice was accepted and rewarded.

Rule of 1876

The rule drawn up by the 1876 Chapter was approved by Bishop Fava on October 4th. It is extremely significant because at last we get an expression of the fathers’ own awareness of themselves and their mission. As stated earlier, the basis for discussion was Giraud’s project of 1872. The most striking differences between the final rule and Giraud’s project arise with regards the spirit. Giraud’s rule of 1872 stated that the:

Congregation of the Religious of Our Lady of La Salette has for its end to live the spirit of the apparition of the Mother of God on the mountain of La Salette, and to communicate this spirit by their example and their ministry. ... This spirit is the spirit of victim shown in all of Mary’s attitudes. ... It is principally a spirit of expiation for poor sinners. ... The religious of the apparition is another Mary, victim with Jesus and victim of the Heart of Jesus, and has only one ardent and generous desire which is to attain all the ends of Mary’s apparition for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity and the salvation of souls. (46)

The difference is evident from the very beginning. Giraud’s rule called the Congregation simply “Religious of Our Lady of La Salette,” while the 1876 rule used the title “religious missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette.” Giraud defined the group principally by what they are; the new rule put more importance on what they were called upon to do. The emphasis was definitely an apostolic one.

The 1876 Rule defined the Congregation’s end as “essentially apostolic” and has for “its special end, apart from the sanctification of its members, to fill the great mission which our Blessed Lady recommended several times in her apparition on the Holy Mountain, to make this divine teaching which she brought from heaven known to all her people ... The religious are thus her messengers, the apostles, those sent by Our Lady of La Salette.” (47)

More specifically defined, the work involved in this mission included “all the works that tend to make God known and served, to dry the tears of Our Lady of La Salette, to withhold the arm of her Son by prayer, tears, and all the acts of expiation which the love of God can inspire.” (I, 6, no. 1) The principal means for accomplishing this are: shrines, parish missions, retreats, fostering vocations, encouraging apostolic endeavors and directing minor seminaries. Relating the works directly to the apparition gave them a Salettine character, although most of the work was that of the whole Church.

The spirit of the congregation was related both to the apparition and the work devolving from that event. The missionaries “should be profoundly penetrated by the spirit of Mary’s apparition on the Holy Mountain so that

they can communicate it to everyone by their example as well as by their ministry.” (I, 1, no.2) Father Foxe observes in an article that “the particular nature of the mission entrusted to any apostolic religious congregation colors the entire life of the members, even in those aspects which seem most peculiarly “religious”.” (48) This is especially true in this case where work and spirit became so interwoven as to form a desired unity, one flowing into the other, at least in the rule.

Chapter 15 spelled out the details of the spirit proper to the Congregation. “This spirit of the Congregation comes from the details of the Apparition studied and meditated attentively and in a spirit of faith.” (III, 1, no.2) The spirit was to be drawn from contemplating the two aspects of the apparition: the sorrowing, weeping, suffering mother and the apostolic messenger. From the first was to be drawn “a great love for God ... a profound and inconsolable sorrow for all that offends him, a vivid and tender compassion for the poor sinners, an ardent desire to pray without ceasing and to atone for so many dear souls who blindly run to the abyss and their perdition.” Contemplating the divine messenger, “they are moved and encouraged to a generous devotion and to works of total apostolic zeal.” (III, 15, no.2) This expression of spirit attempts to reconcile the two tendencies of the group and definitely reflects Giraud’s influence.

The general consequences and dispositions flowing from this spirit are traced in chapter 16. “This spirit of the apparition will give the religious of La Salette the desire to abandon himself to all the works of expiation and reparation.” (III, 16, no.1) (44) This was followed by a section on mortification for the “religious of La Salette will force themselves by the constant practice of mortification to make a permanent protest against the love of pleasure and pervasive seekings for comfort.” (no. 13) Yet we can see the fathers bringing their experience to their drawing up of the rule because the section on mortification is filled with exhortations to moderation. Bossan’s tirades were perhaps still ringing in their ears alone with the painful memory of many years of very poor health. The rule emphasized the need for penance and mortification, especially since it was so related to Our Lady’s message, but having established themselves as apostolic men, the fathers held to moderation, ever mindful that “the high wisdom of the Holy See has more than once lightened the rule of certain religious groups, especially those who were devoted to the fatigues of the apostolate.” (III,16, no. 3)

This Rule is valuable because it does express the community. It was not the work of one man imposed on the others, but it emerged from the exchange of the group itself. It embodied a fair amount of accumulated wisdom and reflected to a great extent the way the fathers were trying to live and carry out their mission. That such a rule could emerge is a tribute to the growth and maturity of the community itself and the influence of Giraud. The novitiate and his training had been a source of common input and had done a great deal to equalize the polarizations. That all the differences were not eliminated was certainly evident in the direction that the Chapter took, a direction away from Giraud’s treasured views. But that it was accomplished and resulted in a rule accepted by all is a sign that the community was no longer in its infancy and childhood stages.

Becoming a Pontifical Institute

Like an adolescent bursting with energy, the Congregation emerged from the Chapter of 1876 setting a great deal in motion. The fathers were seeking Pontifical approbation, but there were some basic needs to be fulfilled before that would be possible. (50)

First was the necessity of an autonomous recruitment program. The fathers received permission to open an apostolic school. This had not been done while Giraud was superior because he believed very strongly that the ranks of the Congregation should be drawn only from the elite of the clergy itself. (51) The history of the apostolic school movement in the Congregation is worthy of a study in itself. It became a most important factor in the future growth and expansion of the Congregation. The first school was begun under the energetic direction of the great Jean Berthier, writer, apostle, educator, and later founder of the Fathers of the Holy Family.

A second important factor needed for Pontifical status was material autonomy. The Rule of 1876 did not provide for this. The fact is, the Congregation was in a very awkward financial situation. From 1852 to 1858, before the members took vows, they were able to retain their own patrimonies and revenues from personal resources. The revenues from the works went back into the works or to the Bishop. Actually, many of the fathers had taken their own money and put it into the building program that was taking place on the mountain. But in 1858 when they took the vow of poverty, they could no longer have their personal money. The problem was, there was no community treasury either. All belonged to the Bishop. In 1877 Bishop Fava made stipulations to rectify the situation and to guarantee the community financial independence. (52)

The greatest impetus, however, to gaining Roman recognition came from Monsignor Bernard, Apostolic Prefect to Norway and Lapland. He had only six priests working in his mission area which was about the size of France. He had often come to the door of the new congregation seeking men to help him, but had been refused because of the fathers' own very limited numbers. The opening of the Apostolic school in 1876 gave him new hope and he brought up the matter again and even petitioned the Congregation of Propaganda to allow the Congregation to help him. This Roman office told him that it would be inopportune for a Congregation not attached to the Holy See to be given mission work since the mission would be far from the diocese of origin and also by being given such a work, the Congregation would have to fall under the rule of Rome since it oversees the work of foreign missions. Consequently Bernard urged Bishop Fava to obtain Roman approbation for the Congregation. (53)

The fathers themselves were seeking Roman ties and they had also agreed in the 1876 Chapter to accept the Norway mission when that became possible. The two desires began to converge. Giraud and H. Berthier were delegated by the Chapter to work on presenting the constitution to the Holy See for approval. The process was in motion from within and without the congregation.

The events immediately leading to Roman recognition truly reads like a movie scenario. Bishop Fava took Henri Berthier with him to Rome for his "ad limina" visit and also to ask the Holy Father the favor of crowning the Virgin of La Salette and to grant the title of minor basilica to the shrine church. During the audience with Leo XIII, who knew and loved La Salette, the Pope asked Berthier about the Congregation, its end, works and constitutions. When he asked if the constitution was approved and was told no, he insisted, "But it must be approved." Berthier had a copy and offered it to the Pope who gave it to the Sacred Congregation and remarked that the Bishop of Grenoble would certainly support their request. (54)

The request was approved by Fava on November 30th and by January, 1879, the Congregation's dossier in Rome was filled with letters of recommendation from various bishops and archbishops. On March 6, 1879, a rescript gave the Norway mission to the Congregation for ten years. On April 18, Pope Leo XIII praised and sanctioned the end followed by the missionaries, "besides their own sanctification, have as an aim the recall to the narrow way those who have left the path of salvation, the strengthening in virtue those who already practice it, by preaching the divine word and dispensing God's various graces." (55) Along with the Laudatory Decree Rome also gave the Congregation some observations, "animadversiones," concerning their rule. As is normal procedure, the approbation of the Congregation and the Constitution was put off till a later date. Thus on April 18th, 1879, the Congregation passed from the confines of the diocese of Grenoble and became a Pontifical Institute. It also marked a major turning point for the development of the Congregation as subsequent history will demonstrate.

Giraud's Final Years

Before concluding this period it would be worthwhile to give a brief overview of the man who played such an important role in it, Father Giraud. After the Chapter of 1876, he became superior of the residence in Vienne, France, and spent his last years preaching extensively, writing and caring for the foundations of religious

women dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette. He died in 1885, never having taken perpetual vows in the Congregation.

He did not completely abandon his idea that the call to La Salette was a vocation to a life of victim and a more contemplative life. Even after the 1876 Chapter he still dreamed of some day realizing his work by founding an order of priest-victims under the title of Priests of the Apparition, to distinguish them from the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. He prayed over the idea, but as happened earlier with his two-branch project, he received no light, no guidance. Finally, this dream and hope vanished from his heart. "These prayers have had the good result of dissipating this thought from my spirit and bringing me to my task at hand, that is to become a good priest and a humble religious. I am convinced of this." (56)

The temptation, however, came once again in 1880 when Bishop Fava wanted to form a new congregation, the Fathers of Reparation. The inspiration had been given to him by two "visionaries" and a visit to Rome with the Bishop, Giraud came to the conclusion that the work should not be pursued and urged the Bishop to drop the project. (57)

The spirit that had personally dominated Giraud from his major seminary days had been one centered on the thought of Our Lord Jesus Christ giving himself up to the glory of his Divine Father and that all creatures are called to be priests and victims with him. It was a point of view very much in the tradition of the *Ecole Française* of spirituality that arose from Olier, Condren and Berulle. Giraud himself often noted his indebtedness to this influence. But he went beyond them and brought to his life and writings a tremendous grasp of Scripture and the Church Fathers. (58)

He took his fundamental principle of the life of victimhood and preached it to simple Christians in his books, *Devotion to Our Lady of La Salette*, 1863, which traced Our Lady's life as victim; *Life of Union with Mary*, 1864; and *Union with Jesus Christ Victim*, 1870. He taught its application to religious in *The Spirit of Sacrifice in Religious Life*, 1973 (sic). Finally, he applied it to priests in his famous work, *Priest and Victim*, 1885, in two volumes. This final work was to have been completed by a more pastoral volume on the priest in his relations with the Church and souls. Death came, however, before the book.

The article "France" in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* cites Giraud and his writings a number of times in connection with French spirituality of the 19th century, which centered on Christic and Marian doctrine and piety. The author of the article regrets that Giraud has not yet been treated by an historian who is at the same time a theologian and who would give a synthesis of his doctrine. It is a major lack, for Giraud is still not given the appreciation he merits for the solidity and depth of his spiritual theology. (59)

In 1960 the Superior General of the Congregation devoted a circular letter to Giraud and urged the members to return to this man for inspiration and guidance in understanding the spirit of La Salette. (60) Referred to as "one of the greatest spiritual men of modern times" by Henri Bremond, Giraud merits attention, especially in this age when the emphasis has shifted from speculative theology to a greater stress on spiritual theology, a field in which he was a master. (61)

Conclusion

The period covered twenty-one years and it is without doubt the most crucial in the history of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. The growing pains are evident. A number of self-proclaimed "founders" moved away from the work, evidently not graced with a founding charism. With the strong polarization of austere vs. moderate, missionary vs. contemplative, the situation had the seeds for a severe rupture, but the guiding force of Giraud brought the elements together and most amazing of all, allowed them to evolve without insisting on his own deeply felt point of view. The congregation defined itself as active and apostolic. The Laudatory Decree of 1879 echoes this.

At the core of the understanding demonstrated in the 1876 Rule lies the apparition. The “founding event” once again provides the understanding for the specificity of work and spirit.

The period deals very much with what may be called the “core group,” the men who definite shape and direction to the Congregation. Giraud received the greatest attention in these pages because he was so central, and yet at the crucial point of definition in 1876, it was the influence of the more apostolic men, like Archier and Berthier, that dominated. Neglect of these men here is due partially to lack of documentation similar to that we have concerning Giraud.

The period does contribute valuable material for an understanding of the original spirit of the Congregation. First is the centering on the apparition by the fathers in their efforts to express and live their spirit; secondly is the decisive chapter of 1876 that determined that the Congregation would be apostolic rather than contemplative; thirdly is the 1876 Rule which came from the fathers themselves that spelled out their self-awareness and is Salettine in spirit and work for both are drawn from the apparition; and finally, there is Giraud and his works which express an aspect of the spirit that found place in future constitutions and which provide some of the best theological understandings of the apparition that the Congregation has as a heritage.

The period brought the Congregation to and through its adolescence and gave it a face.

CHAPTER FOUR: YOUNG ADULthood (1879-1926)

This forty-seven year period is an extremely active one for the Congregation of the Missionaries of La Salette. There is a shift of emphasis, moving away from much of the “*nombrilisme (navel gazing)*” of the previous period and moving into a more outward direction. With the Laudatory decree of 1879 came Pontifical indentity (sic) and also the thrust into mission work as the fathers went to Norway, followed by a movement into other European countries, America, Canada, Brazil and Madagascar. Some of the moves were in response to a call, others were the result of the religious persecution that took place in France at the beginning of the 1900s. Along with the growth came greater Roman recognition with the Decree of Approbation of the Congregation in 1890, the approval of the Constitutions “ad experimentum” for ten years in 1909, and finally, the definitive approbation of the Constitutions in 1926.

This chapter will deal with two aspects: the expansion and activity of the Congregation; and the shaping of the expression of its self-understanding, its rules, as influenced by events and also directives from Rome.

Expansion: Norway, Apostolic Schools, America, Poland

On June 19, 1880, two priests, seven scholastics and two brothers left for Norway. They had been granted the mission for ten years in response to the request of Monsignor Bernard, the Apostolic Prefect. (1) The story of the Norway mission is one of tears and joy. In February, 1885, the leader of the group, Henry Berthier, drowned in a shipwreck. But on August 2nd of the same year the loss was filled with the ordination of three members of the Congregation. It was the first priestly ordination in Norway since the Reformation. (2) At the end of the ten year period the missionaries were recalled to France because of administrative difficulties which had developed with Bishop Fallize who had replaced Bernard as Apostolic Prefect. The source of the difficulties was that the new Bishop was not aware of the demands of religious life. It was not that he refused to collaborate with the religious, but rather that he expected to make use of them without any consideration of the obedience and common life demanded by their religious commitment. He would name them to isolated posts far from their brothers and would do so without consulting their superior. Rather than sacrifice the values of religious life as they understood it and wanted to live it, the fathers withdrew from the mission. (3) It was not an easy decision because the fathers were doing fine work in Norway. >In 1942, Bishop Kjelstrup paid the Congregation a glowing tribute in his History of the Catholic Church in Norway: “Norway has certainly never had more noble, more pious and more dedicated men than Monsignor Bernard and the Fathers of La Salette.” (4)

The Norway mission had been a sign and symbol of the universal expansion that the Virgin of La Salette wanted and it had stirred the mission spirit. But this spirit was not to find fruit again until 1898 when the Congregation was granted mission work in Madagascar and in Manitoba, Canada. (5) The message of Our Lady was being made known to her people far and wide.

The apostolic schools also played a major, though indirect, role in the Congregation’s geographical expansion. The first school was begun in Corps, the village near La Salette. In 1880, the scholastic level moved to Grenoble. That same year the anti-clerical French government issued the law of Jules Ferry which attempted to restrict religions from conducting schools. (6) This naturally put the Congregation’s school in a rather tenuous position. There was protection, however, in the fact that the missionaries used their former title, “diocesan missionaries,” thereby not falling directly under the law. But the situation was nevertheless precarious and the fathers decided to move the scholasticate to Switzerland. The apostolics stayed in Corps, but with the school opening in Switzerland, the Congregation was given a foothold in a new country.

Another piece of French legislation related to students was instrumental in other major moves; it was the question of military conscription. The Chapter of 1892 decided to take advantage of a loophole in the law itself

which exempted a young man if he was not of France at the time of the call and remained out of the country for following ten years. (7) The Superior General thus sent two men to America in 1892 to establish a resident there in order to send over young men and thereby have them avoid military service. In a personal letter the General wrote, “We hope to save our scholastics and brothers from military service.” (8) It should be added, however, that this did not represent a shirking of duty to their country. For when World War I broke, men returned to France from all parts of the globe. By the end of the war, eighty-eight members of the Institute had been in active service, sixty-five in combat. Fifteen died for their country and many were wounded. (9)

The American foundation began with something of the same “providential” action that was evident in the presentation of the Constitutions to Pope Leo XIII. In 1892, Vignon and Pajot sailed for America, landed in Quebec, went to Montreal, and eventually made their way to Hartford, Connecticut. Arriving in the early morning they went to the Cathedral to say mass and met the Bishop’s advisor, Father Harty. This priest had promised Our Lady in his last retreat that he would try to establish a religious congregation in the diocese, preferably one dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. He therefore received the fathers as the answer to his prayers. The Bishop, Bishop McMahan, had studied at Aix-en-provence with Father Giraud and held him in high esteem. He therefore welcomed the fathers and opened the doors of the new world to the Congregation. He gave them his old episcopal residence and from there they began their work of preaching mission in French-Canadian parishes, receiving new members from Europe and accepting parishes offered by the diocese. In September, 1898, they opened their first apostolic school in Hartford. (10)

From the American foundation the fathers spread into Canada, Brazil, and were asked in 1901 to take charge of Polish parishes in the diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts. There were no Polish speaking priests in the Congregation, but undaunted, the Superior General, Father Perrin, sent five Swiss fathers who had just finished their studies in Rome to Poland to learn the language. They lived with the Nazariist fathers in Crascow; learned the language; some left for the parishes in the States; but a group also stayed behind, took over a parish, opened an apostolic school in 1906 and established the Congregation in Poland, where it is flourishing today.

The apostolic schools and the formation program in general, therefore, provided more than just men for the Congregation, they actually were an instrument for expansion since they provided the occasion for the consequent movement into to other countries in order to avoid difficulties in France for the young students.

Persecution and Dispersion

The greatest expansion, however, took place through the dispersion that was necessitated by the Waldeck-Rousseau act of July, 1901, in France. Under the pretext of defining the rights of association, the act, greatly motivated by the strong Mason and anti-clerical factions, aimed at dissolving religious communities. (11) An earlier text of the law contained terminology that was legal and veiled. Its target were associations existing between French and foreigners, especially if the source of direction was with the non-Frenchmen. The final text, however, made it very obvious what they were driving at. “No religious congregation can be formed without an authorization given by law which will determine the conditions of its functioning.” (12) The dissolutions could be pronounced by the Council of Ministers and severe sanctions were established for members of congregations who were found operating unauthorized schools.

Mr. Waldeck-Rousseau in trying to annihilate religious congregation, swore that he had no other objective than to curb the rashness of some troublesome Jesuits and Assumptionists. (13) But the results were far more encompassing and devastating. Leo XIII said repeatedly to his friends, “They deceived me when they told me that the law on associations was just a formality without significance; deceived me when they said it would be applied with largesse and benevolence; deceived me again when they said that the sacrifice of the Assumptionists would save the other congregations.” (14) The French Bishops drew up a protest against the law, signed by all except five. (15) It was a lengthy document which attempted to demonstrate the injustice to the congregations and also the baselessness of the allegations. It did not resolve the situation.

It was a time of great confusion. The Superior General consulted the members of the Congregation and the Bishop as to the course of action. Told by the Bishop that there would not be any possibility for the Congregation to gain authorization, the General offered the members two alternatives: go into exile, or remain in France and return to diocesan status as secular priests. (16) Six fathers stayed in France, the others departed. Scholastics were sent to Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and America. The fathers joined the various houses in these countries. The six who remained continued to preach missions in response to requests from pastors. Two of them remained at the residence called the Hermitage and were thrown into prison for twenty-five days after a much publicized trial. They were accused of continuing to live as religious. (17)

The period was a heartrending one. The shrine at La Salette was confided to the care of diocesan priests; the house in Grenoble, school in Corps and other residences in France were lost. In November, 1901, Pajot, then superior of the shrine community, wrote: "I write to you in the middle of the ruins that surround us, material ruins and ruins of every kind ... We who have so loved this place, to see it become deserted breaks my heart. My only desire would be to leave for America or Africa so that so that I wouldn't have to witness all the destruction that is going on daily in our poor France." (18)

Conflict with the Bishop

In the transference of the shrine to the care of the diocese there emerged an estrangement with the Bishop which would eventually flower into a major conflict. To the political crucible was added the fire of ecclesiastical misunderstanding. The Congregation had received the rights, to the shrine and its revenues through an accord between Bishop Fava and Archier, which had been confirmed by the Holy See in 1888. But Fava's successor, Bishop Henry, in the midst of all the civil difficulties gave every indication of wanted "to exclude the community completely" from the shrine work and its revenues. (19) Pajot wrote in November, 1901:

"Despite everything we have tried to do and say, I believe that Bishop Henry, being pushed by I don't know whom, persists in stripping us of the shrine, although he says the opposite to us when he sees us ... What is going to become of our poor works in France when everything is lost, humanly speaking?... It is a terrible trial." (20)

The flowering of this initial conflict resulted in the Bishop presenting a case against the missionaries to the Holy See in 1902. He complained that the missionaries had spoken badly of diocesan administration; they had taken the relics from the shrine and they should abrogate the right to the usufruct of the shrine; and finally that the Congregation's publication, the *Bulletin*, which had replaced the *Annales* when the diocesan priests took over its publication, was drawing revenue away from the shrine and directing this revenue to the schools of the Congregation. Although the fathers were receiving reassuring reports from supposedly "inside sources" in Rome, in July, Rome presented an unfavorable decision in the matter. It gave the Bishop and the diocesan priests the temporal and spiritual care of the shrine for as long as the situation remained as it was in France, but the Bishop, after meeting expenses, could provide a subsidy to the Congregation; the missionaries had to render full account of the financial situation that existed at the time of their departure; they had to return the relics; the Bishop was given the titles of foundation; and finally, the fathers were to modify the *Bulletin* by removing from the cover the picture of the statue of Our Lady and of the shrine. (21)

Complying with these directives, the fathers were still not certain how things would be resolved. In a personal letter to Beaup, the Superior General expressed his skepticism, "The Bishop seems very satisfied, but who knows if the pack that surrounds this poor Pilate will not continue to ask him to raise the cry, crucifige!" (22)

He had cause for his suspicions. The battle was still raging in 1903. In September, Pajot wrote, "From information coming to us from Grenoble, it seems that the Bishop, who is leaving for Rome, proposes to attack us with the intention of crushing us completely." (23) The letter of Oct. 12 from the General gives some idea of

what the Bishop was up to. “Great and good news. Bishop Henry asked the Holy See for the suppression of our title of Missionaries of La Salette. They answered: Negative!” (24) In his circular of May 1, 1904, the General, Father Perrin, informed the community that in December of 1903 the Bishop had presented a new dossier against the Congregation to the Holy See and that the Congregation on March 5, 1904, had provided an answer to the changes. (25) Rome’s negative answer had not deterred the bishop. The Bishop did not give up on the matter until December, 1906, when he wrote to Rome advising the Sacred Congregation that he was dropping his suit against the Missionaries of La Salette. (26) The matter was finally brought to a close in 1912 with a declaration from the Sacred Congregation of Religious explicitly vindicating the missionaries of all the iniquitous calumnies against them.

There was nothing on the part of the missionary fathers in the that was not conformable to law, nothing that was not inspired by a pure religious spirit. That is why, when circumstances permit, it is completely hoped that they will be recalled to the celebrated , which is theirs by right resulting from their foundation. There, assuredly, because of their meritorious zeal, they will take up again the great works of the past with the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and ever develop more and more. (27)

During this period the Congregation experienced tremendous trials and also unexpected growth. Great men were involved in this whole process. Jean Berthier, so instrumental in establishing the apostolic school system, wrote a great deal and eventually founded the Congregation of the Holy Family, dedicated to delayed vocations. He remained a Missionary of Our Lady of La Salette to his death. There were also great Superiors General at the helm of the Congregation: Archier, 1876-1891; Perrin, 1897-1913; Pajot, 1913-1926. Perrin especially stands out as a leader of great stature. During his term of office twenty-one new residences were established and he traveled all over to keep in touch with his community and to foster the common bond they shared. These were some of the men who brought the community through a period of great crisis and fostered the development of a French Congregation into an international one. (28) Torn from their cradle, exiled from their Mother House, the fathers would have to carry more vividly than ever the seeds of the “founding event” in their hearts, and make Mary’s message echo from the mountain heights of their own zealous dedication.

Evolution of the Rule from 1880 to 1926

As the Congregation became more and more distanced from the “founding event” in time and space, it was important that the unity of the members be banded in the sharing of a common expression of their mission and self-understanding. Ideally, the constitutions of any community should provide the basis for this unity, this bonding. This period contains an evolution of the rule that was influenced by the fathers growing self-understanding and activities, but also, and especially, by the ecclesial directives given. The directives were the “animadversiones” given with the Laudatory decree in 1879, the “norms” of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1901, and the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1918. The final two were helpful in bringing a clarity to rules, but they also contributed to the sapping of much of the uniqueness inherent in rules. The directives produced admirable juridical documents, but, in general, lamentably uninspiring ones.

The 1879 “animadversiones”, observations Rome had to make on the constitutions submitted by the Congregation, dealt primarily with matters of government; there were a few points, however, which were of much greater importance. (29) Of lesser importance, but affecting their life style, was the deletion of the fourth vow of special devotion to the Holy Father. Rome observed that all Christians owed not only devotion but also complete obedience to the Holy See. Also, the Congregation was forbidden to use the title “religious” of itself or its members. Certain authors before the Code of Canon Law refused the title “religious” to institutes with simple vows. (30) The term would appear again in the constitutions after the promulgation of the Code. But the major observation was the following: “In many places the constitutions mention the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the mountain of La Salette and things that are related to this. All is to be deleted. It is above all prohibited for the missionaries or the members to be called Apostles of Our Lady of La Salette.” This was a serious loss, one that touched the very heart of the Congregation.

There are usually two reasons given by historians of the Congregation for this directive. Rome herself did not give any. First, it is not the practice of Rome to give approval to apparitions. Such approbations are left to the local Bishop. In view of future Roman approbations of the Congregation and its constitutions, Rome apparently wanted to be sure to avoid giving the appearance of approving that which it normally does not give official sanction to, that is, an apparition. (31)

Secondly, the times were not favorable. La Salette had remained a controversial apparition and the behavior of Melanie, one of the witnesses, did not help matters. The events of 1879 and 1880 give an indication of what was happening. In 1879 a book was published reputedly containing the recitation of the apparition given by Melanie, plus the secrets confided to her by the Virgin. This work was given an imprimatur by an Italian bishop, but Rome condemned the book. The enemies of the apparition took this condemnation and applied it to the apparition itself. (32)

Whatever the reason, the fact is that the fathers unfortunately followed this directive scrupulously. The 1882 rule, which was drawn up in 1880 by J. Berthier, Giraud and Perrin but completed with a customary in 1882, suppressed all references to Our Lady of La Salette and all direct mention of the apparition. It would seem that they could have avoided this extreme by relegating such material to the customary, as they would do from 1905. (33) The directive also resulted in the Congregation's title being changed from Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette to Missionaries of La Salette, the name of the place permissible as place of origin. The full title was not regained until 1934.

The one explicit note of La Salette remaining in the 1882 rule was the mention of the shrine. "The Missionaries will take care of shrines of Our Lady, and particularly that of La Salette, cradle of the Congregation." (34) And yet, when one reads the text it becomes evident that the basic Salettine perspective remained, although the explicit references are lacking.

The Congregation has for its end the sanctification of the members. It also has an essentially apostolic end. ... The spirit of the Congregation is apostolic as its end is. The missionaries apply themselves especially to fighting the crimes of the day and making known Jesus Christ crucified and the Mother of Sorrows. They will develop in union with them a spirit of penance, prayer and reparation...All the works that tend to make God known and served enter into the end of the Congregation...to convert sinners, to multiply the number of souls devoted to Jesus Christ and Mary, Mother of Sorrows, to appease the divine anger by prayer and every kind of expiatory act. (35)

Veiled references to La Salette were the "crucifix of Our Lady," and also the 19th of the month being singled out for special observances. Our Lady appeared at La Salette on September 19th.

The constitution did reflect the father's growing experience, for in the listing of works was added foreign missions. This was due to the work that had been accepted in Norway. There was also the encouragement to the novices to use Giraud's book, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, to help them in their understanding of religious life. It was one of the few books allowed to the novice for his own possession. (36) Reference to Giraud would not occur again until the rule of 1905 when the common reading for Sundays and holidays was to be chosen from his books. (37) Finally, in the constitution of 1934, the novices were given Giraud's works as a guide in their study of religious life. (38)

The "animadversiones" dictated a change in the letter of the law, but it did not result in a change in the spirit. This same spirit of the apostolate and of penance, prayer and reparation, carried through the rule of 1885 and was part of the texture of the decree of approbation given by Rome on May 14, 1890. The decree mentioned La Salette merely as a reference to the place of origin, "missionaries popularly called of La Salette." The decree spelled out the Congregation's work as: "besides the sanctification of their own souls, the work of spreading the word of God and of bringing stray souls back to God and fighting zealously against the errors of the day." (39)

This mission given by the Church involves works directly drawn from Our Lady's message as understood by the early fathers.

The rule of 1891 was basically the same with the exception of a clearer indication of the Congregation's spirit. "The spirit of the Congregation is a spirit of prayer, penance and zeal." (40) This formula was an echo of the rule of 1858 and was the expression used till the recent revision. One interesting note is that this rule of 1891 was printed and on the title page was a picture of Our Lady of La Salette with the words, "Well my children, you will make this known to all my people." Three years later the picture was gone from the title page, but one wonders if its use was not an attempt to keep the roots in evidence.

The rule of 1894 again demonstrated the evolution of the Congregation. Among its works was now found the acceptance of parishes "as long as it is necessary to obtain the apostolic end of the institute." (41) The fathers in America had begun administering parishes as a response to the requests of Bishops.

In 1901 the Sacred Congregation of Bishops issued their Norms for Institutes of Simple Vows. (42) Consisting of three hundred and twenty-five prescriptions relating to all the major areas of religious life, the Norms gave a clear formula in terms of setting up constitutions, indicating what should be included and omitted, as well as the order to be followed in the text. The Norms came into existence primarily to facilitate the work of approbation since Rome had been receiving a large number of applications in this period. In the spirit of the norms the constitutions were a collection of canon law, a code of law which was not to be considered as a manual to teach the spiritual life. "The result was the spiritual texts were kept to a minimum, and what should have been the book of life of an institute became a dry code, which set forth prescriptions for all eventualities, foreseen and unforeseen, offering little of the founder's evangelical and ecclesial inspiration." (43)

The constitutions were designed to present the greatest conformity possible, eliminating most of what was distinctive to the Congregation and presenting the constitutive elements of religious life common to all. The customary gained in importance because the unique characteristics of the Congregation could be expressed in it. The Norms were responsible for separating what religious men and women had joined together; it would require new norms, the *Motu Proprio, Ecclesiae Sanctae*, to put back together what had been put asunder.

The rule of 1905 manifested this value of the customary very well. It was the work of Father L. Beup, a man who had been novice master for forty years. Here we find the customary expressing once again the explicit La Salette traditions and self- understanding.

Since the missionaries are, as it were, the messengers and apostles of Our Lady of La Salette, they must be thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of her apparition, that they can communicate it to all by their example as well as by their ministry. They will imbibe this spirit by studying and meditating upon all the details of the apparition.

The Blessed Virgin, seated on a stone, covering her face with the instruments of the Passion, will inspire them with an ardent love of God, with a profound and inconsolable grief for all that offends Him, with a lively and tender compassion for poor sinners and an ardent desire to satisfy for them by prayer and penance.

Finally, the Virgin who returns to Heaven after crossing the stream of Sezia, will point out to the missionaries the sublime goal in which their persevering efforts will culminate (44)

The customary gave further stress to La Salette. September 19th was designated as the patronal feast; residences were to be under the title of Our Lady of La Salette; her picture, statues and panoramas of the shrine to be in prominent places; their public chapels to inaugurate the Confraternity of Our Lady of La Salette, Reconciler of

Sinners; the novices were to be given weekly conferences on La Salette and the fathers make the semester, a six month renewal program, studying and meditating with care at this time on the teachings of the apparition.

It was the constitution of 1905 that received Roman approbation for ten years “ad experimentum” in 1909. The decree stated that one of the principal reasons for the approbation was the desire of the members of this expanding Congregation to have a closer bond to one another and to the institute itself. (45) The rule was a source of such a bond. The Congregation had to wait seventeen years for the definitive approbation. The delay was caused by the intervention of World War I and the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law which necessitated adjustments to its prescriptions. The Chapter of 1920 worked on the final draft of the rule and definitive approbation was given on June 7, 1926. (46)

The process leading to this final approbation had been taken the rule of 1876, completed and modified it through seventeen Chapters, drawing from the teachings of experience and the recommendations of Rome. Since 1905 the changes had been minor ones in the customary, all stressing more devotion to and greater propagation of the message of Our Lady. But with the 1905 rule and its customary the Congregation once again found a certain amount of distinctiveness: its apostolates: preaching, parishes, schools and foreign missions; its spirit: apostolic, prayer, penance and zeal. But the source of this spirit remained the apparition.

Conclusion

The rule of 1858 stated that the missionaries would expand “more or less as Providence directs them.” No one could have foreseen the strange agents that Providence would use in the development of this small band of men, especially, the persecution that aimed at crushing the Congregation and yet, ironically, fostered its growth. Although the essential vision concretized in the rule of 1876 was not relinquished, it was nevertheless greatly modified by the demands that Rome put on the Congregation in the “animadversiones” and the Norms of 1901. Still dedicated to the apostolate and still united to a spirit that evolved from the apparition of Our Lady of La Salette, the community did lose, however, some of the specificity in the expression of its charism because of the directives.

Young adulthood is a time of activity and strength. The rapid expansion in membership and works at this time began to draw the Congregation more and more away from a clear definition. The following years would unfortunately bring a greater distancing from and vagueness with regards, “roots.” And yet the touchpoint remained in their ideal self-expression, their rule. And this touchpoint was the “founding event,” the apparition.

CHAPTER FIVE: ADULTHOOD AND “CHANGE OF LIFE” CRISIS (1926- PRESENT)

A man in his full health and productive powers seldom reflects upon himself, but rather invests his energy in activity. It usually takes a crisis to stop the whirlwind and possibly disturb a certain complacency. At such moments an individual has to sift through his value system, the depths of his commitments and the resources that he had for dealing with the unexpected.

Surveying this last period in the chronicle of the Congregation, it is easy to draw analogies. It has been a period of energetic activity, but also a certain complacency because there has been very little evolution in terms of developmental, expressed self-understanding. In 1926 the Congregation produced a constitution according to the prescriptions of Canon Law. The crystallization, a highly juridical one, became more or less fossilized as the years went by. The Congregation was in the process of great expansion in activity and numbers; the world around it was changing at an incredible pace. And yet, the expression of this living and adapting organism, the Congregation, remain static. The only major change was the juridic norms related to the administration of canonical provinces which were erected in 1934. The Chapter of 1938 produced a long list of modifications which resulted in another edition of the constitution; but by and large, these were accidental changes. The rule remained very much a reflection of the ecclesial, juridic conception of religious life, hardly the vital embodiment of a Congregation's life.

Father Hostie described the situation of these years quite well when he wrote: “From 1900 to 1960 no Chapter does work in the sense of effective adaptation of the constitutions. Certainly, they took care of other matters. They elected superiors, created provinces, launched missions, promoted works. They even issued measures to truly inculcate fidelity to the rule and repeated ad nauseam that the rule must be followed assiduously and faithfully.” (1) The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette were no exception to this.

And yet, there were stirrings of attempts to break out of this mentality as early as the late fifties. This eventually received its full awakening in the Council. This chapter will deal briefly with a few highlights of the history during these years, but will concentrate predominantly on the struggles for renewal leading up to and evolving from the special General Chapter of 1968-69.

Expansion and a Return home

The period is one of expansion. In 1934 the Congregation was divided into four provinces which have become over the years eight provinces and three vice-provinces, with three mission regions attached to provinces. New parishes were accepted, new residences created, new schools opened, new missions received, and new La Salette publications initiated. Each work merits a history in itself, often filled with heroism, and constantly manifesting a capacity to move hearts and to effectively serve the Church. Membership increased prodigiously. From one hundred and fifty members at the turn of the century, the Congregation reached a peak of one thousand one hundred and thirty-one members in 1967. Numbers create hope and the hope plunged the missionaries into their own phase of the “edifice-complex” that is rather endemic to the Church. At present works are flourishing in the apostolate, but schools are empty. Future membership is very problematic in many provinces and for many there is a decline of hope in the future.

In 1934 the Congregation regained its full title that had been suppressed by the “animadversiones” of 1879. The General Council had petitioned the Holy Father for this restoration on November 23, 1934. Their petition cited Bishop de Bruillard's mandate granting them the title Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette and stating that they were to be “an eternal monument and perpetual remembrance to the merciful apparition of Mary.” Also the title, Our Lady of La Salette, had been the object of a number of official acts of the Holy See, such as the erection of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of La Salette in August, 1879, and the indult granting the

crowning of Our Lady of La Salette that same year. Another reason given was that wherever the fathers worked Our Lady of La Salette was explicitly honored by writings, shrines and so forth. "It is thus in the desire of regaining the treasured name of their foundation and to put the title of their Congregation in harmony with that of their different publications and their numerous works, that the Missionaries of La Salette humbly ask your Holiness to graciously grant this favor." (2) The request was granted by the Holy Father on December 5, 1934. Once again the Congregation could manifest its roots in its title, Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, and not merely Missionaries of La Salette, designating the place of origin.

A highpoint of the period was the return to the shrine at La Salette in 1943. The missionaries had been absent for forty years, "a long exile for children torn from the arms of their mother." (3) The property itself had been taken over by the State in 1906 but returned to the diocese of Grenoble in 1941. On October 19, 1942, the Bishop of Grenoble returned the shrine and its ministry to the care of the missionaries. This was possible because the State's attitude towards religious had changed and also because the shrine had been officially confided to the Congregation by Bishop Fava in 1888, a decision approved by the Holy See and later reaffirmed by the Sacred Congregation in 1912. It was as if the storms of persecution had been the agent for the spreading of the seeds of Mary's work, and now there was a calling back to the mother soil.

The Superior General used the occasion to remind the community of its origins, its basic unity grounded at La Salette. The expansion of the years was creating difficulties by dissipating the bonds of the Congregation. The General bemoaned the fact that the community's heritage was not known, or at least not well enough known.

It should be a real comfort for the members to become aware of the wealth of this heritage. We depend on our young members to explore the depths of this rich spiritual patrimony. The event of September 19, 1846, sums up in itself the principle, the end, the known, first in our conduct and then in our words, the message of salvation which the Mother of Our Savior confided to us. The task given to us in the Church of God is to bring back the people of Mary to her Son. (4)

There is little evidence that this deepening and strengthening of ties with the founding event was accomplished.

In 1946 the Congregation celebrated the centenary of the apparition with festivities and publications containing tributes from the "great," such as Pius XII, and the "soon-to-be-great" such as Bishop Roncalli, and a Trappist monk named Thomas Merton who contributed a poem on La Salette. (5) The Congregation celebrated the centenary of its founding in 1952. In a series of Circular Letters, the Superior General traced the history of the Congregation, the various events marking the centenary celebration, and he also reminded the members that sanctification is guaranteed by the observance of the rule. (6) It seems a bit strange that there was no mention of the apostolates that the Congregation was committed to, nor encouragement for a deeper involvement in the mission of the community. One may say it was presupposed, but again, it may simply be another reflection of Hostie's observation cited earlier.

Movement Towards Renewal

Towards the end of the 1950s the Congregation began to show concern for the need to adapt the rule to the changing situation within the community itself and within the work-world it was serving. The General Chapter of 1958 voted in its fourth session to form a commission with the responsibility of proposing adaptations for the rule that would be decided upon at the Chapter of 1964. (7) The commission prepared a preliminary report and project for a rule revision and it was presented in 1964, but the Chapter itself did not pursue the idea, although it had been originally designated as a Chapter to work on the rule. The Superior General explained in a circular:

Although the Chapter feels it should not at this time and place go ahead with its study of the submitted project for the revision of the constitutions, it is nevertheless of the opinion that such a revision should be made, in view of the widespread desire within all the provinces, voiced by a very large number of the members of the

Congregation, and considering that far from going against the spirit of the Church such a revision meets one of the Church's most urgent desires. (8)

This desire of the Church was illustrated with a quote from the address of Paul VI to members of General Chapters given on May 23, 1964:

The principal task, to which the General Chapter must apply themselves with the utmost care, is that of continually adapting their own particular laws to changing conditions. But this must be accomplished in such a manner that the particular nature of each Institute and its special discipline be in no way harmed. Indeed, every religious family has its own purpose to which it must remain faithful. (9)

Revision and adaptation were certainly in the air, but the delay by the Congregation was a providential one because the work was given a new and broader orientation by the directives of *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Ecclesiae Sanctae*. The Superior General reflected this when he wrote: "...the Motu Proprio, *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, of August 6, 1966, changed radically the approach adopted by the Chapter of 1964, for the revision of the rule, making it now a matter of reconstructing the constitutions rather than providing simple improvements in the text ... We must not limit ourselves to a textual revision: it is a renovation of religious life that is called for." (10)

Revision became renewal and the Congregation undertook the work with much energy and enthusiasm. The pertinent Conciliar documents were sent to all members of the Congregation, (11) a special General Chapter was planned for 1968; a commission of five men was established to do preliminary studies; a special study session was held in Rome in September, 1967, with input from renewal experts; a series of studies resulting from these meetings was sent to the members of the Congregation. (13) In February, 1967, the Superior General officially convoked "an extraordinary and special General Chapter, for the spiritual renewal of the Congregation and the Revision of the Constitutions and Customaries...in order to implement the prescriptions of Vatican II in the decree, *Perfectae Caritatis*, (nos. 1 to 4) and of the Motu Proprio, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (Section II, nos. 1-8)...for April 22, 1968." (14) The purpose of the Chapter was "to legislate the changes needed for renewal, but also – and more importantly – to bring about in the Congregation the renewal of spirit ... The importance of the Special Chapter is such that no member of the Congregation must ever feel that it is other than his own personal responsibility." (15)

Special Renewal Chapter and a New Constitution

The special General Chapter had two meeting periods, April 22 to June 12, 1968, and October 7 to November 29, 1969, giving a total of a hundred sessions. The years of work resulted in a new constitution and capitular norms prorogated "ad experimentum" by the General Chapter of June, 1970. (16)

The new experimental rule is divided into the Constitution and the Capitular Norms, preceded by four orientation texts, two from scripture and two dealing with God's plan of salvation and the mission of the Church as described in the Conciliar documents. This new text certainly fulfills the directives of the Norms given in *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, nos. 12 and 13, by including "the evangelical and theological principles concerning religious life and its incorporation in the Church...the juridical norms necessary to define the character, aims and means employed by the institute...a combination of both elements, the spiritual and the juridical." (17) The text also exemplifies Norm 15, for the text embodies the theology of religious life as given in *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Lumen Gentium*. In fact, its texture is woven from the perspective of these documents. However, it has been controverted as to whether there is in the new text "an apt and accurate formulation in which the 'spirit and aims of the founder should be clearly recognized and faithfully preserved, as indeed should each institute's sound traditions, for all of these constitute the patrimony of an institute' (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2 b) "...or a "spirit which is authentic." (18) An analysis of the text and its background will show its strengths and also the areas needing revision or amplification.

Reconciliation – Spirit of the Congregation

“For the good of the Church, institutes must seek after a genuine understanding of their original spirit.” (19) The “original spirit” that dominates the new text is that of “reconciliation.” The prefatory orientation texts, scriptural and theological, were chosen with this emphasis in mind. (20) The first is 2 Cor. 5: 18-20 which speaks of the “ministry of reconciliation” that belongs to Christ and has been passed on to us. The second is John 19: 25-27, presenting the scene at the foot of the cross where Mary is being given as mother to all. A later text states that it was here that Mary “was made Reconciler by her unique participation in the work of reconciliation accomplished by her Son.” (Ch. 1, paragraph 5, p.9) The text on God’s plan for salvation puts the covenant within the reconciliation optic, viewing the mission of Christ as being sent by the Father to “reconcile to himself all things,” (Col. 1: 20). The final text deals with the Mission of the Church, “to which has been given the ministry of reconciliation.”

The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette are defined, in part, as “a Religious Congregation dedicated to the apostolate” and “inspired by the same Spirit who moved the Son of God to reconcile the world to the Father... strive to serve Christ and the Church devotedly for the fulfillment of the mystery of reconciliation.” This spirit is then linked directly to the specific La Salette perspective: “Loyal to the spirit of our foundation, which stems from Mary’s apparition at La Salette, we profess a deep love for the mother of Christ and the Church. In our apostolate we follow the example of the Handmaid of the Lord who, at the foot of the cross, was made Reconciler by her unique participation in the work of reconciliation accomplished by her Son.” (Ch. 1, paragraphs 1,4,5, p. 9).

Reconciliation is also inserted into the apostolate which is aimed at “contributing to the ministry of reconciliation confided to the whole Church.” (Ch. IV, paragraph 1, p.12). It is part of the notions on formation in which the candidate is to be helped “to discover his true vocation and arrive at the conviction that he is called to serve the Church and the world as a Missionary of Our Lady of La Salette, animated by a profound appreciation of the mystery of reconciliation and the evangelical values emphasized in the message of La Salette.” (Ch. V, paragraph 2 b, p.13).

The Capitular Norms make it a bit more specific when they state “the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette value the reconciliation of sinners, the mission of Christ and the Church, as the essential part of their apostolic work...for every missionary of Our Lady of La Salette is engaged in the apostolate of reconciliation.” (Cap. Norms, no.17, p.17; no. 33, p. 20).

Although “reconciliation” is not a foreign notion to La Salette, it must be observed that the emphasis is a new one for the Constitution. Previous rules only contained what may be called descriptive statements on reconciliation, such as when it mentioned “the missionaries endeavor to work with their whole heart for the conversion of sinners;” and more broadly when they state that the members “work...for the increase of the number of souls devoted to Jesus Crucified and to Mary, the Mother of Sorrows.” (21) The only explicit use of “reconciliation” in these earlier rules was the mention of special devotion to Our Lady “whom they invoke under the title of Our Lady, Reconciler of sinners.” (22)

Although “reconciliation” did not play a major role in the expression of the community’s self-understanding, it was nevertheless a major part of the devotion to Our Lady of La Salette. (23) The invocation, “Virgin Reconciler of sinners, pray for us,” is of unknown origin, but it is found as early as 1847. The invocation probably came, as a former director of the shrine at La Salette once observed, from the lips of a priest who had just witnessed the graces of confession that are so abundant on the Holy Mountain. (24) Perhaps the invocation came from Father Perrin, the pastor at La Salette, who founded the Confraternity of Our Lady of La Salette. For one of the conditions for membership in the Confraternity which was established on May 1, 1848, was the recitation of the invocation, “Our Lady of La Salette, Reconciler of sinners, pray without ceasing for us who have recourse to thee.” (25)

In official Church pronouncements, the term reconciler or conciliator as applicable to Mary do not appear till after 1850. (26) With regards to La Salette, there was the brief of Pius IX, September 7, 1852, elevating the confraternity to the Archconfraternity of Our Lady Reconciler of La Salette. The title was again used in 1879 when the shrine church was elevated to the status of a minor basilica and permission was granted for the crowning of the statue of Our Lady. (27) In 1927 and 1933 the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary granted indulgences to two prayers to Our Lady of La Salette, both containing the attribution of reconciliation. (28) In 1943 the Sacred Congregation of Rites granted a proper office and Mass for the Feast of Our Lady Reconciler of La Salette, September 19. (29) In 1945 Pope Pius XII sent a letter to the Superior General containing his apostolic blessing for the upcoming celebrations planned for the centenary in the following year. In this letter the Holy Father speaks of the Congregation “devoted to the caring of the shrine of La Salette and to the spread of the devotion to Mary Reconciler.” (30) “Reconciliation” therefore, is a notion that was part and parcel of the devotion to Our Lady of La Salette and also the aspect of the mystery of Mary that the Holy See chose to emphasize whenever dealing with matters concerning Mary at La Salette.

The appropriation of the notion of “reconciliation” to the spirit of the Congregation began to emerge in the General Chapters of 1958. In the minutes of this Chapter there is mention of a report that calls for a Salettine spirituality to be drawn from the notion of Mary Reconciler. This came from the province of Switzerland whose title is “Province of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Reconciler of Sinners.” (31) From all indications, this idea was not pursued. In the General Chapter of 1964, there was much talk of the need for a specific Salettine spirituality. (32) A member of the Swiss province filed a lengthy postulatam that proposed that the spirit of the Congregation be found in the Biblical notion of “penance,” which had been part of the Salettine heritage. (33) The Chapter of the Swiss province itself filed a counter-postulatam affirming that the spirit of the Congregation was best expressed by the Biblical notion of reconciliation. (34) Again, the matter was not acted upon, but it indicated a trend.

Perhaps the most widespread impetus to the promotion of the idea of “reconciliation” as the Congregation’s charism was the Intercommunity Review, *Reconciliare*, founded in November, 1964, and publishing its first issue in May, 1965. “Reconciliation” became a recurrent theme; catchy graphics brought attention to the concept; an issue devoted to the Spirituality of La Salette gave high priority to “reconciliation” (35); and a supplement was issued on the subject. (36)

By the opening of the special General Chapter of 1968, “Reconciliation” had become fairly well implanted in the consciousness of the Congregation. The Synthetic Summary of the views and reports from the various provinces stated:

The theme of reconciliation is favored by the majority of the members of the congregation. Being a doctrine included in the apparition, or deriving from it, it has the advantage of summarizing, or of containing in summary, all the others, and of benefiting implicitly from the Church’s approbation of the event as is shown by the first liturgical invocation addressed to Our Lady of La Salette with authorization from the Bishop...The term, Reconciliation, seems best depicts our charism...it seems that viewed on a universal plane, a Christological, ecclesial and Marian doctrine of Reconciliation should enlighten our apostolic activities, and render them truly fruitful. ... the entire message of Mary’s apparition recalls nothing else but reconciliation of all her people through the reconciling sacrifice of her Son...As in the past, our multiform apostolate will find its unity of thought and action in the Salettine Spirit of Reconciliation, which spirit both inspires and motivates our diverse activities. Reconciliation as a universal and prophetic theme, is arousing enthusiasm among an ever greater number of our members. (37)

In the Second Study Fascicle sent to the members of the Congregation it had been stated in the chapter on the Foundation of Our Spirituality: “In view of the history of the devotion to Our Lady of La Salette and the history of the Congregation, we can say that reconciliation is the key word of our spirit.” (38) One province, Brazil, felt

so strongly on the issue that they proposed that the title of the Congregation be changed to Missionaries of Reconciliation. (39) “Reconciliation” had made its impact.

La Salette Specificity in the New Rule

The Congregation’s roots at La Salette were made explicit in the first chapter of the new constitution: “Loyal to the spirit of our foundation, which stems from Mary’s apparition at La Salette ... in faithfulness to this spirit we seek to emphasize the profoundly evangelical values of Our Lady’s message.” (Ch. 1, parag. 5, p.9). The final line of the following paragraph in the text contains echoes of the apparition: “We ourselves strive to live these values in order to lead men, by the witness of our lives as well as by our words, to receive the Good News which it is our mission to make known to all.” (Ch. 1, parag. 6, p.9) The Good News here refers to the Gospel, certainly, but the line also brings to mind Mary’s commission, “You will make this known to all my people.”

The Capitular Norms continue this specific Salettine emphasis. “The Congregation strives to be a sign of grace of reconciliation to all by Christ and vividly recalled by the Virgin in her Apparition...The Apostolate of the Congregation is characterized by the evangelical spirituality of the Apparition.” (Cap. Norms, nos. 31,32, p.20) The Norms continue this stress in the section on formation; on fostering studies concerning La Salette; determining the manner of devotion to Our Lady of La Salette, the principal patroness of the Congregation; and maintaining the distinctive La Salette Crucifix as an external sign of the apostolic mission and of the common life and spirit of the Congregation (Cap. Norms, nos. 3,4,5, p.17).

Apostolic Emphasis

The new rule gives a primary emphasis to the apostolate. This is made evident from the very opening line of the text: “Among the people of God, we, the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, for a Religious Congregation dedicated to the apostolate.” (Cf. 1, paragraph 1, p.9) The text understands the religious consecration as directed to the apostolate: “Lived in intimacy with Christ, our consecration will lead us to a total availability for his service and that of our fellowmen.” (Ch. II, paragraph 6, p.10) One is reminded of Father Denaz’s letter of 1855 in which he petitioned the Bishop for the vowed life in order to better fulfill the apostolate that he felt Mary’s apparition had given. (40) The former rule tended to create a mentality that could easily see one’s sanctification as independent of the apostolate because it presented a division of ends: the primary being the sanctification of one’s own soul and the special end being the apostolate. (41) The emphasis in the new rule is clearly on the fact that the Congregation is an apostolic institute and therefore the members’ sanctification is linked to the apostolate and not independent of it. In formation, men are to receive everything “necessary to an apostolic vocation.” (Ch. V, paragraph 3, p. 13)

The new rule remains within the traditions of the Congregation in its listing of apostolic works. The wording may be new, but the works themselves, with the exception of ecumenism, are not.

Among the apostolic activities that are confided to it by Divine Providence and by the Church, there are some which are more in line with its character and which may better nourish and develop its spirituality, for example:

- ministries of service to local churches: preaching, caring for shrines, especially that on the Holy Mountain, directing groups for spiritual development, administering parishes;
- the preaching of the Gospel where it is yet unannounced or among social classes that are estranged from it;
- ecumenical work;
- the direction of youth groups and of those called to the priestly or religious life. (Cap. Norms, no.32, p.20)

Response to the New Rule

The dominant elements of the new rule are: the spirit of “reconciliation” linked to Mary’s apparition at La Salette; an apostolic emphasis influencing the shaping of religious life and drawn from the charism of “reconciliation”; and works within the scope that has been part of the Congregation’s mission from the beginning. All of these factors would seem to indicate that the new rule actually does embody a “genuine understanding of the original spirit” and that the “spirit and aims of the founder are clearly recognized and faithfully observed, as indeed the institute’s sound traditions.” (42) Appearances are deceiving, for there has not been agreement on the issue since the promulgation of the rule.

The General Chapter of 1970 opened with reports from the various provinces. One of the questions addressed in the reports was the reception of the new rule. Some provinces felt the rule was merely skeletal and needed a great deal of fleshing out. (43) One province reacted more strongly and felt that the special chapter had gone beyond its powers and had created a rule which has little to do with the old one, and with regards the ministerial activities, does not seem to go back to the sources. They felt the rule was so generalized that it actually changed the original distinctiveness. (44) These “official” reactions are actually like the tip of an iceberg. Objections to the new rule have been widespread and the content of most of them can be found in the objections raised at the preparation of the rule itself. These objections have involved: specifying “reconciliation” as the spirit of the Congregation; the omission of a concrete enough link to Mary’s apparition; omission of the venerable tradition of the spirit of the Congregation as that of “prayer, penance and zeal.”

With regards to the notion of reconciliation, it has been objected that there is no consensus as to the meaning or extension of the term.

There can be no doubt that the concept of reconciliation in all its comprehension and extension is a valid aspect of the mission of Christ on earth and thus a valid orientation for all the Christian and religious life ... But the question here is: does this concept of Reconciliation express, in a concise but rich sense of the meaning, our own return to the sources. Does this concept sum up the intentions and the spirit of the first La Salettes? (45)

It is easy to recognize reconciliation as the ecclesial mission, but specifically how is it the La Salette mission? (46) The rule’s explicit linking of reconciliation to the apparition did not satisfy these doubts in the minds of many. In the back of their questions was a cherished idea of the spirit of the Congregation.

I especially regret that we have left aside the triad: prayer, penance and zeal – which describes so well the attitude of the Virgin at La Salette, whose spirit should animate her missionary. It is a family treasure that has given to us by all the rules since the first, it is necessary to be preserved in the new ... it represents a part of our apostolic witness, as well as being a help in the practice of the religious life and the vows.(47)

Objections have also been raised to the scope of reconciliation in terms of apostolic work in general. The Capitular Norms zero in on the “reconciliation of sinners,” but this seems to ignore the tradition of striving for the sanctification of the just which is at the heart of the shrine work, parish missions and retreats, and the sustaining work of administering parishes. Also missing is the formula that the missionaries are committed to fighting the evils of the day. (48) It is easy to understand the reticence in abandoning these texts since they did form part of a rich tradition and heritage, one that did not only appear in the text of ancient rules, but more importantly, played a part in the Laudatory decree of 1879 and the decree of Approbation of 1890, both conferring the Congregation’s specific ecclesial mission. (49)

There have also been objections from the other end of the spectrum, from people who fought against the spelling out of any Salettine distinctiveness. One can only conjecture that the Council’s significant highlighting of the ecclesial and evangelical dimensions of all Christian life, and of religious life in particular, created in some members of the Congregation a type of intoxication that blurred their vision to the importance and value

of charismatic individuation for each institute. These individuals were so insistent on the gospel and ecclesial emphasis that they could only see justice being done to this emphasis if there was a great diminution of specific identity for the Congregation especially in terms of being identified with the apparition of La Salette. The viewpoint received an airing in two articles in the review, *Reconciliare*.

If we try to conceive a La Salette Spirituality which will not be totally irrelevant, we must disregard the details of the message of La Salette in order to concentrate on what remains basic and true in spite of the passing years. ...We will have to indulge a little in La Salette flag-waving in order to raise as high as possible the banner of the Church. We are too much of a sect without particular devotion. ...Let our title be free from any ambiguity; let it clearly show our intention to work for the Church and in the Church. This is not treason. La Salette is our point of origin, not our way of life....I am firmly convinced that our Congregation will continue to exist only if we break away from our romantic attachment to the fact of La Salette. The apparition is an historical event, and as such, it will be forgotten. If we do not disassociate ourselves in time from this gradually sinking stone, we will disappear with it. (50)

A bit less strident, but from a similar point of view, was the following:

Let the Apparition take second place. In our efforts to define and to elaborate our special mission, whether it be in the Constitution or some other document, let us not use the Constitutions themselves and not even the apparition at La Salette as the starting point. Let us consider the needs of the Church...We have no right to subordinate the needs of the worlds to the claims of our La Salette vocation; it should be the other way around. Otherwise we run the grave risk of thinking of ourselves and of our tradition more than of the Church; worse still, we expose ourselves to the perils of petty concern with our private distinctions instead of busying ourselves with the desperate needs of our brothers, all over the world. (51)

The same theme carried over in the Synthetic Summary where we read: “Everyone knows that apparitions tend to become, and to be considered, a thing of the past and eventually even forgotten.” (52) These are the same sentiments behind the desire to change the title of the Congregation to Missionaries of Reconciliation.

The impression one gets is that the fears expressed come from a mistaken notion of fidelity to La Salette and the apparition; as if such a fidelity takes one away from the work of the Church and from the Gospel proclamation and response to people’s needs. The Congregation’s history of apostolic activity does not substantiate this fear of ecclesial infidelity and narrowness of vision. One has only to glance at the Customary for Parish Missions at the end of the rule of 1909 to see how the preaching apostolate of very explicitly devoted La Salette missionaries was an apostolate of incredibly broad and inclusive Christian-Ecclesial dimensions. The concluding chapter of this study will demonstrate how this proposed “greater fidelity to the Church by playing down one’s distinctiveness” is really a greater infidelity.

Fortunately, the new rule does give prominence to the event of the apparition – not enough for some, too much for others. But the reason was well stated in the second session of the special General Chapter:

Specific mention of La Salette is the basis of our traditions, our authentic origin. It is in the message and also in the Mandate of Bishop de Bruillard that we do find suggested the end, the characteristics, the spirit of our Congregation, also the general lines of its apostolic and missionary activity. Our apostolate, our ministry of reconciliation, should be considered certainly in the perspective of actuality. However, it is important to put in evidence the heritage which comes to us from our origins. (53)

The truth was, “If we reject La Salette, the understanding of the devotion of Our Lady of La Salette, we modify our Congregation to the point of making a new institute.” (54) La Salette was not rejected, but the question still remains, has its traditional understanding been preserved, or has the new rule reflected the beginnings of a deeper and more theological understanding. Or, has the heritage been betrayed?

A commission of the General Chapter of 1970 concluded that the reports from the various provinces reflected that the same sense of the rule, especially the part on government and responsibility of local communities, had not been understood by everyone. The conclusion was that the rule would have to be improved. (55) This has not yet been done and at the grass roots one senses a general disinterest or malaise with regards the rule. (56)

Conclusion

The crisis of the last ten years almost makes one forget the activity of the previous forty, the years of growth, dynamic activity, fervent hope. But was it, as Father Hostie suggests in his study, all surface activity that belied a slowly withering interior? Did the lack of progressive self-evaluation create a type of Humpty-Dumpty that had its great fall at the Council? When Vatican II opened the window and let that little breeze in, did it become a veritable hurricane because it had been sucked into a vacuum? And did the open window result in so many defenestrations (throwing things away) because open windows were such a novelty?

The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette have suffered their share of losses. From the peak year of 1967 with 1131 members, the Congregation presently numbers little more than nine hundred members. Also, in the last few years the Congregation has been confronted with a massive financial problem that touches practically every area of the community's life. The whirlwind of crisis seems over, but there are still deep difficulties to be faced.

The new rule provides a springboard for effective renewal. It contains many touchpoints with the origins and sources, all leading back to the apparition, the founding event. The rule still needs much clarification, however; a work that can be frustrated by the attitude that fidelity to the Church and its work does not allow such luxuries or by the attitude that the rule is to be ignored because it is too vague, too general, to be really applicable. Hope resides in the individuals and communities who will take the time to deepen their understanding of the Vatican II perspectives and the possibilities offered within the new rule. Hope lies with the men who will be willing to take up the directives of the new rule and fire them with a living and ever-growing tradition that will continue to shape and reshape the Congregation's self-expression. Only such commitment and dedication will effectively strengthen and reconstruct that "eternal monument and perpetual remembrance of Mary's merciful apparition," the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette contributing in a vital way to the life of the Church.

CONCLUSION

The journey from the mountain top at La Salette has been a long and winding one. The echoes responding to “make this known to all my people” have sounded in many tongues and very distant lands. The preceding chronicle of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette is not the typical history of glorious deed. There are inside views that are usually glossed over with the phrase, “a difficult period.” And yet, the facts do a great deal to accentuate the role of grace and divine providence in the evolution of the Congregation, as well as the heroism of its great men. The pages of history demonstrate that these were not men who were being led by quick success or the promise of personal fulfillment; there was little of either. Rather, these were men drawn into a vocation of sacrifice by the magnetic pull of a mother’s tears and the urgency of her message. The years of inner turmoil and of difficulties with ecclesial authorities and the State should serve as an inspiration to those who find the process of renewal a tedious and, at times, discouraging one. Members of the Congregation are still being called to what Father Giraud called “the vocation of Calvary.” (1) Today part of that Calvary is the suffering inherent in the fidelity and responsibility demanded by the call to renewal. The Congregation’s history, however, provides a few basic points that should be clearly kept in mind during this process.

First of all, the Congregation in its “returning to the sources” cannot return to a “founder,” but rather must have recourse to a “founding event,” the apparition of Our Lady at La Salette on September 19, 1846. The first missionaries were called into existence because of that event; their work was dedicated by it; and eventually their spirit was shaped by reflections on various aspects of the apparition and its message. As the apparition itself was a charism given to the Church, the Congregation became a continuation of that charism, “an eternal monument and perpetual remembrance.”

It is this charism that the Congregation has incarnated throughout its history and given it various, new faces through providentially-given apostolates and adapted forms of living out its spirit. The Congregation has not existed and flourished merely to perpetuate the historical fact of the apparition; but rather to present within the Church the aspects of the Christian mystery that Our Lady highlighted: the reconciliation of sinners, the call to religious observances, the need for prayer and penance. The Congregation’s documents of approbation show that this is the mission conferred upon it by the Church.

Just as the apostolic life of the Congregation has adapted and grown in response to new situations, so too the understanding and expression of its spirit has evolved. The Congregation has moved from defining its spirit as one of “prayer, penance and zeal” to one of “reconciliation.” Reconciliation is a truth which has roots in the apparition itself, but it has found favor recently because there has been a growing awareness in the Church and its theology of this aspect of salvation. One need only call to mind the fact that the theme of the recent Holy Year was reconciliation. Our “global village” world has created a consciousness of the great need for unity. Theological reflections and awareness has responded by accentuating God’s solution, his gift of reconciliation in Christ. The Congregation’s emphasis, however, is not an interjection of something new into the spirit or its heritage, rather it is simply calling forth something that was already there and which is now particularly relevant.

Value and Purpose of a Search into Origins

The questions now poses itself, “All very interesting, but actually, what difference does it make? We are what we are and let’s just get on with the work.” The remark, one often heard, comes from the existentialist stance towards renewal. A study such as this appears as a waste of time to such a mentality, or worse yet, as an escape from the “real work at hand.” It is the essentialist mindset that produces studies attempting to discover origins and sources.

The essentialists are those who want to determine the proper end of a Congregation; define and trace its spirit; find the sources, the roots, the origins and the evolving expression of the charism. On the other hand, the existentialists want to operate out of the context of the here and now. They find the search for the founding spirit and its development both tiresome and for all practical purposes, useless. For the existentialists it is enough to return to the call of the gospel values, service to the Church and fidelity to reality. (2)

Each position is necessary for an authentic, balanced and effective renewal. The renewal directives of *Perfectae Caritatis* emphasize both attitudes, a return to the sources and an adaptation to the present situation. This study has concentrated on the essentialist's view for the moment, but only in order to more effectively carry out the existential dimension in the future.

The existentialists, as seen in some of the articles in *Reconciliare* and reports of the Special Chapter, bolster their position with the idea that it is for the greater fidelity to the Church and the Gospel that we should not bother with the past or the particulars of a specific Congregation. What is of major importance is the gospel and the needs of the Church. Now that the dust has settled a bit, it is worth pointing out that fidelity to the Church does not arise by abandoning distinctive characteristics and indiscriminately embracing the global mission of the Church. Quite the contrary, true fidelity to the Church consists in contributing one's distinct charism to the life of the Church and with this unique charism to meet the real needs of the day. A Congregation can only contribute this uniqueness if it understands and effectively lives it. To be different, to be distinct, therein lies the fidelity of a Congregation. The point is worth pursuing and clarifying for it is one of the theological gift-insights of the Council.

In *Lumen Gentium*, 43, we get intimations that differences are to be cherished:

Thus it has come about that various forms of solitary and community life, as well as different religious families, have grown up. Advancing the progress of their members and the welfare of the whole body of Christ, these groups have been like branches sprouting out wondrously and abundantly from a tree growing in the field of the Lord from a seed divinely planted. (3)

Perfectae Caritatis begins with a tribute to the variety of religious institutes and in so doing carries even further the observations of *Lumen Gentium*.

And so it happened by divine plan that a wonderful variety of religious communities grew up. This variety contributed mightily toward making the Church experienced in every good deed and ready for a ministry of service in building up Christ's body. Not only this, but adorned by the various gifts of her children, the Church became radiant like a bride made beautiful for her spouse and through her God's manifold wisdom could reveal itself.... It serves the best interests of the Church for communities to have their own special character and purpose. Therefore loyal recognition and safekeeping should be accorded to the spirit of the founders, as also to all the particular goals and wholesome traditions which constitute the heritage of each community. All communities should participate in the life of the Church according to its individual character, each should make its own and foster in every possible way the enterprises and objectives of the Church. (4)

This same note is sounded in *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (5) and Pope Paul VI returned to the same theme in a number of his discourses. (6) It is again expressed in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificata* of 1971: "Any living organism adapts to its environment by the development of the form and vitality proper to itself, not by rejecting its own identity." (7)

The distinctions are to be preserved precisely for the good of the Church. The differences are not man created, but are the work of the Holy Spirit. "The diversity of Religious Institutes...is a permanent sign, a public manifestation of the active assistance which the People of God receive from the Holy Spirit." (8) This accent on the Spirit represented a shift from the canonical tradition of the Norms of 1901 and the Code, which insisted on

great uniformity, even offering models for constitutions which did not allow the use of scripture within the constitutions and relegated any signs of distinctions to customaries. The new emphasis represented a “becoming conscious in a more profound way of the directive role of the Spirit of God in his Church, a renewed attention to the charismatic aspect of the Christian community.” (9) In this context, the ‘return to the sources’ is “inspired by a theology of religious life conceived in an ecclesiology giving the charismatic character of the People of God its full value. . . The Council, in fact, put back in a place of honor the charisms of the ecclesial community.” (10)

A charism is an inspiration of the Spirit which invites a Christian to fulfill a particular task in the mission of the Church and which gives him at the same time the capacity to accomplish it. It is a gift for the benefit of others, for the good of the Mystical Body and not directly, at least, for the personal sanctification of the recipient. It is an impulse of God’s Spirit who wishes to confront in this way the Church with her ever novel present and through the confrontation to engage her with this present in a more thorough and highly differentiated way. (11)

This is perfectly applicable to religious congregations as well as to individuals. As Father Arrupe observed in his address at the Synod of 1969, these charisms are “granted first to the Founding Fathers of religious families and then shared by all those who are divinely called to enter these institutions. Each institute and each of its members, by virtue of this charismatic gift, has a special mission in the Church.” (12) Charism is linked to mission, and each mission is distinct, although all are within the common mission of salvation. “For this reason there is a variety of institutes in the Church, which are all necessary. And the Holy Spirit inspires and continues to inspire the members of all religious families but in different ways, according to their specific tasks in the Church.” (13)

An understanding of the charismatic structure of the Church shows that far from betraying fidelity to the Church, the attempt to discover, recapture and revitalize the founding charism is, in fact, the only true fidelity. “Fidelity to one’s own end is still the principal form of our fidelity to the Holy See. We enter into the pastoral design of the Church completely by respecting rigorously the end for which She has approved us.” (14)

The search, seen within the charismatic context, also brings us a very crucial point, the very fact of the continued existence of a particular institute. “The recall to origins is not just a matter of antiquarianism, it is rather the opportunity for asking a blunt question about the right to exist, and certainly about the right to develop.” (15) The same issue is faced by another author: “The authenticity of an institute demands that it preserve its own charisms and its own patrimony but on the condition, of course, that this special charism and this special patrimony still have their reason to exist in the Church and the world today.” (16) All of this could be very threatening to a member of the La Salette Congregation if he thought of La Salette and the ties to the apparition only in terms of a Marian devotion that was very culturally and theologically bound to another age. The tracing of the Congregation’s history should have dispelled this fear to a great extent, and hopefully a theological exploration in the future should eliminate it completely.

The search into origins is also pragmatically valuable. It produces, or rather spells out, an identification that is necessary so that the older members of an institute can have a medium for continued reflection upon their own identity and new members can have a visible group to be attracted to.

The process of understanding and accenting one’s traditions also enables a Congregation to fulfill another principle for renewal, the directive demanding consultation. (18) If the past is ignored, then a large group of people have been cut off from consultation – the early fathers of the Congregation. As G. K. Chesterton very beautifully stated: “Tradition is democracy extended through time. Tradition means giving the vote to that most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. Tradition is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who are walking about.” (19) By becoming more aware of a Congregation’s traditions, the men who went before the present generation are given a hearing, which is valuable since the charism was transmitted and lived through them

A Janus stance, looking forward and backward, is what is demanded for effective renewal. The whole process has been well expressed in the following:

A religious community can be more present today if it knows its past. Contact with the charism allows the group to measure itself against its past to challenge its present vitality. As a matter of fact, to be truly radical ... they need to be in touch with their roots. The group remains the same group as long as it is united and moved by the same ideals and spirit of its founder. The present and the future grow out of a common history. To the extent that an individual or a community is aware of its past, they can make better decisions in the present. ...When a group has a memory of past heritage preserved in a living tradition, it is more likely to have a creative imagination in moving ahead. (20)

Conclusion

The present study has collected data that is necessary as a preliminary to an in-depth study into the sources, roots, and charism of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. Areas that demand further research are: the theology of apparitions; the theology of Mary's role as Reconciler; an explication of the evangelical values inherent in the apparition and its message; the cultural and theological underpinnings of the various modes used to express the charism in the last century; a contemporary, theological reflection on prayer, penance and zeal; the theological insights of Father Giraud when abstracted from the influence of the French school of spirituality; greater specification of the notion of "reconciliation" within the context of Mariology and the apparition as well as ministerial forms; possible contemporary forms for incarnating a Salettine spirit.

The face of the Congregation has changed throughout the years. It will continue to change, emphasizing and accenting different aspects of its charism according to the needs of the age and the extent of the self-discovery appropriated by its members. Within the tradition and heritage that is linked to a very specific origin with definite characteristics, there is still a variety of possibilities open within the charism. The challenge lies within the creative choices to be made, just as it was before the Chapter of 1876 that gave the Congregation its definitive apostolic thrust. The present members if any Congregation have the responsibility as well as the capacity to make such creative choices because they share in a real way the charism that gave rise to a Congregation and which has been passed on through the years by the forefathers. The choice has to be made with enlightened fidelity to one's heritage as well as with confidence in the Spirit directing the response to the present and carrying the unfolding of the charism into the future.

=Hopefully this study will facilitate the choices necessary to insure that the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette continues to serve the Church in a unique, Spirit-given way, as an "eternal monument and perpetual remembrance of Mary's merciful apparition."

END

APPENDIX

MAJOR DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION

1846	Apparition of Our Lady at La Salette
1852	Bishop de Bruillard establishes the Diocesan Society of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette
1858	The Congregation becomes a Diocesan Religious Congregation
1876	The Chapter defines the Congregation as Apostolic
1879	The Congregation becomes a Pontifical Institute with the Laudatory Decree
1890	The Congregation receives Roman Approbation
1909	Rome approves the rule “ad experimentum”
1926	Rome gives definitive approbation of the rule
1970	Promulgation of the new rule “ad experimentum”

SUPERIORS GENERAL OF THE CONGREGATION

V.R. Pierre Archier	1858-1865
V.R. Sylvain-Marie Giraud	1865-1876
V.R. Pierre Archier	1876-1891
V.R. Auguste Chapuy	1891-1897
V.R. Joseph Perrin	1897-1913
V.R. Pierre Pajot	1913-1926
V.R. Celestine Crozet	1926-1932
V.R. Etienne-Xavier Cruveiller	1932-1945
V.R. Joseph Imhof	1946-1958
V.R. Joseph Alphonse Dutil	1958-1964
V.R. Conrad Henri Blanchet	1964-1970
V.R. Emil Truffer	1970-1976
V.R. Lionel Lemay	1976- 1982
V.R. Eugene G. Barrette	1982-1988
V.R. Ernest J. Corriveau	1988-1994
V.R. Isidro Perin	1994-

THE FIRST MISSIONARIES UNTIL 1876

(–taken from the notes of F. Beaup, I, pp. 168-170. List includes all members to the date of the General Chapter of 1876; dates below use the European order of dates: namely, date, month, year)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Arrived</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Departure</u>	<u>Death</u>
Sibillat	10/05/1852		28/01/1859	10/03/1870
Denaz	14/05/1852			27/04/1857
Burnoud	29/05/1852		¿?/10/1855	¿?/06/1865
Bonvallet	¿?/09/1852		¿?/07/1856	¿?/09/1890
Archier	¿?/11/1852	¿?/02/1858		02/01/1899
Richard	¿?/07/1853		¿?/01/1857	
Chavier	¿?/07/1854		¿?/10/1858	¿?/10/1869
Berlioz	¿?/08/1854	¿?/02/1858	¿?/04/1865	¿?/04/1909
Albertin	¿?/08/1854	¿?/02/1858	¿?/03/1859	¿?/12/1912
Bossan	¿?/09/1856	¿?/02/1858	¿?/02/1868	¿?/04/1890
Buisson	¿?/04/1857	¿?/02/1858		¿?/05/1890
Petit	¿?/08/1857	¿?/02/1858		¿?/11/1862
Giraud	¿?/11/1858	¿?/02/1860		¿?/08/1885
Brun	¿?/06/1859	¿?/09/1860		¿?/02/1862
Milliat	¿?/07/1859	¿?/09/1860		¿?/05/1895
Albert	¿?/08/1859	¿?/09/1860	1877	¿?/03/1886
H. Berthier	¿?/07/1863	¿?/09/1864		¿?/02/1885
J. Berthier	¿?/07/1863	¿?/09/1865		¿?/10/1908
Perrin	¿?/07/1864	¿?/10/1865		¿?/03/1913
Jacquot	¿?/09/1864	¿?/02/1866		¿?/10/1868
Pons	¿?/08/1865	¿?/03/1867		¿?/08/1905
Langlois	¿?/09/1868	¿?/02/1870		¿?/01/1903
Roquebrune	1869	¿?/07/1870	1876	
Ripert	1869	¿?/02/1872	1875	
Villard	¿?/08/1871	¿?/02/1873		¿?/06/1907
Chapuy	1872	¿?/11/1872		¿?/07/1907

ENDNOTES

Introduction

- 1) *Perfectae Caritatis*, Nos. 1 to 4; *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, Nos. 12 to 16, *Lumen Gentium*, V and VI are also fundamental.
- 2) Constitutions and Capitular Norms of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, English edition, 1972, pp. 9, 20.
- 3) Victor Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires de la Salette*, Paris, 1930, p.7. There are two other congregations with the title related to an Apparition: The Brothers of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception of Lourdes. However, both pre-existed the apparition; the first founded as the Brothers of Good Works and the second as Missionaries of Our Lady of Garaison. Cf. Morineau's article, "Les Congrégations religieuses d'hommes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours," *Maria*, Tome III, pp. 337-378. Also confer a listing in the *Anuario Pontificio*, 1973, Città del Vaticano, Pp. 1173 and 1148, respectively.
- 4) Louis Bassette, *Le Fait de la Salette*, Paris, 1955, p. 279.
- 5) Fr. Etienne Cruveiller, Circulars 97, p.2; 99, 1939, p. 4; 108, 1943, pp. 5-6. Fr. Joseph Imhof, Circulars 2, 1947, p. 3; 17, p. 3. Fr. Alphonse Dutil, Circular 2, especially part 3, pp. 19-20; 11, 1961, pp. 8-9.
- 6) *Lumen Gentium*, 43: "...like the branches sprouting out wondrously and abundantly from a tree growing in the field of the Lord..." *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2b: "It serves the best interest of the Church for communities to have their own special character and purpose." *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 16, 3: "For the good of the Church, institutes must seek after a genuine understanding of their original spirit, so that they will preserve it faithfully when deciding on adaptation."
- 7) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires....*; Jean Jaouen, *Les Missionnaires de Notre-Dame de la Salette*, Paris, 1953. Unpublished: James O'Reilly, *The Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, 1852 to 1913*, 1964. Charles Novel, *Du Corps des missionnaires diocésains à l'actuelle congrégation des missionnaires de N.-D. de la Salette*, 1968; and *De la fin et de l'esprit propres des Missionnaires de N.-D. de la Salette*, 1969.

CHAPTER I:

- 1) James O'Reilly, M.S., *The Story of La Salette*, Chicago, 1953, pp. 25-28.
- 2) Louis Carlier, M.S., *Histoire de l'Apparition de la Mère de Dieu sur la Montagne de la Salette*, 10th ed., Paris, 1914, p.429.
- 3) Carlier, Chapters 3, pp. 28-48; 7, 104-173; Victor Hostachy, M.S., *Histoire Séculaire de la Salette*, Grenoble, 1944, pp. 33-53; Bassette, *Le Fait de la Salette*, and a popular account in Michael Cox, M.S., *Rain for These Roots*, Milwaukee, 1956, Chapters 3 and 5.=
- 4) Carlier, pp. 289-296.
- 5) J.F., "Construction du Sanctuaire," *Annales de N.-D. de la Salette*, Juin 1914, p. 6.
- 6) L. Beup, M.S., *Notes sur la Congrégation*, Vol. I, pp. 22-28, contains the correspondence between the Bishop and the fathers with regards becoming missionaries.
- 7) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires....*, p.14.
- 8) "Les Missionnaires Diocésains," *Annales*, Juillet, 1914, p. 42.
- 9) "Projet de règle – 1852," *Constitutions et Règlement Anciens*, pp. 4-6.
- 10) "Important Manuscripts," *Reconciliare*, Dec. 1966, p. 15.

- 11) Hostachy, *Histoire.....*, p.373.
- 12) Abbé Rousselot, *Un Nouveau Sanctuaire à Marie*, Grenoble, 1853, pp. 192-4.
- 13) *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 16, 3; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.
- 14) André Rayez, "France," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Tome V, Paris, 1964, p. 973.
- 15) Soeur Jeanne d'Arc, "Les Congrégations à la recherche de leur esprit," *Supplément: La Vie Spirituelle*, Sept. 1967, p. 519.
- 16) *Lumen Gentium*, 45.
- 17) Herbert Kramer, S.M., "Return to the Founder: A Vatican II Appraisal," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Oct. 1967, pp. 253-4.
- 18) W. Hinesbusch, "Origins and Development of Religious Orders," *Review for Religious*, Jan. 1970, p.68.
- 19) Jean Jaouen, M.S., *Les Missionnaires de N.-D. de la Salette*, Paris, 1953, p.25; Hosdtachy, *Les Missionnaires....*, p.25; J. A. Lefrançois, "Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, N.Y., 1967, p. 389, the caption under the picture of de Bruillard calls him the founder. There have also been some dissenting voices such as Macario Caterini, *I Missionari di Nostra Signora de la Salette*, Torino, 1962, p. 25.
- 20) *Etudes, Troisième Fascicule*, p. 19.
- 21) "Important Documents," *Reconciliare*, pp. 16-17.
- 22) Beaup, I, p. 31, footnote 1.
- 23) *Ibid.* p.25.
- 30) J. P. O'Reilly, *Our Salettine Spirit and Apostolate*, manuscript, p.10
- 31) Jaouen, p. 8.
- 32) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires....*, p. 7.

CHAPTER II:

- 1) Victor Hostachy, *La Galerie des Portraits de la Salette: les Evêques*, Paris, 1931, pp. 137-241. Also very valuable is Jacques Gadille's *Albert du Boys: Ses Souvenirs du Concile du Vatican*, 1869-1870, Louvain, 1968. Here Ginoulhiac's activity in the minority group opposing the proclamation of papal infallibility is traced. High tributes to his theological competence can be found on pages 116, 120, 154.
- 2) Marie des Brulais, *L'Echo de la Sainte Montagne*, Nantes, 1852, pp. 323-4.
- 3) A. Bossan, "Quelques Notes Historiques: Communauté des Pères de N.-D. de la Salette, p.2. The notes are primarily a journal and his own rather testy personality emerges very clearly in its pages. The Notes are very valuable for the factual data given; interesting, but less reliable, for the evaluation he makes. It is a case of a journal keeper fighting and justifying his ways and positions within the more controlled forum of his own pages.
- 4) L. M. Similien, *Pèlerinage à la Salette*, Angers, 1853, pp. 241-6.
- 5) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires.....*, p.36.
- 6) Carlier, pp. 438-450. William Ullathorne, *The Holy Mountain of La Salette*, London, 1854.
- 7) Charles Novel, M.S., *Du Corps des missionnaires diocésains.....*, pp. 16-17.

- 8) Beup, I, p. 35; also Jaouen, pp. 36-39.
- 9) Beup, I, p. 65.
- 10) Bossan, p. 9.
- 11) Ibid., p. 4.
- 12) Hostachy, *Histoire...* pp. 449-461, gives a brief survey of religious women associated with La Salette. In 1855 the Sisters of Providence were called to work at the Mountain. They worked there till 1872. In 1871 Mlle. Delay-Fabry of Marseille founded the Soeurs Réparatrices de N.-D. de la Salette. They undertook the work of caring for pilgrims at the mountain in 1872 and also followed the Missionaries in later years to Poland and Belgium to work in the seminaries. They were committed to the apostolate in a spirit of immolation, prayer and reparation. In 1872 Father Giraud transformed an already existing Congregation devoted to Notre Dame Auxiliatrice, into the Tiers-Ordre régulier de Notre-Dame de la Salette. They did hospital work, taught children, cared for the aged and young girls. In 1945 they established a contemplative house devoted to reparation in the spirit of victim. In 1967 they fused with the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. In 1928, Father Crozet, sixth Superior General of the Missionaries, laid the foundation for the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of La Salette. They were canonically established in 1930 with the aim of sharing in the ministry of the Missionaries. They also ran homes for the aged and a hospice for young women as well as working in the missions with the fathers. Dedicated to the apostolate, their spirit was one of prayer, sacrifice and zeal. In 1965 they merged with the Soeurs Réparatrices and assumed the title Sisters of Our Lady of La Salette.
- 13) Bossan, p.7 . Cf. note 3 above.
- 14) Ibid., p.8.
- 15) Ibid., pp. 3-4, footnote 1.
- 16) Ibid., p.14.
- 17) Ibid., p. 4; Beup, p.42.
- 18) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires.....*, p.45.
- 19) Carlier, pp. 578-582. Hostachy, p.41; there is also a lengthy series on Archier's life by S. Descheaux that begins in the *Annales* in Feb., 1900, is taken up in the Bulletin in 1902 and runs sporadically until 1914.
- 20) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires....*, p. 44.
- 21) Bossan, p. 10.
- 22) Ibid., p. 19.
- 23) Ibid., p. 23.
- 24) Ibid., p. 24.
- 25) Ibid., p. 4.
- 26) Carlier, p. 581; Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires....*, p. 40.
- 27) Hostachy, Ibid., p. 41.
- 28) Bossan, p. 37; Jaouen, p. 39.
- 29) "Règles Provisoires, 1858, " Constitutions et Règlements anciens, pp. 8-14. All references to this rule in the next pages will simply indicate the chapters and numbers in parenthesis.
- 30) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires.....*, p.55. The crucifix which is worn now was adopted on Sept. 8, 1859.

CHAPTER III:

- 1) "Règles Abregées pour les Frères de N.-D. de la Salette," *Constitutions et Règlements Anciens*, pp.18-22. This rule is closely patterned after that of 1858 for the Missionaries, but these are a few observations to be made. First, the brothers are considered as those "who lack the necessary intelligence to become Missionaries but who desire to enter into the work of the Queen of Heaven and to sanctify themselves by following the rule and fulfilling all the functions they are capable of with the faculties God has given them." The Congregation was by origin a clerical one and we can perhaps trace back to this rule the root of the "second-class citizen" position that the Brothers have all too often been given in the Congregation. This statement in the rule for the brothers does not give much value to the specific call to the Brotherhood, but rather, one becomes a brother only if one is incapable of being a priest. Secondly, this rule added two other qualities to the spirit. Besides being men of prayer, expiation and zeal as is designated in the rule for the missionaries, the brothers were to be men of charity and men of silence.
- 2) The Curé of Ars in 1859 remarked to a penitent: "But you have in Grenoble a father who, more than I can satisfy you. They do not know and appreciate him enough in Grenoble, for if they knew what a heart and soul Fr. Giraud has, they would come to see him from everywhere." Jaouen, p.39.
- 3) Giraud, Letter to R.M.Sainte-Claire, Jan. 18,1857. The letters quoted can also be found in Carlier's biography of Giraud, *Un Vrai Fils de Marie*, 1922, p. 231.
- 4) Giraud, Letter to R.M.Sainte-Claire, Aug. 15, 1857, Carlier, p. 238.
- 5) *Ibid.*, Aug. 25, 1857, Carlier, p. 238.
- 6) *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1858, Carlier, p.254.
- 7) Bossan, p.33.
- 8) *Ibid.*, p.29.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p.37.
- 10) Giraud, Letter to Father Boulian, Feb. 22, 1859, Carlier, p.261.
- 11) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p.52.
- 12) Jaouen, pp. 44-45.
- 13) Bossan, p.59. From the *Notes* of Beaup, p. 128, we get a picture of Bossan's extremes and shortcomings. In dealing with the novices of a community of religious women he was guiding, he once ordered a novice to burn a letter she had just received without opening it; another to abstain from communion for eight to fifteen days, although she went almost daily, he was also often criticized for his inconsistency, one day urging frequent communion, the next day the abuse of frequent communion.
- 14) Bossan, footnote 1, p. 56.
- 15) Carlier, p. 15.
- 16) Bossan, p. 118.
- 17) *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 123.
- 18) Bossan, p. 69. There was once a confrontation between the novices and Buisson over a dinner invitation from a convent. The novices did not think it fitting for them to be going out to a dinner on the Monday before Ash Wednesday. Buisson went to the dinner, the novices with the exception of one, stayed behind.
- 19) Carlier, p. 264.
- 20) Giraud, Letter to R. M. Sainte-Claire, June 20, 1861, Carlier, p.277. The same sentiments are expressed by Bossan, pp. 105, 131.

- 21) Giraud, Letter to R.M. Sainte-Claire, Aug. 19, 1863. Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p.61.
- 22) Bossan, p. 133.
- 23) Ibid., p. 200.
- 24) Bossan, pp. 48, 70, 109, 148, 189.
- 25) Beaup, p. 55.
- 26) Jaouen, p. 48.
- 27) Beaup, p. 61.
- 28) Giraud, Letter to Mme. de B..., Feb. 27, 1865, Carlier, p.299.
- 29) Jaouen, pp. 52-53.
- 30) J. Perrin, *Relève des Notes Manuscrites: Notes sur le Pèlerinage de Notre Dame de la Salette: 1865-1871*, p. 82.
- 31) Ibid., p. 84.
- 32) Giraud, *Institut des Religieux de N.-D. de la Salette*, manuscrit. Also Carlier, pp. 335-337 contains this project.
- 33) The vow of special devotion to the Holy See was made by the missionaries from 1872 to 1879, at which time Rome abolished it in the “animadversiones” that accompanied the Laudatory Decree. The vow was made according to the terms and extension proposed in Giraud’s book, *Le Voeu de Dévouement au Saint-Siège*, which had been approved by the Bishop. In this book such a vow is proposed for laity, religious and seminarians. It is a vow binding oneself to new obligations with regards to obedience and love towards the Holy Father and Apostolic See. The obedience is one binding in all matter directly known and pertaining to one’s state which comes from the Holy Father; love binds to avoid any opposition whatever to the Holy See.
- 34) Giraud, *Letter to Abbé Robert*, April 13, 1870, Carlier, p. 347.
- 35) Carlier, p.348, gives an interesting insight into the standing of the Bishop in his diocese. “In mid-July when Ginoulhiac returned from the Council he was significantly left very much in isolation by his clergy who did not approve nor share his ideas on the subject of Papal infallibility.” He was sent as Archbishop of Lyons, Beaup, p. 70, remarks that Father Sibillat, a former missionary, observed, “It is Our Lady of La Salette sending him to Lyons saying to our Lady of Fouyrvrières, ‘Do with him what you can. I couldn’t get anything worthwhile from him.’”
- 36) Perrin, p. 108.
- 37) Giraud, *Letter of Aug. 20, 1873*, Carlier, pp. 369-370.
- 38) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p.68.
- 39) Beaup, p. 74, Carlier, p. 429.
- 40) Carlier, p. 429.
- 41) Giraud, *Letter of Jan. 31, 1876*, Carlier, p.429-430..
- 42) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p. 71.
- 43) Giraud, *Letter of Feb. 8, 1876*, Carlier, p. 430.
- 44) Ibid., *Feb. 10, 11 and 12, 1876*, Carlier, pp. 431-432.
- 45) Ibid., *Nov. 28, 1867*, Carlier, p. 323.
- 46) Giraud, “Le Projet de 1872,” *Constitutions et Règlements Anciens*, Ch. 1, pp. 23-24.

- 47) *Règles ou constitutions des Religieux Missionnaires de N.-D. de la Salette*, 1876, manuscript. Ch. 1, nos. 1, 2, 3. Future references will indicate the part, chapter and number in a parenthesis.
- 48) E. J. Foxe, "The 'raison d'être' of Religious Life," Supplement to *Doctrine and Life*, Jan. Feb., 1974, p.9.
- 49) It should be remarked that in this chapter, nos. 7-10, deal with the theological fact that reparation and satisfaction is only accomplished by Jesus Christ, but the rule calls for a conscious sharing in this work.
- 50) A listing of reasons why an Institute would seek Pontifical approbation is given in Joseph Gallen, S.J., "Differences of law between Pontifical and Diocesan Lay Congregations," *Review for Religious*, March, 1968, pp. 289-307.
- 51) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p.74.
- 52) Beaup, pp. 75-79.
- 53) Jaouen, p. 86.
- 54) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p.93.
- 55) La Congrégation des Missionnaires de la Salette et le Saint Siège," *Bulletin*, April 1, 1909, pp. 136-7.
- 56) Giraud, *Letter of Dec. 2, 1876*, Carlier, pp. 437-438.
- 57) Carlier, pp. 452-453.
- 58) Jean Jaouen, M.S., "Sylvain-Marie Giraud," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, André Rayez, ed., Tome VI, p. 405. Also related to the question is André Levassor, "La Spiritualité de l'école française," *Vocation*, July, 1972, pp. 328-330.
- 59) André Rayez, "France," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Tome V, p. 981.
- 60) Alphonse Dutil, Circular Letter no. 9, 1960.
- 61) Jaouen, "Sylvain-Marie Giraud," p. 406.

CHAPTER IV:

- 1) Monsignor Bernard became a member of the Congregation and professed vows on July 6, 1880. He died as superior of one of the residences in 1895. Beaup, p.98.
- 2) Hostachy, *Les Missionnaires...*, p. 106.
- 3) Jaouen, p. 94.
- 4) Ibid., p. 95.
- 5) Beaup, II, p. 201.
- 6) Fernand Mourret, "L'Eglise Contemporaine, Deuxième Partie," *Histoire Générale de l'Eglise*, Paris, 1925, p. 62. For full treatment of the question see pp. 61-77.
- 7) Hostachy, p. 109.
- 8) Beaup, I, p. 3, 159.
- 9) Hostachy, p. 139.
- 10) ?
- 11) Mourret, pp. 155-193. Daniel-Rops, *Un Combat pour Dieu*, Paris, 1963, 184-187.
- 12) Mourret, pp. 159, 173.
- 13) Ibid., p. 155.

- 14) Daniel-Rops, p. 186.
 - 15) Beaup, II, pp. 314-315.
 - 16) Hostachy, p. 121.
 - 17) Beaup, II, pp. 268-274, 275-276, 288-289. Perrin, Circular no. 11, Aug. 19, 1903, p. 2.
 - 18) Beaup, II, p. 245.
 - 19) Ibid., p. 237.
 - 20) Ibid. p. 245-246.
 - 21) Beaup, II, pp. 282, 300.
 - 22) Ibid. p. 330.
 - 23) Ibid., II, p. 348.
 - 24) Ibid., p. 349.
 - 25) Perrin, Circular no. 12, May 1, 1904, p. 2.
 - 26) Beaup, II, p. 366.
 - 27) Perrin, Circular no. 33, Nov. 15, 1912, pp. 14-15.
 - 28) Thumbnail sketches of these great men are given in Jaouen, pp. 63-84 and Carlier, pp. 589-600.
 - 29) Copy of Documents *concernant le decretum Laudativum Instituti*, 1879, a collection gathered by Beaup.
 - 30) Remarks by Jean Stern, *Constitutions et Règlements Anciens*, p. 34.
 - 31) Charles Novel, M.S., *Du Corps des missionnaires diocésains.....*, pp. 38-39.
 - 32) Beaup, I, 153-154.
 - 33) The difference between constitutions and customary is given in the 1934 edition of the Congregation's rule. "The Constitutions are the Code of Laws or statutes judged by the Holy See suitable to form a true religious life. But a code cannot go into the details that make up the common life. Rules must be added that adapt the general lines to particular cases and furnish certain determinations of modes, time and place. These Rules, that preserve in practice the best traditions of the Congregation, form the General Customary." Rule of 1934, Customary, p.4. Nothing can be added or subtracted from the Constitutions without reference to the Holy See, the Customary is open to change agreed upon by General Chapters.
- There is a passing reference to this question in J. Creusen, S.J., *Religieux et Religieuses d'Après le Droit Ecclésiastique*, 7th ed., Paris, 1957, pp. 22-23.
- 34) Rule of 1882, Part I, Ch. 1, no. 9, p. 5.
 - 35) Ibid., nos. 2,7,8, pp. 3-4.
 - 36) Rule of 1882, II, VI, no. 480, p. 137.
 - 37) Rule of 1905, I, III, no. 710, p. 104.
 - 38) Rule of 1934, Customary, I, III, no. 35, p.10.
 - 39) "La Congrégation des Missionnaires de la Salette et le Saint-Siège," *Bulletin*, April, 1909, p. 138.
 - 40) Rule of 1891, I, I, no. 4, p. 3.
 - 41) Rule of 1894, I, I, no. 9, p. 8.
 - 42) *Normae Secundum Quas S. Congr. Episcoporum et Regularum procedere solet in Approbandis Novis Institutis Votorum Simplicium, Romae*, 1901.

- 43) Ladislav Orsy, and James Walsh, "Commentary on the Norms," *Supplement to The Way*, no. 4, Nov. 1967, p. 13.
- 44) Rule of 1905, Customary, I, I, no. 661, p. 5.
- 45) "La Congrégation..." *Bulletin*, pp. 140-141.
- 46) "Documents Romains," *Bulletin*, Nov. 1926, p. 338.

CHAPTER V:

- 1) Raymond Hostie, S.J., *Vie et Mort des Ordres Religieux*, Paris, 1972, p.263. An illustration of this point is in Cruveiller's Circular 103, March 19, 1941, and its annex of Sept. 19, 1943, which gives a lengthy and detailed examination of conscience on the rule.
- 2) Cruveiller, Circular 86, Dec. 25, 1934, pp. 1-3.
- 3) Cruveiller, Circular 106, Nov. 1, 1942; 108, June 24, 1943, describe the events.
- 4) Circular 108, pp. 5-6.
- 5) The most noteworthy of these tributes were gathered in *Marie*, May-June-July 1951, an issue dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette.
- 6) Imhof, Circulars 13, Dec. 1, 1951; 15, July 1, 1952; 16, Nov. 2, 1952.
- 7) Grand Registre du Chapitre, Chapitre de 1958, séance quatre, no pagination.
- 8) Blanchet, Circular 64 -1, Sept. 19, 1964, p. 6.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 10) Circular 3, Nov. 1, 1966, p. 1; 2, Dec. 8, 1965, p. 4.
- 11) Circular 2.
- 12) (?)
- 13) Three Fascicles prepared by the meetings in Rome, Sept. 15–Oct. 13, 1966, with chapters on: Religious in the World Today; The Religious in the Light of the Council; The Apostolate; The Meaning and Function of our Rule; The Liturgy of the Rule; Scripture and the Rule; The Foundation of our Spirituality; The Virgin Mary and the Council; The Vows; Poverty; Chastity; Obedience and Authority; Common Life; Fidelity to the Founder; Structure of Government; Background to the Outline of the Rule.
- 14) Blanchet, Circular 4, Feb. 22, 1967, p. 1.
- 15) Circular 5, Nov. 1, 1967, p. 3.
- 16) Notice of Prorogation, June, 1970.
- 17) *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 12, 13.
- 18) *Ibid.*
- 19) *Ibid.*, no. 16, 3.
- 20) Constitutions and Capitular Norms of Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, approved English edition, 1972. Future references will be listed as new rule and also simply give the indications in parenthesis after the quote.
- 21) Rule of 1939, Part i, Ch. 1, no. 2, p. 3.

- 22) Ibid., no. 5, p. 4.
- 23) Antonio Martinez, M.S., *A La Salette, Marie Reconciliatrice*, a manuscript.
- 24) J. Jaouen, M.S., *La Grace de la Salette*, Paris, 1946, p.307.
- 25) Carlier, *Histoire...*, pp. 422-423.
- 26) Martinez gives a summary of this in his study.
- 27) Carlier, p. 429.
- 28) *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*, Vatican, 1942, pp. 318-319, 435-436.
- 29) Cruveiller, Circular 108, June 24, 1943, p. 4.
- 30) Circular, 109, Oct. 19, 1945, p. 4.
- 31) Chapitre de 1958, séance de 14 mai, no pagination.
- 32) Registre du Chapitre, 1964, pp. 30, 43, 48-52, 74-75.
- 33) Postulatum of Jacob Birrer, in archive's file of preparatory material for the Chapter of 1964.
- 34) Postulatum from Chapter of Swiss Province, 1964, in archive's file.
- 35) *Reconciliare*, Vol. II, no. 2.
- 36) Not all members were in favor of this emphasis. One member summed up his objections in a private report as follows: "This title seems to me to be giving free publicity and endorsement to a concept of our vocation and apostolate which, however legitimately held by apparently a good number of our members, represents their view only, not necessarily those of all of us ... and sure enough with the appearance of a community magazine, emphasizing issue after issue the notion of reconciliation, many now seem to take it for granted that at long last we have found the right formula both as regards our spirituality and as regards the leitmotiv of our apostolate in this post-councilor era." James O'Reilly, M.S., *Our Salettine Spirit and Apostolate, viewed in the Light of Our Traditions and History*, manuscript, 1967, pp. 19-20.
- 37) Synthetic Summary, pp. 2, 5, 11.
- 38) Second Fascicle, p. 7.
- 39) Synthetic Summary, pp. 5-6. The question of title was not raised in the Chapter under this aspect, but rather with regards to possibly using the shorter form of Missionaries of La Salette. Chapter of 1968, pp. 202, 203.
- 40) Beaup, I, p. 35.
- 41) François Cousel, S.J., "The Single Aim of the Apostolic Institute," *The Way, Supplement 14*, Autumn, 1971, pp. 46-61.
- 42) *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, no.16, 3; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2b.
- 43) Reports from provinces of Seven Dolours, and Mary Queen, U.S.
- 44) Report from province of Mary Mediatrix, Italy.
- 45) Chapter of 1968, p. 185.
- 46) Chapter of 1968, pp. 198, 203.
- 47) Ibid., p. 185.
- 48) Chapter of 1969, p. 419; Chapter of 1968, p. 127.

- 49) It is interesting to note that a preliminary study done by Charles Novel, M.S., on the “End and Spirit of the Missionaries according to their Constitutions” has no mention in it of “reconciliation.”
- 50) Werner Kaiser, M.S., “Probing La Salette Spirituality,” *Reconciliare*, II, no. 4, pp. 36-38.
- 51) Robert Vachon, M.S., “For a Dynamic Evolution of our La Salette Mission,” *Reconciliare*, Vol. II, no. 1, p.83.
- 52) Synthetic Summary, p. 6.
- 53) Chapter of 1969, p. 406.
- 54) *Ibid.*, p. 603.
- 55) Chapter of 1970, “Report of Commission Examining Provincial Reports.” Articles on the question of new rules have been reappearing in reviews after a hiatus since 1968. Joseph Gallen, S.J., “Writing Constitutions,” *Review for Religious*, Nov. 1974, pp. 1323-38 and “Revision of the Constitutions,” R. for R., March, 1974, pp. 376-385, where he modifies his stand on mingling spiritual and juridical elements which he took in R. for R., Jan. 1967, p.184. William Peters, “How to Write Good Constitutions: Continued,” *Review for Religious*, Nov., 1973, pp. 1294-1301. Shaun McCarthy, S.T., “In Search of New Wine Skins,” *Review for Religious*, July, 1974, pp. 818-828.
- 56) A very good article for insights on the response to the new constitutions is Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., “Resistance to New Constitutions,” *Review for Religious*, Nov., 1973, pp. 1288-1293. Another factor, not mentioned in the article, but one often given for resistance to the new rules is that in many cases the people most directly involved in the work have left the Congregation. In the Missionaries of La Salette out of the five members making up the first special commission for the rule, three of them have left.
- 57) Hostie, pp. 271-273.

CONCLUSION:

- 1) Giraud, Letter to Father Boulian, Feb. 22, 1859, Carlier, p.261.
- 2) Soeur Jeranne d’Arc, “Les Congrégations à la recherche de leur esprit,” *Supplément: La Vie Spirituelle*, Sept. 1967, pp. 531-2. Bernard Besret, S.O. Cist., “Critère pour une rénovation,” *Les Religieux Aujourd’hui et demain*, Urtasun et alii, Paris, 1964, p.156.
- 3) *Lumen Gentium*, no. 43.
- 4) *Perfectae Caritatis*, I c, 2 b, c.
- 5) *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 16, 3.
- 6) Paul VI, *Discourse of May 23, 1964, Discourse of Oct. 28, 1966*, found in R. Carpentier and A. de bonhomme, *La Vie Religieuse dans le renouveau de l’Eglise*, Paris, 1967, pp. 220, 306.
- 7) Paul VI, “Evangelica Testificatio,” *The Way, Supplement 4*, p. 24.
- 8) M. Olphe-Galliard, S.J., “Le Charisme des fondateurs religieux,” *Vie Consacrée*, Nov. Dec., 1967, p. 339.
- 9) C. Gallagher, S.J., “Adaptation progressive à la vie religieuse,” *Vie Consacrée*, March-April, 1970, p. 90.
- 10) Olphe, Galliard, pp. 339, 342.
- 11) Gallagher, p. 91; K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler, *Theological Dictionary*, N.Y., 1965, p. 72.
- 12) Fr. Arrupé, *Intervention at Synod, 1969*, quoted in “Report of Superior General to Chapter of 1970,” p. 6.
- 13) Paul Molinari, S.J., “Renewal of Religious Life according to the Founder’s Spirit,” *Review for Religious*, Sept. 1968, p. 799.

- 14) Jerome Hamer, O.P., "Place des religieux dans l'apostolat de l'Eglise," *Les Religieux aujourd'hui et demain*, Paris, 1964, p. 113.
- 15) Illtud Evans, O.P., "Religious Orders and Renewal," *The Tablet*, Dec. 16, 1967, p. 1300.
- 16) Laurent Boisvert, O.F.M., "An Authentic Religious Life," *Donum Dei*, no. 14, Ottawa, 1969, p. 218.
- 17) Shaun McCarthy, S.T., "In Search of New Wine Skins," *Review for Religious*, July, 1973, p. 821.
- 18) *Perfectae Caritatis*, no. 4.
- 19) Quoted in Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*, Garden City, 1959, p. 15.
- 20) Shaun McCarthy, S.T., "Touching Each Other at the Roots," *Review for Religious*, March 1972, p. 203.

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(Note, found on page 70 of this booklet:

Father Novel of the French Province, who translated this work into French, reacted to the conclusion of this section that Bishop de Bruillard should be considered "founder" simply in the "canonical sense." His observations have made me realize that I did give too little value to the actual role of the Bishop in our foundation and I would like to remedy that by presenting the following summary of Father Novel's observations.

The founding of the Congregation can be seen as the crowning point of the Bishop's whole pastoral response to the Apparition. He had been investigating, meditating and promoting the Apparition. He had seen the center of pilgrimage grow and pilgrims coming from his diocese, from all over France, for all of Europe. He had officially declared the Apparition as authentic; approved devotion to Our Lady of La Salette; allowed La Salette to be preached and the consequences of the message to be spelled out. He was convinced that La Salette was a great gift to the Church and meant to endure and be passed on. The erection of the Shrine would assure some permanence, but the Bishop felt there was something more needed. He needed men who were going to preach the message – men to be called and sent – real apostles and missionaries. And this is why he called together his

band of priests. He wanted to share with them his convictions about the Apparition and his awareness of the spiritual fruit produced from it. His conviction of the grace of La Salette was transmitted to these men, not by a written rule or by spiritual writings, but by the very title he gave them – Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. This title gave them the Apparition of La Salette as their heritage and indicated to them that the apparition was their charism, the source of their inspiration, their book of life.

Because of this Father Novel concludes that Bishop Philibert de Bruillard is indeed the Founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette and his Mandate of May 1st, 1852, is its “charter of Foundation.” While giving the Bishop his proper place in the process, Father Novel and I nevertheless agree that the basic source for reflection on our inspiration and charism is the Apparition itself, to which the Bishop himself has joined us.)