

**THE HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST JOHN OF GOD**

**THE MISSIONARY DIMENSION  
OF THE  
HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST JOHN OF GOD**

Prophets in the world of health care

**ROME, 1997**







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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AG	AD GENTES. Vatican II Decree on the missionary activities of the Church
AGFR	Archive of the General Fatebenefratelli Curia in Rome
AIP	Pisas Interprovincial Archive in Granada
Celam IV	IV General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, Santo Domingo (12-28 October 1992)
CIAL.OH	The Interprovincial Latin American Secretariat of the Hospitaller Order Const. Constitutions of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God
DS	Letter of St John of God to the Duchess of Sessa
DV	DEI VERBUM Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
EA	Ecclesia in Africa
EN	EVANGELII NUNTIANDI. Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI Evangelisation in the Modern World.
GL	Letter of St John of God to Gutierre Lasso
G.S.	General Statutes
GS	GAUDIUM ET SPES. Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world
LB	Letter of St John of God to Luis Bautista
LG	LUMEN GENTIUM. Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
NA	NOSTRA AETATE. Vatican II Decree on the Church's Relations with non-Christian Religions
PC	PERFECTAE CARITATIS. Vatican II Decree on Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life
POE	Presencia de la Orden en España. Madrid, 1986
RMi	REDEMPTORIS MISSIO. Encyclical Letter of John Paul II On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate
SC	SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM. Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
SD	SALVIFICI DOLORIS. Apostolic Letter of John Paul II The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering
SELARE	Latin American Renewal Secretariat
VC	VITA CONSECRATA. Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II The Consecrated Life.

**Letters of St John of God.** The English versions of the Letters of St John of God used in this paper are taken from *The Rule of St. Augustine and the Letters of St John of God*, Rome, 1984



## FOREWORD

The *Missionary Dimension of the Hospitaller Order*, which you have now received, has been written to fill a bibliographic void in the Order.

It is the outcome of a long drafting process which I will summarise briefly as follows:

- At the meeting of the General Animation Commission on 11-13 March 1992, the members considered it necessary to study 'The Missionary Dimension of the Order'. Without actually deciding on the title, they felt that the document should review both the past and the present of the Order's apostolic work in mission lands, while at the same time laying down guidelines for the future in this field.
- At the following meeting on 16-18 October that year, this issue was once again raised and it was suggested that the celebration of the 5th Centenary of the Birth of St John of God would be an excellent opportunity to offer the Order a document to revive the apostolic sense in our Brothers and Co-workers.
- The General Animation Committee was given an outline of the main points envisaged for inclusion in the document at its meeting on 26-27 May 1993 to be studied and, if deemed appropriate, adopted. After making a number of amendments to the outline it was eventually approved by the General Animation Commission.
- Another Commission was appointed, comprising Brother Pascual Piles, first General Councillor at the time, Brother Jesús A. Labarta, Master of Novices from Africa, Brothers Jesús Etayo and Ubaldo Feito, who distributed the work between them in cooperation with other Brothers of the Order.
- The General Animation Commission met on 18-20 May 1994, and emphasised the need to publish the document to coincide with the 5th Centenary of the Birth of St John of God.
- Despite the best efforts of the Commission to perform the service entrusted to it, the 1994 General Chapter was told that the document could not be ready by that deadline.
- In the Government's Six-Year Programme 1994-2000, provision was made for the same Brothers who had been members of the Commission before Chapter, including the Prior General, to complete and publish the document during 1996-1997.
- The General Animation Commission at its meeting on 26-27 June 1996 felt that the most appropriate opportunity to present the document would be at the General Assembly to be held in October 1997.
- After each member of the Commission had elaborated and drafted their texts and had collated them to avoid repetition and duplication, the final document which is now being delivered to the Provinces of the Order was finally tabled at the meeting of the General Animation Commission held on 5-6 June 1997.

We believe that we have rendered the service which the Order commissioned us to perform. Account has been taken of the essence of the Church's mission, evangelisation, and the contribution of the Religious Life to that mission, together with a historical overview of the apostolic and missionary work of the Order and the evangelisation which our Brothers are currently performing, with a particular focus on the

developing countries, appraising and thanking them for their testimony. Taking up the suggestion made by the General Animation Commission at the meeting held way back in March 1992, account has also taken of the future projection of the apostolic-missionary dimension of the Order.

I am delighted to be able to offer this reflection to the whole Order, in the certainty that it will help to foster the spiritual and apostolic growth of our Brothers and our Co-workers.

Brother Pascual Piles OH  
Superior General

Rome, 12 October 1997.

## INTRODUCTION

The *Missionary Dimension* has always been one of the fundamental features of our Order in the exercise of its apostolate throughout its history. This missionary spirit continues to remain alive as one more sign that God wishes to extend his mercy to all men and women through Christian charity, in the manner of St John of God and so many other saints, both men and women, of today, yesterday and tomorrow, who have personally experienced the love of God within them and have taken the decision to hand it on to others.

The document is divided into four parts. Part one, divided into two chapters, is entitled *Our mission in the Church: To announce the Gospel of Mercy*. Chapter 1 addresses the evangelising dimension of the Church based on the new meaning of human life inaugurated in Jesus of Nazareth who, before his ascension into Heaven, told his disciples to continue his work of salvation worldwide. The Church community inaugurated at Pentecost inherited from them the mission to bear testimony to and announce the Gospel as the most important task to be performed in the world. We have recalled in particular the missionary dimension of the Church based on Vatican II and evangelisation as the very essence and purpose of the Consecrated Life.

Chapter 2 deals with our Founder who, transformed and captivated by the merciful love of God, felt the urgent need to communicate it to the sick and needy through actions which became prophetic and evangelising signs. St John of God is the source of our Religious Family, and with him and in him we participate in the Church's universal mission.

Part two, entitled *Chosen to evangelise the poor and the sick*, looks back over the history of the Order from its beginnings until the end of the 19th century. The two chapters making up this part help us to appreciate the apostolic and missionary impetus that animated and encouraged our Brothers as they spread the Order far and wide. Chapter 3 deals with those who gave their lives in martyrdom, while Chapter 4 recounts the restoration of the Order's meaning and purpose after overcoming the crisis through which the Church, and consequently the Order, passed in the second half of the so-called *Age of the Enlightenment*.

The two chapters making up Part three, *Committed to Hospitality*, provide an overall view of the means the Order possesses and offers to keep alive the apostolic spirit of the Brothers and to provide structural and financial support for the Order's mission in the world of health care. Chapter 5 refers the teaching set out in the official documents of the Order, the Constitutions and the Circular Letters of the Superiors General, with particular emphasis on the written testimony of Brothers who lived outstanding lives, like St Richard Pampuri, or excelled in their service to hospitality in the mission 'ad gentes'. Chapter 6 describes the various organisms within the Order at the service of evangelisation.

In Part four, *Hospitality today*, the document provides an overview of the way the power of the Order's charism as lived and practised by our Brothers has spread hospitality for the second time in the present century; it is thanks to this that the Order is now making the Gospel of Mercy present in all five continents - Chapter 7 - overcoming the serious social and political difficulties affecting society.

The final chapter deals with the present missionary demands on the Order and the way in which the Brother of St John of God must live his vocation in an apostolic/missionary spirit in our Communities in order to be able to practise and hand on the New Hospitality as the Order's typical manner of expressing the New Evangelisation.

It is offered to all those who work in the Order today to make New Hospitality a reality in union with our Co-workers and future generations of Hospitallers. We wish to offer them the great spiritual wealth that the Order has built up through its apostolic/missionary dimension, faithful to the Spirit, the Church, St John of God and suffering mankind, to enable them to feel animated and continue to announce and spread the message of Christ throughout the world.

With this reflection we would like to recall all those Brothers who have gone before us evangelising, and in particular those who have devoted, and are continuing to devote themselves to the mission 'ad gentes'. It is an unpretentious contribution that we are making in the hope that it will be completed by others. If every Province makes the effort to look back into their own history in order to draw from it the witness of life of the Brothers who have made possible the situation they are in today, future generations will not only be able to marvel at the enthusiasm and sacrifice that animated their apostolic work but they will also find inspiration to encourage them to live the charism that we have inherited from St John of God and to manifest it with renewed vigour.

**PART I**

**OUR MISSION IN THE CHURCH:**

**TO ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL OF MERCY AND MAKE IT PRESENT**



## THE EVANGELISING DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH

### 1. *Jesus of Nazareth. The meaning of human life*

The evangelising dimension of the Church consists of handing on the salvation of Jesus who came to make us sharers in God the Father's loving plan for mankind since the time of creation.

The Father created us out of love and goodness, to partake in his divine nature: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Gen 1:1) and *"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him"* (Gen 1:27). He created everything in the Eternal Word, in his beloved Son: *"In him all things were created in heaven and on earth ... all things were created through him and for him"* (Col 1:16-17).

God desired from eternity to make us *"his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace"* (Eph 1:5-6); *"assuring his own glory and our happiness"* (AG 2).

Through Jesus we know that the Father is manifested in his Son and both are manifested in the Holy Spirit. In this Trinitarian love is the origin of the creation of man as the *"only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake"* (GS 24), because man alone is called to share in God's life. This was the purpose for which we were created, and this is the fundamental reason for our very existence.

Because of its limitations, humanity began with ambivalent feelings about God. Let us recall the history of Israel, the prototype of the contradictions experienced by mankind. The chosen people lived love and faith, alternating with moments of infidelity and idolatry.

Men have always lived with this ambiguity from the beginning, asking ourselves about the enigmas of life, to which all schools of thought have tried, unsuccessfully, to reply. The great questions about the meaning of life, pain and death can lead people to doubt the merciful love of the Father manifested in creation.

Through the Covenant, God maintained his relationship with his creatures and gradually revealed his love and goodness until he eventually revealed himself to us through his Son, Jesus Christ: *"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world"* (Heb 1:1-2).

Having been sent by the Father with the power of the Spirit, Jesus became for us a path of liberation and redemption, giving the full and final meaning to mankind because *"God wishes all men to be saved"* (1 Tim 2:4), because he came to fulfil the plan of salvation announced by the prophets.

The whole of Jesus's life and work was based on this mission, as we know from the Gospel of St John: *"The Father who sent me has given me commandment what to say and what to speak"* (Jn 12:49; RMI 5).

Jesus is the only path that leads us back to God. His mission was to organise everything according to the plan of creation. He was the maximum revelation of the love of the Father: *"I am the way, and the truth and the light; no one comes to the Father, but through me. If you had known me you would have known my Father also"* (Jn 14:6-9). Jesus proclaims the Good News of God who invites us to recognise him as the Father and to direct our lives towards him by doing his will.

The Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation reminds us that: *through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal.*" (DV 4).

Entering into communion with God through Jesus and under the action of the Spirit means continuing to build up a new society in fraternity and solidarity, particularly by helping the weak and the deprived as Jesus did, as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God; proclaiming that God is the Father of all, making all of us brothers and sisters, called to walk on united towards the same destiny, and to build up a world which will reach its fullness when God is all in all things, marks a profound change in human relations.

## *2. Experiencing the faith and announcing the message of salvation*

After claiming to have been sent by the Father, Jesus surrounded himself with followers just as the ancient teachers had gathered their disciples around them, to share with them his words and his life.

He subsequently chose his apostles and disciples (Cf. Lk 5:10-11; 10:1; Mk 3:14). This is how the early Christian community began to be built up around Jesus, subsequently to form the Church of Christ. In addition to the disciples mentioned in the Gospels, there were many others who heard his Word and began to live a faith which radically transformed them.

It was on the basis of the Easter experience that the Church emerged -- a new reality, composed of Jesus and his followers, as the expression of God's plan for the world. After the Resurrection, Our Lord sent the apostles to share with others the experience that they themselves had lived through: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation"* (Mk 16:15; Cf. Mt 28:19; Jn 20:21).

On the day of Pentecost they received the Holy Spirit and began to announce the One who had filled their lives with hope and joy. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the early community began to proclaim and spread the message of salvation throughout the world: *"Christ sent from the Father His Holy Spirit, who was to carry on inwardly His saving work and prompt the Church to spread out."* (AG 4).

The Church has always viewed this first group of Jesus' disciples as the benchmark model for the Christian community and for its mission in the world: *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers"* (Acts 2:42) because *"they were of one heart and one soul"* (Acts 4:32).

Other communities later sprang up in Samaria, Caesarea, Syria, Asia Minor and Europe. One can well imagine that they would never have survived without a powerful community experience, and could never have expanded without a convinced missionary sense.

Of all these the Church of Antioch (Cf Heb 11:19-30) was outstanding as a model of missionary activity. Its founders came from the Jerusalem community. When they reached Antioch, moved by the Spirit, they decided to devote themselves to evangelisation by making their mission a way of life rooted in the faith. This is how the missionary activity of the Church began, and has continued to this very day.

### *3. The commitment of the Church to evangelisation*

For the Church, evangelisation is the expression of communion with Christ: "*missionary activity wells up from the Church's inner nature and spreads abroad her saving Faith. It perfects her Catholic unity by this expansion. It is sustained by her apostolicity. It exercises the collegial spirit of her hierarchy. It bears witness to her sanctity while spreading and promoting it*" (AG 6).

Throughout her history, the Church has manifested her identity in the task of evangelisation: "*We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelising all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church'; it is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise*" (EN 14).

The Gospel message has reached countless places throughout the world, but the number of people who have been evangelised at the present time only account for one-third of mankind: "*As the end of the second millennium of the redemption draws near, it is clear that the peoples that have not yet received an initial proclamation of Christ constitute the majority of mankind*" (RMi 40).

One significant aspect of this is the way in which the work of evangelisation alternates between expansion and regression (Cf. AG 6). The ages in which the Church expanded were also the times of conquest and discovery, setting in motion the 'Christian era' which began with the fall of the Roman Empire and the subsequent conversion of the peoples of Europe. The 'discovery' of America, and the missions in Africa and Asia marked important milestones in the history of evangelisation.

The Church has had to overcome many obstacles in the performance of the mission. These include in particular: the reluctance of many cultures to accept the Faith, opposition from political systems, the effects of poor inculturation, the difficulty of coexisting with other religions, religious persecution, etc. These obstacles have been overcome thanks to the conviction and strength that the Holy Spirit gives to the Church. Some of these obstacles have created opportunities for radical revitalisation and the testimony of martyrdom.

More recently other difficulties have emerged which are now influencing the Church today, building up a culture that belittles the plan of God for the World.

The whole of society has undergone far-reaching changes, and because of her mission, the Church has had to re-state her position in relation to these new situations. This was the background to the Second Vatican Council which was convened to direct the work of evangelisation.

The Council enlightened the ecclesiology of the mission in terms of the Christocentric sense of 'incarnation' or 'embodiment' as the fundamental benchmark to which we should refer at all times: "*The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled by that activity which makes her, obeying the command of Christ and influenced by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, fully present to all men or nations, in order that, by the example of her life and by her preaching, by the sacraments other means of grace, she may*

*lead them to the Faith, the freedom and the peace of Christ; that thus there may lie open before them a firm and free road to full participation in the mystery of Christ" (AG 5).*

The Church does not deny the elements of truth that exist in the world and in other beliefs (Cf. NA 2) but she claims that *"the Church ... is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in his body which is the Church, is the one mediator and the unique way of salvation"* (LG 14). All this must be applied in the broad sense, and in terms of God's saving plan in creation.

After the Council, and when the theology of the mission seemed more appropriate to meet the needs arising in the world, several schools of thought emerged within the Church which even affected the Council teachings themselves. Such issues as liberation, political theology, the salvation of non-Christians, the promotion of justice and peace, and many other forms of missionary cooperation and witness were interpreted from different standpoints in the wake of the Council.

Different schools of thought regarding the interpretation of these issues fostered various pastoral aspects of the mission, giving rise to a variety of different styles and experiences, in the pursuit of the purpose of the same mission.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* and the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* harmonised the various aspects of the mission, superseding the interpretations that had emerged in the post-Conciliar stage.

#### *4. The evangelising and pastoral strength of Vatican II*

Vatican II was not only an original initiative of John XXIII. It may rightly be considered to have been the outcome of a situation that had been experienced over the previous hundred years. The Church wished to defend her position regarding the far-reaching and fast-moving changes taking place in the world as a result of modern philosophy, but she could no longer take up these new challenges by resting her mission on the categories of the past.

She had to look for fresh solutions, because the Church needed to announce the essence of her very being with great clarity, and act in the world as a sacrament and mission to bear witness to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This approach was later to become the most important contribution of Vatican II, and the source from which her evangelising and pastoral power was subsequently to stem.

Many novelties emerged from the Council. Here are the ones that have perhaps had the greatest impact:

##### *a) The relationship between the Church and the world*

The Council proposed a new kind of relationship between the Church and the world based on an offering of faith rather than the domination of the religious over the secular spheres. This new approach, lived in terms of personal freedom and conviction, enables believers to live in the world with the mission of continuing to build up the People of God based on faith and love. It recognises all the positive aspects that modernity has to offer to human dignity, and hence to relationships with God, by promoting the values of a just society based on solidarity, and enlightened by Revelation.

In the same way, the Council superseded the individualistic perspective of membership of the People of God by declaring the Church to be the sacrament of Christ and the communion of faith, thereby paving the way for the view of the Church as a sacrament of communion which is reflected in all the Council documents, particularly *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*.

b) *The Church, communion and mission*

The Council relates the mystery of the Church as communion to the mystery of the Church herself. The mission manifests and establishes communion, and in turn it is the origin and the purpose of the mission.

This mission is rooted in the mystery of communion with God and, in the manner of Jesus, it consists in announcing and building up the Kingdom in words and deeds, which is the purpose of evangelisation.

The definition of the Church as the sacrament of salvation created a new category comprising the ecclesial communion her mission to the world.

c) *Liturgical reform*

This was one of the innovations of the Council with the greatest pastoral repercussions. It required the faithful to shed any individualistic religious attitudes, because as members of the People of God they must celebrate the faith as a community.

The use of the vernacular facilitated understanding of the signs and projected them into commitment to daily realities. Being shared within the community, the liturgy must revitalise and interpret those signs in the light of life.

d) *Other issues influencing the pastoral and evangelising dynamism of the Council were:* the common priesthood of the faithful; recognition of the importance of the laity and their charisms in the consecration of the world; relations with non-Christians and non-believers; episcopal collegiality; the restoration of the permanent diaconate; the concept of the Church moving forward towards the fullness of truth and the declaration on religious freedom. On Our Lady, a whole corpus of doctrine was developed, placing her within the very being of the Church, and as mediator in the redeeming work of Christ.

e) *On missionary activity* the Council set out its teaching in the decree *Ad Gentes*, laying down the lines of action to be followed for evangelisation based on the following points taken from the Council's Constitutions:

- The Church as the 'sacrament of salvation' and the rationale underlying universal evangelisation (Cf. LG 48).
- The Church as the custodian and transmitter of the Revelation of God to all humanity (Cf. DV 1).
- Liturgical reform as a means of effectively fostering evangelisation (Cf. SC 2).
- The solidarity of the Church with the human race and its history, making the universal mission urgent (Cf. GS 1).

The decree *Ad gentes* marked the beginning of a number of positions and contributions that have since helped us to delve more deeply into evangelisation since then.

5. *The demands of evangelisation presented by the Magisterium:  
Evangelii nuntiandi and Redemptoris missio*

A) *Evangelii nuntiandi*

Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, was published on 8 December 1975, ten years after Vatican II.

As its title indicates, its fundamental subject matter is 'the evangelisation of the modern world' *"to make the Church of the 20th century ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the 20th century"* (EN 2) following the line adopted in the decree on the Church's missionary work (*Ad gentes*) and taking up the gist of the document on evangelisation that came out of the 1974 Synod of Bishops.

The great contribution made by *Evangelii nuntiandi* is the broadening of the term 'evangelisation'. The Exhortation itself expresses it very vividly *"To the whole world! To all creation! Right to the ends of the earth! ... as an appeal not to imprison the proclamation of the Gospel by limiting it to one sector of mankind or to one class of people or to a single type of civilisation"* (EN 50).

Evangelisation must be directed to the modern world as a whole. It also brings out aspects relating to justice, development, human advancement, liberation and peace which must be enlightened and fostered by the Church. *"The conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us therefore to revise methods, to seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man. For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the answer to his questions and the energy for his commitment for human solidarity"* (EN 3). And it adds new elements regarding the points set out in the decree *Ad gentes*, while universalising the field of evangelisation.

We should like to draw particular attention to the following aspects:

- The Church constantly needs to evangelise herself through conversion and renewal which help her to maintain her strength and power to announce the Gospel.
- Evangelisation is a complex and dynamic and comprehensive reality, encompassing all the elements set out in the Council Constitutions and in the decree *Ad gentes*, which must be approached globally.
- The most efficient way to evangelise is to witness to the faith through a life lived in a genuinely Christian manner.
- The beneficiaries of the mission include those who do not yet know Christ, the baptised who have since lapsed from the faith, and those who profess other religions even though they may possess elements of salvation.
- The act of evangelising acquires a profoundly ecclesial character, because it is done in union with the mission of the Church and in her name.

- The agents of evangelisation are all the members of the Church.
- The Consecrated Life plays a paramount part in evangelisation, because with total self-giving to God and to the service of the Kingdom, it calls out to the world and to the Church herself.

It set out a new view of missionary spirituality based on witnessing to unity, seeking out the truth and showing the fervour of the great evangelisers.

There is no doubt that *Evangelii nuntiandi* is one of the documents that have had the greatest repercussions on the Magisterium since the Council. It has given a great boost to evangelisation, to the Church in general and to our Order in particular. Its teachings have helped us to direct our evangelising response at all times.

### B) *Redemptoris missio*

John Paul II's Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris missio*, was published on 7 December 1990, twenty-five years after the decree on the mission activity of the Church (*Ad gentes*).

It was the first specifically missionary encyclical following the Council, which deepened and gave practical implementation to the teaching on evangelisation set out in *Evangelii nuntiandi*.

It reminds us of the 'mission of the Redeemer' and the 'permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate', as an urgent call to universal evangelisation, with renewed vigour and new enthusiasm. It offers a dynamic view of the values of the Council and the present-day stances of the Church: *"But what moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelisation is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world, a world which has experienced marvellous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself"* (RMi 2).

We would also like to highlight the following significant aspects:

- It gathers together the theology of the Trinity elaborated by Vatican II and the post-Conciliar Reflection on the mission, animating us to study the different aspects of the mission in greater depth. It stresses the commitment to human advancement, respect for freedom, inter-religious dialogue, and ecclesial inculturation.
- It reminds us of the missionary character of the Church in all its manifestations, drawing on everything that had been achieved since the end of the Council.
- It identifies three situations in the Church's missionary activity: the 'ad gentes' dimension, pastoral care for believers and the evangelisation of the de-Christianised world.
- It defines the various environments for the mission *ad gentes*: territorial, the new social phenomena, the new cultural areas or modern *areopagi*.
- The interrelationship and complementarity of different missionary activities, because the horizons of the mission are unlimited.
- The missionary commitment of the young Churches to reach maturity and full communion with the universal Church.
- It emphasises the need to cultivate and promote missionary vocations '*ad vitam*'.
- It spells out missionary spirituality in greater detail as a demand which associates the mission with the call to holiness.

The Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* laid the bases for evangelisation in the Third Millennium. It links theological and concrete pastoral reflection with a clear projection towards the future.

#### 6. *The Church's missionary responses. The New Evangelisation*

The missionary responses of the Church are the ways in which evangelisation enlightens the needs of mankind in order to bring to them the message of God revealed in Christ. They have been conditioned by the way in which evangelisation is understood and the way it reacts to the challenges which the world throws down. Let us briefly recall this development:

The decree *Ad gentes* interprets missionary activity and evangelisation more specifically as the annunciation of the Gospel and the implantation of the Church, and distinguishes this from the usual kind of pastoral ministry on the behalf of the faithful: "*The proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelisation, and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root ... Thus, missionary activity among the nations differs from pastoral activity exercised among the faithful as well as from undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians*" (AG 6).

*Evangelii nuntiandi* considers evangelisation from a very broad viewpoint, as we have already pointed out. It develops the aspects set out in the decree *Ad gentes* and states that this is a very complex activity, involving a variety of factors which transcend the mere announcing of the Gospel and which must be integrated into a whole: "*Evangelisation ... is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, implicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs and apostolic initiative ...*" (EN 24).

At the present time, John Paul II is focusing the whole of the Church's missionary action on what is called the 'New Evangelisation' which was mentioned for the first time at the Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Haiti on 9 March 1983: "*The commemoration of the five hundredth centenary of evangelisation will have its full significance if you, as Bishops, jointly with your priests and the faithful, take it upon yourselves as a commitment. Not a commitment to evangelisation, but a commitment to a new evangelisation. New in its zeal, methods and expression*".

The document of the IV General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate (Celam IV. Santo Domingo, 1992) took up these fundamental ideas regarding the 'new evangelisation':

- defining it (Celam IV 24; Cf. VC 81),
- indicating the beneficiary (ibid., 25; Cf. VC 79.80), its purpose (ibid. 26; RMI 33) and its substance (ibid. 27).

*"This evangelisation will have a renewing force in fidelity to the Word of God, its place of welcome in the ecclesial community, its creative encouragement in the Holy Spirit, who creates in unity and in diversity, nourishing the charismatic and ministerial wealth and projected to the world through a missionary commitment"* (Celam IV 27).

'New evangelisation' has become John Paul II's preferred marching orders. After being proclaimed for the first time in Latin America, it has now been applied to Europe and the Christianised countries undergoing all-out secularisation.

On various occasions the Pope has encouraged the Church to reflect continuously on the implications of this new pastoral challenge in order to clarify its substance and find the most appropriate ways of seizing on it, insisting on the fact that it must be *"new in its zeal, methods and expression"*.

Here are some of the characteristics of the 'new evangelisation' that we consider to be fundamental:

- It is a clear expression of the Gospel message which announces the saving plan of God, manifested in Jesus as the full salvation of man.
- A style which is distinctly witness-based, in terms of a Gospel radicalism that is the fruit of personal conversion and a process of self-evangelisation.
- Coming down on the side of the poor and the suffering as the priority for any plan for our lives.
- A commitment to human advancement and development, justice and solidarity which promote the dignity of man that God so desires.
- The responsibility of all the members of the Church as agents of evangelisation in all the sectors and environments in which they live.
- Promoting dialogue and a meeting of minds between culture and the faith in order to respond to man's deepest expectations.

On the sidelines of these developments in theological reflection, the Church has always been present in all man's needs in order to enlighten them in terms of the Gospel. She is present in education, health care, social work, the family, infancy and youth, the elderly, the marginalised and deprived, immigrants, the mass media, and the voluntary services in the developing countries, catering for primary needs, refugee camps, and promoting non-government organisations, etc. Any human environment is appropriate for performing the 'new evangelisation'.

### *7. The Consecrated Life in the mystery and mission of the Church*

*"The Consecrated Life is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission, since it 'manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling'" (VC 3; Cf. AG 18).*

Our lifestyle and apostolic work at the service of man have been the two main contributions that have been made to evangelisation: *"Like the apostles, they too have left everything behind in order to be with Christ, and to put themselves, as He did at the service of God and their brothers and sisters. In this way, through the many charisms of spiritual and apostolic life bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit, they have helped to make the mystery and mission of the Church shine forth, and in so doing have contributed to the renewal of society" (VC 1).*

Let us recall some of the features which relate the Consecrated Life to the universal mission of the Church.

- The Consecrated Life is a gift of God granted to his Church (Cf. LG 43; VC 3).
- It is inspired by the Holy Spirit (Cf. PC 1; VC 5, 19).
- It is immersed in the innermost life of the Church and expresses her saving mission (Cf. LG 43, 44; VC 3, 5, 29)
- It makes the universal apostolic work, in different manifestations, possible (Cf. PC 1; VC 25, 72).

Consecrated men and women are witnesses, who announces the Kingdom of God, permanently and freely giving themselves to the Kingdom in hope. Based on continual conversion, the practice of the evangelical counsels and service to the Church, consecrated people establish a new relationship between God and man to go on implementing the project for a saved humanity reconciled in Christ:

*"As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, it is to be recognised that the Consecrated Life which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority. Precisely for this reason it is an essentially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity" (VC 32).*

Announcing the Gospel is a priority of the consecrated life and this is where we find so many of its most representative and charismatic agents. It has contributed to evangelisation through the responses that religious families have made to the challenges that have arisen throughout history. It is in the life and work of their founders and their capacity to interpret the signs of the times that we find the most significant contribution of the religious life in terms of these different charisms.

Outstanding at the present time are the lives of religious men and women lived in the defence of human dignity, justice and peace in such countries as El Salvador, Algeria, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaïre ... sometimes it is the testimony of martyrdom, which has been present in every age, that constitutes one of the most evident forms of evangelisation.

Our Hospitaller Order came into being from the Gospel of Mercy, which was lived in its fullness by John of God its Founder. *"Our charism within the Church is a gift of the Spirit, which leads us to conform ourselves to the compassionate and merciful Christ of the Gospel"* (Const. 1984, 2a). It incorporates us into the mission of Jesus. We are sent into the world and *"we proclaim the greatness of God's love and show all mankind that he continues to concern himself with their lives and needs"* (Const. 1984, 8).

The Brothers of St John of God take on the evangelising task as an experience and a proclamation of faith in Jesus: *"The mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all people which the Church has received from its Lord is ours, too, as Brothers of St John of God. We are conscious of our duty to spread the Good News and hence we keep the missionary spirit alive"* (Const. 1984, 48ab).

The history of our Order is rich in the testimony of so many Brothers who have brought the liberating message of Christ to the poor, the deprived and marginalised, through the exercise of a fully evangelical apostolate, to proclaim the mercy of God for the sick and needy.

**JOHN OF GOD  
A BROTHER-SERVANT AT THE SERVICE OF ALL**

1. *Charmed by the mercy of God*

John of God identified intimately with Jesus of Nazareth in his attitudes and his acts of mercy and solidarity with the poor: he gradually emptied himself of everything that had to do with selfishness and the tendency to live a comfortable form of Christianity, interpreting the plight of the poor and sick in Granada in terms of the faith and mercy. Driven on by his experience of God as a merciful Father, he imitated Jesus Christ by giving himself radically to the service of the needy of his age in order to reveal to them the love of God, enable them to share the same experience and to proclaim salvation to them (Cf. Const. 1984, 1).

Even though the key moment of his meeting with God took place at the Hermitage of the Martyrs in Granada as he listened to the sermon by Master Avila on the Feast of St Sebastian, the light which ultimately enlightened the path along which the Spirit led him to live a life of radical poverty following Christ burst into his life while he was in the Royal Hospital in Granada. When he saw how his fellow patients were being treated he could not stop himself from exclaiming:

*"You traitors and enemies of virtue, why do you maltreat these poor wretches, my brothers, so cruelly, who are in this house of God with me? Wouldn't it be better for you to pity them in their trials, wash them and feed them better, with more charity and love than you do? Isn't that what the Catholic Kings left you their endowment to run this place for?"<sup>1</sup>*

The Royal Hospital was like a novitiate, where the Spirit helped him to endure the humiliation and suffering inflicted on him as an experience of communion with the humiliated and outraged Christ. The contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word which was shown to him transfigured in the faces of the poor, the sick, his companions, helped him to discern how to respond to his infinite love:

*"And seeing the sick, who were mad with him, being punished, he said: May Jesus Christ give me the time and the grace to have my own hospital where I can take the poor defenceless people who are out of their minds, and serve them as I desire"<sup>2</sup>*

This is the way in which John expressed his concern, which meant that he could not continue working as a shepherd in Oropesa or accept his uncle's invitation to stay on in Montemor when he returned from Vienna to his native village in search of his relatives:

*"Since God was served by taking away my parents, I do not wish to stay in this land, but to see where I must serve our Lord outside my native land as my father did, and he has left me such a fine example. But since I have been so wicked a sinner, and as Our Lord has given me life may I use it to do*

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<sup>1</sup> CASTRO, *The History and Life and Holy Deeds of John of God*, Ch. 8.

<sup>2</sup> CASTRO, *op.cit.* Ch. 9.

*penance and to serve him. And I trust that my Lord Jesus Christ will give me his grace so that I can put my desire into effect"*<sup>3</sup>

At the Royal Hospital John Ciudad reaped the fruits of his generous devotion to the Almeida family during his stay in Ceuta, and there he found the response to his general confession and his incessant supplications to the Lord in Gibraltar:

*"Show me the path I must take in order to serve you and live always as your slave and give my soul the peace and quiet it so rightly yearns after"*<sup>4</sup>

God showed him the path, and John set about following it with all the love which God had infused into his heart: never again was he to abandon that path. And he found the peace and quiet for which he yearned, because he had discovered the 'treasure' for which he was able to consume his life: to become a slave, a captive for Jesus Christ alone, devoting himself to loving and serving his brothers and his neighbours (Cf. 2 GL 7.8).

Francisco de Castro, his first biographer, described him as being inebriated by the wine of charity:

*"The love with which our Lord had endowed his servant was so great, and the works that derived from this were so singular that some people, judging him superficially, considered him to be a wastrel and prodigal, failing to understand that our Lord had placed him in the wine cellar and had established his love within him, and that this had inebriated him with God's love so that he refused nothing that was asked of him in the name of God"*<sup>5</sup>

## 2. A witness to the Hospitality of God

After dedicating himself once and for all to Our Lord, John's life consisted of allowing himself at all times to be imbued with the Hospitality of God. He perceived this Hospitality, with a capital 'H', as the sense of being wholly possessed by the mysterious Hospitality of God, and his loving-kindness and forgiveness. He felt that he had been welcomed in a 'hospitaller' manner by God the Father, and joyfully discovered that he was a son of God. Every effort he made was to manifest his sonship by living his life like Jesus: in total receptiveness to the will of the Father, wholly devoted to creating opportunities for establishing fraternity and fellowship with all.

He began his mission by tending to the poor and sick in Granada with the help of God, without a penny in his purse, and with the total and unconditional offering of his own existence, without measuring his efforts, working day and night on his apostolate. The people of Granada originally thought that he was suffering from some odd form 'lunacy'. But they discovered little by little that it was a real 'madness': the madness which had revolutionised his innermost being and had galvanised his heart, infected by the 'madness of Love' manifested by God in his Son Jesus, who became poor in order to communicate to us his wealth, who became a slave to give us his liberty and freedom, and who delivered up his life to serve all mankind, to give all mankind life in Him.

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<sup>3</sup> CASTRO, *op.cit.* Ch. 3.

<sup>4</sup> CASTRO, *op.cit.* Ch. 6.

<sup>5</sup> CASTRO, *op.cit.* Ch. 14.

John of God was a disconcerting *poor man* at a time when begging was a fairly common 'occupation'. The people of Granada were disconcerted by his decision to follow Christ by giving up his small bookshop, giving away the little he had to the poor and suggested setting up a place where he could welcome in, feed and care for the impoverished sick of Granada. People's curiosity was roused when late one night he began crying out in the streets *'Do good, brothers, to yourselves, by giving alms to the poor'*. And they gave him alms, so many alms. This enabled him to begin organising a small inn originally, and then a tiny hospital, and later on to buy an old convent so that he could organise everything in a manner that made it the first hospital of John of God at Cuesta de los Gomelez, where he himself said that over 140 people, sick, poor and pilgrims received help.

It was in his hospital that the poor and the sick, prostitutes who had decided to change their lives, benefactors wishing to help him do good, and the companions who wished to live like him, were taken in and served as brothers and sisters. Without wishing to set up a 'school', John's witness of life infected those around him so that his Hospital became a place in which hospitality was practised, transmitted and experienced.

Sparing no pains or efforts in his charitable self-giving to his hospital, there was no suffering that left John's heart indifferent. In the faces of the poor he contemplated the face of his Lord, and his heart prevented him from passing on the other side, and failing to cater for their needs. Living in the same poverty as the very poorest, he managed to convince others who were able cooperate with his apostolate to join him. He wrote the following words to the Duchess of Sessa:

*"While I was walking through the city of Córdoba the other day I came across a household in very dire need. There were two girls whose parents had both been sick and bedridden for ten years. They were so poor and in such distress that it broke my heart.... They have written me a letter and what they tell me in it is heartbreaking. I am in such straits that on the days when I have to pay the workers some of the poor go without food... good Duchess, if it so pleases God I should like you to gain these alms which the others have lost."* (1 DS 15-17).

And to Gutierre Lasso he wrote:

*"I am also very unhappy when I see so many poor people (who are my brothers and neighbours) suffering and in great need in both body and soul, and I cannot help them... My brother in Jesus Christ, writing to you brings me great relief because I feel I am talking with you and sharing my troubles with you... May Our Lord Jesus Christ reward you in heaven for the good you have done for him, for the poor and for me"* (2 GL 8.13).

### *3. He infected his neighbour with love*

John of God called himself 'the brother of all'. This is probably one of the best possible definitions of him, because he practised and demonstrated brotherhood towards the poor and sick, the rich who had fallen on hard times, soldiers in difficulties, prostitutes, and even the 'Lords' of Andalusia and Castile who helped him with their alms to perform his apostolate of charity.

A radical new idea about the image of John of God began to dawn on the people of Granada. This is how Castro describes it:

*"because the people always judged what they saw him doing as a sign of madness, until afterwards they saw that good seed, that had been buried and had perished, bore so much fruit, and produced so much good wine"*<sup>6</sup>

As the text shows, the people gradually changed their opinion of him when they saw the consistent way he lived his life, his disinterested self-offering, his steadfastness, his spirit of sacrifice, the way he asked for help and the universal nature of his love. We might say that the whole of Granada shed all their doubts about him and identified wholly with John of God through a process that might be described in the following terms:

- *Admiration.* The first positive feeling they had about him was surprise. *"Is this the same man we saw who had gone out of his mind? How he has changed!"* In reality his life showed that the change had occurred. It was not so much a change, but a revelation of what John of God really was and always had been.
- *Recognition.* Recognition followed admiration. John of God began to be loved by all. He did what nobody else was doing, and he welcomed everyone into his home: the sick, the poor, pilgrims, etc. He was not mad but completely sane, extremely sane. He loved and blessed the poor, the powerful, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities ...
- *Cooperation.* With recognition came cooperation. The work of John of God became the work of the whole of Granada, and the people came to feel him as one of their own. The people worked with him in cash, kind, personal service and seeking help from companions and friends. Gradually everyone came to feel that they were protagonists of the hospital of the Blessed John of God. More than cooperating with him, they actually identified with his work.
- *Veneration.* John could never die and be lost from memory. His love still remains alive in every street and corner of his city. His burial awoke a massive display of love and veneration. Castro put it this way:

*"His body was given the most splendid and honoured burial that was ever given to a prince, an emperor, or a monarch of this world"*<sup>7</sup>

The spirit of John of God continued to live on in his Brothers who perpetuated it in Granada and extended his work throughout five continents, so that John of God is not only a historical figure, but a man who continues to live among us today.

#### 4. *His first companions*

John of God fascinated everyone who met him. Thanks to Francisco de Castro we know that he was responsible for looking after all the business of his house for some time single-handed, until he was joined by volunteers, paid nurses and friends like John of Avila, whom the saint familiarly called Angulo, who helped and accompanied him in his work and on his travels. All these people were 'infected' by the

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<sup>6</sup> Castro, *op.cit.* Ch. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Castro, *op.cit.* Ch. 21.

integrity of his life and his capacity to hand on to others the Christian command to practise charity and serve the poor.

The first Brothers of St John of God were also the fruit of his great charity. Through one of his letters we know that he had a very clear understanding that his way of life demanded personal attitudes expressed through total self-giving to the things of God and concern for the poor, and an integrity of life based on the grace of God, the practice of prayer and the sacraments (Cf. LB *passim*). When the time came to choose between them, he did not allow himself to be led by prejudice or be dazzled by externals, because he knew from his own experience that the mercy of God is capable of changing man's heart if he allows himself to be enthralled by his mercy.

John of God's first companions were generally people who had drifted away from God, living rather dissolute lives, and it was his devotion, words and witness that encouraged them to change their attitudes and above all to share his mission with him, giving birth to a new religious family.

The history of Antón Martín and Pedro Velasco is well known to all of us. It was described by the witnesses in the process of beatification. They had been two mortal enemies, because Pedro had murdered the brother of Antón who sought his revenge. But the charity and apostolic zeal of John of God transformed them both, firstly into real brothers, then into John's co-workers, and eventually his first companions.

Simón de Avila comes across as a slanderer of John of God. He discredited him and stalked the saint as he visited poor widows and needy girls in the city. As he doggedly followed in the footsteps of John to try to unmask what he suspected to be bogus charity, he gradually became better acquainted with the real John, and this slanderer was changed into his great admirer. Moved by the grace of God he felt attracted by John's lifestyle and became one of his first companions.

Dominico Piola was a trader who had amassed up great wealth. His contact with the saint gradually transformed his life, and he identified with him and thought of abandoning his worldly goods and joining John by imitating his actions. Before he did so, John of God asked him to put all his affairs in order, and afterwards he lived to the great edification of all who knew him.

We know very little about the life of Juan García before he became a companion of our saint. Encouraged and attracted by the witness of John of God he joined him to work in his hospital. His great charity and desire to serve the sick led him to stay virtually permanently in the hospital...

## *5. Prophetic and evangelising signs of his life*

It is difficult to sum up the traits of the prophetic and evangelising spirit of the life of St John of God. We might try to do so in the following terms which is by no means exhaustive:

### *5.1. His intimate relationship with God*

As a result of his experience of feeling loved by the mercy of the Father, John gradually heightened his communion with God, which he manifested in a personal relationship with Him, but which animated him to live in love as filial acceptance of his will, revealing that he had discovered in Jesus, and had learnt

from Him, that in order to abide in the love of the Father it is necessary to do his will (Cf. Jn 15:9-10; 14:31).

After his conversion, John developed his attitudes of faith, love and hope to such an extent that his love was God's love.

## 5.2. Faith

Faith led him to accept the saving presence of God so deeply into his life that it was God who led him. His nickname 'of God' revealed this. John no longer belonged to himself but to God. He no longer lived for himself, but only for God and his kingdom.

From this experience of faith seen as the conscious acceptance of the presence and the salvation of God in his own life, John took on the attitudes that he subsequently recommended in his letters:

*"God before all the things of the world"* (The beginning of his letters).

*"all this must be borne for God's sake, because if you come here you must suffer all this for the love of God....You must offer God deep thanks for everything, both the good and the bad...."* (LB 9).

*"because the good things people do are not theirs but belong to God: honour, glory and praise to God, because everything is his. ..."* (1 GL, 11).

## 5.3. Charity

John of God is the Saint of Charity. Love of God and the neighbour was the locomotive force and the goal of his life. For him, charity is:

- the manifestation of communion with God: *"Always have charity, for where there is no charity God is not there - even though God is everywhere."* (LB 15).
- *"charity ... is the mother of all the virtues."* (3 DS 16).
- the proof for love of Jesus Christ: *"love Jesus Christ and feel compassion for his children, the poor."* (2 GL 10).
- the guarantee of the forgiveness of sins: *"as water puts out fire, so charity wipes out sin."* (1 DS 13).
- 'the soul' of compassion and self-giving to others: *"."* (2 GL 8). *"I borrowed the sum of three ducats for some poor people who were in great need."* (1 DS 3).

Love for others become the 'soul' which animated his life: he lived Christianity in the imitation of Christ, always loving others, even if his love was not requited. He managed to live Christian love in the most disconcerting manner by loving his enemies, doing good to both 'the good and the wicked'. Francisco de Castro recounts a very telling event which sheds light on this. Certain presumably well-intentioned people went to Archbishop Guerrero to complain that John of God was harbouring people of bad repute

in his hospital, considering that this discredited him. The Archbishop sent for him and invited him not to take in people who were 'unworthy':

*"John listened attentively to all the Archbishop had to say, and with great humility and meekness he said to him, 'My Father and my Lord Bishop, I alone and evil and incorrigible and useless, and I deserve to be driven out of the house of God; the poor who are in the hospital are good people, and I know of no vice in any of them; and since God tolerates both good and wicked people, and lets his sun shine on both of them every day, would it not be unreasonable to send away the defenceless and the suffering from their own home?'"<sup>8</sup>*

For the love of God he endured great insults patiently, and accepted them as a way of suffering for Jesus Christ, identifying with Christ, and *"to the evil they did to him he responded with good"* (Cf. LB 10). He knew that where there is no charity there is no God (Cf. LB 15) and he said so in his letters.

Profoundly sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, he was brokenhearted when he met people in need. He took everyone into his house, which is why they accused him of being over-generous. But he knew very well that his destiny was to make the mercy of God present in the world, and to show boundless love, with an evangelical attitude and an authentic prophetic sense.

#### 5.4. Hope

He expressed and lived hope in the following way:

*"hope in Jesus Christ alone who, in exchange for the tribulations and sufferings we bear in this miserable life for his sake, will give us eternal glory through the merits of his sacred Passion and through his great mercy"* (3 DS 9).

He expressed this very well when he said:

*"my most beloved and respected brother in Jesus Christ, I often do not leave the house because of my many debts,... nevertheless, I trust solely in Jesus Christ, who will bring me out of debt, for he knows my heart."* (2 GL 7.8; Cf. 1 DS 6 b.; 2 DS 7.20).

*"This letter will let you know in what dire straits and in what very great need I am (although I still thank Our Lord Jesus Christ for everything) because, as you must know, so many poor people flock here that very often even I am afraid we shall not be able to look after them all; however, Jesus Christ sees to everything and provides them with food..."* (2 GL 3).

*"and because he looks after everything, may thanks be rendered to Jesus Christ for ever."* (2 GL 9).

*"after our work we must give thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shows so much mercy towards us."* (2 DS 18).

#### 5.5. Solidarity with the poor and sick

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<sup>8</sup> CASTRO. *op.cit.* Ch. 20.

John of God gave himself radically to the service of the sick and needy, based on a personal commitment that required him to identify with them: he 'emptied himself' in order to place himself on the level of his 'brothers and neighbours', and in this way enable him to enter into a loving dialogue with them; a dialogue which took the form of service and the offering of his life to remedy their needs.

There are a few things that emerge so forcefully in his life: he not only served the poor but he made the lives and the fate of the poor and those whom he served his own life. This he expressed very clearly when he wrote to Gutierre Lasso:

*"This letter will let you know in what dire straits and in what very great need I am... I find myself a debtor and a prisoner solely for Jesus Christ. I owe over two hundred ducats... I often do not leave the house because of my many debts... I wanted to let you know of my worries, because I know that you will suffer over them just as I would suffer over yours, and also because I know that you love Jesus Christ and feel compassion for his children, the poor." (2 GL 3.7.8.10).*

It was thanks to this deep-seated identification with them that he himself felt poor and needy; by 'emptying himself' John of God was able to offer his service and remedy the needs of the poor without wounding their 'dignity' or adopting a paternalistic attitude to them. This was the way he could perfectly understand the plight of each person. Like Christ, he lived the attitude of compassion that springs from love, suffering with those who suffer, hoping with those who have no hope ...

#### 5.6. *Prayer*

John of God, seen from outside, looks like an eminently active man, yet in the Bull of Canonisation, the Church offers him to the faithful as a model of charity and deep prayer. In his biography one can clearly see this aspect of his Christian character: he knew perfectly well the Christian's twofold duty of love: to love God and to love our neighbour. And he managed to establish a harmony of life which communicates love. His self-giving in charity was renewed and strengthened through his contact with God, not only in moments of prayer, of which there were certainly so many, but through charitable self-giving to others, because he knew how to interpret life, suffering, poverty and everything else in the light of faith.

His manner of prayer was very simple, like that of any other believers in his day: he recited all the prayers commanded by Holy Mother Church; he meditated and contemplated the Passion of Christ, particularly on Fridays; he was very familiar with the rosary; he attended Mass; he confessed frequently; he regularly consulted his spiritual director; he commended all things to the Lord, ready at all times to do his will, and he trusted totally in Jesus Christ, constantly thanking him for his great mercy. And out of his love and goodness he did good and practised charity to the poor and the sick (cf. 2 DS 18.19).

One may say, without any doubt whatsoever, that St John of God was a man of prayer, a prophet who experienced the presence of God in reality, and lived at all times in an intimate relationship with him, despite his very demanding and all-absorbing work.

#### 5.7. *His ascesis*

After his conversion, John of God lived a very harsh life which Castro described in Chapter 17 of his biography:

*"Even the ordinary work that John of God did to ask for alms and to look after his poor, without considering the constant requests and problems that everyone brought to him was a penance and a mortification of the flesh that was so great that it would have been hardly bearable for anyone else with a strong and healthy constitution that could have endured it merely with human strength. And yet Brother John of God was not content with all this, but actually mortified his flesh with works of great penitence, subjecting it to the spirit and not even granting it its bare necessities"<sup>9</sup>*

Further on Castro continues:

*"John of God endured so many sufferings in order to remedy the sufferings of all the others, both when he was travelling in the streets and in the ordinary work he carried out in the city, that in the end he was stricken down" (Ch. 20).*

From this, we might say that his ascetical life consisted mainly of three things:

- First, the scant concern he showed for his own body; he did not want to pamper it; he lived for the poor and he identified with them. He referred to his food and dress several times (Cf. 2 DS 13) showing that he needed very little to live on. His hard work, little sleep and his austere life, reflected his asceticism.
- Second, his self-giving to others, which meant that he had to be attentive to the sick, to keep an eye on their sufferings, to go and see them as soon as he arrived home, worn out, going out to beg, showing concern to rehabilitate fallen women, explaining to people why he could not pay them what he owed them. His asceticism helped him to become skilled in thanking God both for good and for evil.
- The third aspect is that in order to achieve this, after his conversion John of God went through a process of emptying himself in order to fill himself with love of and for God. After hearing Master Avila's sermon, one of his desires was to be considered a person of no importance. He stripped himself, he threw himself into the mud, and he let the others mock him and judge him to be out of his mind. He always repeated that he was a great sinner, even to Archbishop Guerrero who went to visit him on his deathbed; on Fridays, when he invited the prostitutes to change their lives, he did so by confessing his own sins; in his opinion he was the only person who was unworthy to be in his own hospital ... anyone who reaches such heights of love and holiness feels that they are nothing. This is another of his prophetic features.

#### 5.8. Working with the laity

His work was always open not only to the sick and the poor, but to anyone else who wanted to work with him.

He began by begging alms from the people of Granada; he felt supported by the work of the poor, the pilgrims and the prostitutes whom he asked for some special support; he had nurses working in the hospital when he went out to beg; and on his outings he was accompanied by John of Avila; the

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<sup>9</sup> CASTRO, *op.cit.* Ch. 17.

benefactors gradually became the constant protagonists of his hospital, through their support. The city of Granada felt his absence when he went to Valladolid and was away for nine months, and on his return he was given a very warm reception.

These were merely expressions of his conviction that he was doing something that was shared by all, his firm belief in the value of every person, and his outreach and universality. From the beginning, his work was also that of his co-workers, believers and non-believers alike, who identified with his humanitarian spirit and to whom he wished to demonstrate the power of salvation.

#### 5.9. *His prudence*

John of God was a wise man, endowed with that biblical wisdom which stems from simplicity and humility, of growing according to the calling of God, and of harmonising and centring one's existence around what is considered to be fundamental to life.

His responses became increasingly more prudent, and the people gradually accepted him as a man of sound common sense.

#### 5.10. *Harmony and serenity*

John of God's day was full; he had no time to 'waste' because the needs of the hospital and his care for the poor sometimes did not even give him the time he needed to "*recite the Creed slowly*" (1 GL 4). Yet he was anxious to visit each of his sick, one by one, and showed interest in how they were and how they had been during his absence. When he found someone suffering, he did not hurry. He welcomed them, listened quietly, and as far as possible remedied their need. Castro says:

*"There were so many people that came to talk to him that very often there was hardly room for them. And sitting down in the midst of all of them, with enormous patience, he listened to each one of their needs without ever sending away anyone unconsolated, either with alms or with a good reply".*

#### 5.11. *His evangelising spirit*

John of God is an apostle with a universal and ecumenical view of life, stemming from his meeting with God when he experienced the fact that God is the Father of all and loves everyone freely. This experience formed the basis of his apostolic spirit. He transmitted this in his acts of universal love and in the annunciation of the word, and in his writings, when he invited others to act in the manner of God:

*"If we reflected on the breadth of God's mercy, we would never cease doing good while we were able."* (1 DS 13).

This explains his powerful desire for people to live their lives around God, to experience salvation and appreciate the fundamental value of the human person. Using the language of his age he said that

*"a soul is worth more than all the treasures of the earth"* (1 DS 17).

Hence his interest in exploiting every opportunity to put across the Good News. Announcing salvation was something he bore in his heart. His charity was not limited to solving social needs and problems. Fostering the social advancement of the marginalised and alleviating the sufferings of the sick were by no means his main, let alone sole, purpose of his commitment to man. He lived for and served the poor and the sick as his own personal way of imitating Jesus Christ, of proclaiming the Gospel and making the love of God present to man, particularly the weakest.

He himself said, after listing a whole string of needs and problems:

*"I find myself a debtor and a prisoner solely for Jesus Christ..." (2 GL 7).*

At the end of his letters he would write:

*"John of God, desiring the salvation of all people as much as his own. Amen Jesus. Amen, Jesus".*

It is also obvious that he was not only concerned about caring for the body, and solving social and economic problems:

- every Friday he went to the brothel to evangelise the prostitutes;
  - he taught catechism to children and welcomed them into his hospital;
  - he was concerned about religious assistance and having the sacraments administered to the sick;
  - he gave spiritual counsel to all those with whom he had relationships:
- \* to Luis Bautista regarding the discernment of his vocation;
  - \* to Gutierre Lasso concerning family matters and the future of his children;
  - \* to the Duchess of Sessa to whom he gave so much spiritual advice through his correspondence with her, particularly in the third letter.

John of God performed a comprehensive service to the person. He expressed this very well when he said

*"I am also very unhappy when I see so many poor people ... suffering and in great need in both body and soul, " (2 GL 8).*

He did not concentrate exclusively on the people in his hospital. His love was open to

*"all kinds of poor and needy people whom he took in to help; widows and orphans in secret, lost soldiers and poor labourers... and he helped them all according to their needs, sending no-one away without comfort"<sup>10</sup> "without the students whom he kept and those who sought to hide their shame"<sup>11</sup>*

Today, we speak about the New Evangelisation and the New Hospitality and the Pastoral Care of the Sick. John of God announced and made present the unchangeable substance of the message of the Good News, with a zeal and with attitudes which we sometimes lack today. This is yet another manifestation of his prophetic character.

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<sup>10</sup> CASTRO op. cit. page 60

<sup>11</sup> CASTRO, op.cit. page 70.



**PART II**  
**CHOSEN TO EVANGELISE**  
**THE POOR AND THE SICK**

**A historical overview**



## THE HOSPITALLER ORDER TO THE MID-19TH CENTURY

### 1. *From the death of St John of God to the division of the Order into two Congregations*

The Order certainly began very humbly and simply, but it was blessed by Providence, and was supported by the spirit inherited from St John of God. Divine Providence alone is able to explain the continuity and development of the work that was first set in motion by the *father of the poor*. The material and moral support given to the first Hospitallers came from Archbishop Pedro Guerrero of Granada, St John of Avila and other benefactors. But they received no support whatsoever from the official Church or from Canon Law: it was a venture with no structures, no juridical organisation, and no rules, and it took another 37 years (1587) before it held its first Chapter to appoint a General and draft the Constitutions.

Everything started in Granada. John of God was succeeded by Antón Martín as the director of the Hospital. Between 1552 and 1565, Brother Juan García was responsible for the destiny of the Brothers in Spain, and admitted Rodrigo de Sigüenza, Sebastián Arias, Pedro Soriano, Melchor de los Reyes and Frutos de San Pedro to the Congregation of Brothers.

#### a) *The first foundations outside Granada*

The most important activities in that period, which were milestones in the future development of the Order were: the transfer of the Hospital from Cuesta de los Gomelez to the plot of land owned by the Jeronymites, the journey to Madrid by Antón Martín and the new foundation, and shortly afterwards the Alpujarras War.

Wishing to fit out the new Granada Hospital as soon as possible and as well as he was able, Antón Martín went to Madrid (1552) in search of funds which were generously given by such benefactors as Prince Philip and the Infanta Joan, who also asked him to found a hospital with the same characteristics as the one in Granada. Brother Antón Martín went back to Granada to put everything in order, and then returned to Madrid where he founded a hospital which he called Amor de Dios (Love of God). He fell seriously ill while the hospital was being built and extended and died during the night of 24 December 1553 after appointing the Hermanos Mayores (Superiors) in his testament to run the hospitals in Madrid and Granada.

The work of the Brothers of John of God continued to move ahead thanks to their faith and confidence in Divine Providence and their faithful receptiveness to God's plans which were revealed in the many requests they received to extend this new form of hospitality. Vocations flourished and multiplied unceasingly in Spain, instilling confidence in our first Brothers to go on trustingly extending hospitality far and wide for the benefit of the poor and sick. The foundation in Madrid (1552) was therefore followed by foundations at Lucena (1565), Utrera (1567), Jerez de la Frontera (1568), Córdoba and Seville (1570).

New avenues were opened for the Brothers up to spread the charism far and wide by taking part in the Alpujarras War and the Battle of Lepanto. Their mission was not only to serve in the hospital, because

was later broadened to the army and to naval expeditions, which took the Brothers to places plagued with epidemics, enabling them to serve anywhere in the world that was in need of health care.

During the 1570s, the Brothers of John of God were joined by the Venerable Peter Pecedor (the founder of the Hospital of Our Lady of Peace in Seville and the hospitals at Málaga, Antequera and Ronda) and St John Grande (the founder of the La Candelaria Hospital at Jerez de la Frontera, and later the hospitals of Medinasidonia, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Arcos de la Frontera, Puerto de Santa María and Villamartín) who brought his own followers and hospitals with him. The followers of John Grande included Peter Egipciano, who was the first General of the Spanish Congregation.

#### b) *The approbation of the Congregation of the Brothers of John of God: St Pius V*

Brothers Sebastián Arias and Pedro Soriano travelled to Rome in 1570 to request the approbation of the Order, obtaining from St Pius V the Brief *Salvatoris nostri* (8 August 1571) and the Bull *Licet ex debito* (1 January 1572) which erected the group of Brothers of John of God as a Hospitaller Religious Congregation, placed under the Rule of St Augustine, with obedience to the local Ordinaries, granting the Brothers a habit of their own.

Having obtained approbation, Brother Pedro Soriano stayed on in Italy, and late in 1572 he founded the Hospital of Our Lady of Victory in Naples, beginning work in Rome in 1581 in Piazza di Pietra, before moving to Tiber Island in 1584 when the contract was signed for the purchase of the Hospital of St John Calibita.

#### c) *The approbation of the Order: Sixtus V*

The Institute spread rapidly, and what is more important still, the Brothers lived with genuine zeal the spirit of charity they had inherited from John of God. They felt that the time was ripe to establish an Order, with its own Rules and Superior. Sixtus V, who was very familiar with the work of the Brothers, elevated the Congregation to the status of a regular Order with the Bull *Etsi pro debito*, on 1 October 1586, permitting the Brothers to convoke a General Chapter in order to approve the Order's Constitutions and elect its Superior General.

The Chapter was convened at the Hospital of St John Calibita on 20-24 June 1587. On 23 June Pedro Soriano was elected General of the Hospitaller Order, and the first Constitutions of the whole of the Order were approved.

## 2. *The division of the Order into two Congregations*

On 13 February 1592, with the promulgation of Clement VIII's Brief *Ex omnibus*, the Brothers returned to the situation that had existed prior to the approval of the Institute by Pius V, because Clement VIII only permitted them to take the vow *to serve in hospitals under obedience to the Ordinaries*. Even though it was not the Pope's intention to cause a legal rift between the Brothers in Italy and Spain, this was the effect his decision had, for the following reasons:

- The partial reincorporation of the Order in Italy: the Bull *Romani Pontificis* (9.09.1596) issued by Clement VIII;
- The partial reincorporation in Spain: the Brief *Piorum Virorum* (12.04.1608) issued by Paul V;
- The total reincorporation in Spain: on 7 July 1611, Paul V elevated the Congregation in Spain to a regular Order with the Brief *Romanus Pontifex*. This is when the separation of the two Congregations took on a *juridical status* because the Pope gave them permission to hold a General Chapter, elect a General for Spain and draft their own Constitutions;
- The total reincorporation in Italy: Paul V granted this in his Brief *Romanus Pontifex* (13.02.1617) with the same prerogatives he had granted to the Spanish Congregation. From this moment onwards the Order had two Superiors General.

From the legal viewpoint, the Order comprised two Congregations between 1611 and 1867, when the Order was restored in Spain by the Blessed Benedict Menni, while Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri was the General of the Italian Congregation, giving each of the two Congregations their own Constitutions and Superior General. However, as long before as 1587 there had been a certain separation between the Brothers in Spain and the Brothers in Rome, which had been upheld by certain Brothers in the Granada Hospital and others in Spain who were reluctant to agree that the General of the Order should live in Rome, making them reluctant to renew their profession under his authority. This attitude became even more clear when, after the early death of Brother Pedro Soriano in 1588 while conducting the Canonical Visitation to the Perugia Hospital, the Spanish Brothers did not attend the General Chapter held in Rome in March 1589.

## 2.1. *The Spanish Congregation*

### a) *The Order in Spain*

On 20 October 1608, Pedro Egipciano was elected as the first General of the Spanish Congregation. The same Chapter also adopted the new Constitutions which Brother Egipciano himself took to Rome. Paul V approved them and confirmed the Institute on 11 June 1611. After renewing his profession in the hands of the Pope, he returned to Spain. On 2 November 1614 he was re-elected General, and Pope Paul V issued a *Motu Proprio* on 16 March 1616 removing the Brothers from the jurisdiction of the local Ordinaries. Paul V, in his Brief of 7 December 1619, also divided the Spanish Congregation into two Provinces: Our Lady of Peace (Andalusia) and St John of God (Castile).

At the beginning of the 17th century our Order had about 20 hospitals in the Iberian Peninsula, and then began to develop in America with two foundations in Cartagena de Indias (1596) and Havana (1603), reaching as far as the Philippines in 1617.

In 1715 the two branches of the Hospitaller Order (Spanish and Italian) comprised 16 Provinces, and had 256 hospitals and 2,399 Hospitaller Brothers. The Spanish branch comprised the Provinces of Our Lady of Peace (Andalusia) with 26 hospitals, St John of God (Castile), 22 hospitals; Holy Spirit (New Spain) which also included the Philippines, with 28 hospitals; St Bernard (Tierra Firme) with 11 hospitals and the Archangel St Rafael (Peru and Chile) with 20 hospitals.

On 9 February 1738, Brother Alonso de Jesús y Ortega '*El Magno*' was elected General of the Spanish Congregation. With him, the Spanish branch of the Order reached the peak of its splendour. Something

of the magnitude of the work of the Hospitallers can be glimpsed from the fact that between January 1735 and December 1757 they had cared for 726,637 sick people.

The expansion of the Order in Spain continued until the end of the Generalate of Brother Alonso de Jesús Ortega (+ 1771). At that time the Spanish Congregation had 1,261 Brothers and seven Provinces: three in Spain, three in America (one of them included five hospitals in the Philippines) and one in Portugal which included several centres in Africa and Asia. From that moment onwards the Spanish Congregation began to decline, becoming formally extinct in 1850.

#### b) *The arrival of the Brothers and the consolidation of the Order in Portugal*

At the very beginning of the Order's existence the Brothers had wanted to purchase the house in which our Founder was born. Despite many attempts, and for various reasons, they were unable to do so until 1606, when two Brothers from Antón Martín's Hospital in Madrid went to Portugal. They built a church and a hospital over the house where John of God was born at Montemor-o-Novo.

The expansion of the Order in Portugal followed the same path and the same criteria that had been used in Spain. Portugal began life as a Province of the Spanish Congregation until 1790 when the Holy See gave its approval for its definitive separation from Spain, appointing a Vicar General with his own Definitory. In practice however, it had lived separately from the Spanish Provinces from approximately 1702.

By 1745 the Order had eleven hospitals in Portugal; nine military hospitals run by the Brothers and five in Africa and Asia, while there were over 130 Portuguese Brothers.

### 2.2. *The Italian Congregation*

#### a) *The Hospitaller Brothers in Italy*

The work of the Brothers of John of God flourished and expanded in Italy thanks to their charitable self-giving, their readiness to look after all needs, and their enthusiastic and high quality care. All of this won them the sympathy and favour of both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities and of many benefactors. The Brothers were therefore able to expand rapidly, with many foundations throughout Italy and in most of Europe: Austria, Germany, Poland, France.

In Italy, the Brothers also attended to the soldiers wounded on the battlefields and the victims of plague and epidemics, giving a wonderful testimony of charity and hospitality.

The vigour and development of the Order in Italy can be easily gauged from the fact that only 80 years after the first foundation (Naples 1576) the Brothers already had six flourishing Provinces: Rome, Naples, Lombardy, Bari, Sicily and Sardinia, with 66 hospitals, 1,032 beds, caring for 27,469 patients -- all poor -- with 595 Brothers, some of them highly distinguished for their skills and training in medicine, surgery and nursing, such as Brother Pascual de l'Homme and Brother Gabriele Ferrara.

#### b) *Foundations north of the Alps*

The countries to which we will refer now, which make up the map of the Order in Europe together with the three we have already mentioned, saw the family of St John of God grow as a result of the work of the Hospitallers who had come from Italy or the Provinces belonging to the Italian Congregation. Their expansion was due to the exemplary lives of the Brothers and the apostolic mission they performed.

#### b.1) *France*

The Order spread rapidly in France after 1602 when Brother Bonelli and his companions arrived from Italy to found the Hospital of Charity, the most important in France at that time, and the cradle of the French Province. With the help of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, the Order spread rapidly throughout France.

Even though the French Brothers were united to the Italian Congregation they had their own autonomy. The Provincial was also the Vicar General and governed independently of Italy. In 1789 the Province had 40 hospitals in France, five in the French colonies and a total of 350 Brothers.

#### b.2) *The Austro-Germanic countries*

In 1605 Brothers Gabriele Ferrara, a distinguished physician and surgeon, Giovanni Battista Cassinetti and several other Brothers went to Feldberg at the request of Prince Charles of Liechtenstein to take charge of the Hospital of St Barbara, as the first of the 22 hospitals which the Order founded until the death of Brother Ferrara in 1627.

Very soon afterwards the flourishing Province of the Archangel St Michael was founded, from which all the Provinces in Central Europe stemmed. In the middle of the 18th century, the Province known as the German Province of St Michael the Archangel had 31 hospitals, covering the vast geographic area occupied today by Austria, Italy, Germany, Romania and Hungary.

As elsewhere, the Brothers looked after the sick in their hospitals and also accompanied the Emperor's troops on their campaigns looking after the injured and the sick. Once again they worked selflessly in a great spirit of love to look after plague and epidemic victims.

#### b.3) *Poland*

Brother Gabriele Ferrara reached Poland in 1609 and accepted the Hospital of Krakow. New foundations soon sprang up in Poland and Lithuania. In 1642 the independent Province of Poland was set up under Our Lady of the Assumption. Even though it was a prosperous Province (13 hospitals and 156 Brothers at the end of the 18th century, it disappeared when Poland was split up between Russia and Prussia.

### 3. *The Order in America during this period*

Gregory XIII's Bull '*In Supereminenti*' (28 April 1576) mentioned of the foundations of the St John of God "*in various Provinces of the Indias of the Ocean sea*" without specifying the number or the place in which they were.

Both in the first biography of St John of God (1585) and in the Constitutions drawn at the first General Chapter (June 1587) there is mention of three hospitals in America: in Mexico, in the city of Nombre de Dios (Panama) and Ciudad de los Reyes in Peru (Cf. Const. 1587, fol. 43 v.).

Some of these hospitals must have been the ones that the first colonisers built to look after the Spaniards who travelled to the New World, and the indigenous people there. Other hospitals, as occurred in Spain at that time, were built by pious individuals, associations or confraternities which offered these hospitals to the Brothers hearing of the Congregation founded in Granada by John of God. This is the only possible explanation for the existence of hospitals named after the Congregation of John of God before the first Hospitallers had actually left Spain to settle in America.

In a manuscript preserved in the Archivo de Indias, it transpires that the Brothers of John of God of Granada offered to go to the Americas in 1584. This offer was rejected on 18 April 1584. It also emerges that eight Hospitaller Brothers embarked on one of the Spanish convoys heading for Cuba and New Spain to look after the sick and wounded, including their Superior, Brother Francisco Hernández. He saw the vast field of activity that was opening up in those lands for the Hospitaller mission, and when he returned to Spain he submitted a report to Philip II describing the services provided and the need for them to be extended to the Indies. He concluded his report requesting the King for permission to go back to those regions with five other Brothers to practise their Hospitaller-missionary work.

The King granted the petition this time, and issued a Royal Warrant dated 2 December 1595 to the President and Ministers of the Casa de Contratación in Seville ordering them to allow Brother Francisco Hernández and his five companions to go to the West Indies to look after the hospitals at Cartagena, Nombre de Dios and Panama. At the end of a long voyage, they reached the port of Cartagena de Indias in April 1596, and took possession of the hospital dedicated to St Sebastian.

After settling there permanently, in the first three decades of the 17th century the work of the Hospitallers spread very rapidly throughout the American continent. In order to govern the new situation properly, measures were laid down by the Real Consejo de Indias for the Brothers and Hospitallers in America and were taken up in the 1640 Constitutions.

By 1780, the statistics of the three American Provinces, without including the Philippines, showed the following: the Province of St Bernard, 11 hospitals and 70 Brothers; the Province of the Archangel San Rafael, 20 hospitals and 245 Brothers, and the Province of the Holy Spirit, 26 hospitals and 255 Brothers.

*The factors that encouraged the presence and the expansion of the Order in America* were primarily the charity and self-denial of the Brothers, their readiness to cater for any need and the universal welcome they gave to all, in addition to their human and scientific training which guaranteed high quality care, attracting the support of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities.

The excellent reputation that the Hospitallers enjoyed with the authorities and the people very often meant that the Brothers were called upon to take charge of hospitals, and this made it easier for the Brothers to successfully apply to take over the running of existing hospitals.

The sympathy of the people and the authorities is shown, above all, in the generosity with which they cooperated in providing financial support to the Brothers, because most of the hospitals could not go on operating with the income allocated to them, and they had to go out begging for alms to support themselves. There were also many Confraternities and Brotherhoods in the hospitals which provided real spiritual support as well as care and finance.

### 3.1. *Contribution to evangelisation*

Here is a brief account of some of contributions to the evangelisation of the continent:

- The arrival of the Spanish in America also meant the entry of the Christian faith: priests and religious accompanied the colonisers to provide spiritual assistance to the troops and spread the Gospel.
- Evangelisation, through service to the sick and needy, was and continues to be the great contribution of the Order to the Americas. Corporal and spiritual assistance, as they called it then, and what we would call comprehensive care today, was of high quality and was recognised as such. There were excellent and outstanding physicians, surgeons, nurses and priests.
- Even though evangelisation by preaching is not the purpose of our Order's mission, in America the Brothers carried out a great deal of pastoral work in the chapels and churches in their Centres, in parishes and also through catechesis and formation, in a continent that was in such great need of it.
- The loving and self-sacrificing work of the Hospitallers with the sick, and the devotion with which many of them set about begging for alms were opportunities for evangelisation through a few simple words, backstopped by their outstanding lives. We would like to mention in particular the work of the Venerable Francis Camacho in Lima.
- One outstanding fact is the real incorporation of our Brothers into America. They lived with the people in the New Continent, working tirelessly to help the most deprived. At a time in which the first stirrings of independence were being felt, some of the Brothers, recognised by the people, took the side of those seeking independence, engaging in their struggle and supporting and serving them. This witness was almost always given in terms of hospitality. For some Brothers, this involved exile and imprisonment. We might say that these were real pioneers, together with the other Brothers, priests and laity who were the precursors of today's witnesses of Liberation Theology. We have examples of this in the lives of Brother Agustín de la Torre, Brother José Rosauero Acuña and Brother Pedro Domínguez in Peru, Brother Santiago Monteagudo in Chile and Brother José Olallo Valdés in Cuba.

### 4. *The presence of the Brothers in Asia, Africa and Oceania*

The early days of the Order in Asia, Africa and Oceania were linked to the expansion of the Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms in the 16th centuries and thereafter.

The colonisation of the new lands and/or the defence of others made it necessary to continually send convoys of the Spanish Armada whose ships soon began to take Hospitallers on board to serve the war-wounded and the people in the places where they put into port. Very soon the Brothers reached new continents. However, the permanent settlement of the Brothers took several years to become a reality when they took over hospitals founded by the Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, sometimes at the request of the Order itself and other times at the request of the local authorities.

Working with religious from other Institutes, our Order exercised charity and practised hospitality according to the charism of St John of God.

When the 19th century dawned and the Brothers disappeared from so many places for the same reasons as they had in Europe and America, the features of and contributions to evangelisation were very similar to what has been said about America.

#### a) *Asia*

Even though there were no permanent foundations on the Asian continent until several years later, with their constant to-ing and for-ing with the Spanish and Portuguese armadas, the Brothers set up posts along the Chinese coast to look after people suffering from epidemics and contagious diseases, but also the large number of seafarers wounded on the ships in battle.

The first hospital which the Brothers set up in Asia was at Cavite (Philippines) in 1620. The Brothers from Spain reached the Philippines the first time in 1617 with permission to found hospitals issued by King Philip III. Subsequently (1621), Brother Juan de Gamboa and other Brothers came from Mexico to found the hospital at Bagumbaya (Manila). New foundations were then opened. The political and social upheavals in Spain in the 19th century also left their mark on the Order in the Philippines, and at the end of the 19th century the Order disappeared, leaving this archipelago without any Hospitallers until the Italian Brothers arrived in 1988.

The Portuguese Brothers founded various hospitals along the Indian coasts: Goa in 1685, Baçaim in 1686, Diu in 1687 and Damão in 1693. These hospitals followed the same fate as the Portuguese Province in terms of their development and eventual disappearance.

#### b) *Africa*

Between 1573 and 1834 more than 100 Brothers accompanied the campaigns of the Spanish soldiers in the conquest and defence of the African territories belonging to the Spanish crown. As physicians, surgeons and nurses, missionaries and catechists, they earned the highest praise from the authorities and even from King Philip III (who wrote a letter to Brother Egipciano) in this regard. We would like to emphasise here Brother Pedro Soriano with the conquest of Tunis and Biserta, under the leadership of Don John of Austria in 1573, and the 20 Hospitallers who went to Ceuta in 1843 to fight against the 'evil contagion'. Thirteen of them lost their lives.

The first stable foundation in Africa was set up by the Brothers of Portugal in Mozambique in 1681. The May 1834 Decree abolished the Order in those countries.

#### c) *Oceania*

In May 1606 the first expedition that had set sail from Callao (Peru) six months earlier, reached the Australian coast. For Hospitaller Brothers travelled with the expedition to look after the sick and wounded crewmen, with a permit to found and administer hospitals. However we have no information as to whether they stayed there or founded hospitals, probably because the Spanish failed to settle in Australia.

## 5. *The values of Hospitality and the factors which influenced the spread of the Order*

There were three main reasons for the expansion and splendour of the Order in this age:

- The joyful and enthusiastic way in which the Brothers practised the charism and lived according to the spirit of the Founder, and their readiness and unconditional self-giving in attending to the sick and poor in greatest need, both in their hospitals and elsewhere. The Brothers were real witnesses to hospitality in looking after the victims of plague, contagious diseases and epidemics which were very frequent at the time, both in their own hospitals and looking after and skilfully nursing the sick wherever disasters struck. Furthermore, our Brothers worked diligently in many battlefields and in wars, both on land and at sea.
- Careful concern to provide high quality treatment for the poor and sick, and to welcome in and cater for all those who knocked at the doors of their hospitals. Here we would emphasise their concern for both the spiritual formation and professional training of the Brothers, who included distinguished physicians, surgeons and nurses who not only treated their patients with superb care and charity, but also provided a high level of treatment which was very difficult to find in those days.
- All of this enabled the Order to win the sympathy of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, including the kings, within a very short time. This meant that the Order was given favours in the form of permits and warrants to set up new foundations in Spain, America and also the Philippines, and to implant the Order in Central Europe.

## 6. *Faithful to Hospitality to the point of martyrdom*

With so many years' history behind it, and with such widespread expansion to every continent in the world, it is easy to imagine that must be a long list of witnesses to the merciful Christ, and of real martyrs of hospitality. The concern to spread the Gospel through the practice of charity and service to the sick and needy led many Brothers to endure persecution and to offer their lives, to the point of shedding their blood. This is a constant feature in the history of the Order that we would like to briefly mention:

- **Brazil 1636:** At the port of San Salvador at the hand of Dutch pirates, Brother Jesús Arana y Acosta, Portuguese and the Spanish Brothers Francisco Esforcia and Sebastián suffered martyrdom.
- **Colombia 1637:** Brothers Diego de San Juan, from Spain, and Antonio de Almazán, from Colombia, were killed by the Choco Indians. In 1646, Brother Miguel Romero and a Franciscan were martyred by the Choco Indians.
- **Chile 1656:** The Aucas Indians martyred Brother Gregory Mejía at Valdivia. In 1795, Brother Bernardo Lugones met his death at the hands of the Araucanos Indians.
- **Poland 1656:** At Lublin Hospital Brother Eustace Biescekierski was persecuted as a martyr and left for dead, but survived. In Warsaw Brother Nicolas Orkieska, and Brother Melchiorre Moretti were murdered. Other Brothers, such as Hipolito Ciarnowski, were ill-treated and wounded even though they survived. At Lowiez, Brothers Norbert Gotkoswicz and Hilario met their deaths. The main reason for these deaths was the invasion of Poland by neighbouring countries who persecuted the followers of Christ.
- **Philippines 1725:** Brother Lorenzo Gómez was murdered by a group of local people instigated by the arrival of bonzos from China. At San Juan de Buenavista Brother Antonio de Santiago was killed by the local people in 1715 after living an outstanding life for his missionary spirit and his zeal to spread the

message of Christ. In 1731, at the same place, Brother Antonio Guemez received the crown of martyrdom.

- **France:** When the Revolution broke out and the Order was suppressed the Brothers were persecuted and imprisoned and some of them were martyred: Brother Vomerange in Bordeaux, Brother Felicien Citet in Paris, Brothers Marcet Clément and Modeste Bernard were martyred under the pontoons of Rochefort; he was later banished to Guayana and died in poverty.

- **Spain:** During the War of Independence (1808 onwards) after the invasion of Napoleon's troops, many Brothers were persecuted and violently expelled from the hospitals. Some of them were put to death for having served with the Spanish troops as nurses, physicians or surgeons: Brothers Pedro Pérez and Antonio Pérez, Manuel Groisar and Nicolás de Ayala.

In every instance, the cause of their martyrdom was their hospitaller service and the preaching of the Gospel message.



**THE APOSTOLIC-MISSIONARY RESPONSE OF THE ORDER  
SINCE THE MID-19th CENTURY**

After the Renaissance, the civil authorities began to contemplate the idea of caring for the sick and the poor based on the need to practise justice. After a long process that culminated in the 18th century, the hospitals were gradually secularised and became the responsibility of the civil authorities.

The latter half of the 18th century marked a new stage in Europe's life characterised by rationalism and combating the established order, particular royalty and the Church.

1. *The extinction of the Spanish Congregation*

a) *The decline and restoration of the Order in Spain*

In September 1807 the French troops invaded Spanish soil. This was followed by the period known as the *Constitutional Triennium* (1820-1823). One of the first measures taken by the Liberals (September 1820) was to enact a bill suppressing the convents of monastic Orders and reforming the mendicant Orders. This law made it possible to secularise the religious, prohibit the admission of novices and the profession of any new candidates, to suppress most of the convents and order the closure of any Community with fewer than 24 professed members. This latter measure meant that virtually all the hospital convents in Spain belonging to the Hospitaller Order were suppressed.

On 9 March 1836, the Royal Decree was issued suppressing all religious and monastic Orders. This left only two hospitals in the whole of Spain: Seville and Madrid. In Madrid, at the Antón Martín Hospital there was a Community of 14 Brothers under their Prior, Brother Antonio Albors.

In May 1830 the Spanish Congregation held what was to be its last General Chapter at which it elected its last General, Brother José Bueno y Villagrán. Seeing that all was lost and there was no other possible solution, he took all the necessary steps to save what was most valuable in the ruins of the hospital before the whole building collapsed. He sent part of the documentation of the General Archive to the Seville Hospital (the only one that survived when Blessed Benedict Menni arrived). He also wrote to the General of the Italian Congregation, Brother Benito Vernó, recommending the causes of beatification of the Venerable Francisco Camacho and St John Grande 'to ensure that they do not go astray' and concluded his letter in the following terms: "*You, as the only Superior left in the Order today, are responsible for taking care of everything which formerly belonged to the Congregation in the Order; you will therefore take whatever measures you consider prudent to preserve it ...*". He died in Madrid on 11 March 1850, and with his death the Spanish Congregation of the Hospitaller Order of the Brothers of St John of God became extinct.

In addition to the external causes which led to the formal extinction of the Spanish Congregation (the French invasion and subsequent war, the three-year Liberal government, government policy to exclastrate and secularise the religious Orders), there were also internal causes within the Congregation

itself. Many of them were the consequence of the other but we can also see that the Spanish Congregation was not capable of coping with the new political, social and economic circumstances.

#### *b) The restoration of the Order in Spain*

Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri did everything possible to have the Order restored in Spain. He tried to do this with the few Brothers that had remained there after the death of Brother José Bueno, but this proved impossible. He therefore went to Spain himself, and obtained from Queen Isabel II the licence to set up Hospitaller Communities.

- After various fruitless he sent Blessed Benedict Menni to do this difficult task for him. Brother Benedict had been recently ordained priest, and reached Barcelona in Holy Week 1867 where he founded the Asilo San Juan de Dios for crippled children in December that year. This was the beginning of the restoration of the Order in Spain, which had to come to terms with difficulties of all kinds, but which it overcame through its love of God, the poor sick, and the Order.
- On 21 June 1884 the Province of St John of God was canonically erected with 120 Brothers and five Houses. The hospitals founded by Blessed Benedict Menni were mostly used for the mentally sick and for children suffering from paralysis and scrofula, who were the most neglected.
- The key points that we note in the restoration work of Blessed Benedict Menni were the deep spiritual life, the readiness to meet any urgent need (plague, war) but above all the fervour of the charity of the Brothers, whose testimony attracted many vocations.

#### *c) The extinction and restoration of the Order in Portugal*

Portugal did not escape the social, political and cultural upheavals in Europe in the 18th century onwards. In May 1834, Minister Aguiar decreed the exclaustation of all religious, and every religious Order and Congregation was suppressed in Portugal and all her colonies, which meant that our own Order became completely extinct in Portugal.

The restoration there was also the work of Blessed Benedict Menni who, once again at the request of Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri, sent a number of Brothers, after consolidating the Order in Spain, to restore John of God's birthplace. In August 1893 the Community of the Saúde de Telhal House for the mentally ill was established.

The first few years were far from easy, both because of financial difficulties and socio-political problems. Being Brothers, they were outlaws and were given no protection by the civil authorities, causing considerable difficulties before problems could be solved.

## *2. The decline and restoration of the Italian Congregation*

The social, political and cultural difficulties in Europe also had repercussions on the Italian Congregation. The French Revolution repressed the Order in France, Josephinism led to the separation of the jurisdiction of the General Curia in Rome from the Provinces of Austria, Poland, Lombardy, Naples, Sicily and Tuscany.

a) *Italy*

In 1810, all religious Orders were suppressed in Italy by decree. Despite the difficulties, the Brothers managed to remain in their hospitals until the persecution against the Church stopped in 1814, and the Order was able to regroup.

After Italian Unification (7 July 1866) the religious Congregations were closed down and all their property was confiscated by the government. The Brothers were able to remain in their hospitals as 'Lay Hospitaller Associations' or as nurses or managers. At that time the Order had 50 hospitals and 352 Brothers.

Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri, elected Superior General in 1862, was certainly the great architect of the restoration in Italy. He did absolutely everything possible to keep the Brothers in the Centres that had formerly belonged to the Order, and little by little he skilfully paved the way for the return of the hospitals. He also endeavoured to keep the religious and moral spirit of the Brothers high. His successor, Brother Casiano Maria Gasser, consolidated the restoration in religious, spiritual and apostolic terms.

b) *The decline and restoration in France*

After the French Revolution, the Directory Decree (15 February 1790) was published suppressing all religious Institutes in France. Under the Law enacted on 18-10-1792, the property of the hospitals was sold and the Order disappeared.

The restoration was hard, and demanded great effort. It was begun by Paul de Magallón, a prophetic figure filled with the Spirit of God who radiated hospitality and love for the Church and the Order, with a group of his companions. They wished to place themselves under the tutelage of the Prior General, and in 1823 they travelled to Rome where they made their novitiate and their religious profession. They returned to France and in 1825 founded the psychiatric hospital in Lyon.

There was no shortage of difficulties, compounded by a new decree of suppression issued in 1880. But the Order continued to grow in France thanks to the steadfast persistence and the Spirit of St John of God that drove the Brothers on. They also set up foundations in Ireland (Tipperary 1877), England (Scorton 1880) and Belgium (Leuze 1906).

c) *The Germanic Province of St Rafael the Archangel*

Under Emperor Joseph II (1765-1790) laws were enacted separating the Hospitallers from the jurisdiction of Rome, while other legislation interfered with the work of the Province. The houses outside Austrian territory were separated it. In 1781, the Brothers in these Houses set up another Province called *Provincia per Imperium*, dedicated to Charles Borromeo, based in Munich.

No less harassing were the laws issued by Napoleon, which led to the total disappearance of the Order except for the Hospitals of Breslau and Neustadt.

After 1831, under Louis I of Bavaria, calm began to return and union with Rome was once again established and new Provinces erected: Bavaria 1851, Silesia 1853 and Hungary 1856.

#### d) *Poland*

The disappearance of the *Province of the Annunciation* began with the breakup of the Kingdom of Poland in 1772-93-95, when it was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria. The process was completed under the Napoleonic occupation in 1806, leaving only the Krakow Hospital, which came under the jurisdiction of Vienna.

Becoming became part of Poland after the second world war, we would recall the development of the Order in *Silesia*. In 1710 the hospital was founded at Breslau together with the hospital of Neustadt, founded in 1764, as the only survivors of the tragic political and military events of the time. After a few other foundations had been set up, the Houses in Silesia were erected as a regular Province on 14 January 1883.

The *Polish Province* was not restored until 1922.

### 3. *The decline and disappearance of the Order in the overseas Provinces*

#### a) *The decline and disappearance of the Order in America*

The 19th century was characterised by the desire for political emancipation in Latin America, which also affected the Brothers. The measures taken against religious in Europe, exclaustating them and seizing Church property, also had repercussions in the colonies. The ideas of the Encyclopaedists, the independence movements and the distance from the homelands gradually built up a favourable climate. Some of the Brothers who were caught up in the prevailing environment also advocated the separation of the American convent hospitals from the Spanish Congregation. To bring this about they applied to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and to obtain the support of their Ordinaries all they had to do was to waive the privileges of exemption that they possessed and once again submit to the jurisdiction of the bishops. With the help of the civilian authorities they managed to persuade the King to ask Pius VII for the Brief relieving them of obedience to the Spanish General, so that they could then submit to the authorities appointed by the King to run the hospitals. In 1801 they also requested the suppression of the Commissaries, and the Province of the Holy Spirit of New Spain was the most fervent advocate of the Brief, led by Brother Juan Nepomuceno Abreu.

The Provinces of the Holy Spirit and St Bernard convened a Chapter as soon as they received the Brief, presided at by the Delegates of the Ordinaries, at which the Provincials, Councillors, Priors and the other officials were elected. The Province of San Rafael remained obedient to the General until 1816, and that same year it also convened its Chapter. In Mexico, Brother Juan Nepomuceno Abreu was appointed Provincial and that extinguished the Province of the Holy Spirit of New Spain. The only surviving Brothers were in Cuba because they had made contact with the General in 1824. It was as if divine Providence had wished to award this faithfulness to the spirit of universality of our Order to the Servant

of God, Brother José Olallo Valdés, a Cuban Brother, who, until his death (1889) remained faithful to his vows in the Hospital at Puerto Príncipe (Cuba) as the last Hospitaller of the Spanish Congregation in the Americas.

Even though it was mainly the Spanish Hospitallers who provided care in America, mention should also be made of the Portuguese and French Brothers in those lands.

The Portuguese Brothers had been in Brazil, accompanying the expeditions of the Spanish and Portuguese armadas and after 1724 they founded various Centres beginning with the hospital at Pernambuco. But they also disappeared in the middle of the 19th century.

The French Brothers founded hospitals in the French colonies and more specifically in the West Indies (Guadalupe 1685) and in Canada (1716). They only stayed a short time in Canada, and elsewhere the work died out in the wake of the French Revolution.

#### b) *Restoration of the Order in America*

The restoration of the Order in Latin America was the work of Blessed Benedict Menni. The Hospitallers were only absent from the Latin American continent for a short time. For in 1892 Brother Casiano Maria Gasser, General of the Order, and the Blessed Benedict Menni, Provincial of Spain, travelled to Argentina to see whether a foundation could be set up there. Their efforts were unsuccessful and it was not until 1901 that the Order was able to be re-established in America with the foundation of the Hospital of San Martín, in Guadalajara de Jalisco (Mexico).

In this way, the tree of Hospitality sprang from the deep roots which the merciful love of so many Brothers had put down in the continent that today we call the Continent of Hope. We will come back to the present-day life of the Order in America in a later chapter.



**PART III**  
**COMMITTED TO HOSPITALITY**



## THE ORDER'S LITERATURE ON EVANGELISATION

Throughout the 450 and more years of the Order's life, a great deal of literature on its missionary work has been published, even though it is an Institution dedicated more to the practice of charity, and hence to action, than to writing. Yet the list of writings is extremely long, and some of the most important titles are given in the enclosed bibliography.

### 1. *The historical background and development of the Order's Constitutions*

Throughout history, different texts have picked up the spirit and evangelising mission of the Order based on the charism of Hospitality. We can distinguish between two main periods in terms of our Constitutions: *from the origins to the Generalate of Brother Alfieri, and from Brother Alfieri onwards.*

#### a) *From the origins to the Generalate of Brother Alfieri*

It should be noted first of all that for 35 years (1550-1585) the Brothers had lived without any written rules recognised by the Church.

During the next 31 years (1585-1616) the following Constitutions were promulgated:

- An attempt to formulate the Constitutions in 1583, promoted by Brother Baltasar de Herrera. It was an unauthorised attempt because St Pius V had placed the Brothers under the obedience of the Ordinaries, which meant that it was not possible to draft Constitutions applicable to all the hospitals that then existed.
- *The Constitutions for the Hospital of Granada*, issued by the Archbishop of Granada, Juan Méndez de Salvatierra in 1585. Although expressly designed for the Granada Hospital they were taken up and implemented by the Brothers in all the other hospitals.
- *The Constitutions for the whole Order*, that emerged from the first General Chapter in 1587, were approved after the Order had received the approbation of Sixtus V with the Brief *Etsi pro debito* (1-10-1586).
- *The Constitutions of the second General Chapter* (1589). The Spanish Brothers did not attend this Chapter. Even though the preamble states that they were Italian translation of the 1587 Constitutions, a number of significant changes were introduced.
- *The first Constitutions of the Italian Congregation* (1596), after the partial reincorporation of the Order in Italy.
- *The Constitutions for the Spanish Congregation* (1611), after the total reincorporation of the Order in Spain. This is when the separation of the two Congregations was juridically approved until 1867 when the Order was restored in Spain by Blessed Benedict Menni. With new additions and variations introduced in 1640 and 1741, these Congregations remained definitive until the extinction of the Order in Spain.
- *The New Constitutions of the Italian Congregation* (1616). These were the definitive Constitutions until the reunification of the Order even though a number of corrections in the translation from the Latin were made in 1718.

b) *From the Generalate of Brother Alfieri onwards*

- *The Constitutions for the whole Order, 1885.* This was an adaptation of the previous ones.
- *New Constitutions, 1926.* These were very different, structured and normative, as a result of their adjustment to the new 1917 Code of Canon Law. They were reprinted in 1950.
- *The 1971 Constituciones ad experimentum* after Vatican II, as an attempt to take up the new thinking on Consecrated Life that came out of the Council. For the first time, the normative aspects were collected and published separately from the General Statutes.
- *The 1984 Constitutions.* These took up the new theology of the Consecrated Life, and recovered the original sense of hospitality, with a great deal of doctrinal and pastoral enrichment. Most of the norms were published in the General Statutes.

## **2. Principles governing evangelisation**

The Constitutions, using different styles according to the age, take up the main principles which always run through the evangelising mission of our Order. Here are the most important ones:

a) *Hospitality: the Order's apostolic mission*

Hospitality is the central hub around which the Order's life revolves; it is the charism which St John of God received and in whose founding experience we have participated ever since as the Hospitaller Family; it is also the essential core of our spirituality, as the Constitutions and the writings of both the Church and the Order clearly state; lastly, it is the central core of our apostolic mission:

*"Caring for and giving to the poor, which is the purpose of your Institute and what you most earnestly seek, is so important to your consciences and to the enhancement of this hospital and Holy House" (Const. 1585, Intr.).*

*"Encouraged by the gift we have received, we consecrate ourselves to God and dedicate ourselves to serving the Church in the assistance of the sick and those in need, with a preference for the poorest. ."* (Const. 1985, 5a).

b) *Consecrated in Hospitality,  
we exercise the ministry of mercy in the Church*

While it is certain that the first followers of St John of God lived united by the spirit of their Founder, without needing any canonical norms for the performance of their mission, they were soon recognised by the Church to practise the hospitaller mission, consecrated in hospitality:

*"In virtue of this gift, we are consecrated by the action of the Holy Spirit, which makes us participate in a special way in the Father's merciful love. ...God's love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit inspires us to consecrate our whole person to the Father." (Const. 1984, 2b; 10a).*

There is virtually no limit to the number of quotations we could mention in this connection if we were to take account of all the different aspects that every edition of the Constitutions has taken up. Yet they all contain the same basic substance.

c) *The healing mission of the Church through the apostolate of the Order*

Following Jesus Christ, who passed through the world doing good to all and curing all manner of sickness and suffering (Acts 10:38; Cf. Const. 1984, 2a), the Order, following its founder, has placed suffering and needy man as the very centre-piece of its mission. It directs all its concern to man, extending the healing action of Our Lord through time.

Through their words and deeds and the self-giving of their own lives, the Brothers of St John of God try to cater comprehensively for the needs of the needy. Spiritual care has always been very carefully provided, together with physical, psychiatric and social care, because we know that the faith, if lived maturely, is a source of life and health even in the midst of sickness:

*"As Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God, we are called to carry out, within the Church, the mission of announcing the Gospel to the sick and the poor, caring for their sufferings and helping them in every way." (Const. 1984, 45a).*

d) *A welcome for all*

Inspired by Jesus Christ and following St John of God, the Brothers have never practised any form of discrimination in the exercise of our apostolic mission. This is demanded by our Constitutions, and our practice throughout our history confirms it:

*"In this hospital of John of God all illnesses are treated, both of the men and the women who come to it" (Const. 1585, 10.1).*

*"We see every person as a brother or sister; we welcome and serve anyone in need, without any type of discrimination." (Const. 1984, 45b).*

e) *The prophetic dimension of the hospitaller mission*

The healing work of the Church includes promoting, caring for and defending life. The Order has always been pro-life and has proclaimed its steadfast decision to defend it and fight for it, very often with the humble and exemplary witness of daily service to the sick, but at other times through denunciation and even with the testimony of martyrdom of many Brothers. All of this, in different circumstances, just as John of God did, constitutes the prophetic path that has been followed by the Order and has been taken up by the Constitutions, sometimes reading between the lines:

*"Our Brothers must remember that by providing corporal assistance to the sick they are obliged to do everything that the health of the sick demands ... even at the risk of their lives" (Const. 1926, 225).*

*"The hospitality we have professed means that we must defend and keep watch over the rights of the individual to be born, to live in a decent manner, to be helped in sickness, and to die with dignity."* (Const. 1984, 23a).

f) *Technical/professional care and humanisation*

Medicine has certainly made more progress in recent years than ever before, reaching previously undreamed-of heights in only a matter of decades. Since its Founder's day, the Order of St John of God has been a pioneer not only in charitable and hospitaller self-giving, but also by the high technical and professional standards of its hospitals. Providing training in medicine, surgery, nursing, pharmacy and other specialisms has been a constant concern of the Order, and many of the Order's hospitals have founded their own schools of Medicine, Surgery and Nursing, at which many of our Brothers have been trained: Madrid, Paris, La Rochelle, Rome, Venice, Naples, Milan, Vienna, Feldsberg, Straubing, Prague, etc. Others have been trained at the best universities. In these fields there have been outstanding Brothers not only in the Order's hospitals but also practising in many different countries and State hospitals, such as the Brothers Chaparro, Ferrara, Bueno, etc.

Other aspects where Brothers have shown great insight and creativity, working as pioneers, include the organisation of hospitals and care centres. At the present time the Order has different types of Centres, including some large and highly technologically-endowed hospitals where the very latest developments in medicine are applied.

Throughout its history, in addition to its concern to provide a high level of professional and technical care, the Order has endeavoured to maintain a style brimming with charity and kindness, care with a human face, assisting the poor and sick. Love and science, humanisation and technology: these are the twin ideas that the Order has always tried to maintain, faithful to the style and manner of St John of God, and making a reality the mission of the Church in the practise of charity and caring for the sick:

*"Charity must, nevertheless not be separated from progress, but must be in the forefront; in other words charity must be old in love and modern in the means it uses. Old charity, modern means."*<sup>12</sup>

*"The nurses must sleep in the rooms of the sick so that they can quickly attend to their needs"* (Const. 1585, 9,8).

*"The physician and the surgeon must be sufficiently skilled in science, and have sufficient charity that is required to treat so many sicknesses of so many sick people that are looked after in that hospital"* (Const. 1585, 11,1).

*"In our hospitaller mission we realize and develop the best of our being, and we feel the need to live our identity in a consistent manner. This presupposes... human, theological and professional training, which is an indispensable prerequisite for us to be able to offer the sick and any person in need the*

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<sup>12</sup> Pius XI, Message at the Extraordinary Audience given to the Capitular Brothers at which, among other matters, the transformation of the Hospital of St John Calibita was discussed. Rome, 24 May 1930.

*efficient service they deserve and have a right to expect from us... we are called to carry out our mission with humanising attitudes and means."* (Const. 1984, 43 and 44a).

g) *Cooperation with the Church and other Institutions*

The Order has always been ready to cooperate with other Institutions in the performance of its evangelising mission. This is a constant feature that is still keep up today, demonstrating the spirit of solidarity and service of the Order:

*"The second purpose of the Order is to attend to the corporal and spiritual care and assistance of the sick ... in the Order's own Houses or in others entrusted to it"* (Const. 1926, I.3).

*"The attitudes of service and openness which are features of our mission lead us to collaborate with other organizations in the Church or society in the field of our specific apostolate."* (Const. 1984, 45e; Cf. 47).

h) *The mission 'ad gentes'*

The Order's origins were almost contemporary with the 'discovery' of the American continent, and very soon it undertook the evangelising mission in the exercise of hospitality.

That beginning marked the missionary vocation of the Order which, has enabled it to be present in all five continents throughout its history, as far as it has been able to, taking the message of the merciful love of the Father to the poor, the sick and the needy:

*"We are conscious of our duty to spread the Good News, and hence we keep the missionary spirit constantly alive. We carry out the hospitaller apostolate by constantly increasing the effectiveness of our presence in mission areas particularly in less favoured countries..."* (Const. 1984, 48).

Following this direction, which is also the direction of the Church (Cf. Vatican II 'Ad gentes') the Order has made an enormous effort to be present in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

i) *The apostolate of alms-giving*

Alms-giving has been an apostolic practice throughout the history of the Order: *"Brothers, do good to yourselves"*. This is what St John of God cried out, as he begged for alms for his hospital. Until only a few years ago, and even today in some places, the hospitals still depend on the alms given them by the benefactors of the Order in order to keep going. At the present time, alms-giving is still part of the Order's evangelising mission, even though it uses more contemporary means and in most cases the alms are used to support the social work of the Order. As St John of God understood it, alms-giving is a real apostolate performed by people who cooperate in the charitable work of the Order by offering it their goods:

*"In faithfulness to our spirit, we encourage the practice of almsgiving as a form of apostolate. We view it not only as a work of mercy can provide us with the means necessary for helping those in need, but also as an act which benefits the person who performs it; it is also seen as a proclamation of justice*

*and charity, which helps to break down the barriers which exist between different social classes..."* (Const.1984, 49b).

#### *j) United with the Co-workers*

The presence of Co-workers in our mission has been a permanent feature of the Order ever since the beginning. Until a few years ago, the Brothers did most of the hospital work. But it has always had its Co-workers, just as our Founder did: physicians, surgeons, priests, auxiliaries, benefactors and many Confraternities and Brotherhoods in the Centres.

Today, in view of the modernisation of medicine and health care, we have incorporated many professionals into our Centres to share the mission with. The Order therefore has many people offering their time and their being at the service of the sick and needy as volunteers.

*"we are aware of our limitations and thus seek and accept the assistance of other people, whether trained or untrained, voluntary or paid, and strive to communicate to them our spirit in the performance of our mission."* (Const.1984, 46c; Cf. 51a).

#### *k) The ministerial priesthood as hospitality*

John of God called everyone his brother, and considered that he was the youngest and the least brother of all. His followers set up a Brotherhood devoted to serving the poor and sick, and when the Order was approved by the Church it was approved as an Order of Brothers, as John Paul II expressly stated in his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (Cf. VC 60). However, from the time of its approbation, the Order has always ordained some of the Brothers as priests to care for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the hospitals and Communities of St John of God:

*"Each one of the hospitals now existing or yet to be founded in future, may have a Brother priest whose function will be to say Mass, celebrate the other Divine Offices, and administer the sacraments both to the Brothers and to Christ's poor ..."* (The Bull *Licet ex debito*, St Pius V, 1572).

*"Our Order is a lay institute; however, right from the time it received approval permission was given for some Brothers to be ordained to the priesthood so as to provide for the exercise of the sacred ministry among the sick and in our communities and hospitaller works."* (Const.1984, 1c).

### **3. *The missionary dimension of the Order in the writings of our Brothers***

The missionary dimension is an essential value in the life of Hospitallers. Our history and tradition are full of evidence to this effect. Here are some of the most important writings which bring out the concern, animation and dedication to encouraging the Order's missionary activity. For the sake of brevity, we will only examine the writings of our Brothers since the time of Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri.

#### *a) Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri*

Appointed General on 19 May 1862, he demonstrated this sense of responsibility until his death in 1888. An outstanding figure in the life of the Order, his deep-seated Hospitaller vocation, and his love for the poor and the sick, the Church and his Order, coupled with his intellectual gifts and enterprising spirit, made him the right person needed in those difficult years in the latter half of the 19th century.

He encouraged the restoration of the Order in Spain, Portugal and America; he encouraged and animated all the Brothers in Italy to remain faithful and steadfast in their mission of charity to the sick, particularly when the religious orders in his country were being suppressed (7-07-1866). He did the same to Hospitallers in other Provinces.

He wrote many letters (including 26 Circular) to galvanise the spirit of charity and inculcate the perfect observance and the sound formation of young Brothers. Here are a few samples of his writings:

*"I urge and order all, wherever your hospitals may be, to provide the people with all the help that is possible, also to prevent disasters, and through your Superiors offer the ecclesiastical and civil authorities your labours and also your premises, while always maintaining the management and keeping the care in your own hands".<sup>13</sup>*

*"We are sending this dearly beloved Brother in Christ (Benedict Menni) to France and to Spain, where he will stay so long as we require in order to promote the spread and the good of our Order, according to our Constitutions and our instructions and those of the Holy See. We strongly recommend all the Venerable Bishops and Ecclesiastical Superiors and Regular Superiors in the name of Our Lord to give him all the protection he needs"<sup>14</sup>*

#### b) *Blessed Benedict Menni*

He was born in Milan in 1841, restored the Order in Spain, Portugal and Latin America, founded the Congregation of the Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was elected General of the Hospitaller Order, and died at Dinán in 1914.

We might say that his hospitaller work was missionary above all else. At the age of 26 he left Italy to perform his mission that was to mark out the rest of life: to restore the Order in Spain, Portugal and America. This is the way he expressed his readiness to serve:

*"I wrote to the Most Reverend Brother Alfieri, the Superior General of our Order at the time, telling him that I felt animated by the desire to work for our Hospitaller Institute, and requesting him to give me his most reverend paternal permission to send me wherever he so wished in order to practise sacred hospitality"<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Brother Giovanni Maria Alfieri, Letter to the whole Order, 20-08-1865. At that time, a cholera epidemic was sweeping through in Europe, and Brother Alfieri encouraged the Brothers to give themselves generously to assist the victims.

<sup>14</sup> *idem.*, 15-01-1867.

<sup>15</sup> CRUSET J., *Crónica Hospitalaria. Ed. Hospitalaria, Barcelona 1971, pp. 87-88.* - unofficial translation.

Blessed Benedict Menni wrote an enormous number of letters: 463 to the Brothers, 870 to the Hospitaller Sisters, and many others, particularly in the first few years in Spain. Here are just a few fragments which bear witness to his missionary vocation and devotion.

*"In a few days I shall be taking the first team of our Brothers who are being sent to America ... it is an arduous and difficult enterprise, which outstrips our strength, but trusting in the help of God we hope to carry it through successfully".*<sup>16</sup>

He also tried to extend the Order to Río Muni in the Philippines:

*"Thank you for your letter of 30th and the map of Río Muni in which I can see your country has been acquired for Spain. Perhaps it might be useful to send a few Brothers there. But the Government must consider the members of our Order as missionaries, in other words declare them to be exempt from military service. I therefore trust that you will be able to use your influence to obtain this"*<sup>17</sup>

*"As our Lord has willed, the Brothers of our Hospitaller Order will in fact be coming to the Philippines, but they will not take charge of the hospitals, but will set up a home for the demented in that archipelago ..."*<sup>18</sup>

Following the tradition of his Order, he showed his hospitaller and missionary spirit through his permanent readiness to look after the sick and needy wherever they were, particularly at the time of epidemics and disasters:

*"Your Excellency, the very grave news that the papers are publishing regarding the health status of the San Baudilio de Llobregat Mental Asylum have moved me to offer you, on behalf of the Guild of Hospitaller Brothers of St John of God and the Hospitaller Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus all the personnel you require to care for your raving lunatics in the San Baudilio Asylum"*<sup>19</sup>

In his many writings we find recommendations and guidance for the Brothers regarding the service and the hospitality they are required to provide to the sick and poor:

*"Therefore, by virtue of our vow of Hospitality, each of the professed members of our Order is obliged to provide those corporal and spiritual services needed by all the sick, whether poor or rich, which obedience requires, in accordance with the purposes of our Institute, and according to their skills and faculties"*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> LIZASO, F., *Perfil Juandediano del Beato Benito Menni*. Granada 1985, Carta 33, 25-11-1990 - unofficial translation.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem., op.cit., Carta 79, 1-02-1888 - unofficial translation.*

<sup>18</sup> *Idem., op.cit., Carta 76, 24-10-1887 - unofficial translation.*

<sup>19</sup> *Idem., op.cit., Carta 83, 15-10-1885 - unofficial translation.*

<sup>20</sup> *Idem., Carta 42, 8-03-1911 - unofficial translation.*

c) *St Richard Pampuri*

He was born on 2 August 1897 at Trivolzio (Pavia). After an exemplary childhood and youth, in June 1921 he graduated in medicine and surgery and in 1922 he began practising medicine at Morimondo until he entered the Order. He joined the Order as a postulant on 22 June 1927, taking temporary vows on 24 October 1928. He died in Milan on 1 May 1930.

He was outstanding for his goodness, simplicity, candour and deep spiritual life. From his writings (146 letters), and with regard to the missionary dimension of our Order, we would like to highlight his great religious and missionary sensitivity.

His sister, Sister Longina, played a great part in cultivating his zeal for the missions. She was a member of the Congregation of Franciscan Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and lived in Egypt for over 60 years. He wrote many letters to her (66) full of gentleness and spiritual depth. St Richard told her of his desire to love and serve God, and to find the best way of responding to his calling:

*"You will understand that in seeking the path Our Lord wishes me to serve him on, he has frequently placed before me this glorious path of the missionary. But too often my physical weakness, and more so my moral weakness, has put me off. Yet I would throw myself wholeheartedly into embracing that state of life if divine Providence were to show me that it was the best for me"*<sup>21</sup>

*"On the 3rd I had an opportunity to speak to the Provincial of the Order of St John of God, which I had been advised to enter several years ago, and he told me that they would be delighted to receive me (if I had the opportunity) despite my rather poor state of health, and the fact that I might have pleurisy. As you know, for some time now I have felt the need for a Rule to be able to persevere in a life that is worthy, without the danger of serious backsliding. This is why I accepted this very fraternal offering, and on the 6th I submitted my request for admission, trusting solely in the goodness and mercy of God"*<sup>22</sup>

St Richard performed his apostolic and missionary work by caring for the sick and needy. His diligence and professionalism were boundless, despite his poor health:

*"Pray also for my patients, so that with God's help I can provide them with real relief"*<sup>23</sup>

The Order accepted this holy doctor, called by God to live his life consecrated as a hospitaller. He only lived in the Order for three years, but they were years full of love, humility, self-denial and testimony to hospitality. He served the Order by training the young Brothers who were preparing to become nurses, and as a practising doctor in Brescia. Everyone loved him, the sick and the Brothers alike, for his exemplary life:

*"I pray so much for our beloved patients, so that they can find in our hospitals spiritual health and also abundant physical health, when this is for the greater glory of God and the salvation of their souls"*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> RUSSOTTO, G., *Riflessi di un'anima*, Rome 1955, *Carta* 28 14-08-1923 - unofficial translation).

<sup>22</sup> *Idem.*, *op.cit.* *Carta* 80, 8-07-1927 - unofficial translation.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem.*, *op.cit.*, *Carta* 21, 5-09-1923 - unofficial translation.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem.*, *op.cit.*, *Carta* 88, 23-08-1927 - unofficial translation.

d) *Brother Efrém Blandeau*

Appointed Superior General by decree of the Sacred Congregation of Religious on 15 January 1939, he governed and animated the Order until 26 April 1953. He was a simple man, endowed with great goodness and intelligence, and was loved by all.

He had to serve the Order in this office through the second world war, and was outstanding for his concern to be involved in all the events that occurred in the Provinces and Centres affected by the war. In two of his letters he notified the Order of the plight of the Centres and of the number of Brothers who had died, disappeared or been imprisoned.

In one of his letters to the whole Order he summed up our apostolate in these terms:

*"We are apostles through our own personal witness in performing our daily duties, however humble and modest they may be. By acting in this way we shall respond to the will of our Holy Father who, speaking to Catholic Action, has declared that Hospitallers are the pioneers of Catholic Action by virtue of their vocation to charity"*<sup>25</sup>

e) *Brother Mosé Bonardi*

He was elected Superior General of the Order on 26 April 1953, and governed until 1959. He had a great sensitivity and concern for the missionary Centres and for the formation of the Brothers destined for them. Here are a few paragraphs from his writings:

*"St John of God dreamed about the life of the missionary in the deserts of Africa. As his sons, in this Marian Year, as an act of homage to our most Blessed Lady, we intend to translate into action this desire of our Holy Founder and we will carry forth his work of evangelisation, devoted to charity, to people who are still far from the faith and from civilisation"*<sup>26</sup>

*"The missionary ideal is spreading, and it is catching on in the ranks of our own Order. We will willingly take up any initiatives which emerge from this missionary fervour and unifying them we will submit them to all the Provinces so that they can take part in them and contribute towards them. In this path of faith and generosity, every Province, even the smallest and the poorest in the terms of personnel and money, can find a place of honour and work in it".*

*"It is therefore indispensable for the Brothers who are being sent to the mission lands to be properly prepared in advance"*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> BLANDEAU, E., *Circular Letter*, 29-01-1941 - unofficial translation.

<sup>26</sup> BONARDI, M., *Circular Letter*, 15-08-1954 - unofficial translation.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem.*, *Id.*, 28-11-1955 - unofficial translation.

f) *Brother Higinio Aparicio*

He was appointed Superior General of the Order on 26 April 1959, until 1971. Following in the footsteps of Brother Mosé Bonardi, he encouraged the extension of the Order into the mission lands and showed particular interest in the formation, training and adequate incorporation of the Brothers into those lands and their cultures. Here are a few extracts from his circulars:

*"We must thank Our Lord for this present time and the expansion of the Order through the Spanish Provinces, both in the Peninsula and in America and Africa more recently"*<sup>28</sup>

*"I would like to take this opportunity to tell you that the Order already has a missionary hospital in India in the State of Kerala and the Diocese of Chanagacherry, of the Malabar rite. This new Foundation has been set up by the Rhineland Viceprovince"*<sup>29</sup>

*"The Brother who lives in a foreign land must consider that one of his primary duties is to endeavour to adapt to the cultural environment of the country in which he lives. Brothers must therefore try to adapt to the local customs, to the local food, the social customs and even their own particular forms of language. In the Formation Centres we must endeavour to get our young people to be willing to live the morrow in any place to which they are sent by virtue of obedience, creating a mentality of Christian universalism, so that they can love, respect and commit themselves to the country to which they are destined"*<sup>30</sup>

#### **4. Missionary action according to the thinking of our missionaries**

In this section we shall listen to ideas and hear the witness of a number of Brothers who are currently performing their apostolate in different parts of the world. Their words bring a touch of realism and real life to this paper.

a) *Brother Anthony Leahy. Papua-New Guinea*<sup>31</sup>

The call to work in the Order's Missionary Centres is a gift and a legacy which all of the Brothers have received from Jesus and from our Father, St John of God. Our mission is to take the Good News of Jesus, in the manner of St John of God to all those we meet every day.

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<sup>28</sup> APARICIO, H., *Circular Letter*, 12-02-1967 - unofficial translation.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem., id.*, 28-11-1969 - unofficial translation.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem., Circular Letter to the Spanish Provinces*, 2-02-1963 - unofficial translation.

<sup>31</sup> Brother Antonio Leahy comes from the Australian Province. (Brother Fortunatus is not only one of the initiators of the Order's work and presence in India, but also the Founder of the Sisters of Charity of St John of God). He has lived in Papua-New Guinea for many years and has been a Novice Master.

The Brothers have been in Papua-New Guinea since 1971. We wish to continue the work of St John of God by meeting the specific needs of the country, and particularly by devoting ourselves to looking after the physically and mentally disabled.

The little seed has now become a small but healthy forest. The fertiliser that has helped to stimulate this growth has been the acceptance of new indigenous candidates as postulants, and subsequently as Brothers. Today, the mission in Papua-New Guinea covers two areas:

1. Caring for the needy, particularly the sick and the poor
2. Helping to discern indigenous vocations.

The hope and the dream of the Order now is that the people of Papua-New Guinea can know the love of God by knowing John of God and his work, so that they can themselves become missionaries among the people with whom they live and work.

b) *Brother Fortunatus Thanhauser*<sup>32</sup>: *the Brothers of St John of God in India*

Several centuries after the Brothers had first set up a foundation in Goa, the mission returned again to India after Vatican II, following the visit of an Indian Bishop to Germany in 1964. The Bishop had been to the Tiber Island Hospital in Rome on several other occasions, and had been greatly impressed by the devotion of the Brothers to the poor sick. And this made him think: 'If only I could have these Brothers in my Diocese in India it would be wonderful!' Finally, the Brothers declared their readiness to leave for India.

Overcoming all manner of difficulties, three Brothers eventually obtained visas for India. The first Brothers from Germany were Brother Fortunatus and Brother Prakash. They reached Kattappana on 19 November 1969 and opened a small dispensary with the help of an Indian physician and a few Sisters. This dispensary, with 20 beds, grew over the next 25 years until it became a hospital with 275 beds and 18 physicians, including consultants.

In view of the needs and following the advice of the physicians, the Long-Time-Hospital was built with a capacity of 150 beds for chronically sick old people, and with a unit for disabled children.

There are virtually no conversions in the hospital, while there are frequent conversions in the House of the Poor (the Long-Time-Hospital), even though no-one is ever asked or forced to convert. The same applies to the children in the school, where 56 non-boarders are taught. In the Kattappana Hospital we have made various attempts to improve the organisation of the pastoral ministry of the sick, because at the moment most people see it mainly or even solely as meaning the last rites.

Since Kattappana is rather out of the way, it was difficult to find priests and teachers for the Novitiate, and so we moved to Madras-Poonamallee near the Seminary of the Salesians. In 1981 we set up a Poor Home and a dispensary next to the Novitiate House.

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<sup>32</sup> Brother Fortunatus is not only one of the founders of the Order's work and presence in India, but he is also the founder of the Sisters of Charity of St John of God.

In 1986, at the request of the Bishop of Kandwa in the State of Madhya Pradesh, a new Centre was set up at Deshgaon near Kandwa, with a health centre and dispensary. In this State conversion is banned by the government.

c) *Brother Savio Tran Ngoc Tuyen*<sup>33</sup> *Biến Hóa (Viet Nam)*

The Canadian Brothers reached Viet Nam in 1952 and stayed there until September 1975. During the war they were put through many trials as they tried to perpetuate the spirit of St John of God and hand it on to their Vietnamese Brothers. They gave enormous testimony to evangelisation through their hospitaller work.

Thanks to their perseverance and sacrifice they provided formation for the Vietnamese Brothers, and it is to this that the Order still owes its existence today, despite the fact that no new missionaries have arrived for over 20 years.

Since 1975 the Vietnamese Brothers have been endeavouring to adapt to life under the socialist regime in order to go on living according to the spirit of St John of God and the spirituality of our Order, despite the many difficulties they face. 'St John of God remains alive today'.

The missionary work in Vietnam:

- **The objective:** The poor in isolated and distant villages.
- **Action:** Providing formation to the people in the areas of prevention and hygiene, treating diseases at their onset and treating people in their homes.
- **Facilities:** The required economic and financial resources. There are between two and four Brothers in every village.
- **Usefulness:** For the Order it will be easy to set up a House to do many things; it would be a visible sign and act of testimony. It would also mean being able to help many more people, and to make our Order better known. It would cost little, and care would be better.

d) *Brother Manuel Nogueira*<sup>34</sup> *Nampula (Mozambique)*

*Our missionary opportunity:* As we know, the whole Church is missionary and all the entities and organisations which make up the Beloved Bride of Christ are missionaries, continuing in this way the ministry of Christ himself. It is also a fact that all these organisations and entities must take on the missionary duty in accordance with their own nature and charism, using appropriate means and facilities. We are therefore required to be missionaries of hospitaller charity, because this our charism, and this is our task: to express the love of the Father for needy people whoever and wherever they may be.

It is therefore obvious that the way we cooperate in building up the Kingdom of God under the present circumstances is appropriate and adequate. For the more voices and the more calls that come from our

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<sup>33</sup> A Brother Priest from Viet Nam and Novice Master for many years.

<sup>34</sup> A Portuguese priest. He stayed in Mozambique during the revolution. He is a living witness to fidelity to the Order. He has been imprisoned several times.

world, the more evident is the urgency to bear witness through our work, as devotion to the service of alleviating human miseries.

But if our possibilities are great, so is our responsibility. Our Centres cannot be satisfied with just any kind of training. We must ensure that our Brothers are properly trained to perform an effective missionary task.

*A few conditions for missionary success:* The Centres must be geared and tailored to the conditions. We know that hospital work, like any other work today, can easily become self-perpetuating apostolic work, and even a source of exploitation. This means that we must be very careful when it comes to deciding what type of work we want to organise, or what type of work we have to give up, depending upon the circumstances. It is obvious that our Centres must be wide open to the neediest of all and to those whom other organisations reject and who can only rely on us. If we rigorously select the patients or the sick we admit to our Centres, while this might be a sign of well-organised work, it may also be a sign of a poorly-developed sense of charity. The true man of charity, like our Founder, has a heart that is sensitive to all needs, and not just to a selected few. This is why it will be very appropriate to have a sector in every Centre to attend to emergency cases and those in the greatest need of help. No poor person must ever be turned away. A door opened and a ray of hope must always be there for the most unfortunate.

*Openness and cooperation with all:* Another concern must be to reach out to and cooperate with every organisation, particularly those who work in our own health care field. Whenever we travel a long way to a particular place, and our training has been divorced from real life, there is a danger that we may consider ourselves to be a model and a pattern to be followed, looking askance at those who think or act differently from the way we do. We must avoid all such temptations, and cultivate the spirit of outreach, openness and cooperation with all people.

*The apostolate of alms-giving:* Is it not perhaps the case that the apostolate of alms-giving to which our Holy Founder and his followers were so attached is in crisis among us today because of our tendency to prefer catering for those who can pay us, or who have somebody else to pay for them? At a time in which the rich are becoming increasingly richer and the poor poorer, what better thing could we do than practise alms-giving, within our charism, to bring people together, and even to prevent the social repercussions on what depends on us?

*Our ecclesial and consecrated identity:* Lastly, let us look at the relevance of our charity work to showing what we are, namely members of the Church and consecrated men. Whether we are in a Christian, Muslim, oriental or Animist environment, we have always been chosen by Christ, and sent out by his Church to spread his Kingdom of compassionate and merciful love. People must know and see this. They must feel that our lifestyle and the love with which we treat them comes from God and is based on the teaching and the example of the Lord Jesus.

In short, we must ensure that our work, our centres and our relationships with everyone, particularly with the most underprivileged and disadvantaged, bear witness to our following of Christ. If we succeed in this, we shall be for all people a beam of God's Charity, helping to make up for the lack of love which so impoverishes society.

e) *Brother Ricardo Botifoll*<sup>35</sup> *Lunsar (Sierra Leone)*

The immediate objective of the Order's work in the developing countries is obviously medical and health care oriented, in hospitals, dispensaries and primary health care centres. We must increasingly bear in mind that health care work cannot be left to the unfettered initiative of every institution, separately from the State care network, but requires coordination, and even integration with State and international organisations (WHO, societies to combat TB, leprosy, etc.). The remarkable success of child immunisation campaigns (against measles, tetanus, polio) and others now being envisaged against malaria, point in this direction.

The risk that we must avoid offset is trying to 'shine', and excel, trying to raise the technical levels and standards of comfort in our hospital Centres in these countries to make them comparable to European hospitals. If we do that we will only be able to benefit a minority of wealthy people, and our Centres will stay out of reach of the vast majority of the poor, whom we have -- theoretically -- come here to help. And this is a real danger.

We could say many other things, but in this short note it is impossible. One thing obsesses me, however: our missionary work must also try to improve things in our own European world. We are working here in Africa, convinced that it is from here that we are also helping our old Europe. "*Brothers, do good to yourselves by giving to the poor ...*" This simple but trenchant teaching of St John of God is something that we go on proclaiming from our rustic hospitals in the forests, to the people in the North, who are satiated but dissatisfied. Whatever we do with our hands is a prayer that Europe will truly believe the Sermon on the Mount: 'in work and in truth'. This is our hope, and yet one more foundation on which our missionary commitment is grounded.

f) *Brother Raphael Teh. Monrovia*<sup>36</sup>

Africa is a continent of marginalised people, rocked by tribalism and ethnic rivalry. Violence, coups d'état, the problem of civil war refugees, the violation of human rights, exploitation by the powerful, famine, poverty, sickness, despair and death. The lack of peace and justice have been the main cause of all these problems in Africa. Injustice is profoundly rooted in many of the structures of sin in our continent. That is the way it is. There are just a few wealthy people owning small fortunes, and masses of disinherited, landless, and impoverished people. The power of a few versus the powerlessness and slavery of the majority.

Africa's challenges to health care are chronic malnutrition, diarrhoea diseases associated with the precarious fresh water and health care situations in people's homes, malaria and other contagious diseases. Then there is AIDS and the problem of financing health care. High infant mortality is caused by chronic malnutrition and lack of hygiene, which can be prevented through primary health care.

The economic crisis and budgetary cutbacks are increasing the poverty in terms of health care provision. The prohibitive cost of drugs and hospital care is making it impossible for many people, particularly in

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<sup>35</sup> A physician Brother from the Province of Aragón. He devoted the best years of his life to the sick in Sierra Leone until age and sickness obliged him to obediently agree to return to Spain.

<sup>36</sup> Brother Raphael Teh is a Brother priest, born in Cameroon.

the rural world, to obtain the medical treatment they need. Sickness and poverty are a vicious circle: people fall sick because they are poor, and they become poorer because they are sick.

This is the background against which we operate in our daily hospitaller mission. I see it for myself: our hospitaller centre is like an oasis in the desert. I can bear witness to this, particularly here in Monrovia, where our hospital has stayed open and continued working surrounded by the turmoil and havoc of war, like a 'House of God' where everyone is taken in. It is very gratifying to see the display of consolation and the smiles on the faces of the sick and needy who have been able to reach our oasis, even if it is only to quench their thirst or spend their last day with us on the path to eternity. They are happy with the humane treatment they receive, because they are given a proper bed and clean sheets to lie on, even if it is only for their few last minutes. How I wish this hospitaller oasis to extend throughout the whole of that wilderness, particularly on the outskirts!

Sometimes I want to scream out in frustration or impotence because I am incapable of changing the sinful structures of society. Every day we discover the face of the Suffering Servant when we see so many people burdened down by poverty, exploitation and lack of culture, living in totally subhuman conditions. But I am consoled by the fact that what the hospitaller missionary does is performing is the *Missio Dei*, the reality of God and an eternal mystery. When we reach our human limits, God leads us on across the frontiers created by human greed. The hospitaller spirit of generosity and open-heartedness is what drives us on to remain open to exploring new paths, which bring us ever closer to the service of the marginalised, and makes our mission ever more effective. The New Hospitality is an invitation to us to move from the centre to the periphery, to seek out new methods to transform the world of the poor and their environment, or the world of evil social structures which create these humiliating conditions.

g) *Brother Juan Bautista Carbo.*<sup>37</sup> *Lomé (Togo)*

From the African viewpoint I can say that the missionary work carried out by the Order throughout its history, and mores especially in the past 50 years, has been much more fruitful and extensive than might be thought at first sight.

The hospitaller mission has been consistently based on a principle which is proposed in *Redemptoris missio* No. 42: "People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission..."

When we look at the places where the Order is present today, in most cases we see that settlements have sprung up around the hospitaller centre, and the presence of the Order has contributed to social, economic and religious development (in some cases the Brothers arrived before the official 'missionaries').

This does not mean that there have not been shortcomings, but such shortcomings as there have been are due more to the urge to do so much to meet so many needs, rather than to a lack of desire or will.

The future of the hospitaller charism has a broad base for implantation and development in Africa, mainly for the African Brothers, but at the same time it is a challenge for the whole of the Order. The future is full

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<sup>37</sup> Delegate General of Africa until 1 May 1997.

of hope, but it requires the cooperation of everyone in order to underpin this growth, which is now taking place very rapidly, and can easily overtake us.

The Order must decide how it wishes to be present specifically in these countries, because the needs are many, and the African Church is destined to carry great weight in the universal Church.

We also have a great responsibility, for we are one of the few male Institutes that are devoted entirely to the service of the poor and sick, which means that we must break new ground and help to implant the charism of mercy in these new churches which are so rich in substance, in life, and in women and men who are reaching to what lies beyond.

### ENTITIES AND ORGANISATIONS AT THE SERVICE OF EVANGELISATION

The whole of the legal and organisational structure of the Order is directed towards animating, supporting and enhancing the apostolic sense of the Brothers and their evangelising work by serving the sick and needy which, jointly with the Co-workers, they are performing in the Church.

In this chapter we will merely list the resources provided by the Order specifically to underpin and support its work in the developing countries, drawing a distinction between those with a universal dimension, because they have been or are being promoted by the General Curia, and those which particular Provinces of the Order have promoted or are maintaining.

#### 1. *Entities depending upon the General Curia at the service of the missions*

##### a) *The Missions Secretariat*

Under the Generalate of Brother Mosé Bonardi several Provinces of the Order sent Brothers and resources for evangelisation in Africa, and sought ways of doing so in India. It was a time of a resurgence of vocations in various parts of the world, and this naturally encouraged and helped to fashion the missionary commitment of the Brothers.

In order to "*stimulate, increase, develop and regulate the promising movement trying to enable the flame of hospitaler charity of our Father, St John of God, to burn brightly among the lambs who do not belong to the fold of Christ, so that they can hear his voice and ensure 'that there is one flock and only one shepherd'*" (Jn 10:16)"<sup>38</sup> the General Definitory on 19 October 1957 approved the Statutes for the Missions of the Order.

Since then, the General Curia has tried to achieve this objective by promoting not only economic and financial aid but above all by laying down guidelines and organising means of helping the Brothers to be properly trained and prepared before being posted to the developing countries. The purpose behind it is to keep alive the missionary spirit alive in all the Brothers, and more recently to apply the formation criteria of the Order in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Oceania.

The Course for Missionary Brothers held in Rome on 5-13 February 1980 provided an important occasion for reflection and communion for our missionary Brothers, who were not only given the opportunity to undergo theological, charismatic and pastoral aggiornamento, but also to talk to other Brothers in order to appreciate for themselves the universal nature of the Order's missionary commitment. This was during the Generalate of Brother Pierluigi Marchesi.

The Missionary Charter which is dealt elsewhere in this document, is also the outcome of reflection and animation during the first Generalate of Brother Marchesi. The efforts that were made at that time were

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<sup>38</sup> *Statutes for the Missions*, Introduction, Rome, 1957, p. 3 - unofficial translation.

designed above all to coordinate formation in Africa, and to help create a culture and mentality in the missionary Brothers worldwide in scope, whose results were to be gathered years later.

b) *The Missions Fund*

At the Meeting of Superiors held in Rome in October 1989, it was agreed to establish a Common Fund for the Order's missions, 'to ensure continuous financial support for the care provided in the Order's missionary centres, and it was expected to begin operating on 1 January 1992.

From the moment it was approved and became operational, it was planned:

- to send the Provincials a copy of the draft constitution of the Common Fund, seeking their opinions and suggestions, and asking them to state what financial support they would be able to make during the first two years;
- to set up a working group at the General Curia to run the preparatory phase;
- to examine ways of coordinating with the NGOs promoted by the Order, and of relating them with one other.

The Regulations of the Common Missions Fund were published in February 1992. Its objectives stated that:

- the purpose of the Common Missions Fund was to support and enhance this form of apostolate;
- it was established according to the principle of universality, with the eventual intention of defraying the costs of all the Order's missionary activities.

On coming into operation in January 1992 it would *"have a first phase for which on the General Delegations of Africa and Vietnam were to be mainly responsible"*<sup>39</sup>

c) *The Missiology School in Rome*

The formation of Brothers was one of the main concerns and tasks of Brother Mosé Bonardi, who very clearly realised the shortcomings in the missionary field:

*"We cannot hide the fact that the Order has embarked on this missionary activity without being particularly concerned about providing any specific formation for the persons involved"*<sup>40</sup>

The School of Spirituality and its Missiology section was set up in Rome in 1955 and the Statutes were approved on 17 November that same year by the General Definitory, and were officially adopted by the 1959 General Chapter. It was inaugurated on 14 October 1956.

The objectives and purposes of the Missiology School are set out in article 31 of its Statutes:

*"Considering the missionary activity being performed by certain Provinces in the Order and the increasing spiritual demands of this apostolate, the International School of Spirituality shall have its own*

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Regulations of the Common Missions Fund*, February 1992. General Archive of the Order, Cart. Or. 51, Fasc. I., C.

<sup>40</sup> BONARDI, M., *Circular Letter*, 28-09-1955 - unofficial translation.

*special MISSIONARY SECTION whose purpose is to provide spiritual, moral and cultural preparation and training for the Brothers bound for the missions".*

Brother Bonardi explained the purposes of the School in the following terms:

*"The School which will open in Rome in the 1956-57 academic year is designed to provide the missionaries with all the legal, canonical, linguistic, health care and prophylactic knowledge they need to carry out their apostolate and professional duties with the certainty and serenity of knowing that they are properly prepared"<sup>41</sup>*

Article 33 of the Statutes gave the criteria for eligibility to enter the Missiology School:

*"Any Provinces wishing or expecting to perform missionary activities in the future must send the solemn professed Brothers who they wish to post to the missions to this Missionary Section. The Brothers must possess the necessary physical, intellectual and moral qualities for the hospitaller apostolate in mission lands".*

The fundamental criteria for the curriculum for the Missiology Section are set out in articles 34 and 35 of the Statutes:

*"The trainee missionaries shall attend a number of the courses at the Pontifical Scientific Missionary Institute at the Pontifical Urbanian University of Propaganda Fide for one or two years, and an annual Missionary Medicine course in order to acquire the International Nursing Diploma" (art. 34).*

*"Other special courses for them shall be indicated in a specific set of regulations, to ensure that they are better trained for the future missionary activity to which they must dedicate themselves, in accordance with the spirit of the Order" (art. 35).*

The Spirituality and Missiology School was set up originally at the St John Calibita Hospital in Rome, until the International Formation Centre was established in 1963 in Via della Nocetta.

As far as its results are concerned, throughout the years and in the two stages in its existence, the School of Spirituality and Missiology made it possible to provide training for a large number of Brothers throughout the Order, offering them a variety of theological, spirituality, hospitality and Missiology courses, facilitating and raising the level of their spiritual, religious and apostolic training in the years prior to and following the great ecclesial event of the Vatican II.

The Missiology Section had two highly positive results:

- A large group of Brothers were properly trained to carry out their apostolate in the mission lands. They expanded the Order, with new missionary foundations in Africa, America and Asia.
- Through the Brothers trained in it, some of whom went on the mission while others remained behind, and through the commitment of their Superiors, the School created a special sensitivity to the missions, encouraging many Provinces to found and support new Centres in the developing countries. These were certainly fruits which still remain until this day, since many of the Brothers trained in the School are still active in mission centres.

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<sup>41</sup> BONARDI, M., *loc.cit.*

The School of Spirituality and Missiology ceased operating as such several years ago, basically because the circumstances and the needs are so different from what they were, and formation in the Provinces is now easier to acquire. However, the Centre is still open to Brothers under formation in Rome.

### c) *The General Secretariat of the Pastoral Ministry*

This came into being under the Generalate of Brother Pierluigi Marchesi to encourage and promote evangelisation and the pastoral ministry.

Even though its primary area of concern was not the mission field, its initiatives gave a boost to the evangelising work of the Order. Two outstanding documents published by the Secretariat were:

- *'What is the Pastoral Care of the Sick'* (1980). This was an application of *Evangelii nuntiandi* to the reality of the Order.
- *'The apostolic dimension of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God'* (1982) which traced back the roots and looked at the evangelising projection of the Order.

## 2. *Interprovincial or Provincial organisations and bodies*

The Provinces with Communities in the mission countries have their own organisation for animating the life of their Provinces, but they have always taken great care in providing support to Communities, Brothers and apostolic works in the developing countries. However, as we have seen, the General Curia has also opened up a universal outreach which has taken the form of projects and activities with real cooperation and communion between the Provinces. This has led to the institution of Interprovincial Secretariats which now cover every aspect of the Order. Because of their direct relationship to the missionary dimension of the Order, we shall now look at CIAL (the Latin American Interprovincial Secretariat) and CIPPA (the Interprovincial Asia-Pacific Commission).

### a) *CIAL OH: The Latin American Interprovincial Animation Commission*

The present *Latin American Interprovincial Animation Commission* was established as a means of coordinating the response to the call of Vatican II in that continent to renew the Consecrated Life for which 1979 was a year of special grace for all the Provinces of the Order: *the year of Renewal*.

In Latin America, after very careful sensitisation, motivation and preparation at all levels, all the programmes that had been put into place to motivate all the Brothers in Latin America, to teach and motivate them to know what had to be done subsequently with regard to religious renewal in the Hospitality of St John of God, were successfully implemented.

As the time passed, in each of the programmes of the four courses held in Bogotá (Colombia) and in all the evaluations the Brothers began to feel the need for some entity which could guarantee continuity to the animation work.

The idea to set up an animation body for all the Communities of Latin America was promoted by the Superior General of the day, Brother Pierluigi Marchesi, as the renewal promoter, run by the Provincials of Colombia, Spain and their Provincial Delegates.

On 17 October 1979, the Latin American Renewal Secretariat (SELARE) was set up, as a service to animate the Hospitaller Order in Latin America, with its own draft Statutes that were subsequently approved.

SELARE is defined as a non-profit-making organisation, at the service of the Order's life and the mission and for Agents of the Pastoral Care of the Sick in Latin America. Its objective is 'to coordinate and animate the Renewal process in every field, to ensure a more active presence of the Hospitaller Order in Latin America'.

Here are some of the activities carried out by SELARE:

*Within the Order:*

- It has carried out animation, with programmed visits to the Communities in different countries to present the documents of the Church and the General Curia.
- It has run courses for Community Animators, Formation Masters, and Courses in Preparation for Solemn Profession, the Pastoral Care of the Sick, and for Superiors.
- In December 1979 the first issue of the Bulletin SELARE was published to inform and animate all the Communities and to present the documents and work of interest relating to the Consecrated Life, Continuing Formation and the Pastoral Care of the Sick.
- Almost at the same time, it began publishing Colección SELARE, and so far an average of one hundred titles have appeared dealing with the issues indicated above.
- It has also drafted and promoted a Formation Plan for the Pastoral Care of the Sick by correspondence, by agreement with the Bogotá University of San Buenaventura.

*Outside the Order:*

All the things mentioned here are being promoted by SELARE to facilitate the spiritual and community life and the evangelising mission in terms of the Pastoral Care of the Sick. Many of these facilities are available to the local Churches in different countries, who appreciate and use them, and in some cases they are virtually the only resources within reach for the Pastoral Care of the Sick.

SELARE also promotes, organises and attends all kinds of events relating to the ethics of human life, the Pastoral Care of the Sick, the theology and spirituality of sickness.

On 30 October 1989, the General Curia approved the Statutes establishing the Latin American Interprovincial Secretariat of the Hospitaller Order (SALOH), along the lines of other geographical areas of the Order. From that moment onwards, SELARE became a department of the Interprovincial Secretariat. At its meeting at Cochabamba (13 September 1996) CIAL OH (the Latin American Interprovincial Animation Commission) was created, taking up the lines of action laid down by the LXIII General Chapter in Bogotá. It continues performing all these activities in SELARE, which remains receptive to creativity and the possibility of undertaking new initiatives on behalf of the Order and the Church in Latin America.

#### b) *The Interprovincial Asia-Pacific Commission*

In 1979 the Communities and Centres in Asia were recognised as an entity in their own right, when the Brothers in the region elected their representatives to attend the Extraordinary General Chapter held that year. The region was also represented at the 1982 General Chapter.

On 25 February 1991 the General Government of the Order, after consulting the Superiors responsible for the Communities and Centres of the Order in Asia, set up the Interprovincial Asian Secretariat (SIPA). On 15 February 1996, the General Government approved an amendment to the Statutes which was submitted to the meeting of the Commission in Manila (October 1995) after the Australian Province had joined the Asian Region. The decision to join the Asian Commission was taken by the Australian Province in order to better reflect the cultural situation as it actually existed today in that part of the world. From that moment onwards the Commission changed its name to the Interprovincial Asia-Pacific Commission (CIPPA).

The purpose of the CIPPA Commission is to coordinate the activities in the various Communities and Centres of the Order in the Asia-Pacific Region, in areas of mutual concern. The Commission has an Executive Committee comprising a President, Secretary/Bursar and another elected member acting on behalf of the members of the Commission, and taking certain decisions on matters assigned to it by the Commission.

The purposes of the Commission are:

- To cooperation in the area of pastoral ministry, the mission, lifestyle, formation, laity, Centres and administration.
- To encourage a greater awareness of what is demanded of the Order in Asia and the Pacific to give it a more effective presence by implanting the Order in Asia and the Pacific with new and innovative forms of Hospitality.
- To promote and coordinate requests for aid for submission to the international organisations.
- To develop appropriate lifestyle and formation programmes.
- To facilitate the exchange of experiences and personnel between communities and centres of the Order in Asia and in the Pacific.

The CIPPA Commission, at its Manila meeting (October 1995), decided to set up an Asian Institute for Hospitaller Formation to foster spiritual, cultural and professional formation for people involved in the provision of health care and social services in Asia. The particular approach adopted by the Institute is to prepare all the Brothers and a large number of lay Co-workers to take up the leadership that will be required in the mission of Hospitality. The Interprovincial Asia-Pacific Commission publishes a quarterly newsletter.

#### c) *The Juan Ciudad Foundation ONG.D*

The Spanish Provinces have set up an internal organism in the *Spanish Interprovincial Secretariat* to promote and channel aid to their Centres in Africa which depend on them. Thanks to constant progress with planning designed to acquire more aid from public and private sources, and in view of the increasing demand from the Centres in Africa, this Secretariat was registered on 1 November 1991 as a Teaching

and Research Foundation with the Ministry of Education and Science, and with the Spanish Ministry of the Economy and Finance.

It is dedicated to developing and fostering health care in the Third World and where possible to meet the many needs of the 33 Centres and 15 dispensaries, with a total of approximately 4,000 beds owned by the Order in Africa and Latin America. Although its fundamental aim is to cooperate with the Centres of the Order this does not mean that it ceases to cooperate with other entities and organisations on specific issues.

The Juan Ciudad Foundation is headquartered in Madrid, and has Delegations in all the Autonomous Communities of Spain. It has been part of the governmental Development NGOs Coordination Agency since June 1994.

The objectives of the Foundation are:

- To draw society attention to the shortages and needs in the Third World, particularly in the health field.
- To supply the human, technical and financial resources requested by the Order's Centres in Africa and Latin America, as far as possible.
- To submit projects submitted by the Centres to public and private international cooperation and ODA agencies and organisations so that they can be properly financed.
- To cooperate in development education for the people living in countries where the Order has Centres.
- To provide educational activities in our developed society regarding possible preventive and curative health care projects in the less developed countries.
- To enable the Centres of the Order in the Third World to operate as 'distribution and multiplication centres' of the resources they receive, so that the whole area under the influence can benefit.

These activities are naturally related to the following objectives and purposes:

- the management and financing of Development Projects;
- the regular provision of humanitarian aid;
- to promoting, training and guidance of the international voluntary services;
- the organisation of courses and seminars to sensitise Spanish society;
- the regular publication of a magazine to publicise the activities of the Order's Centres in Africa and Latin America.

#### d) *Associazione con i Fatebenefratelli per i malati lontani -AFMAL*

AFMAL, *Associazione con i Fatebenefratelli per i malati lontani*, is an NGO and as such it is non-profit making, working to meet health care needs and implement international solidarity projects. It was created on 30 October 1979 to work in the field of civilian Voluntary Service and was recognised as such by the Italian Foreign Ministry on 17 July 1987. In 1995 it was recognised by the EU. The Hospitaller Order is its patron and provides support for its activities.

It undertakes development aid activities in the health care field. In particular, it promotes, organises and manages health care and social development projects. In some cases it works in preventive and curative

health care, and rehabilitation; in others it implements integrated projects in conjunction with other NGOs and humanitarian associations in the health care, agricultural, educational and other fields.

AFMAL selects and trains volunteers and contracted-in personnel. It organises vocational training programmes in Italy and abroad.

It runs specific programmes in the Philippines. In addition to this, it sensitises public opinion to the problem of underdevelopment, health, marginalisation, particularly in the poorest countries. To this end it organises seminars and conferences, work and study camps, publishing information and educational materials, and a coordination handbook.



**PART IV**  
**HOSPITALITY TODAY**



## THE NEW SPREAD OF HOSPITALITY

### 1. *Europe: the dynamising power of the Order's presence*

The crisis which the Church and hence the Order experienced in the first half of the 19th century, leading to the disappearance of the Order altogether in countries where it had a long-standing tradition such as Spain, Portugal and France, was gradually overcome. Thanks to the support of Italy, the Order was reorganised, as we have seen.

Looking at the map of the Order in the year 1900 we can see that it was only present in Europe, with the sole exception of the Houses founded in what is now Israel, at the end of the 19th century. This means that throughout this present century, Europe has been the dynamic force behind the presence of the Order in the rest of the world, including in a number of countries in Europe itself, such as the former Yugoslavia. This expansion took place in the following manner: the Spanish Provinces set up foundations in Central and South America and Africa; the French Province in Africa and Canada and then in the United States and Viet Nam; the Irish Province in Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and one House in the United States and Africa; the Bavarian Province in Japan; the Rhineland Province in India; the English Province in Africa; the Portuguese Province in Brazil and Africa; the Lombardy-Veneto Province in Africa, and the Rome Province in the Philippines.

This demonstrates the vitality of the hospitaller charism, and the ecclesial, apostolic and missionary spirit of the Order, the simple and profoundly evangelical witness of the Brothers, the vast amount of social work carried out, and the acceptance and support that the Order has met with in the various places where it is now present.

The continuing call of the Church to evangelise new lands, the desire of the Order to renew its presence in areas where it had formerly been established, its own missionary vocation, the desire to serve the poor and sick in the manner of St John of God, and the witness of so many Brothers to hospitality and the Gospel, to the point of martyrdom, have all been deep-seated reasons for this expansion which makes it possible today for our Institution to be present in all five continents, in over 50 countries.

#### a) *The apostolic work performed in our Centres*

Throughout the 20th century, our Order in Europe has performed its apostolic work mainly in its own Centres, trying to meet the most urgent needs wherever it happened to be.

The mentally ill, the physical and psychologically disabled, children affected by all manner of illnesses, particularly the physically and mentally disabled, have all been the beneficiaries of the charitable mission of the Order. General hospitals, centres for old people, transients and other people affected by the new needs of today, complete the history of the Order's devotion in Europe to this very day.

The Brothers have always performed their apostolic mission in the spirit of St John of God. We have always tried out the best and most modern techniques that science can offer to care for the sick. We have also carefully cultivated a high level of humanised assistance and provided the best possible religious assistance. The welcome given to all those who have knocked at our doors and the boundless efforts we have made to guarantee the dignity of the sick and the poor are the main features of the service that the Order has provided throughout the present century.

These have been difficult times for Europe. Supporting our Centres has required tremendous effort. During most of this century they could only continue working thanks to the alms offered by an infinite number of benefactors. This type of funding gave many Brothers devoted to collecting alms the opportunity to perform a meritorious apostolic work. The struggle for the rights of the poor and sick has made it necessary to manifest the prophetic attitude of hospitality in our dealings with the public authorities, demanding that these rights be honoured. In this way, the Order has been a pioneer and today many of our Centres are integrated into the health and social services of the countries where they exist.

The Pastoral Care of the Sick and Bioethics are another fundamental contribution that the Order has made to the evangelising work of the Church in the world of health. Above all, and in a more systematic and organised manner in recent decades, the Order has been deploying huge efforts to develop and encourage them in its Centres, in active cooperation with the whole Church.

In the 20th century, society has undergone enormous changes in the world of health care and also within the Church and the Order. We must emphasise the Order's capacity to adapt, to respond and to show creativity in order to redirect our Centres to meet new demands, to change whatever may be necessary, to close down anything that no longer meet newly arising situations, and to embark upon new forms of apostolic presence. All of this has been possible thanks to the permanent desire for the renewal and openness to the Spirit, following the deepest roots of our Tradition.

#### *b) The repercussions of violence and persecution*

Social and political instability was the distinctive feature of Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Two world wars, the Spanish Civil War, the installation of totalitarian regimes with the persecution of religious institutions and their members that followed, and the war in the Balkans: this has been the depressing state of violence that Europe has experienced this century. But it has also been a century of discovery, advances and progress of all kinds.

Apart from the war in the former Yugoslavia, the Order has been caught up in all the other conflicts and persecutions. In all these circumstances the Brothers have devoted themselves with self-denial to the poor and the sick as their only true concern.

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), 98 of our Brothers died practising hospitality, 71 of them were beatified by John Paul II on 25 October 1992. The causes of another 19 Brothers are now in progress.

*The two world wars* saw the destruction of our Centres, havoc, shortages and misery, as well as the arrest and persecution of many Brothers in the countries involved in the wars, and most of them remained by the side of the sick until their dying breath.

*Germany and Austria:* the two world wars marked the life of these Provinces by placing the Brothers in serious difficulties and persecution. One outstanding Brother was Eustace Kugler of the Bavarian Province, whose beatification process is now open.

In both these countries, the Houses of the Order were devastated by the second world war. Yet little by little they have managed to recover. Today these two Provinces are performing their mission in well-equipped Centres and provide care of a very high level in technical and human terms.

*The countries of Central Europe:* The inferno ended for these countries with the establishment of a totalitarian political regime, which had serious consequences for the Church and the Order: decreeing the suppression of Religious Institutes in many of them led to the virtual extinction of the Order. Many Brothers were persecuted and imprisoned simply because they remained faithful to the charism of St John of God. Outstanding here was Brother Celestino Sule, the Provincial of the Bohemian-Moravian Province who died in prison in Brno in May 1951. Provinces like Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Bohemia-Moravia and Slovakia were reduced to a tiny group of very old Brothers who remained faithful right through until the collapse of the totalitarian regimes. Supported by the few who managed to survive despite the punishment meted out against them, the Order is now trying to re-galvanise its presence in these countries, and to gradually reactivate those Provinces with the support of the whole Order, particularly the Provinces of Germany and Austria.

*The Province of Silesia:* The few Brothers from the Silesian Province who managed to survive the second world war, most of them Germans, were unable to return home because it had become part of Poland in the meantime. These Brothers were the founders of what was initially the General Delegation of Frankfort, and then the Rhineland Province, and since 1977 a General Delegation once again.

*In Poland,* the effects of the political regime were not so dramatic. Even though the government confiscated the Houses, the Brothers were permitted to live there and practise hospitality.

Clearly, the consequences were serious and amounted to a great loss for the Order. In such difficult times the Order's response was exemplary: dedication, fidelity, a profound religious and hospitaller life on the part of the Brothers who, despite these serious crises, remained faithful to God, the Church, the Order and the sick.

After the second world war the Order grew and spread again throughout all the countries of Western Europe. The seed of martyrdom and the witness of so many Brothers made this possible. The generosity of the Order was so great that it handed over its most precious goods just as Christ gave up his own life on the Cross. But it is in this offering that a new and abundant life is now coming forth for the whole Order today. We continue to trust that this seed of martyrdom will continue to bear new fruit, confident that our Lord will find the same degree of generosity and self-giving in us.

### *c) The industrial crisis and the need for the New Evangelisation*

The succession of political, social and economic crises that Europe has experienced throughout this century have created a new level of development and progress in every country.

Progress in science and technology, macro-economics, international institutions, multinational corporations, new industries and new forms of employment are bringing about the social progress which,

at different times and in many places, has given rise to the Welfare State. We belong today to a society based on rights and duties.

In terms of health and welfare, social security now ensures that health care is a free right in most of our countries, which normally have the best and most advanced systems and techniques medical science can provide.

All this has also produced a society of contrasts, with marginalised groups and large pockets of poverty, which have been called the 'Fourth World'. In the same way we can see an enormous change in terms of values, including the value of transcendency which has gradually been relegated into the background. One also sees ethical and moral relativism emerging.

Even though Paul VI said that Europe is a mission land for the Church, it is John Paul II who has repeatedly appealed for the New Evangelisation of the whole world, particularly in this Europe as it moves towards the end of the second millennium. It is not a question of announcing a new Gospel, but of making the Gospel present today in new ways and with new enthusiasm. It is a matter of making the God of life present as the supreme value of man and the world, bearing witness to him not only in word but above all through our lives, and struggling to defend man and man's inviolable rights to be born, to life and to die in dignity which are the pillars of the Gospel which the Church must make present in the world today.

The Order in Europe is trying to respond to this call to the New Evangelisation in terms of her hospitaller mission and vocation, underpinned by the pillars of the life of the Brother of St John of God, a life centred around God and nurtured by personal and community prayer, a community of fraternal life gathered together in the name of Our Lord, given over to the poor and the sick in apostolic service.

The way in which the Order can make an adequate response to the New Evangelisation in terms of its own charism is to show sensitivity to responding to the new needs of today (the mentally ill, the chronic sick, transients, AIDS victims, the terminally sick), opening up to the participation and incorporation of Co-workers into the life of the Order, cooperating with other institutions and groups, and encouraging the Pastoral Care of the Sick and Bioethics.

For contemporary Europe it is very important for religious institutions like ours to perform simple deeds acts which bear witness to the values of the Gospel: sharing sensitivity towards the needy, being receptive and open, willing and close to others to cater in particular for the least protected groups. It is also necessary for the Centres of the Order to enhance the quality of their care following the manner of St John of God, always seeking the best medical techniques and technologies, while at the same time practising humanisation, defending the rights of the sick and needy, encouraging attention to religion and ethical values, and always coming down on behalf of life in all its stages.

#### c) *Where we are*

**Germany:** the Order has the Bavarian Province with 50 Brothers and 8 Centres and the General Delegation of Rhineland, with 12 Brothers and 3 Centres. In the past few decades the Order in Germany has seen a gradual decline in the number of Brothers at a time when the Centres have been taking part in the process of modernisation and technification of German society, particularly in Bavaria. The Brothers have managed to react to this situation and have involved a large number of professionals in the

apostolate of their Centres and it is these who help to keep alive the spirit of St John of God in technically outstanding Centres.

**Austria:** the Austrian Province has 35 Brothers and 10 Centres, seven of which are highly qualified general hospitals. By tradition, the Order has always been held in high esteem in Austria. The small number of Brothers has encouraged the Government of the Province to open up continually to Co-workers to whom it has handed on the values of Hospitality. A number of our Centres practically depend on these Co-workers.

**Spain:** the Order in Spain has continued and consolidated the path begun by Blessed Benedict Menni. In 1934 under the Provincial Superior, Blessed Guillermo Llop, the three present Provinces were created: Our Lady of Peace (Andalusia), San Rafael (Aragón) and San Juan de Dios (Castile).

After the Civil War, and facing shortages of every kind, the Spanish Provinces saw a resurgence of vocations and an expansion with new foundations, leading them in 1956 to the African continent. Faithful to the charism they have tried to respond creatively to new needs, opening up specifically social Centres, trying to provide high quality care in the manner of St John of God, encouraging pastoral care, ethics committees, voluntary service, etc., to harmonise progress with the humanisation of care. At the present time, the Order in Spain has 46 Centres and 396 Brothers.

**France:** The first half of this century, because of the two world wars, was very hard for the French Hospitallers. The Brothers and the sick suffered the consequences of both wars, and in the first one war in particular the work of the Brothers carrying out ambulance and military hospital duties, was outstanding.

At the present time the Order continues to meet the needs of the sick and needy of France, within the limits of its possibilities. It has 8 Centres, all of them having the legal status of a '*Société Civile*' (non-commercial company) under French law, together with a house for the elderly in Mauritius (Pamplemousses) and a centre for mentally disabled on Reunión. The Province has 80 Brothers.

**Hungary:** The Province of Hungary, founded in 1856, and dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, is now a Delegation of the Austrian Province. There are three surviving Brothers, following the oppression they suffered under the previous totalitarian regime, and the present new vocations receive their formation in the Interprovincial Formation Centres in the Provinces of Austria and Germany. The Order has five Centres.

**England:** The French Brothers reached England in 1877 and founded the Hospital at Scorton. After being a joint Province with Ireland between 1934 and 1953 it was erected with the status of a Province, dedicated to the Venerable Bede. The English Province carried out a discernment, in view of the declining number of Brothers and lack of vocations, in line with fidelity to the charism of the Order and has given up the management of large Centres. It has one general hospital (Scorton), a day centre for the mentally handicapped, 11 services which are homes for groups of mentally ill, mostly adults, founded in 1989 and in 1993, with a pastoral centre at Hemlington founded in 1992. In 1961 they set up a foundation at Lusaka (Zambia) and in 1982 at Monze. There are 19 Brothers.

**Ireland:** The presence of the Order began with the arrival of the French Brothers at Tipperary where they founded a home for disabled children. They followed the process that we have seen in England, and in 1953 the Province of Ireland was established, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Since then it has grown and expanded with new foundations in Ireland, South Korea (since 1959), Australia (until 1956)

and with a centre for mentally ill in New Jersey, USA. At the present time it has 9 Centres, services and small homes for the mentally ill and a Centre in Africa (Malawi). It has 65 Brothers.

**Italy:** The two world wars and their aftermath very severely affected the Order in Italy in the first half of this century: government measures led down to the closure of many hospitals, a lack of vocations, etc. Despite the difficulties, new foundations were established throughout this period in both Provinces, Rome and Lombardy-Veneto, which overcame the crisis at the end of the 19th century.

One outstanding man in this period was St Richard Pampuri, a doctor belonging to the Lombardy-Veneto Province, who died on 1 May 1930 in Milan, was beatified by John Paul II on 4 October 1981 and canonised on 1 November 1989.

The Brothers in Italy have tried to respond creatively to the needs of the poor, the sick and the deprived, following criteria of universality. They run centres for the chronic sick, the mentally ill, the old, general hospitals, etc., and have spread beyond Italy to Africa (Lombardy-Veneto) and the Philippines (Rhineland). At the present time they have 23 Centres and 125 Brothers taking both Provinces together. The Order in Italy also has the St John Calibita Hospital on Tiber Island and the International Centre in Via della Nocetta, both of which depend on the General Curia.

**Poland:** In Poland the Order comprises the Polish Province and the General Delegation of Silesia. Even before the country threw off its political totalitarianism, the Order managed a number of centres mostly devoted to homoeopathic medicine, and others looking after the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. Despite the difficulties, the Brothers are now overcoming the effects of their long isolation from the rest of the Order, and thanks to the efforts being made in terms of initial and continuing formation, the Order is now recovering the prestige that it had formerly enjoyed since 1853 when the Province of Silesia was founded, and in 1922 when the Polish Province was restored. Today there are 14 Centres and 90 Brothers in Poland.

**Portugal:** until 1927 the Portuguese Houses were part of what was then the single Spanish Province. That year, under Brother Rafael Meyer, as Superior General, it became a General Delegation, and on 27 March 1928 the Province of St John of God of Portugal was canonically erected.

The mission of the Brothers since the restoration of the Order has focused particularly on looking after the mentally ill: all the centres, except Montemor-o-Novo which is a general hospital, are devoted to the mentally ill. Together with the Hospitaller Sisters they now cover most of psychiatric care in Portugal, carrying out a profoundly hospitaller and widely acknowledged apostolic work. At the present time the Portuguese Province has 13 Houses, three of them in Brazil, and 86 Brothers.

**The Czech Republic:** the flourishing Bohemian-Moravia Province founded in 1919 and devoted to St Raphael the Archangel, has 9 Brothers who survived the previous political regime, and with the support of the Provinces of Austria and Bavaria they have managed to recover three of the seven centres that the Order had formerly owned at the end of the second world war. The new vocations are receiving formation in the Interprovincial Centres of Germany and Austria.

**The Slovak Republic:** with the death of Brother Fabian Macej in March 1997, the Viceprovince of Slovakia became a Provincial Delegation of Austria in May 1997. The reason for this was that only three solemn professed Brothers had survived the totalitarian oppression and the new candidates are undergoing formation in the Interprovincial Centres of Germany and Austria.

**Vatican City:** Since 1874 the Order has been in charge of the prestigious Vatican Pharmacy run by an international Community depending directly on the General Curia, and which provides assistance to the medical outpatient units in Vatican City.

## *2. The Order in America today*

### *a) The beginning of a new presence*

After the restoration of the Order in America, new foundations were set up in Central and South America, encouraged by the Spanish and Portuguese Provinces. On 5 December 1994, the General Definitory decided to canonically erect the three Viceprovinces that had been there for several years as Provinces: *Northern South America*, dedicated to Our Lady the Patron of the Order and the Venerable Brother Francisco Camacho, *Mexico and Central America*, dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and *Southern South America*, dedicated to St John of Avila.

The Brothers of the French Province reached Canada in 1927 and in 1933 founded the Hospital of Our Lady of Mercy in Montreal. In 1941 the Canadian Brothers went to the United States and set up their first House in West Adams Blvd. (Los Angeles) in 1953. The Portuguese Brothers also set up a new foundation in America at Divinópolis (1963), setting up the Houses that now exist in Brazil, as a Delegation of the Portuguese Province.

### *b) The approach and policy of our Centres*

The Order has always tried to direct its mission over this present century to looking after the sick and the poor, particularly those in greatest need, which it has basically developed in its own Centres, sometimes accepting the management of other State and Church institutions.

The main source of funding of the Centres has been charity. Today, in several countries in South America, alms-giving is still the main means of support for many of our Centres, even though more and more agreements are now being concluded with public and private entities in several countries as a result of economic development.

Psychiatric care is the most extensive kind of service provided by the Order today in America: all the Provinces devote the bulk of their resources to looking after the mentally ill, and in virtually every country in Central and South America in which the Order is present, these patients are being cared for in our Centres. This has been a constant feature of the Order since it was restored in America, as it was in Spain and Portugal. There is no doubt that the mentally ill were, and in many places still are to this day, the most deprived and neglected of all. This why Blessed Benedict Menni and his companions did so much to help them. With the passing of time, and with the emergence of new needs, the Order has tried to respond generously. Centres have been opened for poor and abandoned paralytic children, together with orthopaedic clinics.

Particularly in Latin America, the Order devotes most of its human and financial resources to these two groups. But it still tries to cater for new needs, acting with great realism, devoting new resources to looking after transients and the marginalised and the old, with dispensaries and primary health care and special education centres.

In addition to making a coherent, evangelical response in accordance with the demands of the Church and the needy, the Order in America tries to stimulate the values of the charism of St John of God, in the form of concrete actions marking its own style. The promotion of the Pastoral Care of the Sick, and voluntary service, the principles of Catholic ethics, humanisation and guaranteeing proper professional and human formation, coupled with the application of the very latest techniques, are changing the whole approach to care taken by the Order in accordance with the spirit and the work of St John of God.

Yet there is still a long way to go, and it will probably be necessary to raise the possibility of diversifying the work still more, giving pride of place to working in some countries rather than others in order to better respond to the needs of the sick, the poor and the deprived in the present time.

### *c) Where we have a presence*

In America, the Order is present in the countries in which it had formerly been before disappearing in the 19th century, and in a few new ones, particularly North America. These are:

**Argentina:** Sanatorio San Juan de Dios (Ramos Mejía), general hospital. San Juan de Dios Psychiatric Hospital (Luján). Consultorio San Juan de Dios (Hurlington) which is an open centre.

**Bolivia:** Instituto Nacional de Psiquiatría Gregorio Pacheco (Sucre) and Instituto Psiquiátrico S. Juan de Dios (Cochabamba). Centro Especial de Investigación Psicopedagógica (Sucre).

**Brazil:** Hospital S. Juan de Dios (Divinópolis), general hospital. Residencia S. Juan de Dios (Itaipava), home for old people. Hospital S. Juan de Dios (Pirituba), home for the mentally ill.

**Canada:** Canada was set up as a Canonical Province in 1940, dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy. The Brothers then spread to Viet Nam and the USA. At the present time the Canadian Province has three Communities in Montreal and one in Quebec City. The Brothers work in a centre for drug addicts, another one for transients, cooperating with a number of hospitals and other services. There are 20 Brothers.

**Colombia:** General hospitals: Clínica S. Rafael (Santafé de Bogotá), Clínica S. Juan de Dios (La Ceja), Hospital Parroquial Bto. Benito Menni (Machetá). Services for the mentally ill: Hospital S. Rafael (Pasto), Clínica S. Juan de Dios (Chía), Clínica S. Juan de Dios (Manizales), Clínica Ntra. Sra. de la Paz (Santafé de Bogotá). Other hospitaller mission works in the capital are: the San Rafael Nursing School, Instituto San Juan de Dios (a boarding school), Centro de Salud San Juan Grande.

**Cuba:** Sanatorio D. Juan de Dios (Havana) for the mentally ill. Hogar Clínica S. Rafael (Havana), originally for children suffering from the effects of polio and today an old people's home. At the present time another old people's home is being built at Camagüey.

**Chile:** Sanatorio Marítimo S. Juan de Dios (Viña del Mar) for physically handicapped children. Hospital Psiquiátrico Ntra. Sra. del Carmen (Santiago de Chile).

**Ecuador:** Centro de Reposo S. Juan de Dios (Quito) for the mentally ill. A night shelter of S. Juan de Dios (El Tejar-Quito) for transients and marginalised people.

**United States:** In 1941 the Brothers from Canada founded the Los Angeles House. In 1951 the United States Houses were set up as a Viceprovince and several years later as a Province dedicated to Our Lady Queen of Angels. At the moment it has three Centres: Los Angeles, Ojai and Apple Valley. The Order is also present in New Jersey with a centre for the mentally handicapped belonging to the Irish Province.

**Mexico:** Sanatorio Psiquiátrico S. Juan de Dios (Zapopan), Sanatorio Psiquiátrico Ntra. Sra. de Guadalupe (Cholula) and Clínica S. Rafael (Tlalpan). All three look after the mentally ill.

**Peru:** Hogar Clínica S. Juan de Dios (Lima), Hogar Clínica S. Juan de Dios (Arequipa) and together with this the Parish of St John of God and the Centro de Educación Especial. Hogar Clínica S. Juan de Dios (Chiclayo) and Hogar Clínica S. Juan de Dios (Cuzco) for sick children and the physically disabled. The Centro de Reposo S. Juan de Dios (Piura) is a psychiatric centre.

**Venezuela:** Hospital S. Juan de Dios (Caracas) and Hogar Clínica S. Rafael (Maracaibo): children's hospitals, with traumatology, orthopaedics and rehabilitation units. Hospital S. Juan de Dios (Mérida) for psychiatric care.

### *3. Africa: fresh sap in the tree of Hospitality*

#### *a) Fidelity to the charism in difficult circumstances*

The defining principle of the Order that the most needy must also be assisted and cared for has been followed in Africa, despite great difficulties, because in all the centres in which we work our presence is necessary and appreciated. There is so much to be done in the field of health care that virtually every situation in which we work is an emergency.

The Order has no structure and no funds to deal with emergencies, and we do not believe that this is its mission. But when emergencies do arise wherever the Brothers are, we provide our services to help the sick and needy.

In the past few years, social, political and economic instability has produced situations of extreme violence and war in Africa, very often tribal in origin, creating enormous numbers of deaths and persecutions. Even though no Brother of St John of God has died as a result of these, we have three countries here which are experiencing these events, and in which we are working:

**Mozambique:** The independence movements (FRELIMO), with a totalitarian character were finally successful in June 1975, and after coming to power they nationalised all the educational, social and health institutions, including those belonging to the Church, and hence all the Order's property that had been in Mozambique since 1943.

Little by little, the Brothers went back to Portugal. Brother Manuel Nogueira had remained behind, not only devoting himself to the sick, but also working in evangelisation, which resulted in his imprisonment

on two occasions in 1979. Today, amid considerable difficulties (the centres are still confiscated) the Brothers are living in Nampula in a climate of greater peace.

**Liberia:** In 1990 rebel groups rose up against the regime. There was a bitter struggle with many deaths, including the President. Our hospital was a good place to look after many needy people who sought haven there, fleeing from the bloodletting. The Brothers were present, doing a great deal of humanitarian and evangelical work until the final moment when they had to be evacuated. Our hospital in Monrovia was looted and virtually destroyed.

When the war was over, although there was still great instability, the Brothers returned on 7 June 1991 to rebuild the hospital and resume their missionary and hospitaller work. In April 1996 fighting broke out again with dramatic consequences on the civilian population. But the Brothers decided that this time they would stay in their hospital in the Liberian capital.

**Sierra Leone:** The situation is very similar to Liberia on which it borders. At the beginning of 1995 groups of rebels rose up against the government. When it seemed that peace was about to be consolidated after the democratic elections, in March 1997 there was new coup d'état. The consequences are widespread fear, terror and the deaths of many innocent people.

The Brothers who are carrying out their mission in the Lunsar Hospital in the interior are affected by this situation and on various occasions they have been surprised at the arrival of these armed groups at the hospital and standoffs around it. At the moment everyone is afraid and the Brothers are devoted to looking after the sick, the needy and the refugees that arrive there.

#### b) *The effort to implant the Order*

The Hospitaller Order resumed its presence in Africa in the 20th century with the foundation in Mozambique (1943), which was followed by others in Somalia (1955), Ghana (1956), Togo (1961), Zambia (1962), Indian Ocean (Reunion 1962), Liberia (1963), Sierra Leone (1967), Cameroon (1968), Benin (1970), Senegal (1975) and Malawi (1992). Some of these will remain permanent but others will have to close and restart elsewhere. This powerful missionary impetus is due both to the increase in the number of vocations in the European Provinces (Portugal, Spain, Italy, England, France) and to the desire to respond to the call of the Church, particularly since Vatican II. The Order has mobilised many Brothers and resources to be present in this continent, which is in such great need of us. Even though the mother Provinces have begun to suffer from a fall-off in vocations, the mission area has still continued to be given pride of place.

#### c) *What has been done in this connection*

Our Order has always considered that it has been called to spread the Kingdom of God to every corner of the earth with its Hospitaller mission. In the present century, and specifically in Africa, it has been making enormous efforts to consolidate its presence. Pride of place has been given to the following:

- The initiatives of certain Provinces which feel called to spread the Order throughout Africa. The first was Portugal which, in 1943, set up the first foundation in Mozambique. Other Provinces followed in the same direction subsequently.

- The Rome Missiology School. As indicated elsewhere in this paper, this was established in 1955 as a section annexed to the Spirituality School. Brother Mosé Bonardi, Superior General, was behind the idea and Brother Higinio Aparicio, his successor, further enhanced it.

A great sensitivity for the missions has been created throughout the Order and many Brothers have been able to go to the School and be properly trained to be subsequently incorporated into mission houses. Many others that were trained there did not go on the missions, but did so much to help create the right mentalities and sensitivities at home. There is no doubt that this School has been one of the main means of stepping up our missionary presence.

- The efforts made by many Provinces since the 1950s, generously giving so much material support and above all Brothers. In the space of a few years many foundations were sent up in which the Order continues to do so much important apostolic, social and health care work.
- The most important concerns have always included commitment to fostering indigenous vocations, and caring for their formation. It was particularly at the beginning of the '80s when the work was better coordinated and more systematic, coinciding with the publication of the book "The Formation of the Brothers of St John of God".
- The creation of the General Delegation of Africa was certainly a major landmark. It was not easy to bring together Brothers, Communities and Centres with different cultures and backgrounds, but after a few years in which a Brother Coordinator was responsible for managing relations between the various Centres in Africa, in 1980 under Brother Brian O'Donnell as Superior General, the Delegation was established, demonstrating universality and outreach. This was a concern that had been expressed many years earlier during the Generalate of Brother Pierluigi Marchesi.

During the years since the establishment of the General Delegation of Africa steady progress has been made to consolidate the Order on this continent in every field - formation, administration, lifestyle - yet there is still so much to be done.

- We are doing invaluable work in Africa.
- Lastly, we have opened many Communities and Centres in Africa to receive volunteers who have been helping in the hospitaller work for certain periods of time, sharing the lives of the Brothers. This cooperation has not only been positive for the Brothers and the Centres, but also for the people going there, or people making their own contributions who have derived benefit from it. This is one concrete way of putting into practice the motto of St John of God when he went begging for alms: "*Brothers, do good to yourselves*".

#### d) *The international character of the Formation Centres*

In the early days, formation was always organised in the way it had been in the Provinces. In some cases young new vocations were brought to Europe because the missionary Brothers did not consider themselves skilled in providing formation. But this decision did not achieve sound results, and faced with the lack of perseverance by the candidates, Formation Centres were opened in mission houses themselves.

Since in the early years every Community depended on a different Province and they were separated by enormous distances, each Centre had to provide the full formation cycle with all the difficulties that this entailed.

In the '70s, the first meetings were held for Brothers working in Africa to enable them to share their work and their difficulties and find ways to cooperate. These initial meetings reached their peak with the Missionary Course held in Rome in 1980, as part of the Renewal Courses in the first Sexennium of Brother Pierluigi Marchesi.

Despite this, however, the practical difficulties remained and it was impossible to find enough Formation Masters to provide adequate formation for the young men whose numbers were continually on the increase as they knocked at the doors of the Communities. At the beginning of the '80s the Castile and Aragón Provinces decided to send their novices to the Nguti Novitiate (Cameroon) which belonged to the Betica Province, opening up a new path of cooperation. Very soon the Scholastics went to Afagnan (Togo) where they began their professional nursing studies in cooperation with the Nursing School of the Hospital of San Pietro belonging to the Rome Province.

These were hesitating steps, and not without difficulty. Because of this, the General called a meeting at Afagnan (Togo) in March 1985 at which it was unanimously decided to implant the Order in Africa, encouraging and providing formation for indigenous vocations, providing the human and financial resources needed for its success. The first concrete step was to build a Novitiate at Lomé (Togo) to provide more facilities for the formation of young men, and a Scholasticate at Koforidua (Ghana). These two Centres operate at the international level to provide a standard level of formation for all candidates.

In November 1986, the first course for Formation Masters in Africa was held at Lomé (Togo) at the Novitiate House, run by Brother Valentín Riesco. It was attended by 10 Brothers, and the programmes and criteria to be used were drawn up in accordance with the book 'The Formation of the Brothers of St John of God' applied to Africa. Evaluation and programming meetings were held subsequently.

Once again in 1986, the Togo government authorised the establishment of the St John of God Nursing School at the hospital of the same name at Afagnan, where the Brothers were given formation. The School did not open until 12 December 1989, with the first 20 students. Since then it has trained 44 health care auxiliaries and 36 qualified nurses. The 1994-1997 course has 27 students. This is the first group to have been awarded officially recognised qualifications at the end of the course, because the government of the Republic of Togo gave official approval to the "St John of God" Nursing College on 26 December 1996.

Giving an international character to the Formation Centres was a very wise choice in view of the consolidation of the Order in Africa. It is also an important aspect that enriches us all, because it enables all the young Hospitallers to grow together in their vocation and is at the same time a sign of unity that Brothers from different countries and cultures and with different mentalities and ethnic backgrounds can live together in a world that is so divided asunder as ours is.

#### e) *The General Delegation of Africa*

The General Delegation began life at the Afagnan meeting in 1985 at which it was agreed to set up the General Coordination for Africa covering the following countries: Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Cameroon. The purpose was to standardise the general criteria to be used, particularly

for formation. The first Coordinator was Brother Justino Izquierdo, who was replaced in 1986 by Brother Juan Bautista Carbó.

During the four-year period of the Coordination, the bases were laid to cooperate more closely with various Centres in West Africa. It was in this period that a number of meetings were held at the headquarters of the Coordination and the Lomé Novitiate House (December 1986 and January 1988) at which the things that had already been done were confirmed and encouragement was given to proceed further.

After the 1989 Provincial Chapter, the General Curia held a meeting at Los Molinos (Madrid) with the new Provincial and missionary Brothers who had attended the Chapters. The Provincials of England and Portugal were also invited to this meeting at which it was agreed to establish the General Delegation of Africa, which had to be ratified by the various Provincial Councils. The Coordination was transformed into the General Delegation of Africa dedicated to 'St Richard Pampuri', bringing together Zambia and Mozambique. The first General Delegate was Brother Juan Bautista Carbó, who had formerly been the General Coordinator, while the Councillors appointed were Brothers Justino Izquierdo, Benoît Lokossou and Ivo Tangwa Tatah.

In those years the Delegation began laying down its objectives and standardising its criteria for Vocations Promotion and for the admission of candidates, while progress was made towards creating a common mentality, while Communities were internationalised.

It is in the area of vocations that the Delegation has made the greatest progress. In 1986, at the beginning of this period, even though the Delegation had clear ideas about how to proceed, it was difficult to see how to put them into practice. But little by little, and with the generosity of so many Brothers, the Formation Centres have been set up and brought into operation, and the agreed criteria based on the Order's Formation Book and the results of the 1986 meeting of Formation Masters are beginning to be applied. The outcome of all this has been that the Order now has 80 African Brothers and is certainly a source of great hope for the future.

#### *f) The erection of two new Provinces in Africa*

The General Delegation of Africa has very largely met up with the desires and expectations of all, and has prepared the Brothers for the erection of two new Provinces. After a consultation with all the Brothers, at the Delegation Assembly held in Lomé (Togo) on 14-19 April 1997, presided at by the Prior General, Brother Pascual Piles, after studying all the possible options suggested by the Brothers, the Assembly concluded that two Provinces would be established in Africa, based on their geographic and linguistic distribution. The English-speaking part was dedicated under the canonical title of 'Our Lady of Mercy', and comprises the Communities and Centres in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon and Zambia. The French-speaking Province, dedicated to 'St Richard Pampuri', comprises the Communities and Centres of Senegal, Togo, Benin and Mozambique.

The General Definitory, at its session held on 25 April 1997 approved the decisions adopted by the Lomé Assembly and appointed the Provincials and Provincial Councillors of the two Provinces. For the Province of 'Our Lady of Mercy' the following were appointed: Brother José Maria Viadero, Provincial, and Brother Raphael Ngong Teh, Brother Justino Izquierdo, Brother John Oppong, and Ngha Nicholas Mue, Councillors. Brothers Jesús Labarta, Leopoldo Gnami, José Maria Chavarri, Benoît Lokossou and Fiorenzo Priuli were appointed as the Provincial and Councillors of the 'St Richard Pampuri' Province.

The process leading to this decision had been fraught with difficulties, which will certainly continue in the future in view of the size, the distances and the different languages and cultures. However, the great generosity of the Brothers will continue overcoming all the shortcomings and limitations, and we are sure that this decision will give a fresh boost to the development of the Order in its apostolic work in the African continent.

#### *4. Asia: the presence of the Order in a contrasting culture*

In Asia over the past 35 years the Order has contributed so much to the Church's mission, evangelising the peoples in the developing countries. In Asia the Brothers have responded quite differently to the needs of the poor and the sick. The Order is doing much to help the implementation of national programmes and services, not competing with the government services but offering new models of care.

In the Asian countries which have few health services, the Order has emphasised community health programmes. It demands that the leaders be capable of relating to and not only working and communicating with, the groups: furthermore it asks them to be sensitive to others and to find the capacity to establish a sense of community with the poor, and even more importantly, to be imbued with the Order's charism of hospitality.

Israel: The Order came to what is now Israel in 1891. At the initiative of Brother Alfieri two hospitals were founded: one at Tantur (Jerusalem) and the other in Nazareth, with two Communities looking after the hospital and missionary apostolate. At the present time there is only the Nazareth hospital, which belongs to the Lombardy-Veneto Province.

**Japan:** The Bavarian Province set up a foundation in Kobe in 1951; at the moment it is a Provincial Delegation with two Centres. In Japan, a country which tends to value people in terms of their productivity, Christian witness through the work of our Brothers is extremely important to the Church. It is obvious in the case of its concern for people who have spent so much time in psychiatric hospitals and need longer term help and care.

The devastating earthquake of 17 January 1995 completely destroyed the residence and the Brothers' chapel and seriously damaged the Kobe-Suma Centre. Fortunately there were no deaths or serious injuries. After a very difficult initial period, the Brothers and Co-workers with the help of the Provincial from Bavaria, and some help from the government, has managed to reconstruct the buildings. The Kobe-Kita House was not affected by the earthquake.

The long-stay centre at Kobe-Suma also takes in short-term patients to convalesce from psychiatric illness and offers non-medical treatment such as hydrotherapy. By looking after so many non-Christian patients, apart from the relaxed and welcoming environment, the Brothers also offer a pastoral ecumenical programme.

The Kobe-Kita centre is a residential home for adults with serious multiple mental disorders. The programmes at the Centre aim at meeting the individual requirements of the patients.

In a country in which only 1% of the people are Christian, and with 430,000 Catholics, vocations to the religious life and the Order in particular are proportionally small. Nevertheless we are fortunate to have a number of Japanese Brothers who have already made their solemn profession.

**Viet Nam:** The Brothers of the Canadian Province reached Viet Nam in 1952 and settled in the north of the country. When the civil war broke out, the Brothers' hospital at Tan Bien (Ben Hoa City) was occupied by the State as was the Novitiate House in Da Nang City. The Canadian Brothers were forced out of Viet Nam, after which they only had indirect and sporadic contact with the Vietnamese Brothers through the French Province. This situation has recently improved and direct contact is now possible. But it is still difficult for the Church representatives, including the members of the General Government of the Order, to stay in a local Community when they visit Viet Nam because they need special authority to do so from the authorities. It is also very difficult for the indigenous Brothers to travel outside Viet Nam.

The Brothers' chapel is a meeting place where the people constantly come and go to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and the images of Our Lady, St John of God and St Richard Pampuri. Another important meeting place for the Brothers and the local Church is the tomb of an American, the much-loved Brother William Gagnon, who is buried in the cemetery near the Brothers' House at Tan Bian. Brother William was a member of the Canadian Province and the founder of the Order in Viet Nam. Together with other Canadian Brothers he was firstly a missionary in North Viet Nam and then moved to the south with the refugees when the war broke out. Brother William is remembered as an exemplary Hospitaller, and the Vietnamese people have a great devotion to him. The sick from the hospital and many other people come to pray before his grave every day. In death as in life, he is certainly very close to his Brothers and the Vietnamese people whom he loved with his whole heart and served with compassion and infinite tenderness.

Some Brothers have studied and have received diplomas in the practice of traditional oriental medicine and acupuncture. Dispensaries have been set up, particularly for the poor, as well as a traditional medicine factory which not only supplies its own dispensaries, but also the surrounding dispensaries and hospitals.

The Brothers have many volunteers to help them. There are also seven parishes with over 30 affiliates of St John of God in each parish, who visit the sick and dying in their homes. These parish groups, inspired by St John of God and the example of the Brothers, asked to become affiliated to the Order in order to share its spiritual graces and benefits. The ceremony of affiliation to the Order was held during the visit of the Prior General in 1995.

Despite countless difficulties the Brothers have managed to attract many vocations and to provide them with a sound religious-hospitaller formation. At the end of 1995 there were over 70 Hospitallers in Viet Nam. The most promising aspect for the future of the Order in Viet Nam is the fact that there is a constant flow of candidates requesting admission to the Order.

**Korea:** In 1959 the Irish Brothers set up a foundation in South Korea. Today it is a Provincial Delegation with three Centres. It has humanised the service for the mentally ill, carrying out a prophetic mission in this field of health care. They are very hopeful about the future, in view of the number of indigenous vocations.

Since the inauguration of Kwangju Hospital in 1960, the Order has been serving the poor unable to afford medical services elsewhere. In addition to this aim of serving the neediest people, there is also the ecumenical dimension, because the Brothers work very closely with the local Presbyterian hospital in catering for the impoverished sick, and very close personal relationships have been established between the two groups.

The hospital has prepared a programme to help the surrounding villages. For example, in one village where there were lepers, they carried out regular visits, the children and young people in the street were given free medical treatment, as were the residents in a centre for poor people set up by the civil authorities. For over 15 years, the Brothers, Novices and Postulants included, have worked as volunteers every day in this centre, in which 400 people used to live in subhuman conditions. The state of the mentally ill and the orphans was particularly serious. In that centre, with the permission of the local authorities, the Order set up a building to look after the mentally ill. At that time it was a pilot project.

More recently, thanks to improved living standards as a result of Korea's burgeoning economy and the introduction of social security, the poor and the rest of the population have been able to receive treatment in hospitals and dispensaries. The Brothers' dispensary specialises in dermatology, paediatrics and internal medicine, and is still sought after by many patients. The Order considers the dispensary a very important resource and a help for a home care programme for the terminally or incurably sick: a centre for terminally ill cancer patients, a programme for the elderly, and a mental hygiene service.

Thanks to the pilot project for people with mental disturbances mentioned earlier, the Order in Korea has created an innovative mental health service designed as a residential centre rather than as a psychiatric hospital. It is greatly valued in the country and is a training centre for professionals in the field. The department of education has published several books on different types of mental illness and psychological problems.

In 1984 in Chuncheon City towards the northeast of the capital, Seoul, at the invitation of the civilian authorities and the local bishop - who before he died in 1994 declared that having brought the Brothers to his diocese was one of things of which he was most proud in his ministry as bishop - the Order took responsibility for running a hostel for 150 transients. This is a project based on an agreement between the local authorities and the Order.

In 1990, at the invitation of the Archdiocese of Seoul, the Order opened a centre for young adults with learning difficulties. Due to limited resources, volunteers and university students in particular have played a major part in running training programmes for these people.

The Order in Korea knows that in order to be close to the poor and to offer them regular services, funds are needed from different sources. The Development Office has therefore been set up in order to procure funds for the charitable works of the Order. These funds are at the disposal of the Major Superior to be used at his discretion for projects for the poor, or for projects which are not financed by the government or any other entities.

**India:** There are two interesting features about the foundation of the Order in India. One is the fact that the professed Brothers in that country were formerly members of the founding team which came from the Rhineland Province (Germany) in 1969; the other is the fact that Brother Fortunatus, a member of the same pioneer group, founded a new Congregation of Sister there: the Sisters of Charity of St John of God.

The Sisters, who held their first General Chapter in 1992, work in very close cooperation with the Hospitaller Brothers.

Despite the fact that the largest Centre of the Brothers in India is a general hospital, its activity covers a huge range of activities, which includes running a home for the poor with chronic illnesses, a health centre, a home for old people, and a housing project which has provided homes for more than 1,500 poor families. The general hospital of the Brothers at Kattappana is financially independent, but some of the works of the Order in India are financed by foreign benefactors, particularly Germany. The Brothers of the General Delegation of Rhineland support the 'Indienhilfe des Hospitalordens vom Hl. Johannes von Gott e V.' Association, which cooperates with the works of the Order in India.

At Kattappana, the first foundation, the Brothers have set up a general hospital which also has a nursing school recognised by the Mahatma Gandhi University. The hospital runs a programme for auxiliaries and a free ophthalmological service which is run by volunteers who regularly visit the poor villages around.

The Pratheeksha Bhavan (House of Hope) near the hospital takes in people who are chronically ill, who receive love, friendship and care from the Sisters and Brothers working there. The House of Hope also takes in children from local poor families. It is a centre which helps families in difficult circumstances.

Poonomalle (Madras) is the headquarters of the Delegation and the Novitiate. A home for old people has also been set up there with a dispensary for poor families.

Deshgaon (Northern India) is the latest foundation of the Delegation in India. It is a health care centre. It has a dispensary with a few beds for special cases, and it also serves the surrounding villages.

There is a constant influx of young people to the Order. The Brothers are trained to keep alive the spirit of St John of God and the principles, values and philosophy of the Order, and they receive vocational training as nurses and in other branches of medicine and care.

**Philippines:** The Order had been anxious to return to go back to the Philippines for many years. This dream came true in 1987 when the Rome Province set up a Formation Centre and dispensary in Manila. The Order has a great deal to offer a country with so much diversity, with a certain amount of tension and limited possibilities.

A dispensary in a poor district of Manila provides a valuable service to the local people with a programme for TB patients which the Order opened as soon as it arrived there, doing a great deal to improve the lives of the people it cares for. In addition to this dispensary, the Brothers perform the pastoral ministry in various parts of the city with the mentally ill, old people and children with physical difficulties and learning problems.

Outside Manila, the Novitiate has been set up at Amadeo. The Order recently began running a programme for children with hearing and learning difficulties.

The Philippines is the latest foundation of the Order in Asia. Working closely with the local Church, the Order has a great deal to offer to the evangelisation of this huge continent in this country, the most Catholic in Asia, in response to the challenge thrown down by the Pope to the Asian Church but above all to the Church in the Philippines.

## 5. Oceania: New horizons of Hospitality

Like Europe and the United States, Australia and New Zealand are post-modern societies today, where religion has become a personal affair, separated from the community: individual freedom, social justice, ecology and feminism are considered by many to be much more important than going to Church. As far as the apostolate is concerned, the Brothers are withdrawing from the large institutions which in the past were citadels for the apostolate of the religious Orders and are now opting for smaller centres or individual forms of apostolate.

**Australia:** When the first Brothers of St John of God arrived here in 1947 in the Archdiocese of Sydney (Australia) they were part of the last wave of Irish missionaries to reach the Australian continent. This was at a time in which the level of care and interest for mentally sick children was very mediocre. The Brothers devoted themselves generously and with their well-grounded experience to these children. They opened three special schools and a protected workshop for mentally retarded youths and children. Their work in this field contributed greatly to the Church's evangelising work thanks to their testimony of service and self-giving to the needy, which is a fundamental part of the Christian message.

The Brothers also devoted themselves to psychiatric care at a time in which the mentally ill were simply locked up. In the Brothers' two psychiatric hospitals new methods were used: group therapy, and supervised pharmaceutical treatments for a wide range of psychiatric disorders.

The Order has just celebrated its 50 years in Australia. It has services and Centres in the two eastern States of New South Wales and Victoria.

In New South Wales, the Order runs a home for mentally disturbed children at Morisset, and two psychiatric hospitals in Sydney. In Melbourne it has a network of social and therapeutic services for the disabled.

**New Zealand:** When the first Superior of the Order in Australia left Ireland in 1947 he was given the mandate to extend the Order to the nearby independent State of New Zealand. This had to wait until 1955 when four Brothers went to Christchurch, the main city on South Island in New Zealand to open a special school for children with learning difficulties.

The school, called 'Marylands' became famous throughout New Zealand thanks to its advanced special education programmes. It operated for 28 years before being taken over by the government. Meanwhile, the Order opened a residence for adult psychiatric patients in Christchurch, and a 'home' for juvenile delinquents, many of them Maoris. In 1995, the Order took responsibility for an old people's home which had previously been run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. This residence is at Hastings, on North Island.

In New Zealand, the Order is presently responsible for old people and rehabilitation services for the physically disabled. It also helps transients, above all young people. Its main centres are the St John of God Hospital for the Elderly and the St John of God - Holy Family Hostel at Hastings. At Christchurch it also has a centre for young transients. Throughout these years, several New Zealanders have joined the Order and serve in Australia and Papua-New Guinea.

**Papua-New Guinea:** The population of Papua-new Guinea is around three million. Half of the population is Christian, and half the Christians are Catholics. Being such a mountainous land,

evangelisation had to be divided up into different departments, with different Christian denominations focusing on particular parts of the country. Most of the denominations accepted this situation in the colonial period, but recently the Christian churches have moved beyond their original political and natural confines. The Melanesian culture has no history whatever of the religious and priestly life.

The Brothers of St John of God reached Papua-New Guinea in 1971. They went to work with the children with psychiatric problems and in social need in an institution at the capital, Port Moresby. In 1976 the Order reached the mountainous village of Kamina where the Brothers opened a dispensary and thereby fostered the development of the people through education, agriculture and other initiatives. The Brothers withdrew from Kamina in 1994, and moved to the Novitiate at Port Moresby.

In Papua-New Guinea most of the indigenous Brothers are undergoing formation. However the Order also runs a home for young needy people in Hohola (Port Moresby) and a centre for alcoholics and drug addicts at Goroka. The members of the Order carry out their pastoral ministry at a health centre at Raihu (Aitape). At Port Moresby the Brothers supervise and organise a workshop for lepers.

There are several professed Brothers from New Zealand and the number of candidates in the initial formation phases remains constant. The Scholasticate is at Aitape where the Brothers are trained to run the dispensaries. The Order is also in charge of a centre to treat drug addicts and alcoholics at Goroka, belonging to the Episcopal Conference.

The way the Order expresses Hospitality in Papua-New Guinea has been an original contribution to the evangelising efforts of the Church to show the full range of Christian values, especially mercy and service to the sick and to people with learning and physical difficulties.

**PRESENT MISSIONARY DEMANDS FOR THE LIFE OF THE ORDER**

*1. The vocation of the Brother of St John of God lived with a missionary spirit*

All baptised Christians are called to be evangelisers and witnesses to the Kingdom of God. *"The whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God."* (EN 59). However, there is a diversity of services in the unity of the same mission (Cf. EN 66).

John Paul II, in his Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, emphasises the fecundity and wealth of the Institutes of the Religious Life at the service of evangelisation. He specifically urges the Institutes of the active life, whether or not they pursue a strictly missionary purpose, to work for the spread of the Kingdom of God. *"The Church needs to make known the great gospel values of which she is the bearer. No one witnesses more effectively to these values than those who profess the consecrated life "* (RMi 69).

For us, as Brothers of St John of God *"the authentic meaning of our life is to make Christ present in our apostolate of charity, which invites us to devote our whole being to the evangelisation of the poor and the sick"* (DCG 5.6; Cf. Const. 1984, 2b, 5). This means that we are called to keep alive the missionary spirit at all times, and to practise it in the announcing of the Gospel 'ad gentes', constantly increasing our presence in mission lands (Cf. Const.1984, 48) in order to be witnesses to the merciful love of the Father for the sick and needy wherever they are in the world.

Keeping alive the missionary spirit following our Founder means, and demands:

*a) That we must live and joyfully express our identity and Hospitaller consecration*

Our mission is manifested primarily through our way of life. Being fully identified with our Hospitaller consecration, we show that God is the absolute value of our lives, and that to do his will is our ultimate criterion of life. By welcoming, listening to and caring for anyone in need, we express the experience of the merciful love of the Father and our own capacity to love.

Nurtured every day through our meeting with God (in personal prayer, the Eucharist, the liturgy of the hours, etc.) our faith must lead us to the commitment to our hospitaller mission (Cf. DCG 5.4). *"The consecrated life eloquently shows that the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, giving even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers"* (VC 76; Cf. EN 69).

*"Hospitality, which we have received as a gift, means that we must live our brotherhood with simplicity"* (Const.1984, 36b). We are called to be:

- communities of life,
- witnesses to communion in a divided world,
- communities living fraternity and brotherhood in the environments which they live (Cf. DCG 5.5.1).

Creating fraternity in our communities is a priority commitment of our hospitaller mission.

b) *Being witnesses of Christ*

*"The specific contributions of consecrated persons, both men and women, to evangelisation is first of all the witness of a life given totally to God and to their Brothers and Sisters" (VC 76). The Brothers of St John of God, following in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth who went through the world doing good to all (Cf. Acts 10:38) "and healing every disease and every infirmity" (Mt: 4:23) and of St John of God who "devoted himself totally to serving the poor and the sick..." (Const.1984, 1), cooperate in the salvation of man and the world: through our presence and by being close to others, respecting and ensuring that the rights of the person are always respected, offering the necessary means for providing comprehensive care, making the sick or needy person the focus of interest of our own hospitaller apostolate, announcing the Gospel explicitly, and allowing ourselves to be evangelised by those who are most radically poor (Cf. POE 37).*

c) *Total self-giving to God and total readiness to serve man and society*

*"Thanks to their consecration they are eminently willing and free to leave everything and to go and proclaim the Gospel even to the ends of the earth" (EN 69; Cf. RMI 69). In effect our hospitaller vocation demands our total readiness to be present in any situation in which any sick or needy person requires us. This not only applies to going out to what are known as mission lands, but to go to any situation in which the Order is present.*

d) *Inculturation, ecumenism and universality*

These are three essential elements to keep our missionary spirit alive. We must draw close to different cultures with the idea of respect, appreciation and welcome, trying to take them on ourselves, overcoming defensive approaches or wishing to impose ourselves which is inconsistent with the Gospel (Cf. VC 79, 80). Universality must ensure that we are always willing to promote the culture of dialogue and solidarity between peoples, institutions and individual persons, on the basis of pluralism and respect for all of them. Ecumenism, according to the invitation of Vatican II, is an increasingly demanding call to dialogue and cooperation between different religions. *"[Inter-religious] dialogue is a path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father" (RMI 57; Cf. VC 101).*

e) *Adequate preparation and formation*

Our hospitaller mission demands *"human, theological and professional training, which is an indispensable prerequisite for us to be able to offer the sick and any person in need the efficient service they deserve and have a right to expect from us."* (Const.1984, 43). It is evident that this requirement has specific features depending upon the places in which our mission is performed and the persons for whom we care. Nevertheless it is desirable and necessary for us to have an adequate level of personal maturity and a solid grounding in spirituality in the broad sense of the term in order to be able to live the hospitaller consecration with self-giving and a missionary spirit.

f) *Living in communion with the Order and with the missionary Church*

Sensitivity, concern and communion with and for the missionary works of the Order and the Church are the unmistakable and necessary expression of our missionary commitment. Personal and community

prayer, solidarity and cooperation with the missionary works and their promotion, within the limits of our possibilities, are requirements that we must all take upon ourselves. Incorporated into our own reality and allowing ourselves to be questioned and prompted by it, we must embody the Gospel, feeling united to the whole Order and in communion with the universal Church. *"Only profound love for the Church can sustain the missionary's zeal. For every missionary, fidelity to Christ cannot be separated from fidelity to the Church"* (RMi 89).

## 2. Missionary animation, a challenge to our Communities

Our Communities, as a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world, must take on missionary animation and its projection 'ad gentes' with the same care and concern that every vital and immediate activity requires, based on the radical experience of the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, as a sign and testimony that we have been **sent** to set up the Kingdom of God, as the ultimate end of all evangelising work.

- God the Father **sent** his only Son to restore harmonious relations between man and his Creator thereby to uplift men to participate in the divine life according to the plans of God himself (Cf. Jn 12:49; 6-9; 1 Jn 4:9-10). *"To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption."* (LG 3).
- Christ **sent** the group which made up the Church with the specific mission of transmitting to all mankind the Good News of the Redemption in all times and in all places (Cf. Mk 16:15, Jn 20:21; Lk 24:46; Heb 1:8). *"As the Son was sent by the Father, so He too sent the Apostles ... The Church has received this solemn mandate of Christ to proclaim the saving truth from the apostles and must carry it out to the very ends of the earth."* (LG 17).
- The Community therefore **sends** its members, by virtue of their membership of the Church of which it forms part, to announce and make present the Good News of Christ following its own charism, thereby sharing its mission. Fidelity to the mandate which the Church has received from Our Lord, we therefore maintain the missionary spirit and animation as a personal and community responsibility (Cf. Const.1984, 48 and G.S. 58).
- The missionary animation of our Communities is performed with a continuous attitude of promoting and keeping alive the missionary spirit of our Order through what we call 'forms of missionary cooperation' (Cf. RMi 77 *et seq.*; G.S. 59), which we may sum up as follows:
  - Witness of life by evangelical radicalism in every expression of community life (the life of faith and prayer, life of brotherhood and apostolic service);
  - Participation in the mission through prayer, sacrifice and pastoral practice with the sick and needy in our Centres in order to instruct them regarding the Paschal value of pain united to the pain of Christ;
  - Keeping abreast of the missionary reality of the Church in general and the specific missions of our Order;
  - Showing concern, promoting and helping the formation of missionary vocations;
  - Cooperating by providing material and financial help to mission Centres and Communities;
  - Urging our Co-Workers to provide their professionalism and their experience of the faith to participate in missionary tasks, both for specific ventures and on a permanent basis;
  - Cultivating continuing formation, at the personal and community level, in order to make us aware of the implications and the development of our missionary commitment;

- Coordinating initiatives using all the means that the Order has created for missionary animation and promotion.

The experience of missionary animation in our Communities will be a sign of maturity in the faith, of our Consecrated Life centred around Christ and committed to promoting and saving all mankind, thereby building up the Kingdom of God in the world (Cf. RMI 77).

### *3. The Missionary Animation Charter*

This document came out of the meeting of the Missions Secretariat held in Rome in May 1984.

In its Introduction it analysed the history of the Order in the mission lands and the need to set up the General Missions Secretariat. It continued by setting out the attitudes required for mission: a spirit of service, a capacity to adapt and readiness to listen. It recalled that all of us are involved in this mission directly or indirectly, which means that we must revise the motives of our vocation and at the same look at the missionary reality as a space for evangelisation and commitment for the promotion of the person.

Following the Church's documents on missionary action, the Constitutions and the Statutes, the Charter took up the substance and the lines of action for missionary animation and practice within the Order. It recalled that the environment for missionary animation by the Brothers of St John of God is manifested in two complementary activities: the mission 'ad gentes' and missionary animation within the Order. This is most effective where the Brothers on the mission stimulate the Communities and other authorities within the Order by visits. At the same time, even though by virtue of our religious consecration we are all responsible for this animation, there should be certain Brothers specifically devoted to missionary animation and Communities must cooperate closely with them.

It mentions the following actions inter alia:

- annual, Provincial and Interprovincial meetings in order to keep up the interest in the missions;
- including missionary issues in initial and continuing formation programmes;
- sensitising Co-workers, the local Church and other authorities.

The Missionary Animation Charter did the following for the Order:

- It shed light on this dimension of the hospitaller vocation, laying down avenues of reflection for the future. Missions Week was the result of it, and was started in a number of Provinces until gradually it extended to most of the Order;
- The Order grew in its sensitivity to missionary realities leading to greater solidarity, the communication of goods and the provision of resources;
- It filled a void at the time, emphasising the need to draft a more precise missionary policy for the whole Order.

### *4. The principles on which we wish to work*

On the eve of the Third Millennium, the Order drawing on its essential foundations and taking up the call of the Church to the New Evangelisation, looks hopefully towards the future attempting to respond

generously to the needs of suffering humankind: *"The St. John of God Brother's field of action in the new evangelisation: to be a witness of Christian concern for the whole person, which we have called humanisation, to be a witness of solidarity with the poor, the sick and the emarginated, to be a brother of those who suffer."* (DCG 4.1).

Since every situation in which we live has its own particular features, when we decide on any particular evangelising task we must discern how to perform it creatively, always faithful to our charism (Cf. Const.1984, 6). However there are a number of fundamental criteria which are indicated below:

a) *Hospitality: the central core of our life*

*"The reason for our existence in the Church is to live and manifest the charism of hospitality in the spirit of Saint John of God."* (Const.1984, 1).

Hospitality is the core of our lives through which *"The Holy Spirit ... enables us to carry out the mission of proclaiming and bringing about the Kingdom among the poor and the sick."* (Const.1984, 2) and we participate in the founding experience which our own Founder experienced. It is a gift of God that we must renew every day in our meeting with Him and in our self-giving to our Brothers. It keeps us alert and animates us to live in a constant state of conversion, to take on and practise the same attitudes and actions of Jesus and St John of God which they embodied in the world of the sick and the deprived, and offered effective remedies for their total liberation (Cf. POE 63).

The experience of God's mercy stimulates us to give ourselves wholly to God and to make ourselves fully available for serving any needy person, wherever they may be, to announce to them the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

b) *The healing mission of the Church through the Order*

As followers of Jesus we have committed ourselves to evangelising and bearing witness to his mission of healing and liberating in the world of suffering, living and practising the Gospel of mercy. *"The Church looks with admiration and gratitude upon the many consecrated persons who, by caring for the sick and the suffering, contribute in a significant way to her mission"* (VC 83).

Being faithful to the most original tradition of the Order we must place at the centre of our concerns suffering mankind, to whom we minister comprehensively, thereby extending in time the healing work of Christ. We place special interest in providing spiritual care in addition to physical, psychological and social care (Cf. VC 83).

c) *Evangelisation, humanisation and human development and promotion*

True evangelisation must always be accompanied by a specific commitment to men and women. For us, the challenge is to transform care and treatment into authentic acts of evangelisation. Humanisation and evangelisation must form an indivisible whole because *"where there is no charity God is not there - even though God is everywhere"* (LB 15).

Our commitment requires us to ensure that our care is of the highest calibre, using the best and the very latest techniques, filled with charity and gentleness. This is the twin combination which the Order, ever since the time of St John of God, has tried to maintain in order to perform the mission of charity and ministering to the sick.

The advancement of man has always been a challenge to our mission. Wherever we are we shall find specific concrete features that must be contemplated. Wherever poverty is greatest and resources are scarcest, our action must be performed in solidarity with this situation, using proportional resources and applying simple but effective programmes.

In our commitment to the promotion of man we run the risk of being concerned either solely or preferentially with social issues, with efficiency, neglecting the dimension of witnesses of the love of Christ which is the ultimate purpose of our vocation. Another risk is that we do not pay enough attention to science and technology whereas we should promote dialogue between both, in order to show that science and technology can contribute towards the humanisation of the world to the extent that they are imbued with the knowledge and love of God (Cf. DCG 4.3).

#### d) *Universal welcome and inculturation*

These are two essential principles in the performance of our mission that we must care for and cultivate. The Order has never discriminated in any way in its apostolic mission. Any sick or needy person is the beneficiary of our care. However, knowing our limitations, with St John of God we say: *"I am also very unhappy when I see so many poor people (who are my brothers and neighbours) suffering and in great need in both body and soul, and I cannot help them"* (2 GL 8).

In any place, and to every needy person we must always draw close, showing solidarity with them in whatever situation, pursuing the path that Jesus took who, while God, became man and shared our own reality (Cf. Phil 2:6). We must draw close to cultures with great respect, with due preparation and formation, respecting their ideas, styles and beliefs. This is the only way in which we can show the mercy and love which God has for all mankind. *"The Synod considers inculturation to be a priority and an emergency in the life of the particular Churches in order to ensure that the Gospel can be truly rooted in Africa; a demand of evangelisation; a path towards full evangelisation; one of the greatest challenges facing the Church in the continent on the eve of the Third Millennium"* (EA 59).

#### e) *In cooperation with the Church, with other institutions, and receptive and open to inter-religious dialogue*

In the world, and particularly within the sphere of our own mission, we are not alone. This is why we are receptive to cooperation with other institutions, in and outside the Church, working for the sick and the poor, provided that we are able to perform our mission in its fullness. Groups and entities with which cooperation is possible include religious Congregations, Church associations and those belonging to other creeds, social organisations and public administrations.

This open and collaborative spirit is something that we must enhance as far as possible with ecclesial institutions. In the same way we must encourage inter-religious dialogue because *"inter-religious dialogue is part of the Church's evangelising mission. Institutes of consecrated life cannot exempt*

*themselves from involvement in this field, each in accordance with its own charism and following the directives of ecclesiastical authority"* (VC 102; Cf. RMi 55). On this point Brothers working in the mission lands must be particularly prepared and trained in order to perform this ecumenical mission.

f) *The prophetic dimension of our hospitaller mission*

*"In our world, where it often seems that the signs of God's presence have been lost from sight, a convincing prophetic witness on the part of consecrated persons is increasingly necessary"* (VC 85). Religious have always occupied a frontline position in the Church's mission (Cf. EN 69).

Our Order has always given clear signs of prophetic witness, very often with the humble and generous offering in daily service to the sick and with other acts of denunciation and defending the rights of the poor and the sick in unjust situations. The presence of so many Brothers in frontier areas alongside the sick and the marginalised, and the witness of martyrdom which many of them have given is the best expression of the prophetic reality of the Order.

At the present time it is necessary to take up this legacy and make it bear fruit, with personal and community witness on the part of all of us who make up the Order. Here are a number of points to be borne in mind:

- Our prophetic witness is based on our lifestyle, in the way we relate to one another, the values which give a meaning to our existence and ultimately in the way we are, in order to demonstrate the central and absolute value of God as an alternative to a society which shifts God and man from the centre of life. This requires that we should live a personal and community style of simple and austere life, not succumbing to the temptation to do what is easy and pleasurable, to exercise solidarity and show commitment to the weakest, to take up a critical stand in relation to unjust structures and institutions. These are attitudes that we must take on and cultivate personally and as a community, in order to remain true to our prophetic inheritance.
- We feel committed to ensuring that the rights of the person to be born, to live decently, to be looked after in sickness and to die with dignity are always respected (Cf. Const.1984, 23) acting as the voice of the voiceless, so that human dignity is recognised everywhere and man is placed at the heart of every activity (Cf. EA 70).  
*"The Church reminds consecrated men and women that a part of their mission is to evangelise the health care centres in which they work, striving to spread the light of Gospel values to the way of living, suffering and dying of the people of our day. They should endeavour to make the practice of medicine more human and increase their knowledge of bioethics at the service of the Gospel of life"* (VC 83).
- We are called to identify with those who suffer, with the marginalised, as Jesus did with the weakest. Under present circumstances, even though by tradition our Brothers have almost always performed our mission in our own Centres, we must also be willing to perform the mission outside our Centres, particularly in places where the presence of Co-workers guarantees faithfulness to the essential values of the Order, and where the stability of the Centre does not present any specific difficulties.
- Even though wherever poverty, sickness and suffering exists are appropriate places for us to live and practise the Gospel of mercy, we must also give a particular pride of place to the poorest sick and the abandoned (Cf. VC 83) whom we are called to welcome and care for with greatest urgency. The homeless, the terminally ill, AIDS patients, drug addicts, emigrants, the old, the chronic sick. If we look towards the mission lands, we will see new emergencies: endemic poverty, diseases that have not yet

been eradicated (malaria, leprosy, polio, parasite diseases, etc.) with the mentally sick left to their own devices, the aftermath of war, refugees and displaced persons.

g) *In communion with our Co-Workers*

Following the instructions of the Church, our Order is boldly endeavouring to build up a positive relationship with our Co-workers. The document 'Brothers and Co-workers united to serve and promote life' (1992) contains the doctrinal and pastoral guidelines for working on this project.

It is a gift to the Church and to the Order that so many of our Co-workers (Employees, Volunteers, Benefactors) participate in our charism and our mission, and make up the Hospitaller Family. In communion with them we perform our apostolic mission (Cf. VC 54).

This is something which is bound to be developed in future. There are so many possibilities, based on the respect for the identity of each one. At the last General Chapter our Co-workers considered the possibility of forming part of the Order's mission:

*"The representatives of the co-workers, while expressing appreciation for the Order's commitment to review and renovate its life and its manner of operating in order to meet the needs of the age, consider that the incorporation of the co-workers in the Order's mission is important, necessary and vital today"* (Declarations of the LXIII GC, p. 82).

It is necessary to boldly boost new projects and enhance those that already exist in which the Brothers are pioneers and animators and the Co-workers accept and promote undertakings on behalf of the most needy. There are many experiments in this direction which must be used as a guide for other new ones.

h) *The mission 'ad gentes'*

In reality everything that has been said above applies equally to the presence of the Order in different places in the mission lands, with all the necessary adaptation this implies. Nevertheless we would like to emphasise the call which the Church is making to the religious life for the mission 'ad gentes'.

*"The task of the consecrated life is to work in every part of the world in order to consolidate and expand the Kingdom of Christ, bringing the proclamation of the Gospel even to the most far off regions (VC 78; Cf. LG 44). Responding to this call, the Order is present in all five continents, having made a major effort in the latter part of this century to become implanted in Africa, Asia and Oceania.*

Much has already been done, and the missionary Brothers are real witnesses to the whole of the Order. It is necessary to establish closer relations in order to share, exchange and ultimately enrich ourselves mutually. There are many things that we could do for our missionary Brothers, and there is much that we can receive from them and from the people to whom they minister.

All the Brothers must feel committed to the evangelising mission of the Order with our prayers, by being close to them, and also with our readiness to perform our hospitaller commitment in mission lands.

#### *5. The New Hospitality: the New Evangelisation in the manner of St John of God*

We might begin by recalling what the LXIII General Chapter of the Order told us about the way in which we perceive the New Hospitality:

*"New Hospitality is a movement in which, above all else, that looks into the Order's most intimate identity. In the first place, it affirms that evangelisation takes priority over all the other tasks of the Order. It is not a "new charism", nor its adaptation to society's prevailing system of values. Its novelty is not in the substance of the charism, which is unchanging, but in living and manifesting in today's society, the gift we inherited from John of God. We do this with language, gestures and apostolic methods that respond to the needs and expectations of men and women who suffer because of illness, age, emargination, disability, poverty and isolation."* (Declarations of the LXIII General Chapter).

Talking of the New Hospitality leads us directly to ask a question: How are we, as an Order, responding to our mission today?

Our apostolic mission is leading us to define and implement a project of Hospitality according to the spirit of St John of God: *thinking of the sick and needy, practised with our Co-workers, in a spirit of service to contemporary society.*

Historically, and at the present time, our evangelising mission has always directed us to an infinitude of sick and marginalised people for whom we care: the sick of old and the new sick, the socially marginalised who fail to keep pace with the society to which they belong; in the developed and in the developing countries, those with many resources and those with primary health care and medicine alone.

The contribution of the Order's mission is extremely relevant in all of the places in which we are, both to complement and to take part in providing the services which are organised by society today, or to act where these do not exist.

In recent years we have very often asked ourselves about where we should be present, and in reply the Order has established a number of preferential options.

In the document of our last General Chapter 'The New Evangelisation and Hospitality on the Portals of the Third Millennium' the preferential choices are set out in Part 5.6.1.: the homeless, the terminally ill, the AIDS victims, drug addicts, migrants, the old, persons living in states of chronic sickness and distress.

Through the service we provide in itself and the way in which it is performed, our Centres are environments in which the mercy of Jesus Christ is lived and practised for the sick and the needy, with a project of care that is grounded on the Gospel and in the following of St John of God and the tradition of the Order. In this mission, the Brothers take part with other believers, members of the laity, Sisters and priests and our Co-workers who bear within them the seeds of the Kingdom, and make them germinate, even if they are unaware of it, as the Council reminds us, and with all those with whom we are called to joyfully share our mission.

From this stem a number of conclusions that we must bear very clearly in mind when practising our pastoral mission:

1. Those of us who make up St John of God Centres must feel united in serving and promoting life, offering human, professional and spiritual values to a common project.
2. Those of us who are Christians are called to enrich this project with the spiritual experience of the God who saves, who is a friend, who wishes the good of all, and whom we have to hand on as an experience to our companions at work and to the sick and needy.
3. Far from being a pressure group, Christians are called to form a Church-Communion in the St John of God Centres, in our places of work, through what we say and how we live our lives, even though we may have different criteria and belong to different sectors of the Church. It will never be easy to reach this sense of Communion, but we must strive to create and live our reality as the domestic Church.
4. One of the great tasks of our pastoral mission will be to manifest quite simply our faith to our companions with the sweet taste that the experience of faith gives our lives, consistently with the Gospel, reaching out to establish friendship and understanding with all those who do not think or believe the way we do.
5. Another great task of our pastoral mission is to try to bring the good, merciful Christ, the Good News, close to the sick and needy, who have sometimes turned their backs on God and perhaps live in a situation which causes them to rebel against the ill fate that they have had in their lives.

We are called to be the Good News. We must be the Good News in an attitude of respect for the being of each one, in communion with the local Church, and be ecumenically open to different denominations and confessions, drawing on our own charism.

We know that we belong to a world in which people are asking many questions about the meaning of life, about the fate that has befallen them and about the goodness of God.

The Order is present where no one has ever heard of Jesus Christ, sharing our lives with Muslim, Hindu, Confucianist and Animist cultures. The fact that our mission is not that to directly proclaim the Word means that we realise that our contribution to the Kingdom is to practise signs of Church with our service, even though perhaps others may not know how to read them or may even misinterpret them.

The service to the sick and needy and the pastoral ministry we perform in our Centres, in cooperation with Sisters, priests and the laity, is the way of cooperating with the local Church, completing with our charity work what the priests, Brothers, Sisters and catechists are doing with the word, supporting with the actions of our lives the saving presence of Jesus Christ:

*"Our hospitaller life within the Church is based on the person and actions of Jesus who, in the course of his earthly life, showed a special preference for the sick, the poor and the humble" (Const.1984, 41b).*

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