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### 02. The Provisional Rule of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary

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## **The Provisional Rule of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary (1840-1845)**

*Below are some extracts from the Provisional Rule that François Libermann wrote in Rome while he was waiting for Vatican approval for the projected "Work for the Black People". This original text was corrected and modified at La Neuville during the first years of the existence of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary and was finally printed in 1845. It was never officially approved by the Holy See but it encapsulates the missionary vision of Libermann which he later harmonised with the much older rule of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in 1849<sup>1</sup>.*

### **Part I, Chapter 1**

#### **The Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary, its aim and the means of attaining it**

- 1) The congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary is a family of priests who, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and sent by Him, dedicate themselves completely to announcing his Gospel and to setting up his reign amongst those who are the poorest and most neglected in the Church of God. The following articles flow from this:

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<sup>1</sup> This volume appeared in printed form in October of 1849, under the title, "Regulations of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, under the invocation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, intended to explain the spirit of our Constitutions, to assure the perfect fulfilment of the duties they impose on its members and to determine the details of its organisation and administration". The full text can be found in N.D. X, pp.450-569.

- 2) They must see themselves as Apostles sent by Our Lord, Jesus Christ. For this reason, they must announce everywhere the holy maxims of His Gospel and engrave them deeply on their own hearts; make known its holy mysteries and the commandments of God to those who do not know them; bring back to Him the souls who have gone astray and feed those who are on the right road with His love and sanctity.
- 3) They must not forget that if they are establishing the love and the reign of Jesus Christ in others, they must first of all establish them in their own hearts, as firmly and perfectly as possible.
- 4) Their divine Master is sending them to the poorest of people; therefore, they will only take on missions amongst the most neglected and abandoned.
- 5) They will be totally committed to these poor people, seeing themselves as their servants, having no other thought, desire, or concern than the salvation of their souls.
- 6) They will consider themselves as totally unworthy and incapable of carrying out such a lofty vocation on their own. They will place all their trust in the Master who is sending them and do everything possible to conform perfectly to the great plans that God has prepared for them.
- 7) They must live closely united to Our Lord, Jesus Christ, seeing him as their superior, their sovereign master and their chief. They will stand before him as good disciples, ready to listen to him and carry out his orders in all things. They will obey him with love and trust and live like children who want to please him in everything and to glorify him everywhere and always.

- 8) Their life will be a life of faith, united to Our Lord, Jesus Christ. He will be for them the source, the principle and the soul of all their works. He will be their light, their virtue and their love. They must love him in all things, and love all things in him and for him.
- 9) They will learn to appreciate the incomprehensible sanctity of their Master, and do all within their power to reproduce it in their own person, imitating his virtues to the highest possible degree. They must never feel they have done enough until people see in them and in their lives the One who has sent them, their holy, loveable and gentle Master, Jesus Christ.
- 10) They must become so filled with the spirit of holiness of Jesus, and act so much under the influence of his grace, that their words and actions will convey this same holiness to all those with whom they come into contact.

## **Part I, Chapter 2**

### **To whom is the Congregation consecrated?**

- 1) Primarily, the Congregation is consecrated to the Holy Trinity. The whole reason for its existence is to establish firstly, the glory of the Trinity in its members, and then amongst all those people with whom they come in contact, particularly those to whom they are directed by the Holy Trinity.
- 2) Secondly, we belong and are totally consecrated to Our Lord, Jesus Christ. We have been given to Him by His Father to carry out the work that He wishes. It is He who sends us to this part of His vineyard; it is He who gives us

His grace and strength. We must also work exclusively according to His plans and under His direction.

- 3) These first two consecrations are essential for all types of apostolate. What distinguishes us from the other workers in the vineyard of the Lord is the special consecration of our Society, its members and its works to the Holy Heart of Mary. Her heart is eminently apostolic, on fire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. For us, she is a perfect model of apostolic zeal and an abundant and ever-flowing spring for our inspiration. We turn to her with complete confidence, knowing that she will gain unceasing help for us and our work.