Money, Providence, and Spiritan Mission

Jean-Marc Sierro
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The Congregation made its mark with remarkable missionary momentum all through the evolution of the church since the nineteenth century. Though seldom discussed, the financial aspect of this development was essential and omnipresent.

Even today, finances concretely condition and enable action on the ground. Thus, in order to understand the current financial state of the Congregation, and especially the dynamics in which it is engaged from a management point of view, it must be viewed in the context of the recent evolution of the Congregation and of the Church and society more broadly. In the last thirty or forty years, the Congregation has undergone three major transitions. The first was demographic, with the center of gravity shifting from the Global North to the Global South.¹ The second was structural, with the exercise of authority and leadership passing from European missionaries to confreres of the new circumscriptions. Finally, the third transition was financial, witnessing the decline of mission funding by churches and donor circuits of the confreres of the North.

A characteristic of the demographic transition is its inevitable acceleration, owing to the simple fact that aging is slow at first, then accelerates. We age less quickly between the ages of thirty and fifty than we do between seventy and ninety. The confreres of the North stayed at their posts as long as they could, then departures accelerated. This phase has been nearly complete for over a decade.

Structural transition is always difficult, for no one is willing to question long-standing, proven modes of operating that change may destabilize. The most senior confreres exercised their responsibilities as long as they could remain in office. Their accelerated departure often left circumscriptions without truly experienced leaders, seeing that the transition was not really prepared for. Some confreres with little experience had to assume responsibility. Currently we are seeing the emergence of new superiors who have had experience with circumscription councils and animation and the exercise of authority at various levels of the circumscription. They also have not lived through the frequently conflictual transitional phase. Now that the demographic and structural transition is almost...
These new leaders realize that the destiny of their circumscription is really in their hands.

The third major shift, the financial transition, lags slightly behind the other two, because confreres of the North, once returned to their home circumscriptions, continued to help the circumscriptions of the South, raising funds through their various networks. Established self-help channels continued to exist for some time; in some cases, circumscription reserves helped to cushion some of the shock of the transition.

These three transitions allow us to outline some features of the Congregation’s current situation from a financial standpoint.

Circumscriptions in the North are experiencing a threefold challenge. First, the society that could once be described as Christian is no longer so, or only minimally. The missionary drive of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries no longer exists. As a result, gifts and inheritances that were essential for missionary life at that time have become insignificant and no longer make it possible to finance missionary activity. The confreres no longer have vibrant and lively parish communities behind them providing support.

Second, the relations networks of confreres, and so of the circumscriptions themselves, have aged along with them. As these networks dwindled, their support also decreased considerably.

Finally, resources are declining, to the point that some circumscriptions are in difficult financial situations. Revenues in northern circumscriptions came mainly from support networks and parishes (ties that need to be maintained through contacts and events, etc.), but also from works, and more recently, from pensions of retirees and the salaried work of confreres in parishes and various organizations. With the diminishing work capacity of aging confreres and the financial difficulties of the churches in the North, income is no longer sufficient for the life of the circumscriptions, especially since the care of older and sick confreres is becoming more and more demanding. As a result, circumscriptions are seeing their real estate patrimony diminish, to such an extent that we must consider the prospect of no longer having enough to live on in the next ten or fifteen years.
Circumscriptions in the South face other challenges. As a result of transitions experienced by the Congregation, they inherited structures (buildings, works) and mission territories that required a certain amount of financial resources to sustain, at a time when those resources no longer exist. The churches and the local population often do not have the means to help priests and support their works.

In order to operate, the circumscriptions face many expenses: the training of seminarians, which is expensive and consumes a large part of the resources; the structures of formation; frequent and costly travel for students, those on oversees experience, confreres on missionary appointment, meetings of the Unions, international meetings, confreres’ vacations, etc. The provincial administration must also find resources for its own functioning.

Finally, for lack of means, certain circumscriptions are unable to accept positions of first evangelization or ministries for which the local church cannot find anyone, which is nevertheless an essential part of our charism. In many circumscriptions, the only regular income comes from parishes, particularly urban parishes. This is not without its problems, as diocesan clergy often wish to take over these parishes themselves. There is a “competition” which puts our status as “missionaries” in question.

Conclusion on the Financial Situation of the Congregation

One of the first consequences of this triple transition is that the assistance provided by Cor Unum and the personal contribution to the general administration will decrease quite rapidly in the future. In addition, the northern circumscriptions need the solidarity of those in the South to continue the Spiritan mission, which still has its place in their countries.

In the South, many circumscriptions are almost in a state of re-founding. The changes have been such that they have to be almost completely rebuilt. For this, they must begin with the foundations: establish the bases of their subsistence, and gradually structure their institutions and their action. One cannot start a building on the first floor\(^2\) - one cannot have more students than confreres.

In the current global environment, this overhaul includes, among other things, self-reliance projects, the establishment of a network of benefactors, and the
establishment of a network of NGOs and funding agencies.\textsuperscript{3}

Such is our assessment of the current financial situation of the Congregation. To contemplate the future, we must deepen the analysis and identify the challenges that await the Congregation in view of its evolution and that of the church.

**Cultures and Governance**

The triple transition mentioned above occurred within the context of a much more fundamental trend: the shift from a movement-oriented Congregation, the “go ye afar,” the \textit{ad extra} mission, to a Congregation connected to local churches, immersed in them, where the missionary spirit must be brought. The Congregation was founded in the context of a geographically expanding church, and today we live in a church with a large presence in the world, with vibrant local churches and flourishing vocations, with this paradox, that the northern churches that initiated the missionary movement are in sharp decline, while young churches are growing vigorously.

From a material, administrative point of view, this has important consequences, particularly for governance, in the areas of entrepreneurial culture and financial management.

The gravitational shift of the Congregation - and of the Church - from the North to the South has led to considerable changes, particularly in the cultural sphere. This observation is not extraordinary and seems to state an obvious reality, but curiously, this issue of interculturality has received little attention in current thought. We may talk about it within international and intercultural communities, but it is not really a priority topic of reflection and even less an element of the Congregation’s strategic thinking and animation.

However, there are fundamental issues in the wake of the transitions experienced by the Congregation.

**Precarity and Security**

From an anthropological viewpoint, a culture is a set of representations, beliefs, and behaviors developed by a human group to adapt to its environment. This simple definition will suffice for our purposes. Of all the approaches to analysis of culture, one model seems particularly interesting: that of Clair Michalon, who situates cultures not in the usual terms of “tradition” or “modernity,” but on an axis that runs from “precarity” to “security.”
Each human group has an unconscious purpose, a fundamental task: to ensure its preservation and reproduction. In precarious societies, survival is not guaranteed because material and human resources are limited and uncertain. The group must be united, and all must work for the common good. Children, the sick and the elderly—in other words, those who are not autonomous and cannot fully contribute to the subsistence of the group—must be cared for. Natural disasters, poor harvests, epidemics, conflict, can quickly put everything in question and endanger the whole group. Social control must be very strong.

In security societies, institutions were gradually set up to reduce this precarity and ensure the future: pensions for the elderly, insurance against illness, accidents, unemployment, improved health, etc. Society has become more complex and specialized, and the accumulation of wealth secures the future. When the preservation and reproduction of the social group is assured, the main concern becomes the improvement of the standard of living.

Absolute security hardly exists, nor does absolute precarity, except in the case of violent and lasting conflicts with large displacements of the population.

This model of analysis makes it possible to locate all human groups somewhere along the axis from precarity to security.

“On this axis, it is fairly easy to place certain social groups in the” precarious zone,” particularly groups from Africa. On the other hand, Asian societies are probably in a middle zone, full of uncertainties and ambiguities, a source of strong tensions. The confrontation of social logics is undoubtedly at the root of clashes between generations, between urban and rural life, between the new industrialization and proletarians, between the new rich and those who are marginalized. More broadly, this median zone is obviously the most blurred, one in which many developing societies find it difficult to locate themselves. Their capacity for dialogue is diminished accordingly.”
Contrary to the commonly used “tradition-modernity” schema, this model is not a discourse elaborated by one generally dominant society over another; but rather, a model that makes it possible to locate all human groups, whoever they may be, on the same axis. On the other hand, though the definition of culture as adaptation to an environment is relevant, classical anthropology devotes a great deal of study to cultures, but much less to their environment. Yet a society is a living whole, in constant interaction with its environment, which is itself in continual evolution. This flux shows the difficulty of understanding a culture in its dynamic and creative dimension. And the element that makes reality even more complex in today’s world is the speed of environmental change on every level: the natural environment, technology, communication, economics, migration, conflicts, and so on. One can say that the world has changed more in the last fifty years than in the preceding two or three centuries. Everything evolves very quickly, and on a global scale, demanding great reactivity and creativity of human groups. On every continent, one can find groups living in great precarity directly opposite groups living in comfort and security in the same country or the same city.

As far as our Congregation is concerned, we can see that many of our circumscriptions are located to a greater or lesser degree on the side of precarious societies. A majority of confreres come from this type of society. This is also where we are destined to work, since we want to go to the poorest.

This has direct consequences for governance, on two fundamental points in particular: relationships and financial management.

Relationship Societies and Function Societies

As we have said, in precarious societies, everyone must work for the common good. Each person is important and indispensable, and must adhere fully to the objectives of the group. The dissident, the marginal, is potentially dangerous because he can sow discord and thus increase risks and precarity. In this type of society, relationships are essential. It is necessary to know one another, to observe each other, also to maintain a unity that must always be consolidated. To identify who contributes to the common good and who puts it in danger is essential. Solidarity manifests this unity, and no one can escape it; it also plays the role of “insurance” for old age, health and the vagaries of life. These are also highly hierarchical groups, where everyone must know his place.
and those of others, know his role and stick to it. Social control is omnipresent.

In security societies, a single individual cannot put the life of the group in danger; the logic of accumulation favors quantitative benchmarks. A person becomes part of a more complex structure and is replaceable. What matters is not the person, but his function.

A typical example: in security societies, when people meet, they introduce themselves by saying their name and their job. This locates them on the social ladder by salary level and function. In precarious societies, people say their name and then their family and their village. They are positioned in relation to their network of relationships.7

Whether one is in a situation of more or less precarity or relative security, in more relational or more functional societies, has important consequences for financial management. In security societies, people are used to managing inventories, surpluses, an accumulation of goods. These are societies that make “investments.” The phrase is significant: money is immobilized, usually in banks, who then invest it in industry, services, real estate, etc. This money produces wealth for the investor, as part of a globalized and integrated economic system. Investment in the stock market can even show gains without being connected to any productive activity, purely by speculation. In precarious societies, the majority of the population has little or no money. Nobody can become rich by himself, and whoever becomes rich must make his riches available to all who supported him in his ascent, whether politically or economically. In ordinary life, the constraints are many: housing, food, clothing, health care, schooling, etc. Solidarity also has a high cost: support for the needy, the sick, family members, funeral expenses, celebrations, etc. In other words, people are constantly having to deal with lack, and everyone helps everyone inside the solidarity group, whether it be family or at the level of the neighborhood, community association, or the village. It should be noted that a person usually belongs to several circles of solidarity. This financial logic is contrary to that of “investment”: the more money circulates, the more it creates ties. The person who helps another has a “credit,” but it is a social investment, not an accounting. As precarious societies are highly relational, individuals find themselves very well in this “social accounting.” Everyone knows his economic ties with his entourage, as well as his rights and duties of solidarity.
This system generally works in a balanced way, because anyone who does not respect his commitments or does not fully enter the solidarity circuits will be excluded. Everyone will be wary of him and he will no longer be accepted in any group because he will be deemed unreliable. Thus, in this context, the poor man is not the one who has no money, but the one who has no relationships. \(^8\)

On one hand, we have functional societies, which have management based on financial investment, and on the other, relational societies, with management based on social investment.

In the context of the transitions from the North to the South that the Congregation experienced, these two models met, confronted each other, and especially mixed, as in the world today. No society is totally on one side or the other, and individuals must learn to live in both worlds, according to both models. The majority of our confreres, as we have already pointed out, come from societies of more or less precarity and work there. Concretely, for a bursar, how to manage the often low reserves of the circumscription in order to assure formation, maintain buildings, provide health care, plan for the needs of aging confreres, and on the other hand, respond to the requests of communities or confreres who sometimes live in conditions of extreme poverty? Not to mention that a confre can also be involved in a number of solidarity networks, particularly at the level of his family. This last problem is particularly delicate. In light of what we have described above, to ask a confre to cut himself off from his familial solidarity network is to ask him to exclude himself, to be rejected, to give up something that has profoundly shaped and structured his personality since childhood ... One possible solution to this kind of situation is to have the community, the circumscription and the Congregation also function as a network of solidarity, which is already the case in many areas.

It may be noted in passing that this helps us to better understand the gravity of Christ’s demand when he asks his disciples to leave everything - for those who lived in precarious societies, this amounted to throwing themselves into the unknown, with no more attachments, no security for their future.

Making provision for the future when the present is precarious is difficult, and the margin of maneuver very narrow when it exists. During a training session of the new
circumscription superiors in Rome, when it was pointed out to a provincial that his circumscription had more students than confreres and that financially it was impossible to sustain, he replied, “If we don’t have young people after us, who will take care of us when we can’t work anymore?”

In this context, one can also ask what is the real meaning of the vow of poverty. In many countries we live better than the average population. And how to share or pool assets that we do not have, or over which, in fact, a solidarity network has a “right of access”? In societies where true wealth is one’s network of relationships, it is perhaps this network that should be pooled and shared. In countries where the rule of law is very weak and where corruption is commonplace, a broad and influential relationship network is essential and just as important as money to carry out projects and manage the structures of the circumscription. Sharing and solidarity are to be implemented within circumscriptions, but also between circumscriptions and in the Unions.

A Governance in Transformation

In the realm of governance, security societies, oriented towards the organization of various functions, aim for efficiency and put in place stable and rigorous structures. Thus, over time, the Congregation has established an extremely efficient network of missions and Procures. In the countries where this was present, it was able to produce and provide all that was needed for missionary work in all domains: construction, pastoral care, health, schooling, mechanics, printing, etc. These structures functioned like real banks, allowing efficient and fast money transfers. Everything was based on trust and adherence to common rules and procedures passed down from generation to generation. The structures remained operational even in cases of conflict or war; often they were the only ones still effective, while state services had ceased to function. The flip side of the coin is that this kind of structure requires a lot of resources: financial means, rigorous administration, strict procedures, and continuity. Individuals may come and go, but the system must remain stable because the most important element is the permanence of its operation. It also requires a very hierarchical system. Authority and communication go from the bottom to the top, then instructions and information return from the top down. Until the general chapter of 1968, the Congregation was structured on this pyramidal and centralized scheme.
In societies of precarity, social organization is also very hierarchical, but people’s belonging to multiple networks of sociality and solidarity creates a society made of interconnected networks. Authority and communication are vertical, but also horizontal, no longer according to the image of the pyramid, but of the “fishing net.”

With the transitions experienced by the Congregation, we have mostly moved into a situation where we no longer manage reserves, but precarity. When everyday life is a struggle to find the resources necessary for the life of a circumscription, we have to be flexible and inventive, and we especially need to have large networks which multiply the chances of finding solutions. In these cases, relationship networks are more important than administrative rigor. This is precisely where the great challenge for governance in the Congregation lies: in order to sustain an organization of roughly 2,700 members in over sixty countries, good organization is needed, to which everyone adheres: common rules, procedures, ongoing relationships, risk analyses, reliable statistics, good communication, as well as the transmission and continuity of knowledge and procedures. At the same time, in many countries, vital and urgent needs mobilize most of the energies, and the organizational aspect takes second place.

We now find that the indispensable verticality of the relation of authority is still present, but horizontality tends to develop. For this, social networks are a boon. They allow transversal communication, between confreres, as well as communication with the persons in charge. We can even say that the phenomenon goes beyond communication to enter the realm of interaction, which could open new horizons of governance.

Respecting the pyramidal hierarchy and intensifying networks are not incompatible, but reconciling them requires an awareness of these types of functioning and the collisions of interests that they can arouse, along with the will to solve them. The enterprise is difficult, and in this type of situation, the great temptation would be to return to greater centralization, considering that if we centralize the problems, we have a greater chance of centralizing the solutions. In fact, this approach does not work because it amounts to separating responsibility and authority. To avoid this, it is useful to recall a principle as fundamental as it is old: subsidiarity.
Jean-Marc Sierro, C.S.Sp.

“The principle of subsidiarity is often confused with delegation. It consists in considering that all responsibility must be assumed by the level directly confronted with the problem to be solved, the higher echelons intervening only if the answer to be given exceeds the capacities of the level in question ... the principle of subsidiarity has been adopted by business from the 1980s onwards. It has its origin in the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas and in several authors whose reflections have influenced the writing of the Encyclical Rerum novarum, 1891, the founding text of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.”

If the social doctrine of the church insists on this point, it is not that it wants to be a manual of business management, it is rather a question of human dignity and respect for the person. For self-actualization in one’s humanity, one needs to undertake things, succeed, be fully responsible and recognized. It is therefore necessary - and generally more effective - to distribute responsibilities widely, and not make people merely carry out tasks, thus limiting their initiative and creativity.

In our Congregation, the essential organizational level is not the generalate, but the circumscriptions. These are the ones who have the most authority and responsibility, and who have the most resources, because, let’s not forget, they are the ones who largely support the general administration by providing staff and financial contribution, and who sustain solidarity and a certain equity in the Congregation. In the exercise of subsidiarity, the strongest link is the circumscription, thus constituting the “top echelon” to which the principle of subsidiarity refers. The general council has a preeminent role in ensuring the unity of the Congregation, promoting and coordinating solidarity, supervising the work of circumscriptions, and ensuring their fidelity to the Spiritan vocation. The general council has a strategic role in the general plan of the Congregation, while the circumscriptions are at the operational level.

Another principle to be added is that of collegiality, which is sometimes aligned with synodality, which Pope Francis has been trying to promote since the beginning of his pontificate. The principle of collegiality means that persons in a position of responsibility, when they make a joint decision in the framework of a board or an executive body, defend the collective decision in public debates, even if
it contradicts their personal position. Without this principle, authority is considerably weakened.\textsuperscript{13}

The Teachings of our Founders

If our rapidly changing world needs to invent ever new ways of working, we may also wonder if there aren’t lessons from the past whose value goes beyond their particular juncture. Despite the differences in times and conditions, did our founders not face challenges as great as ours in terms of organization and management? How did they face them?

First, both Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann were what we would today call men of networks. Poullart des Places, through his family, belonged to the elite society of his time in a period when the social classes were very delimited and compartmentalized. He did not use the opportunities for social advancement that he could have personally enjoyed, but he had the necessary connections, and especially the spirit of initiative and enterprise of his social milieu. As for Libermann, we need only consider the extent of his correspondence, which the Notes and Documents provide us, to see the incredible breadth and the immense diversity of his network of relations. But what is striking when one looks at the way our two founders managed and governed the Congregation is their absolutely unshakeable faith in Divine Providence.

This notion has been the subject of numerous and complex debates because it touches on the sensitive subject of God’s intervention in human history. Historically, positions range from the absolute predestination of human destiny to the total non-intervention of God in the events of the world. Unable to enter here into this highly theological debate,\textsuperscript{14} we will content ourselves with seeing how our founders grasped and lived Divine Providence. Both Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann were trained in a theology and spirituality that placed Divine Providence at the center of the life of the world. The Council of Trent, in reaction to salvation by faith advocated by Luther and his followers, strongly refocused practice on Christian acts, which were to be part of the divine plan, according to his mysterious will. Attacked also by philosophy and science, which, since the Renaissance, had increasingly freed themselves from the church’s influence, the church had to reaffirm the submission of all things, even natural phenomena, to God’s omnipotence and his plan for humanity.\textsuperscript{15}
“What is particularly striking in the life of M. des Places is the spiritual poverty, the total confidence in Providence, in whose hands he gives himself up entirely ... This complete availability appears very well expressed in the prayer which opens his reflections titled ‘Choice of a state of life’:

‘O my God, who lead to heavenly Jerusalem the men who truly trust in You, I have recourse to your Divine Providence, I abandon myself entirely to it, I renounce my inclination, my appetites and my own willingness to blindly follow Yours.

Deign to let me know what You want me to do, so that by fulfilling here below the kind of life You have meant for me, I can serve You, during my pilgrimage, in a state where I am pleasing to You and where You abundantly cover me in the graces I need to render forever the glory which is due to your divine Majesty.’”

Father Libermann could have repeated this reflection in every respect. Divine Providence is omnipresent in his correspondence, in terms of his personal spirituality of course, but even more so in the direction and management of the Congregation. For him, Providence is a plan of God, in which every human being has a role, and which constitutes the deep logic and ultimate meaning of the world. God leads history, and Christian action consists in placing ourselves at the disposal of this Providence, as a docile instrument, renouncing one’s own will to enter totally into that of God. Providence has its own rhythm, its mystery, and it is necessary to wait for God’s time, God who makes everything happen in its time. In return, God provides for the needs of those who surrender themselves to him. Fr. Libermann also associates Mary with Providence: “We have much difficulty finding enough to maintain our novitiate. The lovable Heart of Mary, who is a good Providence for her children, will not abandon us ...” It must be noted that this notion of Providence does not lead to fatalism or to predestination where everything is already written in stone. Since evil is at work in the world, the action of God, which goes through that of his creatures, must constantly adjust.

There is still much to be said about the infinite nuances of the Libermanian conception of Providence, but what
must be remembered above all is that it was a formidable driving force for our two founders. It helped them to overcome the innumerable obstacles in founding and managing a Congregation in difficult times in every respect. Divine Providence was a powerful anchor of their faith, which led them to boldness and perseverance. Closer to home, Blessed Daniel Brottier had the same attitude towards Providence, which was also at the center of his faith and his action. A troubling phrase is attributed to him: “As long as we can say to God, ‘I have welcomed these unfortunate children out of love for you, help me now to raise them,’ be assured that Providence will intervene. While if we purport to tailor admissions to available reserves, we would have unpleasant surprises.”¹⁸ A strategy a little difficult to advise for a modern manager ...

Our Congregation had to make its aggiornamento as early as the sixties in order to reread its charism according to the orientations of Second Vatican Council. At present, this re-reading is made necessary by the transitions we are experiencing. Many Congregations have traveled the same path, and many have rediscovered on this occasion the importance of Divine Providence in the birth and growth of their Congregation.

“In the history of religious congregations, the founders and foundresses were animated by a great apostolic impulse, allowing themselves to be moved and to live by compassion, like Jesus before the sufferings of the people. They embarked on an adventure, often without many resources, and in small numbers.

We have in our history a great experience of the Providence of the Father ... In a social context that confronts us with an entrepreneurial management mentality, it is important to deepen the concept of Providence, so important for our founders. Experience shows that when we develop projects for the poorest, Providence is never lacking. We must have the courage to take risks, sure that the Lord never abandons his people, especially his beloved ones. This courage starts from a passion that no difficulty can stop.”¹⁹

The rediscovery of trust in Providence among our founders must also remind us of the attitude it induced in them: a total and unconditional dedication to their mission. When we look at their lives, we quickly realize that for them...
They lived a degree of renunciation, and even destitution, which it is difficult for us to imagine today.

the notions of personal comfort, leisure, “time for oneself,” did not exist. They lived a degree of renunciation, and even destitution, which it is difficult for us to imagine today. Their mission, their apostolic zeal, occupied each moment of their life and took all their energy, often to the point of exhaustion. Only prayer and spiritual exercises could distract them from their mission for a moment. Thus Providence, as the engine of their faith and action, gave them a capacity for work and perseverance capable of overcoming all difficulties. It is a fundamental component of the Spiritan charism.

In our reflection on management in our Congregation, this confidence of our founders in Divine Providence is a source of inspiration. “The confrontation of charism with history leads to discernment and allows one to look with the gaze of God; it is a gift to know how to look with different eyes, able to see what others do not see. Charisms make it possible to see capacities where others only see inadequacies.”

Conclusion

The transitions we have mentioned, and their consequences, are an immense challenge, as we have seen, especially from the point of view of management and governance. The passage is not finished, but the Congregation is on the right path to succeed in this challenge, with the help of the Holy Spirit and fidelity to the charism of our founders.

In the young churches where we work, with our specific mission, we have to find a place that has changed considerably since the origins of the mission.

“It is essential to start from a theological perspective of communion to fully understand openness to the universal church and, at the same time, the need and commitment to collaborate with the local church. When communion is not the foundation of all ecclesial relations, we risk falling into a logic of reciprocal demands. It is necessary, therefore, to promote relations based on the principle of communion, which is based on fraternity and doing together.”

A professor of missiology said: “Even if one day the whole world is evangelized, there will always remain a specific role for missionaries, to call to mind that in every
Even if one day the whole world is evangelized, there will always remain a specific role for missionaries, to call to mind that in every community, every church, there must be a place for the stranger.”

Our missionary life leads us to live in other cultures, to learn other relationships with God and others. In a world of travel and migration, our experience allows us to create ties, build bridges between cultures and religions, between people. If those who have this experience do not do it, who will be able to? This is perhaps the place for new poverties and one of the new faces of the mission?

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Abbreviations

GE Vatican II Declaration on Christian Education
Gravissimum educationis

GS Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et spes

SRL Spiritan Rule of Life

Endnotes

1 We use the terms “North” and “South” to refer to the old and new circumscriptions. This simplifies the matter, despite the limitations of these terms.
2 First floor in Europe is second floor in America.
3 The Central Development Office, which is currently being set up in Rome, wants to meet this requirement and promote the coordination and establishment of this network at the level of the Congregation.
4 Michalon, Clair, “Les systèmes de références culturelles,” Silo, Cahier d’information, No. 17 (June 1991). Everything we say here about precarity and security societies is taken from his analysis, which is extremely rich. We only take up a small part.
6 Ibid., 14. He wrote this in 1991, almost 30 years ago. The rapidity of the changes in the world since that time requires that we relativize the geographical divisions he mentions and reinterpret his remarks in a global way.
7 Ibid., 6.
8 See Ndione, Emmanuel, Le don et le recours, ressorts de l’économie urbaine. (Dakar, ENDA Editions, 1992) - [The Gift and the Recourse, Mainsprings of the Urban
Economy]. In this book, the author describes steps taken by a local NGO, after gradually becoming aware of the economic functioning among inhabitants of a district in Dakar, to adapt its action to this relational and social economy.

9Procure, as explained in the text, is French for a government-recognized office that serves missionaries of the area as travel agent, and for visas, aspects of banking, car procurement, etc.

10Verrier, Gilles, “Le principe de subsidiarité: une clé” at https://www.rhinfo.com/thematiques/management/le-principe-de-subsidiarite-une-cle/ 17/08/2017 [“The principle of subsidiarity: a key”]. See General Chapter 1968-1969, Directives et Decisions, Rome 1970. At no. 149, it defines subsidiarity as follows: “The Congregation is a unity, the organization of which must be in accord with the principle of subsidiarity, leaving to individuals and intermediate bodies initiative and responsibility in the tasks proper to them. All higher authority, moreover, has the duty to sustain and encourage the efforts of the intermediary bodies. It should intervene when these latter, or do not, adequately fulfill their function (GS, 86a; GE, 3, 6)”

11The vow of obedience is also a commitment to initiative and creativity, in fidelity to the mission of the Congregation.

12SRL 198.1

13SRL 198 and 198.1 also refer to subsidiarity and collegiality.


17Notes and Documents, Vol. 13, 171.
18 P. Brottier, 10.09.1978, cited in the beatification process.
21 Ibid., 55.
22 Personal recollection of the author.