

GUIDELINES OF SOMASCAN SPIRITUALITY IN THE TEXTS OF TRADITION

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1. STARTING FROM THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

In my presentation I will start from a way of understanding spirituality that, I think, is both rich in stimuli for research and fruitful for practical conclusions.

The fundamental Christian spirituality derives from the Christological reference of the Gospel, that is, everything concerning *the revelation of God's mystery, of the human being's mystery, and of the world's mystery*. Spirituality derives from this revealed mystery and gives unity to the life of a person or a group by offering inspiration and motivation. When a founder lets himself be caught by a specific aspect of Christ's mystery (that is, at the same time, revelation of God's mystery, man's mystery, and his history) and he translates it in concrete gestures of life, *he makes spirituality under the direction of the Holy Spirit*. Therefore, spirituality is the fulfillment and the translation of one's act of faith in the concrete reality of life. The translation will use *its own mediations and expressions, symbolic structures, and specific languages*.

A particular mystical experience stands at the basis of the spirituality of a founder. It enlightens his way of thinking and criteria for judging; it revives his feelings and justifies his actions. This experience will be handed down to others, carried on by a symbolic language of intense expressive effectiveness. The founder opens the way for a typical following of Christ in which his followers too will be invited to enter.

As to our Founder and us, *the parental symbolism* is of great interest in order to go back to the mystical experience which his specific spirituality comes from.

Are merits of the *devotio moderna* both the reaction to the scholastic conceptualism and the idea of devotion for Christ's Humanity, especially for the suffering Humanity. In fact, Jesus - and the Crucified Jesus - reveals the essence of the Christian God in his relationship with us: this essence consists of being pure love and active, dynamic, and limitless mercy. Since He is love, God is justice and liberation for the poor, hope and refuge for the sinners. Since He is love, He is behind human history till his sacrifice on the cross. If the latter is the manifestation of man's cruelty, the Crucified is the Father's word of love proclaimed with strength in man's history. The unheard novelty of the Gospel stands right here: ~'God loved so much the world that he gave his only Son' who in his turn gives his life for him who believes in Him by making him a son, able to cry out: "Abba"(cfr Jn 3:16;Rm 8:15).

The question we would like to answer is the following: Do our sources mirror a similar filial relationship with God, a relationship that reminds of a previous strong mystical experience capable of integrating, selecting and absolutizing?

The Anonymous already, in introducing the life of Jerome, considers it as a love dialogue between the Father and this son of his. Those who see with the eyes of faith "see the immense God not only as omnipotent creator and giver of things, but also as sweet and humane father; father, I say... who for sure has prepared everything for man, his most noble creature, as we call him, or, should we call him delightful son?" (An 1:7-2, 2). This

God's merciful fatherhood remains unchanged even when "our injustice praises God's justice (Id. 5:17; cfr Rom 3:5).

In *Our Prayer* there is continually the mention of the trustful abandon in God: "He is the beginning, means, end, and fulfillment of every good" (NsOr 13); therefore, "all those who hope in Him will never be confused" (Id 6). The limitless hope in God must remain alive even when one is aware of his own sin: "Let us gather together before our heavenly Father (...) and therefore let us ask Him his mercy" (Id. 14).

It is too easy to find in these expressions the inspiration present in St. Jerome's letters.

In fact, God is "our end, source of every good, only in Him we must have confidence and not in others" (2Let 3); therefore, "since you are not lacking faith and hope, He will make of you great things and exalt the humble" (Id. 6). The confidence in the Father's mercy is founded in that visible expression of the Trinitarian love that is the Crucified: "to be frequent if prayer before the Crucified, and to pray that He may want to open the eyes of their blindness so that they may petition Him for mercy" (6Let 6).

Since God is Father, the attribute that mostly expresses His interest for man is benignity that is the provident stooping down of the Father over the needs of his children, the lordship over man's history for his exclusive benefit, the availability to forgiveness every time the prodigal son accepts the invitation to go back to his Father's home. The confidence mentioned above is not founded on our merits but on this benignity of the Lord: "Listen to us, O Lord, because benign is your mercy and in your immense tenderness turn to us" (NsOr 4); "Let us trust in our benign Lord" (Id. 6). The insistence on these terms which give a particular tone to God's goodness recall the biblical passage of Es 34:6-7: "The Lord, the Lord, God of piety and mercy, slow to anger and rich in grace, who preserve grace for thousand generations."

The Father's benignity manifests itself historically in Jesus, by whose example Jerome feels he is strongly attracted to. He, "noble and old man," follows the rule "of the lowest orphan in imitation of the benign Jesus" (CC 1555,6).

However, trust does not come from a blind fideism. On the contrary, in accordance with Emiliani's mentality, it has to stand too on the awareness that one has done everything that humanly was possible. The *General Guidelines for the Institutions* state: "Whenever possible, the brothers must quit begging: we **must work and hope in God**, take care of the health of the soul, while God will take care of the bodies as the Gospel says" (Fonti per la storia dei Somaschi, 7, Roma 1978,33). Also here it is understood the trust that St. Jerome manifests in the providential love of the Father: "We need to welcome what the Lord sends and make use of everything; we must always pray to the Lord that He may teach us to lead everything to a good end" (3Let 6); "It is not necessary that you pay too much attention to begging, that has not given much, because the Lord, who says that first we must look for the kingdom of God, will provide for those things adequately" (5Let 3).

This typical way of relating to God, founded upon a deep mystical experience, enter into the Constitutional text in order to point out the modality of relating that also the Somascans should have with God, their Father.

As the experience of its liberation had founded Israel's faith in God, Father of his people (cfr Is-63:15ss), the same experience must establish the Somascan in the certainty of being object of the free love of God. The presence of the Congregation in the Church, the call to the individual to live in the Congregation are fruits of the paternal love

of God who has called us "to be a holy nation, a chosen and loved people, in whose midst He is delighted to live" (CC 1626,354).

God's saving action is not a mere isolated gesture, but it represents the usual manifestation of God's merciful fatherhood: "As there is no moment in which we do not enjoy God's goodness and mercy ..." (Id. 356).

The awareness that God is THE FATHER begets complete freedom as to things and people and establishes a preferred tendency towards what humanly does not create security (Id. 366).

"Trust put in God" (Id. 369) and the love look fixed on the Crucified Jesus are the only reasons that push us to welcome from the "hand of God, Father of utmost goodness" (Id. 357), "Father great in love," all the trials and troubles of life: God, Lord of history, transforms our daily events in history of salvation. In fact, even our earthly adventure has become meta-history since God has entered into man's history in the person of the Word made flesh.

To freedom, the fruits of inner peace and joy will be added: "Happy solely for the love and benignity of God" (Id. 372), "we must not look for consolation and comfort in the exterior things, but solely in God and in divine things" (Id. 377).

Also in these *monita*, useful for spiritual progress, one can breathe the freshness of St. Jerome's inspiration. The particular event that the Company is living during the forced absence of Jerome from Bergamo, is a moment of grace for the Company to learn to put all her hope in God alone and not in men, not even in the Founder: "Thus our benign Lord wanted, for increasing faith in you" (2Let 3). "For this reason He has taken me away from you with all other means which give you satisfaction, and has led you to these two choices: either you will lack . in faith and return to the things of the world or you will remain strong in faith and in this way He will try you" (Id. 6). It seems that the history of Exodus, as acknowledgement and affirmation of God's lordship, exerted a fascination in Jerome's heart. The extreme trust in the powerful action of God must lead one to become "instruments that let themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit" (3Let 3) to accept even the effects of slandering: "Blessed is he of whom every kind of evil is said by lying; and he who will bear it with joy, because a great reward waits for him in heaven" (Id. 13). Jerome's freedom is strongly expressed by the Anonymous when, in speaking of the invitation by the administrators of the Hospital for the Incurables to join the two schools for children, states: "As the one who does not want to tie his soul, made in the image of God, to any particular institution, since in everything he would follow the will of his Lord, willingly he went" (An 12:3-5). On the other hand, the entire life of Jerome is a filial answer to the continual action of God, felt as a Father, provident Lord of history.

2. ASCETIC JOURNEY OF ASSIMATION

God's action represents the first word of the dialogue between Him and man. Since it is addressed to man and in the respect of human freedom, it expects a word as an answer. When man, questioned by God according to the logic of "if you wish," decides in favor of Him, he feels the need of unifying all the potentials of his person around a fundamental value that is God and all that is referred to Him.

Man's answer takes the shape of a commitment assumed under the inspiration of the Spirit in order to make one's person more and more fitting with the project of salvation called 'ascetic.'

Christian ascetic is intelligible only if it is read at the light of Christ's Pascal mystery. By the grace of the Spirit, the Christian makes himself available to the Father who revealed himself in the Son, dead on the cross and risen for us. Therefore, Christian ascetic is an *existential yes* to the God of supernatural life, an existential yes to Jesus Christ and to the concrete world in which the grace of God in the world has appeared, an existential yes to the cross and death, to the re-actualization of Christ's Pascal mystery; it is betting one's life and its values on the word of Christ who exhort us to 'lose one's life in order to find it.'

Trusting in this word, Jerome opened - for himself and his own - the journey to go back to the Father, starting from the contemplation of the Crucified Jesus, SON SENT, and deciding to imitate Him according to the two trajectories of love: to empty oneself and to give oneself

The *kenosis* aspect strikes the contemplative soul immediately and love induces one to conform himself to the loved one in everything: "Inspired by heavenly grace, he tried to imitate his dear Master Christ with all his power" (An 7:7-8). What moved Jerome to work upon himself is the love that he feels for Christ and that leads him to imitation. Since Christ appears to Him especially as Crucified, it is by the Crucified that he lets himself be inspired. As Miani made of Christ the center of his being *new man*, all his powers are geared to be oriented toward the way of living that was of Jesus who, as *sent Son*, did not follow his own will but in everything he let himself be guided by his Father's will, discovered in the mediations that show it to Him.

For St. Jerome too God's will manifests itself gradually through situations and people. Therefore, we can say that the first step of his ascetic journey was the renunciation to his will- or better --the commitment to do God's will.

In this "exinanitio," in this extreme poverty of one's being, the Constitutional text has seen the proprium of our life as consecrated people: "Our life does not require great austerity or extreme penance, but it leads us to the goal of perfection through true humility, perfect obedience, complete renunciation of our will" (CC 1626,5). Read in the light of mission, these words should not offend our sensitivity: if mission is not ours but has been entrusted to us, it has not to be carried out according to individualistic criteria but in respect of the will of He Who entrusted it to us and in view of the needs of those to whom we are sent. This requires from everybody, Superiors and not, *denial and abdication of one's will in the journey of Christ the Lord*. The contemplation of the Crucified cannot be reduced to a popular devotion, but it is the main avenue to be necessarily taken: Christ Crucified reveals the mystery of God's merciful fatherhood and at the same time He reveals to us our reality of **children sent** to accomplish our Father's will in everything. The centrality of Christ Crucified becomes for us a tenet for understanding and the realization of our being called-consecrated-sent in the Somascan Congregation.

To this first aspect of the ascetic journey (*self-emptying love*) it must correspond the second one, *self-giving love*: the daily commitment to living our life as consecrated people in communion with other brothers in serving the poor represents the day-in-day-out of the Somascan ascetic journey.

In fact, our Congregation, "dedicated to the ministry of the orphans" (CC 1555, 3), seeks the glory of God "not only with inner commitment, but also with the outer activities undertaken with faith and for the love of Him" (CC 1626, 380). The outer activity of *the servants of Christ's poor* demands the imitation of Jesus Christ, who "did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave" (Ph 2:6-7). Therefore, "each one of us is to commit himself to imitate the humility and meekness of Jesus Christ and he is to prefer to be at the last place in the house of the Lord in charge of the most humble offices, to obey rather than to command, to be taught rather than to teach, to be considered meaningless rather than humble" (CC 1626,37). It appears anew the urgent centrality of the Crucified Jesus, viewed especially according to the category of servant "meek and humble of heart" (cfr Mt 11:29).

If our mission essentially consists in proclaiming to the little ones the fatherhood of God, such evangelization can be especially realized if we make our own *benignity*, the attribute typical of God the Father. St. Jerome had warmly exhorted to be "meek and benign with everybody, especially with those in the house" (6Let 6). In Our Prayer the Blessed Virgin is prayed "so that she may pray to her most beloved Son for all of us, so that he may grant us to be humble and meek of heart" (NsOr 8). And then, one may say a "Hail Mary for our Father Priests who are present and absent and who are about to enter these holy institutions, for all the supervisors and all other our brothers who are entrusted to them to be served, so that the Lord may grant to them perfect love, deep humility and patience for the love of His Majesty" (NsOr 10). Humility, meekness and benignity: to the love that *empties itself* corresponds the love that *gives itself* because our Congregation has been born to serve. The ascetic commitment of assimilation to the model, *Christ the Servant*, enters into the Constitutional text in order to compile the profile of the Somascan: "Everybody, especially the Superiors, are to manifest on their face modesty and religious serenity, rather than austere gravity: they must be **benign with everybody**, must not refuse to anybody the sign of charity, to no one they must show envy, they must do good especially for those from whom they are offended; with them they must use greater **meekness and benignity** than with everybody else" (CC 1626,375).

The charism of fatherhood incarnates in mission through the religious' individual and community commitment of making their own the saving will of God and of expressing it with gestures of humble, meek and benign fatherhood. This is the answer the Somascan should give to the preceding grace of God who calls, consecrates, and sends on the way of Jesus Christ Crucified, the Son **sent**, the Servant of the Father and of all brothers.

The contemplation of the Crucified Jesus was not for St. Jerome a static component of his spirituality. On the contrary, it raised in him a double reaction: loving assimilation to Him who had loved him till his total emptying of self; service to man in communion with Him who had loved man till the total immolation. To do penance (that cannot be excluded from an ascetical journey) is another side of love that wants to respond to Love. It corresponds to the purification of one's being, already washed by the Blood of Christ, in order to make it a subject of identification; it also means assuming the wickedness of men that contradicts the project "man" as intended by God in order to ransom it with his own life united with Christ's. However, without overlooking the sense of penance as

personal mortification, of which he is a clear example, St. Jerome insists in that inner commitment that imitates more and more the Model who is "meek and humble of heart": "Humility, love, meekness, benignity with everybody, especially with those of the house" (6Let 6).

St. Jerome's experience, transferred in our tradition, is based on the frequent prayer before the Crucified, in order to arrive to a gradual assimilation of *Our sweet Father Jesus Christ*, to *Our most benign Lord* through a journey of purification and acquisition of the typical virtues of humility, benignity, and meekness.

3. AT THE SERVICE OF THE LAST

St. Jerome's spiritual experience is not locked in the intimate relationship with God but opens up to the brothers with the intent to help them enter into the new life prepared for them in Christ, the firstborn Son. Among all the brothers he could have met on his way, Jerome, following the example of his Master, chose the most poor and he became their servant.

In order to understand the sense Jerome gives to the title *servant of the poor*, we must read some witnesses of his contemporaries. Even though we need to purify them from the literary emphasis of the time, they give us the measure of our Founder's "service."

The first witness comes from Mons. Pietro Lippomano, Bishop of Bergamo (August 1st, 1538; cfr Landini, S. Girolamo Miani, pag. 487-489): "The faithful are full of great admiration in seeing and contemplating so a lavish charity, so much compassion and piety he demonstrates in washing disgusting sores with his hands, in cleaning and dressing pestiferous pustules, in bearing with terrible odors and filth that provoke nausea to nurses and to the people present while he not only does not loathe but he touches with his own hands, as if they were fragrant with sweet perfume."

The Capuchin Girolamo Molfetta, in his dedicatory letter (1539; cfr Landini, o.c., pag 489-491): "Jerome had an ardent desire of uniting to God men of any status and condition and he showed signs of burning love for God. Therefore, because of his love for the Gospel and for the coming of the kingdom of God, he left his riches, relatives and country and threw himself in the arms of his beloved, naked and crucified Jesus Christ. He started from you, poor ones, to realize his desire. With great *tenderness and benignity* he gathered you, healed your souls with his example and your bodies with his hands, while he provided you with food obtained by begging from door..."

The early followers of St. Jerome took the same way. Let us take the example of Fr. Giovanni Scotti: "To the orphans he would teach not only Christian doctrine, but to read and write. If they were capable, he would teach them grammar too. He would teach them how to sweep. He would help the little ones to get dressed, he would wash their socks, wash and dry their feet, clean and cure. And all these most humble activities he would do even when he was Father General. He would question those who came to wear our habit if they were ready to practice all these things."

To be servant of the poor for Jerome and his companions really meant to get oneself at the disposal of the poor, offer them one's person as a support on which they could rebuild their human dignity in danger of being already lost. Does such a way of serving have sense for us of the postmodern era? Beyond different forms, there is a style of

serving which is perennial and which would also qualify our apostolate in term of service.

Anonymous describes the trajectory followed by Jerome: from conversion to service of the poor, experience of God's merciful fatherhood. Starting from the core of his person, he retakes the way back to God by identifying himself with the Crucified Jesus. He abandons himself to God so that He may use him for the benefit of those who need to experience the warmth of fatherhood.

The push to action comes from his abandon "in the arms of his beloved, naked and Crucified Jesus Christ" (Molfetta). Abandon and service are indissolubly united in the person of Jerome as cause and effect. Abandon and service which require a continual, renewed commitment in the journey that, starting from the core of the person, takes him to God through the Crucified Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can understand his strong and hearty reaction before the misbehavior of some of his. For him *it is impossible to be servant of Christ* without the aware practice of being *offered themselves to Christ*. It is because this awareness is "practical" that he demands *humility, benignity, acceptance, obedience, mortification, reserve ...* As his and his own ones' action is not a social crusade, is not a race to pass, but it is an apostolic work, it is necessary a continuous bond with Him who has sent in mission.

The fundamental reason of his apostolic action can be discovered in the organization of the Company: "And almost as a religion, all those who are commissioned to such love commitment will meet all together for consultation at least once a week about the things necessary and convenient for the maintenance of these children, orphans, widows and other poor people who are under the direction and education of the aforementioned Sir Jerome; who *does not want other main care* for these poor people but the attainment of bodily health if they are sick by *serving them with his own hands, and by educating them to the fear of the Lord and to a right, honest, religious living and talking; leaving any other activity to the Trustees ...*" (cfr Landini, pg. 484).

For St. Jerome the radical following of Jesus - and everything else that refers to it - that has to be manifested in the daily life in practice, is the only motif that can make one to be servant of the poor of Christ. For those who do not have this frame of mind, our Founder repeats with affection and pain: "I cannot do but to beg them. for the wounds of Christ to be willing to be assiduous in prayer before the Crucified, asking him to. open the eyes of their blindness." (6Let 6). The contemplation of the Crucified will give them again the sense of our staying together in a religious and apostolic Congregation.

St. Jerome was not a theologian but, because of the wisdom of the saints, he derived his service of the poor from his spiritual experience: the experience of God's merciful fatherhood. And the Church, by approving the Congregation, considered herself in need of such a charism in order to grow harmoniously.

We need to add another observation. A charism that is not expressed in a ministry (mission) remains at the potential, embryo status: here there are aspects that have not been developed for the good of the Christian community. As well as, a ministry that does not comes from the correspondent charism is empty and is reduced to a mere external function; also the ministry without a charism does not edify the Church.

Having considered all this and the theology of charisms contained in 1Cor 12-14, we can state that the charism of fatherhood must correspond to an action, the mission, the service for those poor who, in a way or another, need to feel the divine fatherhood

through the mediation of an analogical human fatherhood. Without this aspect, the charism remains fruitless not because it is intrinsically barren but because, by not taking it up, we do not offer to it the opportunity to express its living force. As well as, any other mission that does not come from a charism, is an empty sound of drums. *The poor for us* (those poor who are the object of our mission) *are not an option. They are a condition of life and death.* We cannot think of giving life in another way because our service, if does not comes from the Spirit, cannot generate life.

On the example of St. Jerome and following the constants of his spiritual journey, our code of life, in its centennial evolution, puts the unifying center of the personality of the Somascan in the awareness of having offered himself to Christ through the service of the poor.

Since from the beginning the Constitutions of 1555 remind that the Congregation was born in order to dedicate herself "to the ministry of the orphans" (CCRR, Appendix III). And those of 1591, when the Congregation started to take up other apostolic forms, emphasize the need of not losing sight of the primitive inspiration: "... remember that they have to first attain the care of the orphans as a work of charity and mercy ... " (CC 1591, De regimine et cura orphanorum).

In the Constitutional texts, the traditional care of the orphans is charged by strong evangelical overtones which give to it the dimension of *religious service*. The Constitutions of 1626, after having reiterated the priority of the care of the orphans ("before everything" CC 1626, 2), insist in making reference to *pietas*: "The care of the orphan is the *work of piety, the pious institution, the work of mercy* sprung from the 'intense *ardor of piety*' of St. Jerome and his early companions who *were especially fragrant in charity*. This *work of piety* is handed down to us *almost as a hereditary right* and must be pursued *as far as it is possible with commitment and determination*. The care of the orphan is a glory of the Congregation that will commit not only to maintain it, but, as far as possible, to further increase it" (C. Pellegrini, Apostolato, in *Rivista della Congregazione*, 5/1980, 103; cfr CC 1626, 913).

In reality, the apostolate for the poor has represented the typical apostolic form of the Company of the Servants of the Poor, until the death of the Founder: Venice (Bersaglio Hospital and orphanage at the Incurables); Verona (two orphanages and the shelter for rescued women); Bergamo (two orphanages and shelter for rescued women); Como (two orphanages); Somasca (orphanage and Mother House); Milan (two orphanages and shelter for rescued women); Pavia (orphanage); Brescia (orphanage).

The concepts sketched above are present in the current Constitutional text: "Our Congregation, born for the service to the orphans, perseveres with love and eagerness in this mission, precious legacy of our holy Founder, and she performs the care of the orphans and the needy youth with suitable institutions, that she support even at the cost of grave sacrifices" (CCRR 73).

The evolution of the code of life has underlined more and more clearly the relationship between service to the poor and consecrated life to the point of considering the apostolic ministry at the service of the poor as our typical way to express the consecration: "Our most committed Father, by doing every work of mercy, proposed to him and his companions a style of life that manifests one's offering of self to Christ in the service to the poor" (CCRR 1).

The commitment in favor of the last entails a series of consequences, the first of which is *the life in common with the orphans*. Since its origins, the charism of God's fatherhood was translated in charitable structures that had the typical characteristics of a family: "In the institutions, the life of the Servants of the poor and of the children was in common: they would pray, work, eat, study and rest together: a family ... Anyway, in the "General Guidelines for the Institutions," at pg. 24, the 'institution' is called *a family*" (S. Casati, *Le trattative per l'unione coi Teatini*, in *Somascha*, 2/1985, 71).

Moreover, the particular lifestyle in communion with the orphans demands a *communion among the administrators*. Therefore, priest and supervisor must be "a soul in two bodies and in two souls one will only" (General Guidelines, pg. 24). In concrete, this entails the sharing of responsibilities even though each one keeps his own field of action. Therefore, the priest must be present in different moments of the life of the orphan, while the supervisor must also take care of the life of prayer.

Even the life rhythms of the administrators must adjust to those of the orphans, to the "quality and needs of the creatures" (General Guidelines, pg. 24). Therefore, the current Constitutions, obeying also to the directions of the Council (PC 8), state: "Our Congregation is directly ordered to the apostolic mission and its life and structures are permeated by the spiritual and operative needs that come from them" (CCRR 65).

In conclusion, we can state that the apostolic mission for the poor unifies all the dimensions of the Somascan's consecrated life: after the experience of God in the Crucified Jesus, it follows the awareness - always realized in the Crucified Jesus - of being sent to give salvation (in the Crucified Jesus the Somascan really experiences the Father of mercy and the Son sent). This is fully realized when the Somascan loves the poor - as God does - in his individual reality. Therefore, "the Superiors must look with care for giving to each, according to his own vocation and disposition, a direction in his adolescence, keeping in mind that the goal of these institutions is to help those creatures get out of their spiritual and material misery, learn some good virtues and take a good direction for the glory of God" (General Guidelines, 27-28). The attention to the individual was an educational characteristic of the Founder and entered in our educational project: "Making himself little with the little ones, S1, Jerome lived with the children with love and tenderness as a Father in order to better know, educate, and help each one in the preparation for his life" (CCRR 74).

In view of an integral education, the director and the supervisor must use any care so that "everybody may exercise in some working activities in order to support himself" (CC 1591, Care and Regulation of Orphanages).

To the same rule must submit also those whom "the priest and supervisor will deem capable of learning grammar and making progress...; they must be admitted to learn without leaving the manual exercise and only for the time of learning, and without being dispensed from the rules for the other orphans, in order to keep the peace in the house and to keep them humble for their usefulness" (Gen. Guid., 25-28).

Moreover, the full development of a young personality is possible only when there is a relationship of trust with the educator. Trust that stimulates the sense of co-responsibility if the youth is given tasks which are proper for his abilities, without discrimination. The service nature of such tasks needs to be well clear (Gen. Guid., 25-28).

If it is true, as it is true, that our mission especially demands the search of God's glory, this is attained when we try to give back human dignity to the man made in the likeness of God. It is this the goal for which the institutions were born, and this is the aspect that unifies the personality of the Somascan.

As the Founder, the Somascan too is invited to enter in the *way o/the Crucified* in order to experience the merciful fatherhood of God and acquire the awareness of being, as Jesus, son sent to the last in order to announce the Gospel of the "grace of God, that sanctifies all men" (cfr Tt 2:11) with a similar spiritual fatherhood, supported by humility, meekness, and benignity.