

Bond of Unity and Trust

Fidelity to the Holy Church made the Heralds of the Gospel a rapidly developing institution throughout the world.



Sr. Carmela Werner, EP

Chosen to proclaim the Good News among the Gentiles, the Apostle Paul was prepared directly by Providence for the fulfilment of a lofty mission. His unconditional adhesion to Christ which came with the grace of conversion was followed by a period of concentrated communication with Him, lasting for three years (cf. Gal 1:17). During this time, he assimilated the teachings, the spirit and the doctrine of Our Lord more effectively than the other Twelve, which enabled him to perform works greater than theirs (cf. 1 Cor 15:10).

This gratuitous appointment of St. Paul made him a man fit for the good fight, invested with authority to preach to the whole world. And because God acted in him with great power, grace led him to launch himself into proclaiming the Word with such intrepidity that he said: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16).

Nevertheless, even though he enjoyed the constant assistance of supernatural lights which furnished him with all the means to achieve fruitfulness in his labours, the active presence of the Apostle in the

ecclesial community did not dispense him from an important gesture of submission: obedience to Peter, head of the Holy Church: “After three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days” (Gal 1:18).

We know that this encounter preceded the intense, ardent and incessant Pauline missionary activity, which would always be united to the person of the Supreme Pontiff and his orientations. And thus the Apostle, whose conduct continues to inspire just men today, became an exemplar for those who receive some charism of the Holy Spirit and must unite themselves to the legitimate authority, constituted and sustained by God himself (cf. Rom 13:1).

“Be messengers of the Gospel”

When a new institution is born in the Holy Church beginning with the graces granted to the founder, the latter must present himself to the successors of the Apostles so that they may confirm him in his mission. The fact of placing oneself under the aegis of the shepherds is always an indicator of the authenticity of the charism,

for the spirit of ecclesial communion is a constant in the works of the Holy Spirit.

With the Heralds of the Gospel this journey began in 1998, when Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias received diocesan approval for his nascent work, granted by Most Rev. Emílio Pignoli, then Bishop of Campo Limpo, in Greater São Paulo. Favoured by Providence, this seed did not take long to germinate and spread its branches, going beyond diocesan boundaries to reach many countries. In face of the need to gather the various houses of the Heralds under one sole juridical reality, the Holy See decided to erect them as an International Association of Faithful of Pontifical Right on a very symbolic date: February 22, 2001, feast of the Chair of Peter.

On the morning of February 28, St. John Paul II welcomed them with words that are still fresh in the minds and hearts of those who had the joy to hear them: “Be messengers of the Gospel through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”²¹

However, this first pontifical endorsement was not without atten-



*“Be messengers
of the Gospel
through the
intercession of
the Immaculate
Heart of Mary”*

The founder of the Heralds receives the blessing of St. John Paul II, during the General Audience of 28/2/2001

***In the fecund and bi-millenary
wake of the Eternal City***

With time, these impressions were not only confirmed, but also led the authorities to offer concrete signs of recognition of the charism. For example, the granting of a historical church of the Roman vicariate: San Benedetto in Piscinula, erected in the place where the patriarch of Western monasticism lodged during his stay in the city.

Regarding this meaningful gesture, Msgr. Adriano Paccanelli, Master of Ceremonies of the Basilica of St. Mary Major, first section assessor of the Secretariat of State, comments: “For the first time, the Church of Rome, Diocese of the Holy Father, entrusts a sacred place and the pastoral activity carried out there to a private association of laity. [...] By a design of Divine Providence, illuminated by the maternal presence of Mary Most Holy, the Heralds of the Gospel now make up an integral part of the life and history of the Church of Rome, inserting itself into the fecund wake of the bi-millenary path of the Catholic Church, which, in the Eternal City, the See of the Successor of Peter the

tive observation on the part of those who granted it. The Orionine priest Giovanni D’Ercole, then *capo ufficio* of the Secretary of State and today Bishop of Ascoli Piceno, visited several countries to get to know and closely monitor the development of the Heralds.

***The attentive analysis
of Don Giovanni D’Ercole***

After his return to Rome, he communicated his observations to the founder: “I write these lines to confide to you some more commentaries on my visit to the houses of the Heralds of the Gospel in the three Americas. The perspective afforded over the course of these days has given me the opportunity to better evaluate some points, which I had sought to understand more deeply. One of the objectives of my trip was to analyse the diverse realities of the Heralds of the Gospel up close, so as to, if necessary, give counsels and guidance. Accordingly, I made a special effort to pay close attention to everything. [...]

“I already had the opportunity to tell you in São Paulo that I made various observations and sought to offer advice with regard to some matters, leaving a few points to study better in the future. [...] I would also like to make it clear that I found in you, and more generally, in all those in positions of responsibility with whom I spoke, both there and in other countries, an excellent disposition to accept my considerations. Additionally, I was able to witness the vitality and power of expansion of this work which, in such a short time, has been spreading rapidly throughout the world. Please God that it may continue to follow this path, and multiply to the point of reaching every corner of the globe. [...]

“It pleased me to observe, during the days that we spent together, the modesty with which you act in everything, never seeking to call attention to yourself. And this led me to conclude that this was one of the fonts from which spring the prudent and wise guidelines for the Heralds of the Gospel throughout the world.”²

The Testimony of Various Cardinals



Sergio Miyazaki

Cardinal Odilo Scherer – “It is certainly not mere coincidence, but a sign of Providence, that the pontifical recognition has occurred on the celebration of the feast of the Chair of St. Peter. It is a clear sign that the unity and the proximity with the Holy Father and with his Magisterium are for all a guarantee of being in the faith of the Apostles and on the path of Jesus” (*Homily*, 22/2/2004).



Timothy Ring

Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko – “Five years after the pontifical recognition of this Association, the Holy See wishes to definitively approve the Statutes of the Heralds of the Gospel. It is not a mere juridical formality, but a confirmation of the path travelled during these years, and of a new incentive to forge ahead, with even greater apostolic dedication and commitment” (*Audience*, 22/2/2006).



Sergio Miyazaki

Cardinal Franc Rodé – “One of the singular attributes of Msgr. João which profoundly marks the work of the Heralds of the Gospel is the fixed and fervent attitude of supplication to Divine Providence for the obtaining of all that can be useful to them for the greater glory of God and of His Church, which includes forming and guiding men and women along the paths of holiness, building churches, erecting seminaries and houses of study or prayer” (*Homily*, 21/2/2015).

Words of the Apostolic Nuncio

“**M**sgr. Scognamiglio, thank you very much, as well, for having chosen me to impose my hands on these new priests, making them priests of God. Thank you for the welcome that I have been enjoying since yesterday in this reality which I would define as enchanting. It is a reality that I find impressive, because this variety of colours reminds me of what the Church is like: a combination of graces, a gathering of people, an ensemble of functions that form a harmony. This multiplicity gives vitality to the Church, which is one” (Archbishop Giovanni d’Aniello. *Ceremony of priestly ordination of fifteen Herald priests in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary*, 25/4/2015).



David Domingues

Apostle, finds its centre of unity and irradiation of the faith.”²³

The text of the accord signed by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the then Vicar-General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome, clearly reflects this bond of trust: “The presence of the Association in San Benedetto in Piscinula constitutes an enrichment for the Diocese of Rome. There-

fore, the Ordinary determines that the Church of San Benedetto in Piscinula will be pastorally associated with the Heralds of the Gospel’s activities, whose members express their Christian identity by the testimony of their life, with special attention placed on apostolate, and living their own baptismal consecration through Mary, according to the spirituality of

St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort.”²⁴

Pontifical Master of Ceremonies for five Popes

The Herald’s pastoral work in San Benedetto provided the opportunity for the Heralds to become closely acquainted with a dignitary of inestimable import: its rector, Msgr. Angelo

Father and Shepherd of the Heralds

The contacts that the Heralds of the Gospel have had with Cardinal Cláudio Hummes began soon after the approval, when he presided over the Archdiocese of São Paulo, and they have deepened in warmth and frequency over the years.

During a Mass in the Seminary of the Heralds, on November 20, 2006, the Cardinal affirmed: “It was a privilege and a very great grace that the Heralds had their inception in the Archdiocese of São Paulo. I recall the day when João (at the time), today Fr. João, came with his group to say that he was founding the Association of Faithful Heralds of the Gospel. It was thus that they took this decisive step, so courageous and blessed by God. You see today how God has blessed you, and how you have grown throughout the world.”

At the opening of the ordination ceremony of the first Herald priests, presided by Bishop Lucio Renna in the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Cardinal Hummes explained that a very important commitment prevented him from remaining for the celebrations, but he emphasized: “I wanted to come here because of the importance of this moment.” And he added: “This Association has grown marvellously. We are all in awe and praise God for this very rapid growth of the Association of the Heralds of the Gospel, both here in São Paulo as well as in all of Brazil and throughout the world, in all the countries where it is now present:

a Christian Association of Pontifical Right in which the call of God to the priesthood has also begun to

arise. Yesterday, five deacons were ordained and, today, fifteen deacons will be ordained priests. This is an extremely important moment. And I wanted to congratulate you, and with you, to thank God for this great grace that will be granted to you today and, through you, to the Church in Brazil, the Church throughout the world.”

In his homily during the aforementioned visit to the seminary, the Prelate stressed: “St. Paul has said that the Church – the Apostles and their successors – must be able to discern and safeguard, that is, to support that which is good. To correct that which is not good, but to support that which is good, holy and just. The Church has already manifested this

support to you, approving you at the Pontifical level; on a worldwide scale, therefore. You received this privilege from the Church, which is this recognition. At the same time, it is a great responsibility of being very faithful and of being able to interpret the direction the Church is taking, how you can help the Church, how you can give support to all of its initiatives, wherever you are.”

If space permitted, many other words of paternal encouragement could be registered on these pages. Indeed, Cardinal Hummes has always been for the Heralds, from the very first moments until the present, a true father and shepherd.



Fábio Kobayashi

Cardinal Cláudio Hummes during his visit to the Heralds' seminary, 20/11/2006

Di Pasquale. This priest, whose life was spent in high-ranking service in the Secretariat of State, as well as in the role of pontifical master of ceremonies for forty-two years, provided the institution with sure orientation, spoken with a voice of experience that very few can claim.

Their closeness to him made the Heralds feel even more closely bound

to Rome, for the fact that a personal assistant of Pius XII, Paul VI, John XXIII, John Paul I and John Paul II took lively interest in the new Association was, undoubtedly, a link with the most longstanding traditions.

Msgr. Di Pasquale's daily contact with the Heralds in Rome and his various trips to Brazil helped him to establish a bond of respectful friend-

ship with the founder of the Heralds, about whom he once affirmed: “There was a man sent by God, called John, who brought to and fostered in the Church the development of this charism which distinguishes the Heralds of the Gospel and all those who participate in their spirituality. I had the opportunity to get to know this charism firsthand, with their pres-

ence in the Church of San Benedetto in Piscinula, of which I am the rector, and recently while visiting several houses of the masculine and feminine branches in Brazil and Spain. It is a spirituality that is truly their own, with a contemplative life, which does not signify doing nothing, but adoring the Lord, speaking with Him and listening to Him. This is expressed in love and dedication for neighbour. And the Heralds have experienced this great growth because they knew how to unite the active with the contemplative life, within a community life that gives them a sense of being brothers and sisters, children of the same father.”⁵⁵

Two Societies of Apostolic Life blossom

Inexhaustible in His gifts, the Divine Holy Spirit brought forth vocations to the priesthood within this lay Association, inspiring dozens of its members to consecrate themselves to this ministry to serve the Church. The growth of the institution clearly indicated the need for this new branch: the increasing number of members and collaborators could not receive any sacramental assistance from the consecrated members, forming a void to be filled by priests animated by the charism.

In an unforgettable ceremony held on June 15, 2005, in the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in São Paulo, the first fifteen Herald priests received sacerdotal anointing from the hands of Bishop Lucio Angelo Renná, OCarm. It was the sprouting of a lush tree that today comprises 159 priests and 28 deacons dedicated to the service of the altar and the salvation of souls.

The graces granted by Providence since that time and the entrance of numerous vocations soon called the attention of His Holiness Benedict XVI. In *Light of the World*, the book interview published with co-auth-

or Peter Seewald, he declared: “We see that at this hour Christianity is developing a new creativity at the same time. In Brazil, for example, there is, on the one hand, strong growth among the sects, which are often very dubious because, for the most part, they promise only prosperity, external success. There are also, however, new Catholic awakenings, a dynamic of new movements, for instance, the ‘Heralds of the Gospel’, young people who are seized by the enthusiasm of having acknowledged Christ as the Son of God and of bringing Him into the world.”⁵⁶

As these dispositions became more deeply felt in the young communities, its members began to aspire to a complete commitment based on the practice of the evangelical counsels. This called for a new juridical framework, in view of the fact that the existing structure, conceived for laity, had been for the most part superseded.

Thus was born the Clerical Society of Apostolic Life *Virgo Flos Carmeli*, from the priestly branch of the Heralds, followed by the Society of Apostolic Life *Regina Virginum*, constituted in its turn by the more dynamic elements of the feminine branch. Both societies had their statutes recognized definitively by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on February 3, 2010, under the auspices of the Cardinal Prefect, Franc Rodé.

Convinced that he was collaborating with a providential work, he declared on the day the decrees were issued: “Because of what I have been able to do for the Heralds of the Gospel, I can truly say that my time in this Dicastery has not been in vain.”⁵⁷

Awakening hope in divine protection

With a threefold bond to Rome through the ties of obedience, the spiritual family of the Heralds of the

Gospel was ready to confront a distressing reality: the waning number of Catholics in all the countries where they were active, together with a sense of helplessness among the remaining faithful in face of the wave of secularism that seemed to sweep everything along with it.

How to deal with this challenge? A problem involving faith can only be solved based on the same faith. The most disheartening situations would be reversible as long as the glory of the one, holy, Roman, Catholic and apostolic Church were shown to the world, without the least concession to the spirit of the world: the splendour of her worship, the perfection of her doctrine, as well as the efficaciousness of her Sacraments, the holiness of her laws and the power of her aid to the baptized, from the moment of their admission as Christians to their last breath, preparing them like a provident mother for the definitive encounter with the Father.

To close one’s eyes to the seriousness of the scenario or to the probability of this method’s success would be a failure to recognize the full extent of the problem. Cardinal Franc Rodé expressed both sides of the question in affirming: “I must say, with so many lamentations heard here and there; with all the pessimism we find in some sectors of the Church, there is one thing that we do not take into account, that we are incapable of seeing: the enormous dynamism which is present, but hidden, in the Church. Fr. João knew how to see this dynamism, how to discover it, and here you are.”⁵⁸

In this way, initiatives were undertaken which attracted multitudes, unmistakably moved by a joyful, sincere and confident hope in divine protection, which, for many, had been lost or had never existed. We cite merely one authoritative testimony, that of Cardinal Raymond Damasceno Assis, Archbishop Emeritus of Apare-



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Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP being received in audience by Benedict XVI on 26/11/2009

cida, on the Shrine Apostolate Mary Queen of All Hearts, uttered before thousands of participants gathered at the National Shrine: “The apostolate of promoting devotion to Our Lady is always most welcome, for it is through Mary that we come to Jesus: *Ad Iesum per Mariam* – to Jesus through Mary.’ So our heavenly Mother desires that each one of us becomes increasingly perfect sons and daughters of God, disciples and missionaries of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹

The first necessity of our time

Although the hope that this outlook offers be great, it must be acknowledged that the days of generalized desertion of the faith continue, along with society’s aggressive rejection of the teachings of the

Holy Catholic Church, the Mystical Spouse of Christ. This fact cannot but call down upon sinful humanity the severe gaze of God, with all the consequences announced by Our Lady in Fatima.

In a homily given at the Shrine of Fatima, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re summed up the crossroads at which the present world finds itself, within and outside the ecclesiastical realm: “There will only be a way out of the disorder and the problems of the world today if humanity once again raises its eyes to Heaven. Therefore, the first necessity of our time is to bring God back to men’s consciences, and re-open for them the way to God.”¹⁰

The clarity of these words dispenses with any need for commen-

tary, but, on the other hand, they prompt us to draw conclusions: those who, like the Apostles, seek to spread the Good News will be misunderstood by the world and even persecuted by it.

Fidelity to the doctrine of the Church, allied to a conscientious observance of the guidelines received from the Sacred Hierarchy, have made the Heralds of the Gospel a fully-developed institution throughout the world. Without withdrawing from the paths we have trodden until now, we place ourselves at the feet of Mary to hear the words that her Son, resting in her arms, addresses to us, as He did to the Apostles so long ago: “In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). ✧

¹ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *General Audience*, 28/2/2001.

² D’ERCOLE, FDP, Giovanni. Letter dated 27/11/2001. In: *Arautos do Evangelho*. São Paulo. Year I. N.2 (Feb., 2002); p.30-32.

³ PACCANELLI, Adriano. A Diocese de Roma confia a Igreja de San Benedetto in Piscinula aos Arautos do Evangelho [The Diocese of Rome en-

trusts the Church of San Benedetto in Piscinula to the Heralds of the Gospel]. In: *Arautos do Evangelho*. São Paulo. Year II. N.19 (Jul., 2003); p.16.

⁴ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁵ HERNÁNDEZ, José Francisco. Cerimoniário de cinco Papas. Entrevista a Mons. Angelo Di Pasquale [Master of Ceremonies for Five Popes. Interview with Msgr. Angelo Di

Pasquale]. In: *Arautos do Evangelho*. São Paulo. Year IV. N.44 (Aug., 2005); p.13.

⁶ BENEDICT XVI. *Light of the World. The Pope, the Church and Signs of the Times*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010, p.58.

⁷ DEFINITIVE APPROVAL OF CONSTITUTIONS. In: *Heralds of the Gospel*. Nobleton. Vol. 4, No. 30 (April 2010); p.10.

⁸ RODÉ CM, Franc. *Homily*. Mairiporã, May 10, 2007.

⁹ 8th PILGRIMAGE TO APARECIDA. In: *Heralds of the Gospel*. Nobleton. Vol. 10, No. 108 (Oct., 2016); p.26.

¹⁰ RE, Giovanni Battista. An Imbalance That Can Lead to Terrible Catastrophes. In: *Heralds of the Gospel*. Nobleton. Vol. 9, No. 98 (Dec., 2015); p.39.