

## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY

0001/74

To all and to each one  
of the members of  
the Society.

Dear Brothers:

During the First General Chapter of the Society, in July 1972, the idea was expressed that - each year - all the official documents sent to the members during the year should be published together, as Annals. It was, moreover, suggested that each member of the General Council might send annually to all members one or several circulars concerning the subject of his own competence.

The present message from the Superior General wants to fulfill this advice.

Allow me to encourage the other members of the General Council to do likewise, - especially in order to explain, in whatever line concerns them specifically, some of the conclusions reached in the General Council meetings.

I would recommend to all the members of the Society to read the present message in Community, and after having duly prayed, to analyze it and have a communal dialogue on its subject.

It is because I am conscious of my responsibility as Founder to safeguard the Charisma of the Society, that I am now sending you this: read it in prayerful and constructive spirit. I also suggest to each Community that they might send me the conclusions they reach together.

Fraternally united in Christ,

Eusebio H. Ménard.

August 15th 1974.  
Feast of the Assumption.  
Anniversary of the First Approval  
of the Society of the M.Ss.A.  
as a Pious Union, in 1962.

## INTRODUCTION

The Missionaries of the Holy Apostles: Community in Faith.  
- Wisdom of man, Wisdom of God. 1 Cor, 1, 22 - 25.

It is in the light of the Word of God that each one finds his own place in the family of the M.Ss.A. : Founder, Superiors; collaborators: priests, brothers, laymen, etc...

It is obvious that each one of us has his limitations, is a sinner, makes mistakes, and finds himself for ever beginning afresh, -

and it is also obvious that each of us has his own talents which he is bound to use in the service of others.

Let's pray and meditate on these few texts from the Scriptures:

- Wisdom of God, wisdom of man :

“And so, while the Jews demand miracles, and the Greeks look for wisdom, here we are preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans, madness, - but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God” 1 Cor 1, 22-25.

- You are the Body of Christ.

“Now you together are Christ's body, but each of you is a different part of it.”  
1 Cor 12, 27.

- Remain in Christ :

“Make your home in me as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing.”  
Jo 4-5.

- Consider others as superior to oneself:

“ If your life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness or sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind.

This is the one thing that would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of their own interests first, but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead.”  
Phil 2, 1-5

- All is grace...  
 “We know that by turning everything to their good,  
 God co-operates with all those who love him...  
 with all those that he has called according to  
 his purpose...” Rom 8, 28.
- Everything comes from God–  
  
 “In any case, brother, has anybody given you some special right?  
 What have you got that was not given to you?”  
 1 Car 4; 7.
- God resists the proud...  
  
 “Surely you don’t think Scripture is wrong when it says:  
 the spirit which he sent to live in us wants us for himself  
 alone? But he has been even more generous to us, as Scripture says: “God opposes the  
 proud, but he gives generously to the humble.” James 4, 5-6.
- “In God, we subsist...”  
  
 “...since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist, as indeed some of your own  
 writers have said:  
 “we are all his children.” Acts 17, 28.

**BEWARE:**

- Faith is not ideology;
- Obedience is not inertia;
- Liberty is not license;
- Prudence is not laziness,
- Solidarity is not complicity;
- Creativity is not anarchy;
- Love is not weakness;
- Co-responsibility is not demission from authority.

We all remain apprentices in this type, of new relationships - (new, although they are as old as the Gospel) - on which insists the Council Vatican II,

- among the members of the People of God, and especially among the members of a Society gathered in the name the Lord Jesus.

We shall surely require patience and goodwill towards each other, but we shall need most especially to welcome the Word of God and also the strength of the Holy Spirit: together, these, two possess the intensity that overthrows human limitations.

## I - THE CHARISM, THE SPIRIT AND THE MISSION

### OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY APOSTLES -

#### A - CHARISM:

This is the word that covers the effects of the Spirit of God within the believer:

- effects that cannot be demanded by man,
- nor foreseen by the official powers of the Church,
- nor obtained through the reception of the Sacraments.

These effects belong to the necessary, permanent essence of the Church, in the same way as the Hierarchy or the Sacraments.

The Charism Makes the Church visible and credible as “People of God”, being as it is a complement of the ecclesiastical ministry within its own function.

The forms of its manifestation depend of, and vary with, its historical and ecclesiological essence. So that the Charism takes unforeseeable forms and must continually be discovered and accepted.

It is the Spirit of God that goes on giving new impulses to the Church, in order to form bonds of greater intensity with its historical present.

So that the Charism is the Movement of the Spirit pushing an individual, or an ecclesial Society, to work in a definite way within the historical present of the Church. The source of this Movement is the Spirit of God.

#### B - SPIRIT OF THE CHARISM:

It is the manner in which the Charism is carried out in practice. Hence the expressions “Spirit of the Founder” or “Spirit of the Society” which mean the same thing.

When saying that one must follow “the authentic spirit of the Founder”, ‘Perfectae Caritatis’ 2b means that all the members should follow their own Charism, in harmony with the spirit of the Society. Through this very Spirit, all energies are unified, - the particular character and aim of the Society are preserved in their authenticity.

The Spirit of the Charism is especially shown in the typical virtues with which the Society carries out the Motion of the Holy Spirit received by the Founder.

#### C - MISSION OF THE SOCIETY:

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It is the “actuation” of the Charism of this Society, following the Spirit that is its own. The Mission of the Society exists in reference to its own aims, and those include certain activities which carry out its Charism.

## II a - PRECISIONS ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION

What are, generally speaking

a. The Charism	of the Missionaries
b. The Spirit	
c. The Mission	of the Holy Apostles?

- A. The Charism of the Society of the M.Ss.A., according to the Constitution (art.1-5) consists in the “promotion and training of Adult Vocations in the human and geographical reality of the Church as a Sacrament.”

We must not forget that - in the First General Chapter it was brought out that “adult vocations” meant promotion, formation and following up of, not only priestly vocations, but also those of lay spiritual leaders.

This Charism is an essential element in order to discern who has, and who has not, a vocation of Missionary of the Holy Apostles; because those who “through their vocation” belong to the Society, will have to receive from the Holy Spirit a particular Charism in harmony with that of this same Society.

However, if any candidate to the Society discovers that his Charism be either foreign, or even contrary to that of the Society, it would be a clear indication that he has no vocation to be a M.Ss.A.: he should then abandon the idea of belonging to the Society, or leave it if he does already belong to it, -in order to develop his own charism in another ecclesial context.

- B. The Spirit of the Society of the M.Ss.A. is to be found in the spiritual Texts of the Society, and also in the virtues that distinguish this Society.

Some of these texts are:

- Constitution and Juridical Directory,
- Guidelines for Life. ,
- Community Life,
- Evangelical Counsels,..
- Annals of the Society,
- Messages from the Animators of the Society, etc...

In the Constitution, we find many Articles referring to the Spirit of the Society, i.e.:

Apart from Art. 4 and 5, discussed and commented in the First General Chapter, (see Conclusions in the Annals,) we also find important passages in the following Articles:

Art. 7. - To train Adult Vocations, through humanization and evangelization.

Art. 8.- To be sensitive to the Signs of the times; to give priority to witness and dialogue; to work as teams, at the same time dedicated and fraternal; cohesion and collaboration with ecclesial and civic organizations.

An essential virtue among M.Ss.A. is that of Poverty, deriving precisely from the humanization and evangelization, and acting in Community. Within this frame, we find the basis and the realization of our Spirituality of the Mystical Body.

And this is why Art. 77 of the Constitution clearly points out which are the essential qualities for a candidate to be accepted in the Society:

To be ready for this humanization and this evangelization of those less gifted, and to love those who have nothing,

- one has to know that is detachment from material goods,
- one has to understand what is "to share".

The M.Ss.A. is not a man who discovers a place in the Society and who "installs" himself comfortably there.

Art. 11 - 60 - The contents of these Articles in Chapter II of the Constitution give us a clear vision of the essential virtues of a M.Ss.A. in order to have the authentic Spirit of the Society.

- C. The Mission of the Society: according to the Constitution is  
"to establish and to maintain 'Centers of Priestly Formation'", as well as "Centers for the Formation of Spiritual Leaders."

In addition, it includes all the activities necessary to achieve such training. These may be:

- Houses for Spiritual Exercises,
- Organization and care of poor parishes...
- Territories of Mission,

and other apostolic works, all in harmony with the aim of the Society and its Charism. (cf. Art. 4, 5, etc.)

Under this aspect, the M.Ss.A. is an authentic missionary. This is why, within the exceptional charism of the Society, each M.Ss.A. must give topmost importance to the Pastoral of Vocations needed for the Missions: this means not only the promotion and training of Priests, but also of Teachers of Catechesis, and laymen who can be efficiently inserted - as Christian yeast - within the Society.

The First General Chapter has viewed with special predilection the missionary activity of our Society. But a missionary activity without authentic missionaries is impossible.

The official guide, in this field, is the Decree "Ad Gentes", in which are described and - demanded - the authentic qualities necessary for whoever wishes to be a missionary.

## II b - THE CHARISM AND THE MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY M.Ss.A, TODAY:

- A. Our Renewal must consist in living today the spiritual gift granted by the Holy Spirit to the Founder and to all the members of the Society.

In spite of whatever real human limitations the Founder of the Society might have, all of us, members, must start with an act of faith, to achieve the realization of the Charism of the Society.

This act of faith may be expressed in this way:

- The Spirit of Christ who has chosen the Founder of this Society in view of the promotion and formation of Adult Priestly Vocations, and of lay spiritual leaders for the Church,
- who has given him the Spirituality of the Mystical Body, the love of poverty, of the communal Sensibility to the Signs of the times, as also dedication to the service of all, as far as total sacrifice,
- the Spirit of Christ continues to inspire all the members of the M.Ss.A. family, to realize, every day better, their mission, always faithful to their charism.

Under the impulsion of this Spirit, all must explore more and more deeply, the genuine knowledge of his primitive spirit (Ecclesiae Sanctae, 16, 3) - and continually try to reach the evangelical values the Founder always holds as the ideal of their vocation. In such a way, each member M.Ss.A. may go on being always present and active in today's world.

Nobody, then, should judge individually of what he thinks is the Charism of the Society.

In this task of the continual discovery of our own Charism and of the many facets it might present, the Society needs deeply spiritual men, men of faith, who feel acutely the things of God, and who are ready to obey devotedly. Genuine fidelity to the Spirit of the Society, according to previous quotation of 'Ecclesiae Sanctae', consists in being simply faithful to the motions of the Holy Spirit. (cf. Constitution 17-24.)

All this must be done "in Community", because the Spirit of Truth is also the "Spirit of Charity" - and manifests itself the Community gathered in his name, and in love. However, one will have to refer, with humility and loyalty, to the authentic criteria of the presence of the Spirit. Persons, activities, experiences, will have to be judged in the light of their reference to the Gospel, with the Feeling of the People of God (Lumen Gentium 12a) with the Magisterium of the Church, and with the deep values of the M.Ss.A, tradition.

If any one dared to distort the Spirit of the Society, or impose his false criterium on the M.Ss.A charism,

- or if he were to find it impossible for him to act within the authentic charism M.Ss.A.,
- in all honesty he will have to withdraw from the Society; there is no reason to assist him in changing the Spirit and the Mission of the Charism of the Society. On this point I must be inflexible and I am ready to give my life for the Charism which the Lord, in his kindness, has entrusted to us. May all the Animators watch out so that nobody departs from our authentic vocation and Mission.

## B. Importance of the Charism in a young Society:

Before they are recognized as authentic by the Hierarchy, the religious Societies are, within the Church, the special fruit of the charismatic impulse of the Spirit, as much in their Founders, as in the realities of “Societies”, and in each one of their members.

According to ‘Perfectae Caritatis’ 2, one must safeguard the fidelity to the Spirit of the Gospel, and to the intention of the Founder, - but this is only possible in a continuous spiritual renewal which consists, fundamentally, in an attitude of diligent attention, and docility to the Holy Spirits:

The charism of religious life is the fruit of the Holy Spirit who always acts in the Church. It is precisely there that the dynamism proper to each religious family finds its own ground of development.

If such is the constant advice to all Orders and religious Congregations, with more reason still must it be the careful task of a young Society, so that its charism may always be fresh and never get stale.

Our Society is young, and for this reason might be tempted to change its aim, simply because there might be some members who do not fit in such an aim, - for not having the right vocation to it.

The Church asks us to be faithful to the Spirit of the Founder because it is Christ who has called him, and who has enriched him with his gifts.

## C. The Charism and the survival of the Society:

The institutional elements of the Society M.Ss.A., the structures, the forms of organization, the written laws and also the interventions of the authorities are never aims in themselves, but rather necessary means at the service of Vocation and Mission, - those being given by the Holy Spirit, - and besides these means do not exhaust the concrete demands suggested by the same Spirit.

He is Life by excellence: in the measure in which we listen to him, he inspires the right and permanent fitness of the means to the aims of the Society, he prevents the dull routine, suggests new aims and concrete ways of acting which are not necessarily foreseen in the official programs.

A few aspects of this opening towards the Spirit:

### a) Style of personal life:

On the level of interior life: each M.Ss.A. must insist on listening to the Spirit, and be docile to his impulses, particularly in the true mental prayer. (Constit. 36-42.)

On the level of activities: the M.Ss.A. puts all his personal resources on to work, but always acts as member of a Community: he must keep in mind that the Spirit gives his charisms, not in function of the individual, but rather with a view to the Community, for the increase in Charity. (1 Cor 12, 32.)

Finally, the joy of belonging to God forever is unique as fruit of the Holy Spirit, and we

all have appreciated it. Let's take courage and let's learn how to look to the future with confidence.

b) Style of apostolic work:

- Dynamism and enthusiasm: we feel committed and co-responsible in a divine initiative, - the Spirit instills us with courage, daring and strength.
- Realism and creativity: The Spirit invites us to maintain the means of action in flexible form, in proportion to the realization of the aim of the Society.

There is no question of seeing our work from one angle only, as if it were the unique way through which the Spirit of God asks us to realize our Charism. For example, some people think that the Seminaries are the only form of activity to fulfill the vocation and the Mission of the Society M.Ss.A. What would happen, then, if ever Seminaries became obsolete in the Church? Would the whole "raison d'être" of our Society come to an end?

We must listen to the Lord to find out continuously many other activities which – according to the times – may suggest themselves as authentic in order to realize the aim of our Society, - its vocation and its mission: a missionary Territory, - an episcopal vicariate in Harlem, New York, - or the care of poor parishes, - the organization of Centers of vocations for spiritual (lay) leaders, - and other works which would be as many means to realize our mission.

It depends on us to give them the necessary impulse as inspired by the Spirit, so that we may realize through them our Charism and the aims of the Society.

c) Style of mutual relationships:

The Society at its various levels is - rather than an "institution", - a "communion", and a "community" of Christians who have received the gift of an identical vocation.

The action of the Spirit enlivens from within the style of fraternal life and the exercise of authority: it joins them and unifies them in the same movement of apostolic commitment, being at the same time the cause of the unity and of the dynamism of all the members of the M.Ss.A. "family".

In consequence, one must not mix up the personal or human problems that some members may have, with apostolic problems. The fact that some members M.Ss.A. have had to abandon the Society does not authorize us to look for culpabilities: we must rather seek the causes and the consequences, and find the adequate remedies, - learning from our failures as well as from our successes.

Also, the fact that an undertaking proves difficult does not authorize us to abandon it, but rather - on the contrary - we should get all the more interested in our commitment: it could be a proof, otherwise, that we have "installed" ourselves comfortably in the Society, - if we

wish to get rid of the activities which demand more effort.

It is more logical to look for personal solutions when the problem is human and personal: through dialogue, it is easy to find a better location for a member of the Society, without, damaging his vocation, nor the mission of the whole Society,

Let's safeguard our spirituality, identifying ourselves with those who need most; and whenever our mission is more difficult, let's understand that it is there that- we are more wanted. Let's find solutions for difficulties, and not run away from them.

d) Unity and pluralism:

The plurality of charisms being one of the characteristics of the Spirit who gives them for a specific mission in the Church, each one must keep in mind the unity and the mission of the Community, guided as it is by the Animator: it is for him to discern and to respect - as far as is possible - the variety of the charisms and personal talents, arranging them for the common good.

Such respect makes it sure that the common apostolate be more fruitful, and give the possibility to answer to the multiple demands of the world. In his turn, the M.Ss.A. - adapting the individual charism to the common one, is able to discover in himself resources for the apostolate, and to give them new, unexpected values, which otherwise he might have ignored.

CONCLUSION :

From these elements follows that the M.Ss.A. Community may be described as a group of people who - called upon by the Spirit to live in communion and in Community their own consecration, - for a particular mission in the Church, - find in Christ the very reason of their existence; in the witness to the world of the pascal mystery, they find the motivation of their spiritual service to their brothers, according to the Charism of their Founder.

And so the Community, born of the grace of God, comes to be sign of the ecclesial communion, instrument of pastoral service, plenitude of interpersonal relationships, and style of life for the actuation of the M.Ss.A. spirit.

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PRAYER:

Lord Jesus,

I give you my hands to do your work.

I give you my feet to go your way. .

I give you my eyes to see as you do.

I give you my tongue to speak your words.

I give you my mind that you may think in me.

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.

Above all,

I give you my heart that you may love in me.

Your Fathor and all mankind.

I give you my whole self, that you may grow in me,

so that it is You, Lord, Jesus,

who work and live and pray in me.

Amen...

A V E M A R I A !