



CVS INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION ASSEMBLY

Rome, September 14-25, 2005

AN HISTORICAL PRESENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION THROUGH ITS FOUNDERS

Here next to the tomb of our Founding Father, the Servant of God, Msgr. Luigi Novarese, and in the home of the Co-Founder, the Elder Sister, Myriam Psorulla, I think that it is necessary to outline the various important events which were fundamental in the creation of the Association. In synthesis, I will limit myself to focus on the most essential parts: the role of the Immaculate Virgin, the true meaning of the Association's charisma and its relationship with the Church.

THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN

Msgr. Novarese remarked that in the Association there was nothing of his or Sister Myriam's doing, but all was the work of the Immaculate Virgin.

He was born on July 29, 1914. At three years of age, the Blessed Virgin saved him from a bad fall and she was near him during his long illness from 9 until 17. When he was 13, she appeared to him in a dream revealing his future and among other things that he would have regained his health in the month dedicated to her. This took place on May 17, 1931 through the intercession of B. John Bosco and the Blessed Auxiliary Virgin, leaving his right leg 15 centimeters shorter and his hip rigid.

The Servant of God also attributed his priestly vocation to the Blessed Virgin. In fact the day before the Blessed Auxiliary Virgin's Feast Day in 1935, his mother, who was his only aid, died. Then he put his life in the hands of the Blessed Virgin, his mother in heaven, and affronted a future which seemed uncertain. He had promised the Blessed Virgin that if he were cured, he would have dedicated his life to the ill. When he was preparing his final high school exams so that he could study medicine, he recognized his priestly vocation. He was miraculously given scholarships to the Capranica College and the Gregorian University in Rome. He was ordained a Priest on December 17, 1938.

The beginning of the Association started with the Marian Priest League in May, 1943. This coincided with the Church's discovery of the apparitions of Fatima (1917) and the consecration of the Church and the human race to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by His Holiness, Pope Pious XII on October 31, 1942, with a radio message to the Portuguese nation. During Msgr. Novarese's illness, he had gone to Lourdes and Fatima. Thus he decided that the goals and spirituality of the Association should be a response to the request of the Immaculate Virgin for prayers and penance in reparation for sins, for the conversion of sinners and to sustain the Church, the Pope, Bishops and Priests.

The first group to receive this message was the suffering Priests or those in difficulty. Pope Pious XII's proclaimed the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in May, 1945; and Msgr. Novarese decided to organize a week of seminars on the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was appreciated by the Pope. In 1947, Msgr. Novarese together with Sister Myriam, who was born in Haifa, Galilee, and whom he had met providentially, founded the Volunteers of Suffering. He extended to all the suffering the same program of the Immaculate Virgin so that they could feel of service to Priests and to the Church.

On November 1, 1950, they founded the Silent Workers of the Cross to give continuity and leadership to the Association. In June, 1952, they organized the annual Pilgrimages to Lourdes for ill Priests which continue today.

On August 15, 1952, in front of the grotto in Lourdes, he gave life to the "Brothers and Sisters of the Ill" so that they could aid the suffering in the Apostolate. In the following September with the occasion of the Spiritual Retreat in Oropa (Biella), he and those suffering present decided to build the Immaculate Heart of Mary Home for the Spiritual Retreats. The Blessed Virgin brought Msgr. Novarese to Re, the diocese of Novara, where in six years (1954-1960) the home and a laboratory for social activities were built.

Another divine intervention took place. This time the Blessed Virgin of Blood in Re following an order by Sister Myriam to Claudia Giustiniani, a gravely ill sister, manifested her presence. Sister Myriam obtained from the Queen of Jordan, a Muslim, the gift of the Immaculate Heart of Mary statue which was placed in the Chapel of the Home.

In the meantime, in 1957, through the providential intervention of the Immaculate Virgin, the St. Mary of Valleduogo Sanctuary ((Irpino) was given to the Association. This became the Mother Home of the Apostolate because at that Sanctuary Msgr. Pasquale Venezia obtained diocesan approval for the Association which was necessary to be presented to the Holy See.

The Immaculate Virgin guided the Founders in all of the successive steps. The growth of the Silent Workers of the Cross Family, the Head Office in Rome, the various Homes in Ticino, Switzerland, in Arco di Trento, in Montichiari in Brescia, in Moncrivello in Vercelli, in Jerusalem, in Lourdes, in Fatima (Faithful Virgin Home), in Roca Priora, (Rome) for the Novices.

After Msgr. Novarese's death, Sister Myriam worked hard on the building of a second home in Valleduogo, for the birth place of Msgr. Novarese (La Serniola), for the beginning of the Homes in Poland and the Francesco and Giacinto Marto Home in Fatima (Faithful Virgin Home).

The Silent Workers of the Cross continue to follow the Immaculate Virgin in all their activities.

Now I want to give a brief comment on the Association's charisma and the Church.

OUR CHARISMA

Why did Msgr. Novarese give these names? Marian Priest League, Volunteers of Suffering, Silent Workers of the Cross, Brothers and Sisters of the Ill. Let us remember the Virgin Mary, his illness, his suffering, the incomprehensible mystery of pain which is irrational and seems humanly useless; but that is illuminated through the mystery of Christ crucified and resurrected in the "transmutation" (in the Pope's words) of pain. Pain goes from a negative reality to a positive one, from a humiliation to a way of obtaining salvation (see *Salvifici doloris*"), from a punishment of sin to an expression of love (God accepted it for love.), from a tribulation to a means of consolation by virtue of the Holy Spirit so that one becomes a means of doing in the Apostolate, from a condemnation to vocation (SD, 26, "Follow me! Come! Take your suffering and become part of this Apostolate of salvation which is achieved through my suffering." The acceptance and offering of suffering are asked of us by Christ Himself. ("If someone wants to follow me,. . . take your cross and follow me." (Matt 16, 24) The Immaculate Virgin at Fatima said: "Would you like to offer yourselves?" (May 13, 1917) Our charisma is expressed in synthesis by praying for the canonization of the Servant of God, Msgr. Novarese, "who (Eternal Father) let us understand the salvation to be obtained through suffering and our role in the Apostolate of the Ill."

THE CHURCH

Providence had Msgr. Novarese called to work in the Vatican serving the Pope and the Church as a Personal Assistant to Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini and to other Secretaries of State. He was also Director of the Pastoral Office of the Ill for the Italian Bishops' Conference and President of the National Committee of that same group.

Msgr. Novarese's direct contact with the Congregations and various Holy Fathers, as well as the respect which he was given, positively influenced his every initiative for the diffusion of the Apostolate. He always had the support of the Popes who commended his efforts at the official Audiences with the Apostolate.

Pious XII

This Holy Father was the first to speak of the "mission" of the suffering in the Church. He began with our Association the first Special Audiences with the Ill and Suffering. He spoke of the importance of their presence and active involvement in the Church. The suffering are not alone; they are not useless—they greatly aid Priests, according to His Holiness, Pious XII.

John XXIII

This Holy Father adopted Msgr. Novarese's interpretation of the Blessed Virgin's message at Lourdes. He gave the first official approval in the Apostolic Decree "*Valde Probandae*".

Paul VI

This Holy Father implemented the role of the suffering according to the Second Vatican Council and concretely outlined their goals in the various Audiences with the Association. The concept of doing things "voluntarily," the meaning of "Volunteers of Suffering;" the value of being "consecrated" personally to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the vocation of the ill and of suffering, the total integration of the suffering in society were the main themes in his teachings.

John Paul II

This Holy Father asked Msgr. Novarese to bring the Apostolate to Poland. He reinforced all of the aspects of the Apostolate's charisma through his speeches to the ill in general and at his various Audiences with the Association. He wrote a number of encyclicals about the mystery of suffering: *Salvifici doloris*, and *Christifideles laici*, for example. His concept of "Totus tuus"—total devotion to the Blessed Virgin was as Msgr. Novarese had outlined. Also the idea of the "Shepherd who becomes a lamb" (cited by Msgr. Novarese in a speech to the Marian Priest League in June, 1993) was integrated into his philosophy. Finally, Msgr. Novarese's definition of suffering as a "Vocation to love more" was frequently cited by this Pope