

FUNDAMENTAL MAXIMS (F.M.)

INTRODUCTION

The Fundamental Maxims are to be found in Chapter 4 of N. Barré's «†Spiritual Maxims†», published in 1694.

They are called «†fundamental†» because they state clearly the principles regarded as essential to the Institute : abandonment, total detachment, poverty, humility as well as the purpose for which the Institute was established.

These principles apply equally to the administrators (or temporal directors) and Lady Associates who were part of the Rouen administration from the beginning. This type of government disappeared from the Paris Branch of the Institute after N. Barré's death. However, the ideas which N. Barré had, still present us with a challenge today.

- the responsibility given to the laity regarding temporal affairs should enable the Sisters to be more free for their ministry.
- these lay people are also encouraged to enter into the spirit of the Institute, especially availability, disinterestedness, love of God and neighbour.

FUNDAMENTAL MAXIMS FOR THE INSTITUTE OF THE CHARITABLE SCHOOLS OF THE HOLY INFANT JESUS
(F.M.)

1. In the management of the charitable schools, there must be two kinds of government, one monarchic and the other aristocratic (1).

The first belongs to Jesus alone.

The second, which comes from the first and is dependent on it, is exercised by the people whom God will use for this holy work.

2. Three categories of people are necessary.

(i) Some for the Secret Council (2) and for government.

(ii) Others who contribute materially (3) to the maintenance of the schools and Mistresses.

(iii) People of influence and authority (4) who defend the Institute and uphold its Maxims despite opposition from its many enemies (5).

3. The spirit of the Institute is rarer and more exceptional than one would think. We see some indication of this in that very few people really possess this spirit fully and many are critical of it.

4. It is based completely on abandonment and total detachment (6).

5. In accordance with the two preceding Maxims, the Superior or Spiritual Director (7) should be chosen without any fear of what people may say (8), without limiting the choice to any one person or even to any particular Religious Order or to any member of the diocesan clergy. To act otherwise would soon see the spirit of the Institute weaken and die.

6. The Spiritual Director is not to involve himself in temporal affairs and the temporal administrators are not to interfere with spiritual direction.

7. Care must be taken to ensure that the Sisters do not go to the Spiritual Director for their material needs nor will the Spiritual Director have any right to intervene with the temporal administrators on behalf of the Sisters. This would be to give in to feminine weakness, which would misuse spiritual direction and even the Sacraments in order to obtain what is wanted. All should confine themselves within the limits of their own function, whether the Sisters are satisfied or not.

8. The Institute of the Charitable Schools is a completely supernatural project, which must be preserved from whatever is purely worldly (9). It must not be made to depend upon the ordinary means of human prudence and wisdom (10).

9. It is a project originating in heaven, and must always remain focused on its divine origin. «†I saw a new city coming down from heaven, like a bride adorned for her husband.†» (11). Therefore the Institute exists for the sake of Jesus. It must receive all adornment from Jesus Himself, be prepared to please Him by its virtues and activities, completely detached from merely human ways of thought and outlook.

10. Since the Charitable Schools have been established entirely for Jesus and for the purpose for which He came into the world, we must follow Him in all His ways and in all our endeavours act as he would act, in a spirit of poverty, lowliness, humility (12) , ...

11. Be sure not to wander far from the crib of Jesus; retain simplicity in everything, even the furnishing and decoration of

your chapel, neither too much nor too little, no gold or silver, nothing precious, for this is not according to the way (13) of Jesus.

12. The Institute of the Charitable Schools resembles the Church. As it develops, it will encounter persecution, trouble and opposition (14). What appears to destroy it is precisely what will strengthen it. Hence it is necessary to live always in a spirit of abandonment to God, trusting in Him for all our needs.

13. We have to live in a spirit of complete abandonment to the desires of God and of Jesus, ready to accept the failure of our work, should it please God and Jesus. Nevertheless, we must pray to Him with all our heart and place all our confidence in Him. Hoping against hope (15), and when everything seems to point to despair we must continue to hope all the more, to the point of being able to say : «†Even if God were to strike me down I would still hope in Him. (16).

NOTES

1. *Monarchic = government by one person*

Aristocratic = government by a small group of 'people with means'.

These definitions are not meant to be understood in the political sense. It is a comparison used to highlight the Christocentric nature of government in the Institute.

2. *This is the only time we find the term 'Secret Council' in the known writings of N.Barré. We do find mention of an assembly in S.R.14 : 21, but it does not say that it is secret. Maybe it refers to people to whom the 'Secret Articles' were addressed. Research so far cannot give any definite answer on it.*

3. *People who contributed to the Sisters' upkeep and provided rooms and teaching materials for the children.*

4. *Among these were : Madame de Maillefer, Madame de Lorraine, l'Abbé de Rancé, l'Abbé Tronson - the Superior of St. Sulpice, Henri Annauld - Bishop of Angers, etc. Due to their reputation, connections and moral standing, these people were a great support in apostolic work with the ordinary people. There was no shortage of difficulties in such work, arising from : the writing masters, the administrators, some clerics and religious as well as material concerns.*

5. *There were people who opposed the setting up of the Charitable Schools in case their own interests would be jeopardised - e.g. the Writing Masters. There were also those who could not accept N. Barré's Maxims and who wished to belittle the notion of disinterestedness, abandonment, poverty, apostolic zeal. We find ample evidence of this in R.E.*

6. *The very bedrock of the Institute was a spirit of abandonment and detachment - closely linked with a spirit of inner freedom.*

7. *The Spiritual Director had charge of spiritual direction of both Brothers and Sisters, and saw that the Statutes and Rules were lived out and their spirit preserved. There was only one Spiritual Director for the whole Institute, N. Barré was the first. He himself appointed F. Giry to succeed him.*

8. *It was common for masculine religious orders to be unduly autocratic in dealing with feminine orders.*

9. *Jn. 8 : 23; Jn. 15 : 19; Jn. 17 : 6-26.*

10. *1 Cor. 1 : 17 -- 2 : 16 sets the context within which Art. 8 can be understood.*

11. *Rev. 21 : 2*

12. *The word used in the French version 'abjection' signifies 'being looked down upon' or 'not considered to be of great importance'. In Letter 22 : N. Barré explains the meaning he gives to this word. (c.f. Mk. 8 : 34-35)*

13. *Not according to his way of seeing, of being or of doing. The highly ornamented chapels of the period were more likely to give glory to the artists and benefactors than to God.*

14. *Acts 14 : 22*

15. *Rom. 4 : 18*

16. *Job 13 : 15*