

THE APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

Introduction

The writing we are introducing you now is the shortest of those which have come from the pen of Mother Antonia París. This is also a writing about which we have less data on the circumstances why it was written. Truly we have none. When and why was it written? There is no doubt that it is Mother Antonia's. Firstly we have the text in the very penmanship of the Foundress in a small notebook of ten leaves without numbering, six are written and four are blank. There are ideas such as one about the saving in the kitchen that clearly reveals a sensitive feminine experience in which neither Currius, nor Caixal or St. Anthony Mary Claret would have spent time themselves in that manner.

Besides we see in the writing the misspellings, peculiar of María Antonia, very often with her Catalanian pronunciation does not come upon if a subjunctive (in Spanish) ends in "a" or "e", she writes "habla y medite", "teme"(fear) instead of "tema", instead of "malas"(bad) "males". There is no doubt is a Catalanian woman the one who is writing these rules for the missionary men. Besides, there are ideas such as the poverty which are very personal of the Servant of God, and there is some expression that calls poverty as "holy poverty, our Mother", proper of María Antonia París (4). We have to conclude that the Servant of God not only wrote the text but is the author. The fact that a woman is giving discipline and spiritual rules to the Apostolic Missionaries would have inclined us to attribute this writing to the Servant of God even if we had not seen it with her penmanship. Because since 1842, Mother Antonia understood to be the will of God that it be founded an Apostolic Institute with two branches feminine and masculine.

She had the call from God to promote that foundation, three or four years later she understood that St. Anthony Mary Claret surrounded by his sons, the missionaries was going to begin the Institute. We know that the first outline of the Constitutions that the Servant of God wrote in 1848 had rules also for men, because in 1855 when by order of the holy Archbishop, she put in order and completed the Constitutions; she separated the part related to the missionary men. When did María Antonia write this small leaflet of spiritual rules for the missionary men? Unfortunately, at difference of what happens with the *Constitutions* and the *Plan for the Renewal of the Church*, the text has no date, and in no other writing the author tells us how and why she wrote it. If the notebook had not been preserved we would not even know she wrote it.

However the letter of Currius to Caixal which we have just mentioned has some words which we must analyze. In that letter, after saying how the Archbishop has ordered to Maria Antonia in the summer of 1855 to complete the Constitutions, which she already wrote in Cataluña, Currius says: "In the draft (the Constitutions) she has draw up and arranged (fruit of her prayer) what belongs to the dowries of the Tertiaries, she has placed aside separating it from the first draft all that belongs exclusively to the apostolic order of men, whose rules in particular and at length I order her to write last November when I left from here to Puerto Principe and which I have already in my possession to be given to His Excellency the Archbishop, after I have copied them and she has finished several notes and advice to particular persons related to the success of the Foundation (of the Order)".

These sentences can make one suspicious that this writing about the Apostolic Missionary be precisely the number of rules for the masculine branch of the Institute which Mother Antonia set apart from the primitive text of the Constitutions between August 1855 and

May 1856. We have, however, other testimony of Mother Maria Antonia, according to which while the Archbishop told her to put in order the Constitutions, what Currius ordered her to write was the "Plan for the Renewal of the Church". Therefore Mother Antonia was very busy from August 1855 to May 1856, writing the "Plan for the Renewal of the Church" and the "Constitutions" for the sisters.

She does not allude at all the order to separate the rules for the Institute of men. On the other hand, Currius does not mention in that letter the "Plan for the Renewal of the Church" which he had at that time, and he links the Rules for the Missionary men with the particular advises which Mother Antonia put always in relation with the "Plan for the Renewal of the Church". If we add that the second part of the " Plan for the Renewal" is devoted to give rules for the missionaries and that Currius gave to the "Plan for the Renewal" the title of "Apostolic Institute", we arrive to the conclusion that what Mother Antonia wrote and what Currius alludes was the "Plan for the Renewal of the Church".

Did she write during this same time the disciplinary as well as the spiritual rules? It is possible, but we cannot assure it. In the second half of 1857, the Servant of God was very busy writing the autobiography. That is why we are inclined to think that the "Apostolic Missionary" came out of her pen later. Maybe before going to Spain in 1859 during the months that Currius was still with her inciting her to write. We know that during this time the confessor of Mother Antonia was very preoccupied about the foundation of the masculine branch in which he thought he had to play a very important role.

The text is very clearly composed of two parts; the very title suggests it already:

- The Apostolic Missionary, I - In the Government of his house
- II - Travelling and doing Missionary work.

This is confirmed by the numbering of the paragraphs in tackling about the Missionary in his ministry she again begins with the number I (one).

However, scrutinizing it, the writing has, aside from those fundamental parts, another two minor ones. One preliminary with common rules (general principle about the following of Christ and rules of modesty) and another at the end, again about the following of Christ and communion with Him.

The writing has very beautiful remarks of spirituality. The following of the Lord and the communion with Him, the evangelical image of the poor missionary of Christ friend of prayer, humble and given to his ministry. There are rules in which are clear the common mentality in the times of Mother Antonia, and others really good in which with details of a good house keeper teaches to men (so often clumsy in these matters) how to save in the dishes and seasonings. All contributes to give us a living portrait of Maria Antonia, although what is more important for us is her spirituality.

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I. THE APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY - GOVERNING HIS HOUSE OR TRAVELING IN MISSIONARY WORK

1. First and foremost the Apostolic Missionary must conform his life, person and customs with his Divine Master Jesus Christ.

2. The missionary must compose his person in a way that he is a cause of edification to whom might look at him and relate closely with him.
3. This composure requires many qualities but specially the following:

First, modesty in his way of looking he must never look out of curiosity specially women. Second, he must be moderate in his words. Third, he must not move his hands when talking but have them in a decent and quiet way without touching his face, his chin much less his nose; he must not do gestures with the mouth when speaking, he must not change the tone of his voice nor speak making fun or scorning people. The missionary loses very much of his modesty with these manners, and most of all he loses the good opinion the people had of him before relating with him because they see in him things not proper of the holiness of his state of life; in this way he has very small or not fruit at all with his words.

4. He must observe faithfully the Rules and Constitutions of his Institute and make them be observed by the people under him.
5. In the management of his house, he must be vigilant that nothing that is necessary is lacking because for carelessness of the superiors in this matter, many serious problems arise.
6. In the communities is lacking many times the most necessary because they do not know how to handle a prudent and holy economy.
7. As the food is concern it can be saved plenty although eating the same amount and many a times of better quality for the health.
8. Do not refrain from the stew or pottage and meat stew and this must be always with sauce and never or seldom fried.
9. The food of frying pan is very expensive therefore it should be served seldom and when it is served out of need, it has to be with very small amount of oil or lard.
10. If the dishes are soaked in lard or oil it is harmful for the throat and increase in great extent the additions in the accounting books.
11. The cooking of the pottage or stew is important because in every country there are vegetables, legumes and other groceries tasty and equally good or maybe better to maintain a good health. Thus, the poor missionary in imitation of his Divine Master must not look for what gives pleasure to the palate but look for the poorest; because the disciple is not greater than the Master.
12. Thus placing in the pot this vegetables or other, that or this legume, will spend very much and the expenses will go even higher if this disorder happens with the quality of meats that we are taking, as if instead of bacon it will be used ham, blood sausage or sirloin which is very well known that is very expensive because is tastier to the palate; I say the same thing about many other similar things, that many persons do not take into account, if only they would, there would be an immense treasure of savings.
13. Thus the poor missionary must always see what will be cheaper for his accounting, giving a good amount to his brothers and spending less.
14. In the expenses of the oil there is another hidden mine. Therefore be careful the poor of Jesus Christ in using the oil in the viands, stews and salads, as we have already said, in frying pan, pottage, toasts and salads and many other small things that it seems childish to point out and in reality it could be so; but if we see the results in the whole year we shall find enormous difference, even if it is only to save a drop of oil in each plate each day, what do you think of the difference in the whole year?

15. Too much oil is only good to give some pleasure to the palate, but sometimes, depends on the viands, it is very unpleasant by always displeases more to Holy Poverty our Mother.
16. It is also worthwhile reminding that it is a big difference to put somehow thick the wicks in the small and big lamps; in a word, the expenses of oil in a community is like the leech that sucks the blood of the patient so tenderly that he does not notice the evil the leech is doing to him till he is totally weak.
17. In the care of the clothing it can be saved very much, being careful each one of himself, in a way that habits, shoes, bedding, napkins and other things of his personal use will last four years to the religious who is clean. But to the one who is not clean it will last only one year. What does the missionary not careful of evangelical poverty think of the expenses he is giving to the community with his carelessness and dirtiness?... he should think of it very, very much, he will have to give an account to God of what he has wasted in the house of the Lord.

II. TRAVELING AND DOING MISSIONARY WORK

1. The missionary must be always kind and be all to all but without losing his composure and religious circumspection.
2. Beware that due to his carelessness the veneration and respect ought to be given to the priestly character that he is invested, be lost.
3. Do not familiarize with anybody but be kind to everybody. During his travels he must speak little and meditate very much. His lodging in the cities shall be in the hospital.
4. Do not play jokes to his brothers or companions of travel much less to (strangers).
5. He must be respectful to everybody if he wants to be respected as it is proper to a minister of the Lord; for this, will be good to him not to take liberties with anybody.
 - 5a. Do not argue with anybody, his way of talking be simple, saying: "This is so and so" or "It is not so" and not begin a dispute trying to have his own way, but yield to everybody.
6. Never allow anybody to yield ahead of him.
7. Do not make fun of anything nor mock at gestures or words of others, in these matters that seem witty remarks in the mouth of lay people, loses very much the priest of the seriousness of his character making himself despicable.
8. The good missionary must adjust himself to the disposition of the persons with whom he relates and be all for everybody in order to gain them all.
9. Never speak ill of the country God will send him; nor tolerate that his brothers or companions speak ill of those poor people that God has entrusted them.
10. The whole world must be country for the missionary of Christ, because our Divine Redeemer came to redeem all, sending to preach the same Gospel all over the world.
11. The missionary crying before God of the bad customs of the country will obtain more than speaking with his brothers of the poor sinners.
12. The good missionary must be aware that in any place and time he must observe his religious modesty; not because he is a missionary and serves and deals with so many sins that it is licit for him to speak with freedom (about it) with his brothers and friends.

13. The minister of the Lord should always fear and tremble and think that the sins are like pitch that sticks to whatever it touches; therefore when it is necessary to touch it, he must do it with caution if he does not want to be stained.
14. The good missionary must believe that after hearing some sins in confession, those sins are more to be cried about before God than to talk about them.
15. If it is necessary to talk about matters of conscience be it always with fewer as possible words and with as modest as possible terms, he must prefer to be taken as a scrupulous person than as a well informed among his brothers, he must worry to awaken the malice in the very act that he wants to be detested. God will help that what is necessary be understood.
16. May his modesty shine before good and bad people. This is the virtue that must characterize the missionary of Christ.
 - 16a. His modesty be such that even his companions respect him and they may be able to say about him what was said of St. Bernardino of Siena that, I think I have read in his life, when his companions saw him coming all behaved well saying: "stop, Bernardino is coming", such was his modesty.
17. This modesty will help him very, very much in his external composure so necessary to preserve his virtue; because if he is careless of his virtue, it will be useless for him to save the whole world if by his carelessness loses his soul.
18. At sea as well as in land, in the cities as well as in the desert the missionary of Christ must not be careless of self. If he cannot do all his readings, at least he should read two chapters of "The Imitation of Christ", one in the morning and one in the evening, do not ever abandon this faithful friend and always he be his adviser.
19. Do not kill the spirit of the holy prayer no matter the many things he has to do.
20. Jesus Christ our Lord and most perfect Master during the day did mission work and at night he prayed.
21. It is said that the Apostle Bartholomew prayed to God one hundred times during the day and one hundred times at night. This was truly a real follower of Christ, as the evangelical missionary should be.
22. If the words of the missionary will not come from the forge of prayer, they will not soften hearts.
23. Be careful the missionary to be too emotional with the enthusiasm of the homily; he must not immediately say his feelings about any matter but wait for the proper time and it will be better.
24. Strive prudence when in silence and temperance when speaking.
25. If he wants to be listened to, he must never stress his matters but with moderation express his feelings.
26. In a gathering of many speak a little but be agreeable with those who speak if the topics were not bad.
27. He must keep the secret that was entrusted to him and his own secret shall be for himself.
28. He must rejoice that things be known through others and not through himself, and do not say, in public as well as in private, "I knew it"
29. Be reserved in his way of speaking, because if he keeps his tongue he will have secured his heart.

30. The main concern of the missionary is to conform his life with that of Christ, as we have said in the first number of these notes, in his most holy life he will find hidden manna, which he will find good at any time. Therefore, do not get apart from his divine Model if he wants to fulfill the mission entrusted to him by God.
31. Concerning the matters of the divine worship, look at the humility, reverence and fervor with which his Divine Majesty did the works pertaining to the honor of his Eternal Father. In his relationship with men notice the modesty, kindness and prudence with which he behaved; how pleasant and full of charity towards everybody. Even in the natural actions he has a most perfect model in our Divine Redeemer. O prodigy of humility! Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted to be subject to the miseries of men to teach men!! What a temperance and sobriety he observed in eating, drinking! And what a noble intention he had in all his actions, deeds and words.

Therefore the missionary must measure his deeds with this compass if he does not want to destroy the Law he teaches with his words: temperance in all is the mirror of a holy life. He must not think of it as impossible because they are deeds of a God-Man; because for this he became man to teach man; and as a perfect Teacher he wanted to match his deeds to the human nature, which we seldom find in the lives of the saints because God has given them such big favors that are more to admire than to imitate.

If the good missionary does so, believe me, he will soften the works of his mission and will secure his hardships for the eternal rest. Let the missionary

pray with Christ, praying;
travel with Christ travelling;
eat with Christ eating;
drink, with Christ drinking;
sleep with Christ sleeping;
suffer with Christ suffering;
preach with Christ preaching;
rest with Christ tired
and live with Christ dying,
if he wants to enter into life with Christ reigning

To the greater glory of God and well-being of my soul.

Amen.

