

Communication for the General Chapter – Nemi 2022  
Wednesday, 11 May 2022

**Subject: Authority and Governance**

Dearest and esteemed confreres,

My greetings to you all who have come together in Nemi for the fifty-third General Chapter. I express my sincere and much felt gratitude to Father Laurent Zoungrana and the members of the General Consulta for the invitation they extended to me to share with you at the General Chapter my thoughts on the subject ‘Authority and Governance’. ‘The celebration of a General Chapter, Pope Francis has observed:

is a time of grace for every institute of consecrated life. In a climate of prayer and fraternal affection, the religious come together to listen to the Holy Spirit, to face together the many questions and challenges that the institute faces at a precise time in its history. However, before being a moment of reflection on practical matters, a Chapter is the common spiritual experience of a return to the source of the call, both the personal and the community one.<sup>1</sup>

The subject of my communication revolves around two nouns: *authority* and *governance*. To understand the relationship between these two terms and to comprehend the best way of relating them to each other in order to achieve more effective government – such is my goal in this communication. To achieve this, the first thing that we have to do is to have a good understanding of the concepts that are involved, that is to say authority and governance.

**Authority**

In the various disciplines the meanings of ‘authority’ are many in number. I will confine myself to speaking to you about its meanings in the field of consecrated life, but I cannot avoid presenting you with the general and etymological meaning of this concept as well.

In a general sense, authority refers to a ‘recognised general capacity of an entity (whether a man, a group or even a human creation) to influence other men and obtain obedience with the aim of assuring them the achievement of goods or real – or thought to be real – advantages’.<sup>2</sup>

What does this definition tell us precisely? Those who talk about authority speak about a capacity to influence. In a noble sense, it refers to the authoritativeness of the agent that influences. This capacity is recognised in authority. It seeks to ensure that individuals who are different from the holder of power have goods or advantages. Therefore those who exercise authority cannot exercise it for themselves. This is sometimes why the real chief bears sufferings or humiliations in the name of his responsibility.

According to the etymology of the term (*auxano* (αὐξάνω) in Greek and *augeo* in Latin), *authority* refers to the process of growth and means *to make be born* and *to make grow*, on the one hand, and *to perfect* and *to complete*, on the other. Thus authority refers to the two extremes of growth.<sup>3</sup> Parents are an authority for their children because they generated them. Their authority becomes full when, after generating their children, they bring them up so as to make them autonomous and good in society.

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<sup>1</sup> POPE FRANCIS, ‘Address to Participants in the General Chapter of the Little Sisters of Jesus’, Vatican City, 2 October 2017.

<sup>2</sup> CENTRO DI STUDI FILOSOFICI DI GALLARATE, ‘Autorità’ in *Dizionario delle idee* (G.C. Sansoni Nuova, Florence, 1977), p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. C. MACCIO, *Autorité, pouvoir, responsabilité. Du conflit à l’affrontement, la prise de décision* (Chronique Sociale, Lyon, 1991<sup>3</sup>), p. 6; M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza. Il servizio dei superiori* (Lipa, Rome, 2008<sup>3</sup>), p. 139.

At the dawn of religious life, as long as the anchorites lived on their own reference was not made to authority. When they had their first disciples – and it is important to make clear that it was the disciple who chose his teacher – the elder was bestowed *with* authority. The quality of the life of the disciple offered its value to the authority of the elder.

In the field of consecrated life, authority indicates first and foremost a *person* (God and those who represent Him); it then indicates a *legitimate power*; then a *quality* of the person, i.e., his *authoritativeness* or his *responsibility*; and, lastly, it indicates a set of rules that protect the freedoms of people (we may think of the Constitutions or Rules of various religious families). With those here whose language is French one could engage in a play of words with the term authority (*il a l'autorité, il a de l'autorité, il est une autorité, il fait autorité*).

## Governance

This refers to a set of principles, rules and procedures relating to the management and government of a society, of an institution or of a collective entity. It is the style or the concrete way in which an entity or an institution is governed.

As regards the governance of consecrated life, it can, for example, be authoritarian, bureaucratic, participatory or delegated. It can be strengthened by a system of centralised, decentralised or collegial government.

Addressing the subject of *authority and governance* in the field of consecrated life leads us to understand the relationship that exists and/or should be established between these two realities in order to achieve a healthy, peaceful and effective exercise of government in religious Institutes.

I thought I would present my paper to you in four stages:

1. The horizon of authority and/or governance in consecrated life.
2. Some notions of importance when one speaks of governance.
3. Centralised and/or decentralised government.
4. The reality of our Order: difficulties and suggestions.

## I. The Horizon of Authority and/or Governance in Consecrated Life

For me this is a matter of making clear what the purpose of authority and/or governance is. I will do so using three quotations: the first is taken from the decree of the Second Vatican Council *Perfectae Caritatis*; the second comes from a homily of the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; and the third is taken from an Instruction of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life:

Superiors, as those who are to give an account of the souls entrusted to them (Heb. 13:17), should fulfil their office in a way responsive to God's will. They should exercise their authority out of a spirit of service to the brethren, expressing in this way the love with which God loves their subjects. They should govern these as sons of God, respecting their human dignity. In this way they make it easier for them to subordinate their wills.<sup>4</sup>

My real programme of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him, so that He himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>PC, n. 14 §3.

<sup>5</sup> BENEDICT XVI, 'Omelia nella Santa Messa per l'inizio del ministero petrino' (24 aprile 2005), *AAS* 97/2 (2005), p. 709.

while *all* in the community are called to seek what is pleasing to the Lord and to obey Him, *some* are called, usually temporarily, to exercise the particular task of being the sign of unity and the guide in the common search both personal and communitarian of carrying out the will of God. This is the service of authority.<sup>6</sup>

We can also speak about horizons of authority and/or governance (in the plural) because although the final aim is the same, the intermediary goals can be different. From the above quotations we immediately understand that the horizon or the final goal of authority and/or governance in consecrated life is the *Will of God*. Pope Benedict XVI clearly expressed this when, in a speech to religious, he said of the exercise of authority: ‘To assure an authentically fraternal life in the search for God’s will, this is a precious and necessary service’.<sup>7</sup>

The intermediary goals of authority and/or governance are always connected to two concepts: *animation* and *communion*. There can be different ways of animating or unifying a group; various strategies can be implemented to achieve these results. In everything it is important to ensure that the efforts made at the level of animation and/or communion express ever more the will of God.

## II. Some Notions of Importance when one Speaks about Governance

I will dwell in particular on three terms: *participation*, *subsidiarity* and *collegiality*.<sup>8</sup>

### 1. *Participation*

This involves expressing oneself or participating actively in the life of one’s community. To participate may be understood as making one’s own contribution to the life of one’s community. *Two conditions or rules* are needed for participation to be positive and to carry out its mission to the full.

a. Superiors should allow their religious to speak very freely; they should listen to them well; they should, as much as this is possible, take their opinions seriously; and they should not take decisions before their religious have been able to express themselves to the full.

b. When religious are asked for their views, they should accept that they do not have the last word. They should strive to keep their morale high and they should not allow themselves to engage in sterile criticisms if the final decisions of the Superiors are contrary to what they had hoped and the views they had expressed.

### 2. *Subsidiarity*

This involves more autonomy for the lower level in relation to the higher level: what an individual religious can do, the community should not do; what the community can do, the Superior should not do; what the community or the Superior can do, the Province should not do; and so on until the central government of the Order.

*Subsidiarity* comes from the Latin *subsidiarium* or *subsidium* which means *support*, *help*. ‘It is the principle by which an authority of a higher hierarchical level takes the place of a lower level when this last does not do the things which are its responsibility’.<sup>9</sup>

*Subsidiarity* ‘is not only a principle of decentralisation in the sense of avoiding frequent and useless recourse to the higher level; this is only a juridical aspect. Another aspect exists that is deeper, more sensitive, but also more productive. As the word *subsidiarity*, which means help from the outside,

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<sup>6</sup> CICLSAL, *FT*, n. 1 §3

<sup>7</sup> *Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI on the Occasion of the Plenary Session of the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 27 September 2005.*

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. M. DORTEL CLAUDOT, «Il ministero del governo», in *Consacrazione e Servizio* 33/2 (luglio-agosto 1984), pp. 25-28).

<sup>9</sup> ZINGARELLI

evokes, authority, which means the higher levels, intervenes not when it wants to and likes to but when the lower level needs to be helped... Subsidiarity pre-supposes that all people and all communities at the lower level performs their tasks with all of their capacities and also in a spirit of initiative accompanied by creativity. Only when it is not possible to deal with all requirements at a lower level are the Superiors called upon'.<sup>10</sup>

There are three requirements that should be considered in the principle of subsidiarity:

a. Decisions should be taken at the level of the authority that has the responsibility to take them according to (universal or particular) law. If Constitutions prescribe that 'the Provincial has the task of admitting candidates to the novitiate, with the deliberative vote of his council', the Superior General does not have the right, in virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, to admit Carlo to the novitiate of this or that Province. That is the task of the Provincial Superior.

b. The higher level should do in response of a request of the lower level what this last level is not able to do when faced with a particular and special situation. The local Superior should call the Provincial Superior and not the Superior General to help him.

c. The higher level should take the courageous initiative to intervene in questions of the lower level, even against the wishes of the latter, if things are going badly. This action must remain rather rare and it must be limited to cases where faithfulness to the religious vocation of a person, of a community or of a Province is endangered. However, it is legitimate.

Subsidiarity is often confused with the decentralisation of powers. In fact, they are two different notions. The principle of subsidiarity has never meant that most decisions must be taken at a local level rather than at a Provincial level, or at a Provincial level rather than a general level.

Every Institute must respect subsidiarity whereas centralising or decentralising is first and foremost a function of the nature of the Institute.

### *Collegiality*

In a strict sense *collegiality* refers to the ministry of bishops who are united with each other and united with the Pope. It does not mean anything else.

To use the word 'collegiality' in religious life in relation to everything and to nothing constitutes an abuse of language. In the new Code of Canon Law the term 'collegiality' is not to be found. It is more fitting to speak of *synodality*. The Code of Canon Law speaks about a *college* in order to refer to a set of physical persons who have, or do not have, the same prerogatives, but who take certain decisions in common in conformity with particular or universal law (can. 115). Along the same lines reference is made to *collegial acts* (can. 119), things done or decisions taken *collegially*.

In a religious Institute the General Chapter constitutes an organ of collegial government in the full sense of the term: the decisions are really taken collegially. The ballots that are cast have the same weight and the same value. The ballot paper of the Superior General does not weigh more than any other member of the General Chapter. The same is true of the General Chapter of a Province, within the limits of its responsibility.

A point to be clarified here relates to the major Superior and his council: do they together form an organ of collegial government? Do they take decisions collegially? Can the decisions that they take together be called 'collegial'?

A major Superior and his council decide, or can decide, by a *vote that is called collegial* in a rather limited number of cases. But this remains so exceptional that it is impossible to define a major Superior and his council as an *organ of collegial government*. In a strict sense, one cannot use the term

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. LUCIANA DAL MASETTO, 'The grace of subsidiarity is participation. Interaction between different levels of government – the general, the Provincial and the local', in S. GONZÁLEZ SILVA, *Guidare la comunità religiosa: l'autorità in tempo di rifondazione* (Ancora, Milan, 2001), p. 140.

‘collegiality’ with reference to the general government or to a Provincial government. The specific responsibility of a major Superior cannot be diluted or dissolved into a vague collective responsibility of the council. This last is not in the least a small ‘parliament’ placed at the head of an Institute or a Province. For that matter, by a decree of 2 February 1972, which was approved by the then Pope, Paul VI, the Sacred Congregation for religious and Secular Institutes, declared: ‘One cannot allow an ordinary or exclusive collegial government, for an Institute, a Province or for a house, in such a way that the Superior is only a simple executor. According to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (PC, n. 14) and the exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* (ET, n. 25), taking into account legitimate consultations within the limits established both by general law and by particular law the Superiors must enjoy a personal autonomy’.<sup>11</sup> Gianfranco Ghirlanda, who has the same approach, observes:

The Superior must be personally responsible before God, the major Superiors, the Institute and those beneath him for what he decides and commands, as a result of which no collegial ordinary government can be allowed at any level, whether general, Provincial or local, which would inevitably acquire the characteristics of impersonal bureaucratic government. In every Institute, however, as help to the government of the Superiors, there are organisms of participation or consultation (assemblies, consultations, councils) that express the solicitude and participation of all the members with a view to the good of the entire Institute and of the community (c. 633, §1).<sup>12</sup>

The only organs of collegial government that an Institute can have are, therefore, the General Chapter and, within the limits of their powers, the Provincial General Chapters. For the other organs, including the General Consulta and the Provincial Councils, it is more fitting to speak about a spirit of *co-responsibility*. This has its origins in the communion of all the members of the group. It requires that in the group everyone feels personally and as a community responsible for the common good and share as much as possible their points of view and their opinions, in order to illuminate each other. The ultimate decision will be taken by the legitimate Superior, in a way that respects the rules relating to deliberative and consultative votes.

### III. Centralised and/or Decentralised Government?

According to the relationship that is established between community life and apostolic activity, religious Congregations can find themselves in four different situations:<sup>13</sup>

#### *Situation 1*

In the relationship between community life and apostolic activity, *it is the communitarian dimension that determines the whole of the religious project of the Congregation*. The apostolic service – whether it is assured within the framework of a work of the Congregation or not – is always conceived in line with the needs of common life and the inverse is never the case. It is secondary and subordinated to community life. Institutes of this kind highlight certain aspects of religious life:

a. a great deal of space is left to community prayer and the community comes together at least four times a day for divine offices.

b. ‘Living together’ is made a priority. Long periods of time are spent together as a community to speak, exchange ideas, and engage in mutual sharing at a deep level. In order to be more successful, there is no hesitation in reducing apostolic activity and engaging only in part-time work.

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<sup>11</sup> CRIS, Decreto *Experimenta*, 2 February 1972, in AAS 64 (1972), p. 391.

<sup>12</sup> G. GHIRLANDA, *Il diritto nella Chiesa mistero di comunione: compendio di diritto ecclesiale* (GB Press, Rome, 2014), p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. M. DORTEL CLAUDOT, ‘Il ministero del governo’, in *Consacrazione e Servizio* 33/2 (July-August 1984), pp. 28-34. The study of Michel Dortel Claudot addresses Institutes of Apostolic Life for women but his conclusions are also illuminating for Institutes for men.

c. The familial intimacy of the community is conserved to the utmost. Going outside is avoided and there is not much opening to people outside the community.

The apostolate of this kind of Institute is not to render some service to men, to society or to the Church. It is to erect within the people of God very united and prayerful communities that are, through their presence, very visible witness for the human environment that surrounds them in an immediate sense.

What is done in the normal hours of work is seen as being secondary and has as its purpose that of obtaining an income.

#### *Situation 2*

This is the inverse of the previous situation. *The essential thing is to engage in the apostolic activity entrusted to the community. Community life must bend to the needs of this activity.* If this is necessary, community life that is more individualistic, less cordial, and weaker is accepted. Communitarian intimacy has less importance and communal prayer has little space – five or ten minutes of prayer together every day is considered amply sufficient. Lastly, the members of the community are often away from the house or travelling. In this kind of Institute:

a. The whole body of the Province is more important than the community and the whole body of the Institute is more important than the community. Each community is not very autonomous in its relationship with the Province and the Province has the same kind of relationship with the Institute. At the top of the Institute a strong power exists that is able to take many decisions, because what matters is the mission entrusted to the Institute as a whole.

b. The mobility of people acquires great importance in order to be able to be present where there is greater urgency. Each religious is permanently ready to change his job, his community or his Province.

#### *Situation 3*

This is a situation that is halfway between situations 1 and 2.

There is a hesitation to sacrifice apostolic activity to community life and vice versa. A kind of ‘compromise’ is sought between the needs of situation 1 and those of situation 2. These needs are attenuated – there is less community prayer, less apostolic mobility, and a power that is less strong than in Institutes of situation 2.

#### *Situation 4*

This situation is, like situation 3, a mixture of situations 1 and 2, without, however, attenuating them or reducing them. Community prayer, living together and community intimacy thus have less space and importance than in situation 1. The mobility of people and the good of the whole body of the Institute have the value that they have in situation 1. This fourth way of living the relationship between community life and apostolic activity, which in itself is rather damaging, is conceivable only on two conditions:

a. The Institute must have for the most part medium-sized or large communities and not small ones. I mean by ‘small communities’ ones of 3, 4 or 5 members and not more.

b. The religious must exercise their apostolate in the field of the works of the Congregation and never outside it.

These four ways of locating community life and apostolic activity in a relationship with each other do not cover all of the riches of the reality we are examining here. They are nothing else but points of reference in order to be able to obtain a sense of direction. Thus many Institutes can legitimately think that they do

not belong entirely to group 1, entirely to group 2 or entirely to group 4, but nonetheless do not identify with group 3 either.

Experience has brought out the following: many Congregations for women are theoretically between group 2 and group 4. The dominant and priority pole of religious life remains the apostolic mission and not community life. But this last is considered important. The apostolate is the priority but community life is not completely sacrificed to it, as is the case in situation 2.

### *Concluding observations*

A community in situation 1 has a strong emphasis on community and thus can relate to a larger fabric at the level of the Institute as a whole: it can act independently, without any risk, with a more fragile power at the top of the Institute. Solidity at a community level compensates this institutional frailty of the whole body of the Institute.

In situation 2 there is a strong emphasis on the apostolate. An Institute that is at this level privileges sending out on mission in the name of the Church, that is to say the currents of life that start from the centre and go towards the fringes. Everything that assures the cohesion of the whole body of the Institute becomes a priority. What we need therefore are well-based and correct forms of organisation for transmission that are solid.

In simple words, situation 1 requires *decentralised* government and situation 2 requires *centralised* government.

What can we say about situation 3 from the point of view of government? In describing this situation reference has been made to a form of 'compromise'. This means that one is dealing with an 'intermediate, median situation' of 'crossroads', of a balance that should always be sought.

A median position is always more difficult to define than an extreme position. This is why in an Institute in situation 3 government is also halfway between centralisation and decentralisation. But the fact that it is halfway means that there will never be full satisfaction with the established organs of government. They will thus be more vulnerable to the currents of opinion that teem in one direction or another. What is called a 'more democratic' government is dreamt of at one moment; the aspiration to a stronger government can be felt at another. One must accept managing this situation, which is rather delicate and forms a part of the very nature of Institutes in situation 3, in the best way possible.

From the point of view of government, the situation of Institutes in situation 4 is very different from the situation of Institutes in situation 3. Since the emphasis on the apostolate is as pronounced as it is in situation 2, the cohesion of the whole body of the Institute is without any doubt a priority. The two things go hand in hand. Well-based organisational structures and correct systems of transmission that are solid have the same importance. Situation 4, therefore, requires centralised government, as for that matter can be seen in Congregations that are in this this situation.

To centralise or to decentralise? Everything depends on the nature of the Institute. This is the conclusion reached by Michel Dortel Claudot. For many years, many religious ingenuously believed that decentralisation was the best approach for all Institutes alike. Good for some Institutes, decentralisation cannot be advised for others. Good for the Institutes of situation 1, it is not advisable for those in situations 2 or 4. Inversely, being centralised would be a handicap for an Institute in situation 1.

So before endowing itself with a precise form of government, an Institute should consider its own nature and look at its own identity. From those points of departure it can deduce the form that is advisable to bestow on its own government. Of this view is also Luigi Sabbarese who when analysing authority and government in modern Congregations asserts:

The choice of the kind of government to be adopted depends essentially on the kind of Congregation that has been recognised by the Church with the approval of its fundamental Code...in Congregations where the communitarian dimension is prevalent, the government does not need strong centralisation because the priority remains that of the community at the local level. Primacy here is given to the criterion of decentralisation, whereas in Congregations that are polarised around an apostolic project a strong and secure structure is required at the level of the central government. Here, instead, primacy is given to the centralised model. Centralisation is typical of Congregations that have a missionary character.<sup>14</sup>

And now: how should we assess the governance of, and governance in, our Order? What form does it take or should it take? Which are the challenges that have to be addressed and in which ways can we address them effectively?

#### **IV. Government in our Order: Difficulties (Challenges) and Suggestions (Proposals)**

My reading of this will without doubt be limited because the Provinces that I have not visited are many in number. Despite this, I hope to be able to say something to you that does not deviate from the reality of the government of our Order.

When we consider the nature of our Order – we are an apostolic Order that is also missionary in its orientation – centralised government is the most advisable on the basis of what has been said hitherto in this paper. When I look closely at what our practice is, I realise that our Provinces are rather autonomous and that our Order goes forward much more with the individual provinces having their own governments. The sense of responsibility that each Province develops in relation to its future is a significant advantage of this way of doing things. The programmes that are drawn up reflect to a sufficient extent the reality of each Province. This constitutes another advantage. Again dealing with what is positive, this approach enabled the Order to continue on its pathway during the turbulent events of 2013 involving the General Curia. I may be wrong: it is your duty to make the due corrections during your discussions.

However, the tree should not hide the forest. This practice weakens a sense of belonging and obstructs in a certain sense the mission of the General Consulta.

In cooperation between the Provinces, if the central government does not have a leading role various slip-ups are possible. We should be careful to ensure that cooperation between Provinces does not go back to being cooperation between individuals.

I cannot conceal from you that personally I was very disappointed when I heard in Italy, on more than one occasion, Camillians stating that the power of the Superior General and of the General Consulta is a power that exists only on paper and is exerted only in the appointment of Provincial Superiors. I take the liberty of posing this question to you: can the Superior General, because he has ‘jurisdiction and authority over the provinces, the vice-provinces, the delegations, the houses and the religious’ (Constitution, n. 97), move one religious from a Province to another without difficulties or transfer money from one Province to another when he sees a possibility, a necessity or a need to do so? In theory, yes, but what is the situation in practice? So: what idea do we have of authority? I believe that the question deserves to be posed because the behaviour of some Provincial Superiors is at the antipodes of the meaning of authority as presented in this paper. We need to shelter ourselves against abuses of authority.

It seems to me that one of our great challenges is to be born again to a correct understanding of authority and to attend to the profile of religious to be placed in the various positions of responsibility. Increasing the number of, and developing, structures is something that will be in vain if we do not attend to looking after

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<sup>14</sup> L. SABBARESE, ‘L’autorità e il governo nelle Congregazioni moderne’, *Angelicum* 85 (2008) 1034-1035.

the lives of our religious. We need responsible Superiors and animators. What we say at the level of the Order is also valid at the level of the Provinces in the relationships between local and Provincial superiors, between directors of works and Provincial Superiors.

When alluding to the importance of the *sense of responsibility* of a leader, Thomas d’Esterre Roberts writes: ‘it is something more important than his system of government; a bad minister can make the best theoretical systems fail, but a worthy man of state can produce the happiness of his fellow citizens, even under an unforgiving Constitution’.<sup>15</sup>

We are in a rapidly changing world. If you think this is important you can give yourselves some time to assess the governance of the last Superior Generals (with their respective councils): Father Calisto Vendrame, Father Angelo Brusco, Father Franck Monks, Father Renato Salvatore and Father Leocir Pessini. When it comes to their governance, what are the important key points that should be maintained for our Order?

It also seems to me to be useful to think anew about the idea of a well-run international college for the Order. In addition to developing a sense of belonging to the Order, this initiative would help us to live interculturality in a better way. It could also be an opportunity for the training of the future leading figures of the Order at a general level. With the current system, once the General Consulta has been constituted its members must first commit themselves to knowing each other. It would be an advantage if they had had a shared pathway in the past.

Another point which it is not completely useless to consider concerns the appointment of the leading officeholders of a Province. Our Provincial Superiors are normally appointed by the Superior General with the agreement of the General Consulta after consulting the religious of the Provinces (C, n. 103). In concrete terms, the Superior General does not have enough time to obtain accurate information about the people that the various Provinces propose before he appoints them. This is the situation because according to tradition in our Order the various Provincial Superiors are nominated at the end of the General Chapter. Given that the Provincial Superior and his council are appointed by the General Consulta, would it not be more opportune to separate their appointment from the six-year period of the General Consulta in order to obtain a better knowledge of the religious in the Provinces? In practice, the General Consulta that is newly elected at the General Chapter could proceed to the appointment of the Provincial Superiors halfway through its mandate. The General Consulta itself would appoint the Provincial Superiors before the next General Chapter. If it is impossible to change the procedure, one could give the General Consulta a longer period of time for the appointment of the Provincial Superiors (within three months after the celebration of the General Chapter). Looking closely at the current system, we notice that there is a subtle contradiction of the principle of appointment.

In addition, in order to highlight in a better way the spiritual dimension of authority it seems to me useful to hope that the Superiors themselves will behave as companions of the religious and not as boss-Superiors. If, for that matter, we go back to the first name of the Order – the Company of the Ministers of the Sick – this seems to me natural. It reflects the first idea of Camillus: ‘a Company of good men’.

In this sense, it is also important to understand that even if *religious government* promotes some of the rules of democracy, it is not a *democracy*. On this point, in an allocution of 10 September 1957 Pius XII when invoking the ‘Letter on the Virtue of Obedience’ of St. Ignatius said to the religious of the General Congregation of the Company of Jesus:

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<sup>15</sup> T.D. ROBERTS, *Réflexions sur l’exercice de l’autorité* (Cerf, Paris, 1956), p. 39.

Completely wrong are those who think that they must by now abandon the doctrine of that Letter and replace hierarchical and religious obedience with a certain 'democratic' equality, where the subject would discuss with his superior what should be done until both reached an agreement.<sup>16</sup>

It is also important to make a suitable distinction between the Superior and figures that are similar to him in character, namely administrators, managers and leaders.

An administrator controls to ensure that the daily activities of the group are engaged in correctly. A manager plans these activities in the daily, weekly and monthly programmes. Instead, a leader is a visionary. He tries to discover what the purpose of the organisation is exactly. He is not satisfied with the fact that traditional functions are observed scrupulously. He tries to discover how the purpose of the group can be achieved today. He then searches for specific and concrete steps by which to reach that goal. A great Superior must be a leader before anything else, as well as being an administrator and a manager.<sup>17</sup>

The figure of the Superior, therefore, is a continuation of the figures of the administrator, the manager and the leader; he dons them and he transcends them. And to restate the need to have some reservations in identifying these figures, I will share with you this short statement of views of Simon-Pierre Metena M'nteba:

I do not intend to severely criticise leadership or contest the introduction when suitable and well-studied of its *principles of serious and efficient organisation* into the practice of religious government. I only pose to myself a question about the nature and the quality of the correlation that should be established between these *modern techniques of efficient management* and the *mode of proceeding* in religious life. Even if this correlation seems clear and evident, we can always ask ourselves: how do we adapt as religious when the imperatives of leadership and the very contemporary concern for the greatest effectiveness enter into dialogue or competition with the needs of religious life?<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

*Authority and governance.* This is the subject that I have addressed in these pages. At the end of this paper let us restate what Pope Benedict XVI said when speaking about authority. He declared: 'To assure an authentically fraternal life in the search for God's will, this is a precious and necessary service'.

To be successful, it is important, on the one hand, *always to bear in mind the purpose of authority* – the growth of those who are governed in a way that is in conformity with the Lord's project for them, and, on the other, it is always incumbent *to place oneself under the guidance of the Spirit and allow oneself to be illuminated by the Word of God.* Authority will then rediscover its character and sense of service or diaconate of love. This is the truth and we 'do not have any power against the truth' (2 Cor 13:8).

To achieve good governance, it is not enough to be trained in administration, leadership or management. *Good governance is an art, a science and a spiritual approach.* The most important thing, in my view, is to know how to live in the presence of God, from whom all authority comes, and *to recognise Christ as the ultimate model.* In a few words, good governance assumes an exercise of authority in all truth, freedom and charity. Aware that this, too, remains – and remains above all else – a grace that only the Lord can grant, we ask him humbly for the whole of the Church: 'May your Church be living witness to truth and freedom, justice and peace, so that all men may open themselves to the hope of a new world' (Eucharistic prayer V/c).

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. PIO XII, 'Allocuzione ai religiosi partecipanti alla Congregazione Generale della Compagnia di Gesù' of 10 September 1957, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS)* 1957, pp. 807-808.

<sup>17</sup> C.P. VARKEY, *Authority: its use and abuse* (St Pauls, Mumbai, 1999), p. 268.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. S.-P. METENA M'NTEBA, 'L'ordre de gouvernement que l'Esprit Saint a inspiré à notre Père Ignace: sur la figure du supérieur religieux', *Vies consacrées*, 80 (2008/2), p. 91.