

INHABITING LANDS AND OBSERVING HORIZONS

THE RULE of the DAUGHTERS of CHARITY UNDER ANALYSIS by the SACRED CONGREGATION of BISHOPS and of RELIGIOUS

Religious families emerge
to inspire new journeys,
to suggest unforeseen routes, unexpected ways
or respond nimbly with agility
to human and spiritual necessities.
Whenever we make an effort to return to the source
and to regain the original freshness of the Gospel
new avenues arise,
new paths of creativity open up,
with different forms of expression,
more eloquent signs and words
with new meaning for today's world.
Keep Watch, n. 14

Modern young people could be inclined to think that at the end of the day “the nuns” are all the same. The difference lies in the colour and the style of the habit, whether uniform or not, and in the types of services which they accomplish. But that's not the reality. N. 14 of *Keep Watch*, is primarily an invitation to acknowledge that the religious families have a very complex history, loaded with favourable or contradictory initiatives and called to face failure or to be open to the future. Down the centuries – in its untiring search to draw from the original freshness of the Gospel – religious life has treaded new paths, experimented creative methods, expressed herself in new forms and communicated through words overflowing with a renewed significance. And together with its grateful look at the past, paragraph 14 of *Keep Watch* is calling us to new paths, to unexpected ways and to give agile answers in order to meet the needs of today's world through our key roles.

In our fourth meeting of formation of the *Saturday Mornings*, we will therefore try to go through – but unfortunately very briefly – the epochal turning points that have marked the complex history of female religious life. And when we come to the turning point of the pontifical approval of our institute and of its Rules, we will see how religious life too was animated “by the impulse of walking down the roads of the world, the awareness that walking, even going with an uncertain or halting stride is still better than standing still, closed off in our own questions or uncertainties” (*Keep Watch*, 16).

Therefore, let's set out together on this charming journey in the footsteps of our female religious families, a journey that will show us how in the always unstable restraint of “inhabiting lands and observing horizons” (*Keep Watch*, 10), female religious life has encountered youths, widows, the poor, the sick, the children, noble and poor people, the learned and the ignorant ... has inhabited aristocratic palaces, monasteries, medieval communes, big European cities while being open to “God's surprises”, has inaugurated new seasons of fraternity in the hospitals, in the hospices for the invalid, in the boarding schools for the daughters of the aristocrats, in the parish schools...

And the point of departure for our journey is precisely the Aventine area to which we are all attached. But we won't be speaking about the Aventine just because there lies the heart of our institute with its general curia and its marvellous park, or because it's the hill embellished with utterly beautiful medieval churches and constantly immersed in the perfumes and colours of the communal Rose Garden and the Orange Trees' Garden... The reason is different. And perhaps we will be surprised.

Marcella and the Bible in the hands of young people

One can suppose, that not everyone of us is aware that the first group of consecrated virgins who are remembered in Rome, used to gather precisely on the Aventine, in the Majestic palace of the aristocratic Marcella, which corresponds with the garden of St. Sabina.

During the second half of the 4th century, Marcella, a woman of a vast and refined culture, deeply interested in the Sacred Scriptures, had the courage to approach Jerome and to involve him, with his contribution of biblical knowledge, in the “Aventine circle”, who gathered in the library of her palace. We are in the decades of the spreading of Origen's spiritual exegesis that was leaving a strong impact on both young people and women. Even

some men, together with young women, used to pray the psalms in Hebrew while reading and commenting the Scripture and comparing them with the Latin, Greek and Hebrew versions. Marcella animated the meeting.

We like to recall this influential and cultured woman, deeply interested in Scripture and avant-garde of the best monastic culture who refused Jerome's invitation and that of her disciples to move to Jerusalem. Her desert is Rome; God's Kingdom is even on the Aventine and even on this hill, one can live the Church and draw from the treasure of Sacred Scripture. (cf. Jerome to Principia, Marcella's disciple, epistle 27).

The Nuns, spouses of Christ

In parallel with these groups of virgins and consecrated widows, emerged and developed – especially in the 4th century – a female monachism modelled on male monachism.

Unfortunately we cannot follow its development here and now. It's enough to remember that female monachism – starting from the year 1000 – experienced an extraordinary growth within the town's walls, while managing to maintain always alive its typical nuptial spirituality. In fact, the nuns were soon called "Christ's spouses". All the biblical and nuptial rich symbolism played a determining role in the spirituality of female monachism. During the consecration rite, the nun received the veil and the wedding ring which rendered her "a sacred virgin, a spouse of Christ.

Such consecration of the nuns, demanded a full withdrawal from the world; their being "Christ's spouses" required a special protection to their existence exclusively reserved to the intimacy with Christ. These are the origins of cloistered life which characterized the monasteries since the beginning of the 13th century, with various modalities. Then, the institution of cloistered life was submitted to the pontifical authority, with the Bull of Pope Urban of 1263. Some years later, with the Apostolic Constitution *Periculoso* of 1298, the "perpetual seclusion, with no possibility of modification" was extended by Pope Boniface VIII "to each and every nun, the present and the future ones of any congregation and order, in every part of the world".

However the *Periculoso* was not applied at a universal level. The opening of the monasteries was often determined by concrete needs for survival: it was necessary to maintain relationships with those who ordered works - spinning, weaving, sewing ... and in certain months of the year, the poorest monasteries had to send some sisters out of the cloister to beg the essential alms to feed the community.

In the big cities : religiously devoted women or widows and tertiaries

But even the Holy See approved congregations without seclusion: among them there are the "Beghine- women of devotion and charity" of Flanders (1216) and then, the Oblates of St. Francesca Romana (1433). During the big religious fervour that characterised the end of the XII-XIII century, the "Beghine" contributed to promote "the second evangelization of Europe". In those decades, highly radical movements, were pervaded by a need of a more evangelical, simple, chaste, free and poor Christianity, while the letters of Pope Innocent III were full of concerns for the clergy, for the religious and for the entire Christian world. Innocent III invited the prelates to lead a good life and he severely condemned luxury and the comfortable life of the priests, the violation of celibacy, the greed for money, the popular corruption, the vice of usury, superstition... At the same time, throughout the big European cities, flourished the "beghine communities". They led a quiet and modest life, dedicated mostly to the biblical studies and to mystic research understood as an interior adventure, a «noble ride» in search of the Beloved. (Hadewijck, one of the most famous beghine of Antwerp). Hard-working and generous towards the poor, the beghine lived in small mono-storey buildings and gathered around a closed yard where the Church was often collocated. The movement enjoyed the greatest boom in the 13th century and in the early 14th century, especially in the regions of north Europe. It seems that in Germany alone, there were around 200 thousand beghine and 50 communities of beghine only in Belgium.

Always in the big cities, other groups of women – oblates, inmates, hospitallers, tertiaries – dedicated themselves to the service of the poor and of the sick. At this stage we can recall only the Hospitallers of St. Martha and the Hotel Dieu in Burgundy which is an architectural masterpiece where the sick were lovingly cared for by the Hospitallers, but they could also contemplate the most refined beauty, with a touching corporal and spiritual attention. From the Hotel Dieu, then drew their origins the numerous communities of Hospitallers of the French principal cities, including Besançon. Founded in 1667 in St. James' Hospital, the Hospitallers of Besançon took the name of Our Lady of the seven Sorrows. And we can only mention the very numerous Dominican, Franciscan, Benedictine, Carmelite, Cistercians' tertiaries ... approved "with vows of religion", by Pope Julius II (1510) and Leo X (1521), who visited the sick and the poor in their houses, in the hospitals, in isolation hospitals, in the hospices, in the shelters for girls in danger...

In the meantime, in the traditional female monasteries, besides positive realities lived in silence, prayer, liturgical chant, study, search of God and intimacy with Christ spouse, even abuses, slackening and a widespread inobservance of the rule swept through the monasteries which scandalized the faithful. Thus the Council of Trent imposed the strict application of the *Periculoso* of Boniface VIII and Pius V in 1566, expressed through the famous

apostolic Constitution *Circa pastoralis*: the internal spaces of the already existing monasteries had to be reorganised in view of total seclusion with the obligation of common refectories and dormitories. And the bestowal of the solemn vows and the perpetual seclusion was also extended to the beguine and the tertiaries. They were obliged to accept otherwise they risked to die out progressively. In fact, that's what happened to many of them.

But in turn, the crackdown of monastic life laid the foundation of new institutes, as in the case of the Neapolitan Cappuccines of the so called monastery "thirty three" on behalf of the noble woman Maria Lorenza Longo, who took the charge to cure the patients in the hospital of the Incurables which she personally founded, until she succeeded to realise her dream to pass from active to contemplative life. In 1535, the "thirty three" monastery chose the first rule of St. Clare (strict poverty, penance, humility) and the strictest monastic seclusion.

The secular diocesan congregations : the works of mercy

However, the *Circa pastoralis* failed to hinder the birth of new foundations without solemn vows and seclusion, dedicated to the educative and charitable works, now under the authority of the diocesan bishop. Already in France and Italy alone, the list is utterly long: we recall at least in Rome the Oblates of the Seven Sorrows, the Boarders of Bambin Gesù... And in France we limit ourselves to mention the Ladies of St. Mauro, the Sisters of Charity of Nevers, the Daughters of Wisdom ... all were founded between the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries. Defined by the French law as "lay congregations", the people considered them as "religious".

A special talk can be made regarding the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul who obtained – as we know – the pontifical approval of the Lazarists' Superior and not of the local bishop, while insisting on the characteristic of the "lay associates", that favoured their development.

Little by little, under the pressure of concrete life, the law of the Church was modified, while granting the lay congregations the approval of the Constitutions, but not that of the institute. The most famous case which we have already mentioned, is that of Mary Ward. With the famous *Quamvis iusto*, of Benedict XIV, no formal approval was granted to the Institute of the English Ladies. Other similar cases opened the path towards the full acknowledgement on behalf of the Church for the Rules which foresaw simple vows and specific dedication to the works of mercy or to teaching, hence without seclusion. For the approval of the institute remained the hot issue of the mother general which we tackled at length during our last encounter.

The teachers and the hospitallers: the apostolate

When in France – due to the revolutionary suppressions – schools, hospitals, detention structures, shelters for abandoned children and orphans, hospices for the elderly, the invalid and the homeless, wards for the mentally ill were obliged all of a sudden to replace the sisters with the "republican servants" or with the "revolutionary teachers", the administrators and the districts had to deal with their lack of preparation, their opportunism, with their lack of experience and incompetence.

As we know, Napoleon fostered the reconstitution of the old lay institutes, such as the Daughters of Charity, the Hospitallers or the Sisters of Nevers, and the birth of new religious foundations, on condition that all of them shouldered a social activity, either educative or offering assistance. No contemplative monastery was authorized. The most evident characteristic of the new foundations was the new vision of "apostolate", in a way already present in the earlier institutes, which was generalized in the 19th century and began to replace that of the "works of mercy". This shift occurred especially in the teaching domain, which was considered more explicitly as a true and real work of evangelization.

That's how in fact mother Thouret presented the origins of her institute in the *Petition* presented to Pope Pius VII: "While in exile, the vicars general of Besançon asked me to return to France to dedicate myself, according to the example of St. Ferréol and Ferjeux, to restore the good customs of the diocese". In the second half of the second century, thanks to the two brothers Ferjeux, deacon, and Ferreol, priest, who were sent by Ireneus, bishop of Lyon, the *l'implantatio ecclesiae* in Besançon and the first announcement of the Gospel in the Franche Comté region were accomplished. The explicit call of the vicars general to their work of evangelization, identified, collocated properly and addressed apostolically the new foundation entrusted to mother Thouret: it consisted of "a society entirely dedicated to the spiritual and temporal service of the poor and the instruction of poor young women". After the revolutionary years, France needed a fresh evangelization. The religious of the new foundation were entrusted with an important apostolate that rendered them similar to priests. Moreover, in the same *Petition* one can find – even word by word – the dialogue with the Vicars General : "You will tell us that you aren't a priest, that you cannot preach nor confess. But you can accomplish loads of good work in the diocese, according to the means that God has given you". Besides, with this same apostolic awareness, mother Thouret departed to Naples as she invoked a renewed Pentecost: "O Holy Spirit, come down on us, as you came down on your apostles!".

The etymology of the word "apostolate" offers us significant hints to re-read the *Petition*: "apostle" is a composed word, meaning "not collocated", "without a secure place". Hence, their "being called" from Besançon "in other cities and in the countryside of the vast diocese. And then in the dioceses of Lyon, of Chambery, of Strasbourg... And then to Naples, to Tagliacozzo...", without having a secure house, deprived of a stable

collocation, or “going forth”, as Pope Francis asks from us today, “ready to set up rapid tents on the crossroads of unknown paths, “where the Spirit groans” (*Keep Watch*, 15).

The file for the Approval and the Canon Law

With the *Petition* at hand, our voyage that commenced from the Aventine, has led us to Rome near the Quirinale palace, which at that time was the papal residence, precisely on the desk of Cardinal Bartholomew Pacca. Ettore Consalvi, the Secretary of State, handed over to him the file for the pontifical approval of the institute of the *Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul* and of their Rules. The previous name – *Sisters of Charity of Besançon* – had been attributed to them in 1807 by the Paris Chapter for the “useful” congregations, teachers and hospitallers, in view of distinguishing the institute of mother Thouret from other communities that recalled the name of St. Vincent in their title. Now in the *Petition* she was asking the Holy See to have the name of St. Vincent again in the official title of the congregation, because “we are the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul of Besançon: we honour him as our founder, father, model and special protector”.

As we already know, the canonical process began when mother Thouret sent an official request to Pope Pius VII. The *Petition* was accompanied by recommendation letters on behalf of Mgr. Mancinelli to the chief prelates of the Roman Curia, designated to the canonical examination of the Rules. We are referring to Mgr. Consalvi, Secretary of State, to Mgr. Julius Maria Cavazzi of Somaglia, vice-councillor and to Mgr. Antonio Di Pietro, sub-deacon of the Sacred Apostolic College. Through a more personal recommendation note, Mgr. Narni Mancinelli addressed canon Giovanbattista Gallinari, apostolic Forwarder appointed to act as secretary of mother Thouret and Sr. Rosalie. The file contained even the essential presentation letter of Mgr. Durand, auxiliary bishop of Besançon.

The Holy See received the request to approve a female religious congregation with simple vows, dedicated exclusively to apostolic work, without seclusion, having at its helm a mother general and other communities in various dioceses. The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, headed by cardinal Pacca, was the pontifical ministry appointed to examine the issue within the normative framework foreseen by the *Periculoso* of Boniface VIII, by *Circa Pastoralis* of Pius V and by *Quamvis iusto* of Benedict XIV. But now the Holy See was called to consider both the needs of the society who asked for “useful” religious institutes to face the new pastoral, welfare and educative challenges, and also the needs of the same Church who had endured the suppression of dioceses, convents, monasteries, abbeys and confraternities, and soon the requisition of seminaries, bishops’ premises, boarding schools and places of worship. Instead of all these realities, throughout the 19th century, only the parishes and the new female religious communities remained for a long time the only widespread territorial presence, capable to reach the faithful everywhere. They therefore needed to be supported and directed within the vast pastoral work undertaken by Pope Pius VII during the Restoration.

And yet, so far, in front of the requests for canonical approval on behalf of the new female religious foundations, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars had manifested strong perplexities, while considering it appropriate to abide by the traditional instructions, namely to keep the solemn vows and seclusion. Immediately after the Congress of Vienna, the national states, especially of northern-Europe, due to already mentioned reasons, proceeded quickly to the acknowledgement of the new congregations of simple vows and without seclusion. Instead, the Holy See maintained its opinions, because – in that historical moment - it was necessary to defend the independence of the Church in front of the States’ requests who continued to interfere with the pastoral and religious life. Therefore, for the Holy See, these new institutes of simple vows, without seclusion, couldn’t be considered entirely as “religious.”

Then, however, in the light of the pressures made by the French political authorities, who continued to send increasing demands of acknowledgement, the Sacred Congregation implemented a less rigid approach: if the institute had been recently founded, it was limited to praise its goal or the founder, through the *decretum laudis*; if it already enjoyed the full trust and support of the diocesan ordinary, it became an acknowledged institute but it postponed the examination and the approval of the Rules which had to be ad experimentum for a certain time to verify its spiritual and apostolic strength.

Regarding the issue of the centralisation of the government in the hands of the superior general, the Sacred Congregation became also aware that the diocesan bishop, being the superior of an institute who has communities even in other dioceses, could enter in conflict with his co-brothers; consequently, in many cases, in order to help the female superior general in the government, a cardinal was nominated as protector of the Institute. Instead, for advice regarding the internal running of the institute, she had a priest as ecclesiastic Director. One had to wait for *Methodus* (1854) of Pius IX, fruit of a long and difficult discernment on behalf of the Holy See, for the definitive legitimacy of the office of female superior general.

We are henceforth in the second half of the 19th century, but the *Methodus* of Pius IX finally offered the canonical legitimacy to the new model of religious life with a superior general, who manifested distinctive characteristics and a strong identity. Such new model had an orientation towards a socio-charitable apostolate that encouraged the coming forth of dynamic and determined women, capable to deal with property and persons : at the central level, through the superiors general, and at the peripheral level through the provincial superiors: it

demanded a spirit of initiative and ability to face new and stimulating situations, such as the opening of new houses, even in missionary territories or the shouldering of new works in the domains of education, formation and welfare.

Finally, for the canonical acknowledgment of the institutes of simple vows, it will be necessary to wait for *Conditæ a Christo* of 1900 of Leo XIII, through which they obtained the acknowledgement of their juridical nature as 'religious congregations in the real sense of the word. *Conditæ a Christo* introduced the canonical distinction between institutes of diocesan and pontifical right, and it also pointed out the nature of the authority on them: power of jurisdiction entrusted to the Diocesan Ordinary for those of diocesan right and internal domestic authority of the superior general, for those of pontifical right.

The testing of the Rules

On the 20th November 1818, after having personally met the Foundress, the Secretary of State Consalvi "who didn't want to disregard the ordinary process, decided that the so called Rules and Constitutions, together with the *Petition*, will be submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, so that the latter could examine them and hence express its opinion at its earliest". The whole file was entrusted to the secretary of the Congregation, Mgr. Giovanni Francesco Guerrieri, who, on the 8th December 1818, received "Sr. Jeanne Antide Thouret with the other sister and the person assisting them, in order to organize the preparations prior to the examination of the Rules and Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity".

After having translated from French the entire file, Cardinal Cavazzi of Somaglia and the same Mgr. Guerrieri were requested to examine and to express their opinion regarding the Rules. They presented their report during the plenary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars which was celebrated on the 12th February 1819: Mgr. Cavazzi of Somaglia presented chapter by chapter the general structure of the Rules – and even defined it "as a golden light opera" – expressing a positive opinion on the contents as a whole: "I must admit generally that the Constitutions and the Rules are highly worthy of praise". The speaker added that he was requested to "hand over the Rules even to the novice master of the Fathers of the Mission to examine them. On giving his opinion, the latter had to admit that on the whole the Constitutions and the Rules are really admirable, both in the goals suggested by the Institute and even in the indicated instruments. The novice master of the Vincentians had therefore examined what the Canon Law calls today "the patrimony" of the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul – their identity, the goal and the purpose of the Institute, its spiritual life, its particular mission – and identified in it the authentic characteristics of a journey of holiness to be lived in docility to the Holy Spirit and in communion with the Church (CIC, canon 578).

And always in the memorandum of the *Examination of the Institute of the Sisters of Charity*, the long *Preliminary Discourse* preceding the Rules was said to be "composed of excellent principles containing the same fervour and the goals of the institute, namely to unite to the perfect observance of God's commandments and those of the Church, the faithful practice of the Evangelical Counsels, and even to relief the poor sick in their spiritual and temporal needs".

The denomination – the Government – the Vows

However, one had to keep in mind the historical circumstances in which the foundation of the institute occurred and the tradition of the Church regarding the religious orders. Therefore the cardinal mentor urged some essential modifications: first of all "dignity of superior general" which was so far associated with the archbishop of Besançon, "cannot exist anymore, since around nine or ten houses were opened, some of them outside France and another two in the Kingdom of Naples". Another correction concerned the title of the Institute, which, for convenience had to modify *Daughters of Charity under the protection of St. Vincent de Paul*: "For prudence sake, the Pope can no longer prudently approve the title 'Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul', because it belongs to a very extended body, that has been elaborated, planned and consolidated by the same saint. It was known by everybody as Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul".

Finally, the simple vows dictated by the French legislation after the Revolution didn't belong to the church tradition: "Although they had been permitted in France by the Holy See in view of a major spiritual good, there didn't exist any example of them, neither within the Canonists nor within the perpetually instituted Congregations. Therefore one had to return – went on the cardinal mentor – to the custom that the spirit of the Church and her laws have adopted for long centuries". The resolution of the prelate was that "the Congregation couldn't be approved as a religious institute, without the seclusion and without having the Rules approved". Hence he concluded: "I don't intend to propose an approval of such Constitutions in a specific form, but only a simple permission to profess them".

At this point, the plenary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars decided to entrust the study and the solution of these problems – name, nature of the vows and authority on the institute – to another "particular congregation": on the 30th September 1820 cardinal Consalvi reported this fact to the Nunzio of Paris, Mgr. Vincenzo Macchi. The restricted committee was only composed of the Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and

Regulars Cardinal Pacca, by Cardinal Cavazzi of Somalia and by Mgr. Guerrieri. The latter, in his intervention to the particular congregation regarding the suggestion of Cardinal Cavazzi of Somaglia to “abrogate the general superiority of the archbishop of Besançon”, highlighted the dangers connected to it: “If the superiority had to be left only to the female general superior and her council, the female judgment could be too limited. It would be equally dangerous if they had to decide alone on serious doubts regarding the moral state of the houses of the institute in this regard”. Therefore, each religious community had to be submitted to the respective diocesan Ordinaries.

But, in order to avoid the inevitable conflicts among the various diocesan bishops, it was suggested that the “congregation of the Daughters of Charity would have a Cardinal in Rome, appointed by the Holy See, with the title of Protector”. Thus Mgr Guerrieri concluded: “I would limit myself to the permissive Apostolic approval of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity in general; and if one wanted the specific approval of the Institute, of the Rules and Constitutions, I would like that they have a Head and for the moment the perpetual vow is not required. Besides, the institute is very useful and worthy to be propagated. Thus, it is necessary that the rules are printed in Italian to be transmitted to the Houses already erected and to the future ones, while observing the few changes already made by Cardinal Cavazzi of Somaglia and those that will be prescribed in the vows of this special congregation”, who finally pronounced her decisions in this regard: the title was confirmed as “Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul and the simple religious vows had to be valid until the sister remained in the institute. As far as this was concerned, the Legislation of the French Revolution had marked a point of no return: the solemn vows had been prohibited and even the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars now showed that she wanted to take this in consideration, but added in the profession form the clause which then became classic «until I remain in the institute». From then on, even the four religious vows of the Daughters of Charity of mother Thouret were called «permanence vows».

The delicate issue of the centralisation of the government in the hands of a female superior general was thus resolved: “Since the congregation of the Daughters of Charity was spread in other dioceses, not only in France, and was now assuming the title of institute in the Catholic Church, it doesn’t seem appropriate that a bishop, especially in France, must apply rules in other dioceses. It was therefore considered convenient that the Superior General continues to preside over the Institute according to the Canonical Rules and in coherence with the Religious Institutes”. Finally, as Cardinal Consalvi continued to report “the modifications were presented to mother Thouret by Cardinal Consalvi and she accepted them fully”.

Having obtained the consent of the Foundress, Guerriero was delegated to refer to the Holy Father “that one could proceed to the approval of the new institute and of its Constitutions with the above mentioned modifications.” This happened on the 23rd July 1819: for the congregation of mother Thouret, neither a cardinal protector nor an external ecclesiastic director were foreseen. Thus, the superior general of the ‘Daughters of Charity under the protection of St. Vincent de Paul was fully acknowledged as the autonomous guide of an institute of apostolic life, of simple vows, without seclusion and henceforth fully integrated in the life of the universal Church as it was highlighted by the Secretary of State Cardinal Consalvi.

After the pontifical approval, the new Constitutions, besides providing to the sisters a safe reference picture for their religious, community and apostolic life, they rendered explicit the place of the institute in the life of the Church, hence uniting their charism of religious and apostolic congregation to the Pope, and so the Daughters of Charity, under the protection of St. Vincent de Paul participated, from then onwards, in the universal mission of the Church. And the same universality of their mission with the poor, structured in various services and works was safeguarded everywhere. Thus, the institute was engaged to cooperate with the Holy Father, universal pastor of the Church, to serve the poor in communion with the bishops of the various dioceses where the local communities belonging to the congregation of the Daughters of Charity were present.

On the 9th July 1820, a year after the pontifical approval, the *Diary of Rome*, the most important newspaper of the capital, gave detailed news about the event in n. 55. Published three times weekly, the *Diary* printed the religious, political and military events of the city of Rome and the main news of Italy and other countries: “On the 23rd July 1819, the Catholic World had been enriched with the new institute of the Daughters of Charity under the protection of St. Vincent de Paul, institute of Sr. Jeanne-Antide Thouret who still lives in Rome”, in a bid – as we know – to persuade the archbishop of Besançon, Mgr. Cortois de Pressigny and his closest collaborators to accept the decisions of the Holy See regarding the institute. The *Diary of Rome* of July 20th, after presenting a summary of the foundation’s circumstances, narrated the journey undertaken to achieve the pontifical approval of the institute and presented in detail its welfare and educative goals. At the end it concluded: “Briefly, the profession of the new Congregation embraces all the states of the afflicted humanity. So far, through a unique miracle, the Lord has supported its steps, enlightened and blessed the work”. Today, we too can celebrate the Lord’s faithfulness who continued to support the steps, enlightened and blessed the work: “The Lord is alive and at work in our history and he calls us to collaborate and to discern together new seasons of prophecy at the service of the Church, in view of the forthcoming Kingdom”. (*Keep Watch*, n. 1). May it become a reality!

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