**A lifestyle to revitalize the CM identity in Europe and the Middle East.**

The title of this reflection has a prospective intention: it appeals to a way of life, to a present reality through which we can, in the future, revitalize the identity of the CM in Europe and the Middle East. This presentation does not intend to guess the future, but to provide a simple contribution to somehow analyze the cause-effect dynamics of our way of being. In other words, I try to establish a bridge between today and a possible tomorrow, reflecting on some characteristics that may determine our way of life in the short term.

It is true that there are imponderables - such as a pandemic or a war - that condition the course of events, but reading the signs of the times can go some way to predicting what is to come. We cannot give in to the temptation to deny these signs, some of them quite worrying, as indicators of an inevitable reality. So, first, let us look at some of the most significant features of the socio-ecclesial context and take a brief x-ray of the CM in Europe and the Middle East. Secondly, we will try to understand what it means to revitalize identity in the Vincentian spirituality . Finally, we will concretize some dimensions of a way of life as a factor of revitalizing our identity. I will not go into aspects that are part of the lifestyle such as the vows and the five virtues because they have already been duly analyzed.

**1. The socio-ecclesial context: an unsettling present**

Specialists of the Collins English dictionary have created a neologism to define the year 2022. By evaluating the words, the most debated topics of the year, they have formed the concept of "*permacrisis*" (perma + crisis). The year 2022 is characterized by a permanent crisis, an extended period of instability and insecurity that does not cease. In fact, we repeatedly hear expressions such as economic crisis associated with high inflation, energy crisis, environmental crisis, political crisis, humanitarian crisis, pandemic crisis... there is a wave of pessimism that persists.

The Church is not immune to the crisis. As an example, I take the liberty of sharing with you some concerns about the situation of the Church in Portugal provoked by the publication of the report of an independent commission appointed by the Church on the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people by the clergy. I do so sharing the certainty that we will all, sooner or later, have to face this painful process of clarification and purification, an inevitable reality that determines our way of life. The results of the investigation point to some 5000 victims over the last 70 years. We all knew that these situations existed, but we avoided looking at this issue head on. Somehow, we have been pressured by society and the community of believers to come to terms with an uncomfortable truth that we did not want to see.

The reactions have been violent from the main "influencers" in society: from politicians to intellectuals, atheists to the people of God. There is outrage against the Church as an institution. Even the bishops, who in Portugal seemed to enjoy an almost untouchable status, have been the target of collective anger. Resentment built up over decades found in this event the "straw that broke the camel's back" that caused the anger to boil over. Almost daily, for weeks, there have been news reports and disparaging comments in the media. It seems that the meritorious work of so many pastoral workers, carried out for years and years in transforming society, quickly fell into oblivion. Taking advantage of the wave of discredit, some of the more radical movements try to associate the image of the priest with that of a pedophile, and the Church with that of a factory of perverts, a dangerous, anti-democratic organization that attacks fundamental rights and, for that very reason, lacks moral credibility to defend causes such as abortion and euthanasia, among others[[1]](#footnote-1) .

This is our present: at different paces and in different ways, the Church is being scrutinized for what it has done or failed to do. This altered perception of the role of the Church as a now increasingly insignificant institution reflects the cultural paradigm shift in old Europe. Pope Francis said, already in 2015, that "it can be said that today we are not living in an era of change, but in a change of era", and later, in 2019, in an address to the Roman Curia, he takes up the same expression, adding that "we find ourselves, therefore, in one of those moments in which changes are no longer linear, but epochal; they constitute choices that rapidly transform the way of living, of relating, of communicating and elaborating thought, of communicating between human generations and of understanding and living the faith and science". Consequently, "it is not enough to live the change by simply putting on a new garment and then remaining as before".

In other words, the challenge of the present time demands more than a cosmetic change in our way of life, and it would be anachronistic to try to respond to these challenges by recycling the recipes of the past, recovering outdated styles of a time and place that are largely incomprehensible to the women and men of our time. There is a new cycle in history that requires a new way of life[[2]](#footnote-2) .

But the causes of the Church's discredit in the public square are not only the scandals provoked by the abuses of the clergy and the sad strategy of concealment by the hierarchy. Other scandals are eroding the image of the institution called to be a reflection of the divine light, a sign of stability in an ever-changing world; the territory of the experience of the beautiful and the eternal in a time that also produces the horror of war and hunger. The vocation of the Church seems overshadowed by internal wars. There are armies fighting over issues of liturgical rite, ecclesiastical discipline and the transition from an ecclesiological model centered on the image of a Church as an (almost) perfect and hierarchical society, to that of a more synodal Church, itself a wandering and pilgrim subject. The upheavals caused by the innumerable debates raised by the current synodal dynamics, the conclusions of the various assemblies, the input of some dioceses, especially in Germany, on divisive issues such as the obligation of celibacy, the blessing of homosexual couples, the ordination of women, etc., indicate that this change is not for a very distant tomorrow[[3]](#footnote-3) .The Czech theologian and philosopher Tomáš Halík does not hesitate to state that "the state of the Catholic Church is in many respects reminiscent of the situation immediately before the Reformation"[[4]](#footnote-4) . And in the essay written in the context of the pandemic, this thinker sees in the closed and empty churches the warning sign of what the Church could soon become: closed and empty[[5]](#footnote-5) . In some countries, this reality is not a sign, but a fact.

It is not possible to think of the revitalization of the CM without taking into account the current situation of the reform of the Church. We are in a post Second Council era and, as the theologian G. Lafont says, the Church has not yet found its form. Over the centuries we can point to a Gregorian form, a Tridentine form, another Roman form, forms which, according to this author, are certainly venerable and have borne fruit, but inadequate in the present context[[6]](#footnote-6) . Concretely, reflecting on our way of life, can we imagine what would be the consequences for our already small and ageing Society if, tomorrow, the obligation of celibacy were abolished and the ordination of women promoted? What would be the time horizon of these measures? And even more: what is the role of the CM in this reform? In the recent past, some of our confreres have played a decisive role, they have made unique contributions to the reform of the Church, for example, Fr Fernando Portal in the ecumenical movement, Fr Annibale Bugnini in the liturgical reform of Vatican II. They stood out for their persistence and the quality of their work, capable of convincing and mobilizing a community, of transforming a way of being Church. Today, the renewal of the Church, as T. Halík underlines, "will not come out of the Church. Halík stresses, "will not come from the table of a bishop, nor from a meeting and conference of experts, but presupposes a strong spiritual impulse, theological deepening and the courage to experiment"[[7]](#footnote-7) . Can the CM contribute to this movement of revitalization of the Church?

**1.1 CEVIM - Some Considerations on the Situation**

1. At the end of April 2023, CEVIM has 847 members with an average age of approximately 63.5. An ageing community naturally has a greater resistance to change, along with a tendency to conformism and resignation. Beyond a maintenance ministry, it will be difficult to expect much new from a legitimately tired human capital. In this regard, it is not surprising to hear some complaints from younger confreres. Few in number, some have the impression of having been sent only to make up for the shortages, used almost as "cannon fodder" since, once they have finished their studies, they are placed in communities made up of members the age of a grandfather. They are homeless, some speak a language from another world and postulate a pastoral model which, in some respects, seems to be going back in history. In this context, generational conflicts are an inevitable reality, but they are not always negative. Tension between generations is advantageous when it becomes a kind of "fuel" capable of moving and energising a community through open and fraternal debate. However, when this tension becomes acute, it can lead to the breakdown of relationships, create sectarian groups and cause discouragement and public scandal.

The leaders of each Province have the task of accompanying each other, of fostering internal unity while respecting diversity. What initiatives can we take to avoid situations of community breakdown?

2. The presence of foreign confreres, that is, originally outside the CEVIM context, is, in some cases, globally significant, translates the interculturality of the CM and reflects the multicultural character of our cities. The numbers reveal a great variability in the approach to this issue: in some provinces such as Zaragoza, Spain, there are currently 16 confreres (8 in studies and 8 collaborating in ministries). On the other hand, in other provinces the presence is almost residual. Portugal, for example, despite the scarcity and the high average age of its members, has only one confrere in studies. From the data presented, I think we can deduce that this variation shows a different approach to the issue of demographic decline. Faced with the imminent definitive closure of a community, some provinces have resorted to a mutually advantageous strategy: they offer opportunities to the provinces most in need by welcoming previously selected confreres into their midst. The new members become protagonists in the revitalization of a sometimes moribund space, insofar as they provide a sort of "transfusion of blood and soul" from one community to another. Their presence, in a way, changes the face, the way of life of our communities because they introduce diverse cultural elements.

In this regard, would it be possible for CEVIM to adopt a common strategy with regard to the reception of confreres?

And in the field of vocational promotion, could we count on some joint initiatives in the production of materials, in the sharing of reflections and initiatives?

3. The management of a heritage: according to a recent study published in Italy, from 1985 to the present day, religious houses have been reduced by 40% and, if this trend continues, it is estimated that in the next 10 years more than half of the existing communities will be closed[[8]](#footnote-8) . Monasteries, convents, seminaries and retreat houses are heavy and expensive structures to maintain. In the absence of a concerted strategy, the study points out, real estate assets are destined for abandonment and/or speculation by financial agents. Aware of this reality, Pope Francis has insisted on the need for the various institutes of consecrated life to rethink the destination of this patrimony while remaining faithful to the founding charism.

Would it be possible to organise a working group within CEVIM to advise provinces facing the thorny dilemma of giving new life to abandoned heritage?

**2. Revitalizing identity.**

The word revitalize refers to actions such as bringing back to life, recovering, reviving. Revitalization aims at the recovery of something essential, a lost good, a motive that has vanished. The subject of revitalization, the organism in question is the CM. In recent years, as you know, the assemblies have focused on this theme. The insistence on the theme of revitalization of identity suggests that our identity is tenuous, vague, without a clear face, so that a desire for recovery persists, a collective will to overcome this period of prolonged hibernation, a winter whose spring is not foreseen, a Lent without resurrection. How to revitalize the CM in Europe and the Middle East?

The debate on identity is the order of the day. In society at large, issues such as gender identity (What is a man? What distinguishes him from a woman?), the identity of a culture, of a political party, of an institute of consecrated life are discussed. The complex process of personal construction, in the perspective of identity development, comprises several stages and is the result of various types of identification. Among these, I would highlight just one: identity as the fruit of the process of identification with another. Indeed, as the subject grows up, he consolidates his identity in the proximity to a significant other - a relative, a teacher, a relevant figure, generally idealized. It is in the relationship with a concrete "you" that the "I" forms its profile, its character, its personality, its individuality. The self develops based on the characteristics of the other who gives it form. The other with whom one identifies oneself serves as a model for a unique and unrepeatable identity.

From the spiritual perspective, the members of the Congregation, following the directives of St. Vincent de Paul, have Jesus as their model and rule of the Mission:

"Jesus Christ must work with us, or we with him; we must work in him, and he in us; we must speak as he did and in his spirit, even as he was in his Father and preached the doctrine which he had taught him".

As we know, St. Vincent's Jesus is not an abstract God, a vague being, shrouded in the cloud of ignorance. He is, rather, the God who became one of us, saved in sin, thanks to Mary's yes, the one who shared the condition of the poor and marginalized. Vincent succinctly defines the attitude of the incarnate Son in two traits or movements. He expresses this in a letter to a mission priest in August 1657, when he affirms that the two great virtues of Jesus Christ are "religion towards his Father and charity towards men"[[9]](#footnote-9) . The one sent by the Father, the second person of the Holy Trinity, mobilized by the Holy Spirit, participates in the historical dimension of men, takes on human nature to "free them from captivity" or, in other words, to restore them to the condition of children of God lost through sin. For the members of the CM, this is the model to be conformed to - *con+FORM.*

In a constant commitment to draw closer to this divine model, to clothe ourselves with its spirit, no form of revitalization is possible. This process postulates an attitude of continuous personal and community conversion, in a movement from the inside out, from the heart of the subject to the transformation of the world. It is also an attitude with traces of originality, because every action motivated by love is handcrafted: as disciples and friends we are called to actualize the Master's message and not to be photocopiers of gestures and behavior. We are interpreters of the Word and not mere copyists.

**3. Means for revitalization: the four proximities.**

Life in Christ is a constant newness that springs from the inexhaustible source of acceptance and meditation on the Word of the One who has called us. The lifestyle of the community can and must change in order to respond better to the needs of the times, in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit of God. In this regard, I recall the theme of the four proximities in the life of the priest, presented by Pope Francis (17/2/22). The world is made of incessant changes, but the essentials remain the same. The way of being a member of the CM is diverse, but there are common traits that are immutable. There are four attitudes that can define a collective identity as CM. These four proximities are the pillars for the deepening of a "*modus vivendi*" in the style of God. They can and must be adapted and concretized to the context, in the light of our charism. They must be assumed as a way of life capable of revitalizing identity. Let us look briefly at each of them:

**1. Proximity to God.**

As disciples of Jesus, our first duty is to be with Him, to remain at His side and to listen to His voice. The closeness to God, the attitude of continual discernment of the divine will, the commitment to identify with the Son, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, is the first mission of the Vincentian missionary.

"The aim of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ, evangelizer of the poor. This end is achieved when its members and communities, faithful to St. Vincent, strive with all their strength to clothe themselves with the spirit of Christ himself (RC I, 3), in order to acquire the perfection corresponding to their vocation" (RC XII, 13).

The document of the last General Assembly reinforces this call: "We commit ourselves to "clothe ourselves with the Spirit of Christ" and to rediscover the contemplative dimension of our Vincentian spirituality, constantly striving to be faithful to Vincentian prayer, vows and virtues (C 28-50)".

In other words, the experience of mystery precedes ministry. "Being with" configures the priest's way of being, which is then expressed in various realizations. Being is the cause of doing: at the origin of all activity is the ontological dimension, the experience of "being in Christ"; and then, from the contemplation of the mystery comes ministry, apostolic activity[[10]](#footnote-10) .

S. Vincent de Paul used to say that "a man of prayer is capable of anything". Whoever prays, becomes naturally available to do God's will and from him we can expect everything, even the humanly impossible. On the other hand, a lack of spiritual life is the breeding ground for desertion. As Pope Francis reminds us: "Many priestly crises have their origin precisely in a poor prayer life, in a lack of intimacy with the Lord, in a reduction of the spiritual life to mere religious practice".

But it is not enough to perform religious acts, as if prayer were only a duty, a heavy obligation and not a relationship of friendship that transforms the one who performs it. The rigidity of consecrated life schemes can turn the life of prayer into mechanical acts that do not resonate interiorly or engage the praying subject. Creativity is needed in our prayers so that they are an expression of a love for God "with all our heart, with all our soul, intelligence, body, will...".

**2. Proximity to the Superior.**

Living organisms, like communities of consecrated persons, are organised according to the mission they undertake. Without a common objective capable of mobilizing the different members, of keeping them united in the face of inevitable adversities, communities become fragmented, they become places of conflict, they are inoperative.

We must not lose sight of the raison d'être of our existence. In the CM, it is the provincial superior who, directly and indirectly, reminds the members of the purpose of the community. He does so by presenting himself as the point of reference, the one who sets the tone for this purpose to be achieved. He has, therefore, the demanding task of being a neighbor to encourage and bring together those who have been entrusted to him.

Curiously, in our tradition, the Provincial Superior is called Visitor: to visit, to accompany, to be close to everyone is part of his mission. Sometimes, because of lack of availability, fear or for some other reason, we do not want to be close to a confrere and/or a community. We avoid it. Sometimes we omit certain issues for fear of displeasing confrere X or Y. We know, however, that the problems of the confreres are not the same as those of the confreres. We know, however, that problems are not solved by magic. They need to be addressed, with reflection and depth, with charity and prudence, so that evil does not take root.

Moreover, at certain stages of life, the human spirit is particularly inquisitive, reacting to anything that calls into question its autonomy. In certain communities, we find sectarian movements, exacerbated by the current dictatorship of subjectivity, where what counts is personal opinion, based on one of the many ideologies in vogue (sometimes even theologically and spiritually well-founded). Here, too, closeness to the superior can be the antidote to calm self-destructive impulses. Problems need to be addressed. The superior's ability to interpret the aspirations of each confrere, to be attuned to his concerns (which does not mean that he has to satisfy them) and to engage in a constructive relationship, even if it can sometimes be uncomfortable, comes into play. The revitalization of the CM passes through the service of the Provincial Superior, the relationship he establishes with the local superiors and the relationship he nurtures with the members of the communities.

**3. Proximity to the other**

The call to community life, despite its demands, is a great attraction for a society whose families and organizations are often not very communitarian. The comment of the pagans on the way of being and acting of Christians, "See how they love one another", continues to challenge us because, as the Pope says in this regard, "fraternal and fervent community life arouses the desire to consecrate oneself entirely to God and to evangelization", that is to say, the witness of fraternity is the cause of vocations. The revitalization of the identity of the CM commits us to the revitalization of community life so that the spaces are, in fact, territories of life and not "honorable boarding houses" where personal agendas always take priority over community ones.

The sum of eremitical lives does not form a community. True fraternity is a construction that requires, first and foremost, the presence of the members. If the members meet rarely, or when they do it is only to resolve issues, to fulfil formalities or to attend to a need, it is difficult to establish the bonds of unity proper to life in common. Fraternal life requires time, dedication, willingness, patience (a thousand times patience), forgiveness, openness. It is not enough for them to be well-organized communities - with well-defined activities and programs, clean and well-heated spaces, well-cared-for food, etc... It is necessary for them to be fraternal, and, for this, it is urgent to multiply the spaces for dialogue and the common search for truth[[11]](#footnote-11) .

Community rhymes with truth. Where lies reign, there is no community. In this sense, our communities need to consolidate a synodal culture - the synod reflects the way of being of the Church in general and of consecrated communities in particular. We need to invest more in the processes, without expecting immediate results that are so often inconsistent and misleading. In a world of superabundance, in a culture that overvalues personal autonomy, the community runs the risk of having a desert territory where the weakest are forgotten. Once again, to revitalize the CM, it is important first of all to diagnose, to see, to analyze what ails this body.

**4. Proximity to the People of God.**

The CM was born on the frontier between what, at that time, was religious life and secular life. It was born with the freedom to evangelize, especially those who were, in the language of Pope Francis, the peripheries of society and of the Church. It becomes a field hospital that forms and rehabilitates priests for the mission. It is like a big tent that moves easily between villages, cities, countries; that adapts to the circumstances of each region, expands, mobilizes, poor and rich, men and women, laity and clergy, for the cause of evangelization. In the beginning there was an openness, a courage that characterized our way of life. It was discreet, simple, humble, meek, mortified, but also zealous and somewhat daring, and quite effective in announcing the Good News and caring for the poor.

In this regard, I am reminded of an excerpt from Pope Francis' homily (18 April 2020) in which he comments on a passage from the Letter to the Hebrews "where its author realizes that something is happening in the community, that something is being lost, that Christians are becoming lukewarm [...] - he says this -:

"Remember the early days, you have fought a great and hard fight: now do not lose your openness" (cf. Heb 10:32-35)" The Pope says: "Recover", recover the openness, the Christian courage to go forward. You cannot be a Christian without this boldness [...]. If you lack courage, if in order to explain your position you end up in ideologies or casuistic explanations, you lack frankness, you lack the Christian style, the freedom to speak, to say everything. Courage.

At this time, the members of the CM Provinces, in an ageing and almost pagan Europe, need to be able to make decisions, with courage and courage, in the light of the charism they have received. Being more and more a Little Company, the small number of members, at least the new generation, should be better prepared to respond to the challenges of the present time[[12]](#footnote-12) , in areas such as:

1. Ecology: the demonstrations mobilizing young people in many of our countries have the ecological problem as their theme. "The earth is burning" and it is necessary to act while there is still time. The promotion of an integral ecology, respectful of nature and human beings, leads us to areas such as morality and bioethics, places of debate in which we are called to be present.

2. Culture: the Church has been the mother of the arts. The search for beauty unites believers and non-believers. The CM, in its communities, could be a small laboratory of experiences of the beautiful - music concert, book club, debate, etc. Beauty should be a mark not only in the liturgy, but also in the initiatives that open the doors to men and women of the world of culture.

3. Church-Pastoral: in the new times it is necessary to go beyond a mere religious maintenance activity which resembles, in some cases, a pious entertainment. It is urgent to promote a pastoral care capable of responding to the deepest concerns and aspirations of the heart. A pastoral ministry with a prophetic tone that privileges formative processes and not just big events, made up of leaders who include those who are relegated to the background by this aporophobic society[[13]](#footnote-13) .

4. Hospitaller: A CM that is dedicated to welcoming those who, for various reasons, seek places of healing, recovery and revitalization. Today, community animators, priests in particular, in addition to their heavy workload, are under constant scrutiny from society and, very often, from the Christian community. The diagnosis of "burnout" is the order of the day, even for ministers of the Church, and it is difficult to find someone to accompany them. As a community originally dedicated to the care of the diocesan clergy, it would be important, in the CM, to have structures capable of welcoming them and helping clerics in difficulty.

5. Mission *ad gentes*, either by active participation or by hosting a confrere. Despite our weaknesses, we cannot close our doors to this dimension.

At the present time, the Church in general is not immune to crises. This crisis is also a purifying crisis and, for this very reason, this time of grace, "an opportunity", *kairos*, which helps us to grow. Let us remember: The time of crisis in the history of the Church was also the time of the emergence of great leaders such as St. Benedict of Nursia, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales. It was the time of St Vincent de Paul and this is our time. Christian hope is combative" (Francis, 6/9/2015). Let us not be discouraged. Let us be courageous.

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1. The perception of the Church as an undesirable organisation seems to concretise the theses of the controversial British intellectual Christopher Hitchens, who, among others, argued some time ago in a *bestseller*, *God is not great. How religion poisons everything* (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Some years ago, I arrived in a city in a country where there were intense debates, led by passionate people, on issues such as migrants, abortion, adoption by homosexual couples, among others. When I entered the community space, I realized that we were living like in a bubble, as if we were still in the 19th century. The rigidity of a daily routine, the liturgical rituals, with chants of yesteryear, the mechanical and half-hearted recitation of the psalms, the pictures on the walls whose memory is no longer preserved, the many signs of an era that seems to have stopped in time... the reality "ad intra", in our communities, has changed little, but the world is no longer the same. In terms of religious practice, according to several authors, it is remarkable the transit of the typology of the «resident believer» (parish) and the seeker believer (pilgrim) is one of the axes of contemporary religiosity. Cf. TEIXEIRA, A., *Religião na sociedade portuguesa*. Lisboa: Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Referring to some of the debates and the quality of the texts presented, Cardinal G. Muller, former head of the Department for the Doctrine of the Faith, draws a parallel between this period and the context of the siege of Constantinople. At the moment of greatest danger, in the face of the Muslim siege, theologians were engaged in a debate about the colour of the Virgin's eyes. Cf. MULLER, G., *In Buona fede*. Solferino. 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. HALÍK, T., *Pomeriggio del Cristianesimo. Il coraggio di cambiare*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2022, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. IDEM, *Il segno delle chiese vuote: Per una ripartenza del cristianesimo*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. LAFONT, G., "Prefazione" in S. Morra, Dio non si stanca. La misericordia come forma ecclesiale, Bologna, EDB, 2015, quoted by CORREIA, J. F., "Quale forma assumerà il cristianesimo del futuro?". In *La Civiltà Cattolica (*4146), Mar/April, 2023, 594. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. HALÍK, T*., Pomeriggio del Cristianesimo,* p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. PRISCIANDARO, V., Vita nuova per il convento. La sfida ecclesiale di un buon riutilizzo delle strutture dismesse dagli ordini religiosi. In *Jesus, inchieste e dibatti sull'attualità religiosa*, n. 1, 2023, pp. 30-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Letter to a priest of the Mission. S.V.P. VI, p. 370. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Just one example from the NT: the episode in the Acts of the Apostles which is at the origin of the institution of the seven deacons highlights this priority. When the needs increased and the service of the table demanded more attention on the part of the Apostles, the group of deacons was instituted so that they would not be deprived of the indispensable "being with him", in "prayer and preaching the word" (cf. Acts 6:2-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is not by chance that some confreres are closer to an employee than to the members of the community. They look to them for the affection and understanding of a mother, a sister or a brother, which the community - coldly organised - does not offer them. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. "We are the cheap labor of the diocesan clergy," lamented one confrere, "we are called for ordinary jobs and as a last resort. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The phenomenon of fear and aversion to the poor was coined by the Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina with the term aporophobia. Of Greek origin, the word literally means phobia of the poor. In a mentality shaped by an economy of permanent reciprocal exchange, Cortina asserts that the poor are those who cannot give anything in return and therefore do not count, they are worthless subjects. The poor are rejected, even by their families. This universe of the poor includes the mentally ill, the homeless, the destitute, some elderly people, among others, who are incapable of actively contributing to the good of others. Cf. CORTINA, A., *Aporofobia, el rechazo al pobre: un desafío para la sociedad democrática*. Barcelona: Paidos Iberica, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)