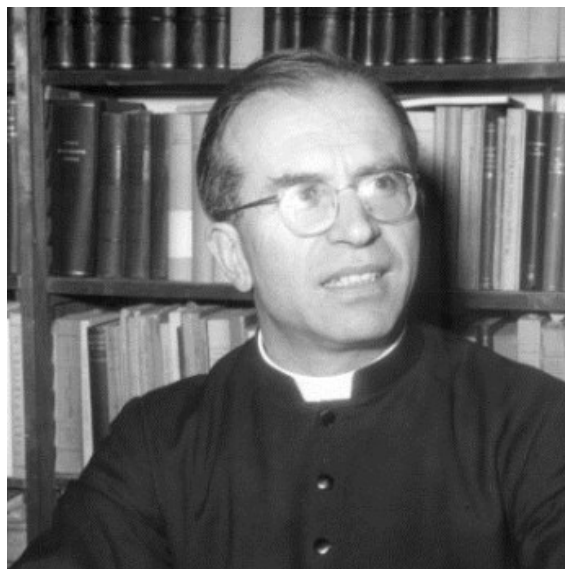


PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION



OF

FABRO'S

Profiles of the Saints

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Lent, 2018

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF
FABRO's
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It is a great honor for me to offer this Preface to the English translation of *Profiles of the Saints*, one of Fr. Cornelio Fabro's many books. I must quickly say, however, that I feel more than a little out of my depth in this undertaking because Fr. Fabro and I are in quite different leagues! He was a prolific writer and original thinker; one we could easily call a true philosopher, whereas my work has focused on teaching.

I met Fr. Fabro when I was a young man studying in Rome and we continued a fraternal association until his death forty years later. Twenty years my senior, he was renowned for his intellectual prowess and his contributions to philosophy, theology and spirituality. I admired his ability to teach himself Danish so that he could read and translate Kierkegaard into Italian from the original, and in the easy skill with which he wrote sometimes in three different languages on three different typewriters at the same time! I was also touched by the attention he gave our younger confreres in his later years, both in lively conversation at table and during recreation. Thus, it gives me tremendous pleasure that this new translation of his work will not only make it possible for our Stigmatine confrere to be even more widely read, but hopefully might make some small assistance, to help him even better known.

Notwithstanding the differences in our work, I believe I have something particular to offer in this Preface because Fr. Fabro and I have shared the same charism. We lived as confreres in the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata, the Stigmatines, and share a devotion to St. Gaspar Bertoni, Priest of Verona, and Founder of our Congregation. We share the ideals of our Congregation, inspired from the earliest years of our formation to "evangelize the word of God – *quocumque* - anywhere in the diocese and the world", in accordance with the needs of the Church".

I am now older by four years than Fr. Fabro was when he died.

[+ May 5, 1995] and during these twilight years of my own life, I have had the opportunity to read much of Fr. Fabro's work, some of it for the second time, and some of it for the first. Reading him has allowed me to revisit the philosophical foundation of St. Thomas Aquinas and to discover Soren Kierkegaard [praised by St. John Paul II in his *Fides et Ratio*], a distinct gap in my own knowledge. In preparing to speak at the Symposium in Washington DC honoring Fr. Cornelio Fabro and his life's work a few years ago, I also had the chance to review the few, but important, essays

he wrote on our Founder, St. Gaspar Bertoni. This range of reading has had a significant impact on me and has given me a vantage point from which I can see something of the arc of Fr. Fabro's own intellectual and spiritual development.

Simply put, Fr. Fabro was a *forerunner* in the articulation of the concept of "participation" in St. Thomas, a *teacher* of the notion of "contemporaneity" explored by Kierkegaard, and a sincere *devotee* of the spirituality of the saints including that of St. Gaspar Bertoni whose decades of suffering worked with that grace by which he grew in unity in Christ until the hour of his death.

These three "ages" of Fr. Fabro's own development—from philosophy to theology to spirituality—were marked by significant written contributions to each¹ and the book translated here, *Profiles of the Saints*, is one I would put squarely in Fr. Fabro's third "age" as he tried to show how these saints lived out the ideas of "participation" and "contemporaneity" which he had profoundly studied for so much his whole life.

[A] Thomism and "Participation"

Fr. Fabro wrote his doctoral thesis on St. Thomas's concept of *Participation*, and because he continued to revise this work over many years, it is clear that he was captivated by this subject and he broke new ground in it as his studies evolved².

Fr. Fabro's understanding of "participation" begins with the idea that as God operates in all things, he is the universal First Cause of all beings in action. Human creatures share in this causality by having been created by Him, but also because God's only Son became 'a partaker of our human nature', thereby not only renewing the whole human race, but giving each of us the innate power to become partakers of His divinity [cf. Jn 1; 2 P 1:4]. Through the grace of Christ, we, too, are called to become true and responsible instruments of God's will.

¹ Thomistic works on Participation: [cf. Publications of the EDIVI: v. 3, Partecipazione; v. 19, Partecipazione e Causalita etc.]

Modern philosophical work/modern atheism: [God in Exile].

Kierkegaardian scholarship [cf. EDIVI nn. 8-11] – [The ideal of "Contemporaneity"].

Spiritual writing: St. Gemma Galgani: "Participation in the Passion of Christ, His Stigmata" [Gemma Galgani, Testimone del Soprannaturale (Passionisti 1989); S. Gemma Galgani, Breviario d'Amore (Lucca 1999); Lettere (ed. EDIVI 2013). Sharing in the Pascal Mystery, the Stigmata;

Devotional writing on St. Gaspar Bertoni, Stigmatic Founder: ["A Notable Share in His sufferings, by making a Portrait of Christ as the Model, a Mirror." [Un sacerdote ecclesiale, (Assisi); "Gaspere Bertoni, una vita illuminata dl soprannaturale", in: Symposium Bertonianum, Roma: Angelicum 1989].

² Cornelio FABRO, CSS, La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo s. Tomaso d'Aquino. 2ª ed. riveduta e aumentata. Torino: SEI 1950, pp. 299-31]. There is evidence that this idea was pondered throughout his entire life [cf. EDIVI editions, nn. 3; 18; 19].

Yet, between God and all that is created, there is a far greater dissimilarity than similarity [cf. IV Lat, D-S # 805], insofar as some scholars hold that “being” in God is not-univocal with that in His creatures, but rather a metaphorical analogy of proportionality. Fr. Fabro beautifully develops the theme of “supernatural participation” in the “elevation to grace and glory,” showing that since we are made to the image and likeness of God, we are still “restless” creatures. The human soul is naturally capable of God, but we are not God, and our human natures are naturally oriented toward Him, but we are not God! As our natural inclination toward God couples with our natural desire for happiness, our human minds are motivated to strive for the Ultimate Truth and our wills to reach for the most sublime Good. Yet because we cannot completely achieve these heights, either on our own or during this life on earth, we experience an “interior tension”, a “propensity towards Him” which unsettles us and, if we will allow God to work on us, this tension can spur us on a lifelong growth in faith.

Thus, our “participation” in the divine nature is a basic reality of our human being. We are created with a passive obediential potency which is activated in response to the First Cause, to God Himself. Living lives of faith, we grow and participate more and more deeply in the Divine Intellect and Will, gradually approaching the very nature of the Triune God [cf. 2 P 1:4]. Jesus Christ is joined to each human being [GS 22] yet we remain unfinished until such time, as Jesus says, “When I am raised up, I will “draw” all to myself” [Jn 12:32].

[B] Kierkegaard and “Contemporaneity”

“Contemporaneity” is simply another way of saying “In Christ Jesus,” but such a profound idea is not so easily explained. St. Paul tried valiantly³, often resorting to re-purposing old words or inventing new ones to express the ineffable union of Christians with Christ and in Christ.

To illustrate the problem, here is a list of such verbs as found in the Vulgate:

- *compati* [Rm 8:17; 1 Co 12:26];- *simul crucifigi* [Rm 6:6];- *configi cruci* [Ga 2:20];- *commori* [2 Tm 1-2:11;cf. 2 Co 7:3];- *conresuscitare* [Ep 2:6; passive: Col 2:12 3:1];- *simul vivere cum* [Rm 6:8];- *convivere* [2 Tm 2:11]; - *convivificare* [Ep 2:5; Col 2:13];- *conglorificari* [Rm 8:17]; - *consedere facere* [Ep 26]; - *conregnare* [2 Tm 2:12; cf. 1 Co 4:8]; - *conformis* [Rm 8:29; Ph 3:21]; - *complantatus* [Rm 6:5]; - *coheres* [Rm 8:17;Ep 3:16]; - *comparticipes* [Ep 3:6; 5:7]; - *coaedificari* [Ep 2:22]; - *constructus* [Ep 2:1; Col 2:19];- *compactus* [Rm 4:16]⁴.

³ Ferdinand Part, SJ, *The Theology of St. Paul*. Tr. By John L. Stoddard. Westminster MD: Newman 1927, Vol. II, pp. 18, ff.

⁴ cf. F. Prat, SJ, *The Theology of St. Paul*.

Our understanding of the idea *“In Christ Jesus”* is further complicated by the difficulties of translating any of these words into the modern languages. This can often be done only with a clumsy re-expression or circumlocution. Here are some of those words translated into English and as we can see, sometimes the attempt to bring greater clarity results in greater obscurity.

For example: *to suffer with Him; to be crucified with Him; to die with Him; to be buried with Him; to rise from the dead with Him; to live with Him; to be made alive with Him; to share His form; to share his glory; to sit with Him; to reign with Him; to be conformed with him; united with Him, co-heir with Him. To these can be added: co-partner – con-corporate - built together.*

By virtue of his studies on Kierkegaard, Fr. Fabro ultimately taught that “In Christ Jesus” expresses a “contemporary presence, participation of believers, of the faithful, of each of us, in the Paschal Mystery”, as in the sufferings of Christ⁵. It is meant as a kind of existential mystical continuation, a life shared in His Death and in His Resurrection offered once and for all for the redemption of the world [cf. Rm 4:25]. Thus for all time there will be a “contemporaneity of repentance and of expiation” for all the sins in the entire world as the faithful are being transformed, conformed to the Paschal Mystery of the Lord. Because we faithful participate in the Lord’s on-going and active reparation for sin in our own time on earth, we all participate in the eternal salvation of the world.

Maurizio Schoepflin has succinctly treated this idea in Fr. Fabro’s *Spiritual Writings* and his perspective is well worth noting here⁶. He states that Fr. Fabro understood this “contemporaneity”, not as the on-going process of ‘up-dating’ the Church, nor as the effort of rendering Christianity ‘actual,’ but rather as a philosophical-theological concept, a ‘prophetic [*metaphysical*] moment,’ bringing eternity into time, joining the “today” with the every “tomorrow” as we commit to a life-time of strenuous effort to imitate, copy, and ‘draw’ a portrait of Him in our own lives. Whoever makes such an effort to imitate Him is “contemporary” to Him, in Fr. Fabro’s view, and this is an essential urgency of the Christian life in our time. It is this day, and every day, we are urged to copy the model, and to imitate Christ in our daily Crosses.

⁵cf. excerpts from the Doctoral Thesis of Fr. Barnabas Mary Ahern, CP, in CBQ, Vol 22 1060, pp. 11-32: - The Fellowship of His Sufferings (Ph 3:10).

⁶cf. Fabro nei suoi scritti spirituali, EDIVI 2008, pp. 39-45.

**[C] Fr. Fabro and the Extraordinary Sufferings of the Saints:
A Participation in Christ's Stigmata: Making the Sufferings of Christ
"Contemporary"**

Fr. Fabro's inspiring *Profiles of the Saints* originally appeared as Part 3, of a two-volume set, entitled *Momenti di Spirito*⁷ or "Movements of the Spirit." Along with great movements in the Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit [such as the "Better World Movement", the Vatican II era] Fr. Fabro considered the saints as more than individual people, but also as "movements" of the Holy Spirit. We need only to think of St. Pius X, St. Pope John Paul II and St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta to see how the Holy Spirit used their individual lives and sufferings to spark great movements of faith.

Fr. Fabro's *Profili di Santi*⁸ encourages us to see that the lives of the martyrs, mystics and saints are specific examples of the timeless goal of unity in Christ. They taught by example, living in ways that contradicted the norm of their own times and indeed still contradict our own [cf. Ws 2]. Their examples bring traditional catechetical teaching to life as they show us time after time how to "*put on the Mind of Christ Jesus*" [cf. Ph 2:5] and how to pattern ourselves more closely on him.

These saints accepted Jesus Christ as an "Exemplary Cause," as St. Thomas Aquinas put it. They deeply understood Jesus as a Model to be emulated with God's grace, a Copy to be imitated, and a Portrait to be drawn in their own lives. As we read Fr. Fabro's descriptions, we are able to observe how they "copied" Christ in their day and age and having done so, it becomes possible for us to see how to do the same in our own. One after another, Fr. Fabro lets them invite us to hold up Christ as our "mirror," too, seeing him, we might trace the more His image in ourselves and ourselves in him as we strive to make our life-long response to the Graces of Baptism. As we do, we gradually become graced "epistles" [cf. 2 Co 3:2] ourselves of the Most Beloved, Only Begotten Word of God to the world around us.

Furthermore, these saints show us that such an imitation is, in fact, an expansion of our experience of life, allowing us to enter into a '*new space for human freedom*'. These saints, people we might call "events" of Sacred History, reveal a providential encounter between divine freedom and human liberty in a particular time and place: The Man-God-Redeemer meets sinful humanity in an on-going experience of Redemption.

⁷ Published by the Sala Francesca, Assisi 1982. Part I of Volume I is entitled "Words and Deeds". Part II, is "The Adventure of Liberty". Part III is the *Profili*, including the first ten Saints pondered by Fr. Fabro, and published by the Editrice del Verbo Incarnato, Rome 2008, as Volume 14, of the *Opere Complete* of Fr. Fabro.

⁸ Cornelio FABRO, *Profili di Santi*, *Opere Complete* 14. Roma: EDIVI 2008.

With these ideas in mind, we realize that when we pattern ourselves deeply on Christ, truly sharing in his personal mission [cf. Jn 20] his sufferings, his sufferings become “contemporary;” they become a reality “of our time” as they are of his eternal Time. In this instant, in our lives, in this opportune present moment (*Kairos*), Providence is unfolding in just the way God intends it. Now is the hour! This is the acceptable time! And so we pray ever more ardently, “Give us this day,” “Pray for us now and at the hour of our deaths,” and most profoundly of all, “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

“*This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it*” is a perfect expression of the spirituality of St. Gaspar Bertoni. Priest of Verona, Founder of the Stigmatine Congregation to which Fr. Fabro and I have shared. As with so many saints before him, St. Gaspar experienced God’s grace every day in the Eucharist and that grace allowed him to deeply unite his own sufferings with those our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the Sacred Stigmata.

Many of the 76 years of St. Gaspar Bertoni’s life were spent in atrocious physical and spiritual suffering. But through God’s Providence and his devotion to the Eucharist, his suffering accompanied, elevated and permeated his spiritual growth. St. Gaspar teaches us how much the burdensome Crosses we carry moment to moment must also be lived through and nourished by that most precious Sacrament.

In the entry he made in his Spiritual Diary on September 17, 1808 when he was just 31 years old, we can glimpse something of the spirituality developing in him and which for us Stigmatines has made him a saint for the ages:

Meditation. Death. The past is no more. The future has not yet arrived. Only the present is here. And it is in my hands. Let me live day after day, or rather from morning to midday and from midday to evening. Let me do every single thing with all possible perfection. Perhaps I will have no more time in which to glorify God.

“By His wounds, ours are Healed!” [Is 53:5; 1Pt 2:2, ff.]

Respectfully submitted:

Fr. Joseph Henchey CSS
[Stigmatine]

**Easter Sunday
April 1, 2018.**