

5. *Religious Spirit.* — When the Servant of God embraced the religious life in its fullness on making profession in 1823, she had already applied herself for years to living it with the perfection and courage that marked all her works. She was consistent in her conduct, always logical and prudent, so that we never see her showing inconsistency. If occasionally she seemed to give way, it was not so in reality; on such occasions she was practising acts of virtue that we can call extraordinary, such as the abandoning of the *Providence* of St. Bruno or the work of Belleville. "The Foundress Mother St. Ignatius, grew up during a tragic period, in anguish and heroism; serious and silent, she decided 'Never to speak about herself, neither good or ill.'" She was a lover of austere virtues, attached to humility, to poverty, good besides, with that kind of goodness, sensitive to suffering, which is practised by those who have suffered. Never sad, she decided on the contrary, to make the children of whom she took charge, blossom forth. She was affable and gentle towards the poor, to whom she devoted herself with unflinching patience and delicate charity; but when it was a question of religious life, she did not look kindly on caprice and fantasy, or soft and weak sentiment. She herself gave an example of firmness and energy of soul, governing with order and good sense, and maintaining her docility and abandonment to Providence and her sound equilibrium through all the events which went against her." To these observations of Mons. Blanchet, Rector of the *Institut Catholique de Paris*, who some years ago made a study of the life of the Servant of God (cf. AUGUSTE VIATTE, *Histoire de la Congregation de Jesus-Marie*, Quebec 1952, p. 8), one may add as principal traits of her spirituality, her love of silence and of prayer. "The founders of religious orders have so strongly recognized and appreciated its advantages that, although the Rules on their Institutes vary, some being based on mortification, others on poverty, others on zeal, etc., all are united on this point, namely prayer, because without it the spirit of fervour cannot be maintained, nor can any virtue be practised with constancy." (IV, 2 18b).

"Fervour cannot be maintained in religious houses except in so far as silence is observed, and with still greater reason piety cannot continue to exist except in persons who avoid using a great number of words." (*ibidem*, 9b).

So thought and spoke the Servant of God regarding these two points which she esteemed to be of capital importance for religious life.

Finally, we point out her great devotions: to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the spirit of St. Ignatius which she made her own, and desired for her Congregation.

The examples of the virtues of the Servant of God, Mother St. Ignatius, and the beneficial effects of the Religious Congregation which she founded have extended through time and space. Today (1966) the religious of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary number 2,500, and there are 210 novices. They are dedicated to the education of youth in 130 houses spread over five continents, with a total of 72,000 pupils.

V. — Doubts put before the Historical Consultors

It does not seem that the documentation of the *Positio*, taken as a whole, presents particular problems of historical criticism. Often, especially in the first two parts, official documents are in question, the authenticity and veracity of which are beyond doubt, apart from a few cases relating to legislation, and these are presented with objective explanations. Unfortunately the same official style of the information deprives the documents of human warmth and that richness and freshness of personal data that a biographer prefers; and in fact, the private and intimate life of the Servant of God frequently remains in obscurity. In order to fill up the gaps and make up for the scarcity of full contemporary biographical accounts, a great deal of research and presentation of particular events was necessary, but always in connection with the central subject of our investigation. The aim of this latter research, which may at times seem too minute and excessively detailed, was precisely to reconstruct without important omissions, the itinerary of the Servant of God, and to throw light, as far as possible, on the historical, social and religious environment in which she carried out her work, and consequently to be able to evaluate better her human personality and her Christian and religious virtues.

The historical and biographical elements scattered in different parts of the documentation are found in systematic order in the *Summarium de vita et virtutibus*. As is customary, this part of the *Positio*, put together with praiseworthy care by Mother Gabriela Maria under the direction of the Historical Section and with the efficient co-operation of Fr. Candido de Dalmases S.J., contains a summarized and orderly exposition of the life and virtues of the

Servant of God, with the usual reference to each of the documents contained and illustrated in the volume.

We have added in the Appendix (pp. 751-776) a very full *chronology* to offer the possibility of contemplating in one synthesized vision both the events of the life of Mother Mary St. Ignatius, and those connected with her, and their part in the progress of the Cause. The specific *Bibliography* has no particular critical value. Therefore we have limited ourselves to presenting a simple catalogue of titles (pp. 777-779).

The Historical Consultors are asked to explain their point of view, using the usual form of expression, about each of the following questions, illustrating and enriching them with observations and opportune suggestions, the fruit of their personal study and their historical competence. Their wise and carefully weighed critical evaluation will facilitate the task of those who will have to work at the Cause in its successive phases.

Here is the formulation of the questions put to the Very Reverend Historical Consultors.:

- I. *Whether the historical investigations to illustrate the life of the Servant of God Mary St. Ignatius were made so completely, and according to the prescribed form, that they are useful to explain fully the subject proposed.*
- II. *Whether the documents which were examined and inserted in the Positio possess the qualities which merit historical belief*
- III. *Whether in the series of these documents one can find useful and necessary elements which can lead to an appropriate and sufficient knowledge of the life of the Servant of God, and offer a solid and certain foundation to give a favourable judgement about her virtues.*

Rome, 1st July 1967.

Fr. MELCHIORRE DA POBLADURA. O.F.M. CAP.
Relator General