

# ***Amigonian Identity in Action***



JUAN ANTONIO VIVES AGUILLELLA





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**AMIGONIAN IDENTITY IN ACTION**  
Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó

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### Dedication

*To my brother Ricardo  
and his wife Conchín,  
whose house, since the  
early death of my parents,  
has been a true family home to me.*

*With affection.*

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

*It is a great honor to present this book to readers in the English language, representing as it does an introduction into a new world of the dimension of a way of being in the world established by a Catholic religious congregation, the Capuchin Tertiary Friars (or Amigonians), who have dedicated the 125 years of their history to bearing witness to gospel-inspired love with the poorest of the poor: children, adolescents and youths dispossessed of their rights, left by the wayside and excluded from opportunities to create their own life stories.*

*This book is not merely a manual. It goes much further, because it presents a life story written by many hands, experienced in living testimony for many years, which has now developed into the pedagogical knowledge of the Congregation of Capuchin Tertiary Friars, who at any of the places on the four continents where they now have a presence, are forging a pedagogical path, based on the same gospel principles and adapted to the local cultures, that has allowed many boys and girls to be “born from above” (Cf. Jn. 3:3).*

*It is a story that would contradict many others derived from pedagogical research, as it has arisen from spiritual and mystical ways that were turned into a method, a life process, giving many people who wandered without direction in the world the opportunity to be creators of their own stories and in their own contexts.*

*This book has a specific weight and value, as although it is the story of a religious community in which readers of the world may learn of its gospel-inspired practice, it had its origins as a text in the context of an Amigonian university, the *Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó*, located in a country on*

*the global periphery (Colombia) and written by a Doctor in Spirituality, Fr. Juan Antonio Vives Aguilera, who happily accepted the task of turning his doctoral dissertation into a compendium with the potential to be turned into a university text book, to share with the academic community a hidden gem full of light, much like the light of the gospel-inspired magic with which the Amigonian friars wander through the world, bringing what the teacher Jesus of Nazareth came to bring: the revelation and tender presence of God the Father's love.*

*May this book, now translated into the global language of English, complete the task of informing the world of a great work, that of Amigonian Pedagogy, which, while joyfully lived in a radical poverty of silent dedication as it is by all of Amigó's religious and lay followers, is nevertheless so rich in content as to enable those who benefit from it to "have life and have it to the full." (Jn. 10:10)*

*Fr. Marino Martínez Pérez, tc.  
Superior General  
Rome, May 3, 2014*

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

*Someone once said that before anything can be done in this world, first it must be dreamed. And indeed, right now you have in your hands an old and cherished dream. A dream which without the intellect, the passion, the sense of congregational belonging, the agile pen and the constant willingness to cross borders of Father Juan Antonio Vives Aguilera, would have remained no more than a cherished dream, rather than the beautiful reality that is now ours, to nourish our souls, and to consolidate the “Amigonian spirit” with a conceptual framework.*

*This beautiful work, built on symbiosis (faith-reason, feeling-knowledge, knowing-doing), offers a portrait of an identity that we have come to call Amigonian, after our venerable founder Luis Amigó, but which seeks to go beyond the concept – thus the inclusion in the title of “in action” – to explain a particular way of being in the world.*

*Father Juan Antonio asserts in this book that “the most characteristic aspect of Amigonian maturation in love is the particular emphasis that Amigonian tradition has placed on the development of the compassionate dimension of love.”*

*For a young university that has sought to devote all its efforts to becoming a bastion for human formation, based on the certainty that it is there where the root of so many troubles afflicting our society today can be found, the conceptual and charismatic outline presented in this book responds to our commitment to accompany men and women in their process of BEING, so that as competent professionals in the personal, family and social contexts in which*

*they engage, they may turn their lives into further proof that in our world solutions do exist, possibilities do exist, hope does exist.*

*And to Father Vives we must say that our gratitude will be the commitment to turn the beautiful book he offers us into a life choice, in which the compassionate dimension of love can be the visible and characteristic sign of our Amigonian maturity.*

*Fr. Marino Martínez P., tc  
Medellín, June 15, 2000*

## PROLOGUE

This book is the culmination of a long and cherished project supported and sustained in particular by the Rector of the Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó, Father Marino Martínez Pérez.

It all began in November 1996, at the kitchen hearth in the motherhouse of the Capuchin Tertiaries in Rome.

At that time, after having lived for twelve years in the Eternal City, I was no longer a resident there, but had come for a short stay to do some research and archive work. And that Sunday –because it was certainly a Sunday when it all began– I was cooking a delicious *paella*, a traditional dish of my native Valencia, for the people staying at the house.

The Rector of the Colombian university FUNLAM (*Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó*), who was also in Rome on a short stay, suggested that I translate my doctoral dissertation *Testigos del Amor de Cristo* (*Witnesses of Christ's Love*) for the lay community, so that it could be used as a text book for a program on *Amigonian Identity*, the creation of which was a dearly cherished dream of his.

Attracted by the idea and intrigued by what seemed to me a most interesting project, I promised to go visit him to learn more about the project on the ground.

So in January of 1997, on my way to a new residency in Chile, I stopped for a few days in Medellín and gave five talks on Amigonian topics to different classes at the FUNLAM. The warm welcome I received, and particularly the interest I perceived in my topic, encouraged me to become more directly involved in the project, which by that time had already begun to be referred to officially as *Amigonian Identity*.

The following year (in 1998), I returned to Medellín (this time from Costa Rica, where I was then living) to give another cycle of talks. The Amigonian Identity project was by then an exciting reality at the FUNLAM, and it was clear to see that day by day it was taking on more

of the structure of an official program within the university's curriculum of studies.

However, it still lacked a text which, by creating a cohesive conceptualization of the broad panorama covered by the Amigonian approach, could contribute to a more systematic study of the subject.

In this context, in November of 1999, during another visit to the FUNLAM campus in Medellín (this time coming from Spain), I decided that the time had come to embark once and for all on realizing the dream –by this time far from new– and giving shape to a book that would in some way bring together the core of the Amigonian pedagogical approach.

I decided to begin working on it in the months of May and June of the year 2000. By that time I had also realized clearly that it could not merely be a translation of my dissertation, *Testigos del Amor de Cristo*.

I therefore set myself a much more challenging goal: to write a completely new work, although one that would certainly bring together, in a systematic way, the different reflections and conclusions on Amigonian themes that I had been developing for several years.

And thus, *Amigonian Identity in Action* was born. It is a book with a very simple structure, revolving around the four core themes that form the focus of its different sections.

The first of these, naturally, is the life of Father Luis Amigó himself, as the founder of what would become the Amigonian approach.

The second section is dedicated exclusively to the basic aspects of his perspective and life that intersect transversally and horizontally with Amigonian pedagogy and constitute its metaphysical, anthropological, ethical and aesthetic foundations.

The third section, the most vital and, in a manner of speaking, the most candid, attempts to convey, more with the heart than with the mind, the purest and most *sacred* essence of the Amigonian approach; its *pedagogical approach* made flesh and paradigm, over the course of more than a hundred years, in the person of Amigonian educators.

And finally, the fourth section is conceived for those who, having perceived the richness of Amigonian life and pedagogy through the first three sections, would like to explore the spiritual inspiration that shaped its deepest roots.

PARTE I

*LUIS AMIGÓ*  
*HUMANIST AND*  
*EDUCATOR*

**Chapter I:**

A Brief Outline of His Life

**Chapter II:**

His Conception of Man and of Education

**Chapter III:**

The Franciscan Roots of His Anthropology  
and Pedagogy

This book, which attempts to give a systematic presentation of *Amigonian identity* and its application in practice, would be incomplete without a first section describing –if only in the most general terms, and mainly from a pedagogical perspective– the man who was its founder and to whom the aforementioned *identity* owes the name *Amigonian*.

## A BRIEF OUTLINE OF HIS LIFE

### *Family background*

Luis Amigó y Ferrer was born on October 17, 1854 in Masamagrell, a town in the Spanish region of Valencia, where his father worked as a town clerk.

His given name was actually *José María*, but when he became a friar years later, he changed it (as was the custom in those days) and was thenceforth known as *Luis*.

His family, like most middle-class families in Spain in the mid-nineteenth century, was a traditional, patriarchal family governed by the principles of the Catholic faith.

The atmosphere in his home was primarily warm and positive, thanks above all to the loving care of his good parents.<sup>1</sup> But his life was not free of suffering and hardship, which arose mainly as the result of some ill-advised financial decisions that brought an end to the comfortable lifestyle the family had once enjoyed and drove them into a state of need. Luis Amigó himself reflects on this climate of suffering and hardship when he paints us this revealing portrait of his mother, in which she appears quite clearly as a veritable *lady of sorrows*:

*“Of my mother,” he writes, “I can say I never knew a more uncomplaining woman; and so prudent that one never knew from her expression how upset she was or the sorrows that that tormented her. She said that no one outside the family was to blame for our tribulations.”*<sup>2</sup>

The climate of suffering that afflicted the family grew worse after the violent uprisings that shook Spain in 1869, the effects of which

1 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 4-7.

2 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works. 6.

were particularly intense in Valencia, with the early death of his father at forty-eight, and of his mother at forty-six, and with the state of abandonment in which Luis Amigó and his siblings were left by the rest of their family without the support they needed.<sup>3</sup>

However, this climate of suffering and pain –which can often turn those who suffer it into resentful and introverted people– contributed in Luis Amigó’s case to the development of a profound sensitivity to the needs of others, and especially to the needs of the smallest and most vulnerable members of society.

### *Early signs of social sensitivity*

While still practically a child, Luis Amigó –or José María as he was still called then– began to show early signs of the sensitivity that enabled him to perceive and respond to the problems of others, a sensitivity that would continue to grow in him amid the joys and sorrows of his family life.

Along with other friends (adolescents like him), he began to devote part of his free time to helping the marginalized members of his community.<sup>4</sup>

He went to the hospitals to share his health and joy with the sick, while attending to their needs in any way he could. He visited the shacks, farmsteads and other houses far out in the Valencian countryside, to share his thoughts and feelings with those who dwelt there, particularly their children and youth. And, above all, he entered the jails to console and teach the inmates, in a way offering them the gift of his own freedom. It is said that he particular enjoyed entertaining the prisoners condemned to life imprisonment, and that he even developed his own particular method to gradually gain their trust and, little by little, win their hearts.

3 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 11-16.

4 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 9.

## *A friar and priest of the people*

When he was nineteen years old, Amigó took the decision to become a Capuchin friar. It was on April 12, 1874 that he donned the habit in Bayonne, France, and came to be known as *Friar Luis of Masamagrell*. A few years later, while living in Montehano (in the Spanish region of Cantabria), he was ordained a priest, at the age of only twenty-four, on March 29, 1879.

His new *status*, however, did nothing to diminish his ability to tune into the problems and needs of others, or his impulse and eagerness to help them.

Francis of Assisi, the poet of creation and the saint of universal brotherhood, the man who found God by kissing a leper and who wanted his friars to be *pilgrims* among men, sharing with them the joys and woes of the daily struggle in life, fascinated Amigó and inspired him to live his friar's vocation in close contact with people and with a commitment to helping them.

And this same closeness continued and matured when he later became a priest. Also at that time, it was Francis of Assisi who helped him to understand and follow the Gospel message in radical terms, and to recognize that the priesthood, understood from a Christian perspective, is a vocation of service.

In the radical message of the Gospel, the priesthood takes on the sense of being a *consecration to love*. To become a priest means *to be taken from among men, with all the strengths and weaknesses of every human being, to be placed at the service of one's fellow man*. Thus, in the depth and truth of the Christian message, to be a priest means *to serve other Christians, and implies living for others and laying down one's life to help them, and being free in love to love everyone more freely and universally*.

And Luis Amigó, with all his human imperfections, lived his priesthood from its very first moment as a true service to others and, particularly, to young people and the marginalized.

In order to contribute actively to the holistic education of the young people of the towns around his convent, he founded various youth movements that offered them a harmonious combination of cultural, religious and recreational activities. One day, while he was

meeting with one of these youth groups, something happened that would have a profound impact on his life: a newborn baby was found, having been abandoned the night before at the door of the convent. The parish priest, the mayor and the other residents of the town all wanted the baby to be the first child baptized by the new cleric. Baptizing that child would have the effect of increasing Amigó's sensitivity all the more to all matters related to the world of marginalized and abandoned children.<sup>5</sup>

Another of the ministries that he assumed with enthusiasm shortly after being ordained a priest was visiting and helping the inmates of the nearby Penal del Dueso, in the town of Santoña. The first time he entered this prison had a very strong impact on him. An extreme coldness filled the air, and the atmosphere was truly fierce. The violence that habitually occurred in the prison had compelled the priest who had been there before him to deliver mass behind the protection of iron bars.

Luis Amigó, however, with the pedagogy of Francis of Assisi (interwoven with loving acceptance, an affable and straightforward approach and keen understanding and compassion), soon began to win the hearts of the inmates and succeeded in implementing a truly all-encompassing rehabilitation project with them. After some time, even the atmosphere of the prison itself underwent a radical change and it was a pleasure for him and for those who worked with him to go there.

But then his mind grew restless with the thought that what had been done at Penal del Dueso could perhaps be done in other prisons, so that the positive effects seen there could be multiplied. And from that moment he began to develop the idea of founding a religious congregation that he initially thought would be entrusted with caring for adult prisoners, but which finally, when the time came, was to be dedicated to the education of children and youths in trouble with the law.

5 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 50-51.

### *The foundations: responding to the needs of his surroundings*

In August 1881, after almost eight years away from his family and his home, Luis Amigó returned to Valencia, to a convent run by the Capuchins in Masamagrell, the town of his birth, where he was entrusted with the task of reorganizing the *Third Secular Franciscan Order* in the towns of the region.

The Third Order is a movement of lay Christians committed to living the Franciscan spirit while continuing to engage in their ordinary family and social activities. One of their distinguishing features has always been active contribution to the assistance and cultural and social advancement of those most in need.

With all the energy and enthusiasm of his twenty-seven years, Luis Amigó gave the task his all. In a short time, there were more than five thousand Franciscan tertiaries –both men and women– receiving his support in the different towns around his convent. Those who knew him in those days portray him as *a great organizer who attracted people as if he were a magnet*. But he had a special gift for attracting youth, who were immediately impressed by the warmth and humanity of this enterprising friar who seemed quite unaware of the existence of the word *exhaustion*.

Naturally, the social work that Luis Amigó proposed for the laypeople who gathered around him were the same actions that he himself had been committed to in his youth and which, moreover, would alleviate the most pressing needs of the region. Thus, he got the women involved in caring for the sick, helping the poor and teaching needy children to read and write. The men, for their part, while being pointed in these same directions, were also guided into voluntary work in the prisons, for which Amigó of course had held a special place in his heart since his youth. Indeed, a group of the most committed laypeople joined forces with Father Luis himself to make regular visits to the prison in Valencia for the purposes of consoling, caring for and preaching the Gospel to the inmates, and even became involved in their reintegration into society upon their release.<sup>6</sup>

6 Cf. “*I Frati delle carceri*” in *Eco di San Francesco* 16 (1889) p. 398.

The fruit of all the intense work that Father Luis Amigó carried out with the lay community was the birth of the two religious congregations that he founded. Amigó himself tells us of how some of the women and men that had been receiving his support on their path of personal growth and social commitment asked him to form a new congregation in order to be able to *dedicate themselves with greater freedom and generosity to personal growth in love and service to God among those most in need.*<sup>7</sup>

Thus, on May 11, 1885, at only 30 years of age, he founded the *Congregation of Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy Family*, whose principal missions he identified as: care for the sick, education of children and youths and, especially, care for orphans.

Subsequently, on April 12, 1889, when he was just 34, he founded the *Congregation of Capuchin Tertiary Friars of Our Lady of Sorrows*, whose members, in honor of their founder, are known throughout the world today as the *Amigonians*. After initially assigning various fields of social action to this group, in 1890 (just a year after their foundation) he directed them toward the task of providing holistic education to children and youths in situations of conflict. And in time this same mission was also entrusted to his *Capuchin Tertiary Sisters*. In a personal letter he sent to Pope Pius X in 1910, he explained:

*“Convinced of the urgent and utmost need of returning to the righteous way, through Christian education, those young people pervaded with false doctrines and bad examples who are separated from the way of truth and virtue, [I] founded... two Institutions of the Third Order of Capuchins, one male and one female, with the intention that the zealous friars and nuns of both Institutions would reform in both the natural and supernatural sense, those youths who have strayed from the path of good, renewing them in Christ by all means at their disposal.”*<sup>8</sup>

Many years later, toward the end of his life, using the allegorical language of the Biblical parable of the Good Shepherd, Amigó left his followers the following *spiritual testament*:

7 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 68 and 83.

8 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1780.

*“You, my beloved children, whom He has made the shepherds of his flock, are the ones who have to go in search of the lost sheep until it is returned to the fold of the Good Shepherd. And do not fear perishing on the cliffs and precipices you will have to place yourselves on to save the lost sheep, nor be intimidated by the thorny thickets and ambushes...”*<sup>9</sup>

### *The bishop who never gave up his humble and brotherly ways*

During the early years of his two congregations, Luis Amigó suffered greatly over the severe internal tensions that afflicted them, which were in fact natural for the incipient stages of any mission as it undergoes its process of identification. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, these tensions had dissipated and Luis Amigó lived peacefully and watched happily as his work flourished. And amid this peace and happiness that he enjoyed in his life, in 1907, at the age of 52, he received the news that the Pope had appointed him a *bishop*.

There are many definitions of the word *bishop*, not all of them good. One of the most accurate is, perhaps, that of *full priest*. If *priest* means *consecrated to love*, to the service of one's fellow man and the community, *bishop* would therefore mean –would have to mean– the *first servant and witness of love in his church*.

Love is the only *merit* to be able to ascend in the *hierarchy of the Kingdom of Heaven*.

When Jesus examined Peter before naming him *the first of the apostles*, the only test he gave him was a test of love: “*Do you love me more than these?*” In other words, will you give yourself, serve others, seat yourself last... more than others?

What a contradiction! The *chief* turns out to be last of his brothers, the servant; *the one who was able to put himself last for love*.

Luis Amigó understood this message fully. He had lived his priesthood in close company with others, and in particular, with the neediest, and now he wanted to live his episcopate as *generous, full and total surrender to love*.

9 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1831.

His intention was clearly summed up in the motto he chose for his coat of arms: *I lay down my life for my sheep.*

Luis Amigó was Bishop, firstly, of Solsona (1907-1913), and then of Segorbe (1913-1934). In both dioceses his favored ones were the youth, the simple, hard-working people and people marginalized from society. He knew how to reach the humblest people. As one farmworker who knew him well once said: "*I never thought that a bishop could be so approachable for everyone... he spoke my language.*" He always gave a generous welcome to the poor and kept his door, his heart, and his pocket open to them. Modest people and laborers working temporarily on one of his projects often sat at his table. And he was not averse to helping the workers himself when the occasion arose, like the time a young farm hand accidentally tipped over the load he was carrying in a horse-drawn wagon and Amigó, picking up one of the spades, helped him load it back in as if it were the most natural thing on earth. Humble and unassuming, like a good Franciscan friar and Capuchin, he awakened the admiration of those who knew him, both great and small. And *with heartfelt compassion*, he continued to care for the marginalized. On one occasion, it is said, he welcomed a man into his episcopal house who, having been falsely accused and persecuted by the law, turned to Amigó for help. A few days later, the man fell ill and Amigó arranged for his care and frequently visited him and tended to him personally. He thus kept the man in hiding until the matter was cleared up and he could return home, healthy, free and safe. Amigó repeatedly upheld the gospel values of social justice and roused the consciences of the people with respect to the importance of a Christian education for the young, and particularly for those who had gone astray from the path of truth and virtue. And through his writings he shared with everyone the wisdom of his soul, the very essence of which was *love*.

### *He lived happily and died smiling*

Luis Amigó's life was longer than the average lifespan in his era. He saw in his seventy-ninth birthday fully lucid and aware, in spite of a few minor ailments, and died just shy of eighty on October 1, 1934.

What those who knew him in his last years found most striking about him was the serenity he exuded, which he transmitted, as if by osmosis, to everyone around him.

That serenity was, in reality, the most palpable expression of the inner harmony which in time he had been able to achieve as a result of a constant and progressive process of human maturation through love.

It is said that happiness is love's most characteristic gift. And Luis Amigó was living proof of this. A man with a strong and bold personality in his younger years, his character softened over time, and he came to be a model of gentleness and grace in his dealings with others.

One of his closest friends left us with a portrait of Amigó that I will offer by way of conclusion to this brief overview of his life. This portrait makes it very clear how Luis Amigó –as the last heading in this brief biography puts it– *lived happily and died smiling*:

*“Peace was at the center of his being; humility governed his outward appearance. His life was like a gently flowing river, without steep slopes or deluges which overflowed the channel. The flowers of all the virtues bloomed when he passed by: charity, poverty, humility, obedience...”*

*“He possessed, as few others do, the rare gift of an unalterably serene life, one without great highlights or dazzling moments, silenced by the purity that comes from following a profound spiritual path.*

*“The goodness of his beautiful soul radiated from the smile that lit up his face; a smile that not even death could erase.”<sup>10</sup>*

10 LAUZURICA, Javier, *Introduction to the Autobiography of Luis Amigó*, in Amigó, L. Complete Works, p. 3.



## HIS CONCEPTION OF MAN AND OF EDUCATION

Pedagogical science naturally finds its point of reference, its Alpha and Omega, in Man.

Every pedagogical system (and this is a very important point to keep in mind) is sustained on a particular anthropological perspective. Without it, pedagogical ideas and activities would wander aimlessly, with no clear conception of where to lead each individual on the unrepeatable adventure of his own maturation and growth as a person.

An anthropological ideal is fundamental, and any methodology also needs to be established and then articulated from the perspective of that ideal. We need to ask, for example, before embarking on any pedagogical journey, what kind of society we want and what kind of person we want to foster.

With this in mind, before continuing with the overview in this first section of the person who founded and gave his name to the *identity* that underpins *Amigonian pedagogy*, it is essential to clarify exactly what his anthropological perspective was.

In this respect, it can first of all be asserted that the anthropology underlying the thoughts, feelings and actions of Luis Amigó is the anthropology that follows fundamentally from all Christian culture, and that always views Man as a referential and relational being who is realized to the extent that, by overcoming his selfish tendency toward egotistical self-absorption, he is capable of opening up to others.

According to the Biblical concept (the true foundation of all Christian thought), Man was *created in the image and likeness of a God whose true identity is love*. In other words, Man was created to love, and he finds his happiness and his truth only if he learns to love.

The man who does not grow in love turns his life into a huge lie. The *truth* of life is found in love because only in love is the full, gratifying meaning of human life. “*Life*,” Unamuno tells us, “*is the*

*criterion of truth. Every creed that leads to living works is a true creed, as that one is false that conducts to deeds of death... When mathematics kill, mathematics are a lie...*"<sup>11</sup> It is equally clear that for Christ the truth consists, in short, of finding the gratifying and liberating meaning of human identity itself. The famous phrase "*know the truth, and the truth shall set you free*"<sup>12</sup> could very well be translated as *know love, grow in love and it shall allow you to experience true freedom*. And the dramatic question that Christ put one day to his disciples, "*what gain is it for anyone to win the whole world and forfeit his life?*"<sup>13</sup> – or, in other words, what profit is there in *having* it all, if you have not been able to find meaning in your own *being*? – can only find a valid answer in love: "*anyone who seeks himself shall be lost, shall be ruined; only he who is able to give life shall find meaning in his own.*"<sup>14</sup> Whoever is unable to surrender to love, whoever is unable to grow *for others, toward others* and *with others*, whoever is unable to overcome the resistance of his own egotism, shall remain dwarfed in the narrow, tedious and dreary horizons of his own *sameness*. Only those who grow in *alterity*, only those who mature in love – which, by its very nature, requires an *exodus* from the *self* and a *pilgrimage* to others – shall illuminate their own existence with the light of *happiness*:

"*Love*" Luis Amigó would write, in what is effectively a synopsis of his Christian anthropological perspective, "[is] *the motive that drives Man in all his acts. Selfless, honest and rational on most occasions; egotistical, sensual and accommodating his animal appetites on many others. But it always turns out that the axis around which all his desires, affections and operations revolve is love, because Man was created to love and love is the necessary function of his heart, which cannot live without loving. Because God, who made him in the living image of his beauty and perfection... wanted Man to partake of His own life, which is love... without [love] Man is dead... our heart is formed to love, and love God, love is its life... To*

11 UNAMUNO, Miguel. *The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho*, Trans. Homer P. Earle. A. A. Knopf, New York, 1927, p. 115.

12 Jn. 8:32. See also Rom. 8:2 and 21; 2Co. 3:17; Gal. 5:1, 13-14.

13 Mk 8:36.

14 Cf. Jn. 12:25 and Lk. 9:24.

*love is its prime purpose and the center to which it is naturally directed.*<sup>15</sup>

*“In the same way that all shapes disappear in nature when the sun is hidden, leaving the beauty of the beings veiled, their vigor goes out of them and their lives dim, leaving the universe as cold as [a] corpse in the dead of night, the most sublime gifts lose their splendor, the virtues are left sterile... without light, heat and life when charity is lacking.”*<sup>16</sup>

Of course (and this cannot be overlooked if we wish to be faithful to his way of thinking), Luis Amigó, as the man of faith that he was, located the focal point of growth in love in the encounter with God. Repeatedly referring back to Augustine of Hippo (“you made us toward yourself, Oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”<sup>17</sup>), Luis Amigó considers the opening up to transcendence to be an essential element for a truly holistic education on the path toward the ideal of love:

*“It is not possible to love God,”* he writes in one of the texts that are most emblematic of his overall perspective, *“without also loving Man, His favorite work, through Him, nor to love Man with a true love of charity if you disregard the love of God. Both loves are like beams that emanate from the same light, like flowers from the same stem.”*<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the above, Amigó’s way of thinking—which arises out of the profound feeling intrinsic to his character—can otherwise be read, as all Christian cultural thought can be, from a purely anthropological perspective that has unquestionable human validity even for those who feel called to reflect on the human person without a specific religious conception, or even without considering an explicit relationship with a transcendent being.

15 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 331, 338 and 520. C. also *ibid.*, 1042.

16 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1153. This passage without doubt constitutes a *poetic hymn to love* by Luis Amigó and spontaneously recalls Paul’s “*If I Have Not Love I Am Nothing*” in his *hymn to love* (Cf. 1Co. 13:4-7).

17 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 351. 478. 521. 663. 966 – 967. 1048. 1510. Traditionally the translation of the first part of this phrase is: *you made us, Lord for yourself*. But bearing in mind the Latin expression *ad te*, I prefer the translation *toward you*, as it better expresses the idea of an *educational journey*.

18 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1044.

## *Accompanying the person toward the human ideal*

Just as Luis Amigó's conception of *Man* is a Christian one, so is his conception of *Man's education*.

The Second Vatican Council, in one of its most important and inspired passages, affirms that Christ, in addition to revealing God's face to Man, also "*reveals Man to Man himself*".<sup>19</sup> This affirmation by the Council, which is intended to highlight Christ's dimension of *perfect Man*, or *human ideal*, is not new, but can be traced back to the very origins of the Christian faith.

The first Christians were already fully aware that Christ's doctrine was not a doctrine aimed solely at making *Man happy in the next life*, but that it was also intended, and indeed first and foremost, to *make him happy in the here and now*, that is, on this precious planet that he has been given to inhabit. And it was precisely for this reason—because they were not *spiritualists*, but *spiritual*; because they did not distinguish between secular and sacred times and places; because they recognized no separation between reaching out to God and reaching out to Man; because they did not nurture schizophrenic divisions between spiritual and human growth—that they saw in Christ not only the son of God, but also the *fully realized image of the human ideal*. And they thus understood clearly that Christ himself was the best model for their own education, for their own *human growth through love*.

There are numerous passages of the New Testament that convey this original *conception of education* in the first Christian communities, but I consider the most explicit and telling to be the following:

"*I urge you*" writes Paul to one of these first Christian communities "*to lead a life... with all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love... until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ... so the body grows until it has built itself up in love... then we shall no longer be children, tossed one way and another... if we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow up completely into Christ, who is the head... you were taught what the*

19 Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

*truth is in Jesus... so that you could put on the New Man... Be generous to one another, sympathetic, forgiving each other... and follow Christ by loving as he loved you...*"<sup>20</sup>

"*Make my joy complete*" he writes elsewhere, "*by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus.*"<sup>21</sup>

And again, Paul urges us to "*be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other... The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts... Always be thankful.*"<sup>22</sup>

Over time, Christian culture came to consolidate this vital dogma of the first community and to present Christ –even for people who did not participate in the faith– as a *valid model for humanity* and, consequently, an all-encompassing point of reference for what it means to grow as a human through love and in accordance with values that constitute a kind of *rainbow of real love*.<sup>23</sup>

And it is precisely within this whole cultural dynamic, in which Christ –leaving aside the parameters of faith– is established as a *heritage of humanity*, appearing to all people of good will as an *all-encompassing point of reference for human identity*, where we need to locate Father Luis Amigo's concept of education, which is founded on the following idea:

*"We are certain that by following his [Christ's] teachings on life, and by no other way, we have to be fortunate and happy, in life and in eternity... having the spirit of Christ lets our heart be possessed by*

20 Eph. 4:1-2; 13-14a; 15; 16b; 17a; 21b; 24a; 32 and 5:1-2a.

21 Philipp. 2:2-5. Cf. also Rom. 15:5.

22 Col. 3:12-15.

23 The set of values referred to here, as could easily be deduced, is that which has traditionally been identified as the Beatitudes, and which are, in reality, the most characteristic features of love in Christian culture. On this topic of the *Beatitudes as a rainbow of love*, see my work *Identidad Amigoniense*, FUNLAM – Medellín, 1998, pp. 16-23.

*affections of the Word made flesh... that is, his inexhaustible charity, deep humility, sweet modesty, his justice... in order to be able to say through the Apostle that Christ lives in us.*"<sup>24</sup>

Only from this perspective, I believe, is it possible to understand Father Luis's references to "*establishing or renewing people in Christ.*"<sup>25</sup> For him, this renewal involves –beyond all religious expression– a true declaration of principles, whereby one feels committed to contributing actively to building the person, considering Christ as *the fully realized ideal of humanity* and the model for a whole set of *values directly related to love*, which humanize the person by giving him, through the feeling and sensibility they bring, his true human face.

This whole *project of humanization*, I believe, also needs to be read in light of the classic concept of *moral uplift* also used by Father Luis Amigó.<sup>26</sup>

It is true that the term *moral uplift* may prove ambiguous at certain moments of its historic usage due to a tendency to confuse or equate (at least at the level of language) *human growth* with *observing Christian morality*. However, bearing all of the above reflections in mind, I would argue that this term –analyzed in its proper context and in all its depth– actually alludes to an educational reality that goes beyond any *ethics of duty* to enter another dimension related naturally and directly with an *aesthetic of being*. In other words, the term *moral uplift*, rather than referring to the *behavior of the growing person*, would refer to the *development of the person's being and personal identity*. Understood fully, moral uplift would thus not so much entail teaching specific conduct or behavior as educating the heart, the human feeling of the person in accordance with the *classic values* that Christian culture has developed, to give life and color to *love*.

### *Heartfelt accompaniment*

Luis Amigó, who perfectly harmonized the lessons he received in the classroom with those he learned in everyday life, wanted his

24 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 480 and 1196.

25 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, especially 1780. Cf. also *ibid.*, 280.

26 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2068 and 2075.

followers, in addition to developing themselves constantly with the advances in the psycho-pedagogical sciences, to be imbued with a sensibility that would enable them to “*learn the science of the human heart through experience*”.<sup>27</sup> And this science can only be learned in the daily sharing with others of joys and sorrows, triumphs and disappointments, projects and enterprises, hopes and achievements, *through the language of the heart*.

Often in life, what is not attained by the *technical hand* is attained by the *friendly hand*. And for Luis Amigó it was vital that anyone who wanted to devote themselves to accompanying others on their unrepeatable adventure toward human maturity should have above all a *big heart* and sufficient sensitivity to act with tact and gentleness:

“*Because for the heart of Man,*” he writes in a text that recalls the message of the conversion of the Wolf of Gubbio, which I will be analyzing in the next chapter, “*these mercies are like burning arrows which light the fire of charity within them and end by converting the rapacious wolf into a gentle lamb.*”<sup>28</sup>

“*The mother [or educator] has to join this instruction, the base of religious and social education of the child, to correction... because the lack of correction is the cause of young people abandoning themselves to all their whims and excesses. But she has to be prudent... joining the determination of character to the sweetness and kindness that wins the heart of the child, so that the correction does not exasperate them.*”<sup>29</sup>

And to offer some more specific guidelines on this intimacy of lives and hearts, he left the following advice for the first Amigonian educators:

“*The friars must always maintain and govern themselves prudently, so that the children do not come to ignore them either by showing too much openness and familiarity or by making themselves repugnant through excessive seriousness.*”<sup>30</sup>

“*Besides the very nature of the human heart, the most beautiful way for inspiring the children... is to awaken a sense of emulation*

27 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2047.

28 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1058.

29 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1086.

30 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2026.

*among them; it appears very much the case to us that you should try to stimulate this among the children of the House... Experience will teach them that they will get more from the children [with emulation] than with any kind of punishment.”<sup>31</sup>*

### *Toward the search for a method*

Although, as noted above, Amigonian pedagogy originally focused on accompanying the youth toward his human maturity mainly by means of the *language of the heart*, the need was soon felt for a particular method which –without limiting the freedom and creativity that education always requires as the *artistic process* that it should be– would somehow regulate the pedagogical practice, so that *it would not only do good, but also do well*; so that behind the language of the heart would lurk no harmful or stunting paternalisms whose tendency to shelter and protect only hinder real and full human growth.

It was Father Luis Amigó himself who –inspired by the principles and even the language of traditional Christian *asceticism*<sup>32</sup>– thus determined the *gradual and progressive* nature of the Amigonian system:

*“Looking at moral behavior, they shall be classified in the orders to be named Neophytes [Catechumen], Diligents and Worshipers. The first, the Neophytes, will be those children who still preserve their old habits or are indomitable... The Diligents shall be the children who are taking advantage of reforming their habits and whom you know have a clear desire to achieve their perfection. And finally, the name of Worshipers will designate those children whose exemplary conduct can serve as a model for the others.”<sup>33</sup>*

Father Luis Amigó was also insistent that his followers, from the very beginnings of the Amigonian pedagogy, should undertake detailed, scientific and personally tailored monitoring of the students:

31 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2049 and 2054. Although I will return to the term *emulation* in the second part of this book, it is worth noting here that with this term Amigonian tradition did not seek to awaken feelings of rivalry or competitiveness between students, but to awaken in each individual the *resources and potential of his own being by inciting his own personal identity into action*.

32 *Asceticism* is a branch of *Christian spiritual theology* that studies the *conversion process* followed in different ways by the man alienated from God on the path back to Him.

33 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2049. Cf. also *ibid*, 2051, 2052 and 2053.

*“So that the Superiors know the prior history and qualities of the youths confided to the care and correction of the Congregation... a private Register will be made, recording all the prior history they have been able to find out about them as well as their abilities, temperament and character, and their grades for conduct concerning devoutness, study and work they would have earned each month.”*<sup>34</sup>

And finally, it was also Father Amigó himself who promoted *holistic education* by ensuring that the instruction and work of the educators would be combined with different educational activities involving religion, culture, sport and recreation.<sup>35</sup>

34 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2029. Cf. also *ibid*, 2027.

35 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2029. 2033. 2034, 2068 and 2093.



## THE FRANCISCAN ROOTS OF HIS ANTHROPOLOGY AND PEDAGOGY

In the previous chapter we saw how the conception that Luis Amigó had of Man and his education was fundamentally grounded in the Gospel, and is therefore framed within the Christian cultural tradition.

However, it is also important to note here –as it was of decisive significance in Luis Amigó’s own life– that he deepened his experience of the Gospel and his understanding of the core themes of Christian culture through the spiritual and cultural movement founded by Francis of Assisi.

### *The Franciscan innovation*

Francis of Assisi’s great contribution to the Christian world lies above all in the radical way in which he followed and lived the Christian message. Francis did not introduce *innovations* to that message; rather, he himself became one great *innovation*, precisely because of his way of accepting and living the Gospel “to the letter”, with all of its force and without exceptions.

And the most striking element of this *innovation* was, in my opinion, the *profound humanity* that distinguished Francis’s life and which he also wanted to distinguish the lives of his followers.

It is well known that in his youth, Francis was not what people would generally call a *good kid*. His parents had educated him according to the parameters of official Christian life; he had attended a parochial school and had taken his first communion when he was already practically an adult, as was the custom then. But the religion he had *learned* had not been enough for him. And just as every human being is a *born seeker of happiness and fullness* (and Francisco was clearly a person who was extremely bright, sensitive and full of life), he embarked on a frantic –even desperate– search for a sense of satisfaction and happiness in his *being* and existence which, until then, he had not found. His behavior was thus like that of a kind of *rebel* without a cause, utterly aimless, a person whom today we would view as a *perfect candidate for a life of drug dependency*.

He sought happiness in the world of *possessions* and in the world of *pleasure*. He ran like a madman after anything that promised him *fullness*. And yet for all his searching, every day his personal experience became sadder and poorer, with a growing sensation of falling irremediably into a void. The more he sought *well-being* and the more he believed he had found happiness, the more he subsequently felt a *dizzying sensation of being hurled into nothingness*.

In a quest for novelty and adventure more than out of any ideological conviction, he even went to war. But this also failed to satisfy his yearning for *life*. A disease contracted while held captive forced him to turn inward and, although this did not provide him with the solution to his problem, it helped him decisively to embark on a new and different *phase of searching*. By then he knew that money, pleasure or power were not in themselves sources of *happiness*, but he had yet to discover where that elusive happiness could be found. Then one day, when he perhaps least expected it, among a group of lepers, happiness knocked on his door. Francis himself, years later, would describe the experience as follows:

“*And the Lord Himself led me amongst them [the lepers], and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them, that which had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body.*”<sup>36</sup>

This experience of intimacy with the person of the leper, which made him profoundly happy, led him to discover in Man—in all men—the face of that God of whom he had heard people speak since he was a child, but who now was made manifest—not to his mind, but to his heart—with a different appearance. This was not the *God-judge*, but the *God-father*, the *God of life and of happiness*.

In the leper Francis discovered God, and from then on in God he always saw the leper and all human beings.

### *Examples of humanity*

As suggested above, God ceased to be for Francis a mere idea, and was transformed for him into *a profoundly human being*.

And Francis thus became the prophet of the *God who was made man* to reveal to every human, in the *splendor of his humanity* and in the *purity and fullness of human feeling*, the reflection and shining light of divinity.

And the contemplation of the God made Man also led him to discover that a person's *happiness* is found in the world of *being*, and is

36 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *The Testament of St. Francis*, 2-3.

achieved by virtue of the fact that each individual *is, through love*, a true reflection of God, who created him in his *image and likeness*. And based on this discovery, Francis directed his whole life to *being more profoundly human every day*, divesting himself of anything that might inhibit his growth as a *being for others*. In this way, Francis became a *credible example of humanity*, and also wanted his followers to distinguish themselves among the people, first and foremost, through the exemplary force of a human feeling interwoven with tenderness and delicacy:

*“And let one make known clearly his wants to another,”* he writes to his friars, *“in order that he may find and receive what are necessary for him. And let everyone love and nourish his brother as a mother loves and nourishes her son.”*<sup>37</sup>

And we have proof that this desire of Francis’s was made a reality in the first fraternity, as according to the *Legend of the Three Companions*, *“each deeply loved the other and cared for him as a mother cares for her cherished only child.”*<sup>38</sup>

*“What love of the pious fellowship flourished among them!”* writes Thomas of Celano, Francis’s first biographer, in a passage that overflows with tenderness. *“For whenever they came together in any place, or met one another in the way (as is usual), there sprang up a shoot of spiritual love scattering over all love the seeds of true affection... their spirit [was] submissive, their tongue peaceable, their answer soft, their purpose identical, their obedience ready, their hand untiring.*

*“And for that they despised all earthly things, and never loved one another with private love, but poured forth their whole affection in common; the business of all alike was to give up themselves as the price of supplying their brethren’s need. They came together with longing, they dwelt together with delight, but the parting of companions was grievous on both sides, a bitter divorce, a cruel separation.”*<sup>39</sup>

And this same *example of humanity* that Francis wanted his followers to be distinguished by in their relations with each other he also wanted them to be distinguished by in their relations with society:

*“And whoever may come to them, either a friend or a foe, a thief or a robber,”* he orders his friars, *“let them receive him kindly.”*<sup>40</sup>

37 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *First Rule of the Friars Minor* 9, 10-11. Cf. *Second Rule* 6-8.

38 Legend of the Three Companions, 41.

39 CELANO, T. *The First Life of St. Francis*, 38-39.

40 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *First Rule*, 7, 14.

“Take care not to be troubled or angered” he also tells them, “because of the fault or bad example of another... but let them spiritually help him who has sinned, as best they can; for he that is whole needs not a physician, but he that is sick.”<sup>41</sup>

Elsewhere he says that his friars “ought to rejoice when they converse with mean and despised persons, with the poor and the weak, with the infirm and lepers, and with those who beg in the streets.”<sup>42</sup>

### *Preference for the marginalized*

There is, however, an element that Francis wanted to be an especially distinguishing feature of his followers’ example of humanity: the element of *compassion*,<sup>43</sup> that *faithful love* “made to measure”, that *personalized tenderness* that motivates us to love beyond our usual boundaries, where there is a greater lack or need.<sup>44</sup>

In a text that we might well consider the *Magna Carta of Compassion* in Christian literature, Francis wrote the following to a brother who asked his advice on what to do about another who was constantly tormenting him:

“Love those who do these things to you,” he begins. “And do not expect anything different from them, unless it is something which the Lord shall have given to you. And love them in this and do not wish that they be better Christians.

“And by this I wish to know” he adds, identifying *love made to measure* as the true *measure of love*, “if you love the Lord God and me, his servant and yours, if you have acted in this manner: that is, there should not be any brother in the world who has sinned, however much he may have possibly sinned, who, after he has looked into your eyes, would go

41 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *First Rule* 5, 7-8. Cf. *Second Rule*. 7.3.

42 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *First Rule*, 9.2. Cf. *Legend of the Three Companions*, 58.

43 The Latin word *miser cordia* used in the Vulgate, which passed directly from Latin into the Spanish language unchanged, has been translated into English using various terms, including “mercy” (cf. New Jerusalem Bible, Mt. 5:7, 9:13 and 12:7; Gal. 6:16), “faithful love” (cf. *ibid.*, Lk. 1:50, 1:54 and 1:58); “pity” (cf. *ibid.* Lk. 10:37) and “compassion” (cf. *ibid.* Col. 3:12). Of these possible translations, *compassion*, and its adjectival form *compassionate* has been chosen throughout this book as the most appropriate to translate the concept of *miser cordia*, (and the adjectival form *miser cordioso*), which needs to be clearly understood in order to fully comprehend both of Amigonian spirituality and Amigonian pedagogy, or, in other words, to fully comprehend Amigonian identity.

44 I will not delve further into the topic of *compassion* here, as I will be returning to it in Parts II and IV of the book.

*away without having received your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not to seek mercy, you should ask him if he wants mercy.*

*“And if he should sin thereafter a thousand times before your very eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him back to the Lord. Always be merciful to brothers such as these. . . . And all the brothers who might know that he has sinned are not to bring shame upon him or speak ill of him, but let them show great mercy toward him. . . . because it is not the healthy who are in need of the physician, but those who are sick.”<sup>45</sup>*

And it has been precisely this element of *compassion* that has traditionally distinguished Franciscan pedagogy as a pedagogy with the power to educate based on a feeling given life in the example of the educators themselves:

*“Since you speak of peace,” Francis tells his followers, “all the more so must you have it in your hearts. Let none be provoked to anger or scandal by you, but rather may they be drawn to peace and good will, to benignity and concord through your gentleness.”<sup>46</sup>*

On this point there is a text in the Franciscan literature that I consider paradigmatic of this whole notion of education through feeling and affection, which I offer as a conclusion to this chapter in light of its connection with the concepts of a pedagogy aimed at rehabilitating children and youths in situations of conflict:

*“In the hermitage that the brothers have on top of Borgo Santo Sepolcro, it happened that thieves would sometimes come to ask for bread from the brothers; they lived in hiding in the great forests of the province, but now and then they would come out to rob the travelers on the road or pathways. Some of the brothers of the place would say: ‘it is not good for us to give them alms, for they are bandits who inflict so many great evils upon men.’ Others, taking into account that they begged for alms humbly and out of great need, would help them on occasions, exhorting them, furthermore, to convert and do penitence.*

*“While these things passed, the blessed Francis came to the hermitage. And when the brothers asked his opinion as to whether or not they should give aid to the bandits, he answered: ‘If you do what I shall tell you, I am sure that the Lord shall make you win the souls of these men.’ And he told them: ‘Go forth and procure good bread and good wine for them, and take these to the forest where you know them to live, and cry out: “Come, ban-*

45 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *A Letter to a Minister*.

46 *Legend of the Three Companions*, 58.

*dit brothers! We are your brothers and we bring you good bread and good wine.” At once they shall come to your call. Lay a cloth upon the ground and place the bread and wine upon it and serve them with humility and good grace. After the meal, show them the word of the Lord and then finally make them, for the love of God, a first plea; that they shall promise not to beat or do bodily harm to any man. If you ask everything of them at once, they shall pay you no heed. The bandits will make you this promise, moved by your humility and by the love that you have shown them. The next day, in gratitude for the promise they have made you, take them eggs and cheese as well as bread and wine, and serve them while they eat. When the meal is finished, say to them: “Why do you stay here all day long, suffering such hunger and such calamity, scheming and then doing such evil? If you do not repent of this, you shall lose your souls. You would do better to serve the Lord, who shall provide you with what you need in this life for your body and then save your souls.” And the Lord, in his mercy, shall inspire them to repent because of the humility and charity you have shown to them.”<sup>47</sup>*

Something of the perspective outlined in this section is what Father Luis Amigó himself seeks to convey in his evocation of Saint Francis in his writings:

*“[Francis] did everything for everyone in order to save them... He cried with the afflicted... [and] sought out with more than paternal diligence the poor sinners so that he could lead them onto the way of salvation with his urgings, warnings and above all the tenderness of his love... because there was room for everyone in his magnanimous heart and his generosity, compassion and love knew no bounds.”<sup>48</sup>*

47 *Legend of Perugia*, 115. Cf. also, *The Mirror of Perfection*, 66. This text is considered by some scholars to be the historical source of the legend of the *Wolf of Gubbio* (Cf. *The Little Flowers*, 21). In reality, both this passage and the same one from *The Wolf* seek to demonstrate that the resources of the heart are the most effective in aiding the rehabilitation of one who is *lost* to life.

48 AMIGÓ, L. *Complete Works*, 1020.

PARTE II

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL  
BASIS OF THE  
AMIGONIAN APPROACH

**Chapter I:**

The Objective: To Find Meaning in Life

**Chapter II:**

The Method: Strengthening the Will

**Chapter III:**

The Creed: Blind Faith in Man

**Chapter IV:**

The Environment: Familial

Having explored, in the first part of this book, the anthropological and pedagogical approach that Father Luis Amigó took personally, in this second section I believe it important to examine how the Amigonian tradition adopted this same approach and how it was developed and consolidated over time to become the *basis and foundation of its identity and activity*; in short, of the *being and doing* of the *Amigonian approach*.

Naturally, some of the underlying ideas outlined in the first part will need to be revisited here, although in this section I will attempt to approach them from an angle that will complement the discussions of the previous section.

## THE OBJECTIVE: TO FIND MEANING IN LIFE

In accordance with the perspective of its founder, Father Luis Amigó, and, through that perspective, in keeping with Christian culture, *Amigonian pedagogy* has always viewed Man as a *project of love* and, consequently, has given priority in its educational activity to accompanying its learners on their exciting and challenging journey toward their own growth and maturation *in alterity*.

### *Youths separated from the way of truth and virtue*

However, to fully comprehend the arduous nature of this objective in Amigonian practice, and to be able to discern, in the proper context, the complexity involved in what on the surface seems as natural and simple as fostering in people the *development of love*, the nucleus and the seed of all human feeling, it is first necessary to present at least a general outline of the typology of the traditional targets of Amigonian pedagogy over the course of its history.

Within the wide range of action in what today is known as *social pedagogy*, Amigonian activities have focused primordially on *children, adolescents and youths in conflict with the law*.

These children, adolescents and youths have been basically and particularly characterized—in accordance with the historical experience of the Amigonians themselves—by their *disorientation in life*.

Father Luis Amigó used to refer to them as “*youths who are separated from the way of truth and virtue*.”<sup>49</sup> And this expression has a certain ongoing validity, although it is important to understand its full ideological depth.

49 AMIGÓ, L. OC, 1780.

That they are youths who are *separated from the way of virtue* is easily understandable. For acting outside or against the law, these youths have been declared, even at an *official* level, to have gone beyond the limits of what is *right, correct*, or ethical... in short, beyond the limits of *virtue*, as understood and regulated by the law.

The idea that they *are separated from the truth*, however, is at first rather more difficult to comprehend. And yet it is this part of the expression that carries a profound anthropological message. *Truth* – within the Christian tradition followed by Father Luis Amigó– is not a mere *logical* category, but an *ontological* one. It is not a question of telling *the truth or lies*. Rather, it is a question of *living truth* or, conversely, *living a lie*.

*Living truth* means finding *gratifying meaning in one's own existence*; i.e. *truly enjoying life*.

From this perspective, to be *separated from the way of truth* means to be personally living the worst drama that any human being can suffer; the drama of being biologically alive without having found *the joy of living*; the drama of *walking dead* through life; the drama of living in *disillusionment*<sup>50</sup> with life itself and of *wandering the world* desperately searching for happiness in fallacies which, far from fulfilling expectations, lead to an increasingly dizzying feeling of frustration and emptiness that lead those who feel it to spontaneously experience the *sensation of nakedness* experienced by the first human couple.<sup>51</sup>

And it is precisely this that is the drama experienced by the vast majority of children and youths with problems – as if it were a kind of common denominator.

Furthermore, this existential life drama which, as will be discussed in the next chapter, represents a major handicap that hinders the person from making free and truly independent choices for his future, also severely inhibits a genuine educational process aimed at *growth in love*.

50 By virtue of its very semantic structure, the word *disillusionment* constitutes a concentration of the Christian anthropological perspective that has developed around the term *truth*. Disillusionment –which always arises in an emotional context– occurs when the person becomes aware that what he thought was *love* was no more than a farce. Disillusionment thus means to emerge from the illusion experienced when we believe something to be *true* –believing it to be love– when in fact it was a *lie*.

51 Cf. Gn. 3:10.

In general, lurking behind this drama (which develops –as noted above– into a *state of growing disorientation*, tending to express itself in behavior that may initially seem incomprehensible, illogical, violent and even aberrant) is a devastating *emotional drama*, provoked by a profoundly bitter feeling of *disaffection* suffered by the person in question. This disaffection can sometimes be so traumatic that the person may come to give the impression that he has lost not only the *capacity to love others*, but even –and this, in my opinion, is much more dramatic– the *capacity to feel loved*, appreciated, cared about and valued.

How to overcome this drama, how to get these children and youths –who in some cases have suffered veritable *assaults upon their being*, whose bodies and psyches have been prostituted, who have felt completely *negated*– to *begin to believe in love*, in its unconditional nature and its goodness, is the great challenge that Amigonian pedagogy has always faced in its project to recover the disoriented person through a *process of whole growth*.

### *Happiness as a point of reference*

In its aim to accompany students in the process of finding meaning in their own existence, through a process of whole growth in love, Amigonian pedagogy has always focused its educational praxis on *happiness as a point of reference*.

With its time-honored motto *educate for life*, the Amigonian pedagogical tradition has sought not only to express that one of the objectives of its activity is to suitably prepare the child, adolescent or youth for subsequent reintegration, with a sufficient guarantee of success, into his family and social environment and into the workforce,<sup>52</sup> but also to hint at the pedagogical principle that *the learner only feels truly and freely involved in his educational process when he perceives the positive effect of what he is doing in his own life*; when he is capable of experiencing, through the different educational

52 For more on this aspect of the motto *educate for life*, see especially: TORRENTE, Valentín de, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, 12,401 and 12,448.

therapies, a feeling of happiness; when he is able to *enjoy life* with a true sense of satisfaction and fullness.

It is precisely this goal of achieving a positive and happy experience that all of the methods that fall under the common denominator of the concept of *emulation* aim for. Within the Amigonian tradition, emulation –as already mentioned, although it is important at this point to explain it more emphatically– needs to be associated not with a context of *competitiveness* or *rivalry*, which by their nature would come into conflict with a process of humanization grounded in love and alterity, but with a context aimed at *stimulating* or activating the potential of the individual, or, to put it another way, to awaken his own emotional capacity, or *self-esteem*.

Such stimulation is also the intention behind the *voucher system*, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The idea behind this system was that the learner, from a complementary perspective, would learn to *value* his environment, feeling himself to be both the artist and the protagonist of his own achievements.

Indeed, experience itself teaches us that evoking the learner's *own positive life experience* is what offers the greatest guarantees of success in education, given the very structure of the human being, who instinctively pursues feelings of happiness.

Every man –however low his level of academic instruction may have been– is aware that there are experiences that help him to *grow* and others that *stunt* that growth; that there are experiences that fill him up and others that leave him feeling empty; that there are experiences that help him to find a gratifying meaning in his own existence, and others that immerse him in a growing sense of existential meaninglessness; in short, that there are experiences that leave him with the good taste of profound peace and lasting happiness, and others which, once the sweetness of the moment has passed, plunge him into feelings of anguish and frustration. Every man is aware that in his life there are experiences of *fullness* and of *emptiness*, experiences of *ecstasy* and of *vertigo*. What matters in education is to know how to evoke these experiences so that the student can evaluate past situations in relation to them and to discover brighter paths for his future. It is not enough to say to the student: *this is good for you and for your life; this will make you happy*. If the educator is not able

to articulate the strategies that make the student experience, in the here and now of his life story, the virtue and happiness promised, all will have been in vain. Education cannot be limited to promoting virtue; it needs to seek ways to foster the experience of virtue. The pedagogical saying *the one who truly loves you will make you cry* needs to be replaced by another: *the one who truly loves you will always look for ways that will enable you to feel good and at peace with yourself.*

These days –perhaps more than in previous eras– Man has a need to *enjoy* life, to focus on *being*, to overcome a whole culture (i.e. postmodern culture) founded on pleasant *sensations* that produce *pleasure* and moments of joy, but which afterwards rarely leave any trace of truly serene happiness.

In response to this question of what is *good* or *bad*, education now more than ever needs to awaken in the student the experiences of *this makes me happy* or *this makes me unhappy*; the experiences of *this helps me enjoy my life* and *this ends up taking away my will to live.*

The invocation of these experiences can also help to counteract in children, adolescents and youths some of the most pronounced deficiencies of today's culture, such as *fragmentation, relativism and permissiveness*, and *hedonism*.

First of all, by virtue of their unifying and harmonious structure, invoking experiences of happiness can contribute decisively to overcoming the sense of fragmentation in which today's culture has immersed the individual.

The unity of life has probably never been discussed or extolled more than it is in the present. Educational projects themselves point in this very direction in their unanimous adoption of a holistic approach and their emphatic defense of this *holism* as an essential value. And yet it is also probable that never before has there been as much cultural *schizophrenia* and as many cases of existential breakdown in individuals as there are in this era. It would seem that in his desire to seek and find unity of knowledge, Modern Man has forgotten the need to seek and find, with the same *fervor*, harmony in his feelings and, consequently, in his thoughts. And while there is a serious lack of conceptual principles that give unity to our thinking, much more serious is the lack of feelings that bring life into harmony. Many people today live entirely at the level of *sensations* and do not seem to

have time to analyze whether those sensations are constructive or destructive for their personal development. It is thus not unusual to find men and women who long to experience the most varied –and even contradictory– sensations, and thus end up turning their lives into a kind of *bittersweet cocktail* that leaves them feeling confused and often leads to depression.

In opposition to this panorama of the structural breakdown of the individual, the feeling of happiness, as noted above, offers the human being unity and internal cohesion, and enables him to feel good and at ease with himself. This feeling of *well-being*, which is expressed externally in happiness, joy and satisfaction, is felt at the deepest level as a positive sensation of serenity and peace. It is a serenity and a peace that not only ensures personal and emotional balance even in the face of life's adversities and difficulties, but that acquires, even in the midst of such troubles, the qualities of that joyful patience that Biblical culture exalts in the profoundly realized and happy man<sup>53</sup> and which Francis of Assisi describes in his life and his writings as *perfect joy*.<sup>54</sup>

From this perspective, *happiness* would be, in short, that *hidden treasure* of which the Gospel speaks; that *gratifying sense of one's own existence*, which, once a man discovers it, he is willing to put all that he is, does and has at its service, to direct his *whole* life to attaining it.<sup>55</sup>

Intimately connected with the above, the invocation of experiences of happiness can also successfully contribute to counteracting the negative influences on the full and happy development of the individual exerted by the *relativist and permissive* tendencies of contemporary culture.

It has been suggested that post-modern Man is a man *with no points of reference*, who, instead of being a compass, is a weather-vane.<sup>56</sup> He is a man who has broken with all absolutes, has made *comfort* his great

53 Cf. Mt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2-3; Eph. 4:1-2.

54 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *The Little Flowers of Francis of Assisi*, Newman Press, Westminster, MD, 1953, p. 21. Cf. also *Admonitions* 13, 15, 22; and Vives, J. A. *Trilogía Amigoniense* (reprint) pp. 105-108, and in *Pastor Bonus* 46 (1997) pp. 131-134.

55 Cf. Mt. 13:44. Cf. also Vives, J.A. "En busca del tesoro perdido," in: *Alborada* (Special 45th Anniversary Edition) pp. 4-5.

56 Rojas, E. *El hombre light*, Temas de hoy, Barcelona, 1998, p. 47.

god and has justified anything that could be placed at the service of that deity. But existential tragedy arises because –as Paul himself points out, based on his own most personal anthropological experiences– *everything may be permissible for Man, but not everything does him good*,<sup>57</sup> because *comfort* does not always coincide with *well-being*, and because there is no pleasure or *having* that can fill the inner void experienced by the person *who does not feel at ease with himself*.

Only the feeling of happiness, in its character as a point of reference and a guiding star, can lead each life project or personal legend to full, harmonious human maturity.

Finally, *happiness as a point of reference* constitutes a true challenge to the unbridled hedonism that prevails in our times.

Hedonism distorts pleasure by making it absolute, often depriving it of its natural relationship with human feeling and thus depriving it of its communion with the nucleus of love, which is in reality what makes the personality a cohesive, unified structure and confers upon it the flavor and tone of happiness.

On the other hand, happiness –through the whole feeling of love out of which it arises– does not condemn pleasure, but gives it back its true face.

Making pleasure an absolute is as harmful as condemning it absolutely. And this is the sin that all morality commits when, losing sight of the unified nature of life and allowing itself to be guided by existential dualisms, turns into *moralism*. With their complete condemnation of pleasure and their traditional exaltation of suffering and abstinence, sometimes to the point of making them absolutes, some ascetic movements, in taking up a position inclined toward a kind of harmful masochism, have robbed morality of the happiness that is one of its foundations.

Christ himself, who some malicious critics accused of being a “*glutton and a drunkard*”<sup>58</sup>, appears as a person profoundly *full of life*, who –without entering into absurd debates such as whether it is better to eat or fast,<sup>59</sup> and without falling into dangerous oppositions

57 Cf. 1 Co. 6:12. Cf. also 1 Co. 10:23.

58 Cf. Mt. 11:19.

59 Cf. Lk. 5:33-35; Mt. 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-22; 1 Co. 10:24-26 and 11:31.

between pleasure and suffering— essentially advocates, with his living example and his words, the development of those feelings that can lead Man to happiness and to true enjoyment of life.

### *Education of the feelings*

In Amigonian pedagogy, the reflections of this chapter so far are perhaps best encapsulated in the concept referred to as *education of the heart*.

In response to those who —based on a fragmentary, superficial, disembodied and decontextualized observation of the traditional re-educational method of Amigonian pedagogy— have dismissed it as being excessively *behaviorist*, i.e. essentially aimed at *changing behavior*, it is important to note that Amigonian pedagogy, in its oldest and most genuine tradition, has always made the guiding principle of its activity the personal maturation of the student's feelings, or, to use an expression typical of the early days of the Amigonians, the *education of the heart*, and the *education of the feelings* of the student, *awakening* or *fostering* in him the *ability to feel* and thus the *ability to open up joyfully to life*:

“*In every human being,*” reflected one of the first Amigonian educators, “*there is a seed of feeling that we cultivate... To do this, it is necessary to have great patience and care in dealing with the children...*”<sup>60</sup>

“*When every method has been tried in an effort to lead a student onto the right path, and he persists in following the wrong path,*” Amigonian tradition recommended to its educators, underlining the power of human feeling, “*seek out an experienced monk, so that, contriving a ‘chance encounter’ with him, he may speak to his heart.*”<sup>61</sup>

“*When students realize that someone is making sacrifices for them and is truly concerned for their welfare,*” wrote another of the great Amigo-

60 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,042–5,043. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 5,048 and 5,052.

61 TERCIARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Manuales de 1933 y 1946*”, n. 228, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*. n. 0,311.

nian educators, “they will feel affection for him and he will therefore be able to work on their rehabilitation.”<sup>62</sup>

“It is important to appeal constantly to the noble and generous feelings of the student,” argues Father Valentín. “His personal conscience cannot be substituted with a purely external conscience.”<sup>63</sup> And he stresses that “we must be artists of that supreme artwork whose ultimate aim is to forge spirits, cultivating the aesthetic of feeling.”<sup>64</sup>

“Only by developing great virtues [or values, as we would say today] in our students,” asserted Father Valentín, “will we be able to successfully achieve the aim of education, which is, before all and above all, the training of the heart.”<sup>65</sup>

Educating the heart of the person is, in short, educating him *to be*, i.e. to become aware of his own personal identity, to freely assume his own right to self-determination and thus to *enjoy* life, with the true joy of happiness.

However, this *education to be*, to be able to *feel happy and at ease with oneself*, in all Western Humanist culture—which is either directly or indirectly rooted in two thousand years of Christian civilization—requires the growth of the individual in *values* and, particularly, in the value that gives value to, *appreciates*<sup>66</sup> and confers the true sign of authenticity upon all others, which is *love*.

These values—which thus constitute the hues or tones that help to identify *true love* and which are poetically expressed in the *Beatitudes*<sup>67</sup>—give growth in humanity a particular quality and make Man a being who is *detached and free* from the gratifications of having, *modest and obliging* in his relationships; *strong and steadfast* in life’s

62 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11,124.

63 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,124, 12,126, 12.127 and 12,128.

64 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,024.

65 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,088. Cf. also *ibid.*, 12,138.

66 The verb *to appreciate* is used here in its etymologically original sense of *putting a price on*, or *increasing the value or price*. This reminds us once again of Paul’s assertion “*if I am without love, I am nothing*” (Cf. 1Co. 13:2).

67 From this perspective, the *Beatitudes* constitute a kind of *rainbow of love* (Cf. Mt. 5:1-12).

These same *values*, however, are also outlined in other Biblical passages: 1Co. 13:4-7; Gal. 5:12-23; Col. 3:12-15; 1 Pe. 3:8-9.

challenges; *caring and committed* in the building of a better world; *sensitive and gentle*, loving everyone *as they are* and extending his care to those most in need; *affectionate* to all and at the same time *respectful* of their freedom and all their other rights; *serene and harmonious* in his personality and a *peacemaker* in his community; *consistent* in what he loves and believes in his heart and *resolute and courageous* enough to bear witness to it; and *happy*, profoundly happy, with that joy that comes from feeling at ease with himself.<sup>68</sup>

### *Education based on feeling*<sup>69</sup>

The original Amigonian educational tradition already clearly understood that the success of the education of the heart and the development of human feeling and love in the student depends on the degree to which the educator, as a true *artist and poet*, can appear to his students as an *expert on humanity*.

Students mature in dignity when they are treated with dignity; they acquire real decision-making ability and autonomy in their lives when they are educated in freedom and for freedom; they grow in love when they feel loved; they are compassionate to others when they feel that they are loved and appreciated as individuals, with all their strengths and weaknesses; in short, they react positively insofar as the educator is able to foster and awaken in them the sensitive fibers of their hearts.

One of the journalists who visited the Santa Rita Center (the first Amigonian educational center, located in Madrid, Spain) in its first years of operation, remarked, greatly impressed by his tour of the institution: “*you are true ‘cultivators of feeling.’*”<sup>70</sup> This definition was embraced by the Amigonian friars of the early twentieth century, who by that time were already fully convinced that to be *educators* they

68 As can easily be deduced, this last dimension related to happiness, although not referred to directly in any Beatitude in particular, underlies all of them and makes them all a veritable *Code of Happiness*.

69 This subsection contains a general overview of a theme that will be developed fully in Part III of this book, dedicated entirely to exploring the more specific hallmarks of the *Amigonian pedagogical approach*.

70 Cf. “*Los cultivadores del sentimiento*”, an article published in the *Heraldo de Madrid*, February 13, 1913 (in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,042).

needed to be, by their very actions, *prophets of human feeling*. The passages quoted below demonstrate this idea very well:

*“The main method, and I would daresay the only one,”* wrote one of the first Amigonian educators, *“is kindness in all its manifestations: benignity, patience... etc.”*<sup>71</sup>

*“True love is revealed in tireless devotion to the provision of aid and support,”* wrote another, *“in faithfully guiding and helping, in patiently waiting for the right moment; in showing understanding for those who err; in love that hopes all and forgives all and that remains faithful even to one who rejects [the help] and who already seems [to be a] lost [cause].”*<sup>72</sup>

*“You catch more flies with honey than with bile”* and *“you catch more flies with a drop of honey than with a barrel of vinegar”* were phrases oft-repeated by one tertiary, echoing a favorite saying of Father Amigó himself.<sup>73</sup>

*“If the student is treated with the true care that the mission of the order requires,”* reads one of the Constitutions of the Capuchin Tertiaries, *“his heart shall be opened to the teachings given to him.”*<sup>74</sup>

*“Of all the qualities of the good educator,”* insisted Father Valentín, *“the greatest is to love the students. Because if they are not loved, the purpose of education is undone... Anyone who does not feel love beating in his own heart, compassion for the poor fallen boys... has no vocation to dedicate his existence to the reformation of youths.”*<sup>75</sup>

*“Love shall always be an indispensable condition not only for educating and molding hearts,”* declares the Santa Rita Center’s report for the year 1927, *“but even for instructing and engraving in the intellects the fundamental obligations that make men useful to themselves and to others... For this reason –without neglecting the tea-*

71 ALACUÁS, Bernardino de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 3,074. Cf. also *ibid.*, 3,073.

72 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11,123.

73 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,048 and 5,052.

74 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 237 in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0,313.

75 TORRENTE, Valentín de, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, 12,031 and 12,464. Cf. also *ibid.*, 12,410.

*chings of science— we continue striving to ensure that all our works are inspired in love.*<sup>76</sup>

However, it is important to stress, if only as an epilogue to this exploration of *education based on feeling*, that for the Amigonian pedagogical tradition the *educators' living example of love*, to be truly effective, must be combined with an appropriate climate of *freedom* and *respect* for the person of the learner himself.

Leaving aside for the moment the value of *freedom*, which will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important to clarify that, for the Amigonian school, the *due respect for the person of the student* is a genuine *logical consequence*—or, to put it another way, *an ontological need*— arising from its *conception of Man and of his education*.

According to this conception, the person is realized—as noted previously—insofar as he grows in feeling. And one of the main feelings that needs to be fostered—in the interests of a fully rounded maturation process—is, as also has been noted above, the feeling of *self-esteem*, which has immediate and irrevocable connections with the learner's awareness of the dignity and rights he is entitled to for the simple fact of being a person.

Thus, in order to foster this awareness in the students, in order to foster in them the conviction that *being a person* is not an obligation to be imposed on them but a *right* they have which must be respected, Amigonian tradition stresses the need to educate them with this *respect*—interwoven into even the smallest details— as explained in the following passages:

*“To teach respect for the property of others,”* wrote Father Vicente Cabanes, *“we need to give them the example of respect for theirs. It is thus important for us not to ‘nationalize’ (if you’ll pardon the expression) the few belongings our students have, delivering them into the common pool. That would be neither fair nor pedagogically sound.”*<sup>77</sup>

Father Vicente further suggests that *“right from our first contact with the student, our interaction may be natural or artificial.*

76 IGLESIA, Pedro de la, “*Memoria de Santa Rita de 1927*”, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 10,015 – 10,016.

77 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,210.

*Could anything founded on an unjust act ever be natural? I have seen centers where methods are applied to the students that run counter to every pedagogical principle, such as 'obligatory head-shaving'. The arguments put forward for this measure were so unfounded that they could only be upheld by men of poor intellect, miniature dictators and, therefore, poor educators. Is not a person's 'toilette' one of the signs or expressions of his personality, and is not the personality one of the elements that we should bring out most in our students?"*<sup>78</sup>

*"All educators must always bear in mind that our students are worthy, on all levels, of our full respect,"* stressed another of the main Amigonian educators. *"And this respect must extend even to care for their belongings. Right from the first interview, warm and friendly, which the educator holds with the student, he should be left with all the things that he has brought with him, even if some may seem of little use. Sometimes what seems trivial to older people is not so to children.*

*"Educators therefore fail to show due respect to the child if on any trifling pretext they break objects belonging to him, perhaps even showing contempt for them, without considering in their ignorance that they are harming the personality of the child and, at the same time, discrediting themselves.*

*"And if respect should extend to his belongings, should it not all the more be shown for his person? If we want the student to respect himself, let us begin by respecting him."*<sup>79</sup>

78 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,208. Cf. also TORRENTE, Valentín, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,435.

79 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11,120.



## THE METHOD: STRENGTHENING THE WILL

Freedom is, without doubt, the great gift bequeathed to humanity, and no action could truly warrant the definition of *human* if it did not in some way arise from and also aim toward freedom.

There can only be real education when it occurs in a climate of freedom.

Among the various declarations in the Amigonian tradition on this question are the following statements by Vicente Cabanes:

*“Education is action, but that action must come from the person being educated himself. To act, the learner needs freedom; otherwise, he would be an automaton rather than an individual pursuing the task of his education by his own impulse and initiative. Education must be freely embraced for it to be sound.”*<sup>80</sup>

*“The educator must be the instructor of true freedom and not the gendarme of coercion who kills the spirit, or the personality of the learner.”*<sup>81</sup>

However, within the overall Christian anthropological conception adopted by the Amigonian tradition, Man, who was created *free* by God, positively exercises this *right to freedom* only if he knows how – without letting himself get carried away by immediate gratifications– to make *investments in true, stable happiness that will help him to enjoy his life*, only if he is able to educate his own human feeling through choices that enable harmonious growth in love and alterity.

Of course, this capacity for choice, this wisdom to invest and this self-education and growth, require a parallel maturation, self-education and growth of strength in the man himself. *Only through his*

80 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,923.

81 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,107. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 14,104 -14,105.

*own inner strength can Man become responsible for his own process, his own "personal legend", so that he may truly enjoy the privilege of self-determination.*

### *Life is not lite*

Although contemporary culture –driven by a kind of *ostrich complex*<sup>82</sup> and with pretensions that betray a certain hint of schizophrenia and that border on absolutism– goes to great lengths to highlight only the pleasant, soft and easy dimensions of life, there can be no doubt that –as much as we may wish to conceal it or silence it– life also has a less pleasant, soft and easy side.

One of the oldest anthropological conceptions of human history, that which is conveyed to us in the Bible, presents life as a dramatic reality. This drama of life –as discussed earlier from a different perspective– finds its roots in the very structure of the human being.

Man is, by virtue of his origins, a *project of love*. Only by learning to love, only by growing in feeling can the essence of Man come to be personalized and humanized. However, this project of love –which by its very structure entails an *adventure* into the world of others, a departure on a pilgrimage from *the land of the self*, from the *I*, to discover together with others a *new land* and to bring to life with them a new reality–finds its strongest and most serious opposition in Man himself, who, in his freedom, constantly feels the temptation to turn the *adventure* –dangerous, but exciting– of the *journey toward the other* and the *meeting halfway with his fellow man*, into a mere *circle trip around himself*. This is the temptation that every man experiences behind the search for the fullness of his own being, the longing for serene happiness. Biblical culture expresses this anthropological drama beautifully, dressed in the garments of faith, in the well-known story of *original sin*.<sup>83</sup> Man, in his *hunger for God*, in his desire to joyfully fulfill his own existence, finds himself at a dramatic crossroads where

82 There is a certain tendency these days to evade the negative side of reality with the unconscious pretension of believing that by burying our heads in the sand so that we don't see the danger, that danger will cease to exist.

83 Cf. Gn. 3:1-24.

he must choose between the *investment in the future* required for a *happiness* born of gradual daily growth in love, and the *immediate gratifications* promised to him –as *ripe, delicious fruit* at a *discount price*– by his own deification. Tempted by the immediate pleasure offered by egotism, Man finds it more appealing to be served than to serve, to be cheered than to cheer, to be praised than to praise, to receive than to give... and, although Man himself is aware that all these things will not ultimately satisfy him, it becomes increasingly difficult and painful for him to oppose their fatal, seductive appeal.

It is precisely for this reason that a pedagogy like the Amigonian, which aims at accompanying the person on his journey to *his truth and happiness* must always promote the *harmonious growth of the person's inner strength*.

In education it is important to be *realistic*. And given the very structure of Man, if we want to *grow in alterity*, we need at the same time *to grow in the strength needed to know how to say no to ourselves*, to what we *want, think, know and have*. The birth of a *we* is only possible insofar as the individualistic *I* is reduced.

And this whole *structural drama* underlying the human project and inhibiting Man's harmonious growth in happiness appears all the more intensely in the children, adolescents and youths with whom Amigonian pedagogy is primarily concerned.

These youths –as was hinted at in the previous chapter– exhibit, as one of their most common obstacles, a lack of sufficient autonomy to be able to choose between things that will *build them up* as people and things that will *destroy* them. They are for the most part children, adolescents and youths who operate on the level of sensations and fleeting pleasures, never thinking or even dreaming of making investments that could promise them a more stable and lasting happiness for tomorrow.

This obstacle –which in fact makes it impossible for them to choose freely between the *aesthetic of being in harmony with themselves* and the *maelstrom* that plunges their personal identity into a kind of increasingly accelerated and accelerating freefall– is, at the same time, one of the most difficult *obstacles* to overcome, because it is in essence the result of the emotional drama arising from disaffection that was discussed in the previous chapter. It is precisely this drama that has

often turned children, adolescents and youths in trouble with the law into people who do not believe in anything or anyone, or, to put it another way, people who believe –with a deep-rooted and unshakable faith– that they themselves are *nobodies*, who are permitted *gratification*, but not *happiness*; who are allowed to experience pleasant sensations, but forbidden from enjoying the true pleasure of a life in harmony with themselves.

### *Education of the will*

Thus, conscious of the fact that the lack of the autonomy needed to make truly free choices in their lives constitutes one of the most serious and common difficulties faced by youths in conflict, and that, on the other hand, this same lack of real decision-making ability reduces their chances of engaging with any guarantee of success in an educational process (to the point of eliminating those chances altogether in the most severe cases), Amigonian pedagogy has from its inception considered the development of the *capacity for autonomy* in these children to be one of its most basic and urgent educational objectives. This objective has traditionally been referred to as *education of the will*:

*“Education of the heart”* writes Father Valentín *“must culminate in the formation of the character that is the hallmark of the strength of the will consolidated in the human soul. To educate without laying these foundations would be to build on the sand.*

*“The good educator should never forget that the will is Man’s supreme guide... the executive power of the human soul... It is that which leads Man to victory or defeat.”*<sup>84</sup>

*“Hence the great importance of the preventive system that requires the strengthening of the child’s will, teaching him to ‘want’, with all his heart, to win ‘daily victories’ over his instincts... to toughen his skin in the sun of fulfillment of duty, of sacrifice... in a word, to*

84 TORRENTE, Valentín M<sup>a</sup> de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,138. Cf. also *ibid.*, 12,088.

*engrave upon him, with the chisel of habit, a strong and manly character.”*<sup>85</sup>

*“It is important to develop in the child a ‘spirit’ of struggle against all that is low and degrading, and at the same time to awaken in him that feeling of ‘pride and boldness’ that we call ‘valor’, a feeling that lies dormant in every young heart.”*<sup>86</sup>

### *Toward personal autonomy, free of deceptive illusions*

With the aim of promoting this *education of the will*, which, as suggested above, is simply a dimension of the same education of the heart (i.e. the same education of *human feeling*), the Amigonian system has made use of various strategies, one of which is the *voucher method*. This method –in addition to contributing positively to the growth of the student’s *self-esteem* and *satisfaction* with his efforts– had the primary purpose of enabling the student to *value* and *appreciate* things by discovering how much effort it takes to achieve something, however insignificant it may seem, and, based on this experience, also discovering how much personal strength is needed to break out of the shell of his own ego and grow *toward others*:

*“One of the factors that nullify the personality”* writes Father Vicente Cabanes *“is getting everything for nothing. Whatever costs nothing is not appreciated. Our students arrive with no appreciation of the value of things. When they were out there, if they saw something they wanted they would take it. They wanted for nothing because everything was in their reach. But inside the establishment, there is only one valid currency, which they use to buy whatever they need; clothes... shoes... soap, notebooks... everything, except for food. And so these youths who before, ignorant of the value of things, destroyed whatever came into their hands, now, understanding the hard work involved in earning the currency or ‘vouchers’, take perfect care of their belongings, because they paid for them.”*<sup>87</sup>

85 TORRENTE, Valentín M<sup>a</sup> de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,139.

86 TORRENTE, Valentín M<sup>a</sup> de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,141. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 12,401 and 12,448.

87 CABANES, Vicente. *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,928.

*And elsewhere the same Amigonian educator asserts that “to make our centers schools of truth, we need to ensure the students appreciate their work and learn to earn their daily bread with the sweat of their brows. The bread of the body, of the spirit, of work and of human dignity.*

*“Only that which requires effort is appreciated. ‘Here, everything requires effort’ should thus be one of the mottoes of our pedagogy. Here, everything is paid for. Nothing is given for nothing. Our students attend the workshops, where they are taught a trade. This work must be remunerated from the moment they arrive, with our internal currency or ‘voucher’ system. It should not matter that they are only in the apprentice stage. From the first day, even if they only sweep the floor, they must receive payment. This remuneration for work must be the only one they can use to buy what they need, and not remuneration for good conduct, which more often than not is ingratiating and self-interested.”<sup>88</sup>*

However, the best strategy articulated by Amigonian pedagogy since its origins to foster the growth of personal strength, to accompany its students in their *education of the will*, has been the same *slow and steady* approach that characterizes this educational method. This *slow and steady* approach is founded on one basic principle: *the greater the responsibility, the greater the freedom*.

*“Our self-education, a principle that informs our pedagogy,” explains Father Cabanes, “is based on administration in doses. Thus, it is in the realm of perseverance, or psychological imperative, where self-education has its greatest opportunity.”<sup>89</sup>*

*“Supervision filled with love is a genuine need” suggests Father Valentín, “especially in the years in which the boy... needs a teacher, a guide, a protector. The supervision, however, should not be the same for everyone... but should vary according to temperament, habits and particular conditions... It should be regulated according to the child’s conduct so that, if the child abuses his freedom, he is subject to disciplinary super-*

88 CABANES, Vicente. *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,526-14,527.

89 Cabanes, Vicente. *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,927. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 14,909 and 14,853-14,862.

*vision, but if he uses his freedom well, such supervision is reduced more and more until it is all but removed.*

*“The educator must know that as the child grows and acquires the use of his free will, it is necessary to appeal most often to his reason rather than to a system of discipline.*

*“It is also advisable to appeal... to the student’s noble and generous feelings... it goes without saying that the students themselves work hard to win the trust of their superiors and develop a sense of their own responsibility.*

*“If supervision... overstepped its proper limits, it would hinder the free development of the learner’s strengths and activities... and it would be disastrous for the education of his will and harmful to the formation of his character... the student’s personal conscience cannot be substituted with a purely external conscience.” And “excessively scrupulous supervision” can lead to such a regrettable result “that, in its need to see everything, it robs the student’s own conscience of its effectiveness.” In this case, such supervision would be a “harmful, destructive action.”<sup>90</sup>*

### *Education of inner strength today*

As noted earlier, one of the most notable characteristics of contemporary culture is its systematic avoidance of any reference to pain, sacrifice or abstinence, almost as if these were *taboo* subjects. For this reason, contemporary culture has been referred to as a kind of *culture lite*, a culture in which the easy, soft, pleasant and gratifying aspects of life are exalted. Yet in spite of the silence this culture has sought to impose, the structure of human existence has of course not changed, and the same everyday reality, the same social framework, the same life, demands effort and *investments in the future*, and only those who *work hard*; only those who have *strengthened their inner selves* and have been able to direct their *freedom* toward true personal happiness, only those skilled in some way in the art of self-domination and self-betterment, will be able to thrive. The *harshness* that this

90 Cf. TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,124, 12,126, 12,127 and 12,128.

discourse seeks to evade is present in our daily reality and the *challenges* that the advertising spots don't want to show us are posed to each one of us by life itself. And this may well be the cause of much of the disappointment and disillusion so common today among youths immersed in the world of drugs. They have been deluded by a world dominated by pleasant rose-colored tones, which they are then unable to find in a *multicolored reality* that includes other greyer and sadder hues. And thus they need to keep *dreaming* in a *fantasy world*, because they are not mature enough to accept the real world *with all of its honey and bile*.

## THE CREED: BLIND FAITH IN MAN

Every pedagogical activity of the Amigonian school has been guided, over the course of its now century-old trajectory, by a firm *belief* in the *natural goodness* of Man –of all men– and consequently by *hope*, even against all odds, for his *rehabilitation*.

This faith in Man and in his potential is without doubt one more legacy of the *Christian Humanism* in which –as has been noted repeatedly in previous chapters– Amigonian pedagogy finds its roots.

One of the principles of *Christian Humanism* is that every person –simply by virtue of being a person– is of inalienable value. This kind of *sanctity* is really what constitutes the axis of all Humanism and is the irrevocable foundation on which declarations of *human rights* are based. And it has been precisely the omission of this principle that has been the common denominator of every *repressive system* that has arisen over the course of human history. These systems, by claiming the relativity of the value of the human individual in favor of other absolutes, such as the *common good*, economic prosperity or even *blind service to a deity* stripped of any feeling for or connection with humanity, have ended up trampling or even annihilating Man. In some cases, these repressive systems have been based on *fundamentalist ideas* of a religious nature that have acted on the pretense of *defending God by killing man in his name*; in others, they have been racially or culturally discriminatory ideologies that have led to massacres; still others include a wide variety of dictatorships which –under the banner of economic or social reform, or based on the chimera of preventing a greater evil– have ignored all human rights to perpetrate all manner of brutality, and have even done so with complete *peace of mind*. But the common denominator of all these absolutist or dictatorial movements has been complete contempt for the principle that every person is of *inalienable value*.

The Amigonian tradition has expressed this fundamental principle over the course of its history in the interest it has always shown for each and every one of the children, adolescents and youths who have come to its centers, in the zeal with which it has defended every child, whatever his situation with the law, and in the fervor with which it has supported, in every national reality in which it has been present, a *law for children* that is based on education.

Intimately linked to this principle –associated, as noted above, with the personal dignity of every human being– is the belief in Christian Humanist thought and feeling that *every human being has an innate capacity to love and to do good*, as distorted as this capacity may appear in certain people and certain circumstances. In this sense, Christian Humanism –in spite of its recognition of a force that attracts Man toward weakness and its acknowledgement that this force dominates some men almost irremediably– has refused to accept the absolutism of theories that claim to find a blind and fatal disposition toward evil in certain genetic structures and consequently attempt to deny any possibility of experiencing positive and constructive feelings for certain groups of people. This *dogma*, based on the *natural goodness of all men*, is, moreover, an irrevocable dogma –in spite of the limitations and weaknesses that its detractors in the field of biological and physiological sciences may argue– for anyone who claims to truly be a *Humanist*, which aims to somehow counteract the temptation –neither new nor sporadic in history– felt by some to *demonize* certain groups of humans in order to exterminate them with impunity based on justifications put forward in the context of a witch hunt. It is logical in a way that society, in the face of certain concrete facts that could be classified as veritable *atrocities*, should experience a certain disgust and refuse to believe that behind the person responsible for them lies even the slightest trace of human feeling. But it is also important –and all the more essential in situations with a greater climate of violence– that the thinkers and, above all, the *educators* of that same society help their men and women, in response to the *logical* disgust over such events, to preserve sufficient clarity to keep them from falling into the error of absolute condemnation and to continue, in spite of it all, to cultivate *that spark of Humanism* that invites us to believe –or at least to *dream*– that even those same perpetrators of the *atrocities* are genetically

programmed for virtue, however much they themselves, due to diverse factors and circumstances, are unaware of the fact.

In keeping with its faith in the natural virtue of every man, Amigonian tradition has always conveyed the belief that there is no such thing as a *difficult* child, and certainly no such thing as a bad child. The passages that follow express this belief in various ways:

*“The students who enter our centers are not depraved or wicked... they are inexperienced youths, distracted or led astray from the fulfillment of their duty... who in the spring of their life, attracted by the brilliant glow of easy gratification, have fluttered like indiscreet butterflies around all manner of dangers, some going to the extreme of folding the beautiful wings of their noble aspirations and falling wildly into the turbulent waters of dissipation.”*<sup>91</sup>

Or, as the Amigonian Constitutions declared back in 1910: *“As it is evident that the students who enter our houses are not depraved, but rather inexperienced youths, distracted or led astray from the fulfillment of their duties, within our walls there is no need for the use of violent methods or harsh punishments.”* The same text also established that *“educators should seek to soften the application of the rules established whenever they can, using the preventive system and resorting to motivational rather than coercive methods.”*<sup>92</sup>

*“Very soon,”* the Constitutions assert, stressing once more the natural virtue of the youths, *“the students will once again manifest their good inclinations and the traces of their past ways will begin to disappear.”*<sup>93</sup>

### *What matters is the person, not his deeds*

One of the most important consequences for Amigonian pedagogy arising from all of the foregoing reflections has been the need to focus its attention on the person and not on his *deeds*:

91 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,171.

92 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 229 and 248.

93 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 238.

“*The repressive system looks at the offense,*” notes Father Valentín, “*but we look at the person who has committed it in order to rehabilitate him and lift him up. The offenses do not matter to us.*”<sup>94</sup>

When the prodigal son of the gospel parable<sup>95</sup> returned home, his father did not reproach him in any way or try to find out what he had done, but simply welcomed him with a big heart and open arms and gave him the honors befitting a beloved and even a favorite son. In response to the attitude of the *elder brother* (who embodies the criteria of a justice that judges according to deeds and ultimately reduces the person to his actions), the *father*, motivated by a love that is *always faithful* and *made to measure*, and capable of *loving most those who need it most*, explains that he is *simply* overjoyed because *his son, who was dead, has come back to life*. For the father, the only thing that interests him is *the person* of his son. His joy does not even arise from the fact that his son has come home or that he has got him back. The reason for his joy is the *son himself*, who before had wandered through life lost, and now is beginning once again to truly enjoy his life.

This story –which beyond any religious meaning constitutes a true and universal *pedagogical poem*– was what traditionally informed the Amigonian educational approach, giving it that quality of *being able to go beyond the deeds and focus the heart of the pedagogical action on the person*.

Based on this focus of the heart of all its educational activity on the person, Amigonian pedagogy has also developed a great capacity for *turning a blind eye* in order to embrace its students, as if they had done nothing wrong, and to look toward their future rather than their past. The past cannot be changed, but the future can always be begun anew.

All of this is why Amigonian pedagogy has been careful to silence the students’ background files, treating them with a careful confidentiality that has been extended even into the center and the educational environment.

However, the passage which in my opinion best expresses this idea of *forgiving and forgetting* the past is the following:

94 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,113.

95 Cf. Lk. 15:11-32.

*“It is not just the plants or the flowers, nor is it the pictures or the birds that make a family house a home... it is the affection, the joy, the open arms of a mother who conceals the failings of the child, who forgets his deeds, although she remembers them in the sanctuary of her heart to prevent their repetition; who wipes her child’s tears, the fruit of pain and of repentance, to join them with her own tears of love and forgiveness; who heals his wounds with the sweet balm of her lips... And this spirit exists between the Amigonian educators and their students.”<sup>96</sup>*

### *Hope against all odds for rehabilitation*

Another of the consequences that its belief in the natural virtue of Man has had on the *being and doing* of Amigonian pedagogy has been its *unconditional openness to hope*.

Since its beginnings, Amigonian pedagogy has taken great pains to cultivate this other dimension of its educational approach through two Biblical passages which, like so many others, encapsulate a great anthropological lesson.

These are the passage of the *dry bones* in Ezekiel<sup>97</sup> and the story of the *raising of the son of the widow of Nain*<sup>98</sup> told in the Gospel. In both, the moral is the same: *when it comes to a person’s rehabilitation, we must never “throw in the towel” and nobody should ever give up*. It is always possible, or at least, we must dream that it is, for the bones –however dry they may seem– to recover their *vitality* through the *spirit*, through the *warmth of love*. And it is always possible for a person –however dead he may seem, and however much the vast majority of society may insist that he is only fit for burial– *to come back to life*. Sometimes all that is needed is for someone with sufficient care and conviction in his heart and his words to tell him with renewed hope: *Young man, get up;*<sup>99</sup> *Lazarus, come out.*<sup>100</sup>

96 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,204 and 14,866.

97 Cf. Ez. 37:1-14.

98 Cf. Lk. 7.11-17.

99 Cf. Lk. 7:14.

100 Cf. Jn. 11:43. A reflection on this passage is offered in the poem proposed for reading at the end of this section.

Taking the affirmations of the *prodigal son* when he decides to go home –*Surgam* (I will get up) – and of Jesus when he speaks to the widow’s son of Nain– *Adolescens, surge* (Young man, get up)– as its own, the Amigonian tradition has always professed its unwavering faith –sometimes even against all possible odds– that every man –and, especially, every child, adolescent and youth– however *dead* he may seem, however severe his *deficiencies* may be, can *come back to life*.

And there can be no doubt that the *Young man, get up* addressed to every child, and particularly to the most troubled, with the profound conviction that change is always possible, constitutes the best pedagogical reinforcement so that the student, convinced of his own potential by virtue of such heartfelt affection, may be able to speak with his own lips and his own heart, with optimism and joy, his own *Surgam* in life, his own decision to *get up* and definitively change his direction.

At the same time, this belief in the rehabilitation of the person is what has given the Amigonian system its ability to *continue to dream* in the context of a daily reality that is far from easy, but which has in this way been crowned by a kind of *halo of magic*. And education must always have something of magic, since magic –and nothing else– is what love gives life through its unwavering and unconditional faithfulness. And this magical dimension, common to all human existence, is all the more necessary in systems which, like the Amigonian, are aimed at people who suffer from greater hardships than most people. It would seem that in these cases it is all the more essential to resort to the use of this *magic wand*, whose effects are only ever positive.

An educator who does not believe in the potential for change in his difficult students is limited, in the best of cases, to treating them with understanding, but will not be able to fully pursue his educational mission, which requires him to faithfully accompany his students on their *journey into the future*. Only with invincible hope can the educator contribute positively and effectively to the rehabilitation of the students who exhibit the greatest difficulties. Something of this

approach is conveyed to us by one of the great Amigonian educators in the following passage:

*“A few words, in passing, about the incorrigible. Do you know who the incorrigible are? This is what some call those students who, because of their obstinate determination to persist in doing wrong, give no hope of correction. But tell me honestly: when can it be said that a student is truly ‘incorrigible’?”*

*“Only when all divine and human resources have been exhausted; when all resources ‘of science and of grace’ have been exhausted, would it be possible to speak so. But who would be so bold as to dare to claim that he has used every recourse offered by science? Who would dare to put limits on the unfathomable depths of grace? ... Therefore, let us not judge our students rashly, because.... God can raise children of Abraham from stones.*

*“Moreover, rash classification is not a habit of good educators, but of inexperienced beginners who, often without sufficient evidence, jump to conclusions that offend the good will that we should have for our students.*

*“In twenty years as an educator, I have never dared to call a student ‘incorrigible’. We must love our students greatly, and an educator who brands them with such labels reveals clearly that he loves them very little.”<sup>101</sup>*

101 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,009.



## THE ENVIRONMENT: FAMILIAL

In the interests of a harmonious and fully rounded maturation of the person in humanity and in love, the Amigonian pedagogical tradition –faithful, once again, to its Christian roots in terms of both culture and faith– has since its beginnings stressed the importance of creating a truly *familial environment* in *educational groups*:

*“The first natural and necessary environment for education is the family,”* said Father Valentín in 1934. *“Indeed, the most effective and lasting education is often that which is received in the family... And what do we do in the reformatories but act as substitutes for their families...? The law of children... seeks a center in which to place the children ‘as in a family’. Therefore, we come to... take on the roles of parents to our students. So much so, that larger groupings of students into sections have been happily done away with and replaced by groups of fifteen or twenty...”*<sup>102</sup>

Father Valentín also wrote: *“The family is the most effective natural environment for education because, as Manuel Siurot says: ‘education is born and established in the home and the mother is the eternal educator of the soul as mother and as wife.’*

*“It is thus of utmost importance that when a child comes to our centers he should find in us that warm welcome, that affection, that ‘accueil’ as the Belgians call it, that allows him to open up the doors of his heart and give himself up to his educators...”*

*“The child perhaps never felt any demonstration of affection in his life, perhaps he never experienced the sweetness of a smile, perhaps he never knew a full stomach until that blessed day when the agent of*

*authority, the Good Shepherd, brought this little wayward sheep to us for curing and healing.*

*“No serious faces, no grim frowns, no surly and intractable temperaments.”*<sup>103</sup>

In his book *Observación Psicológica y Reeducción de Menores*, Father Vicente explains that: “*the system and framework for our sections, or educational groups, gives the impression of a private life, of a family life.*

*“For us, the family system is essential...”*

*“Family life is necessary in any of our reformatories... If the educators in our centers need to take on the role and duties of parents to their students, this will be hard to do unless the organization is based on a familial structure. The students of a reformatory have no home or cannot live in their home; hence the need to fill this gap by creating the sensation of a true family home. No huge houses with voluminous sections under military discipline.”*<sup>104</sup>

The creation of this familial environment, however, although it has even been favored by a pleasant physical layout, *lush with greenery and full of life*<sup>105</sup>, has been, above all and traditionally, the result of the *educational approach* that Amigonian educators have made their own and have exemplified in their actions.<sup>106</sup>

### *Group education*

The social group, whether taking the form of a family unit or a larger structure, apart from constituting an essential environment for harmonious human growth, also becomes a kind of *corporate educator*.

It is obvious that in the normal, complex social context, the role of educating the youngest members of society, while held primarily by

103 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,064.

104 Cf. CABANES, Vicente. *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,865.

105 Cf. CABANES, Vicente. *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, esp. n. 14,204 –14,207 and 14,866.

106 This educational approach, which was discussed in part in Chapter 1 of this Part II, will be explored in more detail, examining its main dimensions, in Part III of this book, which is dedicated to it entirely.

the parents, is exercised and shared by other institutions, such as the school, the neighborhood and the circle of friends.

Moreover, in recent times, as a result of a certain cultural tendency toward increasing relativization of the primordial role of the parents and the family in education, the importance of *peer groups* has developed to such an extent that in certain contexts<sup>107</sup> it is easily observable that the real educators of youths are actually their own friends.

The Amigonian pedagogical tradition –without, of course, falling into the extremism of the aforementioned cultural trend, and without undermining the role of the educator by delegating upon the group the educational duties for which he is personally responsible – has always recognized the important role of group learning for the growth and maturation of each of its members.

Mainly through sport and other recreational and cultural community activities, Amigonian pedagogy has throughout its history promoted collaboration between all members of the same educational group in order to mutually develop values, to file down selfish and surly bumps in each other's character, and to educate one another collectively to live in society, recognizing, in so doing, a whole series of rights and obligations.

In this respect, it has been instructive to see how students have assimilated many of the great *life lessons* more naturally and effectively when they arose spontaneously within their group of friends than when they had been *dictated* to them by the *educator*.

And all this experience of Amigonian activity –which has helped turn the group itself into an educational agent– can constitute a good contribution to the world of pedagogy, at a time in its history when many of its schools (particularly those schools dedicated to the rehabilitation of drug-dependent youths) are stressing the value of *group therapies*, often giving them preference over other more *individual therapies*, which sometimes favor more the development of an *ego* than of a *we*.<sup>108</sup>

107 In speaking of contexts here I do not necessarily mean to refer to problematic or unstructured contexts. The phenomenon described here even occurs these days, as the saying goes, *in the best of families*.

108 Individual therapies, applied indiscriminately and without an open anthropological vision aimed at the growth of the person as a *being in relation*, instead of fostering the expansion of the person toward others, have fed a whole range of *egotistical tendencies* that have a progressively *stunting* effect on the person.

## *Educating the child and his environment*

As noted previously, one of the earliest educational mottoes of Amigonian pedagogy was the motto *educating for life*.<sup>109</sup>

However, this education for life, while being extremely important and sometimes essential, cannot be limited (as it traditionally was in general until the second half of last century) to training the student for the workforce and inculcating him with a few socially acceptable behaviors.

Education for life cannot be fully and wholly achieved without an active contribution from the different social institutions with which the student is associated. And it has perhaps been the lack of this general collaboration that has represented one of the most obvious historical limitations of Amigonian pedagogy, which has often been so careful to safeguard the independence of the educational activities undertaken in the boarding houses and the privacy of the centers, possibly giving the impression that Amigonian education was conducted in seclusion from society.

Over time, Amigonian pedagogy began to acquire the social dimension that all education needs in order to be truly holistic, developing this dimension in specific types of activity in open contexts and in work in the streets and local neighborhoods, leading to the coining in the centers of the expression *re-educate by re-socializing*.<sup>110</sup> However, it was mainly through the therapeutic work undertaken by Amigonian pedagogy in the world of drug dependency that the need was clearly identified to give the social dimension its full importance, and actively incorporate the family and the social environment that surrounds it (insofar as possible) into the rehabilitation programs for children admitted to the centers due to trouble with the law.

And I believe the importance of this opening up of Amigonian pedagogy to the social environment of the children assisted in the

109 Cf. TORRENTE, Valentín María de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,143; 12,401 and 12,448. Cf. also Terciarios Capuchinos, *Manual de Usos y Costumbres de 1933 y 1946*, n. 214 and *Espiritualidad Amigoniana* (Manual de Espiritualidad), n. 167.

110 This activity first began within the broader scope of Amigonian pedagogy with the work undertaken by the Congregation in the poor neighborhood of Auf den Hügel in Bonn, which at that time was the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany.

centers can also be supported with the passages from the Gospel that formed the core inspiration for the birth and subsequent development of the *Amigonian pedagogical approach*.

The passages to which I refer are three parables used by Luke to elaborate a single *thematic unit*.<sup>111</sup>

All three parables end the same way, with a festive, joyful celebration.

Neither the shepherd nor the woman, and certainly not the father, resist the natural tendency experienced by every man to share, with his friends, neighbors and those of his house, his joy over the recovery of the lost treasure. Among the celebrations held by these three characters,<sup>112</sup> however, the third stands out for its expressiveness and liveliness of feeling, in which a great feast is held to celebrate the fact that the young son “*was dead and has come back to life*.”<sup>113</sup>

It is also not hard to see in this third story that the feast organized by the father with those of his house is not only an occasion to share with his neighbors the joy that he feels over the son he has recovered, but also constitutes a kind of *new presentation* of his son *to society*. A new social introduction in which the father wishes mainly to ensure that his son feels welcomed and loved, not only by him (who, as his father, has remained faithful to him and has given him *love made to measure*), but also *by those of his house*, the members of his society. At the same time, this new presentation –as is made evident in the parable itself in the attitude of the elder brother<sup>114</sup>– generally requires educational therapy to prepare the different members of the environment of the person in conflict –particularly parents and siblings– so that they know how to properly welcome the person who is returning and can offer him a renewed environment.

111 Cf. Lk. 15:1-32, where we find the parables of the lost sheep, the lost drachma and the merciful father.

112 Cf. Lk. 15:6. 9. 23-32.

113 Cf. Lk. 15:24, 32.

114 In this respect, the dialogue between the father and the elder son at the very doors of the banquet can be instructive. The father's words are at all times aimed at getting his son to change not only his ideas but his feelings, so that he is able to welcome back his little brother with an open heart. (Cf. Lk. 15:28-32).



PART III

THE AMIGONIAN  
PEDAGOGICAL  
APPROACH

**Chapter I:**  
A Contract of Sympathy

**Chapter II:**  
Attention to Individuality

**Capítulo III.**  
Unwavering Faithfulness

**Capítulo IV.**  
Credibility and Teaching by Example

As has been shown in the previous sections, Amigonian pedagogy, in its project to contribute to rebuilding the person through the development of his capacities for human feeling and free decision-making, has always sought keenly to stir the spirits of its students, in spite of the traumas they have suffered, and to this end has fostered a humane and Humanist attitude in its educators that would truly make them *experts in humanity* and *prophets of human feeling*.

And this educational *attitude*—a unique and extraordinary contribution of Amigonian pedagogy to the world of children in situations of risk or conflict—has made it possible not only to transform the day-to-day activity of the pedagogy into an *art*, but also in a way to give the educators themselves the dimension of *poets* of action, a poet being simply any person who has the power to turn water into wine, to turn what the intellectual calls *ideas* and what the legalist likes to refer to as *the law* or *the rules* into *feeling*.

This third part of the book is thus completely dedicated to exploring this *attitude* that typifies the Amigonian approach, and the values that have characterized it most clearly and purely.

## A CONTRACT OF SYMPATHY

As noted previously, the education of the feelings, the education of the heart –the main objective of Amigonian education– can only be achieved by example.

Only a person who has felt loved can develop his sensibility and capacity for love. Behind every personal drama there is always a profound emotional lack.

And in the progressive emergence from this emotional drama lies the true secret of a genuine personal rehabilitation. As the person begins to feel loved, wanted and valued, his innate capacity for feeling begins to develop and, together with the first and most radical of the feelings –which is none other than love, appreciation and affection– he also begins to experience the feeling of his own personal dignity, the feeling of *self-esteem*, which is essential in order to awaken in him that indispensable capacity for inner strength needed for him to freely choose investments that will foster the development of his identity in happiness and harmony.

In view of this objective, the Amigonian tradition has thus developed *empathy* as a fundamental and essential *quality* of its educational attitude. This aspect will be referred to in this chapter as a *contract of sympathy*, an expression coined by one of the first Amigonian educators.<sup>115</sup>

Empathy (the ability to be in tune with the other, to take, with sacral respect, their most intimate feelings into one's own heart), in addition to contributing to the creation of the familial atmosphere that has traditionally reigned in Amigonian educational groups, has been chiefly distinguished in the Amigonian school by a *life-and*

115 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,330.

*heart-closeness* of the educators with their students, which –as will be discussed in more detail in the different sections of this chapter– has infused Amigonian activity with *constant presence, coexistence, sensitivity and availability, attention, simplicity and joy.*

### *A warm welcome*

A warm welcome for the new arrival is often the first and biggest educational support that the learner can be offered. Sometimes simply giving a friendly welcome to someone who feels troubled or defenseless, or simply listening, in silence but with feeling, to someone who needs to talk about his situation can be so encouraging for the person that it may give him the determination to tackle his troubles with a different attitude, and even to overcome them. In the world of children, adolescents and youths with problems, welcoming them warmly has a very positive impact on their subsequent educational process – a point repeatedly asserted in the Amigonian pedagogical tradition. It is thus important that the welcome should constitute a genuine *first sign of affection* and a *first contact with friendly communication, empathy and kindness*, between educator and learner:

*“From the moment the student arrives,”* asserted Father Domingo de Alboraya as early as 1906, *“he must be given all the attention he needs, without ever being frugal with their affection.”*<sup>116</sup>

*“The first obligation of every educator,”* stressed Father Jorge, *“whoever the student may be, is to welcome him with affection...”*

*“The welcome should be all the warmer for those who have been mistreated or have never enjoyed true and pure happiness.*

*“Any educator who, irrespective of whether he knows the child’s story, receives him with disdain, without words of affection and encouragement... may have closed the doors of the student’s heart.*

116 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,248. Cf. also: Terciarios Capuchinos, *“Constituciones de 1910”*, n. 253, 237 and 244, and *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 212.

*“As promptly as possible, then, the student must be allowed to shower, and if he has not eaten, a plate, a clean table and comforting food should be prepared for him at once.”*<sup>117</sup>

*“It is of the utmost importance for him to receive such an attentive welcome,”* writes Father Valentín de Torrente, referring to the moment of arrival of a new student, *“such affection as to make him open the doors of his heart... Therefore, welcome the student with demonstrations of great friendliness toward him. Nothing of his should be looked on indifferently by the educator; on the contrary, show yourself to be solicitous and attentive to his needs... show him ‘a true love for his reform’, for his well-being.”*<sup>118</sup>

*“If on stepping for the first time through the threshold of our establishment,”* stresses Father Vicente Cabanes, *“the boy is confronted with a mirthless man, with stiffness and stone coldness, and the first words he hears in our house are words of reproach and irony, demands and inquisitions into the wrongs he has committed, that poor boy might very well turn back to his own home. The center would no longer be an educational center for him, but a penitentiary.”*<sup>119</sup>

*“Once again,”* he adds, *“let us remember that it is not the plants or the flowers alone, or the pictures on the wall... that make our centers homes... what make our centers homes... is, above all, the spirit of mutual understanding that exists between educators and students.”*<sup>120</sup>

### *Knowing through the way of the heart*

Since Father Luis Amigó’s recommendation back in 1892 that his followers should *“learn through experience the science of the human heart,”*<sup>121</sup> the Amigonians, while still being pioneers in Spain in the

117 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11,152.

118 Cf. TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,064 and 12,420 – 12,421. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 14,204 and 14,866.

119 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,733. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 14,734 – 14,743.

120 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,866. Cf. also *ibid.*, 14,204.

121 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. OC, 2047.

application of psycho-pedagogical sciences aimed at understanding the child, have always taken the position that the best way to truly come to know the student is *the way of the heart*; that is, to engage in a friendly, empathetic relationship with him that will begin to encourage him to get to know himself through the dynamic of daily life itself.

There can be no doubt that the meditation on the parable of the Good Shepherd bequeathed to them by Father Amigó as a paradigm contributed not only to the full development of this conviction, but also to its pedagogical implementation. Beyond its spiritual significance, the parable of the Good Shepherd –as noted previously with respect to the parable of the prodigal son– constituted for the Amigonian tradition a veritable *pedagogical poem*. It is a poem in which, among other aspects that will be explored below, this aspect of *knowledge through the way of the heart* appears clearly. In the parable, the Good Shepherd *calls his sheep by name and knows them*.<sup>122</sup>

*Calling by name and knowing* are two realities that in Semitic culture are vested with *sanctity*, in the sense that they go beyond the realm of the conceptual and into the sphere of human feelings that have always had an element of the *sacred*, even from a merely anthropocentric perspective.

In Semitic culture, the name is a reflection of the personality, of the identity or *selfhood* of each being. Thus when a person experiences any kind of transformation of identity, that transformation is expressed in a consequent change of name.<sup>123</sup> From this perspective, *to call by name* means *to know* the person. Only insofar as the person called is known does the name cease to be *a mere word* and serve to evoke his personality. The dynamic of *calling by name* thus intersects with the dynamic of *knowing the person*. This knowing is intertwined more with *life* than with *concepts*, more with *feeling* than with *ideas*. It is a knowing that comes through the *way of the heart*. Only by loving can the person be known, because only in love can we share life, can we share *being*.<sup>124</sup>

122 Cf. Jn. 10:3 and 14.

123 Cf. for example, the cases of *Abraham* (Gn. 17:5) and *Jacob* (Gn. 32:28 and 35:10).

124 The question of *knowing* in Semitic thought, and in Eastern thought in general, is much

In this way, *knowing through the way of the heart* also alludes to the very core of *empathy*, as it implies a sharing of feelings, a connection between people at the deepest level of their *being*. And since its beginnings this has been the way that the Amigonian school has approached the extremely important question of *how to get to know its students*. The first Amigonians already realized that the educator has come a long way if he *scrutinizes the movements of the human heart*<sup>125</sup> and they consequently sought a way of *speaking to the hearts* of their students.<sup>126</sup> The main methods traditionally employed by Amigonian educators to get to know their students has been –as can be seen in the passages quoted below– sharing their joys and sorrows with them and creating through those experiences an atmosphere of empathy and open personal interaction:

“*The best method to help students in their rehabilitation*” suggested Father Bernardino “*is to ‘counsel them, suffer with them, stand by them and cry with them and laugh with their joys.’*”<sup>127</sup>

“*The friars respond to the students affectionately and unreservedly,*” noted Father Domingo de Alboraya in 1906, “*and establish with them that mutual relationship of esteem and affection that makes the requirements of the rules softer and more tolerable.*”<sup>128</sup>

“*In our centers,*” remarked Father Vicente Cabanes, “*there is a spirit of mutual understanding between educators and students, whereby the former live, eat, play and interact with the latter, forming a family in which the elder brother is the educator.*”<sup>129</sup>

more deeply explored than in Western culture. It transcends the sphere of the conceptual to enter the realm of feeling. It does not lie in the brain, but in the heart, or *leb*, as the Hebrews called it. It is, above all, *an act of love*. It is for this reason that the verb *to know* sometimes has connotations of *sexual relations* in these cultures; however, in such cases, rather than vesting knowledge with a quality of sexuality, it is sexuality which, vested with feeling, becomes *poetry*.

125 Cf. ALACUÁS, Bernardino de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 3,014.

126 Cf. TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 228 and *Espiritualidad Amigoniana*, n. 195. Cf. also Os. 2:16.

127 ALACUÁS, Bernardino de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 3,008.

128 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,251. Cf. also *ibid*, n. 6,034; 5,058; 5,061; 11,126.

129 CABANES, Vicente. *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,866.

## *Education through closeness*

The feeling of *empathy* has chiefly been nourished and expressed through an attitude of *closeness*. Such *closeness* requires a large dose of generosity on the part of the educator, compelling him to get directly involved in the educational activity and revealing itself especially in his *constant presence* and *affectionate, uncomplicated and simple coexistence* with the students.

*Generosity* is the first requirement that all teachers wishing to engage in *education through closeness* with their learners need to possess.

Anyone who lives for himself or relies on *having* is always stingy when it comes to sharing. On the other hand, the measurement of true generosity lies not in *how much* is given but in *how* it is given. It is not a question of giving more or less, but of *giving oneself*, sharing one's life with the other, in order to help him, in this way, to find meaning in his own. In a world in which we often try to make others happy with the most varied and costly gifts, it is worth stressing all the more that the most precious gift that one can give another is the gift of oneself, through one's *company, listening and words*. And this need for interpersonal giving –always important in education– is all the more essential when it involves supporting the maturation process of people who, due to severe deficiencies, particularly at the emotional level, have an even more urgent need to be *enriched* by the feeling of someone who is prepared to *lay down his life* for them.<sup>130</sup>

And along with generosity, the educator also needs a great capacity for *engagement* in order to get involved in the lives of his students and in their activities. It was precisely this capacity that was among the abilities stressed most by Father Luis Amigó himself, who always considered the ability to *identify oneself with others* to be a characteristic quality of love:

*“It is characteristic of love to attempt to identify itself completely with the loved one, by uplifting him to its own condition if necessary, or the lover descending from his own... the heart [seeks to live] uni-*

130 Among the many texts in the Amigonian tradition that make reference to the *generosity* that educators need, readers may consult those already cited in the section *Education based on feeling* in Chapter 1 of Part II, or those cited in Chapter III of this Part III.

*ted and identified with its beloved to the degree that it makes their pleasures its own, their joys, pains... and all that affects them.*"<sup>131</sup>

Faithful to the teachings of their founder, the Amigonians knew from their beginnings how to make this *capacity for engagement with and commitment* to the lives of their learners one of the most distinctive features of their work, thereby generating a *pedagogy of presence and coexistence*.

Of the passages that speak specifically of this *presence and coexistence*, the following are worthy of particular attention:

*"The educating friars eat with their students from the same pot,"* noted Father Domingo in 1906, *"they work with them and they play with them, taking part in the same games."*<sup>132</sup>

*"While all the friars of the house owe a duty to the students,"* stated the Manual of 1933, *"this is especially true of the first educators; to this end, part of the time that they are not with the students should be spent preparing the life of the section... finding out about the students, talking with them..."*<sup>133</sup>

*"What is the motto of our system?"* asked Father Valentín de Torrente. His answer: *"Love that watches over."* And he adds: *"watching over is like a protection... better still, like the heartbeat of a mother ever attentive to her children."*<sup>134</sup>

131 AMIGÓ, L. OC, 343 and 525. Cf. also *ibid*, 783.

132 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,251. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 6,034 and 5,058; 5,061, 11,126 and 14,866.

133 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 247.

134 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,154 and 12,123 – 12,421.



ATTENTION TO  
INDIVIDUALITY

Without doubt, attention to individuality constitutes another of the most characteristic qualities of the Amigonian educational approach.

This quality takes its first inspiration in the gospel value of *compassion*; that is, in that characteristic value of love which –as has been noted elsewhere in this book– is interwoven with unwavering *faithfulness* to and complete *understanding* of the specific individual, and that encourages greater love –and preferential treatment– for those with greater and more pressing needs or problems.

In contrast with the unifying principle of justice, which deems everyone equal in the eyes of the law (as utopian as this claim has proven historically in practice), compassion favors the application of personal parameters. Compassion thus goes beyond cold justice, as it is not aimed so much at safeguarding the law as rehabilitating the specific person, considered in terms of his individual circumstances. Compassion does not dismiss the law, but relativizes it and gives it back that halo of humane sensitivity that originally inspired it.

Moreover, the personalizing principle of love and justice, the always necessary individualizing principle of education, naturally takes on special importance when it involves supporting the adventure toward human maturity of people who suffer severe personality disorders and who show obvious signs of related behavioral disorders. The therapeutic techniques of pedagogical science need to be coordinated and applied with that human sensitivity that is capable of perceiving the most pressing needs or problems of the individual, and is also able to respond to them in the form and manner in which that person *hopes* they will be responded to:

“Observation and experience have suggested and continue to suggest to educators every day... not only a general system for the successful operation and harmony of the School,” wrote Father Domingo in 1906, “but also, and especially, the specific, individual system in accordance with the strengths, aptitudes, intelligence... and particular way of being of each student, so as not to demand more from him than he can give, but certainly all that he should.”<sup>135</sup>

“Exercise [therapy] should be in proportion with the capacity of the learner,” suggested Father Valentín. “The good educator knows how to distinguish between one student and another and not to demand the same perfection from all, but to be satisfied with the level of each one.”<sup>136</sup>

“The reason for our success is that we individualize treatment as much as possible,” asserted another Amigonian educator. “We pursue a pedagogy ‘made to measure’.”<sup>137</sup>

“Since pedagogical work is more effective the more it is customized to the individual at whom it is directed,” declares the 1933 Manual of Uses and Customs, “educators must try to individualize their treatment [of students].”<sup>138</sup>

In the individualization of its therapeutic treatment, the Amigonian tradition has generally viewed its pedagogical activity as a *bilateral contract*<sup>139</sup> based on the premise that educator and learner should work together simultaneously to find the best or most appropriate approach in each specific case.

Over the course of the now century-long history of Amigonian pedagogy, the individualizing principle of education that has characterized it, the *personalized language* directed, by its very nature, *at the heart of the person*, has been expressed sometimes through small details, other times through welcoming silences, still others through the ability *to turn a blind eye*, so necessary in life, and always, through that *understanding* that allows for a *relativization of the rules*.

135 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,176 – 6,177.

136 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,056.

137 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,139.

138 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manual de 1933 y 1946*, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0,246. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 10,016.

139 Cf. DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,144.

The rules are of course important in their quality as a positive element in the guidance of an educational group. But educators should never forget their *relative* and *relativizable* nature. To make rules absolute means to kill pedagogy as *art*, since all art leans toward individuality, toward the creation of the *unique masterpiece*:

*“As long as the rules are the common law, applied equitably, and go no further than this,” explains one of the most important Amigonian educators, “they have a healthy effect... but if they overstep the limits of the necessary... or descend into tiny details... or are enforced harshly, then they become a smothering instrument that snuffs out all individual initiative. The spirit of the students then becomes inhibited; their activities constrained and dead; their character spiritless, and their freedom completely stifled... Such students are not educated for life, but for servitude. Excessive regulation is always an abuse, ‘an intoxication with rules’.*

*“And bordering on excessive regulation is the militarism that is the spirit of regulation maintained through army-style discipline.*

*“The military system is highly inappropriate for the development of the character of the students. As the character is the quality of the soul and the stamp of the individual’s personality, it needs to be developed ‘from the inside out’; that is, by gradually unfurling the inner strengths of the student. All external imposition upon the student works in the opposite direction, and thus constrains the free flight of his soul and suffocates the full development of his actions...*

*“Our discipline needs to be turned into a form of ‘truly paternal attention’ that acts as needed according to the different circumstances of the person...”<sup>140</sup>*

### *Loving the other as he is*

One of the first and major consequences of the *educational principle of personalization* is that students are loved with a *faithfulness* so unwavering that they come to feel loved and *appreciated just as they are at each moment of their personal history*.

140 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,119 – 12,121.

In the world of the feelings, the only truly fair principle is to love the person in all his specific individuality. A person is either loved as he is or never really loved at all. If you love a person only as long as he acts the way you want him to be, in reality you are merely loving yourself in the other. And anyone who tries to love everyone *equally and in the same way* ends up loving nobody.

Without doubt, *love for the other made-to-measure* constitutes the expression of love that is the purest and the least contaminated by egotism. It means to love the other from the *nakedness of the I* and with a *divestment of the you*, so that the love for the other is truly *inspired by him and directed at him*; to put it another way, it means to love the other not from one's own *I*, but from the *you*, valuing him as a person and not as a mere object.

The *objectification* of people under the guise of love is one of the most common and most hazardous temptations that can arise in the world of education. Parents and educators tend to reflect and sometimes idealize in their students what they themselves would have liked to have been, or what they themselves consider to be *the best* for the other.

Such *objectification*, which resembles a desire to clone one's own *being* or one's own *dreams* in others, and which can have dire consequences for the educational process, is the result of a certain emotional immaturity in the personality of the parents or educators who perpetrate it.

Emotion, the language of the heart, without doubt contains the greatest communicative potential that Man possesses. But it also runs the risk of being turned into a blind force which, if driven by egotism instead of by love (the latter being understood as *a meeting halfway with the other in freedom*), will cut all channels of interpersonal communication.

Thus, although its original aim is to foster this *noble encounter with the other* that can enrich Man's being, emotion can be turned into a means of *possessing the other*. If a person is dominated by his own *I*, he will refuse to come out to meet the other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and freedom, but will seek instead to possess someone who, rather than being respected as a person, is gradually turned into *his object*. And this possessive appropriation of the other,

far from enriching the person, ultimately annihilates him, and far from making him happy, inspires a feeling of ever increasing and unquenched anxiety.

In a certain sense, the attempt to possess the other is depicted in the myth of Prometheus. The more a man struggles and strives to possess the other, the more distorted his view of the other becomes and the more unattainable the other seems. And when at last he believes he possesses the other, he realizes that what he has in his hands is not the person he had desired, but the *object* that he has made of that person.

By his very nature, a person cannot be possessed, nor can his freedom be robbed from him or repressed. Anyone who attempts to do so destroys his own identification with the other as a fellow human and will ultimately destroy himself as a person.

The ability to *love students as they are* thus also acts as a kind of thermometer of the emotional maturity of the educator himself.

An educator who is unable to educate *from the "you"* of the student fails to educate him in a true climate of freedom and to grant him the autonomy he needs to be the protagonist of his own process.

In this sense, *loving the student "as he is"*, is the starting point for a genuine educational process.

However, loving the student *as he is* does not mean that the educator needs to take a passive attitude in relation to the maturation process of that student. On the contrary, the educator, precisely on the basis of this expression of care and appreciation *made to measure*, must help the student understand that it is because he accepts and loves him *as he is* that he cannot remain idle and acquiescent in his educational process. Moreover, drawing also on the growing feeling of *self-esteem* being awakened in the student himself as he feels appreciated in his individuality, the educator needs to spur him on to constant self-betterment, recognizing that, in the unrepeatable adventure of his own human maturation, nobody can do for him what it is up to him to do for himself.

## *Preference for those most in need*

Along with this principle of *loving the other as he is, the educational principle of personalization*, which in the Amigonian school –as noted previously– is rooted in the Christian value of *compassion*, also entails *loving most those who need it most*.

The very same testamentary words of Father Amigó to his followers – “go in search of the lost sheep until it is returned to the fold of the Good Shepherd”<sup>141</sup> – contain, beyond all religious allegory, a genuine invitation to adopt this preferential concern for the marginalized, which has been a constant in Amigonian pedagogical history.

Spurred on by these words of their founder, Amigonian educators have unfailingly acted as *tireless searchers for those most in need of finding themselves and being found*, and have turned the *predilection* for the neediest –as reflected in the passages quoted below– into one of the most characteristic features of their educational approach:

*“This student has made me practice humility more than any other,”* confessed one of the first and truest of the Amigonian educators, revealing his capacity to love most those who need it most. *“I gave him the blue credit<sup>142</sup> and passed him in his studies (even though he didn’t deserve it), something I’ve never done before. Because he is more ‘difficult’, I must love him more; this is what charity teaches; but I confess that it was the product of a huge moral effort on my part.”*<sup>143</sup>

On this same point, another Amigonian educator urges: *“Let us apply the rules with more charity and benevolence to the fallen, the less likeable and the most unfortunate...”*<sup>144</sup>

141 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1831.

142 *blue credit* (*azul* in Spanish): in the Amigonian system, a distinction given to students for good behavior.

143 ALQUERÍA, Lorenzo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 8,043. In relation to this preferential concern for the most difficult students, see also, *ibid.* n. 0,311, which cites the traditional precept of Amigonian pedagogy that for all the most rebellious cases an educator needs to find a way to contrive a *chance encounter* with the student in order to *speak to him from the heart*.

144 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,044.

## UNWAVERING FAITHFULNESS

The *ability to love the other*, and to love him *as he is* and establish bonds of *empathy* with him through daily interaction, the ability to stay by the student's side "*like the heartbeat of a mother ever attentive to her child*,"<sup>145</sup> the ability to bring the two elements of the Amigonian educational approach discussed above to life in oneself, is directly related to the *inner strength* needed to remain unwaveringly *faithful* to students and to the educational mission itself, without shirking or abandoning the task in moments of hardship, which are generally frequent and acute in the world of children, adolescents and youths with problems.

Father Luis Amigó, who had a profound understanding of the human heart and its most intimate depths, thus urged his followers to be "*always concerned with serving their fellow man... not sparing any means to this end, even to the point of sacrificing their own life if necessary*."<sup>146</sup>

One of the central themes of the parable of the Good Shepherd—a parable which, as mentioned above, possesses for the Amigonian tradition, beyond all religious significance, the clear quality of a *pedagogical poem*—is none other than *life* itself.<sup>147</sup> This theme is particularly notable in the expressions: *I lay down my life, I lay it down of my own free will* and *I have come so that they may have life*. In all these phrases, the underlying message is the same: *dying to bear fruit*,<sup>148</sup> *laying down one's life to create life*.

145 Cf. TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,123 and 12,154.

146 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2359. Cf. also *ibid*, 251.

147 Cf. Jn. 10:9; 10; 11; 15; 17; 18.

148 It would be interesting to explore the principles that inform *Christian metaphysical anthropology* to gain a deeper understanding of the phrase "*I lay down my life in order to take it up again*" (Jn. 10:17) in light of the verse: "*unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain*." (Jn. 12:24).

The same Amigonian tradition –aware that love is unrealistic unless it is grounded in a *strong personality*, and further aware that only through strength of spirit is it possible to make life in oneself and bear witness with *unwavering faithfulness* to an *educational project* founded on the warmth and intimacy of human feeling– has underscored the need to value *inner strength* in passages as expressive as the ones cited below:

*“It is sufficient exercise [of inner strength] for an Amigonian to faithfully adapt his person in body and soul to the spirit of sacrifice demanded and constituted by his arduous mission,”* proclaims the Manual of the Congregation of 1911.<sup>149</sup>

*“Take care to educate them in the spirit of sacrifice (inner strength) demanded by the educational mission itself,”* the same Manual urges its trainers of the future Amigonians, *“so that by learning self-control, they will never deny anything that mission asks of them...”*<sup>150</sup>

*“Dedicated by vocation and inspired by the faith and enthusiasm they feel, and nourished by the consoling mission to which they have been called,”* wrote Father Domingo de Alboraya of the Amigonian educators back in 1906, *“they shall spare no means or sacrifice to achieve the goal they pursue.”*<sup>151</sup>

*“The first Amigonian educators led joyful lives,”* attested another friar, stressing once again the importance of inner strength, *“sacrificing sleep, leisure and comforts, caring for the children and youths entrusted to them like young shepherds, with eagerness and self-denial.”*<sup>152</sup>

*“The spirit of sacrifice is a consequence of love,”* taught Father Valentín, underlining the intimate connection between the value of inner strength and the feeling of love and affection. *“When there is love, the obstacles and difficulties that hinder the achievement of the desired goal are naturally overcome.”*

149 Cf. TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manual de 1911*, n. 74 in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0,110. Cf. also Alacuás, Bernardino de *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 3,028.

150 Cf. TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Constituciones de 1911*, n. 221.

151 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,166.

152 Cf. SEDAVÍ, José de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 2,042.

“What inspires the thousand and one sacrifices that parents make for their children? Is it not the love they profess for them as the fruit of their loins? How shall we know, then, whether an educator loves and cares about his students? By the sacrifices he makes for them. And how quickly they will know—even the smallest of them—whether their educator is idle or self-sacrificing!”<sup>153</sup>

### *Inner strength in the face of hardship*

As noted above, the most direct and general consequence of the value of inner strength is unwavering *faithfulness* in the face of hardship.

Father Luis Amigó often told his followers:

“Do not flee from the work that you do for God.”<sup>154</sup>

And in the same context of his spiritual, human and pedagogical testament, thinking of children and youths with problems, he also urged them:

“Do not fear perishing on the steep cliffs and precipices you will have to place yourselves on to save the lost sheep; nor be intimidated by the thorny thickets and ambushes.”<sup>155</sup>

Fleeing is the solution of the weak, their pseudo-victory. Fleeing is educational neither for the student nor for the educator himself, because, by its very nature, it is frustrating.

The educator is called upon to be a *frontiersman*; that is, to be a person who, without madly seeking out difficulties or obstacles, is able to assume and confront those he meets each day with freedom, valor and joy, in the process—always positive but not always easy—of accompanying others on their journey of personal maturation.

But this attitude of *frontiersman* is the inheritance of one who has sufficient *inner strength* to keep from turning back, to keep from seeking refuge in the *rearguard* of education:

153 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,464. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 12,114 and 12,410.

154 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1827.

155 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1831.

“There are reports of deprivations, troubles, disappointments and obstacles I will have to face,” declared one novice Amigonian educator, boasting of the bravery needed to keep from giving up on education with children, adolescents and youths in conflict, “but on this mission... nothing is written of cowards.”<sup>156</sup>

### *Total dedication without timetables*

Total dedication –or, as it was commonly called, *dedication without timetables*– to the students has traditionally been another of the clearest consequences of the value of inner strength that has distinguished the Amigonian, and has also constituted one of the most obvious examples of the unwavering *faithfulness* that has characterized the Amigonian educational approach.

Affectionate *presence* in the life of the other is always the sign of a certain predilection in love. But when that presence continues in moments of hardship, it clearly acquires a tone of *unconditional love*.

Standing by the other when things are not going well, when troubles pile up, when everyone else tends to desert him, or standing by him beyond *the legal requirement*, beyond *the mandatory established minimum*, is very telling proof that the person is loved for who he really is.

“Educators need to possess a spirit of sacrifice to bear their students happily, or at least patiently,” stresses the Manual of 1933, reflecting the strong, faithful and generous spirit that should distinguish Amigonians, “even on those days when they are most troublesome; not to watch the clock or to display weariness with the students; to make their lives in the establishment as pleasant and tolerable as possible, taking into account that they came to our houses to be educated rather than to suffer a penalty or punishment, and that the deprivation of freedom and the change in their lives is punishment enough. None of them should have being with the students as a punishment.”<sup>157</sup>

156 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 8,261.

157 TERCEROS CAPUCHINOS, “Manuales de 1933 y 1946.” n. 212, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0,106 and 0,170. Cf. also, “Constituciones de 1910”, 257 ff.

*“An educator who goes to his time with the students in a grudging and grumbling way will only be present with them in body for his appointed time,”* writes Father Valentín, underlining the idea of the previous quote from a different perspective, *“at the end of which he will not be able to stay a minute longer without protesting and visibly betraying his displeasure. Such educators, if they even be worthy of the name, are detested by the children and incapable of the educational task. A good educator can never utter remarks like: ‘I’m sick of kids’... ‘kids, who needs them?’... Such remarks all too clearly reveal a person who will never achieve anything positive with his students.”*<sup>158</sup>

And historically, Amigonian educators have given life to this ideal –interwoven with presence, generosity and sharing– by being with their students beyond the limitations of timetables, by participating in their educational activities and by empathizing with them, thereby making Amigonian pedagogy (as noted previously<sup>159</sup>) a *pedagogy of presence, closeness and coexistence* with the students.

Of course, this ideal requires a rereading in today’s culture to harmonize it with the reality of a professionalized society. Without doubt, social justice has made some great steps forward during the twentieth century, and its advances -which constitute one of the great merits of contemporary civilization- have contributed new and positive values to the labor world that cannot be ignored or *swept aside*. The ideal of *total dedication* should thus not be viewed as a nostalgic longing for work patterns with interminable work hours that are no longer acceptable, or a rejection of the laudable achievements made by unions. This would be neither logical nor just. It is simply a question of bringing together the appropriate technical training and the necessary disposition, generosity and strength of spirit that will enable the educator not only to *be with* his learners, but to *be among them*, and to *be* a person who accompanies them, encourages them and corrects them, listens and talks to them; a person who shares in their feelings and their activities and, above all, a person who loves them and inspires their love.

158 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,543 D - 12,543 E

159 Cf. above, Chapter I of this part III, section: *Education through closeness*.

However professionalized it may become, education must always be more than a job. Because its task is not the construction of *objects*, but the accompaniment of *individuals*, nobody can ever establish a code of ethics for the profession that goes beyond a basic minimum. Its ideal –entering as it does into the realm of human feeling and, therefore, of *art*– will always require a good deal of room for the educator, above and beyond all labor legislation, in which he can give free rein to his *dreams* and express himself as a true *poet of educational action*.

## CREDIBILITY AND TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

To truly *accompany* students on their project of *human growth through feeling*, the educator (as mentioned in various other sections of this book<sup>160</sup>) should serve as an *example* of that feeling.

The student needs not only to *be loved*, but also, and especially, to *feel loved*. There is a story that a teacher, in his effort to straighten out one of his students, monitored him so closely that every day he would end up catching him doing something wrong, and consequently would administer the corresponding punishment. One day this *distinguished* student, tired of so much *preferential treatment*, dared to ask his teacher why he punished him every single day. The teacher, in a solemn tone, replied: “*Remember, my son, the one who truly loves you will make you cry.*” But the boy, with less solemnity but absolute frankness, answered him back: “*Well then, sir, please don’t love me so much.*”

In education, love, to be effective, needs to be *credible*. Today’s world –it is often said– is tired of *teachers*, and needs *examples*. Today more than ever, students feel the need to see the message proclaimed to them reflected –embodied– in people who can be *role models* for them.

This need to teach by example is all the more pressing in a pedagogical system like the Amigonian, which aims fundamentally at fostering the development in the person of human feeling and of the values that most befit him.

However, in the realm of human feeling and its values, a teacher can only be a *credible role model* if he is notable –among other values– for his *honesty* and his *consistency*.

160 Cf. Especially, Part II, Chapter I, section: *Education based on feeling*, Chapters I, II and III of this Part III also make reference to this concept from a different perspective.

Both these values are actually connected to the same vital core, but while the first value points more directly to the realm of being, the second is more directly associated with the realm of *action*.

*Honesty*—like integrity—requires a unity and harmony of being in the person, and by its very nature stands in contrast to any kind of vital schizophrenia or existential dualism. *Consistency*, on the other hand, requires a correspondence between what the person *is* and what he *does*, and stands in contrast to any kind of hypocritical, false or pharisaical behavior. These two qualities, when appearing together, turn the teacher into an *example*, and thus transform him into a valid agent to accompany a process of growth and maturation in love and in feeling.

The Amigonian school, based on the teaching of Father Amigó himself—concentrated in a way in the passages quoted below—gave special attention to the value of *consistency in being and in doing* and established it as one of the distinctive features of the attitude that should characterize Amigonian educators:

*“In addition to instruction and correction,”* Father Luis Amigó wrote to his followers, “[educators] *have to try to serve as examples for the education [of their students], so that they do not destroy with one hand what they are building with the other... lead by example, for this is the best preacher and its power of persuasion is irresistible...*”

*“Consider the nobility of your mission and the good or bad effect your behavior can have on the youths entrusted to you for their correction. Do not have any doubt that the good example is what has the most influence on the human heart and is the most effective exhortation for the practice of good...*”

*“Bear in mind that no one gives what they do not have, and if you are to teach others the knowledge of virtue, it is necessary that you practice it yourselves, because in this way, without a great amount of work, they will follow your teachings because example is the best preacher.”*<sup>161</sup>

161 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1087. 1805 and 1816. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 1076 and 1146.

## *Teaching by example brought to life in sharing*

One of the classic expressions of *teaching by example* in the Amigonian tradition has been that of *sharing* with students in the educational dynamic.

*Presence and coexistence* –aspects so typical of the Amigonian educational approach, as noted previously<sup>162</sup>– thus took on the quality of *commitment* when applied in action. It was not only about *being together* with the students in harmony of heart, or *coexisting* with them, making their joys and sorrows their own, but that the educator would also personally adhere to the normal daily rhythm of the educational group or, depending on the case, to the rhythm of a specific student. The educator would thus become –beyond the words he spoke or the care he expressed, and even beyond the consistency of his personal life– a credible *example* in the course of the educational activity.

This dimension of commitment –one of the various original elements of Amigonian praxis– found one of its first sources of inspiration in the educational attitude of the Good Shepherd, who, instead of hanging back in the rearguard of the action, *goes ahead of his sheep*, effectively clearing a *path* for them *on his way*:

*“The great factor behind the brilliant results of this school is the living and personal example [of the educators],”* wrote Father Domingo de Alboraya in 1906. *“Here the student is not required to carry out some task or some work on his own; he is never told ‘do this’, but rather ‘let’s do this’... the educator eats with the student... rests in the same lounge room, takes part in his games and works with him, always carrying the heavier burden. This says it all: speech wins, but example wins over.”*<sup>163</sup>

*“Every five or six students have an educator responsible for their care,”* explained Father Javier de Valencia in 1913; *“and the educator never says: ‘get mopping!’ or ‘get sweeping!’, but smiling he exc-*

162 Cf. in this Part III, Chapter I, especially the section: *Education through closeness*, and Chapter II, section: *Total dedication without timetables*

163 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,033-6,034. Cf. also *ibid.*, 6,251.

*laims: 'let's mop', or 'let's sweep'... and the educator is the first one who begins mopping, cleaning and sweeping.*"<sup>164</sup>

"Lead the way by example," the same Father Javier urged a group of young educators some years later. "Thus, when giving instructions never use phrases like: 'Go study', or 'get to work'... but rather, use more charitable and convincing phrases: 'let's go', 'let's study', 'let's get to work'."<sup>165</sup>

### *Uncomplicated, simple and joyful leading by example*

Simplicity, joy and the absence of complications in interaction and sharing is without doubt one of the great contributions made to the Amigonian approach by the spiritual and pedagogical school founded by Francis of Assisi.

One of the distinctive features of the Franciscan school is precisely the emphasis it places on an *attitude of service*. For Francis, the *proof of love* is more valid and credible when it is given with the attitude of one who knows how to be with others not as a *teacher* or master, but as a *servant* and *one of the crowd*.

The desire to *share* with the students without giving up the halo of the chief and leader or without giving up a status of privilege and class-based distance is simply unrealistic. An educator, however involved he may be in the activities of the educational group, is perceived as *distant* by his students unless he is also able to *become one of them*; unless he is able to *understand* their language and *make himself understood* by them; unless he is capable of covering the distances – including cultural distances– that separate him from them and building *bridges* where they can meet.

Anyone who is unable to get close to others, who is unable to lower the *dais of the self*, does not truly love; at most, he will be limited to loving himself in the other, or to seeking to offer his love *as charity* to the other.

The classic Amigonian educator has been so immersed in the kids' world that he has managed even to keep his appearance and his very

164 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,058.

165 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,061.

style of walking and dressing from creating distances between him and his students:

*“We live together so familiarly with the learners”* wrote Father Javier de Valencia in the early twentieth century, *“that not only do we know them well, but we blend in with them.”*<sup>166</sup>

*“With understanding and selflessness, the educators lower themselves to the needs and even the simple desires of the students,”* suggested Father Bienvenido de Dos Hermanas, *“so that, by winning them over, they may raise them to the fulfillment of their duties, for which they set themselves up as models.”*<sup>167</sup>

*“Because of the gentle and gradual nature of the method,”* wrote Father Domingo in 1906, *highlighting the tranquil and joyful atmosphere that reigned in the center, “there is no tension in the relations between educators and students, but rather, they enjoy that tranquility and happiness that are so beneficial to the pursuit of a proper education.”*<sup>168</sup>

*“To make progress in the correction of the students,”* argued Father Jorge de Paiporta, *“joyfulness of character in the educator will be of use, as it is an excellent means of communication between educators and learners.”*<sup>169</sup>

### *An example that creates a family*

And as a conclusion to this exploration of what the value of *teaching by example* as an uncomplicated, attentive and joyful sharing between educators and learners has represented for the shaping of *Amigonian identity in action*, it is important to note that it has been precisely this value that has had a decisive influence on the creation of the familial environment which, as discussed above,<sup>170</sup> distinguishes Amigonian education.

166 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,053.

167 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,139. Cf. also *ibid.*, 10,016.

168 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,254. Cf. also, on the pleasant and joyful atmosphere, TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 212 and 239.

169 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11,126.

170 Cf. above, Chapter IV of Part II.

Indeed, this familial atmosphere of education is to a large extent –as I suggested in *Testigos del Amor de Cristo*<sup>171</sup>– the result of the fact that Amigonian educators traditionally:

- *lived lives completely dedicated to their students*, without checking the clock or making demands for rights, honors, privileges or breaks;

- *shared life, ideals, joys and sorrows with their students*, eating with them, working with them and playing with them;

- *educated more with commitment in action than in word*, becoming involved in educational activities and therapies;

- *welcomed their students like true parents*, giving them all the attention they needed from the moment of their arrival, without ever being frugal with their affection; and

- *fostered a real atmosphere of brotherhood and friendliness in the educational groups*, by themselves being *examples and promoters of that simple joy* that should always reign in education.

Finally, I cite once again a passage written by Father Vicente Cabanes which, although I have quoted it before in other contexts, perfectly sums up the discussion of this last section:

*“Let us remember that it is not the plants or the flowers alone, or the pictures... that make a house a home... it is the affection, the joy, the open arms of a mother who hides the failings of the child... who forgets and remembers... that ‘spirit of mutual understanding’ is what makes a house a home. And this spirit exists between educators and students in our centers. They live, eat and play together; they interact and form a family in which the educator is the elder brother.”*<sup>172</sup>

171 Cf. VIVES, Juan Antonio, *Testigos del Amor de Cristo*, pp. 388-389.

172 CABANES, Vicente, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 14,866. Cf. also *ibid.*, 14,204.

PART IV

SPIRITUALITY AND  
PEDAGOGY

**Chapter I:**

The Amigonian Charisma – A New Attitude  
of Being and Doing

**Chapter II:**

Following the Good Shepherd

**Chapter III:**

Mother of Sorrow, Mother of Love

**Chapter IV:**

In the Style of a Servant

Amigonian pedagogy is Christian not only in terms of culture (as has been highlighted throughout this book), but also in terms of *faith*.

Consequently, anyone interested in entering fully into the Amigonian way of *being and doing* could not possibly refuse to explore, in some way, the *religious feeling* that inspired its deepest and most vital roots.

Logically, this does not mean that the person necessarily has to identify with this religious feeling in faith terms. The Gospel is *good news* not only for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but also, in a certain sense, for those who recognize Jesus as *a great teacher of humanity*.

All religions, in their way, aim to illuminate the *truth* of Man, and all of them may offer light even to those who do not share in their specific beliefs.

## THE AMIGONIAN CHARISMA: A NEW ATTITUDE OF BEING AND DOING

The Greek word *charisma* can be quite accurately translated as *talent* or *gift*.

From a Christian view of life, charismas are *gifts* that God bestows upon a specific person or institution for that individual or group to invest in the common good. The gifts of God are always *gifts to be shared with others*, as in giving them it is not His intention to boost the *ego* of the recipient (which would be diametrically opposed to His original plan to make the person a *being for love*), but precisely to foster the *development in alterity* of the person himself or of a particular community.

In the case of individuals, *charismas* –gifts of God– are innate positive qualities or skills which, if developed properly, give the person the characteristic tone of his personality.

In the case of communities, the definition is very similar. *Charisma* refers to the *characteristic attitude or specific mode of being and doing* that distinguishes each community and gives it the hallmark of its own identity.

The central aim of this chapter is to explore the *specifically Amigonian attitude or charisma*.

### *United growth in love*

In Christian tradition, all charismas, or *specific attitudes of being and doing*, have one common denominator: *love*. On the scale of values posited by Christ in the *Beatitudes*, *love* is the only value that cannot be relativized and which nevertheless relativizes all others. All other values only take on life and color through love and all are *valid and appreciable* to the extent that they reflect and transmit love. The verse

“though I should give up my body to be burned, if I am without love, I am nothing”<sup>173</sup> captures this whole idea perfectly.

A community’s specific attitude of being and doing will consequently be distinguished by its grounding in the *growth of the person through love*; a growth in which *spirituality* and *humanity* are perceived and experienced as perspectives of a single living reality.

However, one of the most common and harmful dramas of religions lies in the attempt to *spiritualize spirituality*.

The best definition of *spirituality* is, to my understanding, that which can be drawn from its very etymology. By this definition, spirituality means *living in accordance with the spirit*. And the nature of this *living by the spirit* is explained very clearly by Paul of Tarsus, who had, among other gifts, the rare talent for expressing profound ideas with simple clarity. To explore this concept of *living by the spirit*, to clearly express the very essence of the spiritual life, Paul used the paradoxical *body/spirit* binomial,<sup>174</sup> or the equivalent concept of *Old Man/New Man*.<sup>175</sup> Following his reasoning, it could be said that the *Old* or *Bodily Man* is he who has chosen to base his project of personal realization on the deceptive and frustrating path of egotism in any of its multiple manifestations,<sup>176</sup> while the *New* or *Spiritual Man* is one who, even with all his hardships or weaknesses, continues to grow and mature fully in the light of Christ,<sup>177</sup> by the Spirit of God, by the *spirit of love*:

“*The whole of the law*” explains Paul in his epistle to the Galatians “*is summarized in the one commandment: You must love your neighbor as yourself...*”

“*I tell you, be guided by the Spirit, and you will no longer yield to self-indulgence. The desires of self-indulgence are always in opposition to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are in opposition to self-indulgence: they are opposites, one against the other; that is how*”

173 Cf. 1Co. 13:3.

174 Cf. Rom. 8: 10; Gal. 5:13-25. Cf. also 1Co. 3:1-3 and 2Co. 10:3.

175 Cf. Rom. 6: 6; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3, 9b-10 Cf. also Rom. 13:12-14; 2Co. 4:16b; 2Co. 5:17; Eph. 3:16-19.

176 Cf. Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:19-21.

177 Cf. Eph. 4:13-16. 24; Col. 3:11; 2Co. 4:10-11.

*you are prevented from doing the things that you want to. But when you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have told you in the past, that people who behave in these ways will not inherit the kingdom of God. On the other hand the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control; no law can touch such things as these... Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behavior be guided by the Spirit.”<sup>178</sup>*

From this Pauline perspective, *spirituality* can be defined as *living by the Spirit* or, to put it another way, as *maturing in love* in accordance with the message of the *Good News*. And from this point of view, it also becomes clear that *growing in spirituality* and *growing in humanity* are not separate aspects superimposed on one another, or even complementary dimensions, but inter-equivalent perspectives of a single lived reality. On the spiritual path, to try to separate the growth of Man toward God from the growth of Man toward himself and others is an error as serious as trying to disassociate the mystery of Creation from the mystery of Redemption. If a person *on the path toward God* does not *grow in humanity through love*, it is because instead of worshiping *God-Love in spirit and truth*, he is worshiping himself. *Growth in humanity* thus becomes the most palpable proof, the most reliable thermometer, of *growth in spirituality* itself.

Something of this is what the Apostle John expresses in this thought-provoking and revealing passage:

*“Let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love... No one has ever seen God, but as*

178 Cf. Gal. 5:14-25. Other passages of Paul related to the *growth of the person in love* can be found in Part I of this book, Chapter II, section: *Accompanying the person toward the human ideal*, which quotes Eph. 4:1-5, 2 ; Phil. 2:2-5; Col. 3:12-15.

*long as we love one another God remains in us and his love comes to its perfection in us... God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.*"<sup>179</sup>

However, in spite of the absolute clarity of the message in the Christian sources themselves, dualisms, self-contained compartments, sectorial subdivisions of the personality and vital and existential schizophrenias have always constituted the great danger to every spiritual life on the path to maturity. Unless the growth is a whole growth through love, all manner of monsters of spiritualism begin to emerge. And the real problem is that the line dividing *spirituality* and *spiritualism*, while so substantial, is at the same time so subtle that it sometimes proves difficult to distinguish when one is on the right path or has gone astray. The same acts that identify a *spiritual giant* may equally conceal a *spiritual dwarf*. A person's growth is not determined by his so-called *good deeds* but by the spirit that inspires them. If his actions are the fruit of the *spirit of love* that can totally renew a person internally, they are expressions of a true (although always improvable) spiritual life; if, on the other hand, his actions are the result of the *self-indulgence of egotism*, they may conceal all kinds of deceitful egomanias. This is the real moral of the following story:<sup>180</sup>

They say that one day, a Chinese woman advanced in years received a divine revelation, in which God –her God, a God with yellow skin and almond-shaped eyes– asked her to do something for Him.

The poor woman, after recovering from her initial shock (as unexpected visits are always a little startling, especially when they are from God), began to reflect on the best possible way to respond to her dear God's wish. And after much reflection she made the decision to *sponsor* another person so that he might be able to dedicate himself with absolute freedom to prayer and contemplation, thereby making company for the God who seemed to long for it so much.

179 1Jn. 4:7-8; 12; 16b.

180 This story –like many others from Eastern wisdom traditions– was made popular in the West by the work of the Indian Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello. The basic elements of the story are outlined here in this free retelling.

She built a little house at the back of her small property, furnished it with the bare essentials, and when she determined that everything was ready she went out into the streets of Peking in search of a young candidate for the office of *monk*. She came upon a youth with a clueless expression and rather sleepy eyes, and she proposed to him a simple contract: *she would let him live in the house she had just built, would clean his clothes weekly and provide his daily meals; he, in return, would need only to dedicate himself to being with her God and praying.*

The young man accepted the generous offer happily, and without wasting a moment began to make the contract a reality.

Days went by peacefully, and then months and years, until one day—around the time of the *silver anniversary* of this most unusual contract—doubts began to sow worry in the heart of the poor woman. She fretted that the monk was not fulfilling his part of the bargain, but could think of no way to verify her fears. Finally, after much reflection, she came up with a clever plan: she would put the monk in the way of a great temptation.

To this end, she wandered once again through the streets of Peking, although this time she sought not a youth with a monastic vocation, but a young girl with a bright expression.

She found one easily. The girl was adorable. The woman took her home and, although the girl needed little instruction, she explained to her what she had to do:

*“What I want you to do” she said, “is to go to that cabin there and tempt a monk whom I have had living there for some twenty-five years. You only need to be suggestive and offer to do whatever he desires.”*

The girl went resolutely over to the cabin, while the old woman watched from the window of her house. But, lo and behold! As soon as she reached the monk’s house, before she even had time to make the slightest insinuation, the monk, armed with a broom, began to chase her and threaten her.

On seeing the uproar the old woman came out to meet them and, taking a position between the victim and her attacker, said to the first:

*“Go and wait for me in the house.”*

Immediately thereafter, without giving him time to recover from the shock, she said to the monk:

*“You, pack up your things and go. Our contract is over.”*

*“Why?”* asked the girl, who had watched everything from the house. *“Why did you send the monk away, if he not only did not fall into temptation but did not even give me the chance to tempt him?”*

*“To fend off temptation,”* answered the old woman, *“he did not need to respond to you with violence.”*

And she added with great sadness:

*“So many years in prayer! And he did not grow in humanity.”*

### *Particular features of the Amigonian charisma*

Given that Christian *spirituality* by its very nature always involves *growth in love*, it would be timely here to clarify what specific contribution is made to such growth by the qualifying term *Amigonian*.

While it is true that according to Christian faith and thought every man is called to mature in love, it is also true that *not all are called in the same way*. And this point, which refers to individuals, also has a corresponding application in the case of *institutions*. All religious charismas –the different modes of being and doing in the Church– aim to foster *human growth through love* in their members, but not all live and act out this growth in the same manner. Each order and each congregation vests the shared goal of maturing in love with a specific tone that will give its stamp of authenticity to its own *identity* and *style of action*, or which, to put it another way, will give its own identifying character to its *attitude in being and doing*:

*“Charity is the complement to the law,”* wrote Father Luis in the first Amigonian Constitutions, *“and the soul of the remaining virtues, without which perfection is impossible... For this reason, then, the various Religious Institutions which make the Church of God*

*more beautiful... are especially dedicated to the practice of this virtue, although not all of them in the same way*"<sup>181</sup>

"Each congregation has its characteristic spirit," he writes elsewhere, "in accordance to the noble mission the Lord entrusts to them."<sup>182</sup>

So then, what is the characteristic feature of Amigonian growth in love? What is it that gives the Amigonian approach to whole maturation its characteristic stamp? What is it that gives the Amigonian way of being and acting a unique quality within the harmonious body of the Church? What is it, in short, that distinguishes the Amigonian charisma, that is, that gives the Amigonians their hallmark, their identity as young shepherds of "*the fold of the Good Shepherd*", as Father Luis Amigó himself called them?<sup>183</sup>

Obviously, defining life in all its complexity and richness is an impossible task. The concepts can be defined, but the lived experiences can often only be described. The world of concepts can be understood from outside, but the world of experiences can be grasped only insofar as they are shared and internalized. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulty, it is possible to offer some kind of answer to the questions posed above, if only approximately. And this answer, even if it fails to clarify the matter completely, may at least help the reader to grasp it intuitively.

It could be said, in an effort to sum up a rich world of feelings, that the most characteristic aspect of Amigonian maturation in love *is the particular emphasis that Amigonian tradition has placed on the development of the compassionate dimension of love.*

This focus on the compassionate dimension within human growth in love and for love has favored the emphasis of aspects of Amigonian identity which, while rooted in *being*, have an impact on the realm of *doing*. These aspects, which specifically involve the *sensitivity to interact and empathize* with the students; the *sensitivity to consider each student's*

181 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2359.

182 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1920.

183 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1831.

*individuality*, to love each one *as he is* and to give more love to those who need it more; the *sensitivity to stay strong and faithful* in the midst of difficulties; and the *sensitivity needed to act consistently*, have already been explored extensively in Part III of this book, under the general heading of the *Amigonian pedagogical approach*. They are cited here again simply to further underscore the symbiosis established between *Amigonian spirituality* and *pedagogy*; between its *identity* and its *praxis*; between its *way of being* and its *style of acting*.

The aspects that distinguish the Amigonian pedagogical approach, that give it its truly Humanist dimension –or, in other words, the purest and most characteristic values of the Amigonian approach– were born and cultivated in a *spiritual* context, which, as such, far from dehumanizing the identity of the first Amigonians, humanized that identity deeply.

### *Spirituality: source of pedagogical wisdom*

From the above it is clear that the Amigonian tradition has not only established a creative *dialogue* between faith and reason, between beliefs and lived reality, but has also produced a genuine *coexistence* and *symbiosis* –as noted previously– between the two perspectives on the same reality. The Amigonian experience of faith, being profoundly Christian, was profoundly human and not only contributed effectively and decisively to the whole growth of the sensitivity of the Amigonian educators, but also informed the whole Amigonian *system* and even its pedagogical *method*.

Some of the contributions made by faith to Amigonian pedagogy have been explored over the course of this book. Notable among these is its perspective on Man (or the *metaphysical anthropology* of the system);<sup>184</sup> its conception of education;<sup>185</sup> its positive view of the

184 Cf. Part I, Chapter II; Part II, Chapter I.

185 Cf. Part I, Chapter II, section: *Accompanying the person toward the human ideal*, and Part II, Chapter I.

person<sup>186</sup> and the same positive view of the effort and strength of spirit involved in any process of self-education.<sup>187</sup>

However, as fundamental and significant as these contributions are, the influence of faith on Amigonian practice since its origins was much broader, and some of its other contributions –such as the *holistic and inclusive view* of education, and the *individualized and progressive view* of the educational process– are worth highlighting in this context.

Within the Amigonian tradition, *the holistic and inclusive view* of education is based on its vision of Man from a Christian anthropological perspective.

In this vision, the theological, psychological and social dimensions of the person are not self-contained compartments, but *communicating vessels* that interfere with each other constantly and complement one another harmoniously. From this it can be concluded, for example, that the theological dimension of the person is not only engaged when the person is spoken to explicitly about God, but also when he is helped to find himself, to discover his dignity as a person, or when his social consciousness is educated. And it can also be concluded – following the above example– that the maturation of a student’s personal and social dimension is also effectively fostered when through faith he learns and freely accepts his own project of *human growth through love*.

From this Christian perspective on which Amigonian pedagogy is based, holistic education of the student thus involves accompanying him in his process with the conviction that faith, in addition to bringing Man closer to God, also helps him to find himself, to find the roots of human identity, and also with the conviction that any educational action, whether personal or social and however insignificant it may seem, is ultimately important and helps the individual, through his own personal or social reconstruction, through the encounter with himself and through savoring the sweetness of his own life, to find God.

186 Cf. Part II, Chapter III.

187 Cf. Part II, Chapter II.

And along with the holistic and inclusive view of education, the *individualized and progressive* view of the educational process is also rooted in the Christian conception of Man.

In reality, hidden behind this individualized and progressive view is the religious category of *conversion*; i.e. the process which, according to religious thought, Man follows in his journey toward God.

Father Luis Amigó himself, who, possibly out of the sensitivity developed in him by the *compassionate charisma* that God had given him, was deeply aware of the reality of *conversion*, which he explored in his writings particularly through the story of the prodigal son, highlighted two basic attitudes in his teaching on this parable –the compassionate attitude of the father and the penitent attitude of the son– behind which can be easily discovered the characteristics of *individuality and progressiveness* referred to here.

Indeed, the *compassionate attitude* of the father underscores the value of *individuality* when he makes it clear that the only thing that mattered to him was “*having found the son he had lost*”.<sup>188</sup> Meanwhile, the *penitent attitude* of the son is suggestive of a whole *process* that leads him progressively to *break* with everything, to *conquer* his difficulties and to *subject himself to* even the greatest of sacrifices to achieve reconciliation with his father.<sup>189</sup>

As Father Luis thus knew that the theological reality of conversion entails *individualized attention* to Man on the part of God, and *progressive action* by Man toward God, and as he was also aware, through his whole view of Man, that this theological process ultimately runs in parallel with the humanizing process, he began first

188 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 389.

189 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 533. The *progressive* nature of this process is clearly suggested through the verbs *break, conquer and subject oneself*. An analysis of these verbs in the whole context of Father Luis' educational system reveals that this suggestion is much more consistent than it may seem at first glance. In effect, the verb *to break* refers to a moment –very much intertwined and united with the moment of reflection– when it becomes necessary to *cut* completely with the environmental circumstances of one's past life (cf. AMIGÓ, L. *Constituciones 1910*, n. 243); the verb *to conquer* points to a subsequent struggle within the man himself for which he must strengthen his will, which still seems resistant to embracing virtue (cf. AMIGÓ, L. *Constituciones 1910*, n. 247); and the verb *to subject oneself* indicates a final submission of his will to the dictates of his own conscience (cf. this idea with AMIGÓ, L. *Constituciones 1910*, n. 254).

to apply his theological deductions to his own ministry with prison inmates, whom he treated personally with a *slow, steady and progressive* technique, and later stressed with his followers the need for the education they provided to be aimed at both individual treatment and gradual correction of each student.

The rules that point to his recommendation of an *individualized education* are:

- the rules aimed at instilling in his followers the need to keep a personal register of each student in order to note down their family and environmental background, skills, temperament, character and other relevant information, to ensure effective adoption of the method that should be applied to them;<sup>190</sup>

- the rules that state how the learner should be treated, not according to generalizing criteria –such as age classifications– but according to their *personal qualities*, bearing in mind that each student requires an educational procedure tailored to his character, temperament, aptitude, attitude, etc.<sup>191</sup>

On the other hand, the rules suggestive of an intention to pursue a *progressive education* are those related to the division of the student's re-education process into different periods. These rules have been cited previously in this book, where I also indicated how in their original formulation they made direct reference to the language of *Christian asceticism*.<sup>192</sup>

And to conclude this long section in which I have sought to offer a clearer picture of the symbiosis existing between spirituality and pedagogy in the Amigonian tradition, it is important to note that the exploration here is far from exhaustive. *Spirituality* –meaning growth in *humanity* nourished by God– not only has been the *historical source*

190 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2029. As can be easily deduced, both these rules and those cited in the next point lie behind the aspect of the Amigonian pedagogical approach that fosters *attention to individuality*, which was explored in Part III, Chapter II.

191 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2051.

192 Cf. above, Part I, Chapter II, section: *Toward the search for a method*. Traditional Christian asceticism divided the conversion process into three stages or ways: the *purgative*, the *illuminative* and the *unitive*, which would correspond directly to the periods of *Neophytes, Diligents and Worshipers* described by Father Amigó (Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2049 – 2054).

*of pedagogical wisdom*, but also continues to be so for all those who still turn to the realm of the spirit in search of new inspirations that will keep their own souls active and on the path of human growth through love.

### *Models of the Amigonian approach*

Within the same dynamic of the spirit, from its beginnings the Amigonian tradition has recognized a number of valid models for growth in love and humanity according to the dimensions and aspects of its style and approach. These include the *Good Shepherd*, *Our Lady of Sorrows* and *Saint Francis of Assisi*, who are the subjects of the chapters completing the last part of this book.

In reality, of these three, the main and central figure is, logically, that of the Good Shepherd, Christ, the only true *Model and Teacher* for all Christian life.

In the Good Shepherd, the aspects and focal points that distinguish the growth in love and humanity typical of the Amigonians find their first and most basic source.

However, this tradition of growth in love is also enriched in a certain way by the figure of Our Lady of Sorrows, through whom the Amigonian approach is especially vested with the characteristic gentleness and inner strength of motherhood, and by the figure of Saint Francis, who highlights the qualities of simplicity and service that characterize one who knows how to be *less* in life, who never thinks himself superior to anyone.

In other words, these three models form a kind of triptych in which the central panel –occupied by the Good Shepherd– represents the *Teacher* of Amigonian identity, but in which the side panels –occupied by Our Lady of Sorrows and Saint Francis– also have their significance and message to convey, reflecting with their own characteristic brilliance the very same lesson of the Good Shepherd.

Today, to these three traditional models for the Amigonian approach we should of course add the figure of Father Luis Amigó himself, as the first custodian of the Amigonian charisma, the

compassionate attitude that distinguishes the Amigonian way of *being and doing*, and as the one who made his life a *living example* for his followers. Father Amigó is not given a chapter here, as the whole first part of this book was of course dedicated to him.



## FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The text of the official decree that made Father Luis Amigó *Venerable* on June 13, 1992 in the presence of Pope John Paul II began with these enlightening words:

*“The generous offering of the Good Shepherd –‘I lay down my life for my sheep’– is the spiritual heart around which the life of Father Luis Amigó y Ferrer turned.”*<sup>193</sup>

And it was certainly so. The figure of the Good Shepherd helped Father Luis to concentrate and somehow encapsulate all the richness of his profound Christological experience.

Father Amigó’s predilection for this image of Christ began to be consolidated within the Capuchin family, which he joined, as noted previously, in 1874.<sup>194</sup>

In the last years of the nineteenth century there was a great devotion among the Spanish Capuchins to the Virgin Mary, under the style *Mother of the Good Shepherd*. She was considered the special patron and protector of their missions in the Americas, and particularly in the Colombian and Venezuelan territories of the Guajira region.

The Mother of the Good Shepherd –customarily called the Divine Shepherdess, and referred to more informally using the Spanish word *Zagala*<sup>195</sup>– thus marked the lives of the friars of the order to which Father Luis belonged. Indeed, by 1894 Father Luis had already written some significant texts clearly revealing his dream of people who, “*not seeking themselves, had the virtue of bringing hearts to Jesus*

193 Cf. *Decreto de declaración de Venerable*, in *Pastor Bonus* 41 (1992) p. 75.

194 Cf. Part I, Chapter I, section: *A friar and priest of the people*.

195 Through the Spanish term *Zagala* (*Young Shepherdess*) or *collaborator with the Good Shepherd* used by the Capuchins to refer to the Virgin Mary, the term *Zagales* (*Young Shepherds*) used by Father Luis to define the core of the attitude of his followers acquires a profound religious and Marian significance.

*Christ, the Way, Truth and Life;*” people who, “*leaving ninety-nine faithful sheep in the fold, were prepared to run after the one who wanders from precipice to precipice and were capable of continuing in their efforts to enlighten it and exhort it until they had brought it back to the fold of the Good Shepherd.*”<sup>196</sup>

However, it was after his ordination as *bishop* that he began increasingly to write about the figure of the Good Shepherd.<sup>197</sup> Indeed, the motto he chose for his episcopal coat of arms was –as noted previously– that of the Good Shepherd: “*I lay down my life for my sheep.*”<sup>198</sup> He himself explained this motto to his followers this way:

“*On having the honor of speaking to you for the first time, beloved children, above all we want to make clear the love we profess to you through Jesus Christ. A love for which we are ready to give our life, if necessary, for each and every one of you... It is also our duty to watch, like any attentive shepherd, over you, our beloved flock, to prevent the voracious wolves which... can make you their prey by drawing you away from the fold of the Good Shepherd.*”<sup>199</sup>

As he delved more deeply into this Christological figure, Father Luis began to discover in it the clearest representation of *Christ the Redeemer*, who was the true heart and driving force behind his life and action. The attitude of the Good Shepherd, who was able to leave the ninety-nine sheep in the field to go and search for the one he had lost and who, “*climbs the mountains and crosses the passes, like a loving shepherd*”<sup>200</sup> in search of his objective, clearly reveals the very purpose of Christ, who appeared before all as one who had “*not come to save the upright, but the sinners,*” and who did not want any of his little ones to be lost.<sup>201</sup>

At the same time, in the image of the Good Shepherd Father Luis clearly discerned the *Christ Incarnate and Crucified* that has historically

196 Cf. Masamagrell Luis de, *Novena a Nuestra Señora de la Fe*, Orihuela, transcript of the popular reading, 1894, pp. 16, 19-20.

197 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 251; 260; 666; 811; 889; 940; 1136-1138.

198 Cf. Jn. 10:11 and 15.

199 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 251 and 260.

200 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 889.

201 Lk. 19:10; Lk. 5:31-32 and Mt. 18:14.

inspired the decision to “*become all things to all men*”<sup>202</sup> and to give one’s life if necessary for others,<sup>203</sup> which have constituted the two major pillars at the deepest level of the Amigonian approach. Expressions like *knowing his sheep, calling them by name, walking ahead and not fleeing from the wolf*,<sup>204</sup> are direct references to the attitude of sharing the other’s reality, identifying with his feelings and his situation.<sup>205</sup> Meanwhile, the concepts of *laying down one’s life*, and *laying it down freely and to the full* allude to the ability to love unconditionally and with unwavering faithfulness.<sup>206</sup>

In addition to the above, Father Luis also came to realize that the Good Shepherd also masterfully encapsulated the Christology of the Perfect Man, the New Adam, the fully realized *Model for Humanity* contained in the expression *Christ, the Way, Truth and Life*. The Good Shepherd is *the way*, as he goes ahead of his sheep, thereby making himself a *familiar and credible model* in their process of self-realization and whole growth. He is the *Truth* because he is the *gate that leads to life*.<sup>207</sup> And the Good Shepherd is also the *Life* because with his attitude he bears witness to the fact that the meaning of life is to *lay it down* and that, for this very reason, in the measure that it is laid down, it is taken up again fulfilled.<sup>208</sup>

And over time, the image of the Good Shepherd came to acquire such meaning and importance for Father Luis that when he wanted to share his spiritual, human and pedagogical testament with his followers, he chose to bequeath to them the purest and most characteristic elements of the Amigonian attitude through the figure of the Good Shepherd:

“*You, my beloved children,*” he thus tells them in a passage quoted previously, “*are the ones who have to go in search of the lost sheep until it is returned to the fold of the Good Shepherd. And do not fear perishing on the steep cliffs and precipices you will have to*

202 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1020. 1053; 1166; 1819; 1833; 2359;

203 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 251. 1831; 2359. Cf. also *ibid*, 609. 1508-1511.

204 Cf. Jn. 10:11; 15; 18.

205 Cf. the reflections in Part III of this book, Chapters I, II and IV.

206 Cf. the reflections in Part III of this book, Chapter III.

207 Cf. Jn. 10:7 and 9. Actually, according to Christian metaphysical anthropology, a person is the *truth*, as noted repeatedly throughout this book, to the extent that he grows in *love and humanity* and *thus truly enjoys life*.

208 Cf. Jn. 10:17-18;

*place yourselves on to save the lost sheep; nor be intimidated by the thorny thickets and ambushes...*<sup>209</sup>

### *Tones of compassionate love*

As noted above, the Amigonian *charisma* or *attitude* involves *whole growth in love*, with a particular emphasis on experiencing its *compassionate dimension*.

However, the very heart of compassion –given the combination of feelings of *unwavering faithfulness* to the specific individual, *love made to measure* and *preference for those most in need* that it entails– is fostered and expressed in a wide range of attitudes toward life. And of these, I would like to give particular attention here to those that inform the example of the Good Shepherd, as it is precisely these that give Amigonian growth in compassionate love its own characteristic tone.

#### *Calling by name and knowing*<sup>210</sup>

Earlier in this book I explored the full cultural implications of this attitude of the Good Shepherd.<sup>211</sup> It should therefore be enough merely to highlight here that it has been precisely this attitude that has inspired one of the most characteristic aspects of the Amigonian educational approach, which is the principle of *knowing through the way of the heart*, through daily coexistence, friendly interaction and a frank and empathetic personal relationship with the learners.

#### *Leading the way by example*<sup>212</sup>

Walking ahead of his sheep, it has also been suggested, the Good Shepherd clears a *way* for them, through the *consistency of his life*.

And this attitude of the Good Shepherd, which also of course had a deep impact on the teaching of Father Luis Amigó, was what made Amigonian educators credible people and examples who, through

209 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 1831.

210 Cf. Jn. 10:3 and 14.

211 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, section: *Knowledge through the way of the heart*.

212 Cf. Jn. 10:4.

their consistency and their commitment to uncomplicated, simple and joyful sharing, vested education with a truly familial atmosphere.<sup>213</sup> It was also this same attitude of the Good Shepherd that in a way nourished the generosity of Amigonian educators, enabling them to educate through closeness, constant presence and affectionate interaction with their students.<sup>214</sup>

### *Never fleeing in the face of difficulties*

The Good Shepherd, in contrast with the hired man who abandons his sheep when he sees the wolf coming because they don't really matter to him at all,<sup>215</sup> not only stands his ground and protects his flock, but even lays down his life for it.

This *vigilant* attitude of the Good Shepherd, apart from having enlightened Amigonian pedagogical activity (from a perspective that complements the view described in the attitude of walking ahead of the flock) with its distinctive tone of *presence*, was what also inspired Amigonian educators to *stand firm in the face of difficulties* and to *live their self-sacrifice without timetable restrictions and with unconditional and unwavering faithfulness*.<sup>216</sup>

### *Going after the needy fearlessly and hopefully*

The attitude of going after the lost sheep is the one that Father Luis Amigó stresses in the figure of the Good Shepherd most often and with greatest emphasis. This attitude, which could be read to involve an effort both to *search for the wayward youth* and to *contrive a chance encounter with him*, gives particular expression to the compassionate dimension that distinguishes the Amigonian approach.

Thus, in Father Luis's teaching, which even encourages his followers to face steep cliffs and precipices, thorny thickets and ambushes in the fulfillment of their mission, the Christ who leaves the ninety-nine

213 Cf. Part III, Chapter IV.

214 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, section: *Education through closeness*.

215 Cf. Jn. 10:12-13; Cf. also Jer. 23:1 ; Ez. 34:5-8; 22; 28 ; Acts 20:29.

216 Cf. Part III, Chapter III.

sheep “*on the hillside*” or “*in the desert*”<sup>217</sup> to search for the lost sheep, and when it is found “*carries it on his shoulders*”,<sup>218</sup> inspired the Amigonian tradition of *loving each one in his individuality*, valuing the person more than his deeds, relativizing rules in his favor, showing a preferential concern for those most in need,<sup>219</sup> and always striving to ensure that the person himself feels valued, esteemed and respected.<sup>220</sup>

### *Laying down one's life for others*

The message of life, so central to the parable of the Good Shepherd, finds its fullest expression in the principle of *laying down one's life* so that others may find meaning in their own.

Moreover, through the central importance that Father Luis Amigó gave the motto of the Good Shepherd (*I lay down my life for my sheep*) in his own life and in his teachings, Amigonian educators received, in the principle of *laying down one's life*, a new inspiration<sup>221</sup> –possibly the most radical of all– for living their dedication to their students with true *generosity*<sup>222</sup> and *total dedication*.<sup>223</sup>

### *Rejoicing at having found the lost sheep*

After recovering the lost sheep, the shepherd organizes a *feast* to celebrate the fact with his friends.<sup>224</sup>

By its very nature, the feast is a universal human experience. All civilizations (and sometimes with greater intensity among the earliest) have enthusiastically cultivated the joyful and carefree dimension of

217 Cf. Mt. 18:12 and Lk. 15:4.

218 Cf. Lk. 15:4. This attitude of *taking upon one's shoulders*, diametrically opposed to the attitude of *placing under one's feet*, is intended to make explicit the aspect of *dignity* and *dignification* of the one who has been found. It is not enough for me to strive to recover the person who wanders through life as if lost or dead; this effort must necessarily be accompanied by an attitude of respect for that same person, for the simple fact that he is a person.

219 Cf. Part III, Chapter II.

220 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, section: *Education based on feeling*.

221 As noted previously, the specific attitudes of true *generosity* and total *dedication* cited below also find a source of inspiration in the attitude of the Good Shepherd who *never flees in the face of difficulties*, but there can be no doubt that it is this attitude of *laying down one's life* that gives it its fullest depth and meaning.

222 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, section: *Education through closeness*.

223 Cf. Part III, Chapter III, section: *Total dedication* without timetables.

224 Cf. Lk. 15:6.

life. Religious rites often find their origins in such feasts, and themselves take the form of festive celebrations. And generally, the feasts of all cultures coincide fundamentally in these two intimately interrelated dimensions: *the celebratory and the social*.

And it is precisely from the perspective of the joyful community celebration that the attitude of the Good Shepherd inspired the Amigonian tradition from its beginnings to live education as a happy and festive experience, on the one hand fostering a *joyful character in the educators themselves as a special means of communication between them and their students*,<sup>225</sup> while also going to great lengths to ensure that the *lives of the students in their centers was as pleasant and tolerable as possible*.<sup>226</sup>

Ultimately, this same attitude of the Good Shepherd has also constituted another source of inspiration for Amigonian pedagogy in its aim to integrate their families and societies into the education of children, adolescents and youths in conflict.<sup>227</sup>

### *The Gospel of compassion*

In reality, the whole Gospel message is compassion and can be read in this sense. The *Good News* of Christ basically involves telling Man—all men—that the Father loves each of us with faithful love *made to measure*, and the only thing He asks of him to begin to feel saved, to begin to experience happiness, to begin to truly enjoy life, is for he himself to take refuge in the love of God, to feel loved by Him and, on this basis, to take the decision to mature in humanity through love.

However, there are passages that have especially helped the Amigonian tradition to recognize what is involved in this compassionate dimension that is a primary and particular feature of the Amigonian attitude or charisma.

Along with the passages of the *prodigal son*, the *compassionate father* and *the raising of the son of the widow of Nain*, which have been referred

225 Cf. Paiporta, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11,126. Cf. also, Part III, Chapter IV, section: *Uncomplicated, simple and joyful leading by example*.

226 Cf. Terciarios Capuchinos, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 212 in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0,170.

227 Cf. Part II, Chapter IV, section: *Educating the child and his environment*.

to repeatedly throughout this book, there are others that have had various degrees of influence on the development of the Amigonian approach.

Naturally, the *parable of the Good Shepherd*, given particular attention in the previous section, occupies a central position, as does the *parable of the lost sheep*, which together with the Good Shepherd forms a kind of thematic unit in Father Luis Amigó's teaching and in Amigonian tradition. However, the parable of the lost sheep is also related in its original context with two others: the parables of the *merciful father* and of the *lost drachma*.<sup>228</sup> And this same context has had a resonance in Amigonian tradition, which has identified in the three complementary attitudes the same drama: the loss of a beloved possession. Specifically, in the case of the *Good Shepherd* the attention to the lost sheep is expressed in his attitude of *going after it*, embarking on his arduous search; in the case of the *woman*, the attention to the drachma is expressed in her attitude of *sweeping and ordering her house*; and in the case of the *father*, his faithfulness and care for the son who left home is displayed in the patience with which he watchfully and hopefully awaits his return. As the Amigonian school learned from all this, the same attitude may not always be taken in response to the same problem. Every individual should be sought and found in the specific way that he needs to be sought and found.

Apart from the thematic core discussed above, built around the figure of the *Good Shepherd*, there have been other Gospel passages that have had or continue to have a particular significance for the Amigonians.

One of these is the *parable of the Good Samaritan*.<sup>229</sup> Father Luis Amigó, *moved to compassion*—like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho one day<sup>230</sup>—did not pass by those who were suffering, but stopped at their side, *made himself their neighbor* and not only gave them a specific and effective solution to their problems, but even offered himself up as an expiatory victim to mitigate the ills

228 Cf. Lk. 15:1-31.

229 Cf. Lk. 10:29-37.

230 Cf. Lk. 10:33 and AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 86.

of society.<sup>231</sup> And the Amigonian tradition, inspired by this example of its founder's, also discerned in the parable of the Good Samaritan another motif for growth in the attitude of integration and commitment that characterizes its *being* and enables its educators to approach the student in need to offer him effective help, *to contrive a chance encounter with him.*<sup>232</sup>

Other passages that have spiritually nourished the human growth of the Amigonians in compassionate love have included: the passage of Christ sharing food with sinners, because he wants “*mercy, not sacrifice*”;<sup>233</sup> the passage of Jesus forgiving the repentant sinner and the adulteress, *valuing the individuals* and their love more than their *deeds*;<sup>234</sup> the passage of Jesus stopping to speak to the Samaritan and to Zacchaeus, because he has come to *save what was lost*;<sup>235</sup> the parable of the servant who pleads for the sterile fig tree with the hopeful patience of one who believes that *there is still something more that can be done*,<sup>236</sup> and the parable of the vineyard owner who, after hiring workers at different hours of the day, ends up paying all of them the same amount, because through the wisdom of the heart that looks at the individual and his circumstances he has learned to rise above the demands of mere justice.<sup>237</sup>

231 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 83.

232 Cf. Terciarios Capuchinos, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 228.

233 Cf. Mt. 9:10-13. Cf. Terciarios Capuchinos, *Espiritualidad Amigoniana*, n. 198.

234 Cf. Lk. 7:36-50 and Jn. 8:1-11.

235 Cf. Jn. 4:7-30 and Lk. 19:1-10.

236 Cf. Lk. 13:6-9.

237 Cf. Mt. 20:1-16.



MOTHER OF SORROW,  
MOTHER OF LOVE

Father Luis Amigó's personal spirituality was profoundly Marian, i.e. his great devotion to the Virgin Mary was extremely obvious. However, within this Marian dimension of his life, his devotion to *Our Lady of the Sorrows* took on special importance.

This devotion became especially clear in the foundation of the Amigonian order that he determined to place directly under her patronage:

*“With everything now ready to celebrate the inauguration of the Congregation on the day of Our Lady of Sorrows,”* as he himself recounts, *“on 2 February of that year [1889]... I placed the Constitutions in the hands of the image of Our Lady of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross... and I asked the Virgin to bless them and grant her protection and support to the foundation that was going to be created in her honor.”*<sup>238</sup>

However, this devotion actually began to develop in the earliest years of his life. It has often been said that Father Luis's affection for Our Lady of Sorrows had clear family roots, although perhaps not enough attention has been given to an event which, in my view, constitutes the main and most profound factor behind that affection.

It wasn't all wine and roses in the Amigó-Ferrer household. The married couple –formed by two extraordinary people– loved one another dearly and remained intimately united, but there were problems, especially economic hardships that greatly troubled his mother, Doña Genoveva. Indeed, when in his later years Father Luis described his parents in the opening pages of his autobiography, he wrote of his mother:

*“I never knew a more uncomplaining woman; and so prudent that one never knew from her expression how upset she was or the sorrows that tormented her. She said that no one outside the family was to blame for our tribulations.”*<sup>239</sup>

It isn't hard to glean from this brief description the figure of a true *Mater Dolorosa*; a mother who suffered intensely for her family because she loved them so dearly.

The family home –through the maternal figure– was thus without doubt the great school where Father Luis began to comprehend the salvational significance of human suffering when it is accepted with a Christian attitude; that is, when it is accepted *for love and with love*. In his later life he would come to understand this even more radically still and, when asked about his special affection for Our Lady of Sorrows, he would respond with a smile on his face and with eyes that hinted at his emotion:

*“Because it is at the foot of the cross where Mary has shown us her motherhood most.”*<sup>240</sup>

Also in later years, as his followers became ever more involved in their ministry to children and youths in situations of risk or conflict, the Lord would make him understand the wisdom of his decision to place them under the patronage of Our Lady of Sorrows.

This ministry to marginalized children helped him realize that very often, behind every boy or girl, behind every adolescent or youth with problems, was the silent figure of the mother, who *suffers* because she *loves* –with unwaveringly faithful love and care, providing for their needs and wants– someone who is, in the eyes of indifference, a person of no value, or even a mere nuisance to society.

### *Paschal meaning of sorrow*

Sorrow for sorrow's sake is not a Christian principle. Christ's words *“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass by me”*<sup>241</sup> are the

239 AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 6.

240 Cf. Quoted in Fatizzo, Sebastiano, *El Padre Luis de Masamagrell, su vida, su semblanza y su obra*, pp. 135-136.

241 Cf. Mt. 26:39.

heartfelt supplication of the Man-God who, on the threshold of his passion, longs to find meaning in his suffering through prayer. Christ does not enjoy suffering, and although he ultimately accepts it serenely, it is because he discovers –not without anguish or pain– that only by doing so can he achieve the maturity intrinsic to human identity.

Created in the image and likeness of *God-Love*, Man –as noted previously in this book<sup>242</sup>– is by his germinal nature a *project of love*. Only by maturing in love, only by growing in feeling, can Man be personalized and humanized. But such personalization, such growth in feeling and in humanity, requires (also as noted previously<sup>243</sup>) sufficient inner strength in the person.

In his strength to bravely and boldly accept the difficulties, setbacks and suffering of his passion, Christ has offered Man a great life lesson. With his own example, Christ showed Man that the *way of happiness*, of full human realization –which is none other than the way of love– can only be traveled if one is *strong* enough to assume with joyful freedom and serene happiness the suffering entailed in renouncing *egocentrism*. It is not possible to love without stepping outside oneself. *The capacity for love* is directly related to the *capacity for inner strength* needed to say *no* to oneself. He who is not able to die to himself (“*like the wheat grain*”<sup>244</sup>) will never discover the joyful meaning behind his own existence.

In this sense, Christ’s message represents a cultural revolution against a human conception which, following the inertia of the inherent human tendencies, values *appearances* more than *being*, *having* more than *giving and sharing*, and *dominating* more than *servicing*.

The scale of values of the Gospel –contained in that *rainbow of love* constituted by the Beatitudes– exalts being fully and happily human over considering people as objects, over having and keeping possessions, or over surrounding oneself with servants. And it is precisely in the all-encompassing totality of this message of love of the Beatitudes where Man can discover the positive meaning of sorrow.

242 Cf. Part I, Chapter II; Part II, Chapter I.

243 Cf. Part II, Chapter II.

244 Cf. Jn. 12:24.

Sorrow is Christian insofar as it arises from love and serves the purpose of maturing –through love itself– one’s human identity: “*though I should give up my body to be burned*” exclaims Paul in the climax of his song to the greatest depths of human feeling, “*if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.*”<sup>245</sup>

But by accepting pain and suffering in their lives, Christ and Mary not only bear witness to the structural need that every man has to be strong enough to *die* to himself if he wants to *live* with and for others, but also reveal the salvational dimension that suffering acquires in relation to others. From this perspective, pain (assumed with a Christian attitude, i.e. through love and with love), while constituting a clear example of *unwavering faithfulness* to the person who is loved (because “*no one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends*”<sup>246</sup>), denotes in the person who loves a resolute desire to *transmit life* to the other.

Christ becomes poor in order to make men rich by emptying himself; he lays down his life not to remain dead, but to take life up again and so that others, through his generous and complete gift, “*may have life and have it to the full.*”<sup>247</sup>

And the sorrow of the Mother, like that of the Son, is also, in essence, a salvational, Paschal sorrow; a sorrow that arises from the same merciful love that God feels for humanity and that is aimed at restoring Man to his full capacity for love and happiness with which he was originally vested as the image and likeness of his Creator.

In view of the above, Mary’s suffering, like Christ’s, is neither frustrating nor depressing, but in fact constitutes a beautiful and clear expression of love. And it is precisely from this profound Paschal view of sorrow that I will now explore the figure of Mary in order to consider the intended message behind dedication to the *Mater Dolorosa*.

From the Paschal perspective of sorrow, the adjective *Dolorosa* should not be given more emphasis than the noun *Mater*. Mary suffers voluntarily because she loves her Son with maternal love and, through

245 Cf. 1Co. 13:3.

246 Cf. Jn. 15:13.

247 Cf. 2Co. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-10 and Jn. 10:10.

him, she loves all men, and her *sorrows* (true *lessons in love* in their singular nature), in their harmonious, multifaceted mosaic, express the diverse dimensions that give love itself its true identity and assurance. Consequently, the expressions *Mother of Sorrow* and *Mother of Love* should never be separated, because present behind the devotion to the *Mater Dolorosa*, in an utterly unique and extraordinary way, is the message of love, of the *motherhood* of Mary.

### *Mary in Amigonian tradition*

In keeping with the views of its founder, Father Luis Amigó, Amigonian tradition has chiefly considered the *Paschal* dimension of the suffering of Our Lady of Sorrows in Christian terms, and has expressed this dimension through the theological core concepts of *collaboration*, *compassion* and *inner strength*.

*Generous cooperation* with redemption is the great lesson that Our Lady of Sorrows offers the Amigonians, who, through their association with her, *see themselves as cooperators in the regeneration of youth*.<sup>248</sup>

Intimately connected with the theme of collaboration, Amigonian tradition has also highlighted the *compassion and inner strength* shown by Mary, especially through her sorrows, in her unique collaboration with Christ:

“*In our life,*” proclaim the Amigonians, “*Mary is the source of the generosity and compassion, of the inner strength and tenderness that our mission requires.*”<sup>249</sup>

*Inner strength*—an essential capacity to be able to grow and act with generous, gentle and compassionate love—acquires in the sorrows of Mary the characteristic tone of the *strong woman* described in the Bible.<sup>250</sup> The inner strength of the woman exalted in the Book of Proverbs does not consist of physical energy or even of bravery displayed in a moment of heroism; rather, it is the *firmness* of one who, for love, assumes with simplicity and dignity, with joy and diligence, the sacrifices and abnegations necessary to confront the

248 Terciarios Capuchinos, *Constituciones de 1984*, n. 7.

249 Terciarios Capuchinos, *Constituciones de 1984*, n. 7.

250 Cf. Pr. 31:10-31; Sir. 26:1-18.

everyday demands of her mission;<sup>251</sup> it is, rather, the *moral bravery* needed to confront, for love and with love, the painful denial of the *I* for the sake of the *we*; it is, in short, the inner strength of Mary who, in her pilgrimage of faith, continued to be intimately *united* with her son and remained *upright* at the foot of his cross.

### *The Sorrows: seven lessons in love*<sup>252</sup>

As noted previously, the supreme model for the Amigonian attitude is Christ, particularly as depicted in the figure of the Good Shepherd; but alongside Christ, at the foot of his cross, is the figure of the Virgin Mary, the *zagala* (*young shepherdess*), the first, unique collaborator in the redemptive work of her son. And although it is true that the attitudes that Mary expresses in her sorrows (all veritable *lessons in love*, as will be discussed in detail below) are already expressed in Christ himself, it is also true that in Mary these same attitudes, crowned with the gentle halo of *motherhood*, highlight elements that serve to enrich Amigonian identity and activity.

Father Luis invited his followers to be *fathers*<sup>253</sup> to the youths who lived with or came into contact with them. And in proposing, together with the Good Shepherd, the model of the Mater Dolorosa, he also invited them to vest that *fatherhood* with the touch of *motherhood*; that is, to vest their generous dedication to others –and especially to children, adolescents and youths in conflict– with the *tenderness and inner strength* of those who give birth to children with both pain and joy. And this is how the Amigonians appear to have interpreted it when they call themselves executors, on behalf of these

251 The strong woman is presented in the song dedicated to her in the Book of Proverbs as a woman *who is active* (v. 12; 18; 27), who *undertakes a wide range of work* in her house (v. 13; 17; 19; 22; 24), who *opens her heart* to all, and especially to the needy (v. 20), and who, in short, *is humane enough to lay herself down* in order to give life to the full to those around her.

252 The sorrows of Mary are, according to tradition: 1. The prophecy of the old man Simeon; 2. The flight into Egypt; 3. The loss of the child Jesus; 4. Meeting Jesus carrying his cross; 5. Mary at the foot of the cross; 6. Receiving the dead body of her son in her arms; and 7. The entombment of Jesus and the solitude of Mary.

253 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 2348 and 2359, and “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 252.

youths, of the inheritance and will of Jesus when he declared: “*this is your son, this is your mother.*”<sup>254</sup>

*Loving the other as he is*

The main, essential *lesson in love* of the first sorrow of Mary is the teaching to *love the other as he is*.

The *prophecy of Simeon*<sup>255</sup> highlights, first and foremost, Mary’s obedience and oblation to God’s plan for salvation, the best expression of which is found in her *fiat*. This *fiat* is a constant in her life, but has three particularly significant expressions. In the first expression, the Annunciation,<sup>256</sup> Mary’s *fiat* constitutes a heartfelt and unhesitating acceptance of God’s plan, which would require her to change her own *life plan* as she herself had dreamed of it. In the second, the *Magnificat*,<sup>257</sup> her *fiat* is made poetry and song, as Mary very naturally attributes to God the central, leading role in an act of salvation which Elizabeth, overwhelmed by emotion, had exalted in the person of her young visitor. And the third expression occurs precisely at the moment in which Mary –when presenting her son in the temple and hearing from the lips of Simeon the prophecy of what that child would be and what she, as his mother, would have to suffer– remains firm in her adherence to God’s will, limiting herself simply to “*storing up all these things in her heart*”;<sup>258</sup> in other words, limiting herself to *love*, to loving her son *just as he was* and to accepting the unfolding events *just as God had arranged them*.

In view of all of the above, Amigonian tradition –once more in keeping with Father Luis Amigó’s vision of adherence to God’s will as the *best proof of love for Him*<sup>259</sup>– was able to discern in this suffering a new impulse to love the person in his individuality.<sup>260</sup>

254 Terciarios Capuchinos, *Constituciones 1984*, n. 58.

255 Cf. Lk. 2:22-39.

256 Cf. Lk. 1:26-38.

257 Cf. Lk. 1:39-56.

258 Lk. 2:51.

259 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. *Complete Works*, 828. Cf. also, 552 and 1393.

260 Cf. Part III, Chapter II. It is important to bear in mind that this same *lesson in love* was also offered by the Good Shepherd in his attitude of abandoning the ninety-nine faithful sheep to go after the one that was lost.

### *Confronting hardships bravely*

Meditating deeply on the biblical passage that recounts the second sorrow,<sup>261</sup> it is clear that the attitude that moves Mary and Joseph to flee to Egypt is not the fearful attitude of people hiding in an effort to escape from reality, but the valiant attitude of people who confront the hardships of the moment resolutely and swiftly.

Although pious tradition has defined this sorrow using the word *flight*, the biblical-spiritual context invites us to see in Mary the valiant attitude of the immigrant and pilgrim, the displaced person who, out of love for her family, is capable of leaving her home, work, comfort and safety to protect them in a threatening present or to assure them of a better future.

And it is precisely this attitude of Mary's that constitutes the great *lesson in love* of this second sorrow, which teaches us to *confront hardships*.

Confronting difficulties is, without doubt, one of the clearest manifestations of the *strength of spirit* needed for a person to mature fully and constantly.

Along with her image of the *loving mother*, Mary, in all her sorrows—but particularly in this second sorrow that tells of her flight into exile, and in the fifth, which reveals her attitude of standing upright at the cross—displays the constitution of the *strong woman* that the Bible speaks of, as discussed above.

Thus, in the inner strength that Mary reveals in this sorrow, Amigonian tradition found another inspiration to bravely confront the difficulties and setbacks that could arise in their daily ministry to children with problems.<sup>262</sup>

### *Zealously looking for the lost sheep*

It is significant that Luke the Evangelist, when relating the event of the third sorrow of Mary, uses the verb *to look for* three times, one of which is further accentuated with a sense of worry. The zealous

261 Cf. Mt. 2:13-15.

262 Cf. Part III, Chapter III. This same lesson can be drawn from the figure of the Good Shepherd, with his attitude of not fleeing in the face of difficulties, as the hired man does, when he sees the wolf coming.

searching –loving and concerned at the same time– for one who wanders through life lost or in need of affection and understanding thus becomes the most important attitude of this biblical passage.<sup>263</sup>

*Zealously looking for the lost sheep* primordially constitutes a call to live in constant tension to *find*, a little more and a little better each day, the true *hidden treasure* that gives full and joyful meaning to one's own existence *in love*.<sup>264</sup> Only from the experience of *having found oneself* and having discovered the joy of *being and existing* can an individual begin the journey toward the other. When Christ invites his disciples to leave their nets to become *fishers of men*, the first thing he wants them to learn is precisely to *fish for their own humanity*, to set out decisively on the joyful –although by no means easy– adventure of *being fully human*. To put it another way, the first commitment assumed in adopting the attitude of *looking for the lost sheep*, is to *embark on a journey to the center of oneself in search of the treasure* (sometimes lost or devalued) *of one's own human identity*.

On the other hand, Mary's attitude as she searches every corner of old Jerusalem inspired the Amigonians even more in their consciousness of being tireless searchers of children, adolescents and youths most in need of finding themselves and of being found, and thus helped them to deepen their commitment to attending to the individuality of each of their students and to giving more love to those who need it more.<sup>265</sup>

### *Contriving a chance encounter with the one who suffers*

The fourth sorrow is not explicitly narrated in the Gospel, but drawing from the passage in the *Song of Songs*, which pious tradition has considered the most complete reflection of the feelings that Mary must have experienced when she hurried out to meet her Son, it can be easily deduced that the *lesson in love* that the Virgin offers in this passage is very similar to that which has been shown in the third sorrow.<sup>266</sup>

263 Cf. Lk. 2:41-51.

264 Cf. Mt. 13:44.

265 Cf. Part III, Chapter II. As discussed earlier, this commitment is primarily supported within the Amigonian school by the attitude of the Good Shepherd who, leaving everything else aside, goes out in search of the lost sheep.

266 Cf. Song 3:2-4a.

However, this time it is not so much a case of *going in search of one who is lost* as *going out to meet* one coming along the road, suffering his troubles, burdened down with a cross of disaffection, of incomprehension, of abandonment, of sickness, of persecution...

Mary's attitude, in *contriving a chance encounter* with her Son as he carries his cross in a way recalls the same attitude that Christ himself exalts in the figure of the *Good Samaritan*. Luke recounts the story more or less as follows: a *lawyer*, in his desire to find meaning in life, asked the Master what he had to do to attain it. And after a brief examination, in which it was made clear that the *vital problem* was not a problem of theoretical knowledge, Christ pointed out to this *good* man that he should act, that is, he should *love* –just as he had responded in quoting the Law– and *life would be his*.

But the problem for this *good* person was precisely that he had not learned how to love. *He wanted to love the other*, but starting from himself and placing his own *I* at the center of all action. *Who is my neighbor?* he asked anxiously, as if hoping that he would be placed before him, in his view, to be able to do him good. At first, we get the impression that Christ doesn't want to answer him, as he begins instead to tell him a story; but through that story he starts to show the man that the problem in loving lies not in knowing *who my neighbor is*, but in discovering *when I am truly a neighbor to the other*.

As a complementary support to the third sorrow, Mary's attitude in this fourth sorrow helped Amigonian tradition to deepen the commitment to educate through closeness from a different perspective, loving the student *as he is* and giving preferential attention to those who *more than being looked for, need to be found*.<sup>267</sup>

### *Standing by the defenseless*

The basic attitude that Mary exemplifies in her fifth sorrow is expressed concisely and intensely in the Latin word *Stabat* used to define it. With this *standing* upright beside the cross, without losing heart, the Virgin, through her *presence and compassion*, participates

267 Cf. Part III, Chapter II.

and collaborates in a highly unique way in the work of Redemption carried out by her Son.<sup>268</sup>

The *presence* at the side of the loved one is, without doubt, one of the clearest manifestations of *unconditional love*. It is significant that only those who felt connected to Jesus by bonds of blood or of deep friendship were there at his crucifixion; only those who truly and unconditionally loved him. Standing by the loved one when things are not going well, when difficulties pile up, and when everyone else tends to turn away, is clear proof that the person is loved for what he really *is*, rather than for what he might have represented at a particular moment. Mary does not appear in the moments when life smiles on her Son and he enjoys success after success; she knew that he would be *fine* then in the company of opportunists who like to bask in the glory of others; but she appears when everyone else, including those who had declared themselves his most unconditional followers, have abandoned him.

Thus, bearing in mind that *presence* entails the capacity for *incarnation* and for *constant and committed love*, Mary's attitude in standing firmly at the foot of the cross meant for the life of the Amigonians a renewed commitment to being truly generous in their ministry, sharing life with their students and giving their all for them,<sup>269</sup> and remaining unwaveringly faithful to them.<sup>270</sup>

### *Warmly welcoming the new arrival*

In the sixth sorrow –the story of which, although it does not appear explicitly in the Bible,<sup>271</sup> is easy to imagine considering that the group

268 Cf. Jn. 19:25-27.

269 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, section: *Education through closeness*. The primordial model for these attitudes is the Good Shepherd, who never flees from the wolf and is generous to the point of laying down his life for his flock.

270 Cf. Part III, Chapter III.

271 The presence at Calvary of the women who had followed Jesus in life is mentioned in all the Gospels (cf. Mt. 27:56-61 ; Mk. 15:40-41, 47; Lk. 23:49-55; Jn. 19:25) and although not even John, who specifically mentions the presence of Mary among them at the foot of the cross, makes any explicit reference to the Virgin receiving the body of Christ into her lap, it is logical to assume that the events unfolded just as recounted in the ancient tradition which affirms that *Mary received the body of her dead son into her arms*.

of women followed Jesus all the way to Calvary, and in that group was Mary— tradition has always emphasized the *maternal tenderness* of the Mother embracing her dead Son.

It was probably Michelangelo who best captured this unanimously accepted tradition in his famous *Pietà*. In this work, Mary appears with tears in her eyes, but with a serene expression, free of any bitterness, tenderly holding the body of Jesus in her lap, and even while she holds her dead son, she seems to keep her arms open to welcome her other absent children. The *Pietà*, as Michelangelo conceives it, appears to be the mother of a great family, whose embrace has no limits, because she knows that there is always one more child who is yet to arrive.

And it was precisely this attitude of Mary's, in the context of faith and spirituality, that has informed the dimension of affectionate welcoming that has distinguished Amigonian pedagogy since its beginnings.<sup>272</sup>

### *Hoping against all odds*

Tradition has emphasized the solitude of Mary in the seventh sorrow. Yet the Virgin's solitude was never despondently lonely, but joyfully contemplative. It was in those moments of the physical absence of her Son when the Virgin, *who had remained faithful to her bond with Him all the way to the cross*, felt a special bond with the Father through faith and hope and, inspired by the Spirit, perpetuated the living bond with her Son beyond the frontiers of death. It is perhaps for this reason that Mary did not run with the other women to the tomb on the first day of the week to anoint Jesus's body, because in her boundless hope she foresaw the resurrection.

Considered from this perspective, the seventh sorrow is the sorrow of the *resurrection foreseen*, of the absolute confidence that, even against all human odds, things—and especially people— can change, can improve, can come back to life. Loving the other *as he is*—just as

272 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, section: *A warm welcome*. The Good Shepherd also teaches this attitude of affectionate and gentle welcoming with his telling gesture of *carrying the lost sheep on his shoulders*.

Mary taught us to do in her first sorrow— does not mean ceasing to dream and hope for a better tomorrow for him, or ceasing to think of the person as a *being* who is constantly maturing and changing, and always with the potential for progressive improvement.

This attitude of hoping, even against all human odds, for the resurrection, for a person's rehabilitation, contributed effectively to Amigonian tradition's embracing of *blind hope in Man and in his potential* as the true creed on which all its pedagogical action is founded.<sup>273</sup>

273 Cf. Part II, Chapter III. This attitude of boundless hope is also taught by the Good Shepherd, when he dreams that the sheep who are not in his fold will be led to it; they will listen to his voice and there will be only one flock (Cf. Jn. 10:16).



IN THE MANNER  
OF A SERVANT

No explanation of the inspirational roots of *Amigonian identity* and its *implementation* in the pedagogical field would be complete without an exploration of the significance for that identity of the spiritual, human and pedagogical movement that began with Francis of Assisi and continued through a whole cultural tradition that came to be known as the *Franciscan tradition*.

The *Franciscan influence*, which has given the Amigonian approach its characteristic quality of *uncomplicated, simple and joyful service*,<sup>274</sup> began with Father Luis Amigó himself.<sup>275</sup>

It is not easy, however, to pinpoint the historical moment at which the Franciscan experience began to influence Father Luis's life. Even in his youth, prior to entering the great Franciscan family (first as a *secular tertiary* and later as a *Capuchin friar*), he expressed a certain preference among the saints for the figure of Saint Francis.<sup>276</sup> However, this fact –or the odd contact with Franciscans in his youth<sup>277</sup>– would not be enough to suggest that Saint Francis had any real influence on Father Luis Amigó in his early years. That influence truly began through the youth associations that he belonged to, which were directly inspired by Franciscan spirituality,<sup>278</sup> and it was finally consolidated when he became a Capuchin friar in 1874.

274 Cf. Part III, Chapter IV, section: *Uncomplicated, simple and joyful leading by example*.

275 Cf. Part I, Chapter III.

276 Cf. RAMO, Mariano, *Mensaje de Amor y de Rendición*, T.I p. 30.

277 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 10.

278 Cf. AMIGÓ, L. Complete Works, 9.

## *The greatness of serving*

One of the most characteristic hallmarks of any spiritual or cultural movement inspired by Francis of Assisi is, without doubt, what is known as *minority*.

A configuration of various intimately linked virtues, minority confers the quality of *servant* upon those who live it, who, like Francis, have chosen the gospel story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet as a paradigm. Minority thus means *poverty, obedience and pureness of heart*, insofar as these three virtues, from complementary perspectives, reflect the *divestment* that makes the attitude of service possible. Minority is also *meeekness, simplicity and plainness*, as only through these can action on behalf of the needy become a true service which, far from humiliating them, uplifts those who receive it. Minority is also *compassion and joy*, as all service must always be loving and joyful action for the benefit of the specific individual. But above all, minority is *humility*, because it is this virtue on which all the others are founded. To speak of minority and of its theology is, in short, to speak of the theology of humility or, to put it another way, of knowing how to be with others without believing or making yourself superior to them.

Of course, the theology of humility is by its very nature Paschal, and as such paradoxical; in other words, it plays constantly –as has been shown repeatedly in this book from complementary perspectives– with the contrast between two anthropological projects: the man who realizes himself according to God's plan and the man who tries to realize himself according to his own plans.

God's plan for Man is of course founded on a scale of values – poetically summarized by Christ in the Beatitudes– through which he can mature and develop in openness to the other, in collaboration and participation with other people and in honest and generous interaction with them. According to God's anthropological project – expressed fully in Christ<sup>279</sup>– Man has been created for love and only by coming out of himself and becoming a *being for others* will he find the *truth* of his identity and, in so doing, happiness.

279 Cf. Part I, Chapter II, section: *Accompanying the person toward the human ideal*.

But attracted to egotism (the true root of every anthropological and moral disorder), the individual man, every man, feels the temptation to follow *his own project* for self-realization with the illusion that he is *like God. Living for himself*, Man then attempts to *appropriate* the Earth's riches, which really belong to all humanity, to turn his relationships with his fellow man into *a possession of the other* that strips them of their humanity, rather than a mutual dedication that enriches them both through a free and respectful meeting between them, and into *prevailing* over others, seeking to forcefully impose a primacy which, by virtue of the human structure, can only exist when it arises out of free and loving recognition by others. Man's egotistical project, far from completing the human being, fills the person with a growing dissatisfaction as he begins to realize that riches, power or possession of the other cannot make him happy, and he is then forced to experience the same sensation felt by the first Adam when, thinking that he could *have* it all, realized he was naked, with empty hands and a heart cold of feeling.<sup>280</sup>

The Paschal paradoxes are, in short, paradoxes of *life*. Man, because of his structurally dramatic nature, lives in constant tension between his desire to *have* and his need to *love*. At every moment in his life he comes upon different crossroads which, peppering his existence with adventure and risk, offer him the bittersweet flavor of his own freedom. And Man, in a constant exercise of self-maturation and self-realization, must once again make a life choice between *having* and *being*.

Christian faith is not only for *the great beyond*, but also for *the here and now*. With his life, Christ is not only a way toward God, but also a *way* toward the *truth* and fullness of a life that can only be found by coming out to meet it.

Along with the great Christian paradox configured around the *truth of human life*, there is a whole other series of apparent contradictions which, as noted previously, are revealed through that paradox. One of these apparent contradictions is that of pain and self-denial as a way toward a mature happiness and a true consolidation of one's own identity. Another is the contradiction that arises in relation with

280 Cf. Gn. 3:7.

humility in particular and with the whole principle of minority or service in general.

Perhaps the most expressive tendency of human egotism is the inclination toward establishing oneself as the *sole master* of the story, to which end others must be dominated. This is the inclination of all those who, at a crossroads in their lives, have chosen *self-worship* rather than the encounter with the other as the way toward self-realization. From the egotistical perspective, the greatness of the self is located in *domination*. It is a domination that over time can only be maintained through the increasingly obvious enslavement of others and the solitude of oneself. By its own nature, domination, the product of a lack of love, creates no true or rewarding personal bonds, but only barriers of isolation or, at most, of merely apparent connection.

In opposition to this egotistical tendency toward domination, Christian anthropology has developed the value of *service*—used here to refer to the affectionate relationship established with the other once the person has descended from his own throne to meet the other freely, respectfully and deferentially— as a substantial value in the journey toward personal maturity. In the dynamic of love, primacy is not imposed, but acknowledged. And people only recognize someone as *greater* when they see greater love, dedication and generosity in him. In the dynamic of love, nobody can expect to be *lord and master*. Such a status cannot be imposed by force of reason or by reason of force, but is conferred by virtue of the warmth of the relationship: “*here I am among you as one who serves*” ... “*Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant.*”<sup>281</sup>

### *The Beatitudes: eight ways to serve*

If the most characteristic contribution of Our Lady of Sorrows to the whole development and maturation of the Amigonian charisma or approach consists (as discussed in the previous chapter) in crowning the lessons in life and humanity learned mainly through the Good Shepherd with *the gentle halo of motherhood*, the most characteristic

281 Cf. Lk. 22:27; Mt. 20:25-28. Cf. also Mt. 18:4 and 23:12; Mk. 9:35 and 10:31. Lk. 9:48 and 14:11.

and important contribution of the Franciscan school in this respect is, without doubt, its enrichment of the same lessons the Amigonians took from the Good Shepherd with the classic touch of the principle of *service*.

And this value of service—a hallmark of the Franciscan philosophy—finds its greatest expression in the *Beatitudes*. Indeed, the *Beatitudes*, which from this perspective become a kind of *servant's code*, would constitute the most fitting framework for an overall appreciation of the elements of the Franciscan roots that have enriched the Amigonian approach.

### *Making oneself poor to make others rich*

Poverty is one of the fundamental values on which the spiritual experience of Francis is based. The evangelical poverty of Francis—presented in the saint's writings coupled with humility—is a poverty that encompasses not only what he *has*, but also principally and fundamentally who he *is*. It is a poverty that can only be fully understood by one who, like Francis, has moved on from “*detachment from mine to detachment from me*”. Ultimately, it is a poverty which, rather than a *lack*, involves the *divestment* of one who “*did not count equality with God as something to be grasped,*” but “*emptied himself*”<sup>282</sup>, *becoming poor so that his fellow man can become rich*<sup>283</sup> and laying down his life so that they would have life to the full.<sup>284</sup>

Evangelical poverty, illustrated by the example of Saint Francis's life, constituted for the Amigonians a new inspiration for generosity in their ministry. The generosity that the Good Shepherd invited them to partake in, laying down their lives to the full so that others could find meaning in their own, is thus given a quality of *divestment* that inspires them to *spend and be spent* for the sake of others, to such an extent that they leave nothing for themselves.<sup>285</sup>

282 Cf. Philipp. 2:6-7.

283 Cf. 2Co. 8:9. This is one of Saint Francis' favorite New Testament passages.

284 Cf. Jn. 10:10; 15.

285 Cf. 2Co. 12:15.

### *Being last in everything*

In the Second Beatitude, *humility*, the core of the whole theology of Franciscan minority, is extolled as a value of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The humility of Francis is intimately associated with poverty, as it entails a *divestment of the self* that is diametrically opposed to the craving for deification, the root and source of all egotism.

This Beatitude, which Francis and Father Luis Amigó usually illustrate with the example of Christ himself,<sup>286</sup> inspired Amigonian tradition to delve further into the message of presence, of coexistence, of inclusion and incarnation in the lives of the students, learned chiefly through the example of the Good Shepherd, who calls his sheep, knows them personally and walks ahead of them.<sup>287</sup> In light of this Beatitude, the Amigonians realized that the whole *ideal of incarnation* in the lives of their learners entails a sincere renunciation of self-exaltation. Only one who, like Christ, renounces the cloak of lordship and dons the humble coat of the servant<sup>288</sup> is able to kneel before the smallest and worship in them, in their dignity as human beings, the face of God.

### *Lovingly embracing the cross*

In the Third Beatitude –which is the Beatitude of the *strong*, of those who are able to suffer without breaking down, and in which Saint Francis identified a song of true *penitence*, that is, a song to that moral bravery that can confront the obstacles on the road to human maturity through love– the Amigonians, in addition to finding another inspiration to turn life into the spirit of strength assumed along with the Good Shepherd and supported by the sorrows of Mary,<sup>289</sup> discovered in this same spirit the tone of joy, that

286 Cf. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Admonitions*, 1, 16; 2 *Letter to All the Faithful*, 5 and *Second Rule*, 6 and AMIGÓ, L. *Complete Works*, 1234.

287 Cf. Part III, Chapter I, sections: *Knowledge through the way of the heart and Education through closeness*.

288 Cf. Jn. 13:4.

289 Cf. Chapter II of this Part IV, especially the sections: *Never fleeing in the face of difficulties* and *Laying down one's life for others*, and in Chapter III, sections: *Confronting hardships valiantly and Standing by the defenseless*.

*Franciscan joy* that has, among other aspects, the face of *serene patience* even in the most difficult, complicated and even painful situations.

### *Collaborating in Man's rehabilitation*

To fully understand the Fourth Beatitude, it is important to situate the *uprightness* to which the gospel passage refers in its proper context.

This uprightness is not always an adaptation to the laws of Man (which do not always coincide with the ways of God<sup>290</sup>), but an adaptation of Man and society to the original plan of the Creator.

Paul, in summing up this original plan, tells us that “*God wants everyone to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth.*”<sup>291</sup> *Salvation and knowledge of the truth* are thus the complementary dimensions which, like pillars, sustain God's plan.

However, there are dangers –not always successfully overcome– of interpreting the overall content of the Christian faith either from a purely transcendent and eschatological perspective, or from a merely immanent and temporal perspective. When this happens, salvation turns into a category which either loses its truly liberating force for today and for the specific individual, or becomes a mere liberation of a structural or social nature. The Christian salvation of Man, although called upon also to transform social structures, should operate at the level of the transformation of the specific individual and, although it will only be complete in the next world, should already be a reality in the historical *here and now*. The specific individual is saved, set free and realized when he knows the *truth*, acts it out in his life and radiates it in his personal context.<sup>292</sup> And, as reiterated throughout this book, Man's *truth*, according to God's plan and God's justice, lies in *love*. To hunger and thirst for uprightness is thus to collaborate in the full maturation of Man in love, according to God's original anthropological plan, fully revealed in Christ, and thereby to contribute effectively to the establishment of a civilization based on the altruistic and communal values of the Kingdom.

290 Cf. Is. 55:8.

291 Cf. 1Tim. 2:4.

292 Cf. Jn. 8:32.

Father Luis Amigó made this Beatitude one of the foundational pillars of his life. All of his acts were moved by the *glory of God*.

But the greatest *glory* that Man can give God is *his own human maturation*; in other words, to realize in himself the original plan of God and thus to reflect as clearly as possible the image of the Creator. “*The glory of God*” said one of the first Christian thinkers “*is the living man.*”<sup>293</sup> God is glorified when Man truly *lives*; that is, when he finds positive meaning in his life. And God is glorified all the more when Man’s life is truly complete.

Thus, based on the teaching and life of their founder, the Amigonians essentially discovered in this Fourth Beatitude that the best service which they, as Franciscans, could offer the specific individual –and especially the children, adolescents and youths in conflict entrusted to them– was to collaborate in their complete transformation, on the basis of the very foundations on which their beliefs and cultural principles are based. And it is precisely here that they were able to read, behind the allegory of *returning the lost sheep to the fold of the Good Shepherd*, a message of *humanization of the person* by means of their whole growth in feeling, *through love*.<sup>294</sup>

### *Giving love made to measure*

The rhythm of the Fifth Beatitude recalls the words of the Lord’s Prayer: forgive our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

As noted throughout this book, and particularly in this section, compassion constitutes the *key value* of the Amigonian approach or charisma. This value, understood primordially through the image of the Good Shepherd, who leaves everything behind to search for the lost sheep, and vested with the maternal tenderness of Our Lady of Sorrows, acquires a new dimension in the Franciscan contemplation of the Fifth Beatitude. It is enhanced here with the meekness, sweetness and joy that Francis of Assisi himself asked of those who felt

293 SAINT IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses*, 4, 20, 7.

294 Cf. Part II, Chapter I.

a calling to “*heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.*”<sup>295</sup>

“*And they ought to rejoice*” he says of them, “*when they converse with mean and despised persons, with the poor and the weak, with the infirm and lepers, and with those who beg in the streets.*”<sup>296</sup>

### *Giving without hope of reward*

The message of *the pure in heart* is, in its full spiritual and human depth, a message aimed at anyone who wants to find the joyful meaning of his existence. Emotion, experienced purely and generously, contributes decisively to the full realization of the person, helping him to grow in a *free and liberating love*. What perverts and dulls the heart is always the craving to possess. It is no coincidence that the blessing of the pure in heart is to *see God*. The pure in heart will not only see God in the great beyond, but can see and worship Him in the here and now, reflected in the face of every human being.

The beatitude of the pure in heart, read from the perspective of the value of *divestment*—a value so very characteristic of the spirituality of Francis of Assisi—has helped the Amigonian tradition to fulfill the desire, expressed by Father Luis himself, that his followers should “*be a father to their students, giving them all the attention they need and treating them with genuine affection.*”<sup>297</sup>

In the Franciscan school, and through the prism of the Sixth Beatitude, the *fatherhood* that the Amigonians are called upon to practice with their students takes on new meaning. Francis of Assisi—positioning himself in the dynamic of the Spirit—goes beyond the boundaries established by human nature between fatherhood and motherhood to conceive and express the love of God and brotherly love in a context in which there are no gender distinctions, and in which the only truly important thing is the reality of generous, free and pure love.<sup>298</sup>

295 Cf. *Legend of the Three Companions*, 58.

296 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, 1st Rule, 9:2. Cf. Part III, Chapter IV, section: *Uncomplicated, simple and joyful leading by example*.

297 Cf. Amigó, L., “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 252.

298 Cf. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, 1st Rule 9, 11; Second Rule 6, 8; *Of Living Religiously in a Hermitage*;

According to this dynamic, being *fathers* –or, perhaps more accurately, *fathers and mothers*– to the students requires a kind of renunciation of all possessive desire, “*ensuring that the students,*” as already established in the earliest Amigonian tradition, “*after giving up to God what belongs to Him, give to their parents and families the consideration, love and respect that arise spontaneously in their hearts.*”<sup>299</sup>

The true role of parenthood, or more expressively still, of motherhood, is to give with no expectation of anything in return; to give oneself and die, like the wheat grain, to give rise to new life; to diminish so that the other can grow.<sup>300</sup> When she gives birth, a woman suffers the pain of separation of a being who is until then identified with her; yet, as a mother and thinking more of her child than of herself, she is overjoyed to see a new life.

Overcoming infantilizing paternalism and authoritarianism, overcoming appropriation that objectifies the other, and, in short, overcoming every craving for possession that enslaves both its victim and its perpetrator, are ways of experiencing purity in heart, and the universality of love, in pedagogical action.<sup>301</sup>

### *Being messengers and builders of peace*

Peace is a gift of the Spirit, which the individual and society receive as a natural consequence of the harmonious synthesis of a life realized in love, according to God’s plan.

The encounter with *truth*, with the roots of human identity itself, makes Man truly free and happy and fills him with a great inner peace.

Within its own context, societal peace is also the product of a civilization founded on values of a love always ready to share its riches with all its members and to contribute to the common good with an attitude of service and generous dedication.

Through the example of the life of Francis of Assisi, who told his friars that “*since you speak of peace, all the more so must you have it in*

*1st Letter to all the Faithful* 1, 7-13.

299 Cf. AMIGÓ, L., “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 252.

300 Cf. Jn. 12:24 and Jn. 3:30.

301 Cf. Part III, Chapter II, section: *Loving the other as he is*.

*your hearts*” and that nobody should ever be “*provoked to anger or scandal by you, but rather may they be drawn to peace and goodwill, to benignity and concord through your gentleness,*”<sup>302</sup> and also through the example of Father Luis Amigó himself, who had “*peace at the center of his being,*” and in whom “*the goodness of his beautiful soul radiated from... a smile that not even death could erase,*”<sup>303</sup> the Seventh Beatitude inspired the Amigonians to be *messengers of peace for their students*, ensuring that their presence and coexistence with them –interwoven with joy and simple service, with generosity, compassion and strength of spirit– would reveal, with renewed intensity, the dimension of *gentle treatment* that distinguished their pedagogical approach from its very beginnings.<sup>304</sup>

Along with the dimension described above, which so enriches their pedagogical approach, the Amigonians also saw in the Seventh Beatitude the reinforcement of the value of *patience*, always so necessary in education, but especially in the case of rehabilitating people who suffer from personality disorders. In this sense, the Beatitude of the peacemakers or the patient would again recall the example of the *compassionate father*,<sup>305</sup> who exercises his role with a *patience* that does not impose deadlines, who respects his son’s conversion process and who, even from afar, accompanies him always with his faithful affection and with unwavering hope for his recovery.

### *Defying the difficulties*

The Eighth Beatitude is dedicated to the *prophets*, to those who with their words and especially with their lives exemplify values that are diametrically opposed to the way of being and acting of human egotism. And in this sense, it is not so much another Beatitude as a concluding summary of the other seven.

302 Cf. *Legend of the Three Companions*, 58.

303 Cf. LAUZURICA, Javier. *Introduction to Autobiography of Father Luis Amigó*, in Amigó, L. Complete Works, p. 3.

304 Cf. Part II, Chapter I, section: *Education based on feeling*.

305 Cf. Lk. 15:11-32.

The prophets persecuted for defending the justice of God's original plan are the poor, the humble, the mourners... because all of them, through their life choice, exemplify and announce the Kingdom and provoke resistance from those who have founded their happiness on riches and domination, on pleasure and plenty for themselves, on harming and exploiting others, and on violence. Precisely for this reason, suffering *persecution* is the clearest sign that a person is in the *dynamic of the Spirit*.

Francis of Assisi, reflecting on this Beatitude, wrote: "*The Lord says in the Gospel: 'Everyone that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father.' And let all the brothers, wherever they may be, remember that they have given themselves, and have relinquished their bodies to our Lord Jesus Christ; and for love of Him they ought to expose themselves to enemies both visible and invisible, for the Lord says: 'Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall save it' in eternal life. 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' 'If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.'... 'Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you... be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.' 'See that ye are not troubled.' 'In your patience you shall possess your souls.' 'But he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.'*"<sup>306</sup>

This beautiful speech of Francis's, intertwined with gospel passages and overflowing with the prophetic radicalness of Christ, was expressed in the life of Father Luis Amigó, who also conveys it with these words, already cited previously in this book: "*Do not fear perishing on the steep cliffs and precipices you will have to place yourselves on to save the lost sheep; nor be intimidated by the thorny thickets and ambushes.*"<sup>307</sup>

306 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *First Rule*, 16, 8-21.

307 AMIGÓ, L. *Complete Works*, 1831.

For Amigonian tradition, the meditation on this Eighth Beatitude, as interpreted by Francis and by Luis Amigó himself, constituted another invitation to experience the inner strength learned from the Good Shepherd and Our Lady of Sorrows, which has so characterized *Amigonian identity in action*.<sup>308</sup>

308 Cf. Part III, Chapter III.



# APPENDIX\*

## **Talk I:**

The Relationship between Charisma and Pedagogy

## **Talk II:**

The Humanist Perspective

## **Talk III:**

Between Method and Feeling

\* This appendix includes three important talks given by the author of this book on the subject of *Amigonian Pedagogy*.



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARISMA AND PEDAGOGY\*

I have the good fortune of having been given the task to open the talks of this Conference on Amigonian Pedagogy, held on the occasion of its first centenary, with the topic titled: *The Relationship between Charisma and Pedagogy*. And I feel it appropriate, before embarking on this topic, to dedicate a few lines to what the scholastics called *explicatio terminorum*, and what I prefer to consider a simple *setting of the scene*.

In short, the term *charisma* –applied to the specific case of a religious order– means *a specific and particular way of understanding and living the multifarious yet unitary Christian vocation*. Charisma is, in this sense, the particular manifestation of a more universal reality that we have come to refer to as *spirituality*.

But the danger with the word *spirituality* lies in limiting its meaning to only one of the dimensions that collectively comprise its vital complexity, in understanding it to refer solely and exclusively to the realm of the transcendent.

Although the word *spirituality* (or, more specifically, *charisma*) has its historical origins in traditionally theocentric societies, it does not necessarily have transcendent connotations in contemporary usage. It has also undergone the changes brought by a *secularization process*, basically characterized by the conferral upon Man of the central role that faith attributes to God. Thus, these days, to offer a clear example from an ideology typically constructed outside the realm of the transcendent, it is possible to speak of the *Marxist spirit*.

\* Talk given in Madrid, Spain, on April 12, 1991 during the inaugural session of the Conference on Amigonian Pedagogy, organized by the General Council of Capuchin Tertiaries on the occasion of the Centenary of the Congregation in the *Santa Rita* School.

In its more secular conception, *spirit* is, in short, the inspiration that marks the conception and action of human life. Behind every form of *spirituality* is a particular anthropological perspective. For believers, this anthropology finds its roots in God, although by its very nature it encompasses the unitary totality of human life. It is therefore impossible to create non-existent dualisms between sacred and secular spaces or times. Every aspect of daily life –with its variety of actions, including the most apparently secular– must be considered *spiritual* by the believer, taking into account that everything that contributes to the humanization of Man is loved by God and that *nothing that is truly human can be alien to the man of faith*.

In anthropology, spirituality thus finds its synthesis and harmony, just as pedagogy finds in anthropology its *raison d'être*. Pedagogical science, which as such emerged as an offshoot of philosophy, takes Man as its point of reference. Behind all pedagogical systems there is always a particular anthropological conception. And it is this idealized conception of Man that marks the pedagogical path as the *Alpha and Omega* of all educational activity. Behind every true pedagogy there is thus an underlying ideology, a *spirituality*, this term being understood here in its most secular sense.

*Spirituality* –or, if you will, charisma– and *pedagogy* are therefore not two separate realities superimposed upon or even merely complementary to one another, but dimensions of a single lived reality. The relationship between the *being* and the *doing* of the congregation, between its ideology of life and its ministerial and pedagogical action, is not the product of a conceptual perspective, but of the spontaneity and symbiosis that typifies existence. The deepest roots of Amigonian pedagogy need to be looked for in the spirit that inspires the *being of the Congregation*.

In my presentation, I will bring together a few elements that shape the existential relationship between Amigonian spirituality and pedagogy, arranging them methodologically around the following four categories:

- The anthropological ideal;
- Inspirational principles;
- The Amigonian educator; and
- The educational environment.

## *The anthropological ideal*

Behind every dimension of the relationship between spirituality and pedagogy, between being and doing, there lies a particular anthropological view. The conception of Man that is held and lived by a society marks its growth and sets the basic parameters for its activity.

Amigonian pedagogy, having developed in a religious context, participates fully in the Christian anthropological view, which presents Man as a *referential and relational* being. According to this view, Man discovers his true human identity when he finds God, “*in whose image and likeness he was created*”, and when he relates to others, breaking down the barriers of his *ego*. It is in love, in opening up and sincerely and faithfully relating to the *other* that Man becomes fully human and experiences true happiness. Saint Augustine’s perspective, summed up in the quote “*You made us, Lord, for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You,*” together with his assertion that “*love is the life of the heart,*”<sup>309</sup> that is, what gives meaning to human life, constitutes a good summary of Christian anthropology.

### *Conversion: a pedagogical path*

However, Christian thought also takes into account that this anthropological ideal –this natural process of humanization through loving openness– was undermined from the beginning by a sin, an unrestrained impulse for self-worship and arrogance, that has left every man with a strong tendency toward self-absorption and a yearning to have everything revolve around him. And this is the reason that every Christian pedagogical attempt at humanization necessarily passes through the path of conversion. Christian pedagogy essentially aims at fostering the transformation of the *Old Man* –the self-absorbed man– into a *New Man* who, in the image of Christ, can discover a positive meaning in his own existence in dedication and openness to others. The fundamental values of this pedagogical path of conversion are the attitudes of *dedication, service and solidarity*, which from

309 SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Confessions* 1.1 in *Patrologia Latina* 32,661 and *Confessions* 13.9, *ibid.* 32,848-32,849.

complementary perspectives express the basic core of the gospel message, fostering the development of the person as a *being for others*, and stand in contrast to attitudes of *possession, domination and appropriation* that distinguish the identity and actions of the self-absorbed man.

From this perspective, all educational activity that fosters the transformation of Man's attitude from egotistical to altruistic could be considered valid and effective within the pedagogical path of conversion proposed by Christianity; and it can likewise be asserted that any activities that provoke attitudes and feelings in the learner such as egotism, underhandedness, insensitivity or contempt for society should be rejected, even if they come disguised in an aura of holiness.

### *The asceticism of conversion*

At this point it is worth noting, however, that the path of conversion is not, as a general rule, a path that can be completed quickly in a single stage. By its very nature, because it is aimed at human free will, it needs time. Hence traditional Christian asceticism has always identified in conversion a gradual and progressive dynamic, encompassed in two main dimensions:

Reflection as self-awareness;

Facing reality and consequently rising to the ideal.

#### Reflection as self-awareness

Moral regeneration is not something external or merely behavioral that can be achieved through the repetition of what we might call *positive acts*. All moral action, to be considered such, must arise in response to human freedom. Only when the person becomes aware of his condition, critically appraises his present, longs for a new reality and determines to break the chains that bind him and to embark as the protagonist –in the first person– on the path toward his humanization, does the true journey of conversion begin.

Reflection, identified by classical asceticism as an essential prior step to the beginning of the conversion, by its very nature underpins the

whole process, as it constitutes the context that makes it possible for the person, looking inside himself, to choose freely throughout this journey and to be the true architect of his own story.

### Facing reality and consequently rising to the ideal

Through reflection, through the awareness that Man develops of his reality, Christian asceticism proposes that he critically confront that reality and bravely and hopefully embark on a path of self-betterment toward the human ideal. And it is at this point that asceticism spells out with full clarity the gradual and progressive nature of the conversion dynamic, in which it distinguishes three stages:

- The first –called the *purgative way*– has the objective of correcting faults;
- The second –known as the *illuminative way*– focuses on the cultivation of virtues;
- The third –referred to as the *unitive way*– aims at the consolidation of good conduct.

Without going into critical considerations here about this division into stages (applicable, incidentally, to all pedagogical systems that set about to distinguish what is *unitary* in the harmonious whole of the human personality), it is worth pointing out that the methodological and pedagogical distinction of Christian asceticism is inspired by a consistent and appreciable anthropological and moral experience.

### *Conversion as moral uplift*

Amigonian pedagogy, having been developed, as I noted earlier, in a religious life context, fully assimilates the pedagogical principles that inform the Christian faith, and is openly inspired by the pedagogical methodology of Christian asceticism. Worth noting among the more explicit points of this assimilation and inspiration are: *the orientation of the Amigonian system toward conversion*, and *the conception of youth rehabilitation as a gradual and progressive process*. The Amigonian system does not aim to instill robotic behavior, but to awaken –in keeping with what conversion represents– a *change* in the personality of the youth through a *gradual and progressive* evocation of his freedom

and responsibility. It would be incorrect to assert that this gradual and progressive approach is a mere transferal to pedagogical terrain of the traditional methodology of Christian asceticism. In its phase of scientific development, the Amigonian method has received strong influences from other pedagogical movements –especially those of central and northern Europe– that have similarly structured the rehabilitation of troubled youth into different progressive stages. But in this regard it is worth highlighting that the first formulation of this gradual and progressive approach was set forth by Father Luis Amigó almost at the same time as the publication of the First Rule of the Santa Rita School, and that the terms he uses to express the different stages –*Neophytes, Diligents and Worshipers*<sup>310</sup>– are more clearly in line with the language of Christian asceticism than with scientific pedagogical language.

However, the original Christian inspiration of Amigonian pedagogy is of course imbued with the cultural and religious features of the era. And this influence is evident in its way of understanding and expressing the concept of *conversion*. In the original Amigonian tradition, the term *moral uplift* was commonly used as a synonym for *path to conversion*. Underlying this idea of *moral uplift* was:

- On the one hand, the conviction that an explicit transmission of the faith and its *free* and active acceptance on the part of the student is the most effective way of achieving his regeneration;
- On the other hand, the belief that Christian *morality* is an irrevocable path for the learner to be able to find his personal and social balance, his realization as a *New Man*.

### *Conversion in a secularized world*

Today, while still recognizing and reaffirming the conviction that the faith –transmitted by word and by living example, and accepted actively and freely– is an excellent way to foster change in individuals and in society, we need to adapt the essential content of Christian

310 AMIGÓ, L., *11ª Ordenación de la Visita Canónica a Escuela de Sta. Rita en 1892*, in *Complete Works*, No. 2049.

pedagogy –and, in our specific *Amigonian* cases– to the political, social, religious and cultural reality of contemporary man.

As a starting point for this adaptation, I believe the following two principles to be essential:

- The acceptance of contemporary society as a society that is not mono-confessional but pluralist, which means that it is important to contribute with principles of respect and dialogue, as Vatican II teaches;
- The transmission of the anthropological values that characterize Christian Humanism and that are established for the full formation of Man and of society without necessarily making explicit use of methods related to the transmission of the faith.

However, I acknowledge that this necessary task of adaptation, while exciting, is also arduous and difficult, and needs to be based on a sociological, cultural, religious and even political analysis of each specific reality. Without attempting to address a problem whose scope exceeds the limits of this talk, I will limit myself to offering a few points of reflection on this point:

A.- It is important to distinguish clearly between *Christian civilization* and *Christianity*. The first concept refers to human and social advancement inspired by a Christian conception of life, which is, however, not exclusive to those who have received the blessing of the faith. The second concept, on the other hand, refers more specifically to the context of a human society governed in all its aspects by the specific moral teachings of the Christian religion. This concept of *Christianity* –very close to the idea of a confessional state – has, thank God, been overcome. And this also has repercussions on a pedagogy which, like the Amigonian, has hints of *missionary work* and is not generally undertaken in religious centers or among people who easily accept the invitation to the faith. The Amigonian system cannot be based today, as it was in its early days, on religious instruction as an essential element for the rehabilitation or transformation of troubled youth.

B.- While accepting the ideas set forth in point A above, however, Amigonian pedagogical action needs always to be open to the transmission of the faith, and its educational projects should offer it explicitly to students with full respect and freedom, in the awareness

that the faith, accepted and lived, greatly favors conversion, defined as the *humanization and socialization of the individual*.

C.- The formation of the youth as a *relational being open to others*—the constant and ultimate objective of Amigonian pedagogy— should be fostered through personal or community therapies that develop values of appreciation for life, respect and freedom, justice, solidarity and peace, among others, which are the core inspirations of Christian Humanism.

### *Inspirational principles*

Through its Christian roots and the anthropological conception that guides it, Amigonian pedagogy is inspired by principles that profoundly influence its implementation. Of these, in this talk I will take a moment to discuss three that I consider the most important for their influence:

- Always hope for the youth's rehabilitation;
- Treat him with principles of compassion;
- Educate him to have a realistic sense of human existence.

#### *Always hope for the youth's rehabilitation*

While recognizing the reality of sin in Man, and without attempting to engage in scientific conflicts with Lombrosian theories aimed at demonstrating a genetic disposition in certain individuals toward personality and behavioral disorders, Christian Humanism, inspired by the Bible, always hopes —and sometimes against all human odds— for the recovery of the lost sheep. And it has been this very hope that has been one of the hallmarks of Amigonian pedagogical action from its beginnings. Gospel passages like the parable of the prodigal son, whose father waits trusting in his return, or like Jesus's raising of a young man in Nain whom everyone had given up for dead, have inspired the Christian consciousness that informs the educational activity of the Amigonians. It was no accident that the first truly pedagogical journal of this Congregation should have been given the title: *Adolescens surge*. The declaration *young man, get up* —addressed to every young man, and especially to the most difficult— with the profound conviction that

change is always possible, is probably the motto that best sums up this inspiring principle of Amigonian pedagogy.

*Treat him with principles of compassion*

In the pedagogy employed by God –through the Bible– to lead the lost ones back (whether referring to the people of Israel or to a specific individual), the compassionate dimension always appears as an essential element of His re-educational therapy. This dimension, which is brought closer and made more palpable for Man in the person of Jesus, who warmly welcomes sinners and eats with them, and declares to the Pharisee that “*mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice*”, is taken up by Christian Humanism and equally informs all of the educational systems which –like the Amigonian system– are inspired by it.

In contrast with the principle of human justice, which advocates giving to each person according to his merits, the principle of compassion encourages giving according to the needs of the other. In contrast with the unifying principle of human justice, which views all men as equal before the law, compassion favors the application of personal *parameters*. Compassion thus takes priority over cold justice, placing its focus not so much on protecting law and order as on protecting the specific person, considered in the unique context of his individual circumstances. Compassion does not dismiss the law, but relativizes it and gives it back that halo of humane sensitivity that was its original inspiration.

And while it is true that this personalizing principle of law and justice is important in all orders of existence (let us not forget that even the Romans used to say *Summum jus, summa injuria*), it assumes even greater importance in the case of people who suffer more severe personality disorders and whose consequent behavioral disorders are more evident. Pedagogical science has advanced a great deal in the area of personalized therapy, and its treatment techniques have been constantly improving; but to be truly effective, these techniques, because they are directed at a person, need to be accompanied by a profound human sensitivity. Experience teaches that sometimes that

which is not achieved by the technical hand is achieved by the friendly hand.

Compassion, that individualizing element of Christian pedagogy, that justice applied personally, that *language to the person's heart* – sometimes interwoven with little details, other times with welcoming silences that ask no questions, still others with knowing how to *turn a blind eye*, and always with understanding– is one of the dimensions that has characterized Amigonian pedagogy most throughout its history. Among the various passages that could be quoted, I offer this one of Father Vicente Cabanes': "*Let us remember that it is not the plants or the flowers alone, or the pictures or the birds that make a house a home, as helpful as they are; it is the affection, the joy, the open arms of a mother who hides the failings of the child, who forgets his deeds... who wipes her child's tears... this spirit of mutual understanding is what makes a house a home.*"<sup>311</sup>

#### *Educate him to have a realistic sense of human existence*

For Christian thought, the reality of human life is by its very nature dramatic. Man, created to love –to find his full realization and happiness in openness to others– has historically preferred the path of self-worship and self-absorption. From that moment, human life turns into a constant struggle. Man feels an anthropological need to love and be loved, but love –the encounter with the other, as a person and in freedom– is only possible if we set out to meet it, giving up our desire to be the *center* of all the action. Rising up to the world of the other requires us to leave behind the enclosed horizons of the self – and to suffer being wrenched away from our own ego. The capacity for love in Christian Humanism is thus indissolubly linked to our capacity to face the self-denial and suffering that it entails; that is, the capacity to bravely face up to human reality with all its joys and sorrows, its pleasures and pains, its hopes and disillusionments. This is the reason why one of the primordial objectives of Christian pedagogy

311 CABANES, V., *Observación psicológica y reeducación de menores*, Vitoria 1940, p. 87.

is to foster in the learner his capacity to face the reality of human existence, which is harsh but, at the same time, rewarding.

Pedagogical experience shows that many behavioral disorders arise from *attitudes of self-defense* in response to pain, suffering, self-denial or sacrifice. On the other hand, many of the *attitudes of contempt* for all that surrounds them that are observable in some youths might also stem from an education that has not helped them to become conscious of—and hence to value—the work that life entails, and, above all, the work entailed in “*loving and being loved*”. On this point, Vatican II states that “*human freedom is often crippled when a man encounters extreme poverty just as it withers when he indulges in too many of life’s comforts and imprisons himself in a kind of splendid isolation. Freedom acquires new strength, by contrast, when a man consents to the unavoidable requirements of social life, takes on the manifold demands of human partnership, and commits himself to the service of the human community.*”<sup>312</sup> It is no accident that most therapies currently applied to the treatment of personal traumas and behavioral conflicts have getting the person to face reality as one of their points of reference.

Strengthening the youth’s character and personality so that he can face up to life rather than run away from it has been one of the determining objectives of Amigonian pedagogy since its foundation. The voucher system, aimed at fostering an awareness in youths that in life “nothing comes for free, and everything has a price”, has been one of the traditional methods employed to strengthen the personality.

### *The Amigonian educator*

Because of the essential nature of the contributions received by the Amigonian system from the anthropological perspective of the Christian conception of life, its influence can be seen most clearly, if anywhere, in the constitution of the person of the educator. It is perhaps in this constitution that the relationship between charisma and pedagogy acquires its greatest expressive force. The vital relationship established through the figure of the educator between

312 *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 31.

Christian thought and Amigonian pedagogy humanizes educators in such a way that they cannot fairly be classified within certain pedagogical systems without first making a few necessary qualifications. In my presentation I will attempt to offer a methodological explanation of the Christian inspiration behind the Amigonian educator from the following three perspectives:

- Educator by vocation;
- Educator inspired by the Good Shepherd;
- Educator with a Franciscan approach.

### *Educator by vocation*

The word *vocation* has suffered a similar fate as that noted at the beginning of this talk with respect to the word *spirituality*. As this word also originated in a religious context, it might be thought that its content is valid only for those who explicitly accept the transcendent dimension in their lives. However, the anthropological content that the word *vocation* has traditionally been intended to express goes beyond the realm of the religious and is used in pluralist societies with various meanings. *Deontology* –or alternatively, *professional ethics*– captures the essence of the inspiration that has traditionally underpinned the *vocational sphere*.

For its appropriate implementation, pedagogy –as the Humanist science that it is– needs to establish a personal relationship between the education professional and the learner. And this relationship, to which the application of appropriate techniques would no doubt contribute, is also fostered to the extent that professionals –equipped with personal qualities that allow them to establish frank and friendly communication with the other– are prepared to develop it with a generosity that goes beyond the strict minimum requirements.

### Inspirational level

Historically, the vocational dimension of the Amigonian educator has taken its inspiration from the Biblical parable of the Good Shepherd, in which, as a background to the main action, two characters appear in contrast to one another: the shepherd, who is

ready even to lay down his life for his sheep because he loves them; and the hired man, who *is physically* there with the sheep, but whose heart and mind are elsewhere.

Father Luis Amigó, in a text written for his friars that is considered his true *spiritual testament*, invites them to work among marginalized youth as “*young shepherds*”<sup>313</sup> in collaboration with the Good Shepherd. And the lived tradition of the congregation in light of this provocative figure has understood this collaboration to require educators to have equal parts of *generosity* and *inner strength*. A generosity inspired directly by the figure of the Good Shepherd, who “*lays down his life*” freely, “*so that others may have life*”, whereby the educator is able to live generously together with the students “*even on those days when they are most troublesome*,”<sup>314</sup> a generosity which means that he doesn’t “*watch the clock*” or display weariness with the students, but makes their lives in the establishment as pleasant as possible;<sup>315</sup> a generosity, in short, that is revealed in a spirit of “*complete dedication*”. And together with generosity, educators need the inner strength to stand firm in the face of difficulties, to bravely face –as the Constitutions of 1910 described them– “*the hardships, troubles and disappointments arising from the specific ministry*.”<sup>316</sup> The words quoted below –which are the ripe fruit of the reflections of the great educator and director of the Santa Rita School, Father Domingo de Alboraya– perfectly sum up the generosity and inner strength with which the Amigonian tradition has defined and acted out the vocational dimension of its pedagogical practice: “*the Capuchin tertiary has enough work in the faithful adaptation of his person, in body and soul, to the spirit of sacrifice demanded and entailed in the arduous mission of the Institute*.”<sup>317</sup>

313 AMIGÓ, L., “*Letter to the Capuchin Third Order Sisters and Friars*”, in *Complete Works*, n. 1831.

314 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Constituciones de 1933*, n. 212.

315 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Constituciones de 1933*, n. 212.

316 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 257.

317 *Manual de 1911*, n. 74.

## The educator with a vocation in a professionalized world

However, everything I have described up to this point must not come into conflict with the contemporary reality of a professionalized society.

Social justice, which has made such great progress in this past century, constitutes one of the great merits of our civilization, and its advances have contributed new and very positive values to contemporary culture. What I am describing here is thus not a nostalgic longing for work patterns with interminable work hours that are no longer acceptable, or a rejection of the laudable achievements made by unions, which would be neither logical nor just.

I believe that acting out the vocational dimension in Amigonian terms today simply means (and this is no small task) combining the appropriate technical training with the necessary disposition and generosity of spirit that will enable the educator not only to *be with* his learners, but to *be among* them; a person who accompanies them, encourages them and corrects them, listens and talks to them; a person who shares in their feelings and their activities and, above all, a person who loves them and inspires their love. “*During my visits to the centers run by the Superior Council,*” wrote Vicente Alejandro Guillamón in *Vida Nueva*, “*I found Capuchin tertiary educators who were completely dedicated to their work, and others with less training and less generosity, as occurs in any Congregation. I know that in the work of rehabilitating minors there are many failures, but the mere fact of being with them, attending to them and trying to help them deserves my full respect and consideration.*”<sup>318</sup>

### *Educator inspired by the Good Shepherd*

Following the development of the inspirational theme established around the figure of the Good Shepherd, I would like to explore here, albeit briefly, some of the characteristics that have traditionally distinguished the work of the Amigonian educator:

318 *Vida Nueva*, No. 1634, p. 39.

## Knowing the students

The Good Shepherd calls each sheep by name, knows them all *personally* and is known by them. Here we enter into the dynamic of knowledge in the Bible, which is interwoven more with life than with concepts; a knowledge that comes through *the way of the heart*. Only by relating personally with the other can he truly be known, because only then is his *being* truly shared. To “*learn the science of the human heart through experience*,”<sup>319</sup> as Luis Amigó instructed his first friars, has been one of the maxims of the Capuchin Tertiaries in their educational work. The same psycho-pedagogical studies that the Amigonian system has applied since its beginnings to foster knowledge of the students with technical expertise have had *observation and coexistence* as their main underlying principles.

## Educating them by example

Leading by example is, as Father Luis Amigó said, “the best preacher and its power of persuasion is irresistible.”<sup>320</sup>

The Good Shepherd clears a path as he walks. Walking ahead of his sheep, he turns himself into a way and a role model for them.

In Amigonian pedagogical tradition, this leading by example has found its best expression in *sharing*. The educator is not a mere spectator or a simple director of the educational activity; he himself engages in it, participating actively the different tasks of the group. Father Domingo de Alboraya, in the report he published in 1906 on the Santa Rita School, elucidated this point with brilliant clarity: “*the work in the School is not merely directive or supervisory, as the friars take a very active part in everything the students are required to do. They never say to the student, ‘Do this’, but rather ‘Let’s do this’, teaching them always by example.*” And he adds: “*the educator eats with his students from the same pot, works with them and relaxes with them, taking part in their games.*”<sup>321</sup>

319 AMIGÓ, L., *Orders to the Convent of Mount Zion of Torrente*, 9, in *Complete Works*, n. 2047.

320 AMIGÓ, L., *Complete Works*, n. 1087.

321 AYARROBLA, *La Escuela de Reforma de Sta. Rita*, Madrid 1906, p. 52 and 75.

## Giving priority to those most in need

Within its universality, the Christian message advocates a preferential and meticulous concern for those most in need. Christ is presented to the society of the time as the one who has “come in search of those who are lost” and to “heal those who are sick”. It is, in short, this compassionate dimension of the Gospel that I have been alluding to in this talk.

Luis Amigó, in bequeathing to his followers the religious and social concern that marked his own life, invited them to “*go in search of the lost sheep*” without fear of “*perishing on the steep cliffs and precipices you will have to place yourselves on.*”<sup>322</sup>

The Amigonian tradition has transferred this spiritual concern of its founder to pedagogical terrain, making one of its ideals the aim to awaken in the spirit of the educator the sensitivity, creativity and inner strength necessary to be able to determine at any given moment who the youths most in need are, and what their most urgent needs are, and to be able to offer an effective response in each case, *contriving a chance encounter with any student*<sup>323</sup> who is experiencing the greatest difficulties, as Amigonian tradition instructs.

### *Educator with a Franciscan approach*

The Franciscan tradition has also left its mark on the constitution of the Amigonian educator.

Francis of Assisi began a spiritual movement in the Church that is basically characterized by a radical adherence to the Gospel message. To live the Gospel “*to the letter and without exceptions*” –as Francis would often say– is the core of Franciscan spirituality.

However, in this radical adherence, Francis focused his attention particularly on what has come to be called *minority*; that is, on discovering and experiencing the truth that Man’s greatness and happiness does not lie in dominating the other as a *master*, but in *placing yourself at the disposal of your fellow man*, as a *servant*. Franciscan

322 Cf. AMIGÓ, L., *To the Capuchin Third Order Sisters and Friars*, in *Complete Works*, n. 1831.

323 TERCIARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manual 1933*, n. 228.

minority –interwoven with meekness and patience, with simplicity and straightforwardness, with affability and joy– finds its fullest expression in the Beatitudes, which also constitute the most complete summary of the values of Christian Humanism.

The spiritual core of minority –incorporated into the very *being* of the Amigonian Congregation from its beginnings– has also been reflected in the person of the educator, and is particularly revealed in the *friendliness* with which he welcomes students and in the *simplicity* and *affability* with which he treats them throughout the educational process, living with them and sharing in their feelings and activities. The original pedagogical tradition of the Amigonians teaches that the friars should take up the role of parents at the center, giving the youths, from the moment of their arrival, “*all the attention they need, without ever being frugal with their affection.*”<sup>324</sup> Father Vicente Cabanes adds: “*the educational process begins with a paternal welcome. If on stepping for the first time through the threshold of our establishment, the youth is confronted with a mirthless man, with stiffness and stone coldness, and the first words he hears in our house are words of reproach and irony, demands and inquisitions into the wrongs he has committed, that poor boy might very well turn back to his own home. The establishment would not be an educational center for him, but a prison.*”<sup>325</sup> And the Amigonian pedagogical manual published in 1985, compiling these teachings, states that: “*the reception of the youth should be friendly, without reservations or suspicions; understanding of the condition of the youth and respectful, remembering that it is a person who is being received.*”<sup>326</sup> “The educator’s coexistence with the students, his presence, affectionate and approachable without being smothering, gives security and cohesion to the group, encouragement and inspiration to the individual, and authority and leadership to the educator; leadership conferred not so much by his position as by his dedication and availability.”<sup>327</sup>

324 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 252.

325 CABANES, V., *Obras completas*, p. 24.

326 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manual Pedagógico*, Valencia 1985, n. 18.

327 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manual Pedagógico*, n. 275.

## *Educational environment*

And as a conclusion to this talk, I would like to offer at least a brief outline of the educational environment in which the teaching work of the Amigonians has taken place, in the conviction that by its nature the educational environment constitutes the most complete synopsis and most visible expression of any pedagogical system.

One of the ideals of the Amigonian system, which, according to many testimonials, is generally achieved in its centers, has been to create in the educational center the kind of familial atmosphere that marginalized youths have generally lacked. This familial atmosphere, whose creation is the product of a diverse range of factors (structural, environmental and, of course, educational), is fostered in particular by the climate of personal relations established between the different individuals involved.

In the natural family, the creation of such a climate of personal relations depends largely on the parents, who through positive action, while at the same time being respectful of the individual freedom of each member, foster (along with the other family members) an honest and friendly *coexistence* and open and sincere *dialogue*.

In keeping with this idea, since its earliest days Amigonian pedagogy has sought to create a *feeling of family* in its centers, through everything from their physical structure to the smallest details of everyday educational activity. But there can be no doubt that this family atmosphere has been fostered most of all by the simplicity, affability, participation, closeness and empathy with which its educators have treated their students, which contributes positively and effectively to fostering a spontaneous and happy coexistence. It could therefore be said, in short, that the family atmosphere that has characterized Amigonian pedagogy has been largely fostered by the attitudes that have informed the work of its educators through the *being* of the Congregation. And in this same sense, I would like to conclude this talk by asserting that the family atmosphere most expressively reflects the symbiosis established in Amigonian pedagogy between *charisma* and *pedagogy*.

## THE HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE\*

### *Background*

I would like first of all to thank Father Marino for the honor of entrusting me with this first talk, and thus allowing me the opportunity to be able to share these moments with you all.

The theme proposed, *The Humanist Perspective*, which in and of itself is thought-provoking, is also for me particularly appealing and provocative, for reasons I will explain to you.

As a result of one of those unexpected turns that life takes every once in a while, I had the opportunity of being a front-line witness (although I was not directly involved in the initiative myself) to the first steps taken by the Amigonian pedagogical community within the field of therapeutic treatment for drug addictions.

I recall well, with both affection and nostalgia, the parliamentary emphasis, verging on the tone of a political rally, with which the great pioneer of this cause within the Amigonian world, Father Marco Fidel López, with the loquacity that characterizes the dedication of the Capuchin tertiaries, advocated therapeutic work with drug users, during the deliberations of the governing body of the congregation at the sixteenth general chapter meeting in its history, held in 1983.

At that time, Father Marco Fidel has just completed a long and demanding training course for leaders specializing in therapies aimed at treating drug addiction. In his manner of speaking at that moment, which at any time was generally eloquent, the degree to which the

\* Talk given in Medellín, Colombia, on November 3, 1999 during the inaugural session of the international symposium on the Role of Therapeutic Communities in the Twenty-First Century, organized by the Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó.

experience *had touched his heart* was clear, and I recall vividly that one of the main arguments he used to convince all of us present of the validity of his concern was precisely to point to the close relationship between the pedagogical system of the congregation and the field of therapeutics.

I do not know whether he succeeded in convincing us then of this relationship. I do know that he convinced us of his basic argument and that, shortly before leaving us, we gave him the green light and full blessings to move forward officially with his proposal to open a community dedicated to the rehabilitation of youths who had fallen victim to drug addiction in Colombia, in line with the Amigonian pedagogical experience.

But why am I telling you all this, you may well ask? Well, because, apart from taking us back to the historical roots of the milestone we are celebrating at this conference –that is, the first 15 years of the Amigonian therapeutic communities in Colombia– the topic that has been entrusted to me is in a way intended to spell out what was being asserted at that time, i.e. the symbiosis that could be created –and that indeed is a reality today– between the historical heritage of the Amigonian mission and therapies aimed at treating drug dependency.

### *Education of the feelings*

With the aim of achieving my purpose with a certain logic and a certain degree of clarity, I invite you all, first of all, to delve into the very heart of Amigonian pedagogy and to ponder with me its most characteristic element, which is, in my view, the *education of the feelings*.

In response to those who –based on fragmentary, superficial, and disembodied observation of the classical re-educational method of Amigonian pedagogy– have dismissed it as being excessively *behaviorist*, essentially aimed at *changing behavior*, it is important to note that Amigonian pedagogy, in its oldest and most genuine tradition, has always made the guiding principle of its activity the personal maturation of the student's feelings, or, to use an expression typical of the early days of the Amigonians, the *education of the heart*.

Educating the heart of the person is, in short, educating him *to be*, i.e. to become aware of his own personal identity, to freely assume his own right to self-determination and thus to *enjoy* life, with the true joy of happiness.

However, this *education to be*, to be able *to feel happy and at ease with oneself*, in all Western Humanist culture –which is either directly or indirectly rooted in two thousand years of Christian civilization– requires the growth of the individual in *values* and, particularly, in the value that gives value to, *appreciates* and confers the true sign of authenticity upon all others, which is *love*.

*Educating to be* thus means educating for love and, through this central emotion, fostering the humanization of the person and his growth and maturation in altruism and generosity, in integrity and in honesty, in solidarity and in sociability, and in a whole range of dimensions that speak more of *being* than of *having*, and more of *being for others* than of *being for oneself*.

Related more or less directly to this education of the feelings (which, as I have pointed out, aims to transform not only or primordially the person's behavior, but his *being*, thereby contributing to his harmonious and full maturity), there are certain terms in the Amigonian pedagogical tradition which, extracted from their original cultural context and disconnected from the primary objective of *educating the heart*, could be construed as meaning the opposite of what they were really intended to express.

One of these terms is *moral uplift*, which, even by its very etymological structure, tends to be used to refer more to the level of behavior than to that of a person's identity. Nevertheless, the Amigonian school uses this term without ever suggesting a conflict with the fundamental objective of the educational process. When the Amigonian school speaks of *moral uplift*, it is never intended to express an end unto itself. And if it promotes it in its methodology, it is always from a merely *phenomenological* –never an ontic– perspective, which aims to uncover in the change of behavior a much more profound, essential and vital change, which is the change in the attitude, in the feelings, in the being of the learner.

Another term in Amigonian pedagogy traditionally associated with education of the feelings is the term *emulation*. And this term also

requires a cultural relocation, because in our times it is very difficult to separate it from a strong sense of *competitiveness* and a *struggle for survival* which, by its very nature, would enter into intense conflict with a process of humanization which, as Amigonian pedagogy itself proposes by virtue of its profoundly Christian inspiration, is founded on *alterity*.

Indeed, in its most original conception (and it is according to this conception that I believe we would need to interpret its use in Amigonian tradition), *emulation*, far from any idea of rivalry with the other, aims to stimulate the deepest levels of the personality, inspiring the learner, in a kind of boost to his self-esteem, to bring his greatest abilities into play and, especially, to mature in his attitudes toward life. It would thus not be a question of *emulating another* or of *competing with him*, but of *stimulating* and activating the possibilities of the learner's own being.

### *Educating in inner strength and responsibility*

To strengthen the learner's capacity for self-determination or, to use the traditional phrasing, *to form the character*, has been another of the fundamental bases of the Amigonian pedagogical system throughout its history.

In terms of his own identity, a person is free insofar as he possesses sufficient autonomy to *choose what is best for his whole and harmonious development toward happiness*, as opposed to what he might *crave* at any given moment. There is no enslavement worse than enslavement to one's own appetites when these separate a person from his own *personal project or legend*.

In the world of children and youths with personality and behavioral disorders, it is precisely their lack of autonomy to choose between what could build them up and what could destroy them as people that is one of their most common obstacles. They are for the most part children and youths who operate on the level of sensations and fleeting pleasures, never thinking or even dreaming of making investments that could promise them a more stable and lasting happiness for tomorrow.

This obstacle –which in fact makes it impossible for them to choose freely between the *aesthetic of being in harmony with themselves* and the *maelstrom* that plunges their personal being, their personal identity, into a kind of increasingly accelerated and accelerating freefall – is, on the other hand, one of the most difficult handicaps to overcome, because it is in essence the result of not believing in anything or anyone or, to put it another way, believing –with a deep-seated and unshakable faith– that they themselves are *nobodies*, *negated people* who are permitted *gratification*, but not *happiness*; who are allowed to experience pleasant sensations, but intrinsically forbidden from enjoying the pleasure of a life in harmony with themselves.

This whole emotional and existential drama –somehow endemic to environments of marginalization– is further aggravated by a contemporary cultural tendency to present a superficial, *lite* view of life, and yet the very structure of Man –oriented toward personalization and humanization by growing in feeling, in love– is testimony of the truth that only by *breaking out of his own shell*, only by giving up –and not without some pain– his own self-absorption and self-worship, can he truly experience the profound joy offered by the empathetic encounter with others and the consequent growth in humanity of his own being, of his own identity or *selfhood*.

Thus, conscious of the fact that the lack of the autonomy needed to make truly free choices in their lives constitutes one of the most serious and common structural obstacles faced by troubled youths, and that, on the other hand, this same lack of real decision-making ability reduces their chances of engaging with any guarantee of success in an educational process (to the point of eliminating those chances completely in the most severe cases), Amigonian pedagogy has, since its beginnings, considered the development of the *capacity for autonomy* in troubled minors to be one of its most basic and urgent educational objectives.

The traditional Amigonian expressions of *educating the will* and *forming the character*, although advocated in secular practice by behaviorist methodologies which, moreover, can foster the establishment of basic habits in certain groups in the right context and are therefore used even in drug addiction rehabilitation, have never had the ultimate aim of changing behavior (which would place the method

in an extreme and senseless form of behaviorism), but of *strengthening* the child's or youth's freedom; that is, his capacity to decide and choose options that favor his own positive process of personal construction.

### *Education through closeness*

Education of the feelings, or education of the heart –the main objective of Amigonian education– is only possible, however by way of example.

Only a person who has felt loved can develop his sensibility and capacity for love.

Behind every personal drama there is always a profound emotional lack.

And in the progressive emergence from this emotional drama lies the true secret of a genuine personal rehabilitation. As the person begins to feel loved, wanted and valued, his innate ability to feel begins to develop and, together with the first and most radical of the feelings –which is none other than love, appreciation, affection– he also begins to experience a sense of his own personal dignity, a feeling of *self-esteem*, which is likewise essential in order to awaken in him that indispensable capacity for *inner strength* needed for him to freely choose investments that will foster the development of his identity in happiness and harmony.

So, how can we fan this first flame of feeling in the person of the student? How can we ensure that the affection for him is both credible and effective in its educational aim?

This is not an easy question to answer.

On the one hand, we need to overcome the temptations of *paternalism*, which, because of their protectionist nature, do not contribute to a true education in which the main player should always be the learner himself, and his growing capacity to take firm hold of *the reins of his own life journey*.

On the other hand, it is not a question merely of loving and *appreciating* the student *as he is*, but of making him believe in that love. And at this point, there arises what is no less than a drama suffered by many marginalized children and youths, some of whom have been so badly abused in their lives, so *negated*, their psyches and

even their bodies so prostituted, that at times it seems that they have even lost the capacity to feel loved, and they find it almost impossible to imagine that someone could love them for the mere fact that they are people, and that they will not have to pay in some way for the affection received. The *unconditional* nature of love –fundamental to all true love and always essential for love to be defined as such– is something that seems beyond the reach of people who tend to assume automatically that anyone who shows them affection *is expecting something from them in return or will have to be paid back for it later*.

It is also essential to make the student understand that, because he is loved *as he is*, he cannot remain idle and complacent in his development process, but rather that this fact should spur him on constantly to better himself, in the awareness that, in the unrepeatably adventure of his own human maturation, nobody else, however much they may want to, can do for him what it is up to him to do himself.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these difficulties, in its effort to contribute to the reconstruction of the person through the development of his capacities to *feel as a person* and to *decide freely*, Amigonian pedagogy has always sought to stir the spirit of the student in spite of the traumas he has suffered. And conscious that only with feeling and through feeling is it possible to help awaken feeling in the other, the Amigonian school has fostered a profoundly Humanist *educational approach* in its educators.

And with respect to this *educational approach* –which to my mind constitutes the purest, most valuable and characteristic contribution of all Amigonian pedagogical praxis– it is important to highlight the fact that one of its most outstanding distinctive features is the notion of *closeness*, a closeness which first and foremost conveys the educational value of *empathy*.

While still being pioneers in Spain in the application of psychopedagogical sciences aimed at understanding the student, Amigonian pedagogy has invariably taken the position that the best way to truly come to know the student is *the way of the heart*; that is, to engage in a friendly, *empathetic* relationship with him that will begin to encourage him –as he feels loved and appreciated in his uniqueness– to get to know himself spontaneously through the dynamic of daily life itself.

To foster such empathy, however, has traditionally been the main task of the educator, and has required from him a *sensitivity* and *availability* that enable him to: *perceive* any calls for help or support that students may make, even silently; to be personally *in tune* with each of them, valuing their individuality; to *share* –in an ordinary way, but with heart– their joys and sorrows; to *live together* with all of them, taking part in their group activities as if it were the most natural thing in the world; to *be close* to them at all times and listen to them carefully, and to *know when to increase* such closeness and accompaniment with those who may need it most.

The figure of the educator, with his approachable and empathetic, sensitive and affable attitude, which equally avoids both paternalism and severity, in addition to having contributed very positively to the rehabilitation of many students who have felt the desire to change their lives, through the *power of the heart*, has also contributed to giving the pedagogical action of the Amigonians throughout their history the necessary dose of *art and poetry* that all educational science requires.

### *Amigonian Pedagogy and Therapeutic Communities: Meeting halfway*

By way of conclusion to the discussion so far, we could say that Amigonian pedagogy has a profoundly Humanist orientation not only because it aims at the reconstruction of the human person by awakening in him the *sacred* repository of his feelings, but also because it contributes to that reconstruction through an emotional empathy between educator and student.

And it is precisely this Humanist character –brought to life especially in the characteristic approach of the educator– that has been the great contribution that this pedagogy has made to the therapeutic communities under the authority of the Capuchin tertiaries.

Moreover, the encounter between these two formative institutions (Amigonian pedagogy and the therapeutic communities) occurred as something natural and logical. Not only was there the circumstance that many drug-dependent youths exhibited a series of emotional problems that bore similarities to those that veiled the personality of

the children traditionally sent to reformatories, but also that in recent years these same children, along with their usual symptoms, are with ever greater frequency being found to suffer the additional problem of drug addiction.

However, and this is also worth making clear, the encounter between these two educational institutions was a *meeting halfway*.

Not only were the therapeutic communities enriched by the contribution from the pedagogical tradition referred to above, but the tradition itself was enriched with the particular pedagogical values observed and fostered by the communities.

And I would like to make reference here in particular to the value of *family therapies* fostered by the therapeutic communities aimed at the full rehabilitation of their patients.

While it is true that Amigonian pedagogy has always focused on *educating for life*, at times it has shown itself to be so attentive to its labor –generally reduced to the *circle of student and educational center*– that it has overlooked the importance of educating the child's family environment, thus forgetting –at least in its praxis– that the child would have to return to that environment one day.

This historical weakness in the Amigonian system is today clearly being overcome thanks to the encounter with the therapeutic communities.

### *An old dream*

And to finish off, following this meeting halfway between Amigonian pedagogy and the therapeutic communities, allow me to share with you an *old dream*, which, in a way, is now beginning to be made a reality.

I am referring to the *therapeutic communities* aimed at the rehabilitation of *adolescents* with drug addictions.

The psychological condition of these patients –very different from that of adult drug users– often requires different methodologies and therapies from those used successfully with older patients.

If you will allow me the comparison, the adult with a drug addiction is generally like an *aircraft ready to land*; a person who has already become aware of his real situation, who has realized that he

must either *touch down* once and for all, or bid farewell to life, and who voluntarily accepts –albeit with the limitations typical of a freedom hampered by dependency– to submit to a cure which, he knows, will often be painful.

On the other hand, the adolescent drug user is –to continue the comparison– like an *aircraft taking off*, who, by the very nature of the take-off procedure, has his mind on everything but landing. It is the age of discovery, of new experiences and of flying high. At such an age it is hard for the person to become clearly aware that he is playing with his life and that he needs to find a way to recover it and hold onto it, giving priority to full and lasting happiness over the fleeting pleasures of the moment.

With such a state of mind and heart, it is hard for the young adolescent to voluntarily accept therapies conceived and developed for people who will agree to follow them with a certain minimum degree of free commitment.

How can we increase the chances of getting these adolescents to understand that, even though *they are beginning to take flight, they urgently need to touch ground?*

How can we develop more effective programs for their rehabilitation?

Therein lies the *dream* and therein also lies a *cause* for which the Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó could become a *champion*.

## BETWEEN METHOD AND FEELING\*

### *Background*

*Between method and feeling.* This reflection from the perspective of Amigonian pedagogy, to be read as an opening to this 4th Latin American Conference on Re-Educational Pedagogy, is intended to be as simple as this.

To speak of Amigonian pedagogy as a reality which, in its activity and historical development, has moved *between method and feeling*, is to speak at the same time of a pedagogy whose objective has moved harmoniously *between education of the will and education of the heart*; between the ethics of doing and the aesthetic of being, or, to use a comparison employed by Luis Amigó himself, *between virtue* (understood as appropriate behavior) *and truth* (as a concept that encompasses that human feeling that identifies the real essence of the person).<sup>328</sup>

Around two years ago, at a talk I gave at this same location, to which I purposefully proposed the title *Amigonian Humanism Is Made Pedagogy*, I addressed the topic (although more from a historical perspective) that I wish to explore today from a more philosophical and anthropological point of view.

### *In the beginning, there was feeling*

When the Amigonian congregation took over the first Spanish center dedicated to the education of troubled children and youths in 1890, therapeutic pedagogy, as such, had not yet come into existence.

\* Talk given in Medellín, Colombia, on Thursday, May 4, 2000 during the inaugural session of the 4th Latin American Conference on Re-Educational Pedagogy, organized by the Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigó.

328 Cf. AMIGÓ, L., *Complete Works*, n. 1780.

The first Amigonians arrived at *Santa Rita* –which was the name of that first center– without much scientific knowledge, although they did have a strong dose of what has commonly been referred to as *good will*, but which in my opinion would be more aptly labeled *good attitude* or *good spirit*, or, in short, *profoundly human feeling* or *humanity*.

This was in a sense the intention behind the papal decree of 1902 that approved the congregation founded by Luis Amigó, when, echoing the reports received from different authorities about what the friars had been doing there, it determined that the Amigonians' chief mission in the world of troubled children and youths involved *servicing as clearly as possible as an example of the compelling love of Christ*; in other words, helping them understand –and above all to *feel*– that they are loved.

In reality, the papal decree did no more than proclaim solemnly to the four winds something that was already common knowledge among those first friars, and for which several of them had become spokesmen:

“*The main method, and I would daresay the only one,*” wrote one of the first Amigonian educators, “*is kindness in all its manifestations: benignity, patience... etc.*”<sup>329</sup>

“*In every human being,*” insisted another, “*there is a seed of feeling that we cultivate... To do this, it is necessary to have great patience and kindness in dealing with the children...*”<sup>330</sup>

“*True love is revealed in tireless devotion to providing aid and support,*” wrote yet another, “*in faithfully guiding and helping, in patiently waiting for the right moment; in showing understanding for those who err; in love that hopes all and forgives all and that remains faithful even to one who rejects [the help] and who already seems [to be a] lost [cause].*”<sup>331</sup>

“*When every method has been tried to lead a student onto the right path, and he persists in following the wrong path,*” the tradition recommends to Amigonian educators, underlining the power of human feeling, “*seek out an experienced monk, so that, contriving a chance encounter with him, he may speak to his heart.*”<sup>332</sup>

329 ALACUÀS, Bernardino de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 3.074.

330 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5.042-5.043. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 5.048 and 5.052.

331 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11.123.

332 TERCERCIARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 228 in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0.311.

In conclusion, for early Amigonian pedagogy what mattered was for the educator to have a *good heart*, for him to be –as we tend to say, simplifying the complex and rich world of the feelings– *a good person*.

### *Feeling was the means and the end*

Called to be examples of love and humanity and prophets of human feeling, those first Amigonians –without falling into paternalism and without ever foregoing a healthy and serious demand when circumstances so required– based their educational method chiefly on the transforming power of feeling itself. They were conscious of the fact that when the person *feels loved*, his reservations give way and, lowering the bulwark of his ego, he begins to open up to others, thereby growing in humanity and, little by little, humanizing his behavior.

This whole creed was expressed in the early days in the concept referred to as *emulation*.

This *emulation* –as I understand it and as I described it previously at the International Symposium on the *Role of Therapeutic Communities in the Twenty-First Century*, held here last November– needs to be interpreted free of notions of rivalry or competitiveness, following its most traditional conception, as an inspiration of the very depths of the student’s personality, so that, believing and trusting in himself and in his potential (or, to put the same thing another way, *growing in self-esteem*), he may begin to activate his being, bringing his greatest capacities into play and maturing in his attitudes toward life and toward others, in response to the love received and engendered.

“*Besides the very nature of the human heart,*” wrote Father Luis Amigó himself, “*the most beautiful way for inspiring children... is to awaken a sense of emulation among them; it appears very much the case to us that you should try to stimulate this among the children... the most suitable means of emulation should be selected from what ingenuity and experience dictates... Experience will teach them [the friars] that they will get more from the children [with emulation] than with any kind of punishment.*”<sup>333</sup>

“*You catch more flies with honey than with bile*” or “*you catch more flies with a drop of honey than with a barrel of vinegar*” was a

phrase oft-repeated by one tertiary, echoing a favorite saying of Father Amigó himself.<sup>334</sup>

*“If the student is treated with the true care that the mission of the order requires,”* the Constitutions declare, *“his heart shall be opened to the teachings given to him.”*<sup>335</sup>

For the early Amigonian tradition, the technique of *emulation* basically entailed acting with the awareness of one who believes –with unshakable faith– in the moral that underlies the Franciscan fable *The Wolf of Gubbio*, which Father Luis Amigó summed up in one of his writings as follows:

*“For the heart of the man in whom the Lord has engraved the gratitude, these mercies are like burning arrows which light the fire of charity within them and ends by converting the rapacious wolf into a gentle lamb.”*<sup>336</sup>

Or, to put it in a way that will hardly seem new at this point of my reflection: he who feels loved, feels inspired to love.

*“When students realize that someone is making sacrifices for them and is truly concerned for their welfare,”* wrote one of the great Amigonian pedagogues, *“they will feel affection for him and he will therefore be able to work on their rehabilitation.”*<sup>337</sup>

The problem lies –as I have noted on other occasions– in the fact that street kids have suffered so much in their lives, have been so *negated* that, in some cases, they have practically lost not only the capacity to express feelings, but even –and this is still more dramatic– the capacity to perceive them. There is an old saying that *the scalded cat runs away from cold water*. And something like this is what happens to youths who have suffered *assaults upon their being*.

But in the early and original Amigonian tradition, feeling was not only the means, but also constituted *the end*.

The main objective of the educational activity of those first friars – whose work has been subject to a superficial and biased analysis by some who have classified it unfairly as excessively or merely *behaviorist*– was precisely to *educate the heart* of their students. Indeed, they felt profoundly pleased by the simple explanation of their

334 VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,048 and 5,052.

335 TERCARIOS CAPUCHINOS, “*Constituciones de 1910*”, n. 237 in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 0.313.

336 AMIGÓ, L., *Complete Works*, n. 1058.

337 PAIPORTA, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,048.

educational method by a Madrid journalist, who spontaneously described them as “*cultivators of feeling*”.<sup>338</sup>

“*Only by developing great virtues [or values, as we would say today] in our students,*” asserted one of those first Amigonians who even ended up working in Bogotá, “*will we be able to successfully achieve the aim of education, which is, before all and above all, the training of the heart.*”<sup>339</sup>

In short, educating the heart of the student was, for them, as I have suggested on other occasions at this same institution, educating him *to be*, i.e. to become aware of his own personal identity and to feel affection for it, and at the same time to freely assume his own right to self-determination and thus to *enjoy life, with the true joy of happiness.*

It was precisely this *education of the heart* that they sought to express with the traditional term *moral uplift*, a term which, although initially it may bring to our minds the idea of an *ethics of behavior*, was to my understanding primordially intended to express an *aesthetic of feeling* or of being:

“*It is important to appeal constantly to the noble and generous feelings of the student,*” argues Father Valentín. “*His personal conscience cannot be substituted with a purely external conscience.*”<sup>340</sup> And elsewhere he stresses that “*we must be artists of that supreme work of art whose ultimate aim is to forge spirits, cultivating the aesthetic of feeling.*”<sup>341</sup>

It is true, and it would be neither logical nor honest to ignore it, that for those first friars, *education of the heart* –as Valentín himself would assert– needed to be harmonized with the “*formation of the character that is the first sign of the will consolidated in the human soul.*”<sup>342</sup> But it is equally true –and with this assertion I will conclude this section– that the primordial objective of education was precisely the maturing of the person’s *being*, the development of his feelings, and fundamentally, as is natural, of the most sacred and characteristic of the human feelings, which is *love*, opening up to others, growing as a *relational being*.

338 Cf. VALENCIA, Javier de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 5,042.

339 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12.088. Cf. also, *ibid*, n. 2.138.

340 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12.124, 12.126, 12.127 and 12.128.

341 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12.024.

342 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12.138.

## *In feeling there was life and color*

Naturally, this whole framework of feeling that existed from the earliest days of Amigonian pedagogy, which constituted the very foundation of its whole anthropological philosophy and was made both the *means and end* of its activity, was not something abstract or ethereal, but something which, also from the earliest days, was made a living reality in the person of the educators themselves.

There are many early Amigonian texts that stress the supreme and irrevocable importance of the educators being individuals who stand out primarily for the richness of their feeling, for the example of their love and care. And among these many texts I have chosen two which, for their freshness, I will quote here:

*“Of all the qualities of the good educator, the greatest is to love the students. Because if they are not loved, the purpose of education is undone... Anyone who does not feel love beating in his own heart, compassion for the poor fallen boys... has no vocation to dedicate his existence to the reformation of youths.”*<sup>343</sup>

*“Love shall always be an indispensable condition not only for educating and molding hearts, but even for instructing and engraving in the intellects the fundamental obligations that make men useful to themselves and to others... For this reason –without neglecting the teachings of science– we continue trying to ensure that all our works are inspired in love.”*<sup>344</sup>

And it was precisely *in the person of the educators* where love, *lived and expressed* in contact with troubled children and youths, little by little took on the *color* and brilliance that confer upon Amigonian identity, the Amigonian approach, its mark and seal of authenticity. It is a color and a brilliance which is, moreover, distinguished by the dimensions of *personalization, empathy, inner strength* and *consistency*.

### *Loving the other as he is*

The first tone of love and care brought to life in the person of the Amigonian educator is precisely the capacity to love the children with a faithfulness so unwavering that he is able to love and appreciate

343 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12,031 and 12,464.

344 Iglesia, Pedro de la, *Memoria de Santa Rita en 1927*, in *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 10.015-10.016.

them *just as they are at each moment in their personal history* and love them all the more the greater are their limitations and failings. Either we love people as they are or we never really love them at all.

This compassionate dimension of love—which inspires us to take the sorrows of others into the sanctuary of our own heart where we feel them and suffer them ourselves—is what has traditionally been referred to as *education made to measure*:

“*The reason for our success is that we individualize treatment,*” argues one Amigonian author; “*and we pursue a pedagogy ‘made to measure.’*”<sup>345</sup>

“*This student has made me practice humility more than any other,*” confesses one educator with extensive experience in the daily struggle with the children. “*Because he is ‘more difficult’, I must love him more; this is what charity teaches.*”<sup>346</sup>

### *Establishing a contract of sympathy with the student*

With the expression *contract of sympathy*, used by one of the early Amigonian writers,<sup>347</sup> I would like to refer now to another of the values that makes an essential contribution to the characteristic tone of the Amigonian educator.

As you may easily have guessed, it is the value of *empathy*. An *empathy* which—in its quality of *friendly communication* between educators and learners—has contributed to the creation of the typically familial atmosphere that has prevailed in the educational groups. An *empathy* that has traditionally emerged from the *closeness of lives and hearts* that the educators have succeeded in fostering with their students through a *constant presence* among them, interwoven with *coexistence* and *sharing*; with *service* and *sensitivity* to be able to identify their needs; with *availability* and *attention* to meet those needs, and with *naturalness, simplicity* and *joy* in their interactions with them. An *empathy* that has also made it possible to truly get to know the student, by the surest way of all, which is the way of the heart.

345 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,139. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 0.246.

346 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 8,043.

347 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,330.

As one Amigonian educator put it: “*The best method to help students in their rehabilitation is to counsel them, suffer with them, stand by them and cry with them.*”<sup>348</sup>

And as another wrote: “*The friars eat with their students... they work with them and they play with them, taking part in the same games... they respond to the students affectionately and unreservedly, and establish with them that mutual relationship of esteem and affection that makes the requirements of the rules softer and more tolerable.*”<sup>349</sup>

### *Standing by the student in hard times*

*The ability to love the other, and to love him as he is and establish bonds of empathy with him through daily interaction and daily sharing, the ability to remain by the student’s side “like the heartbeat of a mother ever attentive to her child,” as Father Valentín described it,*<sup>350</sup> is directly related to the inner strength needed to remain unwaveringly faithful, without shirking or abandoning the task in moments of hardship, which are generally frequent and acute in the world of troubled children and youths:

*“Educators need to possess a spirit of sacrifice to bear their students happily, or at least patiently,” states an old Amigonian manual, “even on those days when they are most troublesome; not to watch the clock or to display weariness with the students; to make their lives in the establishment as pleasant and tolerable as possible.”*<sup>351</sup>

Moreover, this same inner strength that makes it possible for educators to remain unconditionally faithful and close to their students constitutes the most authentic expression of the care and affection that they can have for them:

*“The spirit of sacrifice is a consequence of love,” stresses the Amigonian school. “When there is love, the obstacles and difficulties that hinder the achievement of the desired goal are naturally overcome. What inspires the thousand and one sacrifices that parents make for their children? Is it not the love they profess for them as the fruit of their loins?”*

348 ALACUÁS, Bernardino de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 3.008.

349 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6,251. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 5,058; 5,061; 11,126; 14,866.

350 TORRENTE, Valentín, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12.154 and 12.123.

351 TERCIARIOS CAPUCHINOS, *Manuales de 1933 y 1946*, n. 212.

*“How shall we know, then, whether an educator loves and cares about his students? By the sacrifices he makes for them. And how quickly they will know—even the smallest of them— whether their educator is idle or self-sacrificing?”*<sup>352</sup>

### *Being a credible example to the student*

Teaching by example is always essential in education, as students, in their maturing process, feel the need to see the message proclaimed to them reflected—*embodied*— in people who can be *role models* for them.

But the need for such teaching is all the more pressing in a world like ours (in which most people, tired of empty words and false promises, have a more urgent need for examples than for teachers), and especially in a pedagogical system like the Amigonian, which is aimed principally at fostering the development of human feeling and of values most conducive to the learner.

In the realm of human feeling and human values, a *credible role model* can only be one who is notable for his *honesty* and his *integrity*, that is, for the *consistency* between who he *is* and what he *does*:

*“The great factor behind the brilliant results of this school is the living and personal example of its educators,”* noted one Amigonian as early as 1906. *“Here the student is not required to carry out a task or some work on his own; he is never told ‘do this’, but rather ‘let’s do this’... This says it all: speech wins, but example wins over.”*<sup>353</sup>

*“With understanding and selflessness,”* reads another Amigonian text, *“the educators lower themselves to the needs and even simple desires of the students, so that, by winning them over, they may raise them to the fulfillment of their duties, for which they set themselves up as models.”*<sup>354</sup>

Love *made to measure*, empathy, inner strength and consistency are thus the four main values that illuminate and shape the Amigonian educational approach, which is brought to life in the figure of its educators, who without doubt constitute the most valuable and purest

352 TORRENTE, Valentín de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 12.464.

353 ALBORAYA, Domingo de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 6.033 and 6.034.

354 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9.139.

reflection of the educational system developed by Luis Amigó's followers in their educational work with troubled children and youths.

### *Out of feeling the method was born*

Little by little, out of their pedagogical practice, the Amigonian educational method came into being. At first it was something very elementary, but in time –particularly through the scientific influences in the pedagogical field adopted by the schools in northern Europe– it was enhanced and developed into a true system, admired and even imitated by others.

This is not the moment to engage in an analysis of this method. Suffice it to say that, at a certain point, a certain aura of mysticism came to form around it, which considered that the most important element of Amigonian pedagogy was precisely its method, and which even attempted to confuse method and pedagogy, as if the whole spiritual and cultural richness of the latter could be contained in the former.

What is important to note here is that the Amigonian method was chiefly an expression of its *pedagogical feeling*. It was a way of channeling that feeling that can win the heart of the other through one's own heart, but without giving up the seriousness, firmness and inner strength needed so that educators do not become paternalistic, and so that students can understand the living reality that growth in feeling and in love is only possible through the free and joyful renunciation of *me-ism*.

In this respect, there is no doubt that the method was extremely important for harmonizing gentleness with inner strength, affection with firmness... It was, in other words, the best way they found to regulate the educational process, which –to use an expression of an early Amigonian– *is a bilateral contract that affects both the teacher and the student*.<sup>355</sup>

Indeed, the main philosophical-anthropological principles that underlie the traditional Amigonian method (*Fortiter in re et suaviter in modo; in life everything counts and nothing comes for free; the greater the freedom the greater the responsibility*, etc.) are dimensions and expressions of an approach whose goal is to *educate the heart by strengthening the character and the will of each individual*.

355 DOS HERMANAS, Bienvenido de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 9,144.

### *But the method could never override the feeling*

Nevertheless, *Amigonian pedagogy* –as I have suggested earlier in this reflection, although it is important to stress it again in this conclusion– is a much vaster and richer reality than its method could have been or will be. And this greater breadth and richness –centered on the educational approach that inspired its birth and development out of its Christian roots– acquires life and color in the person of the educators who, through their vocation as artists (rather than artisans), find in the method a channel that does not stifle their freedom of action at a given moment or their creativity and initiative in personal situations.

The method is thus no longer something cold and automatic, but is given life, for the benefit of the students, by the flame of love.<sup>356</sup>

Moreover, in keeping with the above, it is important to bear in mind that Amigonian pedagogy can be fully present in a given reality or context, without its traditional method necessarily having to be present as well.

Indeed, from the very heart of Amigonian pedagogy –configured around the educational approach– there is a need not only review the traditional method, determining the degree to which its therapies continue to be valid today to express or achieve what was originally intended, and the degree to which new therapies need to be articulated or introduced, but also to develop new methods that better respond to the traits of the children and youths at whom it is aimed or to the characteristics of an educational environment that is different from the traditional.

But in addition to all this –and this is much more important still for the future– there is a need to continue to nourish, savor and transmit the Amigonian educational approach or, if you will – adopting that same approach from a perspective open to transcendence– the *Amigonian spirit or spirituality*.

### *Conclusion*

I would now like to conclude this reflection, articulated chiefly around the feeling that inspires the Amigonian educational approach,

356 Cf. Paiporta, Jorge de, *Textos Pedagógicos de Autores Amigonianos*, n. 11.108.

by reciting a few lines by the great Romantic poet Adolfo Becquer, which for its emotional charge is considered a true pedagogical poem, and above all a poem dedicated to re-educational pedagogy:

In the dark corner of the hall,  
perhaps forgotten by her master,  
silent and dust-covered,  
laid the harp.  
So many notes slept in her strings,  
as the songbird sleeps in the branches,  
awaiting the snowy hand  
that knows how to pluck them!  
Alas! I thought, how often does genius  
likewise sleep in the depths of the soul  
and a voice, like Lazarus, waits  
to be told: "Get up and walk!"

In short, the secret of bringing life back to those who are like walking dead involves plucking the sensitive string of hearts with a "snowy hand", that is, with a candid, delicate and gentle hand, thereby awakening the *love for life* that lay dormant as if sleeping.

In the beginning, there was feeling.  
Feeling was the means and the end.  
In feeling there was life and color.  
Out of feeling the method was born.  
But the method could never override the feeling.

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