

Objection 1. It would seem that no religious order may be established for preaching, or hearing confessions. For it is said (VII, qu. i*): “The monastic life is one of subjection and discipleship, not of teaching, authority, or pastoral care,” and the same apparently applies to religious. Now preaching and hearing confessions are the actions of a pastor and teacher. Therefore a religious order should not be established for this purpose.

Objection 2. Further, the purpose for which a religious order is established would seem to be something most proper to the religious life, as stated above (a. 1). Now the aforesaid actions are not proper to religious but to bishops. Therefore a religious order should not be established for the purpose of such actions.

Objection 3. Further, it seems unfitting that the authority to preach and hear confessions should be committed to an unlimited number of men; and there is no fixed number of those who are received into a religious order. Therefore it is unfitting for a religious order to be established for the purpose of the aforesaid actions.

Objection 4. Further, preachers have a right to receive their livelihood from the faithful of Christ, according to 1 Cor. 9. If then the office of preaching be committed to a religious order established for that purpose, it follows that the faithful of Christ are bound to support an unlimited number of persons, which would be a heavy burden on them. Therefore a religious order should not be established for the exercise of these actions.

Objection 5. Further, the organization of the Church should be in accordance with Christ’s institution. Now Christ sent first the twelve apostles to preach, as related in Luke 9, and afterwards He sent the seventy-two disciples, as stated in Luke 10. Moreover, according to the gloss of Bede on “And after these things” (Lk. 10:1), “the apostles are represented by the bishops, the seventy-two disciples by the lesser priests,” i.e. the parish priests. Therefore in addition to bishops and parish priests, no religious order should be established for the purpose of preaching and hearing confessions.

On the contrary, In the Conferences of the Fathers (Coll. xiv, 4), Abbot Nesteros, speaking of the various kinds of religious orders, says: “Some choosing the care of the sick, others devoting themselves to the relief of the afflicted and oppressed, or applying themselves to teaching, or giving alms to the poor, have been most highly esteemed on account of their devotion and piety.” Therefore just as a religious order may be established for the care of the sick, so also may one be established for teaching the people by preaching and like works.

I answer that, As stated above (a. 2), it is fitting for a

religious order to be established for the works of the active life, in so far as they are directed to the good of our neighbor, the service of God, and the upkeep of divine worship. Now the good of our neighbor is advanced by things pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the soul rather than by things pertaining to the supplying of bodily needs, in proportion to the excellence of spiritual over corporal things. Hence it was stated above (q. 32, a. 3) that spiritual works of mercy surpass corporal works of mercy. Moreover this is more pertinent to the service of God, to Whom no sacrifice is more acceptable than zeal for souls, as Gregory says (Hom. xii in Ezech.). Furthermore, it is a greater thing to employ spiritual arms in defending the faithful against the errors of heretics and the temptations of the devil, than to protect the faithful by means of bodily weapons. Therefore it is most fitting for a religious order to be established for preaching and similar works pertaining to the salvation of souls.

Reply to Objection 1. He who works by virtue of another, acts as an instrument. And a minister is like an “animated instrument,” as the Philosopher says (Polit. i, 2[†]). Hence if a man preach or do something similar by the authority of his superiors, he does not rise above the degree of “discipleship” or “subjection,” which is competent to religious.

Reply to Objection 2. Some religious orders are established for soldiering, to wage war, not indeed on their own authority, but on that of the sovereign or of the Church who are competent to wage war by virtue of their office, as stated above (a. 3, ad 4). In the same way certain religious orders are established for preaching and hearing confessions, not indeed by their own authority, but by the authority of the higher and lower superiors, to whom these things belong by virtue of their office. Consequently to assist one’s superiors in such a ministry is proper to a religious order of this kind.

Reply to Objection 3. Bishops do not allow these religious severally and indiscriminately to preach or hear confessions, but according to the discretion of the religious superiors, or according to their own appointment.

Reply to Objection 4. The faithful are not bound by law to contribute to the support of other than their ordinary prelates, who receive the tithes and offerings of the faithful for that purpose, as well as other ecclesiastical revenues. But if some men are willing to minister to the faithful by exercising the aforesaid acts gratuitously, and without demanding payment as of right, the faithful are not burdened thereby because their temporal contributions can be liberally repaid by those men, nor are they bound by law to contribute, but by charity, and yet not so that

* Cap. Hoc nequaquam; Cf. q. 187, a. 1, obj. 1 † Cf. Ethic. viii, 11

they be burdened thereby and others eased, as stated in 2 Cor. 8:13. If, however, none be found to devote themselves gratuitously to services of this kind, the ordinary prelate is bound, if he cannot suffice by himself, to seek other suitable persons and support them himself.

Reply to Objection 5. The seventy-two disciples are represented not only by the parish priests, but by all those of lower order who in any way assist the bishops in their office. For we do not read that our Lord appointed the seventy-two disciples to certain fixed parishes, but that

“He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself was to come.” It was fitting, however, that in addition to the ordinary prelates others should be chosen for these duties on account of the multitude of the faithful, and the difficulty of finding a sufficient number of persons to be appointed to each locality, just as it was necessary to establish religious orders for military service, on account of the secular princes being unable to cope with unbelievers in certain countries.