

St. Gaspar's Letters

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February-April, 1813
 Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
 Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

Varied are the roads through which God leads souls in this present life in order to make them worthy of those singular favors which will help them toward the possession of the highest virtues. Among them, the most common to all ordinarily good people are the ones which I will treat in this letter. I shall try to call to your attention the thoughts of the saints that are most helpful in being able to draw profit from the admirable dispositions of the most merciful God towards us, his miserable creatures.

Scripture says that the just will be tested just as gold is in the furnace: *Tamquam aurum in fornace probavit electos Dominus.*¹ So we are not to be depressed if the Lord is pleased to put us through various tests of virtue (in the brief journey of our days). He does so to provide us with the opportunities for always gaining new merits for our beloved homeland, Paradise. The bravery of a soldier and his skill are recognized in the battles that he fights; the sturdiness of a plant is made evident as soon as it resists the violent impact of the wind; the quality of a metal is proved by the repeated blows of a hammer. Therefore, be courageous: our most, loving Father is totally intent on having us grow in evangelical perfection, in detachment from created things, in total abandonment to his most holy desires. And oh what a consolation will be ours, at the end of this life, when Jesus himself will dry the tears that we have shed in carrying the holy Cross, and will calm those human emotions so opposed to suffering! What a joy will inundate our hearts! What new delights will surprise us!

But almost inadvertently, we have already made some headway in speaking about the soul that may be faced with aridity and internal strife. It is precisely at such times that it is necessary to make use of Christian suffering and recall the following points as a source of comfort.

St. Teresa writes that "with aridity and temptations does the Lord test his beloved. Even though aridity may endure for a lifetime, let the soul not abandon prayer: the time will come when all will be properly rewarded."

To the nun, St. Jane de Chantal, afflicted for 41 years with terrible interior seizures of temptation, of fears of being in God's disfavor, and even of being abandoned by God, de Sales wrote as follows: "You must serve your Savior only with love for his will, with the privation of any consolation, and with a deluge of sadness and fears". He also wrote of her that her heart was like a deaf musician who, no matter how beautifully a thing was sung, that musician was unable to derive any delight.

St. John of the Cross wrote to a desolate woman these words of consolation: "You have never been in a better situation than the present one, for never have you been so humbled and detached from the world, and never have you recognized yourself as bad as you see yourself right now; never have you been so dispossessed and removed even from recognizing your very self. Is it not true that whenever a soul finds itself in that state, it is precisely at that time that more fervent prayers are

¹ The Lord has tested the elect as gold in a furnace.

poured out to the Almighty, that one becomes more humble, that one gets to know oneself better and truly acknowledges how much he needs the Lord? Then, too, is there not the exercise of patience, docility, obedience to the will of the Almighty God? Is it not indeed true that the exercise of all these virtues moves the heart of God to diffuse his gifts upon us even more as we show ourselves more faithful to him and does he not make us grow in holiness by means of those acts of resignation that are so opposed to the internal battles that are being endured? Is it not true that the greater the merits, the greater will be the glory; the greater the suffering, the greater the exaltation; the greater the trials, the greater the recompense? Oh what grand gifts aridity of soul can bring down upon us! Oh how more acceptable to God is the pursuit of a methodical, Christian life during those challenging times than in times of consolation and spiritual delights! Whenever the soul is completely submersed in the delights of grace, it is then that it exerts itself less in remaining faithful to God; the more glorified it becomes, having fought in a thousand different ways, does it not remain quiet in its conformity to the divine wishes and in the constant practice of virtue? A pilot of a ship who leads it back to port when the sea is calm deserves to be praised for not having omitted the usual diligent procedures; but, if he succeeds in guiding it back safe and sound through a tempestuous sea, then, what words of praise, what rewards are due to him because of the special care he used in his skill as a navigator.

Everyone can see the application of this comparison. God is, indeed, delighted to see the souls dearest to him, completely intent on using the particular means when faced with tempestuous times. In the meanwhile he, in the book of life, continues to register new merits for blessed eternity. Oh how the Lord admixes this conduct which solely tends to his greater glory and the greater advantage of the servants who are faithful to him: *Fortiter et suaviter omnia disponit*.² Aloysius Gonzaga used to say that "there is no more certain sign that one is among the number of the elect than in seeing himself fearful of God and at the same time tried by hardships and disappointments in this world". St. John of the Cross said "the love of God does not consist in great sentiments but in a complete nakedness of one's own will and in perfect patience in pleasing one's beloved". St. Teresa would often repeat that "the love of God does not consist in having the gift of tears, in delights and in tender devout feelings, but in serving God in justice and in truth, suffering for God with humility and fortitude". Finally, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to call such souls spiritual babes who were taken by the Lord from the bosom of consolation; and she would say that true virtue and eminent perfection consist in pains, in trials, in suffering. The examples that we have from the lives of the saints prove this to be so. With them we learn to maintain ourselves always in that holy indifference of spirit during those battles, abandoned completely into the hands of the Lord. Therefore, it is a good idea to betake oneself mentally to the Garden of Gethsemane and there be comforted by a remembrance of those interior sufferings which Jesus endured out of love for us, and thank him for the opportunity offered us to more closely imitate him in his suffering of interior struggles.

Generally, such tests are reserved for the more virtuous souls. It is not necessary to be totally crushed in spirit, for Jesus loves us dearly, nor do we need to be overly tested; rather we are led to acquire in this way greater virtue, greater perfection, greater glory in heaven: *Faciet cum tentatione proventum*.³ It is true - they are thorns, but they are thorns that sustain the mystical rose. They are bitter drink, it is true - but a bitter drink that helps anyone to a change of life in the spirit and assists us to be distrustful of self and confident in the divine goodness, which is the sum total of our

² He disposes everything firmly and sweetly.

³ He will produce the result with trial.

sanctification. To this mystical winter, there usually follows a flowering spring; to this most beautiful, mystical night, there follows a most serene day; to this mystical storm, there follows the most consoling calm. In any event, it is always proper to remain in conformity to the sovereign dispositions and to recommend oneself to flee Lord to keep us always faithful to him. Amen.

I wanted to talk about other things but the restriction of time forbids me. We shall continue what I have promised at the beginning of this letter in another later letter. In the meantime, I am
Your humble servant

52

February-April, 1813
Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

Continuing to speak of the various states in which a soul can find itself on the way to perfection, I think it is a good idea in this letter to manifest the wishes of the most merciful God and the means that he would like us to use at the precise time when the devil seeks to beset us with various fears and with an overly, prejudicial timidity.

At times, the Lord permits such a confusion in the mind and disturbance in the soul because he ardently desires us to oppose them with acts meritorious for eternal life and with the exercise of a virtuous confidence in his mercy and love for us. Our common enemy, who seeks nothing other than our ruin, not able to obtain from the just a relaxed manner of life, then seeks any and all ways of representing the law of the Lord to them as an unbearable burden and uses all his strength to shackle those souls with certain chains that must definitely be removed. Here then are some thoughts which, on those occasions it seems to me, can be very helpful. I know very well that the restrictions of the soul can relate, or to state it better, can flow from different causes. But, in general, the spiritual remedy for these ailments consists in a great confidence in God, which leads to a generosity of heart and liberty of conscience that establishes us in a fortunate possession of interior peace of soul and the gentlest tranquility of mind. Therefore, let us listen to what the saints have left us in their writings for our instruction.

"For one who is very fearful of not being pardoned
for sins committed and is tempted to distrust!"

The master, Fr. Avila, in his letters expresses himself as follows for our comfort: "Do not forget that between the Eternal Father and us there is Jesus Christ who loves us and binds us to himself with such loving ties that nothing at all can loosen them if the person himself does not break them by Committing a mortal sin. The Blood of Jesus cries out, beseeching pity upon us; and it cries out in such a way that the noise of our sins is not heard. Jesus said to the Father: Father, I want those you have given to me also to be where I am: "*Pater, quos dedisti mihi, volo ut ubi sum ego et illi sint mecum.*"⁴ Let the sins that I have committed surround me, let my fear of the future assail me, let the devils lay snares for me, for when I beg mercy of my ever benign Jesus, my beloved, I can never be distrusting, even to the point of my death. I see that I am so highly priced that a God has given

⁴ Father, those whom you have given to me, I wish that where I am they also may be with me.

himself up for me. Oh my Jesus, secure haven for those who seek you when facing a raging storm; oh watchful shepherd, whoever does not trust in you deceives himself even if he may want to straighten out his life. That is why you said: It is I, fear not. I am the one who is troublesome and yet the one who gives consolation. At times, I place some people in desperate situations so that they feel that they are in hell; but then I bring them relief. I am your advocate who has taken on your cause as my own. I am your guarantor who has come to cover your debts. ... How can I flee from the one who is searching for me and has fought against those who have sought to insult me? Have I not turned my other cheek to the one who was striking me, and will I not turn it toward the one who wishes to love me? How can my children be doubtful that I love them if they see me taken into the hands of my enemies out of love for them? I even go in search of those who are not looking for me.”

David put all his trust for salvation in his future redeemer and said: "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum; redemisti nos, Domine Deus veritatis.*"⁵ So, how much more should we not place our trust in Jesus Christ since he has already come and has completed the work of redemption? It is true that we have sinned, but the Redeemer came to take upon himself our failings: "*Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit.*"⁶ St. Teresa said: "All of our diligent efforts are worth very little unless we remove our reliance on self and place our trust in God".

It seems to me that these few thoughts gathered together here are quite helpful to revive our spirits and fill them again with a holy confidence in the infinite goodness of our God who wishes to be served by us *in latitudine cordis*.⁷

"For one who is overly saddened
because of a fault that he has fallen into."

Let us keep well in mind this great truth: evangelical perfection cannot be acquired in a few moments. It is prefigured in Jacob's ladder, that is to say, that we arrive only gradually to a most intimate union with God. Let us not be frightened then if, at some time, we should fall into some fault, because with the fire of divine love, little by little, the mystical soil of our hearts will be purged; and mindful of our own frailty, with the holy desire to perfect ourselves evermore (with divine help) in the exercise of virtue, let us meritoriously fulfill the will of the Lord and let us never neglect the cultivation of beautiful Christlike works. Finally, blessed is the one who at the moment of death finds himself a subject of less imperfection than the others and, when thoroughly cleansed, either in the furnace of suffering or in Purgatory, he can attain that beautiful fatherland where *nihil coinquinatum introibit*⁸ and where all is indescribable delight and joy! But, we are cautious against the insidious attacks of Lucifer who, under the guise of sanctity, tries to reduce us to despair and to total debasement of spirit. We must never give heed at all to his exceedingly crafty subtleties. *Resistite fortes in fide*.⁹ St. Francis de Sales, in one of his letters, writes as follows: "Finally, it is always necessary to have courage, and if one were to experience a languid spirit, let us rush to the foot of the Cross, and let us immerse ourselves within those holy odors, those celestial perfumes, and without doubt we will be comforted". Elsewhere, in a letter to a lady, he says. "My daughter, nourish

⁵ Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; you have redeemed us, O Lord, God of truth.

⁶ Truly he bore our infirmities, carried our sorrows.

⁷ In the breadth of the heart.

⁸ Nothing evil will enter.

⁹ Remain strong in the faith.

your soul on the spirit of cordial confidence in God; and, to the measure that you see yourself submerged in imperfections and miseries, raise up the more your courage to be hopeful ... preserve a spirit of holy joy." Finally, St. Catherine of Genoa teaches us what to repeat when one falls into some defect: "Lord, these are the weeds in my garden. I love you with all my heart and I am sorry for having given you this hurt. I do not want ever to do it again; give me your help". St. Francis de Sales concludes: "It is necessary for humility to be courageous and valiant in the trust that one must have in the goodness of God". But let us now go on to something else.

"For one who is afraid that he will not
persevere in doing good."

When the devil, the enemy of virtue, sees that he cannot succeed in getting a soul to deviate from the path of holiness and perfection, what does he do? ... He begins by telling that soul that all those good works are not going to be of any help whatsoever, because it is impossible to maintain perseverance until death. So, it would be better to give up on the procedures adopted. ... Oh how terrifying this diabolical astuteness - this trickery of putting death far into the future so as to dumbfound and discourage us! ... So, be courageous; and when faced with these temptations, let us set up in opposition the principles of the Gospel regarding the uncertainty of our life. Then, too, let us say to ourselves: the past is already on the scales of justice, the future is in the power of providence and the good pleasure of the Lord, and the present is the only time that I must deal with and make good use of, so as to possess eternal glory. God does not abandon anyone unless he is first abandoned. He is full of mercy for sinners; he is pleased with the souls of the just who form the choicest plants in his garden from which he is intent on harvesting luscious fruit for the blessed Jerusalem. Thus, one lives in holiness in the sweetest Heart of Jesus and is never doubtful of the most loving assistance of the merciful God. *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*¹⁰ We conclude: One is not to allow the devil to see us as timid or pusillanimous, but rather courageous and strong. He is a thief who will assail us the more vehemently when he sees a fainthearted soul. That will not happen to us if we treat him with a holy haughtiness and with a magnanimous scorn: *Viriliter age et confortetur cor tuum.*¹¹ Oh what a beautiful crown is prepared for us in Paradise! Amen.

Meanwhile, with full respect, I am
Your humble servant

P. S. Pray for several sick people and especially for the Tannari woman. Offer suffrages for a deceased lady, Countess Malvasia.

53

April 1, 1813
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata
Esteemed Sister Maria

Here I am inconveniencing you with these few lines in order to send you the enclosed materials which should, if you wish, encourage you (to whatever extent you can) to spread a devotion that is so pleasing to the most holy Sorrowful Mother Mary. To carry out this pious work in

¹⁰ I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

¹¹ Act manfully and may your heart be strengthened.

a methodical way, you are to use a notebook in which you are to carefully identify all the half-hours as well as the pious individuals who will assume the responsibility to see that the Sorrowful Virgin will certainly not be left without the company of the children entrusted to her at the foot of the Cross in the person of John. Then, there will be those who will spread the spiritual consolation of seeing a full response by devotees who wish to have this objective achieved. Have this notebook passed around, along with the printed leaflets, and everything will redound to the greater glory of God and our own spiritual advantage.

By divine mercy, my health is excellent, as I hope is the same for you, as well as that of all your fellow-sisters whom you will greet for me with distinction and recommend me warmly to their prayers. Neither should you ever forget to pray to the Lord for me, that I will become holy and always fulfill his holy will. Thus, let us live in holy union of spirit in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, our only Good, and that is where I leave you, saying that I am

Your humble and obliged servant

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

Imola, April 1, 1813

P. S. In writing to Rome, recommend my niece to the Maestre Pie there, and you will be doing me a favor.

54

April 5, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Most illustrious Countess

Because of the different interior attitudes that one can form within oneself, I was truly concerned about the news that came from Bologna which could cause a division into opposing sides, not so much with regard to the substance of the matter, but rather with the question of how we are to conduct ourselves outwardly under the present circumstances. Still, everything has been happening in accordance with my hopes, and everyone has been firm in not putting on any sort of external demonstration. (This is all said in secret and it would be a good idea not to speak of it to anyone except Monsignor Annibale). I say everyone, even though Father Benedetti, who has assumed the task, was warned not to speak to more than one or two, as he actually did, nevertheless the report of those men is sufficient to indicate to us the intentions of the others who are there with them.

He informed us that the decree that has been promulgated has been given a different interpretation by the lawyers in Bologna than the one that we have. They think that we are to be set free and that the oath will be demanded only of those who wish to return to the enjoyment of their benefices. In my opinion, that is not what the government intends to do; in fact, I expect even worse things. We shall wait to see what effect this news brought to us by Fr. Benedetti will have.

In the meantime, let us give thanks to the Lord for so many graces that he shares with us. Let us cling firmly to the holy Cross which is the ladder to heaven, the instrument that will weave for us a beautiful crown for all eternity. Here, in our midst, perfect harmony has reigned and continues to reign and is in no danger. Excluding myself, they are all virtuous persons and with them I hope that the peace of the Lord will hold sway, for that is the most precious treasure that anyone could hope for in community-living.

Within a short time, I shall again write my usual letter to you; pray that the Father of lights will deign to suggest to me the things that will be most beneficial for your soul, so beloved by his ineffable goodness. Do not ever forget to include me in your prayers so that the Lord will always give me the graces that I so direly need - and that he grant me a holy death, the grace of final perseverance.

Excuse my absent-mindedness if in my last letter I failed to mention the image of the most holy Mary that I received with sincere appreciation and true gratitude. Presently, the three books that you were willing to deprive yourself of have arrived. You can see how many are the obligations that I owe you and will profess to you, for the numerous tasks you continuously undertake in my behalf. I ask you, please, do not deprive yourself so much in the future and may you be drawn closer and closer to the Heart of Jesus, wherein I too shall be. That, for now, is sufficient.

Be happy in the Lord who is sweetness itself and the love of our souls. Recite acts of confidence in his infinite mercy and remember what he has suffered for us that we might gain heaven where I hope we will one day be admitted in order to enjoy and love him eternally. Amen.

Forgive me if I have written this in such a hurry. Make use of the booklets that I am sending you in whatever way that you wish. Meanwhile, with all respect, I am

Your humble servant

G. C. d. B.

April 5

55

April 10, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Madame Countess

I am writing you these few lines in haste only to inform you that my companions here have sent out the letter.¹² I believe, however, that it would be a good idea to keep everything secret.

I was opposed to it for the following reasons: first, it is useless to employ means to learn something that one already knows; second, possibly they could understand these things in an entirely different way than what they actually are; third, even though the men in Bologna might decide to have demonstrations, etc., I will never be a part of them. I have set down my principles firmly to remain in this situation like a traveler's trunk which stays exactly where it is put. Besides this, I have other reasons, which it would be too long to list here. Let the others think as they wish, for I am not at all eager to condemn them. I am speaking only for myself. However, they are all still very strongly opposed to taking the oath: all other things are accidental to that.

Pray a lot to the Lord so that I will always maintain myself as I am at present, an immovable boulder and content with my status. Pray, likewise, for all my other very excellent confreres.

I would not want you to make anything of this morning's scene; just realize that it was, as I hope, only an involuntary flare-up.

If you wish, you may confide all this in secret to Monsignor Annibale. In the meantime, I urge you to have generosity of heart, as I remain

¹² The letter that the Saint refers to here is dated April 10, 1813. We used the same date.

Your humble servant

G. C. del Bufalo

I have spoken to one of my companions here and he agrees with what I say.

56

April 12, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Madame Countess

A few moments ago the formal announcement came that in the future someone must be present whenever we are visited by people who wish to show kindness to us. This is a new gift which Jesus Christ gives us. May he be blessed. Happily.

The reply from Bologna, to be sure, was that the decree must be understood as formerly proposed. So, things remain in the same condition as was to be expected.¹³ I hope that we will be able to maintain our letter correspondence with the help of Monsignor Annibale so that, as I hope, we shall not be lacking in ways of carrying out a bit of smuggling. We shall see how things go and if we should not be able to write to each other as frequently, we shall do so only occasionally, and be patient. I hope that everything works out all right.

Be happy, be tranquil and content in the Lord who wishes to be served with generosity of heart. Pray for me, a miserable sinner. I am in a hurry - with all due respect and in the full charity of the Lord, I am

Your humble servant

G. C. del Bufalo

57

April 14, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

I begin this letter at a time when the Church directs our attention to a most serious reflection on the august mysteries of our Redemption, Wednesday of Holy Week,¹⁴ and she urges us to make fervent acts of love for Jesus, our total Good. Oh how our loving Mother Church, completely solicitous for us her children, compassionately makes every effort to etch into our souls this great truth which summarizes all the others: that is to say, that all of us belong to Jesus since he gave himself entirely to us! To speak of any other topics during these holy days would be an estrangement from those memories which are most efficacious in awakening in our hearts the most vivid sentiments of holy love, disposing us for the possession of that homeland which alone can make us completely happy.

¹³ The letter of the Prefect of Reno is dated April 12, 1813. Hence, we have assigned the same date to this letter of St. Gaspar, even though really it was written some days later.

¹⁴ In 1813, Wednesday of Holy Week fell on April 14th. Therefore, we have assigned that date to this letter.

Therefore, let us enter in spirit the sweetest Heart of Jesus, the burning furnace of love for mankind and, therein, let us briefly remind ourselves of all the aspects of that mystical fire, so that we can offer ourselves with completeness and greater perfection to the exercise of the Christian virtues, living for God alone.

*Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur?*¹⁵

Prayer: "Sweet Heart of my Jesus, make me love you evermore.

There is no human language nor any sufficient number of volumes that can worthily describe all of the acts of love by which we have been enriched in our crucified Redeemer! Just to repeat one or the other would require the fervor of those fortunate souls who, like the eagle, freely soared upward from all the things of this miserable world to enjoy the delights of the nectar of Paradise. Certainly they, in some way, will be able to convince us of this delightful theme, but then, what can I do, a miserable sinner, whose heart, through my own fault, is colder than a stone and who does not know how to return love to the one who has loved me so much? Oh divine Holy Spirit, please help me so that I can, at least in a small way, give expression to those sentiments which are apt for arousing and moving us¹⁶ to this holy exercise of love.

Oh soul, redeemed by the most precious Blood of Jesus the Redeemer, at this point, lift up your thoughts and realize that this ineffable benefit and august mystery, together with the Incarnation of the Son of God, was a flaming outburst of love: *exinanivit semetipsum formam servi accipiens*.¹⁷ His submission to so many pains and trials was a flaming outburst of love, finally expiring in a sea of sorrows and on the infamous scaffold of Calvary. It was a flaming outburst of love to leave himself entirely in the Eucharistic banquet. It was a flaming outburst of love for him to find his delight in us miserable creatures: *deliciae meae cum filiis hominum*,¹⁸ and that burning wish of his for our eternal salvation in the beloved homeland of heaven.

Oh soul, plunge yourself deeply into these moving thoughts and you cannot help but repeat with the Apostle: *Caritas Christi urget nos!*¹⁹ It is not so much what Jesus suffered as it is the love that he demonstrated in his suffering for us that obliges us and even forces us to love him in return. Let us listen to what St. Francis de Sales says in this regard: "Knowing that Jesus, true God, has loved us to the point of suffering death for us, even death on a cross, is this not the same as having our hearts put under a winepress and feeling its crushing force, squeezing out love with a violence that is as gentle and loving as it is forceful?" Then he adds: "So then why do we not cast ourselves onto Jesus Crucified, to die on the Cross with him who was willing to die out of love for us? We ought to say: I shall cling to him and I shall never abandon him; I will die with him and I shall burn in the flames of his love. One and the same flame will consume this divine Creator and his miserable creature. My Jesus gives all to me and I give my all to him. I shall live and lie on his breast; neither death nor life will ever separate me from him. Oh eternal love, my soul seeks you and chooses you for all eternity. Come, Holy Spirit, inflame our hearts with your love. To love or to die; to die to every other love so as to live in the love of Jesus. Oh Savior of our souls, allow us to chant forever: Hail to Jesus; love Jesus; hail to Jesus whom I love; I love Jesus who lives forever and ever."

¹⁵ I have come to cast fire on the earth, and what do I wish but that it be blazing?

¹⁶ Some words were scratched out here.

¹⁷ He emptied himself taking the form of a slave.

¹⁸ My delights are with the children of men.

¹⁹ The love of Christ urges us.

This love (says the Ven. John of Avila) is the kind that makes good souls go beyond themselves and leaves them in a state of amazement when they come to realize it. Then, a feeling of interior burning arises, a desire for martyrdom, a happiness in suffering, an enjoyment of those things that the world fears, and an embracing of those things that the world abhors. St. Ambrose says that the soul that is wedded to Jesus Christ on the Cross considers nothing more glorious than to bear in itself the marks of the Crucified. Oh how, my beloved, can I repay you for your love? He is deserving to have a compensation of blood for blood. See, here I am tinted with that blood and nailed to that Cross! Oh holy Cross, receive me unto thyself. Oh crown, loosen thyself so that I can place my head therein. Oh nails, release those innocent hands of my Lord and pierce my heart with compassion and love. ... Oh my most loving Lord, intoxicate our hearts with this wine, burn them with this flame, wound them with the arrows of your love.

Now, as a comfort to one who lives a moderated life it is necessary to be warned about a strong temptation by Lucifer who seeks to represent to us as a very defective thing something that, in reality, is only an effect of that divine love which dwells in the just. Let me explain. From the time that a soul surrenders itself sincerely to divine service and seeks to please its Beloved, it yearns for nothing else than a greater fervor, a greater holiness, a greater perfection. Then, the devil, with respect to this most holy desire which must be regulated in a practical way in keeping with the will of God, finds a way of causing it anguish, assailing it and making it fall (if he can succeed in this) into such a state of dejection that he does not allow it to find a moment of peace, either because of sins committed in the past or because of an excessive fear of falling into new sins, etc., and thus making every effort futile. It is impossible (the tempter of the soul keeps saying as he tries to reduce it to despair) to succeed in an undertaking which would require in you more virtue, more merits, more fervor. It is impossible for you to make progress in doing good, when, by your sins, you have lost the merits of the grace of the Almighty which are needed. In short, it is impossible to be able to fly without wings. Now, if the soul listens to such deceptive images, then the enemy will continue to question it as follows: Tell me, don't you really know how wretched you are, how deficient, how ungrateful before God? ... In your ingratitude, could you really feel worthy of the gentle kindnesses of his ineffable divine love? Therefore, lay aside any such thoughts, for otherwise you will be marked as a presumptuous and proud individual.

Oh how really subtle is that diabolical deception, for it is covered with a mantle of false humility that causes one to attribute to vice something that is happily produced by the love for God. Hence, let us open our eyes and, in order to elude every infernal deceit, let us etch into our hearts the following words of St. John Chrysostom, since they are most opportune in restoring to ourselves calm and tranquility of spirit: "When the love of God has taken possession of a soul, it produces in it an insatiable desire to act in behalf of the Loved One, so much so that, despite the many and the great acts that it performs for a long period of time spent in his service, all seems to be nothing and it always feels hurt that it does so little for God, and that if it were licit for it to die and be destroyed for him, it would be happy to do so. Thus it is that it always looks upon itself as useless in everything that it does because when love points out to it what God deserves, then in that clear light it sees all the defects of its own actions, bringing on confusion and pain from everything it does and recognizes as poor the deeds that it performs for so great a Lord."

St. Justinian says: "When one truly is making progress, he feels in himself a continuous desire to advance further, and as he grows more in perfection, so much more does the desire increase; for as the light in him continues to grow, it always seems to him that he has no virtue at all

and that he is doing nothing good at all, and if he were to see himself doing something good, he gives himself no credit. Therefore, the situation is that he is continually working for the acquisition of perfection without ever growing tired". Hence, all the consequences of the love of God pointed out up to now are nothing but the products of that very same love. They never tend to render the soul inactive, but rather by their very nature excite it to greater industry and concern to purify itself before God. So, how truly terrifying is the devil when he seeks every imaginable way to impede the progress toward perfection, blocking one's total dedication to God. Who is it that cannot recognize the iniquity and the origin of a temptation which tends to arrest the spirit in its chosen course of virtue? "A humility that disquiets one", says St. Teresa, "never comes from God but from the devil". In fact, God does not fail to help us in those trials since he is desirous of our love. *Fili, praebe mihi cor tuum, ecce cor meum.*²⁰

Whatever artifice the devil uses in this regard, the soul must courageously remember what that great servant of God, Fr. Segneri, Sr., used to say to oppose the enemy and to achieve a most glorious victory over him: "There are two ways for clearing out a terrain that has become jungle and covered with heavy growth. One is to take an ax and begin cutting down trunk after trunk. The other is to attack it with fire; and this second way is without comparison, not only because it is easier but because it is more useful in the sense that the terrain is made more fertile by the foliage that is burned down. The same thing occurs in our souls. One can pursue the method of exercising various virtues, uprooting vice after vice, but this method demands great labor, lengthy time and results in little fruit. The real method is to attack the heart with a great fire of love for God and this, in a short time, will accomplish what otherwise would require much effort. Furthermore, it not only purges the soul but wondrously makes it productive". So, whatever may be the condition of the soul, it sees in itself its defects, it considers its status, it realizes how unworthy it is of heavenly favors and notes its ungratefulness towards God. Sorrowfully it applies itself to the exercise of that love that has been commanded to us by the words: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex corde.*²¹ It becomes purified and beautiful in the eyes of the Lord and marvelous prerogatives will continually grow within itself. This is the effective way of angering the devil and removing every obstacle to the working of the grace of Jesus who wants us as his own, because no one can serve him and the world, and because there can never be a union between light and darkness, between fire and water, between Christ and Belial.

Fr. Segneri, Jr. used to say that the love of God is a thief that easily despoils us of everything so that we can possess nothing other than God. St. Francis de Sales said that when a house catches fire, people will throw all the furniture out through the windows; when a person gives himself completely to God, he seeks to rid himself of everything that is earthly. In that way, one comes spiritually to the point of dying to anything that one has in this miserable world, thus verifying in ourselves the words: *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur.*²²

Not everyone is called by God to renounce temporal goods voluntarily or by vow: "but, all must strive affectively for that end by releasing the heart from those annoying shackles and seeking only the faithful fulfillment of the divine will: *Deus cordis mei; et pars mea Deus in aeternum.*²³ The one who must dwell in the world must imitate Noah's dove, which pure and candid, unlike the raven, returned to the good Patriarch. Speaking apart from the figure, I mean to say that our souls must not

²⁰ Son, offer me your heart, behold my heart.

²¹ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

²² Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

²³ God of my heart, and God is my part for eternity.

depart from the mystic ark of the sweetest heart of Jesus; but, rather, should always remain there with its affective love as the only place where it can find peace and quiet.

With these holy thoughts, fervent souls are sanctified in that state of life in which the Lord has been pleased to place them and, with holy joy, they surrender themselves to be of help to their neighbors, to be of benefit to others and, in short, to carry out whatever is within their competency. In that way, one dwells in the world, to be sure, just like the three young men in the fiery furnace of Babylon, not being harmed at all by the mysterious flames that burn incessantly. Oh if only everyone understood these truths, how much more successfully would we pursue the goal for which we have been created, while recognizing ourselves as pilgrims on this earth and spend the days of our life with interior detachment from whatever is transitory! *Dominus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei, tu es qui restitues haereditatem meam mihi*²⁴ (says the royal Prophet). ... *Introduxit me in cellam vinariam, ordinavit in me caritatem.*²⁵ (Cant. 2/4). This wine cellar, St. Teresa writes, is divine love which, when it takes possession of a heart, inebriates it with itself in such a way that it makes it forget everything that is created. A person who is drunk is, as it were, dead in his senses: he does not see nor hear nor speak. That is what happens to a soul that is inebriated with divine love, as it no longer has a sensation for things of this world and does not wish to think of anything else but God, to speak of anything but God, nor do anything else but love and please God.

The Lord said to St. Gertrude, who had asked him what he wished of her: "I wish nothing more from you than a heart devoid of all created things". The prayer of union (St. Teresa writes) it seems to me indeed to be nothing other than a dying as it were to all created things in this world so as to enjoy God alone. What is certain is that the more we turn away from creatures, detaching ourselves for the love of God, the more he will fill us with himself and the more closely united we will be with him. *Deus meus et omnia.*²⁶ St. Francis was wont to say: Oh my God, you are my all and my every good! What beautiful words those are: "My God and my all". Thomas a Kempis says that for one who understands this, nothing more need be said; and for one who loves, it is a sweet experience to repeat always: *Deus meus et omnia*. The aforementioned St. Francis de Sales would say: "If I ever came to discover in my heart a single fiber that was not God's, I would want to tear it out immediately".

Let us conclude then: we must be altogether God's, just as he gave himself entirely for us. "Oh how deceived (de Sales says) is the one who bases sanctity on something other than the love of the Lord. Some base sanctity (the Saint writes) on austerities, others on almsgiving, others on prayer, others on frequenting the sacraments. As for me, I know of no other perfection than that of loving God with all my heart. For, all the other virtues, without love, are only a pile of stones. If we do not enjoy perfectly this holy love, the defect lies in us since we fail to give ourselves entirely to God."

Here is how St. John of the Cross speaks allegorically on this subject: "It makes little difference whether a bird is bound with a heavy cord or with a very thin one; the bird will always remain bound and never be able to fly away". Let us apply these reflections to our own situations and let us reach the goal that we hope for.

Finally, the means for attaining perfect love are the following, taught to us by the angelic Doctor, St. Thomas: First, to have a continuous remembrance of the general and particular benefits received. Second, to think of the infinite goodness of God which is always ready to do good to us, to

²⁴ The Lord is part of my inheritance and of my chalice; you it is who will restore my inheritance to me.

²⁵ He brought me into the wine cellar, and his intention toward me was love.

²⁶ My God and all.

always love us, and to seek our love. Third, to diligently avoid even the least thing that is displeasing to him. Fourth, to renounce all earthly goods (not having an inordinate attachment to them). Fr. Taulero adds still another great means to the attainment of a perfect love of Jesus Christ, namely, meditation on his holy Passion.

So, Countess, let us continue spiritually to live always in the holy union of love at the foot of the Cross; there, reciprocally, let us implore divine mercy. Let us be concerned about our eternal salvation. Reflect often on the great desire that the Savior has to see that everyone is saved. Remove from your heart every worry and harmful fear. Serve the Almighty with joy of spirit, which I heartily urge you to do. Do not doubt that you will gain the incorruptible crown. Have a special remembrance of me, a miserable sinner who, by reason of the priesthood to which God has called me, stand in need of much spiritual help to faithfully correspond to it. Without adding anything further, I am

Your humble servant

P. S. You must be patient if these letters of mine do not arrive with regularity on the set days that we agreed upon, since it is necessary for us to adapt ourselves to the present circumstances. But, be absolutely convinced of my very deep and solid concern for this undertaking (even though I recognize what a weak instrument I am, ignorant and good for nothing). In practice, you will see how you will make progress prudently in working for the greater glory of God. Whenever I have a page to send to you, I will include it with the ones I send to Monsignor Annibale and, in that way, our letter correspondence will be kept known only to the Lord. Be happy, very happy, and again be assured that I am

Your humble servant

58

18 April 1813²⁷

Contessa Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Hail to Jesus and Mary

Madame Countess

Enclosed for you are 12 booklets that I spoke of to you which you will be able to pass on to anyone who is inclined to this devotion of the Chaplet in the Church of the Servites, or you can share them with the other priest who practices it in the Valverde; in short, do as you think best.

Please do me the favor of passing on to Msgr. Annibale, whom you will please greet in a special way, the following notification concerning the half-hours that all of us have selected for the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother, as you know; urgently, I beg you to please deign to fill it out entirely, by getting other pious persons to lend themselves to such a good practice.

From four after midday on Good Friday until 4:30

Canon Fr. Francesco Aisa

From 4:30 until five

²⁷ Contessa Gamba Ginnasi: wife of Count Alessandro Ginnasi and sister-in-law of Msgr. Annibale. In all there are 29 letters addressed to her by the Saint. The present letter is found among the letters addressed to Msgr. Annibale because, as is mentioned in the context, it was delivered to him.

Curate Fr. Giuseppe Luzzi
 From five thirty until six
 Prior Fr. Pietro Guizzi
 From ten in the evening of Good Friday until 10:30
 Can. Gaspare del Bufalo
 From 10:30 until 11 in the evening, etc.
 Can. Fr. Mariano Petrucci
 From 11 to 11:30 in the evening, etc.
 Archpriest Fr. Francesco Ferrajoli
 From 11:30 to 12 midnight, etc.
 Curate Fr. Luigi Risca
 From 12 until 12:30 in the night, etc.

²⁸

With regard to the bottom mattress, everything is taken care of; I will tell you in person everything about that.

Stay well; pray for me and, with all due respect, for I am in a hurry

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. Del Bufalo

(Imola, 1813)²⁹

P. S. Three leaflets of the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother which I am enclosing can be given, if you will, to Msgr. Annibale to do whatever good he can with them.

59

April 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

Venerable Msgr.

I am writing a couple of lines in a hurry only to inform you of the names of those who have enrolled in the Union of Pisa; they are the following:

- 1) Prior D. Pietro Guizzi of Spoleto
- 2) Archpriest D. Fran-o Ferrajoli of Sutri
- 3) D. Giuseppe Luzzi, Pastor of Todi
- 4) D. Matteo Taddei, Pastor of Todi
- 5) Canon D. Fran-co Aisa of Assisi
- 6) Curate D. Luigi Risca of Fuligno

We will take care of providing the booklets; in the meantime, pray for me, and be happy. As for us at the present time, there is nothing new; I am fearful of the future; all will redound to the greater glory of God. Even let Crosses come, for my confidence is entirely in Jesus, our Redeemer;

²⁸ At this point the manuscript is deteriorated and one line is completely illegible.

²⁹ The letter was written certainly from Imola, in the year 1813, and very probably in the month of April: Good Friday in 1813 was, as a matter of fact, on April 16.

with Paul I will repeat.³⁰ *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat; superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione.*³¹

Meanwhile, with profound respect, I continue to assure you that I am your

Humble, devoted and obliged servant

*G. C. del Bufalo*³²

P. S. I AM RETURNING TO YOU THE LITTLE BOOK; THE OTHER LARGER ONE IS FOR MADAME COUNTESS LUCREZIA.

60

April 29, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

Venerable and beloved Monsignor

*Gratia Dei nobiscum.*³³ *Amen.*

Here I am again inconveniencing you with these few lines, by which I beg you please to deliver to Madame Countess Lucrezia the enclosed matter, together with my most dutiful respects; at the same time, I recommend myself to your prayers during the approaching month of May, so acceptable to Most Holy Mary, that through her help and intercession, I may obtain what is necessary for eternal salvation. Besides the usual spiritual pacts that we have, let us increase at this time our petitions for our reciprocal well-being, and let us dispose ourselves for receiving within a short time the Divine Holy Spirit who will fill us with his Holy Divine Love. Please pardon me for writing in such a hurry, but then you are very well aware of the intimate, particular attachment that I hold for your person, not disjoined from the esteem and respect that I openly profess; with these sentiments full of gratitude, in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, I express myself as

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

(from Rocca of Imola) April 29 (1813)

61

April 29, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Hail to Jesus and Mary

Esteemed Countess

This time I am hurrying to send you the enclosed pages so that you can begin the holy month of Mary with a generosity of heart that would match the wideness of the sea. Do not be dismayed by what you related to me in your letter. Laugh at the devil as you would at a buffoon. Do not ever allow yourself to be seen by him as timid, and deal with him scornfully. With total peace, be careful to continue to love the Lord. With regard to desiring spiritual things, when they are in keeping with

³⁰ In the original we read: "ripetere". Perhaps it is a slip of the pen.

³¹ I can do all things in him who strengthens me; with superabundant joy in every tribulation.

³² The letter seems to be written from Imola, about the same time as the preceding one.

³³ The grace of God be with us.

the will of the Almighty, you can have as many as you wish. In the lives of the saints, we find continuous examples of this. Furthermore, that is the effect that one experiences who truly loves our good God. The devil is the one who, being annoyed, twists one's imagination. We must laugh at him as we would laugh at a child who tries to uproot a robust plant, the figure of the soul that is entirely intent on things of heaven.

You know very well that it pleases the Lord to see us as martyrs for spiritual things, that is to say, that he wants us to mortify ourselves even in this regard. This not only does not exclude any sensitivity at all, but rather presupposes it; otherwise, what repugnance or what merit would there be in it? A father of a family, for example, would be happy to visit the sick in hospitals, but since he has to look after his own family, he does not go there except only occasionally (though he would like to go there continually). He offers those intentions to the Lord at the time when he is suffering the disappointment, and that is something that pleases the heart of God who wishes to handle our heart as the potter handles clay. Thus, for one who lacks conformity to God's good pleasure, everything seems to be burdensome; whereas, for one who possesses it, everything seems to be easy and attainable. So, be courageous. God loves your soul very much and will help you in a special way. Confusion in the mind is overcome either by disregarding it or by thinking of the loveableness of Jesus. When the tempter of souls sees that he cannot succeed in tearing down the mystical edifice of virtue, he tries to produce an uproar, a lot of noise. But even with all that, he gains nothing from the one who treats him as he deserves. Hence, always think of loving the Lord; continue to do your job with joy of spirit and you will witness the marvelous results that can follow from that form of life.

Still, I do not deny that interior sufferings do bring to the soul considerable anguish. But, one need not be dismayed; in those moments, it is enough to gently recover oneself by thinking of heaven or of the sacrament of the Eucharist or of the Passion of Jesus. Surely, believe that little by little you will regain calm and tranquility. Also, you can find comfort in the thought that at that same time your Guardian Angel continues to present to the Lord the merits that you have acquired through patience. Especially try to cultivate thoughts that will help to inspire confidence, magnanimity and trust. Do not make too much of those moments of anguish of spirit, for they serve to exercise us in humility and in having recourse to God with greater trust. Live always in total abandonment to the will of the Almighty God who *fortiter et suaviter disponit omnia*.³⁴

During this holy month, pray especially for my poor soul and get others to offer their spiritual help. Tell the Lord to deign to help me always, to give me a holy death accompanied with sincere contrition for my sins, and to grant me the gift of recognizing and fulfilling without fail his most lovable will. I do not know how to tell you how much I need prayers in a particular way, both for attaining eternal salvation as well as for being able to do good for souls, if it please the Almighty. I know my own wretchedness but, at the same time, I acknowledge the kindness of the Lord and I have complete hope in prayer which is the key to the heavenly treasury.

Now, I would like to atone for an oversight of mine by asking you to thank, on my behalf, the nun in Lugo for the leaflets of the Sorrowful Mother devotion as well as for the concern that she showed for the benefit of my spirit by sending the life of St. Catherine which I read with great pleasure. Recommend me to her prayers and note that this act of obligation had slipped my memory, having recalled it only by accident. Such things happen frequently to me, for I am absent-minded. But, I hope you will excuse me.

³⁴ He disposes everything firmly and sweetly.

With Pentecost drawing near, let us renew our fervor and let us hope for particular graces for our souls, granted by the most merciful God. Let us pray for the Vicar of Jesus Christ and for all the holy Church etc. that the Holy Spirit will pour out on her his gifts. Let us turn, also, to the most powerful intercession of most holy Mary who, if I remember correctly, was continuously invoked by Xavier with these words: "Mother of God be mindful of me". That saint would likewise repeat often: "Oh most holy Trinity"; and with those aspirations and ejaculatory prayers, he kept on working in holy, divine love. Let us, too, imitate him and let us recommend to him our souls. At present, I am reading *Theotimo* written by de Sales which I will shortly return to you. However, if you should need it, then I would send it even sooner, because I do not want to take advantage of your kindness. When I get around to returning the aforementioned volumes, then if possible, I would gladly read the other works of that great saint which are particularly fitted to my needs. Once again I repeat my deep felt thanks.

As for the future of our seeing each other again, I do not know what to say. You can wait to see if there will be anything now issued concerning your admission here. Also, you can check with Monsignor Annibale.

It seems that that is all that I have to say for now, except that you take good care of your health, that you serve God happily, and that you be courageous. In the meantime, I remain in the sweetest Heart of Jesus (imploring for you his most copious blessings), repeating that I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. d. B.

April 29, 1813

P. S. Excuse me for writing in a hurry; if, perchance, one of my letters should confuse you because of its lack of clarity, please let me know, for I wish only peace for your soul. In general, keep in mind that certain references apply only for those who, for example, allow themselves to be stifled by the devil.

62

April 29, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi³⁵

Imola

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

Pusillanimity of spirit is one of the principal obstacles which the devil, the enemy of good, places on the way to perfection in his attempt, if it were possible, to weaken the fervor that lies in the many souls who serve God, thus gradually leading them sometimes even to despair and to an abandonment of the path of virtue and evangelical holiness. It seems to me that our common tempter proceeds by imitating the different ways that hunters use to catch what they are stalking. At times, these men seek to snare birds by industriously trying to copy the harmonious sound of their bird-calls, thus drawing them into their nets; at other times, they attack them with the blasts of their muskets; finally, at other times, they make use of various types of reeds, cleverly woven so that they will succeed in what they have set out to do. In a word, they simply adapt themselves to the

³⁵ We have assigned April 28, 1813 to this letter since, very probably the "pages" mentioned at the beginning of the previous letter are in reference to these sheets.

conditions of their location as well as to the nature of the animals that they hope to capture. Now, the devil acts in a similar way: he entices sinners with an unhappy attraction to the miserable goods of this world; and, with fiery weapons, he hurls himself at the just so as to put them in a state of confusion, fear and anguish, thereby seeking to take possession of their hearts. In order to overtake a doe that speedily flees into a forest, the hunter first strikes it with arrows or darts so that, once wounded, it will run more slowly or it will stop altogether. In that case, the hunter will arrive and finish it off once and for all. Lucifer keeps telling himself that a soul that is making great strides toward perfection can never be captured unless, through pusillanimity, he can get it to lose that great speed that it has in its progress to virtue, and thereafter be able to produce in it a nausea towards evangelical holiness, causing it to fall into his power through sin. *Circuit quaerens quem devoret; cui resistite fortes in fide.*³⁶

Woe to those souls who allow themselves to be deceived by this monster and, because of their weak trust in God, fall into tepidity and into sin! Miserable and unhappy, how deplorable is their condition! As far as I am concerned, I can never be sufficiently satisfied in continuously inculcating in the minds of good people that they must score a convincing victory over excessive timidity, over languidness of spirit, over that pernicious pusillanimity that not only stymies one's progress toward virtue, but even causes one to gradually lose determination to serve God. I am only too well-aware of the grave damage that actually results therefrom. But, really, what is the source of that deadly pusillanimity? It has its origin in a certain kind of diffidence toward the Lord, fused into the soul by the devil, to which many virtuous souls faintheartedly yield. In order to repair that evil, let us see how displeasing diffidence is to the Lord and how efficacious, on the contrary, is holy confidence in his divine goodness to provide special helps and unusual graces. At this point, let it be understood well that I am speaking here of those souls that are already in sanctifying grace and who are concerned only with growing in sanctity and perfection. As for the false confidence (which is substantially presumption) that is found in those people who are obstinately dominated by sin, it is not my intention to speak of now at all. So, let us delve into the development of this very interesting topic, even though we have treated it on other occasions. It is a subject that is very conducive to building up the spirit of generous Christian magnanimity, upon which advancement and progress in virtue depends.

Sacred Scripture narrates that when Moses sent scouts to the land of promise, they returned frightened and told the people that they had seen certain strong giants who stood before them as numerous as locusts. Likewise, that they had seen certain well-fortified cities, surrounded by walls and towers that would be impossible to enter. With that report, such a feeling of dismay and great diffidence fell over the people that they were convinced that they would be unable to conquer the land of promise and that they should already look for a leader among their number who could conduct them back to Egypt. God was greatly upset with the people and said to Moses: "When, if ever, will this people come to believe and trust in me, even though they have seen so many signs and wonders that I have done for them? I will send a pestilence upon them and I will destroy them all at one time". Then Moses intervened and begged God to pardon them. God said to him: "Because of your love, I will pardon them, but all those who have seen the prodigies and the signs that I performed in Egypt and afterwards in the desert ... and have not believed nor trusted in me, will not enter into the promised land; I assure you that not one of them will see it with his own eyes." But

³⁶ He goes about seeking someone to devour - resist him bravely in confidence.

more. Even Moses and Aaron themselves, in striking the rock, doubted whether it would supply water, and received from God the same chastisement because of their diffidence. So let us argue as follows. God, in his infinite mercy, has liberated us from slavery to Lucifer by means of holy Baptism by which our enemies, figuratively speaking, were submerged into those saving waters and he has led us into blessed freedom as his children and heirs to his kingdom. After he has cleansed us in this sacred bath, he has pointed out to us the heavenly Jerusalem. Thereupon, in sweet transports of love he has cried out to us that one day we would be admitted there to be inebriated with unspeakable delights. I myself in giving you the law will be the way that will lead you to that blessed place of sojourn: *Ego sum via*.³⁷ I will be the trustworthy leader who will keep on instructing you along the course of that journey: *Ego sum veritas*.³⁸ I myself will be your life, nourishing you with heavenly gifts so that you will be fully satisfied in this sweetest of homelands: *Ego sum vita ... satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*.³⁹ While passing through the desert of this miserable world, you will encounter dangers, obstacles, inconveniences; you will have to suffer for love of me as well as for your own good. But, do not be fearful, for as long as you are docile to my loving invitations, my infinite mercy, like a devoted mother who takes her child in her arms so that it will not perish in going through difficult situations, will reach out to you with its almighty right hand and will guide you to the happy goal of your journey. *Iustum deduxit Dominus per vias rectas; et ostendi illi regnum Dei*.⁴⁰

Oh my children, do not become terrified; you have a Father capable of everything, who wishes all to be for your well-being. You will not be lacking in prodigies that will be a testimony of his love; you cannot at all be doubtful of his desire to see all of you saved forever; indeed, you must be convinced that his fidelity in fulfilling his promises is incontestable. Of whom, therefore, should you be afraid? *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?*⁴¹ So, do not grieve the heart of God with vain, prejudicial fears, with diffidence, with pusillanimity - because in doing that, you offer an insult to his infinite love. Rather, repeat with the Apostle: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat; ... non ego sed gratis Dei mecum*.⁴²

A wise and moderate prince assured one of his subjects his continual assistance and proved it with his deeds. Would it not be an insufferable rashness if, on some occasion, the subject were to exhibit doubts concerning the kindness of that prince? Well, then, what ought to be said about our great God, infallible Truth, who on innumerable occasions in the Scriptures, assures us of his protection and urges us to trust in him, and, in fact, even commands it? Oh how can a creature allow himself to be dominated by dejection or languidness of spirit! You, oh soul, you by yourself (writes a great ascetic) will never be good for anything; but, with God's assistance you will be like a zero in mathematics: no matter how often you multiply a zero, the result is always zero; but, add units to them and they become thousands and millions. God, added to your nothingness, will change you and make you a totality of omnipotence. To be sure, why did the Lord always select the weak, the unlearned, those despised in the eyes of the world for his greatest undertakings, if not to banish from

³⁷ I am the way.

³⁸ I am the truth.

³⁹ I am the life. ... I will be satisfied when your glory appears.

⁴⁰ The Lord led the just one through right paths; and showed him the kingdom of God.

⁴¹ If God is for us, who is against us?

⁴² I can do all things in him who strengthens me; but not I, but the grace of God in me.

our hearts every feeling of diffidence, filling them with holy trust in his divine power? *Confortamini in Domino, et in potentia virtutis eius!*⁴³

Cast a glance at Moses who was sent before the Pharaoh; a look at David who was destined to fight against the giant; see the Apostles who promulgated the sacred Gospel, ... then, let me know if allowing oneself to be overtaken by excessive timidity and pusillanimity is or is not a great wrong against the Almighty and an evident proof that one has not sufficiently acknowledged the amiability of his heart. *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?*⁴⁴

The Israelites, encamped between Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon, were oppressed by an extreme case of despair. On two sides was the desert, in front of them the sea, behind them a very powerful army. How much better, they kept saying, how much better it would have been if we had remained in Egypt! We had chains on our feet but at least we did not have death staring us in the face. No, said Moses. Do not be afraid; wait and you will see the great deeds that the Lord will do for you on this very day. Then, the sea parted and the waters formed, as it were, two walls, leaving in the center a dry pathway for their march. An angel took his place at the rear to protect them from that angle; a column of light illuminated their course, while a column of dense mist covered up all the light in order to cause the enemy to be in darkest night. Nevertheless, the Egyptians followed in the footsteps of the Israelites who triumphantly crossed to the opposite shore. Then, behold how the former were completely inundated by the waves. In the same way does the Lord act when he wishes to demonstrate his mercy, and he will do so also for us, oh souls redeemed at the price of living blood; so, do not be doubtful. Are difficulties encountered while in service to God? Then God will open a way through that sea; he will take away those obstacles. Keep going ahead, you will have no impediments. You have behind you all the demons of hell pursuing you, very vehement temptations that threaten you with destruction. But, *Nolite timere.*⁴⁵ God will arrest their fury and will lead you to a place of rest. In your defense, your holy advocates watch over you: your Guardian Angel is there to assist you; Mary most holy spreads her mantle of protection over you; Jesus Crucified extends his open arms to you. He waits to welcome you in the sacrament of Penance; he comes to meet you, nourish you and strengthen you in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Already he holds out to you the indestructible crown of glory that will make you eternally happy. What more could you wish for? In your difficulties, so de Sales asserts, repeat frequently to yourself that this is the road that leads to heaven. I see the port and I am certain that the storms will not be able to stop me from reaching it. The greater your misery, so much greater will be the triumph of divine goodness. So, with courage, you must place your total trust in him: *Abyssus miseriae, invocat abyssum misericordiae.*⁴⁶ (Segneri).

The aforementioned St. Francis de Sales, writing to a lady, says the following: "I ask you to build up your courage with the confidence that you must have in our Lord who has loved you and has humbly invited you to his service. He loves you now as you continue in it and he will keep on loving you by granting you perseverance. I certainly do not know how souls who have surrendered themselves to divine goodness cannot help but be always happy, since where can there be happiness equal to this? Neither should the imperfections you commit alarm you, in the sense that we do not

⁴³ Be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his goodness.

⁴⁴ If God is for us, who is against us?

⁴⁵ Do not be afraid.

⁴⁶ The abyss of misery invokes the abyss of mercy.

wish to dwell on them, nor should our affections lead up to become enmeshed therein. So, be very calm and live in gentleness and humility of heart."

From all this, we learn how we are to conduct ourselves on the way to perfection; let us imitate the example of the first martyrs and the Apostles who were filled so generously with holy confidence in God.

However, to stimulate ourselves even more in this regard, let us pause a bit to consider the special favors that God grants to those souls who trust greatly in him. In this way, we seek to set this truth deeply rooted within our hearts, despite the assaults of our common tempter.

Remember, oh Christian soul, says the noted Alphonsus Rodriguez, that if you trust greatly in God and hope for great things from him, he will grant you great things and do so to your benefit. If you hope for lesser things, you will receive less. In the holy Gospels, we have many examples that show this. Let us select two of them. The leader in the synagogue who had left his dying daughter said: Lord, my daughter has just died, but, come there and place your hand on her and she will return to life. This man had that sort of faith and confidence, since it appeared to him that it was necessary for the Lord to go to the place and then lay hands on her. In that manner, he believed that his daughter would be brought back to life. The Redeemer of the world acted in accordance with that confidence shown by the man; he goes there and, finding her dead, takes her by the hand and revives her. On the other hand, the Centurion, who had in his household a servant who was paralyzed, had more faith than the other man. He approached the Redeemer of the world and said: Lord, my servant lies in bed, a paralytic, but it is not necessary for you to go there in order to heal him, nor that he come here at your feet: *sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur puer meus*.⁴⁷ Jesus Christ admired him and said to those who were following him: Truly, I say to you, I have not found such faith in Israel. Then, turning to the Centurion he said: Be it done according to your faith. He trusted Christ to the extent that, by only saying a word, he would be able to cure him immediately and that is precisely how it took place. *Sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur puer meus*.

That is how God works with us, in accordance with the trust we place in him. The Prophet David says: *Fiat misericordia tua Domine super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te*.⁴⁸ Depending on the depth that our vase of confidence has, to that extent will it be able to hold water, as one great servant of God used to say. This same thing happened with the Apostle St. Peter when Christ our Lord bade him to come to him on the water; as long as he did not fear, he walked on the waves of the sea as though he were walking on solid ground. When he began to be fearful, watching the violent wind blow, he suddenly began to sink. So, Christ reprimanded him for having so little faith: *Modicae fidei - quare dubitasti?*⁴⁹ Man of little faith, why did you doubt? thus having him realize that it was because he feared and became diffident that he began to sink. This is the reason why, at times, it seems that we are sinking and perishing in temptations, in trials, in our work - allowing ourselves to be deluged by a fatal depression of spirit. In the 90th psalm, the Lord claims that there is no other reason for one's protection and liberation in times of distress than to have trusted and believed in him: *Quoniam in me speravit, liberabo eum, protegam eum, quoniam cognovit nomen meum*.⁵⁰

St. Bernard, in wonderment, comments on those words: "Oh sweet liberality of God which is never lacking to those who hope and trust in him!" *In te speraverunt patres nostri, speraverunt et*

⁴⁷ But say only the word and my boy will be healed.

⁴⁸ May your mercy be over us, O Lord, just as we have overcome in you.

⁴⁹ Of little faith, why have you doubted?

⁵⁰ Because I hope in myself I will free him and protect him because he knew my name.

*liberasti eos.*⁵¹ Our forefathers, oh Lord, placed their trust in you and you freed them. They had recourse to you and cried out to you and they were saved. They placed in you their entire trust and they were not confounded. Who is it that ever called out to God, placing his trust in him, was not heard and helped by his divine majesty? *Nullus speravit in Domino et confusus est.*⁵² Turn your eyes to all nations and to every century and you will find that no one hoped in God and remained confounded. *Quis invocavit eum et despexit illum?*⁵³ To all this, we add that when a man distrusts himself and places all his trust in the Almighty, by this very act he moves the heart of God, as we have said, to be even more concerned to give particular blessings. Why? Because in so doing he comes to an acknowledgment of God's omnipotence and he exercises faith; he acknowledges God's mercy and exercises hope; he acknowledges God's love and exercises charity. In short, he gives glory to the Lord as he should. With this act, he says to the Almighty: My God, by myself I am good for nothing and you alone can console my heart: *auxilium meum a Domino*⁵⁴ in you alone do I trust: *in te Domino speravi*,⁵⁵ you alone are my refuge in hardships: *tu es refugium meum a tribulatione quae circumdedit me.*⁵⁶ My enemies assail me, but you battle with me, or better said, you ward off their darts; all I have to do is to hide myself in the great tower of defense which is your most sweet Heart, and therein, to allow myself to be governed and directed by you: *Domino vim patior responde pro me.*⁵⁷ What, then, can I fear when I find myself helped by a Father who is total love, total piety, by a Lord who is totally intent on what is best for me and before whom all creatures tremble? My soul, why then are you sad and dejected? *Quare tristis es anima mea et quare conturbas me?*⁵⁸ Hope in the great God and thereby defy all of hell; never allow it to be successful in claiming a victory over you! *Spera in Deo quoniam adhuc confitebor illi salutare vultus mei et Deus meus ... Quis me separabit a caritate Christi?*⁵⁹ The Lord is gladdened by these sweet utterances of the soul and, in seeing his desires and wishes fulfilled, he cannot help but repeat continuously: *Viriliter age ... ego ero tecum.*⁶⁰ I shall always be with you, I shall watch over you as your custodian, and, by allowing you to be subjected to temptation. I will always give you opportunity to gain more palms of victory for blessed eternity where you shall rest forever. *Sedebis in pulchritudine pacis et in requie opulenta.*⁶¹ Oh what pleasing thoughts are these for encouraging our spirits and for persuading ourselves that opposing attitudes are only the tricks of the devil who is completely against the spirit of our faith.

Therefore, the means to succeed happily in everything that we have said concerning confidence are: 1) to continually pray to the Lord for it; 2) to reflect often on the points that we have spoken of in this article; 3) frequently to exercise, with God's help, those very acts of confidence in the infinite goodness of the Lord and become familiar with them, just as we are familiar with the

⁵¹ Our fathers hoped in you, they hoped and you freed them.

⁵² No one has hoped in the Lord and been confounded.

⁵³ Who called him and despised him?

⁵⁴ My help is from the Lord.

⁵⁵ I have hoped in the Lord.

⁵⁶ You are my refuge from the tribulation which surrounded me.

⁵⁷ I am suffering violence for the Lord, answer for me.

⁵⁸ Why is my soul sad and why do you disturb me?

⁵⁹ Hope in God because I will still be thanking him for the salvation of my countenance, and my God. Who will separate me from the love of Christ?

⁶⁰ Act manfully ... I will be with you.

⁶¹ He will sit in the beauty of peace, in splendid rest.

Credo. In that way, we shall courageously triumph over all the furies of hell. Let us often think of the love of God and we will acquire that very necessary magnanimity of spirit. Amen. In the meantime, I am

Your humble servant

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April 22, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

(Imola)

Most esteemed Monsignor

I have received a letter from Rome in which I am informed that Ab. Romagnoli is not dead, as it was rumored; therefore, I thought it right to send you these few lines so that you could inform the Pastor, whom you know, of this matter and extend to him my distinctive respects. However, the sister of Msgr. Mondelli has passed on to eternity; please give this information to Father Del Pozzo (with my greetings), because he was well acquainted with this pious person for whom he will surely pray with all concern. Likewise, do me the favor of making a memento for A. Organtini of the Collegio Romano, Teacher of Humanities, as well as for another priest whose name was Sgrilletti who died in the Benefratelli Hospital.

A thousand good wishes to all in the house and especially to Count Alessandro and Madame Countess Lucrezia, whom you will assure for me that I have carried out exactly everything that was requested of me in their last letter, and which this morning I had forgotten to mention to you.

Pray for me always maintaining an attachment to you, and with fullness of esteem I remember myself to you as

Your humble and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

(from the Rocca of Imola) April 29, 1813

P. S. Since there is another sister of Msgr. Mondelli still living, you will indicate that the deceased was named Catherine.

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April 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

Most Venerable and beloved Monsignor

I have anticipated⁶² my letter to you for the month of May, because I fear even greater restrictions. Be happy; and pray for me a miserable sinner, who with fullness of affection and of sincere, constant attachment, I am in a hurry

Your humble servant

(Imola, April 1813)⁶³

I am returning to Madame Contessa the Office for Holy Week; thank her so much for me, while greeting in general all in the house, etc.

⁶² In the original we read: "anticapato". Here too it is a matter of a slip.

⁶³ The sheet was certainly written from the Rocca in Imola, toward the end of April of the year 1813.

May 10, 1813
 Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
 Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. amen.

Esteemed Countess

Enclosed are a few more pages dealing with the tenderest of all subjects, namely, holy divine love. There is no doubt that this topic is, among all others, the noblest one. The thoughts of the saints that I have tried to quote to you are likewise worthy of our full reflection. However, the order, the method and everything else that can relate to my work is truly a mixed-up mess, put down in the worst example of handwriting. So, if you are to profit from it at all, it will be necessary that the Lord, with his grace, supply for all of that and be compassionate toward me. Pray for me so that the most merciful God will grant me that enlightenment which is most productive of his greater glory and the welfare of souls. Continue always to live with me in spirit, according to our pacts, in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, the only source of true joy and contentment. Along with you, I wish nothing more than to belong to the Lord, and consequently you could do nothing more acceptable to me, together with your inclusion of me in the prayers of the good people of your acquaintance, than your own spiritual help which I receive each day. Hence, courage and great trust in the merciful God who watches lovingly and propitiously over us. Keep up your happy spirit, your magnanimity of heart, your fullness of love, and do not be doubtful of anything. *Exultate justi in Domino, rectos decet collaudatio.*⁶⁴

We are now in the month of May, a month so pleasing to Mary. Oh how much more ought we to grow in holy confidence, knowing that such a loving Mother intercedes now in a special way for us! I rely a great deal on her intercession and I am quite convinced that you do too. Let us remember that the most holy Virgin is the aqueduct of divine mercy, our advocate and, after Jesus, our hope and our protection. Therefore, *adeamus cum fiducia ad tronum gratiae*⁶⁵ and we will find peace for our souls, tranquility for our minds, repose for our spirits. If it were not that I have many other things to say to you, I would never finish speaking endlessly of our heavenly Lady. I would say to you that nothing can be delightful for us in this life unless it is flavored with the holy names of Jesus and Mary. I would say to you that these august names must be the beginning and the end of all of our actions, the source of encouragement in dangers, temptations and troubles. I would say to you that these names must remain etched permanently in our souls with indelible characters. They must be the words that seal our lips at the last moment of life. They must accompany us to a blessed eternity.

Oh Mary! Oh Mary! Haven and refuge for us sinners, protectress of the just, our mistress, our counsel, our delight! Grant that one day we can rejoice with you in the heavenly Jerusalem! Meanwhile, enkindle in our hearts greater devotion, greater affection and greater love for you. Defend us against Lucifer, for you are our shield. Lift us out of our weakness or languor of spirit, for you are our strength. Finally, sustain us now and always in doing good, for you are our comfort. In

⁶⁴ Exult you just in the Lord, hearty praise becomes the upright

⁶⁵ Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace.

short, let us live under the protection of your mantle and thus be fearful of nothing. Be mindful of us. Amen.

At the end of this month, we will have the booklets for the Chaplet, and today I wrote to Countess Bentivoglio who will send 500 of them: 300 for Fr. Polini, who asked me to get them; 100 for you and 100 for me. I hope that the Lord will bless our pious intentions and, in the meantime, let us not cease offering the price of our redemption for Holy Church and for the eternal salvation of our souls. Thank you for all the kindnesses that you display in your letter, and I have an endless number of proofs of the generosity of your heart. Be very tranquil, for at the present time, I am in need of nothing and I always have new reasons for thanking the Lord for the goodness that he shows to me, a miserable sinner. Monsignor Annibale continuously goes out of his way for everyone and in an even more particular way for me - something that really embarrasses me. I simply do not know how to express my true gratitude and appreciation. But, let us not say anything more about that.

You probably have already heard the news concerning Corsica from Fr. Polini, whom I asked to do so, and therefore I will say nothing further. Continue trying to do good for souls - that is of so much interest to you. And, in order to stimulate you even more, I quote here a principle given by de Sales. The saint says: "The highest degree of Christian almsgiving is to procure the salvation of souls". In view of the fact that there is nothing more pleasing and desired by God than to see souls in sanctifying grace, so also there is no work more acceptable to divine mercy than this one. Take care of yourself, and with the fullness of esteem and respect, I remain

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare C. d. B.

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May 10, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

The angel with the flaming sword, stationed at the gate of the earthly Paradise, shows us, says de Sales, that no one will enter the heavenly Paradise unless he is pierced with the sword of love.⁶⁶ This is truly a delightful subject for occupying in a holy way those souls who are striving for perfection. To treat it adequately requires a person who is, to say the least, wondrously inflamed with the fire of love and whose heart, were it possible, is likened to a burning furnace. But, what can I, a miserable sinner, say to you - I who, through my own fault, have profited little in the school of love and see myself guilty of so many acts of ingratitude committed against the only true and highest Good? Regardless of that, and trusting in divine mercy, I shall do the best I can, following the example of the saints, to briefly try to describe with precision the four dimensions of divine love, that is to say, its breadth, length, height, and depth - the characteristic qualities and prerogatives which must establish firmly in our minds the correct notion of this most singular love and which must accompany all of our actions.

⁶⁶ We have dated this letter May 10, 1813, since the preceding letter certainly refers to it at the beginning where it mentions "a few pages" (actually there are two of them) dealing with love.

On a previous occasion, we spoke of this interesting subject, but we looked at it from a different aspect. I hope, with the mercy of the most clement God, that the following reflections will be very fruitful and helpful for growing in the desire to serve God and to love him tenderly. Therefore, quite willingly do I dwell upon this topic, since it is by its very nature most efficacious for maintaining the soul in a state of confidence in the Lord and for inspiring us to greater courage, greater trust, greater fullness of understanding and affection. That is what I wish for so greatly for anyone who is walking along the blessed road of virtue.

THE BREADTH

*Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo etc.*⁶⁷ These are the divine words which marvelously explain to us the generosity of spirit that we must have for the beloved who is essentially love itself: *ex toto corde tuo*.⁶⁸ What law could the Almighty give us that would honor us more than this one? I know that we, vile creatures that we are, are commanded to fear the Omnipotent Ruler; to glorify him by abasing ourselves in reverence before his terrible majesty: *timete Dominum et date illi gloriam*.⁶⁹ As a matter of fact, there is nothing that is more owing to his divine greatness. I also realize that when we lift our lowly acts of affection in love toward God, it is something that God permissively allows us. But, for him to command us, for him to make it such a rigorous precept so that not a single person can exempt himself from it without being guilty of hell-fire, that is what St. Augustine found difficult to understand and that it revealed an almost imperceptible condescension. Oh infinite goodness of my Lord! *Quid est homo quia magnificas eum aut quid apponis erga eum cor tuum?*⁷⁰ You cry out that you are offended if I do not love you, and even though everything obliges me to cling to you with the sweet bonds of love, you go so far as to give me an absolute command! What a truly precious thing is love; and what measures your wisdom has sought to provide to make love set deep roots within my heart!

Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo.⁷¹ My soul, does the Lord not have innumerable reasons for demanding from you the totality of your affections and a heart that should be as expansive as the sea in its love for him? St. Bernard asks: do you want to know how to love God? Love him simply without measure: *modus diligendi Deum est diligere sine modo*.⁷² He has loved you from all eternity: *charitate perpetua dilexi te*.⁷³ Even though the world did not as yet exist, he loved you. Since he is God, that is to say, eternal, he has thought of you from all eternity. When the time, set by him, came for you to be created, he never stopped and will never stop blessing you and helping you, until that day when he will see you, as he wants it to be, enjoying all of the joys of Paradise.⁷⁴

How then is it possible for us not to respond with largeness of heart to such an ineffable outpouring of love and at the same time be filled with a special trust in the divine goodness which is completely intent on our well-being and our profit? If a prince of this earth were to benefit one of his

⁶⁷ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

⁶⁸ From your whole heart.

⁶⁹ Fear the Lord and give him glory.

⁷⁰ What is man that you regard him highly or why do you open your heart to him?

⁷¹ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

⁷² The way to love God is to love without measure.

⁷³ I have loved with an everlasting love.

⁷⁴ At this point in the text, there are words crossed out by the Saint himself.

subjects in various ways and then, in exchange for so many favors, demand of him nothing other than love, what a consternation would that subject not experience in seeing that sort of conduct and manner of acting, demonstrative of such clemency and good-will, such love! His admiration would increase even beyond measure if, prescind from all that, he were to observe in the prince a wealth of virtue -- that would truly amaze and surprise him. Then, he, with full understanding, could not help but break out with words and actions that would, insofar as possible, correspond to the thoughts and affections that he has within his soul. Oh holy, divine faith, with your power, arouse the hearts that are most hardened by vice; at the same time, pardon the numerous insults that you receive from so many who even identify themselves as your followers and who refuse even the voices of nature itself which cries out: love! It seems impossible that a human heart, in the presence of all those reasons and stimulated to love by so many different ways, could ever remain unmoved and as cold as a stone.

But, that was not the case for many, many others! St. Francis de Sales said, in speaking of himself: If I were to discover within myself an affection, even the size of a hair, that did not flow from God or did not relate itself to him, I would uproot it at once. Esther, the queen, said to the Lord after her elevation that she never rejoiced in anyone else but in him alone and that neither the benevolence of the king, the deference of her subjects, the splendor of the court nor the abundance of wealth had ever stolen her love away from him. Fr. Luigi da Ponte said: may your most holy will be done in me. These are the generous words pronounced by people who belonged entirely to God, and this is the way that one loves the Lord with breadth of heart.

What beautiful examples we find in the history of the Church with so many heroic people who even gave their lives for Jesus and so many saintly ones who, animated by this divine love, wished to become victims of the same! They did not fear at all the furies of hell because they trusted in the most loving God. Indeed, filled with holy courage, they looked for nothing else than to win the most glorious victories over hell. In short, love is a celestial fire that never says: enough! We must allow ourselves to be consumed by it in accordance with the will of the Almighty. Whatever we have is entirely God's. Rightly is it all given to him since that is what he wills, that is how it must be. It is only in that way that we will enjoy calmness of spirit which, as St. Augustine said, will always be restless until it rests in God: *inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*⁷⁵ St. Mary Magdelene de Pazzi, as she held in her hand a beautiful flower or piece of fruit, felt her heart transfixed, as though by an arrow, with love for the Lord. Likewise, St. Teresa knew how to find in every creature a reason for growing in the exercise of love: from the time that she was taught a bit about the beauty of the humanity of Jesus Christ, the saint would say that it seemed to her that the sun gave off only weak rays of light over the earth. But now let us proceed to speak of:

THE LENGTH

With regard to the length or duration of the love of God, reflect on the advice of Ecclesiasticus: *omni vita dilige Deum*⁷⁶ - love the Lord all your life. As we read in Leviticus, God wanted that on the altar of the Temple, there should be a fire burning without ever being extinguished day or night: *ignis in altari semper ardebit.*⁷⁷ This is a figure of divine love which must be in us incessantly as Pope St. Gregory observed: *Altare Dei est cor nostrum, ex quo necesse est ad*

⁷⁵ Our heart is restless until it rests in you.

⁷⁶ Love God with all your life.

⁷⁷ The fire will always burn on the altar.

*Dominum charitatis flammam indesinenter ascendere.*⁷⁸ Indeed, how can we exempt ourselves from that, having been called by Jesus in the Gospel to be perfect and saintly: *sancti estote quoniam ego sanctus sum;*⁷⁹ always to be prepared for death and ready for any call from the inexorable Judge: *vigilate quia nescitis diem neque horam;*⁸⁰ and, finally, to maintain ourselves always constant in our divine service: *qui perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit.*⁸¹ How can we allow ourselves to be taken over by inertia and lukewarmness, knowing that now is the time for work and not for rest, for war and not for peace, for conquest and not for possession? How can we stop for a single moment from loving the Lord, when at every moment of our lives his divine goodness speaks to us and inspires us with sentiments of love, along with new reasons for understanding better the ineffable sweetness of his holy love? So, to be sure, *omni vita dilige Deum.*⁸²

At this point, we must speak of two very strong obstacles that the devil proposes in order to obstruct many good souls from following through with their plans of belonging entirely to God. The first consists in his attempt to get persons to become bored with spiritual things and, at the same time, representing death to them as something far off into the future. He seeks to make use of every possible means of getting them to look upon the yoke of God's holy law as something unbearably heavy. The devil is well-aware that if he can manage to get a person to yield to those suggestions, very quickly will the flame of love begin to weaken; and, little by little, it will be completely extinguished. That is the devil's way of working at this stage and that is when he puts into operation his wickedest means. Therefore, be courageous and avoid those clever artifices, oh soul! Do not allow yourself to be seduced by the enemy! Do not give in to him at all! And, in order to emerge with a victory, speak to him with direct frankness as follows: At each and every moment, I am at the threshold of eternity; at each and every moment, I have an infinite number of reasons for loving my God, as well as for hoping deeply in him since he loves; at each and every moment, I am to recognize more and more that true happiness, true peace is found only in union with God. "The true lover" (says St. Teresa) "is always mindful of the beloved". Whatever is not pleasing to the Highest Good is nothing but vanity. So, all of your efforts, your plots, your tricks are in vain. No one can take my Beloved away from me: *Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi.*⁸³

In order to shame the devil even more, it is also good for the soul to repeat each day, saying: *Dixi, nunc coepi*⁸⁴ (David). Today I begin to love God as he deserves, for I have showed him so little love in the past. *Dixi, nunc coepi* - today, more fervor in my prayers, more zeal for souls, more love for heavenly things. *Dixi, nunc coepi*: today, more scorn and disregard for temptations, more trust in divine mercy, more concern to be holy. *Ego dixi, nunc coepi; haec mutatio dexterae Excelsi.*⁸⁵

St. Charles Borromeo used to repeat those beautiful words: "Today, I begin to serve my God". All of the saints made use of this method because they knew how angry Lucifer gets when he sees himself scoffed at and deluded. Even though everything that we do for the Lord is, indeed,

⁷⁸ The altar is God is our heart, from which it is necessary that the flame of love ascend unceasingly to the Lord.

⁷⁹ Be holy for I am holy.

⁸⁰ Watch because you do not know the day or the hour.

⁸¹ He who perseveres to the end will be saved.

⁸² Love God with all your life.

⁸³ My beloved is for me, and I am for him.

⁸⁴ I spoke, now I begin.

⁸⁵ I spoke, now I begin; this change is at the right hand of the One on high.

nothing in comparison to his loveableness and our obligations to him, nevertheless, let us resolve each day to belong entirely to God who is the fount of grace, of mercy, of love. *Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi.*⁸⁶ Let us listen to what St. John Chrysostom says of a soul that has given itself completely to the Lord: "Once someone has attained perfect love of God, it is as though he were the only being on earth. Neither glory nor ignominy concern him anymore; he laughs at temptations and sufferings; he loses his taste and appetite for everything. and, since he finds neither support nor rest in any earthly thing, he goes continually in search of his Beloved without ever becoming weary. So, when he works, when he eats, when he stays awake, in everyone of his actions and words, his entire thought, his entire eagerness is to find the Beloved, for only on that is his heart focused and only there will he find his treasure". Therefore, (the soul must conclude against Lucifer) these things will always be my occupations, my delights, my joys until death. This is the will of my Beloved; this is the goal of my desires, of my affections; this will be the happy ending of my longings: *Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in aeternum. Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi.*⁸⁷

The other obstacle that the devil employs in confounding souls in their constant exercise of love is to envelop them in a multitude of scruples, anguish and empty fears so as to manage to win them over by getting them to feel nauseated by the practice of virtue or, at least, to make them lukewarm in the doing of good works. Here again is another pitfall, dangerous for so many devout souls who are excessively timid. It is a thing against which we must defend ourselves well if we truly hope to persevere in the holy love of God until the end of our days: *omni vita dilige Deum.*⁸⁸ Anyone who decides to take a trip does not fail to provide himself with those things that are absolutely needed. So, too, one who each day is traveling toward eternity must not omit what is useful and necessary in order to reach that blessed goal. Since we are dealing here with individuals who are focusing on the practice of virtue, I cannot suggest anything else to him (as a defense against all those diabolical suggestions) than the continuous practice of a most magnanimous confidence in the Lord. That is what will efface all those apprehensions and instantly clear away that mysterious mist. In this world, we are all in a forest populated with thieves and murderers. What guides us and governs us is an all-powerful God. But, he wills that with trust in him we surrender ourselves into his divine power and that we do not become fearful weaklings, when confronted with those threats: *Si exurgat adversum me proelium, in hoc ego sperabo; si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum.*⁸⁹

Beautiful are the writings on this topic that the great seraphim of Carmel, St. Teresa, gives us: "Let our thoughts be grand, for from this will come our good...; it is not necessary to lower our desires, but to trust in God who in strengthening us causes us to arrive, little by little, to that same point where many saints with divine help have reached". In confirmation of that, she declares that she herself had the experience of seeing some spirited persons, in a very short time, make immense strides; for, (she continues to observe) the Lord was pleased with their desires as though they had actually carried them out. In another place, this saint says: "God does not work great favors except for those who expresses great desire for his love...; he does not fail to repay any good desire in this life since he is a friend of generous souls, even though through their own doing they become diffident...; the devil tries to convince them that to have great desires in imitation of the saints is

⁸⁶ My beloved is for me, and I for him.

⁸⁷ God of my heart, and God is my part for eternity. My beloved is for me, and I for him.

⁸⁸ Love God with all your life.

⁸⁹ If the battle arises against me, in this will I hope; if the camp stands firmly against me, my heart will not fear.

being excessively proud. However, it is a very worthwhile thing to be given over to having great desires since the soul seeks to fly higher and move farther ahead, even though it may not immediately have the power to do so". We conclude, therefore: to persevere until death in holy divine love, it is absolutely necessary to be courageous; this is the will of the Almighty and anything that stands in opposition is nothing else than the efforts of the devil, the enemy of our eternal happiness. To be even more secure in this truth, let us now move on to speak of:

THE HEIGHT OR THE ELEVATION OF THE LOVE OF GOD

In order for acts of love to be accompanied by this third prerogative, it would be good to point out carefully the following. God has loved us above all visible creatures, making us in his own image and likeness. The Eternal Father went so far as to give us his own Son in the august mystery of the Incarnation and rather than joining Uncreated Wisdom to the angelic nature, he willed to unite it hypostatically to our human nature: *Verbum caro factum est*.⁹⁰ Hence, only out of a strong love for us, the Lord has communicated eminent gifts to us, adopting us as his children and as heirs to his kingdom. He willed to make his very self our food and a pledge to us on earth so that we could attain our perpetual inheritance in heaven: *Ego ero merces tua magna nimis*.⁹¹ What heights of love that is! What an eminent love! What an ineffable love! *Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut suum unigenitum daret*⁹² If a great earthly ruler were to order one of his ministers to search his kingdom for the poorest individual subject so that he could raise him to a higher dignity and glory (like another Mardocho), it would certainly be a choice act of mercy and of love. But, what would you say if he himself, situated in the full splendor of his sublime dignity, were willing to acknowledge that poor man not only as one of his preferred associates in court but would further admit him into a more intimate friendship; then, not being content with only that, he would adopt him as his own son? Surely, everyone would be astounded in seeing such loving conduct as something truly admirable and surprising!

Now, from this lame comparison, what should we not say when we fix our gaze on our most merciful Jesus? Oh how our spirit should exult with indescribable contentment! For, disgusted with mere earthly things, it will be satisfied only with celestial ones! With what magnanimity will he not surprise us and what [trust will he not awaken]⁹³ in us so as to be completely hopeful in the one who not only accords us a more intimate [friendship]: *iam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos*⁹⁴, but also to love us with the very special love of a father: *fili, praebe mihi cor tuum: ecce cor meum?*⁹⁵ Then, if one looks at Jesus as man, one will come to recognize in him the tenderest of brothers and the first-born of all: *primogenitus in multis fratribus*⁹⁶ - one who is completely enkindled with love for us. Oh what happy thoughts of heaven are these - most appropriate for raising our hearts to the highest degrees of special love and, at the same time, uprooting every vain fear and excessive timidity!

⁹⁰ The word became flesh.

⁹¹ I will be your exceedingly great reward.

⁹² God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

⁹³ The original page is torn and full of holes. The words in brackets were added, based on the marks of the words that were still visible.

⁹⁴ I shall no longer call you servants but friends.

⁹⁵ Son, offer me your heart, behold my heart.

⁹⁶ Firstborn among many brothers.

THE DEPTH

We return for a bit to the comparison made previously and we imagine that the earthly ruler would have been willing to suffer a great deal to carry out his intention, not only of raising his subject to a higher status but also to shower upon him superabundant gifts. In that event, would he not seek a clear demonstrative act that would show that he had not only uplifted the man's love toward more sublime objects to which he led him and directed him, but also to show that he considered it a profound thing to not even spare his own life in order to attain the needed objective? As a result, should the subject then not investigate all the choicest ways and opportune means of responding in a proper fashion?

Oh holy and divine faith -- what an immense field you open up for us now! Oh how clear for us you make the most valuable testimony of love and how we ought to give a proper return to the Almighty! It is not enough that our minds and our hearts be set on great things, but it is further required that in executing them we do not in the least become dismayed by all the furies of hell and that we trust in that Lord of whom it is written: *miserationes eius super omnia opera eius*.⁹⁷ Anyone who loves deeply (the final characteristic of divine love), that is to say intensely, so noble an object as God, is never satisfied with his service to him. Nothing upsets him. Nothing frightens him. Nothing restrains him. His heart is like a torrential river that inundates the surrounding countryside; or similar to a fire when it consumes and reduces all to ashes. It finds its nourishment in no other thing than in loving the Lord; its thirst never says that it has enough. Just as bees feed on nothing other than honey, so also this person is entirely immersed in the nectar of Paradise, in that fountain of sweetness, in that holy, divine love. I cannot but marvel at the indescribable effects of this mystical flame in the heart of a Xavier who finally reached the point of exclaiming: Enough, Lord; no more: *satis est, Domine*,⁹⁸ in the heart of a Philip Neri and so many saintly men and women whom we now venerate on our altars. If the maternal love of the good Tobias' mother would not allow her to be at peace when her beloved son was far from her, what must happen to those souls who know very well the loveableness of Jesus and the delights that are felt in the exercise of love, receiving him so often at the Eucharistic table? In a nutshell, they experience in themselves the admirable effects of that celestial flame of love. *Ignem veni mittere in terram et quid volo nisi ut accendatur*.⁹⁹ They immerse themselves in the tenderest meditation of everything that Jesus has done and suffered, reflecting on the fact that he, inasmuch as he was God, determined from all eternity his love for mankind. They fix their glance on the blessed eternity that awaits them and, submerged, shall we say, in that sea of consoling thoughts, they become marvelously ecstatic and allow themselves to be consumed by the divine fire of love.

St. Francis of Paola, viewing the Crucifix, would cry out: Oh love! Oh love! St. Francis de Sales used to say: "With what love should we not be inflamed when we look upon the flames that burned in the breast of our Redeemer! And oh what a fortunate thing it would be for us to be able to burn with that same fire that burns in our God! What joy it would be to be united to God by the chains of love! Oh how many loving arrows issue from those wounds that strike even the hardest of hearts! Oh what flames come out from the burning heart of Jesus Christ -- flames that warm the coldest of souls! Oh how many darts fly out from that pierced side which strike the most obstinate of sinners! Oh what an abyss of mystery lies in that very intense love which, like a flaming furnace,

⁹⁷ His compassion is over all his works.

⁹⁸ It is enough, O Lord.

⁹⁹ I have come to cast fire on the earth, and what do I wish but that it be blazing.

consumes the very life of the Savior! What a great act of kindness it was for us to be redeemed from servitude to the devil, to return to the possession of grace, to a claim to glory, to be children of God! However, Jesus could have achieved that without undergoing so much suffering. I mean, without the total outpouring of his Blood. Jesus wanted to be the model for confessors and martyrs, for apostles and virgins, for hermits and contemplatives. Jesus wanted to be the universal master. Jesus wanted to nourish us with his very self; he wanted to die for us! Oh love! Oh love! Oh love! My dear Redeemer, grant that I may live only to love you. Amen"

In the meantime, I remain
Your humble servant

67

May 14, 1813
Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
Imola
Madame Countess

In the greatest hurry, I am writing these few lines to recommend myself to your prayers, because tomorrow I will be leaving for Lugo.¹⁰⁰ I am fully resigned to the divine will. Be happy.

Besides my sincere thanks to you, I ask you to extend my most special regards to all in the Ginnasi family and especially to my deeply-loved Monsignor Annibale. Let us live in spirit in the heart of Jesus, and I remain

Your humble servant
G. C. d. B.

68

May 1813
Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
Imola
Venerable Monsignor

Before leaving, I am consigning to Canon Aisa eight *Sc.*, Roman money, which soon will reach you, so that you can do me the favor of giving them in my name to Canon Luigi Gonnelli in Rome. I say in my name because he has not as yet been informed of this. Please advise him or have someone else alert him that he should not at present withdraw that money from Capocci which I wrote about to him recently; in case he has already withdrawn it, he should give it back again. Excuse this bother and the liberty I take. Keep me in your affection; and with the most distinctive best wishes to the Countess Lucrezia, in the Heart of Jesus, I am with a tender embrace

Your humble servant
Gaspere C. del Bufalo
Imola, May 1813¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ The Saint left for Lugo, along with three companions, on May 15, 1813. For that reason, we have given this letter the date of May 14, 1813.

¹⁰¹ This letter must have been written from the prison in Imola, shortly before the Saint's departure for Lugo, that is, in May of 1813.

69

May 17, 1813
 Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
 Imola
 Venerable Monsignor

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

At this time I have the opportunity to send this present letter to you assuring you of the excellent state of health which I am enjoying through divine mercy, as is also the case with my companions, including Prior Guizzi who continues as usual to maintain his health.

The orders that are imposed upon us, as they are very probably also for our Brethren there, are in short reducible to the following: 1) not permitted to celebrate, 2) not permitted to receive foodstuffs, 3) not permitted to have communication with externs; and, whenever there might be occasion, no speaking with the attendant. We are all in one room; we are provided with beds; after dinner we are permitted to have a short walk.

Please convey this news of ours to the other Companions detained there; give them our distinct regards in the name of the whole group. Do not forget me in your prayers, and give my respects to all in the house, especially to Count Alessandro and Madame Countess. All of us (and I in particular) never forget you in our recommendations to the Lord; from his infinite mercy we implore upon you the grandest and most copious blessings.

Express openly our sentiments of esteem to all the people of Imola whom we had the pleasure of meeting there, and offer them our most dutiful best wishes. Among these do not overlook Sebastiano, Fr. Del Pozzo and Fr. Polini.

When you write to Rome, please do me the favor of dropping a line to Fr. Luigi Gonnelli to whom you will give news of me, and tell him to send his reply to this address: Imola per Lugo.

Meanwhile I remain with fullness of esteem, respect and particular attachment in the Sweetest Heart of Jesus,

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

From the prison at Lugo, May 17, 1813

P. S. When you write to Bologna, give news of me to the Tanari House and to Madame Countess Bentivoglio Orsi.

70

June 12, 1813
 Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
 Imola
 Madame Countess ¹⁰²

The kind concern that you have shown in recommending me to the worthy Pignocchi family here gives me the reason for inconveniencing you with this letter in which I wish to express to you my sincere gratitude for all your favors and, at the same time, to assure you that I will always remember them. I do not ever forget the other obligations that I have contracted with you and all of

¹⁰² This letter, sent through the mail-delivery, bears near the address in strange handwriting the words: "Checked - Samaritani", that is, censored by Count Tommaso Samaritani, acting as Commissioner of Police.

your family during my sojourn there. Right now, I ask you to please extend to them my most dutiful respects and gratitude. Do so, especially, to the most worthy Monsignor Annibale to whom I wrote as soon as I arrived at this prison. Point out to him that I maintain a most pleasant remembrance of him here in my solitude. I hope that your daughter is getting better¹⁰³ and I shall not forget to pray for her that, if it pleases the Lord, she will regain her former good health and thus be, along with your other children, a consolation to you here in time and then for all eternity in heaven.

By God's mercy, I still continue to be well as I hope the same is true for you. I never forget to recommend you to the Lord and I am certain that in his loving kindness he will respond with abundant blessings. Do me the favor of greeting with distinction anyone whom you know are acquaintances of mine and particularly Count Alessandro Sassatelli and Fr. Polini etc. I am happy to send you also the regards of my companions whom you will remember and are known well to all in your family as well as to those just mentioned. In the meantime, with the fullness of esteem and respect, I have the honor to declare myself, most esteemed Countess,

Your devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

P. S. I had already asked the Pignocchi family to give you my thanks.

71

May-June 1813
 Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
 Imola
 Venerable Monsignor

I take advantage of this occasion to reassure you of the most vivid recollection that I preserve of you; and at the same time I want you to know that I examined the paragraph in your recent most appreciated letter dealing with the faculties from the Most Reverend Vicar which would grant to us permission to erect an altar for Holy Mass (whenever one might at least hear it), always keeping in mind, however, our privileges. I draw attention to the fact that the aforementioned Vicar perhaps may not have reflected on our situation, by reason of which, since we find ourselves incarcerated, he can rightfully and freely grant the erection of an altar in a decent place, so determined by anyone that he wishes to depute for the task. Please read Liguori in his great Work, and especially the treatise *De Eucharistia*, page 298, in doubt number four, where he treats of the place where one ought to celebrate; what I have just mentioned to you will be verified: so, you can bring it again to the attention of this oft-mentioned Vicar in whatever way you deem it opportune. In consequence of all this, we will be able to have that full faculty which we are yearning for; since the place where we have considered setting up the Chapel is most becoming for such a purpose, it would be a good thing if I were deputed myself, or any one of my Companions, for the customary blessing thereof, without inconveniencing another Ecclesiastic of this region.

I ask your pardon for the many annoyances that I have caused you, and at the same time please give my regards to all in the house, especially to your sister-in-law and Count Alessandro. Keep yourself well; meanwhile with all respect and attachment, I am in a hurry

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

¹⁰³ At first the Saint had written "in health", which he then crossed out.

G. C. d. B.
 (from the Rocca of Lugo, 1813)¹⁰⁴

72

June 30, 1813
 Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
 Imola
 Venerable Monsignor

I have received punctually your most welcome letter of the 26th of this month just about to end; you can quite well imagine what sentiments of special affection I hold for your most worthy person; at the same time, with real delight I have read and re-read it many times. Thank you more than ever for all of your concern for me and for the singular kindness with which you deign to regard me. I do not know how to express adequately my gratitude and true recognizance. I yearn for the occasion when I will be able to answer you with deeds for what I now only briefly allude to. In the meantime I can, in all truth, assure you of the very special remembrance which I conserve for you in my humble prayers, that the Lord will always multiply more and more his ineffable mercies on you, and that He will preserve you for many long years to the advantage of holy Church.

Surely I am not at all forgetful of the spiritual pacts that we have (and all that you know on this topic), since they are of very great interest to me. I recognize as a grace of God the most intimate and cordial union that you have deigned to grant me, unworthy as I am. Read indeed in my heart all that I would like to say on the point, and may you always live united with me in spirit in the sweetest Heart of Jesus.

I have informed my Brethren here quite punctually of all that you requested of me in your last letter; and quite aware of your many obliging favors, they beg with me this kindness, that you contact the Most Reverend Vicar, so that we will be able at least to hear Holy Mass, for it seems to be quite clear that he has taken over the entire responsibility through you.

Furthermore, with regard to the other things that you mentioned to me pertaining to one or the other of my Companions in particular, I have not failed to convey to them what I was supposed to tell them. All of them, in general and in particular, return to you their most distinctive greetings as a group together with mine, including also greetings to all the other Brethren detained there, whom I will not mention individually for the sake of being brief. Tell them, if you think of it, that we have adopted the practice of applying the Holy Rosary every Saturday for all our deceased, so that, in these times of ours, if the Lord would be pleased to call anyone to eternity, and the notice of it could not reach us because of the difficulty of correspondence, at least they may share in these few suffrages, substituting for the customary and most praiseworthy practice of applying the Holy Mass, which we are not permitted to celebrate. Moreover, say a thousand good things for me to your very worthy sister-in-law, whom I keep indelibly in my memory, and extend to all in the house as well as to other persons whom I have met our warmest regards, including Benedetto Martinez whom you mentioned to me in your last most delightful and acceptable letter.

I am not going to dwell here at length on expressing thanks that I owe to you for so many different reasons. I only say, look into my heart and read all, and this actually will be sufficient.

¹⁰⁴ Written surely from the Rocca in Lugo in the year 1813. The month and the day remain uncertain. It must be put together with the letters that follow, which speak of the permission of celebrating Mass. Sardi places it after August 19 (cfr. Lett. n. 27, August 19, 1813).

Finally, I am pleased to hear that your health is good together with that of the others in the house. I thank the Lord that your Mother is recovering; please offer my heartfelt greetings to her.

By divine mercy, my health is excellent, and I can assure you that it has been good in this area, with the exception of a small and momentary distress of nerves which resulted from the recent sickness I suffered in Piacenza. It has become somewhat chronic, but should not be a reason for worry, realizing that it is really nothing! So, at present I feel pretty good; just another reason for giving thanks to the Lord. The air suits me; I do not get upset because of the solitary life, such as the present one is, since it fits into my make-up. I am disposed for whatever else the Lord will want of me; do not cease to pray that He continue to give me His aid. Let us bind ourselves strongly to the Cross of Jesus, my most beloved Monsignor. It is there that our delights lie; may it be our reward in this life, our support in tribulation, comfort in our trials, in short, the ladder to Paradise.

*Mihi autem absit gloriari nisi in Cruce, etc.*¹⁰⁵

I think I have bored you enough. For me, however, these are most precious moments. Take care of yourself; love me; consider me unalterably, with fullness of esteem; of respect and attachment, of you Venerable Monsignor, your

Humble, devoted and obliged Servant and Friend

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

(from the Rocca in Lugo) June 30, 1813

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July 16, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Venerable Monsignor

Recently I received one of your letters which you can well imagine was most pleasing and welcome. I thank you profusely for all the interest and care with which you have acted and made use of this matter of the Mass, concerning which up to now I have not heard anything new; nor can I sufficiently make known to you how deep my gratitude is for all the favors you have done for us.

You probably know already about the unexpected transfer to Bologna of our Curate Tori, following an investigation to which we were all subjected individually. Moreover, from the beginning and throughout the entirety of this incident, we noticed how the aforementioned individual was made a target, though he does not have the slightest notion of what motives the government might have had for it. This affair has made all of us a bit disturbed, because such an unexpected separation has proven to be sad for both parties. May the Lord be blessed in all things and His divine wishes be fulfilled perfectly in us, so that we can always with joy and courage bear the Holy Cross which is our distinguishing identification in this present life.

If I would not have to write in such a hurry, how willingly would I engage myself in making sweet reflections on Religion that are so comforting to us and encourage us in our spirit.

Will you please deliver the enclosed matter to Canon Aisa on behalf of Canon Bacchetoni; in view of the fact that at present one must use the most scrupulous prudence and circumspection concerning letters and other such matters, I recommend that all our mutual Brethren (whom you will greet with distinction in my name) be very careful not to save letters which might in some way

¹⁰⁵ Be it far from me, however, to glory except in the cross etc.

irritate the government; the rule that must be held to at the present time is: read and then quickly tear into small pieces each letter that is received.

My most beloved Msgr., let us never be unmindful of our spiritual pacts; let our union always be in the Sweetest Heart of Jesus; therein we shall see each other in spirit; therein will we give expression to our affections; therein will we mutually interest ourselves in the acquisition of Paradise, where we will always be with God in the beatific vision: *et sic semper cum Domino erimus*.¹⁰⁶ Be happy in the Lord, since that is most appropriate to the just: *exultate iusti in Domino*;¹⁰⁷ maintain your health and give my regards to *omnes et singulos nominatim*.¹⁰⁸

In particular present my sincerest wishes to your most worthy sister-in-law, with whom you can share this present letter. Tell her that I never forget her in my poor prayers; I will resume my correspondence with her when God so wills it. In the meantime, she should be patient and wait. I point out once again my constant remembrance for so many kind deeds that you have shown toward me. I assure you of my optimum state of health, the tranquility and imperturbability of my soul. I would like to tell you ever so much more, if I did not have to close this letter momentarily, expressing the thanks and the general and particular greetings of all those detained here with me, repeating with distinct esteem and respect, that I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged Servant

G. C. d. B.

Lugo, July 16, 1813

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July-August, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Hail to Jesus and Mary

Madame Countess¹⁰⁹

Here I am inconveniencing you with this letter of mine in which I again assure you of the vivid recollection that I preserve of you, as well as the desire I cherish in writing to you frequently whenever it pleases God. I am very sorry to learn that you are not completely well and I beg you to take care of yourself, using every possible help, so that once restored to good health, you can continue to carry out those things that relate to the greater glory of God. I hope that your daughter is on the way to recovery and, in the meantime, just seeing her improvement is for you a great comfort. I am happy to have the opportunity to respond with gratitude for all the many favors you have shown to me. In the meantime, I shall continue to live in spirit with you in the sweetest Heart of Jesus.

Here, in my solitude, I hope to occupy the time in penitential union with my Crucified Lord and recommend to him my soul, his great creation. I rely more than ever on the charity of your prayers for me, which I can almost picture in your heart, and I assure you of mine in return - from

¹⁰⁶ Thus we will always be with the Lord.

¹⁰⁷ Exult you just in the Lord.

¹⁰⁸ All and singly by name.

¹⁰⁹ This letter was certainly written from the Rocca in Lugo, in the year 1813. The date, however, cannot be prior to June 12th since on that day the first letter of Countess Ginnasi was sent from Lugo, as is evident from the context. Nor can this letter be dated for the latter part of August, because at the end of that month or at most the beginning of September, Monsignor Ginnasi was no longer in Imola.

one as miserable as I. I do not fail to have before me in my prayers all that you have specified and you can imagine the deep concern I have. I hope that God's loving kindness will be made manifest in your soul and you will be consoled. With God's help, we can do all things, since God is total goodness and love towards us. Hence, be confident and courageous. I would like that, when it is safe, the enclosed be delivered by hand. Pardon me for troubling you so much. If that letter from Iesi could be answered through your assistance, that would please me. Otherwise, an answer will be sent through the mails. A thousand greetings to all in the family and to my other acquaintances. Special greetings to the worthy Monsignor Annibale to whom I am so deeply obliged and whom I love *in charitate non ficta in visceribus Jesu Christi*.¹¹⁰

Guizzi and Risca, likewise, send their thanks to Monsignor and everyone in general wish him well, etc. If I were not writing in such a hurry, I could never have finished this letter in time. Be patient - and with no further ado, yet with full esteem, respect and gratitude, I am, in the sweetest Hearts of Jesus and Mary

Your humble and obliged servant

This letter will be delivered to you by hand.¹¹¹ My companions whom you know send you their regards, as do all in general.

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August 12, 1813
Monsieur Ab'e Louis Gonnelli
Rome

V. G. e M.

Lugo, August 12, 1813

Dear Brother

The long period of absence of your very dear letters has caused me to inconvenience you with this letter of mine, in which I assure you of my excellent state of health. I hope that the same is true of yours. At the same time I would like to ask you about the following things.

Having you in mind and the continuous remembrance that I have of you, as you can well imagine, has been pleasing and delightful. My spirit is always with whatever you do for the greater divine glory. I cannot tell you how I have deeply impressed in my soul in a special way our projects, our poor, etc. These latter, at least by desire, will form the object of my consolations until death. I beg you to encourage always in our zealous members the most generous concern for the aforementioned, so as ever to maintain alive that fire of charity, already enkindled by the indefatigable zeal of our Venerable De Rossi. But let us get on with our own business.

I am not here to tell you again of the sentiments which fill my heart with gratitude to you. You can easily detect what the obligations are that I profess to you. Let us unceasingly adore, in the humility of our spirit, the ever holy, the ever just divine dispositions. Being conformed in this, let us not stop loving each other in that fullest extension which is known to you, interesting each other mutually in our own spiritual good and warmly recommending one another thereby to the Father of Mercies, to the most clement God. Enough for this digression which is due to friendship. In the first

¹¹⁰ In charity unfeigned in the heart of Jesus Christ.

¹¹¹ In the original, a word, which is illegible, had been crossed out.

place, I ask you to obtain for Melchiorre,¹¹² our mutual friend, the same extentions of faculties regarding Masses, known to you, even though he is not permitted to celebrate. In his name, I ask you to celebrate 40 of them: that is, 20 with a Privileged Altar and 20 without, in fulfillment of the two different obligations of the Altieri Family, well known to you. Later we will come to a settlement. The aforementioned Melchiorre is still waiting for various answers concerning Masses sent to others, such as to his uncle, etc., and up to now he is uninformed of everything. However, he is not wanting in due diligence; since this refers to the months that have passed by, as soon as he gets any news, he will not fail to keep you informed of everything. My state of affairs, however, demands that I advise you to address your letters to Mrs. Maria Madd. Pignocchi; in the very first one you send, which I am anxiously awaiting, please repeat for me everything that you might have written in other letters of yours which were never received. Then, for your own guidance, realize that ever since I got to this place, I have received only two of your letters, and these were of just a few lines: so let this be for you a piece of advice. I accidentally found out that there were some letters for Melchiorre, but as yet the Friend does not intend to give them to him. I am not about to repeat everything else that I said to you in my other letters, since I am very much a part of your love and thoughts. Advise me as to how much I owe you, so that I can take care of it. You might contact Capocci, if the opportunity should come up; he could pay you some small amount which I will have passed on to Bolognetti. I recommend to you the affairs of Girolamo of Piazza Farnese, in accordance with what I wrote you. Should the particular opportunity arise, I will send you some of my papers and some of my Mass records, etc. I know nothing of my uncle, since I have not see his handwriting.

Take care of yourself, love me, and with greetings to yours, to mine and to friends,

Your loving brother

Gaspare

P. S. Since I find it difficult to write at the present time, please tell my Father that I will write to him after I have received an answer to this letter; thus, I will not overburden him with mail. Indicate to him my love for him, etc., whose blessing I ask for, etc.

Continue the five *paoli* both to Gertrude as well as to S. Galla. I do not know whether I shall receive your letters in the meantime. At any rate, I shall await your response to the present one first.

Let me know whether Cavalier Fr. Lorenzo has returned. A thousand greetings to Bonanni and Odescalchi. Goodbye. Goodbye.

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August 19, 1813
 Msgr. Anibale Ginnasi
 Imola
 Venerable Monsignor

I cannot properly express to you the pleasure your last letter of the 11th of this month has brought to me; it always heartens me as does your singular care for me. Also, you reassure me of the excellent state of your health, which is very dear to my heart. I too, by divine mercy, continue to be well and conformed in all things to the adorable dispositions of the Lord. You can well imagine how in this solitude of mine the memory of you is sweet, and what the sentiments are that I hold for you

¹¹² Cf. Gasparian History and Trivia: Melchiorre, The Use of the Name of

in my heart, and with what special affection within myself I call you back to mind and remember you.

I am, along with my Companions, most obliged to you for the interest that you are taking in this matter of the Mass. With regard to that, I might add, speaking absolutely, that it is true that there was a Chapel and altar in the Rocca, and it still exists in the rooms occupied by the Justice of the Peace. It is also only too true that perhaps it has never been used for the imprisoned, but for the Commander who previously lived there. Nevertheless it is not considered wise to upset the government by asking them to surrender that Chapel to us; but perhaps there might be some reason by which the government could allow the priests detained here to be able to hear Mass. There might also be room for hope that we might substitute a portable altar in the place assigned to us without the government having to spend a *denaro* on it. We ourselves would take care of paying the Chaplain. If there is difficulty with supplying us with a Chaplain, because of the regulations of cutting down every communication, the government would have a way to satisfy us by not objecting that one of us celebrate on the feastday. I have wanted to make this suggestion to you, not so much as to put more pressure on you, and thus forcing you to make more extraordinary efforts which we realize could prejudice rather than help the situation; but rather, I simply wanted to throw more light on the subject, especially since Scarselli might have need of this information. Our desire, of course, is to succeed in this matter, but we do not want to abuse your kindness, of which you have given and still give so much evidence.

At the suggestion of one of our group, you made a reference to some sort of broad authorizations, especially concerning the one known to you that deals with Relics. I do not know whether it is an express faculty or an interpretation drawn from the spirit of the Church: whatever the case may be, it would be very difficult to provide all that would be needed, since we are unable to get knowledge of people who might be interested in these and similar things. It would not be easy for us to succeed in this undertaking. This can be deduced from the fact that we cannot even get news that is indifferent: as for example, the item of news that you might have ended your Chaplaincy. The surveillance is such that the persons to whom we are indebted cannot do anything more than what the government permits, such as loaning books, etc., Even the doctor comes into our section for reasons of sickness only, and he is accompanied by a Guard.

Father Guizzi is getting worse in health; and since he has been continuously sick and in some danger because of coughing attacks, he received communion on the feast of the Assumption. On that occasion we all participated at the sacred table, of which, and oh with what unspeakable sorrow, we have been deprived for three months. I would like you to make prudent use of this information since we do not know whether we received this ineffable privilege because someone assumed it on his own or whether it was given with due permission. The aforementioned Father Guizzi would like the Brethren there detained, as well as others of his acquaintanceship, to be informed of his state of health, so that they can keep him in their prayers, to which he fondly recommends himself. He has never been confined to bed and has all the care that is possible. With me, he thanks you for the gifts which you deigned to send us on the occasion of the celebration of S. Cassiano. These are also the sentiments of Fr. Risca, responding as we to your numerous kindnesses. We know no other way than to repeat with spiritual enthusiasm: *Retribuere dignare Domine, etc.*¹¹³

¹¹³ To deign, O Lord, to repay, etc.

I have communicated to Fr. Risca everything that you enjoined upon me in your letter, and full of gratitude, he and his send you their regards; likewise doing so, along with me, is Fr. Guizzi. I include furthermore the salutations and thanks of the entire community; and on this occasion I beg you to ask the most worthy Canon Petrucci if he ever found, after my departure, the *Confessore instruito* by Fr. Segneri, which I had lost, I know not how. Moreover, it has deeply consoled me to have assurances from you that your sister-in-law and niece are presently enjoying sufficiently good health. Thanking Almighty God for it, I wish her wholeheartedly a complete recovery. I do not fail to include in such circumstances a line or two for the Countess Lucrezia to whom you will personally extend my compliments; tell her that she is never to forget me with the Lord.

My most beloved Msgr., how many things I would like to say to you to demonstrate the intimate, constant attachment that I have for you ...; sufficient: who knows, perhaps one day, if it pleases the Lord, I may get a chance to have you know my heart better, and to repay you in deeds, proving not only my affection, but also my gratitude and recognizance for so many, many kindnesses. Our pacts are immutable, and no matter where I may be located, I will surely always be the same. Meanwhile let us live in the closest union of spirit in the sweetest Heart of Jesus: *ibi me invenies*,¹¹⁴ let us say to each other; let us interest ourselves evermore in the spiritual good of our souls. Pray especially for me that God may give me a true contrition for my sins.

I am in the meantime with the customary esteem and veneration

Your humble, devoted and obliged Servant

G. d. B.

(from the Rocca in Lugo) August 19, 1813

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August 19, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Kindest Countess

I owe an answer to one of your most appreciated letters and now that I have the opportunity, I will not fail to fulfill my obligation. Excuse me if I write to you only a half-sheet, for I am doing this only because I do not want to greatly increase the number of letters that I try to send out through the help of Mrs. Pignocchi who is quite concerned about me as well as the others. So, on these occasions, I beg you to thank her in a particular way. My endless feelings of gratitude to you I will not repeat again for the sake of brevity, but without difficulty you can understand what they are. I am pleased to learn of the improvement of your health and that of your daughter, and I give sincere, heartfelt thanks to the most merciful God. I, too, continue in good condition and always conformed to the adorable, most just divine dispositions. In my behalf, thank the giver of every good gift for so many graces that he deigns to shower upon me, such a wretched and ungrateful creature. Continuously pray that he will enrich me always with those heavenly blessings that I need so much to be able to weep in due form for all my sins, and ask him to show me his divine mercy. Oh how many things I would like to say to you on this point, but it is necessary that I refrain giving way to the desires of my spirit, since the supply of paper is so limited. In addition to your own spiritual

¹¹⁴ There you will find me.

assistance, also try to obtain the spiritual aid of those devoted individuals of your acquaintance and for this kind deed I will be obliged to you both in time as well as for all eternity. *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, etc.*¹¹⁵

I read with pleasure all that you indicated to me in your letter and I can assure you that I never fail to have you in mind in my most unworthy prayers, in keeping with the spiritual agreements we have made. My present situation prevents me from having a letter-correspondence with you as you would like, but we must be patient: we will resume it whenever it pleases the Lord. Try to continue maintaining yourself in the exercise of Christian confidence in God, as one who is in service to him who essentially is love itself. Encouraged by this trust in divine goodness, we generously move forward with great strides along the path of virtue and we, in a holy fashion, rejoice in the silence of our hearts. Let our gardens of delight be the most sacred wounds of Jesus, the source of grace, the mine of the purest gold of love. Let them be our comfort, our consolation; and therein, let us set up our spiritual mansion during the brief days of this life.

Presently, I am reading the life of Blessed Leonard, provided to me by Mrs. Pignocchi; next, I will delve into the works of de Sales, also obtained through her. Whole days go by for me in a moment and it does not even seem that I am in prison. This is a grace granted by my most loving God. A thousand greetings to Monsignor, to Count Alessandro etc. and also special regards to Fr. Polini and to anyone else that you see. In the meantime, I have the pleasure of expressing my remembrance of you and, with esteem and respect, am

Your humble servant

August 19¹¹⁶

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September 3, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen

September 3, 1813¹¹⁷

Kindest Countess

Accidentally I learned what happened to my dearest Monsignor Annibale¹¹⁸ whom I esteem and love so much *in charitate non ficta, in visceribus Jesu Christi*.¹¹⁹ I simply cannot express what effect this situation has had upon me. I share completely in the distress that you feel as well as that of the entire family, and, because of the very intimate union that I have with Monsignor, you can realize how I share in the anguish that he must feel. Patience! Let us yield totally to the divine wishes, let us always adore the ever-holy divine dispositions and with humility of soul, let us energetically repeat: *fiat voluntas tua*.¹²⁰ Therein we find the wonderful comfort that our faith

¹¹⁵ One thing I ask of the Lord, this I will seek, etc.

¹¹⁶ On the back side of this letter, the Countess noted down the place of origin: "Lugo". Hence it would have to be the year 1813.

¹¹⁷ Countess Ginnasi noted down near the address the place of origin: "Lugo".

¹¹⁸ When he had a friend read a couple of sonnets written against Napoleon, Monsignor Ginnasi was processed and then constrained to remain, for several months, guarded under "house arrest" in Bologna.

¹¹⁹ In charity unfeigned in the heart of Jesus Christ.

¹²⁰ Thy will be done.

provides for us; therein is the center of peace for our hearts; therein is the balancing power of the most holy Cross of Jesus!

I sincerely hope that in this whole affair things will take a turn for the good and I wish that as soon as this letter of mine reaches you he will have been already returned to his own home. In this most pleasing solitude of mine, miserable one that I am, I do not fail to keep him present in a very special way in my prayers since I really owe him that - because of so many reasons, but in a particular way because of our mutual pacts. I solidly trust in the most merciful God that, within a short time, we shall be consoled.

In the meantime, you must be brave: offer to the heavenly Father these acceptable sacrifices and, as best you can, try to live with tranquility and calmness of spirit in the sweetest Heart of Jesus. Remember only this saying that Blessed Leonard used to repeat to himself: "Paradise in this world consists in suffering, just as that of the Blessed in heaven lies in the fullness of joy." And, with that virtue that is characteristic of you, find comfort in the Crucified Lord. Also, as a good thing to do, I ask you to tear up this letter of mine, and, in case Monsignor is still troubled, you would be doing me a great favor if, in the most prudent way, you would give him my best wishes. Meanwhile, with the fullness of esteem and respect, I am

Your devoted and obliged servant

If you will, please tell Fr. Polini to ask Petrucci if I might have left in the Rocca my copy of *Il Confessore Istruito* by Fr. Segneri. Also, he should ask del Frate if, while we were together in S. Giovanni in Monte, he might have put one of his relics in my container; I would not want him to suffer, and so I would hunt for it among my own. Give my regards to anyone whom you judge it to be prudent - since, even without realizing that it could happen, mistakes sometimes do occur. The other day I was given the greetings of Count Alessandro Sassatelli which I appreciated etc. Give my best wishes to your most worthy husband and your children etc. Everyone here who is acquainted with you wish you well. All of my companions are distressed by what has happened, but, in particular, the one among them who is most beholden to Monsignor. Excuse me for writing so hurriedly.

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September, 1813
Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.
Esteemed Countess¹²¹

With indescribable pleasure I received your most appreciated letter and I thank you always for the remembrance you show toward me and for all of the concern that you demonstrate. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you and the indebtedness I feel for all of your kindnesses. I am gladdened to hear that you are enjoying improved health just as I am, through the mercy of the Lord, and I am consoled even more to learn from your letter that your daughter seems to have gotten relief from the discomfort of coughing spells which I hope do not return to distress her.

¹²¹ This letter certainly followed the one written on September 3rd and precedes the one written on October 4th, as can be deduced from the contents.

I would also have liked to receive the consoling news that our most beloved Monsignor Annibale had regained his freedom. But, patience! May the ever-holy and adorable will of the Lord be always done - he who disposes all things for our benefit! St. Vincent de Paul used to say that "conformity to the divine will is the treasury of the Christian and the remedy for every evil since it brings about the denial of self and the union with God and every virtue". As you see, I am including a letter of mine for Monsignor Annibale. I would be greatly pleased (hoping you can find a safe opportunity) if you see that it gets into his hands. I considered it to be superfluous to urge him to be exceedingly careful and that it would be a very good thing if he were to tear it up after reading it, but, I am quite sure he will do so himself.¹²²

Do not be worried that you were unable to get those replies from Polini. I am sincerely grateful to you for all the solicitude you have shown. With pleasure will I read the life of St. Philip; pray to the Lord that as I read it, I will be inspired to do all for his greater glory and be dutifully remorseful for my sins. I am greatly comforted in being assured that so many people, and you in particular, pray to the Lord for his graces, and trusting deeply in this spiritual help, I am confident of obtaining his mercy. Oh how many things I would say to you if, instead of writing to you, I could speak to you in person! But, since that is not what pleases the Lord, let us, therefore, keep each other often and always in the closest union in the sweetest Heart of Jesus. Therein let us continue to be concerned as deeply as possible about our own spiritual advancement in virtue. In a special way, I myself am most needful so that, if it should please the Lord to keep me alive, I would dedicate myself to the ministry of giving holy missions. Let me know if the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is propagated there and whether the people are aware of the indulgences that are attached to it.

If Monsignor Annibale should not have with him the letters of Xavier, the Chaplet and that book of meditations in Latin that I left for him, then you, if you can manage it, might get them to him, unless, of course, he has been provided with others. The treatise by Rodriguez on conformity to the divine will or his treatment of spiritual joy are, in particular, most opportune.

I take the liberty of including also a letter of importance for me that must be sent to Rome. Please try to find some safe way of having it mailed either from Forli or some other place that you consider good. I suggest to you that it is not enough simply to drop these letters for Rome into the mail, but it is necessary to give them to the postman, paying a few centimes, as you know -- otherwise, they will not go out. Excuse me for giving you further troubles and, if I were not afraid that it might offend you, I would have liked to include the centimes that would cover the expenses.

Finally, you would be doing me a favor if you would consult Monsignor Domenico to see whether he would celebrate a small number of Masses for me, as long as he would be free to apply them and as long as it would not interfere with any other devotions of his. These Masses are obligations which, even though contracted in Rome, nevertheless I am allowed to fulfill by others in other places. In the event that he would be able to do me this favor, he should not begin celebrating any Mass until I send another letter, since right now, I simply want to know whether he will be able to do this or not. And since (because of your kindness) I can freely speak to you, I beg you not to proceed with this request if you judge it inopportune or that it might upset him, since he could already have assumed other obligations etc. I leave it all entirely in your hands to do as you see fit. The pertinent offerings for the Masses are 15 *baiocchi* in keeping with the practice in Rome. It

¹²² The letter to Monsignor Annibale, which the Saint included with this letter, is also written on half-sheet, identical to this letter. It, too, like this one, lacks a date and a signature.

seems to me now that I have nothing further to add. I ask you only to pardon me for writing only a half-sheet, but I do this in order not to increase the volume and not because of a lack of esteem, respect and gratitude. I remain

Your devoted and obliged servant

P. S. Please seal the enclosed letters.

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September, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Bologna

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always in our hearts. Amen

Venerable Monsignor

I do not know how to express to you sufficiently the pleasure I experience in taking advantage of this opportunity to send you these few lines. My thought is always turned to and occupied by your most worthy and lovable person. You are aware of our bonds, our contracts, our reciprocal affection. You know, therefore, what must be the sentiments of my heart for you and how greatly moved I am by the present situation in which you find yourself. Let us profoundly adore the ever holy, most just dispositions of our great God. Let us conform ourselves willingly to his divine goodwill. Let us grasp with love those Crosses which are indispensable in our present life. Let us re-invigorate our spirit in the most loving heart of Jesus: that is where we will find each other close and in the most intimate union; that is where we will inspire each other for the acquisition of the beloved Fatherland of Paradise, in the most expressive ways renew in ourselves the care of interesting each other mutually in the sanctification of our souls.

My most beloved Msgr., I do not know how to tell you how tenderly I love you and what delight I find in you, after it has pleased the Lord to call back to Himself the good Del Sole. Our bonds are directed only to God: and hence it consoles me to be assured that you will always have me in mind in your solitude, warmly recommending me to the Giver of all good things who favors me so generously, the most miserable of all His creatures. Be certain then of my constant, particular remembrance of you and whatever relates to you. You will recall, as De Sales says, God is lovable when He consoles us as when He sends us tribulations; ... that Calvary is the mount of lovers; and that a "blessed be God" when things are contrary is worth more than a thousand thank-yous in prosperous times, according to what the Venerable D'Avila has left in writing. The Blessed Leonard was accustomed to say that just as the Paradise of the Blessed consists in joys, so ours, in this wretched world, consists in sufferings; ... the one who resigns himself peacefully (Fr. Alvarez) to the divine will in his travails, rushes to God with the speed of the mails.

Moreover, I hope to hear that you have shortly returned to your house: meanwhile maintain yourself always in holy joy of spirit, and take care of your health.

I believe that before your arrest you may have received another letter of mine in which I expressed to you the sentiments of true gratitude on behalf of Guizzi and Risca for all that you sent to us: but in case that letter of mine did not reach you on time, I intend now to renew those sincerest expressions of gratitude: all of my Companions do not forget you in their prayers since they have the highest esteem for you, etc., as you rightly deserve.

I wish from the Lord the most copious blessings and the bestowal of those graces that you desire; with all respect, gratitude and attachment, I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant
(Lugo, October 1813)¹²³

P. S. Since you already have connections there, I did not think of writing for you to the Countess Catherine and the Marchesa Tanari, but whenever it pleases you, all you need do is make mention of it. What a fine thing it would be if I could give myself, etc., not for any other purpose other than to demonstrate to you in deeds my affection for you, etc.

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October 4, 1813
Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

I am obliged to you for the singular kindness and concern that you show toward me and I cannot adequately express the true feelings of gratitude that remain hidden in my heart.

In your latest most appreciated letter, you were kind enough to give me the information that I wanted, and at the same time, you assure me of the excellent news of the good health that you continue to enjoy along with that of the others in your family, including the most worthy Monsignor Annibale whom I hoped to hear had been granted freedom. I also trust in God's mercy that your daughter will continue toward recovery and in God's good pleasure you will have the great comfort of seeing her in good time taking care of those things that the greater glory of God will require. Give my infinite thanks to Monsignor Annibale for the obliging remembrance he deigns to have of me and you can assure him of my equivalent response since I sincerely love him *in charitate non ficta, in visceribus Jesu Christi*.¹²⁴

You can inform Canon Rivolta that he should celebrate 10 Masses according to my intention. However, it is required that he do so at a privileged altar for each one. Therefore, I am enclosing one gold Napoleon, allowing you to give him the usual alms of 15 *baiocchi*, Roman money, for each Mass. Furthermore, you would be doing me a favor to keep it in your possession since, within a short time, one of my companions has to settle a matter with one of our men who is detained there in the Rocca and in that way, everything will be taken care of. Excuse me for taking this liberty and for all the troubles that I continually heap upon you.

You probably know already that presently we have holy Mass every day etc. and since this is publicly known, I shall not dwell on it lengthily because I feel quite convinced that you are fully aware of it and all of the circumstances. I will not fail at that time to remember you even more. Be mindful of our pacts as well as of my spiritual needs, imploring from the most merciful God in my behalf those graces for which I continually pray so that I can serve him and love him worthily. With your prayers, you assist me in the acts of gratitude that I owe to his ineffable goodness, and in this manner we shall always make progress in mutually keeping ourselves directed to that holy Paradise which we are approaching day by day.

Please obtain from Canon Rivolta the notification of the days on which he celebrated the Masses and send it to me when you have the opportunity, and ask him to prepare it carefully.

¹²³ On the back of this manuscript Ginnasi notes: "This letter must have been written from Lugo in October of 1813, and sent to me at Bologna by messenger". That can also be deduced from the context.

¹²⁴ In charity unfeigned in the heart of Jesus Christ.

Within a short time perhaps I will again have to trouble you with another letter of mine. In the meantime, I once again express the deep obligation I feel for that last annoyance I gave you recently with that letter for Rome. I will add for greater precision (as though you did not already know it) that the government is not going to prevent us from celebrating Mass daily, so that by rotation we will be able to satisfy your devotion. Since yesterday, the day of the most holy Rosary, we have enjoyed this favor. We have set up a chapel at the end of the corridor where it is taken care of in a decent fashion. Stay well, and during this holy time, recommend me to the great Xavier. Remember the 20th of this month - the anniversary day of the death of my dearest mother. With esteem and gratitude, I assure you that I am

Your devoted and obliged servant

G. C. d. B.

October 4, 1813

P. S. Instead of one gold Napoleon, you will find two. When you get it changed, please do me the favor of giving Canon Bolognetti thirty francs along with the enclosed as soon as you can. Fr. Ferrajoli has been taken care of. Excuse the liberty that I take and, once again, believe me to be etc.

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October 22, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Kindest Countess

The need for having to write ordinarily on a simple, half-sheet in order not to increase the volume too much causes me to beg you to excuse me once and for all for this situation, as I have also mentioned to the most worthy Monsignor Annibale. Your recent letter to me was, as usual, most pleasing and I rejoice truly to hear of your good health, which is the same with me, by the mercy of God. I am writing these words close together so that I can get in as much as possible.

Give thanks for me and my other two companions, Guizzi and Risca, to Monsignor Annibale for his assistance. Even though I have already done so in my letter to him which I am enclosing herein,¹²⁵ we nevertheless do this because our obligations to him are so great! I am sorry that you are put to so much trouble and so frequently, and you can imagine how deeply that is felt.

With pleasure am I reading the life of St. Philip. Pray to the Lord that I, in some way, can also burn with love for the Highest Good. Oh how beautiful and instructive is his life! In this way, you have contributed a great deal to my spiritual growth in addition to the prayers you offer for me, and I hope you will always keep on doing that.

I forgot to mention two things to Monsignor: the first is that Xavier's feast is drawing near, a day of special solemnity for us. Therefore I warmly recommend myself to his prayers. The second is that on the recurrence of all Soul's Day he be mindful of my deceased as I will of his, and in particular, he should remember the good del Sole. Now, since it will be difficult to seal my letter to him which I have enclosed, you include it with one of yours to him.

¹²⁵ See the following letter.

You confuse me by thanking me for the Masses for Fr. Rivolta, and I am sorry only that now I will no longer be able to help him out in any way, since here we are having Mass daily and it is necessary to be of help to one of our companions here. Nevertheless, I will always keep him in mind and do not doubt that, whenever I am able, I will send you whatever offerings are possible and God knows with what joy I will do that. So, I will be fully concerned and whenever his needs become truly urgent, let me know because, in one way or another, we will make things work out for the best. I ask you, however, to be very careful to see that the amount of the offering is exact [in Roman money].¹²⁶ I say this because in regard to the different kinds of money, I always want, in each case, to provide the fractional amount or equivalents. Let me know if the money was exactly sufficient, and, in case I might have forgotten something, you will be doing me a favor by advising me about it.

I shall close now by praying to God in his immense mercy to will (once and for all) to welcome us into his Beatific Vision for which we were born, and, at the same time, to give us in this life ever greater strength so that in serving him with every diligence as he deserves, we will learn how to conform ourselves in everything and for everything at his beck and call. Keep yourself always in good health; do not forget our pacts; be happy and, with the usual esteem and gratitude, most revered Countess, consider me, in the sweetest Heart of Jesus as

Your devoted and obliged servant

October 22, 1813

If there is someone in Imola who enrolls people in the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, propagate it as best you can. All those who are acquainted with you here remember you, along with me, with feelings of gratitude etc.

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October 22, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
Bologna¹²⁷

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. amen.

Venerable Monsignor

Oh how much I was pleased with your letter and how full it was of beautiful sentiments! I thank you ever so much for the kindness that you particularly show to me, and I cannot express how dearly I have held you. It consoles me greatly to hear that you are very much united with the most adorable will of God, nor could I have thought otherwise. Let us wholeheartedly thank the most merciful God, and let us never tire of repeating the ejaculation that the Blessed Leonard made most familiar: *fiat in me, circa me et circa mea omnia sanctissima, perfectissima et amabilissima voluntas tua, nunc et deinceps in aeternum*.¹²⁸ Oh what a beautiful thing it is to live indifferently in the hands

¹²⁶ The words in brackets were added by the Saint in the left-hand margin of the manuscript. But, the edge where these words were written has been lost. From a typewritten copy made before that piece was lost - one that corresponds accurately to the original - we are assured that these were precisely the missing words and we reproduce them here as found in the abovementioned copy.

¹²⁷ Ginnasi at that time was in Bologna where he was on trial because of the incident of the sonnets against Napoleon. [Cfr. biographical note and letter of October 1813, n. 285]

¹²⁸ May your most holy, most perfect and most lovable will hold sway in me and about me and about all my possessions now and hereafter for eternity.

of the Lord, that is to say, with perfect submission to his wishes! There is only one attachment, said the Servant of God, the already mentioned B. Leonard, that I claim to have, and that is to follow the most Holy Will of God in everything: *Unum cor uni Deo*.¹²⁹ St. Teresa gave this piece of advice: "They deceive themselves who think that union with God consists in ecstasy, rapture and enjoyment of him. ... in this holy abandonment, that beautiful freedom of spirit which the perfect possess is generated, in which is found all the happiness that one can desire in this world, for, by fearing nothing and willing and longing for nothing of the things of this world, they possess everything...; hence our subjection is perfect when our own will finds itself cut off from everything and is solely attached to God's will, so that his every movement is only to do the will of God". St. Phillip Neri used to measure the greatness of our love for God by the desire we have to suffer for the love of God. The Venerable Luigi da Ponte used to say: "take the sweet things of this life as bitter, and bitter ones as sweet; and in that way you will always enjoy peace". And St. Ignatius Loyola: "there is no wood so apt for Monsignor, paper is scarce, and hence it is necessary for me to limit what I have to say: you will excuse me then if I write only a half sheet to you, and do not attribute that to producing and conserving the love of God as the wood of the Holy Cross".

My most beloved a lack of respect and esteem, but only to the circumstance of not wanting to make this too bulky, since one must always fold each letter together with another.

I am happy that you are in good health, and the same is true of me; I hope however that within a short time I will be writing to you in Imola, and how happy it would make me to hear such news!

I thank you for your prayers and beg you to continue them always, since the need is so great. I will say nothing of what might be suggested to me at this point by the singular affection that I have for you: you will read it all in my heart, and who knows if one day we will not be able to satisfy our desires, *et os ad os loqui, etc.*¹³⁰ I conclude this letter of mine by expressing the infinite gratitude also of Guizzi and Risca for your help, and all of us are most obliged to you. I regret having inconvenienced you so much and so frequently: God will reward you a hundredfold. All send you their regards, and especially those named above, and be assured that we will not fail to pray.

With the desire however of never ceasing to write, I now take the pleasure of repeating that I am your

Most humble, devoted and obliged servant
(from Rocca of Lugo)¹³¹ October 22, 1813

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December 23, 1813
Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
Bologna
Venerable Monsignor

Here I am fulfilling my precise duties, informing you of my excellent trip to this city, where I am still in optimum health, as I hope the same with you whom I love more than I could ever express *in charitate non ficta, in visceribus J.X.*¹³²

¹²⁹ One heart for one God.

¹³⁰ And I will speak face to face, etc.

¹³¹ Lugo: cf. Geographical Data

The very remembrance of you, I do not know how to put it, is so very gratifying; you can very well imagine what consolation it affords me in our present separation. I see you continuously in the most loving Heart of Jesus. Therein let us continue always to live in a holy union of spirit, until the time when it will please the Lord to bring us together, as I hope he will, in his infinite and ineffable mercy. A friend of mine has procured a place of lodging for me; and I am very happy about it. Please answer me, since I cherish the pleasure of receiving your handwriting, and thus incessantly renew our pacts of true cordiality and affection.

It was probably not surprising to you that I left without seeing you again. In addition to the restriction of time, one might also observe that it was a more appropriate way, since it was more in keeping with persons who sincerely and wholeheartedly love each other.

As for the people of Livorno, I have received nothing new, and as of now, I believe that they have never written. Eventually we will see what the disposition of the Lord will be. Meanwhile let us live in conformity with his most holy will, and may this be our comfort in any case.

Pray for me; and with all esteem, respect, gratitude and attachment, together with the greetings of Canon Pietro Del Frate, etc., I am

Of you, Venerable Monsignor
Humble, devoted and obliged Servant
Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Firenze, December 23, 1813

P.S. I wish you the happiest of Feast Days, etc.; let me know how your finger is.

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January 10, 1814
Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
Bologna

J.M.J.

Venerable Monsignor

After having repeatedly asked the postal service about Msgr. Mazio's letters. I have found out nothing; and now I believe that further searching is superfluous. However, I do not want to delay longer in answering your letter of the 29th of last month, which you can realize was of great consolation to me.

I thank you with my whole heart for the thoughtful remembrance that you have of me, nor could I ever be doubtful of it; also for the singular affection with which you regard me. I cannot tell you what pleasure I have together with my gratitude. Not even death itself will ever be able to alter our union, but only improve it; for, when the soul breaks loose from the prison of the body, the soul that tends to God will perfect its love in the intuitive vision, awaiting from divine goodness such a happy outcome after these extreme agonies of ours. With this I wish to say that we love each other and we shall always love each other in life; then, later, for all eternity toward which we draw near day after day... *et sic semper cum Domino erimus.*¹³³ Let us then be firm in our true affection; let us live always, the one and the other, present in spirit in the most loving Heart of Jesus. This, however, will not cause me to dissipate those proper sentiments of esteem that I have and will always preserve

¹³² In charity unfeigned in the heart of Jesus Christ.

¹³³ And thus we will always be with the Lord.

for you, in addition to the most distinct and grateful remembrance of the outstanding favors which oblige me to endless recognizance.

I already wrote to Rome concerning our business of the two *scudi* a month to Gonnelli, and he will punctually carry out everything that I have mentioned to you. I will repeat all in another letter of mine which I will write to him soon; I hope that we do not run into any kind of delay of mail or loss of letters. I say this because one of the letters that I wrote to the aforementioned Gonnelli, shortly after I arrived in this city, has not been answered as yet, and by now I have no hope of receiving an answer to it. I only fear that he might have addressed his reply to Livorno, for greater security, and as a result I should expect this delay.

I am very delighted to hear that your finger has improved, and now I hope that it will be completely healed. With pleasure I read the news about the good health of Canon Muti, and likewise, I would have liked to have heard the same concerning your excellent niece whom I never forget in my miserable prayers. Let us have recourse to the Heavenly Doctor too, our God, and whatever his pleasure may be. With living faith, let us ask him for a total cure of the sick lady, to whom you must recommend evermore the most earnest trust in the Lord, that he will bless the means which are used in her cure. Tell her to recommend herself whole-heartedly to Xavier or to anyone of her advocates; please give my kindest regards to her, doing the same for your most worthy sister-in-law and all of your highly regarded family.

I hope that you will return soon to your house and I anxiously await this news. You probably know already of the departure of many of our people for Livorno, where all of us, little by little, will be re-united; you already know also of the embarkation of the first ones headed there. So, for now, with some displeasure, (since at any time at all I would like to see your handwriting, and you know how much I love you) I urge you not to answer me with another letter until I advise you again in writing; in that way, it will not happen that our letters will get held up in the post-office, as can so easily happen.

I intend to write a few lines also to the Countess Lucrezia; do me the pleasure of reminding Canon Rivalta that he should pass on into the hands of the Countess Catherine the document, known to him, dealing with the Masses, just in case he might have forgotten to do it. I have a feeling, however, that he may have remembered.

In these days I will celebrate Mass for the Pious Union to which you had me subscribe. So, do not neglect to send my name to whomever requires it, and procure for me one of those little booklets, if at all possible; hold on to it for me until the first opportunity. I cannot remember anything else except the Mass that is to be celebrated; so, everything else will be held in abeyance.

A thousand greetings to those named above: Mazio, Rivalta, Muti, etc. etc. etc. and to all in general and in particular. Take care of yourself; pray for me; and with all the fullness of affection, esteem and gratitude, please consider me as

Of you, Venerable Monsignor

Humble, devoted and obliged servant and loving friend

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

P. S. When I write to you again, I will address my letter to Imola to be more assured of your receiving it, since I do not know how much longer you are to remain where you are.

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
Imola

Jesus Mary Joseph

Esteemed Countess

Through Monsignor Annibale, I recently received news concerning your state of health and I was delighted to hear that it is favorable. I would have liked to have heard similar news concerning the health of your wonderful daughter. But, patience! Blessed be in all things the beautiful will of God, to which we must always be subject and conformed. Find comfort in these holy thoughts and remember that the most painful sacrifices are the ones most pleasing to God. Recommend her often to the Lord who, I hope, will bless the human means that are being used for her cure. Try, always, to keep her cheerful and happy.

You must have received by now a small piece of the canonical cape of Venerable Canon De Rossi. With lively faith, take a few threads from it and, who knows, it may please God to free her from her coughing distress by using these means. I never forget to pray for this intention and I shall continue to do so in the future in order that the Lord will console her and, I hope, return her to good health. In the meantime, you must continue to take good care of yourself and remember also with incessant prayers my poor soul and everything else that you know. Oh what a beautiful thing it is to live in spiritual union continuously in the sweetest Heart of Jesus. What joy our Crucified Love provides for us; what happiness does not the thought of Paradise awaken in us!

Wherever I may find myself to be, I shall always have you before me and I shall never be forgetful of my obligations to you and all in your family, to whom you will please deliver my warmest greeting.

Also, extend my distinct good wishes to Count Alessandro Sassatelli; Matteucci; and Fr. Polini, etc. etc. etc. In short, when you see them, give my regards to all the people that I was fortunate to get to know there - people who gave themselves with such charity for my benefit and that of all the others. Yesterday, I mailed a letter to Monsignor and tomorrow I shall write to Mrs. Pignocchi. In that way, I am now trying to fulfill my obligations, since I do not know when or if the opportunity will be available at a later time.

You probably have learned already that the first ones who arrived in Livorno have already set sail and that today a number of our men here have departed, headed for that city. Tomorrow, others will leave and little by little we shall all end up there together. So, as you can see, it will be a good thing to withhold at present any response to this letter, for we will have time to alert you as to when it will be sure for your letters to get to me punctually. In any event, it would be too long and uncertain to charge a third person to handle the letters; so, let us adapt ourselves to the circumstances.

Procure for me the spiritual help of prayers from the people of your acquaintance; always remember me at the foot of the Crucified One, where I leave you, repeating that with full esteem, respect and gratitude, I am, revered Countess,

Your devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Firenze, 11 of 1814

Fr. Antonio Santelli
Rome

J.M.J.

Firenze, 14 of 1814

Kindest Fr. Antonio and greatly revered sir

Your most appreciated letter of the 29th of this past month *gaudio implevit cor meum*.¹³⁴ I cannot find words to express adequately the contentment of my soul; I am beside myself with joy and cannot satiate myself in blessing and thanking the immense kindness of the most merciful God.

The undertaking of the Holy Missions has always been the object of my yearnings: I am destitute, it is true, of those qualities that are required for such a great ministry; but divine Goodness comforts me and his ineffable Mercy encourages spirit. Hence, quite willingly I accept *et libentissime*¹³⁵ all that you seek to propose to me in your greatly esteemed letter. I thank you for the charity shown toward me by giving me a share in those merits that you acquire by working zealously for the greater divine glory, along with the other most worthy members and Brethren, to whom you will extend these sentiments of mine.

The practices of Piety which all of us try to exercise are most opportune to maintain ever inflamed the fire of the holy love of God, to increase ever more the concern for leading stray souls to the path of virtue, and finally of not overlooking our very selves and the great business of our souls in the midst of the most serious occupations which accompany the indefatigable concern for our neighbors. I shall try therefore to be exact in my Meditation periods, in the reading of a chapter of the New Testament and in a special Memento in the Holy Mass. Pray to the Lord that I profit from it for the attainment of a blessed eternity, and that I may not have to reprove myself in the last moments of my life, for not having taken into account so many impulses which God continues to supply for my conversion. With regard to this, tell Fr. Gaetano to obtain for me the spiritual help of those souls that he feeds with the divine word. In regard to this same matter, I beg you and the other excellent Companions, whom you will greet for me with distinction, to pray that Almighty God will grant me what I desire so ardently.

I would be please if all of us, united in spirit, were to recommend the holy Missions to the great Xavier, to whom the famous missionary, Father Paolo Segneri, was so devoted, as is read in his biography. I am convinced that it would be for us greatly advantageous to have his intercession. I know very well that it is not necessary to remind persons of such spirit and burning zeal of this matter; but my own devotion to this Saint, as you know, has urged me to write these few words. Meanwhile may God bless your holy desires, your pious intentions, your apostolic endeavors. *Qui coepit opus ipse perficiat...gratia vobis et pax a Deo, Patre nostro, et Domino Jesu Xto...gratias ago Deo semper pro omnibus vobis memoriam vestri faciens in orationibus meis sine intermissione, memor operis fidei vestrae et laboris et charitatis*.¹³⁶ I am jubilant in the Lord; and since I am and will always be a useless subject in such a beautiful undertaking, humbling myself before God, I shall

¹³⁴ He filled my heart with joy.

¹³⁵ Most willingly.

¹³⁶ He who has begun the work will finish it ... grace and peace to you from God, Our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ ... I give thanks to God always for all of you making remembrance of you in my prayers without interruption, mindful of the work of your faith and labor and charity.

follow in spirit at least their apostolic footsteps, and I shall go on repeating joyously: *O quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem, evangelizantium bona. Etc. etc. etc.*¹³⁷

The news that you give me both concerning S. Galla as well as that of the Oratory would not have been more in keeping with my desires; these projects that I recommend so highly to your industrious charity, not so much because you and the other members have need of encouragement from a miserable sinner, as I am, but I want only to declare to you continuously what my remembrance and most intense affection for them is, even though I am far away. The work of S. Galla sanctified the great De Rossi; everyone knows how close it was to the hear of such an inexhaustible worker. The Oratory is also of very great importance in view of the fact that the name of the Lord is incessantly praised there and so many souls have the chance to place before the throne of divine Clemency their own petitions in holy silence and most fervent recollection.

Furthermore, you in particular are to remember that this is entirely the work that God has wanted of you; I remember with pleasure the beginning of it, on which I will not dwell in order to be brief.

There are, however, two things in particular that I would like to inculcate on you briefly: the first is the continuation of the First Communion each year for the poor children, a Work which though it is still in a nascent stage because of the system introduced for conducting it with greater fruit, I would hope that it would continue in the best way possible without interruption. I assure you that, though I am far away, I will not cease to support it if at all possible, and I am hopeful that it will be so. The second is the Work with the farm-people on feast days, at least in those squares where the larger numbers congregate. It would be sufficient for this project to assign two or three of the country people themselves so that they would assume the responsibility and would lead their companions to hear the divine word, at least at those times when we would be able to administer to these poor people. I leave all to your wisdom.

The paper is running out and, to my displeasure, I will not be able to go on further. I am overjoyed to hear that you are in good health, which is the same for me, thanks be to God.

I shall write tomorrow to my dearest Gonnelli with regard to the news of my situation. Meanwhile, I assure you that your letters are always most pleasing to me, for I still preserve the same esteem and affection for you: in fact, it grows more and more each day; and oh, with what delight I recall it in my solitude, for it brings me joy. Salute my friends by name. *Gratia D'ni n'tri J.X. cum spiritu vestro. Amen. Testis est Deus quomodo cupiam omnes vos in visceribus J.X., etc.*¹³⁸

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January 26, 1814
 Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi
 Bologna

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Venerable Monsignor

Finding myself still in this city, I do not want to fail to send another letter in which to assure you always of my vivid most gratified remembrance of you and the particular affection which I nourish in my heart for your most lovable person. I hope, by divine mercy, that you still continue to

¹³⁷ O how precious the feet of those preaching peace, of those preaching good things.

¹³⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit. Amen. God is witness of how I long for you in the heart of Jesus Christ, etc.

enjoy good health (and that your finger has completely healed) just as I do, likewise, as a fruit of your prayers, which I beg you to continue for me, in accordance with what you know, etc.

Recently I addressed a letter to you, and I am convinced that it reached you; however, it will please me to see your handwriting, and to speak to you at least by means of letters, since it cannot be otherwise. I do not really know whether your most worthy sister-in-law and Maria Mad'a Pignocchi have received a letter of mine to each one which I mailed quite some time ago. At any rate, I would be happy to have you inform her, so that you will fulfill in my place the duties that I have toward them, and for such a favor I am most obligated to you. Tell Countess Lucrezia that I am overjoyed to learn that her excellent daughter's health has improved, that I never forget her to the Lord, miserable one that I am; and that she remember to do the same for me. You can assure Mrs. Pignocchi that I received one of her most appreciated letters, which I have not answered, since nothing in it seemed to be urgent; and, realizing that I had already written, I thought it best to save on postal costs. Assure her, however, that a short while ago I carried out her errand to visit the Salesian nuns and contact her nieces, to whom I communicated the paragraph from her letter that regarded them; then, I asked them whether they had need of anything. They charged me only with delivering their greetings to everyone in the house; and one of these days I shall return again to pay them a visit. Also the Superior and their Novice Mistress charged me with extending their good wishes to the above-named Maria Mad.; this is the sum-total of what I must report to you on the matter.

To anyone that you see of my acquaintances both there and at Imola, I beg you to extend my compliments, which you will also do with warmness to Msgr. Rusconi, Canon Rivalta and all those in your most respected family.

Moreover, recall that the first year of our very special union in the Heart of Jesus is completed, with all that goes with it, etc. I desire to embrace you again soon, and I yearn for the moment to be able to speak to you *os ad os*;¹³⁹ but let us wait patiently for the divine dispositions.

Take care of yourself, most beloved Msgr. (I speak to you with my heart on the pen, so to speak) continue your friendship for me which I treasure so much; recommend me frequently to my and our Redeemer Jesus, in whose opened Side I leave you, while expressing my esteem, respect and gratitude

Of you, Venerable Monsignor

Humble, devoted and obliged servant and loving friend

Gaspere C. del Bufalo

Firenze, 14 of 1814

P. S. You probably know already of the death of Msgr. Vai, which occurred in Prato. If ever you get to the Tanari house, infinite greetings, thanks, etc.

February 1, 1814

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

¹³⁹ Mouth to mouth [face to face].

Always mindful of you and the kindnesses shown to me in your goodness while I was there, I do not want to fail to renew continually my gratitude and acknowledgment.

You have probably heard already the public news from Rome as well as from Firenze where I am still located. There is a decree issued in Rome for our return and I shall soon be departing for Rome. The Neapolitans have already entered here, the Grand Duchess has left and, at present, the entire city is in a turmoil, which is something that usually happens. Later, I hope to be able to receive more frequent news from you. In the meantime, I did not want to be remiss in my obligations, so I am sending you these few lines informing you of what is happening to me and at the same time to assure you of the good health that I am still enjoying, as I hope is the same in your case.

However, I have not been completely relieved of the problem of nerves which has become chronic, but that is nothing to be worried about nor does it even merit a second thought since it does not in the least affect the status of my good health.

I feel now again, more than ever in the past, the loss of my dear mother and this thought causes me to experience a depression in the present consoling situation. Help me with your prayers so that the Lord, I hope, will bring me comfort; please never forget to pray for me since I desire nothing else than to serve my God fervently and zealously until I die.

In order to avoid burdening Mrs. Maria Calegari with postal expenses, I ask you please to greet her for me and say to her what I myself would like to say in expressing my gratitude to her and my esteem for her.

In time, of course, I will write directly to her, that is, when all of our problems here are settled. But, in the meantime, I intend to fulfill in this way my obligations.

I ask you also to extend my compliments to Countess Landi, to Father Vicar and anyone else that I came to know there. With full respect, esteemed Countess, I remain

Your devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Firenze, February 1, 1814

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February 2, 1814

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Firenze, February 2, 1814

Esteemed Countess

I recently wrote you another letter which I hope has gotten to you. I did not expect to get an answer to it in view of my present circumstances and because of what has happened during these past few days. Now that the decree for our return has been issued in Rome, as you probably know, within a short time I shall be returning to my hometown. I cannot now express to you how much more I am feeling the sorrow for the death of my very dear mother whom I remember with tender tears. Nevertheless, I do not lose my conformity to the divine wishes which I bless and adore with all the humility of my spirit. Still, as a first impression, as they say, I feel that I shall not stop off at home. But, I truly am looking forward to the pleasure of quickly having the comfort of embracing again the most worthy Monsignor Annibale who, I imagine, has already headed in that same

direction. I say this since I have not gotten a response to my letter addressed to him a few days ago, and I base my conclusion on the absence of his letter in response to all that I communicated to him.

In the meantime, you can anticipate my greeting to him and also to extend my special regards to Count Alessandro and all of the members of your own most respected family. Later on, we will have more freedom and time to write to each other. So, I recommend myself as strongly as I can possibly say to the charity of your prayers. Oh tell the Lord to make me his true minister, and that, in short, he assist me and protect me, for you are surely aware of how much enlightenment I need in my state of life.

Recently, I wrote to Mrs. Pignocchi and a short time after that I received one of her letters which I did not answer since I considered that to be superfluous. Still, you can take care of my obligations to her, assuring her of my feelings of gratitude and that in time I will write to her again. Also, assure her that her nieces, nuns of de Sales, are doing well and are most energetic in their work. Ask her to give my best wishes to everyone who remembers me, just as you will do for me there. Gratitude is pleasing to the Lord, but it also is pleasing to human beings. In a special manner, express these sentiments in a thousand ways to Fr. Polini, and ask him to make a memento in the holy Mass for me. I am greatly desirous of receiving good news concerning your daughter. I would like to see her restored to full health so that in her state of life she can carry on her apostolic work. Let us hope for this grace from the Lord.

Finally, I renew my feelings of esteem, of acknowledgment, and of veneration, most revered Countess, and I remain

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspere C. del Bufalo

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March 22, 1814

Canon Fr. Carlo Regi

Rome

Dear Canon

The Pious Union of Priests of S. Galla has granted your desire and they have enrolled you among its workers. You cannot but be pleased with this evidence of esteem toward you, demonstrated by so many most admirable priests. Nor will you be able to second their aims and correspond with the goal of this organization except by using all of your zeal and energy for the spiritual advancement of the poor. So, in virtue of my office as recording secretary, I am happy to inform you of this action with sentiments of particular consideration, and I declare, most illustrious and reverend sir, that I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspere C. del Bufalo

S. Galla, March 22, 1814¹⁴⁰

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April 1, 1814

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

¹⁴⁰ Rome

Imola

Venerable Monsignor

Tomorrow, God willing, I will begin the Retreat at the Cappellette of St. Aloysius; before this appointment, however, I do not want to miss answering, although quite hurriedly, your last most favored, most pleasing and most lovable letter.

It delights me to hear that you are still in good health, just as is true of me at present, by divine mercy. I say at present because in the past I have suffered from a persistent discharge from my eyes, of which I am now freed.

Please tell your sister-in-law that I have received her letters, and after Easter I will answer her; in the meantime, however, give her my best regards, together with all the others of the house, and even to anyone who remembers me.

Hopeful that it will not be an inconvenience for you, I beg you for the celebration of ten Masses, according to my intention, leaving in my hands the respective offerings of 15 b. for each one, to be applied for purposes of charity. If you already have other obligations, then, please let me know of it at your convenience. In case, however, that you can favor me by celebrating them, please do me the pleasure of noting down the days of celebration on a sheet of paper which you will then bring to me soon, as I hope, in person: especially since the churches here, tomorrow, will begin the *itinerarium* for the Holy Father. While on this subject, tell Canon Rivalta that, in case he should remember the days on which he celebrated Masses for me, he should do me the favor of noting them on a piece of paper to be consigned to you; that little receipt that he made for me is not enough for the diocesan visitation, where we have to bring books, etc.. At least have him write ten times: *N. Rivalta cel'it, etc.* without indicating the days, and putting down the month, if he should remember. This all may seem a bit nonsensical, but it is not my doing, etc; please pardon this bother of mine, while with the fullness of esteem and attachment, I renew myself to you as

S.U.D.O.S.¹⁴¹

G. C. del Bufalo

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April 15, 1814

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

Here I am sending you a reply to your most appreciated letter of the 9th of March, received punctually through the kindness of Monsignor Cristaldi and which I read with full satisfaction of spirit. I thank you for the obliging remembrance that you deign to conserve of me and I do not know how to describe the gratitude and acknowledgment that I feel. I am never forgetful of the obligations contracted there with you as well as with your entire family and I would consider myself truly fortunate if I were able to respond in deeds my dutiful remembrance of your kindnesses. Along with my very special best wishes, make these sentiments of mine known to all in the family and likewise deliver them to Mrs. Pignocchi to whom I shall not write in order to spare her the postal expenses.

¹⁴¹ *Suo Umilissimo Devotissimo Obligatissimo Servitore* = Your most humble, devoted and obliged servant..

My work here requires the continual charity of your prayers and the persistent renewal of our pious agreements. Yes, let us mutually be concerned about Paradise, for one day we are to be reunited there, never to be separated again. Everything in this world quickly vanishes and we can find comfort during the final portion of our lives only in the practice of the Christian virtues. So, let us become saints; let us serve God with holy joy; let us trust in his love. And never be fearful of the deceits of Lucifer who must always be treated with scorn and firmness.

With respect to the project that you are considering, the one you mentioned to me, I think that you can surely bring that about in time. Meanwhile, let us fervently pray for that intention to the most merciful God whose will must always form the object of our delights. Oh how consoled I am to see that the Lord is ever sustaining the spirit of so many ladies as examples of the most beautiful virtues. How many things I would like to say to you; however, by letter it might just become endless and time simply does not permit me to do so, for I would like to write a few words to Bianca.¹⁴² Continue to edify people with your good example and weave for yourself a beautiful crown for all eternity. Be a support for the poor, for the school-children, for widows for the abandoned. Do all you can for the glory of the Lord and in those things that are not able to be accomplished, supply for them with your good intentions, your prayers, your regrets, at the feet of Jesus Crucified. Procure many prayers for this poor soul of mine; oh how many it needs since I am such a miserable thing and so great a sinner. Ask the Lord to manifest to me what he wants of me (for I yearn to live with an indifferent spirit in accord with his divine good pleasure) and that he grant me the grace to carry that out. Let us abandon ourselves to his holy love in his opened Side, which is where, Countess, I leave you as

Your devoted and obliged servant
Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

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April 15, 1814
Countess Bianca Ginnasi
Imola¹⁴³
Esteemed Countess

It was a very pleasant thing to see your handwriting and even more so to receive the good news of your health which has always been a concern of mine. I thank you for remembering me and please continue to keep me always in your prayers just as I, wretched thing that I am, do not fail to do for you in return.

I give thanks, furthermore, to the Lord for your excellent sentiments, your holy dispositions and your desire to grow in virtue, gaining merits for Paradise. Yes, this must be the continuous effort by which we will acquire the knowledge that the saints had; this is to form the objective of our delights; this, the goal of our yearnings. So, root yourself with great confidence in the divine goodness and put off thereby all the annoyances with which the devil would like to upset you. Pray a lot for the choice of a state in life and always surrender yourself to the ever-adorable will of the Lord who will speak clearly to your heart.

¹⁴² See the following letter.

¹⁴³ On the back of this half-sheet is the address of Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi. See the previous letter.

Since the beginning and the progress of a devout life depend entirely upon interior mortification, let this be something that is always thoroughly dear to you. Be firm in overcoming the obstacles that are met along the road to perfection; be big-hearted in the execution of your desires, keeping them in conformity to the divine good pleasure, and, do not be fearful of any opposition that you may encounter that would try to discourage you. These are general principles for everyone and they become better understood with the practice of them. Remember that we are in service to a Lord who is sweetness itself and one who wants our love. Therefore, let Jesus reside in our hearts, the thought of eternity in our minds, the world kept under our feet, and, in this way gain merits. Stay well; give my regards to Monsignor Annibale and remember that in the Heart of Jesus, I am

S.U.D.O.S.

G. C. d. B

Rome, April 15

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April 15, 1814

Countess Bianca Ginnasi

Imola

Most illustrious Lady

Since I have the time to add a couple of lines,¹⁴⁴ I repeat what I mentioned in the other letter I sent you, begging you not to allow yourself to be intimidated by the devil. Rest assured that the more disturbance the devil makes in our hearts, so much the more, says St. Francis de Sales, can we be sure that he has not won us over. So, be brave. Do not lose your interior peace. For, are we not able to do all things with the grace of Jesus Christ? Let us not misuse the goodness of God which is so well-known to us. Let us scorn the devil as he deserves.

Those interior fears, indeed, always indicate that you are in good standing with God. If you shake somewhat at the mere approach of temptation, it is a sign that the love of God is causing you to be more circumspect and cautious about yourself. In short, courageously look with scorn on everything that can deprive you of your interior peace. I recommend myself to your prayers, as I remain

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

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May 15, 1814

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

It is now quite some time that I have been wanting to send a response to your most appreciated letter, but the innumerable occupations, indispensable after such a notable time of absence from my hometown, prevented me from satisfying this particular obligation of mine. So,

¹⁴⁴ This letter which has no indication of place or date was included with the other preceding one to which it seems to be related by way of content. Furthermore, the ink and the paper used for these letters are perfectly identical, as is the letter written to Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi on April 15, 1814.

please pardon me and bear with me. In all truth, I can assure you, however, that I always have before me our pacts and that I never forget my obligations. All of this has been etched in my heart with indelible markings and how fortunate I would be if I, in any way whatsoever, were able to respond with deeds all that I mention here only in words.

My uncle has already stopped off in Firenze and, within a short time, he will continue his trip. Albertini is presently in Bologna and I imagine that he went there so that he could make a trip to the holy House in Loreto. Right here, we are in the process of enjoying the fulfillment of divine goodness! The Holy Father's return is expected within days and in the meantime great celebrations are being prepared. Some prelates have already set up a provisional government in the Pope's name and Rome is truly rejoicing.

I am happy to hear that your health is, at least, sufficiently good. I have nothing to complain about in regard to my own. Live with me always in the Heart of Jesus. Greet Countess Landi and my former landlady and anyone else whom I met there. Meanwhile, with total respect, I am

Y. H. D. O. Ser.

G. C. del Bufalo

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July 2, 1814

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Kindest Countess

It is just about time that I fulfill my special obligation of replying to your recent, most appreciated letter, for it has not been possible for me to do so up to now since I have been occupied in many other tasks. Do not, therefore, attribute my delay to a lack of esteem and respect, but rather to a certain involuntary incapability. I am well acquainted with your way of thinking and so I feel certain that you will show a benign understanding.

I am happy to hear that you are in good health, and the same is true of mine, by the mercy of God as well as the fruit of your prayers. I likewise rejoice greatly to receive continuous good news concerning the health of your daughter, Bianca. I wholeheartedly give thanks to the Lord from whose mercy I beseech the choicest and most copious blessings upon her. I do not know in what way I can indicate to you my true gratitude for the kindness that you continue to show toward me, nor can I ever excuse myself from professing incessantly my deepest appreciation.

Monsignor Annibale, whom I love so deeply, is in very good health and would like only to receive some word from you. Monsignor Domenico likewise is well and both of them send their good wishes.

Now, I would like to supply here for an oversight of mine since I have never said anything about what you asked concerning my stepmother. I assure you that she is a courteous and God-fearing person; but, as for me, it is impossible that I return to the house where so many objects remind me of my good mother. Despite my efforts to distract my mind, it surely would cause me to experience a new melancholic feeling and renewed distress. So, everything has been worked out peacefully. Harmony and good relationship has been established and, at the same time, each one enjoys his freedom. In this whole matter, I have adhered to the advice of a worthy person whom I esteem highly and who deserves my entire obedience. My young niece is being educated with the

Maestre Pie at the Gesu, and I am consoled to see her growing up and learning. I recommend her earnestly to your prayers. My sister-in-law is living in my former room and is making continuous progress on the road to perfection, for I see that God wants some very special things from her. From all this, you can see how I am becoming involved in a thousand entanglements which (to tell you in secrecy) hinder me from making an effective resolution to abandon the world and hide myself away in a haven of faith, namely, in the Society of Jesus. My father is getting older and my niece in particular is a worry, since I am the only one of our family left. Enough; just let us pray and if it pleases the Lord, all will work out and we will adore the divine dispositions, since doing his will is what will make us saints.

Furthermore, pray a lot for this very important intention and we shall await God's will. My residence continues yet to be in the Gonnelli house where I am renting. I have been busy with various tasks in different pious places etc. I do not fail to cultivate my preaching ability and to do all I can for souls. But, what is going to become of me if I respond badly to the divine graces, and, while having so many opportunities to become a saint, I remain deficient in the knowledge of the saints and in the school of perfection? I always have in mind the giving of missions and my own Xavier ... but who knows whether or not it is my sins that render me unworthy? I yearn for one thing only and that is to live solely for God. In short, this is my heart opened up to its full capacity.

Now, let us move on to something else. First, I want you to know that tomorrow Monsignor Annibale wishes to have me in for dinner. Then, too, I want to remind you to extend my regards to everyone in your most respected family and to anyone else who remembers me. I would like to list them all here, but, especially offer my best wishes to Count Alessandro Sassatelli, Count della Volpe and the tireless Fr. Polini.

How is the project set up by you faring? I hope quite well, and please, carry through effectively with your intentions which surely aim to procure God's greater glory. Do not be discouraged if you run into difficulties in executing this work, because the works of the Lord provide us with a motive for the continuous exercise of virtue and the examples of the saints give us courage and magnanimity of spirit to keep on. It is very important for us to set our desires high for doing great things as, for example, to want to suffer more than all the martyrs, to accept and pardon all injuries, to embrace every hardship and pain, in order to save a soul, and so on. Let us place our trust in the Lord and let us not be fearful. St. Teresa says that God is as pleased with good desires as though they had already been carried out ... and he does not leave them unrewarded even in this life. The saint continues to say that we are to let our thoughts be grand, for it is from that source that our good work will flow. His divine majesty is a friend to generous souls, even though they may have no confidence in themselves. The advancement toward sanctity is always like the light of dawn as it approaches the fullness of daytime. Oh what a consolation will we not experience one day when we will find ourselves at the end of our battles and at the beginning of eternal joys!

To encourage you even more to do charitable deeds for your neighbor, I remind you that Jesus will demand an accounting concerning these things on the last day. *Sitivi, dedisti mihi bibere, etc.*,¹⁴⁵ and oh how blessed is that person who is enriched by these immense values, that is, of having visited the sick, consoled the afflicted and having become all things to all people in order to win all of them over to Jesus. What was the life of the Redeemer like? Was it not a continual practice of charity and did he not say openly that our charity would be in keeping with his desires as long as we

¹⁴⁵ I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink, etc.

mutually loved each other and that that would be the standard to follow? *In hoc cognoscent omnes etc., si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem.*¹⁴⁶ In doing this work, how greatly one is able to procure the glory of the Lord both by giving good example as well as making headway by giving worthwhile advice, reviving in Christianity that spirit which already in the early days of the Church formed in the mind of the Gentiles an object of admiration. Be especially concerned for the poor, particularly those most in need and deprived of every comfort. Jesus says that he considers done to himself what one does for the poor, and the prayers of these people are heard in a special way by the most merciful God.

I have taken quite a bit of advantage of your patience. But, let this present letter serve as a substitute, a sort of compensation for the rare occasions that allow us to see each other through letter-writing. We do see each other very often in spirit in the loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary. It is there that I leave you now, repeating respectfully that I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del B.

Rome, July 2, 1814

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July 17, 1814

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

Most illustrious Lady

With the greatest consolation to my spirit did I receive one of your venerable letters which brought me particular news of your health and at the same time the confirmation of your singular kindness which continues to be shown toward me. But I never doubted that!

While I renew my sincerest gratitude to you, I beg you not to attribute to a lack of esteem and gratefulness the delay in writing to you. That must be attributed to the numerous tasks placed on my shoulders which, in the confusion of cares, made me suppose that I had already sent you a letter. At any rate, I can assure you that I have always maintained a pleasant remembrance of you and in a special way in the Holy Sacrifice which is for us heaven on earth. I am, therefore, convinced of your charity in prayers which I ask for again, just as your last letter confirmed this conviction of mine. So, let us be united frequently in the most loving Heart of Jesus and there let us mutually pray for the most copious blessings of our merciful God. In the meantime, you can be certain of gaining great merit by suffering the habitual discomforts of life with the continuous practice of Christlike patience. In that way, it pleases the Lord to have you weave a beautiful crown, always remembering that the more one suffers in this miserable life so much the more will one be happy in the next. It is in this way that we come now to resemble even more our model and exemplar, Jesus Christ. Hence, be courageous, for every day we are drawing closer to our heavenly homeland. Jesus loves us! Jesus is with us, so what do we have to fear? Oh what a joy it will be to be forever in his presence in heaven!

Fr. De Turris, who has favored me with news etc., sends you his best regards and, for his age, is in good health. So too does Canon Albertini. Please extend my respects to Countess Landi, to Mrs. Calegari and to Father Vicar. From the latter, I learn with regret of the unfavorable condition of his health and I will make a special memento in my unworthy prayers. Your letters are always most

¹⁴⁶ In this will all know, etc., if you have love for another.

pleasing and for me it is an honor and a true delight to see your handwriting. In the meantime, with fullness of esteem and respect, revered Countess, I am

Your devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

Rome, July 17, 1814

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September 22, 1814

Fr. Gaetano Bonanni

Subiaco¹⁴⁷

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Kindest Fr. Gaetano

With pleasure I have read your esteemed letter of the 18th of the current month, and I am consoled by your surrendering yourself so zealously to the Vineyard of Jesus Christ and the sanctification of souls. The one thing that grieves me is receiving from you an absolute refusal to agree to the Missions in Ronciglione, of which we have often personally spoken aloud.¹⁴⁸ Have you however reflected well on your denial? Have you weighed it well on the scales of prayer and have you made use of that ecclesiastical shrewdness which, in the sundry works of the Lord's glory, selects the one which according to the rules of prudence tends not only to the glory of God but to the greater glory of the Lord? The kindness with which you have regarded me and the confidence which our friendship of long standing permits, and even more so, the interests of our nascent institution of the Missions, all indeed inspire me to write with a holy freedom.

Very briefly, let us consider the reasons for your non-acceptance. The first regards the obligation of Choir. As to this are you perhaps satisfied only in preferring Subiaco to Ronciglione? And if to calm your conscience you avail yourself of the necessary permissions, will this not then redound to the favor of those people who for a very long time have not heard the voice of a Missionary, neither recently nor in the distant past? Still further, do you not see in this Work the hand of God who, by leading us to Ronciglione, is opening up a way to Toscanella where by anticipation the echo of the glories of the Lord wrought there will resound? This likewise will serve to dispose that settlement for the reception of a new foundation. Do you not know that the locales at present are assigned to Religious Communities by the Ordinaries of the place, and do you not realize that when the Vicar General notices our failure to keep the word given to him solemnly by letter, he might establish things quite differently than the system already set up? Would he not be perfectly right in reproaching us for our coldness and lack of care? So, let us follow once again the paths of that Providence which has already given and continues to give to our Works very manifest signs of approval. Not rarely does Lucifer clothe himself like an angel of light in order to cut off access to things that are of greater concern. An Evangelical Worker for whom the way is opened to perpetuate such a praiseworthy institution, even after his death, must not abandon the undertaking to which he has committed himself, postponing it for some other goods whose stability is equally uncertain.

¹⁴⁷ Bonanni along with other Companions was giving Missions at that time at Subiaco and in other towns that were dependent on that Benedictine Abbey (cfr. Rey, *Vita del B. G.* cap. VII, n. 7).

¹⁴⁸ Ronciglione, and a bit lower, Toscanella (nowadays Tuscania): cf. Geographical Data.

When we go to Ronciglione, I can assure you of finding others to be aggregated to the new foundation, and having obtained the Choir permission now for myself, I will be able to lend myself to it with full energy. All I want is the will of the Lord. He, however, though wanting us as simple as doves, desires that we use the prudence of the serpent.

May God be with us, and with greetings to our Companions in common, with a tender embrace in the Heart of Jesus I am

Rome, September 22, 1814

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October 22, 1814

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

The grace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Amen.

Esteemed Countess

I owe you a response which I have deferred until now, not because of a lack of willingness but of time. I am happy to learn that you are in good health and the same is true for me, by the mercy of God. That disorder of my nerves does not prevent me from carrying out my work. I am, of course, deeply obliged to you for the constant remembrance you make of me in your prayers, and I never am in doubt about that. You too can be certain of my return in kind, however that may be. But now, please increase in a special way your fervent supplications because very soon I will be going out to give a mission in Umbria where there is a lot to be done. For that reason, I shall not go on now at length in this letter, but I will do so happily on another later occasion. I was very pleased with what you wrote to me and in another letter I will give you a more precise response concerning those things. Continue your apostolic work zealously. Recognize the difficulties so that you can overcome them, and not be discouraged by them. I bring this to your attention because that is an indication that what you are doing is God's doing and that this kind of struggle must not discourage you. Prayer and confidence in God's goodness must be the anchor of our salvation and the Lord's peace must always abound in our souls.

I send you the special greetings of Monsignor Annibale, Monsignor Gallanti etc. and, in my behalf, extend my good wishes to all in your family, to Count Sassatelli, to Fr. Polini, to Count della Volpe and anyone else who remembers me there. Without further ado and with full respect and veneration, I am unalterably

Your true servant

G. C. del Bufalo

Rome, October 22, 1814

A thousand greetings to Mrs. Pignocchi.