

St. Gaspar's Letters

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October 11, 1808
 Fr. Antonio Santelli
 Castel Gandolfo
 Esteemed Fr. Santelli

With this letter I do not fail to remind you of how we all were in agreement in Rome concerning the great project, very well known to you. It will begin on Sunday, the twenty-third, with the Retreat that Bonanni will give. Afterwards, there will be a continuation of the Oratory every night. For your information, realize that you have been selected to speak on Saturdays on the most holy Madonna. God blesses your efforts; you cannot imagine the contentment that I feel about it, together with all our most amiable friends. Wholeheartedly I thank God and beg him to grant us those graces of which we are indispensably in need, in order to obtain a successful outcome of this undertaking.

The expenses that are presently piling up are very numerous but let us not lose heart. Fr. Antonio Giordani is now acting as Treasurer and Economist. We recommend to your dexterity and energy, together with that of all the workers on this project, the collecting of alms. It is scarcely possible to get five *scudi* beyond that little amount that has been gathered from the charity of others in order to take care of what is purely necessary. Therefore, even while you are on your vacation, please stimulate interest in this project, and in imitation of the Apostle, see to it (through some other person) that a collection is taken up to provide in that way for everything as well as reimburse those who will take care of the expenses.

Let us never tire of prayer. Enjoy yourself a good deal, so that later with greater enthusiasm you can take up your work again in the holiest of commitments and exercises. When you return to Rome, you will find everything underway. Keep me always in your prayers; and with the most distinct best wishes, being disposed to serve you in whatever way you think will be most successful, and full of esteem and cordial affection, I feel privileged to consider myself

of your illustrious person

Humble and obliged servant and loving friend

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Roma, October 11, 1808

Ain Casa Altieri@ Use this in the address of your letter

2

October 26, 1808
 Fr. Antonio Santelli
 Castel Gandolfo
 Esteemed Fr. Santelli

I cannot with words express the pleasure which I experienced in seeing your handwriting. It has served as a further proof of your care and concern in all that pertains to the honor of God and the good of souls, in particular of course of our Oratory. Sunday, we opened the holy Exercises with great success and they are continuing as such. Every night the people flock to it, and up to this point, every night you can count sixty persons or thereabouts. I hope that God in his mercy will continue to bless it. This hope will increase even more in me when I see you in Rome, for with your enthusiasm you will continue even more to seek to propagate the glory of the Lord. Let us continue to recommend each other to the Lord, and in spite of all opposition, let us pursue the project assumed.

Continue your cordial friendship with me and, being disposed to serve you in whatever you deem me capable, full of esteem and sincere affection, I say that I am

Of your illustrious person

Humble servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Rome, October 26, 1808

3

November 9, 1808

Fr. Gaetano Bonanni

S. Maria in Via Lata¹

Roma

Most Esteemed Fr. Gaetano

I say it wholeheartedly; I do not know how to express in words the pleasure experienced in seeing your handwriting. It has served as an unmistakable testimony of the remembrance you reserve for me, though you are distant. I am most grateful to you for this; and with this present letter I give you news of the excellent state of health which, by the grace of God, I am enjoying, in conformity with what I hope is the same for you. Please do not overwork yourself and please take care of yourself, so that you can for a long series of years cultivate the vineyard of the Lord in the way it should be done.

I imagine that the fruits of the Holy Exercises have already been abundant, and it is of great consolation to me to see the eagerness that permeates the Seminarians and others upon hearing the divine word. Food that is taken with a good disposition, there is no doubt, produces its effects very well.

Our oratory continues, and I hope that from day to day it will continue to perfect itself. Whoever disapproves of it, let us permit him to think what he wants to think; we will not cease the Works which God knows have been assumed to increase his glory and in every way to procure the salvation of souls. He, I am sure, will bless it; in the meantime perhaps he is permitting the Oratory not to be greatly frequented, inasmuch as he wants us to pray, and with travail and work bring it to perfection. Meanwhile, if you find it possible, do not fail to get alms in Velletri. If however you come to realize that they are not obtainable, let us put ourselves in the arms of Providence and let us not be afraid.

I shall await you eagerly on Saturday in Rome; and remember that on Sunday you are to do the favor of preaching in the square. Last Sunday, Fr. Giovanni of the Holy Spirit, with whom you are acquainted, preached there, and despite his unhappy pronunciation, he led with him into the Oratory so many people that the benches were inadequate for holding them all. I will never tire of writing because, not having the good fortune of seeing you before me, at least I can take delight in the "indelible" remembrance. I do not want to take advantage of your longsuffering, and so, recommending to you warmly the devotion to St. Francis Xavier, in conformity with what we agreed upon in Rome, and begging you to keep me ever present when you offer the Holy Sacrifice of the

¹ In the address, the Saint has written at first: Anel Seminario di Velletri@, then he canceled those words and substituted for them the other words transcribed above.

Mass and in your other prayers, in harmony again with the pact established by you and me, because I am very, very much in need of them, full of esteem and cordial affection, with greetings from all of us, I remain

of your most illustrious lordship
Most humble and affectionate Friend

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

P. S. On the last day of the Retreat I beg you to have an *Ave Maria* said in common for me.

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April 8, 1809

Fr. Antonio Santelli

Rome

Esteemed Father Santelli

While sending his particular greetings to Fr. Santelli in this letter, Canon del Bufalo begs him to enrol him in the association of the Madonna del Pianto, for it is of the greatest interest to the writer of this letter. He ardently wishes that, under its direction, he will grow in age and wisdom. That is what the writer precisely wishes to obtain from this very kind Fr. Santelli, General Director of many, if not all, pious works. He reiterates that he is

Your devoted and obliged servant

House, April 8, 1809

5

November 11, 1809

A Priest-friend

Rome

Dearest friend

With pleasure did I receive your letter, so ardently desired, in which I learned of the excellent state of health that you are enjoying, just as I do myself, through divine mercy, and also for the hope that you give me with respect to your return soon to Rome. You can imagine how much I have wished for that!

Do not fail to recommend me to God so that once and for all I set my ways right and fulfill his most holy will. Please do not forget me when you offer Holy Mass in which you will also make a memento for some friends of mine who have passed on recently to eternity, and for some other needs that I have, as well as for our pious works. Let us never tire of doing good works and procuring the salvation of souls, for our own salvation depends upon our saving them. Human life flashes by like lightning. Each day we advance toward eternity and so we ought only to do good. I am certain that you will always keep yourself busy; I have unmistakable evidence of that, supported by altogether convincing proof. Continue always in that mode of life, and, in the meantime I send you greetings from all of us. I am

Your most loving friend

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

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November 11, 1809

Sister Maria Tamini
 Macerata
 My esteemed Sr. Maria

It is not necessary that I remind you of the conformity that we should have to the will of the Almighty; neither is it necessary that I tell you that we should always be ready to bear even the heaviest crosses since this is the most opportune way of reaching heaven; nor, finally, must I draw your attention to the motives of our Christian faith, so well-known to you, through which we are animated in all our actions.

As I write to you presently, your father is gravely ill; I do not know whether he will be able to survive this illness in his chest. I place my hope in God that he will. But, in the meantime, you are not to fail to recommend him to the Lord so that his most holy will be done in all things. I felt that it was right for me to relate all of this to you for your information, and, also that your father will not be deprived of all the good that you can do for him. Let us mutually recommend each other to God, and, with esteem and sincere constant affection, I remain

Your loving friend
Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

P. S. As I was writing this letter, the doctor came and determined that he was a bit better than last night - so, we hope etc.

7

May 15, 1810
 Sister Maria Tamini
 Macerata
 My esteemed Sr. Maria

Here I am, after so long a time, fulfilling my duty of giving you an account of my activities. Please note that Annunziata, following the advice given her by Vincenzo Seni, wanted indeed to have a paid-in-full receipt for the services of a notary public. Last night this matter was completed and in your behalf I paid (if I am not mistaken, for I am writing in a hurry) thirteen *paoli*, and now all is taken care of. I have in my possession the sum of money belonging to you as your share and everything else that is of value; the linens and furniture have been consigned to your sister.

I now am awaiting your directions - and you can be certain that I shall execute them to the best of my ability. Remember that in case I should have to pay some money to someone, or handle some other matter, it is necessary that I have this authority granted through a legal document and that the person to whom, for example, I must give money, should show me a letter received from you, and that letter must remain in my possession. We have to do all this because your sister insisted on doing everything with solemn regularity.

That this business has been delayed is not due to me but, indeed, to Annunziata.

Please respond to all of this and, if I have not helped you as you deserve, please pardon me. Chiara is on vacation in Riccia. Recommend me often to the Lord our God so that he will give me his gift of fortitude that is so necessary for one who has been called to the priesthood, and also that he will give me a holy death that will bring me to blessed eternity. I send you greetings from all of us. Give my regards to Sr. Deci and ask her to pray for me, a miserable sinner.

In the meantime, I remain
 Your humble servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo
Rome, May 15, 1810

8

August 5, 1910
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata

Piacenza, August 5, 1810

Most esteemed Sister Maria Tamini

The continuous memory that I preserve of your person and of your virtues is what compels me to inconvenience you with this letter, so as to get news of your health which I hope in the Lord is the best, just as up to the present mine has been and is. I thank you greatly for the favors that I have received from you. In circumstances such as these, one recognizes well a person who bears true affection and goodness. The Lord will repay you and at some later time I will know how to return the favor by serving you in every way that I can. Give me news of your health and of your situation.

I am a boarder here in Piacenza and pay eight *scudi*. Foodstuffs are very expensive and as for the air (I confide it to you in secret) I doubt if it will ever be good for me. But my sins deserve even more.

When you write to my distressed relatives, include my regards and do not forget me in your most fervent prayers. Let us indeed pray with trust. Especially have prayers said to the Lord for me so that, as a pilgrim in this world, I may live in conformity with the Divine Will.

We have received 50 francs as a subsidy and I hope that we will continue to get them each month.

I leave it all in the Side of Jesus Christ, and with the most affectionate best wishes, I am
Your loving friend
Gaspare C. del Bufalo

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August 28, 1810
Fr. Gaetano Bonanni
Rome

Most esteemed Abate Bonanni

I have received a letter from you dated August 7, and what a consolation it was for me you can much better comprehend in your mind than I could ever express in words; I received it indeed on a day dedicated to the glories of Mary assumed into Heaven, a day which I spend continuously in retirement in my room; thus it served as meditation material for me and I have derived great comfort and spiritual relief. You cannot imagine how delighted I am in seeing your handwriting, and what interior joy it brings to me. One of the people that I think of continually, and I say it in all sincerity, is you, whom I esteem and love with a sincere affection and with cordial benevolence. I never fail to pray in the Holy Sacrifice for your spiritual well-being, as I hope you continue to do always for me. Please pray more fervently, if possible for you, in my behalf, a miserable sinner, and have others pray, especially the Brethren of our Oratory (if it is still in existence, since in your letters you say nothing to me about it) and the poor of S. Galla, in whose prayers I have great confidence. This is the only pleasure that I ask of you in my exile.

In hearing of the continuation of the Pious Works of S. Galla I have been so consoled that, because of the consolation, I have kissed these few lines and have not been able to hold back my tears. God will accept my pure desires, and in all things may his most holy will be done. Please, I urge you not to abandon the poor, who are the image of Jesus Christ; so, if it were not possible to cultivate all of our different Works, let not the most necessary be abandoned. Illiterate people have at present greater need of instruction, and you can be sure that the Lord will accompany you with his grace. Instill fervor into our Companions, and with that prudence with which you are endowed, stimulate them to labor. Pray to St. Francis Xavier for me, because the air of this gloomy city makes me suffer from severe coughing spells and continuous headaches. But the thing that consoles me is that I can be up and around: so in all things may the Lord be blessed, he who grants me the strength to purge my sins. You will keep all of this secret, and do me the favor of not revealing it even to Can. Gonnelli, because I do not want it to get to the ears of my family, and thus add my afflictions to those that they already have; much less, tell it to Marini; in short, keep all that I have written to yourself because I hope that it will all turn out to be of no consequence. Please keep this intention also in your prayers. Tell my very dear Canon that it is more than a month since I have seen a letter from him and that he is causing me to be in a state of great frenzy; tell it to him with emphasis. The Canons who are 65 years old are leaving Piacenza, according to the decree of the Emperor; those from the Kingdom of Italy, for some time now, have been in their own houses. We have received 100 francs as a pension for two months ...
(Piacenza, August 28, 1810)²

10

September 6, 1810
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata

Piacenza, September 6, 1810

Most esteemed Sister Maria

It would be a lot better if this city were called: Dispiacenza. With indescribable pleasure I have received your letter in which I learn of the excellent state of health that you enjoy, the one thing that I yearn for and ask for of the Lord in the Holy Sacrifice. My own health is fine, even though the air is not at all pleasant, the city melancholic because it is almost depopulated, the food most expensive and quite different from ours. The wine is heavy, the bread bulky, and the worst chocolate costs 12 paoli in our money. But my sins merit even worse than this, and what we suffer for Jesus is always too little.

I am answering by return mail because I would not want you to leave Macerata, something that I hope to God should not happen at all. However, in case you do go, you know that my house is open to you. However, it would indeed be good to inform me beforehand by letter so that everything will be found in order. Always write to me as you would write to a brother of yours, for we must consider ourselves as such because of the many reasons that you are aware of.

² In the manuscript there are different words and entire phrases crossed out by the Saint himself (or so it seems), and rendered undecipherable. Also, in this regard, the page was torn (by government censor?), so that the entire remainder of the letter is missing. From a note by Merlini and from the postal markings it was determined that the letter was sent from Piacenza, on August 28, 1810.

The Canons who are 65 years of age have already returned, as you probably know, to their houses. I have received letters from Marchetti and by divine mercy they are all well at home. Nevertheless, do not forget to pray always and forcefully to the Lord for me and for my family. Especially ask Sr. Decj for this favor, as well as all the others whom I do not recall having met. Continue your friendship for me. Grateful to you, as long as I have a breath of life, for your many favors, I again say that I am

Your loving friend
Gaspare C. del Bufalo

11

November 11, 1810
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata

Piacenza, November 11, 1810

Most esteemed Sister Maria

Although I may be distant and in other cities, I do not thereby lose at any time my recollection of those people who are of most interest to me, among whom you are surely one, for many causes and motives that would be too long to enumerate.

Here is the reason for which I have undertaken to bother you with this letter. I am desirous of hearing something about you and receiving news of you, for I have been deprived since your last letter addressed to me quite some time ago here in Piacenza. I would like to think that the mountains of difficulties have been laid low and that consequently you are enjoying tranquillity of mind and good health. By divine mercy I am well at present. I can tell you (in secret, however) that from the very beginning I have suffered discomforts, of which I am now as a matter of fact relieved. They were due, I believe, to the variation in food and the diversity of climate. Wholeheartedly I give thanks to the Lord and ask you to thank him for me. Do not cease imploring, through your prayers, divine mercies upon me. May God always be blessed, both in times of prosperity as well as adversity, and let us try to live ever in conformity with his holy will.

Since they know that I am writing this, my family at home have asked me to greet you with distinction. They do not write to you in order not to burden you with mail. I wanted to tell you a lot more, but I see that already the paper is filled out. I do not forget my obligations. Do me the favor of presenting my respects to Sr. Decj and your other companion, if she is acquainted with me. Whenever it may please the Lord for me to return home, perhaps I will pass through La Marca in order to visit the Shrine of Loreto. Pray for me. In the meantime, with the most vivid sentiments of my heart, I do not fail to be your

Humble servant
G. C. del Bufalo

12

December 12, 1810
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata

Bologna, December 12, 1810

Most esteemed Sister Maria

Here I am bothering you with this letter which I would have liked to pay for in advance so that it would not be a burden on you, but it was not possible. Nevertheless, I will try again to do so, and I hope that I will be successful. However it may be, I am writing this present letter to let you know that right now I am once again in Bologna, for by order of the government 200 deportees were destined from Piacenza to this city, since they were too much of a burden there, in view of the scarcity of food. I am very happy to be one of the 200 because from Bologna it is much easier to have commerce with Rome. I would like however that the Lord deign to have me returned home soon, where I could take care of many things that regard his glory, as well as that matter that you know about, of which I always retain a remembrance and vivid recollection. So as not to be long-winded, I am not permitted to express everything that my heart would like to say. In the Lord, I hope that you are enjoying the best of health and that you do not fail to pray for me. Let us always conform ourselves to the divine will which permits all for our own good. Let us continue using the few days of our pilgrimage by serving our good Father with fervor.

I, and those of my house, are always ready to serve you in any way that we can, since we must treat each other as a brother treats his sister. Give my regards to your Companions, in whose prayers I confide greatly. I, in the meantime with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude and of love, say that I am

Affectionately yours
Gaspere Can. del Bufalo

13

January 18, 1811
 Fr. Antonio Santelli
 Rome

Bologna, January 1811

Most esteemed Fr. Santelli

My distance from Rome has not diminished at all (my dearest and most beloved Fr. Antonio) my remembrance both of our Pious Works and the beloved individuals of so great interest to me; I do not fail to recommend them, miserable sinner that I am, in the Divine Sacrifice.

My rather long illness, of its nature fatal, which had afflicted me for almost three months during my stay at Piacenza, impeded me from manifesting to you my sentiments of true and cordial friendship which will exist unchangingly between us even to the grave itself and then on for all eternity in heaven. I wanted to keep my sickness a secret in order not to bring further affliction both to my people at home as well as to those who have been kind to me. But! it was not possible to carry out this desire, despite always doing violence to myself in keeping from writing. However, you probably got my greetings regularly through Canon Gonnelli (under the present situation, I thought it best not to be of useless bother to other people). His virtues, which make him so admirable, have been for me the object of several meditations in the silence of my room, my very special Friend; the concern and the priestly zeal with which he gave of himself, as you mentioned to me, for the benefit of souls; all was a motive for my most consoling delights. May the Lord always be blessed for he supplies continuously such excellent and fervent Workers for the benefit of his mystical vine. They will surely know how to make reparation for the shortcomings committed by me unfortunately in those projects, and they were, are and will be, as long as God wills it, the cause of my afflictions. They torment my lower nature, never however the higher, for by divine grace I am totally in

conformity with the divine dispositions of God, may he be praised and thanked for all eternity. He gives me the opportunity of suffering some little thing for love of him to purge myself thus from my sins. Do not ever forget to pray for me, and at the same time please do me the favor of not making known anything of this sickness to those in my family, since my relatives, by the mercy of God, are in fact in the dark; if indeed I am not deceived, but I hope not. I would not want them to be distressed because of this! Enough said: in all things one needs patience.

The state of my health at present is quite good, and I hope the same is true of you, *quem diligo*, I say with St. Paul, *in caritate non ficta*.³ My spirit always accompanies all the efforts of our group, and I hope that the Lord will accept my most ardent desires of involving myself for his glory, regardless of how inefficacious they may be at present.

My dearest Santelli (friendship makes me forget formalities: let us speak in confidence from this point on since I cannot restrain the impulses of my heart, which loves you so much) you will never believe how much grief the departure of Canon Gonnelli and his distance from Rome have caused me. I will say nothing of the suffering I experienced on the death of the esteemed Saroni. All this is repeated and made sufficiently manifest in the numerous and mutual letters with which both the good Del Sole and I tried to comfort each other in the Lord. Would that he grant us to drink only a drop from that Chalice of bitterness which he drank to the dregs for us, to the most loving Father. St. Francis de Sales used to say that Paradise is a mountain (I will never tire of repeating it to all) which one scales more easily with broken legs than with whole ones. Happily *per multas tribulationes*,⁴ let us hope to reach the goal of our desires. That same Saint, if I remember correctly, does not indeed want extraordinary spiritual attachments, since sanctification, the Apostle says, consists in doing the divine will: *O Christiani: voluntas Dei sanctificatio vestra*.⁵ That spirit is acquired by reading S. Scripture which must be a priest's garden, as St. Charles Borromeo used to observe, and in the words of St. Augustine, it is the letter written by the Omnipotent to his creatures: "*epistola omnipotentis Dei ad creaturas suas*."

My dearest Santelli, if you love me, take charge of S. Galla and of the Oratory; I await an answer to this letter, giving me details concerning the status of these holy institutions. I have written to Gonnelli and I hope that by the first part of February he will be back, aware of my concerns. Give your entire thought to it so that all will be handled in the best way possible, letting no abuses enter in, and have it remain entirely in the spirit of its initial insinuation. In this matter, speaking now of the Oratory alone, I have begged Gonnelli, upon his return, to take over its direction. In case he will not be able to do so or for some other reason, do me the favor of looking out for it yourself, of helping it, of directing and governing it. Please do not deny me this favor for the great love that you bear for Jesus, and grant me to be in this whole matter consoled. I promise that on my return, when it will please the Almighty, that I will resume the job; you need have no doubt about this. Recall everything that we worked for in the opening of the same, of the benches constructed, etc. Works are very easily closed, but to re-open them takes a great effort. Remember the great good that is accomplished by preaching in the open squares, which will be taken up again in due time.

3 Whom I love with unfeigned affection.

4 Through many tribulations.

5 O Christians, the will of God is your sanctification.

Remember, once that locale is lost, strong support for the project of S. Galla will be gone, and especially for the Communion of the poor country-folk.

Finally, I supported your most holy yearnings. The Lord knows how to compensate you. If it is poorly attended at the present time, little by little, it will become a place where the name of God is praised, and the good farmers in opportune times come to frequent the Sacraments. Please, I am putting my trust in you. Make these sentiments of mine known to Canon Carboni, whom you will greet for me. If it should ever happen for the benefit of the Oratory that I should re-enroll in the Pious Union of Charity, from which I dropped out on leaving Rome, I am ready for anything; use me in any way that may affect the care of souls, so necessary at this time. Of S. Galla, I will say nothing else.

Greet all the friends and acquaintances whom I always have present in the divine Sacrifice. Tell Gianolli that I am waiting still an answer to one of my letters sent to him some time ago, and greet him with distinction. Please do me the favor of seeing Fr. Bonanni, to whom you will give news of me, and express my sentiments to him. Then, ask him to be kind enough to write me a letter in which he will indicate to me where he is going to preach for Lent and also to let me know the condition of his health. I am awaiting all very anxiously. Give my warmest regards, when you have the opportunity, to Fr. Costanzi, Msgr. Odescalchi, Mugnaj and absolutely everybody at S. Galla and the Oratory, with Father Stracchini, Marini, etc. See to it that the Founded-Masses Chaplaincy is in order. *Viriliter age et confortetur cor tuum.*⁶ I also greet Fr. Bianchi, Visconti, Vitelli, the most worthy Father Arana, and whoever else retains a memory of me.

Take care of yourself and love me, while with the liveliest sentiments of love and gratitude, and embracing you tenderly, I remain in the Most Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary

Your loving friend

Gaspar C. del Bufalo

P. S. On occasions, console my relatives at home. Greet master Peppe, Giuliani, and anyone else that I know at the Oratory, Brambille and his mother, etc. Tell me everything that may bring joy, and have them pray for me.

I do not write to many in order not to burden them with the mail; this letter is written in haste Yo be on time for mailing.

I hear that Gianolli is a Pastor, and so he will not be able any longer to help at the Oratory, etc. Goodbye.

14

January 24, 1811
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata

Bologna, January 24, 1811

Most esteemed Sister Maria

Your recent most welcome letter of the 30th of December which brought me ample news of your health, has been most acceptable to me. I would, however, like to have more favorable news

⁶ Act manfully and may your heart be strengthened.

and in keeping with my desires. By divine mercy and as the fruit of your prayers as well as those of your good companions, whom you will greet with distinction for me, because if you do (and if your companions were to do the same, a thing which I cannot believe) I would certainly get sick again. Yes, I trust greatly in your prayers and petitions. You can be sure that in the Holy Sacrifice I do not forget to reciprocate, recommending you all to the good God, in as far as I am able.

I recognize, however, in your dear letters the virtue which resides in your heart and which animates all of your actions. May you be blessed by the Lord, to whose will we must always be conformed. Paradise, St. Francis de Sales used to say, is a mountain that one scales better with broken legs than with healthy ones: that is, much better by means of tribulations than by prosperity. Blessed are we, therefore, to whom it is granted to drink some little drop of that bitter chalice, which Jesus drank in love for us to the very last drop. The reward prepared for us in heaven is great; the present life is extremely short.

Marchetti wrote me not too long ago from Empoli, and he is very well. Here, we have been having continual snowfalls and quite noticeably cold weather. The same is probably happening where you are. I am living with some member of the Congregation of St. Phillip, who have remained in this place to take care of the church, and I am quite happy.

My relatives at home send you their regards and they have given me a report of that money which you have probably already received and know about. I am happy that all has gone well. I never forget my obligations. If you should in any way have need of my help, I am always ready to give it. Be happy in the Lord. Pray for some deceased friends of mine; for some of my projects. Never fail to offer suffrages for the soul of my Luigi,⁷ for I never forget your good father whom I assisted in the last moments of his life, and who died in my hands.

We have collected the pension for this month which is enough for a few things. Meanwhile, I leave you in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and say again that I am

Your loving friend

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

15

February 4, 1811

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

My esteemed Countess

How pleased I was and always am to receive your precious letters you can quite well understand better than what I could express in words to you. I am sorry that I was not able to answer your letter when I would have liked to because I was so grieved by the loss that I have experienced of my inseparable companion in so many ways, the good Canon Gambini.

On the night of the 29-30 of this past January, after having eaten supper together and both having enjoyed a walk, we each retired to our rooms. But then! Suddenly the Canon called out to me saying that he felt distressed. You can be sure that I hurried to him as fast as I could. I sent for the doctor who, shortly after his arrival, pronounced the bitter judgment. He had opened a vein, but to no avail! Immediately the good Canon began to fall into his final agony during which he forcefully

⁷ Luigi del Bufalo, brother of the Saint, died in Rome on July 13, 1805.

grasped me by the hand so that I could barely break myself loose. I really had to struggle to control myself. Oh dear Lord, how difficult it was to bear it, humanly speaking. It was I who had to recommend his soul to God as he passed away in my arms.

I am writing and at the same time weeping. His sickness was nothing other than an accumulation of matter in his chest which, already for several days, had been tormenting him in all his joints. It was because of those rheumatic pains that he would moan. And yet, it never in any way appeared to be so serious a sickness as to be fatal.

After his death, all of the departed companions demonstrated evident signs of their attachment to him, etc. while I did all I could to choke off my sorrow in the quiet of my room, but still pouring out ardent tears. May God be blessed - He who has visited me with special tribulations. My sins are deserving of much more. Countess, be courageous, for through the holy Cross we shall certainly reach heaven. Offer suffrages for the soul of the deceased and also please say a prayer for me.

In another letter of mine, I will give you more details. In the meantime, with esteem, affection and respect, I am

Your devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Bologna, February 4, 1811

16

February 19, 1811
Fr. Antonio Santelli
Rome

Bologna, February 19, 1811

My dearest friend

I am not able to express in words the consolation of receiving your most welcome letter of the 2th of January, but certainly in your own mind you are able to comprehend it. I will say only that I read it and re-read it many times; I kissed it lovingly and finally bathed it with tears of tenderness.

I am exceedingly pleased that you are doing well in your health, but it displeases me that you are considering going to Toscana. Patience! In all things one must be conformed to the divine will, and thus be sanctified in doing so. *Voluntas Dei sanctificatio (vestra)*⁸ (S. Paolo).

*Confortamini in Domino et in potentia virtutis eius.*⁹

I too by divine mercy and as a fruit of your prayers am well, but I do not have the will certainly of going out to see the celebrated antiquities and monuments that are found around here; notwithstanding the fact that this is your province, I do not have the desire to travel around it. I enjoy very much being in the solitary life, and all I ask of you is to recommend me to the Lord, that he will grant me the power to draw profitably from everything, to the advantage of my soul. In the holy Sacrifice especially be mindful of me, and continue always to love me, giving me news of yourself wherever you may be.

My dearest Fr. Antonio, excuse my bothering you with this letter to advise you that, in case

⁸ The will of God is your sanctification.

⁹ Be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his goodness.

you should leave, inform me quickly of the status of the Founded-Masses Chaplaincy and of anything else that you think will be of help to me, so that I can substitute another person in your absence, and thus take care of my duties.

I thank you for the concern that you have shown me and mine, whom you will greet with esteem, and be assured that in all things I am fully in agreement. Do not ever forget our Pious Works, which are of such interest to me and for which, even from a distance, I do what I can. God will accept in this matter my desires and my tears, which from time to time I can scarcely hold back from pouring out of my eyes. May the will of God be done in all things.

Oh, how many times, especially in Piacenza, close to death, I called out to you in spirit to come to my bedside, so that I could embrace you tenderly; how many times, I was speaking with (you) and I delighted simply in thinking of you. Oh great God! (how) inscrutable are your judgments. You have preserved me in this life so that I could provide the final rites of charity for my good companion Gambini, to assist him in those last moments of his life, to see him expire under my very eyes! May you be blessed! *Hic ure, hic seca*,¹⁰ etc. But let us not talk about that.

Let us say, rather, that all those in exile applied the low Mass without alms for him. They sang the Mass and Office for him, and during the day, if not all, at least many of them accompanied him to the mortuary chapel with candlelight, all to the general edification of others and with touching emotion. I arranged to have everything done, with all previous permissions. The inscription on the grave marker in the Cemetery of the Certosa is as follows:

*Hic situs est
Franciscus Gambinus
Domo Roma
Canonicus S. Marci in Urbe
Adlect. inter Scribas Adjut. Vicarii P.M.
Praefectura Cleri perfunctus
Pius Doctus Comis
Subito exitu decessit III Kal. Feb. anno 1811
In Pace¹¹*

I have understood with pleasure the report concerning our Pious Works, and I am consoled by it. *Viriliter age et confortetur cor tuum*.¹² May the teaching of Christian Doctrine at S. Galla be close to your heart. Alas, I have a feeling that this project, however, is almost totally dead. On Sundays there is scarcely anyone available, even to have Benediction. What is going to happen to the rest? My dear Santellis, at least at night try to go and preach to our poor who are in need of instruction and preaching. God will reward your efforts. Do me this favor, stimulate others to be present. I live at peace, I trust in your zeal and the attachment which you are good enough to hold for me.

¹⁰ Burn here, cut here.

¹¹ Here lies Francis Gambinus, At home in Rome, Canon of St. Mark in The City, Beloved among the Assistant Secretaries of the Vicar P. M., He was in charge of the Congregation of the Clergy, Pius, Learned Affable. He died suddenly on February 3, 1911. In Peace.

¹² Act manfully and may your heart be strengthened.

When you are ready to favor me with (your) most welcome letter, give me exact details concerning Pianto and the projects¹³; also the projects of St. Michael, if you indeed have that information, which is something that could be recommended to Stracchini. I am likewise most curious to find out the name of the most worthy individual who is preaching at the Oratory on Wednesdays. Greet all of our mutual friends for me, and take care of yourself. With distinction, express my regards to Fr. Arana, Marini, all in the Oratory and at S. Galla, etc. etc. etc., everyone, everyone, everyone. Fazini is very well and I regularly receive greetings from him. As for Pereira - I do not know if he is still in Milan; Larega has gone to see Venice on his own.

My beloved Santelli, *ego cupio videre te, amplecti te, osculari te,*¹⁴ etc. Jesus be with us, and let us suffer for him so we can enjoy the Saintly Paradise promised to the ones who willingly bear the holy Cross during this miserable life. Goodbye; I leave you in the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, saying that I am your

Loving friend

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

Bologna, January 24, 1811

In the last Lent, instead of Bonanni, I remember that it was the good Iaccarini who used to come to the Oratory.

17

February 26, 1811

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

My esteemed Countess

The consolation that your precious letter of the 14th of the current month brought me cannot be expressed in words, but in your own mind and with the talents that the Lord has given to you, you can understand it fully. I tell you simply that I read it at least a dozen times, kissing it often, and finally bathing it with tender tears of affection because of the death of our Canon as well as the very sensitiveness you showed. All of this serves to show you not so much the sentiments of my heart, but rather the proper praise that you deserve for your virtues and excellent qualities that I admired deeply during my stay in Piacenza. Not dissimilar is the praise that I wish to offer in this letter to Countess Landi. Extend to her my sincerest best wishes as well as to all the others of her household, and to anyone else who remembers me, unworthy of all.

Only one thing alarms me and that is to receive such unfavorable news of your health. I would have liked it to have been more fully in accord with my desires. Yet, in all things may the Lord be blessed and let us conform ourselves entirely to his holy will! Your sanctification, the Apostle wrote to the first Christians, consists entirely in doing the will of the Almighty. *Voluntas Dei sanctificatio vestra.*¹⁵ Oh how happy are we if we manage to abandon ourselves entirely into the

13 In the manuscript, at this point, there is a tear; hence, a few words are missing which it was impossible to reconstruct with certainty. Also, elsewhere, in this same letter, the original presents deteriorations; but one was able easily to decipher the words, and they have been transcribed in the text above; however, in parenthesis ().

14 I desire to see you, to embrace you, to kiss you.

15 The will of God is your sanctification.

hands of our most loving God the Father! What joy we will experience in our hearts and what a reward will be awaiting us in the heavenly Zion of Paradise. So, be courageous, most venerable Countess, and have trust in divine mercy. Let us often mutually repeat in the face of troubles encountered in this present life: *fiat voluntas tua*.¹⁶ This is the clear, distinguishing mark of the true follower of Jesus: to suffer anything out of love for him and to drink a small drop from that bitter chalice which he drank even to the very last drop for us. Thus, St. Teresa would say: either suffer or die. My St. Francis Xavier used to repeat, as he faced the crosses and sufferings in India: *plura, Domine, plura*.¹⁷ The Cross (I have been meditating on this during the past few days) is not as heavy as some imagine it to be, since God supplies many, appropriate helps so that ultimately it becomes for us something pleasing and even lovable. So when the time comes for us to pick up a heavy weight, it is then that one turns for help to those who have been in similar circumstances. By moving it forward then back, one side to another, one tries to find the center of balance so as to hold it steady. Having done that, one then moves carefully forward and eventually reaches the goal. The application is clear. Jesus helps us to face every tribulation. Holy resignation to his sovereign dispositions is the central, pivotal point which balances the weight of the Cross. What a beautiful thing it is to know that Jesus has preceded us down the avenues of suffering, and to know that we are pleasing to him and will gain from him an eternal reward. ... But now, let us move on to something else.

In your last letter to me you said that you would like to be spiritually united with me in my prayers. Well, I am very happy with that suggestion and so from now on you can accept me as a partner, not only in the general sense of the Communion of Saints, but even more especially in all acts of virtue, prayer and so forth. I would like to have the same arrangement with Countess Landi. Still, I am sorry that you entrust yourself to such a miserable sinner as I ... enough said ... even though each morning, particularly in the holy Mass, I keep you in mind and I pray wholeheartedly that the Lord will grant you the virtue of holy perseverance so that you will attain salvation. Be certain that through the merits of Jesus Christ, you will surely be saved and, by continuing your most praiseworthy manner of life, you will live tranquilly and happily in the Sacred Side of our Divine Savior. Furthermore, it would please me greatly if, in writing to me, you would give expression to confidential matters which I expect and ask you to do, but that you omit all words of a complimentary nature. If the Lord, in his inscrutable designs, should determine that I go on still another trip (at present there is no immediate rumor), I hope that we will be able to continue to be in contact by letter for our mutual spiritual comfort. If you should learn of my death, I am certain that you will not fail to have suffrages offered for me just as you did for my friend Gambini, whom I always remember tearfully (the enclosed holy card is what you requested) for my own very special edification. With regard to your acts of Christian charity, for a long time I have been thoroughly convinced of them. Finally, here is the inscription placed over the remains of the deceased:

*Hic situs est
Franciscus Gambinus
Domo Roma
Canonicus S. Marci in Urbe*

¹⁶ Thy will be done.

¹⁷ More, Lord, more.

*Adlect. inter Scribas Adjut. Vicarii P.M.
Praefectura Cleri perfunctus
Pius Doctus Comis
Subito exitu decessit III Kal. Feb. anno 1811
In pace¹⁸*

I neglected to give you information about my own health. I will not say anything of how much I suffered when I had to assist the Canon etc. I shall say only that up until last week, I was tormented by discomforts that were aggravated by that sad occasion. At present, however, I am feeling very well and, by divine mercy through your prayers, I could not be better. With regard to the funeral and everything else pertaining to the deceased, if you have not received any information as yet, let me know.

I cease writing, but I do not cease being

Your humble servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

P. S. I ask you and Countess Landi to be kind enough to recite one Our Father etc. each day in honor of St. Francis Xavier, my special patron.

I could have sent you some other remembrances of the deceased Canon, but I did not want to burden you with postal charges.

18

March 19, 1811

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

Esteemed Countess

I am truly surprised that you have not received a letter of mine addressed to you immediately after having read your precious letter written with tears of sorrow upon the death of good Canon Gambini, my inseparable companion, and dictated by your generous and religious heart (so greatly was I moved that out of gratitude I kissed your words and was drawn closely to you who are most deserving of the highest praise). I cannot find anything blameworthy in this except for the delay or loss in the mails. Moreover, most venerable Countess, be assured that I have not failed to fulfill my duties, even by including in my letter a holy card of the Crucified Lord taken from the breviary used by the deceased, just as you requested.

Your letter, sent to me dated from the 1st of the current month, filled me with joy, contentment and admiration as it informed me of the excellence of your health, at least as far as you are capable, plus the loving concern you show toward me. I am truly at a loss for words and simply cannot find adequate terms to express to you the sincere sentiments of my heart, grateful for and cognizant of your countless, charitable favors. But, with your most perspicacious talent you will be able to comprehend all, and so I feel satisfied with this and will not prolong my remarks. I am writing in a hurry to be on time for the postal delivery, since I wanted to be sure to answer quickly your previous, most appreciated letter.

¹⁸ Here lies Francis Gambinus, At home in Rome, Canon of St. Mark in The City, Beloved among the Assistant Secretaries of the Vicar P. M., He was in charge of the Congregation of the Clergy, Pius, Learned Affable. He died suddenly on February 3, 1811. In Peace.

Enclosed is another holy card that I found in the Canon's Breviary, thus replacing the lost one that I sent some time ago. Try to take good care of yourself and pray for me, keeping in mind that when a tree has been planted and sets deep roots, even when it is shaken by the winds, it will remain safe and immovable. St. Ambrose says that a ship's pilot is not to be praised when, through a calm sea, he steers the ship and its sailors safely to port, but he is to be praised when despite the ferocious attack of the waves, he liberates all of his men from death. So, be courageous and have trust. The point of reunion will be in heaven where, I hope, we shall arrive together for all eternity. Remember that we mutually assist each other in doing good in a particular way, and even though we may be separated in body, we are nevertheless always present to each other in spirit. In the holy Mass, I always make a special memento of you. I also wrote a letter to Maria, my landlady, but I have not had a response from her either. Do me the favor of giving her my best regards as well as to all the others who remember me, and especially Countess Landi. My health is very good and, presently, with the others I am undisturbed.

So as not to weary you, I am, illustrious lady, with esteem and veneration

Your humble, devoted, obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Bologna, March 19, 1811

19

April 14, 1811

Fr. Luigi Gonnelli

Rome

Bologna, April 14, 1811

My dearest beloved brother

I am truly edified by the zeal and concern that you have for the little poor of Jesus Christ, who will be the ones by whom both of us, I hope, will certainly be saved. *Quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis.*¹⁹ You cannot imagine how much I have been spiritually consoled in the Lord by your recent letter of the 9th of this month, and how many times I have read it, to satisfy that interior joy with which I feel myself full to the brim at present, seeing also the charitable solicitude that the wonderful Fr. Santelli has for the poor, to whom I beg you to extend my most cordial and affectionate best wishes, also to be communicated to all the other members of my acquaintance.

May the Lord be blessed in all things and may his love and his grace be with us always. Amen.

I have learned with pleasure of your good health and of your immanent promotion in the priestly ministry. May the Father of Lights be the one to assist you and give you each day a greater degree of zeal and fervor for souls. I am certain that all, according to my desires, will turn out for the best. Be assured that in this matter I, wretched thing that I am, have not failed nor do I fail to pray.

You have acted correctly in withdrawing everything that belongs to our little vineyard at my house. In such a way I am sure that nothing will be lost and you will be able to do much good.

I have understood everything concerning the Communion and am very happy that we agree in our viewpoints. However, try not to defer it for too long a time, for both you and the other

¹⁹ What you did to one of my least you did it to me.

members would suffer too much from the heat; likewise, the work out in the fields begins at that time and the boys interested in employment are called out. When the farm-workers do arrive, invite them at least to go to confession. Take care of this matter as you see best and in keeping with that wise prudence which is so characteristic of you. For the present time fulfill the obligation of the 30 Masses at your convenience, 20 of which must be in satisfaction of my recently accepted Founded-Masses Chaplaincy which, as you know, occurred during the Sacred Visitation. There is on certain days the obligation of the Privileged altar, etc. ... I am convinced you understand this well. The other ten, in fulfillment of the other Founded-Masses Chaplaincy (I am speaking of the two of the Altieri family). If you should desire others because of the First Communion, write to me and I will do what I can. Meanwhile, rest assured that I will do whatever I can for that holy institution. I do not give up hope, rather, I securely trust in sending you something more. However, have the poor pray a lot, for they are the only object of our concern. Suggest to them that beautiful ejaculatory prayer that Xavier used to repeat so often: "Mother of God, pray for me"; and confirm them evermore in the holy Faith.

Ask Fr. Santelli to write up the history of the First Communion and also of the erection and foundation of the Oratory in Vincis, the news of which I have received with great pleasure. Order me in whatever I am able to do, and pray much for me, so that I may respond once and for all to that most sublime Vocation to which the Almighty has deigned to destine me, along with you, beloved Canon, whom I love more than myself and to whom I find it difficult to externalize in its fullest extension what I yearn for in my heart. Preserve especially the institute of our De Rossi and do things in such a way that everything will be able to be transmitted to those whom the Lord will select as our successors after we are gone. Do so with that same spirit of simplicity and pure charity by which so many of our Servants of the Almighty have entrusted it to us.

The good Saroni, if I am not mistaken, gave 20 *Sc.* last year and I hope that Monsignor will not have difficulty in continuing to do the same. Realize that Storace too either gave Masses for that purpose or he gave a *scudo*. Get something also from Diotallevi and from anyone else that you can succeed in seeing. Through Fedele have them give you something in Tor de' Specchi. If there is anyone who cannot give money, let him give some soup or similar offerings. Believe me, Providence will not be wanting, for in desiring the result, the means also will be provided. You will see Calini shortly in Rome; remember that if my Uncle talks to him, he will give even more than one *scudo*. Also, the Dignani woman, it seems to me, gave something last year; in that case you might have Fr. Arana talk to her secretary, because she is his penitent. Try to get some help from the Doria woman in Genoa, and through Bianchi of the Odescalchi Family from the Pallavicini Family. I am sure that if you talk to the Altieri Family on this matter you will be given something. You might, however, manage to arrange this with the Prince at the time that he takes a walk through his arcades all alone. In a general way, ask him for some little help, in order to receive whatever Providence will afford. Notarangeli of Piazza Montanara also will give some alms; in short, exert yourself in as much as you can. However, you may say: how easy it is for anyone to hand out advice, but how rugged it is to execute it. ... That is true; but be happy in the fact that I unburden myself in this way, since I am not able to do anything else but ask the Lord to bring to perfection the work that has been begun. *Qui cepit opus, ipse perficiet.*²⁰

20 He who began the work will complete it.

Suo loco et tempore,²¹ Bianchi will have the records of my Founded-Masses Chaplaincies; inform him of this as a matter of courtesy and ask him for a confirmation. Concerning the S. Girolamo Chaplaincy, I have already answered you in a previous letter addressed to your home; therefore, I am saying nothing further about that here. It would not be a bad idea to try to contact Bolognetti. In that way we would be known to him, in case he should have some Founded-Masses Chaplaincies.

I will write another letter to your brothers by ordinary mail; I only ask that you burn all of my letters, because that is all that they deserve.

It seems to me that I have not forgotten anything. If there is anything that you do not understand, ask me, so as to avoid any possible abuses in regard to the First Communion. Take care of yourself and love me with your whole heart as I remain

Your brother

Gaspere C. del Bufalo

P. S.²² Last year Filonardi said a number of Masses in my stead: let this be for your information and guidance. Discuss this matter with Bianchi, and then write to me by return mail. Canon Fortuna also provided a special offering for this purpose and Vitelli sent some wine. Bianchi could at least oblige with something and if he should need permission or anything else, etc., it is a very easy thing to get it from the Prince, etc. However, I think that as a matter of fact he may not have need of anything. Enough said; I shall await your reply on this question.

Pegna also offered a Mass or so. Goodbye, dear friend; take care of yourself and have people help you. Goodbye.

Once you have read this letter, burn it. Let us go forward *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*;²³ may this be the thing that consumes us with love. Be happy - may God reunite us in Heaven for all eternity, just as we are united here on this earth. Tell Moretti to come and serve at the table of the poor, and in that way he will distract himself.

20

May 8, 1811

Sister Maria Tamini

Macerata²⁴

Most esteemed Sister Maria

I do not know how to express in words the consolation of spirit that I experienced when I received your most appreciated letter of the past month of April; surely you will be able to imagine it. I am infinitely happy to hear of your well-being, your situation, etc.... With a full heart I thank God who, because he is our Father, loves us tenderly, does not fail to assist us, direct us, console us.

21 In his place and time.

22 What follows here is written on the fourth facing of the sheet, on both sides of the address.

23 To the greater glory of God.

24 The page containing the address was cut in half.

*Benedictus Deus in omnibus.*²⁵ Yes ... I am sure that the assistance of God's grace indeed will help you always to enjoy fruitfully the best time of your life by having only one desire. I am most convinced that the torrent of heavenly spiritual consolations in you will grow even stronger. I too ought to enjoy this blessing, perhaps even with more reason; but the weight of my miseries is great. Therefore, all my trust lies in the eternal goodness that is implored for me by the continual remembrance in your prayers as well as those of your excellent Companions, whom you will greet, I beg of you, with the most proper good wishes. As for me, I am living tranquilly, cheerfully and contentedly, only because I am doing the divine will. I will be content if at last for once I should sanctify myself as I ought.

Meanwhile, the Lord is keeping me in the best state of health that one could possibly desire. I assure you that in my solitude I do not lose nor shall I ever lose the memory of you and of our affection of long-standing. I used the word solitude purposely, because inasmuch as it is possible for me, I like retirement and silence, where one can better hear the voice of the spouse of our souls. I do not fail to pray for you and your sisters and all your deceased in the Holy Sacrifice, especially, however, for Giovanni²⁶ whose last breath I tearfully gathered in. May God bring it about that I have a similar death, marked by all the prerogatives that Holy Scripture describes in the death of a just man. I ask you again to pray very, very much for me, a miserable sinner and the lowest of the ministers of the sanctuary, so that together with you I might share one day blessed eternity.

Meanwhile, keep up your ministry which is by its very nature apostolic and in keeping with your state. Trust in the Lord to gather the fruit of it in his time. Everything depends on education, and happy is that girl who receives it, in so far as possible, in the schools of your institute. Try always to be happy and serve God with generosity of heart. Continue to love me in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. With greetings from my people to whom I have mentioned Nunziatina, in order to carry out your commission, I remain with all the affection and cordiality possible,

Affectionally yours

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

P. S. Give to your little girls these three things to remember: "There is only one God. Only one soul. Only one eternity." Familiarize them with the ejaculatory prayer that St. Francis Xavier, my special Protector, use to say to Most Holy Mary: "Mother of God, be mindful of me".

21

May 30, 1811
Fr. Filippo Giuliani
Rome

Bologna, May 30, 1811

My very dear Giuliani

Having learned from our incomparable Canon Gonnelli, to whom you can give my particular regards, how outstanding is your zeal and the concern you show for our great project of S. Galla. I can do nothing better than send you this letter to express to you the joy that I feel with you in the

²⁵ Blessed be God in all things.

²⁶ Giovanni Tamini: father of Maria. A little farther ahead in the letter, Nunziatina is also mentioned; she is Maria=s sister.

Lord and at the same time to thank you for the marvellous care that you have for the poor of Jesus Christ. Blessed will you be if you retain that approach to life, for by growing constantly in priestly fervor, you will be following closely the singular virtues of the man who spent his life and achieved sanctity in educating the unlettered, and I mean (to say) our own Venerable De Rossi. Be assured, likewise, my dearest friend, that the real consolation which any true minister of the sanctuary seeks, consists principally in having learned from his earliest years to adapt himself to the ministries of the Church so as then to serve God in whatever is his will. If evangelical perfection and holiness is a command to all, it is, in a special way, commanded to anyone who, upon entering into the clerical army, has pronounced those memorable words: *Dominus pars haereditatis meae*.²⁷

The edifice you build will certainly by a grand and magnificent one. Therefore, most praiseworthy is the style of life that you have assumed and, in keeping with your age, you will be a light of the world by the holiness of your activities and will stand out in as far as it is possible for you, by your educating the poor in the basic knowledge of the faith. Charity, meekness humility are the principal virtues that will make you lovable to all and, furthermore, will make you a saint. The Giver of every good gift, never be doubtful, will supply fully his graces and blessings - something I wholeheartedly wish for you (each morning in the holy Mass I pray for you) as a new plant in the mystical vineyard. In the meantime, try to read the life of the one who has preceded us in this project so blessed by God, and drink in evermore his spirit of holiness and zeal. Pray ardently for me, a miserable sinner and least of God's ministers, so that the Lord will give me the power to do his will always and to better my life once and for all as I should.

Give my best regards to all in your house, to all the workers, and to my beloved acquaintances in the Oratory as well as to all in S. Galla. As best you can, get others to pray for me. As for you, do not forget to recite an Our Father etc. for me to St. Francis Xavier and pay him a visit from time to time likewise in my behalf. Devote yourself, as best you can, to study; take good care of your health. May the grace of Jesus be always with you, as I, edified by your conduct and embracing you warmly in the Sacred Heart, express myself with love and attachment

Affectionately yours

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

22

June 18, 1811
Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo
Piacenza

Bologna, June 18, 1811

My esteemed Countess

I am responding to one of your most appreciated letters received by me with indescribable consolation to my spirit and unutterable joy to my heart. I am delighted to get news concerning your fairly good health, just as I can report to you with regard to my own health which is not only quite good, but the best, thanks to your prayers to the Giver of every good gift, imploring for me his loving mercy.

Now I can send you a bit of good news which should please you, that is, that we have

²⁷ The Lord is part of my inheritance.

regained all of the allowances that were in arrears for the past four months. So, we give thanks to Divine Providence which has even the hairs on our heads numbered. As for me, I am cheerful, tranquil and content, only because I am doing the will of God. I proclaim that I want to live and die with total abandonment to him. Is it not a great thing for a soul to know with certainty that one is fulfilling the divine will? What consolation does one not experience in carrying the Cross with Jesus? What joys inundate the heart of one who is in sanctifying grace? Rightly does one live detached from the world, more in uniformity with the virtues of our Exemplar, more in a position to gain merit for heaven. Yes, my most venerable Countess, let all our thoughts, our desires, our affections be directed heavenward! The time will come when we shall no longer be seated near the rivers of Babylon, tearful and sad, but *sedebimus in pulchritudine pacis, in requie opulenta*.²⁸ And, since glory is proportionate to the merits gained, I, with Xavier, pray that the Lord will give me more crosses - *plura, Domine, plura*;²⁹ and with St. Augustine I pray that God will deign to punish me in this world so that I will be saved in the next. Oh, how happy I would be if I had always loved Jesus as I ought! At least you, please, love him for me and let us make every effort to be entirely his in this life so as to be with him for all eternity. What beautiful thoughts come to me as I meditate now on our Redeemer, whose feast of the Most Sacred Heart we are about to celebrate very soon. That most Sacred Heart teaches us two truths in particular, that is, humility, as he says *discite*, etc. and holy love, symbolized in those flames surrounding the Sacred Divine Heart. *Ignem veni mittere in terram*,³⁰ etc. So, let us then place ourselves before him and ask him to sanctify our hearts and supply us with all that we need.

Be mindful of the devotion to the most Precious Blood of Jesus and say often the *Te ergo quaesumus*,³¹ and I also ask you, at your convenience, to offer a novena to St. Xavier for me.

From my uncle I have received more or less favorable news concerning Canon de Turris. You probably know that here in Bologna a pastor from Spoleto passed on into eternity - so pray for him and for my other deceased friends. July 12th will mark four years since the death of my brother Luigi,³² whom I may have mentioned to you. Please do some charitable works in his behalf and have others do so too.

Be sure to tell Mrs. Calegari, my good landlady there, that I have been awaiting letters from her for quite some time, that I desire them, wish for them and would be delighted to receive them. Give her my particular best regards along with greetings to the Zannonti family; give my love to Signora Maria and to all of my acquaintances there. (I say nothing of Signora Caracciolo to whom I am infinitely indebted).

So as not to multiply letters, I dare to ask you to find out whether Monsignor Nasali received one of my letters in which I asked him to celebrate 10 Masses according to my intention, with a 15 *baiocchi* alms for each one for the benefit of the pious work of S. Galla where he too is enrolled. In

28 We will sit in the beauty of peace, in splendid rest.

29 More, Lord, more.

30 I have come to cast fire on the earth.

31 We, therefore, beseech you.

32 Actually, Luigi died in 1805, so six years, not four, have gone by.

case that letter might have gotten lost and this very worthy man, whom you will greet for me with distinction, is disposed to do this favor for me, let him know that he can begin immediately. Then, he can send me a notification by letter of the days on which he said them - this for my peace of mind as well as for my records. Excuse me for inconveniencing you so, but please be willing to cooperate with this for so great a cause, the education of the unlettered, etc.

I will not be writing to the others, so, in my stead, you can fulfill my obligations to all of my acquaintances in general and particularly to the most worthy Countess Landi whom I love very much in Jesus Christ, the Father Vicar, etc. Be tranquil, cheerful and content, and I am

Your humble servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

23

September 19, 1811

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

Most venerable Countess

I do not fail to seize another opportunity that offers itself to me to send you this letter in answer to your recent most appreciated letter sent on the 10th of this month.

With what joy my heart was overwhelmed in reading your letter I cannot sufficiently express in words. I shall only point out the motive or the reason for it, that is, that by giving me the news of your departure for a vacation, it allows me to hope that your health, though not completely the best, at least is fairly good and adequate for you to bear the burden of looking after your family. I beg you to extend to them my most humble and dutiful regards. In God, I hope that the benefits of being in the outdoor countryside during autumn will be both helpful and wholesome for you.

I do not intend to write to Canon de Turrís in order not to burden him with postal charges. Perhaps you will do me the favor to tell him that my uncle is presently in Civitavecchia, that with me he sends his particular greetings and that both of us remember him in prayer - and whatever else you may wish to add with your own good heart. Then, with regard to Fr. Escolari, etc. I know nothing at all; however, I shall make every effort to find out all of the latest news. You are not lacking in those virtues and refined sentiments whereby you can bring comfort to the spirit of this very praiseworthy Canon who is truly deserving of everything good, since he is endowed with the most beautiful and rarest of prerogatives. I join myself with your feelings, as I write to you and de Turrís at one and the same time.

In this ordinary mail-delivery, I did not receive any letters from home, and as a result I am a bit surprised since, indirectly, I have learned that my mother is ill. So please pray and have others pray for her since, after God, I have nothing dearer in the world. Nor should you ever forget me, most needful of prayers.

I am thoroughly edified by your work, especially for the zeal and Christian charity that you demonstrate by propagating anything that will redound to the greater glory of God. In particular, I am referring to the now well-known Chaplet which you, in your goodness, have begun to distribute to the nuns and other pious individuals. May you be blessed and may God shower his favors on all of your efforts and bring fulfilment to our hopes.

Here in Bologna, some women, on their own, and other people have become so interested in this devotion that at present it has spread throughout Romagna, throughout the diocese of Bologna

etc. In many churches of Campagna, they are already using this devotion in public services. The same thing is occurring, at the present time, in only one of the churches in this city, but becoming more and more widespread in other places. I mention all of this for your consolation. One devoted person had thousands and thousands of the booklets published which were then distributed into the hands of the seculars as well as private individuals, and little by little introduced into the churches. Thus, if devout people in Piacenza can be found who could join together to handle the publishing of some thousands of these booklets and passing them around privately, you will see that our good Jesus will take care of the rest. Speak to Countess Landi concerning this and do for me the most delightful task of giving her my most dutiful regards, while asking her to continue her prayers for me.

Give my regards to all who remember me. And, when you are outdoors in the country, do not bother at all to send a reply to this letter, for I am quite aware of the fact that you will not be able to do this as you take care of your affairs. Indeed, I say this in order to relieve your heart of any anguish, while still remaining, most illustrious lady, with you in spirit in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Bologna, September 19, 1811

24

November 2, 1811
Sister Maria Tamini
Macerata

Bologna, November 2, 1811

Most esteemed Sister Maria

Among all the tribulations with which the Lord is pleased to visit me, there is now added the one, the heaviest of all, of losing my holy and incomparable mother. Conformity to divine wishes does not prevent, in my humanness, the great sorrow that I feel so deeply on such a loss. Patience. She passed on to eternity on the 20th of last month, and I have not written to you before this, so as to make use of another opportunity not to burden you with mail. I will not dwell lengthily on this whole matter for now, because the wound is still too acute. The only thing I ask, in as much as I know how to and am able to, is that you offer suffrages for such a blessed soul, who was so dear and beloved to you.³³ Furthermore, do me the kindness of procuring for her even more good. Have the entire school and your girl pupils and other pious people receive Holy Communion for her. With that intention in mind, write to, or have others write to all the schools of your Institute, so that she will have the suffrages of the Maestre and of the pupils, as I have mentioned above.³⁴ For all this I will ever be

³³ We read in the deposition of Maria Tamini at the Ordinary Process of Albano: "The reputation and fame of the mother of the Servant of God was that of a Saint, in fact she was nicknamed another Saint Monica. As I got to know her and drew close to her after the death of my own mother, I used to call her *madre mia*, for she was a person beyond reproach, had the greatest integrity and modesty of life. During the week she would often go to Confession and almost daily received Holy Communion."

³⁴ In the same deposition, we read: "He wrote to me while he was in exile about the death of his mother; every

grateful to you. I always maintain before myself the obligation that I have with you because of the matter that you know of. Sufficient for now is that you do me the favor of being patient. Let this not be a disappointment for you, for in that case I would seek out a remedy as quickly as possible. My mother had noted down everything, as you probably also know. Meanwhile, I am still stunned.

Fr. Eugenio is in Corsica. But the sorrow on the death of my Mother is inexpressible.

See to it that you recommend Nunziatina to whomever you see fit, and it in this matter or any other I can be of help to you, just remember the disposition of my heart which you know very well. Marchetti wrote to me, and he is well.

Pray for me. My greetings to your fellow-Sisters and consider me

Affectionately yours, at your service

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

Oh, how willingly would I see you! Hail to the Cross.³⁵

25

March 29, 1812

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

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

Most esteemed Countess

I cannot sufficiently describe in words how delighted I was to receive your recent letter that got to me by chance, but certainly you can imagine it in your own mind. The sentiments you express always comfort me in my awareness of the warm concern that you have for me, undeserving though I am of everything. I note in your most appreciated letter those qualities of heart that have been given to you by God. That very beautiful gift of the image of St. Francis Xavier, brought to me here by Canon Galli, affords me still another new reason to express to you a word of just praise, of grateful indebtedness and of indelible remembrance. I could go on at length with this subject, but your tried virtue completely forbids me to do that. I will say to you only that if I had uncovered a treasure, I would not have been so happy as I am right now in having close to me this blessed image which, as long as I have a breath of life, will serve as a continual reminder of you, a most worthy person.

Indeed, I would love to be able to support with actions the incessant desire that I have to serve you in at least some small way. However, since that is not possible under the circumstances of my present situation, I shall continue to give vent to my aspirations to the Father of mercies and divine clemency in your behalf - that he will fill you with his holy love and shower down upon you those blessings that you need in the temporal and, more especially, in the spiritual order. I shall do this continuously also because of the spiritual pacts that we have agreed to and which I consider as something unchangeable, as well as to return to you some small thing in exchange for the many favors that you do for the benefit of my soul. Indeed, I hope to be saved through the merits of Jesus

year after that, just before the anniversary day, he would write to me again, so that I and my Companions and the girls would offer prayers and Communion for her."

35 cf. Gasparian History and Trivia: Death of Gaspar=s Mother.

Christ, our most loveable Redeemer and Father. Yes, most venerable Countess, the time will come when we shall be united forever in the glory of heaven and there we shall enjoy that happy sojourn in seeing God, in loving God, in possessing God. *Sedebimus in pulchritudine sacis*,³⁶ etc.

Oh! what very sweet reflections that ought to be an encouragement for our souls in the face of all the troubles of our present life. We do not have here a permanent home, but we are destined to live forever in the beatific vision of God himself. So, be courageous and trust in divine help, and let us often repeat what Fr. Segneri Sr. was wont to say as he lay dying, while meditating on the thoughts that St. Bernard expressed concerning the words: *abyssus abyssum invocat*,³⁷ the Servant of God used to say: "The abyss of my misery calls out to the abyss of your mercy, oh Lord." With that sort of meditation we also follow closely in the footsteps set down for us by our Redeemer, Jesus. Before rising gloriously and ascending into heaven, he, for 33 years always suffered and anguished out of love for us; and from the Cross, he says to us: "My children, if you want to live gloriously with me in heaven, first live my life of patience and mortification on earth." *"Oportuit Christum sati et ita intrare in gloriam suam."*³⁸

Oh how much more I would like to say on this topic if only I were able, if only I had the time, if only I were speaking to someone who really needed to hear it. I shall say only that the penitential life in Jesus consists principally in serving him in the way that he wishes, denying our very selves and, so to speak, making our progress against the current of water. I thank you, my Jesus, said St. Philip, that things do not go along as I would like them to, for our sanctification consists in conforming ourselves to the divine will. Thus, Fr. Avila, the teacher, said: I am happier when I can lift up a piece of straw to fulfill God's will than when I would convert the entire world simply for the satisfaction of my own abilities and talents. The smallest things are quite sufficient for becoming great saints. Why did Solomon's strong woman, whom you must always have in mind, merit such praise from the Lord? Precisely because she knew how to preside with regularity over her family and home. So, it seems to me, God wishes to have the same from you. In having recourse to him in prayer, uttering some short ejaculations throughout the day as a devout aspiration and, in short, using those means that you are better acquainted with than I, you will come to see how bountiful is the reward that you will have in heaven. But let us move on now to something else.

I hope that your husband has re-acquired a joyfulness of spirit and that you, with the approaching pleasant season of the year, will be improved in your health. Oh! What a beautiful favor would the Lord be granting to you by exchanging Purgatory for a few temporal inconveniences. Yet, always be happy, and, for your salvation use those means that are proper since we are all obliged to do that. Therefore, like a rock in the sea, place yourself firmly in the hands of that Lord who *fortiter et suaviter omnia disponit*.³⁹

Return my dutiful greetings to Countess Claudia and, in general, to the usual people and be assured of the excellent condition of my health which I am enjoying, except for a small, occasional

36 We will sit in the beauty of peace.

37 The abyss [of misery] invokes the abyss [of mercy].

38 It was necessary that Christ suffer and thus enter into his glory.

39 He disposes everything firmly and sweetly.

disturbance of nerves which is really nothing to be concerned about, since it is a usual consequence to the illness that I suffered. But, I repeat, it truly is nothing much. Offer suffrages for the soul of a friend of mine who was exiled to Piemonte, a Canon of Rome, who died in the flower of his youth and a man of angelic character - who, I certainly hope, is in Paradise. I am deeply sorrowed to learn of the death of the Prior of S. Dalmazio and I have not failed to recommend him to the Lord.

Give my regards to my good landlady there. In case there are Masses to be sent to those destined for Corsica, whenever the opportunity arises, you might include my uncle. You would be doing me a great favor - but, do so - without prejudice to anyone else and for whatever intention that can be offered.

Pray also for me, a miserable sinner, and with the total charity of the Lord, I am
Your obliged servant
G. Can. del Bufalo

26

April 17, 1812
Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo
Piacenza

May the grace of God be with us. Amen

Bologna, April 17, 1812

Most esteemed Countess

At an opportune time did I receive through the kindness of Count Arcelli, your very greatly esteemed letter of the 12th of the past month, so that now, as the occasion offers itself, I am able quickly to send you a reply. I thank you with all my heart for the concern that you deign to show toward me as well as for the news you send me of your sufficiently good health which, however, I would have liked to have been more in keeping with my wishes. I can inform you that my own health is the very best. Still, in all things may the divine will be done upon which we must always rely with due docility. Holy Job, in his sufferings, took comfort in the consoling thought of the universal resurrection, just as we hope our bodies will also share in the delightful rewards of heaven: *rursum circumdabor pelle mea, et in carne mea videbo Deum salvatorem meum.*⁴⁰

Oh how beautifully does the apostle number in his letters the gifts and prerogatives that will distinguish the bodies of the blessed. They will be more agile than the wind, still more luminous than even the sun, free of suffering, immortal. *Oportet corruptibile hoc induere incorruptionem et mortale hoc induere immortalitatem.*⁴¹ So, be more courageous and show greater trust in the most merciful God. That is why St. Augustine, in his book of Confessions, was astounded and overwhelmed by those consoling truths, so that in his transports of love he was accustomed to exclaim with fervor: Oh Lord, let me know you, let me know myself, so that I can love you, and let me despise myself. *Noverim te, noverim me ut amem te et contemnem me.*⁴² In that way he sought to

40 I shall again be enclosed by my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God my savior.

41 It is necessary to cloth this corruptible body with incorruption, and to cloth this mortal body with immortality.

42 May I know you. May I know myself in order to love you and despise myself.

urge himself to love the Supreme Good and express his gratitude for the many mercies that God shows toward us, miserable creatures.

However, this times I shall not write lengthily, Countess, so that I can finish in time for the postal delivery. So, let us be content with the few reflections we have made. Animated evermore by the grace of God, they will serve for us as a brilliant light, especially during this holy Easter season in which the Church directs our thoughts to Paradise and leads us to cling to those consoling meditations on the glorious life of Jesus Christ. Note, therefore, that if we have been raised with the Redeemer through an increase of virtue, and if we hope, then, to be glorified with him for all eternity, we must seek only the things of heaven and the supernatural: *quae sursum sunt, quaerite quae sursum sunt sapite.*⁴³

In the meantime, pray a lot for me that I may truly become holy and serve my God fervently in spirit and by the holiness of my deeds so that one day, together with you, I can be admitted into the eternal tabernacles where we shall exult with inexpressible joy. *Videbit et gaudebit cor vestrum.*⁴⁴ I cease writing now, but I return my most dutiful respects to Countess Landi, to your husband, and to anyone else who remembers me. Meanwhile, with the full charity of the Lord and with all due regard and gratitude, I remain

Your obliged servant

G. Can. del Bufalo

P.S. Offer suffrages for a priest-friend of mine who died in Rome.

P.S. My address is: Cartoleria nuova, n. 618.

27

September 7, 1812

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

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

Most esteemed Countess

To none of the reasons that you mention in your most esteemed letter, recently received by me, must you attribute my delay in writing, but only to the idea that I have fixed in my mind of not disturbing you while you are vacationing in the countryside - a time set aside for extraordinary occupations. Indeed, just how very pleased I was to see your handwriting and to receive news from you, I cannot adequately express in words, but you can surely imagine it since the usual sentiments of gratitude, esteem and affection that I have for you are always unchanged. If distance of place separates us from personal contact, it does not keep us from being in spiritual contact, for that remains always the same in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, our trust and our comfort.

I would have liked to receive better news concerning your health and the Lord knows how much I wish for your improvement. But, patience - *in omnibus fiat voluntas tua.*⁴⁵ As for me, I can

43 Seek what is above, have a taste for what is above.

44 Your heart will see and rejoice.

45 Thy will be done in all things.

assure you of my good health, except for a residual nervous twitching which does not even deserve mentioning. So, I wholeheartedly give thanks to God, *a quo bona cuncta procedunt*,⁴⁶ etc.

As for the exiled individuals in the city, you probably know that it is a public fact that several days ago they lost completely their government allowance and that they have been informed of the execution of that well-known decree whose fulfilment already has become evident, so it seems. The person for whom the blessed wine etc. etc. etc. was sent is very, very happy, most overjoyed etc. and imposes on me only the obligation of asking you for special prayers for something that may be of great help to him.

Finally, I remember having sent you another letter which I hope you received. In case there should be an opportunity for you to honor me with your handwriting, you will be able to address your letter in care of the Countess Bentivoglio Orsi who lives on Cartoleria nuova street in the Taconi house. This is all that I wish to communicate to you before assuring you that I am

Your devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

P. S. Give my greetings to your family and to anyone else who remembers me. Please excuse me if I have written this letter hurriedly, since I am occupied in what you yourself can imagine etc.

28

September 8, 1812

Maria Angelica Bertolotti⁴⁷

Medolo

The grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be always in our hearts. Amen.
Most beloved in Jesus Christ and greatly revered Sister

Here is for you another way of meriting for Heaven and performing acts of resignation at the foot of the most Holy Cross of Jesus, who makes me worthy of suffering some little thing for him. In these days they have been proclaiming from Police Headquarters the execution of that famed decree of May 4, which affects all exiles, in virtue of which S. Gio. in Monte will continue to be a place of imprisonment, etc. To date, I have not been called, and I am afraid that there are only three days left; the notice will not be long in coming: In the meanwhile I am putting together the few little things that I have. I simply cannot express to you how obligated I am to the Lord for the very special assistance by which he takes care of me; nor can I sufficiently indicate to you the peace and tranquillity and happiness of my spirit, which will always live, according to our agreements, united with the Sweetest Heart of Jesus.

With these few lines I am asking you to do me three favors: the first is to pray to the Lord that I, who am isolated in prison, will always continue to have joy of soul, clarity and peace of conscience, and also health of body, if it so pleases him. In the second place, of asking the almighty to give me opportune illumination in the handling of confessions, so that I will not be confused, since in this matter I find myself a bit weak; but I hope to overcome it with your many prayers. In the third place, that you keep in mind my family, my niece, the Holy Father and all those who are in distress for the Lord, to whom you will say each morning that he should deign to accept the very

46 From whom all good things come.

47 In the original document Aex Domenicana@ is added by a script other than that of the Saint.

little that I can do in payment for my sins. You can thus be assured that you will be doing a great good, and you will help me to bear the Holy Cross patiently, which tearfully I kiss wholeheartedly and clasp affectionately to my breast. Moreover, because of the love which you bear for the Lord, for the honor of virtue itself and because of whatever sway I may have over your heart, I beseech you to be courageous and exult ultimately in seeing me more like my Crucified Jesus. You will, recall the Mother of the Maccabees who, to the end, was present at the sacrifice of her sons; turn your eyes toward the Crucified One and the Martyrs, and you will be comforted. Again I say courage, for henceforth we will be at the end of this trying time; our friendship in Jesus will last forever and ever, and throughout all ages; if, for now, we will not be able to write to you, that will be more merit for Paradise. From time to time get in touch with La Costa, to whom I entrust many of my matters to be made known to you conveniently after her visit to the country; and from this same person I hope that you will be able always to get news of me. If those of you who are acquainted with Magnoni can work it out that a third person visit me, in that case I will know better by spoken word the news of your state of health, in which I have a very deep interest. In this whole situation we will regulate our actions in accordance with the orders that will be imposed on us and in time made known. If I get out of this prison and am exiled elsewhere, in that case I would make every effort to write to you immediately: in short, be assured of my concern for you, and only force or necessity will be able to suspend the execution of my most vivid desires.

Ask a thousand pardons likewise of Luigina whom I beseech to be considerate of heart, for not answering her directly; I simply do not have the time; beg her please not to attribute this to ill-feeling. Tell her that I really appreciated her letters and wholeheartedly wish her every good thing, while recommending myself to her prayers.

La Costa knows already that she is living almost directly in front of S. Bartolomeo, and quite near a little food-shop.

I leave you now reminding you that if you do not overcome this tribulation courageously, it will bring me the greatest displeasure, and more so to the Lord, for whose greater glory all things redound. Your virtue is a source of calm for me and makes me tranquil; so, without further ado, giving you in the name of God the greatest and most copious blessing, at the foot of the cross, I am⁴⁸

S. A. in G. C.

Casa (Bologna) September 8, 1812

29

October 16, 1812

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

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

Most venerable Countess

Your recent letter to me could not have been more pleasing nor more welcome. I notice in it that you are enjoying sufficiently good health and also, something that is of great interest to the utter

⁴⁸ The biographical note on Angelica Bertolotti was already compiled and entered into its place when the following testimony of Merlini was brought to our attention, which had at first escaped us; now it bears out fully our suppositions: From a letter written to the ex-Dominican nun Bertolotti, and sent to me by Fr. Bianconi of the Oratorio di Bologna ..., I have learned that in the time of his exile, the Servant of God wrote to this kindred spirit".

needs of my soul, your continual remembrance of me in your prayers. For this I am forever obligated to you. You can be quite sure of my reciprocation in prayer as well as of my lasting recollection of the many kindnesses you extended to me and the special concern that you have always maintained in my behalf.

My health is very good and I am most tranquil in this imprisonment of mine, where for almost a month and a half I have been situated. We are separated into two groups: the larger number is in the Convent of the Zoccolanti and a smaller number is in the Monastery of the Rocchettini which has been converted into a public prison, reserving one branch of it for us. I am in the latter place mentioned, but without any native Roman as a companion. That, however, is not at all important and the days go by for me without my being aware of it. Let us not, indeed, be forgetful of the spiritual pacts we have made, for they must always remain inviolable.

I would have liked to write at greater length, but I have neither the time nor the freedom of my own room. So, you will have to read my mind for whatever else I could have said. Whenever and in whatever circumstance you may wish to write to me from time to time, all you have to do is address it to Countess Caterina Bentivoglio Orsi who lives in the Tacconi house. Give my regards to Countess Landi, to my landlady there and to anyone else who may remember me. Meanwhile, with full esteem in the Heart of Jesus, I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

Bologna, October 16, 1812

30

December 9, 1812

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

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

Before entering this prison, I remember having sent you a letter which I hope you received. I would have sent you still others if I were not moderate in writing: I did not wish to overburden the one in charge of censoring these pages. However, with Christmas drawing near, the least I can do is send you these few lines in which to extend to you my best wishes that the Lord give you his choicest blessings and, at the same time, to assure you of the living, constant, indelible memory that I retain of you as a most admirable person. I shall retain that memory for as long as I live and wherever I may be. I trust in the goodness of God that you continue to enjoy at least sufficiently good health, if not the best. Be assured that I shall never fail to keep you in my prayers to the Lord for whatever your needs may be. I am certain that you will do the same for me, a miserable sinner.

By the mercy of God, my health is excellent, with the exception of some minor, recurring discomfort of nerves which I experience occasionally and which has not as yet been altogether cured. I continue to maintain myself in tranquillity of spirit and I thank the Almighty for the many gifts he gives me. I do not know how to express my joy in being remembered by you, and, you can well imagine the warm feelings I experience in remembering you.

Here, we are separated into two groups. The government supplies us with bread, water and a soup from which no one can get any benefit. But, we are allowed to receive help from outsiders, just as they permit to the other types of prisoners. Up to now, nothing new has occurred and, in general,

we are all enjoying good health. The government takes charge of handling our mail and sending it out. If anyone wishes to visit me or the companions, we are led into the local police headquarters.

Do me the favor of extending my most dutiful respects to your family, to Countess Landi, to Countess Malaspina, to Maria of the Zannoni family, and to all the other acquaintances of mine. While wishing you also a Happy New Year, and many others too, in the full charity of the Lord, with esteem, gratitude and affection, I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. d. B.

P. S. Offer suffrages for Monsignor Grassi who died in the Castel S. Angelo in Rome. Also, for two Capuchins who died in Corsica and another one of our men in Alessandria.

31

December 15, 1812
Antonio del Bufalo⁴⁹
Rome

Bologna, December 15, 1812

Dearest Fr. Gaetano

*Gratia Dei nobiscum. Amen*⁵⁰

I am writing only a few lines in order not to unduly inconvenience the one who is in charge of reporting this letter. But you can imagine quite well how many things I would like to say to you in testimony of that true and sincere friendship which I unflinchingly hold and shall preserve for you, wherever I may be.

I will not go into details about my present situation since it is probably known to you already. I assure you only of my good health and of my continual spiritual union with you, whom I never forget. May you recommend me ever more and more to the Giver of every good and thank him for me for the many graces that he has deigned to grant me, while other pious persons are also praying for this same thing, for my spiritual advantage.⁵¹

I recommend to you our Pious Works with all the enthusiasm of my heart for they form (although I am distant) the delights of my poor spirit. Confirm the Workers in fervor and zeal, maintain our initial spirit, and especially work hard for the continuation of the catechising of the

49 Antonio del Bufalo: father of our Saint. In the original address, another hand (so it seems) added in small letter: "Al Sig-r D. Gaetano Bonanni". As a matter of fact the letter belongs to Bonanni, but the one written to his father must, without doubt, have been included. Of the letters that the Saint sent to his parents, not one of them has reached us. During the time of his exile, he used to have much information communicated to his own people by means of his friend Fr. Luigi Gonnelli, to whom he wrote very often at that time. Through those same means he would also give directions for the family and occasionally would send small sums of money to his father: they were alms that he received from pious benefactors (cfr., e.g., the biographical note on Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi), "of which he deprived himself in the extreme need of his incarceration, in order to help his parents".

50 The grace of God be with us. Amen.

51 At this point in the manuscript, there are three lines canceled by the Saint himself (so it seems); below the cancellation, with great difficulty, however, one can still read: "If ever a person were to come in my name to you to confess himself, I recommend him as much as I can to your charity, as well as" and then continues with the words transcribed in the text above.

poor as you yourself know that they are most interested. In my own poor prayers I never forget all this, and the Lord knows to what point my heart's desires reach.

An embrace from me in Christ Jesus for my most beloved and incomparable Gonnelli; a thousand greetings to Sig. Ab. Santelli, Sig. Ab. Mugnaj and to any others that you think of; in the meantime may we both be joined closely to the Cross of Jesus, and with all affection I am, while wishing you every blessing of the recurring solemnity, together with a prosperous new year.

Your truly loving friend

G. C. del Bufalo

32

February 3, 1818

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

Imola, February 3, 1813

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

Esteemed Countess

It is now some 20 days since I, with a few others, have been transferred to this prison. I do not want to fail to give you notice of this in this letter that I am writing which is also an answer to your last one to me which I received in Bologna. By divine mercy, I continue to enjoy very good health and I have always new reasons for giving thanks to God for the many acts of kindness that he deigns to show me. With regret did I learn the details of your state of health and I truly wish that there will be an improvement soon. But, be patient: may the divine will be done in all things. May you never be forgetful of me in your prayers and procure for me also the spiritual assistance of those people with whom I became acquainted there. I ask you, please, to do this for me so that I might become truly holy and achieve the possession of virtue which is always to be the objective of our efforts here in time so as to be happy later for all of blessed eternity.

Through the Vice Prefect here, I have received within recent days a letter from my uncle. It comes, as you know, from the Bastia in Corsica. In that letter, he informs me of the death of one of my closest friends, Canon Rocco Carboni, a Canon from Rome, the Secretary of the Vicariate and a very outstanding person. Therefore, do not fail to offer suffrages for him and do good works to his benefit. I would like to ask you to do the favor of writing a letter for me to Fr. Telesforo Galli, giving him notification of this matter and asking him also to offer the usual suffrages. Include in your letter to him my greetings to the acquaintances that we have in common and especially to Monsignors Olgiati and Conversi; to the Curate, Fr. Paolo Conti who is from Parma and to the others who must be situated in Alessandria. Then, in order not to multiply letters, lest it be an inconvenience, it would be a most appreciated thing if you were to send news of me along with my regards to Mother Abbess of Maddalena (if I am not mistaken) of the Salvatico family, asking her in turn to share this news with all the members of the family. Extend best wishes also to Countess Landi, Father Vicar and all in the house. I have not overlooked offering prayers for our companion concerning whom you wrote to me, who died there in the public hospital. You can be sure of my heartfelt interest in doing good works, acceptable to the all-merciful God.

In this prison here we are only eight in number. I believe that the others are still being held in Bologna. I am the only Roman. Ever since the 21st of the past month, we have been deprived of the subsidy of one franc, and we have been placed on the same rations as the other prisoners, but we

have been given an exchange of 24 centimes in place of those rations and have worked out a plan with the guard for the supply of food. I am tranquil and happy; and the good citizens from this area do not fail to show us the most charitable attention. We all celebrate Holy Mass. And, in short, these are the things that I wanted to communicate to you.

May you live always united with me in spirit in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, and therein, let us set up our permanent home. Amen.

Sincerely yours, Countess

Your most humble and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

33

February 11, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola⁵²

Venerable Monsignor

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

This morning I received three letters by mail: two from Rome, which tell me nothing in particular, and the other from Canon Muti, to whom I thought it good to give a prompt response which I enclose herein to you.

I have thought also of writing a couple of lines to the Countess to ask her help in a small matter that will have to be settled at Bologna (according to a letter from Rome which commissions me to it); on that occasion I will mention to her also the Booklets, etc. Pray for me so that I become holy; remember me to your most esteemed sister-in-law and all in the House, while in the meantime, full of gratitude and reverence and constant attachment, I have the pleasure of renewing myself as

Your most humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

(from the Imola prison) 11 February (1813)

34

February 20, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

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

My hopes for the life of my very beloved Del Sole have completely vanished! He is already enjoying the fruits of his labors and merits in the blessed homeland of Paradise, where he will pray much for my eternal salvation, and where one day I hope to see him again on an exalted chair of glory... ; what I have enclosed will give you details of his illness, etc.; this was given to me by Canon Petrucci who was entrusted yesterday morning with this charge by a letter from Countess Bentivoglio. I leave it to you to imagine how we have been affected and moved by such a loss, and (in order not to deprive myself of the merit of conformity with the Divine Will) with what violence I

⁵² Imola: cf. Geographical Data

should hold resentment against humanity. *Hotocausta medullata offeram tibi*, etc.,⁵³ I will continue to repeat with the Prophet, and in the desolation of my heart I will not cease to adore the heavenly dispositions of the God who disposes all things for good. Let us concern ourselves meanwhile in offering suffrages in as far as possible for this blessed soul, and let us pray for each other to the Almighty that there may be granted also to us such a holy death, precious in his divine sight, and thus have the lot of the just in blessed eternity.

On this occasion also I include the letter of faculties known to you; I ask you to offer my best wishes to your sister-in-law and to all in the house; I assure you of my most vivid sentiments of gratitude and acknowledgment for your favors, which I will long remember. Finally, I simply do not know how to indicate sufficiently to you what has been the esteem and the singular affection which I hold for you, *in charitate non ficta in visceribus J.X.*,⁵⁴ and with what effusion of spirit I desire for you the most extensive divine blessings that you could ever imagine. So, living close to you in the Sweetest Heart of Jesus, I resign myself as

Your most humble devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

(from the prison in Imola) February 20, 1813

Please have the enclosed matter returned to me through Fr. Alessandro Del Pozzo, since it came by hand, etc.

35

February 21, 1813

Countess Virginia Malaspina Caracciolo

Piacenza

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

Most esteemed Countess

It has been just a few days since I received your most esteemed letter with singular pleasure and joy to my heart and with this letter of mine I am sending an immediate response in order to ask you for a favor which you, in your charity, will surely not deny me.

On the evening of the 19th of this month, I received news which was most distressing for me of the death of another pastor from Rome whose name was del Sole. He was a man of singular merit and a very special friend of mine. He died in the hospital in Bastia (after having been isolated for 15 days in that horrible prison) of a malignant fever. I will not tell you how deep the affliction was that I suffered and still feel on such a loss. You can imagine the concern I have to obtain good works for the benefit of his soul. Therefore, I ask you to send a letter to Canon Galli, including my distinct regards to him, asking him to see to the fulfilment of the usual suffrages for this confrere that we have in common. Tell him to see to it that all of the priests celebrate holy Mass for him and (in case our being set free is delayed for a longer time yet) that his name be given to Fr. Luigi Gonnelli, who will then, in adding it to the list of the others, will file it away in the archives of the Union of Priests of S. Galla in which he was enrolled (just as Galli and I are). In this way, a particular remembrance will be left behind for this friend of mine, this brother whom I remember and will always keep in

⁵³ I will offer you a holocaust of marrow, etc.

⁵⁴ In charity unfeigned in the heart of Jesus Christ.

mind with tender tears and for whom I can never do enough. Please excuse all the inconveniences that I cause you. Give my best wishes to all my acquaintances there and especially to Countess Landi and to Maria of the Zannoni family. Pray for me, a miserable sinner, who with the fullness of esteem and gratitude, remain

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

Gaspare Can. del Bufalo

Imola, February 21, 1813

P. S. A thousand best wishes to de Turris and inform him of the death of Fr. Donati.

36

February 21, 1813

Sister Maria Tamini

Macerata

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

Most esteemed Sister Maria

In the greatest hurry I am writing these couple of lines to you only to beg you to make suffrages and get others to do so for the good Canon Del Sole, a very special friend of mine, who died in Corsica. I cannot tell you how this loss has grieved me; but may the divine will be done. Also, pray for Canon Carboni, who died in Corsica likewise, and for a certain other person for whom I have concern. It has been more than a month since I have been deported with a few others to this prison; I am in good health and resigned to the will of the Almighty. Pray for me and give my best regards to your fellow-Sisters.

If our liberation ever comes, as we hope it will, I intend to pass through Macerata to see you again. Meanwhile, I assure you that I am,

Your humble servant

Gaspare C. del Bufalo

Imola, February 23, 1813

37

February 22, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

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

Venerable Monsignor

In the last letter that I addressed to you I was on the point of asking you to do me a favor, but then I did not dare.

Now, however, I want to follow through on that impulse and ask you the following. With my friend Del Sole, *cuius memoria semper erit in benedictione*⁵⁵, I used to have several spiritual pacts, which I would be eager to carry on with you. In the first place we would communicate with each other particularly in the good; reciprocally each morning in the Holy Mass we would make a distinct memento; and then at the elevation of the Chalice we would recommend our souls to the Divine

⁵⁵ Whose memory will forever be in blessing.

Eternal Father, etc. This is the plan of spiritual life that I would like to continue with you, and I am hopeful that you will go along with me.

Other things I reserve for telling you in person. I can however assure you that my affection and attachment to your most worthy person is inexpressible, and if it were not for a certain disparity in rank, I would say that the Lord has perhaps granted me the favor of knowing you as an intimate, in order to make a compensation to me in this world for my deceased friend and brother. Recommend me then often to the Lord so that I become holy as I should; let us always live in the spirit of the Sweetest Heart of Jesus, and from now on, let us never cease to inspire each other in the acquisition of blessed eternity. This morning Msgr. Domenico favored us with a visit, but I did not have the good fortune of seeing him, since I was in my room and no one advised me of it. So, be sure to express my respects to him, together with all the others in the house, and ask them to pray for me. I am sending you the letters of St. Xavier which I hope you will enjoy very much; and always assuring you of my gratitude for all your favors, with fullness of esteem and respect, I would like to remember myself to you as

Your humble devoted and obliged servant

G. C. del Bufalo

(from the prison in Imola) February 22, 1813

38

February 22, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

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

Most esteemed Countess

Last night, with the greatest interest. I received the books that I had asked you for and I am most grateful and obliged to you for them. Pray to the Lord that I can derive from them the fruit that I so desire of being able to attain the possession of those virtues that I need. Do not ever forget me in your prayers as I, a miserable one, will never fail to do for you. Indeed, let us try from this time on to share reciprocally the good that we do with the help of the grace of our most merciful God. And, in this spiritual union, let us mutually be interested in effecting our sanctification as well as giving greater glory to God.

The prayer that St. Francis Xavier was accustomed to recite in honor of the five wounds of Jesus Christ is the following:

*Domine Jesu Christe, per quinque illa vulnera,
quae tibi nostri amor in Cruce inflixit,
tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso Sanguine redemisti*⁵⁶

"O Jesus, God of my heart, I beg you, through the five wounds that You suffered on the Cross out of love for us, that you help Your servants whom you have redeemed at the price of your Blood". And, while we are speaking of Xavier, I do not want to fail to remind you that on the 4th of next month the novena to this great hero begins and will conclude on the 12th of that month - the day on which the Holy Father Gregory XV solemnly canonized him. Fr. John Croiset of the Society

⁵⁶ Lord Jesus Christ, through those five wounds, which your love for us inflicted upon yourself on the cross, come to the aid of your servants whom you have redeemed by the precious blood.

of Jesus relates the history of the novena and therein we note that Xavier appeared to the Servant of God, Marcello Mastrilli. After having miraculously restored him to health, he assured him that all those who, for the space of those nine days, would invoke his intercession, they would experience the effects. In Croiset's narration, if I remember correctly, he presents the prayers to be said each day and on March 5th he relates the story concerning the aforementioned Mastrilli. On this occasion, you can recommend me in a special way to this saint who is my great advocate and protector. You will be able to ask the Lord, in my behalf, for that true zeal in the exercise of my priestly ministry and the grace to fulfill always his divine will, just as the apostle to the Indies, St. Francis Xavier, did in an heroic degree.

In the church where they will observe the month of May in honor of most holy Mary, stress greatly with *fervorinos* the practice of a general communion, since all devotions of faith and piety, aim toward that end; omit nothing that will remove sin from redeemed souls.

In regard to the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother that is to be observed after the Three Hours Agony, at the present moment I am unable to send you the leaflet published in Bologna. But, substantially, it consists in what I am about to say. As soon as Lent begins, a sheet of paper should be passed around on which you should clearly indicate all of the half-hours that elapse from the time of the death of Jesus to the time of his glorious resurrection. Each one, then, should select that half-hour which is most convenient and then sign his/her name on that sheet so that the person in charge of spreading this devotion can be sure of the continual accompaniment of the Sorrowful Mother. It would be a good idea if, for every half-hour, two or three persons be assigned, so that in case something should come up, this devotion that is so pleasing to the most holy Virgin, will not be interrupted. It would also be good that each participant should take along a reminder of the half-hour for which he/she is responsible so that everything proceeds with regularity. On the first occasion that presents itself to me, I shall try to get some of those leaflets printed in Bologna that pertain to this project. In the event that I should not succeed in getting them, still do not give up on propagating this good work.

If the Chaplet of the Blood of Christ could be publicly introduced also in Faenza or in some other place, I will see to it that other booklets are sent from Bologna and, as far as I am concerned, both now and always, I will never lose interest in the salvation of souls. My sins perhaps will make me unworthy to succeed in this, but I hope that divine mercy will have pity on me. Therefore, obtain for me the spiritual assistance of all good souls that you know and recommend me strongly to their prayers. May Jesus always be the one to bless your efforts; may he confirm you in doing good; may he inflame you more and more with his divine love, and, if you should encounter difficulties and opposition in your works of piety, do not be discouraged. God wishes to test the virtue of just souls and wishes to provide opportunities for greater merits for eternity. I ask you to extend my best regards to all in your family. In the meantime, with fullness of esteem and respect, most esteemed Countess, in the Heart of Jesus, I remain

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. d. B.

February 22, 1813

February 27, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

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

Venerable Monsignor

Here I am again inconveniencing you with a couple of lines by which I can indicate to you my most vivid gratitude for the trouble you took in favoring me with linens, as you know; at the same time, I want to assure you of my most intimate benevolence for your most worthy person whom I continually see in spirit in the sweetest heart of Jesus. On this occasion, I ask you to pray for the soul of the Curate of S. Giovanni della Malva, deceased, and that of another person exiled in Alexandria, from the diocese of Sutri. The first one was a Crozier and I think that he had to remain in the environs of Rome as his place of exile; I was very much acquainted with his abilities; the second was actually a native of Bracciano. I got this news from Muti's letter, and he asks me to express his respects to you. I am including in this letter a small image of Xavier, which you will be able to put in your breviary; I also ask that you keep very close to you the letters of this Saint which I voluntarily leave in your hands. Excuse the liberty that I take and attribute it only to the sincere attachment that I hold for you. I am also writing to your sister-in-law concerning a certain devotion to the Sorrowful Mother to be practised after the agonies of Jesus, and hence be kind enough to consign the enclosed to her.

Notwithstanding the fact that Del Sole may have forbidden me to allow anyone else to read some of his poetry which he sent me, dictated by his singular affection for me, I take the liberty of sending them to you to read; and then, I will hold on to them as a remembrance of this most favorite friend of mine.

Let us fervently begin the approaching Novena of Xavier, and mutually recommend each other to this Saint, just as I had the practice with my deceased Friend and brother. Later on, give me in writing your names, the day of your birth and of your first Mass, and I will do the same for you since I used to observe these anniversaries reciprocally with the aforementioned Del Sole, so that on these days we would recommend each other to the most merciful God even more.

Our meditation book was Avencino: *Vita et doctrina J.X.*,⁵⁷ etc., and I simply cannot tell you how fine it is; I regret that I have only one copy, for otherwise I would willingly give one to you; in short, this life of the spirit was the foundation of our union, etc. I thank God for having made the acquaintance of this man and learning from him thereby the practice of those virtues which I need. Afterwards, if I remember something else, I will communicate it to you; and thus we will mutually help one another to be eternally united in Paradise. Meanwhile let us seek out the greater glory of God alone, let us inspire each other in the doing of good, let us always live closely bound to the Cross of Jesus, and let us not doubt his loving assistance in every moment of our lives. He wishes from us a broadness of heart, abandonment to his divine will and zeal for the sanctification of his name. Let us cultivate these holy maxims by serving God joyously; while in the meantime with the fullness of esteem and recognition, I resign myself as

Your humble servant

G. C. d. B.

(from the prison in Imola) February 27, 1813

P. S. With pleasure will I read or hear aloud something of St. Cassian, in whose honor I

⁵⁷ The Life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

recite the Our Father, etc. according to our spiritual agreements; and often during the day, let us recommend ourselves to God. If you would like Avancino, I will look for a way of getting it to you immediately.

40

February 27, 1813
Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
Imola

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

Most esteemed Countess

I received with pleasure your most esteemed letter and in it I notice the outstanding favors that God deigns to impart to you in giving you such lofty sentiments concerning the practice of Christian virtue and evangelical perfection. Always continue to maintain this attitude and be quite assured that the almighty God, who is *in misericordia dives*⁵⁸ and who can never be surpassed in generosity, will diffuse evermore in you his graces and ineffable blessings so as to enable you to attain an even higher place of glory in heaven, the only end for all our desires, and you will, furthermore, abound in merits for the attainment of that goal. Therefore, let us be courageous and never let us make room for those fears that, as a source of confusion, the devil constantly seeks to place before anyone who loves God and strives only for his greater glory. During this very special season of Lent, let us arouse a deeper fervor and, mindful of the spirit of the first believers, let us try to emulate their example. Let us read more reflectively the great book of the Crucifix which is opened for all and, therein, let us learn lessons leading to eternal life, while repeating often each day as a short prayer, *Te ergo quaesumus tuis famulis subveni*, etc.⁵⁹ Oh how happy we would be if all people were to avail themselves of the price of our redemption! What a comfort this would be to the sweetest Heart of Jesus.

When the opportunity arises for you to do good for individuals who are illiterate, unable to read, may I suggest that they adopt the practice of placing before their minds each morning one incident from the Passion of Jesus. With that before their minds, let them then direct all of their daily actions with patience, in their struggle against sin. Indeed, anyone who reflects (when being tempted) that by sinning one renews the sufferings of Jesus, the very making of that reflection provides him with an incentive to keep doing good and a help toward overcoming temptation. I know an individual in Campagna who, by governing her life in this manner, spent her days in a holy fashion, recalling one incident from the Passion of the Redeemer as she went about her daily chores, and she rendered herself worthy of the most copious favors of our merciful God. One more thing that I would like to mention as something to be inculcated, especially in the catechetical instructions, is this: whenever passing in front of the Church or an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the faithful should have the practice of removing their hats. What good can come from this practice? Good example - and whoever adopts this religious act will receive merit for performing frequent acts of the theological virtues. In short, let us not cease studying all the means that can be used in leading souls to God and freeing them from the bonds of sin. Thus, we will use up the few days of our lives

58 Rich in mercy.

59 We, therefore, beseech you help your servants etc.

in doing good work for the greater glory of God.

I have written already to Bologna for a printed copy of the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother that I mentioned in a previous letter of mine. I hope that it will soon be sent to me. I realize quite well that the hours during the night are the most difficult ones to fill. But, I am convinced that the Lord will not fail to inspire many persons to make this beautiful sacrifice. Religious individuals, with a generous spirit of zeal, wish to gain merits for heaven and so I am hopeful that you will not fail to find them, especially since this is a question of a difficulty that does not continue on. It will be easy to find those who will take care of a whole hour and you will see that, in practice, everything will turn out successfully.

With regard to Monsignor Annibale, I can tell you that I could never have found elsewhere a friendship that is so consonant with the feelings of my heart and I am truly edified by his virtuous character. He possesses a profound religious spirit and is evermore eager to work for the greater glory of God. I cannot express to you how grateful I am to the Lord for having provided for me at such a crucial time (since I have been separated from Fr. del Sole) this excellent acquaintanceship with Monsignor Annibale. In all truth, I assure you that I am most unworthy of it. At any rate, he will be for me an exemplar in performing good works and mutually we shall support each other in the cultivation of the evangelical field. Meanwhile, continue to recommend me to the Lord who wishes to be served by us with a spirit of joy. Let me know how I can be of help to you in any way whatsoever. Stay well, and with the fullness of esteem, respect and gratitude, I am

Your humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. d. B.

February 27, 1813

P. S. I forgot to say that the thanks you give me for the small picture are simply a result of your goodness of heart etc.

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end of February 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

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

Venerable Monsignor

The intimate union which has been established between us, and the life of the spirit which forms the ring of our reciprocal correspondence, give me the occasion of writing you this present letter, in which, for our stimulation, we shall specify the diligence that we must exert to attain perfection and virtue, and with what zeal we must pursue the loving invitations of grace.

*Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur.*⁶⁰ Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice for they will be satisfied.

Here is the great maxim that we must carve well into our hearts to become saints. Everything in this world is fleeting and passing away; we are made only for eternity, toward which we approach each day, and our sole comfort can be effected by Jesus Crucified alone. Oh what spiritual sweetness inundates our hearts whenever we occupy ourselves in such holy thoughts! What interior joy do we

⁶⁰ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice because they shall be satisfied.

not experience! What a taste of Paradise do we not feel!

*Anni praetereunt, cleri pede labitur aestas
Et vix orta dies, non reditura fugit.*⁶¹

We who yearn to be united forever in Heaven, as we are here on this miserable earth, let us never cease to meditate regularly on the eternal truths, and full of confidence and trust in the most merciful God let us sigh longingly to be quickly possessors of eternal happiness. *Adveniat regnum tuum!*⁶² But it is not enough that we merely have a desire for virtue and perfection in the conduct of our spirit; it is necessary that we have a hunger and thirst for it (so that we can say with the Prophet: *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.*⁶³), and arrive thereby to the goal of our desires with all the merits possible.

*Fulgebunt iusti et tanquam scintillae in arundinetis discurrent.*⁶⁴ The Holy Spirit declares to us very well the will and the facility with which the just walk in the way of virtue when the fire of holy divine love is enkindled in their hearts: ... they will run, he says, like sparks of fire through a cane field; for with that velocity and facility with which the flame runs through a dry cane field, in the same way do the just run through the way of virtue when they are enkindled by the divine fire. St. Ambrose says that when one has a great desire for his own advancement, God is so pleased with this that he enriches him and fills him with good things and graces; and along with this we bear in mind what the most Holy Virgin said in her Canticle: *Esurientes implevit bonis.*⁶⁵ Oh! if all would thus cultivate efficaciously such thoughts, so fitting for our sanctification, as well as useful in pleasing our Good God and in bringing to ourselves that spiritual joy which is the distinctive mark of a soul that belongs entirely to God, that occupies itself in God alone, that seeks only God! *Deus cordis mei et pars mea Deus ... Dominus pars hereditatis meae, etc. etc!*⁶⁶ We read of St. Gertrude that the Lord said to her: "I have given each one a hollow reed of gold with which he can drink in as much as he wants from my heart: and this is good will and good desire."

*Qui edunt me adhuc esuriunt et qui bibunt me adhuc sitiunt,*⁶⁷ says the Holy Spirit. Since the quality of good roots in a tree is born out by the fruit, so also we, by pursuing the good, do not cease to demonstrate to Jesus the hunger and thirst that we have for him. Especially in the great Sacrifice of the Altar and in the Sacramental reception. Oh! how we show openly to our most beloved Redeemer the longings we have and the promptness of spirit by which we live, in as far as it is possible, to imitate his most holy life and constantly do his divine will. Therefore let us exercise ourselves daily in holy Meditation, which is that mystical furnace in which our hearts are inflamed

61 The years pass by, the summer of the cleric slips by, the daylight of man having arisen flees not to return.

62 Thy kingdom come.

63 As the stag longs for the fountains of water, so my soul longs for you, O God.

64 The just shall shine and move about like sparks.

65 He filled the hungry with good things.

66 God of my heart, and God is my part ... the Lord is part of my inheritance, etc., etc.

67 Those who eat me will still hunger and those who drink me will still thirst.

with charity for the Lord; let us read daily some devout book, but especially (since we are talking about Spiritual Reading) the Life of those saints and fervent ecclesiastics who have preceded us on the road of virtue, and who, if they are in many cases admirable, in other cases however, they are imitable. Above all let us drive out of our hearts every vain fear or pusillanimity with which the devil might perhaps want to assail us, and let us fill ourselves with a holy confidence in that God who is rich in mercy, who loves us tenderly and wishes our salvation. Oh how sweet is his law! How different it is from the one which the devil offers that would seek to make it an insupportable burden for us. God knows our misery, God is with us, we possess all in him. *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat; non ego, sed gratia Dei mecum.*⁶⁸

May Jesus be with us: and in his full charity with all respect I am of you, Venerable Monsignor.⁶⁹

Humble, devoted and obliged servant

G. C. d. B.

P. S. We must make another pact between us, and that is, to offer a particular memento in case of the death of either one of us, etc.

42

February-March 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

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

Venerable Monsignor

Jesus Christ justly reproached the Pharisees since all of their sanctity was based on exterior conduct, not caring at all about the interior purity of spirit which is the essential foundation upon which to erect the mystical building of virtue. We who, by divine mercy, are well instructed in the spirit of our Religion know that it is an indispensable duty of every Christian, and more so of an ecclesiastic, to join the exterior also to the interior purity, not disengaging one from the other. *Beatus vir cui non imputavit Dominus peccatum, nec est in spiritu eius dolor ... ; in omnibus teipsum praebe exemplum bonorum operum.*⁷⁰ Since at other times we have made holy reflections on the sanctity of our hearts, let us do so also now in order to become even more enthusiastic in the holy divine service; let us try to consider the marvellous efficacy of good example, which, as a fruit produced by a good root, causes others to enjoy the sweetness of the holy divine law and excites them to a more faithful observance of it. Whoever occupies himself frequently in thoughts such as these will surely derive a constantly new vigor in the exercise of virtuous deeds and call down upon himself the broadest blessings of the most merciful God.

Let us then proceed to a development of this interesting theme, and briefly single out its

⁶⁸ I can do all things in him who strengthens me; but not I, but the grace of God in me.

⁶⁹ In an annotation put there by Ginnasi, we read: "This letter must have been written from the prison at Imola at the end of February of 1813".

⁷⁰ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin, nor is there sorrow in his spirit ... in all things present yourself as an example of good works.

excellence and value.

If good example were not exceedingly necessary to lead souls to God, I would not know how to see, says a great Servant of God, Father Segneri the elder, how the Lord could make so much of it from the very beginning, when he founded his Church.

Everybody knows what two means were used in the defeating of idolatry: preaching and miracles. God willed that these two means be placed at the disposal of persons who were not only good in their personal lives, but most exemplary, as though without this they would not have had sufficient power to move anyone with their preaching nor convince anyone by their miracles. Having established this fact, one can well understand the reasons why the Apostle recommended so often an exemplary conduct of life: *providentes bona non tantum coram Deo, sed etiam coram hominibus*⁷¹ (Rom. 12, 17), and why Jesus never stops repeating those divine words: *Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus ut videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in Coelis est.*⁷²

*Vos estis lux mundi, vos estis sal terrae; non potest civitas abscondi supra montem posita, neque accendunt lucernam et ponunt eam sub modio, sed super candelabrum, ut luceat omnibus qui in domo sunt.*⁷³ You, my ministers, (says Jesus) in a special way must be the light of the world with the sanctity of your life, the salt of the earth with the wisdom of your teaching. Remember that you form that mystical City visible to all because it is founded not indeed on the level of any one virtue alone, but on the structure of the symbolical mountain of ecclesiastical perfection. Your practices and your deeds must be resplendent in my Church like burning lamps; and if in your zeal for my glory and for the fulfilment of my precepts you so conduct yourselves that the deeds confirm the words, you will come to the point of not only persuading souls of what they must do for eternal salvation, but even convincing them that they can be joyfully successful in the very undertaking. Your life will serve as a norm for them, and you will be the practical teachers of virtue and evangelical perfection. *In omnibus teipsum praebe exemplum bonorum operum.*⁷⁴ (Tit. 2-3).

Here let us recall to memory, most venerable Monsignor, what we read of Naaman the Syrian. He, by what he did in immersing himself in the Jordan, leper that he was, became cleansed and healed: *Restituta est caro eius sicut caro parvuli.*⁷⁵ (4 Kings, 5). Astounded by this sublime miracle, he made his way back to look for Eliseus at whose command he had immersed himself into those waters, and he professed that certainly there was no other God in the world than the God of Israel. So? Overwhelmed by this astounding work done by the true God, was he disposed at that very moment to welcome him to adore him, to reject all idolatry? Not quite yet. He stood there for a short while in suspenseful thought. Then, after a bit of time, seeing that Eliseus, with a very constant

71 Foreseeing good things not only before God, but also before men.

72 Just so, your light must shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

73 You are the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth; a city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but they set it on a lamp stand, so that it gives light to all who are in the house.

74 In everything show yourself an example of good works.

75 His flesh was restored like the flesh of a child.

spirit, refused roundly to accept any of the sumptuous, splendid gifts that were offered by the servants and laid at his feet, he could no longer contain himself. At that moment, submitting his will as well as his intellect to faith, he swore to the prophet that he no longer wanted to have anything to do with victims offered to other gods, but only to the God of Palestine. *Non faciet ultra servus tuus holocaustum aut victimam diis alienis, nisi Domino.*⁷⁶ Consequently, filled with reverence toward Eliseus, he asked him to please allow him to bring back with him, upon his return to his homeland and for his own devotion, two loads not of that miraculous water that had restored his health, but, indeed, two loads of the ground that was fortunate enough to have been trod upon by men of virtue so unheard of elsewhere. *Obsecro concede mihi servo tuo ut tollam onus duorum burdonum, that is, iumentorum, de terra.*⁷⁷ Thus, good example is worth more than miracles themselves in ultimately subjecting to God one's own will, the last thing to allow itself to be conquered.

This is that battering and shaking of wings of those animals that the prophet Ezechiel saw: *et audivi voces alarum animalium percutientium alteram ad alteram*⁷⁸ (Ez 3 - 13), that is, at a time when good example moves another's heart to compunction, to devotion, to a desire for virtue. St. Bernard (Ser. 34 sup. Cant.) confesses that he himself, at the beginning of his religious commitment, was impressed, only by watching the actions of other spiritual and edifying religious, to such an extent that his soul became filled with gentleness and devotion, his eyes filled with soft tears. Not only by watching them, but also just calling back to mind one or the other of those men that he had gotten to know, whether absent or deceased.

Sacred Scripture gives to King Josiah the following praise: *Memoria Iosiae in compositionem odoris, facta opus pigmentarii*⁷⁹ (Eccl. 49-I). The remembrance of Josiah will be something altogether mystically fragrant and sweet smelling and will serve as a consoling and comforting thing. That is what we must make an effort to be towards others, in keeping with that saying of St. Paul: *Christi bonus odor sumus.*⁸⁰

In Deuteronomy, God commanded the captains on their way to war to keep an eye on those in the army and check to see whether any one of them showed himself to be timid or cowardly, and if so, he should return home. *Quis est homo formidolosus et corde pavido? Vadat et revertatur in domum suam (c. 20 - 8) ne pavere faciat corda fratrum suorum, sicut ipse timore perterritus est.*⁸¹ Thus, others will not be made cowards or be led to be fearful and pusillanimous. Let us make an application of this to our own situation. Let us always live with the firm resolution to communicate to our neighbor the fire of divine love by leading a temperate life and one acceptable in the eyes of

76 Furthermore your servant shall not offer a holocaust or a victim to strange gods, but only to the Lord.

77 I beseech you grant me your servant that I remove the burden of two mules [that is] beasts of burden, from the land.

78 And I heard the sound of wings of living creatures striking one another.

79 The Memory of Josiah became a work of a seller of unguents for the making of perfume.

80 We are the good odor of Jesus Christ.

81 Who is man exciting fear and with fearful heart? Let him go and return to his house; let not the hearts of his brothers be afraid, as he himself is terrified with fear.

God and of his people. *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?*⁸²

It seems to me that Holy Mother Church approaches each priest saying to him what the mother of the Machabees formerly said to her youngest son while encouraging him to suffer: *Fili mi, miserere mei quae te in utero novem mensibus portavi, et lac triennio dedi, et alui, et in aetatem istam perduxi*⁸³ (2 Mac. 7). My son, have mercy on me who have carried you in my womb not only nine months, but through the entire time of your clerical status, and I have brought you up and nourished you in virtue and letters, until you were constituted in the state in which you find yourself. And what do I ask of you for all this? I ask you to have mercy on me so that the spiritual weapons with which I have armed you for your own good and your own use, as well as for your neighbor's, be not turned against me by you, nor against yourself, comporting yourself in such a way that what should serve as an occasion or means of being more grateful, more humble and more mortified, be for you, by your own guilt, an occasion of being more unmortified, more liberal, more proud. *Fili mi, miserere mei.*⁸⁴

Therefore, let us walk along the road of perfection, according to the rules that accompany our state of life; and with the Crucifix ever before our eyes, let us repeat continuously: *mihi autem absit gloriari nisi in Cruce Domini nostri J.X.*,⁸⁵ for the time will come when, blessed by God, we will be placed on the high throne of glory in the blessed Jerusalem. Amen

I am in the meantime with all respect⁸⁶

S. U. S.

G. C. del Bufalo

43

February-March, 1813

Msgr. Annibale Ginnasi

Imola

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

Venerable Monsignor

This matter of our advancement in perfection surely does not consist in doing great things, but rather in fulfilling the will of the Lord and becoming sanctified along the path through which he is pleased to lead us. So, what is most important to our being successful in this great undertaking is the exact execution of those ordinary and common daily actions which God wants us to do in the state of life in which he, in his loving kindness, has placed us. In my opinion, this constitutes the

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

83 My son, have pity on me, who carried you in my womb for nine months, nursed you for three years, brought you up and brought you to your present age.

84 My son, have pity on me.

85 Be it far from me, however, to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

86 An annotation of Ginnasi says: "The same as the preceding letter (February 1813 - Lett. n. 13), that is, from the Prison at Imola." Therefore, it belongs around February or March of 1813.

very essence of a holy and virtuous life. Upon this does advancement in goodness depend; upon this the more copious bestowal of God's blessings. A fortress that is under constant attack needs to be kept well-armed with the necessary means so as to be able to offset the enemy's strength. A soul that is always engaged in warfare against the powers of hell must never be left unguarded, but rather be continually on the defensive so as always to sing the song of victory. Let us pause briefly to consider this idea and, since the necessity for our leading a methodical and virtuous life is very evident, let us now recall those means that are conducive to achieving it with perfection and in concordance with God's good pleasure.

The first of the means suggested by the saints as a most effective way to attain the desired result is to revive our faith in the presence of God. Seneca said that any person who desires to be virtuous and to do things well must imagine that he has before him a person whom he greatly venerates. Perhaps this would be enough for doing things well, but, how much more efficacious would that means be if we walked in the presence of God? Especially is this true since this is not a mere imagining as Seneca asserts but an unshakeable teaching of our faith. And oh what a great consolation it is for us to reflect that no matter where we may be, we are with God. This is the same thing as saying that we are with our one and only Good, with the object of our delights, with the only one who can satisfy our heart's desires. *Deus meus et omnia.*⁸⁷ The saints, meditating on this, were not able to hold back their tears and, overwhelmed with joy, they never ceased to bless and praise the all-merciful God. So, when dwelling on the words: *oportet semper orare et non deficere,*⁸⁸ they were wont to say that the person who is engaged in doing good works is one who is praying at all times. St. Augustine, commenting on the words of the Psalmist: *tota die laudem tuam*⁸⁹ says: Do you want a way in which you can spend the entire day praising God? *Quidquid egeris, bene age, et laudasti Deum.*⁹⁰ Thus, if a servant makes the effort of showing his master that he is diligent in serving him, in pleasing him, in demonstrating his abilities, this is already a strong plea for greater affection, greater favors, and greater rewards from his master. We follow the same argumentation when speaking of our own spiritual conduct: let us imitate the faithful servant. We must remember that our heavenly master is watching us at all times and knows very well how to reward one who is deserving of it: "*Qui conservat legem, multiplicat orationem*"⁹¹ (Eccl 35); "*sacrificium salutare est attendere mandatis, et discedere ab omni iniquitate;*"⁹² and again, "*Jam non dicam vos servos sed amicos.*"⁹³ The Lord wants us to serve him perfectly, not only because he is present to us as master, but also because he is present to us as friend. He expects from us definite proof of our true love of

87 My God and all.

88 It is necessary to pray always and not to grow weary.

89 All day your praise.

90 Whatever you do, do it well, and you will have praised God.

91 Those who keep the law multiply prayer.

92 A saving sacrifice is to observe the commandments, and to depart from every iniquity.

93 I shall no longer call you servants but friends.

him. Finally, he is present to us as father and wishes us to love him with filial love: "*Fili, praebe mi cor tuum, ecce cor meum.*"⁹⁴ What a difference there is (generally speaking) in the love of a servant, the love of a friend and the love for one's child. Oh what thoughts are these that re-animate our spirits in such a way that they are to be completely inflamed by the exercise of that beautiful virtue of charity! What an anticipated heaven do we not experience in being intent on working for the greater glory of God. What unspeakable joy! What a calming peace! *Deus meus et omnia ... oculi mei semper ad Dominum!*⁹⁵

The second means for doing well the deeds and work of our state in life is to do each thing as though it were the only thing left for us to do. The devil, implacable enemy of our advancement and our eternal salvation, though unsuccessful in getting us to fall into sin, is nevertheless clever enough to get us to be languid in the practice of virtue, supplying us with a thousand different distractions and disturbances. Therefore, let us avoid those diabolical subtleties and deal with our infernal enemy with great courage. Let us always keep etched in our minds that beautiful principle of Fr. Avila. "When a thought suddenly comes to your mind at the wrong time, simply say: My Lord does not order me in any way with regard to this, and so I need not think about it; when my Lord does command it, then I will consider it". In that way, we will remain firm in our decision.

The third means is found in those beautiful words of St. Bernard: "*In omni opere tuo, dicas tibi ipsi: si modo moriturus esses faceres istud?*"⁹⁶ What a great counsellor is the thought of death. Monsignor, pray for me so that I will become truly holy and with you reach Paradise. Amen.

Meanwhile, with the fullness of esteem, I am

Y. h. s.

G. C. d. B.

44

March 4, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

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

Esteemed Countess

I cannot find adequate words to express to you the joy of learning from your most appreciated letter that on this very day the great novena to my St. Francis Xavier begins in the church of S. Agatha; in your own mind you can certainly imagine what that is. In divine mercy, I trust that this devotion which is so pleasing to the Lord will bring great fruits to souls and especially to the person who is its Promotor. As for me, I was completely surprised by this news and I deserve no credit for it ... May God bless the one who has been so concerned in bringing glory to a saint who was so zealous for the sanctification of the holy Name and even more so may that person be abundantly blessed with ineffable gifts. I can almost figure out who might have been the one who promoted this good work. I am quite delighted only that the good work is being done without my

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

95 My God and all ... my eyes always on the Lord.

96 In all your work say to yourself: if you were about to die this moment, would you do that?

having to express gratitude to its author. Anyone who is engaged in promoting the greater glory of God should be praiseworthy interested in that alone and, in a holy fashion, disregard the vain, mundane words of praise, having nothing else in view than what is pleasing to Almighty God. Oh how our souls find comfort in the exercise of virtue and of what great undertakings is the heart capable that is dedicated solely to God! ... The favors that might be asked for during this novena are the following. The first pertains to the welfare of the universal Church, asking the most merciful God to make it triumphant. The second regards your own greater growth in sanctity, that is, asking the Lord through the intercession of Xavier, for a fullness and magnanimity of spirit to achieve perfection, to procure the salvation of souls to the degree granted to you, and to overcome all the obstacles that you encounter in the execution of good works. Pray, therefore, for any other of your needs or those of others. Especially, pray for the ability to recognize and carry out always the divine will which is at the heart of all evangelical legislation.

During this holy period, be mindful of me, a miserable sinner and an unworthy minister of the most high God. In addition to our spiritual pacts, add special supplications to our great God for my poor soul. Like St. Augustine, I want to suffer anything here on this earth with God's help so as to attain salvation: *Hic ure, hic seca, hic nihil mihi parcas, ut in aeternum parcas.*⁹⁷ I ardently desire to consume my life in true contrition for my sins in the continuous exercise of God's holy love. I wish to know what God wants of me so that I can industriously apply myself to carrying it out. Knowing full well that on this earth we can expect only tribulations and woes, it will be for me a clear testimony of God's most loving and special protective care over my very self when I see myself led along this road to heaven. Oh how wonderfully does our faith encourage our spirits and how sweet it is to serve God! If I remember correctly, St. Augustine compares the divine law to the wings of a bird and then comments how we must grow to love it more and more. If you were to take away a bird's wings, it would seem that the bird ought to be lighter and more agile. But, the exact opposite is indeed the case, since by restoring this gentle burden to the bird, it regains its ability for swift flight: *redeat onus, et volabit.*⁹⁸ Let us apply this idea to ourselves and let us make use of this thought in arousing in our fellow creatures a horror for sin. In fact, sin is that monstrous thing that weighs heavily upon us and disquiets us. But, the most holy law of Jesus is that blessed wing which lifts us upward to Paradise.

Right now, I can say no more to you in this letter; but be assured that I shall not fail to do for you always whatever I can through my letters until my death. Pray to the Lord that he will inspire me in doing what is most beneficial and useful for you in doing good works for souls. At the present time, I am still reading Prola and when I return this small book to you, I shall be pleased to get the other volumes written by this pious author. Yesterday, you were perfectly correct in not working more; I was afraid that you perhaps were exhausted. I, too, am feeling this new transferal to the Rocca; but, in any case, I am quite content. This will not interrupt our exchange of letters. And since I am not acquainted with that locale, I will give further information by letter. I regret that up to this time, I do not have the freedom that I would like to have, since we are confined four to a room. But, patience; the Lord will take care of everything.

I thank you for the image of Liguori which I hope will be of consolation to the sick person. I

97 Burn here, cut here, you spare me nothing here, that you may spare me in eternity.

98 Let the burden return, and it will move rapidly.

beg you to take care of your health for God's greater glory. With the fullness of esteem and respect, I am, at the foot of the Cross.

Y. H. S.

G. C. d. B.

Give my regards to Monsignor Annibale.

45

March, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Madame Countess

Presently I have received from Bologna the printed leaflets for the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother. I assume the task of enclosing them herein so that you can now proceed to make proper use of them. It would be a good idea to propagate it in as many cities as you can and, in sending out copies of these leaflets, send along written instructions as to how this devotion that is so pleasing to the most holy Virgin is to be observed. Oh how delightful is this company of people to our Mother Mary and how greatly she will reward you for your efforts! You will please excuse me for writing in such a hurry, but I am anxious for you to receive these few lines quickly. Meanwhile, with the fullness of esteem and respect. I wish to be remembered as

Your humble servant

G. C. d. B.

P. S. Pray for several intentions and give my best wishes to Monsignor Annibale and all the others. One must make haste because the time is limited.

46

February-April, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

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

Esteemed Countess

The life of people on this earth is a continuous war and a continuous struggle: *militia est vita hominis super terram*.⁹⁹ Still, one must not at all lose heart nor spirit since the most merciful God does not fail to be propitiously helpful and to watch over us with a very special fatherly love. The souls that are dearest to him, his favorite daughters, are those who especially sustain the battles raised by the enemy, just as in an army camp the most valiant soldiers are those who display the greatest bravery. A ship, laden with precious cargo, is much more subject to piratical greed; a soul that is hurrying toward the heights of perfection like a swift stag is more besieged by the infernal predator. Indeed, how deceived are those doers of good who, bewildered by trials, encourage the one who is assailing them. Instead of showing themselves to be vigorous and intrepid, they display timidity and weakness of soul. Oh let us revive our faith and let us reflect that our Leader, under whose banner we fight, is Jesus our Redeemer and Teacher. Let us observe how he brings comfort,

⁹⁹ The life of man on earth is a warfare.

how he gives us courage and how he supplies us with the armament that equips us for a triumphant victory over the devil. So, of whom should we be fearful, of whom be worried or be afraid? Oh martyrs of the early Church, oh holy hermits and champions of our faith, deign to obtain for us that enlightenment that is necessary for understanding ... something that our great God wants us to have, just as you showed in facing all those diabolical attacks.

In the Holy Scriptures, he asserts that he only permits us to be tempted in order to allow us the opportunity for gaining merits for heaven. Furthermore, that it is not possible for him to abandon anyone who confides in him, who loves him tenderly or who is in concordance with the desires of his most gentle heart. Yes. What wrong one does against God by being immoderately fearful of Lucifer's assaults. We are fragile, weak reeds, that is true; but, the powerful right arm of the Omnipotent God makes us become robust plants with the power to gallantly resist the complete fury of the winds. The whole Gospel message and the life of our Lord inspires us to have nothing other than Christian confidence, generosity of heart and magnanimity of soul.

Therefore, you can see that all those things that are opposite and which disturb the imagination are nothing but diabolical annoyances over which we must be victorious. The Psalmist cries out: *Servite Domino in laetitia exultate justi in Domino, rectos decet collaudatio.*¹⁰⁰ Let us remember these truths and we will see clearly that anything that opposes those teachings comes only from the enemy of our souls. God is infallible truth; it is impossible for him to contradict himself. Sadness and confusion is proper to one whose soul is burdened with sin, but not to one who enjoys the avowal of a clean conscience. If in the past, we have offended the Lord, it is he who first repeated those beautiful words: *cor contritum et humiliatum Deus non despicias,*¹⁰¹; he is the one who first lovingly extended his arms out to us and invited us to find rest in his sweetest Heart. With his merciful help, we have responded. So, what more can we expect if not the most exquisite touches of his ineffable love? *Charitate perpetua dilexi te; ideo attraxi te miserans, etc.*¹⁰²

Oh soul, do you need to have any more certain proofs of my love other than those that you continuously receive along with so many interior graces? With so many opportunities to grow in holiness? With so many visits that I have with you at the Eucharistic table? These favors which you receive willingly, which you cherish in your heart, I want you to know, are the way to even greater gifts, to greater blessings, to a greater experience of the sweetness of my ineffable clemency! Established in grace, you are the object of my delight: *vulnerasti cor meum,*¹⁰³ you are more beautiful than the sun, whiter than snow, and oh how I long to enrich you even more by readying you for the heavenly Jerusalem! Are these not most effective reasons for filling you with a magnanimous fortitude so that you do not fear too greatly the attacks that the threefold enemy continually wages against you?

Oh soul, so highly blessed by me, (the Lord continues to speak) remember that I am with you in your struggles against Lucifer; and still you wish to remain in a state of fatal discouragement as

100 Serve the Lord in joy; exult, you just, in the Lord, strong praise is becoming the upright.

101 A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not despise.

102 I have loved with an everlasting love; therefore, taking pity, I have drawn you, etc.

103 You have wounded my heart.

though you did not have sufficient trust in your heavenly Father, your Benefactor, your God? It is true that the Hebrew people had to wander for a long time to reach the promised land. But, were they lacking in the necessary means to accomplish it? Did they not fight against their enemies and see continuous miraculous things happen in their favor?

And, oh soul, do you not still have that mystical column of cloud and fire which strikes terror in Lucifer and which directs you through the darkness of this miserable world, that is to say, the Crucified Lord? Do you not have that heavenly manna, the bread of angels, the sacrament of love, which gives you strength to combat and to elude the devil's trickery? Do you not have those mystical trumpets of Jericho which levelled that city to the ground, that is to say, do you not have all the means that our faith provides for us in bringing down those walls, namely, those obstacles that the demon sets up on the way to our salvation? St. Francis de Sales said that "temptations of any kind at all disturb us because we think about them and fear them too much. We are too sensitive so that just as quickly as we have the least contrary thought to our resoluteness, it appears that the whole structure is going to collapse. Let us allow the winds to blow and let us not think that the fluttering of leaves is the sound of weaponry."

The resolution (de Sales continues) to not give in to any sin, even the smallest one, assures us that we are in the grace of God ... ; and it is right to hold for certain that all those thoughts that disquiet us are not from God, who is the prince of peace". In short, that abhorrence and that nausea that one experiences at the presence of those infernal suggestions is nothing other than the effect of the grace that is at work in our hearts, to which we submit with docility. Let us listen to what that great master of spirituality, Fr. Granata, says: "The devil will put into your heart perverse and abominable thoughts; but, do not pay any heed to them; quickly close the eyes of your soul and do not look at them; they are more effectively conquered by disregarding them than by making anything of them. Do not ever give room for the evil one to upset you". And, de Sales adds: "Do not at all allow yourself to reason with the devil and he will soon tire of shouting and will leave you in peace; do not get involved in fighting temptation with dialogue or argument, but simply turn your heart to Jesus. It is a very good sign when the devil starts rapping sharply and raging fiercely at the door, for it indicates that he is not attaining what he would like... As long as the temptation is displeasing to us, there is nothing to fear, for that displeasure is there because we do not wish to sin".

Each one should conduct himself with the devil as he would with a maniac, paying no attention to him. He is like a mastiff who can bark indeed, but cannot bite except the one who is willing to place himself in his power. St. Jerome, with reference to the words that the devil addressed to Christ ("throw thyself down") when he was taken to the pinnacle of the temple, tempting him by trying to convince him to throw himself down, says: That is the devil's word, for he would like everyone to throw themselves and plunge downwards. Still, *persuadere potest, praecipitare non potest*.¹⁰⁴ He can, indeed, urge us but he is unable to bring us to ruin without our willing it. Therefore, please note, says St. Bernard, how really weak our enemy is who can only win over a soul who wills to be conquered: *Videte, fratres, quam debilis est hostis noster, qui non vincit nisi volentem*.¹⁰⁵

So, is it not confusion of mind to be overly fearful of the devil's insidiousness? When our

¹⁰⁴ It is possible to persuade, it is not possible to cast down.

¹⁰⁵ See, brothers, how weak is our enemy, who conquers no one except the willing.

will is determined to love God, to confide in him, can it not then repeat with Paul: *Quis me separabit a charitate Christi, etc.*¹⁰⁶ And, oh what great rewards are reserved in heaven after we have achieved a full victory over our common tempter: *Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem, quoniam cum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitae.*¹⁰⁷ At that time we will know quite a bit better the great good that the Lord has done for us in testing us in the fires of tribulation. We can then do no more than bless the moments of our lives in which we have fought bravely.

Courage, then, and let us imitate the bravery of David against the giant; let us not allow ourselves to be defeated by Lucifer because of exaggerated fear; let us be prepared for battle with just a few stones, that is, the virtues that are opposed to the devil's allurements; let us use then with dauntlessness of spirit and we shall attain that longed-for goal of rest, one day, in the kingdom of Paradise. Amen. Meanwhile, I remain

Your humble servant

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February-April, 1813

Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

Imola

Madame Countess

In a hurry, I am sending you these few lines to thank you a lot for the inconveniences that you have undergone for all of us and please be kind enough to share these sentiments of mine and my companions with Count Alessandro because all, along with me, have been the beneficiaries of so many acts of charity. However, I beg you not to trouble yourself so much, for it truly is too much. Your reward is already stored in heaven, and so I say nothing further.

I was really pleased to receive the two beautifully done images of Jesus and Mary which you were kind enough to send me yesterday and I simply cannot express it in words, but you in your own mind can imagine it. I am infinitely obliged to you, and please do not go to any further bother.

I thank God for all that you communicate to me in your letter and with the Prophet I repeat: "*Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.*"¹⁰⁸ May the Lord be blessed in all things.

I shall read with pleasure the life of Rodriguez and pray always to my Savior Jesus to be gracious and grant me eternal salvation and the lot of the just in Paradise. I am in need of spiritual help and I hope that you will keep me in mind. Recommend me also to the prayers of anyone else among your acquaintances who is engaged in doing good works. My sins are many and my obligations to God are infinite. Let us be of help to each other and may divine mercy be such as to enable us always to be united in blessed Sion. Amen.

Tomorrow, if I have the time, I hope to write to Monsignor Annibale, to whom you will please give my special greetings. In the meantime, at the foot of the Cross, I am

Your humble servant

G. C. d. B.

106 Who will separate me from the love of Christ, etc.?

107 Blessed the man who endures temptation, because when he has been tested he will receive the crown of life.

108 Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory.

February-April, 1813
 Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi
 Imola

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

"The work of gaining souls for God is of great merit; everyone, according to their state in life, must be interested in doing this work of such immense value."

The work of attending to the salvation of souls is so exalted and sublime that, because of this, the Son of God came down from heaven and became man: *Propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem etc.*¹⁰⁹ He does not want the death of the sinner but ardently longs that he be converted and live. Therefore, do not leave untried the many means for mercy; continuously go in search of souls, for that is the objective of your loving solicitude. Oh how ineffable is divine clemency! ... we got lost in trying to contemplate all of its operations! ... *miserationes eius super omnia opera eius.*¹¹⁰ Thus, anyone who undertakes this work of great importance, is he not one who is truly doing the highest act and the thing that is most pleasing to God of all the things possible for people to do in this life? St. John Chrysostom says: "that in converting just one soul, one does more than giving all one's possessions to the poor", and that this surpasses in worth all the riches of King Solomon. St. John the Apostle tells us how dear to God it is for one to devote himself to winning back souls, or better said, how the Savior himself declares in words referring to himself: *propterea me diligit Pater, quia ego pono animam meam ut iterum sumam eam.*¹¹¹

For this reason does the Father love me, that I lay down my life for people, so as to take it up again by rising from the dead, that they too might rise and live with me for all eternity. Here, the saints comment that he did not say, as he well could have done: the Father loves me because from the beginning he created all things for me; but, he says that because of this did the Father love me, that I laid down my life for the salvation of souls. He says this in order that we might know that there is no work that is more acceptable and more pleasing to God than that, in fact, if a loving father were to see a son, already astray down the path of iniquity, brought back into his arms, would this not be an act that would fill him with joy? Oh holy faith, enlighten our minds to understand well so great a truth! ... Jesus is that loving father who, scorned and insulted, withstands the vilest things that this miserable world can offer. Oh how many sons have rebelled against him and, like Absalom to David, have waged the bitterest battles against him! Let us hear how he, in the Scriptures, laments those insults: *Popule meus, quid feci tibi, aut in quo contristavi te?*¹¹² What have I done that I should be so maltreated by people ... is it possible that they could be so ungrateful of my love? Rather than complying with the one who is seeking their well-being, do they choose to remain shackled by the

109 For us men and for our salvation, etc.

110 His compassion is over all his works.

111 Wherefore the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

112 My people, what have I done to you, or in what have I grieved you?

chains of their chief enemy? Oh you souls who are still faithful to me, at least you should be interested in procuring glory for me, defending my honor, satisfying my desires. With resolve remove from the jaws of the demon the person who has been redeemed at the price of living blood; and, since you are aware of the malice of sin and the hurt it causes me, arm yourselves with holy zeal to prevent it and to remove it insofar as it is possible. I am saddened to see so many fall into ruin, for I would want them to share in my mercy and I am continuously at work, drawing them away from evil. For a single soul alone I would have done all that I did for everyone; and from everything that I suffered, you can see the value of a single soul! Hence, if a sinner will return to me repentant, oh what a feast there will be in heaven where I shall invite the seraphim to rejoice with me: *Congratulamini mihi*¹¹³ (as though it were God's gain and not that of the soul regaining grace) ... *gaudium erit in coelo super uno peccatore poenitentiam agente, etc.*¹¹⁴

I pray wholeheartedly to the Lord that you, Countess, and all good people will take these truths fully to heart. I am convinced that you will always continue zealously to procure the glory of God by counselling, admonishing, instructing and using every other means that the Father of lights, the Giver of every good gift, will suggest to you. If we were to have before our eyes, for example, an image of Jesus Crucified, would we not burn with zeal and with holy disdain against anyone who might be a sacrilegious profaner? Well, the one who sins, in his own way, renews for Jesus his sorrowful passion. Whoever is duly aware of the love that Jesus has for us cannot help but burn with zeal to prevent such an evil and be revolted by such an insult, so that he cannot help but say: Tell me, if you were to see Jesus the Nazorean right here before you and you were ordered to crown him, innocent though he may be, with thorns, to give him gall to drink, to crucify him, would you have the heart to do all that? Oh, the very thought of it horrifies you. And yet, it is you who, with so many sins of thought, torture and crown with thorns our only true Good; you, who with language improper for a Christian, give vinegar and gall as a drink to your very Savior; and with so many evil acts, you pound the nails into his innocent flesh. ... Oh, if only all people would keep etched in their minds this great picture, how profusely they would shed ardent tears for their sins and how careful they would be to avoid them!

Therefore, let us conclude: the work of gaining souls for God is the most acceptable work to God himself; and, whoever does that can expect to receive the most bountiful blessings.

So, everyone should be interested in doing so great a good. I know that the devil, the enemy of our salvation and God's greater glory, tries with vain thoughts to discourage anyone who undertakes this work. But, realizing that this temptation is opposed to the Gospel teaching will be enough to combat it with magnanimity of spirit and bring home a victory. What, indeed, does the Lord say? *Unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo ... rdiliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum.*¹¹⁵ Now, to this evangelical truth, all, in keeping with their state in life, must give their attention not only by good example and prayer, but also by giving Christian admonitions and helpful instruction.

I know very well that it is not the ministry of all to preach from the pulpit. But, I also know that everyone can preach privately, that is, by giving good advice and suggesting basic principles

113 Rejoice with me.

114 There will be joy in heaven over one sinner repenting, etc.

115 God commanded everyone concerning his neighbor; you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

that can move human hearts toward sanctity. Oh how often does the expressing a good thought by any person, even though not a priest, act like a sharp dart that penetrates deeply into the minds of our neighbors! The saints, in speaking of their daily deeds, remind us of these truths. We, in emulation of their example, must do everything to conquer the devil and bring back souls as the conquest of our most merciful God. Oh, my Jesus, fill me with your holy love and cause this mystical flame not only to consume my imperfections and defects but also to spread and be effective in the souls of my neighbors whom you so wish to see reformed.

Countess, be brave and trusting and always show great generosity of heart in the divine mercy. God is with you, he loves your soul dearly and he wishes you to be sanctified by that way of life which must always form your delight, that is to say, the acts of charity shown in converting others to the right path, supporting them with good works, instructing them to the best of your ability in the way of the Lord. In short, he is offering to you the opportunities to acquire a glorious crown for all eternity. St. Francis de Sales says to you that God has not abandoned you up to now - and how can he abandon you now when he wishes you to be his even more? Indeed, he is delighted to see you respond to the stimulus of his grace and, one day, will place you in the fortunate possession of the celestial Jerusalem. Amen.

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February-April, 1813
Countess Lucrezia Ginnasi

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

Esteemed Countess

The time of human life is that precious time during which we must lay up treasures for heaven and accumulate merits for that happy sojourn. Everything calls us to God and we were created only for him and the fulfilment of his divine will. St. Teresa says: "The person who seeks only the happiness of his/her beloved is content with everything that delights the beloved. Love has this power when it is perfect. It causes one to be forgetful of anything that would be of personal advantage or satisfaction and makes one turn one's thoughts completely to giving delight to the beloved one, seeking every means of loving and having others love the beloved."

Consequently, let us enkindle within ourselves a holy zeal to please our most lovable Lord who continues to repeat: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?*¹¹⁶ Oh my children, what more do I ask of you than your love? Can you deny me that? Oh the monstrous ingratitude of people who refuse to love the only, the true, the highest good, the object of true delights, the very essence of love and the only one who can bring satisfaction to our hearts! So, let us fill our hearts with that holy zeal that consumed the royal Prophet David and with him let us frequently repeat: *Zelus domus tuae comedit me.*¹¹⁷

This zeal for souls is a spark of God's love; it is a desire that is so enkindled and inflamed that it would have everyone love, honor and serve God. And whoever possesses it would like to communicate this mystical flame to all and to the extent that it lies within him/her, make every effort

¹¹⁶ I have come to cast fire on the earth, and what to I wish but that it be blazing.

¹¹⁷ The zeal of your house has eaten me up.

to succeed in accomplishing this. Then when a person sees that God is offended and insulted irremediably, he/she sighs and weeps as, that celestial, divine fire mystically consumes him/her: *Zelus domus tuae comedit me.*

Great was the zeal that was possessed by those saints and great friends of God such as Jeremiah and Elijah - and so proportionate to each one's state in life should our zeal be. We must be interested in procuring the greater glory of the Lord; we must rejoice in seeing his most holy Name glorified by many fervent souls; we must study all the means for correcting anything that is contrary to his honor; in short, we must become all things to all people in order to save all for Christ. *Quis infirmatur, et ego non infirmor?*¹¹⁸ the Apostle asks, *Quis scandalizatur, et ego non uror?*¹¹⁹

Charity does not lie down inactive; it is a flame that never lies still. The love of God, says Fr. Segneri Jr., is a thief that easily takes everything from us so that we are left only with the possession of God. That is what constitutes sanctity and the perfection of the soul, that is to say, to be totally intent on serving God. And, since zeal extends itself toward every type of individual, I shall now, point out a few ideas of the saints that can be used on occasions when dealing with our neighbors

"The Sick"

Oh what a beautiful and charitable act it is to visit the sick whenever one can! It is helpful to encourage them to accept suffering by suggesting the ideas that follow.

St. Francis de Sales says that God is lovable when he consoles us as when he sends us tribulations.

Fr. Alvarez used to repeat: "Whoever is peacefully resigned to the divine will in the face of trials runs toward God with the speed of the mail deliveries".

St. Vincent de Paul adds that "conformity to the will of God is a Christian's treasure, the remedy for all evils, since it contains abnegation of self, union with God and all the virtues."

Fr. Avila, the teacher, while suffering the harshest pain from the sickness that afflicted him, would say: "Lord, handle me like a blacksmith: with one hand, hold me firmly and with the other, pound on me".

The Lord said to St. Teresa: "My daughter, realize that the one who is loved most by my Father will receive from his hand greater trials, and his love corresponds with them. The love of God (St. Teresa continues to say) does not consist in the gift of tears, in delights or in tender, devout feelings, but rather in serving God in justice and in truth, suffering for God with humility and fortitude".

St. Jerome says that a holy love is not impatient.

One day St. Gertrude asked the Lord what she could offer him that would be most pleasing, and he answered her: "My daughter, you can do nothing more gratifying than to suffer patiently all of the trials that are given to you".

"Those who are greatly fearful of death"

In a letter to a gentleman, St. Francis de Sales writes as follows: "Anyone who has a true

118 Who is weak and I am not weak.

119 Who is led to sin and I am not indignant?

desire to serve our Lord and to flee from sin should not in any way disturb himself by the thought of death, nor God's judgment, because, even though one ought to be fearful of both of them, that fear, however, must not be so terrifying that it destroys the vigor of the spirit; rather, it ought to be a fear that is somewhat mingled with confidence in the kindness of God which thereby softens it".

These principles are to be developed and applied according to the situation of the sick persons and especially should they be comforted by viewing the Crucifix and by the trusting thought of God's mercy. They are to be urged to repentance for their faults and to receive the holy sacraments fervently... all in keeping with their circumstances. These same helpful suggestions mentioned here can also be used with other people who are troubled etc. by placing before them the acts of our Savior and the glory of heaven that is reserved for them for all eternity. In each of these works of charity, we always have before us the person of Jesus, the delight of our hearts; with this intimate company, we shall enjoy the blessings of Paradise.

"For someone who is faced with a particular difficulty@"

Fr. Avila was wont to say: "A 'blessed be God' in contrary circumstances is worth more than a thousand 'thanks be to you' in prosperous times.

Venerable Luigi Da Ponte used to say: "Take the sweet things of this life as bitter, and the bitter ones as sweet; in that way you will always enjoy peace".

St. Teresa gave this advice: "We acquire more through one day of trials that come from God or from our neighbors, than in ten years of sufferings of our own choice".

"For someone who has received injuries"

It would be good, first, to urge them to have a generous spirit of pardon and compassion (imitating Jesus who prayed for the very ones who were crucifying him); then, you could suggest the following words: "Paradise (says Fr. Alvarez) is the homeland for the scorned, the persecuted and the oppressed".

St. Teresa asserts in reference to herself: "With regard to the persons who spoke with malice about me, it seems that I should express towards them a new act of love".

St. Francis de Sales adds: "Do not ever allow yourselves to yield to anger nor ever open the door to it for any reason whatsoever... I have made an agreement with my tongue, that is, that I will not speak when my heart is disturbed".

"For one who is in poverty@"

The example of Jesus who willed to be born in a cave is an efficacious means of bringing solace to these people. Likewise, it is a very good idea to exhort them to accept suffering in imitation of Job and convince them that there is no wood more capable of producing and conserving God's love as the wood of the holy Cross. Stress especially the avoidance of idleness, the frequent reception of the sacraments, and anything else that you can think of.

Jesus is with us. Amen.

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

In reconsidering this morning what you communicated to me. I feel stimulated to send you this letter in order to encourage you to continue those good works so pleasing to the Lord and so helpful for the souls redeemed by the most Precious Blood of Jesus. Yes, continue with the work you have begun and do not doubt that you will achieve a very happy success. But, perhaps God would want from you the merit for industry and hard work. How to accomplish that? Well, be courageous and have confidence in the divine mercy and with the Apostle repeat: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat; non ego sed gratia Dei mecum.*¹²⁰ The devil will surely make every effort to impede the greater glory of God, but you will score a rousing victory over him.

Meanwhile, with regard to the matter dealing with the lady who is already disposed to approach the sacrament of Penance, explain gently to her how ineffably great is the Lord's kindness toward sinners; souls of this kind need to be completely encouraged (since they are sorely oppressed by the weight of sins) and not to remain overwhelmed by diffidence or fear. So have her think about the patience that God has had in waiting for her conversion, about the love that he has shown in searching for her, and about the charity with which he receives her now with open arms. Who knows (tell her) whether her miseries are not just punishment and at the same time the avenue of mercy for calling her back to the straight path? Oh, my daughter, do you know what you have done by sinning? You have renewed the most painful passion of Jesus! ... Tell me, at the time of the Lord's passion in Jerusalem, would you have had the heart to crown him with thorns, using your own hands, to nail him to the cross, to give him gall to drink? ... Still, this is what you have done by sinning.

On the other hand, have no doubt about this... Jesus still loves you; and from the Cross, he says again: *Sitio*,¹²¹ - I thirst for your soul and I seek nothing more than a sorrowful contrition, a sincere reform, an interior grieving based on true repentance. Oh soul, do you not see that I am on the cross with my arms opened out to take you in and that you can truly satisfy my burning desire for love? Do you not know that I went so far as to sweat blood in the garden solely because of the pain of seeing so many souls lost? I did not, in fact, say: Let this cup of suffering pass from me in a general meaning, but I did say: let this very bitter cup pass from me in a particular meaning in my heart, for I would that everyone be saved; I was alluding to the loss of so many souls. So, be courageous, for you have nothing to fear. Am I not that shepherd of the Gospel who went persistently in search of you; that father who arranged a great feast for the return of his wayward son; the Redeemer who even prayed for his crucifiers and promised heaven to the thief who converted? ...

Oh what a feast there will be in heaven as you convert! Oh what joy I will feel in my heart! What a blessing will come down upon you! Is it possible that you would love sin, which is the cause of the loss of peace of conscience and makes you eligible to receive the greatest of chastisements? What more could I have done for you that I did not do, and all for your own good? Come now. Wash yourself in my Blood, for I indeed have prepared for you a splendid banquet which is the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and, thereafter, an eternity of joy in heaven. Everything turns out to be sweet in this world when you possess habitual grace and everything turns out to be insufferable

¹²⁰ I can do all things in him who strengthens me; but not I, but the grace of God in me.

¹²¹ I thirst.

when the soul is deprived of it.

Countess, in short, this is what you can suggest to that lady for her spiritual welfare. Later, little by little, using the fine talents which God has given to you for his greater glory, you can continue to explain to her that the goodness of a plant is recognized in its fruit; furthermore, that nothing brings forth fruit unless it is cultivated and that in addition to the shower of divine blessings, one must use hard work and good deeds to draw the full profits therefrom. In my opinion, these are the means to be used in achieving the goal that is desired.

But, what does the devil do? He uses shams and fear that accompany the commission of sin; so, one must try to substitute repentance and reform, as well as that confidence and trust which contrition alone can supply at the time of temptation to sin. It is important to be aware of these manoeuvres and with Christian virtue avoid extremes in everything.

As for someone who is reluctant so to confession, it will be enough, in order to encourage him to do so, to place before his eyes the miserable status of his soul; but, it is always a good idea to coat the bitter pill in a charitable fashion, so that, in imitation of the gentleness of Jesus as he called sinners to himself, one can inspire in that person a holy trust in the goodness of the most merciful God. To persons of that type, one must continue always to give them these reminders: "There is only one God, only one soul, only one eternity. In a single moment, one sins; in a single moment one dies; in a single moment one goes hopelessly into eternal fire.@ Yet, in a very special way, try to impress in their hearts the Passion of Jesus and while giving them a holy card, inculcate upon them the practice of virtuous acts.

Sometimes the means that seem to us to be the weakest are the ones that God makes use of for the great works of his glory and from the lives of the saints this appears to be quite evident. Stress to all that they are to pray and offer frequent prayers; that they often kiss the wounds of Jesus (at least in spirit); that from time to time they mentally return to Calvary; that they consider their own wretchedness - and any other thoughts that you find helpful according to the needs that those souls have. For the person who is capable of reading, one will do a good deed by giving that person a devout book (if possible) and then urge that person to meditate on the principles contained therein. Some people claim that they do not know how to meditate and in dealing with poor individuals I understand well that one cannot ask the same thing of everyone. One must be content to gradually lead the souls up the ladder of perfection, prefigured in the one that the patriarch Jacob saw.

Furthermore, says St. Augustine, (if I remember correctly) Why, oh soul, do you not cultivate the eternal truths as you do your temporal interests? In wishing to attain a certain objective, each one of us is capable of reflecting on the mode of doing it, the means and the time needed. When it is a question of eternal salvation, how is it that so many are no longer capable? Most people keep getting involved in useless or temporal thoughts and yet how is it that they cannot get involved with spiritual and virtuous ones? What deplorable blindness! What insufferable thoughtlessness! What a monstrous ingratitude toward our most lovable God! What will such people wish to have done when death approaches their bedside, a thing towards which we are continually moving? Our life is like a candle that is burning down; the world is only a passing scene; our homeland is in heaven! A real concern! So, one must labor hard to persuade souls to follow the true way that leads to heaven! And, that is how it must be! Enough to say that it is up to us to do this good work. The rest does not depend on us.

Let us pray to God that he bless the means we use, that we never become discouraged because of the difficulties encountered in carrying them out. Sometimes, when we are engaged in

these holy pursuits, we are called upon to suffer something; but all will be softened by the holy faith that we profess. If someone wishes to crack a nut, using his teeth, he is not concerned with the pain that he might experience, because he is thinking of the delicious kernel that he will soon feast upon. This anxiety alone makes him satisfied and he does not in the least complain. Let us make an adaptation of this to spiritual things and we will profit from it. Jesus recognizes as done to himself whatever is done to the poor, the object of his love. In fact, on judgment day, he will ask us whether we gave him something to drink when he was thirsty, something to eat when he was hungry etc. and all the rest that is recorded in the holy Gospel. This should serve as a comfort in the exercise of our good works. God keeps an account of everything; now is the time for planting, in spite of any inclemency in the weather or so many other deterrents. In short, the time will soon come for the harvest which we will present to the master of the vineyard so that he can bless us for all eternity.

The time of suffering is short, the time of enjoyment eternal. On this point, what we have said up to now is quite sufficient. I recommend only one more thing to you and that is that you instruct well in Christian doctrine those who are illiterate (for whom Cardinal Bellarmine, among others, explains things) and realize too that God wants you to be a martyr of patience, as I, miserable one, understand. Anytime you wish to have some point of doctrine explained in a practical way, all you have to do is ask me, if you so please to do. With everyone, but especially with beginners, after you have instructed them, encourage them to make acts of love, to recite prayers that are most necessary to be learned, and the frequent use of the act of contrition.

Finally, in that matter dealing with the lady etc., in my opinion, it is a good idea to make every effort possible. Advise that lady to frequently use good reading (it should be something wholesome), to pray assiduously and anything else that the circumstances may call for at a later time. I cannot now continue writing anything further.

It would please me a great deal if you, at your convenience, would let me know if I explain myself clearly or not in my letters and whether that is what you desire. In short, speak with total freedom to me because I am ignorant and I understand nothing.

Meanwhile, I am, with fullness of esteem and respect, in the sweetest Heart of Jesus.

Your humble servant

G. C. d. B.