



**THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS,**

Founder of the Congregation

Of the Barefooted Clerks

Of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ

Published in 1853

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## **PREFACE**

*The following Life of the Blessed Paul is from the Italian of the Venerable Monsignor Strambi,<sup>1</sup> which is considered a classical work in its own department. It is brought out at the present time because of the approaching solemnity of the public Beatification. Monsignor Strambi prefaces his work:*

To write the lives of the servants of God is to draw out the character or to paint in lively colors the portrait of a bright and noble virtue, that may serve for the example and model of copies deeply impressed with similar acts of virtue, in order that those who read them may be encouraged to imitate the servant of God, and by imitating his virtuous and praiseworthy actions, may at last in some way resemble our Lord and Master Jesus Christ Himself, the first and most perfect exemplar of every virtue. In the memorials remaining to us of the servants of God, in the traces they have left, stamped and imprinted with so much labor and merit in the royal road of perfection, it seems that they are ever repeating, with their whole hearts inflamed with ardent love of the glory of their Lord, “*Be you imitators of me, as I also am of Christ*” (I Cor. 4:16).

No one, then, can believe that in this age, amidst the vast mass of useless and pernicious literature now inundating the Christian world, it is unprofitable to write books, which may with greater easiness insinuate in us the practice of true virtue, the most precious treasure of the soul, and draw us more effectually to the imitation of Jesus our Divine Redeemer, of whom everyone, desirous of saving his soul, ought to trace within himself a clear and faithful likeness.

As there have now been so many lives of servants of God written, it may appear superfluous, or perhaps even tedious, to add a new one to the number. But if it is useful for various writers to publish the virtuous and edifying life of even one servant of God, in order that, being by different authors, and the saint’s actions being written in various styles, each one may suit his own taste by reading the author that pleases him most, and being thus led on according to their particular inclination even those may obtain a share in so great a benefit, who would otherwise be most disinclined to such a course of reading at once so valuable and so full of profit – why, is it not an action worthy of praise to write and publish for the first time the life of a servant of God, whom the Lord in these latter days has raised up in His Church for the edification of all, and the guide

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Vincent Mary Strambi was canonized in 1950.

of many? Is not this, then, a devout way of following the loving Providence of our Lord to bring into sight these fresh examples of virtue, whom He, by the communication of His Spirit, is continually raising up in holy Church, ever the fruitful mother of Christian heroes, and placing as on a lofty mount the virtue of these really great men and women, who are in the house of God, as lamps burning, and resplendent to give light to others? Is it not a particular advantage and consolation to souls to set before them a new and secure model of perfection in a servant of God, who has a genius of virtue altogether his own, as much and peculiarly his own, as that of any of the saints and servants of God whose lives have been hitherto written? For although all the saints have that glorious train of the virtues united to charity, as to their mistress and Queen, and have practiced, at various times, one or other of them with great perfection, yet each one, according to the special grace given him by God, has practiced them in a manner distinct and different from the rest. Whence, as you will not find two faces exactly alike in every feature, so you will scarcely discover two virtuous and holy souls entirely alike in the same path of virtue, and which have, if I may say so, the same air and features. Well may the Church sing of each one of her holy confessors in the antiphon, which with sweetest jubilee chants their praises; “There was not found one equal to him who kept the law of the most high” (V. D. Thom. I. 2. qu. LXVI, art. 2. ad 12. S. Fran. di Sales, Tratt. dell amor di Dio. par. II.1.I.c.7).

If, then, everyone has a peculiar and distinct way of practicing virtue and adorning himself, as in a richly embroidered vestment, with holy perfection, it will certainly be a great consolation to souls who are in the pursuit of virtue, and are making, in union with God, the acquisition of holy perfection, to be able to discern and distinguish amongst these noble exemplars of virtue by selecting that one who is most conformed to their own spirit and inclination. It will therefore be better for those who profess the same Institute and manner of living, consecrated to intimate conversation with God and the salvation of their neighbor, as this our servant of the Lord, to profit by this, and closely follow his footsteps, by copying and tracing in themselves from him, rather than from others, those beautiful features which may form a picture so complete and graceful as to engage even the love of God Himself. These are the motives which have induced us to present our readers the Life of the Ven. Fr. Paul of the Cross.

This servant of the Lord was a man of the most sublime prayer and union with God, of the most lively zeal in the salvation of souls, and of the utmost tenderness, compassion, and love, in

contemplating the bitter passion and most cruel death of our Divine Redeemer, into whom he was truly transformed by love. He lived the whole time he was on this earth truly as a pilgrim, detached from everything, or rather as disgusted with this exile, which he looked upon with compassion and contempt. He kept his heart in heaven, where he desired to hold an uninterrupted conversation. The vanity of this world obscured not that clear and penetrating ray of the loving faith which was always his guide, and which rather, by passing from one communication of light and love to another, made him taste of the truth of the faith, with extreme tranquillity, safety, and sweetness. Admirable were the discourses he made us, all full of penetration, life, and efficacy. When he spoke, God alone was on his lips; and when he was silent, divine love seemed to be breathed forth from him. So great was the abundance of charity diffused through his spirit, that, wherever he was, he always took delight in his Best-beloved alone. Forsaking his country, parents, and father's house, he undertook long and disastrous journeys, he gave himself up to the most austere rule of penance, more admirable than imitable, and in the midst of the greatest difficulties, opposition, persecution, calumny, and contempt, he undertook, regardless of fatigue and toil, to execute the design of a new Congregation, inspired him by God. He knew no other rule of acting but the most holy will of God; he loved nothing, he desired and saw nothing in anything but God alone. An enemy to his last moments of that worldly prudence condemned by St. Paul, he traveled on with the simplicity of a dove, but not without due regard to that true prudence, which is in accordance with the heart of God and comes from God Himself, the author of all virtue. Exterior occupations, and they were many and difficult, deprived him not of that interior solitude, where in the sanctuary of his heart he enjoyed God or sought lovingly and eagerly for God alone.

Because of the favor he found in his sight, God put him to the severest and most difficult proofs of his virtue by a long and grievous illness, the malignity, calumny, and treachery of man; by dreadful and frequent vexations from evil spirits, internal abandonments, horrible desolations, crosses, and the most terrible mental agony. In the midst of all these troubles, which from all sides impetuously raged as a furious tempest against his soul, and in their bitterness penetrated its inmost depth, the servant of God always seemed entirely resigned and constant in the fulfillment of the Divine Will. It was a marvelous thing to see him, in such distress himself, comfort and console, with an admirable and almost miraculous efficacy, those who ran to him

for direction, aid, and consolation, in paths the most hazardous in the spiritual journey. But above all was it edifying to see that the servant of God, possessing the most rare and precious gifts of the sublimest virtue and intimate conversation with God, had an esteem of himself the most lowly and most abject that can be imagined. In fine, in this blessed soul were united all humility, simplicity, and union of spirit with God. Oh, how delightful was it to hear him speak of God and of perfection; terms he used were so appropriate and intelligible, that without any difficulty he made all comprehend ideas the most subtle and profound, and in such a way that anyone could easily perceive that God had given him the peculiar grace of speaking aptly on subjects the most sacred and venerable. His mode of conducting souls was full of tenderness and compassion, sweetness and long-suffering. Whence the most inveterate sinners, hearing the good news from others, were encouraged to go to him to get cured of their noisome wounds. His virtue was not of the terrible and austere kind, but gentle, courteous, and full of sweetness. His conversation was joyous, cheerful, and most simple. He avoided the slightest appearance of sadness, or that gravity which might make him an object of admiration, as far as his exterior only was concerned; but sweetly, affably, and most heartily did he talk of God and the things of the Spirit, and he understood so well and so naturally how to enliven his discourse that everyone remained at the same time edified and contented.

To so many gifts of grace, the Lord bountifully united many and various gifts of nature by granting him a lively, penetrating and universal genius, a memory as happy in retaining as in learning, a heart magnanimous, generous, and ready for any great undertaking, a bearing modest and devout; whence it seemed that the Lord, as is generally his way, had left nothing out that might tend to the perfection of this work which his omnipotent hand had designed for his glory. Whatever we here say will be admitted on reading this history, which we have undertaken to write. And the picture we here present is but a sketch of the ordinary and everyday course of the virtues and gifts God had imparted to him, as the reader will easily perceive on glancing through these pages, which are formed and composed simply on the notices deposed on solemn oaths in the Processes, with the addition of a few other things which, having seen with our own eyes, we have a full and secure certainty of. Any person of good sense may safely believe what he here reads, everything being sustained by certain and indisputable facts.

No one who has the Lord's spirit, or possesses true doctrine with some degree of Christian



humility, will be surprised when he reads in this life of the sublimest graces, limited to an innocent and penitential life, and admirable virtue, because he knows well that the loving right hand of the Most High, which has continually formed in His Church perfect and holy souls, is and will always be admirable in its illimitable and infinite powers. But if anyone, full of the spirit of the world, refuses to believe anything because not having experienced it in his own person, he therefore cannot imagine it in others, let him remember that our God, because He is infinite Goodness, performs a work most worthy of Himself whenever He communicates Himself so lovingly to a soul whom He has created in His own image and likeness and redeemed with the precious blood of His own only begotten Son; it is no wonder, however, that the man, who lives in obedience to his senses understands not the sovereign riches of the Spirit of God, a Lord always great, liberal, and munificent in his holy works.

The fruit, which is expected from whoever reads this history in a spirit free from prepossession and prejudice, ever a hindrance to embracing truth, will more than justify the design, and console the desire of him who undertook it, to fulfil the most holy will of God, on whom be benediction, honor, and glory, for ever and ever.

So far Bishop Strambi. Our readers will be glad to have a faithful translation of the Pope's Brief for the Beatification.

## **POPE PIUS IX**

### **FOR THE FUTURE MEMORY OF THE THING**

There is nothing which is more suitable and fit to enkindle in souls the fire of divine love, and to bring men back to the way of justice, from which they have miserably strayed, than the constant meditation of those most bitter torments which Christ our Lord suffered for our salvation, having been made obedient for us unto death, even to the death of the cross. This remembrance of the Passion of our Lord, as just as it is salutary, the Ven. servant of God, Paul of the Cross, Founder of the new Congregation of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, endeavored to excite among men, desiring both for himself and his children no other knowledge but that of Jesus Christ and him crucified, while by the splendor of his eminent virtues and by his apostolic labors, he shed luster on the Catholic Church. Born at Ovada, a town in the Diocese of Acqui in the year 1694, from his very childhood he gave sure and brilliant

indications of his future sanctity; for showing an aversion to the amusements and delights with which children are ordinarily captivated, he took delight in giving himself to prayer, in obeying his parents, in giving alms to the poor, in fasting, and in meditating continually on the sufferings of Christ in his passion. He passed his youth in exercises and literary studies, shining out among his fellows as a bright example of all virtues, and especially of continence, from the observance of which neither the offer of a most honorable marriage, nor that of a very rich inheritance, could withdraw him. Thus making noble advances in the way of perfection, and inflamed with a desire of promoting the glory of God, he thought of instituting a new religious society, which might at once be a defense to the Church and exert all its strength for the salvation of souls. With the consent, therefore, of the Bishop of Alexandria, whom he had for his director, he put on a mean dress of black, to which he fastened the emblems of our Lord's passion, and with bare feet and uncovered head sought the retirement of a narrow cell, where, severely tormenting himself in all his members, he prepared himself by the exercise of every kind of virtue and by assiduous prayer to draw up the Rules of the new society. When he had finished them, he went to Rome to obtain the approbation of them from the Apostolic See; but he left Rome without effecting his purpose, and retired to Monte Argentario<sup>2</sup> with his brother and lived there with him for two consecutive years, devoting himself assiduously, amid his austerities, to the study of the Holy Scripture. From Monte Argentario he removed to Gaeta, where both by word and example he excited the faithful to enter upon the path of virtue. Having returned to Rome to obtain the approbation of his Rules, he exhibited in that city such illustrious proofs of sanctity, that he was promoted to the sacred order of Priesthood by Benedict XIII himself, who then held the Apostolic See, together with his brother, the imitator of his virtues, and also deserved to receive from Clement XII, who succeeded Benedict XIII in the Sovereign Pontificate, the office of Missionary Apostolic by letters in the form of a Brief. He then again retired to Monte Argentario, and there, though the Rule was not as yet approved, he built the first house of the new Congregation in the year 1737; and at length he obtained from Benedict XIV the confirmation, by apostolic authority, of the Rule which he had drawn up; which Rule, having been once or twice slightly altered by the venerable Founder, as it had seemed expedient, was first ratified and confirmed by Clement XIV

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<sup>2</sup> In the time of St. Paul of the Cross, Monte Argentario was spelled Monte Argentaro.

and afterwards by Pius VI. There were not wanting illustrious men who embraced the new Institute, and by the power of divine grace, the religious society began to increase and spread itself, and the venerable servant of God, though against his will, was by common suffrage elected Superior General. In this office he outstripped his companions in his ardor for suffering and prayer, in humility of heart, love of poverty, charity to God and his neighbor, and, in a word, in all virtues, and in observance of regular discipline; and thus by his example he spurred them on, as it were, to run with alacrity along the way of perfection. Although he was continually occupied with the cares of governing his religious society and of founding everywhere new houses for it, yet he never left off preaching the word of God, burning as he did with a wondrous desire of the salvation of souls. He conducted, therefore, sacred missions and traversed many dioceses, inveighing with such zeal against the prevailing licentiousness, that an immense multitude of people lost in sin were brought to a sense of the shamefulfulness of their past lives and converted to a mode of life becoming their Christian profession. Weakened as he was by his apostolic labors, he never, even to his last hour, remitted anything of his austere manner of life, so that, worn out as much by austerities as by old age, he fell into a severe sickness and joyfully died at Rome on the 18th of October, 1775. The fame of his sanctity, which had spread far and wide during his life, increased still more after his death, and a judicial enquiry into his virtues, as is usual, having been instituted, Pius VII, our predecessor of glorious memory, on the 18th of February, 1821, by a solemn decree pronounced that they had reached the heroic degree. A consultation was next held upon the miracles, which were said to have been wrought by God at his intercession, to manifest his eminent virtue; and we, having received the votes of the consultors and the opinions of the cardinals of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, declared that two of those miracles were true ones, approving the first of them on the 25th of February, 1851, and the other on the 2nd of August of the current year, 1852. Finally, on the 24th of August of the current year, the cardinals appointed to take cognizance of sacred rites were assembled in our presence, and having received the votes of the consultors, were unanimously of opinion that the venerable servant of God, Paul of the Cross, might be declared BLESSED whenever it should seem good to us, with all the usual indults, until his solemn canonization be celebrated. We, therefore, moved by the prayers of the whole Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the opinion, and with the consent of the

aforesaid cardinals, by our apostolic authority give permission, by virtue of these letters, for the aforesaid servant of God, Paul of the Cross, Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be in future honored with the title of Blessed, and for his body and relics, or remains, to be exposed to the public veneration of the faithful, though not so as to be borne in solemn processions. Moreover, by the same authority we grant permission that his Office and Mass may be annually recited from the common of a confessor not a bishop, with proper prayers approved by us, according to the Rubrics of the Roman Missal and Breviary. This Office, however, we only permit to be recited in Rome and its district, as well as in all churches in which the Congregation of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the Nuns of that Institute, are established, by all the faithful, both secular and regular, who are bound to recite the canonical hours on the 16th day of November; and with respect to Masses, by all priests who go to those churches in which the feast is celebrated. Lastly, we grant that in the first year from the date of these letters, the solemnities of the beatification of the servant of God, Paul of the Cross, may be celebrated in the above-mentioned churches of the city and of the Congregation, with Office and Masses of the rite of a greater double; and we command this to be done on a day to be appointed by the Ordinary, and after the said solemnities have been performed according to custom in the Vatican Basilica. All apostolical constitutions and orders, all decrees prohibiting worship, and all other things to the contrary notwithstanding. We desire also that copies, though printed, of these letters, provided they be signed by the secretary of the above-mentioned Congregation of Sacred Rites and authenticated by the seal of the prefect, may have the very same credit given to them, even in judicial investigation, as would be given to the signification of our will by the production of these very letters.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, the 1st day of October, 1852, the seventh year of our Pontificate.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI

In the place + of the seal.

*Romana seu Alexandrina et Aquen*

**Of the Beatification and Canonization of the Venerable Servant of God,  
Father Paul of the Cross,  
Professed Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced Clerks  
of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

COLLECT

O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast chosen the Blessed Paul to honor the mysteries of Thy Passion, and to incite us to remember it, and hast through him gathered together a new family in Thy Church, mercifully grant, that walking in his footsteps, we may deserve to reap the fruit of the same Passion. Who livest and reignest, etc.

SECRET

May that Holy Spirit inflame us, O Lord, as we offer this sacrifice to Thee, by whom Thou didst fortify the blessed Confessor, Paul, for glorious conflicts, in order to propagate in the hearts of the faithful the memory of Thy Passion. Who livest and reignest in the unity of the same Spirit, etc.

POSTCOMMUNION

We have received, O Lord, the heavenly Sacrament, the perpetual memorial of Thy Passion, and we suppliantly beseech Thee that, by the merits and example of the Blessed Confessor Paul, we may draw waters in joy from Thy fountains, and the memory of Thy Passion may remain ever in our hearts. Who livest, etc.

DECREE

Since, according to ancient custom and the practice of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, in the apostolic letter shortly to be expedited in the form of Brief for the formal beatification of the venerable servant of God, Father Paul of the Cross, professed Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,

there ought to be inserted proper prayers in honor of the beatified, to be recited in the Office and Mass from the Common by all those to whom permission for this purpose is granted in the above named Brief. Our most holy Lord Pope Pius IX, the Supreme Pontiff, at the most humble prayers of the Rev. Fr. Antony of St. James, General Superior of the said Congregation and Postulator of the Cause, laid before him by me, the undersigned pro-secretary of the same Congregation of Sacred Rites, has now, by word of mouth approved the above proper prayers in honor of the Blessed Paul, after they had first, by His Holiness' command, been diligently revised according to custom, and has allowed them to be recited by all, to whom the Office and Mass of the beatified have been granted, as soon as the formal beatification shall have been completed. 8th day of September, 1852.

A.C. Lambruschini, Pref. C.S.R.

In the place + of the Seal.

Dom. Gigli, Pro-secretary, C.S.R.

In all things it agrees with the original. Witnessed by me at the Segretaria of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, 20th of October, 1852.

Dom. Gigli, Pro-secretary, C.S.R.

In the place of the Seal.

London

The Oratory

The Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas

MDCCCLIII

## **INTRODUCTION**

**by the late Father Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist**

The following life of the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, Founder of the Congregation of Passionists, was written originally in Italian by another venerable servant of God, Father Vincent of St. Paul, at that time a religious of the same Congregation, but afterwards better known under his secular name as Bishop Strambi of Macerata and Tolentino, and since his death declared venerable by the Holy See. He was a man celebrated for his learning, zeal, and piety; beloved by all good Christians of his time, especially by Pope Leo XII, who called him in his old age from Macerata to Rome, that he might give him help and light in the government of the universal Church. It is believed that this good bishop, on occasion of this Pope falling dangerously ill, offered his own life as a sacrifice to God for the preservation of that of the Holy Father, and died of an apoplectic seizure a few days after the offering had been made, while the Pope was recovering from his attack. The virtues and great actions of this holy bishop will be better known in this country when his life, which has been published in Italian, is translated, as it will be, into English. This short notice will suffice to let our readers know something of the author of the Life which is now presented to them; and we have introduced it as we think that the work itself will acquire new merit and value in their eyes from a knowledge of the merits of the writer. None but a saint is qualified to draw the picture of a saint. It required a soul full of divine unction and of the love of God, such as that of the venerable Bishop Strambi to enable him to give to the Life of the venerable Father Paul that captivating sweetness and warmth, that touching and instructive character which ought to distinguish it, and which will be seen throughout the following pages. This work may be considered not only as the history of a single holy man, but also as a school of holiness, as an emporium, wherein will be found collected whatever may lead to the instruction and edification of every one who reads it; but, especially whatever may be reckoned necessary to form a skillful guide of souls, one capable of training them to the highest degree of perfection and sanctity. There is no virtue requisite for a soul, which aspires to perfection of which this life does not furnish a pattern and a rule. The venerable Father Paul, as he was himself a model of all heroic virtues, was an eminent guide to others in the same path, which he himself trod; and no one was better qualified than Bishop Strambi, as a skillful judge, to apprehend perfectly the various beauties of his character, and to dispose and arrange them in the best form for instruction. From this consideration the pious and accomplished editor of this Life relinquished the idea which he at first entertained of omitting or abridging certain parts of it for the sake of

brevity. After mature reflection he determined to give it entire; considering that we have but few books in the English language for the guidance of those who are engaged in the spiritual direction of souls, and that this collection, which will be found here of the admirable instructions given by the venerable Father Paul to various persons, would be of the greatest use in this respect.

Having said thus much of the Life of which a translation is here given and of its author, we think it well to add some account of the Congregation of the most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord, established by the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, of its Rules, its spirit, and its establishment in Italy and in some other parts of the world, but especially here in England.

It would be superfluous to say anything in this preface of the first establishment of the Congregation in Italy as the reader will find some account of this in the Life of the venerable Founder itself. Between the year 1775, which was the time of his death, and the year 1810, several houses, *ritiri* (retreats) as they are called, were opened in Italy; but at the time of the French Revolution, that impetuous torrent swept them all away. Religious Orders were suppressed by order of Napoleon who was the despot of Europe wherever his power extended; and for the poor Passionists who had no houses outside of Italy, this suppression was total, as the whole of that country was under his tyrannical sway. But in the year 1814, the arm of God reached that proud man and brought him low; while the object of his persecution, Pius VII, was, to the joy of all good men, brought back to the possession of his rights, all the powers of Europe, Catholic or Protestant, contributing to the work. It is well known that our English government played a distinguished part in his restoration. After his happy return to Rome, Pius VII began to consider how he might best repair the immense losses which the Church had suffered in the late persecution; and one of the measures which appeared to his enlightened mind to be of the greatest importance was the speedy restoration of the religious Orders. It is to us a most interesting fact that the first of these which attracted his attention was the Congregation of the Passionists, although it was the smallest of all. The Passionists were the first to enjoy the singular happiness of putting on once more their religious habit, and to fill with joy the hearts of all the devout people of Italy by the sight of it. The date of this bright event was the sixteenth of June, 1814. The ten religious of our body who happened to be then in Rome were quickly assembled in their former house of Saints John and Paul, and took immediate measures for gathering again



together their dispersed brethren. The whole number was not great; several of the ancient members had died since their separation, and some did not return to the Congregation, so that at the first they had not sufficient subjects to open all the former houses. But after a while, not only this was effected, but new ones also were founded in the kingdoms of Naples and Sardinia, in Tuscany and elsewhere; but what must interest us the most is their establishment here in England. This kingdom had, from the first, been one of the principal objects of interest to the Congregation. The venerable Founder, full of the Spirit of God, like all God's faithful servants, was continually praying for the salvation of all mankind. But England always was the country of his predilection. It might almost appear to those who knew him well as if he had no heart, no feeling but for England. England was always in his thoughts; England was constantly the subject of his discourse; England was always before him in his prayers. For the space of not less than fifty years, he prayed for England without intermission, as will be seen in his Life.

It is a wonderful phenomenon that he should have persevered thus long in one prayer, though he never could have seen the semblance of any fruit from it. In fact, he died before any visible encouragement of hope for England had been granted. From all outward appearances, he might conclude that his prayer was rejected; and some might say, if his prayer was offered in a right way, how is this to be reconciled with the promises of Our Lord, "*Ask and it will be given to you...seek and you will receive*" (Mt. 7:8). We shall find no difficulty in explaining this, if we remember that He who said, "Ask and you shall receive," did not say you shall receive as soon as you begin to ask or in answer to your first prayer. It is enough to make the promise good that the grace be given at some time, when it will but please Almighty God. Although the venerable Father left this world without having seen any effect produced by his prayers for England, he now sees very cheering effects already brought about by them. But even during his life, he was not left wholly without encouragement. It is related that Almighty God, to show him that these, his prayers, were acceptable in His sight and to move him to perseverance in them, showed him the effects of them in a vision. This fact was thus related by the confessor of the venerable Father. One day, whilst he was celebrating Mass in one of our churches situated in the Diocese of Viterbo under the invocation of St. Michael the Archangel in Monte Fogliano, he remained longer than usual at the altar and stood motionless at the time of communion for about half an hour. During this long time, he was observed by Fr. John Mary Cioni, his confessor, with a face

radiant and full of heavenly light. After the Mass was over the same Father John Mary said to the venerable Father in a playful manner, “*This morning there fell a good shower of rain, did there not?*” This was a phrase, very familiar to the venerable Servant of God, to express an abundance of divine unction or other heavenly favors in prayer. The face of the venerable Father Paul was covered with blushes and with tears in his eyes, and with his voice, broken by sobs, he said, “Oh! What have I seen this morning! My children, the Passionists, in England! My children in England!” His confessor was anxious to hear something more from him upon the subject, but he could obtain no answer but this, “My children in England!” We may presume that some farther particulars were communicated to him on that occasion to console him and strengthen his hope for the conversion of this realm, so dear to his heart; however this was, it is quite sure that he went on to the end incessantly praying for the welfare of this country and never could lose sight of it; as he used to say of himself, “It would be impossible for me to abstain from praying for England, because, as soon as I kneel down to pray, England comes before my eyes.” May we not indulge the thought that at these times not only was England before him but also those of his children who were to be the first to land on these coasts, and those who should embrace his Institute in this kingdom, their sufferings, their labors and all which concerned them? I think we may. At least I am confident that Almighty God now permits him to know their state, and what is more interesting for them, that he prays for them now in heaven with more fervor and efficacy than he did or could do while he lived on earth.

It appears that Almighty God granted to His beloved and faithful servant another grace not less precious, which is, that all his spiritual children have inherited from him a love for England, and an ardent desire to see this country reconciled to the Catholic Church, and to spend their own lives, if they are permitted, on this great achievement. For I am convinced that there is not a Passionist who does not feel interested in it and who does not endeavor to inspire others with the like feeling, exciting them to pray for England’s conversion. We might look upon this as a kind of appendage to the religious vocation to our Congregation. May God grant us to see some good fruits arising from this happy tendency. It seems that many years ago these feelings had already met with a sympathetic chord in England itself. Long before there appeared any probability of the thing being accomplished, some zealous souls in England had expressed their desire of having Passionists among them. I remember being told that the Chevalier Drak, who, from the

Jewish profession had entered the Catholic Church, once called at Saints John and Paul when he was at Rome more than fifteen years ago and said that the first time that he had heard the name of Passionists was in England, and that an impression existed among many people that the Passionists were to contribute to the conversion of England. Before that period I have heard of another more distinguished person having been interested about bringing the Passionists to England. This was Dr. Milner, late vicar apostolic of the Midland District, a man so well known to the world for his zeal and his literary exertions in the cause of religion. He was at Rome for some affairs of his district, about thirty years ago, and made an application to the Very Rev. Father Thomas Albesano, then General Superior of the Passionists, to give him some of his religious for England. The good General was not able to comply with his request, having no subjects fit for this mission. Dr. Milner, however, though he could no longer entertain the hope of seeing Passionists in England during his lifetime, seems to have been confident that they would come at no very distant period; and by the way in which he spoke on the subject, one might suppose that he had even received some supernatural intimation of the event. There is a nun still living in the Central District to whom he said, "I am old and shall not live so long as to see Passionists in England, but you are young and before you die you will have this consolation." It was a subject of great astonishment to Father Dominic, the first of the Congregation who ever did land in England, on his being called to give a retreat in the convent to which this nun belongs, to be thus accosted by her, "Father, how long have I been expecting you!" "How so?" said he. "Did you know anything of me?" "No," she replied, "I did not know you; but when I was young, Dr. Milner told me that before my death I should see Passionists in England."

Whatever view be taken of these previous circumstances, the settlement of the Passionists in England has been happily brought about. The first movement towards this event took place in the year 1830. Father Dominic, the, present provincial of the Order in England, was lector or teacher of theology in the Retreat of Saints John and Paul at Rome, and in this year first made acquaintance with Englishmen, although for many years previously he had been inspired with the like ardent love for England as had filled the breast of our venerable Founder, and with a constant desire of devoting himself to labor for its good. He always firmly believed Almighty God would one day gratify this desire, though he could not see in what manner this would be accomplished. He declared those feeling to his new friends, among whom were the Hon. and

Rev. George Spencer, who had but lately been received into the Church, and Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps of Grace Dieu Manor. They had much conversation together on the subject of bringing the Passionists to England, and afterwards kept up a correspondence with this view for several years, although for the time nothing could be concluded.

In the year 1839 Monsignor Acton (afterwards Cardinal) presented by the hands of Father Dominic a memorial to a General Chapter of the Congregation, asking for an establishment of Passionists in England. The General Chapter acquiesced and the long-desired event appeared now on the eve of its accomplishment; but new unforeseen difficulties interposed, and the plan was frustrated. In the following year, however, a foundation was offered in Belgium, in the Diocese of Tournay, by way of a step towards England, and was accepted, four religious being appointed for it. Father Dominic was not included in the number. He said pleasantly, "I am not chosen by men, but if God has chosen me it is enough; I shall go." So it happened that one of those who had been named, and the one who was to be the superior of the new establishment, began to feel discouraged with the thought of having to learn a new language in his old age, and of other difficulties. When he, therefore, begged to decline the undertaking, Father Dominic was in fact nominated in his place and came to Belgium with his companions. It was a few months after this that Dr. Wiseman was consecrated bishop and appointed coadjutor to the Right Rev. Dr. Walsh, Vicar Apostolic of the Central District. As soon as Father Dominic arrived in England from Rome, he invited Father Dominic to visit him in order to make arrangements for a foundation in England. This first visit led to no conclusion; but in the course of a year, he returned with a companion, and by the favor of these two prelates was at length put happily into possession of the house of Aston Hall, near Stone in Staffordshire, where he opened a novitiate. For a considerable time, as may be supposed, he had to contend with great difficulties from his ignorance of the English language, but gradually these were overcome and about four years ago he began to go out in every direction giving missions and retreats, which he and some of his brethren have continued since without interruption. In 1846 a second establishment of Passionists was formed in Gloucestershire, under the patronage of William Leigh, Esq., a recent convert, who is engaged in building for them a church and house. For this advantage also they are indebted solely to Dr. Wiseman, who recommended them to Mr. Leigh, and whom, therefore, they must regard as the chief instrument for their introduction and establishment in England. I

need not say that all the religious of this Congregation will entertain, as they are bound to do, an eternal gratitude to this eminent prelate, whose learning, zeal, and charity have gained him the veneration of the whole Catholic Church. May he receive an abundant reward from Almighty God.

The house and chapel of Aston Hall are not, in their present state, fit for a community such as we would wish to see assembled at the mother house of the Congregation in England, especially as the novitiate is established here. But by the help of God and the charity of many pious English Catholics, a new church has been begun, and is well advanced towards its completion; and it is intended also to build a new convenient house adjoining to it. As Almighty God has thus far assisted the Congregation in this difficult undertaking of building a church and house, it is hoped He will further bless them by sending them many good and zealous young men to join them in working for His honor and glory for the conversion of England.

Having now given this brief narrative of the establishment of the Passionists in this country, we will go on to give some account of the end and spirit of the Institute itself, and of the manner of life pursued in it. We shall not enter on the circumstances under which it was approved – at first by Pope Benedict XIII orally, afterwards by a Brief of Benedict XIV, and finally by a Bull of Clement XIV, and another by Pius VI. These will be found given at large in the life itself of the venerable Founder. We shall content ourselves here with some details on the nature of the Institute.

This Order, or Congregation, is neither purely contemplative nor purely active. The manner of life pursued in it is of a mixed character, embracing both contemplation and action. It appears that the leading idea of the venerable Founder was to unite in it the mortified life of the Carthusians or the Trappists with the active life of the Jesuits or the Lazarists. The end of the Congregation is stated in the Rule to be twofold: first, the sanctification of its own members and, secondly, the sanctification of others; and the provisions of the Rule are calculated throughout for these two purposes. With a view to the first of these objects, the houses of the Congregation are to be situated as far as possible in solitude; and for this reason are called *Ritiri*, or places of retreat from the noise and business of the world. They are to be decent and clean, but poor in the strict sense of the word. The religious cannot possess any property, either in private or in common, except that in common they may possess their houses with a kitchen-garden and a few

acres of meadowland attached to them, not with the intention of farming, as we say in England, but to keep a few heads of cattle, to provide vegetables for the use of the community, and to enable them to take exercise without going out of the premises, which they never do without a particular permission from the superior. How then, it may be asked, do they support themselves? The Rule allows them to beg, when necessary; and in Italy the religious do go to beg, so that they are reckoned among the mendicants; but in England, they have, as yet, never been obliged to have recourse to this means for their subsistence, having lived *by free will offerings*, on what has been given voluntarily by pious persons from time to time. They are allowed, indeed, to keep some money for the expenses of the church or chapel, which, however, is served quite gratuitously; no seat-rents being ever demanded, nor any fees for baptisms, marriages, burials, or the like. If anything is given on such occasions, it is done spontaneously. It is their custom to make a collection at the offertory of the Mass on Sundays; but what is got by this means, is scrupulously set aside, to be spent not for the wants of the religious, but towards the expenses of the school or to provide something necessary or ornamental for the church. If some person, possessed of property, desires to become a Passionist, and would wish to dispose of it altogether, or in part, in favor of the house which he enters, he may, indeed, if he pleases, present to it some definite sum of money, but would not be allowed to settle upon it anything in the form of an income or revenue, since the Congregation is forbidden to have any revenues. The novice, therefore, is advised when he makes his will at the time of his profession to leave all he has to dispose of to his parents, or other relations, or to whomsoever he pleases. He may reserve to himself the right of returning to it, in case of his quitting the Congregation, so that his legatees enjoy the use or fruit of it during his lifetime, if he continues to the end in his vocation, and at his death they inherit the principal as well. It is to be observed that the disposition which he makes of his property at the time of his profession is a final one. He cannot afterwards make any alteration in it. If the relatives or friends of any of the religious desire to give anything in the shape of alms to the Congregation, or to any of its houses, they may do so, and it would be gratefully accepted. But any settled property, such as houses or land, or any permanent income, from whatever source, it cannot accept.

When the religious go out to give missions or retreats, they are expressly forbidden to ask or expect anything as retribution for their labors; but in this case also, if anything is offered as an

alms, they may accept it with some limitations pointed out in the regulations of the Order. Passionists are, everywhere, poor; and it is to be hoped that they will always continue so. Woe to them if they happened to become rich! Their Rules threaten them in that case with a kind of malediction, which, however, we trust they will never incur. They have never been without food and clothing; and let them be content with this. Whatever they should possess more would be not to their advantage, but their loss. May God avert from them evermore the curse of riches!

Novices, having completed one year of probation, if they are found worthy, are admitted to their profession. They make the three common vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to which they add a fourth, which is to promote to the utmost of their power, especially by such means as the Rules point out, a tender devotion to the Passion of our Divine Savior. On this point we shall presently speak more at large. The Order admits of two classes of religious, that is, choir brothers and lay brothers. The former are to give themselves to study, that they may be fitted, when called, to labor with fruit in the vineyard of the Lord. The latter are charged with the economical business of the house. The conditions for the reception of subjects are that they should be at least fifteen years of age and under twenty-five; that they should have been baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church; should have no stain upon their character or, as it is expressed, should be of good repute; and should be bound by no secular tie such as would be an obstacle to the profession of the religious life. If they are to be received as clerics, they must also have previously a tolerable knowledge of Latin. The General has power to dispense with the impediment of age, so that if there are reasons to make it desirable, one may enter above the age of twenty-five. It is also an impediment if the postulant has before received the habit of any other religious Order, although he may not have been professed in it. The General may dispense also in this case; but this is not done except under certain very peculiar circumstances.

The vows made in this Congregation are simple vows, from which it follows that, for a reasonable cause, the General of the Order, with the concurrence of his assistants, may dispense with them. The religious are not free to quit the Congregation after their profession without such a dispensation, though the superiors have power to dismiss anyone who should prove obstinately indocile or be guilty of any faults such as would cause scandal to his brethren or put a mark of infamy on the body itself unless he were dismissed. No religious, after his profession, can be dismissed on account of any bodily or physical infirmity, unless it be discovered that he was

laboring under it before he was professed and wilfully concealed it. After a novice has made his profession, if he be a lay brother, he will be employed in domestic services; if he be a choir brother, he will go through the course of his regular studies under the direction of able masters in philosophy, theology, holy scripture, etc. When he has gone through his studies to the satisfaction of his superiors, he may be promoted to holy orders (*under the title of poverty*), but not before he has passed four years in the Congregation from the time of his profession, unless the Superior General should think fit to give him a dispensation. Should the student not give satisfaction, his ordination may be delayed *at the pleasure of the superior*. After receiving Holy Orders, he may either go on with his studies, or, if these be completed, he may be trained at once for the apostolic functions of preaching, hearing confessions, etc.

We will now speak of the routine of the life of Passionists while in their *Ritiri*, or religious houses. When they are out on missions they are not under the same regulations, as we shall explain later. They sleep on straw mattresses, with straw pillows, but provided with as many blankets of common wool as the season requires. They do not put off their clothes at night, except in case of sickness, if ordered by the medical man. If they are in health, all rise about one hour after midnight to Matins, after five hours' repose. They remain an hour and a half in the choir, the time being occupied after they have finished Matins in meditation. After this they return to rest, and again rise at five o'clock in the summer, or at half-past five in the winter, for prime and tierce, after which there is an hour's meditation. This being finished, they go to study in their cells, or are employed in other ways suitable to their condition and according to the direction of the superior. At half-past ten the last Mass is said, from which they go to the choir for Sext and None, and then to dinner. After dinner they spend three quarters of an hour in recreation together, and then retire in silence till Vespers. After Vespers, which begin in summer at a quarter-past two, there is spiritual reading for some time in common, followed by another hour of meditation, which being concluded, each goes about his proper avocations till Compline, which in summer is at six o'clock. In winter Vespers are half an hour earlier and the meditation is made after Compline, which at that time of the year begins at a quarter-past five. At half past six they go to supper, after which they have recreation in common, as after dinner, for three quarters of an hour. The day concludes with night prayers in choir, from which they retire to rest. On Sundays, Thursdays, and feasts, whether of precept or devotion, instead of going to study



after Vespers, they have a common walk or recreation till Compline. They keep the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays of every week as fast days, besides fasting and abstaining from flesh meat through the whole of Advent and Lent. Those fasting days, however, which are ordered only by the Rule and not by the universal Church, are not very rigorous, and a person in health finds no difficulty in their observance. When they are away from home, traveling or preaching, etc., they are bound to none of the abstinences, fasts, or other austerities which the Rule prescribes, but follow the practice and diet of other good Catholics, so as not to cause inconvenience to those with whom they may chance to be. In the house, some farther austerities and mortifications or humiliations are prescribed, besides what have been here named; but these are the principal features of their conventual life—the rest will soon be learnt in practice. From what has been said, we may gather that while at home they spend about five hours every day in the choir, singing the Divine Office, which they do according to the Roman Breviary and calendar, or in meditation. The lay brothers, who do not sing the Office, employ the time in reciting vocal prayers, visiting the Stations of the Passion, etc. Every priest in the Congregation says Mass daily. The rest receive communion at least two or three times a week. They all make a practice of going to confession every week, and frequently hold spiritual conferences in private with their directors. There is also a quarter of an hour every day assigned for spiritual reading in private for all priests and clerics. Each year the whole community makes a spiritual retreat, previous to the annual renewing of the vows, and two or three familiar sermons are preached in the choir every week by the superior or by some other priest appointed by him.

The above particulars, as will be easily seen, all regard the first end of the Rule, as before stated, that is, the personal sanctification of all the members of the Congregation.

We will now proceed to give a sketch of what they do for the sanctification of others. We will begin by noticing a few of the things practiced by other religious Orders which they do not do. They have no colleges for the education of seculars and have no young men or boys under their care, except those whom they receive as members of the Congregation. These, as has been said before, must be at least fifteen years old and have already learned Latin. The Passionists do not send out professors to teach in public schools or colleges. They do not preach lenten

sermons<sup>3</sup>, nor, except very rarely, do they preach panegyrics or any other stylish sermons; but they do give simple instructions to the people on Sundays and holy days in their own churches or in others, if called to do it by the lawful pastors. Generally, they do not undertake the cure of souls by themselves, but endeavor to assist the parish priest of the place where any of their houses are established, by teaching Christian doctrine, hearing confessions, etc. Hitherto, in England, it has been necessary that they should take on the care of the congregations where they have houses; but where this is not done, their priests are always ready to instruct and hear the confessions of all persons who resort to their churches or chapels. They also receive priests or laymen in their houses for any length of time, not exceeding a fortnight, if they wish to retire and go through a course of spiritual exercises under their direction, provided the persons be known to them or be recommended by some lawful authority.

The principal means, however, employed by the Passionists for the spiritual good of others, is giving missions and retreats, whether to public gatherings in towns or in country places, to religious communities, to colleges, to seminaries, to any number of the clergy assembled for the purpose, or, as is sometimes done, to a number of persons of some particular class of society sufficient to compose an audience, to whom they would address instructions suited to their state in life. This is their proper calling and principal occupation during the entire year; and for this reason it would be wished that they should not have the care and responsibility of any particular congregation, so that they might be free at all times to go wherever they are called; but in the present circumstances of this country, it may easily be understood that it would not be possible for them to decline this charge. To these missions or retreats they go either one or more at a time, according to the circumstances of the case. For a regular mission there ought to be at least two priests able to preach and hear confessions. We abstain from entering here on a full detail of how these missions are to be carried on. For in many things they must vary according to circumstances; and it has been found difficult hitherto to carry out in this country, to its full extent, the system observed by our missionaries in Italy. In general they accommodate themselves to the practice of other missionaries; giving instructions to the people on the manner of observing the laws of God and of the Church; how to prepare themselves for the reception of

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<sup>3</sup> These sermons were called *quaresimali* sermons in Italy.

the sacraments, especially those of penance and the Eucharist; suiting the style of their instructions to the wants and character of their hearers in different localities. There is also a sermon on each day of the mission on one or other of the great topics of our religion, as on the last end of man, mortal and venial sin, death, judgment, etc., and every day they give a meditation and plain instruction on the Passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In some form or other this last subject must invariably be introduced, both in public missions and in private retreats. The treating on this subject belongs in a peculiar manner to the missionaries of this Congregation, who, as their very name of Passionist indicates, are obliged to promote, to the utmost of their power, a tender devotion towards the Passion of our Redeemer. In regular missions, besides the meditations on the Passion, there are given every morning to the people short and plain instructions on how to meditate on this great subject by themselves. In private retreats, the first thing in the morning is the meditation on the Passion, after which, during the day, are given one or two instructions suitable to the class of persons who form the audience; and in the evening another meditation on some of the subjects which we named above when speaking of the evening sermons in a mission. The length of time occupied in one of these sermons or instructions is from three quarters of an hour to an hour. The time which is not taken up with preaching is employed in hearing confessions, or in spiritual conferences with such persons as desire them. We may observe that Passionists are enjoined by their Rule to avoid charging themselves with the particular direction of souls, excepting the members of their own Congregation. They are also warned against using any influence or giving advice to people about their wills and legacies; but they are more particularly and strictly forbidden, either directly or indirectly, to induce any person to make grants or legacies in favor of their Order; they are, on the contrary, as much as possible to dissuade them from doing it. Passionists, as we before said, must be always poor if they would hope to prosper and enjoy God's blessing; and consequently they should accustom themselves to abhor, as they would a heavy curse upon their Order, the thought of becoming rich, either individually or in common. They should put before themselves, as the only reward of their labors, that which they hope for in departing this life – a place in God's heavenly kingdom. The Passionists make no particular vow, like that of the Jesuits, to be ready to go on foreign missions among infidels or wherever His Holiness the Pope may send them; but their Rules enjoin them to be thus ready at the disposal of the Holy See or of the

Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Accordingly, they have missionaries, a bishop in Bulgaria, and other missionaries in Australia.

They are also commanded by the Rule to conform themselves with the greatest deference to the wishes of the bishops or ordinaries in whose dioceses or districts their houses are situated. These are to be served first, in preference to any other persons; though when not employed by the ordinary of the diocese in which they live, they are ready to obey the call of other bishops or ordinaries who may desire their services, as is often the case. In a word, they profess to serve everybody and to be served by none; and it is their duty to act up to their profession as closely as they can. With the help of God they will never refuse to labor in the Lord's vineyard, though the place to which they are called be the poorest and meanest of all, and the people whom they have to deal with be the most thankless and intractable, or though they have to expose their lives by attending on those infected with pestilential diseases. In short, let them only be called by proper authority and they are to be ready for all things, remembering the example of the Good Shepherd, whose servants they are, who laid down His life for His sheep.

What has been said will give some idea of the nature and spirit of the order instituted by the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, whose Life now for the first time appears in English; and we have thought these details on the subject would form a suitable introduction, or, as they might perhaps more appropriately be styled, a suitable appendage to this work. The same holy man also founded an Order of nuns, whose manner of life is quite analogous to that of the Passionist religious men. As, however, an establishment of these nuns has not yet been formed in England, we refrain on the present occasion from saying any more about them, except to entreat those who may read these pages to pray for all the spiritual children of their venerable Father, that they may never lose the spirit and fervor of their first foundation.

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

Aston Hall, Feast of St. Matthew, September 21, 1847

## **THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **Of the Birth and Early Life of the Venerable Father Paul of the Cross**

Father Paul of the Cross, of blessed memory, was born in Ovada, a small town in the Diocese of Acqui, subject to the dominion of the Republic of Genoa. His father was Luca Danei, a native of Castellazzo of Monferrato, in the Diocese of Alessandria della Paglia, a descendant of the noble family of Danei, once one of the most distinguished of that beautiful city. We might here give his exact genealogy from the archives of the same town, if we had not determined simply to write a faithful recital of the life and actions of Father Paul, who always wished to conceal the rank and importance of his family, desiring only the treasures and ornaments of Christian virtue. His mother was Anna Maria Massari, a lady of respectable parentage, born in Roveriolo, a place which also was subject to the Republic of Genoa. They resided for some time in Castellazzo, the native place of Luca, but to escape from the turmoil and the grievous inconveniences of war which were then heavily pressing on the Province of Monferrato, as well as on other parts of Lombardy, they sought a more peaceful life in Ovada where our Paul was born. His happy parents lived in the holy fear of God, closely united in holy love with each other, and never gave to anyone cause for displeasure or complaint. Luca was a man of the highest integrity and purity of conscience, greatly given to the reading of those books from which he could best learn how to lead a Christian life, for which end the lives of the saints are above all particularly useful. His mother was yet more remarkably distinguished for the exercise of all the virtues proper for her state; she was held in high esteem by all who knew her, and was ever respected as a most pious and exemplary woman. Their means in consequence of various reverses had become much reduced, therefore Luca, not from any eagerness for gain, but to support himself and his family, had engaged himself in a small way of business; while Anna Maria applied herself to the care of the house. The less they abounded in earthly wealth, the richer were they in the treasures of grace. Understanding that they owed both themselves and their offspring to the sovereign Creator of all, they devoted their utmost care to the Christian education of the children with which God

had abundantly blessed them, to the number of sixteen boys and girls. Paul was the first to come into the world, and he received from God the earliest and greatest blessings that descended upon his family. His pious parents made it their rule that their children, as soon as born, should be washed in the waters of Holy Baptism, that they might speedily be born again to grace and might acquire a right to their heavenly inheritance. The baptism of Paul, however, by some accident, was deferred for some days, for he first saw the light on the 3rd of January, 1694, and was not baptized until the 6th of the same month. The infant received in baptism the names of Paul Francis, perhaps by a special dispensation of Providence, this infant being destined, when grown to full stature before God and man, to preach Jesus Christ crucified, like the Apostle St. Paul, and to awaken in the hearts of men the remembrance of the life-giving Redeemer, to which function, like the seraphic patriarch St. Francis, he was likewise marvelously chosen.

His good mother must clearly have perceived that the child which she had brought to light was endowed by our Lord with most special blessings, for during all the months of her pregnancy, she not only felt no load, nor annoyance, nor pain, but she experienced a wonderful lightness in her interior and a certain sweetness and fragrance on her palate, by which she was filled with consolation. At the birth of the infant, the whole room appeared vividly illumined by a marvelous flood of light, and bright refulgence, in comparison with which the lamps which were burning in it (for it was night) seemed to have no more light or brilliance – as though our Lord by this miraculous sign would indicate the brilliant rays which the child would so abundantly shed forth by the example of his sublime virtue. The tender infant, as if he possessed discernment even in his earliest days, took no milk except regularly every four hours, thus seeming to foresee the great abstinence he was to practice in the course of his life. Everyone can imagine how earnestly his mother desired to plant in this soul, which of itself gave such promising hopes, the seeds of all virtues as soon as it was capable of receiving them, and how carefully she watched over the precious treasure confided to her by her Heavenly Father. As this wise parent well knew how easy it is to be infected by the world, more especially in youth, she was accustomed to keep her children at a distance from mingling with others, and particularly from conversation with women, remarking that they too, although they ought to be mirrors of modesty, sometimes say things that ought not to be said. Hence she kept her children at home, under her own eyes, as so many young olive trees that were to be cultivated for the glory and service of God. She always,

however, sent them, when they had arrived at the proper age, to be instructed in catechism, that they might learn with other children in the House of the Lord to know Him well, so as to love Him and serve Him as they ought to do. Still, she believed this to be only a part of the duty of a good mother of a family. In addition, she herself repeated at home the truths of the faith and taught them the law of the Lord. In imitation of the mother of the wise man, who endeavored from the beginning to form her son by her instructions to virtue and holiness, the mother of Paul sought earnestly to imprint the holy fear of God in the souls of her children while yet tender. Her husband cordially approved of her tender solicitude and was delighted to see his offspring thus nourished with the milk of celestial wisdom. He added on his part this special advice to his sons, that they should never gamble and should refrain from bearing arms. As on the one hand he knew how much injury is caused by gambling and the use of arms, and on the other how easily such bad habits are acquired, he would not allow them on any account to touch cards nor to carry arms even for the chase.

In this school of virtue and of the holy fear of God, the child Paul speedily displayed the docility and candor of soul with which he had been enriched by God. His good parents, who watched over the education of their family, but especially his mother, must have worked with all possible affection and earnestness for their son, that with his growth in age he might grow also in grace and virtue according to his capacity. This pious woman lost no opportunity of rendering him better and better by her care. She used holy expedients of all sorts to draw his tender soul to virtue, taking advantage of the most insignificant occurrences to give him useful admonitions under a pleasing form and to stimulate him to virtue with discretion and address.

Thus, when she desired to put his hair in order, if ever the annoyance or the pain made him cry, as children will do, she would recount to him the lives of the ancient holy anchorites; and as she kept her heart in close union with God, she told these things with so much grace and devotion, that the little Paul was quickly tranquillized and ceased to weep because of the consolations which these little recitals gave him, which perhaps was an omen of the great love which he afterwards had for a retired and solitary life. Because this good mother was acceptable to God, and her virtues were of that pure gold which can bear the severest tests, our Lord, in order to refine and perfect these virtues and to enrich them with new merit, gave her great occasions of suffering by which she was enabled to prove herself a truly valiant woman and a

faithful imitator of our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Besides the inconveniences these excellent people endured from being away from their own native place with diminished income, Anna Maria, with the burden of a very numerous family, was almost always ill. Still was she ever united with the most holy will of God; she kept herself humble, devout, and retired. What ought most to be esteemed, amidst so many trials, is that never was there heard from her mouth a word of complaint or impatience. When she found herself most strongly tempted to anger, she would conquer herself and repress all its violence, only saying to her children, "May God make you all saints." With the example of so virtuous a partner, by the reading of good books, and the exercise of holy prayer, her husband Luca also endured with great resignation and patience the inconveniences of his difficult circumstances and his other trials, accepting them all from the loving hand of God. By suffering like a Christian, in silence and peace, there increased within him at the same time an affection for the cross and a love towards our most sweet Redeemer; so that this truly virtuous man conceived so ardent a desire to die for our Lord, that he would willingly have offered his life in the midst of torments for the confession of his faith. How sincere were these desires, and how great was his love of God, from which alone they could spring, was clearly proved by the noble acts of fraternal charity with which he crowned his life and met a precious death. After Paul had left home and was employing himself in assisting the sick in the Hospital of St. Gallicano, as we shall relate in its proper place, his father Luca, we know not by whose fault, met one day with a sudden fall which terminated fatally. No sooner had he fallen than his first thought and greatest care seemed to be the defense of him who was the occasion of his death. There happened to be near him one of his sons, by name Joseph. He charged him, before all things, freely to forgive the person who had unintentionally caused his fall and to beware of entertaining any bitterness or aversion towards him. With these pious and holy sentiments he prepared himself for death. His poor wife, who in losing her husband lost so virtuous a companion and so edifying a model, and at the same time the principal support of her numerous family of all their kindred, must doubtless have felt an indescribable grief; but conquering by virtue all the feelings and the weakness of nature, she continued immovable on her knees at the foot of the bed, recommending to God the soul of her dying husband, and remained thus until he expired. She survived her pious consort many years, and always persevered in her exemplary course of life, until the time arrived for her to go, as we



hope, to receive the reward of her truly Christian life. In her last moments, as the priest who attended her was repeating to her the most holy name of Jesus, to which she had always a singular devotion, she omitted not to bow her head, dying as she was. Having done so twice, at the third effort she placidly expired. As soon as Paul heard of his mother's death, he wrote a letter which may serve as an attestation of her holiness, no less conclusive than it was sincere.

“May the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ be ever in our hearts.

“Most dearly beloved in Jesus Christ,

“I have received your letter, from which I learn the happy and holy death of our good mother. Nature has paid its tribute by making us feel some little touch of sorrow, though this has been sweetened by our seeing in the blow the Divine Will, which can choose nothing but the best. In all our three retreats Mass has been sung and the entire Office for the dead recited, and we three still continue to offer Mass for the soul of so good a mother, though we have a lively confidence that she has no further need of these suffrages, since it appears to us impossible to doubt that our good God has already received her into the bosom of His infinite mercies in the paradise of the blessed. Thus we should all rejoice, that, after so many trials suffered by her with so much constancy, patience, and resignation, she is now enjoying for all eternity the fruit of her many virtues through the infinite merits of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, and that we ourselves are so happy as to have her for our advocate in the celestial kingdom. By her holy example and fervent admonitions, she ever endeavored, while she was in this valley of tears, to set us forward and to stimulate us all to run in the path of perfection and sanctity. It remains for us never to forget her holy instructions and example, and to imitate her constant devotion, patience, and resignation, so that we may one day sing with her the mercies of God in that great kingdom of glory.”

With the pious education which we have described, Paul grew up and from his earliest years he gave the best indications of his future character, showing thus early an inclination for devotion and retirement. Averse to childish sports, he spent his time with particular pleasure in making little altars with his brother John Baptist, who continued as his faithful companion until his death. They used to kneel before a devout image of the Infant Jesus, formed in wax, which they had procured for the purpose. Such acts are generally signs of a pious disposition and of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state. Amidst these practices of dawning piety, Paul and his brother

John Baptist never ceased to venerate, to the best of their power, the Queen of Heaven, the loving protectress of us all. And this mother of grace and affectionate patroness failed not to show how acceptable to her were their acts of innocent homage, and how lovingly she watched over the two little brothers, her clients.

One day, from that want of caution common among boys, they fell into the river Tanaro and were in great danger of being drowned. Suddenly there appeared a most beautiful and lovely lady, who, benignly extended them her hand and delivered them from the water and from death, thus giving them a marvelous proof of the care which she then and ever afterwards took of them.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **How He Devoted Himself to a Life of Exalted Perfection**

As the young Paul increased in age, moved by divine grace as though he was determined to place a fence around his innocence in order to guard it safely and water it abundantly at the fountain of divine benedictions, he commenced leading a most austere life, entirely dedicated to prayer and union with God. He seldom slept in a bed, so that his sister, who observed the manner of life of her virtuous brother, solemnly deposed on her oath that she generally found his bed in the morning in the same state as it had been made up and left the day before. She proceeded to question him to know where he slept, but the good youth, who desired no other witness of his mortifications than his God, refused to answer and modestly bowing his head preserved his secret. His sister suspected the truth and afterwards clearly discovered that Paul passed the night in the granary, with her other brother John Baptist, for she often saw them go up to this place in the evening, and likewise observed that there upon some planks were placed a few bricks with a crucifix. Hence, she had reason to conclude that the two boys slept upon these bare boards, and that the bricks served them for pillows. Nor was the good sister deceived in her conjectures, for besides her depositions on the subject, we are assured in the Processes that Paul slept but little and on bare boards with stones and bricks under his head, often meditating on the bitter pains of Jesus who in his extremist agony had no other bed than the hard wood of the cross. After a short rest, accompanied with so much discomfort, they resolved when it was bitterly cold to commune

alone with God. And as they knew that prayer is a sacrifice so much the more acceptable in proportion as it is attended with mortification and penance, these fervent youths made use of the discipline, and with what severity they chastised themselves is known to God alone, to Whom they offered their bodies as living holocausts in order to find grace and acceptance in His sight. There is no doubt that their good mother was aware of it, and with tears of tenderness and compassion told their sister that she had heard them practicing this mortification. Their father Luca Danei, also found them one day disciplining themselves with strips of leather made into a scourge. Seeing how severely they were striking themselves, he could not resist exclaiming, “How now, are you going to kill yourselves?” So great was the violence of the stripes. But particularly the blows which Paul inflicted on himself were so many and so hard, that John Baptist, although scarcely less fervent, was several times constrained to take the discipline from his brother’s hand in order to save him from fainting. Thus did these chosen souls dispose themselves to be more and more perfectly united with God, the sweetnesses of whose Spirit they already began to taste in great abundance. Inflamed daily with new desires of the Sovereign food, they used to spend many hours in prayer.

In order to find time for this, more free and undisturbed, our Paul used to rise two or three hours before daylight, and retiring in secret into a little room would pour forth his heart before God. He thirsted so eagerly after this fountain of life, that all the time which remained over and above what was employed in studies suited to his age, he gave to holy prayer in hidden parts of his father’s house. But as he well knew that the Church is the throne of the divine mercies which God has set up among men, and the chosen spot for holy prayer, he there passed as many hours as possible assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, reciting the Divine Office with the priests in the choir, or silently meditating. All his chaste delight he found in remaining in the house of the Lord, as we learn from the deposition of an excellent religious who was an educated person, his contemporary and eyewitness of his conduct. He declared that if any wished to find him, it was in the church he must look for him. During the time which he thus spent in the house of God, so great was his exterior recollection and devotion that it might serve for edification to all who beheld him. Amongst others he was observed by the Countess Canefri, who happened to be at Castellazzo, passing there some of the summer months with her noble family. This pious lady frequented the Church of San Martino in that place, and there almost always noticed a youth

close to a pillar, kneeling upon the ground, immoveable in prayer. Being anxious to know who this young man was, she enquired from the sacristan and was informed that he was one of the sons of Luca Danei, that is, our Paul. The good Countess was greatly edified, and that same morning upon her return home, desiring that others should share the spiritual consolation which this sight had afforded her, she related the circumstance during dinner to the Count, her husband, and being a person of great discernment, she declared her conviction that this youth must be forming resolutions of no ordinary virtue.

Hence it is evident that the devotion with which Paul prayed in church was something very singular, not like that of others. Seeing it enabled this pious Countess to perceive the holy designs which he was forming. The lively faith with which he contemplated the house of God, the tender love and piety he cherished towards his Heavenly Father, and the zeal with which he was inflamed for the Divine glory would not suffer him to witness in others profanations of God's house and offenses to the Divine Majesty without being deeply wounded at heart. If he happened to see any persons talking in church, he would reverently go and kneel before them and with all humility beg them to observe more respect in the house of the Eternal God. By these, his lengthened communings with our Lord, who is Himself a holy fire of love which burns away every imperfection and transforms into itself whoever approaches it, as it is written, "The Lord our God is a consuming fire," the devout reader may well conceive that the soul of the young Paul was daily more and more purified from all failings, and that there were kindled in him new desires and inflamed longings to please God even more and more. It was easy to perceive the great profit which he drew from remaining so much with his God; for his words, his looks, and his whole bearing breathed that modesty which makes the exterior of a man a means of instruction and edification. Thus, daily burning with fresh love towards God, he cherished a most ardent desire to convert souls to Him and to inspire them with fervor in His holy service. He therefore chose some young companions with whom he would converse on holy things when walking out together; this he did with great ardor and singular profit, so that these good youths led a most virtuous and edifying life.

The virtue of one of them was put to a dangerous proof by a licentious woman, who, as is related by the servant of God, met the young man alone in an unfrequented road and basely tempted him to evil. The good youth, in his horror and disgust at her infamous proposal,

promptly cut off a great piece of a bramble bush with which he began severely to whip the unhappy creature and punished her as she deserved for her boldness and impudence. Of so much advantage to the young is frequent and pious discourse with a devout companion! In order that they might relish the loveliness of God, and thus be confirmed more and more in the paths of Christian virtue, our Paul, with wonderful skill and sweetness, taught them the method of conversing with God in prayer, and an easy, safe, and direct way to arrive in a short time at great holiness. Seeing that some were called by our Lord to a more perfect state by his persuasions, he induced them to abandon the world and to become religious. Six of his companions took the habit of the Servites of Mary, some others joined the Augustinian Friars, and four became Capuchins. The young Paul, however, gave his most frequent instructions in his father's house to his brothers and sisters. He taught them often to reflect on the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, towards which he entertained even from that time a most tender devotion. He used sometimes to take them to his room, and there read some devout book to inspire them with love for the Divine Mysteries, which are the fountains of all grace. His words must have been most efficacious, because it was evident that he himself was penetrated with compassion for our most amiable Redeemer, the impression of whose suffering he so deeply bore in his heart.

On Fridays, when a special remembrance is made of the death of our Lord, Paul, when at table, instead of eating would do nothing but weep. If he asked for a piece of bread, he begged it as an alms for the love of God from his sister, though he himself was master of what little property they then possessed, as being heir to one of his uncles, deceased, as we shall mention shortly. Of the bread thus begged he took but very little. His drink on this day was gall mixed with vinegar. In order to conceal this from the domestics, he imitated the simplicity of the ancient anchorites, and drank from a little gourd made into a bottle, which he kept with great jealousy hidden from everyone. The family did not perceive this extraordinary mortification, but his sister clearly made out what kind of drink this was by seeing him one day returning home with a bladder full of ox's gall. She asked him what he intended to do with it, but she could get no answer from her humble brother, so she had good reason to believe that this gall tempered with vinegar was his Friday's beverage. Of this we are also assured by another testimony, which says, that "in memory of the life-giving and most holy passion, he drank every Friday a draught of gall mixed with vinegar." He had besides this another little earthen bottle in which he kept gall for the same

purpose. As long as he lived at home, this never fell into the hands of his relations because he took great care to conceal it; but after his departure, his sister one day, while busy in some work about the house, knocked it with a broom and broke it in pieces. It was hardly broken, when (a fact truly miraculous) an unusual fragrance spread through the room and was perceived by her and by others of the family. The devout sister gathering up the pieces, closely examined them, and observed that they were still stained with the gall which her fervent brother was in the habit of keeping in them. Edified by this new proof of the mortification of Paul, she desired that her aunt, a choir nun in the Monastery of St. Augustin in Castellazzo, of the name of Sister Rosa Maria, should share her consolation and astonishment. She therefore carried to her a fragment of the broken vessel that she might also enjoy this wonderful sweet odor. Thus did Almighty God make known how acceptable to him was this self-denial and mortification practiced by the young Paul in memory of the Passion of his Son. By these holy exercises Paul reached such a height of perfection that he was already considered and venerated as a saint, and at the sight of him people used to exclaim, "Here is the saint!" If the servant of God came in the way of a circle of young persons assembled together, and he often did so on purpose to ask them of what they were talking, at the first sight of him, or as soon as they heard his voice, they were so inspired with respect and awe that they would tremble for fear. Paul turned to advantage the influence which Almighty God gave him over the souls of others. He zealously labored and finally succeeded in putting an end to the wicked abuse of young men going about singing during the night, and through his persuasions this bad custom was abandoned. From that time nobody dared to go about singing and playing at night, which they used previously to do with so much danger and scandal, as must be the consequence of bad customs of this kind. It must indeed have been evident to all at Castellazzo, but especially to the young, how much it was to their advantage to obey this servant of God, by the fatal end of one ill-conditioned youth who would not yield to his loving persuasions. His name was Damiano Tarpone. While engaged in bringing about a reconciliation between him and another youth, Paul had strongly cautioned him against going up and down at night, telling him that if he did he would be killed. A few months afterwards, Damiano, despising or not heeding the words of Paul, went to the town of Frascano to see a certain young woman with whom he was madly in love. One night while he was rambling about, as is the custom with young men of bad habits, he was slain, as Paul had predicted, and found

dead in a meadow near the Bormida. To another youth who lived but little in the fear of God, he foretold with equal clearness that he would die when he least expected it. The father of the young man, who suffered greatly from the ingratitude and ill conduct of his son, requested Paul to give him a good admonition and remind him of the respect he owed his parents. The servant of God sent for the youth, charitably reproved him for his faults, and endeavored to persuade him to ask pardon of his father, in order to compensate in some measure by this act of humiliation for the injuries he had done him. "Ask pardon of my father!" said the wayward young man. "No, indeed!" Paul replied, "You will not ask your father's pardon, do you say? In a short time you will die." The prediction was soon followed by the punishment, for in a few days the young man died, though he had not only youth in his favor but had been also in perfect health.

To give His faithful servant still more influence for the benefit of souls, Almighty God, even at the time we speak of, communicated to him the gift of discerning spirits and enlightened him clearly to know the consciences of others. Sometimes when with sinners, He caused him to smell a horrible and unnatural stench and to indicate the foul and hideous crimes with which they were infected. Enlightened by this lively sense of the needs of different consciences, and burning with desire for his neighbor's salvation, he used to disclose in private, first to one, then to another, his secret faults, saying with certainty, "Brother, you have committed such a sin; go to confession." He would then instruct such a person in order to facilitate his worthy approach to the sacraments, and would finally send him to some enlightened director that the minister of God might with charity and skill heal the wounds of the poor soul. Such was the great good which, even at that time, Paul used to do, and such was the tenor of life he observed while still a secular – a conduct, as everyone must see, calculated to draw his soul to an intimate union with God and to pave the way to sublime perfection.

When he was grown old, one day, in a sad and melancholy tone, said to his confessor, "Ah! It appears to me I have mistaken the road; if I had remained a secular perhaps I should have been saved." Continuing the conversation he added, "I used to spend at least seven hours of the day and night in prayer and other devout exercises. The mornings of feasts I used to rise very early and attended a confraternity of which I was a member. When this was over, I went to the principal church, where, according to the usual custom, the Most Holy Sacrament was exposed, and I there remained at least five hours on my knees. I then went to take a little refreshment, after

which I came to Vespers. After Vespers I walked out in company with some devout youths, with whom I kept up pious conversations. After passing another hour in mental prayer I returned home.” So true it is that the servants of God, in the very moment when they are seeking to humble themselves and to condemn their own doings, through a particular dispensation of Providence, disclose things which could not be known in any other way.

His fervor, however, was not altogether satisfied, and he chose to employ himself in other good works, far more arduous and more repugnant to human nature. In imitation of Tobias, he would be the first to take up the most stinking dead bodies, which no one else would touch, and, placing them upon his shoulders, carry them to the cemetery, inviting others to follow his example. The tomb being then opened, he would sometimes, in company with a good companion, contemplate the moldering and putrid corpses enclosed within it, and, as though a great book of truth was set open before them, meditate so profitably on the vanity of earthly things that the young companion would generously abandon all earthly things and devote himself to a life of great fervor and penance. Paul, being subsequently elected prior of the Confraternity of St. Anthony, which met near his house, used to go to their meeting early on festival days. Dressed in the sack of the Confraternity, he used to address the brothers from the prior’s chair in a spiritual exhortation, teaching them the obligations of good Christians. So great was the grace with which he performed this holy exercise that persons used reciprocally to invite each other to go and hear him. In the afternoon he taught the boys catechism in the same church. These were the first fruits which he offered to God of his burning zeal for the salvation of souls, and this was the beginning of that life which he was subsequently to devote to the holy missions to which God called him.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **How He Depended Entirely upon the Guidance of the Director of His Conscience**

In undertaking the devout practices which we have related, Paul did not allow himself to be carried away by a youthful fervor or a capricious zeal, nor did he regulate his conduct by his own judgment, but, as he ever entertained a high opinion of the virtue and merit of obedience, he



placed himself entirely under the guidance of his parish priest. To purify his soul still farther, to receive more copious fruits from the sacrament of penance, when he had reached the age of nineteen years and a half, he chose to make a general confession. He had, as we have already shown, lived so far in great innocence and purity, and had always given edification without a shadow of bad example. Nevertheless, upon hearing one day an ordinary discourse by his pastor, he felt himself so moved to compunction, that he resolved to devote himself entirely to a life of perfection. He threw himself at the feet of the priest and made a confession of his whole life. So vehement was the grief and contrition which our Lord bestowed on him, that he was very near breaking his chest with a stone which he had brought with him on purpose, and with which he struck himself without mercy in detestation of his little faults, as if they had been the most enormous crimes. By the same worthy priest he allowed himself to be entirely guided, and he obeyed him with entire submission. This confessor was naturally austere and of a melancholy, discontented, and disagreeable temper. Hence, partly to excite Paul to virtue and partly from following the impulse of his own natural disposition, he used to give many mortifications to his young penitent, who took everything in good part. He used to make him go to the public confessional, and then would hear the confessions of all the rest of the people, who attended often in great numbers, not turning to him till after all the others. Then, as he was hearing him, he would say in a very rough tone, "Speak out, now." The humble penitent obeyed and confessed his sins in a few words; for, by the mercy of God, he had a tranquil conscience. When he approached the sacred table to receive Holy Communion, there, too, he had to look for some great mortification, for, sometimes when the concourse of people was very great, the priest, as he carried round the Holy Communion, to mortify him right well, would pass him over as if he had been a notoriously unworthy sinner. The poor youth felt this mortification to the quick, fearing the surprise it might create in the people, but taking all in peace and silence. Notwithstanding his great desire to communicate, Paul humbly submitted to this harsh treatment and never sought to receive by any other means.

Another time, when the servant of God had retired to the choir of the church, where, tasting the sweetness of God in prayer and shedding copious tears, he was keeping his face covered with his mantle to conceal the grace of devotion which he was receiving, his director, who knew how to avail himself of every occasion to mortify his penitent, seeing him thus recollected, violently

and angrily pulled his cloak off him and said with a severe countenance, "Is that the way you behave in church!" as if he had been guilty of some weighty fault, when uniting himself more fervently than usual with God.

When he accused himself of some such failing, as may be compared to dust, with which the most pure souls are soiled, the confessor did not lose the opportunity of mortifying him yet more sharply.

Having once observed the modesty and devotion of a certain person in church who, Paul had been told, was a soul of great virtue, it seemed to him afterwards that he had indulged his curiosity, though, after all, it was through a motive of devotion; he therefore mentioned it in confession to the same priest who scolded and reprovved him as harshly as if he had been guilty of some great crime. The trial, however, which put the obedience and submission of Paul to the severest test, was upon the following occasion, when his confessor, otherwise a grave and sensible man, seemed to out step the rules of wisdom and discretion. During the Carnival, when there was a little entertainment given in the priest's house, the servant of God happened to pass by the street on his way to church. As soon as the curate knew that Signor Danei was going past, he immediately called him, obliged him to come up stairs, and in an authoritative manner commanded him to dance. This he did, either to try the obedience of the youth or to mortify him by exposing his devotion to ridicule. One can easily imagine what were the young man's feelings at so unexpected and indiscreet a command; for, having his heart full of God, he must have experienced the very greatest repugnance to mixing in such vanities. Nevertheless, so highly did he esteem holy obedience, that he was preparing to comply in all simplicity, it being a case where his pure soul did not clearly discover sin. Our Lord, however, who ever protects those who seek Him with a pure intention and serve him with their whole heart, ordained that the musicians had hardly begun to play when all the strings of their instruments were broken. This unlooked-for extraordinary accident rendered the curate more prudent. He allowed the young man to take his leave and dismissed him in peace.

Although Paul was treated with so much harshness, and we may almost say with so much indiscretion by his director, he never left him. It is true the enemy of all good suggested to him to go to another, but he constantly replied, "No, this is the confessor for me, as he makes me bow down my head."

The parish priest, after having assisted him for some time, himself judged it better to put him into other hands, that he might be more helped forward in the interior paths of sublime perfection to which he was called by God. Paul then placed himself under the guidance of a new confessor, who knowing his purity of conscience and close union with God, made him communicate every day. Paul humbly obeyed, but approached the holy table first in one church and then in another, desiring to hide himself from the eyes of men, that he might be dearer in the eyes of God. It is not precisely known who this confessor was, but from what can be gathered from the Processes, we may conclude that he was Fr. Girolamo da Tortona, a Capuchin. Father John Baptist of Alexandria, ex-provincial of the Capuchins, deposes that after Father Girolamo had heard Paul's confession and directed him for some time, seeing that he was a man of the highest degree of contemplation and perfection, recommended him to another Capuchin, Father Columbano, a Genoese, a man full of the Spirit of God and endowed with a rare talent for the direction of souls. Paul professed himself under deep obligations for the aid which this most worthy religious afforded him, instructing and animating him to work courageously in the way of the Lord. Afterwards, perhaps because he could no longer enjoy the assistance of the above-mentioned Father Columbano, he placed himself under the direction of the canon penitentiary of Alexandria. What kind of man this ecclesiastic was may be best learnt from the words of Father Paul himself, who thus writes in one of his letters, "I have to inform you that two other ecclesiastics have joined us; and my former confessor, who is the grand penitentiary of our Cathedral of Alexandria, who used to direct my poor soul when I was a secular, sends me from Lombardy four other subjects examined by himself. I can safely trust this learned servant of the most High."

No small discomfort and mortification, however, did this direction cost our pious youth. He had in the first place to walk nearly four miles to see his director. When arrived at Alexandria, the penitentiary would make him wait entire mornings, nor had he a chance of an audience until all the female penitents had been heard. Paul used freely to open his heart to him and disclose all the lights and graces which our Lord conferred upon him in prayer. But the canon, either from caution or in order to try him, chose not to value such gifts. He would even answer him with reprehension and reproofs; and having planned in his own mind a method of direction for him, according to the way by which perhaps he himself walked, he appeared as if determined to lead

Paul by a path quite different from that to which he was called by God, as he ordered him to choose for the subject of his meditations sin, death, judgment, hell, and heaven. The servant of God, with perfect obedience, would set himself to make his meditation according to his director's injunction upon sin, saying to himself, for example, "Consider, O my soul, that sin offends God," etc. Our Lord, who takes such delight in docile and truly mortified souls, would, in reward for his obedience, illumine his heart with a vivid ray of interior light, so that he could not continue forming reflections upon sin, but his soul, taking flight, was raised to sublime contemplations of heavenly things. The same happened whenever he attempted, from holy obedience, to meditate upon the four last things. When he came to the reflection on Paradise, he was more than ever wrapped up in God, and, among other things, he heard our Lord saying to him with a very clear internal voice, "My son, in Paradise one of the blessed will not be united with me as one friend is to another, but as iron penetrated by the fire." And here he heard "secret words which it is not granted to man to utter."

As he enjoyed such familiar converse and so intimate a union with God, it is not wonderful that the general esteem in which he was held was always increasing, particularly among the young, in whose eyes the presence of the servant of God came to be so venerated. If they only saw him approaching from a distance, while they were conversing on anything not good, they would be quite confused and say one to another, "Let us be off; here comes the saint." Thus does he who is united with God diffuse around him the sweet odor of holiness, which is communicated to him by God Himself, as our Lord once interiorly said to Paul, "Son, do this to please Me, for the fruit of good example will follow in consequence." Paul, however, though in such constant exercise of virtue, did not think himself secure in the midst of dangers, but avoided, as much as was in his power, all occasions of sin. He especially kept aloof from the company of women and showed a great aversion to conversation with them. He never spoke with anyone alone, never even looked at them. He fled from them as from fire, and charity alone could bring him to talk with them. It was this charity of his which induced him, while still a young secular, to take home with him one day two poor French women who were heretics. From the desire he had of their conversion, he did all he could to serve them, and our Lord in part satisfied the desire of this servant, for one of them embraced the true faith and was subsequently placed by his means in the asylum of Santa Maria of Alexandria. Except on similar occasions,

when charity induced him to converse with women for their good, he avoided them as much as possible in order to preserve that serenity of mind and unsullied purity of heart with which he pressed forward in the holy service and love of God.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **How He Renounced an Honorable Marriage, and Gave up the Inheritance Left Him by His Uncle the Priest, with Other Property Which Was Offered Him**

While Paul was thus endeavoring daily to detach himself more and more from things of earth, in order to unite himself still closer with God, his uncle, who was a priest, desiring to see him happily settled in the married state, had, without giving him the least intimation, negotiated an honorable connection for him with a young lady endowed with every good quality. Nothing more was necessary than that Paul should see her who had been thus destined by others to become his wife, and that he should give his consent to the arrangement. When, however, the affair was mentioned to him, he could not be persuaded in any way to entertain his uncle's proposal; for the servant of God had very different designs in view and was determined at all costs to preserve his purity unsullied. His uncle, taking, perhaps, too great advantage of the influence which he possessed over the mind of his nephew, pressingly insisted that he should agree to his wishes; and others of his family, who hoped by an advantageous marriage to raise the fallen fortunes of their house, joined in most earnestly persuading him to comply. Pressed on all sides and hardly knowing how to escape, Paul had no other refuge than recourse to the Almighty, who knows how to unloose the most complicated bonds. Meanwhile, however, he could not avoid going to the young lady's abode with his uncle, who had determined that there the contract of marriage should be finally settled by his nephew.

But this was just the conjuncture to see repeated the example of Saint Francis de Sales, when placed in a like perplexing and difficult position. The modest youth did not so much as raise his eyes while in the presence of his chosen bride. His uncle still persisted in his efforts. The servant of God, upon his return home, had recourse by fervent prayer to the Divine Goodness to free him from this most trying difficulty. Our Lord most speedily granted his request, but in a manner he

little expected. Not long afterwards his uncle fell sick and died, and thus was Paul freed from his importunities. It is true that in order to facilitate the execution of this marriage contract, this priest had left him the heir of all his property; but Paul, who, in comparison with the treasures of chastity and virginity, esteemed as dirt all the goods of the earth, generously renounced before the vicar of the place the proposed legacy, only reserving for himself a breviary to recite the Divine Office. After which, turning to the crucifix with deep interior fervor of heart and tears of love, he exclaimed, “My crucified Lord, I protest that of all this inheritance I desire but this breviary, because You alone are sufficient for me, my God and my all!”<sup>46</sup> The executors of the will wished to give him a new suit of clothes, in order to fulfil the intention of the testator who had so directed. They were already taking steps to provide some becoming cloth, but Paul refused to accept them, contenting himself with being clothed for charity with a dress of coarse cloth, which just sufficed for his decent covering. In proportion, however, as he for love of holy poverty refused what was offered for his own person, so much the more did he from charity and compassion desire all to be given to the poor, because in them he recognized by a lively faith the person of Jesus Christ Himself. Hence he was often seen offering them alms on his knees with great humility.

While Paul was thus advancing in virtue by the means of so many pious exercises, all of which drew him towards God and more intimately united him with the Divine Majesty, it happened that the Serene Republic of Venice was raising a large army to send against the Turks. In the fervor of his devotion, desiring to wage war against the enemies of our holy faith, Paul enrolled himself as a volunteer. But Divine Providence had destined His servant to fight in another sort of warfare against vices and crimes. And so, one day, as Paul, now a soldier, was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, exposed for the forty hours’ adoration, our Lord made him understand by a clear inspiration that He called him elsewhere. He therefore left the army, and on his way home, when passing through Piedmont at a place called Novello, he was entertained by a gentleman and his wife, who conceived such an affection and esteem for him in consequence of his many good qualities and rare virtues, that, having no children themselves, they were minded to make him heir of all they possessed.

Paul, however, esteemed not earthly riches, and willingly renounced all to live more entirely for Jesus Christ. He, therefore, returned home and continued the same austere manner of life we

have already described. In his severe mortifications he found great support from frequenting the Holy Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, each communion serving him as a preparation for the next. His innocent soul experienced so lively a desire to be united to our Savior sacramentally, that, afterwards he used to say to his confessor, “In those early years, our Lord caused me to hunger for two things, for Holy Communion and for suffering.”

Although we have hitherto beheld Paul always occupied in works of piety and other exercises disconnected with literature and study, we must not think that he passed his life without attending to the cultivation of his mind. God had endowed him with a good mind, much penetration, and a capacity for acquiring all kinds of knowledge. When he was still quite young, he was placed by his father under a master in Cremolino, a town not very far from his own home. He made as much progress as could be expected at such an age and in such a school. Free from the tumult of passion, with a serene mind and a tranquil heart, he continued always to read and reflect seriously, and thus acquired that happy method of expressing himself with propriety and persuasively, and with that unaffected, pious eloquence which ever afterwards characterized his discourses.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **How Our Lord Inspired Him with the Design of Founding the Congregation of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ**

Almighty God, who delights to employ such instruments for His glory as appear in the eyes of men the most unsuitable, had, in His special mercy, chosen our Paul to found a poor Congregation, which, by word and example should labor to awaken in the faithful the remembrance of the suffering Jesus, and imprint deep in their hearts a great devotion to His most bitter passion and most painful death.

The young Paul was leading a life thus detached from the world, recollected and devout, when Almighty God began to make known to him the general outline of the work for which He principally intended him, and the manner of life which he was to lead until his death.

The most holy will of God was in part declared to him by the means of an excellent nun of

Alexandria, who sometimes said to him, “God has given me to understand that He expects great things from you.” At other times, while in prayer, our Lord used to show him a black tunic, but He did not then explain the mystery of it. After these first lights, which formed, as it were, the rough draft of the future holy work, it pleased God, at length, to reveal to His servant the whole plan, in a wonderful manner which will be best related in his own words, which were, by way of an introduction to the original Rules, written in his own hand. In this place he had, in obedience to an injunction of his director, to give some account of his undertaking and of his most holy purposes. Thus we come to the knowledge of what it had pleased the Divine Wisdom to bring about. Blessed be the Name of Jesus!

“I, Paul Francis, a most miserable wretch and great sinner, the least of the servants of the poor of Jesus, about two years after my most loving God had converted me to a life of penance, was passing along the coast of Genoa, towards the west, when I saw a little church upon a hill above Sestri, called la Madonna del Gazzo. Seeing it, my heart was moved with a desire for that solitude, but as I was then engaged in the charitable office of assisting my parents, I could never effect what I wished, but I always cherished this desire in my heart. However after some time (though I do not clearly remember the month nor the day) these constant inspirations to retire into solitude became more and more pressing, and my good God accompanied them with much sweetness of heart. It was about this time that I was moved to wear a black tunic of a stuff called *arbagio*, which is made of the coarsest wool to be found in those parts, to go barefoot, to live in the greatest poverty and, ultimately, by the grace of God to lead a life of penance. The desire I then conceived never left me. I felt myself more and more powerfully impelled, not so much to retire alone into that little church in particular, but simply to go into solitude, whether it was in that place or in any other, and this in order to follow the loving invitations of my God, who in His infinite mercy called me to leave the world. But as I could not then execute this holy inspiration on account of my services being needed at home by my father, mother, and brothers, I kept the above-mentioned vocation always concealed in my heart, except that I consulted over it with my Reverend Father Confessor. I did not know what God desired of me, and so I thought of nothing more than getting clear of my family affairs, that I might then retire into solitude. Almighty God, however, who in his infinite mercy expected something more of this poor worm that I am, never permitted me at that time to free myself. When I was on the very point of



breaking loose from all ties, new difficulties would arise, but my desires were always growing stronger. It was then that another inspiration came into my mind, and this was to assemble some companions that we might unite together in endeavoring to promote in the souls of others the holy fear of God, this being what I wished for the most; but this idea of gathering companions I did not attend to much, though it remained in my mind. Finally, in order not to be too diffuse, I will simply state how long these desires and inspirations lasted before they were followed by the light I am about to mention. I could not tell this with certainty, for I made no note of it. To speak about the mark, more or less, I would say about two years and a half. Then at the end of the following summer, I cannot recall the month or the day, because I have not written it down, but I know it was when the harvest was being gathered in, I had been to communion some week day in the Church of the Capuchins in Castellazzo, and I remember having been very recollected. Then I left the church to return home, and as I went I continued recollected as if in prayer. I was in a street about to take a turn close to home, when I was absorbed in God, in a state of most exalted recollection, with a forgetfulness of all around me and an exceeding great interior sweetness. At this moment I saw myself in spirit, clothed in black with a dress down to the feet, having a white cross on the breast, and under the cross was written the most holy name of Jesus in white letters! Then I heard said to me these very words, “This is a sign how pure and spotless that heart ought to be, which is to bear stamped upon it the most holy name of Jesus.” Seeing and hearing this, I began to weep and then the vision ceased. A little time after I saw in spirit the holy tunic offered to me, with the most holy name of Jesus and the cross all white, but the tunic black, I embraced it with jubilation of heart. Let the reader remark, that in seeing myself given this black tunic, I did not behold a corporal form, or anything like the figure of a man. No! What I saw was in God; that is to say that the soul knows that it is God because He makes it understand this by internal motions in the heart and by an infused intelligence in the mind, and this in a way so deep that it is most difficult to explain because that which the soul understands is so great that it cannot be expressed in word or writing.

“To be, however, better comprehended, I will relate a certain spiritual vision with which God in His infinite goodness has many times favored me, when He was preparing to send me some extraordinary trial. While in prayer, I used to see a scourge in the hands of God, and this scourge had lashes like a discipline, on which was written *Amor*. At the same instant God would raise my

soul to the most exalted state of contemplation and enlighten it to know that He intended to scourge it, but with love. My soul would run in haste to embrace the scourge, kissing it in spirit. When God in His infinite goodness has made me see this, in a short time some very remarkable tribulations have come upon me, and I knew for certain that they were to come because God used to give me, in my soul, an infused knowledge of them. I have written thus much in order to explain my meaning, and to declare (by the power of understanding which God gives me) that I hold as more certain what I see in spirit by the most exalted light of holy faith, than if I beheld it with my corporeal eyes. For these might impose upon me by some false apparition, but in the other case there is no danger, according to the knowledge which God gives me, seeing that I resign myself to the advice of my superiors, subjecting myself to whatever, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they shall tell me. When, therefore, I say that I have seen anything in the hands of God, I have not literally seen it, but my soul has a most exalted knowledge that it exists in Him who is infinite, and thus it happened to me in regard to the holy tunic. And further, let it be known that after my God has withdrawn me from the exercises of meditation, that is, from forming reflections in my mind upon the mysteries and passing from one point to another, I no longer see forms in my imagination.

“To proceed, then, with my account of the wonders which God did for me after these visions of the tunic with the most holy badge, he gave me a still greater desire and impulse to form an association of companions, and with the permission of holy Church, to found a Congregation entitled, The Poor of Jesus. After this God gave me an infused knowledge in my soul of the form of the holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus, and by me, his least and most unworthy servant, which by virtue of holy obedience I now will go on to write, with the grace of the holy Spirit.

“Let it be known, that the intention which God gives me in regard to this Congregation does not consist in anything but this, that is, in the first place, that we should perfectly observe the law of our good God, adding to this the perfect observance of holy, evangelical counsels, and particularly the total detachment from all created things and a strict practice of holy poverty, which is so necessary for the observance of the other counsels, and that we should maintain our fervor in holy prayer, be zealous for the honor of God, promote in the souls of others the holy fear of God, seeking to destroy sin, and, in fine, that we should labor indefatigably in holy works

of charity, so that our dear Lord may be loved, feared, served, and praised by all for ever and ever. Amen. *Blessed be the Name of Jesus.*

Here follow the Rules written by his own hand, in which were found the most exalted sentiments of deep respect and reverence towards the Mother of God, of great love for perfection, and of a most special devotion to the most blessed passion of Jesus Christ. The following are extracts from them:

“Ah! dearest brothers, recalling Friday to our mind is enough to cause the death of one who truly loves, because it is as much as to say this is the day on which my incarnate God suffered so much for me and then left His most holy life, dying upon the hard tree of the cross. And know, dearly beloved, that the principal intention of our being clothed in black, according to the particular inspiration which God has given me, is to wear mourning in memory of the Passion and death of Jesus in order that we may never forget to keep up within us a continual sorrowful recollection of them. Therefore, one of the Poor of Jesus should endeavor to lead all whom he can persuade to the pious contemplation of the torments of our most sweet Jesus.

“I, Paul Francis, a miserable wretch and great sinner, and most unworthy servant of the Poor of Jesus, have written this holy Rule, retired alone in the parish Church of San Carlo at Castellazzo, that retreat having been assigned me by his Lordship the Right Reverend Monsignor Gattinara, Bishop of Alexandria, during the first days after my receiving the habit. I began to write this holy Rule on the 2nd of December in the year 1720, and I finished it on the 7th of the same month. Before I wrote I said Matins, then applied myself to mental prayer, and then went full of courage and began to write. The enemy of souls did not fail to assault me by feelings of repugnance for this work, and also suggesting difficulties. But, as it was a good while since God had inspired me with the thought, and I was acting under obedience, I set myself to work, by the grace of God, without regard to anything. And be it known that, when I was writing, I went on as quickly as if somebody in a professor’s chair were there to dictate to me. I felt the words coming from my heart. Now I say this that all may know that I was herein particularly inspired by God, because, as far as regards myself, I am nothing but iniquity and ignorance. In all, however, I submit to the judgment of my superiors. May the most Blessed Sacrament be praised and honored upon all the altars in the world.

“Paul Francis, the most unworthy servant of the Poor of Jesus.”

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **How He Opened His Mind in Full Confidence to Monsignor Francesco Maria Gattinara, His Bishop, Who Approves His Spirit and Finally Clothes Him with the Habit of Austere Penance in Memory of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ**

Father Paul, in the direction of souls, as appears most clearly from his letters, always acted with great wisdom and sought that those whom he conducted should serve God in sincerity and truth, with due dependance on their spiritual superiors. He himself walked faithfully in the same path, never following his own opinion, but subjecting himself in all things to the judgment of men full of wisdom and discernment, that he might make sure of following the will of God. Whenever, therefore, he was about forming any extraordinary resolution, he used to multiply his prayers for the divine light, and he sought the counsel of persons noted for their union with God, their knowledge and experience. This plan he followed with more exactness when he had to make up his mind to embrace the state to which he thought himself called by God. He threw himself at the feet of Bishop Gattinara, a man most abundantly gifted with all the talents necessary for guiding souls and discerning the true movements of the Holy Spirit, and begged to be informed by him what was the most holy will of God.

We will here give the reader a short account of this illustrious prelate, to the end that he may better know how to appreciate the counsel and direction of the man, at whose command Paul undertook the work of God, and by whose advice he regulated his conduct as long as he was permitted to enjoy his instructions and holy conversation. Monsignor Francesco Maria Arboreo di Gattinara was born in Pavia, and having entered the illustrious Congregation of the Regular Clerks of St. Paul, commonly called Barnabites, he there completed his studies and became an excellent preacher. He was endowed with the talents requisite to make a true orator; his words were animated with a burning desire to draw souls to God. He spoke to the hearts of his listeners and touched them all the more effectually as he himself in preaching was wholly penetrated and moved with the truths which he announced and was often seen bathed in tears. The tears of Francesco Gattinara became quite proverbial, and the fruits of his sermons were visible upon the

most hardened sinners. In the management of affairs, to his singular prudence, he united such amiability and persuasiveness of manner as endeared him to all and ensured him success in all he undertook. Clement XI made him Bishop of Alexandria. In the government of his Church he was ever a watchful pastor, untiring in the exercise of his sacred ministry and in all the duties of a good bishop. He never spared himself when the honor of God was concerned. He was especially remarkable for the lively zeal with which he labored in the regulation of his diocese, but particularly of his clergy, who formed at once the most conspicuous and the most holy portion of it. Tenderly solicitous for all the wants of his flock, his charity seemed to know no bounds; he did all that he was able and he desired to do far more. His great art lay entirely in this, to gain the hearts of all, to do good to all, and by kindnesses to win the affections, even of the wicked. Benedict XIII, of blessed memory, aware of his uncommon merit, transferred him to the archbishopric of Turin, where he was received with demonstrations of extraordinary joy. His charity increased with his extended sphere of action. He seemed to think that all his property belonged of right to the poor; he spent all on them. Once, when the death of a certain person relieved him from the payment of a pension, he said that the gain was not to himself but to the poor. In fact, no one ever asked him for an alms in vain, and no one was ever in distress but the good archbishop, if he came to know of it, without being requested, would immediately relieve him liberally. He looked upon all pious institutions with an eye of special benevolence, and many of these experienced the abundant fruit of his great generosity. By his giving so freely, it sometimes happened that in a few months he had spent in alms a great part of his entire annual revenue. And in the year that he died, it was computed that from the month of January to the end of September he had distributed five thousand crowns of gold. Many persons used to wonder how he could afford such liberality; but he is always sufficiently rich who willingly relieves the distressed and has a lively confidence in God, who has declared Himself the loving Father of the poor. Ultimately, Bishop Gattinara was a true shepherd, who would have given not only his riches but his life for his flock. In fact, when his flock was in the greatest affliction, through the miseries of war, after conducting a solemn penitential on the 22nd of September, 1743, this tender pastor preached a discourse which breathed all the spirit of his devotion and manifested all the tenderness of his heart. Those who heard it were deeply moved, particularly at the conclusion, when, weeping as he was wont to do, he turned himself to God, and with great

feeling said that he offered himself for the safety of his people, imploring that if the Divine Justice was not yet appeased, it might discharge its blows upon the shepherd and spare the sheep. There was not one who listened to these words but felt himself irresistibly moved to love and gratitude, as each one most clearly understood that he was an object of his devoted love.

It would seem that our Lord graciously accepted this cordial and most generous offering. The effort which he made in speaking aggravated a complaint under which he was suffering before, that is, a rupture. He was obliged to take to his bed, and, in a few days, was too ill to leave it again. Inflammation having fixed on the part, he was brought to extremities and received the last sacraments with the greatest devotion. Comforted by his God under the most acute pains, he maintained an invincible patience and an unalterable serenity of mind, and repeated with great calmness, "Let us suffer willingly for the love of God." Those present, seeing him suffer so much and so cheerfully, were edified and touched and could not restrain their tears. At length, full of firm hope of possessing that God which he so eagerly desired, after a short agony, he gently breathed his blessed soul into the hands of his Creator on the 14th of October, 1743, at the age of eighty-five years, nine months, and one day.

Such was the chosen director of Paul, into whose hands he resigned himself the more willingly, as, at the same time, he was his bishop, so, while following his counsels and instructions, he was persuaded that he was following the very voice of God. In order to make a good beginning, and to give this holy prelate a clear knowledge of his interior, Paul began by accusing himself of his sins and making a general confession. He gave a faithful account of his past life and confided to him the lights with which he had been favored by God. The most prudent prelate listened attentively to the recital, and then ordered his penitent to relate to him from time to time all the communications which he received from our Lord. The devout youth obeyed and, having written several sheets of paper full, brought these to the prelate, who, reading them, and knowing that there were true lights imparted by God, who is truly the Father of lights, shed over them tears of tenderness and devotion. Nevertheless, acting as a man of caution and prudence, he chose to seek further assurance that the spirit and conduct of the devout youth were sound, and made him take counsel of the most pious and learned men who could be found in those parts. At last, no longer able to entertain a doubt of his divine vocation, he resolved to invest Paul with the black habit in memory of the Passion of our Lord, according to the idea

which the Almighty had Himself put before him.

The fervent young man, secure of being soon gratified in his holy desire, looked forward, as may be easily conceived, with inexpressible eagerness to the event he had so long sighed for, when he might, by the very form of his outward dress, declare that he renounced all things to live entirely for God. But, as great undertakings have generally to encounter great difficulties, it was not long before the spirit of Paul had a fierce battle to fight, which will be best described in his own words from a letter which he wrote to a devout youth, his penitent, in order to encourage him to follow his vocation to religion:

“Happy you, my dearly beloved, if you are faithful to fight and conquer, and if you do not care for the compassion of parents, but look steadfastly upon the Crucified, who invites you to follow him in so marked a way. He will be to you father, mother, and all. Oh! if you could but know the conflicts which I endured before embracing this sort of life which I follow, the great horror which the devil raised in me, my feelings of compassion for my relations! All their hopes, according to the world, were placed on me. Then came interior desolation, melancholy and fears. It appeared to me that I should not persevere. The devil tried to persuade me that I had been deceived, that I could serve God in some other manner, that this life would never suit me, and plenty of other fine things which I omit. The worst was, that all fervor of devotion had left me; I found myself dry and tempted in every sort of way; I began to detest the sound of bells; everyone appeared happy except me. I could never relate these great struggles I endured, and these assailed me more vehemently as the time of my clothing drew near to when I was to quit my poor home. This is merely the simple truth, but there is plenty besides which I cannot explain, and which I omit for brevity. Therefore, dear brother, take courage. ‘To him that overcomes, He will give the hidden manna and a new name.’”

This was permitted by our Lord who is wont to play lovingly yet teasingly with his servants, in order to try Paul’s fidelity, to strengthen his virtue, and to prepare him by these conflicts for more glorious victories. To these interior struggles was added an exterior suffering, and this was more definite, acute, and sensible. Scarcely had the bishop permitted him to put on the sacred habit, than he began to feel the greatest inconvenience from the cold. The very day that he returned from Castellazzo to Alexandria to put on the new habit, he experienced on the way before his clothing so great a cold, that he greatly feared he should not be able to endure it,

although he had previously been so hot, that he could hardly bear his shoes on. But he who follows faithfully God's voice conquers all; for God, when He calls us to a hard and austere life, does not fail to give the necessary strength to bear all the pains which it brings with it. Thus it was with Paul, for notwithstanding all the repugnance he was beginning to feel in following the will of God, he bought some coarse common cloth called *arbazio*, seeking it of that quality because he had seen that it was what was worn by the poor in Genoa. He caused it to be dyed black to make it like the tunic he had seen in the vision; and then he went on, preparing himself by great acts of virtue, for the clothing so long desired. He would have wished to be clothed on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his dearest mother and lady, that he might imitate on that same day the generous example which she left us of an entire consecration to God. But in that year, which was 1720, the Feast of the Presentation fell upon a Thursday. The following day was Friday, the day consecrated to the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. Paul thought it best to defer his clothing to Friday, which was the 22nd of the month. Having made all his preparations, he visited the churches of Castellazzo on the 21st; he had his hair cut off as though in attestation of his entire renunciation of the things of the world; he took leave of his friends; and he disposed himself with new fervor of spirit for the sacrifice he was about to make. The day following he set out for Alexandria, where he found the bishop was out of the town and not expected to return that day; but the servant of God asserted positively that he would return, as in fact he did. His lordship the bishop returned on that same day, the 22nd of November, 1720, and so this most prudent prelate clothed our Paul in the new habit of the Passion on a Friday, the day on which the Redeemer of our souls gave up his life for our love in a sea of agonies and torments upon the cross.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **How He Wrote the Rules in a Wonderful Manner**

The graces and spiritual consolations which Paul received, after he had been invested with the sacred habit, are known to God alone, who was the loving and liberal dispenser of them. We may, however, say that, from the moment of his putting on the dress of the Passion, as if he had



been filled with a new spirit, he took up the resolution to imitate in all things the virtues of Jesus Christ, and to make in himself, as far as he could, a copy of His most holy life so that he might, more by his works than by his habit of penance and sorrow, give a living image of Jesus crucified and might thus remind all others to follow his example and weep over his death. Understanding, then, that it was according to the will of God that he should retire into some place apart, he obtained the permission and blessing of the bishop to remain in a little room which was underneath a staircase near the sacristy of the parish Church of San Carlo, to stay there while he wrote the Rule of the Congregation, of which God had inspired in him the form<sup>4</sup> and at the same time to enjoy in perfect peace the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which was reserved within the church. This room, which he asked for, was an abode where he might suffer much, for it was damp, confined, rude, and disgusting, without any convenience except a little stove. And here it was that the fervent Paul withdrew, or, as I might say, shut himself up. His entire clothing consisted of a tunic, very rough, with common drawers of the cheapest linen cloth, so coarse that its roughness seriously hurt one of his legs. His head was always uncovered and his feet bare; for his bed he had nothing but a little straw thrown upon the bare ground; all his food consisted of a little bread, which he received in charity; and his drink was pure water. Who, then, can tell how much this pious youth must have suffered in so cold a climate, at a time when a severe winter had just set in? But in the midst of all these sufferings, all his refreshment and comfort was in the holy love of God. Desiring also to offer up to Him in the time of his greatest silence and quiet a sacrifice of praise, he used to rise in the night to recite the Divine Office, after which he commenced his mental prayer, and between Matins and meditation he employed about three hours, notwithstanding the violence of the cold, which must have been excessive. After having thus prepared himself by long prayers, he used to write every day a chapter of his Rules. So manifestly visible was the assistance of Heaven to this prayer of his, that although he had never read the Rules of any religious Order, he wrote with as much freedom, rapidity, and readiness, as if he had heard a voice dictating to him how to compose the Rules of the new Institute with exact discernment and perfect wisdom. In order that he might not be anyway interrupted in that holy retreat, in which his great occupation was to remain in constant

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<sup>4</sup> The spirit of the Rule.

recollection and union with God, the true Father of lights and Fountain of all wisdom, he held no conversation at that time with any person whatsoever, but lived in perfect solitude. Great were the graces and extraordinary the communications with which God was pleased to favor him in that place, of all which, in order that he might walk secure from all illusion, he rendered a faithful account to his bishop and director in an exact diary. In this, his own account, we plainly perceive that if his sufferings were great and deeply felt, through the hunger which tormented him, the cold which pierced him as though with sharp needles on all sides; if the temptations and assaults of the devils, who sought by them to increase his feelings of pain and to force him from the exercise of holy prayer, were so violent and grievous that his weak body felt the effects of them, and his chest was painfully affected; if some days our Lord left him in darkness, in dryness, under interior desolations, to make him acknowledge himself daily more and more unworthy of the divine favors, and look on himself as a most filthy sewer; yet he well understood that the soul which perseveres firm and immovable in prayer, amidst weariness, heaviness, and the most troublesome temptations, is like a rock, hard and firm, against which the fury of the waves and tempests may be let loose and will spend itself without moving it in the least. And on some other days he received communications and most profound conceptions of highly privileged supernatural prayer, through which he was enabled afterwards to speak on the subject with confidence, “*taught by experiencing divine things*”; and through which at one time he felt his breast melted with love as with a fire; at another he was inflamed with the most eager desire to drink with Jesus the chalice of the Passion; at another animated with a burning zeal for the conversion of infidels, but more especially of England, and for the reformation of the multitudes of wretched sinners. So abundant were these desires, that he wrote to the above-named bishop, that while enjoying the sweetness of this infused joyous contemplation which our Lord imparted to him, he used to long to be flayed alive for one only soul. The fervor of his love increased greatly as he daily received Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who is the Furnace of love and the Source of light. From him he asked with great affection the necessary light, and his own spirit with which to be guided in writing his Rules. To obtain this more easily, he addressed himself with great confidence to the Blessed Virgin and to the angels and saints in Heaven, particularly to the founders of religious Orders. When he had thus passed forty days, with his Rules now written out in full, and his soul penetrated through and through with celestial unction, Paul went

forth from his solitude, threw himself at the feet of the bishop, and presented him the Rules written in the manner we have related, by the inspiration of God. That prelate, full of learning and wisdom as he was, yet not depending, as is usual with persons of superior discernment, on his own judgment in a matter of such importance, in order better to ascertain the will of God, desired Paul to go to Genoa, and there to consult a great servant of God, who, by the great lights with which he was enriched, was well qualified to form a judgment whether the youth, who was presented to him, was guided by the Spirit of the Lord. It was then the depth of winter, and the mountain which divides Lombardy from the Genoese territory, which he had to cross, was so impassible and frightful on account of the snow which falls there in great quantities and lies a long time, as of the impetuous winds which rage upon its heights, that the boldest and most experienced muleteers will hardly risk the attempt. Travellers who are too venturesome often lose their lives upon it. Nevertheless, Paul, made valiant by obedience, set off on the journey, walked over the ice and snow with his feet bare, his head uncovered, and with a single tunic, better calculated to cover his nakedness than to protect him against the cold.

In order, moreover, to fulfill with the greatest promptitude the command of that holy bishop, he was not content to walk by day. Pressed on by his fervor, he walked also by night amidst the cliffs and precipices of that terrible mountain, where to the excessive cold was joined the fear of the wolves, which he saw ravenous with hunger scouring the steeps – he with no other company or support than the image of Jesus crucified, which to his great consolation he bore upon his breast. When morning came and the sun rose, although it is true that his sufferings and the horror of his situation became less in some respects, yet his fears increased as he beheld great blocks of ice detach themselves from the summit of the mountain and precipitate themselves from time to time on the road, which he had to pass. At length, stiff with cold, oppressed with fatigue, and tormented with hunger, he reached the top of the mountain upon the night of our Lord's Epiphany, a memorable feast for him. Not having even a morsel of bread, nor money to buy it with, he asked alms on his knees, as was his practice in those first days, of some policemen whom he happened to meet. These poor policemen (*Sbirri*) gave him a little refreshment, and the servant of God received this kindness with so much gratitude and affection, that not only did he preserve the memory of it as long as he lived, but ever afterwards showed a special affection and charity towards this class of men. Particularly in his missions, he devoted himself with the

greatest earnestness to assist the souls of those, by whom, as he used to say, he had been relieved in his most pressing need.

As Paul went on his way, some who saw him in so penitential a dress, and not having understanding to know and admire the fervor of the innocent youth, exclaimed one to another, “Oh! He at least must have been a rare sinner! See what a penance his confessor has given him.” Amidst incessant contradictions and annoyances he arrived at Genoa. He met with two religious there, who, not having light to discern his virtue, in order to mock and insult him, misapplied the words of Scripture and said, “Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things?” as though they would make him out a fanatic, or perhaps even a madman. On hearing such words, the servant of God only humbled and abased himself the more, and his soul gained so much good from these that he used afterwards to say, “These scoffs and derisions, however, did my soul much good.”

The precise advice given him by the holy man whom he went to consult we know not, but there is reason to believe that he fully approved the tenor of life which he had undertaken, that he recognized his lights as true and his designs as holy, and that he gave assurance of this to that most prudent bishop. For Paul, being returned home and continuing still under the direction of his prelate, went on with increased fervor in his practices of penance and sought to bring to perfection the work he had begun with more and more satisfaction in proportion as he was better assured that it was acceptable to God.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **To Enjoy More Entire Solitude Paul Retires to a Church in the Country Dedicated to St. Stephen and about His Labors for the Good of His Neighbor**

It is no wonder that, as the soul of Paul had now tasted the peace and sweetness of solitude, he should seek to separate himself as much as possible from communication with the world. After returning to Genoa, he retired, by the permission of his bishop, into a little hermitage attached to a country church dedicated to St. Stephen, where his brother John Baptist also chose to keep him company. In this solitude their life was in the highest degree poor, penitential, and in

all respects well calculated to make of them great servants of God, who might be set forth as examples of virtue and perfection. Their dwelling was very small, consisting simply of one little room. Very scarce and very poor was their furniture, there being in the room nothing but a straw bed covered with a tattered rug, a crucifix and a discipline hanging on the wall inside. On the outside of the same wall there was a little box to receive the alms which charitable and pious people offered spontaneously, which generally consisted of nothing but a few bits of bread, which they used very sparingly, giving the best part to other poor persons and keeping for themselves only some remnants. It happened sometimes that it would be a late hour before they had taken food of any kind. When this came to the knowledge of their good father, who no doubt must have been highly astonished and at the same time consoled at their virtue, he ordered that a basin of soup and some other provisions should be taken to them from home to refresh them. The good penitents thanked him, and although they preferred to continue to live as they had commenced, they were obliged by the commands which their loving father wisely laid upon them, and thus on that one day young Paul and his good brother relaxed, somewhat, the penitential rigor with which they afflicted themselves.

Amidst all this mortification, our Lord, who graciously bestows His highest favors upon souls that suffer most for His sake, did not fail to enrich the two penitents with His choicest gifts. Such were the consolations of spirit and peace of heart which our Paul experienced in this place of retirement, notwithstanding the assaults of the common enemy, that when he wrote to his bishop, he humbly thanked him for having procured him a paradise in holy solitude. While Paul thus passed his time, wearing the holy habit in his own country, he felt a constantly increasing desire to bury himself in a still more profound retirement. Accordingly by the counsel and approbation of his bishop, he made a journey to France to explore certain mountains, in the hope of finding a suitable place where he might live hidden from the eyes of men, and at the same time might practice his exercises of piety and devotion. He had been told that there was there a little chapel dedicated to the great Mother of God; but when he reached it, he found it uninhabitable on account of the quantity of snow which fell and constantly lay there. He therefore returned to his own country, waiting to know in better time where it was that the holy will of God would call him to accomplish the designs which He had for him.

But he was destined to something more than forming his own soul to virtue in solitude; he

was to become a great apostolic laborer, who in his missionary career was to be the means of leading many souls to heaven. Hence, our Lord, disposing all things at the same time with sweetness and with force, caused that, at the sight of the enormous sins by which the souls of men are lost and God offended, he should be pierced to the heart with the most lively grief and should be moved by an ardent desire to remedy the evil as much as lay in his power. For this purpose he consulted and conferred with his bishop, and that enlightened prelate, who well knew the great treasures of celestial wisdom which Almighty God had hidden in the heart of Paul, ordered him to undertake the catechetical instruction of the children in Christian Doctrine, thus affording him some means of displaying the zeal with which he was so ardently inflamed. The fervent youth would have immediately obeyed the command, if the curate of the place (perhaps with a little too much regard for the custom of the age) had not told him that, as it was the time of the carnival, it would be better to defer for a season the commencement of a work, otherwise so pious and profitable. The young Paul thought it right to comply with the wishes of his superior and consented to the delay of a few days. But shortly afterwards in prayer, he felt himself interiorly reprehended by our Lord with some severity, understanding, therefore, that it was always a suitable time to do the good that God desires. Without further demur, he quickly took a blessed crucifix and, conquering his natural repugnance, went out for the first time into the streets and public places, inviting all with a loud voice, "To the Christian Doctrine in the Church of San Carlo." While he thus employed the zeal and talents which God had bestowed upon him, his little instructions produced fruit beyond expectations. When the bishop was informed how they were blessed, he greatly rejoiced in our Lord, and in the consolation of his heart shed abundant tears. Reflecting on the profit that might be reaped among the people if Paul could extend the sphere of his labors, this excellent prelate ordered him to preach from the pulpit and to propose more particularly to the meditation of the faithful the most holy passion of our Savior. It may excite surprise that so wise a bishop should depart from the regulations of the Church in thus employing a young man who had not yet received even the tonsure, but only wore the habit of a penitent. But this pious and learned man thought he could reasonably use a dispensation in favor of one upon whom our Lord had conferred such rare gifts.

The blessings that attended the labors of Paul proved it a sign of great prudence and wisdom to lay aside ordinary rules when it is evident to an experienced eye that a great object can be

attained. Paul therefore left to others the instructions upon Christian Doctrine, but he did not entirely lose sight of a work which had produced so much good. One day, approaching the youth who was catechizing the young girls, he gave him some very beautiful and opportune advice by repeating the words, "Turn away your eyes, lest they behold vanity." And now he directed all his attention to announcing the truths of our holy faith from the pulpit. And because his words proceeded from a heart united with God and were animated with a fervent zeal, and supported by the example of a holy and irreproachable life, they brought forth abundant fruit. At his voice, balls, feasts, masquerades, and other dangerous amusements ceased without anyone showing displeasure or lamenting the change. The occasions of sin, being thus removed, in order that all might be excited to true penitence, he desired in the last days of the carnival to conduct a solemn Triduum. He observed the following method in conducting it. Towards evening, he went round the streets of the town, preceded by a large crucifix and accompanied by several persons and a good number of children singing devout hymns. The people flocked in crowds to the church, which was soon quite full. Paul then commenced a fervent discourse, inveighing with great force against sin, and particularly against the scandalous conduct of certain females who disregarded modesty and decency in dress. All listened with deep attentions and seemed penetrated by his words. But the devil, jealous of what promised so much good, endeavored during those days of prayer to distract the audience and dissipate their feelings of compunction by means of a possessed woman, whom he excited to make a great noise in the church. The servant of God saw this work of the malignant enemy and was interiorly inspired to order him to cease his disturbance. Knowing that his impulse proceeded truly from God, he commanded silence and the evil one obeyed. By the power and earnestness with which he had announced the sacred word, and by the silence he had imposed on the devil, the people were completely overcome and were heard, as with one voice, to cry out to God for pardon and mercy. The fruit of his preaching was still more apparent in the amendment of sins and disorders, particularly amongst the women, who at his suggestion no longer entered the church with their heads uncovered. He continued during the ensuing Lent to deliver pious discourses and fervent exhortations, and with particular care he instructed his hearers how to meditate upon the sacred passion of Jesus Christ, always leaving them touched and enlightened by his holy words. His zeal was not confined to his own immediate neighborhood, for he preached a mission in a place called Retorto, and in two other

towns where his memory is still preserved, and where the happy result of his labors was seen in renewed fervor and compunction amongst the inhabitants. On one of these occasions, a distinguished lady, the Signora Marchesa del Pozzo, in a penitential procession which took place, insisted, through humility, upon walking barefoot – to the great edification of all. This pious lady had afterwards the consolation of possessing and retaining in her house a heavy cross which Paul used to carry on his shoulders at these solemnities. This relic is still preserved with singular devotion by her descendants.

Having once tasted the sweetness of gaining souls to God, Paul knew not how to restrain his zeal, but continually occupied himself in visiting and consoling the sick, in rooting out all bitterness and discord, and in reconciling such as were at variance with one another. Nor was he daunted by the fatigue and annoyance these acts of charity might cost him, because he knew they were pleasing to the most loving heart of his Jesus. It came to his knowledge that, in a place about three miles off, there were some persons who lived in mutual enmity, and although the winter was most rigid and the road covered with snow, all barefoot as he was, he walked full of fervor till he reached the spot. He had no sooner arrived, than he brought peace to the disputants and reconciled them with themselves and with God. The pain and trouble which his labors cost him seemed light in comparison with the peace he restored and the charity he rekindled in so many hearts. Amongst other things, there was one occurrence that made a great impression at the time, and which we cannot refrain from relating here. A bitter quarrel had existed for a long period between two of the principal persons in Castellazzo, one of whom was the doctor Maranzana, and the other a person bearing the same name, probably one of his relations. Their reconciliation had been vainly attempted by parish priests, by preachers, and by holy religious men. It seemed that the victory had been reserved for Paul. The two enemies went one evening, either out of curiosity or from some kind of devotion, to hear the servant of God preach at St. Stefano. One of them was observed by a certain Canon Sardi, a friend of Paul's, who immediately went to inform him of the fact. Paul, therefore, adopted as the subject of his discourse and meditation the prayer uttered by Jesus Christ upon the cross for his executioners. Animated by the Spirit of God, he spoke with so much force and efficacy, that those long hardened hearts were touched and conquered. They both inwardly resolved to lay aside their animosity. No sooner was the function over, than they stood before Paul in his little room near to



the church. This was all that was required to complete their conversion. Paul's brother was there and Signor Sardi. Now, more than ever, stimulated to be united in holy charity and peace, they affectionately embraced each other as a sign that they had cast away all hatred, that they sincerely forgave each other, and that they were perfectly reconciled. Wisely, however, did our Paul remind them that all was not finished, but that they had to seek to repair the scandal which had been given. To this end, therefore, he advised them on the following day, after a good confession, to receive Holy Communion together in the parish church. A great concourse of people would be drawn thither by the forty hours' adoration, and it would be a public evidence that those, who had once so implacably hated, were now, on the contrary, filled with fraternal charity since they approached side by side to the sacred banquet of celestial love. And thus it is the happy lot of one who is rich in virtue to go about sowing peace in the hearts of families, because he himself partakes so abundantly of the Spirit of God, which is a spirit of love and peace. So common was the opinion held of Paul's influence in settling all kinds of disputes that even drunkards, the very men of all others least likely to listen to reason, submitted without resistance to his words.

There was one day a fierce quarrel between some of these men in Castellazzo, and they were on the point of coming to blows, with what peril to themselves may be easily imagined. Paul ran to the spot with a crucifix in his hand and, kneeling down in the midst of them, urged them to be reconciled for the love of Jesus. The dispute was over in an instant and the combatants dispersed, some on one side, some on another.

But Paul's chief solace in all his labors and sufferings, and the sweet but strong support which carried him through his life of penance and austerity, was the long and continual prayer with which he nourished his soul. Many hours did he pass in his hermitage, conversing interiorly with God, many more did he spend in the church, assisting at the sacred functions, hearing Masses, or kneeling before the altar where his Jesus lay hidden beneath the sacramental species. So untiringly did he persevere in prayer, that a worthy ecclesiastic, who knew him, deposed in the Processes that Paul was generally the first to enter and the last to leave the church. No wonder, then, that while thus perfectly united to God, from whom comes all help, strength, life and every good, he was enabled to prosecute the undertakings which he had begun. The consolations he received in the midst of his exercises of charity and penance were not always

interior ones, for several times our Lord testified with open prodigies the satisfaction he took in his servant. There lived in Castellazzo a pious man named Andrew Vegetto, who had several times, when Paul lived at the hermitage of St. Stefano, given him the charitable assistance of some wood for his fire. By an accident this poor man hurt his leg and a wound formed which became an ulcer. Paul went one day to see him, and out of his great charity, he insisted upon dressing the wound. A considerable discharge came from it, but the servant of God, overcoming the repugnance of nature, was only the more animated by the mortification, just as a fire burns with greater vigor when agitated by the wind. Recognizing, by the light of faith, the person of Jesus Christ in this sick man, he desired to perform towards him an act of heroic self-devotion. He told him to turn away his face, and then, believing that he was not seen, he began to apply his tongue to that disgusting wound. The sufferer perceived what he was doing and vainly entreated him to desist. The next morning, when the surgeon came, the ulcer was found dry and healed, and in another day or two Andrew was able to rise from his bed and walk about without pain. Finding himself cured in this wonderful manner, he began to publish everywhere the charity and holiness of the servant of God. Not content with making the miracle known in his own country, he went on purpose to Retorto, that he might relate the grace he had received, to Paul's great friend, the Marchesa del Pozzo. Almighty God was pleased thus marvelously to testify how grateful in his sight was the charity of our devout youth. In a similar manner did he make known his approval of his austere penance. It happened on one winter's day, that Paul, walking as usual with his bare feet, got them very wet and muddy in fording the little river Bormida. He was met by a pious woman named Tecla Gambarotti, who, seeing the state he was in, presented him with a towel to cleanse and dry his feet. Paul did not like to refuse the solace which she so kindly offered, especially as her prayers and entreaties would scarcely admit of a denial; he, therefore, took the cloth, and after using it, gratefully returned it all soiled as it was to the devout woman. She had to pass the Bormida herself as she went home, and she determined therefore to wash her towel in the water as she went by. But on looking at it again, her surprise was extreme to find it perfectly clean and unsullied, with only one little spot of mud in the corner, as though to show the change that had taken place. A truly wonderful prodigy operated by that God who displays his infinite power in small things as well as in great. We need not, therefore, marvel that the town of Castellazzo, which received such edification from the life of Paul, became daily more

and more confirmed in a high opinion of his sanctity. Every hour a great multitude of persons of all ranks came to seek his advice and to listen to his pious instructions, as we are assured by the testimony of creditable eyewitnesses. His exemplary life, his truly admirable patience, the ardor of his charity and the fervor of his zeal, caused him to be esteemed and venerated by all as nothing less than a saint.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **Now He Went to Rome to Throw Himself at the Feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and How He Was Denied an Audience**

Almighty God, who was forming in Paul a model of virtue, which might afterwards, like an excellent statue chiseled by some famous artist, serve as a copy for others, now spoke amorously to his heart and called upon him to leave his country, his parents, and his friends, in order the more perfectly to fulfil his heavenly designs. Paul manifested all his inspirations to the holy bishop, his director, and that wise prelate consented that he should undertake a journey to Rome, that he might kneel at the feet of the Vicar of Christ, and then, giving up himself and all he possessed, learn from his lips the holy will of God in his behalf. Bishop Gattinara could not oppose this project, although he cherished Paul with the love of a father for his son and entertained such an esteem for his virtue that in an attestation he gave him, after mentioning that he had clothed him with the habit of the Passion, and recommending him to the charity of all who might see this credential, he called him a youth “shining with wonderful virtues.” Now these words give us a very distinct idea of the resplendent, luminous, and edifying character of Paul’s sanctity, and from the lips of so prudent a prelate cannot be suspected of exaggeration; still, with all his love and esteem for Paul, the bishop thought not of opposing the designs of God, who called His servant out of his own country to lay the foundation of the new Congregation.

Full of fervor, and with a bold and trustful spirit, Paul began his journey. It is not difficult to imagine what a loving heart like his must have suffered in this separation from all his friends, from his good brothers and sisters whom he cherished with so true and sincere a charity, and

from his parents, whose Christian life and tender care of their family rendered them worthy of all the gratitude, reverence, and piety he felt towards them. He offered up the sacrifice of all to his Lord, and then, with no other company save his confidence in God, he set out for Genoa, where a devout Cavalier kindly received him and charitably provided the expenses of his journey. While he was waiting to embark, his brother John Baptist, a youth of great piety and earnestness, came to seek him with the idea of accompanying him to Rome. But Paul, ignorant as yet of the will of God in this matter, persuaded his good brother to return home, although the young man, perhaps more fully enlightened, exclaimed, "You may go, but you will find no peace without me!"

John Baptist went home by Monterrato and Paul embarked immediately afterwards for Civita Vecchia. On the 8th of September, 1721, the Feast of our Lady's Nativity, the vessel reached Monte Argentario, but here the wind so entirely ceased that it was impossible to proceed. The sailors went upon shore to gather some wild figs which grew there, and Paul remained contemplating the mountain and admiring the little grottoes and caves in the rock, which during the middle of the day are exposed to the sea, and which, perhaps, were once the habitations of those religious, who, as St. Gregory tells us (Dialog. lib. 3, C. 17.), used to live there doing penance. He felt a strong desire to retire into such a solitude in order to lead a life of penance and prayer. But the wind arose and the vessel moved onwards, while Paul was filled with a fervor of spirit which animated him to go to the other end of the world, if necessary, for his dear Jesus. They reached at length the port of Civita Vecchia, where, on account of some fear of contagion, the sailors and all the passengers had to perform quarantine. Paul had no provisions for this delay, so the magistrates of the town, taking compassion on him, allowed him two *bajocchi* a day (about six farthings) to buy some bread. Scanty as was this charitable aid, Paul was most grateful for it and never forgot as long as he lived the kindness which prompted it. Although he was then young and vigorous, and at an age which requires more food than any other, so accustomed was he to mortification, that he was contented with a little and suffered want with the greatest consolation of heart. In order to lose not a moment of the time, which he looked upon as a precious treasure, he employed himself during those days of quarantine in transcribing clearly the Rules he had already written in the Church of San Carlo, and the hours that still remained, he devoted to catechizing and instructing the people in the Lazzaretto.

When the quarantine was over, he hastened to set out on the road to Rome. He stopped for

the night in an obscure country inn in order to be as poor as he could, and he took no refreshment but the little he received from a poor man who accompanied him. On the following morning he reached Rome, and before entering the holy city, penetrated with a lively faith and humble devotion, he reverently kissed the ground which had been blessed with the footsteps and blood of the apostles and martyrs. He then went quickly to the Basilica of St. Peter, but, upon kneeling down to pray, he found himself in great aridity and desolation of spirit, and deprived of all the sweet communications he was accustomed to experience – a prophetic indication, perhaps, that the time was not yet come for the fulfillment of his desires. He lodged that night with the other pilgrims in the Hospital of the Trinita where Christian charity is exercised in such perfection and reigns with so visible a spirit. Going with the rest to the washing of the feet, it happened that the person who was to perform that charitable office was a great cardinal, Monsignor Tolomei, of happy memory, who constantly undertook this lowly employment to the great edification of all who saw him. We can easily imagine the confusion of poor Paul, who, in his humility deemed himself worthy of nothing but contempt, especially when the holy prince, having washed his feet, offered him an alms. He, believing himself sufficiently rich with his trust in God, meekly refused the gift and besought his eminence to bestow it on another, that thus it might benefit the poor.

Early the next morning, Paul was at the pontifical palace, longing to throw himself at the feet of the Pope, who was then Innocent XIII, of blessed memory. But when he requested an audience, he was rudely rejected by one of the officials who said to him, “Do you know how many loiterers come here every day? Be off with you.” The humble servant of God, satisfied that he was treated according to his deserts, and clearly understanding from this that the period had not yet arrived for his great work, submitted to the will of God and began directly to think of returning to Monte Argentario. As he walked away from the palace feeling the want of some refreshment for his weak body, he retired into a court where there was a little fountain, intending to eat there the small pieces of bread which had been given to him that morning at the Trinita. But God, who desired to try the charity of His servant, so disposed that a poor man should approach just then to ask an alms. Paul’s youth, as well as his long fasting, had given him so great an appetite that he could have eaten five loaves instead of one. Nevertheless, doing violence to nature, he parted with half his bread for the love of God, whom he never failed to

recognize in the person of the poor. Little, indeed, was the relief he bestowed, but the affection with which he gave it, at the time he needed it most, was certainly not small, but great and generous.

## **CHAPTER X**

### **How He Went for the First Time to Monte Argentario and Afterwards Obtained from the Bishop of Soana Permission to Inhabit the Hermitage of the Annunziata upon That Mountain**

Divine Providence had still in store for His servant diverse accidents and trials wherewith to prove and fortify his virtue. Paul, leaving Rome, embarked in a vessel, where he found a priest, who, strangely enough, whenever he saw the devout youth recollected in prayer, seemed moved by an almost insane fury against him and loaded him with injuries and reproaches. At Fiumicino, where the boat stopped, Paul engaged a place in another ship going towards Santa Severa. But this voyage was rendered no less disagreeable than the last, by the behavior of a lay brother, who insulted and ill treated him without any visible motive. Paul, who in his prayers had conceived an earnest wish to suffer something with his Redeemer, and from Jesus had learned how to be silent under scoffs and revilings, never opened his mouth in reply, either to the priest or the lay brother. Believing himself a miserable sinner, he said in his heart that there was doubtless every reason for treating him thus. From Santa Severa he went by land to Civita Vecchia, and there, finding no one who would take him in, he spent the night in the portico of the Sanita.

He journeyed onwards through Corneto, where he was charitably entertained by the Augustinian religious, and he was sheltered for the night at Mont'Alto, through the kindness of a good priest. The next day he took the road to Monte Argentario, hoping to reach the mountainside before dark. But he was overtaken by night in the open country, and he was obliged to seek his rest in a wretched hut which had been abandoned by shepherds. The place swarmed with nasty insects, which to our poor youth, who had nothing but his rough tunic, were a great torment, until he returned to Lombardy. In the morning he walked on quickly towards Portercole, anxious to complete this tedious journey; for besides his exhaustion from fatigue, he

felt lonely in those dreary wastes, where there was no human being but himself, and his spirit was under the influence of that interior desolation with which the Almighty so often tries the constancy of His servants. At Portercole he was most kindly received by the archpriest D. Antonio Serra, who informed him that upon the mountain there still existed a hermitage, which had been a convent of Augustinians under the title of the most holy Annunciation. Desiring to find out if it could be adapted to his pious designs, Paul ascended the mountain, taking with him nothing but a small morsel of bread given him that day in alms by a charitable cleric. He saw with delight that the whole place breathed an air of holy retirement and invited to recollection, penitence, and prayer. He accordingly remained in this retreat for several days, nourishing himself with the bread he had brought and a few grapes which grew there. He found the spot well suited for retirement and for the tranquil enjoyment of sweet converse with God. He therefore desired to see the Bishop of Soana, to whose spiritual jurisdiction the church and hermitage of the Annunciata belonged. Not feeling in his heart all the peace which is enjoyed in the perfect fulfillment of the designs of God, he began to remember the strong desire his brother John Baptist had expressed to be with him, and the words he had spoken, and he then thought of going to fetch him that they might inhabit this hermitage together.

He descended the mountain by Orbetello, in order to take the road to Pitigliano, the ordinary residence of the Bishop of Soana. Not having any acquaintance in Orbetello, there was no one to receive him; wherefore, standing among the poor in the piazza, he waited with them till Providence should send him some charitable host. He did not stop there long, for a good Father of the Minims who passed by was touched by compassion at the sight of this youth in his abject garb of penance. He obtained the superior's leave to invite him to his monastery, and here Paul was lovingly received by the religious and the priest friend, who became for some little time his confessor.

He left Orbetello by Marsigliana, but his journey was weary and difficult, in consequence of the many twinings and windings of the road, which was perfectly unknown to him, and lonely and desolate on account of the solitary fields and dark groves which abound in those parts. He arrived the first day at Manciano, in Tuscany, and meeting the curate of the place, he humbly begged a lodging for the love of God. The priest, seeing before him a person so ill-dressed and neglected, without much thought abruptly refused him, saying, "So many beggars arrive here,

and one is enough to do mischief.” The lowly servant of God at these words only meekly answered, “I am indeed capable of doing any evil, but I trust God’s grace will preserve me from it.” True humility is the great secret for winning all hearts and obtaining whatever we want. Touched by a reply so wise, and at the same time so gentle, the curate received Paul into his house and treated him with all kindness.

The youth pursued his journey on the following day to Pitigliano, where he found to his great disappointment that the bishop was absent at Pienza. After fresh difficulties he succeeded in reaching that town, where the good prelate, who was Monsignor Fulvio Salvi, benignly welcomed him, granted all his desires, and dismissed him with his benediction.

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **How He Returned to Lombardy for His Brother John Baptist**

Paul, consoled with the bishop’s goodness, determined to go from Pienza to Leghorn in order to embark for his own country. He reached Pisa in a short time and took the canal from there to Leghorn. Again was his vessel a school of patience, for two ecclesiastics who were on board treated him not only injuriously, but even inhumanly. It is scarcely to be wondered that he met with such frequent harshness since his strange dress of penitence and austerity was revolting to the feelings of those who possessed not the spirit of God, although his sufferings were enough to move the pity and compassion of the hardest hearts. In fact, while in Leghorn he begged of a Jewish merchant, who was unable to resist the sight of such poverty. With the small pittance he received from this man, he procured some refreshment for that day and the following morning. After obtaining his passage from a charitable captain, he embarked for Genoa. Again his voyage was one of the greatest suffering, for the vessel was loaded with undried bull’s hides. Since Paul, as the poorest, occupied the worst place in the boat, he suffered the most from the intolerable odor emitted by the skins. At night he rested his wearied limbs upon a hard plank; added to this was the inconvenience which he suffered from those insects which must have been abhorrent to his sensitivity; but he endured all with unfailing patience. His repose was tortured and his nourishment scanty, being no other than what was given him in charity by the sailors, and even



for this he had little appetite on account of the fetid smell, which produced a nausea for all food. When the boat arrived in Genoa, all were obliged to perform quarantine. As if to render his sufferings more acute, with the sight of the palaces of that superb city, came the thought of all the comforts and delights enjoyed therein which contrasted so miserably with his own poor and painful position. He was sensibly alive to the privations he endured; but turning them into an occasion of merit, he offered them up in conformity with the holy will of God, for whose love he would joyfully have borne greater evils.

As soon as the quarantine was over, he set off for Alexandria in order to have the consolation of being once more at the feet of his beloved bishop. Who can describe the tenderness and compassion of that most loving father, when he listened to the history of the painful trials of his son Paul? The wise prelate did not, however, doubt of the ultimate success of the work of God. At the request of Paul, and at the urgent desire of John Baptist, he clothed the latter with the habit of the Passion on the 20th of November, 1721, the octave day of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, in order that together they might follow the voice of God.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **How He Quit His Own Country and Left Pious Advice to His Family**

The two holy brothers, Paul and John Baptist, cherished the same earnest desires to serve God and the same ardent longings to promote his greater glory, united to a tender devotion to the most sacred passion of Jesus Christ. Being now both clothed with the habit of penitence, they remained some months in the hermitage of San Stefano, where they gave general edification by the austere mortification of their lives, by their utter withdrawal from all outward relationships with others, and by their great dedication in prayer, in which holy exercise they passed many hours in the church. At length, on the first Sunday in Lent, when the Gospel speaks of our Lord being conducted by the Holy Spirit into the desert, they left their country for Monte Argentario, that there, in still more profound solitude, they might freely devote themselves to the contemplation of the Divine perfections. The feelings of flesh and blood, which might awaken their tender regrets at bidding farewell to their country and home, had no power over them, but

with fervent hearts, while seeking to increase within themselves the divine love, they both labored (but Paul more especially) that those who remained in their family should, according to their state, love and serve their Lord. The letter which Paul wrote upon his departure is full of these sentiments and is a clear indication of the rectitude of his intentions and of the ardor of his zeal. It is well worthy of being copied here in his own words for the edification of the devout reader.

“The holy peace of Jesus Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, be with us and guard our hearts.

“Beloved brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ.

“I, Paul Francis, your brother, a miserable sinner and most unworthy servant of the poor of Christ, being obliged by the Divine command to leave these parts in order to follow the holy inspirations of Heaven, and by retiring into solitude to excite not only all reasonable beings but even irrational creatures to weep with me over my great sins and to praise the good God whom I have so much offended. Before entering into my holy retreat, I cannot leave you without bequeathing to you, my brothers and sisters, some spiritual advice that you may ever walk with increased fervor in the holy love of our most tender Savior.

“In the first place, observe with the greatest exactness the holy law of the Lord, and preserve a filial fear for that great God who has created and redeemed you. Know, dearly beloved, that in proportion as a son loves his father, so does he always fear to distress him, to displease him, in short, to offend him in the least degree. In like manner, then, cherish this holy fear of offending God, that it may serve you as a preservative against falling into sin. Love this best of fathers with an ardent affection and look up to him with a tender but reverential confidence. May your every action, as well as all your words, your sighs and tears, your labors and troubles, be dedicated to his holy love. In order to retain this divine friendship frequent the sacraments, that is to say, go often to confession and communion. When you approach the Sacred Table, have no other end in view than ever more and more to consume your soul in the flames of this holy love.

“My dearly beloved, I say nothing of the requisite preparation, because I believe you will do all that you can. Remember that it is the holiest action you can possibly perform. Ah! Think that our dearest Jesus could have made us no greater gift than His own Body for our food; let us then love One who has so loved us. Be full of devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament; go frequently

to adore it in the church, and visit reverently the altar of our dear Lady. Teach these acts to the other children and perform them especially before you go to school. Let no day pass without making half or a quarter of an hour's meditation on the dolorous passion of our Blessed Redeemer. Do more whenever it is possible, but at least never omit this. Preserve a continual remembrance of the sufferings of our crucified Lord, and remember that the saints of God, who now reign triumphant in eternal bliss, attained their perfection principally by this means. Employ yourself, therefore, in this heavenly exercise whenever you can and more particularly on days of Holy Communion. Entertain a tender devotion for the sorrows of our Blessed Lady, as well as for her holy and Immaculate Conception, for your guardian angel, your saintly advocates, and the twelve apostles. Familiarize yourselves with ejaculatory prayers, and see that they spring from the depths of your heart. I write a few here for your spiritual profit:

“Ah! Dear Lord, would that I had never offended You! Ah! Hope of my heart, I would rather die a thousand deaths than sin any more against You!

“Ah! My Jesus, when shall I truly love You! Oh! My Sovereign Good, wound my heart with Your holy love! He who loves You not, my God, does not know You. Would that all could love You, my dearest Love! When shall my soul be inflamed with the fire of Your charity?

“Acts of resignation. May Your holy will be done. Welcome, toil and labor! Dear sorrows, I embrace you! I press you to my heart! You are the joys sent me by my Lord! How beautiful it is to suffer! I kiss the beloved hand of my God! Blessed be the blows that hurt me so grievously! It is good for me, dear Father, that You should humble me!

“Endeavor thus to make continual acts of love and sorrow; you can pray when you are walking, and while you are at your work, even when in the company of others. For if men surround your body, they need not approach your heart so may your soul gain much good in the midst of the most engrossing occupations.”

He goes on to exhort them most earnestly to practice perfect submission towards their parents, and he calls this virtue a heavenly gem, and one of which our Lord Himself gave the brightest example when He laid down His life for obedience upon the hard wood of the cross. He admonishes them that they can scarcely attain perfection in this virtue, unless they submit even their external affairs to the will and direction of their father and mother. And with the design of removing them from the perils of the world, he advises them to read every day some pious books

and to fly from evil company as from the devil. He then counsels them to be strictly just in their dealings, to pay their debts whenever they have contracted any, and if they should find themselves unable, meekly to beg their creditors to have compassion on them. “Humble yourselves,” said this lowly-minded man, “before all for the love of God.” And placing a just value upon the merit of holy charity, he continues, “If I beg of you to bear ever in mind that great precept which Jesus gave to His apostles at the last supper before His death, ‘My dear disciples, I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you.’ Oh! what sweet words! And how dear an example! Love one another, my dearest brothers and sisters, and remember that you can never please Almighty God if you do not love each other. Let there be no dissension amongst you. If by accident some bitter word be spoken, soften it quickly, and let not anger take possession of your hearts. Again I return to the maxim of St. John, ‘Love one another,’ for in this is known the surpassing charity of our Lord. Be gentle and compassionate towards the poor of Christ.

“His epistle concludes with these touching and devout expressions, “I leave you, then, within the sacred Wounds of Jesus and under the protection of our Lady of Sorrows. Pray that she may bathe your heart in her most sorrowful tears, in order that you may preserve the constant memory of the cruel Passion and bitter sufferings of your Savior, and that you may persevere to the end in the holy love of God with patience and fortitude. Take her, therefore, as your protectress, and forget not the frequent meditation of the death and passion of Christ. May God in his mercy grant you his holy benediction, which I pray you in return to obtain likewise for me. *Thanks be to God and Mary ever a virgin.*

“Your most unworthy brother,

“Paul Francis Danei, the lowest among the servants of the poor of Christ.”

## **CHAPTER XIII**

### **How He Returned to Monte Argentario. The Fervor and Penitence of the Two Brothers in the Heritage of the Annunziata**

Paul and John Baptist, now more united together, were of mutual assistance in increasing

each other's zeal, like two lighted coals, which, when brought into contact, communicate their fire and heat. In this happy union they departed from their home, embarked at Genoa and arrived at Civita Vecchia, where, after performing quarantine, they set out on foot for Monte Argentario. One day's journey brought them on Wednesday in Holy Week to the borders of Lake Burano, where they found themselves in want of shelter and unprovided with any kind of nourishment. Defending themselves as well as they could from the cold air of night, they laid down with their scanty clothing upon the bare ground under a tree, which was so poor a shelter that they arose in the morning soiled and wet and with their hair covered with frost. The pious youths, remembering that it was Maundy Thursday, a day consecrated by so many mysteries, were inflamed with an ardent desire to make the Paschal feast with their Redeemer and to communicate in some church. Accordingly, heedless of their fatigue and suffering, they hastened to continue their journey, and ran rather than walked until they reached Portercole, which was about twelve miles distant from the lake. They arrived there exhausted with hunger. While their bodies were weak and sinking, their souls were strong and fervent. It is not easy to express the consolation which Paul in particular enjoyed when he found himself enabled to be united with his Lord in sacramental communion. Neither can we attempt to describe the devout affections of his heart during that and the following days. It was his usual custom at that period of his life to remain in church during the whole time of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the repository, and to persevere in prayer without stopping either for repose or food. We may well believe, therefore, that he did not omit this now when he was preparing with his brother to retire into the most complete solitude and to perfect the new enterprise he had just begun.

When Holy Week was over, by the advice of the chief priest of Portercole, who had charitably received the two brothers into his house, they resolved before ascending Monte Argentario to go together to the Bishop of Soana and to obtain, with his blessing upon their undertaking, fresh grace from Almighty God. They went on to Orbetello, and upon leaving the church there, they met General Marchese Speco, accompanied by several gentlemen of his staff, who had just been assisting at Benediction. This nobleman enquired who they were and where they were going. "We are," they replied, "two poor brothers, who have been inspired by Almighty God to do penance on Monte Argentario." These simple words were uttered with so much humility, modesty, and devotion that the General and his company were both moved and

edified. Taking leave of his excellency, they pursued their journey to Pitigliano, where they received the bishop's blessing, and then hastened onwards to their retirement on that rock which Paul used to call, with reason, the Mount of Sanctity.

The provision which the two brothers carried with them to the hermitage of the Annunziata may be learned from the words of Fr. Paul himself. A few years before his death, he visited for the last time that retreat, and upon hearing the young novices sing the praises of God, he was unable to restrain his tears. His confessor asked him in the words of St. Francis de Sales, "Has it been raining?" alluding to the abundant sweetness showered from heaven upon his soul. But Fr. Paul replied with a deep sentiment of humility and thankfulness, "Ah, how can I help weeping when I remember that I came to this solitude with no other provision but a morsel of cake and a little gingerbread given me in alms at Pitigliano, and now I behold two monasteries full of fervent religious, praising God day and night."

In order to try the constancy of his servants, their loving God permitted them to remain for some time in this desert without any human assistance and with no other food but herbs and roots. At last, however, he who holds in his hands the hearts of men, moved a devout lady of Orbetello to bestow some relief upon them. Following the divine impulse, she sent them a quantity of small beans, with which the grateful penitents satisfied their hunger, eating them, generally, raw as they were, beside the fountain which sprang up beneath the hermitage. They afterwards received succor from various other persons, but their mode of life always continued rigorously austere. They drank no wine except on Thursdays and festivals, when it was sometimes furnished them by charitable benefactors. Their bed was either the bare ground, on which Fr. Paul reposed, or a hard plank on which John Baptist slept. Their rest was very short, for they both rose in the middle of the night to recite Matins and afterwards employed three hours in uninterrupted contemplation. Paul returned again to prayer in the early morning, as soon as the birds began to sing, as if these innocent creatures invited him to love and praise their Creator. All day long they kept themselves in the presence of God, occupied in meditation and study. They took their daily walk barefoot into the wood to make up their bundle of sticks. Their silence was continual; they spoke not to each other in order that they might entertain themselves with God and hear His voice in their hearts. The mountain on which they lived, and all the creatures upon it, were, as a book, always open, or as a school, in which they might learn to love

their divine Creator. Even the neighboring garrison helped to stimulate their fervor. Paul, when he heard the sound of the drum, used to say to himself, “See how much is done by the soldiers of earth to defend their material walls; and what then ought you, a soldier of heaven to do, to protect the spiritual kingdom of your soul?”

And as with tepid persons all labor seems irksome, so with these fervent servants of God everything they did appeared light and easy. Hence, they sought to increase their pious practices by special novenas. And the day after the Epiphany, Paul retired by himself into a still more lonely part of the mountain, thereby to imitate the seclusion of our Savior in the desert. To say all in a few words, the life of these two hermits on Monte Argentario was one of solitude and silence, penitence and prayer. Hidden from the eyes of the world, they preserved their innocent souls unperilled by its snares; they daily offered up a sacrifice of grateful praise to God; they obtained rich treasures of grace for their neighbor; and they formed in themselves examples of lofty virtue, which were, one day, to serve as models for many others. Nor did Paul forget that he had been called by God to work for the salvation of souls. He therefore employed himself frequently in teaching and explaining Christian Doctrine. On festival days, he went to Portercole for this purpose, where, with marvelous zeal and devotion he preached the knowledge and love of God and the observance of His holy law.

## **CHAPTER XIV**

### **How They Were Called to Gaeta by Bishop Pignattelli, the Bishop of That City, after Having Made Another Journey into Their Own Country through a Motive of Charity**

The spirit of charity is the rule which governs all the actions of the servants of God and makes them ever willing to give up their most innocent and virtuous inclinations, when a reasonable motive seems to demand the sacrifice. How willingly our two penitents would have remained in their retirement may be imagined by those who have tasted in solitude the sweetness of the Lord. But when they heard that one of their relations was in danger of losing his soul and might possibly be saved by their means, they immediately left their desert, and exposing themselves anew to all the hardships of a long voyage, they at length reached their own country,

where they had scarcely arrived before John Baptist fell sick. Upon this occasion, Cardinal Cienfuegos, who had always been very kindly disposed towards the two brothers, wrote to Paul in these words, "Your letter would have been most welcome and acceptable to me if it had not brought the news of John Baptist's illness. Still, I know full well that the visitation of the Lord never gives you anything but contentment."

When they had completed their work of charity and settled every other affair which demanded their presence, they set off on their way back to Monte Argentario, in the hope of again enjoying the blessings of that beautiful and holy solitude. Passing through Genoa, Paul uttered a prediction to the mother of the archbishop of that city, then Monsignor Saporiti. This pious lady saw the servant of God in church, and struck with his recollected deportment, she conceived a great desire to speak with him. She communicated her wish to the prelate, her son, who perhaps deeming that it proceeded from feminine curiosity, endeavored to dissuade her from gratifying it. But the good mother was bent upon satisfying her devotion; she sent for Paul to speak with him, and the conference they had together proved very beneficial to her soul.

The servant of God clearly announced to her that she must prepare for her death, which would take place on the ensuing Feast of St. Joseph. Shortly afterwards, she fell seriously ill, and she died precisely on the day which had been foretold her. The archbishop knew of the prophecy and was fully convinced of its truth; he himself attested it to a priest, who deposed it upon oath in the Processes. The time alone is uncertain; it might possibly have happened during another of Paul's journeys, but this does not diminish the certainty of the occurrence.

The brothers were allowed but a short time to rest at Monte Argentario, for being invited by Monsignor Pignattelli, Bishop of Gaeta and a worthy prelate of holy Church, to visit his city. Out of respect to so holy a name, they lost no time in complying with his request. They left their desert a second time, carrying with them the blessing of Bishop Fulvio, and an attestation in which he briefly bore witness to the mortified and edifying tenor of their lives. At Gaeta their exemplary conduct gained them the affection and admiration of all. The bishop was well pleased to have them in his diocese, and he willingly granted the permission, which out of their unabated love of holy solitude they demanded, to retire to a hermitage called Our Lady of the Chain, situated upon a hill near the rock Serapi, about a mile and a half distant from the town. Paul and John were thus enabled to resume their exercises of penance and prayer in this devout seclusion,



the spot in which, according to tradition, St. Nilus had once founded a monastery. One, who had the consolation of being near them and of knowing them more intimately than others, was astonished and confounded at their mode of life, so detached from earth and so hard for flesh to bear. He deposed with great exactness in the Processes that, besides wearing a rough habit which pricked and tortured their skin, they passed their nights upon the bare earth. "Many times," he said, "have I seen them sleeping upon the ground." They rigorously observed a daily fast, taking no other dinner but a little bread and water or a broth composed of herbs and vegetables, with nothing but mortification to season it. When there was oil in it, salt was wanting, and when it had salt they used no oil. Often, to render it still more unpalatable, they sprinkled their potatoes with ashes. In the evening they ate about three ounces of bread each, and even this slender pittance was sometimes diminished if it was not supplied them by the hermit. The above-mentioned witness adds that their time was entirely employed in contemplation or in reading some spiritual book in a tribune above the porch of the church. He concludes, "So that I may well say that their life was one continual prayer." Their rigorous abstinence, together with their harsh treatment of themselves, rendered their bodies so thin and emaciated that they seemed nothing but skin and bone. But while the flesh was denied every consolation, Almighty God abundantly nourished and invigorated the spirit in holy prayer and interior recollection. Paul, in particular, desiring to plunge into the very depths of the ocean of the infinite goodness of God, found a grotto for himself among the rocks by the seashore. Having placed in it an image of our Blessed Lady, he there passed alone a great portion of the day, reading and meditating on the Scriptures and tasting all the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, who speaks therein with such infinite love. The devil tried to molest him, but he received the infernal suggestions with contempt and was not to be diverted from his interior recollection. Sometimes, of course, it was a duty for these servants of God to converse together or to receive the persons who came to visit them. Upon these occasions they always kept before their eyes the Divine Presence and their own spiritual advantage. Hence, as the same witness declares, their conversation was always upon spiritual things. Paul and John Baptist both entertained a singular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Whenever the desire of the bishop, or any pious motive, called them to the city, they quickly sought the cathedral church, and kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, remained absorbed in prayer until they were summoned away.

Sometimes they had to dine in the episcopal palace, but they soon left the table to return to the church. If they found the doors closed, they retired to some unfrequented spot to adore in spirit that sacrament which was their love, their consolation, and their true and divine food. The ardent devotion which they professed towards this Furnace of love could not remain unknown, and was, in fact, soon talked about in the town. These fervent youths had deeply impressed upon their hearts that whoever walks out of the road of holy obedience, however holy he may imagine himself, treads a dangerous path. They therefore placed themselves under the direction of a good priest, who, knowing their virtue, exercised them in diverse ways.

He sometimes obliged them to carry heavy loads of wood upon their shoulders, while they, submitting to him in all things, obeyed even his slightest sign. Their conduct, also, depended upon the bishop, to whom they professed entire and loyal subjection. This wise prelate soon perceived the marvelous gifts they had received from God; and, guided by the same spirit of discernment which had regulated the Bishop of Alexandria in his direction of Paul, he ordered them to teach catechism and Christian Doctrine in the cathedral church, to visit the rich<sup>5</sup>, and to console and prepare the dying for their last hour. He went still further when he desired Paul to give the ordination exercises. At this unusual determination, there were not wanting critics full of the spirit of contradiction, who censured the good prelate for committing this ecclesiastical function to one who was a simple lay hermit. But the wisest, best, and the largest portion of the clergy were pleased with the bishop's choice because they knew that Paul was full of the spirit of God, and that his words, breathing no common zeal and fervor, penetrated all hearts and reaped wonderful fruits of conversion. The humble servant of God obeyed his superior's commands and preached the exercises. The profit and advantage to the newly ordained were so great, that the opinion of the prelate was fully justified and the approval of all good men was gained.

## **CHAPTER XV**

### **How They Went to Naples to Venerate the Relics of St. Januarius, and Were Afterwards Summoned to Troja by Bishop Emilio Cavalieri, the Bishop of That City**

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<sup>5</sup> This might be a typographical error; perhaps it should be "sick".

The Feast of St. Januarius, being near at hand, the brother penitents determined to go to Naples, both to honor the relics of that great martyr, the wonderful protector of the city, and to be present at the miracle, which is one of the clearest signs of God's Providence over a faithful people. And since the servants of God are ever distinguished from the children of the world by the manner in which they make the most indifferent things tend to their sanctification, so the very voyage of Paul and John was rendered a holy one by the devout and fervent discourses which they delivered in the vessel, and which greater edified the mariners and excited their admiration for the two brothers. Among the passengers was a worthy ecclesiastic of Gaeta, who himself declared that either through the consolation of being with Paul or by some special grace from God, he was entirely free during this voyage from the illness which on all former occasions had so greatly inconvenienced him. This, he said, had been predicted to him by the holy man when they started. When they arrived at Naples, they lodged in this priest's house, and on the Feast of St. Januarius, they went with him to behold the miraculous liquefaction of the holy martyr's blood. Their piety and reverence gave a lesson to everyone on how it behooved them to venerate the relics and employ the festivals of the saints.

When they had satisfied their devotion and kissed the blessed relics, they thought of returning homewards. During the eight or ten days that they had sojourned in Naples, they had given singular edification by their modest bearing, their penitential dress, and the good advice and holy counsels with which they furnished all who had occasion to speak with them. Those who knew the brothers conceived so high an opinion of their sanctity that the night of their departure, while they were waiting for a favorable wind in the house of the captain of the ship, a crowd of persons from the neighborhood assembled to see them and to have the consolation of kissing their hands and their habits before they went. Paul and John did not lose so good an opportunity for inviting all present to dedicate themselves, heart and soul, to the holy love of God. They had an appropriate word for everyone, and they especially exhorted the women to become mirrors of Christian modesty.

On their return to Gaeta, after a voyage like the first, employed in devout and holy practices, they received an earnest entreaty from Bishop Emilio Cavalieri of Troja to visit that city. The bishop was a man of profound learning, of a singular perfection, and of an extremely penitent

life, as we learn from our Paul himself, who was admitted into his confidence. To form an idea of his doctrine, it is sufficient to know that Clement XI, a most enlightened judge in such matters, would remark whenever anything important was asked in Bishop Cavalieri's name, "We must do as he requests, for it is impossible that he should ask anything incompatible with ancient precedents or the example of the fathers." His great virtue had gained him such esteem that the same Sovereign Pontiff often expressed himself most edified with the holiness of life and purity of conscience of the Bishop of Troja. Moreover, Clement XII, speaking of this bishopric, did not hesitate to give the title of saint to him who had governed it, saying, "We know how a saint like Bishop Cavalieri must have suffered in that diocese." Benedict XIII, during the good bishop's lifetime, had spoken of him in the same terms upon an occasion which we cannot refrain from mentioning here.

During the Holy Year of 1725, a young man from Foggia went to confession in the Basilica of St. Peter. Now it happened, that without knowing him, he knelt at the feet of the Pope himself, who, out of his ardent zeal for the conversions of souls, was wont to hear the confessions of the pilgrims. The youth accused himself of having spoken against the character of his prelate, the Bishop of Troja, upon which His Holiness severely reproved him, saying, among other things, "How is it that you have dared to open your mouth against so holy a man?" He imposed upon him as a penance, that immediately upon his return to his own country, he should go and kiss the bishop's feet, retract his uncharitable words, and publish throughout Foggia that the Pope had given him this penance.

The reason why this holy prelate desired to have the brother penitents near him may be learned from the *Life of Cavalieri*, published in Naples in 1741 by the archdeacon of Troja, John Rossi. He speaks thus, "The bishop having heard of the piety of two brothers who lived in a hermitage and devoted themselves to a continual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, forthwith sought to have them within his diocese in order that their example might excite his people to a greater veneration of their Blessed Lord, and, at length, to his extreme joy, he obtained his desire. "The request of so great a prelate, and one of whom fame spoke so highly, could scarcely be denied by Paul and his brother, although they foresaw that the journey to Troja must be attended by much suffering and inconvenience. They left Gaeta in the month of August, while the heat was so excessive that the burning rays of the sun fell with torturing power upon their

uncovered heads. John became so ill that he nearly lost his life, and Paul was attacked with a malignant fever. They traveled without either money or provisions, begging for relief at the inns upon the road. They met, however, with little compassion and scanty charity, for the alms they received amounted to no more than a single coin of little value, with which they procured some refreshment but were unable to afford a lodging. Still they went meekly on their way, their patience failing not and their devotion never cooling. When they reached Mount Gargano, they spent the night praying before the miraculous cave, rendered special by the apparition of St. Michael. It was during their prayer that John Baptist heard these words addressed to him in a clear voice, "I will visit you with a rod of iron, and I will give you the Holy Spirit." Thus did Almighty God, while he was preparing many trials for his servants, promise to communicate to them at the same time the abundance of the Spirit. Weary and exhausted, they at length arrived at Troja, where the welcome given them by the good bishop was in proportion to the desire he had testified to see them. He received them with affectionate joy and lodged them near himself in his own palace.

The zealous pastor was not deceived in the hopes he had built upon the two brothers; for the example they gave of reverence and tender love towards the Blessed Sacrament caused many fervent souls to devote much of their time to visiting and contemplating Jesus in the mystery of his love. The holy prelate, as the above-mentioned life informs us, joined his prayers to theirs, and although burdened with age and infirmities, gave up all the time he could spare to partake in their devout exercises. Desiring that his flock should profit by the voice as well as by the example of Paul, and that the wicked might be redeemed, while the good were encouraged, he begged him to conduct the practices of devotion in public and to preach in the open streets and squares of the city. The humble servant of God attended with prompt obedience to the wishes of a superior whom he so highly venerated. He began his mission by going about in the night, accompanied by the brothers of a pious confraternity, awakening with the thunder of God's word those who were slumbering in sin. He even went so far as to preach in the vicinity of places of public scandal, at the request of a zealous priest who trusted that the words of Paul would effect the conversion for which he had so often labored in vain.

The bishop, being well aware that the brothers were full of the Spirit of God and were deeply versed in the science of the saints, held frequent spiritual conferences with them. To Paul in

particular, he opened his whole heart with great humility, and he sought his direction in that road of penance and holy love which he already trod with giant steps. On the other hand, Paul, who loved the prelate as a father and venerated him as a saint, submitted his conduct entirely to his discerning guidance, and revealed to him the light he had received from God, touching the foundation of his new Congregation. After hearing him, the bishop could entertain no doubt that Paul had been guided by the true wisdom of God, and that his graces came from that Blessed Lord, who is the source and Father of light. Nevertheless, in order to pronounce with the greatest decision in an affair of such importance, he consulted the Almighty in fervent prayer. As soon as he clearly understood the designs of God's infinite wisdom upon his servant, he eagerly encouraged and animated Paul to carry out his holy enterprise, saying, with deep feeling, "This is God's own work; great things will come of it. It will make progress through hidden and mysterious ways." The holy prelate's words, full of heavenly discernment, relieved Paul from all the doubts and perplexities which had seemed to hinder his undertaking. The bishop even declared that the first house of the new Institute should be established in his diocese, and he immediately began to seek for an appropriate site, which, however, could not then be found. He would have wished, if his state of health had permitted it, to go himself to the Roman council, and to lay before the illustrious Benedict XIII the whole idea of the Congregation of the Passion, in order to obtain the pontifical approbation. And as he had long desired to end his days in peace, unburdened by the weight of the episcopate, which has caused the holiest souls to tremble, he intended to devote his latter years to God in a house of the Institute. He was not, indeed, enabled to effect all that he proposed; nevertheless, he contributed greatly to the establishment of the Congregation by his wise counsels and fervent prayers, and also by his inducing Paul and his brother to prepare themselves for the reception of holy orders. He declared to them that such was the will of God, made manifest to a holy soul under his spiritual direction, whom he had often consulted about the Congregation. However, he assured them that they would soon have as many companions as they desired. Thus did our Lord dispose all things for Paul's encouragement, so that he could no longer fear to present himself once more in Rome with his holy bearing and abject dress. The servant of God, however, deemed it prudent to communicate to his eminence, Cardinal Cienfuegos, the sentiments of the Bishop of Troja, and to ask him still further advice upon the matter. The cardinal replied in these words, "I received your welcome letter with great

joy, and I have to tell you that I can do no less than praise exceedingly the conduct of that excellent pastor, the Bishop of Troja. I entirely concur in his wise opinion, that our Lord in his mercy not only inspires his servants to perform what he desires but likewise frequently indicates to them by outward signs His omnipotent will in their behalf. I will offer up what prayers I can for you, and I beg of you not to forget me before God, whom I now entreat to bless you with the unspeakable fullness of His divine grace. Rome, August 1st, 1724.

“Yours, in all affection,

“A. Cardinal Cienfuegos”

Paul could now no longer remain inactive without opposing the will of God, but it may be easily imagined that he felt no little sorrow at the idea of leaving Troja and parting from the holy bishop, whose life was an example of all virtues and in whom he had found such treasures of enlightened doctrine and celestial wisdom. On the other hand, the good prelate himself suffered no less at the departure of the two brothers, whom he so tenderly loved, and especially at the loss of Paul, to whom he had confided all the secrets of his heart. When they took their leave, he gave them a proof of his solicitude for their success, and his great desire for the foundation of the Congregation, for, to use the words of his biographer, when these holy souls had determined to go to Rome to obtain the approbation of the Holy See, the bishop presented them with letters of recommendation to many cardinals and to other distinguished personages of the papal court. Through the help of these, after a diligent examination of the spirit of the brothers and of the Rules of the Institute, the apostolic approval and confirmation was conceded to them, but this happy result came long after the holy bishop had passed (as we may piously believe) to the reward of his labors and his toils.

## CHAPTER XVI

**How They Arrived in Rome During the Holy Year. They Went to Gaeta, and Then Back to Rome, Where They Were Ordained Priests, and Employed Themselves in Attending the Sick in the Hospital of St. Gallicano**

It was the jubilee year when Paul and John Baptist left Troja for Rome; and we may well

believe that, had there been no other motives for visiting the holy city, their lively devotion and tender piety would have induced them to go there at such a time to venerate, like the saints of old, the sanctuaries of the faith, and to acquire the priceless treasures of the indulgences of the church. The two brothers were praying one day in the Basilica of St. Peter, when they were observed by Monsignor Crescenzi, then a canon of St. Peter's, and afterwards a cardinal of the church. Upon seeing these modest youths in their strange garb of penitence, he was moved with a pious curiosity to know more about them. He himself gives the account of their interview in a letter he wrote many years afterwards to Paul:

“I cannot help reminding you, that we first became known to each other in St. Peter's, during the Holy Year, 1725, at which time I was a canon of that basilica. When I saw two brothers in so austere a dress and nearly barefooted, praying before the Confession of the St. Peter<sup>6</sup>, I had so great a desire to know their state of life and vocation, that I asked them many questions in the church.”

Not long afterwards, he introduced them to Cardinal Corradini, and then to Benedict XIII, of happy memory, who ordained them priests. And thus, no little good was caused by visiting the holy places of Rome in that penitential dress. The very first conversation which this enlightened prelate held with Paul and John Baptist inspired him with that esteem and love which he ever afterwards showed towards them and their Congregation.

Through the influence of Bishop Crescenzi, they were introduced to his eminence, Cardinal Corradini, a man of undeviating rectitude, and, at the same time, of so tender a charity that he was known by the name of the father of the poor. He recognized in our holy penitents a true spirit of piety and an earnest desire of serving God, and he most probably spoke in their favor to the Sovereign Pontiff himself.

One day, when His Holiness had occasion to visit the Church of Santa Maria in Navicella, Paul and John threw themselves at his feet to ask his permission to form a Congregation according to the Rules Paul had already prepared. The Pope, without any hesitation, *by an oral declaration* granted their request and confirmed by his pontifical authority the foundation of their poor and lowly Institute. After obtaining this precious favor and satisfying their feelings of

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<sup>6</sup> A shrine in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome.



devotion, they returned to Gaeta to the hermitage of our Lady of the Chain, where Bishop Cavalieri addressed them a letter in the following terms, “Oh, how consoling it is to think that, with the blessing of God, you are now to be joined by companions who will walk in your footsteps. I do not envy, but *with the envy of God I envy* the Bishop of Gaeta, who has you in his diocese; nevertheless, I hope against hope; I trust and confide.”

Paul and his brother did not possess in their hermitage all the peace and retirement which they desired, for they were disturbed by the crowds of people whom the fame of their sanctity attracted. Hence, to enjoy more fully the sweet fruits of solitude, they withdrew for some time into a sanctuary of our Blessed Lady, about five or six miles from the town of Gaeta. It was here that the heart of Paul became more and more inflamed with heavenly desires, as we learn from a letter which he wrote to his confessor, in which he speaks thus, “May the most holy cross of Jesus be ever planted in our hearts, in order that our souls may be engrafted upon this tree of life, and may produce worthy fruits of penance through the merits of the death of the Author of life. Oh! when shall we imitate perfectly this Divine Redeemer who emptied Himself? When shall we be so humble that our glory will consist in being the rejected of men and the outcasts of the people? When shall we be so simple and lowly that we shall think it our happiness to occupy the last place and our misfortune to be honored and esteemed? Ah! When? When? In charity pray that God may give us this grace.”

So great was his longing to unite himself closely with God and to transform himself into his sweet Redeemer, that he complained of being still interrupted in his prayer and distracted in his intimate communications with his only Good.

But it was some time, after so long a preparation of penance, that Paul should proceed with his brother to the spot where they could be admitted to the priesthood. In the month, therefore, of September, in the year 1726, they went to Rome, where they speedily devoted themselves to the practice of acts of charity worthy of their piety. Paul gives some account of their manner of life, in a letter written to the above-mentioned confessor, “We have arrived at Rome, by the grace of God, in good health, and we live at the Hospital of San Gallicano, where we daily increase in desire to consummate our sacrifice of love. The opportunity, however, has not yet been presented to us; but within eight or ten days the Pope will come to consecrate the church, and then we shall be enabled with holy joy to consecrate ourselves also entirely to our beloved Jesus in the persons

of His poor. Here we have much labor, many mortifications, and frequent occasions of self-abasement.”

The building of which the venerable servant of God speaks about being completed, when the church was opened, it fell to John Baptist to carry the cross during the sacred function. Cardinal Corradini, who was the patron of the charity, desired the brothers to take care that no spiritual aid should be wanting to the poor sick. Paul devoted himself to teaching the catechism and to giving instructions. Among other holy practices, he introduced there the custom of a general communion at certain times of the year. He was vigilant in preventing those abuses which are so apt to creep in and ruin the most holy works. But for this he gained little favor with those who ought to have been the first to second his zeal; and although perhaps they acted for the best, the only recompense he met with was mortification and ill-treatment. All was borne in peace and silence by our Paul, who had already rejoiced in the opportunity of self-abasement.

In the meanwhile, Cardinal Corradini, who was well acquainted with the irreproachable conduct of the two brothers and was highly satisfied with their active charity, showed them a daily increasing love and esteem. Apprehending the repugnance which their humility might feel at receiving holy orders, he commanded their ordination under holy obedience. He took upon himself the care of procuring the necessary credentials, and obtaining from the Pope, as a special favor, that they should be ordained for the service of the hospitals. The fervent youths complied. Thus, with the merit of obedience, they received the tonsure on February the 6th, 1727, from the hands of the then vicegent, Bishop Baccari. They were promoted to minor orders on the 23rd and 24th of the same month in the domestic chapel of the prelate.

On Holy Saturday, April 12th in the same year, after having performed the spiritual exercises in the house of St. Andrea di Monte Cavallo, then the novitiate of the Jesuit Fathers, they were ordained subdeacons in the Lateran Basilica. On May the 1st, with the apostolic permission for receiving orders *outside the regular times*, they were admitted to the diaconate. Finally, on Saturday in Ember week, the 7th of June, they were ordained priests in the Vatican Basilica by Pope Benedict XIII of holy memory. His Holiness, while imposing his hands upon Paul, pressed them on his head with peculiar earnestness, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit,” etc. When the ceremony was concluded, he joined his hands together in fervent prayer, giving thanks and repeating, “*Thanks be to God.*” After the function, although he had not spoken to any of the

newly ordained, with special affability he inquired of the penitent brothers whether they had received minor orders in their own country or in Rome, to which Paul meekly replied, "In Rome."

After having been endowed in the sacrament of Holy Orders with a more abundant infusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it can be readily conceived that, if Paul's soul was before inflamed with divine love, it became now, as it were, consumed with the ardor of his charity. The sentiments of faith, devotion, and tenderness, and the copious tears with which he said his first Mass on the Feast of the Holy Trinity were the fruits of this charity; hence it was, that for many years he never celebrated without weeping. He returned with fresh zeal to the service of the hospitals; and as he felt that the rank of the priesthood and the good of his neighbor required (as he wrote to a friend) great things of him, he applied himself with particular diligence to study. He sought the aid and guidance of enlightened men in order that he might diffuse abroad the food of holy doctrine, as well as the edification of good example, and be in the house of the Lord like the lamp of the sanctuary, which not only burns but illuminates. Almighty God was pleased to bless his holy purpose and virtuous application, so that he was enabled to attain all the knowledge necessary for preaching missions with spirit and benefit. Both he and his brother, who was remarkable for his knowledge of scripture, spoke with such force, precision, and propriety that it might well be said of them, "*They were imparting the word of truth without deviation*" (II Tim. 2:15).

## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **How They Went Home to Lombardy on Account of Their Father's Death and Afterwards Returned to the Hospital of St. Gallicano**

Wise and holy men have never believed that any exercises of devotion or austerity could dispense them from the duties of their state, or from the obligation of love and reverence which they owe to those who gave them birth. While Paul and John were piously spending their days in the Hospital of St. Gallicano, news reached them of their father's death. They lost no time in writing their widowed mother a letter full of consoling and encouraging sentiments:

“Live Jesus.

“Most dear Mother,

“The news of our father’s death has caused us, as you cannot doubt, great affliction, the more so as we have not yet received any distinct accounts of it. We bow before the holy will of God and pray that He may console you. Be comforted, dear mother, and let them not grieve at home, for we feel assured that our father is in paradise. I will say no more at present, for we shall set out as soon as possible and come to assist you in your need. We shall procure the necessary leave today, and shall only wait to arrange our affairs, so that we hope to commence the journey in the beginning of September. Pray for us. Tomorrow, and often afterwards, we shall say Mass for our departed father.

“Your most affectionate servants and sons,

“Paul Francis and John Baptist

“Rome, August 16, 1727”

In order, therefore, to give what comfort they could to their good mother, and to help their family with pious advice and direction, they went home to Castellazzo, where Paul wrote to a friend:

“The death of our father, whom I firmly trust God has taken to Himself, has recalled us into Lombardy for works of charity in our own household. After two months voyage, I was taken ill when I arrived, with tertian fever<sup>7</sup> which has prevented my saying Mass for eighteen days.”

Having put in order the affairs of their family, the two brothers returned to Rome, leaving their mother consoled and revived by the holy thoughts with which they had inspired her, and their brothers and sisters excited to walk with fresh courage in the path of perfection. Paul always continued to communicate with them by letters and to give them advice worthy of his fervent spirit. He taught them to be faithful in prayer and to live in retirement and holy humility, saying that there was no better rule than to keep in solitude, to attend to themselves, and to open their hearts to all the sweet feelings of God’s holy love. “I know,” he said, “some poor people of this world who do great things for God and never give up prayer, although they are in poverty,

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<sup>7</sup> Malaria.

affliction and wretchedness. Happy they! because they know the truth and reject the lies of which this world is full.” “Thus spoke our Paul, burning, as he was, with an ardent desire to see all his kindred saints. Some years afterwards, when he lost his excellent mother, knowing the need in which his family stood of holy direction, he gave them many instructions, beside an attestation in writing of the virtues of their departed parent, in order to serve for example to those she had left behind. He wrote with touching affection to the oldest of those who were at home.

“My dearest brother Joseph,

I recommend to you a constant care and vigilance over our dear sisters. Let them remember that they are obliged, beyond all others, to give good example, and to become holy according to the instructions which I have given to them, both by word of mouth and in writing. Let them keep themselves retired, let them work and pray and frequent the holy sacraments. Above all, let them not suffer anyone to visit them, not even ecclesiastical persons, for, although these are supposed to be devout and holy, yet we must be prudent with everyone. Oh, what experience I have had of this during all the years of my missions! How often do I recommend it in my sermons! We must attend to ourselves with a filial confidence in Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints; but we must avoid the company of men. I do most firmly trust that our good sisters will be real saints and examples to those around them. Believe me, dearly beloved, you are the happiest people in the world, poor in this life, it is true, but rich in faith, rich for all eternity. Do you know why God keeps you in all this trouble and poverty? Because he wishes, by these means, to insure your everlasting happiness. Short and momentary will be your sufferings; eternal your rejoicings. Tell me what you would wish to have done if you were about to breathe your last. Would you desire to have had riches, which are so often accompanied by grievous sin, and be thrown into hell? Or would you have the poor life you actually lead and be transported into heaven? Be of good courage, then, look up to God, and believe for certain that He will never abandon you, that He will Himself assist you and provide you with all that is necessary. This is the true way to love our kindred, in Him who is the author of all union, by helping them in the paths of sanctity.”

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

## **How They Left the Hospital of St. Gallicano and Retired to Monte Argentario, Where They Were Inspired by God to Form Their New Congregation**

The true servants of God, when changing their place of abode, do not alter the resolution of their hearts. They carry with them everywhere the same fervor of spirit and the same desire of fulfilling the holy will of God. Hence, that which is the effect of caprice in those who are guided by their own inclinations is prudence and wisdom in such as follow the inspirations of Heaven.

After the return of Paul and his brother to Rome, they did not remain long in the Hospital of St. Gallicano, but speedily left it for reasons which will presently be explained. The principal motive for their conduct is manifested by Paul himself with admirable simplicity in a letter which he wrote to a worthy priest of Gaeta: “I have not yet been able to give you any account of our departure from our hospital for Monte Argentario, but I will now do so in order to show you how the grace of God has drawn us to that place, though at the time we knew it not. Many things happened to detain us in Lombardy, among which was my sickness, which lasted the entire winter. Then we were both ill almost all summer, and it became evident that the air did not agree with us. Upon our return to Rome, we found that the rules for the hospital were being drawn up, and one of the principal duties required of the attendants was bleeding the sick, which, although it was so great a work of charity, we had not the courage to undertake, and, in fact, we never desired to do it. We employed ourselves in all the other offices of the house, principally in the spiritual care of the sick, but not in this particular work. His eminence, the patron, seeing our faint heartedness in this respect, most kindly obtained a Brief from His Holiness, permitting us to return to our solitude.” So far the servant of God. Another reason for their departure was the weakness of their health, which sank beneath their charitable labors, as they themselves acknowledged to Pope Clement XII when they asked him to change the title of their ordination from the service of the hospitals to the duties of the missions. But, far beyond all other motives, was the internal impulse in the heart of Paul, which he well knew came from our Lord, and which lovingly invited him to continue the holy work of his Congregation. Hence, he himself said to a good priest: “When our Lord desires to be glorified in his servants, He stimulates them continually with his grace until they follow the divine inspiration. I went and hid myself in the

Hospital of St. Gallicano, and even there our Lord visited me with repeated impulses until he drew me forth.”

It was impossible for our Paul to doubt that he was really called by God, for he had received a letter from that most enlightened man, Bishop Cavalieri, telling him that his stay in Rome was not in his opinion according to the designs of Providence in his behalf. “For,” said that wise bishop, “the idea of retiring into the hospital seems to me to be attended with every possible difficulty. I conceive that this employment is directly contrary to your vocation and to what our Lord has clearly shown He desires from you. We must hope against hope. Our salvation is nearer than we believe, for when Abraham sacrificed his son, he did not expect to be the father of the faithful. Have we not a still more sublime example? Our Savior promoted the glory of his Father in the opprobrium of his cross, and the Father glorified his Son in his very sufferings. *“I have glorified it and will glorify it again”* (Jn. 12:28). Out of his opprobrium did the Son look for the glory of His Father. *“I made known to them your name”* (Jn. 17:26). Courage, recoil not at difficulties. I hardly know what I have written.”

Unable to resist any longer the manifestations of God’s will, Paul and his brother retired to Monte Argentario, where, finding their old hermitage of the Annunziata occupied, they obtained the bishop’s permission to inhabit another cell, which was next to the Church of St. Antonio. Here they prayed day and night in perfect peace and a firm trust that our Lord would send them companions. Nor were they mistaken, for they were soon joined by three persons, two of whom were lay people and one a priest. What manner of life they led in this holy solitude, we learn from the words of one of their number, whose simplicity and clearness attest the truth of his recital, the veracity of which he indeed deposed upon oath. “After I was invested with the habit, I remained in the hermitage of St. Antonio, where there were five of us, Father Paul, Father John Baptist, Father Anthony, and his cousin’s brother, John Mary, and myself. The tenor of our life I will presently describe.

“The hermitage consisted of a little church and two rooms, one above the other. In the upper chamber we all slept upon straw, raised above the ground on boards. Each of these rude beds was separated by cloth curtains, so that we could not see one another. In the middle of the night, we all rose and went to church, where Father Paul and the two priests recited Matins, while I and my lay companion said the beads and other prayers. When Matins was over, we devoted an hour to

meditation, after which, four times a week, we took the discipline; then those who desired repose returned to bed, and the remainder occupied themselves in study or some profitable exercise. Before dawn we returned to the church for prime and tierce, and for another hour of mental prayer. The Fathers then celebrated Mass, and after the thanksgiving they remained some time in the lower room reading and writing. Father Paul and John Baptist then took their writings and went out separately into the wood; Father Anthony occasionally did the same, and we two lay brothers stayed at home, employed in different things, such as cultivating the little garden, collecting the wood, or cooking herbs and vegetables in a shed which fronted the hermitage and served us for a kitchen. An hour before noon, they all returned to the hermitage and proceeded to the church to recite Sext and None, after which we took our repast. Our food consisted of diverse pieces of bread we had received in alms, a little wine mixed with a great deal of water, a soup of herbs and vegetables, and a small portion of salt fish which had been given us in charity. After dinner we spent a short time in recreation, either in the lower room which served us for refectory, or in the shed which was our kitchen, and we again separated after reciting Vespers. In the evening we returned to the church for Compline, an hour mental prayer, and the rosary of our Blessed Lady. In the winter season we remained for some time in study and then had tea, for every day was observed as a fast, unless it were a feast of the Church.”

The writer concludes by saying that the life led by Father Paul made him appear in the eyes of his companions a most austere penitent, an angel in the flesh. This witness, who at that time wore the holy habit, was not able, on account of his health, to endure so severe a life. Thus, Father Paul, guided by a spirit of prudence, advised him to return home saying, “Son, you must acknowledge that your strength cannot sustain our austerities; therefore, it will be better for you to leave us. When you are stronger, we shall see you with pleasure, but you can never belong to us. Preserve in your heart the holy fear of Go, and keep yourself in his grace, ever remembering what I say to you now that you will have a heavy cross to bear; carry it with patience and paradise will be yours.” The novice adds of himself, “I went home to Orbetello and all that Father Paul said to me has come true, and still continues to be verified.”

The same heavenly light by which the servant of God was enabled to foretell things to come gave him the knowledge of many past and hidden events. The priest Anthony, who was one of his earliest companions, walking out one morning, as he himself deposed upon oath in the



Processes, was tempted to eat some figs without permission and unknown to anyone. He carefully washed his mouth lest his fault should be discovered and he deemed himself quite secure since his brother, being employed in prayer, could not have observed him. But the servants of God are endowed with a superior light, which penetrates what ordinary eyes cannot discover. The moment Father Paul saw Anthony he said with a severe countenance, "What, have you eaten figs without leave?" The culprit was inclined to deny the fact, but feeling an interior reproach he confessed his fault. Father Paul replied, "In a few days you will have a fever as a punishment for your disobedience." Anthony made answer that he heard that "figs eaten in the morning were good for the health." "You will soon find that out," added Father Paul. In fact, he was shortly afterwards seized with a fever, the attacks of which were proportioned in number to the figs he had eaten.

With no less certainty upon another occasion did Paul disclose to the same priest the hidden thoughts of his heart. For, as they were one day walking together the servant of God asked him some questions to which he, without thinking, gave a prevaricating reply. Father Paul, turning to him, gravely said, "Take care that you do not utter a falsehood. I know very well that you are now thinking of such a thing, of such a person, and of such a place," and he clearly described what was passing in Anthony's mind. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that this priest, when questioned by the presiding bishop during the Processes upon the judgment he had formed of Father Paul, should reply, "I have always held him in the highest esteem, and your Lordship will allow that I had good grounds for my opinion since he disclosed to me my most secret thoughts." It is easy to imagine the exalted idea that must have been conceived of the servant of God by those who inhabited or visited Monte Argentario and became acquainted with his marvelous life. Several times it happened that persons walking in the woods near the hermitage heard a strange noise, and when they ran to discover the cause, to their great surprise, they beheld Father Paul disciplining himself with an iron chain or tormenting his body with other painful instruments

Thus did the little Congregation of the Passion begin and thus did Paul labor and suffer in order that it might increase with the blessing of God. As he loved to unite a vigorous life with a joyous spirit, he took great care that in their poor solitude they should keep the feast of the Church with all fitting devotion. While, therefore, they celebrated the functions of Holy Week with a fervent spirit of faith and love and deep feelings of compassion, they also solemnized as

well as they could the festivals of Easter, Christmas, and the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin. It was beautiful to see how all that was wanting in pomp and grandeur was supplied by piety and fervor. Like the ancient anchorites, upon those blessed solemnities Paul permitted his attenuated body some little relaxation. He set aside the usual austerity of his meals and partook of milk diet<sup>8</sup> and eggs. The house in which he had assembled his companions was inconveniently small, but his spirit rejoiced because it was far from the tumult of the world, and he felt assured that our Lord, in His own good time, would find him a more suitable habitation. He opened his heart in a letter to a worthy priest in these terms, “This place is certainly well adapted for attaining exalted holiness on account of its perfect solitude. Our hermitage contains no more than two rooms, but if there were a hundred, there would be space enough left for recollection and silence. God might doubtless give us more rooms if he so willed, but we do not wish for them, and through his grace we live detached from all things, at least in desire. May the most holy will of God be ever accomplished in us.” And in another letter he says, “God is praised here day and night. As for me, *‘I am a man of unclean lips’*” (Is. 6:5). Thus wrote one who was a master as well as model to others in the fervent practices of piety.

## **CHAPTER XIX**

### **How the First Missions of Father Paul Were Favored with the Special Blessing of God**

Prudent men have ever desired that those who are called to labor for the salvation of others should first, by a long trial of their own virtue, have acquired the strength necessary for enduring the hardships and overcoming the difficulties which they must meet with in seeking to draw souls out of the snares of hell. Moreover, that by fervent prayers and loving communications with Almighty God, they should obtain that abundance of spirit which may enable them to transfuse into others the overflowing sentiments of their own hearts. He who with such a preparation goes forth to announce the word of God will assuredly reap a plentiful harvest. His words will be so many sparks of fire if they proceed from a heart inflamed with love; his

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<sup>8</sup> Dairy products.

reproaches will be piercing darts if they are directed by a strong and ardent zeal; his threats will be thunderbolts to strike sinners if his virtue is a bright burning light before men.

Our Lord was pleased to manifest, by the success of Father Paul's missions and of all the other enterprises which he undertook for the good of his neighbor, the force and efficacy of his servant's zeal and the sanctity of his life. Knowing well what God desired of him, he went to Orbetello and Poretercole to give instructions in Christian Doctrine while John Baptist catechized the people of the Port of St. Stephano. Bishop Christoforo Palmieri of Soana, seeing the exemplary life of the two brothers, conferred upon them, after a brief examination, the faculty of hearing confessions in order that they might be of still greater service to the sinners whose cause they had so much at heart.

The will of God, in this respect, was no sooner declared to Paul by Bishop Palmieri, than he determined upon going down to Portercole every Saturday evening. He walked always barefooted along the steep and rugged path of the mountain. His feet were so pricked and wounded by thorns and stones that the road not infrequently streamed with his blood. In the summer he had to endure still greater suffering from the rays of the sun which fell upon his uncovered head with almost intolerable heat.

This was the more painful to him as he was by nature so delicate and feeble; but the weakness of his body was overcome by his ardent love of God and his insatiable thirst for the salvation of souls. When he reached Portercole, he generally asked for the keys of the collegiate chapel, and passed the night before the Blessed Sacrament praying for the abundant blessings of Heaven for those whom he had come to serve. Nor were his supplications unavailing, for their fruit was seen in the crowds of penitents who surrounded him not only upon the days he was accustomed to hear confessions but whenever he came into the town. Beholding his extreme poverty (we use the words of one who was an eyewitness and a distinguished soldier), his perfect detachment from the things of this world, his lowly bearing, and his subjection to inferiors, they recognized in him a true servant of God who sought to reclaim sinners, heedless of difficulties or repulses. They received with eager hearts the good seed he scattered amongst them and brought forth such fruits of virtue that when the Spanish troops entered Portercole, the city was the admiration of all the officers who said they had never beheld so pious a town.

It would seem that God wished to reward, even with temporal blessings, the docility with

which his servant had been listened to. One day when the air was loaded with a heavy tempest which threatened to destroy the vintage, Father Paul, at the insistence of the terrified inhabitants, made the sign of the cross in the air with a crucifix, and the hail which fell left the grapes untouched while it withered and killed the leaves around them.

Besides the food of the word of God, which the two brothers unceasingly dispensed to all in the neighborhood of Portercole, they went out during the spring and autumn seasons to preach missions wherever they were asked by the bishops and ordinaries. It is not difficult to conceive what must have been the effect of their preaching when the sight of them alone was a sermon. These two missionaries, coming forth out of their solitude with their rough garb of sackcloth, their uncovered head and bare feet, recalled the memory of the great precursor of the desert or of the apostles of Christ, who announced, like them, in perils and in poverty the gospel of peace. Their labors commenced in the Diocese of Soana; they went next into that of Acquapendente; they preached in Tuscany and in part of the Maremme of the Patrimony of St. Peter; and they extended the missions to Giglio Capraja and the Island of Elba. Their toils were unceasing and, as was deposed by one who witnessed them, their sufferings were inexpressible. Wherever they preached, crowds of persons followed, beseeching them to hear their confessions and reconcile them with God.

Their severest labors were upon the coast of Tuscany, which teemed with bandits and public robbers. At that time the laudable custom of giving up convicted malefactors to their respective states had not yet been introduced. Father Paul, seeing the miserable state of those unhappy men and the need in which they stood of help, devoted his days and nights to effect their conversion and treated them with marvelous charity and gentleness. Nor was Father John Baptist backward in following the example of his fervent brother. He suffered greatly from the incessant toil which he imposed upon himself, and in his later years he acknowledged how much those missions had cost him, "I ruined my constitution," he said, "when we preached in Tuscany; I stood much in need of nourishment at that time, but I was engaged the whole morning hearing confessions and so could take nothing before dinner." From this confession of John Baptist we may judge of what was endured by Father Paul, who had to bear the heavier portion of the labor. His stomach became so weak that he never entirely recovered, and his death was finally caused by his inability to swallow any food, except a little sugar and water.

Their journeys were not the least toilsome part of their missionary duties for they always walked barefoot with uncovered heads and nothing but a simple tunic to defend them from the inclemency of the weather. When they arrived at their destination, drenched with rain or frozen with cold, they sought no other refreshment but retiring to the nearest church to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, which to them was like a burning furnace of love. They then resumed their apostolic labors with renewed earnestness, entirely forgetting how much they needed both food and rest. The missions concluded, they were soon upon the road again, walking vigorously, although their frail bodies were almost worn out. Their exhaustion was at times so complete that Father Paul once, sitting down by the roadside, fell fast asleep in the midst of some briers without feeling the pricks of the thorns. Nothing could daunt the courage of our Paul; he went from one mission to another, just as the voice of his Lord called him. Nor would he give up his work when attacked by evident illness, as was proved by his conduct when sent for to preach at Farnese. He was then under medical treatment, and no one could look at his attenuated frame without compassion; so much so, that a man whom he met a few miles from the town, and whom he sent before to say that the missionaries were coming, exclaimed, when he had delivered the message, "As for these missionaries, to look at them you would say that one at least was a dying man."

But Father Paul had no sooner mounted the platform than, conquering the weakness of his body by the strength of his zeal, he preached with so much force, vivacity, and fervor that the people were almost stupefied with surprise and admiration. No wonder that the mysteries of our faith, announced in such burning words and exemplified in such marvelous lives, should have struck the hardest hearts and converted the most obdurate sinners. As soon as the missions had terminated, the servant of God was in the habit of retiring joyfully into his beloved solitude, for he had deeply impressed upon his heart those words of his Divine Redeemer, "Come you apart, into a desert place and rest a little." This quotation was very often on his lips, and he instilled its spirit into all the missionaries of the Congregation. He took care that our retreats should be mostly situated in secluded spots, in order that when their labors were over, the missionaries might restore their diminished strength and acquire new fervor of spirit by being entirely removed from all outward distractions. He wished them to beware with the apostle, lest, while they preached to others, they should themselves become castaways.

While the fame of Father Paul's virtues became daily more extended, his missions, his voyages, and his labors increased in proportion. Besides the sufferings, which were almost inevitable to him from his scanty clothing and bare feet, he had much to endure from the accidents which befell him upon his journeys. He was once traveling with his brother towards Pitigliano, when they lost their way in the woods during a heavy shower of rain. It was in the depth of winter, and when night came on, wet as they were, they could find no better shelter than a tree under which they were obliged to remain. The rain was followed by intense cold; in the morning they found their hair was frozen upon their heads. Tortured with this exposure to the inclemency of the weather, they were awaiting the appearance of the sun to effect a slight thaw and enable them to continue their journey when they were recognized by a compassionate priest, accidentally passing by, to whom they were well known, and who treated them with all the kindness and attention their condition required.

We must not omit that our Lord was pleased more than once to work prodigies in favor of his faithful servants, especially in behalf of Father Paul. Upon one occasion he and his companions were preserved dry amidst a shower of rain which fell around them, as is distinctly attested by diverse witnesses worthy of faith, to whom we shall refer in the sequel. At other times, in order that Paul's abject dress might not have the appearance of extravagant singularity among those who could not comprehend his spirit, Divine Providence worked miracles in his behalf, such as one which took place while he was journeying to the holy house of Loreto. He had received a letter from Doctor Gherardini to one of his relations, Don Pietro Bianchi of Perugia. When he arrived in that city, Don Pietro, seeing his dress and appearance, began to suspect him to be an impostor; he therefore sent him to dine with his servant and was going to make him sleep in the same room with him. His sister, however, suggesting that this might appear disrespectful to their relation who had written to recommend our Paul, allotted a separate room for his use. Still doubtful of his guest, he locked the door upon him and carried away the key, so that no one could leave the apartment.

Paul made no complaint nor did he appear the least offended at the suspicions cast upon him. He only begged that the door might be opened early in the morning as he wished to pursue his journey. His host paid little attention to his words, and the next morning slept securely, knowing well that Father Paul could not leave the house without his concurrence. In the meantime the

sister went to see if the door had been opened. Finding it shut, she reproached her brother for keeping it still locked. He replied, "How do you know what might have happened to us?" However, giving her the key, he sent her to the room. She opened the door and then to her great surprise found that Paul was no longer there. He had doubtless been carried away by the hand of the Lord, who whenever he wills works such wonderful miracles in his faithful servants.

## CHAPTER XX

### **The First Companions Abandon Blessed Paul, and in Their Stead God Sends Him Others. The Building of the First Retreat and Church Is Begun on Monte Argentario under the Title and Invocation of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

The thoughtful reader has doubtless reflected with astonishment upon the marvelous acts of penance and self-abnegation which we have endeavored faintly, albeit faithfully, to record. We have been obliged to compress in a few words a perfect compendium of every kind of mortification, fasts and vigils, hair-shirts and disciplines, snatches of repose taken upon hard boards, and long journeys always performed walking and barefoot. All these form a noble edifice of which, we see indeed, the grandeur of the whole. But we know not the toil and labor bestowed upon the construction of each separate part. Some idea may perhaps be formed of the peculiar and magnanimous perseverance of Paul and his brother, when we relate how short a time they were accompanied in their arduous enterprise by those who had joined them at first with sincere desires of perfection. One after another they all abandoned Monte Argentario and left Paul and John Baptist alone in their retirement. Doubtless this was a heavy blow to our Paul, but hope was strong within him and his trustful spirit was not easily shaken.

"Our vessel," he said in a letter to one of his friends, "is upon the open sea, with neither sails nor oars; but it is guided by the great Captain who knows how to conduct it to a safe harbor. We are in the midst of storms and tempests, but his wisdom and his might shine all the brighter for the perils which encompass us. Blessed be God for giving us something to suffer for His love. The works with which he inspires us must struggle with difficulties, in order that they may exhibit the magnificence of his power. The more our labors cost us, the higher will they soar. *"The Lord brings one close to death, down to the underworld, then back again"* (I Sam. 2:6). Let

us all pray one for another, that we may conquer the enemies that stand in battle array against us, and that victory may be given us through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the most holy will of God be ever accomplished in us; for that is the great end of a devout life. May we despise ourselves and be closely united with this blessed will. Amen.”

God did not permit his servant to be deceived in his expectations, for He speedily sent him some new disciples, whose fervor of spirit and sanctity of life gave him much consolation and support. Among the most faithful and zealous of these was Father Fulgenzio of Jesus, a man of austere life, of wonderful patience in the sicknesses he had constantly to endure, of amiable sweetness of spirit, and of such winning manners that no one seemed able to resist his influence. The other companion, who deserves particular mention for his uncommon virtue, was a certain Brother Joseph of our Lady, a native of Augusta in Sicily, who, although a layman, was of much assistance in the missions, and by his fervent prayer contributed greatly to their success. After leading a life of exemplary holiness, he truly died that death of the just which is precious in the sight of the Lord. Hence, Paul wrote of him, “I have great confidence that his death has been precious *‘in the sight of the Lord.’* He burned with desire to fly up to heaven and to be united with God.”

Paul now began to think seriously of building a house for himself and his companions, as well as a spacious church, in order that their Rule might be strictly observed and the sacred functions decorously performed. He did not tremble at the expense which such an undertaking would necessarily entail, for deeply impressed upon his heart was that golden maxim that the foundations thereof ought to be laid in prayer. Most fully and fervently, therefore, did he recommend his design to God. One day when he was walking alone and turning over this thought in his mind, he came to the spot opposite the town of Orbetello, where the Retreat of the Presentation now stands. He knelt down according to his custom to adore in spirit the Blessed Sacrament preserved in the church of that city, and he then felt a special inspiration to recite the Litanies of our Blessed Lady. While he was praying, our Lord was pleased to visit him with a rapture in which He clearly revealed to him that upon that very ground would be built the first retreat of the Congregation. Being thus assured of the will of God, which he ever implicitly obeyed, he addressed a humble supplication to the town of Orbetello, that he might be enabled to follow out the Divine inspiration. The citizens received his proposition with much kindness and



unanimously consented to his project.

Circumstances, however, prevented him from carrying it into execution immediately, and it was not until two years afterwards that, when he was preaching a mission in Orbetello, the inhabitants were so moved by his zeal and by certain prodigies, which happened at the time, that they entered enthusiastically into his undertaking and took the work into their own hands. Desirous to see the building commenced, they collected a considerable sum for the purpose, so that at last the foundations of the house were laid upon the plan which Paul himself had traced out on the ground with his staff, which combined in a very striking manner both holy poverty and monastic decency. The venerable Founder was soon called away to preach the Lent at Piombino, but he left his brother to superintend the work. John Baptist eagerly watched the progress of the edifice, and finding that the supply of water, being at a great distance, occasioned much expense and delay, he had recourse in all simplicity to that God who causes the streams to flow and the torrents to gush forth. He went out one day, carrying the cross at the head of a little procession to a site near the place where the laborers were engaged. He prayed for a while and then ordered them to dig where he pointed; in a few minutes they found a stream of the purest and most clear water, which had never before been discovered. They employed it for the purposes of the building, and it still serves for the use of the religious who live there and for the refreshment of the travelers who pass that way. Thus was God's visible protection shed upon the rising edifice. The walls were already six feet above the ground when Paul returned from Piombino. But their progress was suddenly arrested by the Spanish army coming to lay siege to Monte Filippo. The tumult of war rendered it impossible to continue the work. Paul, submitting to the Divine dispensation, tranquilly waited for a seasonable time, and employed himself while the siege lasted in many deeds of heroic charity, which we are now about to recount.

## **CHAPTER XXI**

**How Paul Devoted Himself to Works of Charity During the Siege of Monte Filippo. How the Building of the Retreat Was Completed and the New Church Opened to His Great Consolation**

Undisturbed by the tumult and agitation of the world, the true servants of God are ever at peace and always ready to promote the good of their neighbors upon any occasion that may be offered them. Hence, while the Spaniards, encamped at the foot of Monte Argentario, kept in a state of siege both Orbetello and the fortress of Monte Filippo (which were at that time in the power of Austria), Paul embraced the opportunity of practicing continual acts of charity. Sometimes he was obtaining pardon for deserters, who by the laws of military discipline were condemned to death; sometimes he was employing himself in other kind offices; but most frequently was he listening to confessions and receiving with open arms the penitents who crowded to kneel at his feet. He heard everyone who came to him, although his ignorance of the Spanish language cost him much additional time and trouble. His life was several times imperilled by his labors, particularly during the summer season when he used to go down to the camp in the open plain, exposed to the burning rays of the midday sun.

The life of the servant of God was at the same time in more evident danger, because the Spanish camp, being continually bombarded by the cannon of the fortress, the balls fell here and there, killing first one, then another. But the venerable Father, with that charity which burns the more brightly in proportion to the trouble and danger which it meets, hastened first to one point then to another as necessity required and courageously went on in the exercise of his ministry. He even went so far as to take his place under the fire of the artillery, where the balls fell the closest, to hear the confession of a poor soldier, who was wounded in that very part of the camp. After the towns had surrendered, the fame of his sanctity became very great, in both the Spanish and Austrian armies, as well as among the inhabitants of the surrounding country. Upon the restoration of peace, Paul's first thought was the continuation of the building of his retreat, but as he found that even the abundant alms of the good citizens of Orbetello were exhausted by the expense of transporting materials into so remote a place, he resolved upon making a journey with his brother to Naples, in order to implore from Don Carlos, the King of the Two Sicilies, not only assistance in his undertaking but likewise approval of his work. He was received with singular affability by that pious sovereign, who immediately ordered that a hundred pistoles should be given him, as a sort of a pledge of the munificence with which he afterwards assisted our poor Congregation. Paul returned from Naples to watch joyfully the daily progress of his building, and in order to hasten its completion, he himself and his companions used to help the

workmen with their own hands. They chose for themselves the most painful and laborious tasks they could find. After toiling all the day, they walked back at night along the rude mountain path to their old hermitage of St. Anthony. Their number now amounted to nine, so there could be but little comfort in those two close and narrow cells, which served for their dormitories. What with the heat, the close atmosphere, and the insects, their repose was rather fresh torment than a rest for their weary bodies. Paul, who was the father and leader of them all, animated his little band both by words and example, although he had still more acute sufferings to endure from the opposition the devil raised to impede the progress of the edifice, which was to contain so many holy men. How deeply he felt this cross and how resignedly he bore it may be gathered from an extract of a letter he wrote to a devout friend, in which he says, "O my God! how the powers of Hell conspire against me! How busy are evil tongues! I scarcely know which way to turn. Men persecute me with good will, for so I am willing to believe, and devils with malice. We must pray fervently for tempests are rising on all sides and contrary winds are blowing against us. If you only knew the troubled waters in which your poor Paul is struggling! God be praised for all. His scourge hangs over me in an inexplicable manner, and I fear it will become heavier every day. Pray that he may chastise me with mercy, and that he may preserve the soul that has cost Him so dear."

Paul's conduct was in accordance with the sentiments he expressed and was full of the most tender charity towards those who opposed, insulted, and derided him. That the number of these was however but few, he himself tells us. "Through the disposition of God's gracious Providence, the devout people of Orbetello are all longing to build us a retreat and a church in honor of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, and the neighboring town of Portercole is also well disposed in our favor."

Still, his enemies, few as they were, did all they could to discredit and prejudice the servant of God and to throw contempt on his undertaking. The good Father sought to disarm their malice by every possible kindness. If he met them in the streets, he saluted them with affectionate cordiality; if they came to the retreat, he accosted them lovingly, made them eat and drink with him, and would not let them depart until he had given them some little pious present. Thus did this true disciple of Christ overcome evil with good, and thus, after suffering the storms which God had permitted should be raised against him, did he deserve to obtain peace and tranquillity

for his reward.

The long-wished-for day arrived at last, the first retreat of the Congregation of the Passion was completed, and upon the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 1737, the Church of the Presentation was solemnly consecrated by the Vicar General of Orbetello, who was empowered to perform the ceremony by Cardinal Altieri. A Brief was obtained from Pope Clement XII, dated August 31st, of the same year, and then Father Paul and his companions took possession of their house. The servant of God, writing to the same pious friend, speaks of the event in these terms, "After some trouble we procured a Brief from Rome. When the church and house had been blessed, our little Congregation made its solemn entry into the retreat on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It was my office to head this procession with the cross. I was followed by eight companions, four priests and four brothers. The function concluded with a discourse suitable to the occasion. All serve God fervently here, except the unworthy writer of this epistle."

In order to render the solemnity still more imposing, some of the Spanish soldiers brought their musical instruments and made the mountains re-echo the praises of him in whose honor this new temple had been erected. Father Paul was not, however, fully satisfied with his church, because he had not yet obtained for it the blessing of the Sacramental Presence. He thus opened his heart in a letter to one of his penitents, who afterwards entered the Congregation and died in the odor of sanctity, "Our retreat is built, our cells are finished, and nothing more remains to be done but to arrange and decorate everything in the church, so that we may place therein the most Holy Sacrament. Oh my God! how does each single hour appear to me a thousand while I am waiting to behold my Love enthroned within our tabernacles! How do I long to pass my time at the foot of his altar! Who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may fly to his Sacred Heart!"

Three years passed before his desires could be fulfilled, but at last this privilege was granted him by Cardinal Altieri. Full of joy and gratitude, the servant of God wrote to Count Garagni of Turin, a holy priest to whom he was much attached, in these terms, "I have just received the necessary permission for retaining the Blessed Sacrament in our church. This morning, after a solemn Mass, we placed it in our tabernacle, and then we sang the *Te Deum Laudamus* in thanksgiving for so precious a favor. My only trouble is that my poor heart cannot possess a single spark of the true love of God, or it would never would have resisted his calls, but would

have been overwhelmed and annihilated at the sight of all the graces and mercies which his infinite goodness has heaped upon such a monster of ingratitude.”

The Rescript which Father Paul mentions arrived at the very moment when such a permission would carry with it the greatest spiritual consolation, for it reached the retreat upon the Feast of Corpus Christi, while the entire church was employed in honoring with the tenderest sentiments of love and devotion the most August and adorable of mysteries. Doubtless it so happened by the particular disposition of God, as was observed by Cardinal Rezzonico (afterwards Pope Clement XIII), when he wrote to Paul in the following words, “I cannot but believe that Divine Providence specially ordained that the arrival of the vicar of Barletta should be postponed until Corpus Christi, in order that you might profit by Cardinal Altieri’s permission for the first time on that glorious feast. Greatly do I rejoice, therefore, because I trust that your pious adoration may have made some reparation for the irreverences which are too often committed in the world against the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.”

This holy cardinal had first become acquainted with our Paul through the means of Bishop Crescenzi, and he had conceived so high an esteem for him that he frequently invited the servant of God to make use of his palace while he was in Rome, telling him he would find there a poor lodging like his own cell at the retreat, and that he would have full liberty to follow out his holy exercises and preserve his loved retirement. And when he had once received him into his house, his love and attachment increased to such a degree that he became of great use to the Congregation and served it upon all occasions with loving alacrity and zeal. He once wrote to Father Paul, “It is very consoling to me to think that our Lord should have permitted me to help you in the smallest trifle, and that He should have inspired Bishop Crescenzi to give me anything to do for you.”

## **CHAPTER XXII**

### **How Benedict XIV Approved by Rescript the Rule of the New Congregation Presented to Him by Father Paul**

When the building of the retreat was finished, nothing seemed wanting to complete the

spiritual joy and consolation of Father Paul. He was at last fixed in a solitude of his own, in a spot which breathed, or rather invited, holiness. His venerated superior, Cardinal Altieri, notwithstanding the rumors which some evil-disposed persons spread of his disaffection toward the Congregation, testified towards it the most special marks of his favor. He made use of Father Paul and his companions to preach his missions, and he had painted, at his own expense, a magnificent picture of the Presentation of Our Blessed Lady for the decoration of the high altar of their church.

The holy Founder, meanwhile, cultivated with zealous care a true religious spirit among his disciples. Meditating day and night upon the law of the Lord, they flourished like trees planted near running waters, while Paul, looking round upon his little band, sighed for the time when God's blessing might enable fresh vineyards to be planted and more laborers set to work. It was just while he was waiting in faith and patience for the aid of Divine Providence that he heard of the accession of Benedict XIV, that great ornament of his age, to the chair of St. Peter. At this joyful news Father Paul felt so much interior consolation that it will be well to extract his own words from a letter he wrote on the occasion to the Abbe Garagni.

“I felt an extraordinary commotion in my heart, such as I have never before experienced, and which inspired me with a lively hope that this was the holy and zealous pastor destined to restore the failing piety of Christendom. I immediately burst forth into praises and blessings of the Most High for the signal mercy shown towards his sinning people.”

From this great Pontiff, Father Paul confidently hoped to obtain all the countenance and support necessary for establishing and propagating his little Congregation. In the meanwhile, he wrote to Cardinal Rezzonico, who was always ready for works of charity, begging him to mention the new Institute to the Holy Father. The good cardinal, having spoken to the Pope and ascertained his favorable sentiments upon the subject, answered Father Paul in these words:

“I presented myself yesterday before His Holiness and gave him (so to speak) a rough sketch of your holy Institute, explaining to him the sacred end for which it had been founded and the great good to be derived therefrom when the Constitutions should have received the approbation of the Holy See. He listened to me with the greatest attention, and then desired me to let you know that whenever any of your Order could bring the Constitutions to Rome for approval, he hoped to be able to grant all that you wish.”

Father Paul himself carried his Constitutions to the feet of His Holiness, and a particular Congregation, composed of Cardinals Corradini and Rezzonico, with the Abbe Garagni, was immediately deputed to examine them and pronounce an opinion. The investigation was conducted with all the application, discretion, and prudence demanded by so important an affair. With the exception of a few trifling mitigations, the examiners gave their unqualified approbation on the 30th of April, 1741, and with this decision they presented both Rules and Constitutions to the Pope. His Holiness, by an apostolic Rescript, dated May 15, joyfully added his own solemn approval of an Institute whose object being to awaken in the hearts of the faithful the memory of the Passion of Christ, was esteemed by him to contribute no less to the glory of our Divine Redeemer, than to the advantage of the souls he died to save. Consequently, so the Holy Father was heard to say, that this Congregation of the Passion had come into the world last, while it ought to have been the first. And thus it was that our Lord recompensed at length all the toils and privations, the humiliations and sufferings, the vigils and penances which his servant had so patiently borne, particularly the many weary voyages that he made to Rome for this long-wished-for approval. In one of these he and his brother John Baptist narrowly escaped with their lives, for they were exposed in their usual scanty clothing to the rigors of an uncommonly severe winter. Pierced through and through with the intensity of the cold, they must have fallen dead upon the road if Almighty God in His compassion had not wonderfully delivered them. It was the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Out of gratitude for their merciful preservation, as well as for many other favors obtained by the intercession of that apostle, Father Paul caused this feast to be celebrated every year in the Congregation with particular solemnity.

## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **How Paul, after Obtaining the Papal Approbations by an Apostolic Brief, Was Joined by Some New Companions**

After the Rule had been approved by the papal Rescript, God was pleased to send Paul some associates who were of great assistance to him. Amongst these we may mention Father Marc Aurelio Pastorelli, first a priest of Christian Doctrine, and afterwards a religious of the Passion

under the name of Marc Aurelio of the Blessed Sacrament. He was a man of much learning, but of still more piety, and although of delicate constitution, was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of penance. Father Paul wrote of him, "A valuable laborer has been sent to us and to our missions. Oh, how good is Providence!" Animated by the words, and far more by the example of their holy Founder, these new disciples gave themselves up to a life of such fervent penance and uninterrupted retirement that upon Monte Argentario might be seen revived the sanctity of the ancient anchorites. They vied with one another in mortifications and self-abasement. They were all men of prayer and spent many hours of the day and night in that holy exercise.

Father Paul could not but deeply rejoice in beholding the graces with which he was given by God and the loving-kindness with which he was treated by his Vicar on earth, the Sovereign Pontiff. All this gave him fresh courage to pursue his work, and his next step was to ensure its stability by obtaining another confirmation from the Pope in the form of an apostolic Brief. Accordingly, he went again to Rome, and as he had already contracted obligations to his eminence, Cardinal Albani, who had both the power and the will to forward every good work, he applied to him with great humility and confidence to request that he would be the bearer of the petition to His Holiness. The Pope received it graciously, and as it was necessary to re-examine the Rules and Constitutions, he appointed for this purpose a Congregation composed of the Cardinals Annibale Albani, Anthony Saverio Gentili, and Giovacchino Besozzi. Such a deputation must have given great hope to Father Paul, for they were all men of singular prudence and piety. Cardinal Crescenzi, who had not lost his love for the poor Congregation, nor his desire for its speedy establishment, wrote of the affair in these terms, "The choice which His Holiness has made of the Cardinals Albani, Gentili, and Besozzi for the revision of the Rules is greatly to be praised, since their eminences are full of virtue and piety, and will doubtless draw a special grace from God upon their decision. I have written to Cardinal Gentili upon the subject and begged him to communicate my opinion to his colleagues."

The deliberation, however, proceeded slowly, and as it was impossible to hasten the conclusion, Father Paul determined to go back to his solitude, leaving all his fears and anxieties to the tender care of Divine Providence. There had not been wanting, even during his stay in Rome, in the midst of all his distractions and inquietudes, some of those sweet consolations which our Lord is often pleased to drop into this bitterest chalice of His servants' troubles.



Before his return, he had received into the Congregation, D. Thomas Struzzieri, a priest well known for his learning and piety, and who had already labored in the apostolic missions with much fruit. When clothed with the habit of the Passion, he took the name of Thomas of the Side of Jesus, and he lived in the Order with so much regularity and fervor, that Paul spoke of him in a letter thus, "Father Thomas is a true instrument of the glory of God; he is a pillar of the faith; he suffers and does great things; and he is ready to give up his life for the Congregation." This faithful priest, so full of the Spirit of God, had hardly been made known to Father Paul in the Church of the Conception of the Capuchin nuns, than there grew up between them an intimate union of holy charity, which increased as long as they lived. When Father Tommaso was admitted into the Order, which his friend had founded, he became remarkable for his lowliness and simplicity of heart, for his love of penance and his special gifts of prayer. During missions, the grace of God which had abounded in him showed itself in the power he had of touching and winning the hearts of all who approached him. In the management of secular affairs, he was distinguished for a rare and Christian prudence, joined to undeviating meekness and perfect integrity of soul. He was sent in the role of theologian to the Island of Corsica, with Bishop Angelis, the apostolic visitor. He was then appointed by Clement XIII, to whom he was well known, Bishop of Tiene, and afterwards declared Vicar General and Suffragan of the Visitor. Upon the sudden death of the latter, he was himself constituted apostolic Visitor in Corsica, in which office he was loved and revered as a Father by the whole island, and held in such honor by the officers and troops of the French army, that his most Christian Majesty, by a gift worthy of his liberality, was pleased to testify the esteem with which his virtues had inspired him. Afterwards, as Bishop of Amelia, he governed the church to the great profit of souls. Then he was transferred to the See of Todi, where he ended his labors full of years and good works by a peaceful and happy death.

After making this valuable acquisition for his Order, Father Paul commenced his journey back to Monte Argentario. He had hardly reached Orbetello before he fell ill and was confined to his bed for nearly six months with the most acute sufferings. He never entirely recovered from this violent attack, and during all the rest of his life remained feeble and lame. The torments he endured in his sickness were so terrible that he could not swallow the least food without intense pain, and for forty days and nights he never closed his eyes in sleep. He used to turn towards the

image of his dear Lady which stood near him, begging her to obtain that he might be able to sleep at least for one hour. When this was not granted him, he implored half an hour's repose, and at last only a quarter, but the Blessed Virgin, doubtless knowing it to be the will of her Son that his servant should receive no relief, did not obtain his request. He asked the prayers of all his spiritual children, but they seemed of no avail, and his sufferings only increased. To his pains of body were united those of the mind. He was overwhelmed with a desolation of spirit and tormented with attacks of demons, who were frequently the companions of his illnesses. Nevertheless, he preserved his interior constancy, and full of strength in his Lord who was at hand to console him, he pursued his labors, even from his bed of sickness, and continued to take all the necessary steps to procure the papal Brief which he had so much at heart. For this end he wrote the most urgent letters, he smoothed the difficulties which were placed in his ways, and he carefully watched that nothing should be done in the matter which did not tend to the greater glory of God.

Having heard that it was being considered to concede to the retreat the power of possessing certain revenues, the venerable Founder thought this contrary to the spirit of poverty which Almighty God demanded from his new Congregation. He therefore called Father Thomas of the Holy Side of Jesus, and having discussed the affair, assisted by those lights which always guide the true servants of God, he wrote to Cardinal Annibale Albani a letter full of so much zeal, supported by such strong arguments, and expressed in such convincing words, that his eminence was thoroughly persuaded to abandon the design. Hardly could our saintly invalid rise from his bed of suffering, than he hastened to his dear children at Monte Argentario, from where, though still weak and lame, he very shortly set out for Rome. When there, his eminence Cardinal Albani caused him to be charitably received in the convent of St. Andrea of the Minims, of which he was the patron. Father Paul was welcomed there with affectionate kindness and gave great edification to the whole house by his saintly and innocent life. During this sojourn in Rome the good Father suffered more than ever, for he had to exert himself almost beyond his strength and to drag himself about oppressed with his bodily infirmities and tormented by the severity of the weather. It was no slight fatigue to ascend the long staircases of those lofty Roman palaces and, when he had at length reached the waiting room, to wait a considerable time before he could obtain an audience. It may be imagined, too, how painful this was to one who so much loved

solitude, retirement, and silence. With all his exertions it was two months before the Brief could be expedited. New difficulties were continually arising to try his patience just when everything appeared settled, so that the poor Father's exertions at last reduced him to such extremities that he could scarcely stand upon his feet. He, however, kept himself closely united to the cross of Jesus and waited meekly and patiently until our Lord was pleased to come to his aid. The cardinals were at last unanimous in deciding that the Rules should be approved by Brief, and Cardinal Albani entrusted to a suitable person the task of translating them into Latin. This man, being one day visited by Father Paul in the midst of his occupations, displayed some rudeness and ill temper towards the servant of God. But the good Father, who had still more humility in his heart than abjection in his dress, threw himself on his knees before him, and thus disarmed his anger and restored him to tranquillity. The Rules, being translated and presented with a favorable recommendation to His Holiness, this great Pontiff was pleased to command the immediate publication of the Brief, which was accordingly done on the 28th of March, 1746, an ever memorable day, as Father Paul himself said when he wrote the following to one of his spiritual children, "Most dear and beloved Father Fulgenzio. In this place I am deprived of your valuable letters. I have already made a gentle complaint to your Reverence and your charity will doubtless cause you to compassionate my poor and imperfect soul, but in the meanwhile I ask your pardon with all my heart. Thanks be to God, on Monday in Passion week, when the Gospel for the day was, *"Let the one who is thirsty come to me and drink..."* (Jn. 7:37), the Vicar of Christ gave with his own hands the Rescript of the Brief for the confirmation of our Rules. It is now being drawn up by the proper authorities. I went yesterday to the feet of His Holiness to thank him and to beg further favors of him; he told me that he would speak for me to the Cardinal-Secretary of Briefs. I say nothing of the wonderful Providence of God, who, notwithstanding all our efforts and diligence, would not permit us to obtain our desire before these mystical days of his Son's passion. Your Reverence will recall that despite all the efforts we used, we could not enter into our retreat nor celebrate the Divine Sacrifice until the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The first song we sang in our church was *"May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 6:14). These are marvelous things, which, together with many others, must be long remembered among us. I cannot relate them now; but when God permits it, you will hear of them. The Brief cannot be expedited before Low Sunday;

his eminence will send it to me. All goes on well respecting the ordinations, indulgences, etc. I can do nothing but thank God for his loving care of the Congregation, and I feel daily more assured that it is his own special work. All Rome (so to speak), both prelates and religious, think the same. God has powerfully helped me; I can truly say it is a miracle of his mercy that the affair has been brought to this happy conclusion. I will let you know when the time comes for our solemn thanksgiving; in the meantime, you will not cease praising and blessing the Almighty. March 30, 1746.”

After the approbation of the Rules came that of the rites of clothing and professing. Then Father Paul adopted as the seal of the Congregation the shield, like the emblem which he carried on his breast, with the palm on one side and the olive branch on the other, to signify the victory of the cross of Jesus and the peace and reconciliation brought into the world by his passion and death. Father Paul writes again in these words to Father Fulgenzio, “Upon the day of the Commemoration of St. Paul, the 30th of this month, you will have the goodness to begin the solemn Triduum *for thanksgiving* with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, to be terminated on the Feast of the Visitation of Most Holy Mary. Let all pray with great earnestness and fervor for an apostolic spirit; let all implore Jesus to send down upon us the Holy Spirit. I have said all in a few words. But for myself, a poor sinner, spoiling the work of God by my unworthy life, what shall I say? Casting myself down at the feet of all, after having asked pardon for the scandal given by my negligence and tepidity, I entreat of them to implore the forgiveness of God for my many grievous sins. Since I cannot give them the example of a good life, let them beg of Almighty God to take me away from them by a holy death. For the love of God, let them not refuse me this charity. I have a firm belief that if they comply with my request, God will make them all saints, and I know well what I am saying. 4 June 23, 1746.”

## **CHAPTER XXIV**

**How the Regular Novitiate Was Formed, and Father Paul Elected at the First Chapter Superior of the Whole Congregation. How Clearly His Conduct Manifested That He Was Convinced by the Spirit of God.**

Father Paul went home to his *ritiro* of St. Angelo (the foundation of which we have already related) full of joy and consolation, bringing with him the Apostolic Brief, like a loving father carrying to his children a precious gift from distant lands. His first thought upon his arrival was to form a perfect novitiate, which, like a nursery of young plants, might bring forth plentiful fruits to the glory of God. Knowing that the progress of the novices depends principally upon the direction of their master, who can make them assume whatever form he pleases, he chose for this important office Father Marc Aurelio of the Most Holy Sacrament, whose doctrine, prudence, and piety were well known and whose reputation was increased by the singular profit which the novices derived from his guidance. The postulants, who were twelve in number, commenced their novitiate upon the solemn Feast of Pentecost. So great was their fervor in their exercises of piety, that they were more like persons experienced in virtue than young beginners on the road of perfection. A holy emulation rose up among them, and they vied with one another for who could best serve Almighty God. Singing the divine praises, solitude, and prayer were their greatest delights. In the observance of their Rule they were most exact and in the practice of mortification most eager. One there was among them, who, during the whole period of his novitiate, never raised his eyes to look at a building that was being erected close by, and by which he had to pass several times in the day. All of them doubtless enjoyed many sweet communications with God or they never could have supported the hard and suffering life they had undertaken to lead. The holy Founder never lost sight of them, and ceased not to encourage them to fresh efforts. The delight he took in their ardor may be easily imagined.

It was now the spring of the year, and Father Paul was advised by his doctors to visit the baths of Vignone in order to restore in some degree his failing health. Unfortunately, the benefit he derived therefrom was scarcely sufficient to compensate for the fatigues and trials of his journey. But if he gained but little by the excursion, the inhabitants of the place had reason to rejoice at it, for, as soon as he arrived there, he began to catechize and hear confessions, and his life gave such general edification that his virtues were like balm, spreading around the sweet odor of Jesus Christ. The duke, who was lord of the place, with his duchess, entreated him to come sometimes to their palace, that they might profit by his devout conversation. Father Paul took advantage of their invitation to turn their house into a sort of school for giving instructions upon the method of mental prayer. He had nothing in view but the glory of God and the good of

souls. He declined the hospitalities which were offered him, and he even refused the slight refreshment of a little chocolate, which the duchess herself pressed him to accept.

It was his great desire to live always in dependence upon the loving Providence of God, who never fails to take special care of those who trustfully confide in Him. And, in fact, our Lord was pleased to show, in a wonderful manner, the effects of His particular Providence over Father Paul. For, one day that the good Father, while suffering great bodily weakness, was taking a bath, he heard an internal voices which said, "Leave this bath quickly." No sooner had he obeyed the admonition, than he fell fainting to the ground, an accident, which, had it occurred while he was in the water, would have placed his life in imminent danger.

Upon his return from Vignone, he spent some months in solitude at St. Angelo, and then proceeded to the Retreat of Monte Argentario, where, with much consolation of spirit, he received the solemn profession of his fervent novices. When they had pronounced their vows, he sent them to St. Angelo to pursue the studies necessary for their missionary duties. Having discovered, notwithstanding the pains which holy men always take to hide their acquirements, that Father Marc Aurelio was endowed with uncommon piety and wisdom, together with a peculiar facility for imparting his talents to others, Father Paul determined that he should still remain with the novices as the master of their studies, in order that they might preserve their devotion in all its freshness, amid the distraction of science and the pursuit of learning. This decision was blessed with particular graces from God. So well did the novices unite application of the mind to recollection of the heart that they aspired to the highest practices of virtue, and it became necessary to moderate rather than to excite their zeal. They were to be seen walking barefoot in the very depth of winter in order to suffer more of the torments of their Lord, although the recent mitigation of the Rule permitted the use of sandals. Now, the Retreat of St. Angelo was intensely cold, both on account of its situation on a mountain in the middle of the woods and by reason of the unfinished state of the house itself. Hence, the poor novices suffered most painfully in consequence of this exposure to the weather, and some of them lost the nails off their hands and feet. The Fathers, Marc Aurelio and John Baptist, and, above all, the venerable Founder, contemplated these acts of heroism with joy and admiration, beholding the singular graces with which Almighty God favored these good youths. They sought by every means in their power to animate them to correspond to the inspiration of Heaven and to

persevere in their courageous ascent up the steep and rugged path of perfection. Whenever Father Paul was not called elsewhere for the missions, spiritual exercises, or other affairs of his Congregation, it was his delight to retreat to St. Angelo, where he could remain in holy solitude and partake of the counsels and devout conversation of the earliest and most faithful of his companions. At these times he used to give frequent discourses to the novices and to all the members of his religious family, and it was one of the greatest privileges of this retreat to be so often instructed by his wise maxims and valuable experience.

On Sunday mornings he was accustomed to hold a conference with those who were preparing for the priesthood, and then, like a kind nurse, he would make himself, so to speak, little with the little ones, accommodating himself to the capacity and to the interior spirit of each separate soul.

The time had now arrived when, as Pope Benedict XIV had determined, a Chapter should be convened to elect the particular superior of the Congregation, the General of the Order. The first Chapter of the Congregation of the Passion was small indeed, if we consider the number of those who met together, but great if we look upon the men, full of heavenly light and burning zeal, who composed it, and the venerable servant of God whose spirit animated and directed it. It assembled in the Retreat of the Presentation, and there, upon the 10th of April, 1747, Father Paul was chosen superior guardian angel by his children, who as we may well believe were desirous to continue under that direction which had already proved so profitable to their souls. As the number of men capable of filling positions of authority was necessarily very limited in those early days of the Institute, Father Paul was also chosen superior, or rector, of the house of the Presentation upon Monte Argentario. The venerable Father, whose conduct knew no other rule than the holy will of God, humbly bowed his head to the ordination of Divine Providence, and undertook the heavy responsibility which he was virtually to carry to the day of his death, for his religious could never afterwards consent to be deprived of the great benefits they derived under so holy a government. Their Rule, forbidding them to elect the same person twice, they always procured a dispensation, without his knowledge, whenever the time of election came, and thus he was compelled to remain superior. Feeling, however, all the weight of so important a charge and believing also to be totally unworthy of it, he frequently besought his brethren, with tears in his eyes, to choose someone else in his place. But his prayers were of no avail. They only became more convinced that he, who had received so many lights for the foundation, was the most fitting

person for the government of the Congregation.

As soon as this man of God was once convinced that his renunciation could not be accepted, he took upon himself, cheerfully and trustfully, the charge of his little flock. As God guided his every action, nothing was wanting to his success. Hence, his government was the very ideal of a just and religious rule, a rule in which prudence directed every step, in which firmness was tempered by sweetness, and in which charity was the main spring of the whole. Nothing was ever done until Almighty God had been first consulted, and it may be truly said that he learnt first in heaven what he afterwards taught upon earth. Hence came those marvelous results which we have all beheld with so much consolation. The good Father knew how to insinuate himself into every one's heart, and he possessed the talent of always making himself more loved than feared. Therefore, it was that his exhortations and gentle entreaties never failed to effect all that he desired. He was more solicitous about intentions than actions, and he wished his religious to be guided by interior principles so that, being perfectly united to God, they might learn in the heavenly school of prayer whatever was most conducive to their souls' good. One of his favorite maxims was, "Interior virtue is to work with the spirit and to labor with the heart." He carefully observed the spirit of each of his brethren, and he undertook long journeys to visit those who were absent, that they might be animated and consoled by his presence. These journeys were very painful to him, both on account of the bodily sufferings which they caused him and because they obliged him to give up the only time of peace and quiet which was left him, when his missionary duties were over. The monastery itself, however, could scarcely have been a greater retirement than these very travels. Father Paul generally kept profound silence, and to avoid distractions, he walked on a little before his companions. If he ever spoke, his discourse was calculated to inflame those who listened to him with the love of God and to inspire them with esteem for their holy vocation. Contemplating the works of God around him, he used to exclaim, as he looked alternately on heaven and earth, "To whom does this country, to whom do these fields and pastures belong? Is it not to God alone? *'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'*" (Ps. 24:1). Such were the devout exclamations which would occasionally burst from his lips, and which were enough to alleviate the fatigues of his companions and, at the same time, to sanctify their journey.

As for himself, however tired he might be, he never allowed himself more repose than was



absolutely necessary. His chief anxiety was to reach the retreat he was about to visit – to arrive there at a convenient hour so as not to disturb the religious or to inconvenience the brothers employed in the domestic offices. Directly upon entering the house and without losing a moment of time, he opened the visit with the usual ceremonies, and as long as he remained at the retreat, he devoted himself with the utmost patience and charity, listening to all that his dear children had to say to him. In the spiritual conferences his instructions were so opportune and were given with so much sweetness, that none who heard them could fail to be consoled as well as enlightened. If he perceived the slightest relaxation or abuse in the community, he laid aside all human respect and rested not until he had made the necessary correction and entirely eradicated the evil. To the end that all might be inspired with fresh energy and serve God “*with a great heart and willing spirit,*” he went through the spiritual exercises with that fervor and zeal which come so naturally from a heart like his, on fire with divine love. It is not wonderful that, at the conclusion of his visits, he left the retreat in the most perfect peace and union, renewed in the spirit of devotion and animated to the exact fulfillment of all their religious duties. Years later, when Father Paul’s failing health compelled him to depute others to make these visits in his place, he gave them the most minute instructions lest anything should perchance escape their vigilance, and he strongly impressed upon them the necessity of putting in practice all the means which his own experience had taught him and were so efficacious upon these occasions. When the visitors returned, he required an exact account of all that had passed. It is not easy to describe his joy when the report was a favorable one and he could see that the work of God stood securely upon the strong foundation of solid virtue.

But the care of this good shepherd for his flock was not confined to the times of visitation, for he was never weary of giving advice by letters to the local superiors, whenever he saw that they were in need of help. His sincerity, tenderness, and ardent zeal can hardly be fully appreciated without reading the letters themselves, wherein every word reveals the vigilant parent intent upon the welfare of his beloved children. Father Paul’s correspondence was indeed no little labor for him. He had to write very frequently upon the subject of the missions and exercises which he was requested to give, and he had, besides, numbers of persons constantly begging for his counsel and direction in the affairs of their souls. But the good Father, who was never known to find fault with anything that brought him more work and greater suffering,

performed all these laborious duties with scarcely any assistance. Every week he was obliged to spend several entire days at his desk, but as long as his strength lasted him he toiled on. All this time he was enduring so much oppression on his chest and so great a weakness of stomach that, when he went to his scanty meal, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could swallow anything. His pains and weaknesses could not abate his ardent charity, and he thought himself only too happy to be allowed to contribute to the peace of his brethren and the good of souls at the expense of his own comfort.

Almighty God was pleased to bless in a visible manner the industry and solicitude of his servant, insomuch, that Fr. Paul himself exclaimed, “Oh, how wonderful has been the conduct of God in this work! With how lofty and mysterious a Providence has he guided us! Well do I now remember what was said to me by a great servant of God, many years ago, that this was God’s own work, and that I knew not the marvelous and secret ways through which he meant to lead it. And many other holy souls have addressed me in the same terms.”

He said again, that he doubted not that all the religious who had died before him (and their number was over sixty) were saved and were already enjoying the glory of paradise because they had faithfully corresponded to their vocation and had led a true interior life, as none could know better than he, who had been from the commencement their superior. He spoke with special confidence of one who, he was assured by divine revelation, had been face to face with God immediately after his death. Of a young cleric who died in the Congregation at an early age in the odor of sanctity, he wrote in these words, “Brother Thomas has died the death of a saint, and I feel convinced that he has gone straight to heaven. Some there are who know not how to pray for him, on account of their interior certainty of his blessed state, but recommend themselves confidently to his intercession. Happy soul!”

## **CHAPTER XXV**

### **How Fr. Paul Pursued with Great Fervor His Apostolic Ministry in the Mission to Which God Called Him**

The Almighty, who appeared to have specially chosen Fr. Paul to touch the hearts of sinners

and to awaken in the faithful the memory of the Passion of his only Son, destined him to preach Jesus crucified in many different places. The servant of God, well aware of his vocation, did not hesitate to devote himself with all the energies of his soul to the duties of the holy missions. To his former penitential life, he joined these new labors, which were so much the heavier for him, that his ardent zeal allowed him no other repose when one mission was concluded and beginning another. It is impossible to describe the success which everywhere attended him. But some idea of it may perhaps be formed from the account we shall presently give of the wonders wrought by this apostolic priest. The mere listening to a man whose words were like so many sparks from a furnace of charity, whose thirst for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was as intense as it was insatiable, who felt nothing but tenderness for sinners and compassion for those who groaned under the weight of their crimes, who, ultimately, was all on fire with Divine love and breathed only Christ and him crucified, might well be enough to touch the hardened heart and bring back the prodigal son in tears to his Father's house. If there were any so obdurate as to remain unmoved by his exhortations, he would sometimes conclude his sermon by summoning them before the tribunal of their Almighty Judge, in language so glowing, that his terrified audience almost thought they heard the voice of God Himself. Wiping from his forehead the perspiration with which his energy and zeal had bathed him, he struck his moistened hand upon the wall and declared that its impression would remain there to witness against the obstinate sinner for all eternity.

Wherever this servant of God was seen, sins and disorders disappeared, and flames of love towards Jesus crucified were enkindled in the hearts of men. All his missions seemed to have a peculiar blessing on them, renewing the face of the country wherever he went. The conversions God wrought by his means were innumerable. An eyewitness of his labors at Orbetello furnishes us with the following account:

“At the time that I lived at Orbetello, the inhabitants of that place were conspicuous for their piety. This was the happy result of the indefatigable labors of Fr. Paul and his brother John Baptist, who preached here with so much force that many of the officers of our garrison completely changed their lives, frequented the sacraments, and became models of virtue. The intensity of Fr. Paul's zeal sometimes lighted up his countenance in a marvelous manner, which startled sinners and converted them as suddenly as if they had seen a vision from

heaven. Indeed, I myself, with several of my brother officers, have felt the like emotion while listening to him. But he did not always terrify, for he had a touching way of alluding to the mercy of God, which never failed to fill the people with compunction and make them shed bitter tears over their sins. While his sermon sowed the seed, his labors in the confessional gathered the fruit; and many of the soldiers, who were afraid to confess themselves to other priests, went willingly to confess to Fr. Paul and returned with changed and contented hearts. Some who had absented themselves from the sacraments for twenty years and more, he received again and again at his own house, until they were completely reconciled with God. I myself have seen persons, many of whom were of high rank, who had lived for years in mutual enmity, so moved by his exhortations that they became reconciled in the public streets and asked aloud for each other's pardon. I have seen soldiers of the garrison who had been addicted to the sins of blasphemy and gambling, who after confessing themselves to Fr. Paul, gave public signs of conversion and brought their dice and cards to be burned by him before all the people. Ultimately, so complete was the reform effected in Orbetello that I who lived there beheld the greatest possible change and saw with astonishment the officers and soldiers, as well as the citizens, avoid the occasions of sin and abstain from even allowable diversions."

This deposition agrees perfectly with the testimony of other credible witnesses, whose precise words we do not quote for fear of fatiguing the patience of the reader. The mission of Orbetello may truly be called a blessed one, especially if we take into account the miracles and prodigies which were wrought – *"While the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs"* (Mk. 16:20). At this time the town was subject to the emperor; hence, it happened that the garrison was partly composed of German Lutherans, very few of whom spoke Italian. When our good Father began his mission, the General in command obliged all the soldiers to attend the sermons; but what fruit could be expected when they did not understand the preacher? Our Lord, however, who desired the salvation of these poor souls, renewed in their favor one of the most wonderful miracles of the early church, and His faithful servant, although speaking only Italian, was perfectly understood by every one of the Germans present. His burning words produced their usual effect, and there were evident signs of the impression they made upon these poor unbelievers in their crowding round the pulpit and

implored to be allowed to renounce their errors without delay.

We distinctly remember that, during that mission, seventy of these heretics were received into the church. One young man, seized with extraordinary fervor, rushed upon the platform in the middle of the sermon and proclaimed with a loud voice, "I repudiate, detest, and abominate the sect to which I have hitherto belonged, and I acknowledge, believe, and confess that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church founded by Jesus Christ."

Among the soldiers of the garrison, there was a certain obstinate sinner whom nothing seemed to touch. He was present one evening at the sermon, which terminated, as usual, with the benediction of the crucifix. As he knelt to receive it, the miserable man beheld the right hand of our Lord's figure detach itself from the cross and stretch forward to bless the people. At the sight of this prodigy, the poor sinner was completely overcome. Moved by divine grace, he instantly repented, confessed his sins, and returned, like the lost sheep, into the fold of the good Shepherd. Another soldier, who had resolved to reconcile himself with God, went to confession to one of Father Paul's companions; but he had no sooner begun to accuse himself of his faults, than he felt grasped by an invisible hand and forced out of the confessional. He clung to the spot with all his strength, but such was the violence with which he was pulled, that the confessional itself moved along with him, as well as the confessor within it. The spectators ran to fetch Father Paul, who instantly hastened to the relief of the terrified penitent. He placed upon his neck a rosary of our Blessed Lady, knowing well that it is she who crushes the serpent's head. Then, taking the poor man under his cloak, he conducted him to the sacristy, where he himself heard his confession and gave him absolution without any further obstacle. The converted soldier left the feet of the servant of God so penetrated with contrition and gratitude, that he desired nothing more than to die in the state in which he then was, and ignorantly believing that he might, without sin, hasten his own death, he opened a grave in the church and threw himself into it. Father Paul's distress, when he heard of what had happened, may be easily imagined. He hurried to the spot, and peremptorily commanded the soldier to come out of the tomb. But the poor penitent, in his ecstasy, could not, without difficulty, be induced to obey. Father Paul, in relating this story afterwards to one of his friends, remarked that he had more trouble in bringing out of the sepulcher this repentant sinner than in rescuing him from the power of the devil.

Although our Paul never failed to reap abundant fruit from all his labor, yet, upon some

particular occasions our Lord was pleased so to inflame his zeal and inspire his words, that he seemed to carry all before him. He preached a mission once in St. Lorenzo delle Grotte, near Montefiascone. At the last sermon, when he gave the papal benediction, he appeared completely on fire with Divine love, and every syllable he uttered was like a flaming dart piercing the inmost hearts of those who listened to him. No one could doubt from where came these burning words of his. Almighty God Himself made known that they were the direct effect of inspiration to a pious priest. D. Joseph Paci, canon of St. Lorenzo, relates the miracle in the following terms:

“On the last day of our mission, I assisted, by Father Paul’s desire, at his discourse, wearing my surplice and standing at the left hand of the great crucifix. The sermon had scarcely begun when I heard a low voice whispering, as it were, into my ear the very words uttered by the preacher, so that everything which he said I seemed to hear first. I was very much surprised at this circumstance, which has never happened to me upon any other occasion, and I marveled at what it could mean. I observed that there was no one upon the platform except Father Paul and myself, and I could not help concluding that the voice I heard was no human voice, but a divine one. The words were touching enough to melt a heart of stone, and there was not a creature present who did not weep most bitterly during the whole sermon.”

Can we wonder that after such discourses as these, conversions should be suddenly effected, reconciliations brought about, disorders amended, and scandal removed? Who could doubt but that God had endowed his servant with the most abundant and efficacious graces for the salvation and sanctification of souls?”

## **CHAPTER XXVI**

### **How Our Lord Took Special Care of Father Paul While He Was Employed upon the Holy Missions**

A man who, forgetting himself, seeks nothing but God and the divine glory can truly say that he dwells in the aid of the Most High and abides under the protection of the God of heaven. With how singular a love divine Providence watches over such men may be clearly seen in the life of our Paul, who, as we shall presently relate, was several times delivered in a miraculous manner

from the most imminent perils.

He was once summoned to Pisa by the Marquis of Montemare, General of the Spanish army, to preach a mission to the troops. The good Father never refused any opportunity that was offered him of procuring the glory of God or of helping the souls redeemed with the blood of Christ. He embarked, therefore, without delay at St. Stefano for the port of Livorno. But he had hardly set sail when a terrific gale arose and the ship became half filled with water. The sailors were exceedingly alarmed, and not without cause, for several vessels near them went down in the storm. Father Paul, who in all accidents placed his only trust in God, no sooner perceived the danger than he had recourse to him whom the winds and seas obey. He invoked, also, the Mother of divine grace, most holy Mary; he recited her litanies and then abandoned himself peaceably into the hands of Providence. The mariners, despairing of safety in any other way, lowered their sails and began to row; but in a few minutes the violence of the waves broke one of the principal oars, and at this last misfortune, in utter hopelessness, they gave themselves up to their fate. The servant of God, who felt a secret confidence that the boat would not perish, now ascended the rear deck of the ship and addressed the drooping sailors, "My children," he said, "fear not, but confide in God and in our dearest Lady, for this storm is only raised by the devils who pursue me." In fact, notwithstanding the contrary wind and the raging tempest, they found themselves suddenly transported in safety into a bay below the Tower of Montenero, by the hand, doubtless, of that God, "who above works great wonders."

Father Paul received a similar favor in another voyage which he made from Genova to St. Stefano, upon the vessel named "Despatch," commanded by Captain Nunzio. Here again, when the ship was nearly filled with water, to the terror of the sailors, Father Paul encouraged them by telling them they would be saved. His prediction was verified as speedily as before.

A still more wonderful miracle occurred when he was on his way to preach a mission in the Island of Elba. He could find no other vessel than one, which had run aground at Fullonica, and which the venerable Father caused to be launched against the judgment of the sailors, who all believed it unfit for navigation. He, however, full of faith, performed his voyage in the rickety vessel as far as Porto Ferrajo. No sooner had he landed in safety, than the boat went to the bottom, as if our Lord wished to show that it had been only preserved by the presence of the fervent missionary.

We can, however, scarcely be surprised at the marvelous graces which everywhere accompanied Father Paul, when we consider what manner of life he lead during these voyages. Instead of taking advantage of them to diminish his penitence, he rather made them fresh occasions of suffering by enduring the presence of others when he naturally longed for solitude and quiet. Captain Fanciulli, whose passenger he was in that storm near Montenero, relates that after the whole crew had landed and were refreshing themselves, he perceived that Father Paul was absent. He went to look for him in the woods near the shore and found him cruelly scourging his bare flesh with an iron discipline. Thus did he draw down upon himself the loving eyes of God and secure that tender and jealous care which his heavenly Father always took of him.

Upon one occasion, when he was preaching from a pulpit, from some unknown cause he suddenly fell back in a manner which, naturally speaking, must have given his head a severe blow against a large stone in the wall. Instead of being hurt, he seemed protected by an invisible hand, and recovering himself instantly, he went on with his sermon as if nothing had happened. We could here relate many more signs of God's Providence over him in the missions, but we prefer speaking of them a little later in a more appropriate place.

## **CHAPTER XXVII**

### **How Father Paul Wrought Many Marvelous Conversions**

The salvation of souls being the most wonderful work of divine power and the most precious attribute of his infinite goodness, we feel assured that the devout reader will desire a distinct account of some of the miracles operated by the right hand of the Most High through the means of his faithful servant, Paul. The good Father was preaching in Orbetello and laboring indefatigably to deliver sinners from the tyranny of Satan when one night, after his sermon, a great noise was heard in the quarters of the Namur regiment, which formed part of the garrison of the town. A crowd of persons ran to the spot and beheld one of the soldiers being apparently dragged away by some invisible force. A sergeant was sent to summon Father Paul, who was then taking a little repose after the labors of the day. As soon as he reached the house, the



messenger called out, "Father Paul, come without delay; the devil has seized upon one of the soldiers!" The good Father was filled with horror at these words; he immediately arose, and taking with him his crucifix, hastened to the barracks. There he saw the unhappy man pale with terror, struggling with some unseen foe, and crying out, "Help, help, for the devil is carrying me away!" The servant of God began by boldly asserting his authority over the infernal enemy, and then addressing the soldier, he said, "Fear not, I am with you; you have only to repent of your sins." With great fervor he animated him to confide in the mercy of God, to make acts of sincere contrition, and to renounce all commerce with Satan. The bystanders were paralyzed with fear, but Father Paul undoubtingly stood his ground, and the devil was at length constrained to obey his commands and to take flight. The poor victim was so overcome that he could scarcely stand and his countenance was more like that of a corpse than of a living man. Well knowing why he had been thus suddenly possessed, he desired to repent of his past life and to confess his sins without delay. The good Father encouraged him in his good resolutions and promised to hear him on the following day. In the meantime, to secure his safety he placed his own rosary round the poor man's neck, telling him that would suffice for his defense. The next morning, the soldier presented himself at the confessional at the appointed time. Father Paul, finding him unable to express himself with ease in Italian, took him to the chaplain of the regiment, who completed the work of his entire reconciliation with God. The gratitude of this poor sinner knew no bounds. Many years afterwards, he testified his deep sense of the benefit to one of our Fathers in Rome, saying with lively emotion that he had been delivered from the devil through the help of Father Paul. The impression which this extraordinary occurrence created in the town of Orbetello was so profound that it sensibly increased the fervor of the mission and caused the confessionals to be crowded with penitents.

It has generally been found that the souls most hardened against grace, and most difficult to convert in the missions, are robbers and public criminals who live continually in the occasion of mortal sin. It would appear, however, that our Lord had given His faithful servant both a strong desire to aid these unhappy men and a peculiar influence over their wayward hearts. Not a few of them, after simply hearing him preach, hastened to change their lives and to reconcile themselves to God. Our holy missionary treated them with such gentleness and sweetness that they could hardly tear themselves from his side. They often accompanied him upon his journeys, and

whenever he had to pass through any rough and thorny path, they dismounted from their horses and spread their cloaks for him to walk upon. Father Paul, unused to such attentions, tried to avoid them, but he could not refuse the little services which these poor people delighted to offer to one whom they regarded with filial affection. We should never finish if we attempted to recount all the conversions of these public sinners brought about through his means. We will refer, therefore, to only a few of the most remarkable.

He was in the country of Rocca Albigna in Tuscany, where he was solicited by a certain gentleman to assist him in reclaiming an assassin, who had lately attempted to take his life. The servant of God sent for the culprit; he came to the church fully armed and demanded fiercely, "What is it you want with me?" Father Paul, who knew that pride and hard heartedness are best conquered by humility and gentleness, knelt down before him with his crucifix in his hand and meekly replied, "Son, I want your soul." The words were few and simple, but nothing more was needed to touch that obdurate heart and to lay the foundation for a solid repentance. In the year 1750, he gave a mission in Camerino, which produced wonderful fruit among the people of that town. There lived in this city a person named Corporal Orazio, who was the head of a notorious band of smugglers. Now this man was guilty not only of smuggling but of numerous homicides. As he went about followed by all his companions, he was enabled to defy the officers of justice and to make himself dreaded by the whole neighborhood. He grew bolder every day, and at last carried his audacity so far as to open a public shop in the town for the sale of contraband goods. Strange to say, he attended some of the sermons without any particular motive, through a careless curiosity. Father Paul was informed of this, and he accordingly fixed his eyes upon him with the firm and steadfast intention of converting him. Nor were his hopes deceived, for at the sound of the awful threats, as well as the merciful invitations of this faithful minister of good, the unhappy sinner began to recognize the fearful state of his soul. Seeing himself covered with the hideous leprosy of sin, he wished for a physician to cure his disease. But, not having that sincere will which is necessary for obtaining the special graces of God, he put himself into the hands of a confessor who did not possess all the science and zeal requisite for his delicate ministry. No sooner was Father Paul aware of this, than full of grief he exclaimed, "Now indeed there is little hope for him, for when once he has attained absolution without proper disposition, his conscience will no longer torment him, and he will sleep securely in his sins." But as charity

hopes all things, the good Father resolved to make one more attempt in behalf of this erring soul. He called him into his presence and, in his own gentle, winning way, he spoke to him of the misery of his past life. Orazio did not deny his guilt. He replied, "All this is very true, but I have been to confession." "Well," answered Father Paul, "and where then is your resolution of amendment? You still keep an open warehouse of contraband goods, and you continue in the occasions of sin." "What then," said the smuggler, "had not my confessor the power of absolving me?" "Not without the necessary dispositions," quickly rejoined the servant of God. The poor man was at length undeceived, and he then declared that he would make a fresh confession to Father Paul with a firm purpose of doing all that should be required of him. With Orazio came those who had been his companions in guilt, and the holy missionary had the happiness of reconciling them all with God. Desiring to remove the now penitent smuggler from his former temptations, he had recourse to his kind patron, Cardinal Albani, and through his means obtained from Benedict IV a full pardon for the criminal. He himself presented this document to Orazio, and then the poor man, full of gratitude for so much charity, retired to his own home where he led a Christian life and in the year 1765 made a happy end.

The endless labors of Father Paul were indeed admirable; but still more astonishing were the consolations which our Lord bestowed upon him in permitting him to gain over these sinning souls, who were far more precious to him than the richest earthly treasures. While in Tuscany he was much grieved at the public scandal given by a certain person who led an abandoned life. He hardly knew how to remedy this crying evil, until Almighty God sent him a sudden inspiration one day to go straight to the miserable being, to reprove him in the very house of his sin, and to call him upon the spot to come out of the noisome sepulcher in which he lay. When he reached the door, he was met by the man himself, who, fully armed and with a menacing air, exclaimed, "What do you seek here?" The man of God held up his crucifix and answered in all the boldness of his zeal, "I want you to dismiss that woman from your house." "But, Father," said the libertine, "there is no harm in her being here." "There is nothing but sin in it," rejoined Father Paul, "and if you will not do as I ask you, I will appeal to the Grand Duke." The poor sinner, in spite of his assumed haughtiness, began to tremble in his heart. He lowered his tone and said, "When must I do this? How much time do you give me?" "Not a moment," returned the Father, "you must act without delay." Humbled and convinced, he yielded at length to the words of him

who spoke with so much power and authority in the cause of God. "I will obey you, indeed," he said, "and then will you hear my confession?" "Yes, my dear son," replied the tender Father, "I will confess you. I will console you and restore your peace." This poor man was as good as his word. He repented of all his sins, he approached the sacraments, and he removed the enormous scandal which he had so long given to his fellow citizens.

Among the penitents who openly manifested their compunction, and could not be restrained from publicly confessing their sins, were some who, after imitating in their guilt the sinful woman of the Gospel, followed her also in her repentance. While Father Paul was preaching in Mont'Alto, he heard of a woman who had caused much disedification by her wicked life. The Bishop of Viterbo had been obliged to make use of his authority to punish her, but without any effect, for she continued miserably bound in the chains of hell. She went one evening to hear the sermon which the holy missionary preached with his usual fervor. Her heart became gradually so inflamed by his burning words that, unable to contain herself any longer, she rose up and before the assembled Congregation asked pardon for her public scandal. The audience was inexpressibly moved at her address and frequently interrupted her by their tears and sobs. As for the penitent, her conversion was as sincere as it was sudden. She broke through the snares of Satan and gave herself irrevocably to God. The remainder of her days were spent in practices of piety, and she died in the truest sentiments of Christian virtue after patiently bearing the cross of a lingering illness. No less marvelous a change was wrought in the person of a young girl named Elizabeth who during Father Paul's discourse upon the Passion of Christ, made an open avowal of her guilt, confessed to the servant of God, and began from that time to lead a life of holiness. These were far from being the only persons who gave extraordinary signs of repentance. There was a lady in the Diocese of Acquapendente, who, hearing one of the sermons against scandal, recognized her own faults in complying with the maxims of the world and violating in her dress the rules of holy modesty. Penetrated with the truths announced by the missionary, she rose from her seat, went up to the platform, and exclaimed aloud, "I am that sinner who by my vanity have scandalized the people." She then asked pardon of all in the most touching terms of humility and sorrow. From that time forward she commenced a course of virtue and holiness, in which she had the grace to persevere until her death. She was imitated by another lady of the same place, who after the mission afforded as much edification by her devout example as she had formerly given

scandal by her worldliness.

In his sermons Father Paul was accustomed first to terrify sinners by his threats and afterwards to invite and encourage them by his sweetness. He showed them how much had been suffered for their love. In revealing to them all the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of their Savior, he often caused them to burst into tears of shame and sorrow. The affection with which he received all those who went to confession to him is not easily expressed. He was like an anxious mother healing the wounds of her children and preserving them from the future attacks of a venomous serpent. Knowing by experience the happy effects of kindness upon these poor creatures, he inculcated the same treatment to all others who had the charge of souls. He was accustomed to say that gentleness gains the most obstinate sinners, while harshness drives away contrition. Upon this subject he used to relate an instructive fact. He was sitting one day in the confessional when a poor man came up and whispered, "Father, hear my confession. It is twelve years since I have approached the sacraments." Father Paul, struck by his earnestness, begged him to wait a little and follow him as soon as he left the confessional. He conducted the penitent to a retired spot and with the greatest charity disposed him to make a general confession. When this was over he asked his penitent what had been his motive for neglecting his religious duties for so long. The poor man replied, "The last time I went to confession my director scolded me with great severity and sent me away, saying, 'Go, you will be damned.' I have been too frightened ever since to enter a confessional again." Father Paul, upon hearing this, encouraged him all the more, and after giving him absolution, dismissed him in peace. Several years afterwards this person met the servant of God again. When he saw Fr. Paul, he ran to kiss his hand, saying, "I must tell you, Father, that ever since I saw you, I have remained faithful, by the grace of God, and have been preserved from the sins I then confessed."

The same sweet and gentle manners, which won the heart of this unhappy sinner, drew many notorious criminals and malefactors to the confessional, even when there was no mission going on. These poor people mutually encouraged one another to go to the good Father, and they always came back satisfied and consoled. Even when he journeyed about the country, he was often stopped by persons entreating his spiritual aid. He was going once to Monte Marano in Tuscany, and as he passed through a woods, a little in advance of his companions, he was suddenly stopped by an armed man who insisted upon accompanying him into the forest. The

Father was naturally somewhat alarmed, and after walking a few steps, enquired what was wanted of him. "Let us go farther," replied his conductor, drawing him by the arm as he spoke. The man of God now became really frightened, not knowing how this adventure might end. However, disregarding his fears, he continued to advance until his companion stopped and turned to him with an altered countenance, saying, "Father, hear my confession." "My son," replied Father Paul, "you should have told me that a little sooner. Stay here while I go and inform my companions." He speedily returned and with his usual charity he listened to the tale of sin and had the happiness of bringing back, thus unexpectedly, an erring soul to God.

The Almighty, who looked down complacently upon the toils and labors of his servant, was pleased to cooperate in his ministry by many wonderful miracles. Sometimes sinners were permitted to hear a miraculous noise or were expressly directed to go to Father Paul, as was the case with a man whose conversion we will here relate. The good Father had been giving the general communion after a missions and was going to take some repose, when at the door of his house he found a person waiting for confession. Almost exhausted from fatigue, he candidly told the man that he was compelled to seek rest for his aching head, and therefore begged him to go to the church, where he would find one of his companions who would serve him instead. Having spoken thus, he was entering his chamber when he heard a clear internal voice, saying, "Confess that poor man." The faithful servant instantly obeyed the command of God. He called back the penitent and was told by him that during the preceding night he himself had appeared to him and had desired him to come to confession. "But, how could this be?" said Father Paul. "So it is," replied the penitent. "You said to me these very words, 'Come to confession.'" The Father adored the inscrutable designs of God and piously believed that the apparition had been made through the means of his guardian angel, who doubtless delighted to help him in the blessed work of the salvation of souls.

## **CHAPTER XXVIII**

### **How the Missions of Father Paul Were Marked by the Miraculous Interposition of Providence, and How All His Predictions Were Exactly Verified**

The common enemy of souls could not see, without malicious rage, the great good performed by Father Paul. Hence, the enemy endeavored by every means in his power to destroy the fruit of the missions, but he was never able to succeed in his infernal purpose. The devout Father was preaching once in the public place of Orbetello, when, all of a sudden, two young bulls detached themselves from the cart, which was conveying wood to the garrison, and ran furiously towards the square where the people were assembled. The terrified multitude began to disperse in great confusion and to escape some one way, some another. The servant of God, perceiving this to be the work of the devil, commanded them in a loud voice not to stir from the spot. Then, taking up his crucifix and full of confidence in God, he turned towards the ferocious animals and ordered them to depart. The beasts, as if they both understood and respected the voice of the minister of their Creator, quietly turned into another road, and thus the people were delivered from danger, and the devil was defeated in his malignant design.

At other times, the evil one attempted to disturb the missions by unexpected changes in the weather and violent showers of rain. This happened once at Santa Fiora, where Father Paul was addressing the people from a platform raised opposite the door of the principal church. The day was serene and the sky cloudless, when suddenly the rain came down in torrents, and the audience was compelled to seek refuge in the church. The holy missionary, with his usual faith, held his crucifix on high and exhorted those who still remained in the square not to move, and the rest to return to their places. The shower instantly ceased and, wonderful to relate, not so much as a drop of rain had fallen either upon the preacher himself or upon those who followed his advice. During another mission in Santa Fiora, the devil raised terrific peals of thunder to alarm him, but, full of courage, he told his hearers not to be dismayed by the tricks of Satan, for Almighty God was ready to defend his servants from the snares of hell. The tempest broke in torrents, which were sufficient to inundate the whole country around and to cause the water to overflow the fields. But in the square, where the people were gathered together with the missionary, the ground was not even moistened by the rain. At the sight of this touching evidence of the loving protection of God, the good Father could no longer restrain his fervor. He seized his discipline and exclaimed that he would do penance for those whose ingratitude was undeserving of such favors. He scourged himself so violently that the discipline broke in two, one part fell upon the roof of a house, the other upon a height at some distance from the

platform. Instead of desisting at this accident, he soon made himself a fresh scourge with the chain he wore about his neck. He continued his cruel blows until a priest rushed up to the platform and took it from his hands by force. Thus did he confound the tricks of the enemy and sacrifice his innocent body for the souls which Satan labored to destroy.

Similar to the wonders we have related was the interposition of Providence during a mission at Sutri, where, upon the day when the papal benediction was given, the sky became densely clouded and the rain fell all around except upon the spot where the people were listening to Father Paul. These miraculous events were renewed in many other places in which he preached, in order that his apostolic labors might be prosecuted without intermission or disturbance.

We must now speak of other wonderful signs and marks of approbation with which our Lord vouchsafed to fortify the minister who so faithfully followed the inspiration of His grace. It frequently happened that the voice of Father Paul was heard at a distance which it could not naturally reach, as was the case during a mission he preached in his youth at Castellazzo. The same thing occurred after the foundation of the Congregation at Tolfa, Civita Castellana, and the Island of Elba, where his voice was distinctly heard five miles off.

In the year 1738, when the servant of God was at Piagaro, in the Diocese of Pieve, he repeated several times during the mission the following words, "There are many among you to whom my departure seems a thousand years off. But when I go, I shall leave one who will preach far better than myself." When the mission was over and the blessing had been given, he quitted them to seek fresh fields for his zeal in other towns of the diocese, accompanied on his way by a great part of the people, while the remainder stayed in the church to pray. All of a sudden, wonderful to relate, a large crucifix carved in wood suddenly was seen to pour forth a copious sweat of the color of blood. The spectators were struck with awe and astonishment, and as they looked upon the wonder, they called to mind the last words which the holy man of God had spoken to them and were filled with compunction. The priests hastened to wipe up the miraculous sweat with linen cloths, while some of the people ran after the venerable missionary. When they related to him what had happened, he calmly replied, "I knew it already." He asked what color the sweat was, and being told that it was red, "It is a good sign," he answered. Then he went on his way in silence, like one who well understood the meaning of the miracle.

The inhabitants of Piagaro, seeing how mercifully Divine Providence thus called them to



repentance, performed now what they could not be induced to do before. Those who had not been moved by the exhortations of Father Paul were conquered by this supernatural appeal. The blessed image was ever afterwards held in particular veneration; a new chapel was built to receive it, and the following inscriptions in Latin recorded its marvelous history, "In the sight and in the midst of the tears of the people of Piagaro, this image poured forth a crimson sweat after a mission preached by Father Paul of the Cross of Monte Argentario in the year of 1738." On the epistle side are these words, "*The officials of the people of Piagaro and Anthony Pazzaglia, priest and rector of the church, with money freely offered in 1738, erected and adorned this church as a memorial of the precious Blood.*"

That Father Paul received from Piagaro a full amount of the circumstance which he foretold appears from the following words in one of his letters, "Besides the event at Civita Vecchia" (what this was we do not precisely know, but he doubtless alluded to some other miraculous occurrence), "there happened at one of our missions in Umbria a no less remarkable phenomenon. An image of our Lord upon the cross became covered with streams of sweat. A verification of the fact was sent to Rome, and the crucifix is now held in great veneration by all the people. This was related to me in a letter from the doctor, Domenico Anthony Ercolani of Civita Castellana, dated from St. Angelo, June 28, 1749." Thus far the servant of God. The pious citizens of Piagaro have ever since had a singular devotion towards that sacred image, the very sight of which invites to compunction and renews the memory of this touching miracle; for it still preserves visible the imprint of the streams formed from the head to the feet through the means of the miraculous sweat, as I myself have seen with my eyes during the mission which I gave there in the year 1777. Thus was fulfilled what Blessed Paul had said, that after him there would be another mission of greater efficacy made with the voice of wonders.

Other predictions uttered by the venerable Father were verified with equal exactness and certainty, especially some in which he prophesied a miserable end to those who, instead of receiving with a good heart the loving visits of the Divine Mercy, drew down upon themselves by their obduracy the tremendous chastisements of His justice. A priest of the Diocese of Monte Fiascone, who led a corrupt and abandoned life, came once to confession to Father Paul, while he was there giving a mission. What passed between them in that confession is related by the ecclesiastic himself, who, shortly afterwards, fell dangerously ill. When about to receive the holy

Viaticum in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which was already in his room, and in the presence of the priests of the village, after having asked pardon from all present and from the absent for the scandal he had given, said these words, “Know, my brethren, that during the late mission of May, I confessed myself to Father Paul, who refused me absolution, although I returned to him with tears after having promised to abandon that house. He then told me these words, ‘Go, and know that if you set your foot again in that house, you will be summoned to the tribunal of God before the end of the month of July.’ Not long afterwards, I returned there as before, and now you behold the consequence. Pray for me.” And thus, after having given authentic testimony to the prediction of the venerable servant of God, he went before the Divine tribunal, where the supreme Judge called him to render an account of his life.

During a mission in another part of the same diocese, the good Father was told of a young priest of a lively temperament, who was guilty of certain evil practices which gave considerable disedification. Desiring to remove the scandal, he began by speaking gently to the culprit, and at last told him that, if he did not reform, he would meet with a sudden death in the house of his sin. The priest, who was at that time in robust health and of a strong constitution, turned his words into ridicule. Woe to those who deride and despise the corrections of the servants of God. They are chastised when they least expect it. The prophecy was uttered towards the end of May, and it was in the month of October, while Father Paul was still continuing the missions in the Diocese of Monte Fiascone, that the curate of the place came to tell him that the miserable delinquent had been struck by apoplexy and had died upon the spot in the midst of his sins in the very house where he gave the scandal and without a moment’s time to make his confession.

A similar death happened to another priest, belonging to the Diocese of Viterbo. Father Paul was giving a mission there in the year 1759, and returning one day to his house, he showed himself very much grieved because he had been informed that a priest, together with a certain family of that place, not only derided him, his Congregation, and the sermons, but what is worse, never came to the holy exercises in the church to the great astonishment and scandal of the public, who knew their aversion and evil dispositions towards the servant of God. The holy missionary was perfectly indifferent to the injury offered to himself, but he was indignant at the contempt displayed for the word of God and the hindrance which this bad example placed to the salvation of souls. Speaking, therefore, one day of this fact, he suddenly broke forth into these

words, “That priest will die a sudden death and that family will be dispersed.” The inspiration with which he spoke was fully recognized some time afterwards when his prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. On the 7th of May, 1764, the priest was sitting down to table when an unforeseen accident deprived him of his senses. The archpriest, who is our authority for the fact, ran to his assistance; but so quickly did the poor man pass into the other world that there was hardly time to administer Extreme Unction “with one anointing.” The family, which had united with him in opposing the glory of God, began gradually to decline from the time the prediction was made until it was at last reduced to the extreme of misery. Thus terribly did God, for the instruction of all, avenge the outrage done to his holy word.

With his accustomed fervor he was giving a mission in the year 1751 in the same place in the Diocese of Viterbo. There was a certain old woman who obstinately refused to pardon another who had offended her. The persons, appointed during the mission to reconcile those who were at variance, had spent all their industry and charity upon her in vain to induce her to pardon and to be reconciled with the person who had offended her. The affair was represented to Father Paul, and his ardent zeal induced him to make fresh attempts, but with no better success, or rather she became more hardened in her obstinate refusal. The servant of God was extremely grieved in his heart and predicted that in a short time God would punish her. And so it happened. A few days after his departure, the wretched woman fell down dead all of a sudden without being able to receive any sacrament. She was found dead in her house with a countenance so deformed and horrible, that it struck terror into all who beheld it. We might here relate many other awful interpositions of God’s Providence, but not to be too long, we refrain from so doing, as those we have referred to are sufficient to know how clearly God showed His approbation of the labors of His servant by honoring them with so many wonders.

## **CHAPTER XXIX**

### **The Method Which the Venerable Servant of God Pursued in Giving the Holy Missions**

The devout Father, when about to give a mission, was accustomed to give previous notice of the arrival day of the missionaries by a letter, full of respect and humility and breathing zeal,

addressed to the curates of the place. He and his companions then set out barefoot. When they came near to the place of the mission, he sent word to announce their entrance. He proclaimed to the people peace and reconciliation with God the moment they entered the town. Having entered with great devotion and good order, and having intimated at the very commencement the great end of the holy mission, Father Paul delivered his first discourse in the church, and thus began the apostolic ministry. In its continuation, leaving aside the processions and other functions which are laudably practiced by other missionaries and which he himself had sometimes made use of in his early missions, he insisted principally upon instructions, sermons, and confessions. He had the catechetical instructions twice a day; the first very early in the morning for the laboring poor, in order that they might not be prevented from attending to the labors necessary for their subsistence, and might still have an opportunity to receive the food of the Word of God so necessary for their spiritual life. This instruction was to be entirely devoted to the explanation of the Decalogue in a slow, easy, insinuating manner, for the space of about one hour. The second, in the afternoon, before the sermon, lasted for half an hour only; in this were unfolded the ordinary faults committed in confession. The true manner of being reconciled with God or of participating more abundantly in the fruits of the sacrament of Penance was explained. After this Father Paul ascended the platform to deliver the sermon, after having prepared himself, not by study only, but also, and much more, by holy prayer. Before he ascended he used to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and there, prostrate on the ground, recite with great sentiments of faith the Creed of St. Athanasius, in order thus, having revived faith in himself, to preach according to the advice of St. Paul, *“As from God and in the presence of God, we speak in Christ”* (II Cor. 2:17). Having arrived on the platform, and given to the people some practical advice according to the light which God gave him or the wants of his hearers, he began his sermon according to the common rules of sacred eloquence. But as he proceeded, feeling some internal impulse, he suffered himself to be guided by the Spirit of God, whose movements he so well understood. Hence, it often happened that he departed from his principal subject to digress upon other points. This produced such admirable effects that none could doubt his inspiration. His delivery, according to the testimony of one who was his companion in many missions, and as can be attested by all who have heard him, was always earnest and striking. He inveighed against vice with equal boldness and zeal, without flattery or human respect, and with so much animation that

his countenance became all inflamed and seemed to be a living flame of fire so that, when he express strong disapproval, he struck fear and horror into his listeners. A public highway robber often said to him, “I shake from head to foot, Father Paul, when I see you on the platform.” And an officer of rank, after having confessed to him, told him, “Father, I have been on the field of battle; I have been under the cannon’s fire; I have never trembled; but you make me tremble from head to foot.” Towards the end of his sermons, he assumed, or rather was penetrated with, so gentle, so moving a spirit, that he dilated the hearts of all in such a manner, with confidence in God and holy affections, that the coldest and hardest among them were moved to compunction and melted into tears. After the sermon was over, he gave the meditation upon the most sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, but with so much unction and fervor of spirit, and with so much affection and compassion for our innocent Redeemer, that his audience again shed abundant tears of compassionate love towards Jesus, through the wonderful gift he had for revealing to the world Love Crucified and proclaiming to all his most bitter sufferings. Hence, it might well be said that even then was seen verified the prophecy of Zachary, “*In that day there shall be much weeping in Jerusalem. And it shall be said, ‘What are these wounds in the midst of your hands?’*” (Zach. 12:11; 13:6)

Knowing the great profit men derive from public practices of penance, because by these they dispose themselves to make a good and holy confession, he assembled them in some church in the evening, half an hour after the Ave Maria. Having proposed with great energy some strong and powerful motives to invite everyone to do penance, each one was at liberty, as the lights were extinguished, to offer up to God a little sacrifice of bodily mortification, in satisfaction for his own sins. He rigidly excluded all women from this exercise, not even allowing them to approach near the door of the church during that time. He enjoined them all to unite at the same time in prayer at their own homes by saying five Paters and Aves for the conversion of sinners. This he did for five or six evenings during all the period of the mission. An hour after sunset every night he caused the bell of the parish church to be rung to remind the people to recite five Paters and Aves in honor of the most Sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ and to beseech the divine clemency in behalf of all who were plunged in the abyss of sin. He desired that the chimes should be slow, solemn, and lugubrious, in order that the sinners themselves might feel that they were dead to God and to grace. As the sanctification of the laity depends in great measure upon

the sanctity and good example of the clergy, he used to give separate spiritual exercises for the ecclesiastics, in which they were strongly exhorted and encouraged to correspond with the sublime dignity of their calling and ministry. This function was generally entrusted to Father John Baptist, his brother, who fulfilled it with much depth of learning and true wisdom and with a zeal extraordinary, wonderful, and surprising.

All the remainder of the time he desired to be faithfully employed in hearing confessions, wisely distributing a portion of the hours of the day for the men and a portion for the women. It is not to be supposed, however, that he, who had established so many practices and exercises in the method of his missions, was unmindful of that prudence and moderation in laboring so necessary for carrying on well all good works, and especially those which are most fatiguing. It is true that in his first years he used to hear confessions even during the day before the sermon, but finding his strength give way, he moderated himself in this respect. He employed all the morning in that onerous duty, beginning at a very early hour and leaving off towards midday. In the evening, after having taken some little repose after the sermon, or to speak more truly, after passing some time in great recollection of spirit, recommending to God the fruit of the sermon, he again returned to the confessional. All the leisure he had, he spent in giving audience to those who sought his spiritual aid, which employment was so fatiguing to him that he said to his companion, who was afterwards his confessor, "If I could do like a certain missionary, who gave no audience outside of the confessional, it would seem to me as if I were taking a pleasant walk, but I must hear those who come. I feel myself urged to do so."

As he did not expect from his children all the great fatigues and penances which he had endured, especially during his first years, he desired, after the mitigation made by the Sovereign Pontiff, that they should exactly follow the advice which Jesus Christ gave to His apostles, "*Eat what is put before you*" (Luke 10:18). Nor in this respect would he tolerate any singularity, but required everyone to conform to the common practice of the others. One day, Father Marc Aurelio of the Blessed Sacrament, asking him what he would have done if any of our laborers had desired to abstain from flesh meat during the time of mission, as was practiced by another missionary of great virtue and merit, he frankly replied with great earnestness, "I should prevent him from going on the missions, seeing that our Rule on this is clear. If others do it, their Rule prescribes nothing on that point, but ours does." He then added, "By regulating ourselves

according to the prescriptions of our holy Rule, we preserve our health and humility; by acting otherwise, we are in danger of losing both one and the other.” Hence, he was accustomed to recommend his missionaries, when he sent them on the missions, to take all the nourishment that was necessary, saying, “If our Lord shall be pleased to communicate to you an extraordinary spirit, you will remain even many days without food; but not having such a spirit, you must regulate yourselves according to the dictates of holy prudence, since the labors are great.” And he used to repeat, “*He made him honorable in his labors,*” and then the Lord, “*completed his labors*” (Wis 10:10). As for himself, however, he always ate sparingly during the time of the missions; in fact, after the first days, owing to the weight of labor, he generally lost all appetite so that he could no longer eat without repugnance and doing violence to himself, but this only increased both his mortification and his merit.

When the missions were terminated, which always lasted a discreet time, regulated by that wisdom and prudence which knows how to discern the wants of the people and the fervor with which the mission is attended, he immediately took his departure, but did not lose, nor in the least diminish, the ardent desires he entertained for the good of the souls he had helped in the way of perfection. Sometimes God even performed some great miracles to satisfy his ardent zeal. Upon one occasion, he had already terminated with the papal benediction the mission in Piombino, and, in the presence of a large concourse of people, of many gentlemen, and in particular of Doctor Gherardini, who accompanied the servant of God, together with the others, had embarked off the quay. The vessel, which had sailed with a favorable wind, was already out of sight. Afterwards this same Gherardini, having returned into the town and entering the house of a gentleman to settle some business, to his great surprise, he saw Father Paul coming out of one of the rooms. At first he remained astounded and, as it were, out of himself, but afterwards, to assure himself of what he saw, he exclaimed, “What, Father Paul, you are here! Why, I accompanied you to the quay and saw you embark and sail at a distance out to sea, and now I find you here!” “Hush, Signor Gherardini,” replied the man of God, “do not speak.” Paul then told him that he had been miraculously conveyed to this spot to perform an act of charity in behalf of his neighbor.

## CHAPTER XXX

## **Foundation of the Retreat of St. Angelo in the Territory of Vetralla, and of That of St. Eutizio in the Territory of Soriano**

It is a special mark of that holy confidence in God, which is possessed by the saints, that each favor they receive is to them an encouragement to hope for future graces. Thus Father Paul, seeing himself so favored by the Divine Goodness, and looking around upon the many companions full of zeal and virtue, whom God had already sent him, felt emboldened in his undertakings. His generous soul allowed no good opportunity of founding new retreats to pass by, trusting that God would send him other subjects of equal goodness to edify their neighbors by their penitential life, and for awakening them to a grateful remembrance and compassion of their Redeemer, by announcing His most bitter passion and dolorous death.

It was so disposed by Providence that the venerable Father should be requested by Monsignor Abati, Bishop of Viterbo and Toscanella, to give a mission at Vetralla in the year 1742, and with the Divine blessing it succeeded extraordinarily well. The principal people of the place were struck by the immense good which ensued therefrom, and they became very desirous to possess the advantage of a retreat, like that of Monte Argentario, in their own neighborhood. A general meeting was held on the 20th of May to discuss the subject, and one of the council spoke thus, "Since we have all observed the benefits that have accrued to the people of this place through the preaching of the celebrated missionary, Father Paul of the Cross, and since we cannot doubt that these benefits would be more widely extended and more permanent if the good Father could be induced to form a retreat in our hermitage of St. Angelo, it appears to us that the most illustrious Signori Priori should be instructed to give notice of this our desire to Father Paul, and to take all the necessary steps for carrying it into effect." The votes of the number of twenty-five were all united in support of this resolution. As the affair proceeded there were not wanting the usual difficulties which rise up against every good work, but Father Paul was not easily daunted when the glory of God was concerned, in whom he had full confidence. With every means in his power, he sought to bring it soon to a happy conclusion. He therefore wrote a letter full of energy to his great friend, Canon Biagio Pieri, a worthy ecclesiastic, who was held in high esteem in Vetralla, his native country. "Your Reverence," he says, "ought to be a great



promoter of this work, which will be of so much spiritual profit to your own country and to the other places around. Oh, my dear Canon, now is the time to show God a brave, loving, constant, and generous heart, and to overcome all the opposition of the enemy armed against this holy work. If I could only speak to you in person, I would make known to you some of the hidden designs of God and the marvelous things that he will perform for his glory. “

Again, on the 26th of August, he writes, “I hear from the governor that matters are now nearly arranged for the establishment of our retreat, which is indeed much wanted in that locality. Mother Gertrude Salandri tells me that the governor wishes me to apply to the Sacred Congregation about it. To satisfy him, therefore, I have done so and sent the petition to a qualified person in Rome, in order that being put in good form, it may be presented to the Sacred Congregation.”

The prudent servant of God took still further precautions to ensure his success. He wrote to several influential persons at Rome, among whom were their Eminences Cardinals Colonna, Sciarra, and Rezzonico. From the first he received the following cordial reply, “I am never weary of reminding Cardinal Riviera of the Retreat of Vetralla, and considering the zeal of that prince and his particular regard for me, I look forward to obtaining all that you desire. He contributes his prayers for the same intention, that the will of God may be accomplished.”

The second answered with no less kindness, “I rejoice to find by your last letter that you have agreed to accept the Retreat offered at Vetralla. Even if you are not able to open it with more than three or four priests, I trust you will not abandon it, for I feel assured that Providence will know how to fill it for you (these words are well worthy of remark, seeing that at the present moment this very retreat is quite full). Do not fear the opposition of the Enemy of all good; he is making war against you, but he will soon be shamefully defeated. I cease not to beg Almighty God to give you courage and strength. I thank you for the charity with which you remember me in your prayers, and I implore for you all the fullness of the gifts of Heaven.”

The good Father was greatly assisted in this foundation by the Abbate Count Garagni of Torino, who had some influence with Pope Benedict XIV. He had already, as we have related, been of no little service to Father Paul in the beginning of his Congregation, and now he employed all his credit in the establishment of this new house of the Order. In a letter dated October 12th, 1743, he writes, “I can tell you for your consolation that I see many openings for

the propagation of your Institute, for which I am constantly praying and getting prayers, feeling certain as I do that God wishes for you to be in more than one place near Rome.”

When all the necessary faculties had been conceded, the Passionist Fathers took possession in the month of February, 1746, of the hermitage of St. Angelo. The spot is said to have been occupied formerly by a community of Benedictine religious, whose presence has sanctified so many solitudes. The retreat was opened with a devout and solemn function. Father Paul, with a rope about his neck and a crown of thorns upon his head, presented himself with his companions in the collegiate church of the town. There he took the cross and after having intoned the litanies, they all went in procession to the hermitage. Upon their arrival, the deed of possession was read and Mass was sung at the high altar. All present were greatly edified, and it appears that a deep impression was produced by an ancient painting of the crucifixion, which vividly placed before the eyes of the beholders the idea and object of the Institute. The venerable Founder chose his brother John Baptist as the superior of the new house and left him there with several Fathers. The poverty of these good religious was extreme, their habitation was very small and their provisions scarce, but the more they suffered, the more fervent they grew. St. Angelo was ever afterwards Father Paul’s great delight. He loved to come and seclude himself there in holy retirement. It was indeed a spot which inspired recollection, being three miles from any human habitation, in the center of a dark and shady forest.

At the same time that the good Father was establishing the Retreat of Vetralla, he was requested to found another at Soriano near the sanctuary of St. Eutizio, which belonged to the illustrious family of Albani. He gives notice of it in these words to his friend Canon Pieri, “Cardinal Albani wishes me to set off immediately for Soriano; he has taken upon himself the charge of settling everything with His Holiness, and the mission of Nettuno is put off till the end of May so that Cardinal Alessandro may be present. These pious princes have very much at heart the foundation of St. Eutizio. The designs of Providence are most admirable in all things! I have before me the letters of the Pope on the same subject. Have the charity to tell Sister N\_\_\_\_\_ that now is the time for helping the work by her prayers, and particularly for recommending to God a great laborer who shows some inclination for our Congregation.” (He probably is referring to D. Tommaso Struzzieri.) “He would be a great gain to our little band; and oh, how much do I desire him! Let her make an earnest petition and I feel assured that she will be heard. Let her remember,

also, my poor soul, my companions, and our house at Monte Argentario. I beseech her not to forget us day or night, and you, too, Reverend Father. Bear us in mind in your holy sacrifices. I conclude in haste and am always yours,” etc.

At the instance of the above-mentioned cardinals, Benedict XIV commanded Cardinal Valenti to write to the governor of Soriano and to the bishop of Civita Castellana to this effect, “His Holiness, having learned that certain secular priests have been invited for a time by Cardinal San-Clementi to the Church of St. Eutizio in the territory of Soriano, and have left the place after doing much good among the people, has determined for the benefit of these souls to establish there some other missionaries who belong to the newly founded Congregation of the Passion. The aforesaid cardinal has received with gratitude this decision of His Holiness, and I now desire to inform you of the same in order that your authority may supply all that is wanting for the execution of the pontifical design. You are therefore entreated to promote, assist, and forward this holy work by the most prompt and effective measures which it is in your power to employ. Wishing you every blessing, I am your devoted servant, Cardinal Valenti. “

In this manner was the negotiation respecting St. Eutizio brought to a successful conclusion, to the great consolation of all the parties concerned, and to the special satisfaction of the good Bishop of Orte, the diocesan who wrote to Father Paul in these words, “With inexpressible joy do I learn that the glory of God is to be still further promoted by your Institute, and that some of your religious are to take possession of the Retreat of St. Eutizio. Most willingly do I grant the faculties which you demand for hearing confessions and for reserved cases, extending them to Father Marc Aurelio. I am fully satisfied of your learning and piety, and convinced of the benefits my flock will derive from your presence. In the meantime, I will not cease to offer up prayers for you, and if they are united to your own, I shall promise a successful outcome. Varro, Bishop of Orte.”

Father Paul began by preaching a fervent mission at Soriano, and then with the same touching ceremony we have before described, he entered the house of St. Eutizio. It was a sort of sanctuary annexed to the church, where are preserved those venerable relics of the holy martyrs, which are sometimes seen to distil drops of miraculous manna. Father Marc Aurelio, a man of singular virtue, was appointed rector.

From this time forward, the excellent Albani family entertained a special affection for our

poor Congregation and loaded it with benefits. When our Fathers were settled at St. Eutizio, Prince Orazio wrote to Father Paul in the following terms, “Among the many obligations which I am under to my uncles, the cardinals, I reckon none greater than their having procured for my territory the great advantage of possessing a house of your exemplary Institute. The joy which this event has given me increases every day, when I reflect upon the seeds of holiness which you are daily sowing among my people. I thank your reverence with all my heart for the wisdom and charity you have shown in this affair, and it will be my great care to attend to all your wishes and to assist you and your colleagues by every means in my power. I recommend myself earnestly to your prayers, in which I place no little confidence.”

So far this pious prince. His zeal and charity were wonderfully blessed by our Lord for His greater glory and the good of souls.

## **CHAPTER XXXI**

### **How Father Paul Founded the Retreat of St. Mary of Corniano at Ceccano, and Our Lady of Dolors near the City of Terracina**

The clergy and people of Ceccano in the Diocese of Ferentino, having heard of the marvelous good wrought by the new Congregation, conceived a strong desire to have near them a retreat of the Order. In the year 1747 they made known this wish to Father Paul. Ceccano is a fief of the excellent Colonna family, to whom our obligations are so great not only for the houses they have founded at Palliano, Falvaterra, Monte Cavi, and Ceccano, but also for the abundant alms which they have ever been ready to bestow on us.

At the request, therefore, of the inhabitants of Ceccano our holy Founder agreed to give them the consolations and advantages which a monastery of the Congregation would afford them. Accordingly, he sent Father Tommaso of the Holy Side of Jesus (afterwards Bishop of Lodi) with Father Anthony of the Passion to make the necessary arrangements for the foundation and to preach missions in the surrounding villages. A hermitage was quickly prepared with all that seemed indispensably necessary for the little monastic family. In the middle of the winter of 1748, Father Paul set out with his brethren for their new retreat. It may easily be imagined that he

had much to suffer on the way as the weather was most inclement, the snow lay upon the ground, he was always on foot, and he had received a painful wound in the leg from a thorn. But he never ceased to animate his companions to proceed courageously and to bear their toils with patience. When these good religious approached the town of Ceccano, the people came out in crowds to meet them; they welcomed them with every sign of gratitude and joy, and conducted them to the abode of the Abbate Angeletti, one of their principal benefactors, who received them with the greatest affection and kindness. Upon the 14th of January, 1748, the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Father Paul accompanied Bishop Borgia, the Bishop of Ferentino, to the spot named Our Lady of Corniano, and there took solemn possession of the place for his Congregation.

Upon the same day that the cross was planted upon the site of the future retreat, our Lord was pleased to show in a special manner His peculiar satisfaction in this holy work. A large concourse of people had assembled to witness the ceremony. They were taking some refreshment afterwards when it was found that the wine which had been brought there in a little flask was not sufficient for the guests. Father Paul, perceiving the deficiency, quietly desired everyone to drink from the flask, assuring them that Providence would supply their wants. They replied it was useless to expect to find any more wine in the vessel, and in proof of what they said they turned it upside down. Still Father Paul insisted, and in the same confident manner repeated his command. One of the most docile at length obeyed, and he had no sooner applied his mouth to the bottle than he discovered it to be really full of wine. All who were thirsty drank abundantly, and the provision lasted until everyone was satisfied. This was the beginning of the House of Our Lady of Corniano.

The venerable Founder, anxious to unite several good works in one, immediately commenced giving spiritual exercises to the inhabitants of Ceccano. But he was compelled to interrupt them by an attack of illness, which confined him to his bed and obliged him to sacrifice his zealous intentions to the holy will of God. It is related that during the whole time Father Paul was employed in these foundations, Father John Baptist, who remained at St. Angelo, often exhorted the religious to pray for his brother because he foresaw the malady which would seize him.

When the servant of God was a little recovered, he went back to St. Angelo, leaving as superior at Ceccano Father Thomas of the Holy Side of Jesus. On his way through Rome he

stopped to kiss the feet of Pope Benedict XIV, who testified to the satisfaction he had felt upon hearing of the foundation of the new retreat and the advantages he expected to be derived therefrom. It may easily be conceived that Father Paul felt no ordinary gratification at the kindness and friendliness of the Sovereign Pontiff, in whom he beheld with the eyes of faith the person of our Lord Himself, and whose words he therefore received as if they came from his Divine Redeemer. But as the Almighty is accustomed to temper the sweetness of his consolations with some drops of the bitterness of his chalice, so he permitted that His servant should meet in the very antechamber of the Pope some persons who were opposed to his recent foundation, and who were then going to present some petitions against it to His Holiness. Committing, however, to Almighty God the care of his little Congregation and trusting that our Lord would protect his own work, he quickly left Rome for St. Angelo, where his presence, and the happy intelligence he brought of the successful commencement of the house at Ceccano, afforded universal consolation. Father Paul made but little stay among them, for we find him soon afterwards at the Retreat of the Presentation upon Monte Argentario, once more beholding the first and dearest of his children and stirring up within their hearts new fervor and earnestness in the service of God. From here, also, he chose the religious who were to accompany him to Santa Maria del Corro, near the city of Toscanella, where a fresh demand had been made for his missionaries.

We have already related how the servant of God, after the last foundation had, in consequence of his many sufferings and labors, fallen seriously ill. While he was thus indisposed at Ceccano, he received a present of some peas, which Bishop Oldi of Terracina sent to Father Thomas for the benefit of the poor religious in the newly founded house. Since Father Thomas was absent upon a mission, Father Paul was obliged to reply himself to the note of the good bishop. He was lying in bed in a debilitated and prostrate state, thinking of writing this answer, when he heard an interior voice which said, "Rise and write to the bishop about the establishment of another retreat." In his weak and reduced condition he felt a great repugnance to the exertion, but, accustomed to distinguish the motions of grace from the delusions of Satan, he recognized the spirit of God in this unusual impulse and feared to resist the Divine Will. He rose, therefore, from his sick bed and commenced his letter.

After having offered his thanks to the good bishop, he added that it appeared to him

conducive to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls that his Lordship should procure the establishment of another house of his Institute upon a mountain, situated near the city of Terracina. It was said there had formerly been on this hill a palace of the Emperor Galba, and some ruins are still to be seen, which attest the ancient magnificence of the edifice. The retreat is founded upon the very walls of this building and the vaults are now converted into the various domestic offices of the community. In this place, once the palace of a pagan emperor, did God cause a church to be erected to his honor with a monastery annexed to it, where religious might sing his praises day and night. Twenty-five years before our Lord had favored Father Paul with a foreknowledge of this event; for one day as he was silently passing with John Baptist along the road beneath the mountain, he was given to understand that near that spot would be established a retreat of the Congregation which he had already been inspired to found. Therefore, it was that when the servant of God wrote to the above mentioned bishop he knew that he was only acting according to the Divine Will in suggesting this foundation. Most willingly did the pious prelate give his consent; and after causing the spot to be examined, his Lordship replied, "The place you mention is particularly well calculated for your proposed end, being both commodious and spacious. To begin the work, I promise for the love of the five precious wounds of Jesus to bestow five hundred crowns." With this generous assistance they were enabled to commence the new building, not however without much opposition from other quarters, of which we shall speak more distinctly hereafter.

The holy prelate, full of faith and courage, stood by them constantly and became, so to speak, their wall of defense against all opponents. He contributed several considerable sums of money, besides his first gift of five hundred crowns. If he had not the satisfaction of beholding the accomplishment of the undertaking, his zeal was not less meritorious in the sight of God. After his death Bishop Palombella, a man of singular learning and integrity, took his place in the diocese, and under his protection the rising edifice was speedily completed. Upon the 7th of February, 1752, after having preached the exercises to the inhabitants of Terracina, Father Paul took solemn possession of the retreat amidst the universal joy of the people and the unspeakable consolation of the good bishop who, belonging as he did to the Order of the Servants of Mary, had a special desire to promote, together with the devotion to her dolors, the memory of the life giving Passion of her Son, the source of every grace and the channel of every good.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### **How Other New Retreats Were Founded, among Which Were Those of St. Sosio, Santa Maria Del Cerro near Toscanella, and the Most Holy Trinity at Monte Albano**

We have already related how Father Paul, after having returned from Ceccano and undertaken the establishment at Toscanella, set out for Monte Argentario in order to choose the religious who were to serve this latter house. The pious little town of Toscanella earnestly desired to have a retreat within its precincts and the bishop had written to Rome respecting it in these terms, "Father Paul, the Founder of the new Institute of the regular clerks of our Lord, would doubtless be most useful with his companions in sanctifying the spot called Santa Maria del Cerro. They are especially successful in converting and instructing, and of this I can assure your Eminence with particular confidence, since I have myself listened to their sermons and frequently made use of them to give missions in different parts of my diocese." Thus wrote Bishop Abati in the testimony he gave to the usefulness of the desired foundation. When everything had been decided by the "*motu proprio*" of Benedict XIV, our venerable Father had not a little to suffer in establishing his monastic family. He had traveled but one day's journey from Monte Argentario when he had to encounter a bitter north wind, which blew so violently and directly in his face that by the time he reached Toscanella he was thoroughly exhausted. Upon entering the town he found nothing ready for his reception. The servant of God, however, could not be discouraged. Placing all his confidence in him who has promised not to abandon those who trust in His Providence, he resolved to proceed in the work and to carry out, at whatever cost, the desires of the bishop. Accordingly, he and his brethren entered their future abode amidst privations and sufferings which will be best described in Father Paul's own words to Father Fulgentius, "Besides the suffering of my body, I had to endure in this journey terrible conflicts in the spirit. The new house, which we opened yesterday with what little solemnity we could, had much opposition to encounter. No retreat has ever yet commenced in such a helpless state of poverty and never have I felt so much anxiety about a foundation. God knows I am not yet free from these troubles, but I hope for the best. The brethren are joyful and content, and I



trust they will be of great service to their neighbors.”

Thus wrote Father Paul on the 5th of February, 1748, the very day when, by special dispensation of God, who doubtless wished to try his servant's faith to the utmost, they found themselves more destitute than ever and in want of common necessities. Undismayed by difficulties, Paul cheerfully said, “As this is a fast day we will make but a slender breakfast and trust to Providence for our supper.” Before night an unknown benefactor presented himself at the gate with a basket of provisions. Father Paul had some nourishing soup prepared, which he took special care should be first partaken of by the young Fathers whom he had brought with him to the new foundation and who were less able than the rest to go without food. Never was table spread in a truer spirit of holy poverty. They had no knives or forks and were obliged to use rude instruments which they had fashioned out of sticks and reeds. The next day the servant of God exhorted all to reanimate their faith and confidence, and he added there was a certain pious woman in Pianzano, who, if she had known of their arrival, would certainly not have allowed them to want. He had hardly left the retreat when a woman came to the church to confession and addressed herself to Father Domenico of the Conception, he being the superior of the house. The following morning she returned with several beasts of burden, laden with provisions for the good Fathers, who were full of gratitude for this timely succor. They had tasted nothing all the preceding day but a few vegetables given to them out of compassion by a hermit. From that time forward, they were never again in want but were abundantly rewarded by God for what they had borne in the beginning for His sake.

All the other foundations cost the venerable Father many labors, anxieties, and prayers; but God gave him the consolation of seeing, before he died, twelve flourishing retreats with numerous families of his spiritual children.

In order not to detain the reader too long with details, which will not be considered of general interest, and to pursue without interruption the life of the servant of God, we will do no more than mention the names of the foundations. St. Sosio, near Ceprano, was founded on April 2, 1751; Santa Maria of Pagliano, November 23, 1755; St. Giuseppe on Monte Argentario (a probation house for the novices) in 1761; and our Lady of Dolors. near Corneto, March 7, 1769. Father Paul took a particular interest in this last establishment, in the hope that the numerous shepherds who kept their flocks in the neighboring pastures would derive particular benefit from

the spiritual assistance of his missionaries. Another house of the Institute, which we cannot pass over without a few remarks, was that of the most Holy Trinity, at Monte Albano, commonly called Monte Cavi. Now it was that the prophecy of Isaiah seemed verified. "*The abode where jackals lurk will be a marsh for the reed and papyrus*" (Is. 35:7). For upon the very ground where had stood the altars of paganism was now erected a church to the God of the Christians. A famous temple of Jupiter had formerly attracted many blind idolaters to this spot; the woods around were sacred to their gods, and it was here that the celebrated Latin feasts were solemnized. The Monte itself was desecrated by many superstitious and profane practices, among which, it was said, was the sacrifice of human victims. Some Trinitarian Fathers had been the first to consecrate this unholy solitude to God, but they had deserted it long before the time of which we write, and their house and church had fallen into decay. Ruinous as the habitation was, Father Paul rejoiced to fill it once more with those who would make an atonement of prayer and praise to Him whose Majesty had been so much insulted there.

The religious whom he sent met as usual with plenty of sufferings. The house, though partially restored through the munificence of the Colonna family, still admitted the rain on all sides and was open to the fogs and mists which hang perpetually over Monte Albano. Their venerable superior, though he could not be with them, sympathized in all they had to endure and encouraged them by his fervent letters to offer up everything for God's greater glory. One of these epistles, to the rector of the new retreat, was couched in the following terms, "I have received with the greatest pleasure yours of the 20th, and I assure your reverence that the narration filled me with so much comfort and edification that I could not restrain my tears. I caused it to be read aloud in the refectory, that all might share my consolation. The peculiar circumstances attending this, our last foundation, lead me to expect great results for the honor and glory of God. The inconveniences and the poverty which your pious community has had to endure are so many precious gifts which the Divine Mercy vouchsafes you, in order to render you the cornerstones, so to speak, of his new dwelling place and to purify you in the golden furnace of faith and charity, so that you may be burning holocausts before the Most High and spread abroad the salutary odor of your generous sacrifices. Oh! how much do I hope that all these new establishments in the very sight of Rome may redound to the honor of God and the particular advantage of your reverence who has had to bear the burden thereof. How many

inestimable graces hath not our Lord in store for him, who by his vigilance and solicitude maintains his religious in fervor of spirit and strict observance '*before the Lord.*' I conclude that you have been informed that I accepted this new foundation upon the express condition that we were to have a branch house in a situation less exposed to the damp and the south winds; but this promise has not yet been fulfilled. I am told that the owner of the land is dead; still I trust to Providence to open to us some road to the possession of so desirable an addition to our retreat. In the meantime, God will protect you from the fury of the winds and the inclemency of the seasons. He will take care that 'no harm will come to you.' I write in haste, embracing you in Christ with all my heart and making this one petition to you all, '*Pray very much for us.*'"

The desires of the servant of God were fully accomplished some time afterwards, when another house of the Institute was established upon Monte Albano and a stately church erected there, more spacious and more beautiful than the old one, by the munificence of his royal highness the Cardinal of York, Bishop of Frascati. It was consecrated by the same pious prince, who could have said with absolute truth, "*O Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house.*"

### **CHAPTER XXXIII**

#### **How the Whole Congregation of the Passion, and the Separate Foundations in Particular, Are Opposed and Resisted**

One of the peculiar marks of God's favor upon an undertaking would have been wanting to Father Paul's work if it had not met with contradiction, opposition, and ill will among men. And as the storm which was raised against him threatened to overthrow not only the newly established houses, but the Institute itself, we think it necessary to give a distinct account of it here.

Certain persons moved by a false zeal did not content themselves with speaking disparagingly of Father Paul and his religious brethren; they went so far as to present a memorial against them to Pope Benedict XIV, part of which was as follows, "N. N. (the names are concealed for obvious reasons), throwing themselves with the deepest sentiments of humility at the feet of your Holiness, beg to lay before you their fears respecting a considerable abuse which has lately shown itself among the religious Orders of the church. This novelty threatens not only

to disturb and disorganize cloistered communities but to give scandal to the whole Catholic world, to throw discredit upon the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and to imperil in some sort the hitherto invulnerable orthodox faith, as may be clearly seen by those who can discern the wolf in sheep's clothing. Such indeed, it is greatly to be dreaded, are certain men styling themselves the missionary Fathers of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ who believe that they can succeed in all their designs by the power of the title they have assumed and by the help of a new device of a pierced heart which they bear. Desiring in this manner to distinguish themselves above all other holy Institutes, it is their singular prerogative to sow divisions, to excite tumults, and to disturb both clergy and laity. If the spirit of this new Institute in these early days consists in causing lawsuits in depriving poor seculars of their property and in putting an end to the pious customs practiced by other mendicant Orders, it must be evident to all that, when more firmly established, they will be too strong to be resisted." So far the memorial. When the wise Pontiff heard all these calumnies, in order to make clear the truth and to shut the mouths of slanderers, he deputed a secret Congregation of cardinals to examine the affair and to give him an account of the character and mode of life of the religious of the Passion. The result of this inquiry confirmed the Pope in his already high opinion of the evangelical spirit of the new Congregation. He was filled with spiritual joy and consolation and was ever afterwards more gracious and affectionate than ever towards Father Paul and his brethren. That he granted them many special graces and favors and held them in the highest esteem may be drawn from a letter written to Father Paul by Cardinal Rezzonico, who was himself afterwards raised to the papal chair, "I have made known to the Holy Father the sentiments of your paternity for which His Holiness returns his thanks. He regrets to hear of your illness and heartily desires your perfect recovery. Your singular zeal and piety, no less than the interests of religion, render me also particularly desirous for the preservation of your health, etc."

The tempest, however, which threatened if not ruin at least great injury to the work of God, was not yet lulled. The venerable Founder had still a great deal to suffer; but the more his trials increased the more calmly did he abandon himself to Divine Providence. Speaking one day during recreation to his religious of the violent hurricane which was raised against them, he seemed unable to contain his spiritual joy and said, "Sometimes it happens that a great thunderbolt, darting from the clouds, falls upon a barren mountain, and behold a mine of gold is

discovered. Let us hope that this storm may produce in us a similar mine, and that our Lord may work it for our greater good.” With these sentiments of confidence and conformity to the Divine Will, he patiently submitted to the labor and fatigue which this opposition cost him, replying to a numbers of letters and taking all the means of defense in accordance with Christian prudence. Opening his heart to Father Fulgentius of Jesus, a man of marvelous sanctity, he wrote in the following words, “Our affairs go on as usual; the tempest still threatens us, but we shall gain the victory in Christ after having endured the greatest misfortunes and having seen our cause, as it were, almost overthrown. But let us continue to pray. Either our good God does not desire our Congregation in his Church or He intends us to do great things for his name. Know, beloved Father, that petitions have already been presented demanding that the retreat of Ceccano be destroyed and no new houses founded in that part. The Sacred Congregation has granted them everything. Does your Reverence still believe that we shall triumph? It will be so indeed, but we must go through many trials first. I am tossed upon a stormy sea, and I tell you in confidence that I am in desolation ‘within and without’ and tormented by devils in a horrible manner, so that I no longer appear to have faith, hope, or charity. Oh! what a state I am in! But no one knows it or perceives it.”

And in another letter to the same Father he says, “Our affairs are still as much embroiled as ever; we are summoned to appear in court, but we shall not defend ourselves because the poor cannot afford to go to law. The devil is always on the watch to discover some loophole by which to enter and ruin the work. Recommend us and all the Congregation to God for our wants are extreme and my necessities urgent. I am, however, secure of this, that the Congregation will flourish when I shall be no more.”

The opposition grew more violent, and the servant of God wrote again to Father Fulgentius, “Our annoyances continue, and I know not what will be the result; everyone here expects that we shall triumph in the end, and I, too, am of the same opinion; the clouds which hang over us scarcely permit us to see the sun behind them. *‘Thanks be to God.’*”

Almighty God was pleased at length to console His faithful servant, and his next letter to Father Fulgentius relates the good news thus, “The particular Congregation, appointed to examine the petition of our opposers, has decided that the consent of the ordinaries is sufficient for the expedition of Briefs for the generality of our foundations. As to the retreats of Ceccano,

Terracina, and Palliano, they have decreed ‘*according to their intentions and their intention is,*’ that with the information and approbation of the bishop, we shall retain the peaceable possession of them. Marvelous things have come to pass upon this occasion. Great have been the outward persecutions, but the interior trials have been worse. I have been allowed to taste some drops of my Savior’s chalice, and if I had not remembered the Divine Will, I would have sunk, for I am weakness itself. Tomorrow, I shall leave Rome as happy as if I carried away a Bull for all the foundations in the world, because I am fixed in the belief that “*He who began the work will bring it to perfection*” (Phil. 1:6).

Thus wrote Father Paul of the Cross with a heart full of conformity to the holy will of God and burning with love for opprobrium and sufferings. Whenever he spoke upon the subject, he would conclude by saying, “*We give You thanks,*” or by repeating the words of Scripture, “*Blessing and glory and thanksgiving,*” etc. (Rev. 5:12,13). Hence it was that he obtained in the end from that merciful Lord, in whom he fully confided and for whose love he had endured so much, the object of his desires and the confirmation of all his hopes. While these things were passing in Rome, and those who had little affection for Father Paul were calumniating him and his Congregation, he behaved as a true follower of that great apostle, whose name he bore, and continued his holy ministry through glory and shame, through good report and evil report. He preached missions in the towns of Corneto and Camerino, and also at Rome for the opening of the Holy Year in the Church of St. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. Upon his return to his solitude, he confirmed his brethren by his holy discourses, encouraging them to abandon themselves entirely into the hands of Providence and to dispose themselves for new crosses.

One evening, after the meditation in which he had been shown many future sufferings, he said to his religious, “I know, my brethren, that the Congregation will have to pass through many trials.” He added, “A great persecution has arisen in the church.” He repeated this several times, saying that he knew not how to explain himself in any other way. The light with which the devout Father was inspired was fully evident a short time afterwards, when several members of the Institute became tired of their penitent life, and although they had been treated with so much kindness, they turned their backs upon their venerable superior and left his Congregation. Father Paul must have felt their defection very sensibly, particularly as he had only a limited number of titles for ordination, and they were not available without the dismissory letters of the bishop,

often difficult to obtain. He tried to repair the loss by strengthening the vocations of those who were beginning to waver, but finding his charity thrown away, he submitted to the designs of God, exclaiming, “Every tree that any heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.”

## **CHAPTER XXXIV**

### **How Father Paul Visited His Retreats**

The foundation of religious houses is scarcely more important than their preservation in a spirit of fervor, because it too often happens that the holiest commencement gradually falls away into a miserable end. Our Paul, being persuaded that superiors are often lost through their sins of omission, dreaded nothing so much as neglecting the work of God. Like a careful gardener, he set himself to watch with the utmost vigilance the young trees which had been planted in the courts of the House of the Lord. He visited in person all the houses of his Order, never thinking of his own convenience when there was any necessary reformation to be made or regular discipline to be established. His holy zeal was rewarded by our Lord with many sensible consolations, particularly with the gift of perfect interior recollection, which he enjoyed during all his journeys. Sometimes it was clearly perceptible that while his body was walking, his soul was being brought into communion with the Spirit of God and was drinking at the everlasting fountain of wisdom, life, and love. Upon one occasion, when on his way to the retreat of St. Eutizio, he suddenly stopped and asked, “Whose territory is this?” He was answered that it was the land of Gallese. But he again demanded in a louder tone, “Whose territory is this, I say?” Seeing that his companion knew not how to reply, he looked upon him with eyes that seemed on fire with love and said, “To whom do all these lands belong? Ah! you do not understand me – to our great God!” He was so carried away by his feelings that he quickened his pace and took a leap of seven or eight feet, while his companion remained astonished and edified at the fervor which consumed him. Another time, as he was going to Ceccano through the forest of Fossanova after visiting the monastery in which the angelic doctor, St. Thomas, expired, he burst out into the following exclamation, “Ah! do you not hear the trees and the leaves calling out to us, ‘The love of God – the love of God!’” He desired his companion to go before him, that he might give

vent to his fervent aspirations; and when the wondering disciple looked back, he saw the countenance of his venerable Father so inflamed that it seemed to dart forth rays like the sun. He was still repeating, “What, then, do you not love God – do you not love God?” Meeting some persons on the road, he said to them, “My brethren, give all your love to God, who deserves it so well. Listen to the leaves, the trees, telling you to love Him. Oh, the love of God! – the love of God!” These words were uttered with so much earnestness and ardor that not only his companion but all his hearers were penetrated to the heart, and several could not restrain their tears. With these celestial consolations did our Lord repay His servant, even in this land of exile, for the labors and journeys he undertook for his sake.

When he arrived at the retreats, he was again comforted by the sight of his religious, full of happiness in their poverty, serving Almighty God in simple faith and joy of spirit. He felt renewed confidence that their merciful Lord would continue, as he had hitherto done, to provide for all their wants. One day, as he was making his visitation at the House of our Lady of Corniano, the provision of bread at dinner was so scanty that there was barely enough for two or three mouthfuls each. But, just as the religious were sitting down to table with their venerable Founder, a person arrived at the door with a great basket of loaves. The porter accepted it with every demonstration of joy and carried it to Father Paul, who ordered him to go and thank their benefactor. But upon his return to the gate, he could see no one, nor was he able, therefore, either to express his gratitude or restore the basket. The religious acknowledged with overflowing hearts the special care of that Providence who feeds the birds of the air and never forsakes those who trust in Him.

What method was pursued by Father Paul in his visitations, what spirit guided him, and what solicitude animated him must have already been observed by the pious reader, but we shall speak more fully upon this subject hereafter, when we have to treat of the prudence of the saints, which God had bestowed so abundantly upon this His servant.

## **CHAPTER XXXV**

### **How Father Paul Went to Rome to Place His Congregation under the Protection of the Newly Elected Pope Clement XIII**



The death of the great Pontiff Benedict XIV caused deep affliction to Father Paul, both for the sake of his Congregation, which lost a faithful protector, and for that of the church, which was deprived of a wise and Holy Father. But he received much consolation in the election to the papal chair of his friend Cardinal Rezzonico, whose unfailing kindness towards him encouraged him to form new hopes for his Institute.

As soon as he heard of his accession, he hastened with his brother to Rome; and the Holy Father, who had so often testified his affection to Father Paul and assisted him in his struggles, received him most graciously and appeared disposed to do everything in his power for the stability of the Order.

The venerable servant of God wrote thus to his master of novices, July 8th, 1758, "I have to inform you that the Lord Cardinal Rezzonico has been raised to the Pontificate, and I set out immediately with Father John Baptist for Rome to embrace his most holy feet. During our interview, I introduced the subject of the permission to take solemn vows and the retreat which we hope to have in Rome." Some time afterwards he wrote to the same person in these words, "There is no necessity of returning to Rome, for the Pope is most propitiously inclined towards us. The Holy Spirit has inspired him to take an interest in the firm establishment of our Order, and to further this purpose he is about to appoint a particular Congregation of cardinals."

In the meantime Father Paul continued to recommend the affair to God with the greatest earnestness, begging prayers from others with a firm confidence that by this union of supplications, he should obtain whatever was expedient for the successful progress of his holy work. In one of his letters to an ecclesiastic of great virtue he said, "It is indeed true that the elevation of Cardinal Rezzonico to the Pontificate will prove for us a happy event, if God will deign to bestow upon us, as I sincerely trust he will, the abundance of His graces. Thus, it behooves us to implore with fervent prayer, in order that our holy Institute, with the help of the papal approval and the addition of solemn vows, may take root and be firmly planted in the evangelical field. Already the approbation which I announced to you is rendered more valuable by the expedition of an Apostolic Brief, wherein are inserted the Rules and Constitutions which were examined by their Eminences Cardinals Albani, Besozzi, and Gentili. I entreat you to add your prayers to ours, that we may be spread all over the Christian world and even beyond it; for

our Congregation has already been offered a mission among the unbelievers, which it only awaits the decision of the Propaganda to accept.” This mission was prevented by the unexpected deaths of several of the Fathers.

The particular Congregation which the Pope appointed was very slow in coming to a decision; and the venerable Father, whose health was now weakened by his declining years, had to undergo the constant fatigue of making toilsome journeys and of writing frequent letters with scarcely any help, since Father Thomas had gone with Bishop De Angelis to Corsica. The man of God, however, never lost his interior peace, nor ceased to await with perfect indifference the fulfillment of the holy will of God. Writing again to the ecclesiastic we have so frequently mentioned, he said, “The affairs of our poor Congregation are in full progress at Rome, where His Holiness has chosen five cardinals to advise His Holiness and to determine whether we shall be constituted a regular Order and be permitted the usual solemn vows of religious men. If this should be their happy decision, it will be a miracle of grace for these deplorable times. As for myself, I am equally content with success or failure, our Lord having given me the grace to will and desire nothing but his good pleasure.”

It appears, nevertheless, that shortly afterwards Father Paul found himself in many interior doubts and perplexities, whence he wrote thus to Father John Mary Cioni, “I am in the midst of contradictions, between doubts and fears, and the dread of interfering too much in this matter. What this may mean I know not, but I beg of you to give me your opinion.” In order to be more certain of the Divine Will, he again directed that the Congregation should offer up continual prayers and sacrifices. As the day of decision approached, he seemed to have a foresight of what would happen, for, upon the morning that the cardinals sat for the last time, he said to his companion, “You will see that they have done nothing for us.” And so indeed it proved. Their Eminences, taking into consideration the extreme severity of the Rule, judged it more expedient to leave the Congregation with no more than the simple vows, in order that a door might be open to weak souls, and that there might be among them no discontented religious, but only the cheerful givers, whom our Lord regards with so much complacency. The venerable servant of God, who in the declaration of the cardinals recognized the Divine Will, adored the designs of Providence and returned thanks to the Almighty for so clear a manifestation of his good pleasure. He even acknowledged that it was better for the Congregation to be able to liberate itself from

turbulent subjects; and, in fact, one of the last instructions which he gave to superiors before his death was, “Take care of the wheat and throw away the tares.” Although he did not obtain the particular favor which he had applied for, he received upon this occasion many gifts and privileges for his Congregation from the paternal charity of Pope Clement XIII.

## **CHAPTER XXXVI**

### **How His Brother John Baptist Died. How He Visited His Provincial Retreats<sup>9</sup> for the Last Time and Was Taken Seriously Ill at St. Angelo**

The time had now arrived when, by the inscrutable wisdom of God, the brother and faithful companion of Father Paul should be removed from this earth, upon which he had only remained until he became a fitting ornament for the heavenly sanctuary, and be taken up to an eternal union with that Sovereign Good for whose possession he had never ceased to sigh. After an illness of two months, which he bore with admirable patience, being at last, on account of the weakness of his stomach, totally unable to take nourishment, his happy spirit passed away and went, as we confidently hope, to rest in peace with God. The grief which this bereavement occasioned to Father Paul can hardly be properly estimated, unless we remember that in his brother he lost a man of holy life, who from his earliest days had been the companion of his prayers, his vigils, and his penances; one who had been gifted by God with an extraordinary fervor of spirit, which made him fearless of any difficulties when he was following the designs of Providence; one who, being the partaker of all his secrets, was enabled to relieve him of many of his solitudes in the first foundation of his Congregation; and (what was the greatest deprivation of all to the servant of God) one who offered his advice with freedom and his corrections whenever he conceived them needed. To understand what even the saints themselves must feel upon the loss of such a brother as this, it is enough to recall the touching lamentations of St. Gregory Nazianzen upon the death of St. Cesarius, those of St. Ambrose upon the loss of his dear Satirus, and those of St. Bernard upon that of his Gerard. Bitterly, however, as Father

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<sup>9</sup> Retreats south of Rome.

Paul sorrowed, he was at the same time full of submission and resignation to the Divine Will. “I was silent,” he said, “and humiliated.” He did not wish to be thought possessed of a virtue which is above all feeling. He offered the tribute of his tears to him whom he had lost. But amidst all his grief, his firmness and fortitude never left him. During his brother’s long illness, he was always at his bedside, serving and assisting him with his own hands. As he loved him entirely in Christ, he took care to comfort him spiritually as well as corporally, to animate him with the holy love of God, and to dispose him to embrace the tender invitations of his Redeemer, who showed Himself, so to speak, by the means of the sufferings which He sent.

He suggested to the sick man the liveliest sentiments of faith. He inspired him with the most complete trustfulness and the most entire abandonment to the Father of mercies, sometimes repeating for him acts of repentance and contrition, and sometimes purifying him more completely in the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, by giving him the sacramental absolution. The venerable Father was severely inconvenienced at the time by an attack of gout, but he used to drag himself on crutches to his brother’s room and, several times when he supposed him to be in danger, he recited with great fervor the Recommendation of the Departing Soul. When he was really in his last agony, all the Fathers assembled around his bed, as is the custom of the Congregation, and Father Paul intoned the *Salve Regina*, which the rest took up in a solemn chant. He then went through the sorrowful function of the Church towards the departing soul with so much courage and fervor that an eyewitness declared it was enough to make all present desire the same assistance in their last passage. He did not cease until the innocent spirit of John Baptist had passed away in peace. Father Paul was now deprived of his beloved brother. He could render him no further assistance except by his prayers. But he had not lost his fervor nor his courage nor his heroic confidence in God. For all these he obtained such rewards as saints alone can appreciate – the grace of new crosses from his loving Redeemer, who was pleased to enrich his faithful servant by permitting him to drink deeply of the bitter chalice of his passion.

Seeing his trials increase, Paul sought for nothing but help to endure them patiently; and he thus disposed his soul for a singular consolation which our Lord was already preparing for him. He was now in a state of utter abandonment and desolation, and when he turned towards God, it seemed as if his heavenly Father rejected and deserted him. To the afflictions of his spirit were added the sufferings of his body and the malicious assaults of demons. The loving hand of

Divine grace, however, invisibly sustained him. With the hope of being of some use in visiting and consoling his spiritual family, he determined to go around, once more, to all the retreats in the provinces, and to give his blessing to his children for the last time. It was in the year 1766 that the venerable Father, burdened with old age and infirmities and oppressed by interior trials, set out upon this visitation, of which he gave notice in these touching words, “Now that my life is well nigh spent and I see myself upon the verge of the grave, I have resolved, ‘in the Lord,’ to come and say my last farewells and give my parting embraces to my dearest brethren in the country retreats.” Passing through Rome, he beheld with no little joy of heart the site of the small hospice which the Pope, after many entreaties, had ceded to our poor Congregation. His visitation produced the greatest consolation among our religious, who saw with delight and admiration their beloved superior devoting to the service of the Congregation the last remains of a life which had been almost worn out in the struggles of its foundation. It was also a sensible satisfaction to Father Paul to see the good fruit ripening in the little vineyard which had been planted by the hand of the Lord. During his journey, the servant of God had a new torment in the honor and veneration which were paid him in all the places through which he passed. The fame of his virtue had become diffused abroad, for the more the saints endeavor to be unknown, the more does Almighty God procure their glory. The marvelous gift of prophecy and the power of working miracles, which he had bestowed upon the venerable Father, will be fully described in the sequel.

Upon his return to Rome, he established a retreat at the hospice under the title of Jesus Crucified, and he felt renewed hopes of obtaining one day that particular house upon the Celian Hill which he knew the Divine Goodness had destined for him. After this he went back to his dear brethren at St. Angelo, and he was here attacked by what he called a precious infirmity. This illness rendered all his usual sufferings more grievous and oppressive, but Father Paul, although he felt pain as acutely as other men, knew how to bear it with invincible patience and perfect peace, like a true servant of God, who through His grace, “*When he is weak then he is strong*” (II Cor. 12:10). His brethren were in the greatest fear of losing him. His advanced age, his habitual indisposition, his serious illness, all combined to threaten his life, but it pleased the Divine Mercy to spare him a little longer for the perfect establishment of his Congregation. He recovered from his sickness, but he remained for a long time weak and suffering. He revived a

little in the month of May, 1769, when the General Chapter was held for the election of superiors. Upon that occasion Father Paul prostrated himself before the Fathers, and after confessing his faults and performing the usual acts of humiliation, he sincerely protested that he desired to end his days in obedience as a simple subject. But the religious, looking more to the stability of the Institute than the humility of their good Father, confirmed him again as guardian angel superior. He publicly renounced the dignity, but his opposition was useless. The capitular Fathers refused to accept his resignation, and, together with his confessor, using affectionate violence, they constrained him to continue in his paternal office. The servant of God, who was as obedient as he was lowly minded, submitted to the decision of others and undertook once more the government of his Congregation.

## **CHAPTER XXXVII**

### **How Father Paul Obtained from Pope Clement XIV the Entire Approbation of His Institute**

The Apostolic See had become once more vacant by the death of Clement XIII on February 3rd, 1769. The venerable servant of God, who considered it incumbent on every true son of the Church to pray for her necessities, offered up many fervent supplications that the Divine Goodness would send a worthy pastor to His flock. He replied in these words to the letter which brought him the news of the Pope's death, "I have received with grief your sad news; I celebrated holy Mass this morning to obtain a happy election, placing in the Sacred Blood of Jesus the hearts of all the Conclave, particularly that of Ganganelli." He had, in fact, remarked to his companion after Mass that day, "I have offered up with the most precious Blood the hearts of all the Cardinals, and oh! how that of Ganganelli shone among them." These words of Father Paul agreed with what he had said upon other occasions, sometimes to the Cardinal himself, clearly predicting his elevation. But we shall return to this subject in the sequel when we come to speak of his spirit of prophecy. With this interior illumination he waited from day to day to hear the expected news proclaimed. He occupied himself in the meantime by looking over his Rule and improving the method and form of that part which had been altered under the direction of

Benedict XIV. Directly the news of the election of Fra Lorenzo Ganganelli reached him. On the 25th of May, he started for Rome. He stopped at Ronciglione, where many persons sought his advice and were consoled by his admonitions. Continuing his journey on the following morning, he arrived towards night at the little hospice near the Lateran Basilica, where his beloved children welcomed him with delights.

The new Pope had not forgotten the saintly Passionist, whose prediction he now beheld so wonderfully verified. Discoursing one day with his private secretary, Monsignor D. Carlo Angeletti, a great friend and benefactor of the Congregation, he said, "We shall soon see Father Paul in Rome." "Impossible," replied Bishop Angeletti, "he is so ill; he can hardly move." "Never mind," returned the Pontiff who well knew the heart of the venerable Father and the affection he entertained for his person, "you will see if he does not come." His Holiness was soon informed that the servant of God was already in Rome, and desiring to have the pleasure of conversing with him as soon as possible, he sent his carriage on the 29th of May to fetch him from the hospice. The good old man, as he went along to the Papal palace, calling to mind the weary Roman journeys of his younger days, could not forbear exclaiming to his confessor, "Oh! how often have I trodden this road barefoot! How much have I had to suffer in this city." To which his companion replied, "Behold, now the fruit of your labors." The Pope received him at the Vatican with the tenderest affection. His Holiness appeared full of joy at seeing the man whom he so truly esteemed. He spoke to him with complete unreserve, and in order to make known to his companion the reverence in which he held him, he said in a tone too low for Father Paul to hear, "I have with me one of his letters which I always carry about my person; it went with me even to the Conclave."

After a long audience Father Paul, being firmly convinced of the Pope's favorable dispositions towards his Institute, presented the memorial, praying for its formal approbation as a Congregation with simple vows and for the concession of all the favors and privileges of other Congregations. His Holiness declared that he was ready to grant whatever he desired, and he dismissed him full of new hopes for the firm establishment of his holy work. The Sovereign Pontiff lost no time in deputing Bishop Zelada, Secretary to the Sacred Congregation of the Council, and Bishop Garampi, Secretary to the Signet – both of them well acquainted with the affairs of our Institute – to make the required examination and pronounce an opinion. During

forty days these wise prelates were employed in considering the Rules. At last, they represented to His Holiness that they wished to recommend two alterations – one respecting the night's repose and the other with regard to fasting. The changes they desired were that five entire hours should be allotted to sleep all the year round, and that the fasting should be limited to three days in the week. This discreet proposal was very agreeable to the Pope, as he foresaw that the Order, by being less rigorous and better adapted to the weak, would become at the same time more stable and permanent. He refused, however, to come to any decision without consulting Father Paul. No sooner was the servant of God made acquainted with the suggestion, than, recognizing the Divine Will in the wishes of the Pontiff, he gave his entire consent to the mitigation. This was the happy conclusion of the affair which Father Paul had had so long at heart. Everything was finally arranged on the Vigil of the Assumption, and upon the morning of that great feast, the Pope sent his confessor, Fr. Maestro Sangiorgio, to tell him that his desires had been granted and that his consolation was at hand. In order to understand the full meaning of these words, it must be premised that the servant of God had signified to the Holy Father his wish of visiting on the Feast of the Assumption the image of Our Lady in the Borghese Chapel at St. Maria Maggiore, to thank her for the secure establishment of his Congregation and for the numerous favors it had obtained through her intercession. Fifty years ago, upon that very spot and before the same image, he had for the first time bound himself by vow to promote in the hearts of the faithful the devotion towards Jesus crucified and to unite companions for the same purpose. And now the Vicar of Christ himself assured him that it was time to testify his love and gratitude towards the powerful protectress who had assisted him through so many difficulties and had at last procured him the crowning object of all his prayers. The venerable Father therefore performed his little pilgrimage; afterwards, tired as he was, he assisted at the function in the Papal chapel, and there again returned his heartfelt thanks to Almighty God for the singular favor bestowed upon him after so many years of labor, anxiety, and fear.

He gave a general order for a *Te Deum* to be said in all the retreats and a solemn Mass *of thanksgiving*. The Brief for the confirmation of the Rule, and the Bull of approbation were expedited on the 15th and 16th of November in 1769. Upon the 23rd of the same month, the day of the commemoration of the glorious martyr, his patron, Pope Clement XIV sent the precious document to Father Paul. He received it with the greatest joy and devotion. Kissing it reverently,



he placed it upon the altar in the chapel of the hospice, and then calling together his little community, they all poured forth anew their gratitude to God, whose benefits they felt they could never sufficiently acknowledge.

## **CHAPTER XXXVIII**

### **How Father Paul Preached His Last Mission in the Church of St. Mary's in Trastevere, and Then Fixed His Residence in Rome**

The venerable servant of God, believing in his humility that his infirmities rendered him incapable of public preaching, had for some years desisted from giving missions. He still, however, retained as freshly as ever his ardent zeal for the good of souls, and he was always ready to take the field against his old enemies, vice and sin. Upon the publication of an extraordinary jubilee in 1769, the Pope expressed his desire that by the means of a public mission the inhabitants of the holy city should be renewed to fervor and disposed to receive the many spiritual favors of that year of grace. The Cardinal Vicar, Bishop Colonna, was commanded to appoint the missionaries, and he immediately informed our venerable Paul that he intended to name him as one of them. The humble Father modestly excused himself, saying that his strength was failing, that he was almost an invalid, and so deaf that for four or five years he had discontinued preaching in public. The good Cardinal smiled and replied, "At all events, your voice is good enough, and as for your hearing, it matters not provided that your audience be not deaf." At these words, obeying as usual the Divine Will in the wishes of his superior, he gave his consent without any further hesitation, and, although he was very weak and the heat of the weather increased his indisposition, he immediately began his preparation for the duty he had undertaken.

The missionaries were to be distributed in the different quarters of the city, and the Cardinal Vicar gave Father Paul the choice of three churches: St. Carlo in the Torso, St. Andrea delle Fratte, and Our Lady of Consolation. He fixed directly on the last, because it was chiefly

frequented by the poor, saying it was to them our Lord sent him. *“To evangelize the poor, God has sent me”* (Lk. 4:18). His Eminence, however, did not approve of this choice; he wished Father Paul to have a larger field for his labors, so he assigned to him the Basilica of St. Mary’s in Trastevere. All was arranged when, upon the very day that the mission was to begin, the poor old man was attacked with fever and was obliged to have his place supplied by one of his companions. As soon, however, as he was able to ascend the platform, his ardent desire to announce the truths of faith to the people of Rome caused him to take upon himself the labors of the mission, without any thought of his own weakness or of the danger of a relapse into the illness, from which he could not be said to have recovered. An unusual crowd assembled to listen to the man of God. People of all ranks and conditions were gathered together in the Trasteverine Basilica – religious and secular priests, prelates and cardinals, and the first nobility of Rome. The fruit produced by his sermons was marvelous. Uninfluenced by a shadow of human respect, and burning with pure zeal for the glory of God, he inveighed with bold and thrilling words against all the common abuses of the day. It was a strange thing to see that vast audience hushed into breathless silence or melted into tears of contrition by the voice of one feeble old man. The mere sight of his venerable form, with uncovered head and sandalled feet, scarcely able to stand upright and tottering up the platform steps with the help of several assistants, was enough to win the inmost hearts of all beholders and to produce the most unheard of effects upon their souls. His discourse was no sooner ended than the people crowded round him to kiss his hand, to touch his habit, or to receive his blessing. His friends were often obliged to protect him from the numbers who pressed upon him. Upon the last day of the retreat, the concourse was so great that the Basilica, with the piazza in front of it, were both quite full, and still many persons had to go away without the consolation of hearing him. Cardinal Panfili, the titular of the church, caused some soldiers to be stationed among the people to preserve order. This, the last sermon ever delivered by Father Paul, was crowned with perfect success. But as he detested nothing more than public applause, he escaped as soon as he could from the crowd that surrounded him and hastened home to his brethren at the little hospice. Thus, in the Church of St. Mary’s in Trastevere was concluded the apostolic ministry of Father Paul of the Cross, which had been exercised with so many blessings and advantages during the space of fifty years.

While the venerable Father was giving this mission, the Sovereign Pontiff used to enquire

every night how the sermon had succeeded and how the poor old man had borne the fatigue. Hearing that all had gone well, he would exclaim joyfully, "That is right, let him go on." After these labors, Father Paul was able to spend some time in retirement and recollection. In the month of October, out of gratitude for the favor he had received in the confirmation of his Institute, he resolved to make the pilgrimage of the Seven Churches. During his visit to these holy sanctuaries, he conceived new and ardent desires to live entirely to God. He felt particularly inspired in the basilica of his great advocate, St. Paul, and in that no less consecrated spot, the scene of his martyrdom and of the miraculous Tre Fontane. Returning again to the hospice, he began to feel an inward longing for the more perfect solitude of his earlier days, wherein he had enjoyed such intimate communications with God. His Holiness, however, whose chief consolation it was to have Father Paul near his person, made known to him his desire that he should remain in Rome, "I know very well," said the Pope, "what you would do at your St. Angelo; you would meditate, and you would pray for yourself, for us, and for the church. Now all this, and even more, you can do without leaving Rome." These words were enough for the humble servant of God; he instantly gave up his private wishes. The Pope knew how to appreciate the prompt obedience with which Father Paul sacrificed so innocent an inclination. Upon the Feast of St. Thomas, Father Paul went to offer his congratulations for His Holiness' birthday and was honored with unusual marks of affection and esteem. Causing him (as he always did) to be seated in his presence, the Pope said to him, "Well, Father Paul, since you have submitted so willingly to the desires of our Cardinal Vicar and ourselves, we must think of providing you in our city with a house and church for your little community. This is only justice, but you must give us time." In order that the venerable Father might have the consolation of offering up the Holy Sacrifice on Christmas night, he granted him a special faculty for celebrating in the domestic chapel of the hospice. He returned home with a grateful sense of this new favor, and kept the great solemnity of our Lord's Nativity with extraordinary devotion, and with a mind full of the contemplation of the touching mystery it commemorates. On the vigil of the feast he seemed unable to contain his holy joy and walked about the house exclaiming to all whom he met, "Oh prodigy! Oh miracle. *Deus nascitur!*" What were the heavenly communications he received upon that night of benediction can be known only to himself, although his tears and sobs were sufficient indications to his religious of the fire which the

Redeemer had lighted in his heart. In the morning, after saying two more Masses, he went to venerate the holy cradle in the Basilica of St. Maria Maggiore, he then proceeded on foot to assist at the High Mass which was sung by the Sovereign Pontiff, nourishing his spirit all the time with tender meditations on the ineffable mysteries of the Divine love.

## **CHAPTER XXXIX**

### **How Father Paul Made His Last Visitation to the Retreats in the Papal Territories**

Satan, who had never ceased to persecute the servant of God, assaulted him with increased fury now that he had received such special graces from on high. The very day after those celestial favors we have just mentioned, he was most cruelly tormented by the enemy of mankind. He did not, however, lose courage; but, animated by the blessings which had been bestowed upon him, he summoned all his fortitude and resolved more firmly than ever to serve Almighty God with generosity and love. For the greater glory of his heavenly Master, he determined to undertake a journey to all his retreats which belonged to the patrimony of the Pope. But as he decided nothing without the advice of Christ's Vicar on earth, he sought an audience to demand the necessary permission and to obtain at the same time the apostolic benediction. The Sovereign Pontiff could not oppose the desires which proceeded solely from a burning zeal for the good of the Congregation. After tenderly blessing our Paul, he referred him for his leave of absence to the Cardinal Vicar. Before he left him, he lovingly complained that he never asked for any benefits, saying, "I admire your modesty, but I beg of you to speak freely of all your wants and do not fear that I can ever find you troublesome." We can easily imagine what Father Paul, with all his affectionate veneration for the successor of St. Peter, must have felt when he heard addressed to him such words as these. After taking his leave, with a full heart he went to the Cardinal Vicar to explain the motives for his journey. His Eminence allowed him at length to depart, upon condition that he would return to Rome at the latest by the Feast of St. John the Baptist. He could not, however, go away, even for a short time, from the holy city without saying a farewell prayer at the Confession of St. Peter and placing the success of his undertaking in the hands of the blessed Apostles.

Upon the 27th of March, 1770, he started for Civita Vecchia. It was a dreary time of the year for traveling, and he had to suffer from the neglected state of the roads, as well as from the cold and bitter winds. When he reached the inn at Monterone, he was almost frozen, but finding himself among country people, who rarely enjoyed the advantages of hearing the word of God, he would not lose the opportunity of giving them a little pious instruction. Accordingly, he delivered an exhortation full of simplicity and fervor, which being adapted to the capacity of all, was listened to with the most profound attention. His first visit was to our house at Corneto, one of his earliest foundations. As he found many of the religious there in weak health and declining years, he determined to give the spiritual exercises himself. Thus, he employed Holy Week to the great advantage of the community. Throughout his exhortations and conferences, as well as in the touching ceremonies of those solemn days, it was evident to all that his whole heart was fixed upon "*Jesus Christ and him crucified*" (I Cor. 2:2). After Easter the venerable Father, ardently desiring to embrace his dear children at Monte Argentario, determined to go there at all risks, though he was assured that the roads were in a dangerous state and in some places almost impassable. He consented to make the voyage by sea as far as he could, and he embarked in a small vessel from Corneto, but he was compelled by contrary winds and tempestuous weather to land at Mont'Alto.

While he was detained at this place, unable to remain idle, he employed his time in giving instructions and teaching an easy method of meditation on the Passion. It was here that some devout persons seized the opportunity of procuring some pieces of his cloak while he was intent upon his discourse and did not observe what they were doing. Finding it impossible to procure a carriage at Mont'Alto, he was obliged to continue his journey on horseback. It was a weary ride of twenty-six miles, and he was lame and weak. Placing his confidence in God, he went trustfully on his way, and he arrived safely at the town of Orbetello as the bells were ringing the Ave Maria.

Here he was detained one entire day by the rain, and the good citizens, who were delighted to have him once more among them, testified in the most lively manner their consolation and joy. They flocked around him as he left his house; they thought themselves happy if they could kiss his hand; some even prostrated themselves to embrace his feet, while others tore off shreds from his cloak and habit to keep as relics. It was not without some difficulty that he escaped from their

affectionate importunity The following day he rejoiced to be freed from the honors which were so distasteful to him, and he hastened onwards to his beloved retreat. Weeping as he went along the well known road, he exclaimed. "Ah! with what recollections are not these mountains associated!" And well, indeed, might this holy solitude recall to his mind the memory of many a bitter trial and many a precious heavenly grace! He conducted his visitation at Monte Argentario in the same manner as that at Corneto. He spoke with singular tenderness to the novices, treating them as children who rather needed milk than meat, and he addressed to them so touching a discourse as to draw tears from the eyes of all.

While he was here the Sovereign Pontiff gave him a new proof of his fatherly love and condescension. Father Paul, knowing that His Holiness desired to have news of his journey, had written him a letter, telling him of the proposed convent of the Passion at Corneto, and speaking of the fervor and peace which he had found among his religious in the retreats there. The Pope was much gratified by this epistle, and he sent him in reply a Brief full of kindness and affection, as our readers may judge by reading the translation of it which we here subjoin.

CLEMENT XIV, POPE

"Beloved Son, Health and Apostolic Benediction in the Lord.

"From the paternal love which, you are aware, we entertain for you, you can easily conceive the pleasure with which we read your letters, which breathe so much affection for ourselves and veneration for our Apostolic See, and which assure us also of the prayers you and your Congregation cease not to offer for our weakness, which the clemency of God has raised to the dignity of His Vicar. Nothing, indeed, could have more fully proved your piety towards us, nor could you have done anything more agreeable to the Rule of your Institute, in aid of our affairs, which depend so entirely on the Divine support. Continue, beloved son, to deserve our gratitude, and that of the whole Church, by persevering with your brethren in those petitions which are so necessary for our help. In this manner you will respond to the entire confidence we repose in you, and you will still further stimulate that benevolent feeling, which we promise shall always be displayed in your need. With these sentiments we trust to behold your Congregation increase every day in merit and in all Christian virtues. The account which you give of your Institute is most satisfactory to us; we rejoice to see it propagated in the odor of sanctity; and we shall always be ready to assist it by our authority,

protection, and favor. We wish that these, our letters, should remain as a memorial of our singular good will in your behalf. We earnestly desire that, persevering in what you have begun, your paternal government, joined with our assiduous supplications, may, with the Divine blessing, maintain and increase the Congregation to your own great joy. In the spirit of humility and charity we impart to you, beloved son, our Apostolic Benediction. Given at Rome at St. Maria Maggiore, under the ring of the Fisherman, April 21, 1770, the first year of our Pontificate.”

The servant of God received this Brief with profound humility of heart. Kissing it and with tears of joy he exclaimed, “Ah, poor me! Well may I fear lest I have addressed to me at my death those words of our Lord, ‘You have received good things in your life.’” He was so overwhelmed with his own unworthiness that he was inconsolable until he was reminded that the favors he received were necessary for the establishment and progress of his little Congregation, scarcely yet out of its infancy.

He had a fresh cause for humiliation upon his journey from Monte Argentario to Rome. As he approached Mont’Alto, all the inhabitants came out to meet him and to testify their joy at again beholding him. It was edifying to see sick persons who could hardly drag themselves along and mothers with tender infants in their arms pressing round his carriage and begging for his blessing. In vain did he tell the driver to hurry on. It was some time before the horses could be extricated from the crowd, and when at last he had escaped, he burst into tears, exclaiming, “Ah, how miserable I am! I ought to keep myself locked up rather than allow the world to be so deceived about me!” After a most fatiguing journey, a great part of which he had to perform on foot, on account of the dangerous state of the roads, Father Paul found himself once more in his home in the eternal city. And now, as a reward for his toils and labors, he received from our Lord the loving visitation of a severe illness. He was confined to his bed by gout and sciatica, pains in his head and a weakness in the eyes. But in all his prayers and meditations he had only more perfectly learnt the lesson of accepting everything from the hands of God and of finding tranquillity and peace in the Divine Will.

## **CHAPTER XL**

## **How Father Paul Employed Himself in Rome and How He Was Cured of a Dangerous Illness**

As soon as Father Paul was sufficiently recovered from the fatigue of his journey, he hastened to throw himself at the feet of His Holiness, who was anxiously expecting him. He carried with him the Rules for the proposed Convent of the Passionist Nuns at Corneto, which the Pope graciously received, and then entrusted for revision to a person of great learning and piety. Upon the Feast of St. Anne, the servant of God again asked for an audience, and although the Pope had refused to see any one that day because of illness, he no sooner heard it was Father Paul than he instantly admitted him. He made him sit down by his side and gave him the most tender and delicate marks of his affection. Turning to the Father who accompanied him, the Pope exclaimed in the warmth of his heart, "Oh, what pleasure this interview affords us! We had determined this morning to receive no one, not even our secretary, but our dear Papa (Babbo) is always an exception." Finding the Pope so graciously disposed towards him, the man of God ventured in all humility to offer an opinion upon a subject which he had already discussed with many persons noted for their prudence and zeal. He exposed to His Holiness the necessity for a reform of the clergy, especially of regulars, and he laid before him the means by which he conceived this might be peacefully and prudently accomplished. Clement was equally pleased with the sincerity and the wisdom which dictated these remarks. He replied that his sentiments perfectly coincided with Father Paul's, and he applauded his project as the best mode of furthering the end in view. He begged of him to use his private influence among the clergy for this purpose, and in particular to exhort all priests who came to him for advice to that constant prayer, wakeful vigilance, and earnest preaching so necessary in those who serve the sanctuary and are the watchmen on the towers of the holy city.

It was not long before the Pope, being about to leave Rome on a visit to Castel Gandolfo, again admitted Father Paul to a private audience. He gave him fresh marks of his esteem, repeatedly expressed how much he valued his Congregation and begged, that while he was away, the venerable old man would add to his usual prayers one Ave Maria for his particular intention. Upon this occasion as he was leaving the palace, he met the secretary of State, Cardinal Pallavicini, who addressed him with singular reverence and affection. When the humble servant



of God spoke of the gratitude he owed to his Eminence's parents, who had once hospitably entertained him in their house at Genoa, the Cardinal testified his joy and exclaimed with much cordiality, "You see, Father Paul, what an old friendship ours is." All these honors, however, were but fresh occasions of interior humiliation to our Paul; entering into his own nothingness, he went quietly back to the little hospice and began to prepare himself in a special manner to celebrate the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, which is a special feast of the Congregation. During the novena preceding this festival, he passed his days and a great part of his nights in a close and intimate communication with God. In this blessed union, beholding by the Divine light his own destitution and unworthiness, he turned to his crucified Redeemer and offered himself up to the Eternal Father, clothed with the infinite riches of the merits and sufferings of his Savior.

About this time Father Maestro Sangiorgio, the Pope's confessor, was seized with a sudden and violent illness which deprived him of the use of one side. The servant of God, who loved and venerated this excellent religious as a true friend, hastened to visit and console him. "Padre Maestro," he said to him, "you are now at the gates of death, but take courage, you will get well, and I am as certain of your recovery as that I hold this handkerchief in my hand." The prediction was speedily verified, for Father Maestro was so completely cured, that he suffered none of the usual consequences of so severe an attack.

As Advent approached, Father Paul, notwithstanding his advanced age and weakened constitution, was desirous of observing the fasts and abstinence of that holy season, but his physician and his confessor both obliged him, under obedience, to seek a dispensation. He therefore took the usual nourishment, but so sparingly and with so little relish that what strength he had began daily to diminish. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, His Holiness wished to see him and sent his carriage to fetch him. It happened, however, that during the previous night he had been assaulted by devils in so extraordinary and terrific a manner, that he was scarcely able to defend himself. In vain did he seek a refuge in his own interior by uniting himself with God, as an utter desolation of spirit and an internal abandonment deprived him of all consolation. He passed the night in anguish, and the next morning he was so exhausted that he was unable either to leave the house or to offer the Holy Sacrifice. The Pope was greatly concerned and, fearing to lose him, sent frequently to know how he was. Father Paul suffered

continual nausea and weakness of stomach for about a week. As he was less oppressed in the day and always worse at nights, it was difficult to prescribe anything for his relief. At length he was bled and ordered to take bark, which he forced himself to swallow, although he had a great dislike to the medicine. Knowing from where his malady proceeded, he said to his confessor, "This is not a medical case, for my illness is caused by devils." Notwithstanding this opinion, he would not act upon his own feelings, but obeyed his physicians in everything. Finding that he grew worse, he began to prepare himself for his last hour with the most perfect conformity to the will of God. Speaking unreservedly before his spiritual director, he exclaimed, "I die contented and I care not to live longer. To some death is an object of horror, but to me it brings no fear; I willingly accept it in penance for my sins." Upon the Feast of the Expectation of our Blessed Lady, he begged to be allowed to receive the holy Viaticum, and, as but little hope was entertained of his life, his request was granted. His confessor deposed that upon the previous evening he disposed himself with the greatest fervor to receive his Savior in the Adorable Sacrament, and in the morning he desired to go to confession, saying, "I have nothing upon my conscience that disquiets me, but I wish to confess myself as an act of obedience." He accused himself with the most lively sentiments of contrition and after the words of absolution had been pronounced, he said, "I place all my hope and confidence in the Passion of my Jesus; He knows that I have ever tried to promote his glory. I have endeavored to make others love Him, and I trust that He will show mercy to me now. The prayers of the poor sinners whom I have assisted will plead for me in this my hour of need." He frequently repeated with great devotion, "Mercy, my Jesus, mercy!" When the Viaticum was administered to him, his fervor moved the hearts of all present. Towards evening his illness increased so rapidly that the doctors, finding their skill of no avail, declared his case to be well nigh desperate. Being left alone with his confessor, the sick man asked, "And am I really in such danger?" Being answered in the affirmative, he rejoined, "Now, indeed, do I understand the light which our Lord once gave me to foresee that I should pass through a great trial, but that my life should be spared." He did not, however, appear to confide entirely in this interior conviction, for he spoke of disposing of everything as if his death were at hand. "If I die," he said, "have the charity to perform my obsequies privately in the chapel here. Let my body be carried secretly, late in the evening, to the Church of Saints Peter and Marcellinus and buried there without ceremony. When my flesh has decayed, cause my

bones to be taken to St. Angelo at Vetralla and deposited near those of my brother John Baptist.” The humble servant of God little knew how differently others had arranged his interment. His Holiness, when he heard that his death was hourly expected, decided that he should be buried in the Basilica of the Apostles and then removed to one of the churches of the Congregation, if his religious desired it. His confessor, being well aware of this intention, replied to Father Paul’s observation by saying that the Pope would take care of his funeral. The countenance of the sick man fell, and he remained for a while silent. Then sighing deeply, he murmured, “All I wish is to die in some place where my body could receive no honor.” To console him, his spiritual guide suggested, “Obedience in life, in death, and after death. Jesus Christ suffered His body to be buried wherever His faithful servants pleased.” After this he seemed to have no more will of his own. He spoke not again upon the subject but, continuing to converse about his illness, he said that, notwithstanding his dangerous state, he felt assured he had yet some time to live. During the night which followed, he reposed more tranquilly and in the morning found himself well enough to take some food. He was no sooner aware of this improvement, than, turning to the Source of all good, he exclaimed with tears in his eyes, “As the nobles of the world are accustomed to receive memorials when their birthdays approach, so my sweet Jesus has been pleased to accept the petitions presented by my religious before His holy Nativity. By the grace of God, when I am recovered, I shall amend my life. “ He was visited that morning by Canon Pirelli and Bishop Zelada. Conversing with them, he remarked, “I never had so little fear of death as upon this occasion. In fact, I could not help thinking that it was an event more to be wished for than dreaded since it is only a deprivation of life by the same Hand that gave it to us.”

He now acquired fresh strength every day, and he even hoped to be able to say Mass upon the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord. But the Pope, fearing lest he should exert himself too soon, sent him word not to celebrate on that day. He obeyed with his usual alacrity, and upon Christmas night, although he was lying on a sick bed, instead of officiating in church, he did not fail to contemplate in spirit the ineffable mysteries of love which were being commemorated. His recovery was unfortunately considerably retarded by an attack of a different nature, which so weakened him that on the 12th of January he was in a kind of delirium. Various remedies were tried, but all in vain. The servant of God again resigned himself to the Divine Will and during several days waited for our Lord to do what He pleased with him. Upon the 22nd of January he

requested the holy Viaticum, and upon the Feast of our Blessed Lady's Espousals, after confessing himself with tears of contrition, he fervently received the Blessed Sacrament. After his thanksgiving, his confessor entered the room and found him unusually calm and tranquil. He cried out, "I am not afraid to die, for my Jesus has assured me of paradise. When a great king sends one of his ministers upon a long journey, he provides him with a prudent guide to ensure his safe arrival, so my good God has given me for my voyage to eternity His Divine Son as Viaticum." He again repeated, with tears in his eyes, "I am not afraid; I have nothing to fear; I see not yet the hour of departure." After this there was some improvement, but it was not permanent and he continued to alternate between recovery and relapse. The poor invalid was worn out with suffering, and he was tormented besides with interior desolation, which our Lord sent him for the greater purification of his soul. He adored the dispensation of Providence and abandoned himself entirely to the good pleasure of Almighty God. He passed his days in prayers of thanksgiving and praise, often repeating with particular devotion, "We give You thanks because of your great glory." This had always been his favorite ejaculation, and he had frequently exhorted his religious to use it whenever they had any particular undertaking in hand, saying, with peculiar earnestness, "*We give You thanks because of your great glory.*" At other times, prostrating himself in spirit before the throne of the most Blessed Trinity, he fervently exclaimed, "*Holy, Holy,*" or, "*Blessing and glory,*" etc., which he used to call the song of paradise.

Father Paul was now, naturally speaking, in imminent peril of death. Out of love for holy poverty, he stripped himself of all his little possessions, which he placed in the hands of his first consultor, and asked as an alms a poor habit to be buried in. Calling to mind with deep humility all the faults of his life he said, "He who has committed high treason deserves death; I am guilty. Therefore, it is just that I should die." One of the bystanders answered, "By the grace of God you have been pardoned." But he rejoined, "Ah, which of us knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred? But my trust is in my God, and the merits of Christ are the foundation of my hopes." He now left nothing undone which could contribute to his salvation, and he entreated that when he drew his dying breath the last absolution of the Church might be given to him. His confessor, having asked his benediction, the tender Father took up his crucifix and made the sign of the cross, saying, "May our Lord impart to you His Holy Spirit." One thing more remained. He had

not yet received the blessing of His Holiness, and it seemed impossible that he should die without this last mark of affection from him who bore him almost a brother's love. Accordingly, he despatched his confessor to tell the Pope that he was a true son of holy Church and as such he wished to die. In return the Pontiff sent him, with the deepest tenderness, his apostolic benediction "*in articulo mortis*." The most marvelous part of Father Paul's illness was that though his dangerous symptoms increased and the doctors declared further remedies useless, he still retained the government of his Congregation as if he had been in perfect health. He had made arrangements for his intended convent at Corneto, gave all the necessary orders for the establishment, and dictated, with the greatest energy, the letters and documents which the occasion required. His whole conduct was an example of zeal and vigilance, self forgetfulness and patience, and, in fact, the only remedy for his malady seemed to be the fulfillment of the will of God and the performance of all his ordinary duties. Nothing disturbed him so much as the attentions that were paid him, as he sincerely believed that his sufferings were unworthy of the least consideration.

But while his dear children in the Congregation were expecting every day to hear the sad knowledge of their beloved Father's death, our Lord had resolved in His mercy to spare him a little longer for those who so much needed him on earth before he went to be their protector and advocate in heaven. He was destined to arise from his sick bed and to celebrate a joyful Mass of thanksgiving for a sudden and unexpected recovery. The manner in which this took place will be best related in the simple words of his infirmarian, the truth of whose recital is attested by several other witnesses. "While our Father Paul of the Cross was in Rome at the hospice of St. John Lateran, he was seized with a mortal illness which reduced him to the last extremity. Doctor Giuliani attended him and declared that he did not expect him to survive the week. I went with Father Procurator to tell the Pope that the servant of God was dying. His Holiness, whose affection for Father Paul was increased by the fear of losing him, answered in these words, 'I will not allow him to die yet. Tell him he must stay with us a little longer; I command him under holy obedience.' We returned to the hospice, well pleased with the kindness shown to us by the Pontiff, and with our hearts gladdened by the hope we began to conceive of our Father's recovery. We repeated to him the Pope's message; he wept as he heard it. Turning to the crucifix by his side, he thus addressed it, "My crucified Lord, I desire to obey Your Vicar." From that

moment he began to rally, was gradually freed from suffering, and restored to his former state of health.” And thus Almighty God made known that a lively faith and a generous obedience act with gentle violence upon His loving Heart and obtain the most wonderful favors.

## **CHAPTER XLI**

### **How a Convent of Passionist Nuns Was Founded in the City of Corneto**

Through the mercy of God there were now twelve religious houses in which the Rules of the Congregation of the Passion were observed and continual prayers offered up, that the Divine Goodness would vouchsafe to pour the abundance of His Spirit upon those Christians who, looking upon their Blessed Redeemer transfixed for their sins, should weep with compassion for His cruel death. “I will pour out,” said the prophet Zachary, “upon the house of David and the habitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.” It appeared, therefore, suitable that there should also be some convent where holy women, consecrated to God and secluded from the world, might contemplate the same Man of Sorrows and compassionate the same agonizing death. “And the land shall mourn,” continues the prophet, “and the women apart.” Carrying upon their hearts the symbol of His Passion, their whole conduct was to exhibit a lively image of their crucified Spouse. By their fervent prayers they were to implore him to turn to Himself the eyes and hearts of those for whom He died. By their words and actions they were to promote a practical devotion towards His bitter sufferings. For this end our Lord so ordained that a design should be formed and put into execution after the manner we are about to relate. We have already alluded several times to the establishment of this convent. Since we wish to give the reader an entire history of its foundation, we will go back to the origin of this holy work and see how, by the mercy of God, it was at last happily completed.

In the very beginning of the Congregation of the Passion, a special light was received upon this subject by a holy soul named Agnes, who was a penitent of Father Paul’s. How much she profited by the enlightened direction of her confessor may be inferred from what he himself said of her after her death, “I earnestly desire that the life of that great servant of God could be written

by some learned and devout pen.” This saintly woman was inspired by God to know that Father Paul would one day found a monastery of Passionist nuns. But he, who in the direction of souls proceeded with the greatest caution and weighed with the scales of the sanctuary all the operations of the Spirit within them, refrained from a sudden approval of the revelation. In order to increase his penitent’s humility, Father Paul took little notice of what she said. All the time, however, he was offering continual prayers to know the will of God in this matter. At last he was given to understand that a convent of nuns of his Institute was really to be established. Upon the 18th of January, 1749, he wrote to another holy soul whom he guided, “We cannot tell when Almighty God will perform what we wish in favor of the holy virgins. I look for it in all peace. God desires that we should not cease to pray for this is a work which must be the fruit of prayer.” Many years had passed; the Rules of the Congregation of the Passion had been confirmed and approved; houses of the Order had been founded and retreats built, when God put it into the hearts of Signor Domenico Costantini of Corneto, D. Nicola, his brother, and Lucia, his wife, to establish at their own expense a convent of nuns, wherein the rigorous Institute of Father Paul of the Cross might be observed. They communicated their intention to the venerable Father, and he, knowing how greatly such an undertaking would promote the glory of God, encouraged them to persevere and invoked upon them the choicest blessings of Heaven. The pious benefactors, therefore, began to think seriously of commencing their work. They sought for a fitting locality, and after some difference of opinion they at last all agreed (not without a particular inspiration) upon the spot where the convent now stands. They themselves possessed several houses in Corneto, but finding that the ground which they occupied was not sufficient for the purpose, they bought a piece of land which lay contiguous, and having privately obtained the permission of Bishop Saverio Giustiniani, they laid the foundations of the edifice. As the workmen were pulling down the old buildings, they brought down by inadvertence an image of our Lady, which had been bricked up between the walls. The upper part of the statue fortunately escaped injury, and it is now venerated with particular devotion on the altar of the convent church. The venerable servant of God rejoiced to see himself relieved, by the charity of these good persons, from all the usual difficulties of a new foundation. He wrote, full of confidence, to a devout woman, “We want to have a community of great and holy souls, who in their virtues and penances will imitate Jesus crucified, their Spouse, and His most afflicted mother, their abbess

and guide.”

There were not wanting, however, to the fulfillment of this enterprise some of the usual obstacles which are so commonly permitted in all the works of God. No sooner did the pious design become generally known, than plenty of persons were found to oppose it and turn it into ridicule. And for a little while it met with a still more effectual hindrance in the financial losses of Signor Domenico, which obliged him to suspend the progress of the building, which increased the scorn of those who had derided him. But Father Paul was his chief comfort and support under all his misfortunes. He wrote to him frequently and upon one occasion used the following words, “Arm yourself with unbounded confidence in God, who, if He will, can overcome all your difficulties by the marvels of His power. Be encouraged, therefore, to persevere with a great heart and willing spirit, in humility and purity of intention throughout. Remember that you are forming a nest for the pure doves of Calvary, and that you are pouring into the wounds of Jesus the precious balsam of their tears. Go on then bravely for the love of the most sacred Passion. Oh, how high and holy a work is this! Return thanks to God, who has chosen you to do it for His Glory, and utterly annihilating yourself before Him, exclaim, “My very substance is as nothing.” Animated by the advice of so bold and trustful a spirit, Domenico Costantini recommenced the work and became full of zeal for its speedy progress, while Father Paul on his side labored to have the Rule and Constitutions ready for the inhabitants of this new sanctuary. When the edifice was at a state of forwardness, the founders presented to Monsignor Giustiniani a deed by which they engaged themselves to pay for the maintenance of the convent, 400 scudi annually during their natural lives, and to leave, for the same purpose, all their property and possessions at their deaths. The worthy prelate, however, was not satisfied with this allowance and required, instead, a revenue of 50 scudi a year for each nun. The benefactors were discouraged by this unexpected reply, and although they did not renounce their holy project, yet the demand of the bishop and their own recent losses obliged them to interrupt its execution for the present.

During the pontificate of Clement XIV, as Father Paul was celebrating Mass in Rome upon the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, his countenance suddenly became inflamed and his eyes overflowed with tears. One who was accustomed to discern his spirit guessed that our Lord had favored him with some peculiar light. So indeed it proved to be, for he had received a clear indication of the manner in which God willed the establishment of the Nuns of the Passion. He



became aware that it was necessary, for the greater security of the undertaking, to speak of it to the Sovereign Pontiff, and he observed about this time in one of his letters, “In reply to yours, which I received with much joy this morning, I have to tell you that we shall really have our monastery this year as we expected. But because great enterprises must meet with great difficulties, it is fitting that we should have to struggle for awhile and thereby increase the splendor of the glory of God. Our work, too, will possess all the more solidity for having withstood the persecutions raised against it by devils and also sometimes by men, “who think they are offering worship to God” but are opposing His own special projects and desires. I shall petition the Sovereign Pontiff for an ample Brief of approbation of the Rules and Constitutions, and I have complete faith that I shall obtain all that I want.” The venerable Father determined to go in person to Corneto, to enquire into the state of the building, and to solicit its speedy completion. But in order to assure himself of the Divine Will, he thought it right first to make known the whole affair to the Vicar of Christ. Accordingly, on the Feast of St. Joseph, 1770, he threw himself at the feet of His Holiness, and after manifesting his own desires and the intentions of the founders, besought his blessing on the undertaking. The Pope listened to him with great attention and cordiality. He granted him the permission for his journey to Corneto and declared his entire concordance in the pious design. The Rules and Constitutions were committed for revision to the Father Maestro Pastrovichi, afterwards Bishop of Viterbo. This holy and learned man expressed himself of them in the following terms, “The characteristics of this Institute are not only in perfect conformity with purity of faith, holiness of life, and strict religious discipline, but they breathe a spirit of prudence, discretion and fervor, which encourages us to hope much for the spiritual advantage of those who will have the happiness of professing them.” They underwent a further examination by the secretary of the Council, Bishop Zelada, who pronounced an equally favorable opinion of them.

In writing the Rules Father Paul’s great ends were perfect detachment from creatures in order to live only to Christ and the ever-present remembrance of the bitter death of Him who was sacrificed on Calvary for the redemption of the world. For the instruction of his religious in the science of the love of God and in the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Incarnate Word, he ordained that their meditations should be almost always upon the Divine perfections or the mysteries of the sufferings of Jesus, trusting that by this means they would obtain the light

and strength to walk faithfully and fearlessly in the footsteps of their Spouse. Every Friday they were to make a more special commemoration of the most holy Passion. "Fridays are to be observed by the religious with peculiar solemnity, the whole mornings are to be employed in recalling the touching scenes which that day brings to mind by meditation or reading or the Way of the Cross, not omitting some special mortification for the greater honor of their crucified Lord. On that day, also, one of the nuns, chosen by lot from among the rest, shall be dispensed from all other labor in order to visit thirty-three times the most blessed Sacrament." The Rule prescribed that each religious should perform her work in her own cell, maintaining herself as much as possible in the presence of God and enjoying the blessing of uninterrupted communications with Him, after the example of the ancient anchorites, who, while they labored with their hands, kept their hearts in peace before God. All was to be done in sweetness and tranquillity, and the life of the Nuns of the Passion was to be one of simplicity, meek love, and spiritual repose. They were not, however, to be content with the nourishment which they themselves received from the five precious wounds; they were to have very much at heart the extension of the devotion to the sufferings of Jesus and the Dolors of Mary. "They shall go," says the Rule, "like tender children to the feet of the Immaculate Mother of God and invoke her in all their wants. Every day they shall accompany her in spirit to Calvary, and shall compassionate her in the sorrow which pierced her soul during the death-agony of her only Son."

The Rules and Constitutions, having been fully examined by competent judges, Clement XIV proposed to expedite the Brief for their approbation. But Father Paul begged His Holiness to defer this last step until experience should have more fully proved the wisdom of the Institute, and he therefore received for the present a simple Rescript, dated September 3rd, 1770. Everything now seemed to promise the final success of the undertaking. The young virgins, ten in number, who were to inhabit the new monastery, had already arrived at Corneto and had been welcomed by the new founders with exultation and delight. But an unexpected obstacle arose, just as the work appeared upon the very eve of completion. It is not easy to express the affliction of the good benefactors, who saw themselves exposed afresh to public curiosity, criticism, and contempt, nor of the devout virgins, who, after journeying from distant parts to shut themselves up in a hidden solitude, found themselves without a refuge and uncertain of their fate. These poor Sisters could only pray, but the prayers of their innocent souls did gentle violence to the loving

Heart of Jesus and obtained all that they asked. The venerable servant of God was very ill at the time, but another Father had been appointed to take his place at the solemn function which was to have marked the opening. From him the Pope heard of the circumstances which retarded it. His Holiness immediately ordered that the postulant Sisters should receive the habit, and he generously assigned a pension of 300 scudi for the support of the community.

Upon the day which had been originally fixed for the clothing of the religious, Father Paul lay upon his sickbed in Rome. After communicating in the morning, he told his infirmarian that he felt sure the ceremony at Corneto had been deferred. Whether he had some suspicion of what had occurred or had received upon the subject a special light from God, we know not. But it was soon ascertained that his presentiment had been a true one. It must have been no little cross to Father Paul to see the work for which he had labored so indefatigably thrown, as it were, to the ground in the very triumph of success. But he lost not a moment in submitting to the Divine Will and in abandoning all his hopes and wishes into the hands of the Almighty. He was not insensible to the discredit which would be thrown upon him and upon all who had taken part in the enterprise; but he had resolved to serve his Lord “in disgrace or in honor,” and he could not be moved by these opinions of men. His first thought was of the poor postulants, and it was at his instance that permission was obtained to clothe them. Finding that the ceremony could not take place, as had been intended, upon the Feast of the Annunciation, he fixed upon that of the Finding of the Holy Cross, a day of particular devotion in the Congregation. And as the first church of our Institute, after many obstacles, had been opened at Monte Argentario thirty-five years before upon that glorious feast, so our Lord ordained that the first Passionist Convent should date its commencement from the same memorable day.<sup>10</sup> They alone, who understand what it is to seek God only and to be intimately united to Him, can sympathize in the joy of those holy souls who, upon that happy morning in May, entered into the repose of the children of God.

The new religious were not of the number of those foolish virgins who are at no pains to keep their lamps burning with the fire of holy love. No sooner were the monastery gates closed upon them, than they commenced the observance of their Rule so fervently and persevered in it so

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<sup>10</sup> The Feast of Finding of the Holy Cross was May 5, when the Passionist Nuns entered their convent; the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is September 14, when the Passionists entered the Retreat of the Presentation on

faithfully that Bishop Banditi, a prelate worthy to be compared to the primitive pastors of the church, wrote of them in these terms to Father Paul, “I cannot conclude, my much esteemed Father, without informing you of the singular consolation I experienced in receiving the religious profession of eleven nuns of your Institute. Their convent, which is full of the spirit of God, already contributes greatly to the Divine glory in this city and will bring many future blessings on us all. I can hardly express to you how affecting a ceremony it was, and how much I myself was touched by it. I had previously spoken to each of these holy virgins apart, and I felt convinced they were inspired with a true vocation and an ardent desire to consecrate themselves to God in a religious state. The president, vice president, and consultor were elected according to the Constitutions on Thursday morning, and every thing was conducted in my presence with the greatest order and unanimity.”

The Nuns of the Passion, when they were settled in their convent, wrote to inform the Sovereign Pontiff that they had pronounced their vows. In return he sent them the following Brief, which gives a true idea both of the spirit of the Institute and of the interest which His Holiness felt in the new foundation.

“To our beloved daughters in Christ, the Nuns of the Passion of Jesus, in our city of Corneto.

“ Beloved daughters in Christ, health and apostolic benediction. The letter in which you inform us of your solemn profession and the pronouncement of your religious vows was received by us with singular joy, inasmuch as nothing can be more pleasing to us than to see your Institute, which has our entire approbation, crowned with all those virtues which tend to holiness and perfection of life. The peace and consolation which you experience give us every reason to hope that we shall have to rejoice more and more in your perseverance and in the uninterrupted charity and union which will reign among you. Although we look in all trustfulness for this consummation, still we cannot but exhort you to be careful to imitate the prudent virgins of the Gospel, who were found watching when the bridegroom came. Endeavor then, with particular earnestness to turn yourselves completely from that world which you have forsaken and to fix your whole attention upon Him who has conferred upon you so special a favor and privilege. In your hearts, as well as in your minds, have engraved the image of the Passion of Jesus Christ our Lord, which is your motto and your emblem, and

in which consists all the vigor and beauty of your Order. Let meditation upon this subject be your occupation, your study, and your principal delight. Nothing can be irksome or difficult while you have those bitter pains before your eyes; and in all your labors and trials, the thought of your suffering Spouse will bring you consolation and peace. Hence, there is no joy so boundless, no pleasure so unalloyed, as that which Jesus gives to those who seek none other but himself. When in this manner the world is crucified to you, and you to the world, when in all simplicity and strict observance you live entirely to your Spouse, then will your monastery diffuse around a grateful odor of sweetness. Thus, of you and of all who succeed you, it shall be said, “These are the fairest among the daughters of Jerusalem. In conclusions, beloved daughters, we ask of you what we are sure your piety and charity will grant, namely, that you will offer your fervent prayers to the Father of Mercies for us and for the church which is committed to our weakness. We promise that we shall let no opportunity pass in which we may assist you by our protection or our favors. In proof of which, we impart to you, beloved daughters in Christ, our apostolic benediction. Given at Rome, at St. Mary Maggiore, under the ring of the fisherman, July 20, 1772, the fourth year of our Pontificate.”

Thus spoke the supreme pastor to his tender lambs, who had abandoned the world to cling to their crucified Spouse and who found their pasture and their nourishment in His life-giving wounds. Happy they, if faithful to their high vocation, who imitate their Blessed Redeemer in all things and are at length called by Him to the eternal glory and ineffable joy of paradise. *“If only we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him”* (Rom. 8:17).

## **CHAPTER XLII**

### **The Sovereign Pontiff Presents Father Paul, after His Recovery, with the House of Sts. John and Paul for His Community in Rome**

The venerable servant of God passed eighteen months upon his sick bed, enduring with marvelous patience and resignation the sufferings which Almighty God sent him for the greater purification of his soul and as a preparation for the new graces which he was destined to receive. Towards Holy Week, 1772, he was able to rise and dragged himself, with the aid of his crutches

and the infirmarians, to the chapel to receive Holy Communion. His strength gradually increasing, by the Feast of Corpus Christi he was able to say Mass. It cost him, it is true, no little pain, but his consolation of spirit was so great that he would have celebrated every day if the weakness of his muscles had not prevented his standing upright. The summer season, which always agreed with him, improved his health so much that, after the Feast of the great St. Bernard, he began to say his usual early Mass every day. He had as yet scarcely left the house, when hearing that His Holiness had returned from the country, he resolved to pay him an unexpected visit. When the Pope was told who had come to see him, he was taken completely by surprise. Causing him to enter, he welcomed him with the warmest expressions of joy and delight. "Holy Father," said the servant of God, "if I am still alive, I owe it after God to your Holiness, for I had the greatest faith in obeying your command, and you see how I have been rewarded for it." It may be imagined with what pleasure the Pontiff listened to the recital of his marvelous recovery, and how he spoke to him once more in all the fullness of his heart's affection. As it was a public audience day, the Pope could not have him as long as he would have wished. When he was obliged to dismiss him, he took leave of him with his usual marks of tenderness and esteem. All this time the Sovereign Pontiff had not forgotten his promise of providing the poor Congregation with a church and retreat in Rome. In the year 1773, before he went to his summer residence in the country, he gave an audience to our Father Procurator, who had been sent by Father Paul to wish him a pleasant journey. In the course of conversation, he asked whether the servant of God had not had a brother in the Congregation named John. Being answered in the affirmative, he muttered "John and Paul" and was then silent. Upon his return to Rome he again testified the warmest affection for Father Paul and signified his desire of benefitting his Congregation. After some further consideration, he at length finally decided upon giving him the Church of Saints John and Paul, with the house annexed to it upon Monte Celio. The Fathers of the Congregation of the Mission, who at that time occupied the place, were transferred to St. Andrea at Monte Cavallo. Upon the 9th of December, 1773, after the first Vespers of the Translation of the Holy House of Loreto, about three hours before the Ave Maria, Father Paul and his companions took possession of their new dwelling, returning their most humble thanks to God. Shortly afterwards, they recited Compline and from that day forward officiated day and night in the devout basilica of the glorious martyrs.

The venerable Father, as soon as he heard of the intention of the Pontiff, lost no time in expressing his gratitude for this last and greatest favor, which he had received from his generosity. This is the letter which he addressed to him upon the occasion:

“Most Holy Father, while I praise and bless the Divine Mercy for permitting your happy return to the apostolic residence, I cannot refrain from expressing, likewise, my humble and heartfelt thanks to yourself for the charity with which you have deigned to bestow on us the church and house of Saints John and Paul. I rejoice in our Lord that your Holiness should have founded in the metropolis of the world a house wherein will be made a constant commemoration of the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer, and which will be a lasting monument to Christendom of the piety, earnestness, and zeal of your beatitude for promoting in all hearts an undying devotion towards the most holy Passion. As for me, Holy Father, I find myself improved in health, although I cannot depend much upon my strength on account of the suffering state of my nerves. Still I am able to celebrate every morning in the little chapel, which is so close to the hospice where we still remain. Besides the prayers, which I offer day and night for your Holiness, I supplicate for you with more power and efficacy at the tremendous Sacrifice of the Mass. Nor can I refrain from placing your heart in the precious blood of Jesus Christ when I place the sacred particle in the chalice, in order that, nourished and watered by that crimson stream, it may produce, as it always has done, fruits of eternal life in the hearts of the faithful. The consolation which I experience is abundant, when I think of the protection of the Almighty over you, and of the care which our dear Lady takes to keep you in her most holy bosom.”

Thus it was that, after all the toils and labors he had undergone, and the vain attempts which he had made to establish his Order in Rome, God was at length pleased to console him and to reward that faithful trusting spirit of his, which had caused him to write some years before, “After the labors of nearly one year, we are finally in possession of our hospice in Rome. In a few days I shall place there three learned, pious, and able missionaries. I look upon this little hospice of Rome, near St. John Lateran, as a grain of mustard seed which the Divine Majesty sows for the present in that great city. But with a lively faith, I think He will one day make it grow into a large fruitful tree. “ In this manner, likewise, was verified another prophecy he had uttered many years before in allusion to the present foundation, which we shall not fail to relate

in its proper place. The servant of God was careful to establish in his new retreat a very fervent spirit of piety, regularity, and exact observance.

The new Rector was appointed before Christmas and upon the night of the Nativity, Father Paul himself sang Mass with a devotion which moved all beholders to tears. Much as he suffered by this exertion, tenderness for the touching mysteries of our dear Redeemer's birth and childhood caused him to go through the same function upon the Feast of Epiphany. During this glorious octave, he assembled all the religious in his room, and delivered to them a devout discourse, in which he took for his text the following words of St. Paul. "*We urge you, brothers, to progress even more, to aspire to live a tranquil life, and to mind your own affairs*" (I Th. 4:10,11). To the end that his community in the new retreat might serve Almighty God in the true spirit of virtue and sanctity, he urgently exhorted them to maintain inviolable holy peace and fraternal charity and to attend most diligently to religious perfection. Upon all the principal solemnities of the year and, from time to time on other occasions, he was accustomed to address his spiritual children. His discourses, full of unction and fervor, were as useful as they were consoling to all. The experience of many years taught him that young men are like tender plants, which require to be cultivated with the greatest watchfulness and care. The venerable Father used frequently to call the students of the house to his room, and treat with them in the most affectionate manner upon the concerns of their souls. He heard their spiritual conferences and, as a loving father, gave to each one the necessary advice, in order that they might become men of prayer and true servants of God. But in all he sought to leave deeply impressed in their hearts the true maxims of virtue and the proper rules for prayer and meditation.

When Holy Week came, as his strength was partially restored, he determined upon officiating himself in all the functions of that solemn time in which he found so much precious food for his soul. The debilitated state of his nerves, however, cost him much suffering during the lengthened services of Palm Sunday. On Maundy Thursday he would not omit the sermon to the religious, which he was accustomed to deliver every year when he was in health. After speaking in burning words, being all the while wholly recollected in God, of the boundless love of Jesus in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, he gave them practical instructions upon the manner of celebrating worthily and with fruit the sacred functions of Holy Week, and of performing what he termed the obsequies and the funeral of our Divine Redeemer. The



tenderness and devotion with which he spoke drew tears from the eyes of his audience. When, after having offered the holy Sacrifice with extraordinary fervor, he carried his Beloved Savior in the Sacred Host to the sepulcher, the floods of tears he shed were so great that it seemed as if his heart would melt into love and compassion for his dear Jesus. He continued to weep so much that he completely moistened the humeral veil which covered him in that sacred function. In short, he spent the whole of that great week in contemplating and compassionating his crucified Love. The servant of God continued thus to rise up every morning from his bed and celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to entertain himself many hours of the day seated in his room, either by praying or reading, or discoursing upon useful subjects with those who came to visit him. When upon the Feast of Saints John and Paul, the titular saints of the Basilica, His Holiness was pleased to go and pay his devotions to these holy martyrs in their own church. He was received by Father Paul and all the religious habited in their surplices, as was becoming, and after satisfying his piety, he kindly visited the retreat. Father Paul was full of joy at beholding the Vicar of Christ in their new dwelling, and with his usual fervor and devotion he exclaimed in the words of the Gospel, "*Today salvation has come to this house*" (Lk. 19:9). The Holy Father was conducted to a throne which had been erected for him, and he there received with the greatest kindness and courtesy the homage of our Fathers, as well as of many other ecclesiastics who were in the house at the time. He afterwards retired into an inner room and discoursed for a long while in secret with Father Paul. In taking his leave he expressed the joy and satisfaction his visit had afforded him and declared that that was truly a house of servants of God.

The venerable Father, whose affection for the Sovereign Pontiff had been increased by a grateful sense of his unvarying kindness and fatherly attachment to him, prayed day and night for His Holiness and could not hear without the deepest sorrow the knowledge of his expected death. He would certainly have wished to have enjoyed the last consolation of being near a person whom he so tenderly loved and profoundly venerated, or at least of paying him a visit in his last moments, but he was prevented by a violent attack of illness, which seized him upon the 21st of September, the very night when Clement XIV passed to his eternal repose in a better life. When he was told that His Holiness was no more, the poor old man was truly inconsolable and could not dry up his tears. It was only in the Divine Will, in which he was accustomed to view everything which happens, that he found peace and comfort. He caused letters to be written to

the local superiors commanding solemn Requiems in all the retreats for the soul of this great Pontiff and so loving a benefactor of the whole Congregation. During the whole of the Office and solemn High Mass in his own church, being too weak to stand, he sat at the foot of the catafalque, penetrated with lively sentiments of grief, love, and gratitude, and was continually employed in fervent prayer. He felt himself to be now most truly a fatherless orphan and, regarding not only his own private wants but the necessities of the universal church, he prayed unceasingly and caused others to pray for the election of a holy Pastor full of the spirit of God. God vouchsafed to console the whole Church by giving to it a Pontiff, according to His own heart, in the person of the illustrious Cardinal Braschi, now Pius VI, now happily reigning. At the happy news of this auspicious elevation, Father Paul was filled with inexpressible consolation, and being well acquainted with the singular virtues and rare gifts of the new Pontiff, he conceived a lively confidence that he would, with the Divine assistance, spread everywhere, by word and example, the brightest rays of heavenly light. By his authority, united to the splendor of his virtues, the new Pontiff would bring great help to the universal Church.

Nor was the servant of God deceived in these expectations, for from the earliest days of the new Pope's reign, he showed how great was the ardor and purity of his zeal, which desired nothing but the glory of God and the care of the sheep of the fold which had been committed to him by Jesus Christ. Father Paul hoped, likewise, that the new Pontiff would be propitious to the rising Congregation, and in this also did God abundantly console him. For the Holy Father, a few days after his election and upon the first Sunday in Lent, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for the Forty Hours in the Basilica of Saints John and Paul, going there to adore his Savior, was pleased afterwards to enter into the retreat and to visit in person the venerable Father in his sick chamber, with a wonderful example of kindness, charity, and humility, truly worthy of the Vicar of Him who was the most humble, the most meek, and the most loving of men.

## **CHAPTER XLIII**

### **New Confirmation of the Rules and of the Institute**

Although the venerable Father was able to celebrate Mass and to sit up at his little table for

many hours in the day, nevertheless, ever since his long illness, his weakness and helplessness had rendered him a confirmed invalid. The pains which afflicted him, his extreme debility, the difficulty he had to take food, everything tended to show that at his great age only a short period of life still remained to him. But the more his body was weak and infirm, the more was his spirit strong and full of life and inflamed with a desire to be perfectly united to God. He continued preparing himself for death by the practice of continual acts of different virtues, especially of profound humility. This virtue, which had always been most dear to him, and upon which, as upon a solid foundation, he had built the spiritual edifice of his sanctification, was perhaps never more than at present practiced by him in an excellent manner. It seemed as if he made everything that happened to him serve as a fresh occasion for humbling himself. His constant need of assistance, his exclusion from regular observance, and his dispensation from the rules of the house caused him to look upon himself as one who was not only a useless member of the community, but a charge upon the brethren and a bad example to others. Whenever he spoke to his religious, whether privately or in public discourses, in proportion to the esteem he showed for others was his desire that they should look upon him as a poor, ignorant, and miserable old man. If sometimes he thought that he had offended or given any little displeasure to any one, he humbly asked pardon. A few days before his last illness, he went to the sacristy for a private conference with some devout person. Finding a lay brother there, who remained to finish what he was about even after Father Paul had begged him to leave the room, he said to him, but without the least anger, "But, brother, I told you to make haste as I want to speak with this person." No sooner had he uttered these words, than he was seized with remorse as if he had committed a great crime, because he feared he had offended that brother. He went to him and with great humility said, not once but many times with tears in his eyes, "Brother, pardon me for the love of God if I have offended you." He was inconsolable till the lay brother solemnly assured him that he had not been in the least hurt by the reproof, but had deserved it most justly for neglecting to obey his Father and superior. So truly did this servant of God, through his miseries and improper ways, as he called them, fear to occasion displeasure in others. The low esteem he had for himself had arrived to such a degree that during these very days, with tears in his eyes, he said to one of his friends, "Who knows whether I shall be here tomorrow, for I fear lest God will have to drive me from the earth," as if he could no longer endure him. Thus did this saintly old man

dispose himself for his last passage by the practice of self-abjection and lowliness. Thus did he seek from God, who gives his grace to the humble, that gratuitous grace which is the crown of all the others, namely, holy perseverance, and of dying with great peace in the embraces of his Divine Redeemer, who humbled and abased himself so much for the love of us with infinite kindness. Never, however, for a moment did the venerable Father lose sight of the stability and perfection of the Congregation whose Father and Founder he was. On the contrary, during that last period of his life, he attended with renewed fervor to promote, as much as he could, its welfare and to establish the exact observance of the holy Rules. He made, moreover, with great calmness and deliberation a revision of the Rules and Constitutions, reading only a portion of them at a time, begging particular light from God, and entreating him more than ever to make known to him His holy will. In order to obtain more easily, through the intercession of the saints, the necessary light and assistance, he prayed and recommended himself day and night to all the founders and foundresses of religious Orders. Then, with the counsel of some of the oldest and most experienced of the Fathers, he determined what was to be proposed in the approaching General Chapter, in order that the terms of the holy observance might be so fixed that after his death it might be said with truth to anyone who should try to change them, *“Remove not the ancient landmark which your ancestors set up”* (Prov. 22:28). During the days immediately preceding the Chapter, he gave audience to each one, and, like a most tender father, left them most excellent words of advice. To the different Rectors of the retreats he spoke much of the tenderest charity in governing, and of gentleness and kindness towards their brethren in religion, in order that being thereby more and more animated and encouraged, they might attend more diligently to perfection. The Chapter was held in the month of May. Father Paul assisted at it with the greatest interest and attention. Full of wise and enlightened zeal, his first recommendation to the assembly was that they should make a wise election of a new General for the Congregation. As he guessed what was indeed true, that they had again obtained a Rescript to confirm him in this office, he implored them with the most lively sentiments of humility to remember how unfit he was for it. He exposed his defects, his infirmities, and his sufferings, and ended by saying that his conscience would not permit him to remain in such a situation. But as he was never accustomed to act upon his own opinion, so upon this occasion he did not fail to consult his director, who prudently replied that if the Capitular Fathers wished to re-elect him, he

must first candidly expose his motive for resigning and then submit to their decision, from whom he would hear the will of God. The humble servant of God, as an obedient little child, yielded immediately and regulated himself in everything according to the answer of his director. When all the votes were collected, the venerable Father was carried in upon his chair, as he was unable to walk. He then presented himself before the Chapter in an attitude of the deepest abjection with a rope about his neck, as if he were a public criminal. He accused himself with bitter tears of all the faults he had committed during his government and besought the Fathers to impose a heavy penance upon him. It may be easily imagined how touched and edified all present must have been at such a scene as this. Proceeding to the scrutiny of votes, they found that he was chosen as superior without a dissenting voice. When he again expostulated and repeated his scruples, and with prayers and entreaties sought to be dispensed, being intimately persuaded that he was a man full of miseries and defects, they answered him with love and affection as true children by saying that if their consciences would allow them to elect him, he might with the greatest safety accept the election. After this, Father Paul could say no more, but meekly bowed his head to the will of God, fearing lest he might oppose it. He then addressed a fervent discourse to the Chapter and the religious of the retreat, beginning with these words, “I compassionate my dearest brethren, your misfortune,” and continued in the most moving strain of profound humility and heartfelt love. When they came to make their obedience, he embraced each of them separately with the greatest tenderness and gave his paternal benediction. Before the Chapter concluded, he desired that the Rules should undergo, in an assembly called for the purpose, a strict examination by all who had a voice in the General Chapter and also in the Provincial Chapters, and that each one should say what appeared to him, “in the Lord,” to be most expedient for the stability and perpetual observance of the Institute. Although the reading of the Rules was a tedious task and occupied for several days many hours both in the morning and afternoon, and although the good Father was worn out with fatigue, he went through it all unweariedly for the sake of his dear children and the advantage of the Congregation. A deputation of Fathers was afterwards sent to lay them at the feet of Pope Pius VI for his approval and he, after submitting them to the consideration of Cardinals Lanze and Zelada, was graciously pleased to approve them by the Bull beginning, “*Praeclara virtutum exempla*,” dated September 15th, 1775. And now at length it was time to conclude this memorable Chapter, the last at which the venerable Founder was

destined to preside. He himself, in dissolving it, gave one more earnest exhortation to maintain inviolable fraternal peace and charity, and to preserve as a treasure interior recollection of heart. He most particularly impressed the practice of these virtues upon all superiors. He recommended them in their corrections to proceed with a pure intention, a serene mind, and a tranquil heart, always inclining more to sweetness and gentleness than to rigor and severity. Thus was closed by the Founder his last General Chapter, by strongly inculcating the practice of holy charity in which is included the fulfillment and the perfection of the whole law.

## **CHAPTER XLIV**

### **Last Illness, Tranquil Death, and Burial of Father Paul**

Death for the souls of the just is a repose after labor, a harbor after a perilous navigation, a journey from a painful exile to a happy home. Although in their bodies they feel the suffering of the infirmities which precede it and the pains which accompany it, yet their spirits are in undisturbed peace and tranquillity before God, founded on a firm confidence in Him and animated by ardent longings to be united for ever to their eternal felicity. Such was to be the happy passage of the servant of God whose life we have recorded, and the circumstances of whose death we are now about to relate.

During the fatigue of the Chapter and the examination of the Rules, the diarrhea with which he was habitually troubled increased and, combined with a nausea and loss of appetite, considerably diminished the little strength he had left. At last he could withstand no longer the progress of his disease. He took to his bed and never rose from it again in life. Upon the Feast of Saints John and Paul, he fainted several times and was seized with great oppression in the stomach and violent sickness. This last symptom, which had been partly brought on by his long fasts and other austerities, increased to such a degree that for the last four months of his life he was unable to swallow solid food. Desirous that he should take some kind of nourishment, his attendants procured some weak broth, but this was found too heavy – so weakened was his stomach. With great simplicity he sometimes said, “It seems to me as if I had stones upon my stomach.” They then, by the advice of the doctors, tried the yolk of an egg, but he was unable to

digest it, and at last they had recourse to toast and water, which was his only support during a whole month, of which he took but very little every twenty-four hours, not being able to take more. It was an edifying sight to see this servant of God preserving amidst all his sufferings the most perfect serenity of mind and tranquillity of heart. His courage never failed him at the thought of death or his continual suffering. With his joyful countenance he remained like one entirely recollected in himself and fully resigned to the Divine Will, without ever giving the least sign of impatience or showing the least desire for his recovery. Although completely exhausted in strength, and as it were in a dying state, he did not neglect to watch over, with the greatest attention and zeal, the good government of the Institute, giving wise counsels for the regulation of the retreat in Rome and those outside, and dictating letters full of zeal, prudence, and sound doctrine. The discourses, which he yet addressed occasionally to his brethren, gave great edification and proved that his spirit had not lost its vigor and that his soul was more than ever absorbed in God. He loved to be left alone as much as possible, in order that he might pass his days, as well as his nights, in continual prayer and intimate union with his blessed Lord. He purposely caused his door and window to be kept shut, in order that he might enjoy with greater liberty and quiet of mind the repose which he found in God. He observed a profound silence towards creatures in order the better to relish the interior voice of his loving Creator. He was very faithful during these last days in his tender and loyal devotion towards that Mother and Queen, whose protection he so valued during his early life. We may even say that it was so much the more vivid and fervent as his practices in her honor, which he inviolably fulfilled, cost him more pain and trouble to perform now in his weak and suffering state. He had never omitted, as long as he lived, to recite every day at least a third part of the rosary. But in his last illness he daily recited the whole. One day, while he was repeating it, his companion, perceiving that his weakness hardly permitted him to articulate, could not help compassionating him and exclaimed, "But you cannot go on any longer. Do you not see that you have no breath to speak? Do not fatigue yourself, therefore, by saying the rosary." The servant of God replied, "I wish to say it as long as I am alive. If I cannot say it with my lips, I will say it with my heart." And on the 15th of August, when it was always his custom to spend an hour in particular devotion, according to the Rule of the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary, who had each an hour assigned to them in the course of the year for this purpose, he would not allow his illness to dispense him from

offering this tribute of his sincere devotion to our Blessed Lady. Being unable, since he had taken to his bed, never more to rise from it to celebrate Mass, which was the greatest comfort to his mind, he desired at least to hear it. He caused it to be said every day in a little Oratory, adjoining his room, by a priest who had a clear and distinct voice. At this he communicated for some time every morning. That he might not be deprived of so precious a treasure, he remained fasting from the preceding midnight until the hour of communion. And how great soever his thirst might be, he not only abstained from drinking before communion, but also for a long time afterwards, which he employed in devout thanksgiving and intimate union with his Lord. After which he would swallow a little broth or toast and water. When His Holiness heard of this, and knowing what inconvenience he must have experienced through it on account of his old age and infirmity, he immediately, with the most delicate thoughtfulness, sent the poor old man a dispensation to receive every four days without the obligation of fasting. The servant of God availed himself ever afterwards of this singular privilege during the several weeks he still lingered on. As he grew worse, the doctor thought it time for the Blessed Sacrament to be administered to him under the form of Viaticum. Then the devout Father, filled with joy at the good news of his approaching departure, signified his wish that it should be given to him in the presence of all his religious children, in order that he might express his last sentiments to all and ask pardon for the bad example he had given, and, as superior of the Congregation, make his profession of faith. He signified, moreover, that the Holy Viaticum should be brought to him from the Church.

On the 30th of August his first general consultor brought him the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by a solemn procession of all the religious, bearing lighted torches and singing devout canticles according to the rites of our holy church. Father Paul, who was unable to move from his bed, no sooner beheld his loving Redeemer, than he lifted up his hands and cried out more with his heart than with his lips, “Ah, my dear Jesus, I protest that I wish to live and die in the communion of your holy Church. I detest and abominate every error.” He recited aloud the symbol of the Apostles, accompanying every word with great feeling of heart. Then, as the father and superior of all, and because he had been earnestly requested, he gave them his last and



principal *ricordi*<sup>11</sup> in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which were faithfully written down at the time by two of the religious not seen by the sick man because they were in an adjoining oratory. They were as follows, “Before everything else I earnestly recommend fraternal charity; love one another in holy charity. This is the last advice which Jesus Christ left to his Apostles, ‘*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you love one another*’ (Jn. 13:35). I exhort all the Fathers, especially the first Father Consultor, to preserve in the Congregation the spirit of prayer, the spirit of solitude, the spirit of poverty. If this spirit be preserved, the Congregation *will shine like the sun in the sight of God and before the Gentiles, and for all eternity.*”

Then, turning to his sweet Redeemer with all the affection of his heart, he said, “*Come, Lord Jesus,*” opening at the same time his arms as if to embrace Him. Striking his breast, in testimony of his great sorrow, he exclaimed, as tears streamed from his eyes, “*Lord, I am not worthy.*” And here, calling to mind what appeared to him the scandalous faults of his past life, he protested that he desired to ask pardon from all the religious, both present and absent, with his face in the dust and sorrow in his heart, for the ill example he had given during the government which it had been the will of God he should exercise for so many years. Penetrated with a deep sense of his miseries, he added, “Unhappy that I am! Behold, I am about to depart from you to go into eternity; I leave you nothing but my bad examples, although I must confess that I have never had such an intention, but have always had at heart your sanctification and perfection. I once more, then, entreat your forgiveness, and I recommend to you my poor soul, in order that our Lord may receive it into the bosom of His mercy, as I hope, through the merits of His sacred Passion and Death. Yes, my dear Jesus, though a sinner, I hope soon to come to enjoy You in Paradise and to give You, at the moment of my death, a holy embrace; to remain for ever united with You in everlasting life, and to sing eternally Your mercies. I commend to You now and forever the poor Congregation, which is the fruit of Your Cross and of Your Passion and Death. Behold then, my dear brethren, the last words which I leave you with all the earnestness of my poor heart. I leave you now and I shall remain expecting you in holy Paradise.”

With humility, faith, and the liveliest sentiments of confidence and ardent love he prepared his heart for his Savior, and he received Holy Communion. Afterwards, again addressing himself

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<sup>11</sup> Advice, last will and testament.

to his brethren, he desired the superiors to have the Rules translated from Latin into Italian for the benefit of the lay brothers. And then, with his heart upon his lips, he gave his benediction to the religious, both present and absent, of all the retreats. He remained for a short time in silence, and when he spoke again, it was to beg that the superiors would take care that all the future houses of the Order should be founded in solitude, according to the Rule, and that no human respect whatever should induce them to depart from this determination. After this Holy Communion, the servant of God awaited in great peace and tranquillity for the call of his Lord. More brightly now than ever shone the great virtues of which his soul possessed so rich a store, humility, patience, and sincere love to his God, strong and constant in spite of every trial. Always himself, he frequently addressed pious counsels to those about him, both for the public good and for that of individuals, according to the thoughts God put into his heart. Nor did he forget to preserve a grateful remembrance of all his benefactors, especially of some distinguished friends in Rome, whom he mentioned with much affection and promised to pray for them. But his most lively gratitude was given towards the Sovereign Pontiff, to whom he owed so many benefits. He desired that his brethren should never omit the daily recital of the Litanies of the Saints for the intentions of the Pope and the wants of holy Church. He added, “If I am saved, as I hope to be, through the Passion of Christ and the Dolors of our Blessed Lady, I shall never cease to pray for the Holy Pontiff, to whom I leave, as a legacy after my death, this Lady of Sorrows, on account of the many obligations I lie under towards him.” Then he added, “Pray for him, that the Divine Mercy may prosperously preserve him for a long while for the good of the church, and may console him by the good success of his desires. *May he grasp whatever is pleasing to God, and may he work at it with all his strength.*” (With one exception, this pontiff sat the longest on the Chair of St. Peter, after that Great Apostle himself – namely, more than twenty-four years, very nearly approaching the twenty-fifth. Yet he had only been raised to it a little before Father Paul died.)

A few days after he had received Viaticum, his ordinary director arrived in Rome. It was he who had been his confessor when they were together in the same retreat after John Baptist’s death. He was preaching a mission in Caprarola when he heard of the dangerous state of the venerable Founder, and he immediately set off for Rome. When Father Paul saw him, he said with much affection and gratitude, “We have always loved one another, and now you have come

to assist me and to close my eyes.” Upon the vigil of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross,” writes the confessor, “ he wished to go to confession. He said to me, ‘By the grace of God, I have a most tranquil conscience.’ After receiving absolution with the deepest sentiments of contrition and humility, he asked me for some spiritual advice, saying, ‘I wish to save this poor soul of mine.’ I suggested to him some motives of spiritual comfort, and his mind became even more calm and tranquil.” But Father Paul was not one of those whose peace depended upon sensible consolations, and who knew not how to make a generous renunciation of them for the sake of his neighbor’s good. Hearing that his confessor had been engaged to give another mission at Tolfa, he would not allow him to omit such an opportunity of laboring for the conversion of souls. He said to him, “Go, without thinking of me, for I shall not die just yet.” Mindful, in the midst of all his torments, of anything which might lead to the salvation of others, he advised the missionary to stop, as he passed through the little village of Rota, in order to invite the people there to go and profit by the exercises at Tolfa. He gave him other counsels full of wisdom and charity. When the confessor kissed his hand at taking leave, out of humility he insisted on doing the same to him.

And now the nearer Father Paul drew to his happy end, the more closely his spirit seemed to be united with God by greater love. Feeling that he had not much more time to live, he said one day to the local superiors in most humble terms, “I deprive myself entirely of the little I had for my use, and I beg you, in your charity, to bestow on me as an alms a poor, worn-out habit to be buried in.” He then requested that the mattresses, on which he lay in order to relieve his pain, should be taken away as he wished to die upon straw. To satisfy him partly, because charity and piety did not permit them fully to acquiesce in his request, they removed one and placed a thin pad filled with straw in its stead. He likewise earnestly implored that when his death approached, they would put a rope upon his neck, a crown of thorns upon his head, and give him an old habit as a garment, in order that he might die with the dress of a poor sinner. All the time, though his spirit was constantly taking flight to heaven, he always protested that he desired neither to live nor to die, but that only which his good God desired. If any of his brethren appeared to compassionate him, he turned to them affectionately and replied, “My sufferings are sorrowful for you, but they are not so at all for me.” Being most persuaded that he would very shortly complete his sacrifice to the Divine Will by his death, he exclaimed, “Earth calls earth.” A priest,

who was present, suggested to him that he might yet recover. “No,” he firmly answered, “No.” So clearly did he know and adore the designs of Divine Providence upon him. Looking upon death as lovingly disposed by God, he could not be disquieted nor dejected. One day when he had a violent attack of pain, the Fathers by his side were overcome with affliction at seeing how much he had to endure, but rallying his strength, he looked up at them with a cheerful countenance and spoke in the words of Judas Maccabeus, “If our time has approached, let us die with fortitude.” All that he said was accompanied with so much fervor and unction that his words drew tears from those around him. The venerable Father, continuing thus in the acts of great virtue, tranquilly awaited the moment of being freed from the bands of this miserable body. In the meanwhile, his disease became so oppressive that he could not swallow a drop of water without the greatest torment, to which was added a universal suffering over his whole body, for he was tormented at one and the same time with sciatica, rheumatism, a fluxion in the eyes, a severe toothache and utter prostration of strength, so that, as he said to his companion, “It seems to me as if my soul wants to detach itself from my bosom, and I have not the space of four fingers all over my body free from pain.” But throughout all these torments, there was the same example of perfect patience in the saintly sufferer. When they offered him the nourishment which occasioned so much repugnance to nature, he only said, raising his eyes to heaven and wringing his hands, “Blessed be God,” or testified by his gestures how completely he adored the Divine Will and embraced it with all his heart.

Weakness had now rendered his voice so faint that he spoke with great effort, and it was very difficult to hear him without being close to his side. Knowing how near he drew to his last combat, he begged with much humility and devotion to be fortified with the sacrament of Extreme Unction. He prepared himself by going to confession to Father John Maria, who had just returned to Rome after leaving some one in his stead to conduct the mission at Tolfa. Father Paul wished to receive the last anointing upon the 8th, the Feast of Our Lady’s Maternity, and he entreated that it might be given to him after Vespers when all the community might be present. Upon this occasion, the man of God, who left nothing undone that could help him in this last struggle, earnestly implored his confessor to be careful to recommend his soul when he should be in his agony and to pronounce over him again the words of absolution. On the morning of the 8th, he called one of the religious to his bedside and asked him to assist him in preparing for the

sacrament by recalling to his memory its power and efficacy. So humbly did he, who was a master of others, stoop to be taught by his own disciples, and so great was his diligence when he had to receive the holy sacraments. At the appointed hour the brethren were gathered together in his room, and the priest who was to anoint him began by explaining the marvelous effects of this holy rite, and he made signs that he had them all present to his mind. During its administration the venerable old man remained in perfect recollection with his hands devoutly joined together. His attitude was one of utter humility and interior devotion, and when they came to apply the sacred oil to his eyes, they found them quite swollen from the tears he had been shedding. When this ceremony had been performed, Father Paul begged his infirmarian, Brother Bartholomew, to admit no one else to see him but the religious. He desired to pass the last moments of his life alone with God. He, who from his earliest youth had fled the society of creatures and made his heart a solitude wherein he might converse with his only Love, determined to enter into a still more perfect retirement in order to meet courageously the death which was coming upon him. For some days he continued in this oppressive state, suffering intensely in his body, but calm and peaceful in his mind

On the 18th of October, the Feast of St. Luke, towards whom he entertained a particular devotion, he asked for Holy Communion, and out of greater respect, he refused to swallow the toast and water which he had a dispensation to take. Before communicating, he gave notice to his companion to admit no one that day, as he wished to remain in holy silence with his Jesus. But the lay brother could not prevent the visits of some distinguished persons, who would not forego the edification they derived from the sight of the dying saint; so, trusting to the Holy Father's kindness of heart, he introduced the Bishop of Scala and Ravello, and afterwards a monk of St. Gregory who was accompanied by a gentleman from Ravenna. Father Paul spoke a few words to each and presented them with some little brass crucifixes, making them signs to remember the Passion of Christ. All this he did with so much fervor and piety, his countenance still expressing such entire serenity, peace, and resignation, that the monk turned to his companion as he went out and exclaimed, "One truly sees that his face breathes sanctity! Happy they, they have a saint! Truly, he is a saint." Towards midday, the Bishop of Todi, Bishop Thomas Struzzi, who was a member of our Order, arrived to see him. He had written a few days before to say that he was coming and to beg that the venerable Father might be asked to wait for him. When this message

was delivered, the good old man smiled and replied with simplicity, "Yes, write to him that I will wait for him." And he kept his word, for scarcely had a few hours passed after the arrival of the bishop, than Father Paul died, as if he had waited until that time in order that he might see him once more for the last time. The bishop went immediately to Father Paul's room, and when the servant of God beheld him, he took off his scull cap and would have proceeded to show him other marks of respect had not the prelate prevented him and tenderly taken his hand to kiss. He seemed to derive fresh strength as well as comfort from the visit of one so dear to him, for he raised his voice and said, "I am delighted to see you in such good health," adding other expressions of the most cordial affection. When the bishop left the room, Father Paul, ever full of thought for others, called his attendant and inquired who Monsignor brought with him. "Go," he continued to Father Rector, "and beg him to entertain the bishop with all possible care, to let our brothers wait upon him, and not to forget the poor people who came with him."

About the hour of Vespers he began to feel the chills of death and desired to be turned to the other side of his bed, that is to say, with his face turned towards the great crucifix which stood in his room, in that position precisely in which he afterwards died. He then said, "Call Father John Mary to assist me, for I am very near death." His companion replied that the doctors saw no immediate danger, and they had pronounced him better in the morning, but he quickly returned, "Yes, yes, call Father John Mary to me in order that he may come to assist me." Instead of going immediately, the brother sat down by his side and said, "But, Father, do you not die willingly for the love of God?" Father Paul, who in his extremist agony never lost his presence of mind, answered very earnestly, raising his eyes as if to confirm his words, "Indeed, I die most readily to perform the holy will of God." His attendant added, "Be of good heart, then, and have confidence in God." The sick man took out his hand and pointing to the crucifix and said, "There are all my hopes, in the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The other spoke a few more words to him and then, Vespers being concluded in the church, he went for Father John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrero, the first consultor, that he might judge the state of the sufferer. Directly upon entering the room, Father Paul exclaimed, "Let them come and assist me for my death is at hand." The Father consultor, not believing that his chillness indicated approaching death, said to him, "Perhaps you are cold on account of the change in the weather." But he replied, "No, no, I am dying. Let them come to assist me." Father John Mary was then

sent for, and afterwards Bishop Struzzieri and the whole community, who were just coming out of the choir after Vespers. When all were assembled in his room, seeing that his life was fast ebbing away, the bishop and his confessor began the recommendation of a departing soul, suggesting to him devout sentiments, in order that he might die in the more fervent exercise of the theological virtues, entirely united to his God. In the meanwhile Father Rector read the prayers of the Church. They were responded to by all the religious, by Signor Anthony Frattini, and several other seculars.

It was a touching thing to see Father Paul, who had spent his whole life in the practice of union and conformity with the blessed will of God, now placidly abandoning himself into the merciful hands of his Lord and encouraged in his last moments by a great prelate, the faithful companion of his great austerities and his spiritual child. In order to animate his fervent soul, to take a generous flight like the pure dove into the bosom of his God, the holy bishop suggested to him the most urgent motives for confidence and hope, and he repeated to him with great unction, *“I, however, will always hope and will praise you more and more.”* The servant of God testified the comfort and strength which these words afforded him. His confessor, seeing that but few moments of life still remained to him, again gave him absolution according to his promise. The Father Rector pronounced the last blessing in the moment of death by a special delegation from His Holiness. He also gave him the benediction of the rosary, which Father Paul had requested a few days previous, from Father Thomas Mary Boxadors, General of the Dominicans, and afterwards cardinal; and lastly, that of the Order of Mount Carmel. While they were invoking the graces of heaven for him and enriching his soul with so many precious treasures so that it might be all beautiful and adorned before the pure eyes of his Divine Redeemer, he kept his eyes immovably fixed upon the two images of Jesus crucified and our Lady of Sorrows, glancing from one to the other with a serene and joyful countenance and with ineffable tenderness, and clearly manifesting that, though his speech had left him, his understanding was unimpaired. All around him were absorbed in prayer and in the attentive consideration of this edifying scene, when suddenly Father Paul made several signs with his hands, as if he were beckoning some persons to approach and making room for them to come to his side, whence it was concluded that he was favored with some joyous celestial vision. And this opinion was confirmed by his appearing after death to a devout soul, and relating that before he died he beheld coming into his

room the Divine Redeemer with His Blessed Mother, St. Paul, St. Luke, St. Peter of Alcantara, and with them his brother John Baptist, and other departed members of the Congregation, besides the souls of many he had converted. All came to assist at his happy passage and conduct his spirit to heaven. At the sight of so wondrous a company, the dying servant of God, as the priest nearest him plainly observed, received a special infusion of consolation and strength and seemed to take fresh delight in the reading which was being made to him of the Passion of our Savior according to St. John. It was as if, from that fountain of salvation to which he was going to unite himself more perfectly, he drank in abundance peace, joy and love. *“You will draw water with joy from the fountains of the Savior”* (Is. 12:3).

The bishop, who in his great affection for the Congregation, wished to recommend it once more to its Founder, said to him, “Father, when you are in paradise, remember the Congregation which has cost you so many labors and pray for us, all your poor children.” The dying man, unable to express his assent in words, signified by signs how cordially he desired to comply with the request. At length, the servant of God, a quarter of an hour before he breathed his last, shut his eyes forever upon the visible world, which had always been to him as a place of exile. Then, full of days and consumed with labors and penances, at the age of eighty-one years, nine months and fifteen days, towards evening on the 18th of October, 1775, he gently gave up his spirit to his Creator, while listening to the words of St. John, “With his eyes lifted up to heaven,” as if these very words, which he had devoutly recited every day, together with the prayer which follows, in order to animate himself more strongly to the acquiring of his blessed country, had been to him the herald of a happy eternity at the last moment of his life. All those who beheld this calm and tranquil departure, exclaimed one to another, “Now we have seen how the saints die!” And his religious, afflicted as they had been throughout his agony, experienced a kind of sweet consolation after his death.

When the servant of God had expired, Signor Anthony Frattini went to inform the Sovereign Pontiff. His Holiness entertained a true esteem and affection for our venerable Father, and he manifested great grief at having lost him. Remembering the virtues and sanctity of the departed, he clasped his hands and cried out, “Ah, happy soul! happy soul!” He then expressed his desire that the corpse should not be interred in the common burial place but in some reserved spot, and that it should be enclosed in coffins of wood and lead at his own expense.



In the meantime two lay brothers were performing the last duties to the body. According to the usual custom, they clothed it in the holy habit with a stole about the neck and a crucifix between the hands. They then placed it, as the Rule directs, upon some boards with some bricks to support the head in the very same room in which he had died. The sight of this blessed corpse, serenely beautiful with its usual expression of interior recollection, inspired devotion in all who looked upon it. Many persons arrived that very evening at the retreat (notwithstanding the distance from their houses) in order to see it; but, as it was late before the brothers had finished their last offices, only the religious and a few particular friends were admitted that evening. All night long the brethren watched in turns beside the bier and prayed for the repose of his soul. About twelve o'clock on the following morning, they carried the body down the inner staircase into the Basilica, chanting as they went along the solemn prayers of the ritual. They placed it in the center of the church without any pomp and only four torches burning around it. No sooner were the doors opened than numbers of persons crowded in anxious to obtain a sight of the remains, and, in spite of the unfavorable state of the weather, in a very short time the church was quite full. Nobles and plebeians, ecclesiastics and seculars, all were equally eager to approach the corpse of the servant of God to kiss his hand and to take away with them some part of his habit or a portion of his hair. This was carried to such an extent that, to prevent the body being completely stripped, they were obliged to form an enclosure around it with benches, and a German cavalier, a great friend of Father Paul, stood within to protect the body and to distribute little pieces of the clothes. The same concourse of people and the same devout enthusiasm continued throughout the day. All this time Masses were being celebrated by our Fathers and by several other priests who, out of affection for the departed, wished to offer the Holy Sacrifice for his soul. Among these the most distinguished were Cardinal Boschi, the Titular of the church, Bishop Marcucci, the Vicegerent, and Bishop Tiberio Ruffo. At ten o'clock Office for the Dead was chanted by the whole community, and High Mass sung, followed by the customary absolutions. It was a beautiful and moving sight to see the multitude of people remaining unweariedly in the church, weeping and praying and reminding one another of the heroic deeds of him whom they already considered a saint. It was more touching still to see that pale and placid corpse lying upon the boards in the habit of penance with ashes sprinkled upon the head and a crucifix clasped in the hands – it seemed to bring so vividly before all eyes the road of

mortification, abjection, and contempt of the world through which he had so faithfully trod in the footsteps of his crucified Lord. There was a glory on his countenance which made those marvel who gazed upon it and forced them to exclaim, “A Saint is dead!” One holy priest of spotless life noticed when he took Father Paul’s hand to kiss it that there came from his virginal body an odor of ineffable sweetness. He confidently mentioned this circumstance to the attendant who had waited upon him, asking if he had poured any scented water upon the corpse. The brother replied that nothing of the kind had been near it.

In the evening of the 19th of October, the remains were placed in a wooden coffin, which was to be enclosed in a case of lead, according to the command of His Holiness. Bishop Marcucci then ordered the church to be cleared, but it was found impossible to send all the people away. Many insisted on remaining, among them several persons of distinction. The doors were closed and a plaster cast was taken of the venerable Father’s head, after which the coffin was carried to a room called the sepulcher, at the bottom of the basilica on the left side of the entrance, opposite those holy remains. For two entire days they remained in the room we have already mentioned. On the evening of the 21st, Bishop Marcucci superintended the removal of the wooden coffin into a case of lead, which was sealed up like the first, and then deposited in a third chest of wood. It was finally deposited near the room beneath the spot where may now be seen a little piece of masonry bearing an inscription.

Thus, to the great sorrow of his spiritual children, who were now completely deprived of their loving Father, and to the regret of many devout persons whose last consolation it had been to look upon his corpse, was Father Paul of the Cross buried in the Basilica of Saints John and Paul. Thus was taken from their eyes one who had begun, in the innocence of his youth, a tenor of life so severe and rigorous as to cause wonder to a great penitent and who, in his maturer years and old age, far from obscuring its luster or diminishing its first fervor, had added to its merit and perfection by generously combating and overcoming everything that could impede his perfect union with God. And thus did he leave a glorious example for the imitation of all who know how to appreciate that crown of justice and glory which we trust he has received from his loving Lord. And as the features of the exterior are often all indication of the virtues of the interior and help to render them more admirable, so Almighty God was pleased to bestow His gifts upon the body, as well as the soul, of his servant. Father Paul possessed a grave, majestic and, at the same

time, an amiable appearance, a tall stature, a placid and modest countenance, clear and calm eyes, an elevated and wide forehead, and a distinct, sonorous and penetrating voice; his manners were full of affability and respect without any affectation; his temperament was sanguine and very sensitive. So well did his outward appearance correspond with the movements of his heart, that in his exercises of piety, his sermons, and his studies, his features revealed the fervor of his devotion, the ardor of his zeal, and his diligence in nourishing his soul with eternal truth.

## **BOOK II**

### **OF THE VIRTUES PRACTICED BY FATHER PAUL, AND OF THE GIFTS WITH WHICH HE WAS ENRICHED BY GOD**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the events of the Life which we have endeavored sincerely and faithfully to record, we have seen how Father Paul, after devoting from his earliest years all the earnestness of his heart to serve and please Almighty God, continued to increase in union with his Sovereign Good, and to advance step by step towards a sublime and heroic degree of perfection. It behooves us now to contemplate more leisurely in what this perfection consisted, and to revere, as well as recognize, the treasures which the Divine Goodness had hidden in his heart, in order that the consideration of his particular virtues may inspire us to imitate so rare an example.

Hardly had the childish devotion of Father Paul begun to assume the character of fervor, than he manifested his ardent desire to deliver himself from the cares and solitudes of the world, to purify his spirit, and to unite it intimately with God. Fully persuaded that from him alone comes all the graces which we need, he eagerly thirsted after that fountain which is an eternal torrent of celestial love. It was clearly perceptible to those around him that his communications with God were neither imaginary nor fruitless, for he was one of those Christians, of whom St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote, that their Christianity was an imitation of the Divine nature. In fact, several of his friends deposed that in his early youth he made such progress in sanctity, that his life already

appeared less to be imitated than admired. And Fr. Francesco Antonio of Castellazzo, a Capuchin, spoke of him in these terms, “I can truly certify that the conduct of Father Paul at the time I knew him, when he was quite a young man, was most admirable and well nigh beyond the bounds of imitation. He was remarkable for his great piety and devotion, his love of retirement and solitude, his severe austerities, his love of God and zeal for the Divine glory, his labors for the salvation of souls, his rigid poverty, and his eagerness in removing scandals and abuses. All these virtues I myself observed in him.” This was Father Paul’s character at an age when the innocence of so many suffers a deplorable shipwreck at the very outset of their voyage in life. Nor shall we marvel at these precocious fruits of holiness, remembering what is related in the Processes of his application to prayer and of the many hours, both by day and night, which he consecrated to uninterrupted meditation. It was then that he received those wondrous lights which he afterwards displayed, and that he conceived that burning love which gave him no other thought or hope or longing but the attainment of a perfect union with the Sovereign Good, in order that, as St. Paul says, he might be one spirit with God. “*Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him*” (I Cor.6:17).

But as he well knew that God, however faithfully we serve Him, deserves far more than we can give Him, and that the crown is promised to those only who persevere, he did not halt or linger in the road to perfection. Firmly believing that he had done nothing well, and that he was full of faults and frailties, he was never satisfied with his own actions but animated himself day by day to the acquisition of fresh virtues. The most arduous and exalted practices at length grew easy and natural to him, and in times of trouble and misfortune, when men’s minds are generally most apt to give way to irritation and dejection, he possessed that strange peace and serenity which is the peculiar characteristic of the saints.

The lessons which we learn from the example of the servants of God form by far the most important part of the study of their lives. For this reason we have determined to consider separately each particular virtue which adorned the interior of blessed Paul, and to make our readers acquainted with that noble edifice, which Almighty God raised like a spiritual tabernacle in the soul of his faithful servant.

## CHAPTER I

## **Of Father Paul's Faith**

Faith is the first foundation of the edifice of a Christian life, and the only secure guide amidst the darkness and dangers of this world. Hence the souls who are called by a loving Providence to a high degree of sanctity repose with tranquil confidence upon the Divine revelations and follow with simple obedience the path which faith points out. Father Paul was favored by God not only with the faith so necessary for all who desire to be saved, but with that special gift which exalts and distinguishes the faith of the saints. He entered very early into the school of the sanctuary, where he learnt how to contemplate the deep meaning of the sacred dogmas of his creed and how to fulfill in actions what he professed in words. The maxim, which he there first understood, was ever afterwards his favorite advice to his disciples, "Walk in faith; walk in faith." He inculcated the same in his letters, "Oh, how much do I love!" he wrote, "those souls who walk in pure and simple faith, abandoned in the hands of God. Above all, do I desire that we should all walk in faith. It is the only true way.

Faith blind and lowly  
Is the guide safe and holy  
Of all perfect love;  
Oh, certainly sweet  
To my heart to repeat,  
And ever to prove.

And he added the stanza composed by St. John of the Cross.

O dark and deeply clouded night,  
Yet lovelier far than brightest morn,  
Which loved and loving doth unite,  
And loved into loving doth transform.

Thus sang a great saint. Another time he wrote in these words, "Oh, how noble an exercise is it to annihilate ourselves before our Lord in pure faith, and to cast our nothingness into that great

All which is God, that is, to lose ourselves in the ocean of His charity, and to have our souls entirely penetrated with His love, to be transformed into Jesus Christ and to make His sufferings and His sorrows ours. This is a lofty lesson, but God teaches it to those who wish to learn it. Love speaks little, and he who loves most speaks least, I mean in holy prayer. The language of love is fire, which burns, liquefies, and consumes itself as a holocaust before God; then the gentle breath of the Holy Spirit stirs up our worthless ashes and raises them till they are lost in the abyss of the Divinity. O happy loss! O fortunate soul thus absorbed in infinite love! All this is done purely by faith, and God teaches it to meek souls.”

One so truly rich in faith could never forget that he was to be a citizen of heaven. He lived upon earth as an exile from his country, and he kept his heart so continually lifted up to the thoughts of divine things that his whole life might be called a life of faith. Those, who have lived with him and have heard him discourse, can bear testimony to this truth. When he spoke, either familiarly in private or openly in public, he talked of the maxims of faith with so much certainty, vivacity, and reality that he appeared to see them with his bodily eyes. Ardently desiring to impress the hearts of those who listened to him, he succeeded admirably in his design. His discourse seemed made not of words but of darts which transfixed the soul, and no one could hear him speak without being pierced by them. It was his frequent custom, in his familiar conversation, to introduce, quite naturally and without affectation and restraint, some discourse upon the mysteries of faith. During the recreations of the community, he used to converse in such a manner that the recreation became a sort of spiritual conference. But the practice which he inculcated with the greatest warmth and earnestness was the continual recollection of the presence of God. He had a singular facility for imparting this exercise to others, insomuch that the most ignorant of his brethren became, by his means, deeply versed in this science of the saints.

It would seem that Almighty God had chosen Father Paul, in a special manner, to teach men how to seek Him in the interior of their hearts. “I can truly say,” adds the authority already quoted, “that though I have been acquainted with many holy men, I have met no one who equaled him in the zeal and unction of spirit with which he treated this subject.” In order to make himself better understood, he used to employ various parables, by which he gently insinuated his ideas into the minds of others and drew them powerfully towards an intimate union with God.

“Look,” he used to say, “at a ball of cotton/wool on which a drop of scented balsam drops! The balsam spreads itself all through the wool, and renders it as odorous as itself. Thus an aspiration which we make in our interior embalms the whole soul with the Spirit of God and makes it odorous in His sight. Look at an infant which throws itself into its mother’s bosom for nourishment and rests perfectly happy; we, like little children, ought to abandon ourselves in simple faith within the bosom of God and to enjoy perfectly His divine communications. Some there are,” he added, “who visit with great devotion holy places and solemn shrines. I do not condemn their piety, but I would remind them that faith teaches us that our own interior is also a sanctuary because it is the living temple of God and the dwelling of the most Holy Trinity. Let us enter, then, into this temple and adore our Lord there in spirit and in truth. This is a most sublime devotion.” He spoke of these things with so much energy and devotion that his brethren never grew tired of hearing him. With the same lively faith, he sometimes exclaimed, “The kingdom of God is within you. Fail not to renew this belief when you study, when you work, when you eat, and when you sleep, saying in spirit, ‘O Infinite Bounty!’ or any other ejaculation which your heart may suggest.” He once said to a soul whom he directed, “The same great God, who for our love was made man, is nearer to you than your skin is to your flesh, closer than you are to yourself.” Ultimately, Father Paul’s faith was so animated and so deeply felt, that he seemed scarcely able to express it in words.

One day as he was talking familiarly upon pious subjects with his religious community, after having spoken of the amorous communications of God in prayer, the fire which inflamed him burst forth in the following words, “I cannot understand how it is that any one be found who does not think always of God.” He then seized the hand of one of the religious, and said, “Is it not true that this skin is truly yours, that this arm, these veins, these muscles, are truly yours? It must be so because they are united with your body. We are more certain however that Almighty God inhabits our souls than that our arms belong to our bodies, because, in proof of one we have only the fallible evidence of our senses, while in support of the other we have the infallible teaching of faith.”

He never let pass an opportunity of alluding to the presence of God. He was constantly saying to one or other of his community, “*The just live by faith; you are the temple of the living God*’ (Hab. 2:4; Cal. 3:11). Make frequent visits to this interior sanctuary, and see that the lamps

be ever burning there.” These lamps, he used to explain, were the three virtues of faith, hope, and charity. At other times he would say with pious pleasantry, “Stay in your own house, go to your own home,” or “How do you get on at home?” And if he was not immediately understood, he would continue, “Ah, your house is your soul, the temple in which the living God dwells by faith.” It is not to be marveled at, that the servant of God should take such pains to induce his disciples to walk always in the Divine Presence. It was a favorite maxim of his, that those who practice this holy exercise may be said to spend their lives in one uninterrupted prayer by the continual aspirations which they offer up to God. This, indeed, he taught no less by example than by instructions, for he never turned away the eyes of his soul from the contemplation of his Sovereign Good. However distracting might be the affairs which engaged his attention, he knew how to keep God always before his mind, and it was his delight to return as speedily as possible into his interior cell and to resume his sweet communications with his Heavenly Master. Everything served to remind him of God, and he used to imagine that all creatures cried out to entreat the love of man for Him who made them. He was often observed, when walking in the fields, especially during the spring season, to gaze earnestly at the flowers as he went along, and to touch them with his stick saying, “Be silent, be silent.” And he used to tell his religious that the flowers were always calling upon them to lift up their hearts in love and adoration towards their Heavenly Creator.

Father Paul gave many proofs of the profound and cordial respect with which he venerated all the truths of Faith, and of the heartfelt and earnest manner with which he put them into practice. He was frequently heard to say, with peculiar fervor, that he was ready to spill every drop of his blood for his holy religion, and that he should consider it the greatest grace our Lord could grant him if he were allowed to lay down his life in confession of his belief. In uttering these words, the eagerness of his countenance and the enthusiasm with which he spoke clearly showed that his heart was upon his lips. All his conversations were alike, illumined with the heavenly light of faith, and we may safely say that this is confirmed by the testimony of all those who ever had any conversation with him. But since he had been called by our Lord to serve His Sanctuary and to labor in His vineyard, his faith was destined not only to edify his brethren but to instruct and convert whole populations. The knowledge he displayed of the truths which he announced and the zeal with which he taught their practice were so surprising that he almost



appeared to have forgotten the world and to have become another being. It often happened that during the missions his habitual illness obliged him to remain in bed a great part of the day; all this time, instead of resting himself, he would receive his penitents and hear confessions. When the time arrived for his sermons, he was scarcely able to stand, and none who beheld him could imagine it was possible for him to preach. No sooner, however, had he mounted the pulpit and begun his discourse, than he seemed animated with a new spirit and fresh strength. His movements became active and vigorous like those of a person in perfect health. The impression made upon his audience, and the conversions which followed, we have elsewhere related. Who indeed could have looked unmoved upon that saintly missionary, at one moment so inflamed with zeal that his eyes appeared to dart forth sparks of fire, at another so touched with fear and compassion for those sinning souls that he became pale and trembling and frequently shed torrents of tears?

But the following account, given by an eyewitness, will best describe the effects produced by Father Paul's discourses:

“During the first mission preached by Father Paul of the Cross in Vetralla in 1742, he appeared all the time of his sermon on death perfectly pallid, and literally shaking from head to foot, so that it was very evident he was penetrated, heart and soul, with the awful truth he announced. The same was witnessed when he preached upon hell; he drew so vivid a picture of that place of horrors, that his hearers shuddered with the fear he awakened in them. The blows of the discipline, which at these times he was accustomed to inflict upon himself, proved his own terror of the divine justice and his desire that they should all be saved from the wrath of an avenging God.”

Thus wrote Don Giuseppe Cima, then Archpriest of Vetralla. Similar accounts were given by various other respectable witnesses in allusion to the holy fear which inspired the servant of God. They deposed that they had frequently seen Father Paul's hair stand on end while his whole countenance assumed an expression of fright. The burning words, which accompanied all these demonstrations of feeling, produced, as we have elsewhere related, the most wonderful effects, not only upon hardened sinners and obstinate heretics, but even upon Jews, among whom many edifying conversions took place. We ourselves preserve a distinct recollection of a Jew, who was so struck with the preaching of the servant of God, that he renounced without delay his creed,

embraced the faith of Christ, and died in truly Christian sentiments, assisted by one of our Fathers. In order to form an idea of the faith of Father Paul, it was not, however, necessary to hear him preach; it was sufficient to look at him. Sometimes his eyes lifted up to Heaven with an expression of intense devotion; at other times, the reverent inclination of his head proved how completely his heart was inspired with the awful presence in which he stood. For this reason it was that, many years before our Rule was finally altered and approved, he always wore his head uncovered. When one of his companions enquired about the motive for this custom, he replied, "Respect for the presence of God." After the alteration in this Rule, he covered himself, like the rest, to avoid singularity. He still retained his original practice whenever he preached, and although occasionally persuaded while suffering from one of his frequent indispositions to wear something upon his head in the pulpit, he frequently refused, exclaiming, "I cannot bear my head covered when I speak of God." He generally endeavored without being noticed to take off his cap when conversing with holy persons, whom he recognized as the friends of God and the living temples of the Holy Spirit. Those who had the happiness of speaking with him could not but animate their own faith and excite themselves to greater recollection after the example shown them by this great servant of God.

From the love and esteem which he entertained for the sublime virtue of faith, there sprang up within him at the same time an ardent desire to see the whole world gathered into the Catholic Church, the fold of Christ, under the conduct of St. Peter's successor at Rome. It is impossible to express the tenderness and eagerness with which he wept and prayed for the conversion of all heretics, and in particular for the return of England to the Catholic Faith. He was often heard to say that he had England's conversion very much at heart. "Ah, England! England!" he used to repeat in tones of sorrowful affection. At other times he used to say, "Let us pray for England! I could not, if I would, help doing this, for directly when I begin my prayers, this poor country comes into my mind, and it is now fifty years since I have prayed for its conversion. I remember it every morning at holy Mass. What is God's will to do with this country, I know not; probably He will have mercy upon it, and of His mercy bring it one day to the true faith – it is enough for us to ask for this and leave all in the hands of God." Upon one occasion, it appeared that while pondering the destinies of that unhappy kingdom, once so faithful in saints, he was for a time almost deprived of his senses. He was recovering from an illness, and the infirmarian had entered

his room to bring him some restorative, when he found the servant of God in a state of unconsciousness, in a sort of ecstasy. Having shaken him three times, he at last came to himself and exclaimed with deep feeling, “Oh, where have I been? My spirit found itself in England, considering its glorious martyrs and entreating God for its conversion.” Thus did Father Paul pray for England and all other faithless countries. He used to protest that he would willingly have gone through any peril to gain the souls of heretics to Christ.

It was a mortal wound to his heart to hear of any outrage, however slight, offered to the Faith; he could not tolerate even a shadow of disrespect towards it. He listened with jealous ears to any conversation that seemed unbecoming a true son of holy Church. If any sentence was uttered in our schools, which either from his deafness or from some other cause he did not perfectly understand, he could not rest until he had satisfied himself of the sincerity and good intention of the lecturer and the students; it was an edifying spectacle to see the good Father call them aside, one after the other, to assure himself of what he had so much at heart. He recommended the scholars as well as the teachers, above all other things, to ground themselves thoroughly in dogma, while discussing the subtle questions of the schools.

When they arrived at the study of the Treatise of Predestination, he testified the most anxious solicitude, lest they should unwarily be led astray. Hence, to use the words of one of our Fathers who was a student at the time, “He often interrogated us concerning the Treatise to prevent our taking up any opinion opposed to faith.” “Upon a former occasion,” he said to us “when other young men were engaged like you upon this Treatise, some of them, being tormented with doubts and vacillation, came to me full of perplexity, and I replied to them in these simple words, *‘Those who have done good deeds will enter into life everlasting, those who have done otherwise will go into everlasting fire.’* I say the same to you, and I advise you, whenever your minds are disturbed, to calm yourselves with this sentiment.”

Out of his great desire to keep clear of all perilous novelties, he ordered that our schools should always teach and follow the admirable doctrine of the Angelic Doctor; he expressly commanded this in the Rule, and he left it, so to speak, as his dying legacy, for towards the end of his life he said, “Never depart from our great master St. Thomas.”

He was very careful that those around him should speak with great precision and reverence of all things pertaining to our holy religion, and if any erred, even without malice, he reproved

them with rigor and severity. He used the same holy liberty in correcting not only our Fathers and his own penitents, but any person who transgressed the strict rules of religious respect. And here it may be interesting to relate what passed between the servant of God and a gentleman of rank, who had come to visit him at Saints John and Paul. The good Father was at the time in extreme old age and was suffering from his usual ailments, but he received his guest with great courtesy and, seeing that he was a young man of prepossessing appearance, he began to converse with him on the propriety of avoiding all familiarity with persons of a different sex. The gentleman took offence at what he said and replied that if he could have his way, priests as well as religious, should be allowed free association with such persons. At these words Father Paul, fired with zeal, indignantly reproved him and caused him to see how great was his error, and how directly opposed to Divine Revelation. He quoted several texts from Scripture in support of what he said and declared that, if his visitor continued to entertain such sentiments, he would in some sort be denying his faith. The young man, full of confusion and probably ill pleased with the liberty of the servant of God, took his leave. The venerable Father, careless of the good opinion he had lost, was satisfied to have vindicated the honor of God and the maxims of religion. He was the more consoled as he knew, apparently by a supernatural light, the motive which had caused his visitor to speak so indecorously. In fact, when he was gone, one who had heard the discourse remarked that he thought the gentleman had received too severe a reproof. But the Holy Father replied, "Suppose he had come on purpose to tempt me!" It was afterwards known that this had really been the intention of the young man, for he told several persons that he went to try Father Paul and to see what his spirit was.

But the hardest trials the faith of the man of God had to encounter were those raised against him by the malice of demons. Many and violent were the assaults with which Satan endeavored to deprive him of this precious grace. His confessor speaks of them in the following terms, "The servant of God related to me that, from the very commencement of his spiritual life, he suffered extremely from temptations against faith; and that in his youth these came upon him sometimes with such force that he was obliged to place his head against the altar rail as a defense. At length, one Pentecost Sunday, he was rapt into so high and sublime a state of prayer, that all at once his temptations disappeared and never afterwards returned to molest him. He further told me that, after he had devoted himself to a life of penance, our Lord infused into his soul such wonderful

demonstrations of the mysteries of faith that it would require a whole library of books to declare and explain all that he was taught respecting those divine truths. Once in particular he received so clear an intelligence of the Godhead that hidden things seemed open to him, and faith was changed into evidence. His soul began to desire most earnestly to be separated from its mortal tenement and to be closely united to the Chief Good. It appeared to him that, next to the Beatific Vision, nothing else was worth possessing in this life. Thus it was that he received no harm from his insidious enemies but rather fresh grace from God in reward for his fidelity in resisting their attacks.”

Hence came that filial love which our venerable Father entertained for his holy Mother the Church, in whose bosom our Lord has deposited the wondrous treasure of faith. Often did he protest with touching earnestness that he was a son of the Church, the least of her children. It was but a short time before his death that he sent the Pope a message saying that he was a true son of holy Church, although a most wretched and unworthy one; that he had always lived and now desired to die in her bosom with an entire subjection to the Roman See and to the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The veneration, the devotion, the almost childlike and tender love, which he felt for the supreme Pastor of the Church and common Father of the faithful, can be but faintly expressed in words. The Divine Goodness had so disposed, for his greater comfort and encouragement during the early struggles of his little Congregation, that several of the Sovereign Pontiffs should entertain a peculiar esteem and regard for Father Paul. Their demonstrations of affection were like burning coals upon a heart already inflamed with love, which compelled him to redouble his prayers for an increasing fullness of grace and blessing upon their government.

Upon one occasion Cardinal Zelada came to see him and told him that Pope Clement XIV had said, “Father Paul has forgotten us.” He eagerly replied, “May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not.” He took care that the prayers he so willingly offered up for His Holiness should be joined in by all his Congregation. He ordered that every evening after Compline and before meditation they should recite the Litanies of the Saints and the Collect for the Pontiff. When he received any special favors from the Holy Father he went about repeating, “Whence is this to me who am the very least of his children?” And speaking in confidence to one of his friends he said, “The first time that I presented myself before the Pope and was allowed to

kiss his feet, when I recalled to mind that he was the Vicar of Christ, I felt an unspeakable reverence spring up in my heart towards him. Overcome with his sublime dignity, I dared not utter a word.” Never did the servant of God lose the freshness and animation of these feelings; his pale and trembling aspect testified to others how deeply he was impressed when he stood in that August presence. This was the more remarkable because his was naturally a bold and fearless spirit. He was waiting one day for an audience in the pontifical palace when one of the prelates struck by his silent and thoughtful manner asked, “Does Father Paul say nothing?” The servant of God replied, “What would you have me say? How can I do otherwise than ponder on the thought that I am soon to stand in the presence of the Vicar of Christ?” “Oh, God!” he continued, “if we had but faith, if we only realized this, how reverently should we bear ourselves before the Holy Father!” After these words he relapsed again into a profound silence. When he was admitted to the Pope, he expressed the veneration he felt for his lofty dignity with the simplicity and confidence of a child. His Holiness, alluding to some who entertained very different sentiments towards the Apostolic See, exclaimed, “Ah, they ought to know what I know and understand of this great office. Believe me, most Holy Father, that notwithstanding the goodness with which you are pleased to treat me, I tremble with awe at the insight God gives me of the sublime dignity of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.” Hence he ever felt firmly convinced that the prayers offered up by the Sovereign Pontiff possessed a singular efficacy for obtaining all graces from the Divine Goodness.

Under the pontificate of Clement XIII, there was a year of great scarcity in Rome, and Father Paul, speaking of the penitent processions which were performed there in consequence, said, “I have heard that the Holy Father himself accompanied one of the processions of penance and recited with tears in his eyes, ‘Spare, O Lord, spare your people.’ This pontiff is a saint (he was well calculated to give this opinion, having so intimately known His Holiness). How grateful, therefore, to our Lord must be such supplications from such a Vicar.” He never spoke of the Pope without some exterior mark of respect, such as bowing his head. If he heard his opinion lightly mentioned by others, he would raise his eyebrows and say, “The Pope thinks thus, he is the Vicar of Christ.”

With the same reverential feelings did he regard the ministers of the church, the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God. He was always scrupulously obedient to the bishops, whom

he knew were appointed by God as rulers over his church. Nor was there a priest to whom he did not bear himself with profound respect. He liked to anticipate them in all little courtesies, to be the first to kiss their hands and to address them with his head uncovered. It was a strangely touching sight to behold that venerable old man, in the last years of his life, after his long career of apostolic missions and the numerous favors he had received from God, behaving in their presence like a little child with a graceful deference and tender respect which could only spring from the most profound humility. And truly it would seem that our Lord had infused into his soul a special knowledge and a special light concerning the royal dignity of the priesthood. While he was staying with Bishop Emilio Cavalieri of Troja and Foggia, an ordination took place in the episcopal chapel, at which the servant of God assisted through devotion. Upon that occasion he conceived so high an idea of the sacerdotal character that he formed the resolution of never again sitting down in the presence of priests. With all the experience, which he must have had of the disorders of the world, he never could entertain a bad opinion of priests. He acknowledged that he had never confessed himself of any rash judgement in their regard, because he esteemed them so highly and looked upon them all with the eyes of faith. He did not, however, hesitate to say that the relaxed manner of life introduced in our own times among the clergy was unworthy of their rank and character and proceeded from a want of faith in the loftiness of their position. Penetrated with grief, he often exclaimed, "Ah, how little faith there is in the world! How little do men believe!"

Still more sensible was the sorrow with which he contemplated the sufferings of his tender Mother, the Church. We find the following passage in one of his letters, "I feel most deeply the calamities of holy Church, but I firmly trust that God will humble those ungrateful children who afflict and torment their loving Mother." Hearing one day that some poor Christians in foreign countries were persecuted for their faith by the infidels, he began to weep bitterly, begging our Lord to have pity on them and exclaiming, "Oh, how deeply does this touch me, who desire to be always a true son of my dear Mother!" When he saw the commands of the church neglected, or her teaching despised, he was accustomed to say, "He who has not the church for his mother, will not have God for his father," according to St. Cyprian's famous declaration. As an affectionate son, when he sees his parent insulted, cannot help testifying his indignation, so Father Paul, in the troubles of the Church, could not contain his grief and displeasure. "Not one

thorn,” he said, “but a whole group of thorns is piercing my heart when I think on these fatal occurrences. Let us hope it is God’s will that the calamities should finish here.” He sometimes declared that, if the number of sins was not diminished, misfortunes would continue, and he desired his religious to pray that the anger of the Lord might be appeased.

He inveighed with much zeal against the books which were written in a spirit of rebellion to the Church, saying that, if he had the opportunity, he would boldly reprove the authors of them for their pernicious writings. He appeared inconsolable whenever he heard anything prejudicial to the purity of the faith and to the progress of the Catholic religion; his grief was so great that in his familiar conversation he was frequently seen dissolved in tears. On the other hand, it was noticed that he experienced an unspeakable joy when he saw anyone employed in the propagation or the defense of our holy faith. He rejoiced to find himself in the company of zealous missionaries and men of an apostolic spirit. He never grew weary of conversing with them. For the same reason he delighted to meet with the students of the Propaganda because he looked upon them as persons destined to carry the light of faith among the infidels and to assist the poor Christians who dwelt in unbelieving countries in the midst of constant perils. He used to exhort these young men to light up in their hearts the flames of celestial love and to form in themselves a lively image of Christ crucified who, together with this doctrine, has given us His life and the last drop of His precious blood.

Such then was the faith of Father Paul – a faith which inspired him with an ardent desire of seeing the whole world embrace revealed truth; which stimulated him to fervent prayers for the conversion of heretics and unbelievers; and which made him desire the palm of martyrdom in the cause he esteemed so glorious and so sacred. Not being able, as he would have wished to die for his faith, he determined at all events to consecrate his life to its defense and assistance. This he did most efficaciously by founding a new Congregation with the special object of reviving in all Christian hearts the blessed memory of the Passion of Him who is the author and finisher of our faith and with the particular obligation of sending missionaries into infidel nations to preach and teach Jesus crucified.

From what we have said, it is not difficult to infer how rich Father Paul was in that faith which works by charity. Hence it was with truth that Pope Clement XIV said of him, “I know Father Paul to be a man of great faith and of living faith.”



## CHAPTER II

### **Of the Lively Spirit of Faith Manifested by Father Paul in Venerating the Sacred Mysteries and Celebrating the Principal Solemnities of Our Holy Religion**

It is not wonderful that a soul, gifted so highly with the grace of faith and illumined so clearly with its pure light, should have been raised into a kind of ecstasy in contemplating the tremendous mysteries of religion by the power of that faith which “*works through love*.”

The servant of God was overwhelmed with astonishment and awe in considering the mystery of the adorable Trinity, and those around him noticed the deep reverence in his exterior deportment and the lowly inclination of his head whenever he named the three August Persons in the Gloria Patri or any other prayer. He recommended to his religious the faithful observance of this pious practice. If he observed that anyone omitted it during the divine office, he did not fail to reprimand him and to remind him of the chastisements with which Almighty God had been known to visit such negligence. He was accustomed to repeat with particular devotion and consolations of spirit and with tears in his eyes the sublime Trisagion, “Holy! Holy! Holy!” He had very often upon his lips those glorious words of the everlasting song, “*Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might to our God forever and ever. Amen*” (Rev. 712).

With the same glowing faith did he honor the mystery of the Incarnation. When he reflected on the wondrous lowliness of the Word made Flesh, he would exclaim, “A God to make Himself man for us!” Out of gratitude for so much love, he advised all to bow while repeating the last verse of the Angelus, “*And the Word was made flesh*” (Jn. 1:14). He never uttered the holy Name without a profound inclination, and he could not bear to hear it pronounced in a careless and unreflecting manner. During the season of Advent he employed himself in animating his faith still more strongly and in inflaming his love towards that Divine Redeemer, who so mercifully deigned to visit us in our wretchedness, and he exhorted others to make good use of that precious time of preparation for the festival of the Nativity. He wrote thus to a devout soul, “The time draws nigh when holy Church will celebrate the memory of the Divine Espousals of the Eternal

Word to our human nature. Contemplate, O my daughter, the depths of this mystery of love, and let your soul be free to engulf and immerse itself in this boundless ocean of every good. Pray and desire that the espousals of love may now take place between Jesus and you, and me, an unworthy sinner.”

When Christmas day approached, he performed a devout novena with exposition of the most Blessed Sacrament and many fervent practices of mortification. The affection of heart with which he disposed himself for the celebration of these tenderest of mysteries may be inferred from the words he used in his letters at the recurrence of this great solemnity. “How astounding is this,” he said, “to see a God become an infant, a God wrapped in swaddling clothes, a God laid upon a little straw between two beasts of burden! Who will refuse to be lowly! Who will not abase himself for God’s sake? Who will dare to complain of suffering! Who will not remain in silence, within and without, under all trials!” And writing to his own brethren, he expresses himself with greater freedom. *“I announce to you great joy for our salvation is coming quickly.”* Behold the poor sinner Paul, at the feet of the pious community of the Retreat of the Presentation, begging pardon of his dearest brethren for all the example of his tepid and vicious life, and entreating them to obtain for him the same forgiveness from the infinite mercy of God. “I take confidence in the merits of Jesus, and although a useless and unworthy servant, I bring to you the glad tidings of joy and peace for the approaching festival of the Nativity. Have I not, O my brethren, the more reason to announce to you this great consolation because, being a miserable sinner, I cannot but rejoice exceedingly in the coming of that Blessed Child who so tenderly invites me to His pardon. Let us then exult, O my very dear sons in Christ. Let us put off the old man with his deeds and clothe ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ. And even, as in this sweet solemnity, we commemorate the birth of our dear Jesus as a little child, so let us make ourselves little children with Him by our exact obedience, our purity of conscience, our love for holy poverty, our desire for suffering, and, above all, by our childlike simplicity in the observance of our Rule. Let us not dare to interpret this after our own fashion, let us not explain it in a broad sense, for narrow is the way that leads to life. But let us be guided and directed by the superiors, whom God has appointed to govern our little Congregation. Thus shall we be true followers of the Infant Jesus, who abandoned Himself utterly to the care of His Mother, Mary most pure, most holy, and immaculate. With these bright and beautiful virtues you will dispose

yourselves to approach that blessed crib, and with your burning affections you will give warmth to the little trembling Infant, who willingly shivers with cold that He may light the fire of love in your hearts. Ah, my dearly beloved, meditate, consider with earnest thought this great mystery, ponder the inconveniences, the cold, the poverty, the want suffered by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. And remember that true sanctity cannot be separated from suffering; you must have tribulations "*intus et foris*," fierce battles with enemies, visible and invisible, pains of body and pains of mind, dreary desolations and long aridities, in fine, all sorts of vexations from the devils, from men, and from your own rebellious flesh, since all who would live piously with Christ Jesus suffer persecution.

"Take courage, nevertheless, my dearly beloved, recollecting that as He hath walked so it behooves us now also to walk. We may not serve God for the sake of His consolations, and He often deprives us of all comfort that we may act from pure love. Sometimes, upon these solemn festivals, He takes away from His servants all spiritual sweetness in order to try their faith and fidelity. Lift up your heart then, let us raise up our souls to work with a great heart and a willing mind for our Almighty Lord, and our Savior Jesus Christ, in pure faith and perfect love. Amen.

"And now I come in spirit to embrace you all in Jesus Christ. First, I embrace and wish all the happiness of the feast to the Rev. Father Rector, and the priests, clerics, and laity, his children. May peace be with them, and may they remember to pray for me, an unworthy sinner. I embrace in like manner the Very Rev. Father Director, with his dear sons the novices. May the peace of Christ be with them also and may they recommend my necessities to God.

"Upon Christmas night I shall offer up the divine Mysteries for our poor Congregation. I shall place the hearts of our Fathers and novices in the manger of the sacred Infant Jesus, that He may inflame, strengthen, and sanctify them to do great things for the glory of God. I shall ask our dearest Lady to nourish them with the most precious food of her pure milk. Amen."

Sentiments like these, all burning as they are with the love of God, cannot be thought of or read without imparting some of their fervor to the coldest of those who meet with them. It may be imagined with what ardor the writer of them waited for the night of benediction, which he spoke of in such glowing terms. He always read the martyrology himself on the vigil of the feast, and when he had to chant the sweet words which announce salvation to the world, "*The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ*," he burst into a sudden fit of weeping and could scarcely utter a word.

Before beginning Matins in the choir, he directed the religious to come to church with lighted torches in their hands while singing a devout hymn. Then, attended by his assistants, he went all through the retreat in solemn procession, carrying a figure of the Infant Jesus. This image was placed in a sort of cradle and dressed in swaddling clothes because, he said, it inspired him with greater admiration and devotion to behold the omnipotence, the goodness, and the wisdom of God wrapped so helplessly in those miserable rags. During this function his weeping was so continual that the sacristan feared his tears might spoil some of the ornaments, the veil in which he carried the Bambino or the sacred figure itself.

The year that Father Paul was in Rome at the little hospice near St. John Lateran, he was in great grief at being unable to say midnight Mass because the chapel was a private oratory. But Pope Clement XIV, who so tenderly loved him, no sooner heard of his difficulty, than he gave him ample faculties to celebrate. Upon that occasion his devotion was so great that his tears literally bathed the altar.

He was accustomed also to solemnize with special fervor the Feast of the Epiphany, and he exhorted his religious to do the same, saying that it was a memorable day because it had witnessed the calling of the Gentiles, and that we ought not to let it pass without returning grateful thanks to the Divine Mercy for permitting us to be born in the bosom of his holy Church, and thus to possess the invaluable gift of faith. He wrote at this season to one of his penitents, "Truly this is a glorious day! Although I have not time now to speak of the Holy Mystery it commemorates, when I am at the altar I will not forget to place your heart in the heart of the sweet Infant Jesus. 'O Jesus my Love!' I will say, 'burn with the fire of charity the heart of this daughter and of another one you have given me. Make them lowly and childlike and transform them with Your holy love. O Jesus, Life of my life, Joy of my soul, God of my heart, receive their hearts as altars whereon will be sacrificed the gold of ardent charity, the incense of constant prayer, the myrrh of continual mortification. Amen.'"

How lively and how fruitful were the affections of love, gratitude, and compassion with which the servant of God was impressed in meditating and preaching upon the most holy Passion may be inferred from the whole tenor of our narratives and will be treated at full length in a distinct chapter in the sequel. Father Paul, having attained to such an intimate union with God, it may be imagined that he was penetrated with deep feelings of devotion towards the Holy Spirit,

the Sovereign Master and sure Guide of those who would walk in the paths of prayer. He writes to his religious, “The inexpressible, more than joyful Festival of the Holy Spirit being near at hand, when we must all be prepared to welcome in the interior of our hearts that sovereign Guest, who is our Lord and God, I would not willingly omit the duty of admonishing you by this poor letter, and of reminding you of the strong desire God has imprinted in my heart to see you all great saints, according to the perfection of the Institute to which the Divine Mercy has called you. Therefore, my dearly beloved in Christ, to dispose yourselves for the High Festival you are about to keep, examine yourselves and see if there be anything within you which is not purely of God. Discover if all your actions have proceeded from a pure intention, and if you have each day endeavored to direct your aim, so that all your works might be performed from the sole love of God and united to the works of Jesus Christ, our only Way, Truth, and Life. My beloved sons, ‘You are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.’ Since, then, you are dead to all that is not God, strive to preserve your minds in complete abstraction from all created things in true poverty and nakedness of spirit and in perfect detachment from those sensible consolations, which are so dear, while they are so dangerous to our fallen nature and so often deprive us of more solid blessings. Direct all your efforts to acquire interior solitude and to become adorers of your Sovereign Good in spirit and in truth. All will go well with you if you are gentle and lowly in your own conceit, for God loves childlike souls, and to them He imparts that sublime knowledge which He has hidden from the wise and clever of the world. Never depart from the wounds of Jesus; let your souls be clothed and penetrated with the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer; and do not doubt that he who is the universal Pastor will conduct you as His beloved flock into His everlasting fold. And where is the fold of this good Shepherd? It is the bosom of His heavenly Father. For as Jesus is always in the Bosom of His Father, ‘Christ Jesus who is in the bosom of God,’ so to this same secure sanctuary will He conduct you, while you remain in pure faith and holy love, in forgetfulness of the things of earth and in perfect interior solitude. But so high a grace is only granted to those who study to become everyday more humble, simple and loving. Believe me that the great pests of religious communities are judging the actions of others while we lose sight of our own – misinterpreting the motives of our brethren, murmuring at their defects, and repeating to one another our uncharitable ideas. Oh! what ruin do not these things cause in religious houses.” He concludes in these words, “Ah, my dearly beloved, pray

and entreat the Most High God that He would deign to increase and extend our poor Congregation, that He would provide it with zealous men, who, as so many trumpets of the Holy Spirit, may sound and make known in all parts what Jesus has done and suffered for the love of those who live in forgetfulness of Him, a thing to be lamented with inconsolable grief, the cause of all the miseries which abound in the world.”

In order to excite a more fervent love towards the divine Spirit, he desired that in all the retreats of the Congregation a novena should be performed with the Exposition of the most holy Sacrament and the extraordinary mortifications prescribed by the Rule. When the solemn day arrived, the ardor of Father Paul’s feelings betrayed itself in his countenance. He himself intoned the *Veni Creator* at Tierce and appeared rapt in a trance of delight, love, and astonishment.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **Of Father Paul’s Wonderful Devotion Towards the Blessed Eucharist and of His Lively Faith in Celebrating Mass and in Reciting the Divine Office**

The faith of the servant of God shone forth most conspicuously in his affection for the most blessed Eucharist, which is, properly speaking, the Sacrament of Faith. From his very earliest youth he had been remarkable for his lively devotion towards this divine mystery. He spent many hours of his nights, as well as of his days, in church before the sacred tabernacle, without so much as changing the position of his body. He used to kneel upon the bare ground without anything for support, his hands crossed upon his breast, his head bent downwards, so still and immovable that he scarcely seemed to breathe. He appeared to have forgotten everything else when he was allowed the blessedness of being alone with Jesus. One day, it happened that he went to benediction at the church of the Capuchin Fathers at Castellazzo; he had hardly knelt down when some boys let fall a heavy bench upon his foot, which wounded him most severely. But with an undisturbed countenance, he gently raised the bench, kissed it, and then went to the altar rails to continue his devotions. His companions, who knelt behind him, noticing that the foot was bleeding profusely, could not help approaching him to tell him of it, but he paid no attention to the observation and, without either moving or answering, pursued his prayer as

before. When the function was over, his companions begged him at least to have his wound dressed in the monastery, but he still took no notice. When at last, upon reaching St. Stefano, he was again urged, he replied, “Such pains as these are roses. Jesus Christ suffered much more, and I desire far worse in punishment for my sins.”

It was the young Paul’s greatest consolation to receive Holy Communion; and if his director was absent, he would travel miles to see him in order to obtain permission to communicate. When he went to inhabit the hermitage of Our Lady of the Chain, near Gaeta, he and his brother John Baptist gave great edification, to all who beheld them, by their recollected countenance whenever they visited the Blessed Sacrament in the churches of the town. If by chance they came at a time when the doors were closed, they used to retire to some secluded spot, where they could uninterruptedly adore in spirit their only Love. It was the fame of their piety towards the most Blessed Sacrament, that, as have before related, induced Bishop Emilio Cavalieri of Troja, to invite them into his diocese in order that their example might inspire the same fervor in his flock.

The riper years of Father Paul’s life were distinguished by no less tender devotion. Upon entering any town or village, his first act was always to throw himself before the Blessed Sacrament. Even upon his journeys, whenever he noticed any churches in the distance, he knelt down immediately to adore his Lord, who dwelt there under the lowly eucharistic species. It may be truly said that his piety in paying homage to the Blessed Sacrament fully corresponded to his lively faith in contemplating that priceless treasure in which Jesus has given us himself. He ardently desired that all should benefit by this wondrous gift. Hence, in his familiar discourses, as well as in his sermons, he tried to make all his hearers understand and appreciate the inestimable advantages which the Catholic Church enjoys by being enriched with Jesus Christ. He told them that our Lord remained in the tabernacle for them alone, although they knew it not, advising them to unite themselves frequently with Him at least by spiritual communions. During the missions which he gave, he often spoke with great force on the reverence due to the holy Sacrament. He earnestly exhorted all those who had it in their power to accompany the Viaticum when carried to the sick, and if possible, to bear torches in their hands. When he gave the spiritual exercises to the people, he used to recite fervent acts in honor of the Blessed Eucharist, which was exposed to public veneration. Sometimes he began by a renewal of faith in these words, “I know in whom I believe, I am certain.” Or else with an ardent aspiration of love, such

as, “*O! How sweet, O Lord, is your spirit.*” And by the earnestness with which he spoke, he drew abundant tears from those who heard him. Through his zealous exertions, he introduced in many places the pious practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament every evening; and in order to facilitate the devotion to poor laborers, the good Father prudently adapted himself to their condition and only required that they should go to church when their work was done, there to ask the blessing of Jesus before they retired to rest. This beautiful custom is still retained; and it is a touching thing to enter those quiet country churches by twilight and to see numbers of devout persons kneeling before the altar of the Most Holy, where two lighted candles seem to typify their faith and love. Their day is thus peacefully concluded under the shadow of the tabernacle. Father Paul’s zeal, which led him to exhort so many upon this subject, did not cause him to forget his own brethren. With still greater industry he endeavored to impart to their hearts the love which burnt so brightly in his own. To animate their faith and increase their love, he desired that they should go very frequently to visit Jesus hidden in the adorable Sacrament.

The joy and consolation felt by the venerable Father when he possessed, in the retreats of our Order, under his own roof, so to speak, the gracious Presence which so filled his soul, will be best described in his own words to a devout youth who was directed by him, and who afterwards joined our Congregation. Speaking of the first church on Monte Argentario, he said, “The cells are finished and now there is nothing more required but a little interior decoration to prepare the Church for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. Oh! how each single hour appears to me a thousand until my Savior comes and I can spend my solitary hours at the foot of His altar. Ah! who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may take a loving flight to His Divine Heart.”

Long afterwards in his extreme old age, when he was suffering from habitual indisposition, his love for Jesus caused him to make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to remain before it during long hours of unwearied adoration. The respectful veneration with which he conducted himself was admirable to behold; as his infirmities prevented him from genuflecting when he passed the altar, he uncovered his head and made a profound inclination, uttering at the same time some devout aspiration. It happened that he had to repeat this ceremony very often in the day when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, for to reach his little miserable cell he had to pass the choir where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. The servant of God, although he liked to see all the altars of the Church decently provided, wished that the principal decorations should



belong to the high altar where the Blessed Sacrament was kept. He caused it to be ornamented with vases of natural flowers, and if he saw these faded or neglected, he reprehended the person whose duty it was to renew them.

In the latter years of his life, he was generally confined either to his bed or his cell on account of his frequent illnesses. But if he ever had a little interval of convalescence, oh, how eagerly did he seize the opportunity of visiting his dear Jesus and pouring out before Him all the loving affections of his heart. In the year that he died, being at Rome, in our Retreat of Sts. John and Paul, during the novena of the Assumption, he would be carried down to the Church every day to assist at the devotions in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. And when the Forty Hours was kept that year, at Sts. John and Paul, he insisted on being carried to the organ gallery, and there locked in, desiring to be kept undisturbed and to be denied to everyone, even to his most distinguished friends. It happened that a person of high rank came that day to visit the Blessed Sacrament and asked to see Father Paul, but was refused the consolation of speaking with him because he was shut up alone with Jesus. A prelate from the pontifical palace also arrived, wishing to obtain for the Pope news of Father Paul's health – this was thought a sufficient excuse for disturbing him. One of the Fathers went to the gallery to tell him, but he, scarcely heeding the interruption, abstractedly replied, "This is not the time for speaking with creatures, because the Master of the House is giving audience, the Lord of Lords! The Master of the world!" It is not to be supposed that so singular a devotion could pass unrewarded by him who is the source of all graces, and we know that his loving Redeemer made him frequently experience the admirable effects of such constant communion with His Sacramental Presence. During the many years that he passed in preaching missions, he used to be tormented with a burning thirst after his sermons, but out of mortification he would never seek any other refreshment than visiting the Blessed Sacrament. With simple faith, and holy confidence, he turned to our Lord and exclaimed, "You, oh my Jesus, have said, '*If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink*' (Jn. 7:37), it is for You, then to give me to drink," and "truly," he himself related, "truly, Jesus did so for me, and once in a special manner most wonderfully refreshed me. A certain doctor afterwards told me that enduring my thirst without drinking was likely to bring on a malignant fever, and that I ought not in conscience to expose myself to such danger. This induced me to take something to drink after my sermons, but ah! that doctor has ruined me! Patience!" To the same ever-flowing Fountain,

the servant of God came when he was tired and exhausted, after serving the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and performing other works of mercy and charity; begging our Lord to refresh and invigorate him with the torrent of His celestial sweetness.

In recompense for his faithful devotion, Almighty God permitted him to have miraculous indications of the Sacramental Presence. And so, when he entered into a church, he became aware by an amorous correspondence in his heart which altar his treasure inhabited. Upon one occasion his companion was going to an altar, which by its exterior appearance he judged to be that of the Blessed Sacrament, when Father Paul stopped him and directed him to another part of the church. In the same way he was allowed to feel equal certainty of the Divine Presence when a wretched man brought him a consecrated particle, which he had sacrilegiously taken. In this instance it seemed that our Lord wished to console and indemnify Himself in His faithful servant, for the enormous injury He had received, as it is written, “God will be consoled in his servants.” He often perceived from a great distance whether the Blessed Eucharist was in any particular place, and these celestial favors excited him to still more ardent affections of devotion. This fervor never showed itself in a more lively manner than when he was celebrating Mass. At those times the venerable Father appeared all tenderness and ardor, transformed into a seraphim of love. After a long and fervent preparation he ascended the altar, and then his face was often seen to change color and become inflamed, while his eyes overflowed with tears of interior sweetness. For many years he could never say Mass without weeping. Afterwards, being placed by our Lord in the crucible of aridities and desolations, his tears were not so continual, but he was often observed to shed them from the consecration to the communion. When he sang High Mass, he generally fell into so deep a contemplation, that he was obliged to do violence to himself before he could proceed; in chanting the Preface and Pater Noster, he was constantly interrupted by his sobs, which gave edification to all who heard him. He was particularly exact in the observance of the rubrics and of the prescribed holy ceremonies. After Mass he retired to some quiet spot, where he could give vent to the burning affections of his heart and enjoy the possession of his only love. He was most careful that everything belonging to the altar should be suitable for so high a service, and he was not content with bare decency, but he desired to see the most extreme cleanliness and purity. He sometimes sent away one corporal after another, until he got one that was perfectly clean. The smallest thing, he said, that is employed in the Holy

Sacrifice ought to be spotless. Our Lord was pleased to show by miracles how grateful in His sight was the faith and devotion of His servant in that sacred function.

Upon one occasion, when he was celebrating in the Monastery of St. Lucia at Corneto, the assistant, who was Signor Domenico Costantini, observed, to his great surprise, that when the venerable Father drew near to the consecrations, there arose from the steps of the altar a kind of smoke, like that of incense, which after the elevation gave forth a marvelous fragrance quite indescribable and unlike any common odor. A still greater wonder was seen at the same time, which was that the servant of God was raised in the air, two palms above the altar steps, both before and after the consecrations. Each time that he offered up the Holy Sacrifice, Father Paul imagined it to be the last Mass that he should say, and he told one of his religious, “Whenever I celebrate I receive the Holy Communion as a Viaticum.” He recommended others to perform not only this sacred function but every action of the day, as if it were the last of their lives.

As it is natural to one who loves, enjoys, and possesses an immense good, to desire to communicate his happiness to those especially who are capable of appreciating it, so Father Paul’s ardent wish was that all priests, and particularly that the Fathers of our Congregation, should know how to enrich themselves with the priceless treasures of the adorable sacrifice, and that for this end they should prepare their hearts with the utmost care for the presence of Jesus Christ. “Endeavor,” he said, “to be always ready to celebrate with the deepest devotion, watch day and night before the interior tabernacle, which is in the hearts of all priests. Guard with anxious care this living temple, keep always burning there the lamps of faith and charity and let it be decorated, as for a perpetual festival, with all Christian virtues. Jesus celebrated the divine mysteries in a furnished room. He inculcated to his religious that they should not only prepare themselves for Mass by serious meditations upon the mysteries of faith, but that even while celebrating they should follow Jesus in spirit through the different stages of His passion, performing His obsequies with the mournful tenderness of Mary, St. John, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and then depositing Him in the sepulcher of their hearts, *“In which no one had yet been buried”* (Jn 19:41). He said that the Mass was the most appropriate time for negotiating with the Eternal Father, while we offer to Him His only Son Incarnate for our salvation. “Before you celebrate,” he wrote to a priest, “clothe yourself with the sufferings of Christ by a sacred colloquy, placidly made in the midst of aridities. Carry to the altar the necessities of the whole

world.” With the same earnestness he sought to impress upon all the priests of the Congregation the utmost exactness in the observance of the rubrics. He particularly insisted that those who were newly ordained should be well instructed and exercised in the ceremonies, and he often took upon himself the charitable duty of assisting them. He could not bear to see the least disorder or mistake in the sacred functions, and if he noticed any who failed in the correct performance of them, he took an opportunity of reproofing them, saying, “The rubrics ought to have been studied beforehand.” He could not tolerate the idea of a priest abandoning Jesus almost immediately after Mass without making the proper thanksgiving. He declaimed eagerly, and upon every opportunity, against this abuse, and he employed all the power of his ministry in engaging priests to render thanks to their loving Lord for so inexpressible a benefit. As far as he could, he endeavored to prevent from approaching the altar all those who gave little reverence for the tremendous mysteries or who were not attired in the clerical garb.

An ecclesiastic of distinction came to say Mass at one of our retreats, dressed in a colored coat and without the dignity required by the sacerdotal character. The good Father immediately reproofed him and would not permit him to celebrate, saying, “This is not the dress for a priest to wear at the altar.” Full of these zealous sentiments, he wrote thus to a devout soul, “You must fly in spirit to the heart of Jesus in the adorable sacrament, and there weep with grief for the insults he receives from worldlings, from wicked priests, and from tepid religious, who return ingratitude and sacrileges for his infinite love. In reparation for all these outrages, let your soul offer herself up as a holocaust, all burning with love and praise, and thank him in place of those who ill-treat him. Above all, go to visit him at those times when he is most neglected and forgotten.”

The love which consumed Father Paul while he offered the Holy Sacrifice manifested itself in no less striking a manner when he administered Holy Communion. When he uttered the words, “*Behold the Lamb of God*” (Jn 1:29,36), he spoke with so much energy, fervor, and reverence, that it might well have been imagined that he beheld his Divine Redeemer with his own eyes. And so also it was observed in carrying the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Body of Christ, his face was bathed in a torrent of tears. This festival was to him a day of peculiar solemnity, and he kept it with a marvelous spirit of faith. If he was at one of the retreats, he himself sang High Mass and carried the Sacred Host in procession round the enclosure; but if

some urgent business separated him from his brethren, as was the case one year when he was at Ronciglione, he disposed himself with equal devotion to do homage to the Blessed Sacrament. Beholding the procession, he melted into tears, exclaiming, “O, what wondrous love! O, what a day is this! O charity! O love!” Alluding to this feast, he spoke thus in a letter to a devout person, “As the moth flies round and round a light until it is burnt in the flame, so does the soul turn about and within Divine Love, until it is utterly consumed in this great and blessed octave of the adorable sacrament. O, my daughter, eat, drink, and inebriate yourself; fly, sing, exult, and feast with the Divine Spouse.”

Well knowing the boundless treasures which lie hidden in the Blessed Eucharist for all the children of holy Church he exhorted the laity to communicate often, and with the deepest feelings of affection. “Holy Communion,” he once said, “is the most efficacious means of uniting ourselves with God. Be always prepared for the holy table, purify well your heart. Above all, carefully guard that tongue which is the first to touch the adorable Sacrament. Go not away until you have made a fitting return of grateful thanks; let your heart remain a living tabernacle of Jesus. Visit him often who wearies not of staying within you, and offer him all the adoration, affection, and thanksgiving with which love can inspire you.”

The mere sight of the servant of God was enough to confuse any person who said the Divine Office with tepidity, or who was wanting in reverence for what the Holy Fathers call the “divine work.” In his heaviest infirmities he insisted upon reciting the breviary himself, nor would he take advantage of the dispensation granted him by Pope Clement XIV, until his last illness, when he was so oppressed by suffering, that he was obliged to give it up and to procure the assistance of a priest, who read it aloud to him with a clear and intelligible voice. He always kept his head uncovered during the divine office, even when he journeyed through the open country during the coldest days of winter. During his last illness his companion begged him so earnestly to cover himself that he did so for a time; but soon taking off his cap, he exclaimed that he could not say his office with his head covered, adding, “We must remember what it is we are doing,” as if he would say that this is the time for speaking to the Divine Majesty, of whose presence he had so constant a recollection.

Still more clearly did he manifest his faith and love when he was present in choir with the rest of his brethren to praise and adore Almighty God. He was most exact in appearing there both

by day and night; at night with still more fervor than at any other time, because he was persuaded that the prayers offered up to God at an hour when the greater part of the world either forgot him in sleep, or neglected Him for their pleasure, were most grateful and acceptable in the Divine sight. Then it was, he said, that we ought to sing serenades to God. It was a touching sight to see the venerable old man dragging himself to the place of prayer, when he could scarcely walk and, in spite of his pains, standing upright and motionless while he offered up the sacrifice of his praise to God. None could doubt how deeply he felt the maxim which he so often inculcated, “When we assemble to recite our office, we must animate our faith and remember that we are joining the angels, who descend into our choir to sing with us to the honor of God.”

He took care that the chant should be regulated by true devotion and accompanied by pauses which contribute so much to fervor. He used to repeat emphatically the words of that hymn, “*Mouth, tongue, mind, sense, strength – all sound forth with praise.*” If any one made a mistake, he was fired with zeal and struck his little staff upon the ground, saying, “This is not the way to recite the divine office in the presence of God.” He once saw a religious in choir leaning against a bench in an unbecoming attitude; he instantly went up to him and admonished him to pray with reverence and attention for at the hour of death our Lord would show him what it was that he had neglected.

Such were the words and thoughts of one who, with a lively faith, saw not with his bodily eyes, but with those of the spirit, the immediate presence of the invisible God.

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## THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS

Founder of the Congregation

Of the Barefooted Clerks

Of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ

Published in 1853

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## **PREFACE**

In Chapter X there is a statement respecting the infrequency of the communions of the Fathers of the Desert, which is not quite correct, or at least which is so worded as to leave an



erroneous impression. Benedict XIV has shown at length in his *Treatise on Heroic Virtues* (Vol. I, p.306. Orat. Trans.) the misconception, which is not an uncommon one and has arisen from the supposition that the solitaires of the desert were so circumstanced by the fact of their seclusion, that they could not participate in the sacraments. It is, however, easy to show that this hypothesis does not rest on any solid foundation.

The first, and by far the largest, class of those who retired into the deserts of Egypt and Syria consisted of monks living together in monasteries under the rule of an abbot. There is no want of historical evidence that these were accustomed to assemble in church at stated times for the purpose of hearing Mass and receiving communion. Thus, in the Rule which St. Pachomius, the Founder of the monastic life, gave to the monks of Tabenna in the Thebaid, who were in number about sixteen thousand under one superior, it is enjoined that the holy sacrifice should be offered up on Saturdays and Sundays, and that the brethren should communicate. Again, it is related that in the desert of Nitria there dwelt five thousand solitaires, distributed into fifty monasteries. They had a church, served by eight priests, which was large enough to contain the whole body, and there they all journeyed on Saturdays and Sundays to celebrate in common the Divine Offices. In like manner the solitaires of Scetis, who were renowned for their excessive austerities, had several churches in which they assembled. There is still extant a discourse which the Abbot Theonas delivered to them on the subject of communion. In it he combats the error of those monks who communicated only once a year, on the ground that they were unworthy to approach the divine mysteries, “unless their souls were free from every spot and blemish, forgetting that it is by the reception of this sacrament we attain to the sanctification and purification of our souls.” He then concludes, “It is more fitting that we should, every Sunday, partake of the heavenly Bread as the medicine for our infirmities, humbly acknowledging our inability ever to merit so great a grace, instead of vainly and presumptuously persuading ourselves that by the end of the year we shall have become worthy to receive these holy mysteries.” It is needless to multiply instances; the above are sufficient to prove that the monks who lived in community were in the habit of communicating at least once a week.

We now come to the solitaires who lived, each one by himself, in *laurae* or cells. They were men who had previously passed a long time in some monastery, and whose faults had been eradicated and their virtues matured by the exercises and mortifications of community life. Hence, it frequently happened that they fixed themselves near a monastery and lived under

obedience to the abbot. Thus we read in Surius that the Abbot Gerasimus presided over a monastery to which was attached a *laura* of seventy cells. With regard to the manner of life followed in the *laurae*, St. Cyril relates that for five days in the week each one remained silent in his cell, tasting nothing but bread, dates, and water, and on the Saturday and Sunday they all came to the church where they received the Eucharist, after which they retired to the cell and partook of some boiled food and a little wine. Rufinus, after having spoken of the monks of Nitria who lived in community, continues, "There is another spot in the heart of the desert, distant about nine miles from Nitria, which is called the Cells from the great multitude of them which are found in every direction, each separate from the other. Hither come those who, after having been trained in the Monastery of Nitria and habituated to the practice of every religious virtue, desire to lead a more retired and hidden life; for this desert is very extensive, and the cells are at such a distance from each other that nothing can be seen or heard." He further adds that each one had a cell to himself, that the strictest silence was preserved, and that they met only on Saturdays and Sundays in the church.

It is clear from all this that the solitaires of the *laura* had the same facilities of participating in the sacraments which were enjoyed by the monks who lived in community. Besides those who led a life of solitude in the *laurae*, there were others who shut themselves up in cells, either within the precincts of a monastery or in its neighborhood. They very seldom came forth from their prisons, except it might be to assemble together in church, especially on the more solemn festivals.

In addition to the opportunities afforded to them at these times of receiving the sacraments, we are told by a very exact writer (Bulteau ap. Marin *Vies des Pères des déserts*, tom, iii., p. 370. From this latter work, and the *Treatise* of Benedict XIV, all the instances which have been cited are taken.) that "a priest used sometimes to go and say Mass in a cell occupied by only one solitary, that he might have the consolation of communicating. The anchorites were also allowed to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their cells, that they might receive communion according to their devotion." St. Basil alludes to this latter custom in a letter written about A.D. 370 to Caesaria, a patrician lady. He is defending the practice which prevailed during the times of persecution of permitting the laity to communicate themselves in the absence of a priest or deacon. "All the solitaires of the desert," he says, "wherever there is no priest, keep the Eucharist in their dwellings and communicate themselves." This custom must have seemed a very natural

one to the Egyptian anchorites, for St. Basil continues, “At Alexandria and in Egypt, almost all the laity keep the Eucharist at their homes, and, when they please, administer it to themselves.”

There now only remains for us to consider the case of those anchorites who retired into the farthest recesses of the desert, where they lived in complete and perpetual seclusion from others. Such a one was St. Paul, the first hermit, who, to escape from the persecution which was then raging, fled away in early youth into the desert of Egypt, and there lived in such entire solitude for nearly a century that he would have died unknown had not God, by a special inspiration, guided St. Antony to the place of his retreat. Such a one, again, was St. Mary of Egypt, who, in penance for the sins of her youth, hid herself for forty-seven years from the sight and memory of others in the wilderness of Syria. “With regard to this class of solitaires,” as Benedict XIV observes, “it certainly cannot be proved that they came at stated times to the churches which were at a great distance from them, or that a priest had access to them.” On the other hand, it would be rash to infer that they were wholly cut off from the sacraments. Some of them may have long retained in their possession the Blessed Eucharist, which the laity, in times of persecution, at least, were permitted to carry away to their own homes. Others were, through a particular providence of God, visited by pious and religious persons, who administered to them the sacraments, as we read of Zosimus, a monk of Palestine, who brought communion to St. Mary of Egypt at the eve of her death. Again, there were some who received communion through the ministry of angels. This favor, of which there are so many instances in the later ages of the Church, was granted to St. Onophrius, who passed seventy years in the deserts of Egypt without seeing or speaking to anyone. He was at length discovered by St. Paphnutius, to whom he revealed that God had fed him every Sunday with the Bread of Life by the hands of an angel. Sozomen, in *Ecclesiastical History* (l.vi.c.29), relates the same thing of Marcus, one of the solitaires of Scetis.

It must also be remembered that, while communion is necessary as a means in order to attain eternal life, there are two ways of receiving this sacrament: one spiritual, the other sacramental. Now Almighty God, who by a special and extraordinary vocation called these holy persons to embrace the eremitical life, could, if He pleased, sustain their souls by spiritual communion alone. Or He might have poured forth such abundant graces upon them in the few sacramental communions which His providence permitted them to enjoy, that, like the prophet Elias, they journeyed onwards in the strength of that heavenly food forty days and forty nights, the full term

of their pilgrimage, to the true Horeb, the mount of God.

To sum up what has been said, it appears that the charge of infrequent communion will not hold against any but the last class of the solitaires of the desert. And it has been further shown that even these anchorites, whose vocation was singular and rare, were not altogether deprived of a participation in the divine mysteries.

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Feast of St. Peter Martyr

MDCCCLIII

## **THE LIFE OF PAUL OF THE CROSS**

### **CHAPTER IV**

#### **Of Father Paul's Hope**

The world is a sea which is constantly agitated by winds and troubled by tempests; but, through the infinite mercy of God, we possess the blessing of hope, which, like a secure anchor holds firm the vessel of our hearts, and prevents them from being tossed about by the storms of disorderly affection or immersed in the waves of tribulation. To the holding fast of the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor to the soul, sure and firm, and which enters in, even within the veil, where the forerunner Jesus has entered before us. In proportion as the souls of the elect are subjected to the rudest trials, so our Lord, who never permits any to be tempted above their strength, infuses into their hearts a greater degree of hope to assist and encourage them.

Now Father Paul of the Cross had been chosen by God for a life of toil and suffering, in imitation of Him of whose childhood it was written, "He was in labors from his youth" (Cfr. Lam 3:27), and of whose manhood, "He came into the depth of the sea and a tempest overwhelmed Him" (Cfr. Job 30:22). Hence we may reasonably conclude that our Lord, who with such infinite wisdom disposes all necessary means for obtaining the destined end, had gifted His servant with a marvelously firm hope, which should endure, without shrinking, the severest ordeals. It was enough to treat familiarly with the good Father to become aware of his complete trust in God and his utter abandonment of all things in the hands of his loving Lord. He imagined himself, as he once said in confidence to a friend, to be a little infant in the arms of its mother, who lifts up her child in play over the brink of a precipice, and as no one would suppose that she meant to let her infant fall, so he could never believe that Almighty God would suffer him to be thrown down into the abyss of hell. He walked through this valley of tears with eyes always looking upwards, as one who is waiting trustfully for the heaven he sees above. Those around him often observed that, as he gazed upon the sky, he broke out into touching exclamations, such as, "How beautiful is yonder country, and it is all for us." At other times, with tears in his eyes, he said, "Nothing in this life can please me that is not God; all that I hope for, all that I wish for, is to go and enjoy Him. This I trust to do through His pure mercy, by His bitter Passion, and by

the sorrows of my Mother Mary.” While taking a walk with one of his brethren, and discoursing upon indifferent subjects, he suddenly exclaimed, as he lifted up his eyes to heaven, “Do you see that glorious country above? It will one day be ours.” Then he fell into an ecstatic silence, and it was some time before he recovered himself. He was once asked, when in Rome, to go and see the Villa Pinciani. “I care not,” he replied, “to see it, because I know of a better and more beautiful one.” The person who invited him, believing that he spoke literally, enquired where it was. Then Father Paul, pointing to Paradise, said, “These are my true delights and my only pleasures.” He sometimes repeated with deep feeling, “What more glorious sight can there be than the starry firmament? And that is but the pavement of the heavenly country which I hope to see one day. Nothing in this world can console me, nor can anything give me pain or trouble. It seems a thousand years until I can repose in my Sovereign Good.” Hence it was that the servant of God took such pleasure in speaking of heaven. Whenever the subject was introduced, his heart appeared to leap within him. It was the greatest consolation to hear him converse upon this happy subject; for he treated it in so lucid a manner, and explained so clearly the enjoyments thereof, that many learned persons said, “Father Paul speaks better theology than we do.” Father Marc Aurelio of the Blessed Sacrament, a man of profound doctrine, of sublime genius, and of singular union with God, after hearing him speak of Paradise, bowed his head and said, “This Father of ours must experience the delights of heaven to describe them so well.”

In order to adapt his language to the understanding of others, he sought to explain, by a similitude, the happiness of the blessed. He said that the soul would become quite transformed in God, and God in the soul, so that it would, so to speak, be completely divinized. He added, “If a drop of fresh water, thrown into the sea, becomes so swallowed up and absorbed by it that it can no longer be distinguished from it, in the same way a beatified spirit, which is immersed in the boundless ocean of the Godhead, is in a certain manner deified by being united, through love, to God Himself.”

Father Paul had proved in his youth, by his generous renunciation of the inheritance left him by his uncle, how steadfastly he had determined to confide in no earthly support and to possess no riches outside of God. And therefore it was that the Divine Goodness provided His servant with all that he required, and gifted him moreover with imperturbable peace of mind and unclouded tranquillity of spirit. It is not to be supposed, however, that our Lord did not try his fidelity by frequently withdrawing His interior sweetness, depriving him of His illuminations,

and hiding Himself as if in wrath. For many years Father Paul was plunged into a terrible darkness, in which he was constantly agitated by fears and doubts respecting the certainty of his salvation. But faithful to God, he clung to Him all the more trustfully when he seemed most abandoned and forgotten by His Mercy. His brethren, when they entered his room suddenly, often found him uttering with profound sighs such words as these, “O Lord, do what You will with me; torture me as You please, provided You do not remove Yourself from me forever.” At other times he exclaimed with inexpressible ardor, “You flee from me, O Lord, but wherever You go, I go, and I remain always. Lord! let Your holy will be done in me. I will suffer whatever You please, for I shall never cease to belong to You. Flee from me as You will, I shall always follow You.” It was easy to surprise him in these outpourings of his heart, as all who wished might enter his room at any hour. In the last years of his life, the saintly old man was so deaf that he could not hear the noise they made in approaching. If he was ever asked the cause of his loving complaints, he answered, “I am in a state which, I pray to God, may never be experienced by another.” Then, when he thought himself alone again, he turned to the crucifix and continued, “I prize You so highly, O infinite Goodness of my Jesus! You flee from me, O my God, but I follow you and I shall be ever Yours.” Far from relying upon the good works he was so continually performing, he rested all his hopes upon the infinite mercy of God and the merits of his loving Redeemer. “There,” he said frequently as he pointed to the crucifix, “there are all my hopes.” And if any of his brethren in conference with him manifested a fear of ever reaching Paradise, he could reply that he also trembled, but that the thought of the merits of Jesus dissipated all his terror. He always kept before his eyes a devout image of his crucified Lord to animate his faith and to encourage him to confidence. In proportion as his trials increased, so did the servant of God strengthen his faith, and so, likewise, did he continue to hope against hope in our Lord, offering up from the depth of his interior darkness short prayers of perfect conformity and abandonment to His most holy will. Often did he repeat that, though he found himself in a sea of tribulation, he could bear to have them increased tenfold without losing his confidence of being saved through the Passion of Jesus and the protection of Mary. Sometimes he said, “What will become of poor Paul? I am full of miseries, but I hope to be saved. I trust through the Passion of Christ, I trust through the intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows, that I shall one day reach Paradise.” And again, “I know how miserably ungrateful I have been to God, but yet I confide in His mercy, that He will receive me into His Paternal Bosom.” This then was the

wondrous secret whereby Father Paul found peace in the midst of the most violent interior warfare.

The feelings of the heart are not easily concealed, nor could those who heard him speak of the Divine Goodness fail to perceive by his inflamed and animated countenance, that he was almost out of himself with love and astonishment. The same sentiments were expressed with great vivacity in his letters, and we believe that the few extracts we have gathered from them will be of no little edification to the reader. “Dear Father Fulgentius,” he exclaimed, addressing one of his religious, “terrible are the trials which I have to endure, ‘*although He should slay me, I will trust in Him*’ (Job 13:15). A shipwrecked mariner at the mercy of the ferocious waves may truly say, ‘One thing alone is my comfort, that I should lift up my eyes to the Lord.’” Another time, to a devout soul, he wrote, “I see new combats preparing for me, and who knows how I may meet them. Clouds are gathering, darkness is increasing, terrors are awakening, devils are assaulting me with temptations and people with the malice of their tongues; with them is nothing but fighting, desolation, and wearisomeness; not to mention other points which are indescribable. Ah, how much more desirable is death than life. May it please Almighty God that all this may open for me the road to a happy eternity. I know not how to endure myself, but I do not lose my faith, and I trust that God will perfect His work in me.” He made use of these words in another letter to Father Fulgentius, “All the world is against us, so Father Tommaso tells me. I rejoice at it, because we shall be in greater favor with God. I thank the Divine Goodness for the prosperity of our Retreat at Terracina, and I feel assured that He will never permit them to want, while they are faithful to Him.”

He wished his own childlike trustfulness to be shared by all the souls whom he directed. “If your eternal salvation,” he wrote to one of them, “were in your own hands, you might well tremble, but being in the hands of your Heavenly Father, what cause have you for fear?” And to another, “The prison walls are falling fast, and the poor prisoner will soon fly away with the joyous liberty of the children of God. Sigh for that blessed country, your eternal home. Let your spirit take its flight of love there. Above all, let it drink eagerly of the chalice of the Savior, let it be inebriated. With what? With love and with suffering. One little drop of one’s own torments thrown into the sea of sorrow of the Divine Spouse.”

## CHAPTER V



## **Of Father Paul's Marvelous Courage in Undertaking Enterprises for the Glory of God**

Father Paul was not one of those teachers who preach with earnestness what they do not care to practice. Gifted as he was by Almighty God with a high esteem for the theological virtue of hope, he fearlessly undertook and undauntedly carried out the most heroic enterprises for the divine glory.

The history of the Congregation of the Passion furnishes sufficient evidence of the bold and trustful spirit with which he achieved whatever the designs of heaven marked out for him. His first simple exposition of his inspirations to his superior, the bishop of the diocese, his perfect obedience when sent by his authority to the Pope, his weary journeys barefooted and bareheaded along the rough roads and the lonely wastes amid the mountain passes between Lombardy and Rome, and his arrival at the pontifical palace, when the one hope that had been his support under all trials was taken from him, and he was turned away as unworthy to kneel at the feet of Christ's Vicar upon earth. Every step that he took showed the most complete diffidence in himself and the most unbounded confidence in Almighty God. If any one of those who, seeing this youthful hermit wandering through the streets of Rome in his uncouth and penitential dress, had asked him why he had come there alone and friendless, in that abject and neglected garb, and had been told that his object was to found a new and strange congregation, which should be specially employed in reviving in the minds of all the memory of the most holy passion and death of Jesus Christ; that he desired to establish not one retreat only, but many houses of this new Institute; and that he expected to obtain from the Pope faculties necessary for commencing this great work; would not such a person have been inclined to laugh at and scorn an idea so extravagant and a project so visionary? But, if the inquirer had proceeded to ask where were the patrons who supported him, the companions who were to join him, the funds upon which he relied, and further, what were his talents and the gifts which he possessed for carrying out an enterprise which would doubtless have to encounter many obstacles and to struggle against many difficulties; if the answer of this poor youth had been, once more, that he had no friends, no protector, no companions, that he had scarcely one small coin in his possession, that he knew little of the Latin language, and had never learned from books anything concerning the government of Orders or the rules of religious houses, notwithstanding his ignorance, his

poverty, and his weakness, he had so firm a faith in Him alone who was his friend, his treasure, and his power, that he might not doubt of success in the work he was inspired to do – would not his interrogator decide either that he was a fanatic and a madman, or that his heroic confidence was a supernatural gift from God? That it was a supernatural gift the sequel clearly proved, for this obscure and unknown young man was permitted to found a congregation, of which he saw before he died twelve different houses. He was enabled to obtain approbation of his Institute from several successive pontiffs, and after many years of suffering and contradiction, he was strengthened to complete and fulfill the wondrous designs of God's hidden providence over men.

When Father Paul saw the Congregation in any danger or difficulty, he used to say, "It is on account of my sins that we do not prosper." And he would add, with great animation and confidence, "Take courage, we shall see; I know very well what will become of the Congregation; my sins alone hinder its progress. Still, it is the work of God and must make its way in time."

In order that nothing might be wanting to confirm his hope, Almighty God was pleased to give His servant the strongest assurance that he was fulfilling the designs of heaven by means of several persons remarkable for their sanctity and learning, particularly the two holy bishops, Gattinara of Alessandria and Cavalieri of Troja. Both of these prelates recognized the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in the conduct of Father Paul, and they both gave him their counsel, their direction, and their fervent prayers. It is, indeed, believed that Bishop Cavalieri offered up his supplications in behalf of the then budding Institute after his death, for Father John Baptist, a man who was reserved in his conversation and not at all inclined to be deceived, related, that a servant of God, being in prayer, beheld in spirit the bishop's soul going up to heaven and perceived that after thanking the blessed Trinity for his eternal salvation, he petitioned for the help and progress of the Congregation of the Passion.

Thus did Father Paul, with that hopeful spirit of his, go joyously onwards through all the toils and fatigues of his long and laborious life. It is not to be supposed that he did not feel their wearisomeness. God even gave him a keener perception than most of the bitterness of his trials in order to enhance the merit of his crown. But at the same time He bestowed upon His servant a bravery and fortitude which encouraged and even consoled him under his heaviest burdens. In his last years, while walking in Rome with his confessor, he ingenuously exclaimed, "Oh, what sufferings! What rude treatments have I met within this city!" And in the last journey which he

made to the Retreat of Monte Argentario, upon the road between Rome and Civita his companion, speaking to him in the pleasant strain which Father Paul used when he compared himself, out of humility, to a beast, inquired if he had ever carried burdens along these roads. He replied in the same tone, "Burdens, yes, whole cart loads! I went about, in the beginning of my work, from Rome to Monte Argentario, always on foot, through the piercing cold of winter and the burning heat of summer." "Oh, what suffering!" he added. "The trust I always placed in God was the only support of the congregation; otherwise, it must have sunk under the opposition which it had to encounter."

Since a true knowledge of the gifts of God only renders more lowly the heart that receives them, Father Paul, recognizing the light and strength which he had been given from on high, was careful not to attribute to himself the smallest particle of what he had performed. If haply others spoke of the good he had wrought among sinning souls and of the merit he had thus acquired, he quietly replied, "I have no confidence but in the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ." Looking mournfully upon the crucifix, he said he had never done anything well, that he had spoiled every good work, that he was a sinner and deserved hell. Yet, when he thought of the love and goodness of Jesus, he was filled with consolation and threw himself entirely into His merciful arms.

Full of this confidence, he pursued his course with untiring patience. He did not neglect any ordinary human means to ensure the success of his labors, for that, he said, would be tempting instead of honoring God. He used all as instruments, while he relied upon heaven alone for the result. He had often upon his lips those words of Christ, "Without Me you can do nothing," and, again, the text from St. James, "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).

He earnestly recommended to his religious an utter diffidence in themselves, a simple trust in God, frequent prayer, and the recollection of the Divine Presence, saying, "If we were men of prayer and truly humble, looking up to God for all things, He would make use of us, poor and miserable as we are, to do great works for His glory." This was indeed, under all circumstances, the conduct of Father Paul. When he had done all that Christian prudence suggested, he gave up to God alone the care of himself and his Congregation. This, too, was his constant practice in the foundation of the different retreats. The expense of his first building at Monte Argentario was estimated at more than a million Roman crowns, and he had scarcely a farthing in his possession

when he began it. Nevertheless, full of faith, he commenced the work without delay and marked out the plan upon the ground with his little stick.

When he afterwards found it was necessary to have another retreat for the novices in a more healthy part of the mountain, he did not hesitate to commence a new edifice. He invoked the assistance of God, chose a suitable spot for the building, and, beginning with a small alms which had been given him, was speedily enabled, by Divine Providence, to pursue and complete his design. In every other foundation God was his inexhaustible treasury. He possessed nothing of his own and yet he undertook to raise edifices, poor indeed, but still provided with decent churches and with every requisite accommodation for religious communities. In these enterprises he had often to struggle with all that fierce opposition which the works of God are sure to meet with from devils and even sometimes from good people who are actuated by a false zeal or deceived by calumnious representations. In such tempests as these, Father Paul never lost heart; he did not appear over anxious for success, but, with his hopes in the hands of God, and his eyes fixed upon heaven, he waited for Providence to take care of its own work. The same steadfast faith was his rule in all his missionary labors. When he was once convinced he was doing God's will, he paid no attention to his own weakness, his infirmities, or his danger. He went to preach in the *Maremme*,<sup>1</sup> when the air was known to be most injurious and when he was already suffering from a feverish attack. It was a striking lesson in Christian confidence to see him going through all sorts of perils with no other protection but his trust in God." Through the help of Providence," he wrote to one of his brethren, "I have returned from the mission safe and sound, after all that I had to fear from the violent tempests of wind and rain and the almost impassable state of the roads."

It was a matter of astonishment, not so much to our religious who so well knew his courage, but to many seculars to find the servant of God setting off for a mission when he had scarcely strength to stand. He no sooner reached the platform than he appeared a perfectly different man, so marvelously was he revived and supported by Him who gives strength to the helpless and makes His power triumph over weakness. He was not, however, accustomed to commence a mission without being perfectly assured of the will of God. He was most unwilling that either he or his brother religious should intrude themselves, through an irregular or capricious zeal,

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<sup>1</sup> Marshy ground near the sea.

without the legitimate call of superiors. If his services were demanded, he rejoiced in the Lord; if they were not wished for, he resigned himself with perfect indifference.

Upon this subject he wrote thus to one of our religious, "Father N. writes me word that the mission to the infidels is nothing but smoke, because there seems now no fitting opportunity for it. I adore and bless the Divine Will, and hope for some greater work for the Congregation. These are secrets of Providence. God, who knows our wants, will not permit our subjects to be cut off from us, while there are so many calls for them." Thus does one, whose heart is united with God, abandon himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "*But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit*" (I Cor. 6:17).

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Of Father Paul's Success in Inspiring Others with Confidence in God, Joined to Holy Fear**

Father Paul used all his endeavors to infuse into the hearts of others that unshaken confidence which so completely possessed his own. In this manner it was that, during his missions and spiritual exercises, he gained for God the most hardened sinners. After having roused the terrors of his audience by laying before them the awful truths of faith, he allayed their fears with the most consoling pictures of the mercies of God. He dwelt especially upon the merits of the Passion of Christ, and while he revealed the depths of love and tenderness which are hidden in the sufferings of Jesus, his hearers were given to tears, and thus his sermon always ended amidst sobs and groans and a universal cry for pardon. It would scarcely be possible to relate the numerous conversions which were the fruits of such sermons as those, but we will briefly recall a few instances which may give some idea of the efficacious impression produced by the loving voice of the Good Shepherd, tenderly calling back to the fold His wandering sheep. Father Paul was giving a mission in a certain town, and one night, after the last sermon, he was returning home quite worn out with his labors, when he met a man who was standing thoughtfully, with his head buried in his hands, in the attitude of one who is in need of help and consolation. The servant of God could not pass his sorrowing brother without giving him a word of comfort, so he gently said to him, "Would you like to come to confession?" The man replied, "O yes, Father." "Come then," returned the missionary. "Come home with me." The poor penitent made his

confession with the most extraordinary marks of compunction; he accused himself with so many tears and sighs that Father Paul almost expected to see him die of grief at his feet. Desirous of discovering the particular means God had made use of to touch his heart, he asked him what had first moved him to repentance. The man replied that, as he was traveling through the country, he went to church to hear one of the discourses of the mission. The whole sermon struck him extremely. But when the preacher at last raised the crucifix in his hands and exclaimed, "Behold this divine blood! Behold these precious wounds! Behold these arms which created heaven and earth, outstretched upon the cross to receive repentant sinners!" He had felt entirely overcome at the remembrance of his outrages against his loving Redeemer. After reciting this touching instance of God's compassion upon a soul which had so long neglected Him, Father Paul shed many tears and exclaimed in the ardor of his zeal, "Oh, if I were only thirty years younger, I would go all over the world preaching the Divine Mercy."

The same soothing motives of hope and of confidence won the heart of an unhappy sinner who had determined to die in his guilt. But after listening to a sermon of Father Paul's, he was so struck by the goodness of God, that he went immediately to confession and led ever afterwards a life of true penance.

The servant of God was accustomed to receive his penitents with the greatest affection, and when he saw them penetrated with sorrow, he would encourage them, saying, "Be of good heart, and cast away all fear and doubt; I take upon my own shoulders the sins of your past life. Think now only of the future and leave the past to me." The devil once tried to disturb his peace of heart and shake his confidence by saying to him, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, "Unhappy man, you have taken upon yourself the sins of others; you will be sorry for it at the judgment day." But the good Father, calling to mind that Jesus Christ *is the propitiation for our sins* (Rom. 3:25), went with childlike simplicity to the feet of His Lord, saying, "Behold, O my God, how I have loaded myself with the sins of others for Your love, do You look to them; I unburden myself of them to You." Having thus placed his load upon the sacred shoulders of that loving Redeemer who bore with the wood of His cross the weight of all our sins, he was perfectly at peace. He persevered in the same affectionate and encouraging demeanor towards all who sought his aid. This was the reason why Father Paul's penitents went about speaking openly of the tender treatment and kind reception they met with from him. The fame of his gentle and winning ways spread far and wide so that, not only during missions, but at other times, many

robbers and criminals used to come eagerly to seek peace and reconciliation with God.

Among numerous instances which are related in the Processes, the following is sufficient to inspire hope in the most abandoned. The servant of God arrived late one night at Montalto and went straight, according to his custom, to visit the Blessed Sacrament. As he left the church, he observed a man leaning against the doorway, whose countenance told a tale of desolation and despair. Father Paul asked him why he stood there, and the miserable wretch no sooner heard his voice than he felt moved to open his whole heart to him. He exclaimed, “Ah, Father Paul, I have made a compact with the devil, and this very night he is to come and carry me away.” The good Father, full of compassion for this unhappy man’s fate, used every argument to induce him to confide in the Divine Goodness, and to convince him that it is never too late to return to God. At length the despairing sinner beheld a ray of hope in the abyss into which he had fallen. He took courage and resolved to throw himself confidently into the arms of God’s infinite mercy. He followed Father Paul to a retired spot, confessed, and was happily delivered from the power of his dreadful enemy.

The influence of the servant of God over these hardened sinners was so remarkable that a priest deposed in the Processes that he seemed to have been specially sent by Almighty God for the conversion and salvation of these sinners.

But as the virtues of a generous confidence and trusting faith are necessary, not only to bring sinners to repentance, but also to encourage holy souls to take lofty flights up the mount of evangelical perfection, so Father Paul differed widely from those directors who guide souls by means of fear and keep them always in a state of pusillanimity and cowardice. He inculcated courage, confidence, and holy freedom. He was a great enemy to scruples and to everything which disturbed the peace of an intimate union with God. There was nothing he had more often upon his lips in conferences and conversations about perfection than words of encouragement and consolation.

The witnesses who deposed in the Processes have preserved for our edification the words which we are about to quote, so that the reader may at least have the comfort of knowing his sentiments, although he can no longer hear his voice. He was in the Retreat of the Presentation at Monte Argentario when, one day at recreation, he thus spoke to his brethren, “I well know that young beginners in the divine service are apt to be discouraged on account of the imperfections into which they fall. But whenever you find yourselves inclined to fear, lift up your hearts

lovingly to God and be assured that your defects are, in the sight of His infinite goodness, but as a few threads of tow cast into a sea of fire. Imagine to yourselves,” he continued, “a burning furnace as vast as the hemisphere we inhabit. If a piece of tow were thrown into it, would it not be so absorbed in the fire as instantly to disappear? Now, ‘*Our God is a consuming fire*’ (Dt. 4:24; Heb 12:24), as it is written. Our imperfections, compared with His goodness, are what a piece of tow is to the furnace. When, therefore, we have fallen, let us humble ourselves sorrowfully in His presence and, then, with an act of unbounded confidence, let us throw ourselves into the ocean of His goodness, where every failing will be cancelled and doubt will be turned into love.”

To a religious who was of a timorous disposition, he said, “Where is the Father who, carrying his little child in his arms, would let him fall to the ground on purpose? And if even an earthly parent could do this, our heavenly Father could not. Courage must be your motto in the service of God.” These exhortations were made with so much earnestness and vivacity, that none could doubt he had received a singular gift for encouraging and animating souls to heroic acts of virtue. And to him might well be applied those words of Jeremiah the prophet, “The Lord has given me a wise and discreet tongue for the consolation of the timid and the weak” (Is. 50:4).

The confidence, by which the revered Father reposed in God, was accompanied by that holy fear which is the beginning of wisdom and which gives stability and security to the spiritual edifice. He used to relate with trembling awe those examples in scripture of men who had once been holy, but who, neglecting the Lord in little things, fell by degrees into greater and were at last eternally reprov'd by God. The state of abandonment, in which this servant of God often found himself, furnished him with constant motives for fear, and thus it was that his hope was kept from becoming presumption.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **Of the Special Assistance and Loving Protection by Which Our Lord Showed How Pleasing in His Sight Was the Lively Hope of His Servant**

To Father Paul’s confidence in God must be attributed, more than to any other causes, the marvelous fruit of his missions. He was accustomed to prepare himself by study of the matter he



was about to preach, but far more by interior recollection and union with God. Upon this subject he used to say, “Would it not be an act of simple folly for anyone to let fall a drop of spring water into the ocean with the expectation of making the whole sea fresh? Just as absurd is it for a soul to believe herself capable of the least good without the help and special assistance of God. From the moment we attribute to ourselves the least credit in what we perform, God humbles and confounds us, and ceases to employ us to do great things for His glory. Science without true humility only puffs us up; but humility, united to prayer and confidence in heaven alone, causes God to work wonders through us in the conversion of souls.” In this manner did Father Paul engage in his favor the assistance of God, who so visibly aided him, and by whose powerful protection he appeared to be completely overshadowed while he was laboring for his neighbor’s good.

With equal clemency and mercy the Almighty watched over him in all the difficulties attending the foundation of his Institute. When he was forsaken by any of his companions and disciples, it was natural that he should be somewhat pained, for it cost him much to direct and instruct them, and it was not an easy matter to have them ordained in those days, when the Congregation had not yet obtained the privilege of receiving orders upon the title of poverty. Nevertheless, Father Paul, who well knew that God Himself cultivated those chosen plants, which like flowers growing on Calvary and watered with the blood of our blessed Redeemer, were to diffuse around a sweet odor of Jesus Christ, was never agitated, never cast down, but reposed all his care upon his Lord, and with an act of confidence in Him, exclaimed, “Every tree that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.” “Few and good,” he would say. “God has no need of anyone – I trust entirely to Him. The Congregation is His own. His were the lights which were given me to found it. It is for Him to look to its advancement.”

With the same hopeful feelings he consoled himself at the death of any religious, who seemed one of the pillars of his little edifice. When he found himself in temporal privations, he used to say, “I am not afraid; I have found by experience that God has always provided for us. When we were two, he gave us enough for two, when four enough for four, and so on; verifying His own divine words, ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added to you,’ and ‘Be not solicitous, saying what shall we eat and what shall we drink...’” (Lk. 6:31-34). Some of our dear brethren, persuaded that there would be a difficulty in living at Rome, advised Father Paul not to begin that foundation with so numerous a family as thirty-three. But the

servant of God replied that he trusted Providence, who would never let them want, as in fact the sequel proved. What happened, with regard to the Roman retreat, was experienced at all the other foundations. All were begun in great poverty and, although as a loving trial of the faith of His servant, Almighty God permitted them for a short time to suffer some little privations, yet in the end He always furnished them with a sufficient provision. And it is a source of much gratitude and praise to God, that in those days our religious never sought alms but subsisted upon what was spontaneously offered them. In the times of the greatest scarcity, there were always persons found who, moved by an impulse of charity, brought them all they needed.

It sometimes happened that when the dinner hour came, the supply of bread failed, but the Providence of God could not fail. As if to encourage us to live without a thought of earthly things, He sent relief when it was least expected. Thus, upon a festival day, at the Retreat of St. Maria del Cerro, when the superior of the house was coming out of the church, he met a pious person who asked him what his religious were doing. The Father replied that they were at table reading, not eating, because they had no bread, at which time the other brought forth a basket of provisions which he had with him and sent it in to the monastery. The superior, full of gratitude, said that on this, as on many other occasions, Providence had always taken care of them.

Father Paul, seeing the powerful protection of heaven thus constantly extended over his little Congregation, earnestly exhorted the superiors to throw aside all excessive anxiety to see their houses well provided, and recommended them to be solicitous rather to preserve among their religious a spirit of prayer, of retirement, and of exact observance. He told them that since God had enabled them to found twelve retreats, they need not fear lest He should now forsake them. "Let us only be faithful to Him," he said, "and let us not doubt." He did not object to the collection of alms which were made at certain times; but he enjoined the collectors not to be importunate, saying, "These poor, good seculars do not like to be teased, and we are in danger of losing the true spirit of our vocation by going about too much." He was not alarmed when the season proved adverse and the harvest scanty. He once wrote in these words to a benefactor, "The frost has ruined the vines, and it is feared there will be a scarcity of wheat, but the granaries of our heavenly Master can never fail." He wished to see his feelings shared by all those whom he directed or who came to him for advice. He did not find fault with the ordinary means for procuring money suggested by the rules of prudence, but he never could approve of the methods made use of by some, which he said helped to excite avarice and to delude those who had

conceived expectations from them. “As to the lottery tickets,” he wrote to a friend, “I beg you to renounce so silly an idea. That is not the way to provide for a house which is to be a nursery for holy souls. I never had the folly to ask you for any numbers. *God forbid!*”

To accustom him to this total independence of earthly support, Almighty God tried him in various ways. Out of obedience to the Holy Spirit, who guided him, he made his first journey to Rome without the slightest provision. But when amidst the Genoese mountains he was fainting from want and had no means of procuring relief, Providence sent him, as we have elsewhere related, some police officers, who received him with the most affectionate charity. Encouraged by the loving care of his Lord, he ever afterwards made his voyages without taking any money with him, and when an alms was offered him, he generally refused it in favor of the poor. In his extreme old age, when he was in need of some particular medicine, our Lord, who holds in His hands the hearts of all, moved a pious person to take him an alms with the express condition that it should be spent in procuring some delicacy for Father Paul. The infirmarian, who found this happening upon several occasions, went about saying, “God provides this servant of His with everything that he wants, because he relies upon Him alone.” He was traveling once with two of his brethren towards Valentano, and by some mischance they lost their way in a forest. They wandered about till they were completely exhausted with fatigue and want of nourishment, not having taken any food for twenty-four hours. But God, at length, looked down upon the needs of His servants and provided for their relief. He so disposed that a pious lady, who resided at a short distance, observed the good religious. Immediately, conceiving that Father Paul might be among them, she resolved to go out to meet them. It seems that her husband, at first, was not much pleased with this proceeding, but conquered by the fervent charity of his wife, he consented to accompany her and gave the Fathers a pressing invitation to take some rest and refreshment at his house. His compassion and devotion were so excited by the sight of them, that he insisted upon washing Father Paul’s feet. Perceiving that several large thorns had entered into his flesh, he extracted them with a little pain to poor Paul, as may be easily imagined. They were all treated with the greatest hospitality. When they took their leave, their host and hostess felt as if they had been entertaining our blessed Lord Himself.

The good woman was amply recompensed by God for her charity for, when some time afterwards she was attacked by a severe illness, which placed her life in imminent danger, Father Paul, knowing her situation by a miraculous inspiration and being aware also that she was

suffering violent temptations to despair, resolved to go to her assistance. When he reached the house, he found her in a profound lethargy. But he immediately went up to her and challenged her in an authoritative tone, “Angela, what are these doubts which pass through your mind, and why do you despair of your eternal salvation? Do you forget how good God is?” He went on suggesting to her various motives of hope and confidence in the Divine Mercy. These words produced an instantaneous effect upon the sick person. She roused herself from her lethargy and began to enjoy a sweet confidence in the mercies of God, joined to a lively sense of the Divine Goodness. Before long she was perfectly restored to health.

Another time Father Paul was again on his way to Valentano and had courageously undertaken the journey on foot, although he was suffering from an attack of fever. He lodged one night in a monastery at Bolsena and intended to proceed to his destination the next morning. But upon rising he found his strength so weak that it was impossible for him to walk much further. He therefore resolved to embark on the lake below Bolsena, and thus to spare himself some fatigue by performing as much of his journey as he could by water. Father Fulgentius of Jesus was with him, and they went down to the lake together to entreat a boatman to transport them out of charity on their way to Valentano. This man, with a harshness which is not often used towards religious, positively refused to take them, although Father Paul offered him a note by which he could procure payment for his trouble. Father Paul renewed his solicitations in the most humble manner. At last, seeing no resource but in Providence, he recommended himself and his desires to God, trusting to have from Him what he could not obtain from the rude and cruel boatman. At that moment a gentleman on horseback made his appearance and, coming up to the servant of God, asked if he were Father Paul. The good Father replied in the affirmative, and added that he was waiting to cross the lake but could find no one to take him because he had no money to pay for his passage. The gentlemen no sooner heard this than he went up to the boatman, gave him the price he asked, and then returned to take leave of the religious. Father Paul, whose heart was sensibly alive to such an act of kindness, thanked him most warmly and offered to celebrate a Mass for him. His benefactor said he would not put him under such an obligation and only recommended himself to his prayers. When the good Fathers reached Valentano, they knew not where to find lodging. But here again Providence was their refuge, and they soon met with a gentleman of the place, who took them home to his own house and treated them with all possible hospitality. The servant of God, when he called to mind all these instances of the affectionate

care of his Lord, melted into tears, exclaiming, “I ought to burn with love for God to correspond with the tender thoughtful charity God has shown towards me.”

The divine protection was exhibited still more strikingly in the miraculous preservation of the saintly Father’s life upon several different occasions. When he was quite a young man, he was once attacked by robbers, who intended to take away not only his property but also his life. He had recourse to prayer to God for preservation, and then with great humility he entreated the ruffians to spare him out of charity. Strange to say, those merciless hearts were so moved by his petitions that they contented themselves with taking his money and then left him in peace. Another time he was traveling with a brother, and, as they were both very tired, they sat down under a tree to rest, when suddenly the good Father rose and said, “It is not well for us to be here; let us go somewhere else.” No sooner had they left the tree, than it fell to the ground without a moment’s notice, and would have inevitably crushed them had they remained there. Our Lord, in His wondrous goodness and compassion for those who trust in Him, gives them even more than they ask as a reward for their confidence. The servant of God met a master fisherman once on the seashore near Portocolle, who gave him a history of his misfortunes, saying that for three or four months he had caught nothing, that the expense of keeping his men at work had made him run into debt, and that his nets, instead of coming up full of fish, were often destroyed with holes which were torn in them by the rocks. He ended by imploring Father Paul to help him by at least blessing his fishing tackle. Touched with the distress of the poor man, Father Paul sought the aid of Our Blessed Savior, who had had compassion on His own apostles in a similar situation. With his usual devotion to Mary, he desired the people to recite her Litanies. Then taking his crucifix, he blessed the sea and the nets, and told them to have a lively faith and God would assist them. He pursued his journey. The fisherman that very night went out with his boats and caught so much fish that he was enabled to pay all his debts and to send a generous alms to one of our retreats, out of gratitude for the benefit he had received.

During the year 1766 there was a great scarcity of grain in the city of Corneto, and our benefactor Signor Dominic Costantini found that the provision in his storage would not nearly suffice for his family and dependents until harvest time. Father Paul arrived at Corneto just when this fact was discovered. Signor Costantini begged the assistance of his prayers and conducted him to look at the wheat in the granary. The servant of God blessed it with much fervor and desired his friend not to fear. After his departure the grain was all threshed at once, and,

wonderful to relate, the small quantity of flour which it produced lasted until the month of August, not only for the maintenance of the family, but for the support of the work people in the country, and for the liberal supply which those good souls always distributed to the poor. This prodigious increase was recognized by all to be a miracle wrought through the faith of Father Paul. Alluding to all these signal favors God had bestowed upon him, Father Paul used to say, “If God had only opened my eyes to see the perils I have escaped, and the favors I have received through him, some day or other I must have fallen dead with love and sorrow at the foot of His altar.” We have now seen why it was that he desired nothing upon earth but continual sufferings and tribulations, because he was sustained by that hope which made him seek all his comfort in heaven, without which the life of one who loves God would be inconceivably wearisome, tedious, and intolerable. It was hope which gave him that lofty and generous soul; it was hope which inspired him with courage and energy in the greatest difficulties; it was hope which made him often say, “God will help us; our Lord has supported us in so many trials. He will carry us through this.” It was hope which bore him up, strengthened him, and consoled him in his undertakings, because it was inspired and animated by that divine charity which the Holy Spirit had so abundantly infused into the soul of His servant, as we are now about to see.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **Of His Charity Towards God**

God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God (I Jn. 4:16). God is Himself love, and he whose happy faith it is to lead a life of love lives in God and God in him. If a soul, being one with his Lord, partakes abundantly of the divine communications and becomes so much richer, by how much more it is closely and perfectly united with God, so that it may be truly said, “He is most holy who has most love.” The Divine Goodness, who intended Father Paul to perform great things for His glory, deigned to enkindle in his heart a wonderful fire of charity to enable him more efficaciously to increase in the souls of others those flames which Jesus came to cast upon earth. And well did the whole course of his life prove how fervently he loved God, and how sincerely he cherished his neighbor for the love of God.

From the moment that he began to taste the sweetness of God, his whole heart, all his

pleasure and all his delight were centered in Him. When quite a youth he could not resist pouring forth to his intimate friends the amorous effusions of his heart, which consisted in touching protestations of his faithful, unwavering love. And hence it was, that in his tenderest years, his greatest happiness was to be in the house of God, to serve at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to assist at the sacred functions. He was to be seen there perfectly recollected and immoveable, and with so singular a gift of prayer that it was already accompanied with tears of devotion. Our Lord, who wished him to become strong by following the path of tribulations, disposed him by spiritual consolations for the trials he was to encounter in the foundations of the Congregation, which, as he said, was to commence at a time when the whole world was in ruins.

And, as sincere charity always brings with it burning zeal, the young Paul received so strong a hatred for offenses against God, so eager a desire of exterminating sin, that he went about with a crucifix in his hands, preaching and calling upon all to return to the love of their good God. In his transports of fervor, he desired that his body, as well as his soul, should be sacrificed to love. He tortured his flesh with the most cruel austerities, and as he once said, jestingly, of himself, through his continual fasts and other mortifications his skin cleaved to his bones. This, however, did not induce him to relent. His constitution, which was never strong, at last gave way, and the poor youth fell into an illness from which he only recovered with great difficulty.

His heart was so strongly stirred with this absorbing charity, that he seemed unable to contain it within his breast, and the two ribs on his left side became considerably elevated. It is not known precisely at what time this extraordinary palpitation began, but it was remarked that it went on increasing, sometimes with more, sometimes with less violence but never ceasing as long as he lived. It was deposed by those who were his constant companions that on Fridays it became more impetuous and caused him more pain, so that sometimes he let fall sighs and groans which inspired devotion in all who heard them. And although the servant of God endeavored to conceal the cause of these sufferings, he could not prevent the elevation of his side from being noticed by others on several occasions.

The following deposition was made under solemn oath in the Processes by a learned professor of medicine. "I believe the charity of Father Paul of the Cross to have been particularly intense and heroic, insomuch that it prevented his heart from remaining in its natural circumference and caused an enlargement in the left ventricle. The palpitations and pains which he suffered sufficiently proved this to me. But I was more strongly confirmed in my opinion

about ten years later, when I was called to attend Father Paul during his illness at the Retreat at Vetralla. Upon that occasion I had to bleed him in the right arm and I noticed that the ribs of the left side were curved and raised higher than those of the right. Desiring to be certain of this fact, I examined and felt with my hand this curvature and elevation, which I found to be exactly what it appeared. It was then that I took the resolution, that if I happened to be present at the saintly Father's death, I would cause his body to be opened, under the firm conviction that his heart would be found impressed with some sign of the Passion, of the archangel St. Michael, or some other supernatural mark, which had occasioned the above-mentioned elevation and curvature." To the same cause, namely, the love with which he burned for God, may be attributed the extraordinary heat of his chest, which often made the woollen cloth which he wore appear scorched, as if it had been next to a fire.

Father Paul, being thus inflamed with heavenly love, continued always increasing in ardor. By the practice of the most heroic acts of virtue, he purified his soul and removed from it every stain which could lessen the fervor of his charity. He was particularly diligent in keeping far from him the least thing capable of displeasing God, and his confessor attested that he once said to him, "Since my conversion (he always applied the term of conversion to the commencement of his penitent life when he was about nineteen years of age), I do not remember having ever committed a mortal sin or even a deliberate venial one."

He was most exact in the observance of the divine law and of the evangelical counsels. His heart was so completely given to God that he had no affection left for creatures. He told his confessor, "I am wicked indeed, but I am not a thief; I have zealously preserved all my love for God and in saving souls. I have cared only that they should love Him." He appeared never satiated with thinking of his Sovereign Good. For many years he had practiced the pious custom of walking always in the Divine Presence and of adoring God everywhere by faith. "If I were asked," he again said to the same confessor, "at any moment of what I was thinking, it appears to me that I could always reply, 'God.'" Out of his tender affection for God, he was constantly feeling the most eager desires to burst from the earthly tenement of his body, and to be face to face with his only Good. His companions sometimes told him that he would do much for God's glory by remaining on earth, but he impatiently replied, "No. All I wish for is to be united to Him."

This burning heart of his was frequently throwing out, as it were, sparks of love by the most



touching and fervent aspirations. He had a great devotion for repeating the *Trisagion*<sup>2</sup>, which he said was a song from heaven. During his illness he used to break forth into such impetuous exclamations and such floods of tears, that those who heard him wondered at his strength. Even the seculars who charitably entertained him at their houses, observing him through pious curiosity, often beheld his countenance inflamed and his eyes wet with tears. When the servant of God thought he was discovered, he would try to conceal the cause of his emotion by saying that he suffered from violent internal agitation. In order to bear ever in mind that he belonged entirely to Jesus crucified, he dropped his family name and assumed that of the cross. He wrote to one of his friends, "I have no longer the name which you give me in your letter, but only that which I sign below." But he went to still further lengths than this, for, by way of consecrating himself more visibly and painfully to his Lord, he marked upon his breast with a red-hot iron a cross with the letters "J.C.". The impression remained till his death and was then distinctly seen and observed by several persons.

Father Paul's highest happiness was to speak of God and of His greatness. He thoroughly abhorred worldly discourses, and with singular dexterity he generally contrived to cut them short as soon as they were started. He conversed about heavenly things with marvelous sweetness and grace. He became gradually more and more excited, his countenance grew inflamed, the color came into his cheeks, and he looked like a seraphim. The most intelligent persons listened with astonishment when he treated of the divine attributes and perfections. He went into the depths of that profound abyss, saying how impossible it was for any human intellect to comprehend the infinite, eternal, immense God, and how all that we could conceive of Him in this life was nothing compared to what He was in Himself. He lamented and deplored with bitter tears the ingratitude of others who corresponded so coldly to the unbounded goodness of God. He would repeat, "What! A God made man! A God crucified! A God dead! A God hidden under the sacramental species! Who? A God!" And then he was for some time silent in a sort of ecstatic stupor. He then continued to exclaim, "O burning charity, passionate love! Who? And for whom? O ungrateful creatures! How is it that you love not God! I would that it were possible to set all the world on fire with love. Ah! for a little strength to go out into the open fields preaching my dear crucified Jesus, our good Father dying upon the cross for us sinners!"

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<sup>2</sup> Prayer based on 'Holy, Holy, Holy'.

Although the servant of God spoke with all this vivacity of feeling, he truly believed himself to have not so much as a spark of love in his breast. He wrote to a devout person, “My dear daughter in Christ, I reply to your letter today, as we have already celebrated the first Vespers of the octave of our infinite love in the Blessed Sacrament. I would fain say great things to you, but when one loves not, one cannot speak of love. There is a language which love alone can teach. I read your letter at Orbetello, and on my return to the retreat towards evening, my spirit wished to say many things to your heart, but earth is silent before the greatness of God, ‘*Let all the earth keep silent*’ (Hab. 2:20). Much I meant to say, but I am dumb. Listen, O my daughter, to the Divine Spouse and let Him teach you. I would desire to be consumed with love; but what do I say? I speak of what I know not. Ah! my good God, teach me what I ought to say. I would fain be all on fire with love. More, I would sing in those flames and magnify the great mercies which increased love has imparted to your soul. Tell me, then, my daughter, should not the poor miserable Father be grateful to God for the superabundant graces He has bestowed upon His child? It should indeed be so, but I know not how to feel it. To be convulsed with love for this great God is little; to be consumed for Him is little; what, then, shall we do? Ah, let us lead a life of prolonged agonies for the sake of our Heavenly Love. Alas! do you think I have said what I ought? No, for I would say much more, and I cannot. Do you know what consoles me? It is that our great God is that Infinite Good which He is, and that no one can love Him or praise Him as He deserves. I rejoice that He loves Himself infinitely. I rejoice in His essential Beatitude, which none can deprive him. But I am foolish; would it not be better that, like a moth, I should precipitate myself into the flames of charity and be reduced to nothing in that Divine All? But this is a work of love, and I, through my wicked life, am unworthy of such a transport. My thirst is so great, that whole rivers would not slake it. Only the ocean could satisfy me – the sea of the flames of love. Tell this to your Divine Spouse.”

In a letter to another pious person, he exclaimed, “O sweet embraces of love! O divine caresses. When shall we burn like seraphim and be consumed with love!” And again. “What shall we do, my daughter, to show our gratitude to our sweetest Jesus? Ah, I desire that such a fire should be enkindled in us as would burn all who came near us, and not only them but all people, tribes, tongues, and nations – in a word – every living creature, that all might know and love the Sovereign Good.”

Being invited to profess some novices, the compassionate Father preached with great unction

from the text, “Go you also into my vineyard” (Mt. 20:7). Then he gave the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. In doing so his countenance became so inflamed that it seemed all on fire.

He went upon one occasion to the Carmelite convent at Vetralla, and discoursed to the nuns upon the love of God, taking for his text those words of the Gospel, “He that thirsts, let him come to Me” (Jn. 7:37). The fervor with which he spoke appeared to transport him out of himself. Wishing to excite confidence in those religious, he told them that frequent communion was a most efficacious means for uniting themselves with God, and that they were to cast doubts boldly away. His words were of great service to the holy virgins, and appeared to have been specially inspired by God, as some of them suffered a great deal from pusillanimity and fear. To this day the community speaks of the sermon on “He That Thirsts” and gratefully recall the fervor and devotion it introduced among them.

He was in Rome on account of certain affairs of our Congregation in the month of May. He was lodging with some of our benefactors when one day, after the hour of repose, his companion, who was accustomed to wait till Father Paul called him, after expecting him for more than two hours, at last went straight to his room to look for him. Upon entering (these are the very words of his attestation in the Processes), he seemed to find himself in Paradise, so great was the consolation given him by the sight of the servant of God, whose face darted forth rays like the sun. Approaching the bed, he exclaimed with simplicity, “I see now, Father, why you did not call me – all for your reverence, and nothing for me.” The good Father, in whose soul the divine favors always produced their right effect, namely, an increase of holy humility, replied, “Be quiet and mind you say not a word of this to anyone.”

Another time Father Paul was discoursing on spiritual matters in the house of Signora Maria Giovanna Grazi, our great benefactress at Orbetello, and he suddenly began to speak with wondrous ardor and impetuosity. The pious lady raised her eyes to look at him and saw, to her surprise, a marked alteration in his countenance. It beamed so brightly that she was obliged to turn away. He presently concluded abruptly, saying to his companion, “Let us retire.” He went quickly to his room, leaving the woman filled with wonder and devotion.

Once, in his hermit days, when he was with the Bishop of Troja, they were one day contemplating together the sorrows of Mary, when Paul proposed that they should recite the symbol of the apostles, and upon pronouncing the words “*became man*,” he was so overcome with the piercing thought of the wondrous abasement of the Son of God, and of the bitter wounds

of Mary His Mother, that he lost his senses in a violent transport of love. Not less admirable is what we are about to relate. Father Paul had given a mission at Fabrica, and, upon its conclusion, left to preach another at Corchiano. He was followed on his road by several gentlemen of the former place, who accompanied him out of affection for his person. As they went along, the good Father was full of cheerfulness and holy joy. When they arrived at a place called Cinque Cerque, Father Paul began to admire the landscape, which was then adorned in its brightest spring dress of flowers and herbs. He was led to speak of the beauty and amenity of that joyous sight. Making use of the visible creatures to raise his thoughts to the Omnipotent Creator, he alluded to the greatness of God and exclaimed, “O great God! O grandeur of God!” So saying, his body was completely carried away by his spirit, and just as he was lifting up his arms to heaven, he was elevated about two palms from the ground and remained in an ecstasy for some time. Those who accompanied him were moved to tears by so marvelous a sight. But he, upon returning to himself, quietly and prudently went on talking as if nothing had happened.

As the servant of God continually fed his soul with the contemplation of the divine perfections, he could never weary of speaking about them to others. Hence, when he was among his brethren, his conversation, even in times of recreation, was always of God. He introduced the subject simply and naturally and would relieve it occasionally with some little pleasantry. Then he went on talking in his winning way of the love of God and of union with Him, adding an appropriate anecdote or fact that had come under his notice. It must be allowed that in this power of his, he had, so to speak, a celestial art, so that none who heard him could help being delighted. They would have liked the recreation to have had no end, and they came away from it as recollected as from a meditation. His conversation produced a still more wonderful effect upon a pious lady, who was listening to him when he was quite young, and before he had attained that vehemence of charity, which God infused into his soul at a later period. But he spoke even then with so much sweetness and unction, that his devout hearer, following the loving attraction of the Divine Goodness, was transported out of her senses by his words.

One of the strongest proofs of the reality of Father Paul’s charity was his jealousy of God’s honor, and the acute pain he suffered at the sight of the offenses committed against Him. The hatred he had for sin is not to be described; he could not hear it named without shuddering. When he preached on the malice of mortal sin, his internal sorrow showed itself in the pallor of his face and the agitation of his whole person. None could doubt in beholding him, that if he

might have sacrificed his life to prevent a sin, he would willingly have done so. When he heard of any particular outrage against God, or knew that the holy Church was suffering, that the rich and great set an evil example to the poor and lowly, or that the priests neglected to correspond to their high vocation, he wept and groaned and sighed and struck his breast, saying, "My sins are the cause of all this. My infidelities are moving God to anger." He would willingly have braved the most cruel and barbarous of deaths to remedy the disorders of Christendom. His greatest cross in his illnesses was his inability to do anything to prevent offenses against God. With tears in his eyes he cried out, "Ah, if I could only work! But I am not able; I am no longer a laborer." While he had any strength left him, he used to go out into the open country, preaching with such tender compassion the sufferings of the innocent Lamb immolated for our sins, that several worthy ecclesiastics said of him, "This good Father will one of these days drop down dead in the middle of his meditations on the Passion."

In his sermons, with an utter disregard of human respect, he inveighed against the disorders which were most prevalent. If any persons sought to impede the fruit of his missions, he opposed them with all the indignant zeal of his apostolic character. Thus, when he was preaching in a certain town where the principal person of the place gave anything but good example, Father Paul boldly sent him word not to dare to disturb the good order of the missions or hinder its fruit by his wicked actions. With the same holy liberty, whenever he saw God offended, he feared no danger, but freely reprehended the guilty. The miraculous effects, produced by his corrections, clearly proved that he was inspired by God. He was once traveling in the Roman *compagna*, when he met a laborer ploughing the fields, who because his beasts were not quite so docile as he wished, uttered the most revolting blasphemies. The servant of God, with great charity, gently admonished him and tried to persuade him to acknowledge his fault. But the wretched man, unmoved by his paternal advice, continued his dreadful language. Then, turning his rage against Father Paul, he seized a musket with the intention of firing upon him. The good Father, more terrified at the blasphemies with which God was insulted than at the danger which threatened himself, raised his crucifix in his hands and said, "If you will not respect your Savior, at least these beasts will acknowledge Him." At his words the oxen, as if they understood and wished to repair the outrages offered to their Creator, fell down on their knees before the servant of God. The ploughman, at this phenomenon, entered into himself. He threw down his weapon and, casting himself at the feet of Father Paul, he asked his pardon and begged to be allowed to follow

him and to make his peace with God.

The truest test of perfect charity is a willingness to suffer for the object beloved. Father Paul often repeated upon this subject a reflection he had made in his Hermitage of the Annunciation on Monte Argentario. "One day," he said, "it being very cold, I wished to light a fire. Accordingly I picked up in the woods some dry, well-seasoned sticks and found that in a short time they made a great blaze. And why did they ignite so easily? Because they had been long exposed to cold, frost, sun, and heat, and so had become quite dry and withered. Thus," he added, "does it happen with our souls. If we want them to burn with the fire of divine love, we must let them be purified by trials and hardships, by temptations and persecutions." In the same strain he wrote to a pious person, "O my dear daughter! Happy is that soul which is detached from its own pleasure, from its own feeling, from its own understanding. This is indeed a lofty lesson, but God will teach it to you if you place your whole contentment in the cross of Christ, and in dying upon that Cross to all that is not God. As for the contempt, the slights, and the derision you have to bear, receive them all with the greatest gratitude and let them form a pile upon which you are to be immolated as a victim of love."

Our Lord was pleased to give his servant Paul many opportunities of suffering for the glory of His name and the promotion of devotion towards His life-giving Passion. His whole life was spent in labors and fatigues, and in the journeys to and fro to found new retreats, and to direct those already established. He founded altogether fourteen houses, including the hospice at Rome, and the convent of Passionist nuns at Corneto. Many other works he also undertook for the divine glory, and in all of them he had to encounter much opposition and many vexations. One was the project of a penitentiary for women, concerning which he spoke to Pope Clement XIV, but which was never completed on account of the benefactor changing his design. Still greater, however, were the labors and sufferings of his apostolic life; witness the missions which he preached in towns and villages, the exercises he gave to monasteries, the colloquies, conferences, and correspondence he held with so many persons, all of which abundantly prove that his charity was always working and never growing weary in the Divine service. Like a docile child, he left everything to the amorous guidance of the Spirit of his heavenly Father. Before all his enterprises, he sought with great earnestness to purify his heart and to keep his intention fixed upon no other end but God. He often repeated with deep feeling, "*For the great glory of God.*" He had learnt from his early director, the wise and holy Bishop Gattinara, the practice of making

an examen upon purity of intention in his actions many times during the day. He derived so much profit from this exercise that he said to his confessor, "It seems to me that I have always acted from a pure motive, and I have often renewed my intentions twenty times in one sermon." He had so high an esteem for this virtue that he said, "I should consider myself a reprobate if I robbed Almighty God of His own gifts."

The hardest of all the trials love has to bear is suffering, which is like water thrown upon a fire to put it out. But the charity of our servant of God was too strong and too glowing to be easily extinguished. In the first years of his dedication to the service of God, it pleased the Divine Majesty to visit him with many special lights and graces, but at the same time He was preparing for him greater crosses and trials. In his interior revelations he was permitted to hear these words, "I will show you what great things you shalt suffer for My name." In a vision he saw a discipline with golden chains, upon which was inscribed "Love" to signify that his scourge was to be one of love. Upon one occasion, while praying before the Blessed Sacrament, his spirit took a loving flight towards Jesus, when a voice said to him, "Son, he who approaches Me approaches thorns." Another time, he was standing absorbed in prayer in the sanctuary of the most Holy Trinity at Gaeta, when an angel came to him with a golden cross, and our Lord interiorly said to him, "I will make you another Job." With these and similar favors did Almighty God, who disposes all things with admirable sweetness, prepare His servant for future afflictions. And these divine inspirations inflamed his heart with so ardent a desire for suffering, that he used to say he had an insatiable hunger for crosses. It was not long before our Lord began to satisfy his cravings. No sooner was he clothed with the holy habit, than he was tormented during many hours of the day with the most horrible desolations, temptations, and internal derelictions; so much so that everyone else appeared happy compared to him. As he advanced in years, the frequency and intensity of these spiritual martyrdoms increased. He said in confidence to his confessor, "For fifty years I do not remember to have passed a single day without interior darkness. We read of souls having desolations for five, ten, fifteen years, but as for me, I cannot think of it without shuddering." And he spoke this because, out of his great humility, he feared having been guilty of some hidden infidelity. He said with St. Austin, "Many things have my eyes known which I know not."

When he contemplated his interior, he used to tremble from head to foot with the fear of being eternally lost. He said he should feel joyful if he were sure of remaining in purgatory till

the end of the world, because, then, at least, he should some day see God. He would have been thankful to die with the feelings of contrition of many of the poor sinners whom he assisted in their last moments, so great was his terror and apprehension of the awful judgment. At these times nothing could console or relieve him, and his confessor found no better means than changing the discourse, for in his case words of comfort only increased his pain. He often repeated in the bitterness of his heart the lamentation of the prophet Jeremiah, “He has shut up my ways with square stones, he has turned my paths upside down” (Lam. 3:9), and those of Ezekiel, “Lamentations and canticles and woe” (Ezek. 2:10). In this sea of sorrow, his usual exercise was perfect abandonment to the Divine Will. Having read that St. Gertrude recited daily a rosary, composed of the words, “*May Your will be done,*” he began also to practice a devotion so acceptable to God. With equal sentiments of conformity he exclaimed, “Just and true are Your judgments, O Lord. You have done all things justly, for we have sinned and disobeyed Your law.” God once showed him an immense heap of crosses, and at the same time taught him to cast his little will into the vast ocean of the will of God. Father Paul obeyed, and the crosses vanished. Then it was that he spent his time between suffering and love, realizing what he wrote to a devout soul, “One of the clearest signs we can give of loving God is to seek nothing but His divine pleasure, and to follow promptly the least sign of His will. Just as melted wax in the hands of an artificer, such ought the soul to be in the hands of God. My soul is liquefied that my Beloved may speak.” If in this resignation to the Divine Will he found no sensible sweetness, he derived at least much esteem for suffering. Hence he often replied, to those who asked him how he was, that he was well, that he felt no pain in his gout nor in his sciatica nor in his rheumatism nor in any other of his illnesses, because he remembered that by suffering he pleased God and merited for himself an abundance of glory in the next world, to which the troubles of this were not worthy to be compared.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **Of Father Paul’s Perfect Conformity to the Most Holy Will of God**

It was impossible to mistake in our servant of God the true mark and countersign of a soul that really loves. “*Those who are truly lovers keep His commandments*” (Jn. 15). The will of



Father Paul was as united to the will of God, that he seemed to have no other rule for his life or guidance for his conduct. This was his sphere, his center, his repose, and his resting place; hence he was never agitated, never disturbed, and when anything did not succeed with him, he only said, "Leave all to God; let His will be done. I desire neither more nor less than what God desires, for time and for eternity." He expressed the same sentiments under all misfortunes. "May the most amiable will of God be done!" he exclaimed, meekly bowing his head. And he often quoted our Blessed Lord's words in the Gospel, "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (Jn. 6:38), and again, "My food is to do the will of My Father" (Jn. 4:34). He well knew that this is the true secret of gaining the heart of God and interesting Him in our behalf. "He will do the will of them that fear Him," and that he who opposes the Divine Will can never enjoy peace. "Who shall resist Him and have peace?" In all the troubles and difficulties he met with in the commencement of his Congregation, this was his only resource. Raising his eyes to heaven, in an attitude of the deepest submission and confidence, he would say, "The will of God." Then taking off his cap and reverently bowing his head, he would add, "*May Your will be done*" (Lk. 22:24). With a smiling countenance he would explain himself, saying, "When God sends us crosses and misfortunes, we must bow down and humble ourselves, because, if we raise our heads, He will give us ten strokes where he only intended one; if we lower them, He will hardly give us one where He intended ten."

Many and bitter, however, were the trials which the servant of God had to endure in order to render his conformity perfect and heroic. Our reader can hardly have forgotten how his life was interwoven with sufferings, and how many sorrowful events happened to wound his heart. He bore them all with uncomplaining meekness, and when the Congregation, to which he had sacrificed his whole life, was threatened with dissolution, he abandoned his work to God's pleasure without a murmur. "The Institute is born," he wrote, "but I see that it is not improbable it may die in its very infancy. I prepare myself for all, and resign myself to behold this work done or undone, just as God wishes." In another letter he said, "On my return from Rome, where our affairs have progressed according to the divine pleasure and to my entire satisfaction because I wish for nothing but the accomplishment of the Will of God." His maxim was to receive all afflictions straight from the hands of God, without so much as looking at the instruments through which they came. He made use of the following similitude. "Suppose," he said to his brethren, "you had gone into the garden to gather fruit and a heavy shower of rain came on. What would

you do? Without doubt you would seek shelter in the shed. So, when there is a storm of tribulations and vexations, where should you take refuge but in the holy will of God, under whose shadow nothing can hurt you?”

To a soul whom he directed, he wrote, “My daughter in Christ, when, oh when, shall we be dead to all, that we may live only to God! Precious death, more desirable than life, death which renders us divine, because it transforms us into God through love. St. John Chrysostom says, ‘*The silence the clay offers to the potter, you need render to your Maker*’ (Cfr. Is. 45:9), words of deep import, signifying that we are to imitate in our conduct to God the silence of clay in the hands of the potter. It is equally passive whether he puts it to an honorable or an ignominious use, whether he breaks it in pieces or fashions it into vases for the galleries of kings. Bear in mind this lesson.”

“The desires, which God gives us for the good of souls and the assistance of holy Church, are excellent, but you must let them be consumed in the flame of the love of God, from which they proceed, and wait until He produces their effects. In the meantime cultivate the best of all desires, which is that of pleasing God in all things and nourishing yourself with his holy will. Feed upon the will of God and drink the chalice of Jesus with your eyes shut, so that you may not see what is inside. Let it be enough for you to know that it is the cup of your sweet Jesus. Above all, form to yourself a constant habit of resignation by making frequently such acts as these: ‘O beloved Will, O most holy Will of God, I love You!’ ‘May the most sweet will of my Heavenly Father be ever blessed!’ ‘O most holy Will, O most sweet Will, be my food!’ The food of my Jesus was to do the will of His Father; mine shall be the same.

“The last part of your letter pleased me extremely, showing me how much God does for your soul. Oh, what graces! Oh, what gifts! Now it is that you feel what is really sweet and precious. The time will come when you will know no other food but crosses, which were the food of your Savior. Nourish yourself with them plentifully and be in peace, for this food requires to be digested in interior solitude.”

From all that we have said of the charity of Father Paul, we may well conclude that his was a love burning in a heart detached and purified from every earthly affection, a love which raised itself above all meaner things that it might delight in God alone, a love which, although tried by the most terrible desolation and abandonment, fastened itself generously to the cross and followed Jesus into the darkness and the bitterness of death without ever seeking comfort or

relief. It was this love which gave to all the virtues of Father Paul their heroic value, while it left him to suffer from the absence of all sensible union with God, and with the piercing thought that he might possibly not be in possession of the only good he valued, and out of whom he could not find either repose or peace.

In this manner it was that his charity, fortified with the food of tribulation, while it became strong under temptations, indefatigable in labors, imperturbable under misfortunes, left him always ill-satisfied with himself. In the acts of love which he made in the superior part of his soul, he was permitted to feel no sweetness or consolation in the inferior part, so that he was continually plunged into an overwhelming dread of having lost God, and in this state of profound grief, between suffering and loving, he passed the greater part of his life. When he heard anyone speak with unusual energy of the loss of God, he endured so terrible a martyrdom that he confessed he would rather have suffered death. He was once giving the exercises at Vetralla, and when he came to the meditation on hell, penetrated with horror at the idea of eternal reprobation, he exclaimed, “Never to see God! Always without God!” with a thrilling emphasis on the words ‘never’ and ‘always,’ which seemed to tear his very heart. Then he added with fresh terror, “Oh how miserable a necessity to hate forever Him who has loved us from all eternity!”

## **CHAPTER X**

### **Of the Gift of Prayer Possessed by the Servant of God, and Excellent Advice He Gave to Souls in Order to Direct Them Safely in the Way of Holy Prayer**

The interior school, in which Father Paul learned lessons so sublime, was holy prayer. This was the heavenly furnace in which his soul became so greatly inflamed with the love of God, who is an inextinguishable fire of charity. “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). In prayer his love went on constantly increasing; to prayer he felt himself drawn with the greatest sweetness; and to prayer he gave himself entirely. He showed clearly by this means how sincerely he loved God, according to the words of St. Chrysostom, “Prayer is a sign of great love.”

Our saint’s love for holy prayer cannot be expressed in words. In prayer was his strength, in prayer his repose, in prayer his treasure. From his early youth, he had been accustomed to rise in

the night and go barefooted with his brother John Baptist to an Oratory, under a staircase, to recite there the Divine Office and converse with the Divine Majesty in the silence and tranquillity of those nocturnal hours. Afterwards, it may be said that prayer was his continual exercise, and to keep himself united with God, his constant employment. Besides the time that he devoted to it with the other religious, he usually rose early in the morning to converse longer with God in prayer, and sometimes to prepare himself to celebrate Mass, inflaming his heart with a great increase of love and desire of Jesus in His sacrament. He lost not a moment of the time left at his disposal, but jealously profited by it to unite himself more closely to God and more lovingly plunge himself into that ocean of Goodness. For this reason, he loved to be alone and to enjoy the peace of solitude. If sometimes he had reason to leave the house, he diligently endeavored to return there speedily, that he might enjoy God in tranquillity. The time of sickness was for him a precious time of more continual recollection. He wished to be left almost constantly alone with his windows closed. Thus he spent his time in reciting vocal prayers or in conversing silently in holy recollection with God. Hence, his companion often said to him, as he himself attests, “Are you always praying?” And he would answer, “Such, at least, is my intention.” “Frequently,” says the same witness, “I entered the room and he never saw me; I found him in deep recollection. Sometimes, on calling him, he seemed to awake from a profound sleep. I purposely said, ‘I am sorry to have awakened you,’ He replied, ‘I was not asleep; it is my custom to remain in that position.’” His custom was to be in prayer.

In order to conceive a just idea of Father Paul’s gift of prayer, we must hear his confessor, to whom he confided the secrets of his soul, following that wise and useful maxim of devotion which he taught to other souls in these words, “Be secret from creatures, excepting your spiritual Father.” He added that this is one of the most certain signs and effects left by the true gifts of God. The confessor says, “From the beginning of his conversion, he several times told me that our Lord had granted him a great gift of prayer, and that he felt himself so absorbed in God that he would have desired never to separate himself from Him.” He was often ravished out of his senses, in sublime ecstasies. Hence, one day a good Capuchin brother said to him, “Father, it seems to me, you wish to mount up to heaven.” From the beginning, he gave himself to meditation on the life and passion of Jesus Christ. So great was his interior compunction, so abundant his affections, and so copious his tears, that it would not be easy to describe them. Our Lord, accommodating Himself to his spirit, as he was then only a beginner, showed him in

frequent visions the mysteries of His holy life and passion. And finally, in saying the holy rosary, Jesus showed Himself to him as a beautiful infant. Soon, however, He deprived him of these more sensible graces and began to visit him with graces more spiritual, which are removed from the senses. Hence, the visions granted him were intellectual, and understanding was infused into his soul by the way of impression, in the same manner as the form of the seal is imprinted on soft wax. In such communications God made him understand so many and such great truths regarding the mysteries of the holy faith that, as he used to say to his director, a room full of books would not have sufficed to explain them. From this source, therefore, we may believe to have proceeded that heavenly knowledge of the things of God, with which he was adorned, and which, with so much clearness and fervor, he used to impart to others. Besides the truths of faith, our Lord made known to him the tribulations, with which He should try him, and the great work of the foundation of the Congregation, in which He intended to use him as an instrument. By these lights and heavenly graces, his mind was so strengthened, comforted, and encouraged, that he would have passed on amidst swords and hatchets. He told me that, not knowing how to explain otherwise to his director what he received from our Lord in these intimate communications and the effects they produced in him, he made use of the following similitude, “Imagine that you have in your hands a dish of very fine gold, and that you pour therein the essence of the finest, rarest, and most exquisite perfumes. Afterwards you plunge into it a fine cambric handkerchief, and smell it on taking it out. It is certain that this handkerchief would send forth a most delicious perfume, composed of all scents. It is thus with my soul when it receives these close and secret communications.” His Divine Majesty continued to anoint and perfume him for the space of twelve years with the unction of His mercy. During this space, He also occasionally visited him with aridity and great desolations, to prepare him for the conflict. But they were not so frequent nor of so long duration. God, who “*rejoices in His inhabited world*” (Prov. 8:31), was pleased, if we may so speak, lovingly to divert Himself with His servant. He left him during the remainder of his life, that is, for the space of about fifty years, in those most horrible derelictions, aridities, and interior desolations, giving him, however, now and then, though rarely, and for a short time, some interval of comfort, during which he appeared inflamed like a seraph and spoke with such fire and ardor of heavenly things that he enkindled the same fire also in his hearers. He was himself greatly strengthened and encouraged to bear, with heroic generosity, his interior martyrdom. During the period of his greatest darkness, after giving me an

account of his soul, he said to me, “Though I am in so miserable a condition that I seem to myself to be without faith, without hope, and without charity, and not to possess even that natural light which others have, so that I seem to be like a beast, nevertheless, if I were asked at any time whatever, ‘What are you thinking of?’ it seems to me that I should reply that in the depth of my soul I have none but God present with me.” Hence, we may conclude that his prayer was more continual, noble, excellent, and sublime in proportion as it was more hidden and deprived of all sensible pleasure. He used to say, “It seems to me impossible not to think of God, our minds being entirely filled with God, and we ourselves wholly in God.” And to someone who did not clearly understand this, he said, “But we have these truths in the Lord’s Prayer. Do you not say, ‘Who are in Heaven?’ This spiritual heaven is our soul, and there the Divine Majesty has His throne. How then is it possible to forget God and not to love Him?”

It is not surprising that he, who so continually practiced this divine exercise of prayer, should have discoursed so well upon it and on the manner of performing it. He was an excellent master therein. When he was speaking to anyone of prayer and persuading him to practice it, he expressed himself with so much grace and unction, that he seemed to communicate to him the spirit of prayer. He always spoke excellently on prayer, like a great master, and immediately understood whatever was said to him regarding it. But before answering, he seemed to be lost in thought and then said, “That is enough – I understand. You must do so and so.” And he very often by some similitude explained the manner in which this soul should act conformably to the spirit of God, who is the Sovereign Master of prayer, and adapted to any necessities. In order to excite in everyone a love of prayer, he was never tired of saying that in holy prayer the soul is united and transformed into God by charity and love. In saying this, the affections of his heart were so vehement that he declared his desire of being wholly absorbed in God, and his countenance became inflamed, a mark of the greater fire that burned in his breast. He would have desired that everyone should give themselves to prayer and to conversing with God. He was, if I may so speak, inconsolable because so few knew the treasure that is found in prayer and in union with the Supreme Good. He was convinced that the road to precipices is easily opened when prayer is abandoned. He never failed to give all sorts of persons suitable advice to guide them in all the different ways of holy prayer, in order not to impede the sublime works and the delicate operations of divine grace in that intimate communication and familiar converse that well disposed souls enjoy with their most loving God. Those, however, with whom he more freely

poured forth his heart and his intense desire of seeing the practice of holy prayer extended, were the religious of his Congregation. To them, in order that they might be well disposed for the grace of holy prayer and might always preserve the fruit of it, he recommended particularly to keep themselves in the presence of God. Not by a dry and sterile exercise, but lovingly, tranquilly, and quietly, that they might be imbued with the spirit of God. He inculcated its frequent remembrance as a powerful means of keeping the soul closely united to God in holy charity. He repeated with great feeling the advice given by God Himself to Abraham, “Walk before me and be perfect” (Gen. 17:1). And also that beautiful promise made to the faithful soul, “I will espouse you to Myself in faith” (Hos. 2:21). Sometimes he would say, “*A godly climate dawns in the soul through a continual recalling of God,*” adding that silence and retirement were two most powerful and efficacious means to raise the soul to God and totally inflame it with the love of the Sovereign Good. He confirmed his opinion with divine authority, “*He shall sit solitary and hold his peace, because he has taken it upon himself. For while all things were in quiet silence and night was in the midst of her course, your Omnipotent Word came from thy royal throne*” (Wis. 18:14). And in explanation of these words he said, “When the soul keeps her passions in subjection, when she keeps herself recollected in God, when she walks in lively faith, which form the silence and the midnight that God requires, then the Divine Word is born in the soul by a nativity wholly spiritual, wholly divine.”

And because by dissipation the most precious treasures are lost and the most profound recollection destroyed, he earnestly recommended souls, who possessed such gifts, to proceed with great caution and circumspection, endeavoring to maintain interior recollection, even in the midst of occupations, turning frequently to God interiorly and resting in Him and keeping a guard on the senses, chiefly the eyes. Since, as he said, “He who stands at the door or at the windows of a house sees, indeed, what is done outside, but not what goes on within. On the contrary he who keeps retired in the house knows all that is done therein.” And he added, “He who shall practice modesty in looks shall acquire recollection of heart.” As Father Paul knew that to the faithful soul is promised an increase of talents and divine gifts, he admonished souls who had the gift of prayer to be faithful to our Lord by the practice of holy virtues, chiefly humility, trying to keep their secret according to those words, “*The secret is to myself*” (Is. 24:16), and to humble themselves on all occasions. “We must,” he said, “keep always in our own territories and within our own boundaries, which are nothingness and sin, then God will more

readily draw us into His own and absorb us wholly and entirely in His infinite immensity.” He used often to exhort devout persons to keep the temple of the soul well guarded, having always burning before the altar of the heart the three lamps of faith, hope, and charity. Father Paul also encouraged people to keep the fire of divine love always lighted on the altar of the heart, remembering the command of God in the old Law, “*The fire will be burning always on the altar*” (Lev. 6:13). These were his most frequent instructions and exhortations to souls who had the gift of prayer. He made use of parables and similitudes to engrave them on the minds of his hearers. And to imitate our Blessed Savior, on occasion he would say, “Jesus Christ, the Master of Truth, spoke not to them without parables; therefore, do you listen to this parable, etc.”

To those souls who had not the gift of prayer, he exhorted to exercise themselves during the day in aspirations and ejaculations to God, taking advantage of what they saw and heard. “If, for example,” he would say, “you see flowers on going into the garden, say to one of them, ‘*Who are you?*’ It will not reply, ‘I am a flower’; no, it will say, ‘*I am a voice*; I am a preacher, who preaches the power, wisdom, goodness, beauty, and prudence of the great God.’” He recommended that afterwards, as if they had received such an answer, they should allow it to sink deeply into their heart that it might be entirely penetrated with it.

He was, as we have said, an enemy to scruples, which greatly disturb the mind and prevent it from relishing the sweetness of the divine law. He wished that all should burn with the fire of divine love. “Lose yourselves,” he would say, “entirely in God; rest your soul in the divine bosom of the Heavenly Father.” As a remedy against other interior troubles, he exhorted all to invoke the Holy Name of Jesus. In order to explain by an appropriate similitude the wonderful effects of peace and tranquillity that follow from the invocation of this Name of salvation and grace, he used to relate that being once at a place near the sea, for the good of souls, he was invited by some fishermen to witness the fishing. When he went, he saw that when the sea was rough, they throw oil into it from time to time. Where it fell the waters became calm, and the fishermen could see the fish and catch them. He, who well knew that everything contains instruction for him who is inclined to profit by it, drew from this an important lesson That when the soul is agitated like the sea in a storm, we should frequently throw oil upon it by the invocation of the most Holy Name of Jesus, of which it is written in the Sacred Canticles, “*Your name is as oil poured out*” Cant. 1, 2.

How excellent a master was the servant of God in that science which he continually studied



at the feet of Jesus Crucified is known yet more clearly from his letters, which preserve to us with the greatest fidelity not only his sentiments but also his words. It was his maxim that each one ought to have the food that suits his stomach. Therefore, he guided souls in the manner he knew to be most profitable to each. To beginners, as a tender nurse, he “*fed them milk*” (I Cor. 3:2), and he thus wrote to a Master of Novices regarding them, “I received your valuable letter this morning, and I rejoice to hear of the favors granted by God to these His servants, especially to Father N., who, though he begins to have the gift of prayer, must be carefully watched that he may not relax in the practice of virtue and the imitation of Jesus Christ; taking always to prayer some Mystery of the Passion, without, however, making efforts to meditate, except by sweet colloquies and soliloquies. When God attracts to the silence of love and of faith, ‘*in the bosom of God,*’ which is the prayer spoken of by your Reverence, the soul must not be disturbed by reflections from such a state of repose and quiet. But, above all, ground them all well in humility and hatred of themselves – for of this, ‘*never enough.*’” According as souls advanced in the way of holy prayer and virtue, he encouraged them to good, with a spirit of wise discernment, by suitable instructions. He wrote to one of these, “Your letters rejoice me much in God, and give me reason to bless that Sovereign Goodness, who shows such mercy to the child His Divine Providence has confided to my care. I desire great fidelity to the Supreme Good in order to correspond with favors so sublime, which prepare the soul for still greater gifts, for lights yet higher and more sublime, by which the soul will become more enamored of God, will acquire greater virtues, and will practice them in a more heroic degree. For when the soul is more enlightened in holy faith and in prayer, it becomes more closely united to God, and by means of this union with the Sovereign Good, all gifts come to the soul. She works great things with true humility and self-annihilation, and this annihilation prepares her soul to be entirely absorbed in God in holy contemplation; for the Divine Lover draws her to Himself and entirely divinises her, if I may so speak, by means of this holy union with His Divine Majesty.

“I desire, also, that you should exercise yourself much in the perfect knowledge of your nothingness. Then I wish that you should immerse this nothing in the great All, which is our good God. Oh, most happy loss, by which the soul, losing herself wholly in God, finds her advantage. Ah! how great a lover of truth is our Sovereign Good, since He is the God of Truth. He who knows and remains in his own nothingness knows the truth by means of holy contemplation, in which is learned this great truth of our own Nothingness and of the Divine All,

which is God, for the soul is entirely immersed in the infinite love of the Supreme Good.

“In my other letters I have given you rules for holy prayer, to guide you in it, because God gave me the light. My child, the present state of prayer, in which God has placed, you does not require many words. Love speaks little. The tongue of holy love is the heart which burns, consumes, and dissolves itself entirely in God and cannot express in words its ardors, which make a continual sacrifice of love in the living soul. This sacrifice is a holocaust; that is, everything is consumed and reduced to ashes in the divine fire of Infinite Charity. And by one word, one glance of love in pure faith, great things are learned. Oh, how much I wish to say, but have not time. My mind loses itself in the immense ocean of the infinite greatness of God! Courage, let us serve God generously; let us exercise great virtues. God will be our strength and will give us the victory. I recommend you not to lose sight of the Life, Passion, and Death of Jesus our Life. Take notice, my child, that now you are not to meditate as you did at first, but according to the holy rules I have given you. Love is a unitive virtue and makes the suffering of its Beloved its own. Do not make use of the imagination – it is not now the time – but make use of pure and holy faith. Make a bouquet of the sufferings of Jesus and carry it in the bosom of your soul. Remain wholly immersed in God in pure faith, and by some word of love remind Him how much He has done and suffered for us. Let those sufferings and that love sink deeply into your heart, remaining in that sacred silence, that sacred amazement which enkindles greater love for God. Unite with the sufferings of Jesus those of most holy Mary, and the soul, wholly immersed in those sufferings and sorrows, is both loving and sorrowful, sorrowful and loving. Love will teach you everything, if you keep well entrenched in your own nothingness.”

When a devout person began to feel interior trouble and desolation of mind, he encouraged her to be faithful and to profit the opportunity of serving God more perfectly. “As for your soul (he writes in another letter), a little winter is necessary, for this purifies the earth and the air from noxious vapors and benefits, also, the human body. Though it strips the leaves from the trees, it is that they may take deeper root. Spring comes afterwards, when everything recovers, everything flourishes. Every degree of prayer must have a preparatory purification. Great fidelity is necessary in all the exercises of prayer and of virtue, chiefly of sublime resignation and to remain ‘*in the bosom of God,*’ without sensible comfort, but in the superior part of the soul rejoicing without relish in the accomplishment of the will of God. In this manner winter passes on, flowery spring arrives, and ‘the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.’” He was most

careful, if a soul was called by God from meditation to a more sublime prayer, in advising her to let herself be guided by God Himself, who knows well what is good for each one. He wrote as follows, “I do not tell you to do this (speaking of prayer) in my way, but according to the way of God. Leave the soul in holy liberty, that she may receive the divine impressions as it may please God. Prayer should be made by the movement of the Holy Spirit, for such is the will of Infinite Goodness.”

“If God,” he says in another letter, “wishes to deprive us of all things, let us leave ourselves in His hands. Do not give up the practice of holy virtue, quit not the holy presence of God, and do not forget the Passion of our dear Jesus. We must meditate upon it in His way – not in ours. Rules have been given, but God is the Master; let us abandon ourselves to Him, confide in Him, and strip ourselves of all things. God will clothe us according to his pleasure.”

Giving the same instruction, full of wisdom, he writes, “Leave the soul at liberty to take strong flights towards the Supreme Good, according as God draws her, like the moth which flutters around the light and then flies into it. Let the soul fly around and into this divine light and be entirely consumed therein.” Again he writes, “I understand that you cannot meditate as before, nor make the composition of place, and that your mind suffers if you try to force it. Thanks be to God. Act, then, in this way: Remain in the presence of God with a pure, simple, and loving attention to this immense good, in a holy silence of love, resting your soul in this holy silence in the loving bosom of the Eternal God. When you cease to feel recollected, awake your soul sweetly by some dart of love – O Infinite Goodness! O Infinite Charity! My dear Lord, I am Yours! O Infinite Sweetness! Use these, or others, as God may inspire you. But take notice that if, in forming one of these darts of love, the soul is filled with peace and becomes recollected in God, nothing more is necessary but to continue this loving silence, this repose of the soul in God, which includes excellently all the acts that we can ever make. And when this peace or recollection is not felt, and the soul cannot meditate, you must leave her so, always keeping up a loving attention to God in the superior part of the soul. In such a case, then, remain before God like a statue in its niche, detached from every consolation.”

There was no soul, however highly gifted, to which the servant of God, who was a perfect master in mystical theology, could not give the most sublime and perfect instructions to guide her in prayer and an intimate communication with God. We have perceived this from the letters already cited in which we see grouped together, as it were, a treasure of heavenly learning, and

as we shall see more clearly in other letters that we shall now add in their proper place.

“*Those who adore*,” he wrote, “*adore the Father in spirit and in truth* (Jn 4:24). Notice this well, for in these words of Jesus Christ is contained the perfection of holy prayer, which does not consist in delights and spiritual consolations, but in spirit and truth, that is, in true, pure, and simple nudity and poverty of spirit, detached from every sensible comfort and reposing as a naked and pure spirit in the infinite Spirit of God. To be in truth consists in remaining in our poor and naked nothingness, without robbing God of anything.”

To another devout soul Father Paul writes, “After you have entirely annihilated, despised, and lowered yourself in the depth of your nothingness, ask permission of Jesus to enter His divine heart, and you will immediately obtain it. Place yourself there as a victim on that divine altar on which the fire of holy love continually burns; let these sacred flames penetrate to the marrow of your bones, and even entirely consume you. If the gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit raises these ashes to the contemplation of the divine mysteries, give liberty to the soul to become entirely immersed in this holy contemplation. Oh, how pleasing to God is this practice.”

In order to be more easily understood, he explained by beautiful similitudes the instructions that he gave, “The infant, after playing lovingly and caressingly on its mother’s neck, rests at her bosom and falls asleep, without, however, ceasing to move its little lips in sucking milk. Thus, the soul, fatigued with affections, should take rest in the bosom of the Heavenly Father and not arouse herself from this attention of faith and love without the permission of her Supreme Good.”

To another devout person he wrote, “You must remain entirely immersed in God, and lose this little drop of your poor soul in that immense ocean of charity. Repose there and receive whatever God communicates to you, without losing sight of your own nothingness. In this divine solitude everything is learned. In this divine interior school, more is learned by being silent than by speaking. So Mary Magdalene fell at the feet of Jesus through love. There she was silent; she listened, loved, and even melted with love. Take with you this prayer and interior recollection in your business, your occupations, and in every place. Go out of yourself and lose yourself in God; go out of temporal things and lose yourself in eternity. I am on the sea coast and I have a drop of water hanging from one finger. I say to this water, ‘O poor little drop, where do you wish to be?’ Hear the answer. ‘In the sea, in the sea,’ it answers. And what do I do? I shake my finger and let fall this poor little drop into the ocean. Now, I ask, this little drop is in the sea, is it not? Certainly

it is. But find it if you can; it is lost in the sea, its center. Oh, if it could speak, what would it say? Make the conclusion and apply the parable. Lose sight of heaven, earth, sea, sands, and every created thing, and let this drop, your soul, which God has given you, lose itself in its source, which is the great omnipotent God.”

“My child,” he writes to another, “this is a very sublime science, only understood by the humble of heart. Remain therefore in annihilation and total contempt of yourself, desiring, above all things, that you should be thought of, and esteemed, as a drain from a dunghill, near which all hold their noses that they may not perceive the stench. With these sentiments of entire annihilation, plunge with great confidence into that abyss of every good, and leave that Infinite Goodness to perform His divine operations in your soul, that is, to penetrate it with the rays of His divine light, to transform it through love, entirely into Himself, to make it live by His most Divine Spirit, to make it live a life of love, a divine and holy life. Let the poor moth, after flying round this divine light with the wings of affections, humiliations, and, above all, of lively faith and charity, cast itself into this most divine light, which is God Himself, and be therein entirely destroyed and burnt to ashes. Then will it live a life, not its own, but in and of the life of its Supreme Good. These are the sublime works of His Divine Majesty in souls that annihilate themselves, that make themselves little, that give to God all the glory of His gifts, and give them back by a humble and loving offering in His divine sight, like sweet-smelling incense. Read all those sentiments with attention, and read them with a humble, simple, and open heart, like a mother pearl or a shell that receives the dew of heaven and then shuts itself up closely, goes to the bottom of the sea, and there gives birth to its pearl.”

As it often happens, as St. John of the Cross deplores with great compassion and zeal, souls find an obstacle in going freely to God from those very persons who ought most to assist them and promote their good. Our saint has left excellent instructions on this point in writing to direct one who was little understood by her confessor and little assisted in the path of an interior life. “When your confessor has dismissed you, depart in peace and immediately cry out lovingly, like a child, according to the parable I gave you, ‘Ah, Father. Ah, great Father!’ Show Him the pain, anguish, and fears that the voice of your confessor has caused in you. You will then immediately feel a most sweet attraction which will make your soul take flight into the depths of that divine solitude in which she will be entirely absorbed in God. Her anguish, fears, and scruples will be consumed in the furnace of holy love; repose there, and if the Divine Spouse should cause you to

slumber, sleep in peace and do not awake without His permission. This divine slumber is an inheritance that the Divine Father grants to His beloved. In this slumber of faith and love, the science of the saints is learned and the bitter mouthfuls of adversity are quickly digested. O silence! O holy sleep! O precious solitude! Humble yourself more and more. Remain always in true poverty of spirit. Strip yourself, as I said, of all His gifts since they are soiled with your dust, and make of them a sacrifice of praise, honor, and benediction to the most High, keeping yourself in your own nakedness. Such a sacrifice must be made in the fire of love, without ever quitting the sacred desert.”

Above all things, Father Paul earnestly desired that souls, possessing the gift of prayer, should well understand that prayer ought not to be a subtle and barren speculation, but a practical school of holy virtues. And that he who enters the path of holy prayer, enters into the treasures of God to enrich himself in his poverty. He wrote, therefore, to one of his spiritual children, “I thank the Divine Mercy that your mind does not depart from the remembrance of the sufferings of your heavenly Spouse; but I should wish that you should allow yourself to be entirely penetrated by the love with which He has suffered these things. The short way, therefore, is to lose oneself entirely in the sea of these sufferings, since, as the Prophet says the Passion of Jesus is a sea of love and of sorrow. Ah, my child! this is a great secret made known only to the humble of heart! In this great scene, the soul fishes for the pearls of virtues and makes the sufferings of her Beloved her own. I have a strong confidence that the Spouse will instruct you in this divine fishing, and you will be taught it in interior solitude, free from all images, apart from everything created, in pure faith and holy love. I have touched on these points because I see that our sweet Jesus invites you to this. You must, therefore, leave your soul at liberty to take those flights that the Holy Spirit shall urge her to take, being most obedient to His sweet attraction. I will just say to you this, which will serve as an example for you. When the soul is in this sweet solitude, this holy silence of faith and love, if she feels any interior movement or impulse of charity to pray for the necessities of the Church or of the world, in general or in particular, she must do it at once. But when this sweet interior exclamation has ceased, she must resume her sacred repose in God. If it changes into the slumber of love and faith, it will be better. I hope that His Divine Majesty will make you understand what I say, if you keep yourself well exercised in humility and cast down in your nothingness.”

“The movements of Holy Love,” he writes to a soul that was greatly favored by the Divine

Goodness, “with which His Divine Majesty assails your heart, you must not allow to go out of your interior; for our sweet Jesus, in His Sacrament, keeps it with Him, nor could it love Him unless it possessed the living Fountain of pure and holy love, which is the Holy Spirit, according to the words of our Divine Redeemer, *‘He that believes in me, as the Scriptures has said, “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Now He said this of the Spirit they should receive who believed in Him’* (Jn. 7:38-39). Thus, when you are seized with such transports, which are singular graces of pure and holy love, lose yourself in that Infinite Good, and there act as an infant, and sleep the slumber of faith and holy love in the bosom of your heavenly Spouse. Love allows of few words. Observe, however, whether this sovereign grace of prayer, which the Almighty gives you, produces in you a clearer knowledge of your own absolute nothingness, a love of being concealed from creatures, and known only to God, with a lively desire of His greater glory and a contempt of yourself, accompanied with all the virtues, patience, meekness, tranquillity of heart, and perfect charity towards your neighbor. These are the fruits which He desired should be drawn from prayer, not consolations or delights.”

“Endeavor,” he writes in another letter, “to practice true poverty of spirit by living absolutely detached from all sensible consolation, whether interior or exterior, that you may avoid falling into the vice of spiritual gluttony. We must live detached from our own enjoyment, from our own understanding, and from our own feeling, so as not to fall into curiosity of spirit, but to practice more perfectly true poverty of spirit.” And to give the instruction with greater authority, he proposes the great example of our Divine Master. “Jesus prayed three hours on the cross; this was a prayer truly crucified, without comfort from within or without. Oh God! what a great lesson! Pray to Jesus that he would imprint it in your heart. Oh! what a subject is this for meditation. I have read that when Jesus was agonizing on the cross, after the three first flames of love, that is, after the three first words, he remained all the rest of the time in silence till the hour of mercy and then he prayed. I leave you to consider what a painful prayer this was.” “Repose,” he says with the same sentiments, “on the naked Cross of our sweet Jesus, and make no other complaint than this infantile cry, *‘My Father, my Father, Your will be done’* (Cfr. Lk 22:42). Then be silent and continue your repose on the Cross till the precious time of true mystical death arrives, for in this happy death, more desirable than life, you will find yourself, as St. Paul says, *‘quite hidden with Jesus Christ in God’* (Col. 3:3). You will be in that most sublime solitude that you desire with a total separation from everything created. It is now the time for silent, tranquil

patience, suffering with sublime resignation the agony you now feel, which leads to mystical death.” As our Founder knew well how to unite the sublimity of heavenly wisdom with vivacity of mind and pleasing manners, in a letter to Father Thomas of Jesus, afterwards Bishop of Todi, he speaks excellently well, but as if in jest, of this mystical death, and shows at the same time his excellence as a master and the perfection of the soul of this servant of God. “The life of the servants and friends of God is to die daily; *‘we die daily; you are dead, and your life is hidden in Christ in God.’* This is that mystical death that I desire in you, and as, by the celebration of the divine and sacred mysteries, I have entire confidence that you will be born again in Jesus Christ to a new and divine life. I desire also that you should die mystically in Christ daily, more and more, and let the many moths that fly through your mind, of things of no importance, disappear in the abyss of the Divinity, *‘and let your life be hidden with Christ in God.’* Many years ago, I was talking to a poor, sick Neapolitan, who said to me: ‘Father, listen, I have only one thing in my head that I think of.’ ‘What do you think about?’ I asked. ‘I think of death,’ he said. ‘You do well,’ I answered and gave him suitable instructions. My dear Father Thomas, think in your head of mystical death; he who is mystically dead thinks of nothing but of leading a divine life. He desires nothing but God, the greatest and highest good. Cut off all other thoughts, though they may be of good things, to have this one only which is the great Good, and wait without disquietude for God to dispose of you. Remove everything from without, that it may not be an obstacle to the divine operations which are carried on in the secret closet, where no creature, human or angelic, can enter. God alone dwells in that inward part, or essence and sanctuary of the soul, where the powers themselves watch attentively the divine work and the divine Nativity which is celebrated every moment in him who has the happiness to be mystically dead. I am in haste. This note is very mystical and is not suitable to weak persons, but to strong souls, and you must speak of those things *‘with a grain of salt.’*”

As in the exercise of holy prayer, the most painful, difficult, and dangerous steps are those when the soul is put to the trial of her fidelity and called upon to divest herself of everything that is not God. This great director did not fail to give instructions very useful to souls who are in this state of interior purification. “It is not necessary,” he writes to one of our Order, “that all souls who arrive at close union with God by holy contemplation should walk in the same way as Brother N. I have read something on this subject, especially in one author who is the Prince of Mystics. It is true that such purgations are usually undergone *in different ways*. God has ways



beyond our understandings. He makes sure of the finest files which cut through and remove all rust, and are purely spiritual. Of such sufferings it is true that they are often *more bitter than hell*, if I may say so. Because they are more pure, more penetrating, and more free from every consolation *within and without*, they prepare the soul in a most sublime manner for holy union with God since they make her feel more deeply, by experience, her own nothingness, insomuch that this trial is often like the pain of loss. Oh, how much is there to say on this point! Almighty God permits this trial in Brother N. for His own divine ends, and he gives marks of advancement. Notice, however, if he has a secret esteem for this purgation, it would be pernicious. Or if it leaves him in a deep knowledge of his nothingness, which makes him praise the Divine Mercy. Almighty God also permits these things that your Reverence may learn the science of the saints and may become skillful in holy direction. Another kind of file will be used for you, and it is already present. Love will be the executioner – let it act, for it is practical. When it martyrs you, you will require very great help and strength, which God gives, else the trial would be too great.” With the same charity he animated those who felt a disgust for virtue. “It is an excellent sign,” he writes, “that your Reverence has, as you tell me, a repugnance for all good works. This is a trial of fidelity, to which God puts you, that every moment you may gain new jewels and pearls to be set in your crown of glory.”

As it is very easy to become attached to God’s favors by that defect which mystics call spiritual gluttony, the prudent director, besides what we have quoted, wrote on this subject, “You must not look too much at other graces, nor stop at them, but at the Divine Fountain, whence the streams flow. They are good because they issue from the fountain; but the living Fountain is better. Plunge and lose yourself more and more in God with a pure and simple love, reserving nothing to yourself, not looking at sensible consolation of which you must make a sacrifice to God, placing such favors in the censer of the heart and in the fire of the purest divine love, and offer the incense of gratitude to the Most High – you yourself remaining in true nakedness of spirit.” With the same spiritual wisdom he wrote, “Trees, planted in the margin of running streams, receive refreshment from these waters and let them pass by, while they stand firm where they are planted. Thus, the soul should receive the impression of these gifts; but she must remain, without further reflection, immoveable in God, who is the Supreme Giver. Otherwise, by remaining in reflection on favors and consolations, she would be in great danger of illusion.” The gifts of God leave the humble soul filled with a deep sense of her own nothingness, with a love

for contempt, a fervent zeal in the practice of every virtue, and they bring with them also secrecy from all creatures, except the director and spiritual Father. The soul should not rest in the gifts, but in the Giver. When we go into a garden, we do not gather leaves, but fruits. Thus, in the holy garden of prayer, we must not attach ourselves to the leaves of sensible consolation and devotion, but rather gather the fruits of the imitation of the virtues of Jesus Christ.” “The touchstone of prayer,” he says to a nun, “are the effects it produces.”

He speaks more at length to another devout soul. “My dear child, you must know that prayer is most perfect when it is performed in the interior, in the essence of the soul, which ‘prays in the spirit of God.’ This is sublime language, but when God pleases, He makes even stones speak. Let, then, this immense God rest in you and you in God. Oh sweet, oh divine work! God feeds, if I may so speak, for I have not terms, upon your soul, and your soul feeds on the spirit of God: ‘*Christ is my food and I am His.*’ There can be no delusion in this divine work, for it is a work of faith and love. If I could speak to you personally, I could perhaps explain myself better. But it is best to be silent in these mysteries. Listen, you must be just to each side; keep to your own, which is horrible nothingness, capable of bringing forth every sort of evil possible, and leave to God that which is His, for everything good is from Him.” Thus he desired that even from the most sublime prayer should be gathered the fruit of humility.

Our Lord, who is the God of peace, loves to converse familiarly with souls that are peaceful and tranquil, “*His place is peace.*” On this account Father Paul earnestly recommended peace of heart, especially to persons of prayer. “Come, my child,” he writes to one of his penitents, “be at rest in the most loving Heart of Jesus. Do not lose peace even if the whole world should be destroyed.” “One of the best marks,” he writes to the same, “of your being in a good way is to be tranquil in the assaults and contradictions of creatures; be strong in this and laugh at all the attempts of hell. Endeavor, more than ever, to show your fidelity to His Divine Majesty by resting on the Cross with great equanimity of mind, trying with all your power to be quiet, serene, and tranquil, without complaining. Try to drink lovingly the chalice that Jesus Christ Himself offers to you; for though it seems bitter to our sensuality, it is sweet to the spirit. What I recommend is to keep your heart in peace, without trouble. Even if the world should be turned upside down, maintain your peace of heart. Nothing can separate us from God but sin. That, we will not commit. Jesus lives; therefore, let us keep our hearts fixed on Heaven.”

In order to preserve peace of heart, he desired, as the reader will have seen, that his penitents

should make no account of fears, useless reflections, and, above all, scruples. In his letters he also gave excellent advice. He wrote to a religious, "Experience will teach you that those vain fears of sin are real follies. They should be consumed in the fire of love. Make great account of that special grace of keeping the heart contrite and humble, I beg of you."

To a devout person, he writes, "Make a bundle of all your reflections, fears, and useless puerilities, and cast them into the furnace of divine charity, where they will be immediately consumed. Continue solitary in your own interior, reposing your soul in peace in the bosom of the great heavenly Father."

To a nun he writes, "Be very careful to keep your heart always tranquil, for the devil fishes in troubled waters."

"I perceive the storm of scruples," he writes to another, "that the devil has raised in your mind. If you will practice obedience, it cannot do you the least injury. God permits this trial, that your soul may be more purified. Believe me, the sufferings you feel render you more and more pure in the divine sight. It is a malicious suggestion of the devil that makes you think you sin in everything; it is not true. Humble yourself before our Lord, and then, sweetly reviving your faith, hide yourself entirely in God. Fly to the uttermost depth of that sacred desert, of which I spoke. Lose yourself entirely in that Supreme Good, and let yourself be wholly consumed in that sacred furnace of love. Believe me, that divine fire will consume all the clouds and dust of scruples, and your soul will become more and more pure, more and more beautiful, in the eyes of your Divine Spouse. In that sacred furnace you should remain in the silence of faith and love, like a victim offered in holocaust to the glory of God, our Supreme Good, without reasoning in the least or reflecting on these scruples. But constantly despising them, repose in peace in the divine bosom. From the merciful visits that our sweet Jesus makes to your soul, in which you need not fear delusion, you can tell how much this sweet Spouse loves your soul. You may also know that these scruples are the work of the devil. In the temptation of scruples say, 'Yes, my Jesus, yes. I hope that You have pardoned me. I do indeed hope it. My confessions have been well made; my spiritual Father has said it; I believe Your minister, not the devil who seeks to destroy me and rob me of holy peace. Courage, therefore, my dear soul. God has pardoned you. Hope in Him. Oh dear Father! Oh my God! in You I hope, I believe in You, I love You. Go, infernal spirit; depart from me; no more scruples, no more fears, no more doubts. Let the love of my Spouse Jesus reign in me. The love of Jesus forever!'"

As holy recollection is an excellent disposition for performing prayer well, and as it is also a certain sign that prayer has been well made, he earnestly recommended souls to preserve interior recollection during the day and to avoid dissipation.

“Keep your mind clear and pure from every imagination and detached from all created things, that it may be better disposed to unite itself with a fervent will to the Supreme Good.” Thus he wrote to a devout person.

“My very dear Father Superior,” he wrote to one of our Order, “I will say to you only one thing: Walk before God and be perfect. Love to be alone, interiorly reposing in the spirit of God, in the sight of your own nothingness, and you will do all things well, mixing and uniting action with prayer.”

“Use every effort,” he says in another letter, “to remain in solitude and to be a true inhabitant of your interior. Your prayer should be continual, and in this,” he says with the same sentiment, “you understand me. The place of prayer is in the spirit of God; in God we should chant the Divine Office; in God we should do everything.”

Pray twenty-four hours a day. This he had written in the rules given for the guidance of a nun. He thus explained it, that is, to do everything with the mind and heart raised to God, remaining in interior solitude, and reposing in pure faith, holily in God.

With a greater diffusion of spiritual learning, he writes to a person of prayer, “Wish your heart to be more and more consumed as a holocaust to the Supreme Good in that holy sanctuary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, plunging the ashes of the holocaust into the boundless ocean of divine charity. Now, more than ever, it is the time to die to everything that is not good, to converse with greater love alone with the Supreme Good. What do you want with creatures? Remain alone as much as possible, hidden, shut up, buried, in the great cabinet of the Sacred Heart, where the Divine Spouse gives us to drink of that new wine, which inebriates, comforts, strengthens, inflames, exalts, and raises us on high to the contemplation of the Sovereign Monarch. There is learned the true science of the saints, which is taught to the truly humble. I beg of you to be truly detached, hidden and annihilated. In the Heart of Jesus we feel compassion for His sufferings, and the soul purifies herself in that bath of His Blood which inflames her with love. Continue to practice interior recollection, for no aridity can prevent it. It is not necessary that we should feel the consolation of the Divine Presence. But it is of great consequence to remain there, in pure faith, detached from all satisfaction in our own comfort.”

With no less fervor he writes in another letter, “Your Reverence, in order that His Divine Majesty may work more and more His wonders in your soul, you should keep yourself, as much as possible, in profound abstraction from everything created, in true poverty and nakedness of spirit, and in true interior solitude, letting the flocks of the powers and affections depart ‘*to the interior desert.*’ And if they lose themselves in God, allow them to do so, for they are happily lost in their Source. O infinitely rich loss! O sacred Desert! in which the soul learns the science of the saints, like Moses in the solitude of Mount Horeb.”

He wished and taught that persons of prayer, even when they are favored, should use every term of respect and profound reverence towards the Divine Majesty. “When the poor little moth,” he says in another, “is fluttering round this divine light, eager and anxious to burn and totally consume herself therein, let her not omit to speak to Him with great respect and gratitude of the wonders that He has wrought for us in becoming man, suffering and dying, and the like. One or two words may cause the soul to be wholly enraptured, enamored, languishing and sorrowing through love and grief. The world has always been the enemy of God. He who converses with Him remains united to Him and discourses familiarly in his interior with Him as one friend does with another.”

Father Paul desired, therefore, that souls should, as far as possible, fly from discourse with people of the world and avoid mixing in it. “Begin with great generosity of soul,” he says to a devout penitent, “to trample under your feet all human respects, and be not ashamed to be a servant of Jesus Christ. Look upon the world with the same horror with which you would behold a criminal hanging from a gibbet, and be assured that nothing is breathed therein but an atmosphere poisoned by the numberless sins committed therein, for which we ought to weep with tears of blood.”

To remove souls to a still greater distance from the infection that reigns in the world, almost universally, he advised those whom he directed, especially religious persons, to have a great love for solitude in order to enjoy continual communication with God. “I could not hear,” he writes, “more agreeable news than that you have consecrated yourself entirely to the service of Jesus Christ. What do we want with this world, where nothing is breathed but air poisoned with sins?”

“I beg of you,” he says elsewhere, “to shut the door upon all creatures, keeping yourself closely entrenched in the closet of your heart, in converse alone with your Beloved. You must converse with others when charity or necessity require it, and not otherwise.”

“The choir and cell,” he wrote to a religious, “are the earthly Paradise of the true servants of God. Let these three only be the places in which you delight: the first is the choir, the second your cell, the third, and the chief, is the interior triumph of your soul.” Writing to another nun he says, “The parlors are the destruction of monasteries.”

Knowing the great advantages that are derived from silence, he had a most high esteem for it as the best means of acquiring the true spirit of prayer. “Preserve silence like a key of gold that locks up the great treasure of the other virtues that God has given us.”

Though he most earnestly desired that his penitents should be entirely devoted to God, for he had the true spirit of God, Father Paul required, above all things, that they should fulfill the obligations of their state and condescend to others as much as possible, avoiding, as far as they could, making their devotion burdensome and annoying to others. He wrote to one of his penitents, a married person, “Each one ought to lead a holy life in his own state. He who has a wife should not live like a Capuchin.” He says to the same, “You are your own master to take your journey to the Holy House when you please. I say, however, ‘*one who is often on pilgrimage is seldom sanctified.*’ I think that you will serve God better by watching over your family and the interests of your house.”

To a lady who lived with her family, he writes, “It is best to obey your father regarding your communions, and thus you will make to God a sacrifice of your will and will keep holy peace with your father, whose intention we must believe to be good. Those great servants of God, the ancient hermits, communicated very rarely,<sup>3</sup> but as they were well disposed, they received so great an abundance of blessings, that in a short time they made great advances towards perfection.”

He writes again to the same, “When I come down, I hope that I shall be able to open for you the way to remain before Jesus in His sacrament. In the meantime go and dwell there, and if your superiors, your father or uncle forbid you to do it, obey in silence and be there in spirit in your room. This is the way to practice the virtues of Jesus, who became obedient unto death and the death of the cross.”

To another, also a daughter of a family, he writes, “I must add that you should not remain so long in church in the morning, but, having duly made your thanksgiving, return home quickly

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<sup>3</sup> See Preface to Volume II.

that no one may have to complain.”

In order that each should have time to fulfil exactly the duties of their state, he suggested that the time to be devoted to prayer should be proportioned to the state and employments of everyone. He therefore wrote to a married man, “As regards prayer, if you cannot give so much time to it, never mind, *‘for he who does good, prays always.’* Attend to your occupations and you will thus perform every duty, and remain attentive to God, often plunging your soul into the immense ocean of His Divinity.”

To preserve his penitents and spiritual children from all the delusions that they might fall into in an interior life, he required, as the foundation of prayer, a solid, well-grounded faith, fruitful in virtuous and holy effects. “Seek,” he writes in one letter, “to render your prayer constantly more interior in pure faith and with great self-annihilation, not looking at consolations but at the God of consolation.”

“Of what use,” writes Father Paul, “are these imaginations of visions? Oh! they are useless things in which the devil plays an ugly game! The malicious wretch is not in a hurry, but goes on quietly the better to deceive.” In another he writes, “These visions, elevations, splendors, and the like, the more frequent they are the more they are to be suspected.” ‘It is better,’ says a great saint, ‘always to reject them. To drive them away with constancy, and never trust them, chiefly in regard of women, whose imaginations are more lively.’ Thus we act wisely, for if they are from God, they will have their effect, even though they are rejected. If they come from the devil, which is more probable, by repelling them we free ourselves from delusion.” “These locutions,” he says to a religious, “that your Reverence mentions, are most dangerous. Nor can I approve of them, and I will tell you why – with that little experience God has given me. What necessity is there that God should make known to a novice, that He requires from the novices greater fervor in communion? Does not their Director know it himself through the lights God gives him for his office? Besides, does he not know that God is greatly offended, chiefly by sacrileges? Therefore, do you not see that such a locution is not necessary? God does not make revelations, except *for the sake of His glory* and for the wants of holy Church. And what we can learn from holy books, by the experience God gives us, and much more by the lights He gives to those who have offices, we need not wish to know through locutions. When God speaks to souls by intelligences and impressions, in an angelical manner, without any expression of articulated words, but by most sublime communications (and these are not subject to deceit, being purely intellectual), He does

it always with great majesty, and the effects it produces are inexplicable. When, however, they are locutions, articulated *interiorly*, and are from God or from the angel (as is usually the case) who speaks in the name of His Sovereign Master, they are also accompanied with majesty, with suitable and magnificent words, which work what they express and always leave wonderful impressions with heavenly intelligence and an elevation in God, '*interiorly and exteriorly*.' And as, out of a hundred, and perhaps a thousand of these articulated locutions, there will be scarcely one or two that are true – and it is difficult even for great spiritual masters to know them and discern the true from the false – those of their own spirit and those of the enemy who knows how to feign effects in appearances as if they were from God. Therefore, the best method to take is to order him who has them to drive them away, to humble himself before God, and to protest that holy faith and holy books are sufficient for him, with the instructions of his spiritual Father, who speaks to him in God's name. By acting thus, he gives glory to God, distrusting himself, humbling himself, considering himself unworthy of such graces. He frees himself from all delusion, for if they are from God, the good and holy effect is infallible. The soul receives it, however much she may do to drive them away, while she practices that obedience which is so dear to God and frees herself from delusion."

In writing to a person of prayer, he says, "Yesterday afternoon I received your letter, and as it does not seem to me necessary to answer all the points singly, I say to you only this, that the things of God and His gifts give a deep knowledge of that infinite Majesty and a deep consciousness of our own nothingness, so that the soul would cast herself under the feet, so to speak, of the very devils, so low is the opinion she has of herself. They cause a great detachment from all things, a strong love of the Cross and of suffering, great condescension in all that is not sin, with exact obedience. They infuse a deep peace and heavenly intelligence; they give a great attraction for holy prayer. Sometimes they cause all these and other effects, sometimes in part. What is certain is that they always bring with them the low esteem of oneself and deep veneration and respect for the Majesty of God. The works of the devil seem, at first, to bring some little devotion, but it does not last; they generate a secret presumption and esteem of oneself; they bring, if not at first, after some short time, disquiet of mind, agitation of the passions, hardness of heart, and pride, from which proceed a disadvantageous opinion of others and love of one's own ideas. Such as these and others are the effects of the devil's works." What was most admirable was that though he had so great a zeal for the salvation of souls, assisting



them with the fervor of charity, devoting himself wholly to their service, he was nevertheless ready to give up the direction of them whenever it pleased God. He kept himself in great detachment from them for he sought nothing but God. "I have always had," he writes, "for a maxim to live detached even from the direction that God wills I should give to souls. For this reason I hope that God will not permit me to deceive myself. How much I wish to give up all things and to leave this most sublime, but most laborious and dangerous, exercise for learned and prudent priests! I am all darkness and deformity; this I say as it is, and as I feel it."

"We must fear," he writes to a devout person, "that fierce beast, pride, which is a dragon with seven heads, that meddles with everything. There is nothing that I fear more, and it makes me watch over my heart for I dread that it may become defiled with it. The love of God is jealous. A grain of inordinate affection to creatures is enough to ruin everything." "Hear my child," he says to the same, "the less you can communicate with me, the more opportunity you have to do it with God. The more you are deprived of the consolation of conversing even with your spiritual Father, the more abundant will be the consolations of the Holy Spirit."

As the good Father thought he stood in need of the lights of others, and wished to be instructed and corrected, he writes in another letter, "Give a full account of your soul to your spiritual Father. Tell him how I have guided you. I wish this greatly, and I submit everything to his charitable censure. I give leave and I wish that my letter may be shown to your confessor, and I should be glad if he would correct my errors, for I know myself to be very ignorant and imperfect."

Through this most noble detachment, he wished for nothing from the persons he directed but the greater glory of the Divine Majesty, their sanctification, and the aid of fervent prayers. "Do not think," he writes to a spiritual daughter, "of sending me anything, for I do not wish it. Practice holy poverty and detachment from all things." In another he says, "I beg of you not to send me anything more. I wish for nothing but the charity of your prayers." We see clearly, therefore, that this man of God was truly animated with that Spirit of intelligence which, being the fountain of sanctity, requires that the chaste delight of souls should be in holy discourses, pure and burning with the fire of charity and the flames of heavenly love; a Spirit that by His penetration goes to the depths of hearts to discern their different dispositions, always rich in eloquence, in persuasion, in sweetness, and in grace; a Spirit which, while He is in Himself one and most simple, multiplies Himself in wonderful effects, making Himself all to all. Now He

ascends on high, speaking of the most sublime sanctity with the perfect; with the weak, like an affectionate nurse, He seems to grow little and lose Himself; a Spirit, finally, who, being the master of all truth, speaks with firmness, with truth, without knowing any doubt or hesitation in His infinite knowledge, but because He loves souls most tenderly, speaks always affectionately and shows Himself, as it were, all humanity, all benignity, and most earnestly desirous of their good. With this Spirit the servant of God was animated; hence the various instructions that he gave so appropriately and wisely; the great facility with which he entered and, as it were, transformed himself into the state of each soul to give to each a more suitable assistance; the facility, the eloquence, the clearness with which he explained the most secret mysteries which God, in His infinite charity, works in the sanctuary of the soul; the certainty, the consistency, the constant stability of his teaching. These cannot be the effects of the human spirit, as unable to perceive with its defective sight the immense light of the most sublime truths, as it is weak, variable, and inconstant in its thoughts and ideas.

By means, then, of holy prayer, this excellent master endeavored to form a circle of heavenly and uncontaminated souls, entirely consecrated to divine love and union with God, without, however, neglecting to give due application to the different obligations of each one's state. Nor was he satisfied unless he saw practiced that advice which St. Paul gives us in speaking of himself, "But our conversation is in heaven." If, with earnest desire and assiduous care, they did not endeavor to keep their hearts in heaven, conversing with the blessed and with God Himself, as he himself always tried to do – so diligently that a priest of our Congregation, a very spiritual man, said that Father Paul, whether alone, in company, in retreat, or traveling, was almost entirely absorbed in God – and by his exterior modesty showed the elevation of his soul and his union with the Divine Majesty.

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **Of the Means He Took to Preserve and Increase the Gift of Holy Prayer**

In order to keep up a loving discourse and close communication with God, and to become more and more in love with the divine perfections, Father Paul delighted in reading holy books, especially the scriptures in which God Himself speaks and manifests His will to us, some works

of St. Augustine, the works of St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, and others. He preferred that the books he read should begin with the letter 'S', that is, that they should be composed by saints, according to the advice of St. Philip Neri, and he taught this also to others. He took special delight in reading the pious John Tauler, into whose meaning he penetrated with great light. He often, therefore, spoke of him with so much pleasure that at the mere mention of Tauler, his countenance became inflamed, and he shed a flood of tears of joy and devotion, clearly showing that the doctrine of this great man, where he treats of the union of the soul with God, of repose in God, of annihilation in God, and the like, had become entirely his own. He experienced in himself what he read in Tauler. He exhorted others also to profit by the sublime doctrines taught by that author to lead the soul to union with God. He wished that the reading of this book should not be a speculative and barren study, but should be well reduced to practice. Hence, he said one day to a superior, "My dear Father Superior, now is the time to dwell in the depth of Tauler, I mean in interior solitude. Take the repose of love '*in the bosom of God.*' There you will learn to perform well your office of superior and become a saint."

These were usually the books that Father Paul read. But he had continually open before his eyes a much larger book, that of all visible creatures in which pure and loving souls, by means of visible things, as so many letters formed by the beneficent hand of the Creator, read the greatness of invisible things and the infinite perfections of their beloved Lord. Hence it was that, when walking sometimes in the enclosure, he seemed to hear a voice crying out and reminding him of his obligation to love God. Once especially, when he was living in the Retreat of St. Angelo, on going out and seeing the beautiful flowers in the garden, he struck them with his stick saying, "Be silent, be silent." It seemed to him, as he said between smiles and tears of consolation, that these flowers spoke to him with a loud voice, "Love your God, love your God." This exercise, which he found most useful, he recommended to one of his penitents to whom he said in writing, "Recreate your mind with some lawful amusement, with necessary repose, by taking a walk alone and listening to the sermon that the flowers, the trees, the grass, the sky, the sun, and the whole world will preach to you. You will see that it will be a sermon of love and of praise to God, which will lead you to magnify the greatness of that Sovereign Artificer, who gave you your being."

Father Paul listened most willingly, and as often as he could, to this sermon. Once, when he was leaving a place where he had given a mission and saw that the people were accompanying

him, he said to them with a holy liberty that they must leave him alone for he also wanted to hear a sermon. When they turned back, Paul began to contemplate the flowers and the grass. It seemed to him as if they said, "Love God, serve God, glorify God." Thus the fervent missionary listened to a sermon, mute indeed, but very eloquent to a soul that loves and desires to increase in love.

In this contemplation he enjoyed the sweet fruits of solitude, where God is more easily found and more tranquilly enjoyed. After Vespers one day he had gone into the woods near the Retreat of St. Angelo and had walked far into a thick part of the forest, that he might not be disturbed in his sweet conversation with God. But as the students went out to amuse themselves, as is usual at vacation times, they accidentally saw the good Father walking under the trees without his hat. Approaching him, they saw that he was entirely absorbed in God. One, more courageous than the others, seeing him with the rosary of our Lord in his hand, said with confidence, "What does the rosary say?" And he, with all simplicity and openness of heart, showing his rosary, told them that he was yet at the commencement, and that he had stopped at those very words, "Our Father," contemplating their profound signification without passing on, though he had been already walking alone some time. In this manner, under the shade of trees, his soul reposed in God, our most loving Father, and he tasted the sweetness of those words, "*Our Father*," in which he took great delight. Hence, in spiritual conference with religious, he exhorted them to make their prayer in these words, "*Our Father, who are in heaven...*" Then he added, "Say this, '*Our Father*,' and then be silent, and let your interior work." It is no wonder that Father Paul had so great a love for solitude, wherein he found such benefit and enjoyed such sweet converse with God.

By his own choice, he would never have abandoned solitude, but would have spent in it, as in a sepulcher of life in which we die to the world, to live happily to God all the hours of his life. Hence, with all truth he could write to a devout soul:

1. "When I have nothing to do, I do not stop.
2. "When I have fulfilled my duties, I must retire, and let myself be seen but little. I hope to do it more and more, as I have made strong resolutions in these holy days, because God wills it. He who talks much with others becomes less a man.
3. "I cannot come to Orbetello for I am suffering more and more from my

dreadful miseries and I have resolved that, without necessity, I will not descend from the mountain; and I have most firmly determined to bury myself here, except at the time of the missions.”

From this great love of solitude, he left other places as quickly as he could when he was obliged to visit them. It appeared clearly that nothing but the glory of God could detain him. He anxiously sighed for his return to the retreat, even when his health seemed to require that he should remain longer.

His affection for solitude never diminished, and in the last years of his life he wished to retire to the novitiate and there end his days, hidden from all eyes. “I shall not have the pleasure of seeing the little building down there,” he writes, “for in spring there is the Chapter, and after that, with God’s help, I shall fly to the novitiate. It is not expedient to employ me in labor, for as I am so near death, I wish to retire from everything. As long as I could I have served; now I can do no more.”

It is, however, most true that when he left his material and visible solitude, he carried with him always that interior solitude of the heart in which he conversed lovingly alone with his Lord. He made use even of his journeys to recollect himself more and more in God, and he seemed, as he went, to be entirely absorbed in that Supreme Good, whom he tenderly loved. “Scarcely,” thus deposes a witness well worthy of credit, “had he left the retreat and the inhabited part of the country, when he devoutly recited the Litany of our Blessed Lady and some prayers for the souls in purgatory with his companions. After saluting the holy angels with the proper antiphon and prayer, he went on for some miles in silence, during which time he was seen to be bathed in tears, and his face so bright and so inflamed that he seemed like a seraph. Breaking silence at last, he fervently exclaimed, “Dear brethren, *lift up your heart*. All that we see is our property; what belongs to the Father belongs to the son; all things belong to God the Father. Therefore, all is ours for we are His children.” Again, on seeing trees, springs, and grass, full of holy fervor, he exclaimed, “Be silent, be silent. Preach no more.”

When he saw any village in the distance, he taught the practice of kneeling and sending the guardian angel to visit Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament in that country.

Though Father Paul so greatly enjoyed Almighty God and His infinite perfections in his interior, he knew that the Divine Spouse loves secrecy and humility, which jealously guard Him. Therefore, he endeavored to make no exterior demonstration and to conceal himself from the

eyes of others, that he might be more pleasing to God. He was cheerful and frank – the capital enemy of hypocrisy, falsehood, and affected manners, and also of that weakness into which beginners in devotion sometimes fall, that is, imagining that it consists either in bending their neck affectedly or some other external act. At the time in which he made his prayers with the community, he was most careful to abstain from any mark of devotion, such as sighs, groans, and extraordinary prostrations. Except for tears, which proceeded from the furnace of love that burned in his heart and ran sweetly from his eyes without any noise, he gave no sign of the interior communications he received from Almighty God. He disapproved of singularity in others with a just and holy liberty, and he seemed as if he could not tolerate them, for he wished each one to keep his secret jealously to himself.

On account, however, of his interior recollection, his external appearance and behavior, without his perceiving it, gave great edification and moved everyone who saw him. It was very manifest that he dwelt in the world with his weak and corruptible body, touching the earth with his feet only, but that his heart was in heaven. Each one was edified, as our Lord had foretold in speaking familiarly to his interior, as one friend does with another. One day, feeling a strong desire not to give bad example to his neighbor, but to edify through a good and holy intention, he was thinking over the means of carrying out his design. He heard in his heart a locution, so clear and distinct that he could not doubt of its coming from God. It was said to him, “To please me alone, you should keep recollected; for good example to others follows from it in consequence.” This locution was indeed most strong and efficacious in him, for all his life he endeavored to keep recollected and to converse familiarly with God, feeling sure that he who remains united with his Lord, who is the Lord of virtues and of life, cannot disperse an odor of death. This interior exercise, this loving discourse and intimate communication with God, gave birth in him to a great and entire detachment from all earthly thoughts and every affection of flesh and blood. Therefore he could write as follows, “I perceive that already the memory of our poor house is nearly extinct in this country, and I cannot express how greatly I rejoice in God for this; why, I cannot and ought not to say.”

As it is impossible to raise oneself to God without generously detaching oneself from the world, nor to enjoy tranquillity and profound interior peace without renouncing the inclinations and mortifying the passions which seek their food on earth, this truly enlightened man, who was skilled in the science that makes saints, required from those who put themselves under his

direction the same detachment that he himself practiced.

He wrote to a local superior, "I have thoroughly examined the letter of Brother N., and I see that there is no necessity for his going to his home. It is a stratagem of the devil to make him lose the merit he has so far gained." He continues with his usual prudence to say that the affairs, on account of which religious men wish to go home, may be very well arranged by means of other wise and charitable persons. He concludes, "Let him abandon himself into the affectionate arms of Jesus and help his parents by his prayers, which will do more good than he himself could."

"I do not like," he wrote to a penitent who had been married, "that you should make such frequent memorials of your late wife. It is better to pray for her and keep your heart in great detachment, and your mind and imagination free from any representation."

In the same spirit he wrote to a nun, "I will not fail to pray for Sig. G. C., and for your mother, and for the whole family. But, remember that you are dead and that the bells have already tolled as a sign of it."

It was noticed in his life how well his letters and the instructions he gave to others agreed with his own method of acting in regard to his relations, who for many good reasons would have merited special consideration. Though they were of honorable and noble birth, as we have said, they were in great difficulties and, we may say, in real want. His mother was a widow, left with a family. After her death, a brother and sister were left, who merited every kindness and compassion. But Father Paul, who had forgotten his country and the affections of flesh and blood, not only never went back after 1727 to Alessandria or Castellazzo, but never even sought any help or temporal provision for his relations. It was not that he did not love them, for virtue and ordinary charity require it; but he wished that in his love natural feeling should have no part. He held in suspicion every coin that was not the pure gold of charity. Mindful, however, of the real duty of well-ordered Christian piety, he encouraged them by his letters to suffer willingly their precious trials, as he called them, and to confide in God who is infinitely rich. But he never asked anything in their favor, though he might so easily have helped them as he enjoyed the friendship of great princes and Sovereign Pontiffs, who, through their charity and indulgence, would have favored him in everything. True it is, that his brother Joseph Danei, an honorable gentleman, wrote to Bishop Thomas Struzzieri, who had been of our Order and was then Bishop of Amelia, to recommend some affairs to him. In the letter, Danei frankly told him that he had at first applied to Father Paul of the Cross, who had answered that he could not and would not mix

in such affairs; that he was dead and they must consider him so and not think about him. These are words truly worthy to be meditated on and admired by all who know how much it costs to detach oneself from honorable and virtuous parents; words which show also how jealously Father Paul kept his heart for the holy love of God, to whom he had entirely consecrated it.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **His Charity and Tender Compassion for His Neighbor, in Favor of Whom He Obtains Help and Relief from God, Even by Miracles**

The beloved disciple, whose words are a complete and perfect instruction for the practice of holy charity, left this in writing, *“If anyone shall say that he loves God, and has in the meantime an aversion to his brothers, he is a liar; for it is not to be believed that he, who does not love his brother, whom he sees, will raise himself up to the love of God, whom he does not see”* (John 4:20). He concludes, *“We have received from God this commandment, that he who loves God must love his brother also.”* With all reason, therefore, it is said that the true and certain mark of the love of God is the love of our neighbor, and that he who loves his neighbor most loves God the best also. In this love of his neighbor, the virtue of Father Paul of the Cross shone out brightly. He had a very compassionate heart. From his youth, as much as he could, he lovingly assisted the poor of Jesus Christ. He went so far, sometimes, as to take the bread from his own mouth to relieve the poor and assist their necessities. During the first years after he left home, he was several times in want of a little bread that he might not die or faint from hunger. When Divine Providence sent him an alms through some charitable person, he immediately gave it to some other poor person who came to him – it happened more than once. The man of God never thought of the necessity which he was suffering without the hope of any other provision for himself, as he traveled without money or any provision. As he grew in years, he increased in compassion and sought their relief by every means. Traveling one day with some gentlemen, who went with him through devotion, they stopped when it was time to take refreshment. Two or three poor people then came to them. Father Paul, moved with compassion, took the best fish and the bread and would have given the food to them had he not been prevented by his companion, who promised that the poor should receive necessary relief. In proportion as the servant of God



gave food and nourishment from a love for the poor that burned in his heart by relieving them, so much the more did it increase and strengthen and oblige him, by a sweet and amiable violence, to continue and increase the assistance and alms to the poor as much as he could.

He required that in our retreats alms should be given to the poor who came to ask it. Besides this, in the retreat at Rome, two days of the week were assigned on which bread and soup were given to all the poor who came to receive them. He was most anxious that this practice should not be neglected and often repeated with great affection, “Let what is left in the refectory be given away at the door; it is the property of the poor.” And as in Rome, at the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, the poor came in great numbers and the remnants from the table were not sufficient for them all, the good Father ordered that whenever bread was made for the religious, an oven full should be made also for the poor and be given at the door. It was certainly beautiful to witness the miracle of holy poverty that those who possessed nothing and lived by alms should be able to relieve the poor who flocked to them in such numbers. As charity feels as its own the wants of others, and in proportion as our neighbor suffers it feels his burden and his sorrows and eagerly seeks to relieve him, so Father Paul, in those years when the poor people from the want of wheat and other provisions were in the greatest need, melted with compassion and tenderness and seemed unable to find any rest because Jesus Christ’s poor were not relieved as he desired. In the scarcity of 1764, to excite a still greater fervor of charity in his Congregation and to teach them how to find means in their poverty to help the poor, he wrote a circular letter to all the retreats, in which he clearly shows the tenderness of his charity. He exhorted us strongly to find new methods of mortification in a penitential life, that “*the abstinence of those who fast ought to become the feeding of the poor.*”

Not satisfied with the relief he had procured for the poor by that letter, he made one day in the Retreat of St. Angelo, where he then was, a discourse in which, inflamed with charity and most deeply penetrated with compassion, he showed on one side the misery of the poor who had nothing to appease their hunger and on the other the mercy of God so loving towards us that He provided us sufficiently and freed us from the difficulties and toils to which the poor were subject. Then he added that it was not right that we should be exempt from the universal scourge. Rather, we ought to be the first to feel for the wants of our neighbor, to clothe ourselves with the bowels of compassion to make the sorrows of our brethren our own and give them part of our own food, though sparse, and thus share in the common calamity. It seemed to him proper that

the religious should only receive half their usual portion and that only half the quantity of oil should be use in cooking, in order that what, through the love of holy charity, was taken from the religious, should be distributed at the door to the poor. He never ceased most earnestly to teach that the poor ought to be helped. That, out of the great number that came, not one should be forgotten by his charity, he ordered the brother appointed to the kitchen not to dismiss anyone unrelieved, though they came in such crowds. He also said, "Give my soup to the poor and the small loaf also, and put a piece of bread for me in the refectory. Do you understand?"

Often, in that year of want, on entering the refectory, thinking more of the misery of the poor than of his own refreshment, he said, "We shall not die of hunger; let him who wishes to leave his soup or little plate of herbs with half a loaf for the poor, do it with God's blessing." Saying this, full of compassion for the sufferings of his dear brethren and not being able to restrain his tears, he wept bitterly through the grief of his heart. These exhortations, and much more the example of the servant of God, had the desired effect. The religious vied with each other in holy imitation to deprive themselves, in part at least, of the provisions and bread given them in the refectory that they might be given to the needy.

The servant of God must have felt great consolation in seeing so much charity for the poor in his religious, and so great readiness in assisting them as far as they could. But though it was very pleasing to him that they showed themselves on this occasion by the excellence of their charity, being a true disciple of Jesus Christ, his heart seemed to be inconsolable during these calamities of the poor. Like a tender mother who speaks of nothing more willingly than the wants of her children, to give vent to her affection and obtain compassion for them, he often spoke with his eyes bathed in tears, especially at recreation time, of the sorrows and want suffered by the poor. He had a particular devotion to go himself to the door and give alms with his own hands. He went to the kitchen and said humbly to the cook, "Brother, give me a little bread to give to the poor," and then went to comfort the person who was waiting for an alms.

As he was almost crippled and rather dragged himself along than walked, it caused no little emotion and fervor to see that charitable old man receiving strength from his devotion in carrying alms to Jesus Christ's poor. Sometimes he exercised this act of charity humbly kneeling before them. One day, while he was living in the Retreat of our Lady at Cerro, a poor man came to ask an alms at the time the religious were dining. The good Father told the porter to let him wait. In the course of dinner the servant of God kept putting away what was brought to him and

reserving it in a dish. After dinner he himself went to the door and gave it affectionately with his own hands to the poor man. Kneeling down before him with his head uncovered and with tears in his eyes, he begged him to eat it, giving him spiritual refreshment at the same time by charitably consoling and encouraging him to suffer his poverty and misery for the love of God.

The servant of God was greatly comforted whenever he could make an offering of love to his Lord and Savior of what was given him for his own support. Hence, when he was in Rome, though his food was most meager, from morning till night he took only two slices of bread and drank very little wine. He desired that his poor brethren should benefit by this abstinence. He ordered the religious brother, who was his companion, to give in charity the bread he himself ought to have had to eat and the wine, also, to a certain person. Joining to holy charity the practice of true humility, which is its foundation and what renders it worthy of a reward and crown, he added, "Give him what you should have given me in charity, for I do not deserve it, I whom am a great sinner." He desired to help everyone that came to him and had not the heart to send anyone away discontented. His companion had perceived this virtuous inclination and, though he was much edified by the servant of God, yet as he did not equal him in the extent of his charity, he was careful when he was living in the house of Saints John and Paul, as he himself attests, not to take poor people to him for he was always moved with pity and ordered for them relief. Though the retreat in the beginning was very poor and there was difficulty in procuring necessary support for the religious, the servant of God, measuring his power rather by his tender charity and confidence in God than by the small quantity of provisions he had, ordered that something should be given to all. Among others came a gentleman who made known to him the misfortunes which had happened to him. Father Paul could not refuse him relief and, calling his companion, he told him he wanted thirty *paoli*.<sup>4</sup> The companion asked him what he wanted thirty *paolo* for, telling him that he should consider we had hard work to live. The servant of God humbly asked that at least twenty might be given him. Thus, as well as he could, he comforted that poor man. He would have had a certain amount of scruple if he had not tried to help the poor. Once he heard the bell ring at the door and running there saw two poor men. As he was thinking of other things, he said to them, "Go on ringing. The porter will come and will give you charity." He then retired to his room. But, as if he had just committed some serious fault, he said,

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<sup>4</sup> A coin with face or name of St. Paul the Apostle on it.

as his companion heard, "I am very sorry I did not give alms to those poor men. But, if they return I will atone for the fault." It was known that he felt great sorrow and displeasure; so much did he fear the shadow of a fault against fraternal charity.

He could not endure that things which were spoiled and bad should be given to the poor. One day, when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, a brother asked his leave to give something to the poor which was spoiled. Father Paul severely reproved him, telling him that it was against charity to give to the poor what is prejudicial to health. It is not surprising that Father Paul showed such true and cordial love for the poor for he remembered what Jesus Christ had said. What is done to the poor He takes as done to Himself. With the eyes of faith he saw in each poor man the person of Jesus Christ. On this account he assisted them with much readiness and respect. On another occasion, when at his retreat, five poor men came to ask an alms. He ordered the cook to give to them immediately, adding. "Look at their foreheads where all the five bear the name of Jesus Christ engraved."

As he knew what treasures are to be found in poverty, united with virtue, he desired to relieve not only the temporal wants of the poor and give them bodily assistance, but also to help them spiritually, for the soul is often no less weak and needy than the body. When he spoke to his beloved poor, he encouraged them to bear their misfortunes and said to them, "Take courage, poor of Jesus Christ, for Heaven belongs to the poor. Woe to the rich for their riches will cause them greater torment in hell (quoting to this effect some texts of Scripture - Cfr. Lk. 6:24) if they have not made a good use of them."

As this true disciple of his Divine Master, all love and charity, could not do alone what he wished for the poor, he labored in their favor as much as he could, making use of the opportunities that the giving of holy missions and similar employments afforded him. On one occasion, when Father Paul was giving the exercises publicly in a city in 1759, he found out that the poor were in distress because they were obliged to pay back the loan of wheat received for their nourishment during the past winter from the public deposit, without having the means of repaying it, as the harvest had been very scanty that year. The law was just going to be carried into effect against them, and the poor creatures were reduced to extreme distress. Father Paul, moved with compassion for them and their misery, recommended so earnestly and forcibly from the platform to those gentlemen that governed this public office to grant some delay. Showing so tender and cordial a compassion, he moved the hearts of the Vice President and all the gentlemen

who had anything to do with the affair, and obtained that payment should not be called for until the following year, to the universal consolation of the poor. He grieved deeply when the poor were abandoned. When the servant of God was staying in a retreat, some poor came to the door to ask alms. Father Paul, who was present, said to them kindly, as it was harvest time, “Why do you not go and glean?” “Oh Father, that God would grant that we might be able to go. The masters will not allow it because they want the wheat for the black pigs.” The servant of God was on fire with holy zeal on hearing that beasts were preferred before Jesus Christ’s poor. He went to his brother Father John Baptist, who was perfectly versed in holy Scripture, to ask him to find quickly that text where our Lord in the Old Testament commands that the poor shall be given full liberty to glean (Cfr. Lev. 23:22). Then he wrote a letter to the Ecclesiastical Superior of that place, representing strongly to him the greatness of the disorder and how outrageous a thing it was to prevent the poor from gleaning in order to give food to unclean animals.

More willingly, and with greater fervor, did the servant of God exercise his charity when there was question of helping persons who, for want of relief, were in danger of falling over some horrible precipice of sin. Though he was poor and the retreats of the Congregation were also poor, nevertheless made rich and ingenious by his charity, he many times found means to assist poor girls who were in danger of losing their virtue. This office of charity he exercised in Orbetello, a city greatly attached to Father Paul and much beloved by him. First with one, then with another, sum of money given him as an alms, he placed in security the honor and innocence of more than one. Once in Rome he was received through charity by some kind benefactors who lodged him in their own house. He went out early to say Mass, as is his custom, but in returning he met two poor girls who asked an alms. The good Father, who had shortly before received a piece of gold in alms, but had not the money himself, full of charity, turned to his companion and ordered him to give the money to these poor girls, and for the security of their virtue to recommend to them the holy fear of God and devotion to the sacred Passion of Jesus Christ.

Once when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, a poor woman came who had an opportunity of settling her daughter in marriage, but had no means of providing her with what was necessary to complete the arrangements. The poor creature had recourse to Father John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel, brother of the servant of God. Father John Baptist, who was also all charity, told Father Paul, who at once ordered the superior of the retreat to give the poor woman a quilt, a mattress and, I believe, also a pair of sheets with a sum of money, which was done.

Through this charitable donation, her daughter was enabled to marry at Bieda. Thus, Father Paul sought to help his neighbor by every means. And as his reputation was high, and he was considered a saint, he obtained on this account for his brethren, whom he loved tenderly in Jesus Christ, what one less esteemed than he would have found it impossible to gain.

And now, to my great consolation, I have to speak of the charity with which the servant of God particularly loved the city of Orbetello and of the extreme gratitude with which he endeavored to make a return for the charitable reception and the alms which, from the beginning, he had received from its inhabitants. At the time when the States of Tuscany were besieged by the Spanish troops under the command of General the Marchese de las Mines, by some evil reports and falsehoods the mind of this gentleman was so highly exasperated and irritated against the people and citizens of Orbetello that he had not only ordered that the vineyards should be laid waste, the vines cut down, and the country desolated, but also that the city should be bombarded without reserve or compassion. All was ready, a great quantity of mortars prepared and a strong detachment of troops ordered against Orbetello. When Father Paul, hearing of the misfortune that threatened the city, moved on one side by compassion and on the other by the hope of obtaining everything from that General, over whose mind our Lord had given him a spiritual influence, went to the General and began to dissuade him from the undertaking, assuring him that the people of Orbetello were not of that bad character that malicious persons had represented them to be, that they were honest, civil, and well behaved, and that they would be ready to surrender to him on conditions, so that he might himself ascertain the truth of what he said. But, as the General, who had begun the undertaking, did not yield nor revoke the order, Father Paul said so much and begged so humbly and so efficaciously, that this gentleman could resist no longer, and said openly to Father Paul that he granted his request, adding these precise words, "I do it for you Father Paul." The order was withdrawn and everything suspended, nor had the General to repent of yielding to Father Paul's advice as charitable as it was just, for when the place was surrendered, and he entered Orbetello, seeing the character of the inhabitants and perceiving the falsity of the calumnies, he said to Father Paul, "You are right, Father Paul; I am very well pleased with these people and am obliged to you for what you made me do." By saying this, he showed how useful it is, even to military men, to have persons, who in the heat of certain resolutions which repentance alone can repair, will speak in time for the truth and for innocence.

With much more difficulty he obtained from the Governor of Longone the pardon he asked

for a poor man condemned to death. It required a miracle. He was a poor soldier and, having been sentenced to death for desertion, a great crime in the army, there seemed to be no hope of obtaining his forgiveness. The Governor had this peculiarity that when he had once sentenced a criminal to death, he admitted no one to an audience till the sentence was executed. On the very morning when it was to take place, he was in his own room, setting his sword on the ground and leaning, I do not know why, with his head on the hilt, waiting immovable in this position till the news should be brought him that the man was dead. He gave strict orders that in the meantime no one should come to him. Father Paul, being at Longone, was entreated by the officers to interpose with the Governor in favor of the poor man. The good Father knew not how to refuse to perform this act of charity for a soldier, for whom he witnessed such compassion in the officers. He went immediately to the Governor's palace to speak to him and ask the favor, but was told by all his court that he could not have an audience, as there was a strict order to admit no one. The servant of God did not lose courage. He again begged and entreated that they would tell His Excellency that it was Father Paul, and that he wished to speak of an affair that would not admit of delay. Seeing such perseverance and knowing the merit of the servant of God, though they had given him many refusals, they finally consented to take a message to the Governor who, contrary to his custom, permitted him to enter. On his entrance the Governor said, "Well, Father Paul, what do you want?" "Your Excellency," he replied, "I wish this condemned man to be set free." "I cannot do it," said the Governor. Father Paul then set before him the reasons that could move him to clemency, and again with greater force begged him to forgive the criminal. The Governor, inflexible, always replied, "I cannot, I cannot." The servant of God, seeing that he could not obtain the favor from man, emboldened by his charity, hoped to receive it from God. Inflamed with holy zeal, he said, "Well, since Your Excellency will not grant this favor, let God do it." As he spoke he struck his hand against the wall. Scarcely had he ceased speaking than the palace began to shake from its very foundation. The Governor was seized with such fear and terror that, turning to Father Paul, all trembling he said, "Father Paul, the grace is granted." Thus, this soldier, who was on the point of being executed, was liberated.

When the servant of God could do nothing else, he had a wonderful and most efficacious secret by which he sought to obtain relief for his neighbor – he made by prayer fervent recourse to God in whose hands are all the hearts and all the destinies of people and the dominion of every other creature. Through his desire that the harvest might be abundant, he prayed himself and

wished others to beseech the Divine Goodness to bless the fruits of the earth and grant that they might produce an abundant harvest, as he could not bear to see the poor people in want. By this means he miraculously obtained relief for more than one place.

He was once giving a mission in Canepina in September 1750. As in that year it was perceptible that the harvest of chestnuts would be very poor, as the leaves of the trees were yellow and withered and the husks spoiled by the great dryness of the season, the people who derived their chief support from the chestnuts were in great affliction and consternation. Father Paul, full of compassion, felt a great desire to help these poor people. Feeling in himself a great confidence in God, he sought to infuse it also into the people, and from the platform said in public, "Fear not, my people. Recommend yourselves to God and trust in Him for I hope that the harvest of chestnuts will be abundant this year." In fact, after the mission and the departure of the servant of God, most unexpectedly, as the season was far advanced, copious rain fell, which so greatly invigorated the trees that they produced a more abundant harvest than had been before witnessed. He obtained by his prayers a similar benefit for the people of Vallerano, to whom he was giving a mission in the same year and season. The chestnuts in that territory had suffered even more than at Canepina; the trees had lost nearly all their leaves and the husks, besides being very small, were withered and, as it were, burnt up. Everyone expected that the first rain would bring them to the ground, and that there would be no harvest at all. Father Paul, who desired to confer at the same time two benefits on these people, repeated often to them, "Be converted, my people, and I assure you, trust that God will give you a good harvest of chestnuts." Not one word of the servant of God fell to the ground; everything was verified. The very abundant harvest that followed was attributed to the prayers of Father Paul, who was comforted by Almighty God in his desire of assisting these people, temporally, because they courageously resolved to profit by the mission. Through this charitable compassion he wrought by the power of God other miracles in favor of his suffering neighbor. One day Antonio di Parmiglio Galli of Bieda was carrying lime and other materials for the building at the Retreat of St. Angelo. He was seized on his way with so violent a toothache that he was scarcely able to reach the place. While his companions went into the retreat, he remained outside and, unable to endure the excessive pain, threw himself on the ground as if in despair. Just then Father Paul came out at the door and, hearing that poor Antonio had so dreadful a toothache, he went to him most compassionately and asked him to go and take some food with the others in the stranger's room. Antonio replied that he could not



chew any sort of food in the state he was. The servant of God begged him again, and in the end almost obliged him to go in. When he entered the room, Father Paul gave him with his own hands a piece of bread and told him to eat it through obedience. He began to eat, but as was natural, the bread increased the pain, which was excessive before. Father Paul then made the sign of the Cross on the suffering cheek, and then, as if in play, and smiling, gave him a slight blow, saying, “Does it hurt you now.” The pain immediately departed and Antonio exclaimed, “Ah, Father, I am alive again!” “Well there,” said Father Paul, “eat with the others.” Antonio began to eat and did so without pain and with the greatest facility, as if he had never had the toothache. When he was going away, wishing to kiss Father Paul’s hand, he seized it almost by force and, as he kissed it, the decayed tooth from which he had suffered fell into the hand of the servant of God, as if it were to be a visible and clear testimony of the wonderful and charitable cure wrought by that blessed hand. Antonio left the retreat perfectly well and never again suffered from a toothache.

By the same motive of charity, Father Paul wonderfully cured a sick woman. He had gone to Orbetello to visit the mother of a family, who was very ill. She had a young daughter, who, if her mother died, would have been left in want – a dangerous thing at her age. The heart of the servant of God was touched by the mother’s suffering and the daughter’s danger. When he left the house, he said to his companion, “I feel great compassion for that poor sick woman.” He showed also a great desire to help her. In fact, as was known afterwards from this Father Fulgentius, Father Paul appeared miraculously the following night to the sick woman who was wonderfully cured.

### **CHAPTER XIII**

#### **Of the Servant of God’s Charity Towards the Members of the Congregation and Towards All the Sick**

If the servant of God’s charity was great towards all, we ought most certainly to say that it was extraordinary towards the Congregation, whose members he tenderly loved as his dear children and, in his humility, respected as servants of God more fervent and virtuous than himself. It is impossible to express the marks of cordiality, affection, and the most refined charity that Father Paul gave on all occasions to his religious. He who has seen it can do no less than

say, with great gratitude, that Father Paul's charity was the charity of a saint. So well were we all persuaded of this truth that it was said among us, when he was alive, "There is no charity like that of our Father." No one had recourse to him, who was not consoled in affliction, comforted under humiliations, reassured in perplexities, and immediately assisted if he was in any necessity. Insomuch that his brother and director, Father John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel, used to call him, with holy cheerfulness, the Mamma of mercy. The servant of God did not, however, wait till persons had recourse to him, but anticipated the requests and even the wishes of everyone. He was most watchfully solicitous to foresee and provide, in the instructions he gave those who were in office, for the wants of each, and he inquired closely into them. He desired that to each and to all should be charitably given what was required, and as much as was possible according to our poverty, and that no one should have reason to complain. Not only by words but also by letters, he often told the superiors that, with confidence in God, they must give the religious all that is prescribed and allowed by our holy Rules. He had a most persuasive manner of gaining the hearts of these superiors and leading them to act according to the spirit of Jesus Christ. He had a special love and compassion for the novices, as tender plants requiring greater cultivation and more consideration. He would not allow the penance to be given them to fast on bread and water. He writes to Father Fulgentius, the Master of Novices, a man of holy life, "We see, and it is practiced by all, that everyone mortifies himself by leaving something. If the portion be so scanty, when something is left scarcely anything remains. For much restriction must not be allowed, it is detestable, but the medium is discreet. I saw, when I was in Chapter, that all was done well, and I hope it will continue. Oh, how necessary is vigilance that the young may keep up their strength; otherwise we should have a hospital, and few would persevere! I know that you are cautious in forbidding the little chains and other penances beyond the Rule, and I know practically your charity, prudence, and discretion. Do not be surprised that I speak so much of this, for God makes me feel it much. I assure you that in keeping up the strength of the young, especially, the Rules are better observed." When young men came to take the habit and he was at the retreat of the novitiate, he immediately showed them all the tenderness and charity of his heart. He was filled with consolation to see them away from the stormy sea of the world and placed, as it were, in security in the harbor of regular observance. Towards the young ecclesiastical students, who have not generally that perfection and steadiness of mind which is found in the far advanced, the wise and prudent Father showed a great affection and care. As

much as he could, he cultivated them himself and directed them in the spiritual life. When he was in the retreat of study, he often listened to their conferences and often, also, made to them exhortations full of affection and efficacy. On all occasions he gave them much paternal advice. On every occasion he showed his interest in the young, his strong wish for their spiritual benefit, and his consideration for their health.

General, indeed, for all was his paternal affection, his diligence and most affectionate solicitude. He required the food to be prepared according to poverty, certainly, but with cleanliness and holy charity that the religious might keep themselves in health and serve God and their neighbor. His charity was so attentive that even the least things did not escape his notice. He even went so far as to teach the superiors and cooks how to prepare Lenten food, and said that when he was at Monte Argentario in the first beginning, he was the cook himself. But that was indeed simple cooking that he performed when he was alone or with his brother John Baptist at Monte Argentario. Father Fulgentius of Jesus, who is now dead, used to relate that he was one of the first companions of the servant of God and that, when he went to be received into the Congregation and take the habit, Father Paul, as a sign of joy and to strengthen his new companion and excellent novice, put a pot full of vegetables on the fire. This was to be all their dinner. But beginning with great fervor to speak of heavenly things, Father Paul forgot his pot and the fire and his pot of vegetables all ended in smoke. If the religious were going to travel, his charity was most ingenious in their behalf. With great exactness, especially if the journey was long, he gave them a sort of itinerary that they might know the precise spots where they could rest and refresh themselves from the fatigue of their journey. He desired them to take some light provisions with them, that they might not feel faint. He contrived that out of the things belonging to the retreat those should be chosen most suited to their wants. He himself took care that those little things should be prepared which would be for the greater comfort of his poor religious. He truly seemed what he was, a most tender Father, so great were his charity, affection, and attention. He neglected nothing and seemed to be engaged on a most important affair, for in his eyes, whenever charity was in question, everything was of importance. When the religious returned from any journey, he received them affectionately, embraced them with great charity, compassionated their fatigue, and, if they had been absent several days, he required an account of what had been done, but in so pleasing and kind a manner that it delighted them. He ordered dinner or supper to be prepared for them, according to the time of their arrival, and with special

charity. "Poor religious!" he said kindly. "They have been laboring." When our missionaries were going to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, it was easy to see that he accompanied them with his heart and with his charity. He omitted none of the regulations and advice by which he hoped everything would succeed well, without injury to their health. He recommended them to take necessary repose, saying, "If our Lord granted you extraordinary strength, you might remain two or three days without food. But as you have not such strength, you must take necessary refreshment." He also exhorted them to labor with holy discretion, that in them might be fulfilled the words of the Holy Spirit, which he quoted with his usual fervor, "*Wisdom made him honorable in his labors.*" Then he added, it will be verified that our Lord "*accomplishes his labors*" (Wis. 10:10). When they returned to the retreat from holy missions after the good success of their work, then it was that his charity knew no bounds; the greatest marks of affection and distinction were for the missionaries. He embraced them, he kissed their foreheads, lavished a thousand caresses on them, and immediately desired that food should be prepared for them, telling the cook that he must treat the religious with holy charity. As if he feared the cook should forget or be unable to give them the necessary refreshment, he sent for the superior and gave him the order. And to be more sure, he went in person to the kitchen to give distinct orders. He often used to repeat those words of the Apostle, "*They are worthy of double honor who labor in the word*" (I Tim. 5:17). He earnestly begged the religious to refresh themselves and take the food and sleep that they required for the restoration of their strength. "I remember," says a witness, "that on one occasion, though he was then infirm and almost crippled, he would wait upon us at table himself." He ordered them to take additional rest for several nights. All these things the servant of God performed in so pleasing a manner that he gained the hearts of all and engaged them to persevere with new fervor in the apostolic ministry. He used to say, as if in justification of all these demonstrations, "A missionary is of more value than a retreat through the great good he brings to souls." He sometimes also said, "It is better to lose a retreat than a missionary."

The good Father could not bear to see anyone suffering more than is required by the Rule. If he saw that one religious had greater difficulty than the others, his compassion was excited, and he tried to relieve them. For this purpose he even deprived himself of food, taking it from his own mouth to give it to others. This happened particularly at the time of novenas of great devotion in the Congregation, when the religious each usually deprive themselves one day of their portion, eat sitting on the ground, and practice similar mortifications. On such occasions

Father Paul often gave up his portion and sent it to one of his children for fear he should suffer too much.

Above all, the charity of the servant of God was wonderful and special for the sick. He had great devotion in visiting and assisting them, and waiting upon them himself, whether they were religious or externs. He had made a good novitiate in this holy practice at the Hospital of St. Gallicano, named by him in a letter, “A furnace of charity – there is none greater.” During the long space that he lived in the Retreat of St. Angelo, to keep up as well as he could a custom so holy and a practice so dear to our Lord, each time he went to the neighboring town of Vetralla, he visited the sick, going to the hospital with others, which served as a stimulus and example to the edification and consolation of the people.

Also at Vetralla the servant of God showed his tender and loving heart towards the sick, and our Lord granted him the consolation of knowing how much good is effected by charitably visiting them. One day, as he was returning from Vetralla to the retreat, he asked on the way, urged by his ardent charity, whether there was any sick person in the neighborhood. Hearing that there was a man ill, he quickly went to him. Very opportunely, he found the poor man seriously ill and in danger of death and without having made his confession. The servant of God, without delay, began to assist him to dispose himself for the great journey to eternity. He heard his confession and was most strenuous in desiring that the curate should be sent for to give him the other sacraments, as death was approaching. In fact, after two or three days, the sick man died, having had the happiness of making his confession at the last hour to a man of such charity and zeal.

In the visits that Father Paul made to the sick, and knowing the danger they were in, he told them clearly to prepare to die and abandon themselves into the loving hands of God. He would have considered it a great sin to flatter them, a sin completely contrary to that openness of heart and sincerity in words which he so greatly loved in himself and others. Nor did he think it lawful, as some wrongly imagine, to deceive persons on account of their distinguished rank. No less to them than to others, he gave notice in a becoming manner, but with the true liberty of the servants of God, that they must dispose themselves for a happy death. When he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, a person of distinction fell dangerously ill in a neighboring town. The servant of God hastened there by his zeal for the gentleman’s soul. Some days after he had returned home to the retreat, he was heard by a devout friend, exclaiming with great grief and

sighing, “Oh, I did it in time! I told him clearly that he must prepare for eternity! He allows himself to be deceived and believes those who flatter him!” Continuing to refer to the sick man, he said, “Ah, if I could go. But the night and the long distance prevent me!” The good priest, his friend, was edified to see such zeal in the servant of God for that soul, and when the following day he heard that the sick man was dead, he believed that Father Paul, by supernatural light, had been made aware of the imminent danger in which he was.

Feeling persuaded of the fruit which is reaped from visiting the sick, according to the words of the Holy Spirit, “*Do not hesitate in visiting the sick, for you will be strengthened in love*” (Sir. 7:39), he used to say to our religious at Rome who went to the hospital, “Oh, what a great vineyard is the hospital; great good may be done for the sick. Blessed are they. Let them then go to visit the sick. Ah, if I were not deaf and so infirm, how gladly would I go, but God does not will it and I am content.” In saying this he showed a deep feeling of charity which animated all to the holy work. More than once, with great fervor of charity, he said, “If for our sins, our Lord should send the plague in my time, I would be the first to leave my solitude to help, in everything and everywhere, my poor neighbors suffering from such a disease, and I would help them as long as I had breath and life.”

Everyone can easily imagine how extremely tender would be Father Paul’s charity for the sick of the Congregation, if it was so great for all others. He used to say that the sick required either a mother or a saint. In fact, Father Paul had the heart of a mother towards the sick, because he had the charity of a saint. Often in the day, he visited them, and he waited upon them with incomparable affection. He was all attention that nothing might be wanting of medicine, food, or any other remedy, going so far as to deprive himself of the little refreshments given to him or prepared for him, of which he stood so much in need. When he was in good health, he himself prepared remedies for the sick and gave them with his own hands. He kindly assisted them and performed all those offices for them that his paternal charity dictated. He would almost have considered himself guilty of grievous sin if, when going about, he had not several times visited the sick, though not in danger. Nor did he dispense himself from it on account of his other weighty duties. He asked each one how he felt, if he wanted anything, if he had all necessary assistance and charity, if in due time and place he was provided with what he required, and if he could serve him in anything. To his words he united such marks of affection that his heart seemed to be melting with tenderness and compassion, which clearly proved his great love for

God and his neighbor. And in order that the sick might know how to avail themselves of the treasure that is hidden in sickness, he suggested powerful motives of loving resignation to the Divine Will to suffer the disease with patience from the example of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, that the sick man might abandon himself with holy joy to the will and pleasure of God, and might well understand that that was the proper time to practice virtue in imitation of the apostle who said, "*When I am weak, then I am strong*" (II Cor. 12:10). This was his principal end in visiting the sick, that each one might be spiritually assisted, and that the holy sacraments might be administered carefully and in time. He did not allow anyone to be left alone who required assistance and was in affliction, that he might not be deprived of necessary spiritual and temporal aid. When he was obliged to lie in bed, if he could by any means rise, he dragged himself or was carried by others to visit those who were sick. It was indeed a touching sight to see the good old man walking with crutches, or carried in the arms of others, proceeding to the infirmary. If he could not leave his bed, he sent others in his place to see how the sick were, whether they wanted anything, if they were assisted and relieved, if they were treated with charity, if he could be of any use to them in anything. In effect, he behaved like a true father, or even a tender mother, towards all, especially the sick. As the charity of God, who is the Sovereign Master and perfect model of charity, embraces all, so the charity of the servant of God, which was a fire lighted up by the Holy Spirit in his heart, knew no restriction nor reserve. It embraced all and was most affectionate, not only towards priests and missionaries but also to students, brothers and even the boys and workmen that he employed in the retreat. During a great epidemic, predicted by the saint, which in 1759 attacked our Retreat of St. Angelo and carried off a great number, the sick amounted to seventeen. Among them were three seculars who worked in the retreat and were happy enough to ascertain by experience the extent of Father Paul's charity. The good Father immediately ordered that they should be waited upon like the religious, visited by the physician, helped by all the remedies that were judged necessary, and attended night and day without ever being left.

True charity penetrates by its beneficial effects, even when at a distance, to every place where it can find nourishment for its kind and holy desire of relieving others. Hence, when there were sick in the retreats, when Father Paul could not be present, he visited them in spirit by the compassion and tenderness of his heart. He wrote pressing letters to the superiors, and with great charity recommended to them the care of the poor sick. He often said, "Poverty is good, but

charity is better.”

In convalescence he wished that the religious should act with discretion for the recovery of their strength. Therefore, he disapproved of their straining or kneeling too much, and so weakening themselves or preventing their speedy recovery and perfect cure. He required the same spirit of charity in all the superiors of the Congregation. He used to say, and he repeated it also in the chapter room after a General Chapter when the capitulars were present, that the sick should be treated with great charity in proportion to their wants, and that expense should not be considered, but that in case of necessity the sacred vessels should be pledged or even sold. Thus, he clearly showed that he loved all for the love of God, and in a more special manner those of whom he had the particular care, as he had learned in the school of charity, in which all is according to order. He made use of every occasion to practice this virtue, so strongly inculcated by our Divine Redeemer. Even in the last moments of his life, he gave extraordinary signs of his tender charity as may be seen in the course of the history, thus disposing himself to enter happily into the immense ocean of divine charity and heavenly sweetness.

## **CHAPTER XIV**

### **Of the Charity of the Servant of God for the Spiritual Benefit of Souls**

If Father Paul was so anxious for his neighbors’ good, where bodily health and life were concerned, much greater and beyond comparison was his care and solicitude when the soul and its eternal felicity were involved. For he knew well that as the soul is the chief part of a person, so the principal and best part of charity should be exercised towards the soul for the sake of future and eternal happiness. To ascertain in some degree how constantly this internal fire kept him in motion for the good of his neighbor, we must see him in his missionary duties. When he had to go forth into the field to fight against sin, the cruel enemy of souls, nothing could keep him back. In the last years of his life, he went out when he was suffering greatly from his usual infirmities and pains and sometimes with fever upon him. It was always very well known that he sought nothing but to rescue souls from the slavery of sin and bring them to God. He spared himself neither by day nor night. He spent almost all the time either in reconciling enemies and settling their differences, in hearing confessions or in prayer, even with that difficulty to himself



that can easily be imagined as the poor missionary was sometimes troubled and oppressed by the disease which, as we have said, he had upon him. Very short was his repose, and he often spent whole nights in hearing confessions without closing his eyes. All seemed to wish to confess to him, not only a great number of distinguished persons, but also the most uncultivated in mind. The fiercest souls, beggars, and wretched persons all wanted Father Paul because he showed all a most singular charity. Those, however, to whom Father Paul seemed most tender and affectionate, were the greatest sinners and the most defiled souls. Like a compassionate physician he took special care of such souls, because he knew they stood in greater need of it. He used to say that bandits and similar persons were his greatest friends and, in fact, he loved them all with a boundless charity. They, perceiving the servant of God's affection and knowing the benefits they received from him, became strongly attached to him. To gain them, the servant of God treated them in the most sweet, mild, and persuasive manner; he caressed them, embraced them, and seemed to become their father to free them from the hands of the devil and the monster sin, so that it had become a proverb that, for a great sinner, Father Paul's charity was required. It was said, "As for you, you want Father Paul."

If we were to attempt to describe the wonderful conversions wrought by God through His servant on this sort of people, we should require an entire volume. It will suffice to relate a few of them, for from these, and others already related, we can imagine how great was the charity of Father Paul for these poor, lost, and almost despairing people. In 1756 there was at Canino a certain man who lived in sin with a woman, and neither the zeal and efforts of the parish priest nor the Orders of ecclesiastical superiors had sufficed to make him leave her, though they had anxiously endeavored to remove so great a scandal and sin. The servant of God, when on a mission, in order to gain this wandering soul, sent for him, received him with great charity, embraced and affectionately kissed his forehead in the public room of the house where he was staying, in the presence of several persons. Then Father Paul led him to a room apart. This poor sinner was so touched with the kind and affable manners and the efficacious words of the servant of God, that he immediately resolved to change his life. What he determined upon he faithfully executed; he removed the scandal, abandoned his sinful course, and became sincerely converted to God.

We will relate another wonderful conversion. When Father Paul was traveling on business from one country to another, he saw at a distance a band of soldiers with their muskets on their

shoulders. To one of them he made a sign to wait for him. As the man did not understand, he said aloud to him, "Wait for me; wait for me; you are to be mine." At these words all of them stopped in amazement, not understanding the meaning of these words. But he who had been called was more surprised than the others. When Father Paul came up to them, he immediately went to embrace the one to whom he had made a sign. Kissing him, Father Paul said, "My son, I wish to cure you; you are not well and you need a physician to cure you. I am the physician and will do it." The man, much more surprised, answered, "I am well, and I wish to God that I might be always so." Father Paul then replied with the tears falling from his eyes, "You will not escape from my hands; you are to be mine and not the devil's." The poor man, understanding then what sort of disease was meant and seeing himself thus discovered by the servant of God through supernatural light – since what Father Paul said was quite true – conceived in his heart a great esteem for him, and afterwards a sincere desire to confess to the blessed Father. But as he had to perform a duty imposed upon him by his superior, he said, "I cannot now go to confession." Father Paul then answered, "For your soul's sake, you must leave all things. Fear not. I will speak to your superior." He took him to a place apart and, having prepared him for confession, began to hear him. But behold another miracle. Father Paul held the crucifix in his hands and, as if he read in those most sacred wounds the sins of the penitent, manifested to him his sins one by one. The soldier acknowledged himself guilty of them. Our Lord, who, like an affectionate pastor, recalled to the fold that lost sheep by so great a miracle, gave the poor sinner so deep a conviction, horror, and detestation of his crimes that during the whole time of the confession, which occupied about four hours, he did nothing but weep. Afterwards he felt such satisfaction and happiness that he could scarcely contain himself for spiritual joy.

Another miserable sinner had given his soul to the devil and, the time agreed upon with the malicious tempter having already expired, he was in the last degree of despair. To his great happiness, he prostrated himself before a man full of that charity of which he had so great need in his deplorable state. This was Father Paul. On seeing him, the servant of God felt in his heart a particular impulse, which strongly urged him to assist and comfort him. He immediately heard him with great tranquillity and patience put before his eyes his dreadful situation. After he had recalled and detested the infamous compact, Father Paul made him make the profession of faith to recover the divine grace – with what consolation we may easily conceive.

The servant of God had a good opportunity of employing his charity for the benefit of some

poor apostates, who flying from a fold where they are vigilantly watched, fall into the greatest errors. By his zeal and charitable endeavors, he obtained the return to religion of two apostates, one of whom, besides apostasy, had been guilty of homicide. Our Lord, who knew the charity of His servant and had granted him a heart so sweet, kind, and loving to compassionate poor sinners, once sent some to him even in a miraculous way. When he was giving a mission, a man came to him just as he was taking off his vestments after celebrating Mass. With a loud voice the man cried out, "Father Paul, hear my confession, for I have not confessed for ten years." The servant of God answered, "Why do you give yourself a bad name?" And turning to those who were present, he said to them, "Do not believe him; he says that to get the first turn in the confessional." The penitent, who had a strong desire of finding a remedy to his already festering wounds, thought of nothing but of speedily putting himself into the hands of a skillful and charitable physician and replied with firmness, "I say that I have not confessed for ten years." The servant of God then in a low voice told him to wait till he had made a short thanksgiving and then to follow him to the house immediately. The penitent obeyed, and when in the house, Father Paul took him to his room and heard his confession. But in that confession the Divine Mercy took a loving revenge; for when the number and enormity of the sins were excessive, then grace abounded more. This man, so far from God before, received from our Lord so deep a contrition that he began to strike his breast violently with a large stone he had purposely brought with him. He would not have ceased if the servant of God, perceiving it, had not made him put it down. But we must make known how this poor man determined to confess, for it was an extraordinary circumstance. As he was going to the mission to listen, perhaps through curiosity, to the missionary, the devil, as he himself related, appeared to him, threatening him and wishing to carry him away. Anyone can imagine how terrified the poor wretch was. He traveled on as well as he could to the place and stayed there for the night, during which he heard a voice which said to him, "Go to confession; go to Father Paul." He did not know the missionary's name, but learned it then, and made use of it the following morning to call him by it. By the same charity he obtained from a bandit that, laying aside his ferocity, he would pardon a man whom he had resolved to kill. The servant of God, going one day to Orbetello, found one of the principal gentlemen in that place in a great state of terror, not daring to go beyond the city gates because a famous chief of bandits, who had a den and place of security in Magliano under a different government, distant about ten miles from Orbetello, was watching and waiting for this person to

leave the gates of the city, as he was positively determined to kill him. Many gentlemen interposed to appease this ferocious and sanguinary man, but in vain; for, encouraged in his boldness by the company of others of the same character who were with him, he was implacable and would not hear a word of pardon or reconciliation. Father Paul, hearing of it and animated with the charity that burnt in his breast, said he would go in person to find this bandit and speak to him even though he did not know him. He therefore took his crucifix and, armed with that lively confidence with which his charity inspired him, took the road to Magliano. Though everyone tried to dissuade him from it, and told him he would incur great danger, Father Paul went out. But the servant of God, having in the crucifix an unconquerable weapon and defense, went to the place. Finding him in a small house, Father Paul asked him if he was such a person; but he already supposed it from the manner in which he was armed. He answered rudely and with a troubled countenance that he was the same. The servant of God, then kneeling down with the crucifix in his hand, said, "I am come on purpose to ask a favor of you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and I shall not depart till I obtain it." He answered angrily as before, enquiring what he wanted. "Nothing," replied the servant of God, "but that you pardon such a person and do not injure him." At these words the heart of the bandit was entirely changed. Quite touched and subdued, he immediately said, "Oh Father, rise! I cannot refuse it to you; you alone could obtain this. Yes, I pardon him from my heart." Father Paul, whom experience had made very cautious and aware that he must continue to strike as long as the iron was hot for the security of so Christian an action, drew out a paper which he had purposely brought, which contained the promise and concession of pardon and peace. He read it and presented it to be signed by the bandit, who immediately acceded. Father Paul, seeing so good a disposition for a complete conversion, with his usual fervor, sweetness, and persuasiveness began to speak to him of God. The wicked man was touched, repented, and immediately asked to confess to the servant of God. Father Paul, who sought nothing so eagerly as to carry to our Lord's feet this soul as a rich and noble prey, heard him with great charity. In the meantime, some men of his company coming in, the bandit ordered them never again to injure in any manner that person. The ardent zeal of Father Paul was not satisfied with having gained the chief; he took occasion to speak of God and of His goodness to those poor sinners also. Our Lord gave such efficacy to his words that they changed the hearts of all. Pierced with contrition, they all asked to confess to him, and thus Father Paul gathered abundant food from his charity and left those poor people comforted.

In Orbetello our saint's friends were expecting his return. Not seeing him appear, they believed him already dead. But when he actually returned, their consolation was no less than their surprise. It was greatly augmented at the sight of the peace and pardon signed by the bandit by which the gentlemen, their fellow citizen, was reestablished in tranquility. He himself expressed great gratitude to Father Paul. To confirm his new penitents in their holy resolution, Father Paul used, with prudent and industrious charity, to take them with him from one mission to another. Among the converts who faithfully followed him as long as Father Paul judged it proper, there was one who by an enviable death ended his days in the hands of the servant of God. This man had been a blasphemer, a murderer, and a scandalous public sinner. The servant of God, being informed of this man's bad character when he was giving a mission at Vetralla, with great prudence and charity endeavored to gain an entrance to his heart, sending for him, showing him great marks of affection, and persuading him to be present at the sermons. This poor sinner could not resist such marks of love and charity, and went to the sermons where the Divine Mercy was waiting for him. Enlightened, moved, and penetrated by the efficacy of the divine word, he made his confession to the servant of God, after which he was greatly changed and began to live as a good Christian. The good Father, however, who like a skillful physician, knew how greatly his penitent, newly restored to health, stood in need of preservatives and of care to confirm him more strongly in his holy resolutions, took him with him on his other missions. The man, becoming more and more attached to the charitable and affectionate Father of his soul, and valuing most highly his advice and instructions, continued to lead a good life till his death. After following Father Paul for sometime, he went to serve in the public hospital of Vetralla, where, after greatly edifying the whole people by the extreme charity and attention with which he treated the sick, he fell dangerously ill. The servant of God, hearing of it, went to visit him. As soon as the sick man saw him, he cried out, "Ah, Father, how greatly am I obliged to you!" And he answered, "To our crucified Lord you owe all obligations." Encouraging him by good and holy advice to hope in the mercy of our Lord and in the blood of Jesus Christ, he said, "Accept death willingly for your sins, for thus you will satisfy for much of the punishment due to them in purgatory." The man, comforted by the servant of God's words, was inspired with new confidence to ask pardon of God for his sins. By means also of Father Paul's prayers, in which he greatly trusted, and with the sentiments of a good Christian, the man departed to another life.

By his great charity he brought to repentance a famous bandit, who was afterwards his

penitent for the space of eight years, and led so holy a life with such purity of conscience that, as Father Paul said, he did not find in his ordinary confession necessary matter for absolution. The servant of God, to confirm him in his holy resolutions, had ordered him, when he went near any place where Father Paul was giving a mission, to go to him. He immediately did so as soon as he received the notice. It was beautiful to see this man, formerly haughty and ferocious, become obedient and submissive to Father Paul as a meek lamb. If it happened that the servant of God was hearing women, the man placed himself before the confessional with his arms folded in the form of a cross on his breast, to the great edification of all the people. He remained so till the missionary called him. Having heard him in front of the confessional, Father Paul sent him away in peace, always roused to new fervor in the divine service.

It was frequently seen that many, converted by the servant of God, persevered for a number of years; others, even to the end of their lives, kept up their holy resolutions and left at their death well-grounded hopes of their eternal salvation. Truly might he be considered happy and fortunate who, on going to hear Father Paul, yielded to the divine call. But, on the contrary, he who continued obstinate and inflexible, not infrequently drew upon himself the divine malediction, as may be seen in the following instance, besides many others we have related. At Caparbio, a man gave scandal by living in sin with a woman of bad reputation. This man was taken ill at the very time when the servant of God was giving a mission in the place. The good missionary used every effort to make him break these bonds of death and forsake sin. He feigned sincere repentance, but, horrible to relate, after seeing the missionary, he returned to his sins the night following. The poor wretch, however, struck by the omnipotent hand of God, died miserably that same night. From this dreadful case the servant of God took occasion to deliver a powerful sermon on the pains of hell, to the great terror of his hearers, who were moved still more on account of the fatal occurrence that had taken place.

In giving the spiritual exercises, as well as in missions, Father Paul had wonderful power in converting and arousing souls to fervor through the boundless charity of his heart. He was so often summoned to convents of nuns to give the spiritual exercises, that he could not remember the number of times. In every place God gave him grace to assist greatly the souls of His spouses. In all the monasteries where he had given the exercises, we may truly say that he left the good odor of the virtues of Jesus Christ, for the nuns admired in him a great zeal, a close union with God, entire detachment from created things, and a wonderful talent in the direction of souls.

He happily succeeded in banishing from convents discord, which, when it has once gained an entrance into those holy places, is usually more lasting and more dangerous. If he found any nun that had lost the grace of God, then it was that Father Paul used every exertion to reconnect that strayed sheep to the fold of the Good Shepherd. The good Father would have wished to see in every monastery the most exact observance, perfect peace, and entire tranquillity, and to leave the nuns inflamed anew with the love of their heavenly Spouse. Through his desire that without any disturbance they might exactly keep their holy Rules, he sometimes obtained of our Lord by his prayers that they should be miraculously freed from venomous animals which infested them, which was the case with the nuns of Farnese. We have, relating to this, a letter from Cardinal Charles Rezzonico, in which he says to him, “It would grieve me if this letter of mine should find you gone and unable to console those good nuns, who ask of me the favor that you may enter their monastery to free them from the annoyance they endure from serpents and vipers, which have gained an entrance there. They hope that God would bless the curse that you would pronounce on these hurtful reptiles. If this letter should find you at Farnese, pray console them. I give you leave to enter the enclosure.” The servant of God willingly did what the nuns and their pious protector desired, and our Lord so visibly showed the effect of His servant’s prayer that those reptiles immediately left the monastery. From that time, wonderful to relate, the reptiles have never again entered its precincts.

Thus we see how the servant of God’s charity was always in motion for the benefit and tranquillity of souls. He was never fatigued, nor ever thought it necessary to take rest and recreation, which he said were reserved till after death. He gracefully added that for the dead we say, “Rest in peace,” wishing and asking for them the desired repose.

The value of souls, considered in the light of loving faith in the heart of our Divine Redeemer, was the noble source of that great zeal shown by him for the salvation of those souls. Hence, he never dispensed with himself in helping and relieving them in their spiritual wants, however great were the labors and difficulties he had to suffer, very frequently undertaking fatigues far above human strength, deriving fresh vigor from charity. Going once to the royal garrison of Longone to give a mission, and the ship having touched land towards evening about half way, the servant of God, to make his prayers in quiet and employ himself without disturbance in sweet converse with God, retired to a rock near the sea. As this rock was partly washed with the waves, his feet slipped and touched the sea without his falling into it by a

special favor of our Lord, who preserved him in this danger from drowning, the sea being very deep in that place. But in falling he struck his leg violently against the rock and was a good deal bruised and hurt. Father Paul did not lose courage for this, but, trusting in God's providence, continued his journey. On arriving at Longone, he began his mission with great fervor. It was wonderful to see that, when not on the platform, he could neither drag himself along nor stand, so that he was obliged to lie in bed. To lift him up, four persons were required. Yet, when the hour for preaching had arrived and he was on his feet, as if he did not feel or had forgotten his pain, he went to the platform and preached with his usual energy, efficacy, and fervor, moving with great agility whenever the spirit of his discourse led him to do so.

As his apostolic zeal was displeasing to those who are enemies of the light and the truth, some persons conceived so great a hatred against him that they sought his life. In one place he inveighed against sin with all his zeal to hinder the offense of God and courageously deprived some sinners of the occasion of their poisonous gratifications. But they, like the delirious patients who are furious against the physician that compassionately cures them, in return for an action which was all charity and love, resolved to destroy the servant of God. Almost out of themselves with hatred and ill-will, they gave to him, and to his brother Father John Baptist, poison in the soup which was their dinner and was made of a few beans. The poor missionaries took it without being made aware of the circumstance. As the poison was very strong, they would certainly have died, if God had not, by His special protection, preserved them. Our Lord, to whom a life was extremely dear that was wholly employed in the good of souls, helped His faithful servants. They speedily rejected the poison with the soup, and acknowledging the favor of their preservation from our Lord by the intercession of ever blessed Mary, under whose protection they lived, they continued their holy missions with new courage and fervor.

As a careful merchant profits of every opportunity of increasing his wordily gains, Father Paul allowed no time to pass uselessly in which he could help his neighbor. His ardent charity was not confined to the promotion of their spiritual good by missions and spiritual exercises, but, besides this, his holy zeal exerted itself in laboring for souls on occasions which either presented themselves or were sought by him, chiefly in traveling and in paying or receiving necessary visits. He, who does not know the true characteristic of the charity of God's servants, need only observe attentively how they behave in administering fraternal correction, regarding which Jesus Christ gives us in His Gospel a special precept. For, as correction is in itself a nauseous food to



the palate of our corrupted nature, charity alone can sweeten and render it pleasing and agreeable, in order that our poor, sick, and needy neighbor may not abhor and reject it with disgust. In this very occasion our servant of God showed that he had the true spirit of God, which is sweeter than honey. "*The Spirit is sweeter than honey.*" In correction he did not disguise the evil nor flatter, but if necessary he made use of fire and sword. He knew, however, how to use them with so great discretion and skill, learned in the school of holy charity, that it was truly admirable. He did not abuse nor terrify; he never allowed himself to be carried away by passion, but with perfect control over himself, he discreetly mixed together wine and oil, severity and sweetness. With wonderful prudence he knew so well how to combine rigor with mildness that he usually obtained his desired object. He used words, so full of kindness, that they manifested a heart full of true affection, and plainly showed the strong desire he had of the good of the person corrected. At the very time that he was obliged to use some degree of severity, he accompanied his words with great marks of charity, and thus gave evidence that he had no other aim than the spiritual advantage of his neighbor.

In writing, no less than in speaking, he used the same charitable method of correcting. Wishing to correct one of his spiritual children, he thus writes to her, "Is it possible that after so many admonitions you will not mortify yourself and be silent in word and writing, whatever I may say to you? For a penance, enter into the Heart of Jesus; no, rather remain at the door of this great Heart, humble yourself, and ask pardon for so many imperfections and acts of ingratitude. Then, when you have leave, enter in, make yourself little, and afterwards burn and consume therein, allowing the wind of the Spirit of God to carry away with it these ashes on high and lose them in the immense abyss of the Divinity. Amen." Wishing to reprove one of our religious for a fault, he writes thus, "I know that Father N. has written to a friend in Orbetello, without having the charity to console poor Paul, who has always loved and esteemed him, and the others have done the same. I do not know the reason, unless I attribute it to my sins." It was his maxim that reproofs given with sweetness cure and heal every wound. On the contrary, those given harshly, in place of curing one, make ten more. So greatly had he at heart this most just sentiment, that he desired that the exhortations given to a religious family should be made with all sweetness and mildness. "I have heard," he writes to a superior, "that your Reverence in the examinations and chapters makes very strong exclamations, as if you were giving a mission to a parcel of whiskered and mustached gentry. But, dear Father Superior, why do you do so? I praise your

zeal, and I know that it springs from a strong wish for observance; but the truth is that our religious are very good. Therefore, there is no need of such exclamations... Work with sweetness, speak with peace of mind, do not force your voice, and believe me that it will strike more, and will do more good, and the religious will be better satisfied.”

If those who were corrected humbled themselves and acknowledged their faults, his tender heart could not resist this. At the same moment, like a tender mother, he embraced them and pardoned every fault. Many facts might be adduced in proof of his well-known charity. Some few, however, will suffice for the reader’s edification. A brother had gone to the Retreat of St. Angelo to pass to another retreat, where Father Paul destined him to be of the community. The poor brother showed a repugnance to this change, and the servant of God, knowing it, showed displeasure at the want of virtue of this religious and corrected him. But after the correction, Father Paul returned to his room quite in affliction. Another religious, seeing the good Father’s sorrow, endeavored to show this brother his duty, persuade him to go and ask pardon of his fault from the servant of God, and manifest a willingness to obey. Enlightened and convinced, the brother who had formerly been obedient<sup>5</sup> went to Father Paul’s room and cast himself on his knees. The servant of God, seeing him in this humble posture, immediately embraced him, and said with great affection, “Oh, my dear brother, I have always desired your good.” After exhorting him to obedience with great compassion and charity, Father Paul dismissed him, consoled and satisfied.

One of our religious had committed a serious fault, for which he merited expulsion from the Congregation. Father Paul admonished him with so much charity that the religious, overcome by his mildness, acknowledged his error, sincerely detested it, voluntarily submitted to the penance imposed, and amended his conduct to the general satisfaction.

We may say that it became quite impossible for Father Paul to use severity when he saw the religious humbled and penitent for their faults. One day some students, reproved for some fault by the good Father, knelt down. He, then all joy and serenity, said to them with a smile, “Oh, now, who could scold you? What do you wish me to do? Rise up, for you have conquered me.” With his usual cheerfulness he remained conversing with them, like a most affectionate father.

Even when serious faults were in question, whoever humbled himself and repented from his

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this is a typographical error that should read “disobedient”?

heart was sure to obtain pardon. See how he writes on one of these occasions. “I just read Father N.’s letter, in which he greatly humbles himself; believe me, he moves me to compassion. If he speaks truly, he desires to amend. Ah! the Divine Shepherd seeks and seeks again for the poor sheep! Let us console Him by nursing it, that it may be cured and may not separate itself from His fold of this Congregation. If afterwards nothing else can be done, patience! *‘Let him look to it himself.’*” In another, with the same kindness, he says, “Brother N. greatly moves me; he seems very penitent. He says he should be damned if he went back to the world; he weeps and sighs. I intended to take off his habit, but in the end he has conquered me. He appears very resolute, and it seems to me to be saving a sheep from the jaws of the infernal dragon.” Thus, he behaved to those who humbled themselves, and he desired that all the superiors should use the same sweet and persuasive method. “My dearly beloved Father,” he writes to a superior, “I have read your letter to my great edification and consolation, rejoicing greatly in the mercy which our good God continues to show to your soul. I hope your Reverence will attend, and will commission one of the religious also, to watch the goings on of Father N., that all things may be provided for. It is true he makes great efforts to do good, notwithstanding the habits he has contracted in the world, and this is a reason that ought to excite in us greater compassion, lead us to promote his eternal salvation, and be satisfied if he observes our holy Rules *at least* in the essentials. When he does fail, look on him compassionately and correct him with the greatest charity, giving him the necessary remedies, both in the chapter of faults and elsewhere. If we succeed in cooperating to his salvation, what a great gain! What great glory for God!” Thus he speaks and writes who possesses true zeal, who nourishes in his heart the flame of charity, and who preserves an even and discreet judgment – not disturbed nor extreme. It sufficed to make him change his language, that he should be informed of the reason of an action, and the correction was then changed into compassion and tenderness. Sometimes he gave it up that he might not give occasion to the least virtuous to fall into some greater fault, imitating the conduct of our blessed Savior, of whom it is written in the Holy Gospel, “A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench...” (Matt 12:20).

As all human minds usually desire to be treated with consideration and delicacy, the servant of God adhered to the same rule of compassion and kindness when he had to correct secular persons, and God blessed his words, which had wonderful efficacy. Father Paul was giving a mission in a place where, as usual, he chose four principal persons who had the charge of

pacifying those who were at variance. After a few days he was told that one of these deputed peace-makers was completely separated from his wife, even in residence. He wisely waited till this gentleman came to his house to speak of things relating to his office. Then, taking him aside, said to him, "How is this? I have commissioned you to make holy peace, and I know that you live separated from your wife!" With all sweetness he then exhorted him to join her, but the gentleman, sighing most deeply, answered, "Ah Father, it is true, but I have a good reason for I found my wife almost '*in the very act of sinning*'" (Jn. 8:4). The servant of God answered, "Perhaps you were mistaken and deceived by appearances." Father Paul sought, by the strongest persuasions and most prudent means, to induce him to be united again with his wife; but this man was not then in a state to see clearly or understand the force of the reasons. The servant of God did not gain his object, and seeing that he could not then overcome his obstinacy, Father Paul wisely ended the interview; in the meantime he recommended the affair to God. After the mission, as the bishop wished Father Paul to give the exercises to the nuns, he was often visited during his stay in the monastery by that gentleman, who, for the sake of having him in his own house, invited him one day to dinner. The servant of God, who did not lose sight of his object, with great fervor replied, "What! am I to go to your house, where holy peace does not exist, when the Holy Gospel requires that before anything else peace should be proclaimed and procured in the house we enter, '*First say, "Peace be to this house"*'" (Lk 10:5). That shall never be." Touched and penetrated by these few words, the gentlemen begged him to go, as he would do all he required. The servant of God answered, "If you promise to be reconciled to your wife, I will come." He promised that he would willingly do it. "Well, then," said Father Paul, "I will come tomorrow to dine with you; but remember that tomorrow is the first day of the nuptials, that is, a day of special benediction." The following day, after thus disposing the mind of the offended husband, judging it necessary to exhort the wife to perform those acts of humiliation and virtuous submission that would show her sincere repentance, he went a little before dinner time to the house to which he was invited. Finding a good opportunity of speaking to the lady, he charitably showed her how she should behave to pacify the mind and regain the affection of her husband, and he hinted to her that with all humility she should ask pardon for her fault. The husband came home near the dinner hour, and his wife presented herself to him, humble and penitent, knelt down and asked his pardon. But, as humility always obtains more than it asks, the husband, overcome by this action of his wife, also knelt and begged her to pardon him. Father

Paul, comforted to see this couple reconciled, told them they must imagine this to be the first day of their marriage, and blessed them, entreating the Divine Goodness to confirm this blessing. After this followed dinner, which truly might be called a banquet of peace and charity. As our Divine Redeemer, in assisting at the nuptial feast of Cana in Galilee, carried there with His Divine Presence all the most precious blessings, so He caused His servant to leave in that house a lasting peace, which is the most desirable of benefits, assisting and animating him for the purpose with a special grace; for, as the enlightened man of God himself said, “It is very difficult, without a special grace from God, to settle such disagreements between husband and wife.”

He had also the same special assistance in those corrections that, with holy liberty and warmth, he gave to different persons, who, though freely and severely reprov'd, did not show the least displeasure at the sincerity and charity of the servant of God, but took in good part what, had it proceeded from another mouth, would have perhaps greatly exasperated them. He perceived once that a married lady, who was speaking to him, was not sufficiently covered, having on this occasion been led away rather by the reigning bad fashion than by a bad intention, for she was most virtuous. The servant of God did not fail to represent to her how great an evil it was; that in the future she might guard against it and appear in public adorned with chastity and modesty as is becoming in a Christian woman. The lady, with perfect docility, listened to the good Father and, following his orders, was afterwards a model of Christian modesty.

If ecclesiastics, who gave disedification, came to him, he endeavored first with respect and affection to gain their hearts, and then freely reprov'd them. In fact, these corrections had a good effect. One person, who had been thus corrected by the servant of God, had such respect for him, that he feared to enter his room if he was not dressed very modestly and in a manner becoming his state. Another, perhaps because he had been reprov'd by the good Father for some fault that he himself had not known, said that before entering Father Paul's room, it was necessary to go to confession. Nor did he think that because persons were of noble condition and great consideration, they might be deprived of such charitable help, of which they often stand in greater need, as they find few who have courage to give it them by a wise and Christian corrections.

When Father Paul was staying in the Hospital of San Crocifisso, near St. John Lateran, a prince went to visit him, to whom the servant of God, with that energy peculiar to him when

there was question of saving souls from danger, spoke on the abuse of modern conversations. As words animated by true zeal carry with them clearly the affectionate impulse of holy charity, the good prince was not offended by the servant of God's discourse, nor displeased with his liberty and sincere zeal. On leaving the servant of God's room, he showed himself so greatly edified by him that he said to the religious, his companion, "Truly, Father Paul is a saint."

The Church of God militant on earth holds a loving communication of holy charity with the souls of the faithful departed, suffering in purgatory. Therefore, good Christians try as much as possible to assist by prayers, sacrifices, alms, and acts of mortification the holy souls in purgatory. Father Paul was most feeling for these blessed souls and had an extreme compassion for them. He fervently exhorted all, especially his children, to help them with great earnestness. In the Rules written for his Congregation, he expresses a desire that all should help those poor souls in every possible way, that they might soon enjoy the Beatific Vision of God. He reminds them that the Divine Goodness will dispose that we also, after death, shall be helped with charitable suffrages, if in life we take care to assist those souls that suffer so much. He practiced first what he taught others. To relieve those blessed souls, Father Paul offered sacrifices, prayers, and penances, and passed a good part of the night in watching for their benefit. The Divine Goodness, who desired to free many of these souls from their terrible sufferings and to crown with merits the charity of His servant, allowed them very frequently to appear to him at night, with a melancholy appearance, asking in a piteous tone for help and relief. The pious reader can imagine how greatly his tender heart was moved by such visits and requests, and how diligently he employed himself to free those chosen souls quickly from their sufferings. Among the apparitions witnessed by the servant of God, I will relate one for general edification, which appears to me very instructive. Father Paul was the friend of a secular priest, who, having been frequently warned by him to correct some considerable faults, had not taken due care to follow the advice and reform his life as fully as God required. The priest died, and one night, when Father Paul had gone to rest, he heard a great noise close to his room. He was at first alarmed, as is usual in visions that proceed from good spirits, asked who it was, and that instant heard the door open and a voice reply that it was that priest, his friend, who was just dead and in purgatory. His fear vanished at this answer. At the sight of a soul dear to God, as was this, Father Paul asked him why he was condemned to those sufferings? And he replied that he had not profited as he ought by the advice he had received from Father Paul and had not corrected those faults

which now deprived him of the vision of God. Then, speaking of his sufferings, the priest said, “Oh, how terrible they are!” and asked how long he had been suffering them. Father Paul asked him if he knew at what hour previously he died. Hearing the answer, he took the timepiece and, counting up, told him not more than half an hour. This suffering soul was greatly astonished at this news, believing that he had been already in Purgatory a long time, so severe and painful are those torments. And in proportion, therefore, God’s servants have strong sentiments of compassion and charity, show pity for them and have a strong desire to relieve them.

## **CHAPTER XV**

### **Of the Servant of God’s Charity Exercised in Behalf of Those Who Were Opposed to Him**

Fire, when it is well lighted up, is not easily extinguished by water thrown on it, nor by the wind; and charity when it is strong, ardent, and generous does not grow cold, but derives fresh vigor from ingratitude, calumny, and persecution. “*Many waters cannot quench love*” (Song 8:7). Such precisely was the charity of the servant of God, resisting the trials of great labors and adversities. He was not called, without particular inspiration, Paul of the Cross, because he was to suffer much and render himself worthily of a name so respectable and honorable for a Christian. People took their part in afflicting the poor servant of God, and with a good intention, as he said, gave him occasion of merit, and, as it were, by repeated blows, made of him a noble statue worthy to be placed in the divine sanctuary. For he, with great fortitude, suffered all for the love of God. To all those who ill-treated, vexed, or grieved him in any way, Father Paul offered always in return just the same proportion of affection and charity. From his youth, as we have noticed elsewhere, he had worn a rustic and contemptible habit, and thus covered, rather than clothed, walked barefooted and bareheaded. Worldlings, seeing that penance which in itself was so edifying and truly marvelous, understanding little of the guidance of the Spirit of God, easily imagined that it had either been imposed upon him for some enormous crime or that this mode of life had been undertaken by him through an extravagant caprice, directed by no rule of wisdom. Therefore, they took occasion to abuse and deride him, and sometimes even to throw stones at him. God’s servant, as if he had become, for His love, insensible to contempt, and dumb, that he might not complain of it, with humility and peace, kept silent and recollected. He

prayed for those who injured him, putting thus into practice, with great devotion, the advice contained in the Gospel, *“Pray for those who persecute you and say false things about you.”*

How he behaved on many other occasions, difficult and dangerous for a weak degree of virtue, we have already seen in the course of this biography in various places, where we have spoken of many and great troubles and very heavy injuries borne with great patience and tranquillity of heart by the servant of God. And as we avoid repetition, we will merely relate some other acts of singular charity, joined with great patience, when he was ill-treated.

The first time that he went to Civita Vecchia, though by some he was received charitably, and during the time of his Lent was provided daily with three loaves, he found, nevertheless, on this occasion, persons to exercise him in patience. On going one evening, after Lent, to pray in a church, he was driven from it in a very insulting manner with words as abusive as if he had been the vilest and most infamous man in the world. He never opened his mouth but, recollected in himself and with great humility, left the Church, recommending to our Lord those who thus insulted him.

Another time, at the baths of Vignone, he was loaded with abuse and greatly insulted. To such bad treatment the servant of God offered no answer but patience, humility, and sweetness, kneeling down at once before the person who insulted him and interiorly recommending him entirely to God, without saying a word in his own defense.

When he was advanced in years, a letter in angry and bitter language was written to him by a person who wrongly thought himself aggrieved by Father Paul. The servant of God, full of that charity which is discreet and mild, said cordially to his companion, “I compassionate him.” To tranquilize this person’s heart and convince him of the truth, he caused a letter to be written to him, in which his prudence appeared no less visible than his zeal, as well as the sweetness of his charity. The anger of this man was not appeased by the servant of God’s reply. By another letter, in the same tone, he again attacked the virtue of the good Father, who judged it expedient to offer no other justification, but in silence suffered all with great patience and trusting by God’s grace to gain the person who showed such irritation. He said to the same companion, “He will be pacified, you will see.” So it was, for seeing the truth and repenting of his anger, the man wrote letters of great humiliation and came in person to ask pardon. Father Paul tenderly embraced him and expressed a most true and cordial affection for him. The man became so attached to the servant of God, and to the Congregation, that he was afterwards one of our kindest benefactors.



Father Paul had need of greater virtue to bear the unmerited reproofs of a great personage. The Cardinal Bishop of Viterbo, prejudiced by reports against our saint, showed himself, from the commencement of his episcopate, little inclined to favor him, and wished to send visitors to the Retreat of St. Angelo to make the visitation there. Father Marco Aurelio of the Most Holy Sacrament, who was then superior there, showed, with all humility and respect, that by the Brief of Benedict XIV, we were exempted from such visits. As he had not the Brief at hand, he sent meanwhile to the servant of God, who was giving a mission in Porto, for the Pontifical Brief in order to show to His Eminence. This did not suffice to change the mind of that prelate, who, judging that he had a right to make the visitation, desired that his resolution should be carried into execution. The servant of God, having returned to the retreat from the missions, went the following day to Viterbo to see His Eminence, and, at the same time, to show him the real truth. But as it easily happens that pious and enlightened persons of the best intentions are deceived in forming an opinion of others' virtue, and come without reason to an unjust conclusions, which is so much the more difficult to remove as their zeal is more lively and active, the Lord Cardinal, instead of yielding to the reasons and condescending to the humble entreaties of the servant of God, treated him in a very harsh and abusive manner, saying he was proud, a hypocrite, and the like. Father Paul, without showing any resentment, answered only by words of humility, seeking to tranquillize the angry mind of the bishop without success. Father Paul departed from the audience very much humbled, it is true, but with a tranquil and peaceful heart, as if he had been kindly received. In going out Father Paul said confidentially to Count Peter Brugiotti, who had accompanied him to the cardinal, "Let us commend the Lord Cardinal to God, for his life will be very short." The statement proved to be correct, for he died in a few months. The servant of God returned the same evening to the Retreat of St. Angelo and, in giving to the religious the usual blessing before reciting the holy rosary, ordered, as a witness attests, with the greatest energy that we should recommend the cardinal bishop to God. It was easily known by those who understood well the maxims of Christianity, so faithfully and generously practiced by Father Paul, that he had been badly received and worse treated.

Father Paul behaved in the same manner to those who spoke ill of him and of the Congregation. He knew very well that some religious of a highly respectable Order threw discredit upon him and said openly that he was a hypocrite, that he did not practice what he had laid down in the Rules. He knew that they opposed, with all their power, the establishment of the

Congregation and took every means to hinder its progress. Nevertheless, if such religious happened to come to our retreat, as they sometimes did, he ordered them to be treated with every kindness, made them sit in the most honorable place in the refectory, and showed them a thousand attentions and acts of kindness.

As calumny has power to disturb the mind of even wise people, who not infrequently, under pretense of a necessary justification, give vent to their resentment, and as it may be called the test to try the fine gold of charity, by this precisely the measure of Father Paul's charity was better known. For to calumny, when not obliged to justify himself, he offered no reply but holy prayer. Being once unjustly accused by one of his enemies, the servant of God, without excusing or justifying himself, abandoning all to God, said, "I am now under an obligation to recommend them specially to our Lord." As if he who had calumniated him merited from him a special kindness, he invariably prayed particularly for anyone who had thus persecuted him.

The most acute and painful wounds to a father's heart are those that he receives from his own children. It is a real triumph of charity to overcome, with the same degree of affection and kindness, their ingratitude and evil dispositions. The venerable Founder had even occasions of this kind to signalize his charity, for he had, and always manifested, a strong desire of benefitting those, who, after being brought up with such difficulty, abandoned him and left the Congregation. Though he was greatly displeased, he treated them with extreme goodness. He ordered that they should have refreshments before they left. He gave them what was necessary to clothe them as seculars, according to the condition of each, and with a father's care not only gave them money but also some provisions that they might travel home, or wherever they were going, comfortably. It seemed, indeed, that to obtain some great favor from the servant of God, it sufficed to have offended or displeased him.

A certain lady had, without any reason, declared herself offended because her nephew had entered our Congregation. Allowing herself to be carried away by passion, she had, on different occasions, by words and deeds, shown the aversion and great hatred she had conceived against the whole Congregation and, especially, the Founder. Being taken ill and seeing death at hand, she earnestly begged to be visited by Father Paul, who was then in the place. The archpriest of that place, who was asked to speak to Father Paul, feared to meet at least with some reluctance, so great were the injuries the servant of God had received. But scarcely had he opened his mouth than he saw with his own eyes the kind of revenge that the saints take; without the least

difficulty, without saying a word about what had passed, as if he did not remember it, he hastened to perform this charitable act, and spoke to the sick lady with words animated by such ardent charity that she received from them the greatest comfort. Thus, consoled by finding so much spiritual sweetness in the servant of God, she tranquilly expired a few days later.

But the charity of the servant of God was never so clearly proved to be great and heroic as at the time when he went to Rome to obtain the approbation of his Rules. In a lonely street, he met a certain religious, who had entirely lost the spirit of his vocation. This man, having become fierce and inhuman, without having received from the servant of God any provocation, began to ill treat him most shamefully. Taking occasion from the servant of God's meekness, he became more enraged in place of being softened, rushed upon him, threw him on the ground, struck him without remorse, and even went so far as to trample upon him without any sign of resentment on the part of Father Paul. The patient man, after receiving these insults, which, as one brought up in the school of the suffering Jesus, he regarded as precious gifts, went soon after to call upon Don Francis Casalini, a worthy priest and his friend, and by this friend, who perceived him to be more thoughtful than usual, he was asked what he was thinking about. Without speaking of the affront he had received, he answered that he was most deeply afflicted on account of an act committed by a religious man, by which he had unfortunately put himself into a dreadful condition and into great danger of eternal perdition. He added that his friend must not fail to pray to God for that poor soul, as he himself did, that our Lord would enlighten his mind and change his heart so that he might not perish eternally. After words of so great charity, Father Paul said nothing about the person that had insulted him, but Don Francis afterwards heard of the shameful treatment that the humble servant of God had received from that religious. Father Paul returned to those who offended him good for evil with such cordiality, that he could say sincerely, and he several times repeated it, that he loved all in God, and that in his poor prayers he prayed first for others and then for himself, and daily prayed specially for two kinds of persons: first, for those who had greatly offended him, and second, for those who had left the Congregation.

The same sentiments are more clearly expressed in his letters, in which the servant of God opened his whole heart with holy confidence.

"I have returned," he writes, "from the holy missions, loaded with precious mortifications. The devils persecute me with fury, and men with a good will, as I wish to believe. It is enough. We must pray much for tempests rise on every side and many contrary winds are blowing.

Blessed be God.” “My necessities,” he says in another letter, “are very great, especially in the present circumstances when storms and great persecutions have arisen against our poor Congregation. I believe, however, that everything happens with the good intention of him whom the Divine Majesty allows to afflict us.”

“Be not afflicted,” he writes to a devout soul, “to see me despised and slighted, for this happens by God’s permission to humble me. I rejoice at it. I do not know what the Lord Bishop may have done in this way. I know well that I have labored for years past in his diocese and was very near losing my life there. The poor bishop is to be pitied, for persecutors and calumniators have not been wanting, especially since the foundation of the retreat has been spoken of. Blessed be God, this does not grieve me. I was intending to write you a letter, but afterwards thought it better not to do so. It is better to leave to Almighty God my justification, especially as I do not know your sentiments. And when you last wrote to me, you addressed me in very cordial terms, for which I feel greatly obliged to you.”

“I compassionate the mistake of N.,” writes Father Paul, “but I regret the offence he has committed against the Divine Majesty. May God pardon him; as for me, he has no cause for affliction, for I love him as before.”

The precious treasure that he had found hidden under the thorns of persecutions and labors, and with which, by God’s grace, he had so greatly enriched himself, he desired to make known also to others, to his Congregation, especially, and those persons whom he directed, that they might also become rich. He wrote to them, therefore, as follows, “Keep up that love which you feel for holy poverty, and as for the alms you gave to that religious who bestowed upon you the glorious cross of injuries, you have done well.” “Value the friend who tries you,” he writes to a devout soul, “as a treasure.” And again he writes, “You must esteem that person more than a precious treasure, and look upon her in the Divine Will with an affectionate eye, as the person of whom the Sovereign Good makes use to fabricate in your soul a robe adorned with flowers of gold and precious gems, which are holy virtues, especially patience, silence, and the most holy meekness of Jesus. Oh, how much I am pleased with this fine opportunity! It is enough – never defend yourself, never speak; but if you say anything, let it be something in her excuse and honor. When you pass her, bow your head reverently, as if you were passing an instrument of God’s loving hand. The most certain part is to be silent under all, after the example of Jesus Christ. If you do not receive what is necessary, rejoice and say, ‘Oh, how well I am treated by

this dear friend and mistress,’ and say it from your heart. Jesus will himself feed you with an invisible food, which will strengthen you more than corruptible meat.”

“Seek,” he says elsewhere, “for such occasions of assisting your accusers and of benefitting them as much as you can with greater eagerness than others go to seek for pearls and diamonds.”

As he knew well, and by the light of prayer more clearly understood, that charity cannot exist where the actions of others are curiously watched and censured and their failings discovered, he recommended and desired that no one should observe the defects of others, unless obliged to it by his office. Each one should think of his own, for thus, he said, charity covers the defects of our brethren. This man of true charity was most attentive whenever the reputation of another was concerned. Everyone might believe and be sure that, wherever Father Paul was present, he had a loving protector and vigilant guard, who would defend his reputation and esteem, and take care of him behind his back. If in conversation the defects of others were named, if he knew it to be detraction, he immediately either turned the discourse or found some excuse and said that other’s faults ought to be covered with the cloak of holy charity and excused as caused by ignorance or inadvertence. Finally, he was a man whose soul was full of the most sweet and upright spirit of charity. As he sincerely wished to help and please his dear neighbor at all times, he could not endure that others should injure or give him any cause of grief and pain.

## **CHAPTER XVI**

### **Of the Servant of God’s Devotion to the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ**

The entire life of the servant of God, Father Paul of the Cross, shows clearly that he had planted in his heart those great words of the Apostle St. Paul, “ *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*” (Gal. 6:14). We should rather say that the merciful hand of God had imprinted them there. Father Paul had always a most ardent desire to conform his life to that of Jesus crucified and to awake in the faithful the remembrance of the cross and death of Jesus our Divine Redeemer. To this tended all the thoughts of his mind, all the ardent wishes of his heart, all his actions, his journeys, his spiritual exercises, his missions. For this same end he instituted, according to the inspiration God gave him, this poor and humble Congregation of the Passion, that it might be entirely consecrated to meditate on the Passion and death of Jesus and to invite

the faithful to call to mind the torments, sorrows, and agony in which the Only Begotten of the Divine Father was, as it were, drowned and submerged. Renouncing every remembrance of the world to live hidden with Jesus Christ, he abandoned his family name and took that of the cross, that he might say with the Apostle, whose name he bore, “*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Gal. 6:14), and afterwards awakening in the people the too often forgotten remembrance of the sufferings of our Savior. He added with the same, “*But we proclaim Christ Crucified*” (I Cor. 1:23). This was all his learning, and he valued no other science than the science and the loving knowledge of Jesus crucified, a science truly profound and sublime, for in our Blessed Redeemer are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. “*In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col. 2:3), a science not speculative, barren, and dry, but fruitful and delicious, bringing the nourishment of a heavenly life and of eternal salvation. “*By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved*” (Jn 10:9). God willed that from his youth he should devote himself to promote the devotion and awaken the remembrance of the life-giving Passion. By the direction and command of his bishop, in whose person he venerated with profound reverence the person of God Himself, he preached to the people of Castellazzo and taught them to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus. He so greatly moved the people to compunction that they burst into sobs and cries, asking mercy of God, to the astonishment of everyone.

When the servant of God began to give missions in various places to which he was invited by the Ordinaries, everyone perceived that he was burning with the desire of imprinting in the hearts of all the Passion of Jesus Christ. It would require his heart and his tongue to express clearly the affection with which he himself meditated on the Passion, and the benefit he drew from it. As more than one witness testifies, no one spoke of the Passion like Father Paul; he represented the mysteries, either of the agony in the garden, of the insults in the tribunals, of the barbarous flagellation, or the cruel crucifixion in so lively a manner that he excited an unspeakable devotion and tenderness in his hearers. He never spoke of it without tears of affection and compassion, which caused all who listened to him to weep also. So deep was the feeling and so sublime the light which he had regarding the love of the Son of God in giving His blood and life for us, that he often repeated with extraordinary emotion, “A God bound for me! A God scourged for me! A God dying for me!” In uttering these words, it was seen that, having entered into the sanctuary of the Divinity and into an immense ocean of Goodness and Perfection, he

was, as it were, entirely absorbed in God with astonishment and love. Regarding this subject, he said one day, “In the beginning of my conversion, it seemed to me easy to meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ. But now, when we have said a God scourged, how can we say anything more?” Wonderful were the conversions that he wrought by this means, and, in order to effect them, the man of God would not allow the people to stop at a certain tenderness of devotion which would go no farther than a few tears. With that mastery over hearts that God gave him, he animated them to hope in the Divine Mercy at the sight of so great goodness, so many wounds, so much blood. He burned with love of God to correspond to the immense charity of God, who for us has given His blood and life on an infamous gibbet. And though in his sermons he frequently recalled his audience to the sight of Jesus crucified, nevertheless, to teach this holy devotion with greater fruit, he made a meditation on the Passion of Jesus at the end of the sermon. In proportion as he had terrified them by the discourse, he softened and comforted their hearts by the meditation, finishing all with fervent acts of contrition. Towards the end of the mission, he used to make a special and more solemn commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ. Oh, it was on that evening that the good missionary appeared, through love and sorrowful compassion, entirely transformed into his beloved Jesus, “*who, out of excess of love, willed to be nailed to a cross.*” So great an effect did it have on the audience that cries of devotion and weeping were heard to such an extent that it might be said, “*There was great lamentation and they grieved as in the death of the first born*” (Zach. 12: 10). The servant of God ardently desired, and earnestly begged of our Lord, to die on one of these evenings, embracing the crucifix – which grace was granted him, but in another manner. If he did not die on the platform while he was meditating on the death of his dear Jesus and embracing His holy image, in spirit he died embracing Jesus, the Man of sorrows, united and conformed to Him, for he was afflicted in his whole body and on the very day of his death promoted this holy devotion, as we shall soon relate. Not only at the time of the missions, but in giving the spiritual exercises to the people or in monasteries, among the other meditations he daily made one on the Passion of Jesus, with his usual fervor, and desired nothing more than to imprint it in the hearts of all. Very often he made upon it devout discourses to all at the retreats, where he happened to be, and his words seemed to pour a new balm of devotion into the hearts of his children and to light up a new flame of love towards our beloved Redeemer.

In the last two years that he resided in Rome, at the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, though

often suffering from his infirmities, he endeavored through his desire of promoting the spirit of virtue in his religious to make those devout discourses which we call examens, accompanied always with wonderful persuasiveness. It will be, I think, very pleasing and useful to relate here the sentiments that proceeded from that blessed heart, expressed in one of these, as we find it in the Processes.

In 1774, on the 14th of September, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, he made, though he was indisposed, a discourse to the whole community, explaining these words of the Apostle St Paul, "*We, however, ought to glory in the cross of Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 6:14). Through the lively desire which he had of imprinting on the hearts of all the heavenly words, with an inflamed countenance and with extraordinary power he sought to lead them to live crucified to the world, as was specially required by the obligation of their state and profession.

"You, my sons," said the affectionate Father, "must live crucified to the world, that is, hate whatever the world loves." As he continued the discourse, his devotion and love of the cross, becoming more and more inflamed in his heart, he exclaimed, and often repeated, bathed in tears, "Oh, dear cross! *O my most bitter sorrows, filled with every grace!*" So great were the tenderness and fervor with which he uttered these words, that he drew tears from the eyes of all. Desiring to end his discourse with great fruit, he said with deep feeling and repeated twice, "In order to obtain this great benefit, I propose to you two maxims. Imprint them well on your minds. The first maxim is never to complain, never to justify yourselves; the second maxim is to labor, to suffer, and be silent. Put these in practice and you will be saints." Then, giving us his blessing with his crucifix, after previously addressing our Lord as if He were in this image, and a most tender colloquy, he dismissed us. We retired in tears. Thus concludes a witness who was present, "As the tongue speaks from the abundance of the heart, and words are so many flames of the burning heart, he caused to be felt, if I may so say, the fervor of his charity and the love that he bore to his crucified Redeemer. In private conversations, also, and in spiritual conferences, the servant of God always inculcated meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ. He desired that by this door an entrance should be gained to the delicious pastures of the soul. "*I am the door,*" he repeated with great feeling, "*I am the door*" (Jn. 10:9). He said that a soul that enters by this door walks in security for in the Passion there is no delusion. He would repeat that there is no delusion. He used in his explanations very appropriate similitudes to excite a great esteem for the sacred mysteries of the Passion. "Imagine that you are seriously ill; I, who love



you tenderly, come and visit you. After saying a few words of sympathy and consolation, I should certainly look at you with compassion and, through love of you, make your sufferings my own. Thus, when we meditate on the sacred Passion of Jesus, seeing Him in such affliction, we ought to compassionate Him and then, through love, to remain looking upon Jesus in so great torments, and through compassionate love make His sufferings ours.” “Figure to yourselves,” he said on another occasion, “that you had fallen into a great river, and someone, through compassion, threw himself into the water to swim and save you. What would you say to such goodness? More, even more. Imagine further, that on leaving the river, you were attacked by assassins, and the same person, through his great charity, interposed himself to receive the blows and wounds, and thus preserve your life. What would you do at the sight of such love? It is certain that you would make his sufferings your own; that through love and compassion you would run to console him and to cure his wounds. Thus it should be with us. In meditating on Jesus, drowned in a sea of sorrows to save us from the deep ocean of perdition, seeing Him all wounded and bruised to give us life and health, we ought to make His sorrows ours through compassionate love, to sympathize with Him in His griefs, and give to Him all our affections.” Such discourses as these greatly moved those who heard him and very often affected them to tears. Sometimes, merely to hear him read some book, treating on this tender and devout subject, caused all the hearers to weep. It happened even in the refectory, when the good man, during the time of meals, read according to the Rules. He was so inflamed with love and read with such devotion. If the book spoke of the Passion, he himself could not restrain his tears, and the religious who were listening wept with him.

As he knew well that the thought of the Passion of Jesus is for all a strong and invincible weapon to defend us from the wounds of our fierce and implacable enemies, he proposed to all, and strongly recommended, meditation on the sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, both to seculars and religious, to spiritual persons and those engaged in the world, being himself firmly convinced that whoever thinks on the Passion of Jesus Christ keeps far from sin. “How can it be possible,” he said, “to offend a God scourged, a God crowned with thorns for us, a God nailed to the cross for us; how is it possible, that, thinking deeply on these maxims and truths of faith, today and tomorrow, we should offend God? It is not possible.” “By these sentiments,” he used to say, “I have converted the most obstinate sinners, thieves, and all kind of persons, in whom, when I heard their confessions after a course of time, I could not find matter for absolution, so

great had been their change of life because they had been punctual in meditating deeply on the bitter sufferings of Jesus as I had recommended to them.” He used also to say, condescending with wise discretion, to those who had not yet tasted the sweetness that is proved in drawing near in spirit to the sacred wounds of our blessed Savior, which are fountains of life and sweetness, “Begin with a quarter of an hour in the morning; before you leave your room make your prayer. You will see that everything will go well with you, and you will keep far from sin.”

Though he earnestly recommended this prayer to all, he desired it to be performed especially by ecclesiastics, whom he reminded that St. Bonaventure used to say, “He did not seem to himself to fulfill his duties if on any day he did not think of the Passion of Jesus Christ.” To husbands and wives, in order that they might serve each other as an example and stimulus to piety and virtue, and then might in unison practice it with great fervor, he used to say, “The most important affair that you have on hand is your own soul; therefore, before leaving your room in the morning, make at least a quarter of an hour’s prayer on the life, passion, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, how greatly does heaven rejoice; what delight do the guardian angels take to see husband and wife making holy prayer together! Therefore, do not omit this pious exercise.” And to his words he added such grace and efficacy that these persons were quite overcome and excited to fervor in practicing so useful a recommendation.

As letters are lasting witnesses that preserve with perfect fidelity all the words, the expressions, and sentiments that, coming from the heart, were noted by the pen of the servant of God, from them each one of our readers may gather how great and continual was the ardor of Father Paul’s zeal in promoting devotion to the sacred Passion of our Lord. “Pray,” he writes, “for our poor Congregation, which is always mourning for the sufferings and death of its Beloved; would to God that there were many great laborers who, like loud trumpets of the Holy Spirit, might go and preach all over the world, that there might not be so many sins...” “We see,” he says elsewhere, “by experience, more and more visibly, that the most efficacious means of converting even the most obstinate souls is the sacred Passion of Jesus, preached according to the method which the infallible and uncreated Divine Goodness has approved through His Vicar on earth.”

To a devout person, he says, “I thank the Divine Mercy that your soul never departs from the remembrance of the sufferings of the heavenly Spouse. I wish, however, that you should allow yourself to be entirely penetrated by the love with which He has endured them. The short road is

to lose ourselves wholly in the ocean of these sufferings, since, as the Prophet says, ‘The Passion of Jesus is a sea of sorrow and pain.’ Ah my child! This is a great secret manifested only to the humble of heart. In this great ocean the soul fishes for the pearls of the virtues and makes the sorrows of her Beloved her own. I feel a strong confidence that the Spouse will teach you this divine method of fishing, and He will teach it when you are in interior solitude, free from all imaginations, detached from every earthly affection, removed from every created thing, in pure faith and holy love.” To a religious man he writes, “Do not doubt that you are ‘*in the bosom of God*’ in the passive way. It is a short road to annihilate and drown oneself in the infinite All, passing through the divine gate which is Christ Crucified, making His most bitter sufferings our own. Love teaches all things, for the most bitter Passion is the work of infinite love.” And in another letter he says to the same religious, “The point that your reverence does not understand of making through love the sufferings of our sweet Jesus your own, the Divine Majesty will make you comprehend when it pleases Him. This is wholly a divine work. The soul entirely immersed in pure love, without imaginations, in pure and naked faith, when it pleases the Supreme Good, finds herself in a moment immersed in the ocean of her Savior’s sufferings and, in a glance of faith, sees them all without understanding. For the Passion of Jesus is entirely the work of love, and the soul, being lost in God who is charity, who is all love, feels both grief and love – for her spirit is entirely penetrated with a sorrowful love and a loving sorrow. *The Work of God*. No one fishes here unless our Lord teaches it. I have explained myself very imperfectly, but I have said nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing; to have nothing, to be able to do nothing, to know nothing, and God will draw from this nothing the work of His greater glory.”

“When our sweet Jesus,” he writes to a spiritual person, “shall have taken deeper root in your heart, you will sing, ‘*to suffer and not to die*,’ or ‘*to suffer or to die*,’ or even better, ‘*not to suffer and not to die*,’ but seek only an entire transformation into the Divine Will. Love has an unitive power and makes the sufferings of its beloved its own. If you feel yourself wholly penetrated within and without by the sorrows of your Spouse, rejoice. But I may say that this joy takes place in the furnace of divine love, because fire, which penetrates even to the marrow of the bones, transforms the soul into her beloved and, joining love and grief in a sublime manner, grief and love make a loving and sorrowful union, so close, that love is no longer distinguished from grief, nor grief from love, so that the loving soul rejoices in her sorrow and triumphs in her sorrowful love. Remain in the knowledge of your nothingness and be faithful in the practice of holy virtues,

chiefly in imitating our sweet and patient Jesus, for this is the great aim of pure love. Never fail to make the sacrifice of holocaust of your whole self to the Sovereign Good, and this sacrifice must be made in the fire of divine charity, kindled in that sacred bundle of myrrh which are the pains of Jesus. All this must be done with closed doors, that is, at a distance from everything sensible, in pure and naked faith.”

In another, like a great spiritual master, he says, “In the time of aridity, arouse your mind sweetly with loving acts, and then rest in God without feeling Him and without enjoying Him, for then the soul more clearly proves her fidelity. Make a bouquet of the sufferings of Jesus and keep it in the bosom of your soul, as I have told you. Sometimes you may make an affectionate and sorrowful commemoration of them, speaking sweetly of them to our Lord: ‘O my dear Jesus, how swollen, bruised, and defiled with spittle do I behold Your sacred countenance. O my love, I see all Your wounds! O my sweet Jesus, how disjointed are Your sacred limbs! Ah, what pains! what sorrows! O my sweetest love! You are one entire wound. O dear sufferings! Ah, dear wounds! I will keep you always in my heart!’”

As Father Paul had always been accustomed to keep before his eyes, while he remained in his room reading, praying, or writing, the devout representation of our crucified Lord, and to wear it on his breast whenever he left the retreat, that he might always bear in mind the sufferings and death of Jesus, he knew by experience the great benefit produced by such a practice. He also recommended it earnestly to others, teaching them the method of profiting by it. “In the solitude of your room,” he writes, “take the crucifix into your hands, kiss the sacred wounds with great love, beg our Lord to give you a little sermon, and then listen to the words of eternal life that He will speak to your heart. Listen to what the thorns, the nails, and the divine blood will preach. Oh, what a sermon!”

In order that souls which he directed might find occasion, even from things that conduce the least to devotion, to call their Beloved Redeemer to mind, he wrote to a person in the world, “Wear a string of pearls when you go out, if you like. But when you put it on, remember that Jesus wore cords and chains round his neck. Wear this ornament purely to please God, and be confounded, saying, ‘Jesus was bound with ropes and chains in His Passion, and I wear pearls.’ Teach this also to your daughters.”

As all suffer either much or little, Father Paul, in order that each might know the true remedy, would have wished to make known to all this great sentence, which he wrote in another letter,

“The meditation of the Sacred Passion is a precious balsam that sweetens every sorrow.”

As on the feasts of the Holy Cross, we celebrate the memory of the triumph gained by our Blessed Lord in His Sacred Passion, he celebrated these feasts with extraordinary fervor. He sang Mass, gave holy communion to the *clerics and lay people*, and performed the whole function with abundance of tears and a most tender sentiment of devotion. He taught others a very sublime and devout method for celebrating them with great fruit. “And what are you doing?” he writes to a soul of sublime prayer. “Did you celebrate very solemnly the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which took place the other day? You answer yes, but who knows whether you have well understood me? The feast of the Cross is celebrated every moment in the interior temple of the true lovers of our Crucified Lord. And how is it celebrated? I will tell you as well as I can. Do you know how? This feast is spiritually celebrated by silent suffering, without support from any creature; and as feasts are kept with joy, so the feast of the Cross is kept by its lovers in suffering silently with a joyous and serene countenance, that this feast may be hidden from creatures and known only to the Supreme Good. In this feast we feed on a delicious banquet, nourishing ourselves in the Divine Will in imitation of our Crucified Love. O what sweet food! This food is seasoned in various ways, with bodily or spiritual pains, with contradictions, calumny, and contempt from creatures. Oh, what a sweet flavor to the palate of the soul which tastes it in pure faith and holy love, in silence and hope!”

With great fervor of devotion and tender compassion, he also celebrated the Feast of our Blessed Lady’s Sorrows, which are so closely united with the bitter pains and death of Jesus. On that day, opening his heart to a devout person, he says in a letter, “Friday is the Feast of the Sorrows of my Blessed Mother. Recommend me very much to her that her griefs and the Passion of my Jesus, may be impressed on my heart, which I so greatly desire. Also, I should wish to imprint them in the hearts of all, and then the world would burn with holy love.”

In the feasts and joys of holy Easter, he exulted with delight in the Resurrection of his Beloved, but he remembered also the pains He had suffered, as a most efficacious encouragement to suffer with Him, and thus merit to rejoice afterwards with Him. “The great prescription,” he wrote to a devout soul, “which you desire for keeping Easter well is this: resignation to the will of God in all things; often to repeat these acts; to behold with the eye of faith all interior and exterior sufferings as excellent things because God wills them; not to think of the future, that is, of the pains, sufferings, and other events that fancy puts before us, but to

lose them in the will of God.” The prescription goes on further – I go to the end – “All sorrows and sufferings must be bruised with patience and in silence, then a pill is to be made of them, kneaded with the balsam of the sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, swallowed by faith and love, and digested by the heat of charity.” However much the servant of God had at heart and recommended meditation on the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ and to make the sufferings of Jesus one’s treasure, the wise director left, however, to souls the holy liberty of following in prayer that path to which God called them. He thus expresses himself to a pious soul, “I desire greatly that the Passion of Jesus Christ should be the subject of your prayer, and that in these loving colloquies the soul should be immersed in God. But understand me well, I wish the soul to be left free, and that the loving attractions of the Holy Spirit should be followed. Therefore, I repeat what I have written – we must pray, not according to our way, but in the way of God. Yes, my child, when the soul rejoices to find herself alone with God, with pure and loving attention to God, in pure and lively faith, reposing in the sweet bosom of her Beloved in the sacred silence of love, where the soul speaks more to God by this holy silence than if she actually spoke – in such a case she must be allowed to remain thus and not be disturbed with other exercises. For God then carries her in His loving arms and gives her entrance into His wine cellars, to drink of that sweet wine which makes virgins to spring forth. Oh, what great language is this.” Thus wrote this wise director, who, however, generally counseled all souls of prayer to enter by means of the Sacred Passion of Jesus as the gate, shown to us by Incarnate Wisdom Himself, to a close union and sweet conversation with God. Finally, we may say that the servant of God, whether in preaching, speaking, or writing, always carried out this great resolution of preaching Jesus Christ “*and him crucified.*” He had Jesus Christ Crucified in his mind, Jesus Christ Crucified on his tongue, and with Jesus Christ Crucified he began every action and even every letter, putting before each these great words, “*The Passion of Jesus Christ,*” and with Jesus Christ Crucified he happily ended all his undertakings. We may therefore say that it was Father Paul’s continual exercise to promote and inculcate devotion to the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ.

During the last months of his life, though so weak and exhausted that he could hardly speak, he made use of the charitable visits paid to him to speak of Jesus Christ and of His Passion. The very day on which he died, the good old man, though he could not speak without great difficulty, received a gentleman of Ravenna, who had been introduced by a Camaldolese monk, and took in his hand a small picture of the crucifixion, and with his hand and eyes made signs to this

gentleman, wishing him to understand that we must always keep the Passion of Jesus before our eyes. That he might, as Father Paul wished, preserve the remembrance of it, he gave him the little picture, as he was accustomed to do to others on different occasions. On Friday, which, as everyone knows is the day of the death of Jesus Christ, the servant of God was seen to change color, becoming pale and livid. The palpitation of his heart was stronger, sometimes even so vehement that he seemed to have scarcely any pulse. Thus he manifested evidently what impression the sufferings of Jesus made on his soul, for even his body participated in it. When on that day he visited the Via Crucis, it was easy to see that he accompanied, with a heart sorrowful and pierced with compassion, his Lord in this journey of pain and sorrow. During the days of Holy Week, which our Mother the Church consecrates chiefly to meditation and grief for the death of our Divine Redeemer, it is impossible to express in words with what sorrowful compassion for Jesus the servant of God was penetrated. At the approach of these holy days, he felt an ardent desire to perform the sacred functions that commemorate the Passion of Jesus Christ, and though he was suffering violently from his infirmities, he begged God to grant him strength to perform these sacred functions. Our Lord was pleased to hear him, giving him as much strength as was necessary to go through them for the increase of his merit, though he did not accomplish this without great difficulty. When the functions were ended, as if his body began anew to feel all its weakness, being no longer sustained by that fervor of devotion which possessed and supported him during the ceremonies, he was obliged through indisposition to lie in bed. The spirit of devotion in which he performed these ceremonies was remarkable. When he blessed the palms, he did it with such feeling and such lively faith that he usually wept and his countenance changed. On Maundy Thursday he used to give to the whole religious community a devout discourse or meditation, which he did also in Rome the year before his death, with extraordinary fervor and a great impression on all, in preparation for Easter, which he was going to celebrate with his religious. He spoke with exceeding great ardor, as if he were sending forth flames from his burning heart. He often broke out into great exclamations, saying, “O goodness! O charity! O love of the great Son of God!” By these words the hearts of his hearers were so penetrated that they wept bitterly.

After the meditation, he asked pardon of all, and with such a sentiment of humility, weeping, sighing, and striking his breast, that the religious might have believed him to be what he wished to appear and believed himself to be, a great sinner, if they had not known him to be a great

servant of God. Therefore, it could not possibly be otherwise than that they should be confounded and touched.

He began Mass with an abundance of tears, even as if his heart were melting away. He continued quite recollected in God and absorbed in the sublime mysteries of our holy religion. When he came to the consecration, or to the reception of the Sacred Host and of the Precious Blood, he was again all bathed in tears, and his face became so inflamed that it seemed like a fire. At the communion of the religious, in uttering these words, "Behold, the Lamb of God," so great were his affection of devotion and his flow of tears, that words were rather expressed in weeping than articulated. Sometimes he carried the Sacred Host in the mysterious procession of Maundy Thursday. When he placed it in the sepulcher, he did nothing but weep. As we have said, he completely wetted the humeral veil and the corporal on the altar. After the sacred minister had locked the tabernacle of the holy sepulcher, Father Paul took the little key, put it round his neck with great devotion, tenderly kissed it, and said, "This is the key that secures my Treasure, my Good, my God."

As his soul was pierced with sorrow, his body, on these occasions, was more than ordinarily weak. He could not even take his usual food, and with great difficulty swallowed only a little soup. On Good Friday began again the sighs and tears with which he accompanied the sacred functions. In uncovering the crucifix, he showed more than ever the affection of his heart. It is not possible to express the feeling with which he went through this function. Whoever has seen it, will know well what I mean. With his eyes bathed in tears, his countenance on fire, and a tone of voice both faltering and touching, he said, '*Behold the wood of the Cross.*' Lame as he was, he would kneel down, and made so great an effort that he succeeded, though with considerable inconvenience to himself, in making his adoration. When he reached the feet of Jesus Crucified, he seemed ready to expire and deposit his soul in the wounds of his Beloved. Returning after the functions to his room, everyone can imagine how deeply imprinted in his soul he bore the whole course of the insults, the sorrows, and the agony of our Blessed Redeemer. One year, when he was suffering more than usual from the pains that had become habitual to him, the brother who was his companion persuaded him to take his food in his room instead of the common refectory. He yielded to this wish, but when the sparse meal, that on this day is given to the community, was brought to him, he wept bitterly, saying, "What? Do you wish me to eat, dear brother, when I am thinking of the sorrows of ever Blessed Mary! Oh, dear Mother, what grief was yours in



seeing yourself deprived of your dear Son, and in seeing Him afterwards dead in your arms! Ah, what a grief to Blessed Mary! to return to Bethany after burying her beloved Son!” “And do you wish me to eat?” he repeated. “when I am thinking of this!” Again, becoming absorbed in the contemplation of this great sorrow, he burst into a flood of tears, which prevented him from eating. He exclaimed, “Oh dear Mother! How is it possible for me to eat on this day! You were so oppressed with grief, and there was no one to give you consolation!” He finished with sighs and tears, and with these holy considerations he went to the secret chapel to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. All these things occurred almost annually. And though, for a great many years, God kept him in a state of aridity and desolation, like gold in the crucible, nevertheless, on those days, as if the abundance of his desolation and interior communication with God could not all be contained in the superior part of his soul, the superabundance of it appeared even exteriorly. He was bathed in tears and his face was first pale as a corpse, then red and inflamed, and every now and then he burst into tears. We find these sentiments of tenderness, love, and compassion expressed in a letter written by him on one of these holy days. “It is not now the time for writing,” he says, “but for weeping. Jesus is dead to give us life; all creatures are in mourning, the sun grows dark, the earth trembles, rocks are split, the veil of the temple is rent, my heart only is harder than a stone. I will say nothing more than this: Keep close to the poor Mother of the dead Jesus. By a miracle she does not die; she is entirely absorbed in the sufferings of Jesus. Imitate her, ask dear Magdalene and the well-beloved John, also, what they feel in their hearts. Let the ocean of the sufferings of Jesus and Mary inundate your soul. I remain at the foot of the cross, and thus subscribe myself the crucifier of Jesus Christ, Paul.”

He used to say in the same sentiments, “These are days when even stones weep. What! the High Priest is dead, must we not also weep? We could not otherwise have faith! O God!” In saying these words, he was pierced with sorrow, so that an ocular witness, worthy of all credit, was able to say with truth that on these days, as well as on the Fridays destined by the holy Church to renew in her children the remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ, one must either avoid going to Father Paul, or go prepared to weep through devotion in bearing his inflamed discourses. It is not, therefore, astonishing that our Founder did and suffered so much. The thought of our Lord’s Passion was a stimulus, an encouragement, and a most sweet consolation to him. Listen to the deposition of one of his friends and benefactors. “I remember that, conversing one day with Father Paul, amazed at the sort of life he led, I said to him, ‘How do

you manage, Father Paul, to lead such a life?’ He replied, ‘God has suffered so much for me, it is not much that I should do something for His love.’ He has often given me this answer when I have put similar questions to him.” Paul had always his crucified Love in his mind and heart, and from Him derived constant force and vigor to sustain him amidst labors that he might not yield to attacks nor lose courage at the obstacles he encountered. He faithfully carried out the loving designs of Divine Wisdom. United to his Divine Redeemer and affectionately looking on his Divine Redeemer, he may be said to have led a life wholly animated by lively faith, love, and compassion for the Incarnate Word, who has so greatly loved us and has suffered so much and so willingly for our love.

## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **Of Father Paul’s Extraordinary Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the Angels and Saints**

The great Mother of God, the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, may be called the loving protectress of all religious Orders, which are like chosen vineyards planted by our Lord’s hand in his Church, and watered most abundantly with the fertile streams of His grace, according to those words which are so applicable to her: *“They put me in charge of the vineyards”* (Song 1:5). She well shows, by her maternal affection and by her powerful protection, how great is the care she takes for them, and how many graces she obtains for these mystical vineyards of the Lord. All religious Orders have constantly recognized her as their Mother and their Sovereign Protectress, because from her they have obtained a thousand favors and signal graces. Some, however, among them acknowledge much greater obligations to the Queen of Heaven, because she herself has given them a beginning, either by communicating the plan of the Institute, by showing the form of the habit, or in some other way, graciously cooperating in their foundation. This special favor was granted to the little Congregation of the Poor Barefooted Clerks of the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, for the great Mother of God condescended to appear to Father Paul, who was chosen by His Divine Majesty for this work, to show him the habit of mourning and of penance, which they were to wear. She herself, the most loving Mother, called him to lead a retired and penitential life in the solitude of Monte Argentario. She always protected the Congregation, and

by means of so powerful and merciful an advocate the most signal favors and distinguished graces have been received, from which the new Institute has derived its establishment and its perfection, as we shall soon see. Father Paul, seeing that our sweet Lady acted towards him as a most tender Mother, endeavored to prize highly her affection and to correspond with it in the best manner he could and not to be an ungrateful son to so great a benefactress. All his love, after God, was given to Blessed Mary. The great desire, the satisfaction and delight of his heart, was to find a means of making to this great Lady offerings to honor and please her. He daily recited the holy rosary with singular devotion. He would not omit it, even when dying. Every year, on the 15th of August, he made her a tribute of that hour of prayer, usually called the Hour of the rosary, and he made it at night from seven till eight. Even when ill and in bed, he would always continue this holy practice and earnestly begged the brother assistant to call him at that hour. He made use of the alarm that he might not make a mistake, so much did he fear not to be exact in this devout practice, though he slept very little at night.

All the feasts of the ever Blessed Virgin were for him days of the greatest recollection, devotion, and fervor. He had a particular devotion, joined to a very devout interior attraction for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. He said several times, “The holy Church has not declared herself on this point, but I would give my blood and sacrifice my life in torments in defense of it. If in this manner I did not become a martyr, I should at least give great glory to this great Lady. How happy should I be could I do so!”

The devout sentiments of his heart on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Mary may be known from a letter which he wrote on that occasion. “This great heart of the Infant Blessed Mary, which after the heart of Jesus is the sovereign of hearts, has loved and loves God more than all heaven together. I mean more than all the angels and saints who have been, are, or shall be. Therefore, desire to love God like the heart of this great Infant. To do it, cast yourself in spirit into that bountiful heart and love the Sovereign Good with that most pure heart, with the intention of practicing all the virtues she exercised.”

He prepared by novenas of great fervor for the feasts of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the temple and of her glorious Assumption into heaven. He desired that those religious belonging to the Retreats at Monte Argentario, where the church is dedicated to the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, should make this novena with him, and he prescribed the plan of it, that the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and, among other prayers, the psalm, *‘Shout with joy, all the*

*earth; sing a psalm to his name'* (Ps. 66:1,2), was sung, because in that psalm was shown the path in which God had made him walk. It commemorated also the singular graces he had received from the Blessed Virgin, who had always assisted and protected him. He did all in his power to be present at this novena in the Retreat of the Presentation. How often, when old and crippled, did he leave the Retreat of St. Angelo or of St. Mary del Cerro, and go through bad roads and unfavorable weather in the month of November to Monte Argentario to celebrate that feast with greater recollection. It is not easy to describe with what devotion and tears he celebrated it. His heart seemed to melt like wax before the fire, through the love he bore to his dear Mother and his gratitude towards her. When the feast drew near, it seemed to him, through his interior joy and spiritual cheerfulness, as if the very air derived fresh sweetness, according to the expression of the Prophet Joel: *'In that day the mountains shall drop down sweet wine and the hills shall flow with milk'* (3:18). "The Feast of the Presentation," he said before his death, "was always considered by me *a most solemn and holy day.*" On that day he was penetrated with most tender devotion, and he used to say that this holy day was the happy day and anniversary on which he had said farewell to the world. On that same day he ardently desired to be for the first time clothed with the habit of the Passion, and thus offer himself in the flower of his years to the Divine Majesty in imitation of that great Queen, who, in offering herself in the temple, made of herself a sacrifice so agreeable to the heart of God.

He celebrated every year with equal devotion the Feast of the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. He preceded it by a preparation of forty days, which he called the Lent of Our Lady. During that time he daily recited the whole rosary, practiced various mortifications, one of which was to abstain entirely from all kinds of fruit. He would never dispense himself from this rule, however necessary he might feel it to take fruit, which was perhaps the only food that suited his stomach.

In the nausea, the weakness, and pains from which he suffered, it is certain that Father Paul, always a lover of mortification, sought to overcome himself even in this and contradict even that little natural inclination. Therefore, if the brother assistant, even out of this time of Lent, gave him any fruit, he seemed to accept it, but through mortification ate only half or a third part, and left the rest. He did this with so much natural simplicity that it did not seem to be mortification but a natural action. During the Lent of Our Lady, he made a loving offering of all kinds to this great Queen and, though he felt a great dislike for every other kind of food and an inclination to

vomit, and it appeared to him, especially in the latter years of his life when his weakness was greater and his infirmities more serious, that fruits alone best suited his stomach, he would never give up this devout practice, but willingly deprived himself of them for the love of the Blessed Virgin. Once in the year 1767, being scarcely recovered from a dangerous illness, and actually suffering from a dreary convalescence and disgust for food, a beautiful apple was offered to him, which was the very thing he could best relish. But the servant of God, always intent on pleasing this Sovereign Lady, would not even taste it, because it was during his dear Lent. As he knew to season his mortifications with cheerfulness, he said with a smile to one of the priests who was present, "I am like a famous chief of robbers, who, on a Wednesday, would not eat the meat put before him, because he said he was making the Wednesdays of St. Anthony, and he had just committed a homicide." Thus spoke Father Paul, because he really thought himself the chief of sinners.

The power of his example in leading others to embrace a similar practice of abstinence may be inferred from what he himself writes, "It will suffice that the abstinence from fruit commences on August 1st, for those who wish to keep it, but all will do it for they greatly love our sweet Lady and Mother, Mary." The nine days immediately preceding the feast, he spent in a most fervent novena, adding other exercises of mortification and penance, recommending their practice also to all the rest of the Congregation. They have been introduced into all the retreats from the example and counsel of the servant of God. On the day of the great feast or triumph of the Queen of heaven and earth, the heart of Father Paul was all joy and cheerfulness, tenderness and devotion towards this great Lady. It was easy to see from his exterior, chiefly in time of Mass, that he would sing as long as he could, though it cost him no little difficulty sometimes, since he generally did nothing but weep through devotion and delight. On that day he wished the religious to feel a universal joy; he ordered that the food should be better than usual and that fruit should be put on the table, saying that it was to be eaten through devotion. From some of his letters, written on this great solemnity, which fortunately have been preserved, we clearly see how great was the fervor of his devotion on this day. "The great triumph of the Blessed Mary is already at hand, but I have not courage to speak of it. The riches of this Sovereign Lady are so great, and she is so deep an ocean of perfection, that the great God alone, who has enriched her with such treasures, can know it. That great wound of love, with which her most pure heart was sweetly pierced from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, increased so much during

the course of her most holy life and penetrated so deeply, that it caused her blessed soul to leave the body. Thus, this death from love, more sweet than life itself, put an end to that great sea of sorrows which this great Mother suffered during the course of her blessed life – not only during the sacred Passion of Jesus but also in beholding the many offenses committed by ungrateful people against the Divine Majesty. Thus, rejoice and exult in God our Good, in the great triumph of holy Mary, our Queen and Mother. We rejoice that she is exalted above all the choirs of angels and placed at the side of her Divine Son. In the great and divine heart of Jesus, we may exult in the glories of Holy Mary, loving her with the most pure heart of her Divine Son. If Jesus permits it, take flight into the pure heart of Mary and rejoice with her, rejoicing that so many pains and sorrows are ended. Ask for the grace to be always swallowed up in the immense ocean of divine love, from whence flows that other sea of the sufferings of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary. Let us be pierced through by those pains, by these sorrows, and let the sword, lance, or dart be well tempered that the wound of love may be deeper. For the deeper the wound of love, the sooner will the prisoner be freed from the dungeon. I am all abyss of darkness and know not how to speak of such marvels. He who wishes most to please our Blessed Lady must humble and annihilate himself the most. Because Mary was the most humble of all creatures, she pleased God more than all by her humility.”

And in another, “The great feast of the triumph of our dear mother draws near. O sweet death! This great Queen died through love, a death more desirable than life. Ah, on that blessed day recommend fervently poor Paul to her. I desire nothing but to be entirely transformed into the Divine Will!” The sweet and merciful Mother of God used to bestow many gifts upon him, but in the way best suited to the true friends of her crucified Son. That is, by obtaining for him occasions of practicing patience in tribulations and purifying his charity in the midst of sufferings, Father Paul’s greatest afflictions usually occurred during these novenas or the Lent of our Blessed Lady. Then he remained in bed, unable to rise; then he was oppressed by external pains, contradictions, and the most cruel assaults of the devils; and then he suffered terrible dereliction and tormenting desolation of spirit. Hence, he, who well knew this, used to say, “Now we are entering upon our Blessed Lady’s Lent.” During the last years of his life, our loving Mother seemed to treat him with more sweetness and to give him more consolations. In 1769, on the Vigil of the Assumption, Clement XIV, of holy memory, sent him word by his own confessor that the favor he had asked, the approbation of the Institute and the confirmation of the Rules,

had been granted. In due time the Brief was issued, and on the Octave of Our Blessed Lady's Presentation, the Bull was sent to him. In 1773, on the Vigil of the Assumption again, the same Pontiff sent to him the minutes of the Brief, drawn out as the instrument made for the concession of the Church and house of Saints John and Paul. Lastly, in 1775, the servant of God, having presented a supplication for a renewed approbation of the Institute and Rules to His Holiness Pius VI, the business was concluded and the sending forth of the Bull agreed upon on the day of the Vigil of our Blessed Lady's Assumption. From these new graces the servant of God derived an increase of love and great fervor of devotion.

To show his gratitude to the great Mother of God by perpetual demonstrations of his filial affection, Father Paul caused several churches to be dedicated in her honor. The first church built by the servant of God on Monte Argentario was dedicated to our Blessed Lady, under the title of her Presentation in the Temple. To the great Mother of God, under the same title, was dedicated the church of the first monastery of our nuns at Corneto. Two other churches were dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Other churches, already built and dedicated to our Blessed Lady, and offered to Father Paul that he might build retreats for his religious annexed to them, he accepted very willingly, because the new foundation was placed under the special protection of his most loving Mother. Finally, wherever there was our Blessed Lady's name, and where there was the most devout remembrance of her, there was Father Paul the happiest, because, after Jesus, all his hopes were in his Blessed Mother.

When he was going to make, for the first time, the great vow, the distinctive mark of our Congregation, and thus lay, if I may so speak, the first stone of the Institute, our Lord would not have him make it elsewhere than in a very devout chapel dedicated to our Blessed Lady, where is venerated a picture of her, painted, it is said, by St. Luke. For having one day, at the time when he first came to Rome, entered the Church of St. Mary Major, he felt before that most devout picture of our Blessed Lady, venerated in the Borghese Chapel, a sweet inspiration to make for the first time a vow to promote, in the hearts of the faithful, devotion to the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ and to endeavor to associate companions in so holy a work. He did it as if offering it by the hands of our Blessed Lady, with the greatest consolation of soul and confidence of corresponding to it with all fidelity, being under the protection of the ever Blessed Virgin. These are all marks of the great devotion he entertained towards his Sovereign Benefactress.

Indeed, in order to know his filial affection, it sufficed only to look at him when he uttered or

heard mentioned the name of holy Mary, for he immediately took off his berettino, and with humility and special reverence bowed his head, as if he were actually humbling his heart before the throne of that Queen. He wished others to do the same when the name of Mary was pronounced. If afterwards he began to speak, as he often did, of this great Lady, it is impossible to express the confidence that his words inspired. He said with great feeling, “Mary must remedy these things.” With similar expressions, he indicated not only his confidence, but also his great love and reverence. In his necessities, besides having recourse himself with all confidence to his dear Mother, he requested devout persons to pray also for him, and exhorted them to do it with lively confidence. In public, in his sermons, he spoke of her with the most profound respect, and with unspeakable joy praised her perfection. He would have wished that everyone should have shown great devotion towards her.

The sorrows of Mary, in particular, were most vividly and profoundly imprinted in his heart. He always wore round his neck the devout little habit of Our Lady of Sorrows, and in missions fervently promoted the devotion to her sorrows. Though he was not in the habit of making processions, he sometimes, to increase devotion in the people towards the sorrows of our dear Lady, took them in procession to some church where Our Lady of Sorrows is venerated. This he did at Ischia, the first time he gave a mission there. With all the people, he went to visit the Church of the Servants of Mary, and on arriving at the church door, made a very fervent discourse, wept bitterly and severely disciplined himself. Compunction and tears were general among the people, and from that time sprang up a new fervor of filial devotion and of tender loving compassion for Our Lady of Sorrows, which remains even to this day.

To all, generally, he recommended meditation on the Sorrows with great fervor. With the same zeal with which he promoted the remembrance of our Lord’s Passion, he promoted the devotion to the Sorrows. For, as he said himself, if we go to the Cross there is the Mamma. Where the Mamma is, there is the Son. It was certainly enough to soften the hardest hearts to hear him speak of the bitter sorrows of Mary. He meditated and considered them with filial piety, great compassion, and devotion. He sometimes imagined tender dialogues between the loving Mother and the suffering Son, but with such deep feeling that the hearers were dissolved into tears of compassion and grief. He compared the sufferings of the Son and the griefs of the Mother to two seas and said that we pass from the first to the second. “The grief of Mary (these are his words) is like the Mediterranean Sea, for it is written, *‘Great as the sea is your sorrow’*”



(Lam 2:13). From this sea we pass to the other boundless sea of the Passion of Jesus, in whose person David says, *‘I have come into the depth of the sea’* (Cfr. Ps. 77:20). Here the soul enriches herself and fishes up most precious pearls of the virtues of Jesus and Mary.” With the Passion of Jesus he had always in his mouth the Sorrows of Mary, and said that his hopes lay in the Passion of the Son and in the Sorrows of the Mother. Though he spoke of them constantly, he always seemed to say something new, because he always spoke of them with new affection, so deeply was he penetrated with them in his heart. Most frequently, when he spoke thus, he wept bitterly and changed color, becoming first red, then pale; he then burst forth into these words which came from the profoundest depths of his heart, “Ah, poor Mother! Ah, dear Mother!” On Good Friday, as we have said, oppressed by grief and spiritually drowned in the bitterness of that great day, he could not even take food. Often he was heard to say. “Mary’s greatest sorrow was when she saw her beloved Son dead in her arms.” Saying this, he cried out, more by tears than words, with the affection of a truly loving heart, “Oh, grief above grief!” He himself related in reference to this, that on one occasion our Blessed Lady was seen in that most sorrowful act of receiving into her arms the lacerated body of so dear a Son, and through her great sorrow and affliction, her face was like that of one dead. We do not know precisely who had this vision, but we find it deposed in the Processes. The servant of God, speaking one day with a priest, a dear friend of his, on the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary, drew from his sleeve, with a countenance all on fire, as was customary with him when he felt devotion, a little picture representing Our Lady of Sorrows. The picture was drawn by Cavaliere Conca who, being at the same time a skillful and excellent painter and a good Christian, painted it with great skill and devotion at the request of the servant of God, who begged him to express her grief as strongly as he could. He said, “Here, I give it to you because it is not sorrowful enough – I have seen her in greater sorrow.” With these words, Fr. Paul gave him the holy picture, which is now preserved in the Monastery of Mount Carmel at Vetralla.

In the last years of his life, this most merciful Mother showed herself pierced with grief to her faithful servant as she was at the time of the most bitter passion of her dear Son. In the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, when, after Mass, he was making his thanksgiving in the room next to the little chapel where he celebrated, she appeared to him with a sword through her heart and tears in her eyes. Speaking of her sorrows, she gave him so deep a sense of them, and used words of such tenderness, that they would even have rent a heart of stone. She gave him to

understand that her sufferings were beyond measure, terrible and overpowering, from the ardent love she bore for her Son and the incomparable amplitude of her soul, capable of a sea of sorrows.

The Queen of Sorrows complained of the false devotion of those who say they are devout to the Blessed Virgin and then outrage by sin her Beloved Son. With great force and tenderness, she exhorted her dear servant to promote, as he always did, devotion to the sacred Passion of her Son and to her sorrows. This Mother of Mercy, desiring to help a poor priest, whose soul was in a wretched condition, manifested to Father Paul his necessities. This priest, having come into his presence afterwards, the servant of God, who saw his interior, said to him with a tone of certainty, “You appear to me as ugly as a devil.” At these words the priest, entering into himself and acknowledging his dreadful state, prostrated himself in confusion and grief at Father Paul’s feet, promising to amend his life, and thus showed the truth of the apparition of Our Lady of Sorrows, who wished to draw him from the path of perdition. It is not, therefore, surprising that the servant of God, after such visions and so deep a perception of the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, spoke of them with so much affection, tenderness, and compassion. As he knew what a treasure true devotion to our Blessed Lady is, he ardently desired that his children should enjoy the abundance of it. He inculcated, and with great fervor recommended, that they should be devout to our dear Lady. “Let them take,” he says in the Rules, “for their chief protectress the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and bear towards her a due devotion. Let them often call to mind the most bitter sorrows endured by her during the Passion and death of her dear Son, and let them, by voice and example, promote in others devotion towards this great Lady.”

In a special manner he taught them true devotion towards the Mother of holy purity to preserve ourselves pure and chaste. “Let them keep,” he says to his religious in the same Rules, “their interior recollected in God, and let them be armed with a filial and fervent devotion towards the Mother of God. Let them endeavor to imitate her sublime virtues, and in so many dangers implore her powerful protection.” To engage this loving Mother to protect us with maternal care, he ordered that every night in the retreats of the entire religious community, before going to rest, the rosary and Litanies should be recited with the Antiphon, ‘*You are entirely beautiful, Mary,*’ that the day might happily end with an offering to the Queen of Heaven of this spiritual crown of flowers, and that each might go to rest more tranquilly under her protection. Further, he ordered that in the novitiate, every day after Vespers and spiritual reading,

the novices should make a devout procession through the retreat, reciting the holy rosary, to place themselves early under the protection of the heavenly Queen, these plants yet tender in piety and religious life. The servant of God was delighted when he saw devotion to our Blessed Lady flourishing among us. And that each one of our religious might be encouraged to recite the holy rosary and have recourse to Mary by the treasures of indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiff, he obtained some weeks before his death from Father John Thomas Mary Boxadors, then General of the illustrious Order of Preachers, a permission to erect in the novitiate the Society of the Rosary, with the faculty for the master of novices, *whomsoever held the position*, of ascribing all the religious who might wish to avail themselves of so great a benefit.

It was most edifying to see the poor old man in his last illness, already prostrated, speaking to the Father General<sup>6</sup> with so much vivacity and spiritual fervor, and showing such sweetness for the good of his dear children. On that same occasion, he said to the Father General that he left our poor and little Congregation under the protection of the Order of St. Dominic, so vigilantly guarded by our Blessed Lady, and seemed quite delighted to have had the consolation of speaking to this good superior and of commending to him before his death the rising Congregation of the Passion.

Having received holy Viaticum on the 30th of August, he wished to make known to all his dear children that he left them under the mantle of the Blessed Virgin, his dear Mother, and said these words, which each of us should always keep in his heart, “You, O Immaculate Virgin, Queen of the martyrs, by those sorrows which you did feel in the Passion of your most beloved Son, give to us all your maternal benediction, for I place them all and leave them under the mantle of thy protection.” He wished, as we have mentioned, that the religious of the Passion should also promote in others devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He left it written in the Rules as an indispensable duty. “It will be likewise the duty of our religious,” he says, speaking of missionaries, “to promote in the faithful a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God.” Happy he who so greatly esteemed this devotion, and with it found Mary always kind and loving towards him, and with our dear Lady found also life and salvation from that Blessed Lord, who deigned to become her Son, “*He that shall find me shall find life and shall have salvation from the Lord*” (Prov. 3:35).

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<sup>6</sup> John Thomas Mary Boxadors.

Father Paul, desiring to make many friends in heaven and to have many intercessors with the Divine Majesty, as he knew the power of the prayers of the saints and had great diffidence in his own unworthiness, determined to have among the angels and saints many advocates who might pray specially for him. He honored with particular devotion the Prince of the heavenly host, the Archangel St. Michael. He chose him for the protector of the whole Congregation and ordered that in every retreat the religious should recommend themselves to him after the rosary, reciting the antiphon, '*Most glorious prince,*' with the corresponding prayer. To encourage his children in this devotion, the good Father said that, at the time in which the foundation of the Retreat of the Presentation at Monte Argentario was opposed, the Archangel Michael was seen by a holy person, standing, as it were, on a globe of fire with an unsheathed sword in the act of defending the rising Congregation and new retreat. In memory of this apparition, an altar was erected in that first church in honor of the holy archangel. He also venerated the guardian angels, especially his own, with particular devotion. Wherever he was, he saluted the guardian angel of the place. When he mounted the platform during a mission, he saluted the guardians of the people, and begged them to assist his audience. He said that he was greatly helped by those blessed spirits, who cooperated with him for the good of his hearers. When he was at the retreat and met any of the religious, his first salutation was for their guardian angel. It was several times observed by persons who did not know his interior, that on joining the general recreation, he made a profound bow to all the religious with a joyous countenance that inspired devotion. The good Father, seeing that the religious were surprised, told them frankly that he did it chiefly out of respect for their guardian angels who were with them. He wished each one of us to be very devout to his guardian angel. He introduced the pious custom of saluting the holy angels at the commencement of the morning and evening recreation with the Antiphon, "*Holy Angels, Guard Us...*," and its corresponding prayer. And that each one, by a confidence of obtaining through the guardian angels great graces and favors, might increase in devotion towards them, the good Father related the assistance which he had himself received from his good angel. He said that once, when in the act of falling from the platform, with the danger of severely hurting his head against a stone, from the accidental breaking of a plank during the warmth and fervor of the sermon, he felt his head borne up in the air and then laid softly down without any shock, which there must otherwise have been. When he related this favor, he said, weeping, "And yet I have always been and am ungrateful to God after so many benefits." The holy Founder received other special graces and

favors from the holy angels. He went once to the Retreat of the Presentation at Monte Argentario during the winter and, after walking a short distance, he felt quite exhausted from the fatigue of the journey and his own weakness and was seized with convulsions and shivers. He was obliged to throw himself on the ground, not being able to continue his walk. But he did not on this account lose his confidence in God. Full of faith, turning towards his blessed Lord, he said, "Lord, I should not like to die here without the assistance of my religious." After these words he totally abandoned himself into the affectionate arms of Divine Providence. Feeling himself suddenly lifted from the ground, he opened his eyes and, seeing two most beautiful angels, exclaimed with a heart full of gratitude, love, and joy, "Oh, the great Providence of our Lord." Thus supported by the holy angels, without perceiving the distance, he arrived in a very short time at the retreat.

He was once traveling with his companion and brother Father John Baptist. The season was a very severe winter, the country was all frozen, and the journey long, unfortunate, and full of suffering. The servant of God felt a natural repugnance for this journey, but as the glory of God was concerned, he overcame every obstacle with great confidence. Having begun to travel, he preceded his companion by a wretchedly bad road, opening a path by his footsteps. But after walking a long time, both of them became, from the cold, their weakness, and fatigue, almost incapable of proceeding farther. Father Paul felt severely his own discomforts, but his heart was much more deeply wounded by compassion for his poor companion. The virtuous Father, with lively confidences, had recourse to the holy angels and humbly begged assistance from them. Behold, he felt himself taken by the hand and carried immediately to the end of his journey. Not seeing his companion when he arrived, as one grace encourages us to ask for another, he again turned to the holy angels and begged them to help his companion. These blessed spirits, who are so full of charity, did not delay to comfort blessed Paul entirely. He soon saw his companion before him. Asking him what he had suffered in the journey, Father Paul was answered that after he himself had disappeared from his eyes, he had suffered nothing, for he had been carried by an invisible hand to the place where they stood. The servant of God, much more animated by such wonderful graces and favors, had recourse, with great confidence, to the help of the holy angels. Often, when traveling, not knowing what road to take when he came to a highway, he used to recite on his knees an Our Father and Hail Mary to his holy guardian angel, and then took the road to which he felt himself inspired. He happily arrived at the end with the assistance of that

holy angel whom he so greatly venerated and so heartily loved.

Among the saints he had chosen for his special protectors, first, St. Joseph, the most pure spouse of the Blessed Virgin and the great master in converse with God and holy prayer. When he built the retreat of the novitiate, apart from the other Retreat of the Presentation at Monte Argentario, he caused the church to be dedicated to the glorious patriarch, St. Joseph, supplicating him to be the protector of those devout youths and their master in an interior life. He venerated also, with special devotion, St. Peter, the great prince of the Apostles; St. Paul, a vessel of election chosen to carry the name of Jesus Christ over the whole world and preach the glories of his crucified Lord; St. Luke, the great example of mortification; St. Blaise, protector of the city of Orbetello; St. Francis, the living image of Jesus crucified. Through veneration for this blessed saint, every year, when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, on the day of his feast, he went usually to visit the saint in the church of the Capuchin Fathers at Vetralla. Among the female saints he venerated with special affection was St. Mary Magdalene, to whom he bore a very fervent devotion, sang Mass on the day dedicated to her, and made it a feast in the Rule. He used to say, to encourage others in this devotion, that after the Blessed Virgin this great saint was, of all the women, the one that loved God the most. He also honored St. Catherine of Genoa, that great prodigy of divine love.

During the novenas in honor of our Blessed Lady and other saints, the servant of God was always present and assisted at them with great modesty and recollection. If he could not walk, he was carried in people's arms or in a chair. When he could not move from bed, he said to his companions who asked his leave to be present at these holy functions, "Yes, go and pray. Go for me, and I shall assist in spirit at the devotions." He said the same on the Saturday when permission was asked to go to the Litanies, which are sung by us on that day, and thus he always showed his great devotion and veneration for the saints.

True piety omits nothing that contributes to God's honor and to that of His saints. Therefore, Father Paul also venerated with great devotion the holy relics of the saints, who had been living members of Jesus Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost. He would have them carefully kept in the church, nor did he allow them to be worn without due respect because of his veneration for them. When relics were to be kissed, the good Father, who in his old age had all the fervor of holy devotion, not being able to go down to the church, begged others to have the charity to carry him. And thus the servant of God sought to make many friends in order to be well received by

them after his passage from this vale of tears to the tabernacles of eternal rest.

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

### **Of the Prudence of the Servant of God**

The prudence, with which our Lord enriched the soul of His servant, was that true and excellent prudence of which the Apostle St. Paul speaks. He gives a perfect description of it in reprobating and detesting the vain and hurtful prudence of the world. Spiritual prudence, which in proportion as it has a lively desire and firm resolution of preferring by a noble choice its blessed end, spiritual and eternal things, rather than those which are vile, fading, and transitory, has also a clear and enlightened eye to discern that which is best, and knows how to give to every act of virtue a certain grace and discretion, which is most pleasing to God and to the truly wise. His heart desired nothing but God; therefore, in his whole conduct he sought nothing but the paths that lead directly to God and the means of accomplishing, in all things, the will of His Divine Majesty. From his youth, having, by divine inspiration, formed the design of giving himself entirely to a life hidden in God and to familiar conversation with the Supreme Good, he left whatever could be an obstacle to it. Having retired from the world far from the noise and tumult of business, in the quiet of solitude, he labored day and night in seeking after Almighty God and enriching himself with those treasures which are found in God alone. To obey the voice of our Lord, who wished to make use of him for the holy work of the Congregation, he wrote, as we have said, the Rules in which he breathes everywhere not only the love of God, a strong desire of His glory, but also prudence, wisdom, and spiritual sweetness. The whole wonderfully contributes to form in the little Congregation men, entirely dead to the world, who live by the spirit of Jesus Christ and may, in due time, called by a lawful vocation, leave their solitude to preach penance with fruit among the people, and awake the nearly extinguished remembrance of the Passion and Death of our Divine Redeemer. It is true that the Rule, besides requiring us to rise each night to sing the divine praises, to sleep upon a little straw, and to fast often, imposes many other austerities painful to our weak nature. Nevertheless, it gives so many spiritual helps and so efficaciously leads us to conversation with God that the religious, who is faithful in its observance, finds his delight in it. Nor does he grow weary of the multiplicity of exercises; for,

being all at appointed times and all regulated by holy obedience, one exercise gives great helps to practice another, and all give one another the hand mutually, so prudently are they connected together and regulated. Yet when Father Paul wrote these Rules he had no experience in the Rules of religious Orders, nor had he read any other Rules. But the Spirit of God that guided him infused into his soul that prudence which is never wrong in its regulations.

As, moreover, the good Father knew that as the little Congregation grew and its members increased, he could not on account of human weakness promise himself that all would have that great fervor and strength of constitution that a very austere Institute requires. He agreed, on the approbation of the Rules and the confirmation of the Institute, that some practices of austerity should be mitigated. Nor could he doubt that it was the will of God, when the Sovereign Pontiffs Benedict XIV and Clement XIV gave him to understand that they not only gave their consent and approbation to this, but felt particular satisfaction from it. He was, however, always of opinion that the houses should be founded, as much as possible, in solitude. He knew the great injury to our spiritual profit that too much conversation with seculars causes, unless there be necessity for it. It was always his custom, after assisting his neighbor by missions and other exercises of charity, to retire into solitude to enjoy a little sweet repose, and increase his fervor by employing himself tranquilly in conversing with and enjoying Almighty God so that he might be able, in due time, to return to the assistance of his neighbor without injury or danger to his soul, which he greatly feared. As from the falls of others, he had learned like one who knows how to derive instruction from them. He had become deeply convinced that it is necessary for evangelical laborers, after working for their neighbors' good, to retire from time to time into solitude. Father Paul would have the houses founded in remote places, reflecting what Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, said to His disciples when they returned from the missions, "*Come apart to a deserted place and rest a while*" (Mk. 6:31).

Therefore, as he, after laboring some time in giving holy missions, retired into solitude, he desired that the same practices should be observed also by our religious and missionaries. "Otherwise," he used to say, "we shall be like a candle which consumes itself in giving light to others." In order to establish the Congregation happily and direct it well, it is impossible to express how the servant of God labored and how happily he succeeded in his holy undertaking and, without wishing it, showed himself to be a master of Christian prudence.

Of all the springs, from which he drank abundantly the waters of intelligence and the science



of life, the chief was holy prayer. Before anything else, when he had to deliberate on business, he had recourse to God, invoking the aid of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of true counsel. He used to say on this subject, "*Prudence is the wisdom of the saints*," and our Lord, who delights in humble souls that fly to Him and gives the good spirit to them that ask Him, helped that he might not err. Very often God infused into his soul lights, so clear and so abundant, that the directors to whom the servant of God communicated them were astonished. Bishop Emilio Cavalieri, a man of that merit, sanctity, and learning which we have described elsewhere, when he heard the youthful Paul in a conference, felt interiorly moved and could not restrain his tears, which ran down in streams from his eyes. He said firmly, "Paul, this is entirely the work of God, and you will see it established by means which you never thought of." Thus he spoke of the Congregation and wished to be one of the first to take the habit of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

As Father Paul found in God the source of all light, he was constantly more and more animated to have recourse to Him in every perplexity. But he did not on this account neglect the means, or omit that care which Almighty God wills that we should employ and which He accompanies with His loving benediction. The servant of God, therefore, read good books with great attention, first of all the sacred scriptures, which he deeply meditated; he also read ecclesiastical history and the lives of the saints. And like an industrious bee, he collected for his own direction and that of others those facts which are most instructive. Very often, and almost always when he was in his little room, if not in actual prayer, he had in his hands some book of edification and instruction. One day a brother, entering his room, found him with a book of lessons from holy scripture in his hand and said to him with filial confidence, "Reverend Father, are you amusing yourself?" "Amusing myself!" said the servant of God. "I read for profit." As he read with a strong desire to become better acquainted with the paths that lead to God, and as he united application with extraordinary intelligence, he found, as it were, a treasure of a thousand facts most useful in practice, and being gifted by God with a most happy memory, he drew from it, for the benefit also of others, those sentences and instructions which were best adapted to the necessity, and made upon them excellent reflections, which he uttered always with deep feeling. Though what he said was often well known, when he spoke it seemed quite new from the energy and unction which accompanied his words. No one, who is at all versed in ecclesiastical history or devout books, will be quite a stranger to the fall of Origen; but it was delightful to hear it from the mouth of this saintly old man, who spoke of it with holy fear and

great earnestness. “When I consider,” he said, “the fall of this great man, I think how great is human weakness, imagining to myself, as Origen himself says that he was, as we also all are, a vessel of glass sustained in the air by the hand of God. If it is left for a moment by the beneficent hand of God, it falls to the ground, is broken into a thousand pieces and not a trace of it remains.” A truth, very useful to lead us to distrust ourselves and ground ourselves in holy fear, on which every edifice of sanctity is well founded.

As Father Paul well knew that he who depends too much on his own ideas and lights either deceives himself or opens to the devil a wide gate to enter in with his artifices and deceits. He was always very desirous of receiving advice. With singular humility and docility he had recourse on all occasions to wise and enlightened persons. With regard to this, he used to repeat often with great respect these two sentences of the Holy Spirit, “*I, Wisdom, dwell in council*” (Prov. 8:12) and “*Son, without council you accomplish nothing.*” We have seen how, in undertaking the work of the Congregation, he sought in all things the advice and direction of his bishop and of other men according to God’s own heart. During the whole course of his life, he always took first the advice of his director, and as long as his brother Father John Baptist lived, consulted him, though advice often cost him very dear and he had to purchase it at the price of great humiliations. If on these occasions, some good counsel was suggested to him, he immediately yielded with admirable docility and allowed himself to be turned to any side without difficulty. Nor did he desire that a resolution should be taken one way or the other, but quite satisfied with knowing what ought to be done, said, full of humble gratitude and with great cordiality, “You are right; you speak well. I am a poor ignorant man. I have not the light of God.” One who did not know him would have taken him for a man without talent; so deep was the feeling with which he pronounced these words. Having found, as he believed, the right way to God, he immediately undertook it, unless the importance of the affair in question urged him again to have recourse to God by fervent prayer. He did this himself and engaged others also to do it, especially those souls known to him, who dwelt in the interior sanctuary and conversed intimately with God, the true light and fountain of all wisdom. It sometimes happened that our Lord gave to him extraordinary light to know that which was hidden from human understanding, and the servant of God, though at first he had yielded with all docility to the advice of others, said with holy liberty that the thing must be done differently from what they had agreed upon. The effect clearly proved that the Spirit of God was with him and led him, as it were, by the hand

in ways exceeding the light of ordinary prudence.

We must not believe that the servant of God failed to use the necessary means for the good success of his undertakings; but he did not place his confidence in them but in our Lord. He was not, therefore, fond of employing in his affairs many recommendations and entreaties, for he wished his business to have an unfavorable or prosperous termination according to the pleasure and will of God, who regulates all things discreetly and wisely. When he saw that the efforts made and means tried were useless, he quietly resigned himself to the will and sovereign dispensations of his Lord. By this prudent method of acting, the servant of God obtained the desired establishment of the Congregation. When in his counsels there was no room for doubt, and it seemed that the deliberation had been made according to God, Father Paul took great care that everything should be punctually performed. He was a great enemy to delay, which may often ruin the most useful designs and enervate the most important and well-planned affairs. He tried to have business quickly despatched, which he recommended to others. He used to say that having once consulted Bishop Cavalieri, Bishop of Troja, to know if the diligence he employed in his affairs was according to the will of God, the good prelate replied, “We read of the angels, *‘Go fast, angels.’*” By this the servant of God was greatly confirmed in his good custom of laboring diligently after consultation and due deliberation. He reaped great benefit from this, for he was thus able by God’s assistance to carry to perfection many things, which by slowness and delay would have failed or been imperfect. This he knew himself, and he used to say sometimes, “If I had not taken care, this would not have been done.” It was pleasant to have any business to do with the servant of God, for what he could do today he never put off till tomorrow. If he had two days’ time to do anything, he did it on the first day and said, “Who knows that there will not be something else to do tomorrow.” And he would add, “*He gives twice who gives quickly.* Let us get rid of thinking about it.” This he used to say when he gave letters to be answered by his secretary. When the letters were sent off he said, “Now it is done; let us think no more of it.” The wonder, however, was that in this solicitude he never lost that tranquillity which, in the opinion of the servant of God himself, was indispensably necessary to terminate affairs happily. He used to say that to dispatch business quickly a peaceful heart and tranquil mind are necessary, and these qualities accompanied all his operations.

## CHAPTER XIX

## **Of His Prudence and Wisdom in Governing the Congregation and in Every Other Occasion**

It would be proper to speak here of the prudence and discretion constantly evinced by Father Paul, of his indefatigable vigilance in the government of the Congregation. But as in the first part of the history we have given some idea of these qualities, we will endeavor to be as brief as possible. We will say nothing except that the government of the Founder clearly proved that a prudence, entirely according to the heart of God, is most efficacious for keeping up good order in a community and for promoting advancement in virtue. He had the art of winning over every mind and of entering into all hearts, which is the true secret in order to direct the wills of others to the glory of the Divine Majesty. Having God always in view himself, and aspiring to Him continually, he led to God, along with himself, the whole of the little Congregation, keeping up always an ardent desire of pleasing God and making Him a perfect sacrifice of the holy work he had undertaken. With tranquility of heart and presence of mind, even at an advanced age, and we might say to his last breath, he always sought the spiritual advantage of the Congregation, giving with great earnestness, sick and even almost dying as he was, most important advice in word and writing that all might turn to God's greater glory.

In his missions, no less than in the government of the Congregation, he displayed a rare prudence, full of wisdom, as the devout reader will have perceived. And in the regulation of the missions, of which we have elsewhere given an idea, and in the wonderful and frequent conversions that followed from his missions, the charity of the good Father, being then all activity and most ingenious, made him find many different means of gaining souls to God, taking each in the way best suited to it – sometimes by practices in themselves trifling, such as a short quarter of an hour's mental prayer or meditation on death, placing oneself on the ground, in the position in which corpses are placed. He succeeded in detaching from the love of vanities some women who were on the way to perdition through following them, persons who, as all enlightened people know, are not without great difficulty induced to make this renunciation. But prudence, animated by true zeal and accompanied by much prayer, obtains everything with the help of our Lord.

When he met with great obstinacy in the wandering souls whom he sought to lead back to

God, how greatly then did the good Father exert himself! How active was his charity! What efforts, and all holy, did it suggest to his heart! When giving a mission at Pitigliano in Tuscany, he was informed that an old woman there had two daughters, who bore an implacable hatred to a certain man and desired his death because, with an excess of barbarity, he had killed his wife, the sister of the two girls and daughter of the old woman. Father Paul knew well how difficult it would be to make peace and to obtain the pardon of these wretched women, who believed they had so much reason to hate their enemy. Nevertheless, confiding in God, he began to attempt the reconciliation by sending for the mother and the two daughters. But scarcely had they heard the proposal for peace, than, full of ill-will and quite enraged, they disrespectfully opposed the missionary and, hating even the remembrance of the murderer, began to cry out furiously, "Ah, the traitor!" And Father Paul could not say anything more about forgiveness to souls so ill disposed. He continued his sermons and, preaching one night on peace, took in his hand the crucifix and began to declaim with great energy against those who obstinately refused to pardon, saying, "O you soul! Take notice that if you refuse peace, Jesus Christ will turn his back upon you!" At this sermon one of the widow's daughters was present, but not she nor the other sister, who, perhaps because they feared the cure and the remedy of their festering wound, avoided the charitable physician. These words were not uttered in vain for this girl, for, feeling herself struck by the threat, returning home, she said to her mother and sister, "I will make peace, for I do not wish Jesus Christ to turn His back upon me." These words made an impression on the hard hearts of the mother and sister. No sooner did Father Paul hear of this than, in order to keep alive in these souls the spirit of charity which had begun to be enkindled, he sent for all three, and having kindly exhorted them to make peace, they agreed to do it. The Father then added that with every precaution he would have the murderer, who was then at Montalto, brought to the place. He sent at once, arranging everything with the greatest discretion, that the man might come and conclude the peace and might not, on the other hand, endanger himself or give occasion to any tumult. When he arrived, he made him stop at a safe place in a church outside the village, which had the right of sanctuary. Then sending for the lawyer and the women, he waited for them to conclude the treaty of peace, which was universally desired in the country, where the murder and the hatred were both well known. The women came, but scarcely had they heard of the arrival of the murderer, than, calling vividly to mind the cruel murder of the departed woman, and feeling anew a violent passion of hatred enkindle in their hearts, they could not contain themselves, but

furiously exclaimed, "That traitor is come; we wish him dead!" At these words, the poor missionary, though surprised, did not lose courage, but desiring, if he could not then entirely extinguish the fire of passion, at least to arrest its flames that they might not make a greater conflagration, intoned aloud the Litanies and desired the people, who were there in great concourses to answer. While these women were obliged to keep silence, the zealous missionary begged our dear Lady, who is a loving peacemaker, to obtain the grace he desired of a truly sincere and Christian peace. After the Litanies, the good Father kindly asked these women if they would make peace for the love of God. Their hearts being changed, they all replied that they would. Father Paul immediately departed with them, followed by the people, to meet the murderer. But alas! as they were passing the place where the dreadful murder was committed, the old widow, as if she saw her dead and murdered daughter before her, said with a burst of anger, "In this place that traitor murdered my daughter," and protested that she would not on any account grant pardon. But the servant of God, who had already experienced the efficacy of recourse to our Blessed Lady for preventing the rage and furious exclamations of that woman, kneeling down immediately, again intoned the Litanies, to which all the people answered. Then, with a sweet and amiable manner, he asked the woman, "Now will you make peace?" The old mother, and much less the daughters, could no longer resist. Their anger being calmed, they again promised to conclude finally the peace so greatly desired by the missionary. As the man of God, with discreet prudence, judged it expedient that the murderer, when he presented himself, should appear, at least exteriorly, penitent for his crime, he went to him before the women saw him, and said that when he made a sign, he should come into the church, and in an attitude of great humiliation ask pardon of his mother and sisters-in-law for the horrid crime he had committed. Then having lighted some candles before a miraculous image of our Blessed Lady, venerated in that church, he gave notice to the women that the penitent man was come to ask their pardon. But again, carried away by a violent burst of passion, they could not overcome themselves. The widowed mother, more furious than the others, cried out again, "Ah, the traitor that killed my daughter!" The patience of the good missionary was not wearied out by this new assault, nor did he attempt with indiscreet zeal to extort their consent by force, nor would he use towards them words of resentment or bitterness, which would only have increased the wound. But again, using the remedy that had first relieved it, with a firm hope of obtaining a perfect cure, he intoned once more the Litanies with his usual fervor. As he wisely judged, so it

happened, for the women, renouncing entirely the hatred that had possessed their hearts and, giving place therein to the mildness and sweetness of holy fraternal charity, conceived sentiments entirely different, pardoned their enemy and became reconciled to him. The peace was so sincere and accompanied with so great a blessing that, when Father Paul was again passing through Pitigliano, this widow, after he had made a short discourse to the people, presented herself to him, saying, “Father, I am the woman that made peace. Ah, Father! since then I have always enjoyed the peace of Paradise.”

By the same spirit of prudence and discretion, he contrived in another mission that a work should be undertaken and completed for the glory of God. He had gone to give missions at Ischia, in the Diocese of Acquapendente, where it was necessary to build a new church, which had been several times discussed, but as the opinions of the citizens were divided, for many years they were unable to bring about an affair so glorious to God, so advantageous to souls, and of such benefit to the country. Many great servants of God, who had gone to preach the Lent in that place, had with zeal sought to unite the minds of the people and move them to the holy undertaking. They went so far as to renounce and apply to the building the alms of their sermons, but nothing was determined upon. Notwithstanding, the servant of God, going there and having greatly at heart the building of the church, inasmuch as the bishop in sending him there had given him by letter a special commission for this. To obey the prelate, and because he knew how greatly a decent church, proportioned to the number of the people, would contribute to the glory of God, and how much it was desired by good persons, at the end of a sermon, all on fire with holy zeal, he made a short exhortation to the people there present, and spoke with so much fervor and persuasiveness that all were moved and roused to fervor, and the work was determined upon. In the progress of time, much opposition was raised, which is always the case with works glorious to God. Scarcely had one declared resolution been made than some one declared himself contrary to it. But the servant of God, who had always for his object the greater glory of God, did not on this account lose courage or confidence but, with energy and lively faith, vigorously promoted the holy work. As long as he was there, he tried by sweetness and humility to gain that person. But after he had left, hearing by a letter from Canon Scarzella that the work of God was hindered, he animated him to courage by telling him that he must continue with fervor the good work on which he had entered, and he must not fear because it was the cause of God. Father Paul brought forward to him the example of St. Theresa, who, in proportion as she encountered

opposition in founding her monasteries, became more earnest in prosecuting the work, ascribing the contradiction to a manifest sign that the work begun would turn out to God's greater glory. This letter, passing from hand to hand, finally reached Pope Clement XIII, of pious memory, who agreed to read it. Through the excellent opinion he entertained of the servant of God, the Pope immediately ordered that what was determined upon in the council at that place, regarding the building of the church, should be executed, and also contributed munificently to the beauty of the House of God, giving, without being asked by anyone, a hundred pistoles. Every difficulty being then overcome, the commenced building was happily continued. It was a consolation to see how the people, remembering Father Paul's advice, vied with one another for three years in carrying materials for building the church in honor of the Divine Majesty. Strangers who happened to see the work could not restrain their tears through devotion and tenderness. During the work, stones were once wanting, and the work was interrupted. But on that occasion it seemed as if our Lord wished to show visibly His approbation and acceptance of this holy work, for suddenly, without any apparent reason, a great mass of stone broke away, which, without any expense, provided for the immediate wants of the building. Thus, the magnificent church was built, which cost no less than twenty thousand crowns, a considerable sum, contributed by the voluntary alms of pious persons who were won by Father Paul's mild and sweet manners and animated to the holy work by his fervor. The bishop gave him cordial thanks for this in a letter which follows. "I know not what words to use, nor how to thank your Reverence for the great good you have done in Ischia by your holy missions, having brought the people to peace and union, and universal compunction, and besides, for having moved them to the great and pious work, so much wanted, of building the church. For these things, and many others that I do not mention, I shall be eternally obliged to you. I am not able to make a return for so many benefits and so much good done by your Reverence to my people, but God will do it superabundantly in His time, from whom alone I know that your Reverence expects the reward of so many apostolic labors. Begging you to remember me in your prayers, which I request as a charity, full of obligations and esteem, I sign myself." Thus God blessed His servant and gave a happy issue to his holy designs, conceived in the ardor of charity and regulated by Christian prudence.

The great prudence of this man of God in every holy work appeared manifestly on many other occasions when he had to labor for his neighbor's benefit, one of which I will relate, because it is accompanied by difficult and contrary circumstances, and may serve as a proof



evinced the discretion of his prudence. The Spaniards were besieging the fortresses of Tuscany, Orbetello, and Montefilippo, and the army, for the most part, was encamped on the plain at the foot of Monte Argentario, when the servant of God was staying at the hermitage of St. Anthony. He often descended, moved purely by his charity, to the Spanish camp to assist the sick or wounded soldiers, and help them to die happily. He also went through charity to Orbetello and the neighboring places. Everyone knows what suspicion in time of war may be created by a man who, in the dress of a hermit, goes first to the enemy's camp and then to the besieged places. But, as the servant of God in his whole conduct clearly proved that he sought nothing but the service of the Divine Majesty and the good of his poor neighbor, and caring nothing about mixing in or knowing earthly affairs, made use of every prudent precaution, he was not only never suspected but had always free access to the camp and the besieged places. Father Paul was beloved, revered, and esteemed by all, especially by the Spanish General de las Minas, who had chosen him for his spiritual Father. So true it is that prudence, united with true piety, not only renders us dear to God and merits for us the reward of eternal life, but makes us also pleasing and agreeable to persons of good sense, who with a dispassionate eye behold the conduct of others.

That the members of his Congregation might employ themselves with greater success for the glory of God in holy missions, he left them in the Rules excellent instructions, in which, as much as in other things, he displays his rare prudence. He labored in order that the toils of his Congregation might be blessed by God, as were his own. This copious benediction always accompanied Father Paul so that at other times, besides the missions, he did great good in directing souls in the way of perfection and leading them to God. Among the many proofs that might be here alleged, I will relate one fact in particular, which seems to me the most edifying. A young girl went to him to confession and made known the state of her conscience. After he had heard what she had to say, knowing well the way to lead that soul to sanctity, he placed her in a great school of truth and imposed upon her, for a penance, that every morning, for many days, shut up in her room, she should put a coverlet on the ground, lie down upon it as if dead, and remaining there for a quarter or half an hour, as she pleased, should go on repeating to herself these words, "Perhaps, in a short time, I also shall be dead." The penitent obeyed and faithfully practiced what Father Paul had imposed, and happily experienced how well adapted to her was the exercise prescribed by her wise counselor, for she received such an abundance of heavenly

light from God in the serious consideration of that tremendous passage, that she immediately dedicated herself to a life of holiness.

By this same means he also gained to God a woman of wicked life, who, after practicing for three days the advice given her by Father Paul, returned to him entirely changed and truly converted to God.

As it is very difficult to give a just regulation and direction regarding wills, without offending in any way against the laws or the rights of any person, or without giving occasion of offense to those who have real or pretended interest therein, Father Paul, guided by that prudence which, with a clear and pure eye, looks on every side to avoid dangers, was not accustomed, and was most averse to having anything to do with wills. But having to advise one of our religious, whom he had long directed, he gave him such a plan of a will as may serve as a model and formula for every Christian testament. “I greatly approve of your Reverence’s making your will before your profession, and I should wish you to make at least the minutes of it in your own handwriting, before entering on the probation of the Novitiate, to avoid distractions. This testament must be made ‘*with caution,*’ and under the direction of N. First, you must begin this testament with great sentiments and expressions becoming an ecclesiastic and son of the Congregation, that this testament may serve as an example to the house and to posterity for ever. The first points must contain salutary advice to your sons, your daughters, and your posterity. Recommend to them never to omit at home daily meditation in common with the family and the married daughters in the sacred Passion, the frequentation of the sacraments, alms, and mercy towards the poor, humility in dress, and in behavior chiefly towards the poor and servants, *and the rest*, which you can explain better than I can. Having thus arranged spiritual affairs for your family and posterity for ever, go on to speak of temporal things, leaving your son your heir, which he is by right. Do not load him with legacies, and leave none, excepting of some trifle. Believe me, it is a mistake to load heirs with obligations and legacies, for generally they fail to fulfil them, or delay it long, and God, the most just judge, chastises families so severely for this that they go to ruin and are rooted up for ever from their foundations. I am old and have experience.”

The servant of God’s charity, which put his prudence in action, never allowed him to omit any opportunity of assisting his neighbor. He industriously made use of every occasion to speak of God, of eternity, and of the soul. In visits of civility, he would not lose his time, but sweetly endeavored to gain something by them, and found means to do so from all things in a pleasing

and graceful manner. Father Paul was this, a man of great mind, of good and enlightened judgment, with a sincere and affectionate heart, truly, therefore, a man of prudence and of wisdom. On account of these gifts, highly talented persons and men of much wisdom had recourse to him for advice. Many bishops, prelates of the Roman court, princes and princesses, and even the Sovereign Pontiff, Clement XIV, deigned to consult him. One day in particular, when the Holy Father was speaking to the servant of God on the state of our holy Church, the good Father, who ardently desired that His Holiness, when in the enjoyment of the necessary peace and time, should seek to remove from our Lord's vineyard the abuses and disorders that may creep in almost imperceptibly, and who knew the favor with which the Pontiff regarded him, took courage to propose to him a plan of reform, which was highly approved by the Pontiff and judged to be entirely conformable to the Spirit of God. He, with all frankness, declared that God gave him also the same ideas, saying, "You see, Father Paul, how our thoughts agree." In this plan, among other things proposed by the servant of God, one of the chief was to introduce the practice and habit of mental prayer, because, as he said, irregularity of morals comes from the want of prayer. Such were the counsels of Father Paul, counsels truly worthy of a man who seeks God alone and His glory. Hence, recourse might well be had to him, in order to know the ways of God.

## **Chapter XX**

### **Of the Sincerity and Simplicity That Father Paul United to Prudence**

With so much greater security might everyone leave recourse to Father Paul, and with so much more facility receive light from his advice, as the servant of God was at an immense distance from every artifice and from everything approaching to flattery or falsehood. He united in himself, by an admirable combination, the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove, but in such a manner that he seemed to wish that there should be less of the prudence of the serpent than of the simplicity of the dove, because this virtue was extremely dear to him. He practiced it with great delight, not only in what referred to Almighty God, who was always the sole object of his aim and of his intentions, directed to His greater glory, "*for the sake of the great glory of God,*" as he said, but also in everything concerning his behavior to his neighbor,

towards whom he always showed such frankness and openness of heart, that it was quite delightful. He abominated all sorts of duplicity and artfulness, and used to say so. “I greatly detest duplicity and dissimulation.” What he had on his tongue, he had also in his heart. “I am a Lombard,” he would say, “and what I have in my heart, I have also on my tongue.” Jesus Christ says, “*Yes, Yes; No, No*” (Mt. 5:37). There was no action in which he did not evince this truly evangelical simplicity, by which all who conversed with him were edified. The Sovereign Pontiff, Clement XIV, scarcely became acquainted with him, when he was cardinal, before he conceived a strong affection for him. The reason was, as he said, because he found in Father Paul a man made after the old fashion, who went about everything with veracity and frankness. When he became Pope, he used to say, “I know Father Paul; he is a man of great simplicity.” He had so great a horror of falsehood, that he would rather, as he said himself with strong feeling, let his head be cut off than tell one single lie. It was plain from his love for truth and frankness, that he could not endure lies and dissimulation in others. So great an enemy of falsehood was he, that one day, when he was staying at the house of one of our benefactors, being told that a servant had said to someone that enquired for him that he was not at home to prevent his being annoyed by some visit, he severely reproved him and showed him the horror we ought to have of lies.

The servant of God, being himself so sincere and upright of heart, knew not how to judge ill of anyone, particularly of a priest. He said one day, speaking confidentially to his companion, that he could not think ill of priests, though in his long experience he had been a witness of terrible cases in the persons of some among them who, after leading a wicked life, died wretchedly, like beasts, in the filth of their sins – so far was he from forming a bad opinion of others, from that goodness and simplicity of heart, which our Lord had given him. Hence it was, that it seemed to him strange to meet with persons who acted with duplicity. It did not enter his thought that he should be ever deceived. When, in managing the affairs of the Congregation, things were made to appear as if already done, and he afterwards found that it was quite the contrary, he felt much grief, because things were not done with holy evangelical simplicity. Sometimes, to express his sorrow more strongly he said, “In treating of so many affairs, they have endeavored to make me lose that holy simplicity that I brought with me from the womb of my mother.” This simplicity of his, as it was really virtue, never injured him, but, on the contrary, availed him much in business and in assisting souls. If there was question of direction, confessions, missions, or other affairs relating to God’s glory, and particularly of the government

of the Congregation, he was all attention, caution, and circumspection. He thought of everything, foresaw everything, knew how to remove cleverly every obstacle to God's wish, and clearly showed that his simplicity did not proceed from want of talent or stupidity of mind, but from great innocence of morals and extreme purity of heart. Wherever he might be, he knew well how to act with due reflection and discreet discernment.

It is true, indeed, that this simplicity and cordiality greatly smoothed the way for those who watched his conduct in order adroitly to enter into his heart and extract from him some information which he alone could give. The good servant of God, who had no idea of what others thought of his sanctity and virtuous life, easily gave credit to the cunning protestations of those who dexterously questioned him, that they asked information for the sake of the religious that would follow, or to satisfy themselves that the Congregation was the work of God, and similar excuses. He sometimes related what had taken place in him, but as soon as he perceived that it might turn to his praise and cause astonishment to others, he ended the recreation with marks of displeasure or cut short the conversation. If any persevered in begging him to go on speaking, he replied, "*Be not more wise than is necessary*" (Ecc. 7:16), or ended the discourse in some similar way. Thus he kept in concealment the secret of his heart, which he well knew how to hide in God, when he knew it to be right. In fact, though he was so extremely cordial, sincere, and open, he never spoke but to his directors of the singular graces, the intimate communications, and the sublime gifts with which God had enriched him. If he found out that anything had been written or printed in praise of himself or of his conduct, he either tore it up or threw it into the fire, as we shall mention more at length later. From this great anxiety to keep himself hidden from the eyes of others, we regret that we are deprived of the greater part of the most beautiful traits and of the most edifying circumstances of his interior sanctity, from which proceeds the first and principal rectitude of virtuous actions. He had for his director and confessor his brother and faithful companion, Father John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel. As long as he lived, as Father John died before Father Paul, Father John was as careful to keep in profound silence the secret of his virtues as he was diligent in assisting his brother to become a great saint. Therefore, very little information has come to us, in comparison with that which we might have gained. And if Father Paul had not been for many years in darkness, desolation, and dereliction, and had not believed himself in that state to be full of miseries, infidelities, and sins, so that he sometimes spoke of them either through the fear of going astray or his sincere desire of

receiving light and advice from others, we should have known much less, for he would not have opened his mouth to manifest even that little regarding himself, which is a matter of so much edification to us.

Prudence and simplicity are often placed in such painful and difficult circumstances, that it seems very difficult to unite them together, so that a just attention to one may not be an obstacle to the other, or offend against its holy frankness. But whoever is guided by the spirit of God keeps the virtues in perfect concord and true harmony, acting uprightly according as the case requires. Father Paul, therefore, joined to a discreet prudence a holy liberty, nor did he ever, for the sake of the deceitful maxims of worldly prudence and detestable policy, betray the truth or, in speaking it, rob it of the just liberty that belongs to it, whatever danger he might thereby incur of displeasing those who prefer to be flattered by a traitor to being charitably admonished by a friend. Once, when ill in bed, he was visited by two religious of a certain Order, who recommended themselves to his prayers. Father Paul, who well knew to whom he was speaking, and felt in his heart a great desire of benefitting them, replied, “Yes, I will do so.” And with great liberty added, “You need divine help, for you are grown very tepid and no longer preserve the spirit of your Institute.”

An illustrious personage of high rank in the Church went often to visit Father Paul and enjoy his sweet and agreeable conversation. The good Father, though he might expect to offend him in some degree, did not fail to represent to him with prudence and holy integrity, how pernicious to the soul are certain conversations which imprint on the mind the ideas of dangerous objects and make bad impressions, and when no other evil proceeds from them, cause a difficulty in fulfilling the duty of holy prayer and keeping the mind recollected in God.

Perhaps his words had not the desired effect; for one day with greater clearness, he showed him the great evil that such conversations cause to the Church of God, as our neighbor is not edified by them. “What,” he said among other things, “will the servants say when they see their master converse in this manner?” This personage, considering the sincerity of heart with which the servant of God spoke to him, caring nothing for the complaints and repugnance of self-love, was charmed with his words, returned to him quite changed, desired to speak to him alone, and expressed his wish to take him for his spiritual Father and place himself under his guidance. The good Father, encouraged by the effects his words had produced without fearing to displease the gentleman or become troublesome to him, continued always with the same sincerity to say to

him what was proper, according to the spirit of God and not according to the false ideas of the world. This liberty, though always accompanied with great moderation and respect, did not always please, for truth cannot always put in our mouths what is pleasing and agreeable. However useful his advice might be, it was not always well received nor acted upon with docility. It is true that he, who would not be guided by the sage counsels of the servant of God, had great cause for regret.

A certain gentleman, a great friend of his, caused himself to be inscribed among the nobility of a city in the pontifical states for the greater glory of his honorable family. The servant of God could never approve this resolution, which breathed too much of the spirit of the world. Therefore, he said clearly, "This is not prudence; it will not last and will leave a bad end; these things are not pleasing to God." This prediction was soon verified, for in a few years this gentleman failed, was obliged to sell the palace he had bought at great expense in that city, and retire much humbled to his native place.

A young ecclesiastic went one day to visit the good Father, who was in Rome at the Hospice of the Holy Cross near St. John Lateran, and desired his advice as to whether he should receive holy orders or not. Father Paul told him not by any means to be ordained, but for a year to prove himself, and in the meantime to recommend himself fervently to our Lord. This youth, who was perhaps one of those who ask advice in order to find a counselor according to their own will, did not abide by the prudent answer of the servant of God, but procured his promotion to the subdiaconate. He had, however, great reason to repent of it, for the bishop did not judge it expedient to raise him to the higher orders, and thus he found himself in such great distress that he used sometimes to say, "How much happier should I be had I acted according to Father Paul's advice."

The wise Father had need of greater courage to speak candidly the sentiments of his heart to a personage of great consideration and of high dignity in the Church. This man wished to ordain as priest one of his neighbors<sup>7</sup>, who was of mature age and who, up to that time, had been a secular, engaged in most honorable but worldly employments, for he thought he could renounce, in his favor, a very good bishopric. He asked Father Paul's advice, but the servant of God, having in view only the glory of His Divine Majesty, openly disapproved the design and opposed

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<sup>7</sup> A member of his family.

himself with great fervor and resolution to these intentions. He said to him with holy liberty that the wish to ordain his nephew did not in his belief proceed from the spirit of God, but rather from earthly affections, and that it was not expedient to ordain him at once. An attentive examination must be made to see if he had a vocation from God, which must be put to the test by employing him in the service of the Church and in the exercise of ecclesiastical functions. Therefore, he thought it well that he should assume the ecclesiastical habit and apply himself seriously to sacred studies in order to learn the ecclesiastical spirit. He concluded by saying that, if he did not act thus, he would never give his approbation in an affair of so great importance. “To pass so quickly,” he said with great warmth, “from the sword to the altar, from the world to the pastor of souls! Oh, no! This cannot be.” The sincerity and candor of the servant of God were not very pleasing to this gentleman; he appeared offended at the opposition made to his resolution. As it often happens, the gentleman thought Father Paul, who possessed a most wise, discreet, and enlightened mind, to be scrupulous. He did ordain his nephew. When Father Paul heard this, he shrugged his shoulders and said, “The uncle will not obtain his wishes; the nephew will remain as he is.” It was so in effect, for the uncle died before he could make the renunciation, and the nephew remained merely a priest, deprived of a large fortune of which he was in possession before he embraced the ecclesiastical state. We thus see how safe in advising is he who, in order not to err, retires into the interior sanctuary of his heart. There, with all humility and confidence, he consults the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude.

Thus, then, lived Father Paul, always an enemy of that deceitful prudence and worldly policy so much practiced by those who love to make a vain appearance and seek always to conceal themselves under lies and deceit. He was always governed, directed, and assisted by a prudence that had nothing of the world about it; hence we may say of him, “*Wisdom gave him knowledge of holy things; she prospered him in his labors, and increased the fruit of his toil*” (Wis. 10:10).

## **CHAPTER XXI**

### **Of the Justice of the Servant of God**

Every just soul, that continually nourishes itself with sweet meditation on the divine law, is like a tree, that being fortunately planted near a copious stream of water, fails not to yield its



fruits at the proper time and season. Yet, all the servants of God do not produce equally the same fruits of sanctity, justice, and perfection, but each according to the opportunities afforded by his employments, his profession, and state of life, in such a manner, however, that when it is necessary, or when there is occasion to practice other acts of virtue, they are practiced and produced with so much ease, exactness, and perfection that, though their exercise may not be habitual, it is evident that their true spirit and strength exist. We see that, though the servant of God had few occasions of showing how anxiously he desired that everyone should have what by right belonged to him, since he had little to do with contracts, or in any other way to exercise that kind of justice called commutative. Nevertheless, on every occasion, like a true servant of God, he exactly fulfilled every duty that he had to perform towards his neighbor to whom he would not, if possible, owe any debt but that indispensable one of always heartily loving him, according to the advice given by St. Paul, "*Owe no one anything, except to love one another*" (Rom. 13:8). When artists or workmen had done any work for the Congregation, he insisted upon it that their claims should be satisfied. He used to say that the poor live by their labor, therefore, they ought to be at once paid. He would not allow any dispute to be held with them about the amount of their wages, but desired that what was due should be immediately given to them, and sometimes more. Father Paul said, "These poor mechanics are badly off and have no means of relief but their labor," and added that God had provided for us in other ways. If any debt was incurred for the wants of the retreats, he was all anxiety that it should be paid, and that the creditors should be satisfied as soon as possible.

Of the money given in alms to the Congregation, he was not to be called a most faithful guardian, but rather a distributor as charitable as he was just and exact. Though his parents were highly respectable, as we have said elsewhere, they were in great poverty. His brother Joseph Danei several times had recourse to him, but the good Father, from his delicacy of conscience and detachment from his relations, did not consider it lawful to help them, though he felt compassion for them and loved them in Jesus Christ. Among the letters that his brother wrote, I will cite one addressed to one of our religious, which may serve as a proof of the virtue of the servant of God. "I cast myself at the feet of your Reverence, supplicating you, for the love of the sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, to deign to exert yourself for this poor family, to visit us and give us some relief in the great indigence from which we are suffering, on account of the scarcity that has prevailed and exists even now in this part. I have several times applied to my good and

reverend brother Father Paul Danei of the Cross, your Founder; but he has always replied that he is bound by his holy vows, and that he has abandoned all his relations in this world for the love of his Lord. He tells us to derive courage in our tribulations by a true and perfect resignation to the Divine Will of God. If we do this, our Lord will inspire some holy soul to help us in our great poverty. Therefore, I hope He will make use of your reverence to relieve this humble family, since He has taken from us all our fortune, leaving us only the antiquity of our house of Danei. I tell you this as a secret, that you may not tell the Very Reverend Father, for he does not wish to know anything about his relations, and it is more than a year since we heard anything of him, whether he is well or says Mass. It will be a pleasure to us to hear good news of him. I should have come in person to the feet of your Paternity to ask relief, but I cannot leave my poor sister, who for the greater part of the year has been in bad health. Glory be to God for all.” Father Paul might have spoken a word to the Sovereign Pontiff, then Clement XIV, his affectionate Father and benefactor or applied to some other friend, but he never would do it through the fear of following the suggestions of affection for his relations.

With regard to the Congregation, he watched always with a truly paternal care and sincere love of justice to see that the religious were well treated and had all the little comforts prescribed by the holy Rules. He would not allow the superiors to make certain retrenchments which distress the poor religious. Once, in particular, on going to make the visitation in one of the retreats, he found that the superior, on account of the great expense he had incurred in carrying water to the garden, had not enough afterwards for the maintenance of the religious, and provided them very scantily with food and clothing, from which they suffered great inconvenience. The servant of God judged him to merit reproof, admonished him strongly, and said among other things that the garden was made for the religious, not the religious for the garden. If they were sick, he would have no expense or labor spared for the recovery of their health. When they had sufficiently recovered their strength, to avoid the danger of tepidity and relaxation, he sweetly recommended them to resume holy observances. “Brother, how do you feel?” he would say. “It seems to me that you are well, so that you may now begin again the community life with the others.”

He required from all punctuality and promptness in rising at night to Matins and in the morning to Prime. But he would not allow the religious to be deprived of the least part of the repose allowed them by the holy Rules. Regarding this, it is related in the Processes that in the

Retreat of the Presentation, the superior, then Father Fulgentius of Jesus, a man of great fervor, who slept very little, rung Prime about a quarter of an hour before the time. Father Paul heard of it and, on visiting that retreat, said publicly that he absolutely forbade them to ring before the proper time, giving as a reason that the religious ought to have everything given to them as it is prescribed in the holy Rules. Finally our good Father, with all zeal, required that the religious should take pains to fulfil their duties exactly, but he was equally earnest that they should be deprived of nothing that is allowed according to our poverty. He showed always a strong desire of offering to our Lord, among other sacrifices, that of justice and equity, in which His Divine Majesty takes great delight.

Though Father Paul always endeavored perfectly to fulfil the duties of justice to all, he was not, however, always treated in the same manner by those who were bound to do it. More than once he met with a bad return and was even injured, but would never show any resentment. When he took possession of the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, in that part of the gardens which was assigned for the enclosure, there was a vine dresser who was greatly annoyed at having to leave. Through spite, before he went away, not only did he greatly offend all the religious and the servant of God with words dictated by passion, but went so far as to offer various insults. The superior thought himself obliged to have recourse to the Treasurer, begging him to restrain such audacity by his authority. The worthy prelate ordered the man to be arrested, which was done. As soon as the servant of God heard of it, he disapproved of the superior's conduct, nor would he admit of any justification when he heard of the proceedings of the vine dresser. He, afterwards, wrote a note to the above named prelate, begging him to pardon the poor man his fault. This note arrived in time to be of great use to the poor man, for the Treasurer had resolved that he should be flogged three times. But for the sake of the servant of God, whom he greatly loved, he pardoned him and set him at liberty. On leaving his prison the vine dresser, by order of his Lordship, went to the servant of God, who received him with great charity, treated him with special kindness as if he had been a particular friend, and refused to receive any compensation for the injuries and insults he had received. Thus, Father Paul acted, giving to each one his own, as readily as he was patient, forbearing, and generous in pardoning offenses against himself.

He had more frequent opportunities of practicing that part of justice which ought to be exercised by a good superior, that he may, in a manner pleasing to God, distribute rewards, assign employments, and inflict punishments when necessary. As he had the dignity of superior

from the time the Congregation was founded till his happy death, he plainly proved that he was never guided by passion, and that he had no regard, excepting to the merit of each. He was most attentive to find out the inclinations, the talents, and the virtues of his subjects. He watched carefully over all and made himself acquainted with everything, particularly at the time of his visits, that he might not, as he said, sin by omission. He often repeated that the sin of omission sends superiors to hell. When, from the exact enquiries he made, he found that the religious were quiet, humble, obedient, and fond of solitude, he esteemed, encouraged, and praised them. He was much pleased with those who, when sent out by obedience, returned as soon as possible to the retreat. He said that by staying away from solitude its spirit is soon lost, and that one shows the true spirit of the Congregation of the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ who loves to remain in retirement at the foot of his Crucifix. When he had to confer the offices and employments of the Congregation, he would have the merit and abilities of each person distinctly pointed out, that the most worthy might be elected. He did not allow that positions were titles of exemption and chairs of repose, but held as a maxim that the superior was obliged to endure insults and sufferings for the service of the Congregation or the retreat. He often repeated it and insisted that from among the most able, the most worthy should be chosen, either because he wisely judged that from the greater prudence, virtue, and good example of the superior, great benefits are derived for the community, saying, "On the superior depends the good order of things," or because he wished justice to be done to the merit of each. It sometimes happened that he proposed for some dignity a subject whom he considered worthy of that employment, and was told it would be useless to elect him, for he was determined not to accept it. "It does not matter," answered the servant of God. "On that occasion I will do my duty, for he deserves it." By the light of God and from his long experience, he was well aware that the spirit of nationality causes in religious Orders diffidence, discord, tepidity, and complete confusion, so he was its declared enemy. Whenever he had reason to fear that anyone was actuated by this bad spirit, he raised his voice with the liberty and authority of a father, severely reproved him, and protested that he could not, and would not, by any means, tolerate the introduction of such an abuse into our Congregation. He not only took care to keep great evils at a distance from our Congregation, but diligently sought to remove those smaller disorders that resemble little foxes and devastate the vineyard of our Lord, doing more injury in proportion as the prejudice is less perceptible. He used the appropriate remedies for both. He corrected and punished, but always in a spirit of

virtue and holy charity, that is, with the spirit of God. When he saw that a subject, on receiving correction, took it in good part and humbled himself, his heart was immediately touched. He animated and encouraged him, showing him the love of a true father and even of a most affectionate mother, saying with the Apostle, *“As if a nurse should cherish her children”* (I Thess. 2:7). If it happened that offenders, corrected again and again and penanced, were hardened and obstinate, the grief he felt at cutting them off was most bitter; but in order not to fail in any duty of a good superior, making use of the faculties granted by the Supreme Pontiffs to the General Superior of the Congregation, he sent them away and gave them their dismissal, lest, like infected sheep, they might spread the contagion of their bad example among the flock of Jesus Christ. However useful a subject might be, if he were not a lover of religious observance, the good Father preferred that he should go away rather than remain in the Congregation. “I am more anxious about observance,” he would say, “than for a great number of subjects.” He was well persuaded that no one is really necessary and said, speaking of himself, “If I thought myself necessary in this world, I should believe myself to be damned.” He resolutely repeated, “Few and good. It is better that we should be few but good.” Or he said, “We must be the chosen grain,” or “The small flock is the best guarded by the shepherd.” Whoever offended against observance wounded him, if I may so speak, in the apple of his eye. With fortitude above all human respects, having God before his eyes, he refused to yield to any requests he judged to be unreasonable and not conformable to the Rules of the Institute. If anyone persisted, he opposed him with moderation, but also with manly courage. He was firm as a rock in defending and supporting the edifice of our Lord. He went so far as to make answer to the superioress of a monastery, who asked him to allow one of the religious to be visitor, that she had better not make any such application to the Lord Bishop, for rather than permit a thing so contrary to the Rules, he would leave the retreat near the city where the monastery was. His companion, a brother, through his intimacy with him sometimes said, in order to make him yield, “But, Father, you might do this.” Father Paul replied, “I am bound to keep up holy observances. As long as I live, I will never give this bad example.” As he spoke so he wrote, and he was the first to practice what he desired others to perform. “I will not,” he says in one of his letters, “and I ought not, to meddle in temporal affairs, which I do not understand and for which my occupations give me no time.” In another, “My vocation prevents me from answering for children at baptism, and I will never do it on any account whatever.” And he answers another

person, “Regarding the marriage you speak of, I cannot, *according to the Rules*, speak one word, but I will recommend it to God.”

He desired to communicate the same zeal for exact religious observance to religious persons not belonging to the Congregation. Hence he wrote to an abbess, “It is most true that the observance of the Rules approved by the Pope is to be preferred to the observance of the Constitutions approved by the bishops. But as these are all founded upon the Rule, and are its wall and defense, it is necessary, in order to observe that well, that the Constitutions also be exactly observed. Therefore, let them say what they will, but do you with courageous constancy cause them to be practiced and, especially, never permit that the door be kept open and that the nuns speak from it to the ladies you name, for gentlemen will sometimes come with the ladies. However it may be, it will be in the greatest degree pernicious to the souls of your religious, and you will have to render an account to God for it.”

In correcting the negligent, the Founder, who was truly upright and just, treated all equally and showed no respect of persons, not sparing even his own brother Father Anthony of the Passion, now Don Anthony Danei. Though Father Paul loved him tenderly in Jesus Christ, he never allowed himself to be influenced by affection nor drawn to partial leniency. It will be well to hear from Father Anthony’s own mouth the manner in which he was treated. These are his words. “I myself have experienced both the sweetness and severity exercised by Father Paul in administering, correcting, and inflicting penances, for he never exempted me, declaring that he did not regard flesh and blood. He has even imposed upon me penances for months. When asked to have compassion on me, he said that in what relates to the punishment of the faulty, he had no brothers.” This good priest could not easily adapt himself to our solitary and penitential mode of life. Father Paul often took compassion on him and virtuously passed over his failings, but when any strong remedy was necessary, he employed it. And that he might, in those hours when he was not employed in any duty of holy obedience, enjoy the quiet of his own room and spend his time usefully in praying or studying, he told him resolutely that he would have him do this, and forbade him to go without leave beyond the limits of the enclosure during the time for walking alone. The poor brother, who was of a very melancholy temperament, thought this command very severe. When an excellent secular priest and great friend of Father Paul came to the retreat, Father Anthony begged him to intercede for him with Father Paul to obtain a dispensation from this order. They both went for this purpose to the servant of God’s room. Father Anthony

represented to Father Paul the difficulty he felt in obeying. But the servant of God, who for many years had closely watched his brother's conduct and had borne with him with great patience and charity, believing the time had come for making a determination, which however painful to himself, was most necessary for the sake of good order, said to him, "You are not suited to our Congregation, your cell suffocates you, and you are delicate. It would be better for you to go home to your own country, where as a priest you may do good." These words greatly edified the good secular priest, as they were uttered with the spirit of God. After this conversation Father Anthony was honorably and charitably dismissed. Father Paul preferred to be deprived of one of his beloved brothers, rather than show a partiality unworthy of his integrity and exact justice.

## **CHAPTER XXII**

### **Of the Gratitude of the Servant of God Towards His Benefactors, of His Love for His Friends, and His Affability and Kindness to All**

The spirit of God shows itself more than ever sweet, amiable, and adapted to maintain in society a mutual friendly feeling to the satisfaction of all, when it makes the souls guided and influenced by it attentive in fulfilling even those duties, which, though their violation does not offend against strict justice, are omitted by many without scruple, but not without some derangement of that perfect harmony and right order which includes the exact practice of every virtue. One of these duties is the obligation of lively gratitude and sincere acknowledgment of benefits received. The Apostle St. Paul, the great master of Christian wisdom, says, "*Be thankful*" (Col. 3:15). Father Paul, animated by this spirit, always showed himself deeply sensible of the smallest kindness and most attentive in making what return he could to those who benefitted him. He acknowledged the smallest favor he received and valued it much more than it deserved. To use the words of a witness, "He appeared as if he would have given the whole world if he possessed it. As if he desired to place in Heaven anyone who had done him a kindness, he preserved a most lively remembrance of it. On all occasions he did what he could to make a return." As he had frequently received an alms from soldiers, as we have said, he was so attached to these sort of people that he called them his friends, declared himself much indebted to them, and distinguished them in his missions, treating them with special charity and making them take

rank before others, that they might make their confessions and thus receive for their souls that remedy of which they are often in the greatest need.

If the virtuous soul of Father Paul was so strongly bound by the benefits received in a passing way, everyone will be able to imagine how much he felt indebted, and how greatly he desired to show gratitude, to those benefactors who maintain us throughout the year, and who are always ready to help and even receive into their own houses the poor of Jesus Christ. I cannot express the affection and tenderness which the servant of God spoke of them, nor how greatly he was interested both for their spiritual and temporal advantage. When he recommended the religious to pray for these dear benefactors, it seemed as if his heart, entirely steeped in love, wished to infuse into his sons the affections of charity and gratitude that he experienced. He never ceased to inculcate that they should think of their benefactors when they were conversing with God to obtain for them every good gift. He was not satisfied with having ordered and laid down in the Rule that several times a day benefactors should be prayed for specially, and that the same should be done at night, several times a week, but he wished that every religious should consider them as affectionate parents, and thus bear them always in his heart to pray with greater fervor and more frequently in their favor. When they were in any urgent necessity, then the charity and gratitude of the servant of God were all activity. He desired the whole community, by assiduous prayer, to do a sweet violence to the heart of God to obtain the desired graces for our kind benefactors. If they came occasionally to the retreats, though the good Father used to receive everyone with kindness, he treated benefactors with particular cordiality and charity. If one of them was sick, the servant of God, when he was able, went to visit and, with the heart of a father, encouraged the benefactor to suffer willingly for the love of God. If the person became worse and in danger of death, Father Paul, when informed of it, hastened to dispose the sick person for a happy death, and in assisting him showed such earnestness and charity, that he seemed to wish to open Heaven at once so that the benefactor might go and receive the reward of generosity. After their death, he caused suffrages to be made to hasten their possession of an eternal reward and of the beatific Vision of God. Nor did he ever forget them, but continued to pray for them and desired others to do the same. He expressly commanded in the Rule that once a month the Holy Sacrifice of the altar should be offered, and the Office of the Dead recited for departed benefactors. The same is now practiced. Not satisfied with this, as the fire of charity was always burning in his heart, and he felt continually new motives for gratitude, he ordered shortly before



his death, with the consent of the capitulars of the last General Chapter, that on all the doubles of the second class, in each retreat, Mass should be sung for benefactors and that, besides the suffrages we have named, an anniversary should be made during the Octave of All Souls, with the recital of the Office and the celebration of a '*High Mass*' for all departed benefactors. Finally, the servant of God showed that he had deeply rooted in his heart the above named words of the Apostle, "*Be thankful.*"

By gratitude to benefactors he acknowledged the goodness of God Himself, who moved their hearts, and offered to Him a sacrifice of his affectionate and virtuous heart. Our Lord was pleased constantly to increase his benefactors, among whom were even distinguished persons. We cannot refrain from mentioning here the great kindness, particular affection, and esteem with which Benedict XIV regarded him. The servant of God, besides always speaking of that Pontiff with profound veneration, and besides constantly praying for him, felt at the Pope's death that deep grief which was called for by the loss of a Pontiff of so great piety, wisdom, and learning, and of a father and most kind benefactor. To engage others to be grateful towards a Pontiff to whom the Congregation owed its first establishment and to whom, then more than ever, we could show our gratitude by multiplying our entreaties at the throne of God, he recalled to us on that occasion, with deep feeling, the great benefits we had received from his clemency, applied particular suffrages to his soul and never afterwards spoke of Benedict XIV without marks of profound veneration and tender sentiments of gratitude. Clement XIII, who, as cardinal, had favored Father Paul in every way and had even, when he went to Rome on business connected with the Congregation, received him in his own palace, giving him distinguished marks of kindness, when he was raised to the Pontifical chair, granted several favors to the Congregation and bestowed special benefits on the servant of God. The servant of God, favored in so many ways by this great personage and Holy Pontiff, endeavored by his prayers and those of the Congregation while he lived, and also after his death, to make the return to him with the Divine Goodness, as indeed this Holy Pontiff himself desired, a man of so great humility and piety. Of Clement XIV I shall say nothing but that our Lord had infused into his heart so much esteem and affection for Father Paul, that his greatest consolation in his illustrious position was to be able to assist the servant of God, whom he tenderly loved and looked upon, I may say, as a father. We have elsewhere spoken of Father Paul's love and veneration for this Holy Pontiff. At his death, he would most willingly have gone to assist him, had not his habitual infirmities prevented him.

After his death he appeared almost inconsolable, feeling as if he were an orphan without his beloved father. He ordered a solemn funeral service immediately in the Church of Saints John and Paul, and during the whole function, which lasted several hours, he remained at the foot of the catafalque. It was beautiful to see that saintly old man, deeply recollected, penetrated with grief, shedding abundant tears for the death of this great benefactor, and remaining motionless, offering to the eternal Divine Father the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, sacrificed on the altar for the soul of him whom he loved more than his own life. He never ceased lamenting the great loss that the Church had sustained in the death of this great Pontiff, spoke with profound veneration of his virtues, and expressed his amazement at the humility and charity of that great soul. He had a most high opinion of him, and with good reason, for humility is the foundation of the building and charity the roof of the spiritual edifice, and according as the foundation is deeper and the roof more elevated, the edifice of perfection is more secure, more noble, and more magnificent.

But the thoughts that occupied Father Paul's mind, the affections, strong desires, and sighs of his heart during the time the See was vacant, he alone could fully describe. He continually besought Almighty God to provide His Church with a vigilant and holy pastor, and to provide also for him, who considered himself as the poor orphan of an affectionate and compassionate father. And God heard him by placing in the pontifical chair, to the universal happiness of the Church, the Sovereign Pontiff Pius VI. The Holy Father soon manifested his great charity, condescension, and the kind feeling God had given him for the poor Congregation of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and for Father Paul, its Founder. Nineteen days after his election, he went to the Church of Saints John and Paul to adore the Blessed Sacrament, exposed there for the adoration of the Forty Hours, and afterwards admitted all the religious into the sacristy to kiss his foot, giving to each one marks of his regard. Afterwards, with singular kindness, the Pontiff went to Father Paul's room when he was ill, and then it was that the servant of God exclaimed, in expressions that came from the depths of his heart, "*And why is it to me that the Vicar of Christ should come to me?*" (Lk. 1:43) He took a special and most affectionate interest in everything that concerned the Holy Father; he desired that prayers should be constantly offered for him, ordered that the Litanies should be recited every day for this good Pontiff, and when he was near death, having no means of showing the deep sense of gratitude he felt, ordered that a devout little print of Our Lady of Sorrows, which he had greatly venerated,

should be presented to His Holiness as a testimony of his profound respect and lively gratitude, urged to this partly by his love and partly by his knowledge of the great goodness and excellent heart of His Holiness. After his death, it was taken to His Holiness, and the Holy Father was much pleased with the attachment of the servant of God and the little present sent to him.

It is not surprising that Father Paul, when almost dying, had so lively a remembrance of the Sovereign Pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth and our most kind Father. It would have shown great ingratitude not to remember him in those circumstances, when, as he was leaving this life, he could no longer show his grateful feelings here. The benefits he had received had been continual and very considerable, and all were present to his mind, more particularly that of the apostolic Bull, published to confirm anew the Institute and the Rules, sent to him by the Holy Father a few days previously. Therefore, I may say that, even if he had wished, he could not at that time have forgotten them. He remembered then his dear benefactors and, especially, those who were near to him in Rome, giving them in dying the greatest marks he could of his love and of his acknowledgment of the great favors he had received from them.

Both in words and in writing, Father Paul evinced the goodness of his heart and his lively gratitude. All his letters, in answer to his benefactors, or in which some benefit is mentioned, contain lively sentiments of acknowledgment and humble gratitude. He shows it more vividly when he speaks of the many great and signal favors received from the Supreme Pontiffs for the confirmation of the Rules and of the Institute, from the Cardinal Protectors, and the Abate Count Garagni, who greatly exerted himself for the success of the first foundations. His letters may be read after those of Cardinal Altieri. He promises them all that he will remember them in the Holy Sacrifice. He wishes them to participate in the prayers of the Congregation, and says that he hopes with firm confidence that our Lord will reward them abundantly. In fact, he omits nothing that can appertain to true and perfect Christian gratitude. That a man full of the spirit of God should have shown gratitude so strong and sincere towards those benefactors, who have given to the Congregation its establishment and perfection, or have supported, defended, and assisted it, or continually support it and maintain the religious by their pious alms, is not anything very astonishing, but it is surprising that when he was superior, for every small service done to him by his subjects, he showed as much feeling and gratitude as if he had received a great favor. "If any brother of the Congregation," says a witness, "assisted the servant of God in mounting the staircase, because he was unable to support himself alone on account of his infirmities, he

thanked him, saying, ‘May God reward your charity,’ and similar expressions.” Thus, when during illness he was visited in bed by his religious, at their departure he thanked them for their visit, saying, “God reward you for this charity,” which he did also whenever they performed any little services for him, even by shutting or opening the window. But his companion expresses himself the best of all when he says, “It appears to me that I ought not to pass over in silence the great gratitude that Father Paul evinced towards me for the assistance I rendered him. He constantly said that he was greatly obliged to me for the little I did for him. He always thanked me a thousand times with most affectionate words, full of humility and charity. About three hours before his death, he called me, took my hand and pressed it strongly, saying to me, ‘Ah, dear brother!’ as if he wished to give me the last farewell.”

From what has been related, it is evident that Father Paul, though he had spent a great part of his life in solitude, nevertheless understood proprieties perfectly well and how to fulfil all the duties of society, which derive from the Spirit of God a new degree of nobility and a new excellence and render him most pleasing who practices them. He was very far from that worldly intercourse which is not becoming in persons consecrated to God. But he knew well, when opportunity required, how to fulfill all the duties of society, and he felt pleasure in the friendship of those who possessed the Spirit of God. He treated them as true friends, opened to them his heart, exerted himself as much as possible for their good, and had a special esteem for them.

With all others, his manners were sweet, amiable, and cordial, and there was no fear that he would omit any marks of respect due to any person. Therefore, all who went to visit him were perfectly satisfied. It was wonderful that the good Father, even up to a very short time before his death, should have preserved such sweetness and affability of manner and so much mildness in his words. He used to say, “*Pay to all their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, toll to whom toll is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due*” (Rom. 13:7). Whatever intimacy or authority he might possess, he never thought it right to dispense with this law. The wise Father directed spiritually a lady of high rank and great virtue, who, seeing herself treated by him with much respect, mildly complained to him that in word and writing he gave her the title of excellency and expressed a wish to be treated without ceremony. The servant of God answered as usual, “St. Paul says, ‘*Render to all what is due, honor to whom honor is due*’” (Rom. 13:7). In using expressions of esteem and giving titles when due, his manner was most graceful. It was evident that he did it with the frankness, humility, and simplicity of a heart, full

of the Spirit of God. Hence, that which is sometimes in others affectation and courtesy was, in the good Father, natural character, sincerity, and a virtuous disposition. What he practiced he wished to be performed by his sons. He recommended them to treat all with due respect because, as he said, justice requires it. Speaking once to his confessor of the great charity shown by a princess to the Congregation, the servant of God warned him, that when he had to go to her, he must not fail in his duty. "Treat her with respect," he said, "and give her the title of excellency, for this is proper, though the princess treats us as her brethren."

If it happened sometimes that any of our religious made a mistake, or offended persons of consideration, by a want of politeness, he, who like an affectionate father, bore the burden of the failings of others, and endeavored to satisfy, as best he could, for their deficiencies.

The Princess Albani was residing at Soriano, and one day the Father Superior of St. Eutizio, which is very near, sent to the Lady, I do not know for what reason, a brother, as simple of heart as he was rough and uncouth. The good Father, who was then at the Retreat of St. Eutizio, heard of it and immediately hastened to apologize to Her Excellency because he feared this good brother might have been wanting in manners.

It was enough that anyone, even without reason, should consider himself offended by our religious and not treated with the esteem and respect he merited for the servant of God immediately to order that his pardon should be asked. The Bishop of Viterbo believed, perhaps from the suggestion of others, that one of our religious, a man of great virtue and merit, had not treated him with due respect. Father Paul heard of it, and though he knew perfectly well that his Lordship was mistaken, he desired the subject to go and ask his pardon humbly. That worthy prelate, seeing so much humility and respect in the poor religious when he presented himself, and in the good Father, who, bringing up his sons in the true school of the humble, had sent him to his feet, received him with great courtesy and was not only greatly satisfied, but also edified with him.

This was Father Paul's manner of acting, and thus he treated persons of consideration. For himself, however, he did not desire any consideration. He abhorred every title and every mark of esteem. He considered himself as a dead and petrified dog, the worst of all. Hence it was, that among other acts of affability, he was always the first to offer a salutation. When he met anyone in traveling, he was always the first to take off his hat, and said that this ought to be done because the poor man is the image of God and through reverence to the holy angel guardian who

accompanied him. These are, it is true, small acts of virtue, but they are marks of a well-formed and virtuous heart, and of a soul that fears to give any small offense to God, the first Author of good order, and therefore neglects nothing. *“He who fears God neglects nothing.”*

## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **Of the Fortitude of the Servant of God**

The necessity of the virtue of fortitude, in order to attain, by the practice of Christian virtue, to the possession of heaven, will be easily understood by everyone who seriously reflects that our life is a perpetual warfare with powerful enemies, who obstinately dispute the passage with us. That no one obtains the reward, but he, who doing violence to himself, combats faithfully with holy fortitude and truly Christian courage to the end. But this strength and courage can come to us only from God, who is our protector, our help, our strength, and our true life. Father Paul very clearly comprehended these great truths, for from his youth he kept his heart closely united to God, and thus obtained from God that strength which is so necessary for generously undertaking great things for the glory of His Divine Majesty and for bearing with invincible patience, all the difficulties that are to be met with in the path of the most perfect virtue. There were not wanting to him many great and different occasions of practicing fortitude and acquiring new strength and new courage; and in all things he acquitted himself with great fidelity; and fighting manfully to the end, he gave to God new proofs of his love and gained for himself new and rich crowns of merit.

His leaving the world in his early years, renouncing everything he had or could have, and embracing a plan of life so severe and penitential, which would have terrified any less generous heart, was certainly an act, as everyone sees, of great and generous fortitude. He knew all the difficulties of the undertaking for which he was preparing. Persons were not wanting, who, to dissuade him from it, said to him that by going about so badly clothed, with his head uncovered and his feet bare, in the great forests and cold of Lombardy, he would not be able to persevere – and without doubt, his feet would be frozen and fester, and he would be obliged to have them cut. Paul did not yield to this counsel and reasoning, nor was he alarmed. But taking new courage from the difficulty of the undertaking, he rejoiced interiorly and exulted for joy, esteeming

himself very happy in meeting with occasions of suffering for the glory of God. So courageous and intrepid was he even then, and nothing less was required to found our Congregation. A great and arduous work was in question; the Institute was to be founded in the greatest poverty, at a time in which the world was abundantly furnished with most exemplary and useful religious Orders. Opposition and contradiction were sure to rise, and, in effect, they were of many kinds and vigorous. The labor was continual and very painful, but the good servant of God, believing he could do all things in the power of that God who interiorly strengthened him, undertook the holy work, promoted it with all his strength, and, to bring it to perfection, made more than once, in the severest winter, long journeys without money or provisions, always barefooted, suffering unspeakably, without ever becoming wearied till the work was accomplished. Nor would he ever avail himself of any assistance, unless he were completely powerless. Nothing could restrain his fervor when he thought it necessary to travel, not even the coldest weather of the season, rains, nor falling snow. Nor would he allow himself to be influenced, though on every other occasion he was very docile, by the entreaties of his kind benefactors who wished to keep him from undertaking such journeys, even for the sake of enjoying for a longer time the consolation of receiving him in their own houses.

Once, when on his way to Rome, after passing the night at Ronciglione in the house of a man as charitable as he was rich, he intended to continue his journey the next morning, but the snow was falling copiously. This pious benefactor tried every means to induce him to remain, or at least, if he would go, to make use of the carriage which he himself offered him. But the servant of God, though he showed himself grateful for the charity of his benefactor, excused himself from remaining and from receiving any help. Barefoot as he was, his head uncovered and without a cloak, he set out for Rome in the midst of the snow. After his departure, his friend went to the window and saw that the servant of God, after taking a few steps, was quite covered with snow, but, nevertheless, courageously pursued his journey to the great wonder and edification of him who was watching him.

In the many journeys that he performed, as he had to travel over mountainous and dangerous roads, his feet, when he reached Rome, were often covered with wounds so that he left the trace of blood on the stairs and in the antechamber of the palaces he visited. Sometimes, through toil, fatigue, and weakness, he became quite exhausted. His strength totally leaving him, he was obliged to lie down on the ground. But after a short rest, he rose up courageously and continued

his journey.

He toiled for forty-nine successive years, which were required to elapse before he obtained a confirmation of the Institute from the Apostolic See, which, in its deliberations always proceeds with wise caution. Father Paul sacrificed his life, worn out with penances and insults, to the benefit of this holy work; nor did he ever cease, up to the time of his death, to make efforts and to labor as much as he could to obtain for it, by a new confirmation, that greater stability and firmness he desired. It is difficult to express how much he suffered in going to Rome and returning so many times. He had no house there, no particular benefactor. He could not obtain his desired end, in order to return quickly to his beloved solitude, and take with him the wished-for favor. During his latter years, when he was going to Rome, he sometimes said in confidence to his confessor, "Oh, what labors and what sufferings I have endured in that city!" He arrived sometimes almost crippled by his infirmities and was obliged to walk through Rome, leaning on his stick to mount many staircases in the palaces of noblemen and to wait long in antechambers. He became so weak that he could scarcely stand. But this was the least. The greatest suffering was to have to endure from all sides insults, refusals, scoffs, and derision. As he was clothed in so poor and mean a style, it was difficult for those, who did not see things with the penetration of the spirit of God, to know the great merit of the man who made so abject an appearance. The first time he went to Rome, as we have said, to prostrate himself at the feet of Innocent XIII, he was rejected by some of the servants as a beggar. Another time, he went with his brother to have an audience of a great cardinal, but, as this gentleman knew that he went to him to beg him to intercede for him and obtain the approbation of the Rules, he would not admit them to an audience. The servant of God was greatly afflicted by this refusal. As he knew that our Lord willingly receives the most despised poor, he entered thus mortified into the Church of St. Charles in the Corso, began to pray, and was affectionately comforted by Almighty God in his interior and assured by a strong light that he had been heard in all he asked. He went in the evening with his brother to his lodgings, and as it was late at night, the Lord Cardinal had gone to bed, but he could not sleep for agitation, nor could he find peace. Not knowing how to account for it, it occurred to him to call his servants. When they were assembled, he began to pray with them to our Lord that He would vouchsafe to free him from this uneasiness. Having recourse also to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, they recited the Litany in her honor, after which this pious cardinal remembered the refusal he had given two days previously to the two monks. He



felt convinced that this caused his interior uneasiness and, therefore, ordered his servants to make a diligent search the next morning and bring them to him, which was done. When the two good brothers were introduced, the consolation of the two servants of God and of His Eminence was reciprocal, for the cardinal recovered his peace of mind, and Father Paul obtained what he desired, and thought himself well compensated for the repulse he had received. This worthy prince afterwards showed every desire to help on the holy work, as we see by a letter of the 7th August, 1751, in which he says, “As I regard with particular esteem and affection your holy Institute, and the good subjects that compose it, you may be sure that whenever I have an opportunity of promoting its increase, I shall always employ for that purpose both my labor and my money, chiefly on account of the spiritual benefit that I am thus certain of promoting in my poor neighbor for the greater glory of God.”

He had many greater insults to endure in different places. Once, in Leghorn, he was taken for a thief. Having arrived late, and being fatigued with his journey, not knowing where to go for shelter, he entered a church. The sacristan, seeing him so wretchedly clad and in so miserable a state, took him for a suspicious person, drove him out and would not listen to his prayer to be allowed to pass the night there. But this was not all, for, on leaving the church, he remained in the porch for shelter. Being believed to be a wicked man and not to be trusted, he was also driven from the porch. In the canal of Pisa, he was treated worse by two foreign priests when he met them in the same vessel. Having heard them utter some unbecoming words, Father Paul, strongly moved by the honor of God and fraternal charity, with all sweetness and humility, entreated them not to use words so ill-suited to the mouth of a priest. Irritated by an action which ought to have pleased them, they vomited forth against him such abuse, such insults and mockery, that those who heard them were horrified. The humble servant of God, without answering one word, without being in the least discomposed, even preserving a very peaceful and serene countenance, and keeping his mind interiorly fixed on the consideration of the insults received by Jesus in His Passion and on the knowledge of his own ingratitude, humbled himself and sank down into his own nothingness, where he found that tranquility and repose that our Lord gives to the humble of heart. While he thus humbly kept silence, a gentleman who was in the vessel, and from his appearance and dress seemed to be a person of distinctions, turning to the two priests, reproved them to the regret of the servant of God, who rejoiced in his humiliation. The gentleman said to them, “Mind what you are doing; you are insulting this poor servant of God, and who knows

what God will one day make of him? Who knows how many companions he will perhaps have at a future day?" This good Christian seemed to speak with a prophetic spirit in taking the part of the young Paul, who kept silence and pitied those who insulted him.

Our Lord, who, in proportion as He takes delight in the humility and patience of His servants, hates and detests those who insult and dishonor them, sometimes took vengeance on those who showed contempt of the servant of God and opposed his holy intentions. When Father Paul was giving, for the second time, a mission in a city of Tuscany, six persons, instigated by the wicked spirit, joined with another, who was an apothecary, to do whatever they could to show spite to the servant of God and hinder the benefit of the mission. When he was actually on the platform preaching, they struck the bronze mortar with heavy and repeated blows, and made so much noise that the people who were farthest from the platform could not hear the sermon. The servant of God noticed it and sent an order that the noise should be stopped. They answered that they were at home, and that they would do what they pleased. At this answer the servant of God was silent, and after a short prayer, he said that they had better take care for God would punish them, and so it happened. One of them fell down dead as he was in the act of opening a door, and the others all died in a short time. These were not the only persons stricken by the avenging hand of God; for the chastisement of the Lord fell also on many others of the people who in that mission did not receive the word of God with good dispositions and benefitted little by it. The servant of God, penetrated with grief to see those poor souls despise their remedy, burning with zeal for the glory of God, shaking the dust from his feet as he left the place, predicted that the chastisement of God would soon visit them. Not one word of the fervent missionary fell to the ground. God sent an epidemic, by which five hundred persons died, without reckoning the Jews who resided in that city.

The Divine Goodness, which, having purified like gold the virtue of Father Paul, went on working it and bringing it to a more perfect representation of our Blessed Redeemer. If it struck with one hand, it kept him with the other strong and firm, comforted him, and constantly infused new vigor into his heart, by which he generously undertook, for the glory of God, the execution of those designs which He Himself deigned to inspire. Father Paul, who knew how lovingly the Divine Majesty protected him, and how near at hand He was to assist him, never spared himself, nor allowed himself to be deterred by any human respect or base fear when the glory of God was in question. Often, as it usually happens in missions, he was praised and commended for his

preaching by the wisest and most religious persons, but was scoffed at and derided by libertines. He cared for nothing, however, but with a firm foot passed by everything, and used to say on these occasions that we must go on, as St. Paul says, “*through good report or bad report*” (II Cor. 6:8), and thus advance towards God. Very often it also happened that, when he applied a remedy to the diseases of consciences, removed scandals and proximate occasions, several of those wolves, who saw their prey taken from them, were greatly irritated. But the wise Father allowed them to rage and howl, and in the meantime provided a place of safety for those converted souls that the scandal might be removed. If it was necessary, he ordered that a public and sinful life should be ended by lawful marriage.

If, in giving missions to soldiers, he sometimes in the regiments met with persons consecrated to God, who, having abandoned their heavenly profession, had entered the lists as soldiers to the dishonor of their rank and dignity, the zealous Father then greatly exerted himself to free them from this miserable state, so unworthy of their character. As the Captains, intent only on temporal advantages and fearful of a defeat, refused to lose any of their men, Father Paul, with great courage, had recourse to the General or to some superior officer, and, from their piety and rectitude, obtained what others, through motives of interest, refused him. In one word he showed on these occasions the heart of a priest and the courage of a saint. The good servant of God acted with the same firmness in confession when it was necessary to repress the obstinacy or insolence of anyone. He was, as we have said, all charity and compassion for his penitents. But when it was necessary, he knew how to use the wine of salutary severity, as well as the oil of compassion and sweetness. He was sympathetic as long as he could be so. But when it would degenerate into baseness, he had a heart of iron to resist any person and to refuse or delay sacramental absolution in regard to those who were undeserving of it.

As the servant of God had, during his life, the various offices, all important and difficult, of missionary, superior, and Founder, and in all desired to please the infinite Majesty of God and fulfill his obligations in spite of everything that opposed him, he had, in all, much to bear with and to suffer. When he obtained from the Holy See permission to found, he accepted, with due reserve and mature deliberation, the foundations offered to him. But that was the very time when hell seemed to be let loose upon him and, though he felt most deeply the warfare that was carried on against the work of God, he was, notwithstanding, always intrepid and courageous.

The fury of the storm, then raised against the Congregation, and the proceedings of the

servant of God, in so dangerous an occasion, may be known, better than from our account, from some of his letters, in which he opened his heart to one of our religious of great virtue and wisdom, and the second of his companions. “Our affairs,” he says, “go on as usual; the storms have not yet subsided, but we shall gain the victory in Christ after suffering great inconveniences.”

In another he wrote, “Our affairs are always in a tumult. All the communities are united in opposition. Oh, how I regret it! I have written and written again to prevent the lawsuit. ‘*A servant of the Lord ought not enter law suits*’ (Cfr. I Cor. 6:7). It seems as if the devil wished to make a great gain to our disadvantage. I have declared that I do not wish for retreats with lawsuits, but in peace. The prayers must be fervently continued.”

It would appear as if the servant of God had been sufficiently tried and, by the labors we have described, might have gained for himself a very glorious crown of merit. But our Lord treated him as one of His friends, making him partake abundantly of the chalice of His sufferings. He often visited him with long and painful sickness. Supporting him on these occasions with the strength of His arm, He made him an example of patience. When yet a secular, after he gave himself up to a life of penance, he fell into a most dangerous illness. But when he was recovered, he did not, on that account, relax anything of his severity. He had other attacks successively, caused by the fatigue of missions, the difficulties of traveling, the labors of penance, or the unwholesomeness of the air in the places where he gave missions. In all he was seen to bear his sufferings with patience and cheerfulness, and what is more, with joy and alacrity of mind. And as he knew that it is only by the help of grace that sickness and suffering can be made agreeable, often, in the beginning of a fever, seeking to draw from the loving visit of our Lord the benefit designed by God, he went to visit Jesus in His Sacrament and remained there for some time, weeping, sobbing, and asking for pity and mercy on his soul. Then, bathed in tears, he went to lie down on his sack of straw, having received from Jesus, in His Sacrament, strength and courage to suffer the illness God had sent him. We have more exact information regarding the illnesses of the servant of God, either from some of his letters or from the witnesses examined in the Processes. He had one long illness in 1727, another in 1732. In 1741, having gone to give the holy missions at Piombino, when the air was not well purified, he had scarcely given the holy benediction before he was seized with a violent fever. He immediately went back to Monte Argentario. But as he became worse, he was removed to Orbetello to be

cured and, there, was brought very near to death. Father John Baptist of St. Michael, his brother and inseparable companion, assisted him and could not conceal his grief and regret at seeing himself so near losing a brother, so dear and so virtuous. But Father Paul, with strength of soul, encouraged him to vanquish all the affections of flesh and blood.

In 1742 he had another illness, in which, as the servant of God himself writes, he was “at the gates of death.” He had another attack in 1749, contracted in giving missions at Porto, in a place where the air was not good. I pass over various others, which all served as a fire to refine, more and more, the virtue of the servant of God and make him more acceptable to our Lord. It may be said, in short, that after fifty years of his life had elapsed, his illnesses were frequent and most painful, through habitual infirmities, which tormented him up to his death. These had been contracted by his exertions in promoting the glory of God and particularly by a journey from Rome to Orbetello, made in 1745, which brought on a serious illness that left behind it pains and tormenting sciatica, as we have said before. During his illness, and when attacked by the most violent of his pains, he suffered with a courageous soul and was so far from yielding or allowing himself to be overcome by impatience, that he even spent the time in singing joyfully. He had met with a very beautiful, but mournful, chant for our Blessed Lady’s Litanies. By singing this he comforted himself when the pain was greatest. He practiced this pious exercise of singing devout prayers that he might not disturb others with complaints, and to prevent himself from making any exclamation through the violence of the disease and of the pain. If sometimes, when the pain was most severe, he had cried out suddenly, it seemed to him that he had been wanting in patience, and immediately he began to sing aloud in the mission tone, “*Holy Mary, pray for us.*” His devout custom of singing was so frequent that at last one of our benefactors, when he had Father Paul in his house, found out his illness by his singing. Not only by singing did he endeavor to prevent the signs of pain that might have rendered him burdensome to those who assisted and visited him, but, possessing his soul even in the midst of pain and weakness, he entertained the minds of others in the spiritual conversations that he held with some joke or amusing narration.

Once, when confined to his bed at the Retreat of St. Angelo and so ill that he could not even turn himself, he related, smiling, what had been predicted to him by a celebrated military man. “I remember,” he said, “that Marshal Garma, the General at Orbetello, said to me, ‘Father Paul, you now take long journeys barefooted, and you are continually laboring in missions; but know that

when you are old, Jesus Christ will cripple you in one of your limbs and will thus reward you in this world.' See how it has been verified." From this manner of conducting himself in sickness, everyone who saw him received great edification, beholding such serenity amidst such pain and anguishes. From the peace and tranquillity with which he suffered, he appeared in bed like an innocent babe, lovingly abandoned in the arms of Divine Providence. It was well understood that from the depths of his heart came those expressions by which he declared that his illness did not displease him. "I am willing," he said, "to remain thus all my life." To a person who asked him how he felt, he replied, "Let us thank God." He looked upon the pains of sickness as presents and precious visits from our Lord. With all these infirmities, if his pains were in some degree mitigated, he went to the holy missions. So great was his fervor in the work of God that, when he took his staff in hand, he seemed no longer lame and continued the apostolic ministry with great courage and generosity of soul.

## **Chapter XXIV**

### **Of the Vexations of Devils, Interior Desolations, and Other Trails of His Heroic Fortitude**

The devil, either because he envied so much virtue or foresaw the losses that the servant of God would cause to the kingdom of darkness, sought to torment and mock him in every way. "The retreat (he speaks of the first, that of the Presentation) is almost finished, and in Lent we hope to enter. Oh, God! what a tumult of devils! ...and God knows what I feel interiorly." And in another, "It is not very long since a poor old man of the Congregation, and old in sins, distinctly heard in the night sounds of whistling in his ears, which awoke and made him tremble; but all passes away, *'nothing shall harm you. Do not be frightened or apprehensive; the Lord will fight for you'* (Cfr. Jn 16:31; Ex. 14:14; Deut. 1:30, 42). Alleluia, alleluia. alleluia.' The devil is terrified by the alleluia, a sound come from Paradise." He also writes, "I am in the arms of the Divine Mercy, severely scourged by the ministers of His justice, and much more by my sins." The Divine Majesty was pleased to manifest to him by a clear locution, as he said to his confessor, the permission He had given to the devils to torment him, mercifully to dispose and prepare him for the great combat and victory. Our Lord then said to him, "I will cause you to be trampled on by devils." The prediction, as it was true, was fulfilled with all exactness. The

devils, besides tormenting the servant of God with disturbances, horrid hissing, and frightful noises, as if many pieces of artillery had been discharged, often awoke him to his terror and dismay. They sometimes spitefully drew the covering from him. Sometimes in the form of a cat, they walked on his bed. Thy often appeared under horrible forms of a furious cat, a large mastiff, and a frightful bird, and in many ways tormented and mocked him.

Even during the times of his most painful illnesses, they did not spare the afflicted and sorrowful servant of God. He had been forty days and nights suffering dreadful pain, confined to his bed, in the house of one of his benefactors at Orbetello. He had been unable to close his eyes in sleep when, one night, through great weariness and weakness, the pain, having subsided a little, he began to doze, and immediately the devil began to make a horrible noise by loudly opening and shutting a warming-pan in the room. The poor invalid awoke and with great courage and resolution threatened the devil, showing marks of contempt. The devil, who is a proud spirit, immediately departed and for some time did not disturb him. Father Paul, who knew well how to unite devotion with vivacity and a joyous spirit, when he was relating this to his confessor said, smiling, “What do you think of it? The proverb tells us not to arouse a sleeping dog, and a poor man that had not slept for forty days and nights to be aroused in his first sleep! Is this a proper thing?”

One night he was suffering severely from gouty pains, when the devil, to increase his torture, took the great toe of the foot, that was the most painful, and twisted it with such fury and spite that the servant of God seemed to be suffering one of the torments of hell. The most ordinary and furious attacks, by which the devils assailed and attempted to disturb him, were always made when he was exerting himself for the glory of God, the advantage of the Congregation, and the good of his neighbor. If he began to pray or say his Office, then hell seemed to be unchained. If he took his pen to write to any person on important business, the devil showed his rage by the noise he made. If at recreation he spoke, as was his custom, of the interior kingdom of God, the devils vented their rage upon him when he retired to his room.

When his heart was most strongly occupied with the desire, and his mind with the thought, of the establishment of the new monastery for the nuns of the Passion of Jesus Christ, at the time that the Rules composed by him in 1770 were under review, he generally passed the nights without sleeping. One night, when he had raised himself up to sit on the bed, he suddenly felt himself seized and his head violently struck against part of the wall, which formed a corner near

the bed, with so much noise that the infirmarian, who was sleeping in the next room, awoke terrified. When Father Paul was asked by his confessor, the next morning, how he felt, he replied with equal discretion, grace, and vivacity, “God does not allow that the devil’s operations should do much harm, but they do not, however, do any good.” He added in confidence, “This monastery torments the devil.” And at the time of the missions, during those few hours of rest which are so necessary to refresh the fatigued head, his room was filled with devils, trying to disturb him in that short repose. The wicked spirits could not endure the loss suffered by the kingdom of darkness of so many souls, which sincerely returned to God by means of Father Paul’s sermons, and more especially of the meditation on the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ – yet they were forced to acknowledge it. When a worthy priest was exercising a possessed person, the devil cried out that he could not bear the Mass that Father Paul celebrated. Being obliged to say if any other thing tormented him in the servant of God, he furiously cried out, “The Passion, the Passion!” In order to succeed better in their wicked designs, the devils sometimes assumed a human form, and thus presented themselves to deceive and afflict him even to the last degree. Shortly after the death of his brother Father John Baptist, Father Paul fell seriously ill. One night he saw in his room six or seven persons, who said they were physicians, who, having heard in the neighborhood of his illness, had come to tell him to prepare for death for there was no chance for him. They could speak so much the more resolutely of his approaching death, as, by an apparition of his deceased brother, they knew that he was to die on the following Wednesday. But as the true servants of God, who suffer life in patience and have death in desire, are not alarmed at the announcement of approaching death, Father Paul, observing that among those who gave themselves out for physicians there was not his own physician, Dr. Mattioli, said quietly that so many physicians were not required to give him this warning, for it would be enough if Dr. Mattioli spoke to him. The devils, confounded at not having been able to disturb the tranquil uniformity of the servant of God with the Divine Will, disappeared in an instant.

One night, the Founder was staying with a companion in the house of a benefactor, when, on their retiring to rest, the devil appeared in the shape of a terrible man of gigantic height. The companion, terrified, said to the servant of God, “Do you see?” The servant of God, accustomed to the molestation of devils, answered, “Be quiet and do not be afraid; he is not come for you.” And it was known the next morning whom the malignant enemy had intended to strike, for Father Paul’s legs were black from the blows he had received the previous night. Not only this



companion, but many others, on different occasions, perceived the attacks made by the devils on him. Sometimes he arrived at the retreats so exhausted that he could scarcely drag himself along, as it once happened when he went to the Retreat of the Presentation, which he could scarcely reach, having in a place called la Feniglia been beaten by devils, who, drawn up visibly in ranks like so many soldiers in the act of making some culprit run the gauntlet, cruelly struck him. And sometimes it happened that he was obliged to lie in bed, pale and emaciated as a corpse, without the reason being known. From these facts may be inferred the degree of courage necessary for Father Paul to persevere courageously and fight continually.

He knew well, however, that with such an enemy he must not show nor entertain fear, but have good courage animated by lively confidence in God. From a youth he had learned thus to resist and foil the efforts of the adversary. Even in the first years that he spent at Monte Argentario, when he went at night to Portercole to help souls or was passing the night in church before the blessed Sacrament, the devil, envious of the good done by the servant of God, tried to disturb and frighten him by making a noise in the church at night. But Father Paul remained intrepid, made no account of the noises, and persevered in his prayer all night without moving. The following morning he employed himself in hearing confessions with that fruit that might be hoped for after such a preparation. On other occasions, when attacked by devils, he did not call anyone as he might have done, through a wish not to show any fear of the proud spirit. Taking the crucifix with faith and devotion, he had recourse to the holy Name of Jesus, well knowing that this is a name of salvation and of victory, and he pressed to his neck the rosary of our Blessed Lady by means of which hell has received so many defeats, and with great firmness intimated commands to the devils that they should depart. They obeyed in spite of themselves, though they soon returned to give him new annoyances.

Besides the external molestations with which the wicked spirits tormented the servant of God, they had other methods, very afflicting and tormenting, of making him suffer more deeply in his interior. They sometimes caused in him weariness, melancholy, and sadness, and so greatly oppressed him that one day he said to his confessor, "Today, I have felt strong impulses to run wildly, like a fugitive, through these forests." Sometimes they set the bile in motion and made him feel so strong an emotion of anger that, though he resisted, he felt great pain and seemed to be burdensome, even to himself. For fear of allowing some word of impatience to escape his lips, he then remained quite alone, suffering in silence for the love of God, who thus ordained it.

Sometimes they assailed him with despair so violently, that it seemed as if they would force him to kill himself. Conferring one day with his director regarding his interior, he told him that he had been violently tempted to throw himself out of the window.

His greatest troubles, however, were violent temptations regarding the mystery of predestination, with which the devils tormented him and made every effort to lead him into despair. They sought, in every way, to embarrass him with different sophisms on this mystery, and did this with so much power of persuasion that the poor servant of God had much to do to fight and resist generously. From his youth, that his virtue might not even then be without the precious treasure of suffering, he had been troubled with this violent temptation. Having consulted Bishop Gattinara, his director, upon it, he was at that time freed from it. When afterwards he entered upon the painful martyrdom of his spiritual derelictions, the devils returned to the attack with greater fury and, with more vigorous efforts, sought to give some color of truth to falsehood in the state of darkness in which he then was. But the grace of God, who never permits anyone to be tempted beyond his strength, always mercifully supported his servant that he might, amid so many combats, remain victorious. The attacks availed nothing but to multiply his crowns and render him skilled in that science, which he was afterwards to employ for the good of so many souls.

The servant of God, accustomed to fight with the devil and gain the victory over him, gave excellent instructions for overcoming this furious enemy. He said that we must oppose, resist courageously, and despise him, as he wrote once to a master of novices, who had a novice whom the devil troubled, “I am not surprised at my troubles, or at the attacks of the devil, for in the end it is written, *‘many are the scourge of the sinner.’* But, I feel great compassion for these innocent children. The enemy must be opposed; the truth, as it is said, must be shown him; he must be tormented with rigorous commands...they must be written and pronounced verbally by someone in a stole, fixed up in the room with great faith. And this must be done with great authority in the name of Jesus Christ.”

“Last night,” he wrote to a religious, “I received your letter. It displeases the devil much that you should write to me, as your letter shows me. You may know clearly why he is thus enraged, without my telling you. Arm yourself more and more with faith, confidence in God, and profound humility of heart; renew the orders to the devil; command him in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from you and go to the place appointed him by Almighty God for his pride; fear

nothing. These diabolical apparitions, with the horrible temptations that accompany them, are excellent signs, and the suffering that your soul feels serves as a fire to purify her more and render her more and more disposed for the union of love with the Divine Majesty. Oh, what a great work is this. I beg of you to use, regarding this subject, the advice I gave you in another letter, and I now repeat the same: profound humility, silence, reverential annihilation before Almighty God. This is a rule for ascending on high. When your soul is more deeply sunk in interior solitude and in a more profound repose of love in the bosom of the heavenly Father, make the cry of a child and show Him what you suffer from the devil's fury. He knows it already, but He desires that you should tell it to Him with an infantile cry. Tell Him, with profound annihilation, not to allow the devil to molest you with those frightful apparitions, but to enable you to abandon yourself to His most holy will, which must be your continual food. Our sweet Jesus always nourished Himself with the will of His Father in a sea of sufferings. Take courage, be careful never to allow yourself to be terrified by the devil, and remain hidden in God. Nothing can hurt you. Never leave off prayer when you see those phantoms, but remain firm and constant and do not arise from the place of prayer. Then the devil will go away in confusion. Be of good courage. God wishes to make you a saint. May Jesus bless you."

The devil, when he conceals himself the most, is the most dangerous; when he transforms himself into an angel of light, does the most injury. The good Father, continually watching over the progress of his children, wrote as advice for one of them, "As regards Brother N., I also hope that his conduct is according to God; but the devil deceives much by a great and false pretext of good. From these combats may arise a hidden pride. Therefore, it should be made known to him that, if for a venial sin he would deserve purgatory with horrible pains, what a great thing it is that the Divine Goodness should exchange such a punishment for these small drops of bitterness. Let him then humble and resign himself, abandon himself to God with great confidence, and remain always in his nothingness."

This lesson, so entirely suited to him who professes the spirit of God, was exactly practiced by Father Paul, when, as we have seen, he was molested by devils, opposed by others, and stricken by God with painful sickness. But all this, to say the truth, was the smallest and least painful part of his grievous sufferings. That which pierced his heart and caused him great interior torment and a struggle of death, was the lively fear of having lost God and of being deprived forever of His Beatific Vision. Our Lord, that His faithful servant might more anxiously seek

after Him, had withdrawn from him that sweet spiritual communication with which He used at first intimately to converse with him. He had taken away that abundant light with which He formerly visited him, and had, as it were, hidden himself in the heart of His dear Paul without his being aware of it. Poor Paul, who, from his youth, charmed with the divine perfections, had most ardently sighed for union with God, had abandoned everything in order to enjoy Him more, and would have sacrificed a thousand lives to please Him, seeing now, as it seemed to him, God displeased, God far from him, God lost, could find neither rest nor consolation. With the greatest vehemence, his soul was carried towards God, but at the same time, he seemed to be powerfully repulsed, afflicted, and terrified. Therefore, he knew not what to think of himself. To explain his state to his director, he used to say, “Imagine you see a poor shipwrecked man, who, after the ship is lost, is supporting himself on one of the broken planks. At every wave and every gust of wind, he trembles and fears to be drowned. Or see a criminal condemned to die, who is waiting with constant palpitation of the heart, till he is conducted to the scaffold. Such is my state.”

On this account, writing to one of his religious, he said to him, “I am in many combats, but God does not manifest them exteriorly. Often even in sleep (I tell this as a secret to your heart), even in sleep I suffer and awake all trembling; for many years I have been in this wretched state. However, this seems nothing to me in comparison with a great cross that for many years I have borne without consolation. It seems to me like a hail-storm that cuts down everything. I am like one that is almost always in the depth of the sea, in a violent storm without having anyone to offer him a plank to save himself from shipwreck, either from on high or on the earth. There is still a ray of faith and hope, but so slight that I scarcely perceive it.”

Sometimes, amidst his trials, like one who lifts his head above water, he sang with holy enthusiasm and true joy of heart:<sup>8</sup>

Only, only on the Cross  
Comes the soul to ripe perfection  
Fervent, constant counting loss  
Every non-divine dilection.

Nella Croce il Sant'Amore  
Perfeziona l'alma amante  
Quando fervida e costante  
Gli consacra tutt'il cuore

Oh, if I the news might bring

O! se lo sapessi dire

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<sup>8</sup> English translation from *Letters of St. Paul of the Cross*, Volume I, letter #364

How the One-in-Trinity  
Hides in bitter suffering  
Treasure of Divinity.

Since it is a secret thing  
Only to the loving known  
I, in darkness, wandering  
Hail afar the fair unknown.

Yet I know that heart is blessed,  
Abandoned on the Cross of shame,  
In a high embrace unguessed,  
Burned in Love's consuming flame.

Yea! And double blessed is he,  
By this flame no longer warmed,  
Who in purest agony  
Into Christ is thus transformed

Happy he who suffers pain  
Yet this treasure would forego  
Counting self and all things vain  
Save His love Who wounds him so!

Take this lesson that I send  
From the Cross that Jesus bore.  
But in prayer your perfect Friend  
Will instruct you more and more. Amen!

Quel tesoro alto e divono  
Che il gran Dio Uno e Trino  
Ha riposto nel patire!

Ma perchè è un grand'arcano  
All'amante sol scoperto  
Io che non sono esperto  
Sol l'ammiro da lontano.

Fortunato è quel cuore  
Che sta in croce abbandonato  
Nelle braccia dell'amato  
Brucia sui di Sant'Amore

Ancor più è avventurato  
Che nel suo nudo patire  
Senza ombra di gioire  
Sta in Cristo trasformato

Oh, felice chi patisce  
Senza attacco al suo patire  
Ma sol vuol a sè morire  
Per più amar chi lo ferisce

Io ti do questa lezione  
Dalla Croce di Gesù  
Ma l'imparerai tu più  
Nella santa orazione. Amen!

From the great dereliction of which we have spoken, arose in him so great a fear of damnation that he sometimes trembled from head to foot and shuddered. "I must not," he said,

“think of my state, for I am horrified.” Sometimes he would say, “What will become of poor Paul! Shall I be saved? Ah, my affairs go on very ill, yet I hope to be saved; hope is a precept; therefore, I ought to hope for my salvation.” When the servant of God spoke thus, it was easy to see from his face and mode of expression that his words came from the depth of his heart, and if he was always sincere, he then more than ever evinced the candor of his soul.

If, when in this state, he had occasion to speak in public of the loss of God by miserable condemned souls, he appeared terrified, trembled from head to foot, and his hair stood on end. But in this great terror and violent tempest, his soul kept a strong hold on the anchor of holy hope and, in such tormenting trials, he was entirely resigned to the Divine Will. He raised his eyes and his heart to God and said, weeping and striking his breast, “Oh, how much I love God! I love Him. We must always love Him, even when he chastises us.”

On many other occasions, with tears in his eyes, resigning himself entirely to the will of God, he said, “I rejoice, my God, how good You are. I seek nothing in this world but You, oh my God.” And by a wonderful effort that love alone knows how to make, Paul’s soul was carried more ardently to God in proportion as it seemed to him that he was rejected by God. So much the more anxiously did he seek to please Him, as he figured Him to himself irritated and angry. It was wonderful to see how, in this very state of terrible dereliction, he had a singular gift of consoling and encouraging whoever had recourse to him in this or in other trials. It sufficed for them, so to speak, to open their mouths, and he, immediately understanding their necessities, encouraged them with great fervor, enlarged their heart, comforted them, suggested remedies and appropriate methods for overcoming the temptations and disposing them to receive the grace of God. One, who did not know what passed in his interior, would have thought that he was favored by God with extraordinary graces and tokens of favor. But, as he who is a master in virtue practices it also when deprived of those comforts which are usually granted to those who are less strong and not so far advanced in a spiritual life, the good Father, in comforting others, remained in a sea of bitterness. Our Lord did not let him see the treasures contained in his soul; He gave him no light to understand his own state; and he could not, from that of others, be certain of his own. Even from reading he could derive no comfort and said to his confessor, “My interior state is so dark and obscure, and my path so interwoven with fears and terrors, that I find no book capable of comforting or tranquillizing me. I am reading the *Mystical Treatise* of Tauler; I find something there, but not all that is necessary in the sea of storms in which I am plunged.”

Our Lord, who desired to form in Paul a soul that should live entirely to grace and yield in nothing to the inclinations of nature, showed great jealousy of his heart and seemed to oppose him in everything that he might not lean on anything nor rest in any creature. But like an affectionate dove, he directed his flight always to God and, in the bosom of God alone, sought his repose. In fact, as the confessor of the Father Paul wisely remarked that our Lord, in keeping him for so many years in a state of suffering and often confined to his bed, not only deprived him of the little relaxation that nature, worn out with labor and continual application, enjoys in breathing a little fresh air, or in taking necessary nourishment without disgust, but seemed also to contradict him in those inclinations which are more innocent and come from a virtuous principle.

Our good Father desired to lead a life hidden and unknown, attending to his own sanctification by conversing alone with the Supreme Good in perfect tranquillity. But our Lord willed that, leaving the solitude and retirement in which he would have gladly ended his days, he should labor in founding the new Congregation, and should several times present himself at the palaces of the great to speak with them and to promote the success of the holy work.

Father Paul, when he knew the will of God, through his desire of executing it and his natural fervor and activity, would have wished to see this edifice founded immediately and built for the glory of the Divine Majesty. But our Lord, trying and refining more and more the virtue of his faithful servant, made him wait twenty-one years for the first confirmation of the Rule that gave to the new Institute a fixed form, and did not console him by the other confirmations that gave to the new Congregation the necessary completeness and perfection till after forty-nine years had elapsed. There were as many from the year in which he began to receive companions, till 1769, when Clement XIV, of bold memory, by his Bull approved the Institute and confirmed the Rules of the Congregation of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It happened in the same manner when the foundation of new retreats was in question, even though the wise Founder proceeded with great caution and judgment before he accepted any new foundation. When he ascertained the will of God, he would have desired to see erected immediately a house, in which God might be praised day and night, and in which virtue and innocence might be more secure under the garb of rigid penance, and might also give to others an example of virtue and nourishment for body and soul. But our Lord so disposed that many difficulties arose, which prevented the saintly Father from enjoying that consolation which not infrequently accompanies the execution of virtuous undertakings. Having seen with his own eyes the great fruit which is

gained for souls by means of missions, and especially by recalling the remembrance of the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, without heeding the burden of labor or the loss of health, he would have gone everywhere to enkindle the fire of divine love and destroy all the wicked fruits of vices and sins. But our Lord, taking great delight in the excellent dispositions of his servant, often kept him sick in bed or half crippled in his room, with that mortification and suffering that can only be understood by one who possesses lively zeal.

That sacrifice, however, which to souls that have enjoyed an intimate and affectionate communication with God, is beyond measure afflicting and is the privation of the sweet presence of their Beloved, the horrible abandonment in which God seems to leave them when He refuses them the sweet feeling of His presence. Hence, they suffer a species of martyrdom, so much the more painful as it deeply afflicts the soul without that comfort and sweetness that divine love brings with it. Even from the greatness of love, it becomes more tormenting and terrible. And because our Lord saw how great and strong was this love in His servant, and the desire of always conversing intimately with him, He left him for so many years in aridity, darkness, and horrible dereliction. It may be said that He deprived him of everything that could console him; and, as it were, with a sharp sword, penetrating even to the division of the soul and the spirit, separated him completely from everything that had not its origin in the life of the spirit and of heavenly graces. It cannot be denied that amidst so many thoughts, cares, and anxieties, and under the weight of so many sorrows, the presence, advice, and help of his dear brother Father John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel were a comfort to him. But, our Lord wounded him even in this tender point, in which the sentiments of nature and grace were united, that he who was to be great in fortitude and an example to others might feel the blow and the trial more severely. God, however, prepared him first to receive with perfect submission the dispensations of His loving Providence. When he was celebrating Mass in July 1765, our Lord spoke interiorly to him by a clear locution for two successive days, "Prepare yourself for one of the greatest of trials." This was precisely the loss of Father John Baptist. The degree of pain that this loss would cause him can only be understood by one who knows what it is to lose in a brother one who had been, and was, his faithful companion in all his labors, journeys, and penances, who had been the depository of all the secretes of his heart, and who, for his great virtues, was esteemed and venerated as a saint by Father Paul. But so much the more painful as this loss was, so much the more meritorious was the submission to the Divine Will with which Paul endured it. Deprived of



the consoling presence of his brother, afflicted and grieved, he continually made new progress in the sublime school of suffering, disposing himself to accomplish his sacrifice by a death which he met not only with resignation and unconquerable patience but even with joy and cheerfulness of mind.

When he saw it near at hand, he looked upon it with great intrepidity. He spoke of it like a person who expects his true repose in death, and said, “Sometimes this fear presents itself to me, but it departs immediately when I think of the Passion of Jesus Christ.” One day during his last illness, speaking of his approaching death, animated by the spirit of God, he said with great generosity, “*If our time comes, let us die bravely*” (I Mac. 9:10). And then he added, “Cowards fear death. Behold me, O my God; I willingly accept death from the hands of my heavenly Father as a last penance for my sins. How happy is it to die by our Father’s hand! I am guilty of high treason; therefore, I receive this sentence willingly as a last penance for my sins.”

When the hour had come for him to leave this land of exile to go into the repose of eternity, he was so humble, patient, and meek in the midst of his pains and anguish, that he seemed to be a true representative of the man of sorrows, Christ Jesus, without lamentation or complaint, like the “*meek lamb led to slaughter and not opening his mouth*” (Is. 53:7), living and dying with most humble and tranquil resignation to the Divine Will. Hence, he showed in himself that by patience is perfected the work of sanctity. “*Patience has a perfect work*” (James 1:4). And he taught all by his example that which he often inculcated in conferences, that the Cross must be carried with resignation and joy. He took great delight in those persons who acted in this manner.

## **CHAPTER XXV**

### **Sentiments of Father Paul on the Value of Suffering and the Method of Suffering in a Holy Manner**

As Father Paul was taught in the school of suffering by lessons so constant, so strong, and efficacious, it is not surprising that he gave such sublime instructions on the excellence of suffering and the method of profiting from sufferings, which he termed precious. It will be very edifying and useful to read and consider them attentively. “What a great honor God does us,” he writes, “in making us walk in the path by which He made His Divine Son walk.”

“Make great account,” he says in another, “of these exterior and interior trials; the little garden of Jesus will then be flourishing by the virtues that are exercised.”

“When the Cross,” he adds, “is most afflicting and wounding, it is the best; when suffering is most deprived of comfort, it is the purest; when creatures oppose us the most, we approach more nearly to the union with God. The servant of God who is not crucified, what is he? Too much sugar causes worms in infants. The life of Jesus Christ was all a cross. In these great sweetness and elevations of mind there is always danger that the devil will play us some trick.”

“He is not worthy of divine contemplation who has not suffered and vanquished some great temptation. Trials are beneficial and of great use to keep the balance steady.”

“In consolations every infant seems brave; but in great trials strong souls are put to the test, not the weak.”

As he had a great wish and a special gift to make himself well understood, he explained by beautiful similitudes the precious effects of suffering. “Afflictions, fears, desolations, aridity, abandonments, temptations, and other trials are an excellent broom that sweeps from your soul all the dust and mire of the imperfections that are concealed from you.”

“Work, suffer, be silent, do not complain, do not show resentment; these are maxims of the saints and of high perfection.”

“Has your Reverence ever seen a rock in the sea beaten by a storm? A wave comes furiously and strikes it. What happens? There is the rock. Another more furious wave comes and strikes it on every side. What becomes of it? There is the rock. After the storm, if your Reverence notices the rock, you will see that the waves of the storm have washed and purified it from all the defilements it had contracted during the calm weather. Henceforward, I wish you to be a rock; a stormy wave comes; be silent. See, a hundred, a thousand come! Be silent. The most I give you leave to say in the midst of the storm is, ‘My Father, I am Yours. Oh dear, oh most sweet Will of God, I adore You!’”

“The statue must be struck with hammers and polished with sharp chisels before it is placed in the great gallery.

“The Holy Gospel says that if the grain that is sown does not die, it remains and brings forth no fruit. But the poor grain that is sown to die and bring forth fruit, what does it endure? Rain, snow, wind, and sun. Thus, the soul is a grain that God sows in the great field of the Church. That it may bring forth fruit, it must die by suffering, pain, contradictions, and persecutions.”

“These little trials, corporal and spiritual, are the first little steps of that high and holy ladder, which is mounted by great and generous souls, which they ascend step by step till they reach the top, where they find the purest suffering without comfort from heaven or earth. If they are faithful in not seeking consolation, they pass from this pure suffering to the pure love of God without mixture of any other thing. But, very few and rare, indeed, are the happy souls that reach the step I speak of. Ah, a soul that has received heavenly favors, to find herself stripped of everything! Yet more, to go so far as to seem to herself abandoned by God, to think that God no longer loves her, no longer cares for her, and that He is very angry. Hence it appears to such a soul that everything she does is ill done. Oh, I cannot explain myself as I could wish! It is enough for you to know, my child, that this is almost the pain of loss, if I may so speak, a pain beyond every other torment. But if the soul is faithful, what treasures does she gain! These storms pass away, and she reaches the true, sweet, beloved embraces of the Divine Lover, Jesus. Then God treats her as His spouse; then are celebrated between God and the soul the sacred espousals of love. Oh, what treasures! But you, my child in Jesus, are not yet at the first step of this ladder. I have written this, however, that you may not be alarmed if God should place you in any state of pure suffering without comfort. Then, more than ever, be faithful to God and never leave off your accustomed exercises.”

To lead others to suffer willingly with sweetness of heart and tranquillity of mind, he wished them to receive trials from the loving hand of God as from their source. “You cannot have,” he wrote, “more certain signs of the divine love towards you than the sufferings which he permits and bestows...”

“I adore the Divine Will which keeps you in the state of sickness. I know also that when you were a secular, you had good health, but you were not then so much loved by God as you now are. His Divine Majesty loves you as a child, and even as a beloved spouse. Therefore, He bestows on you great gifts. Long illnesses are the greatest graces that God bestows on the souls dearest to Him.”

“I feel deeply the news of the dangerous illness of your pious sister, the nun. Tell her to rest quietly on the bosom of her heavenly Spouse, who loves her much, and to remain on the cross of her sickness with a peaceful mind and as silently as she can. Tell her, also, that I have well understood her, and what she suffers from bodily pain are blows of love that embalm the soul. If she were to die from such blows, it would be a death more desirable and more precious than life

itself.”

“The short way to acquire that peace which springs from the love of God, from which flow all virtues, as from a perpetual fountain, is to take every trial and affliction, spiritual or temporal, and all misfortunes of what kind soever, to take them, as I said, ‘*without intermediaries*,’ from the loving hand of God, looking upon and receiving every adverse occurrence as a gift and treasure that the heavenly Father bestows upon us, and often repeating the sacred words of Jesus Christ, ‘*Yes, Father, what is pleasing in Your sight*’ (Mat. 11:26). Almighty God, from His eternity, has been pleased and has willed that your Reverence should suffer these bodily afflictions from the devils and from other creatures. Behold them, then, with the eye of faith, and embrace the will of God with ejaculatory acts and darts of the soul.

“Beholding, with the eye of faith, the greatest trials and storms, spiritual and bodily afflictions, beholding them, as I said, with the eye of faith as jewels sent by holy love, they are no longer bitter but most sweet and pleasing.”

“The remedy in your tribulations is the balsam of the Divine Will, which must be embraced and loved, both in prosperity and adversity.”

“Act,” he says in another, “like the vine dresser or gardener, who, when the storm comes, retires into the hut till it has passed away, and all is tranquil. Let us then, amidst so many tempests, evoked by our sins and those of the world, remain retired under the golden covering of the Divine Will, delighting and rejoicing that in all things the Divine Will is accomplished.”

Prayer was the great secret he taught for learning well and for deriving virtue and strength to abandon ourselves to the loving will of God, but a prayer truly interior and fervent.

“One day, I was reflecting within myself at the feet of Jesus Christ that the food which is taken at the royal banquet of the Cross is hard of digestion to the animal stomach; therefore, sleep must be taken, for we digest better sleeping than walking. But simple sleep does not suffice for great heat is needed for good digestion. Therefore, by sleeping in the fresh air, we run the risk of not digesting well. It is better to sleep near some oven. I know no better place than to fall asleep, satiated with the Cross, on the sacred Heart of our blessed Savior, the furnace of holy love.”

This good Father and wise spiritual guide did not mean that a person ought to be insensible in sufferings. But he taught that we should not give way to the interior opposition of reluctant nature. “When you feel,” he says, “the assaults of passion and anger, then is the time to be silent.

Jesus was silent in the midst of his sufferings. '*Jesus kept silent*' (Mt. 26:63). O holy silence, rich in great virtues! O holy silence, which is a key of gold, keeping in safety the great treasure of holy virtues."

"Almighty God, in creating the fishes, made them dumb, because they were to remain in the waves of the sea to teach us that he who sails amid the storms of this world must be dumb, as if he had no tongue, never complaining nor justifying himself."

Speaking particularly of sickness, besides what we have already mentioned, he exhorted souls, with great earnestness to acknowledge and make use of it as a loving visit from our Lord. "Sickness is a great favor that our good God bestows. It makes us know what we are. Here we find out who is truly patient, humble, mortified... In sickness, when the body is weakest and most mortified, the spirit is most inclined to raise itself to God."

"In what regards bodily diseases, render an entire obedience to the physician. Tell him your infirmities sincerely with modest and clear expressions and with all brevity. Having said what is necessary, cease to speak and let him do what he will. Do not refuse remedies, but take them in the loving chalice of Jesus with a pleasant countenance. Be grateful to your attendants and take what they wish you to have. Remain in your bed, as on the cross. Jesus prayed three hours on the cross, and His was truly a crucified prayer, without comfort from within or without. Oh God, what a great instruction. Beg of Jesus to imprint it in my heart. Oh what a subject is this for meditation!"

To souls of prayer, it is an almost incredible affliction to be mortified by their confessors. The man of God taught them how to profit by so excellent an opportunity of merit. "Our good God, in the mortification that He permits, intends that you should die by a mystical death to all that is not God, and should conduct yourself like a dead person without tongue, eyes, or ears. As a corpse, when buried, is trampled on by all, let yourself, like a dead and buried person, be trampled on by all and made the opprobrium and abjection of the people. I rejoice to hear that your confessor treats you harshly, that he is strict and severe. Oh what a good friend he is! God wishes now to put the finishing stroke to the statue and beautify it for the gallery of heaven. He, therefore, permits that he who ought to give some spiritual consolation should use the finest and sharpest chisel to polish the statue well. Oh, what a great work is this! Beg his Divine Majesty not to deprive you of such an instrument till the work that God wishes to perform in you is finished."

To another he says, “Make no account whatever of the distress and fear that your confessor causes in you by telling you that you deceive yourself or that, instead of purifying yourself, you become more defiled, and similar things. Listen with profound annihilation, with humility and silence, humbling yourself even lower than hell, were it possible – quietly, sweetly, and peacefully. When your confessor has dismissed you, go away in peace and immediately cry out like an infant, according to what I told you here, ‘Ah Father! Ah great Father!’ Manifest to him your pain and distress and the fear caused by the words of your confessor, and you will immediately feel a most sweet attraction that will lead you into the depth of that divine solitude in which the soul will be quite absorbed in God. The soul’s distress, fears, and scruples will be consumed in the furnace of holy love. Rest there and, if the Divine Spouse should cause you to slumber, sleep in peace and do not awake without His permission.”

A man who so well understood the value and merit of suffering could not but be displeased with the complaints of certain weak and cowardly souls. Hence, he wrote, “You complain without reason, saying that you have crosses and sufferings. Believe me, you do not know what it is to suffer. May God preserve you from suffering one single day what a poor soul has to endure that I cannot name.”

“I do not like you to think so much of your little trials, darkness, and aridity. The pure and true love of God makes us always consider little and trifling that which we suffer for the divine love.”

“Believe me, if you think you suffer much, it is a sign that you have a very small degree of love for our Lord. For the true mark of divine love is to suffer great things for the Beloved without thinking that we suffer at all.”

“I beg you to make known your treasure as little as you can. You know of what treasure I speak? That of precious suffering. The pearl is formed in the shell, but when the shell has received the dew of heaven, it closes, goes to the bottom of the sea and there forms the beautiful pearl. Understand me well. The pearl of true virtue is formed at the bottom of the sea of suffering and in the sea of the knowledge of your own nothingness. From these seas we go on to swim, or, I would say, to plunge ourselves into the boundless ocean of uncreated, immense love.”

Finally, as it were, epitomizing in a few words the sublime doctrine of suffering, he wrote sometimes, “Put in practice these two precious words: Suffer, Be silent. This is a short road and rule to be soon holy and perfect.” And this was the very path by which the Divine Goodness

conducted Paul to perfection.

## **CHAPTER XXVI**

### **Of the Temperance, Great Mortification, and Abstinence of the Servant of God**

To maintain ourselves in that wise and discreet moderation which forms in our interior a sweet harmony of tranquillity and peace, and in the exterior accompanies all our actions with grace, due proportion, and decorum, it is necessary to be firmly established in that virtue, which has for its office to repress, regulate, and moderate all emotions, and more particularly, those which, if not repressed and conquered, cause disturbance, trouble, and disorder. In proportion as the natural character is quick and ardent, in the same measure, like a willing and high-spirited horse, it requires to be restrained and wisely regulated by the rein that it may not run into danger. Father Paul, who well knew what our Lord required of him, not only endeavored to reduce to due moderation all the impulses of the exterior and visible man, and of the interior, which, being hidden, is known only to the most pure eyes of God, but also sought, with great fervor and by means of the exercise of holy and generous mortification, to die to the inclinations of nature in order to live according to the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus our Redeemer and Master. He wrote in holy confidence to a person whom he directed, "I should wish always to keep in hand a sharp sword to cut and entirely destroy the weeds that keep growing up in the garden. You understand me; I mean that I wish to keep my soul stripped of everything that is not God." And in another, "St. Ignatius often said, 'Ignatius, overcome yourself; Ignatius, overcome yourself.' Oh, what a great counsel is this! What a great point of perfection!"

With these great maxims he constantly mortified himself and bore everywhere the mortification of Jesus Christ in his body, of which, together with his soul, he had made a living, noble and pleasing sacrifice. We are not going to repeat here the austerities practiced by him during the course of his life, chiefly in the commencement of that new course of penances which he termed his conversion, but we will give merely a glance at his manner of conducting himself in taking food and other necessary refreshment. And for the common edification we will relate some particular acts of virtue which have not yet been named.

He was always most temperate in the use he made of food and drink. When he was in health,

he took the same nourishment as the others at the fixed hour, but very sparingly, of common coarse and ordinary food. "In the morning," his companion testifies, "he was satisfied with a little soup; he did not like to have many kinds of meat. Whoever did not want him to eat had nothing to do but to put many things before him. Often he has said to me, 'In charity, give me very little if you wish me to eat, for when I have taken the soup, I have dined.' He took the portion of salt fish or eggs, but in a very small quantity. 'Very little,' he said, 'suffices when one can eat a little bread.'"

When he was not at the retreat, he took a little of what was placed before him, but very sparingly. His benefactors pressed him to show that he appreciated their charitable affection. He praised everything and said the meats were extremely good. Then, eating a little soup and very sparingly of something else, he sent away the rest with some good excuse, or left it on the plate. He took so little that it scarcely sufficed to support him. His manners were so pleasing and obliging, and he was so joyous and open-hearted, though always recollected within himself, that the person who had invited him was not offended, but, on the contrary, edified. Among those, who had the consolation to have an example of penance at their table, was His Excellency the Marchese de las Minas, who, through his love and veneration for the servant of God, often asked him to dine with him. Father Paul, though very averse from such entertainments, thought he could not refuse and went as a true religious and servant of God. He contrived that the dinner should afford him a fine opportunity of mortification, for he scarcely ate anything, and returned to the retreat almost fasting. Yet it is to be remarked that this noble man gave splendid banquets, having with him a great number of the most distinguished officers of his army. The General could not avoid noticing Father Paul's mortification and abstinence, and once complained of it to him. One day His Excellency had a small dish of new peas, a great rarity, as they were then out of season. He divided the peas and gave half to Father Paul. The servant of God ate two or three and then dexterously gave the rest to the servant who waited at table. The General perceived this act and said in Spanish to Father Paul, "Do you not eat these vegetables which are so good?" Father Paul, seeing himself discovered, was not disconcerted, but answered His Excellency in so humble and pleasing a manner that the nobleman, instead of being displeased, was greatly edified.

In the houses of his benefactors, where he was most intimate, he mildly complained that the dishes were too numerous and the food too delicate, saying that he was satisfied with herbs, roots, or bread, flavored with garlic. In all the journeys that he performed on the business of the



Congregation, for any other holy work or in all the missions, he took with him, as his inseparable companion, the strong desire and virtuous practice of mortification. Thus, even though he did not speak, he taught to others who saw him the practice of Christian virtue. It is true that in the missions, where the fatigue was great, he seemed to need more support. But when he was alone with his good brother Father John Baptist his repast during the missions consisted of nothing but soups made of vegetables. It is said that when giving a mission at Pereta, there was no other food but wild endive, boiled, and very little bread. Nor would he ever mix wine with his water, unless obliged by obedience to the priest D. John Baptist Rossi, and for many years he continued to eat abstinence-food – even during the missions.

The Rules having been approved by Benedict XIV, in which it is said that when the religious are absent from the retreat, and particularly during the holy missions, they must practice the advice contained in the Gospel, “*Eat what is placed before you*” (Lk 10:8). He conformed himself to the holy Rule that he might not be singular and bring confusion on his companions. He was always most moderate in his food, taking nothing but soup and a very little of something else. But his weak stomach did not always allow him to take even that small quantity of nourishment. For, after the missions had continued some days, fatigued and exhausted by labor, he lost his appetite and could take no food without disgust. It was then necessary to give him some other nourishment, which being of a coarse kind, was more pleasing to his penitential spirit and more suited to his stomach, which for so many years he had nourished with such rigid austerities.

The friends, in whose houses he resided during the missions, seeing his want of appetite, procured for him little things that he might like. But, if he tasted them through politeness the first time, he deprived himself of them afterwards through mortification. When he was ill, which was during many years, he took care that his sickness should not be a pretext for relaxing in virtue. He would not allow fish or anything else to be bought for him. His companions, seeing him in as great need of food as he had a disgust for it, thinking that the good Father, when old and infirm, ought to be treated with that charity which he would have ordered to be shown to others, had something prepared for him and carried it to him, or carefully garnished for him some food of the community. The servant of God, who was most grateful, showed pleasure at this act of kindness; but to mortify himself, he did not touch it or left it after tasting. If anything was sent him as a present that happened to be suited to his appetite, which felt a disgust for other food, he

expressed his obligations to his benefactor and prayed for them, and then deprived himself of the whole or a part, desiring that it should be given to some other religious, causing his abstinence to be conducive to the comfort and charitable relief of his sons. If some choice kind of fish was sent him by a friend, Father Paul mortified himself when it was placed on the table and, loving to be unknown, concealed his mortification by saying, "I prefer small fish to large ones." He could not bear to eat meat, and when it was ordered, took very little and left the rest under some specious pretext. He ate a little bread and salt, when through indisposition he was unable to eat vegetables, garlic, leeks and other coarse food. He used to say, with a great sentiment of devotion, that such was the food of the ancient monks. Sometimes he presented a part to his companions as a present of mortification and poverty. However indisposed he might be, he almost always fasted in the evening, taking at most an egg; nor did he ever take the small quantity of food he allowed himself without sorrow of heart; and with a deep feeling of compassion, he said, in imitation of the great Father of solitaires, St. Anthony, of whom St. Athanasius writes, that in the act of taking food he felt greatly ashamed because he saw that the generous and noble efforts of the soul are restrained and tied down by the wants and sufferings of the body. "Let us go and do the work of asses." But as he was a man, he was obliged also to eat. It seems, however, that he was always obliged to do violence to himself. When in sickness, he had also, as was usually the case, a disgust for every sort of food and an inclination to vomit. He was obliged to make a great effort to take anything in the way of support. When he had taken a little, he was unable to take what was necessary for his support. He said to the brother, "Brother, take this away if you wish me to retain the little I have been able to swallow." And as this often happened, the brother once said, "You always say, 'Take away, take away quickly,' because you will not overcome yourself and force yourself to eat." Father Paul, then, without saying another word, went on eating in order to obey his infirmarian humbly and exactly. But in the act of swallowing down the mouthfuls, so violent was the effort of his stomach in rejecting it, that the brother was much grieved to have been the cause of this suffering. He perceived that, when he asked to have the dish removed, he was incapable of taking more food.

In order that the time spent in nourishing the body might not be without special profit to his soul, the servant of God contrived, when he took his scanty meal, to refresh his soul also with some good consideration. If he was at the community table, which he always attended when he was sufficiently well, he listened to the spiritual reading, kept himself in great recollection and

was often bathed in tears from the devotion of his heart. Sometimes he was absorbed in God and did not know what he was eating. One day in particular, when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, he ordered the cook to make soup of rice or pasta for the community. The cook obeyed exactly, but after dinner the good Father, meeting him, reproved him for not having obeyed in regard of the soup. The cook and another religious who was present were much surprised at this reproof, as the soup had been taken to table and the good Father, as well as the others, had eaten of it. The cook thought he must justify himself and told the Father how it was. Then, the good Father, with great simplicity, replied, "Have patience, I did not notice it."

What he practiced himself, he always taught to others. He desired that all, in taking their food, should keep their hearts raised up to God.

"At the time that the senses of the body are performing their functions," he said to one of our religious, "the soul can perform hers by tending towards God and loving Him. Thus, we may, while we are eating, love God with the soul; converse with others and discourse interiorly with God at the same time. By this means we are not led away so as to exceed in these animal actions, and we become superior to all the things of this world. Then, there is no danger that the allurements of created things should draw away the affections of the soul."

So far we have spoken of the plan of life pursued by Father Paul in exactly practicing the rules of holy temperance; we will now speak of some more particular austerities, by which he mortified himself in the use of food and drink. He was persuaded that our Lord required from him great penance. "You are not right," he writes to a devout soul, "that God does not require great rigor from me. One like me, who has so greatly offended God, ought to perform great penance, but I do not perform it – God requires penance from me." For many years he fasted three times a week on bread and water, that is, when he was at Monte Argentario. He began this fast before he had any companions and continued it for some time with his brother Father John Baptist, though he wished the others to fare better. He would have continued this severity if he had not been prevented by the physicians. About the year 1743, when, on account of his pains and infirmities, it was judged necessary to dispense him from it. For many years he drank water always. He desired to continue this, but when he was at Orbetello, Captain Grazi, seeing him one day weak, emaciated, and pale, said to him, "Father Paul, this is not an air to live in on water only." The servant of God yielded to the advice of this charitable gentleman and began to make use of wine, but of very little, "*for the sake of your stomach*" (I Tim. 5:23). The wine was always

mixed with water, and if, on the one hand he gave some little support to his stomach, on the other he maintained the vigor of his soul and the practice of holy mortification. Though he had moderated in some degree his first rigor, yet in the first years when he was at Monte Argentario, in order to remain unknown and retired, without going in search of alms, he had very little refreshment and fed on herbs and vegetables, which were often without the necessary seasoning. Of that which our Lord sent him, he partook most sparingly, so far as to feel hunger, and this he did often during the whole course of his life. From that early time he suffered from weakness of stomach, but he made no account of it and went on without taking any remedy. When he was at Mount Argentario, he chose for himself to say the last Mass, to give place to others, who on account of being young subjects, would have had to wait. In his last years he suffered from the same weakness, and he sometimes said to his confessor with a smile, "I feel as if my inside was gradually going away." In the latter part of his life, he sometimes took a little chocolate in the morning, but of so weak a kind that it was much more like colored water than a strengthening beverage. He practiced exactly the instruction that St. Augustine had received from our Lord, to take food as medicines are taken. He rejoiced not only in suffering hunger for the love of God but also thirst, in memory of that burning thirst that Jesus suffered on the Cross. We have said elsewhere that for many years, after preaching the mission, he would not even take a mouthful of water, but went before the Blessed Sacrament to refresh himself at the fountain of life. Afterwards, being obliged by the physicians, he had begun to drink to moderate the heat caused by preaching. He could not, however, feel satisfied after giving up this practice of mortification. "Ah," he said, "the physicians have done me an injury, for formerly I often found water that quenched my thirst."

Our loving Lord treated him in a similar manner on another occasion. He was traveling in the extreme heat of summer, returning from a mission with Father Fulgentius of Jesus and, through the fatigue of the journey and the heat of the season, they were tormented by a burning thirst. At last, they came to a spring of fresh water, and the servant of God said to his companion, in whose virtue he had all confidence, "Shall we perform an act of mortification by not tasting this water? Yes, for the love of a crucified God, enduring thirst on the Cross, let us make a sacrifice of abstinence from it." Father Fulgentius, who was a willing companion to Father Paul in the practice of devotion and mortification, cheerfully acceded to the fervent proposition. They performed the act, and our Lord was so much pleased with this mortification that the servant of

God was replenished with heavenly consolations, which made him exult with joy during the rest of the journey. Thus, God rewards him who for His love deprives himself of the small satisfactions he might derive from creatures. Father Paul, who well knew this, often offered such sacrifices, which were so much the more acceptable to God, as they were painful to his appetite.

When he was staying at the Hermitage of our Lady of the Chain near Gaeta, besides the great austerities with which he accompanied his slight meal, it was his custom never to ask for anything, but to live solely on what was spontaneously offered. If no one provided anything, Father Paul suffered hunger in patience and humble silence. Day by day he distributed to the poor what he saved by his penance and mortification, and with greater joy in proportion as the food with which he had been provided was more meager. One day the bishop sent him a meat pie, but when the good Father saw it on the table, in the spirit of humility he said to his companions that food so delicate did not seem suited to them. Exhorting them to make an affectionate offering of it to our Lord, he desired that it should be given in charity to the first poor man that passed by. When the order was executed, and the meat pie given to a poor peasant named Angelo, he, seeing something offered to him which he had perhaps never even tasted before, thought they were making a fool of him. But when he was assured that they were serious, he refused to take the whole, contenting himself with a part, and would only receive the rest when he heard that Father Paul had expressly ordered it. Angelo departed joyously, and another monk, named Biagio, who lived in the hermitage with Father Paul, followed him. Not having the servant of God's mortification, this monk allowed himself to be overcome by gluttony and asked for and received from the peasant part of the meat pie, which he ate very secretly, without the servant of God knowing anything about it from anyone. When he returned to the hermitage, Father Paul so verily reproved him, telling him that he had let himself be carried away by gluttony. Seeing himself discovered, he thought that another companion, who had seen him follow the peasant, had said something to the servant of God, and he went to complain of it to him. But when he heard that nothing had been said, he was much confused for what he had done secretly, and edified with Father Paul's virtue, who, by so many examples and instructions, authenticated by graces and supernatural gifts, exhorted others fervently to the practice of holy mortification.

The servant of God was fond of fruit, but he made use of this innocent inclination to mortify himself very painfully. From his youth, when at Castellazzo, he resolved never to taste muscatel

grapes which were in an arbor in the garden. He faithfully kept this resolution and deprived himself of the slight refreshment they would have been to him. We may say that in place of them he substituted the gall and vinegar, which he then began to drink every Friday in memory of Jesus Christ's Sacred Passion. During the whole course of his life, when he did eat fruits, he took them with singular mortification. Though they were of excellent quality, he would take a pear or an apple of ordinary size and only eat half of it. Even though he felt a disrelish for food, being unable to taste anything else, fruit would have contributed to diminish these uncomfortable sensations and this nausea, he nevertheless deprived himself of it, to the great edification even of those who were well practiced in mortification. His mortification went so far that we cannot recall without emotion an act which he performed in his last illness. He had been suffering two months without being able to taste any kind of food. The physician who attended him well knew that a little fruit would probably have diminished his nausea, but he did not dare to suggest this to him for, as his great friend, he was aware that during that time, which was the space between the Visitation of our Blessed Lady and her glorious Assumption, our good Father used to practice particular abstinence in honor of the great Mother of God. He, therefore, judged that unless he were obliged, he would not be persuaded to taste fruit of which he always deprived himself during that Lent, as he called it. He wished, therefore, being a discreet person and of delicate conscience, to consult some of the religious to know if he should do well to oblige him to it. Having asked the opinion of two priests, they told him that in Father Paul's state of weakness and disgust for every kind of food, the attempt ought to be made and some fruit given to him to assist him in his extreme necessity. The physician returned to Father Paul's room with the two priests and frankly told him that he must try whether his irritated stomach would not receive and retain some kind of fruit. The good Father, with grace and vivacity, as if he had entirely forgotten his disease, and, full of candor and sincerity, replied, "But I have presented them to a lady!" The physician and the priests, greatly edified by his virtue, ventured to add that our Blessed Lady accepted the offering he had made to her, but that she could also be pleased if, through obedience, he made the trial. The poor sick man showed that he was just as docile with most virtuous indifference as he was devoted to mortification, but he could only take half a plum as his stomach, so much weakened by his penances, could not bear more. Hence, the nausea and irritation went on increasing till he could not even take a mouthful of broth or a spoonful of wine. With great violence to himself, he took a little toast and water and thus died exhausted,

leaving a great example of that mortification of which he had been a master. The servant of God could not be ignorant that a life of so great austerity was a great means of attaining that penance to which he aspired with all his heart. But he was so far from making a great account of it and placing his confidence in these mortifications, that in reflecting on what the saints have done, he was greatly confounded and humbled himself. In one of his letters he wrote confidentially to a religious of great virtue, “Gregory the Great lived upon a few vegetables, as I have seen in the ancient inscription where there is a picture of St. Sylvia, the saint’s mother. In our times there is so much delicacy and fear of being ill through holy and discreet penance! St. Gregory, of a noble house, young and delicate, was satisfied under the care of these holy monks with a few vegetables sent him as an alms every day by his holy mother! My dear Father Master, this circumstance humbles me to the dust with shame.” Thus spoke this man of so great mortification.

We must acknowledge, however, that his good brother Father John Baptist greatly assisted him in this holy exercise. He not only joined him in his mortifications, suffered hunger through rigorous fasts and macerated his body till his stomach was greatly weakened and contracted a serious illness of which he died, but he also watched vigilantly over his brother’s conduct and took every opportunity of making him perform some noble act of mortification. He sat near him in the refectory. If, when his brother was eating his small portion or some fruit of which the community had partaken, he happened to perceive that he liked it, he immediately took it away before he had scarcely begun to taste it. Truly, the patience of a saint was required to sustain trials so constant and so severe, inflicted on a poor man that suffered so much from want of appetite and weakness of stomach. But Father John Baptist knew better than anyone else how solid was Father Paul’s virtue, and he freely gave the blows of a master hand to bring it to perfection. The servant of God, on all these occasions, sweetly and humbly shrugging his shoulders, bowing his head, and joining his hands, allowed himself, like an infant, to be guided by this great master of mortification.

Not only in the retreat did Father John Baptist make use of the absolute authority that his brother gave him over himself, but even in the houses of benefactors he lost no opportunity of trying and mortifying him. If his friends pressed him and Father John Baptist, who well knew how to unite politeness with sanctity, forbade him, Father Paul did not presume to take a mouthful of what was offered. Behold, the true manner of loving in God, to help one another

mutually to become rich in the treasures of holy virtues, chiefly of holy mortification, which may be called a treasure hidden and unloved.

Father Paul wished this virtue to be great in his religious; he exhorted them never to leave the table without having made some sacrifice to God. When he saw anyone unmortified, the good Father, as if wounded to the heart, spoke to him. By his sweetness and persuasiveness, Father Paul induced him to conquer his appetite, to overcome gluttony, and practice a discreet mortification and abstinence, which he, according to the opinion of the Fathers, considered one of the foundation stones of the spiritual edifice.

## **CHAPTER XXVII**

### **Of the Other Austerities and Extraordinary Penances Practiced by Father Paul**

Great, certainly and extraordinary, was the exercise of mortification we have described, but the fervent spirit of the servant of God was not satisfied. He afflicted his body in many other ways and in penance was more admirable than imitable. As he was so badly clothed and went bareheaded and barefooted, he felt all the inconveniences of the seasons extremely. In winter, he was benumbed with cold, and in summer, walking a long distance under the rays of the sun when the heat was excessive, he suffered from great weakness and exhaustion. Often, as was very likely to happen in wild and rugged roads, he pricked or wounded his feet. But, that he might feel more pain he sometimes allowed the thorns to penetrate deeply without removing them, causing to himself great pain and difficulty in walking. If anyone, noticing the thorn, expressed compassion, Father Paul said it was nothing when Jesus Christ our Lord and Master had so many sharp thorns in His head.

That charity which led him to offer to God these bodily sacrifices made him also ingenious in finding new methods of tormenting himself. We do not know precisely all the penances that he performed in the different solitudes where, during the first years he resided with his good brother Father John Baptist, for these two servants of God, who were so anxious to be pleasing in the eyes of our Lord, with equal diligence avoided being seen by the eyes of others. It is narrated in the Processes, however, that Father Paul even when at home disciplined himself so severely and so often that his brother John Baptist, who was then a secular, was frequently obliged to take the



discipline from him, lest he should faint under the blows. And as the desire went on increasing of offering new sacrifices of his body to his wounded and lacerated Redeemer, imitating those saints, who with magnanimous and extraordinary fervor practiced penances rather to be admired than imitated, he even went so far as to roll himself naked in a thorn bush which was seen by some hunters, who going to the chase on Monte Argentario and hearing a noise in the bushes near the retreat where Father Paul was then staying, and thinking at first it was caused by a wild boar, softly advanced and held their muskets ready to fire on the side where they heard the noise. When they were close to a bush where the noise was greatest, they perceived the servant of God, who was rolling himself among these thorns. At this sight the hunters were amazed, and Father Paul greatly confused at being discovered performing such an act of penance. Father John Baptist, his brother, the imitator of his virtues and the companion of his penances, was also found beating himself severely. These incidents were necessary to make known to us, if not distinctly, at least in some degree, the penances of God's servants. In a similar manner, it was noticed by an eyewitness who lived with him at different times, that on Fridays, beside the discipline which was usually taken on other days also, Father Paul about midnight, before he began the Divine Office, bound round him an iron belt wider than the hand and armed with iron points, and kept it on the whole of Friday till the midnight of the following Saturday. During that time he remained retired in his room in continual prayer and without going to table with the others, a thing which could not cause much admiration as there were then few companions in the Hermitage of Saint Anthony. Nor was the penance less rigorous and severe with which he afflicted his innocent body, when he dwelt in the Hermitage of Our Lady of the Chain, for we know from a good priest, who was then his companion, that he always wore next to his flesh shirts of iron with points and often severely scourged himself with disciplines of iron.

As the servant of God very well knew that the fruit of missions entirely depends on and proceeds from the grace of God, who is much pleased with the sacrifice of prayer, joined to holy mortification, as sweet-smelling incense mixed with chosen myrrh, during the mission he practiced some very extraordinary and painful penance. When he was giving a mission at Caparbio in Tuscany, his charitable benefactress waited till he had left the house and then, going to make the bed, saw to her great edification that under the mattress were hidden an iron heart armed with sharp points, a ball similarly provided with longer points, two little chains, and several disciplines of little stars and hooks; and that all these instruments of penance were

stained with blood. When Father Paul returned, seeing that the bed had been moved contrary to his expectation, he expressed great sorrow because by that means something might be known of that penance which he wished to be known to God alone.

On another occasion he was giving a mission at Bassano, an estate belonging to the Giustiniani family, and was staying in the house of one of our kindest friends. Before the evening service one day, he begged the master of the house to allow no one to enter his room. As he wished to study a sermon, he could not admit persons to an audience. Very soon after, a person came earnestly asking to speak to Father Paul. The friend said that the time was inconvenient, and that she might come again; but as she renewed her entreaties and expressed a great anxiety to see the servant of God, at last overcome by her importunities, he went into the room where Father Paul was to tell him and found him on his knees at the foot of the crucifix. The gentleman was not surprised to find him preparing himself by prayer, for he well knew that from that fountain of light more than from study, Father Paul derived his sentiments and words. But seeing that the servant of God, perceiving that someone had entered his room, was dexterously concealing a piece of iron on which he had been kneeling, he noticed it more closely and saw that it was covered with iron points. Father Paul, thinking that he had cleverly concealed his penance said, "See, I study my sermon at the feet of this crucifix." Thus, the servant of God, an inveterate enemy of ostentation, sought to conceal himself. It was a fortunate accident that made known some of his penances.

But notwithstanding all his care, we have great proofs of the rigor of his mortifications. Our Lord has so disposed that many of the instruments he used have been preserved, and the very sight of them horrifies delicate souls. Besides an iron shirt four fingers wide, armed with iron points, a discipline is kept at Gaeta, which was taken from him by his confessor D. Erasmo Tuccinardi at the time that the servant of God was not a priest. It is composed of several little cords joined together, about a foot long, ending in seven lashes at the extremity of each of which is a heavy oval piece of lead, surrounded with seven iron points, all stained with blood. This good priest, moved with compassion, took it away, for as he said Father Paul scourged himself most severely with terrible blows. In his room at the Retreat of St. Michael the Archangel, a wooden cross is kept armed with points to the number of 186, of which the good Father made use, wearing it next to his breast to keep more vividly in his heart the affectionate remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus and compassion for them. I do not mention the shirts of camel's hair

nor the discipline of iron wire, which are preserved, because they are less painful instruments, though from Father Paul's hand they received great power to afflict his body. I will speak of one instrument with which Father Paul scourged himself so fervently that he felt the effect of it in his health during his whole life. This was a chain made of several links of iron, not much smaller than those that are worn by the prisoners at the galleys, which Father Paul used at mission times, led by the spirit of penance, to make to God a sacrifice of his body. Taking, therefore, the long chain he made of it, as it were a handful or a heavy scourge of several lashes, and scourged himself so severely that it was distressing to see him. Once when he was disciplining himself, a person ran to the platform without Father Paul's perceiving him to take away this instrument of penance; but to his sorrow he found out, on this occasion, the strength of Father Paul's arm, for he received so violent and heavy a blow, that the arm which had been struck was lamed. The servant of God, however, on perceiving it, made the sign of the cross on the arm and miraculously cured it, as if our Lord had communicated a wonderful virtue to that hand which was offering to Him so great a sacrifice of penance, as a sign that He accepted that made by His faithful servant.

The servant of God, finding that these chains were kept at the Retreat of the Presentation at Monte Argentario, took them and threw them away saying, "Since you have lamed me, I am determined you shall not hurt anyone else." Great indeed, therefore, must have been the fervor with which Father Paul was accustomed to use them.

In giving missions in later life, he made use of a discipline of steel wire. He used it with so much compunction and fervor and with so true a spirit that the people who heard him were greatly moved. Sometimes, especially when he preached on hell, he appeared on the platform with a rope round his neck and a crown of thorns on his head, so closely pressed in that the blood ran down his forehead. The servant of God, who so greatly loved secrecy, could have desired to perform this part of his penance in some desert or solitude, but he knew by experience that to strike rustic and ignorant people, of whom the audience is in great measure composed, and who understand little of the instructions and arguments of the discourses, though given in a style like his own striking, animated and touching, and also very clear and intelligible, such practices are of great utility, and that by these sensible things sinners are more easily roused to repentance, for external penance is the means of awaking interior repentance. The effects proved that our Lord blessed the holy efforts of His servant, for in the missions wonderful conversions of the most

erring souls took place as we have said. The war which Father Paul had declared against his body never allowed him to take that repose that would seem absolutely necessary after so much toil and labor, but converted that very repose into a new means of penance and mortification. From the first years after he gave himself entirely to God in his father's house, he slept on the ground or on a little straw, and for a pillow had nothing but a few bricks or a hard stone. Young as he was, he broke through his repose in the night and in the severest winter rose to pray with his good brother Father John Baptist. When he was at St. Anthony's, it was often seen that instead of sleeping on his poor sack of straw, he went out of the hermitage at night to a place where there are two rocks between the Hermitages of the Annunciation and of St. Anthony. These rocks formed a species of grotto which the servant of God entered and remained in this silence and darkness till midnight, when he went back to the hermitage to recite the Office with the rest. After the Rules had been approved, to avoid singularity, he retired at night to his poor cell. If he was not ill, he always took his rest on a sack of straw, so hard and uncomfortable that it might rather be called a torture than a comfort. He would have it so, however, and rigorously prohibited that the straw should be changed, at least at the Retreat of St Angelo. As he applied himself much to the exercises of the holy missions, and all the penitents seemed to wish to confess to him, he slept very little at night at those times. To keep himself wakeful, he tormented himself with an instrument called a "*canetto*," well known to persons brought up in the school of mortification. In some missions it was noticed that he slept on his knees, leaning against the bed, as was seen several times by the Canon D. Joseph Suscioli, his dear friend, who is also dead. It was not possible to understand how he could support such fatigue, allowing a repose so short and so painful to his wearied and weakened limbs. It is true that in the latter years of his life, he no longer practiced that extraordinary rigor with which he began; but his infirmities and habitual weaknesses were a great penance, perhaps more severe than any other. At least it is certain that these penances are most acceptable to God because in them there is nothing of our choice, according to the doctrines of the saints to which Father Paul so entirely conformed himself. He wrote on one occasion, "This sickness is a grand discipline, a grand hair shirt. Oh, how pleasing to God are the disciplines that His Divine Majesty sends us!"

And for this reason, under the wise direction of his brother, seeing that he had lost his health and become the prey of pain, it was right that he should remove those penances and mortifications which might at first seem excessive, as his confessor observes, adding that though

he was destitute of strength. “Nevertheless,” these are the confessor’s own words, “he earnestly begged to be allowed again to wear his instruments of penance. I, reflecting on his continual infirmities which were no slight discipline on the attacks of the devils and the spiritual dereliction in which our Lord kept him, besides his great anxiety and solicitude about governing the Order, constantly refused him this permission.”

By this obedience he was obliged to give up his holy custom of going on foot as he had done for so many years, with such suffering as everyone can imagine, contracting thereby those diseases and habitual infirmities which afflicted him during a great part of his life. Nor could it be otherwise in so many journeys, long, frequent, and difficult; through snow, rain, frost, and mud; barefooted and bareheaded. The very mention of which causes horror. He tried, it is true, to go on foot even when he was lame but, finding it to be a complete impossibility, he was obliged to use conveyances or a horse.

Almighty God showed more than once, by miraculous signs, how greatly He approved of the discreet and wise conduct of His servant and justified his real necessity. He arrived one night at Sutri, much fatigued and exhausted by the missions he had given. Our benefactor D. Joseph Suscioloi, his great friend, sought to make him pass the night there. But the servant of God humbly refused the offering and said resolutely that he wished to return to the Retreat of St. Angelo. This charitable friend, not being able to persuade him to remain, wished to procure him a conveyance as he saw that it was impossible for him to walk the distance from Sutri to the Retreat of St. Angelo, which is many miles. He asked an inhabitant of the city to oblige him with a conveyance. This person said he would have gladly obliged the Rev. Canon and Father Paul, but that it was not possible for one of the horses was lame in one leg, and he had no other to put in its place. What this gentleman said was true, for the horse had been ill fourteen or fifteen days and did not improve with all the remedies and care that had been employed. During their conversation the gentleman felt an impulse to offer the carriage and horses in the confidence that God, by His blessing, would give success to the journey as it was for Father Paul. Quite changed, he suddenly made the offer. When put to the carriage, the horse was so lame that it went, as it is said, on three legs. But scarcely had the servant of God entered the carriage and gone a few steps, than the horse became perfectly sound and never again suffered from that troublesome lameness. This event was considered miraculous not only by the horse’s master but also by the man who had the care of it.

Our Lord showed him a very similar favor when he was returning from the mission at Tolfa. When he passed through the Allumière to go to Corneto, the receiver of rents, seeing him unable to go that distance on foot, offered him a carriage which Father Paul accepted with lively gratitude. But soon after they had set off, one wheel of the carriage came off and was so entirely out of order that all the spokes were coming out of the axle. When the driver perceived it he was at a loss what to do, for he could not continue the journey with the wheel in that state, especially as the road was bad and rough. He could not put the wheel in order as he had to keep in the horses which were eager and restless. But the servant of God, when told of the accident, persuaded the man to leave the horses and look at the wheel. To remedy the urgent necessity, Fr. Paul gave him a woollen girdle, such as religious wear to keep up the habit when traveling, recommending him to use it. Anyone can imagine what the driver would think when so thin a cord was offered to him, where a strong one was necessary. But he did not presume to oppose Father Paul and with a certain air of derision, he tied and bound the servant of God's girdle round the spokes as he wished. The event proved to the driver how advantageous it is to obey God's servants. The horses never moved and the wheel served for the whole journey, as if it had been sound, and gave great cause for wonder to Signor Dominic Costantini at whose house the good Father dismounted, when he heard from the driver the whole account of the wonderful fact wrought by God in favor of Father Paul. If the servant of God could not always exercise those acts of mortification and perform the penances he wished, he maintained to the last that spirit of penance which had led him to do and suffer so much during his life, and which sometimes urged him to perform acts of virtue most worthy to be admired, even in the person of the greatest saints, and which we have purposely reserved to conclude this chapter to the particular edification of the reader.

He was at Gaeta when he was asked to assist a poor dying man, named Antonio Alvares, who lived under the castle in that city. The poor sick man, as a consequence of the disease from which he was suffering, vomited from his mouth loathsome evacuations into a basin which Father Paul held. Nature had a horror and repugnance for a thing so disgusting. But as charity dreads nothing that pleases God, "*love does not fear*" (I Jn. 4:18), the man of God, gaining a complete victory over himself, took from the basin, repeatedly, a handful of these disgusting evacuations and swallowed it. Then, after so splendid a victory over himself, bravely continued to render his charitable assistance to the poor dying man. At other times the servant of God, to overcome

himself, had gone so far as to suck the loathsome wounds of the sick. He who overcomes himself with so great generosity renders himself master of himself and of the world, and shows so great a hatred for the allurements of earthly things and for himself, that he can say, "*The world is crucified to me, and I to the world*" (Gal. 6:14).

## **CHAPTER XXVIII**

### **Of the Poverty of the Servant of God**

A soul which truly relishes God and knows by the strong light of faith the immense treasures contained in God, the fountain of all good, hates whatever is not God and unites himself so much the more closely to God as he detaches himself from creatures. Father Paul of the Cross, as he began from his youth to have an intimate communication with the Divine Majesty, showed that he made no account of earthly things and, in order to enjoy true liberty of spirit, courageously despised whatever could embarrass him. Fully satisfied with the riches that are found in God, he chose to live in the greatest poverty of earthly goods and thus honor and imitate, at the same time, the poverty of our Divine Redeemer, who chose to be born poor, to live poor, and to die on the cross in extreme poverty, naked and abandoned. From his youth he renounced, as we have said elsewhere, the inheritance left him by his uncle, and with deep feeling protested that he desired no inheritance but his crucified Lord. Having made this generous renunciation, he clothed himself with that poverty that has been described. It truly excited compunction, as a witness says, to see him rather covered than clothed with a common cloth, called *arbagio*, of a dark color, barefooted, his head uncovered, without any sort of cloak and go, in summer and winter, through rain, ice, and snow.

He would have nothing, even then, but what was purely necessary. Divine Majesty, to confirm him in that holy resolution, so ordained it that once, when he was in retirement conversing with God and preparing himself by prayer and silence to write the holy Rules, he could not rest because he had by him a beautiful apple, given to him by a pious person. He gave it away as soon as he could and made the holy determination to live on what should be charitably given him in alms. If, when traveling, money was offered to him, he generally refused it with humility. After he had retired to Monte Argentario, in order to ascertain the extent of his poverty,

it is enough to know that when he was at the Hermitage of St. Anthony, he was so poorly lodged that he and his brother Father John Baptist slept on the hard boards. When it rained, the rain fell on Father John Baptist, who probably had yielded to his brother the least uncomfortable situation. Neither of them could sleep much, owing to the great noise made by rats, which rendered that hermitage a place little adapted for the tranquility and repose of night, but very suitable as a continuation, during the night, of the exercise of penance and mortification of the most innocent inclinations of nature. When they went to Our Lady of the Chain, as they relaxed nothing of their most austere poverty, they gave great edification by their generous detachment. “The poverty of these two good brothers,” deposes a witness, “was extremely dear to them. They wore no shirt, but only a tunic of rough and coarse cloth which, when thoroughly wet with perspiration or rain, they were obliged to change and have them dried. In the meantime they put on an old and torn tunic of the same cloth till the first was dry. They went barefooted and bareheaded. They slept on the ground and had nothing in their room but a few paper pictures. Whatever food remained over and above, they caused to be distributed in alms by me, reserving nothing to themselves for the following day. They had a great aversion to money and never received money in alms, though it might be offered.”

It will easily be inferred how diligent were these good brothers in the most perfect practice of poverty, as they had accepted it as a sacrifice and promised it to the Divine Majesty. They had so great a love for this virtue and esteemed it their treasure. Speaking merely of Father Paul, and leaving others to relate the virtues of that great servant of God his brother, we may affirm that in all his actions, he always exhibited forth the beauty of holy poverty and showed great jealousy of it. He was poor in his food, poor in clothing, poor in his all, poor in everything that appertained to his use. It was not sufficient for him to depend on his brother and ask permissions from him, which he practiced with extraordinary virtue as long as he lived, though he was always superior and was never bound to ask such permissions. He also desired that his beloved poverty should be his inseparable companion in his entire method of life. His nourishment was most poor, and the servant of God rejoiced in receiving it as an alms. He sometimes humbly asked of the religious, when they were seated at table in the refectory, a little bread through charity. Then kneeling down at the door, he modestly ate it and remained in that humble position till the meal was ended. Even when ill he liked to eat poor food. He did not wish fish to be bought for him, but at those times ate a little dried, or tunny fish, and desired his companions who, urged by charity,



wished to procure for him at least a little fish instead of the other coarse food which was injurious to his health, to do nothing of the sort. For it seemed to the delicacy of his poverty that that would be bad example, which was a discreet and reasonable dispensation clearly required by his serious infirmities – so great a lover was he of this virtue. It happened that the Father Paul's companion had to go before the Sovereign Pontiff Clement XIV. When the Holy Father enquired after the servant of God, the brother said to His Holiness (they are the words of the same brother who deposes the fact) that Father Paul had a great disrelish for food and could not eat, that he gave him a little dried fish, which he ate. The Holy Father wept through compassion and tenderness saying, "Poor Father. He is so ill and he eats dried fish!" The Pope told the companion to take every care of him. But Father Paul always repeated, "Spend nothing for me, or at least very little." He begged that the remedies might not be expensive but poor as he was himself. He always said, "We are poor; therefore, let us act like poor people."

He would also be poor in his clothing. He rejoiced in wearing an old and used habit, especially when he was at the retreat. He took it as an alms. A local superior once had not thought of furnishing him with a habit for winter. What he had was very thin, and the good Father, being old and infirm, suffered much from cold, which increased his pains. Yet even in this necessity the servant of God would not have a new habit, but contented himself with receiving, as a charity, one that had been worn by a brother.

This was not, however, the occasion in which he practiced with the greatest perfection that poverty which was so dear to him. Hear how he himself writes in confidence to one of our religious. "My very dear friend. I write on Good Friday and, trusting in the sacred Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, I inform your Reverence that I shall send back one or two of the habits that your Reverence will send, though there are not any here. For two or three years I have had no summer habit. I am going, on Low Monday, to give a mission at Viterbo in this thick one, and I have no other than this, which was given me as an alms in the Retreat of St. Eutizio. I will wear it all the summer, if I live." It was his custom to keep in his room no habit but that which he was actually wearing. When a new habit was given to him, he gave up the old one. Of those emblems we wear on the breast, he usually had none but those he was wearing. In all other little things that he used, poverty always shone forth, nor would he allow them to be renewed though they were of little value, saying that they were good enough.

He who wished to see a true portrait of holy poverty would have been satisfied to see Father

Paul in his cell in the solitude. A little wooden table, a few straw chairs, a small straw bed with a woollen covering on boards supported by wooden legs, a crucifix and a few devout pictures, mostly of paper, were the valuable furniture of this holy man, who was truly one of Jesus Christ's poor. His mattress was so hard that after sleeping on it one night, says his companion, one felt as full of pain as if one had slept on stones. He always, when he could, chose the least comfortable of the rooms. When he went to Rome, at the time that we had the Hospice of the Holy Cross, he took for his own the smallest room, which was so narrow that his little bed was only just contained between its walls. When taken ill, he was obliged to remove,<sup>9</sup> but did not stay too long. In the end, he took so small a room that he could scarcely pass from one side of the bed to the other. In this room he received the visits of all, even princes and cardinals, who through charity and kindness, went to see him when he was ill, in much greater happiness than if he had dwelt in a magnificent palace. When the Church and Retreat of Saints John and Paul were given to him by Clement XIV the servant of God desired the brother, his companion, to give him the worst room and complained to him because he had not put him in the infirmary on the ground floor, which was not at all suited to his infirmities; and being afterwards put in the superior's room, he begged so earnestly and anxiously that a room might be given him on the same floor as the infirmary so that those who came to see him might not disturb the tranquillity and recollection of the religious. It was necessary to yield to his wish, and he was removed to a room that Cardinal Pallotta, then Treasurer General, knowing his delicacy, chose for him himself, that he might feel no difficulty when he saw it was larger than the others. The room which Father Paul inhabited longer and more willingly than any other was that which is situated at the side of the Church of the Hermitage of St. Angelo at Monte Fogliano. This, of all the rooms which he inhabited in the retreats, is the poorest and therefore was perfectly suited to his ideas. It rather resembles a prison than a room, having a low ceiling with only one little window, guarded by a grating. He never allowed it to be whitewashed, though he loved cleanliness and had for a maxim that we must be poor, but clean. Nor would he ever change it, though in summer he suffered terribly from heat there. He could not bear handsome furniture in a cell and would have nothing that was not also used by the others. His Eminence the Cardinal Vicar Colonna, the true father of the poor, visiting him one day and seeing his poverty, especially regarding his bed, sent him a

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<sup>9</sup> Paul was obliged to take a larger room.

covering of white cloth which was very good. Father Paul's ardent affection for holy poverty would not, however, allow him to make use of this charitable gift. Though a Canon from His Eminence came several times to tell him that he must use it, he could not be persuaded till one day, when His Eminence was coming, the brother that waited on him told him that the cardinal would have reason to feel offended if he did not see the covering on the bed. But, as if it were a crime in him, Father Paul felt as much ashamed as if he were a thief taken with stolen goods in his possession. When the cardinal was gone, he had it taken off and afterwards gave it to a friend who provided him in exchange with one of a common kind.

If his poverty was so jealous and delicate in refusing those things that did not appear to him completely ordinary and common, much less did he permit that there should be anything superfluous in his room. Among the poor he would be the poorest. Once it was made known at the Retreat of the Presentation that the good Father was going there. The brother who had charge of the rooms prepared him one and put something in it that was not necessary. As soon as the servant of God saw it, he was greatly displeased, desired that all should be taken away, declaring that, otherwise, he would not remain there. He spoke with so much fervor and feeling that it was necessary to obey at once and satisfy him. He had once ordered a common desk to contain the writings of the Congregation, but as the brother made it with some kind of ornamental work, though common and of small value, the true friend of poverty would not on any account have it in his cell.

From the great affection that he cherished in his heart for the virtue of holy poverty, he very frequently reminded the brother, his infirmarian, that he would have nothing in his room that was not absolutely necessary. "Bring me nothing," he said "that is sent to me by my friends; make use of it for the religious." When anything was sent to him, he made a thousand protestations that it did not belong at all to him, that he was poor, and that he received as pure charity all that was given him or made for him. When he wanted even the smallest thing he asked for it as a charity. As a poor man he was most careful of Jesus Christ's property. He went so far as to write on little scraps of paper letters to confidential persons, in imitation of those great saints who on such little shreds left most edifying letters, rich in spirituality and a precious treasure of heavenly learning.

Much more averse was he from keeping money; he would not even have anything to do with counting it. In his visits, as he had to be informed of the receipts and disbursements of the alms of the retreat, he wished that the money should be counted, but usually ordered others to count it,

showing a disgust for the sight of money, though he said in the gratitude of his heart, “Behold, without our possessing anything, our Lord deigns to provide us with what is necessary.” When sometimes money was given him in alms, he did not take it, but desired his companion to receive it. Or if he was at the retreat, he caused it to be given to the superior or some other priest among the religious, saying with a great love for poverty, “I do not keep money, nor will I keep it.” If it was any considerable sum, he had it placed in the hands of the treasurer.

The treasures contained in holy poverty are neither known nor appreciated by him who is not a lover of it. Father Paul, who had always practiced it, kept up in his heart a great esteem and affection for it and sought in every way to counsel and teach its practice to his children of the Congregation. He had always a great zeal for holy poverty and held this great maxim that in the Congregation the spirit of holy perfection would be maintained as long as the true love and exact observance of voluntary poverty should exist. If this should be absent, cupidity would put everything into confusion, “and the strengthen and love of holy discipline will fall away.” He used, therefore, to call holy poverty “the invisible rampart of the Congregation,” because, as long as this existed, the spiritual edifice of religious virtue was in perfect safety. He spoke with ardent affection of this beloved virtue of his and sometimes exclaimed, “O what a happiness is community life!” And he also said, “In a community life a great treasure is contained.” Exhorting his religious in words that came from the depth of his heart, he said, “I recommend to you holy poverty. If you are poor, you will be holy; on the contrary, if you seek to become rich, you will lose the religious spirit, and regular observance will no longer flourish among you.” Sometimes he added, “The sons of Jesus Christ’s Passion ought to be stripped of all created things, and our Congregation ought to shine forth in this, to be poor in spirit, naked, and deprived of all things.” With his usual fervor he often said, “If our brethren of the Congregation keep up the true spirit of poverty, the Congregation will always maintain its vigor – I shall always say so. If I were at the point of death, I should leave three things behind as counsels: If the spirit of prayer, the spirit of solitude. and the spirit of poverty are preserved, the Congregation will shine both before God and man.” He was most watchful to prevent the introduction of even the shadow of an abuse contrary to holy poverty. He would not allow any legacy to be received, however specious the excuse might seem. On a certain occasion he wrote as follows, “Mr. N.’s sister-in-law wished to leave a legacy of a thousand crowns to one of our retreats for the celebration of a daily Mass. We cannot accept this, as it is against the Rules and vow of poverty; so this affair is

at an end. Our good God will, however, raise up other means to enable her to finish the work she has begun.” Thus, he determined on every similar occasion. He once heard from the superior of St. Eutizio that a kind person wished to leave a house at Soriano for the Congregation with the sole obligation of saying one Mass annually. The house seemed very convenient as a hospital for the retreat, but the good Father told the superior not to engage himself in such a treaty as he did not wish to open the way for any sort of income to the Congregation.

Neither infirmities nor pains prevented him from carefully guarding this his dear treasure. He was sick at the time that a particular Congregation was deputed by Benedict XIV to examine the Rules. One of the cardinals was trying to obtain permission for the house of study to possess property. In his illness Father Paul wrote a most earnest letter to the same cardinal to entreat him to prevent such a grant being made to a Congregation of poor, barefooted monks. In the same spirit of poverty, he made a powerful opposition to prevent Clement XIV from granting to our Congregation the power to receive bequests of goods, to be afterwards sold for the wants of the Congregation itself, as the holy prelates deputed by His Holiness to look over the Rules were thinking of doing. He said so much and prayed so earnestly that, at last, it was settled as he virtuously desired.

His vigilance made him notice carefully that in the building of the retreats everything should be conformable to holy poverty. If he ever remarked any small excess, he was not satisfied till it was removed. In building the Retreat of St. Sosio, a benefactor superintended the building and, for I know not what reason, made the great door rather superb. The servant of God, thinking it not conformable to holy poverty, complained much about it, disapproved of it, and was never satisfied till it was altered, though the order of the building might be destroyed. Father Paul preferred rather to guard poverty jealously than to keep to the symmetry of the edifice.

It is true that the good Father accepted the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, where the dormitories and cells are larger than is customary in our retreats. But he accepted it because the Sovereign Pontiff had given it to him. He took care that it should not serve as an example in the building of other retreats which might be erected.

As he who loves fears, the servant of God, who had a singular love for holy poverty, feared the slightest fault against it. He kept even every danger at a distance. With great zeal and fervor he prohibited the religious from keeping anything superfluous in their cells, and much more particularly did he take care that no eatables should be kept there. It is not possible to express

how earnestly he recommended superiors to attend to this. And that the practice might be established he expressly inserted it in the Rules, where he forbids even the greater superiors from keeping such things in their rooms. “Oh,” said he, “how necessary it is that in this superiors should be attentive, for on this much depends.”

Everyone will understand from this jealousy how painful to his heart was every failing that he witnessed against holy poverty. He did not conceal it, nor was he barely silent when it was necessary to speak and cry out that those abuses might not enter in which, though at first sight small, are capable, like little foxes, of ruining the vineyard of the Lord. He denounced them with great force and courage.

He wished, as we have said, that the poor religious should be treated with all charity in regard of food, but watched diligently that no abuse should be introduced contrary to the strict poverty we profess. He often reminded the cook to be properly economical and reproved him when he was not so. Even in coarse food, he would have a just proportion considered, and even in this his jealous poverty could find delicacy.

As poverty is most pleasing to God when it is most exact, the servant of God carried his vigilance into the most minute things and charitably expressed displeasure as was proper. If oil, paper, or anything else was used beyond what was necessary, if more fire was made than was required, if candles were burned longer than was proper, he noticed it and even went so far as himself to observe whether the wicks of the lamp were too thick, saying with great feeling that this was against holy poverty. If anything was broken through negligence, as it happens, he gave a reproof and a penance in order to remedy, as well as he could, the injury to holy poverty. These, it is true, seem small acts of virtue, but they are really proper and even necessary attentions to keep at a distance those abuses which insensibly disfigure and deform the countenance of holy poverty, which is in itself so beautiful. Hence, the saints have been enamored of it and even the Saint of saints himself who came on earth to lead a life of the greatest poverty.

Through the love entertained by Father Paul for this virtue, little known in the world, he was very far from asking anything and often refused what was offered him as a present. When he gave missions at Camerino, the gentlemen, appointed to assist him and watch over the good order of the mission, wished at the end to make a demonstration of their satisfaction by sending him a present worthy of their magnificence and charity. But the exemplary missionary

persevered in refusing it, and to show his gratitude merely accepted a little chocolate. He humbly thanked a lady who offered him some fine white pocket handkerchiefs, but it was not possible to persuade him to take them. Even with persons of the highest consideration, he showed that liberty which his love of poverty gave him. Cardinal Portacarrero, after Father Paul had given missions in his Bishopric of Sabina, offered him a purse of money as a mark of satisfaction and under the name of alms. But the good servant of God would not accept anything, though the retreats of the Congregation were very needy.

He showed his moderation still more manifestly in the reserve with which he asked favors of the Sovereign Pontiff. We have elsewhere noticed the friendliness and clemency with which several Pontiffs treated him, but he never abused it and was most reluctant in asking. It is not known that he ever asked anything for himself or for his relations, with the exception of spiritual favors. Though sometimes, the Sovereign Pontiff, to give him courage, almost urged him to ask. Though he was pleased with the liberality of His Holiness and grateful for it, he was very averse from asking because he was content to possess his poverty as a most rich treasure. Benedict XIV, of holy memory, in a secret audience to which he admitted him kindly, asked if he wanted anything and desired him to ask for something. Father Paul made no request but that he might be allowed to celebrate Mass an hour earlier than was customary, a very useful privilege for one occupied in holy missions or for one who traveled much, like Father Paul.

Once, after he had obtained the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, the servant of God went to an audience of Clement XIV with the superior of that retreat. As the wants of the religious were very great, the superior asked Father Paul to show to His Holiness, in the course of conversation, the wants of the retreat and the great outlay that was required, especially then when everything was in its commencement. Father Paul seemed to be convinced and persuaded. When they were admitted to the audience, the Holy Father, beginning at once to speak of the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, asked him how they went on or whether they wanted anything there, which seemed to be a fitting occasion for manifesting the wants of the retreat. The servant of God replied that they were even too well off and would say nothing more. When he returned to the retreat, the superior asked him why he had not told His Holiness of their wants. "What we have is sufficient," he replied, "We are poor." He spoke as if he would have said, "Poverty to which nothing is wanting has nothing of poverty but the name and the honor." Pope Clement XIV was well aware of this moderation and great reserve of the servant of God in asking. The Pope even

mildly complained of it to him, saying one day, “I admire your modesty, but you carry it too far.” It is true that sometimes, on account of our poverty, he was obliged to ask something in charity, but he asked with so much reserve, discretion, and humility that one of his benefactors attests that he was obliged to urge him to ask, even when want was pressing upon him. He desired all our religious to use the same reserve and greatly disapproved of importunity and indiscretion in asking. He did not, however, disapprove of quests being made when necessity demanded, to do what could be done<sup>10</sup> to furnish ourselves with necessary provision. In short, Father Paul was poor in effect but much more in affection. He loved to experience the effects of holy poverty, and it was his greatest delight to consider himself one of Jesus Christ’s poor.

The esteem was so great and the affection so sincere that he cherished for this virtue, that he rejoiced in learning that his relations were reduced almost to extreme poverty. Though he felt deeply the misfortunes of his neighbor, he seemed not to know how to be sorrowful on this occasion, because he looked upon poverty suffered with perfect resignation and patience as a real treasure. He caused Father John Baptist, their and his brother, to write the following letters which we cite the more willingly, as they clearly show the perfection of the good Father’s soul, which is also evinced in a postscript added by Father Paul to a letter written by Father John Baptist. “Father Paul has read and has caused me to read your pious letter. As he is occupied this post-day, he has ordered me to reply. I say to you with all sincerity that the way in which our Sovereign Lord continues to make you walk is the way chosen by Wisdom itself and uncreated Truth, Christ our Lord, who being Himself infinitely rich and Master of all the goods of nature, grace, and glory, nevertheless became poor, as St. Paul says, was born, lived, and died, stripped of all things and always poor (II Cor. 8:9). Happy then will you be if you know how to make a virtue of necessity and to rejoice in heart and will. Poverty renders you like unto that great Lord who says in His gospel, ‘Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 5:13). Oh, from how many evils of sin and worms of conscience are you preserved by being oppressed with corporal necessities! These must urge you to aspire more and more to the eternal felicity of heaven. I believe that the merciful eyes of God have looked upon Catherine with that charity you mention, in order that the affair of her marriage might not succeed, to prevent her from going into a world where all is abomination, and to preserve her entirely for Himself in a single state. If

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<sup>10</sup> Making a special appeal at a local church.



our brother Joseph takes care of his conscience and of the household, it is impossible that God, who is Infinite Goodness and who never abandons us in our necessities, should allow you to want what is necessary in order to live in your poor and abject state, in which He wishes you to remain, that you may die rich in grace. You may rely upon our prayers and tomorrow, Wednesday in Holy Week, I will say Mass for you all. We are well and after Easter we shall go out for missions. Continue in these good sentiments expressed in your letter. And may God bless you. I salute you all in the Lord, and am, etc., John Baptist of St. Michael.”

P.S. by Father Paul: “Read this letter with attention, for it is written with the light of God and by one who is so greatly and so constantly assiduous in prayer, that he has not his equal in the Congregation. Fear nothing. God wishes you to be very rich in grace in this life and afterwards in eternal glory. Therefore, He ordains for you the poverty you experience because this is the safest path to eternal salvation. I also will celebrate Mass for you all tomorrow. Never doubt of the divine assistance, for otherwise you would offer too great an injury to the Father of Mercies. Continue to live piously, to frequent the holy sacraments, prayer, meditation on the Sacred Passion, spiritual reading, and the flight from worldly things. By doing this you will witness miracles. Since the poverty we profess by vow keeps us from helping, you will have assistance directly from God. I rejoice that Joseph conducts himself well; happy he if he persevere. He will sing forever the Divine Mercies.”

“I have adored the Divine Will in the account you gave me in your letter of the first of last September, of the death of our sister Catherine. I hope she has been received into the bosom of the Divine Mercy, as our Lord has taken her to Himself, after she had been well prepared and strengthened by the holy sacraments, and especially after making her general confession, not only when in health, but also in her last sickness. These are clear signs of her eternal salvation, and we must not desire revelations to have a certainty of it, for this displeases God. The truth is that the great poverty in which she has lived, together with you two, and the scarcely less than extreme distress she experienced during the latter days of her life are great marks of her predestination to the glory of heaven. Therefore, you have great reason to rejoice in our Lord and to be more and more encouraged to patience in your trials. After these momentary afflictions, there is prepared for you, by the Divine Mercy, an eternity of happiness. I strongly hope, in the infinite merits of the sacred Passion of Jesus Christ and in the Sorrows of Mary, that we shall sing all together for eternity the mercies of Almighty God and shall say with the prophet, ‘We

are happy in the days in which you humbled us, for the years in which we experienced hardship’ ” (Cfr. Ps. 107:12).

In another of his letters, entering completely into the sentiments expressed by his brother Father John Baptist, he thus writes to his family, “Poverty, which is so greatly abhorred by the world, is a precious jewel, rich in every treasure before God. I write in haste, and I beg of God to shed abundant blessings on you.” Those who speak of the advantages of holy poverty with so much affection, energy, and feeling, and those who in their whole lives have practiced it with so much care and fidelity, clearly show that in detachment from all things they found that true Good, who alone is capable of consoling and satisfying the amplitude of the human heart, than which He is infinitely greater. “*Our God is greater than our heart*” (I Jn. 3:20).

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## **THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS**

Founder of the Congregation

Of the Barefooted Clerks

Of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ

Published in 1853

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### Of His Spotless Purity

Father Paul well knew that the Beloved of souls, the Divine Spouse, takes His greatest delight and dwells most willingly in those who, by their purity and spotlessness, are like so many white and fragrant lilies in the Church of God, “*who feeds among lilies*” (Cant. 2:16). Therefore, he was always most careful to preserve his innocence and purity unspotted. He practiced what he said with deep feeling to others, “*I would rather die than be violated.*” Up to the time of his death, he preserved his virginity unstained. Our Lord so disposed that the virtuous Father, without being aware of it, gave us a certainty that he possessed this gift, and that he had carefully guarded this precious treasure all his life. Speaking one day of his early years, he said, as if reproaching himself, that he had been lively and rather too much so; however, he added, “But not...” – giving clearly to understand by his words that God had preserved him from striking against those rocks on which so many young men are so miserably wrecked. On another occasion, at the time when he was suffering at Orbetello that very painful illness we have mentioned, thinking that no one heard him, he was pouring forth his soul affectionately to God and said, “You know, O Lord, that your Paul, through your grace, is not conscious of having stained his soul with wilful sin.” As he spoke these words, they were heard by Father Fulgenzio of Jesus, one of our religious, who for his spirit of prayer, sweetness, and prudence, was very dear to the servant of God, to his and our great consolation, and from him has been transmitted to us this sincere attestation of Father Paul’s innocence. Our Lord, as if He wished to manifest, by unusual and miraculous signs, the servant of God’s purity, ordained that, more than once, several persons should perceive a perfume and most fragrant sweetness, not to be compared to any ordinary scent, either in kissing his hand, in approaching him, in taking hold of his handkerchief, wet with perspiration after he had been preaching, or of any sign of the Passion which he had worn, or in entering the rooms inhabited by him, as is attested in the Processes. At Aspra, in Sabina, Doctor Felix Bruschi, having received the good Father in his house, perceived, as soon as he departed, in the room which he had inhabited, a singular fragrance, and considering it something extraordinary and wonderful, he called his family, saying with amazement and a deep

feeling of devotion, “Smell, smell what a perfume! What a fragrance! Oh, what a fragrance!” The same thing occurred at Fianello, when Signora Juliana Angelini and Antonia Pacelli, on entering the room Father Paul had occupied during the mission, immediately smelt a sweet perfume, unlike anything they had ever before experienced; and what is more, this scent, like something supernatural, caused in them a special devotion, by which they were more than ever confirmed in the opinion they entertained of the holiness and spotless purity of the servant of God.

The same wonderful fragrance was noticed in other rooms occupied by him; and one who for a considerable time had the consolation of being near him attests that, besides the fragrance emitted from his body and his habit “which I myself (these are the witness’s words) have perceived by remaining with him, especially in the Retreat of the Presentation at Orbetello, and that at Toscanella, when I served him as secretary and was obliged to be near him, the same fragrance was perceptible in the cell where he slept.” The same is attested by another religious, who, without being told of it by anyone, which might have caused it to be considered imagination or prejudice, more than once perceived an unusual perfume in Father Paul’s room; and once, when the servant of God left the Retreat at Cerra, the sweet perfume of the room he had occupied was perceptible for six months; and the religious, having mentioned this fact to the Father Superior, was told by him that he had noticed the same thing. Thus, our Lord more and more manifested the purity of His servant and made it an object of veneration. Paul, who knew very well how precious is this great treasure, renounced constantly and generously, in order to preserve and possess it, all the allurements and the great hopes that the world offered him, and among them an honorable and advantageous marriage, as we have said.

Many dangerous occasions and violent assaults, however, were not wanting to him, and one whose virtue was less solid and strong would have tottered, and perhaps have fallen. When he was one day at prayer in a Church, an immodest child went and placed himself at his side, and by indecent actions dared to tempt him to sin; the chaste youth who had, with a fervent love for holy purity, sincere charity and prudent discretion, that he might not cause scandal to those who were present, left the place and the hellish tempter without saying a word. By his hatred of sin and growing more fervent in the love of God, Paul continued his prayers with greater devotion. On another occasion, as he was leaving the Church when there was a great crowd, a bold and wicked



woman suddenly approached him and tried to tempt him; he resisted with the constancy of a hero, conquered and confounded the guilty woman, and after gaining the victory affectionately thanked God, who had preserved him in such danger.

It must not be imagined that his having preserved this heavenly lily, pure and unstained, was the effect of a cold and slow temperament, or of a torpid and obtuse mind. On the contrary, the servant of God was of an ardent and sanguine temperament, of a brisk and lively disposition. He was not wanting, especially when young, in that vivacity, beauty, and gracefulness, which expose innocence to greater danger, in proportion as it is less cautious and reserved. We may therefore conclude, that the preservation of so precious a treasure was in him entirely the effect of vigilance, circumspection, and a great love of virtue. So much the more because he did not always afterwards live hidden and, as it were, buried in solitude, but was obliged, for the execution of those works to which he was led by the Spirit of God and by that zeal which is the true child of charity, to converse on many occasions with persons of every kind; and in order to heal, by the most precious Blood of our Redemption, souls infected with sin, he was constrained by necessity to see and consider closely those frightful wounds which may cause injury to a less cautious physician, who does not provide himself well with those heavenly remedies that keep the abominable infection at a distance. The good Father, in order to rescue a soul that was miserably plunged in the horrible pit of this infamous vice, had no dread of approaching with great affection, confiding in divine assistance, those who had fallen; and, united by love to that God who is purity by essence, he rendered every assistance and did all in his power to enable the sinner to arise from the mire, and to wash himself in the bath of sacramental confession, without receiving the least harm from these efforts. The many different avowals that he had to hear never in any way troubled him, nor distracted his mind; nor in speaking to so many persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions, did he ever feel the flame of impurity enkindled in his heart, and as an act of gratitude to the Divine Goodness, who had preserved him, he told his confessor that from the time he was young, God gave him the grace to hear so many things against purity and yet to remain cold and unmoved as marble. It is, however, true that the servant of God, to live more closely united to God, and more remote from dangers, retired in the beginning to a solitary place and led most joyfully a life of solitude during all that time that obedience and charity for his neighbors would allow. And as he well knew that the lily of purity is not in safety unless it be

protected by the hedge of mortification, he undertook and persevered in that penitential life, which caused him to be sometimes considered a great sinner. He attended specially to the mortification of the appetite, for it was his maxim, and it was always on his lips, “He who does not mortify his appetite does not know how to mortify his flesh.” However mortified he knew his passions to be, and however great the gifts of God, he never relied on himself, but always practiced the greatest caution, and, as far as he could, avoided conversing with women. It was his saying, that the breath of woman is poisonous. He used also to call women “basilisks that kill by their glances, enemies that do not fly away at the sign of the cross like the devil.” Therefore, he concluded that it was necessary to keep as far as possible from women. He added, “As it is impossible that tow should not burn if it is put close to the fire, so it is impossible that a man, remaining near the fire, that is, near woman, should not fall; for as long as we have our bones covered with this skin,” he continued, “there is always cause for fear. Therefore, we must be always cautious. Many persons advanced in years, and who, for their merits, might be called pillars of the Church, have, in this way, fallen into sin, and shall we then trust in ourselves? Charity to all, but particular intimacy with no one.”

That he might have no chance of even meeting them when he was in solitude, if he heard that there were women in the neighboring forest, gathering wood or mushrooms, etc., the good servant of God would not leave the enclosure and deprived himself of this little recreation to avoid every shadow of danger. Thus, he fears who loves much, and to this extent is he cautious who always has in sight this treasure, which is preserved in weak and brittle vessels, as long as we live on earth.

He went so far, though he was of a most grateful disposition, as to show a great dislike for the presence of ladies, even benefactresses, in our retreats. If he went to speak to them, in accordance with their pious wishes, he went as if by force, and disengaged himself very quickly after a few words. This custom of speaking to women in few words, which he taught to others, he himself practiced with great exactness. He repeated with great fervor this admonition, “*With women, let your words be few and reserved.*” In fact, his words were all serious, devout, and solid. Nor did he dispense himself from this observance, however virtuous and pious the person might be to whom he spoke. As soon as he had said what was necessary, he modestly retired. The time that he was obliged to spend in conversing with these persons was a most instructive

and efficacious lesson for everyone who saw him, according to the expression of a good priest, who deposes it in the Processes, having himself noticed him to be, through his angelical modesty, rather an angel than a man. He would not have raised his eyes without believing that he had committed a serious fault, and it could reasonably be said that he would rather have had his eyes plucked out by the executioner than have fixed them on the face of a woman. His whole conversation breathed gravity and heavenly devotion, and was very quickly brought to an end. Hence was derived the great edification that he gave, of which the remembrance is still alive among us and elsewhere. Among the more singular facts, it is related that at the time the good Father lived at Monte Argentario and went down to Orbetello for works of charity, a Spanish lady began to confess to him and placed herself under his direction to be guided in the path of Christian virtue. This lady was singularly beautiful, and, as was commonly said, was the most fascinating woman in Spain. The servant of God had to hear her confession not only in the Church, but more than once at her house, when she was ill. He had also to speak to her on other occasions, when politeness required it. Nevertheless, he never looked at her, nor saw her face, and only recognized her by her voice.

But, as purity, which, like an innocent dove, is always in fear of snares, requires the greatest caution, these were not the only precautions that this most chaste servant of God took when he was obliged to speak with women; he would always have the room door open in which he was speaking, and placed himself in a situation where he could be seen by others, who were thus enabled to be so many witnesses of his modesty and purity. His companion was absolutely obliged to be in sight. It was his maxim that the companion is like the guardian angel, and that when two go, one protects the other. Though he might have to see persons of high rank, he never departed from this rule, which he had prescribed to himself. He once had to converse with a princess, who wished to consult him on the state of her soul; the door was closed by someone, and the good Father perceiving it, began to speak aloud, saying, "Open the door, open the door, for it is against the Rule of my Institute to be in a room with the doors shut." The mature age of the person did not make any difference to him. He was always constant in adhering to his praiseworthy rule. When he was giving a mission in the Diocese of Acquapendente, he was received at the house of a lady, who, in order to speak with more facility to the servant of God, asked him to go to her apartments. Father Paul refused to do this, because the rooms were not in

sight, but at a distance. The lady added, with simplicity of heart, “I am old, and you are older than I.” “Never mind,” said Father Paul, “never mind. I cannot, I cannot, if I am not in sight of my companion or some other discreet person.” He was so particular in the observance of this virtuous practice, that one day he went so far as to say to one of his spiritual daughters, and our benefactress, “I do not trust myself; in this point I have been perhaps too particular and have even failed in civility.” The servant of God showed that he well understood that politeness in a religious requires, before everything else, the exact fulfillment of his Rules.

However short his discourse might be, it appeared always troublesome and long to him, and he seemed like one afraid of fire. And though in his later years, being somewhat deaf, he had some difficulty in understanding, he would not on this account allow them to approach nearer to him than he judged proper, and he often made use of this excuse to avoid speaking with women. He could not always, it is true, avoid speaking with spiritual persons of a different sex, and his charity would not allow him to leave any soul deprived of consolation that had requested it; but he used the same caution with these persons as with others. He would have the door open and the companion in sight as much as possible. If these persons wished to speak to him more than once and had placed themselves under his direction, though sometimes he yielded, yet he was most watchful lest under the pretext of spirituality some sort of attachment should creep in. He wished that the direction should be entirely holy, heavenly, and given only for the love of God, for, as he felt in his heart, he did not wish to be a thief. These are his words: “I have been, and am still, a sinner and wicked, but a thief I have never been, for I have always been careful not to steal from God the love that is due to Him, to give it to creatures. Nor have I ever wished that others should be thieves on my account, loving me with a love that did not spring from pure charity; let us give to God what belongs to God.”

The good Father directed at Orbetello for many years Donna Agnes Grazi, who afterwards died in the odor of sanctity; and as this lady was a benefactress to the retreat, she received all our religious in her house. Father Paul had to remain there occasionally when he went to Orbetello on business of charity, but he always conducted himself with such circumspection and reserve, that this lady, though of great virtue, said to Father Fulgenzio of Jesus that she owed great obligations to Father Paul, for he had greatly benefitted her soul, but that he had mortified and humbled her extremely, treating her always with harshness and the greatest reserve, forbidding

her even to approach to kiss his hand. For the same virtuous and holy reason he refused to allow his hands to be kissed by other women, and purposely wore long sleeves that his hands might be concealed, and that he might keep them under the sleeves in a modest manner. He would have the habit long enough to cover his feet. Finally, he not only omitted nothing which could contribute to the protection of this holy virtue, which, like clear crystal, is tarnished by the slightest breath, but which could render him a living example of purity and chastity in the eyes of all, of the strong and the weak, of well-disposed persons and also of the malicious, before whom we are obliged to show an irreproachable life. This was the manner in which Father Paul conducted himself in conversing with women, and he never dispensed himself from these rules. When he was old he seemed to wish to exceed the exactness he had practiced in his youth. In his journeys, though he always walked modestly and quite recollected in God, if he perceived people coming at a distance, as if he feared that his eyes might in some way deprive him of the profound peace of his heart, he composed himself with greater modesty, and he used to say, “I am more afraid now than when I was young.” And with the same sentiments he wrote to a devout person, “I can do nothing for you, with the devout women you name, for I do not speak, nor will I speak to them, excepting when I am in the confessional. I fear more now that I am old than when I was young, *Martin, flee.*” It clearly appears in this servant of God, who greatly loved purity of heart, that in proportion as his love increased, so also did his fear. When he had fulfilled the duties of charity or politeness in conversing with women, he thought no more about them than if they had not been in the world. A lady asked him to recommend her to God in his prayers, and Father Paul promised to do it; the lady added that she wished him always to bear her in mind in his prayers and never to forget her. “Oh, no!” answered Father Paul, “When I have spoken to women and have tried to help them as far as I am able, I recommend them to our Lord, and then endeavor quickly to forget them.” This answer did not seem very polite, but the servant of God said that by this roughness the beautiful lily of purity is preserved, and he believed, on the contrary, familiarity with persons of a different sex to be a thorn that may wound it.

In order to know how greatly the servant of God loved and valued this angelic virtue, it is not necessary to see the reserved and serious manner in which he conversed with persons of a different sex, when he was obliged to do so; but on all occasions, from his words and method of acting, it was easy to perceive that he showed a deep love in his heart for holy purity. His

conversation was always most guarded; and however cheerful he might be at recreation, his words were like silver, well purified in the fire of the love of God. He seemed even to have a repugnance to pronounce the word “woman” or “female,” but when there was a necessity for showing of whom he was speaking, he found some other expression which could be sufficiently understood.

As holy modesty guards the heart and leads in the end to great delicacy of conscience and love of God, the revered Father, fully aware of the advantages that spring from modesty, endeavored to regulate every action, word, and movement by the most exact modesty, so that he became a living portrait of this holy virtue, and it sufficed to see him to have an esteem for it. It is not easy, therefore, to express how great were his pain and distress in the time of sickness. As he was destitute of strength, he was obliged to be assisted like an infant on those occasions, “*in which*,” (I will use the expression of St. Ambrose) “*the demands of nature had to be met*,” in which men of great spirituality and learning, knowing the miserable condition of man, are greatly humbled and confounded. He mildly complained of this his state, and said that he had been ashamed on one occasion to show his side, on account of some disease, even to his mother, and now, with great repugnance, he submitted to what gave him extreme pain. “Oh, what a mortification is this illness to me! But I am content, because God wills it so.” And on these occasions he raised his eyes to his crucifix and remained recollected in prayer, as his companions noticed, and showed them more than ever the living affection he cherished in his heart for holy purity and modesty.

A man who so highly valued holy purity and innocence, and who was well aware that it is impossible, without them, to diffuse the sweet odor of good example, was certain to desire and procure that his sons should possess this virtue in an eminent degree, and should guard it with all jealousy. All the desire of his heart seemed to be that his religious should shine in holy purity. He wished them to become, through this virtue, like so many angels, and never to neglect any means of protecting this virtue, which is easily lost by him who is not careful, for “*We hold this treasure in fragile vessels*” (II Cor. 4:7). He inculcated holy modesty at every time, in every place, because “we are always,” he said, “before the eyes of God, who is everywhere present.” He strongly exhorted us in our behavior, our manner, and our dress to form in ourselves a copy of the singular modesty of our Blessed Savior. He not only advised custody of the eyes and

mortification of the appetite, but that every action should be regulated by that virtue which gives to all things their due proportion, propriety, and fitness; and he recommended even the most minute observances, which, however, were all suited to this end. He wished that the habit should be worn shorter in traveling, but at other times it was to be long enough to cover the feet. When the religious were alone in their rooms, or reposing on their straw beds, he desired them to have their feet covered. He disapproved of immoderate laughter, which often proceeds from levity. Seeing an ecclesiastic one day laughing more loudly than was becoming, the good Father, with a serious countenance, reproved him, saying that the wise man is scarcely heard to laugh, and confirmed the advice by the words of the Holy Spirit: "*The prudent man smiles gently*" (Ecc. 21:20). Then turning to them all, reminded them that in due time and place recreation is necessary, but it must always be taken with religious modesty and gravity. On another occasion, he said to the same effect: "We have always reason to weep and not to laugh, like those who are in a miserable exile, far from their country." Rendering his counsel more efficacious by his example, he was always most moderate in this and showed, even in trifling actions like these, a great love of virtue.

He would have considered himself wanting in the affectionate care of a vigilant and attentive Father, if he had not, above all things, recommended to his dear sons great caution in conversing with women, which he always knew to be a very perilous thing, and, therefore, he often inculcated and repeated the advice of St. Paul, "*But the younger widows avoid*" (I Tim. 5:11), expressing with great energy the desire of his heart.

His religious were not the only persons to reap the benefit of the salutary advice that he gave regarding holy purity, but by words and example the servant of God sought to inspire in all an affection and esteem for it; and more particularly when he was speaking to religious persons, he showed an earnest desire that they should remain faithful to their heavenly Spouse, like chaste and innocent doves. He wished them to keep themselves, with all diligence, far from every danger of offending, not only against purity, but the smallest rule of exact modesty. He went so far as to obtain from the Divine Goodness the miraculous cure of a religious, that she might not be subjected to the examination of medical men for a disease that afflicted her. This nun belonged to the Monastery of St. Anne at Ronciglione. Having perceived a small swelling in her breast, she concealed it for a long time through her great love of holy modesty. But as the disease

increased, she was obliged by the Mother Superior, who knew of it, to inform the medical attendants and allow them to use the necessary remedies. The examination was made by two physicians and two surgeons, and all agreed that she had a cancer. One of these attendants applied to it an ointment which, instead of relieving, increased the evil and inflammation seized the part with pustules and little worms. To the great happiness of this nun, the servant of God, Father Paul, went at that time to give the exercises in the Monastery of St. Anne. Being informed by the poor nun of her serious illness, he said, “Alas, such a disease is not suited to the spouses of Jesus Christ. Therefore, without using any other remedy for three days, anoint yourself with the oil of the lamp that burns before the Blessed Sacrament; have faith and fear not.” This nun obeyed with humility and confidence, and after three days was perfectly cured, never afterwards suffering any inconvenience from that part. Thus, Almighty God clearly showed how pleasing to Him was the singular and ardent love that His servant bore to holy purity.

The sorrow that he felt in his heart when he saw little esteem for this virtue, which makes us become, as it were, angels on earth, can be easily imagined. A lady presented herself to him at Rome, dressed in a manner that was unbecoming. Fr. Paul did not see her, but hearing it from others, without looking at her, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground, he reproved her with great liberty, joined with holy prudence. He did the same on other occasions, for, with serious words, animated by the Spirit of God, he reproved in women the pernicious abuse of not being sufficiently covered. Hence it followed, that persons who knew him, aware of the great abhorrence he entertained for immodesty, were very careful to appear before him with great modesty and decency, for fear of receiving some reproof from the servant of God. Not only in private conferences, but in public, and from the platform, Father Paul, full of zeal, sought to enkindle in others a great love for holy purity. He exclaimed with much energy and force that women, even Christian women, seemed to have forgotten the holy laws of modesty and decency, to induce them, mindful of their obligations, to cover themselves more modestly. Persons that confessed to him were remarkable among others for their modesty and devout seriousness. At Orbetello particularly, where, during many years he labored for the glory of God, the fruit of his holy words was manifest. He heard the confessions of many persons who had placed themselves under his direction. Among them were ladies of distinguished rank; the servant of God made them become mirrors of modesty. If they were single, he would have them excel, particularly in



holy modesty, reserve, and the most edifying bashfulness. If they were married, he did not forbid them to dress in a manner becoming their state, but they were always to be adorned with modesty, and he added, “If your husbands wish you to act differently, you are not obliged to obey in this, but you are under a strict obligation to dress very modestly and decently.” Those ladies who did not appear in modest attire, he told with the greatest warmth of his zeal that they rendered themselves guilty before God of the injury they caused to souls, and hence it was that his penitents wore dresses as high as the throat, and military men, when they saw them, used to say, “These are penitents of Father Paul.” Those, therefore, who practiced the servant of God’s counsels, greatly edified their neighbors by their virtue and modesty.

Among the many, who profited by the words of Father Paul, was a lady who seemed to make no account of his declamations against immodesty from the platform, nor of his private admonitions. She dressed herself so immodestly that the ladies of Orbetello themselves could not endure it. But as she would not cover herself to her own merit, she was obliged to do so to her great mortification. The esteemed Father predicted to her that our Lord would punish her and cover her with confusion, and so it happened. Being attacked with a burning fever, she became covered, especially on the breast, with disgusting scabs, so that, against her will, she was obliged to be covered, and also to bear all the confusion that followed from it, for everyone believed this disease to be a chastisement of her impudence and a punishment of the opposition she had made to the servant of God’s advice.

Great and wonderful was the zeal with which this fervent servant of God combated the vice of impurity when he spoke of it openly. His words, though they were very circumspect and his opinions well considered, seemed to be so many darts hurled against that idol of abomination, and his reasonings were all directed to show the deformity of that vile monster, which, however, seems to be adored by many. From the ardent zeal with which Father Paul exhorted souls to the love of holy purity, from his words, which all breathed purity, and from his exemplary modesty, everyone who knew him was convinced that to defend this virtue from any attack, he would have given his life; therefore, it sufficed to name Father Paul, and to make known the advice he had given, to arrest the passion of a wicked young man who was attacking a chaste young girl. After the servant of God had given a mission at Valentano, in Montefiascone, before he left, a young girl of that place presented herself to him. Father Paul, enlightened by God for her greater good,

told her he had an important piece of advice to give her, and when she showed a great wish to hear it, he added, “My child, be on your guard, for you are to suffer a great combat and persecution with regard to purity.” He then encouraged her to have great confidence in God, who by His grace would render her victorious. After four years had passed, being alone at home one night, she was attacked by a wicked youth, who wished to deprive her of the treasure of holy purity; she saw no means of escape, when fortunately she remembered Father Paul’s words, and taking courage said to the man, that through charity he should respect Father Paul, who had desired her to preserve her virginity unspotted. At these words, as if a torrent of water had fallen on the flames of passion, the young man immediately gave up his wicked attempt, became confused, and departed without injuring the chaste young girl. Seeing the wonderful effect that Father Paul’s name had produced, on three other occasions, when she was attacked and had no human assistance at hand, she had recourse to Father Paul, invoked his name, and always gained a victory.

As if in reward of his spotless purity, and the diligence with which the good Father sought to make it loved and valued by all, our Lord granted him the singular privilege of knowing those who had miserably lost this most precious jewel. If any person infected with the opposite abominable vice approached him, he often knew it, for God caused him to perceive a loathsome stench as a sign of this abominable sin. From the time that he gave himself wholly to the love of God, His Divine Majesty was pleased to grant him this gift of discerning impure persons by the stench they emitted, and this was sometimes so strong and so disgusting that the servant of God could scarcely endure it, as it happened once especially. When a certain woman came to his confessional to make her confession, he perceived at once so pestilential an odor, that he thought it would kill him. Full of charity he sought to cure such disgusting wounds, and disposing these poor penitents for forgiveness, afterwards he washed them in the Precious Blood of our Lord.

If we knew how many persons he freed from this accursed vice, we might form a voluminous history of these conversions alone. He gained them all by his charity, mildness, and meekness. Charmed by these qualities, they returned to God so sincerely and heartily, that he was comforted in depriving hell of its prey, and they were filled with consolation. However mild and discreet the servant of God was in his behavior to these sinners, he never would permit ecclesiastics, who had become stained with the horrid vice, to advance into the sanctuary till they

had put themselves to a sufficient trial, living in unspotted chastity. If they did not promise to act in this manner, he courageously refused them absolution.

As the vice of impurity is easily contracted by those who live with little caution in this world, which may be called an infected country, '*rooted in corruption*' (Cfr. II Peter 1:4), the good Father failed not to suggest precautions which all secular persons should use. He taught them particularly to make use of temptations as occasions of acquiring a greater degree of purity. "Lilies," he wrote, " become whiter and more odoriferous when planted among thorns, than in the open soil; I mean that holy virginity becomes more white, pure, and odoriferous before God amidst the thorns of combats and the most horrible temptations."

And in another: "Regarding impure temptations, the Divine Majesty permits them, that you may exercise yourself in the humble consideration of your true nothingness, and may know that if God did not assist you, you would be capable of everything that is most horrible. Be, therefore, cautious, fly all occasions of conversing with the other sex, except through great necessity. Guard your eyes, your heart, and all your thoughts. Be modest and sedate, day and night, in your whole conduct. Be most jealous of this virtue of holy modesty, and an ardent lover of it. Trust no one, and, above all, have great diffidence in yourself."

He also writes similarly to another person: "At night sprinkle your bed with holy water, lie down to rest with great modesty, well covered, and well composed. Do not sleep lying on your back, but on the right side; keep the crucifix near you, and when you are attacked by the horrid temptation, take it in your hands, kiss the sacred wounds, then lift it up and say, 'Behold the cross of Jesus Christ, fly you accursed devils, I command you, in the name of the most Holy Trinity and of Jesus Christ, my Savior, and of ever blessed Mary, the mother of God.'"

As he knew that the good order of the family generally comes from the vigilance of parents, and that by their bad example and negligence the children sometimes learn vice before they understand it, he exhorted them, in the first place, to be very watchful and to love holy purity themselves, and then to give holy example to their children. The following are his words: "Trust not yourself; for cedars of Lebanon have often fallen. Though they be relations, sisters, servants, you must fear and fly.

"You must entirely break off the intercourse with the person you name; I see that there is a hidden attachment, and that false zeal, or the devil under this pretext, lays a snare for you, to

make you fall down some precipice. Such battles are only gained by flight... You should never keep young servants; I speak of women; your sons are growing up; I have been a missionary, and I know the great dangers and difficulties this causes. Even with your daughters you must be most cautious, and leave to them an everlasting example of great modesty.” Further, according to the advice of the Holy Spirit, he desired that special care should be taken of daughters. “The advice,” he says, “that you ask regarding the good education of your daughters, you already know perfectly well; young girls are precious jewels that must be rarely seen, as the relics of saints are seldom shown. Prayer, spiritual reading, the frequent reception of the holy sacraments, with due preparation, and particularly the flight of idleness; this, believe me, is a rule that will make you holy as well as your daughters.” With inexpressible fervor and zeal he recommended parents not to let their young children sleep with servants of any kind; and he advised them as much as possible to avoid letting brothers sleep with brothers, or sisters with sisters, but to let them all sleep separately. “Great care,” he said “is necessary in bringing up a family.” Much more did he exhort parents to be greatly on their guard, never to perform any action, or say a word, in presence of their children that is in any way contrary to holy purity and exact modesty.

When he gave these exhortations, the singular love which he had in his heart for holy purity clearly manifested itself exteriorly. As experience, accompanied by wise reflections, attentive readings, and the light of God, showed him the occasions in which incautious souls most easily fall, full of zeal, he detested and denounced the abuse of conversations, the profane custom of courting, and other similar things, that may be occasions, especially to youth, of staining their souls with the abominable vice. He detested with greater zeal the abuse by which some ecclesiastics debase themselves, their rank, and their sacred character, in allowing women to take their arm. He gave on this subject to a priest kind and efficacious admonitions in private, and he judged it expedient to make known to a lady, to whom a priest had given his arm, that in his opinion she had better not again give that priest admittance into her house. We have reason, then, to say that the love cherished by the venerated for holy purity was very great, and that neglecting no care or precaution, he preserved unstained in himself that most pure lily, which he so earnestly desired that others also should preserve.

## **CHAPTER XXX**

## Of the Servant of God's Obedience

The easiest method of gaining, in a short time, the victory over all the enemies of our salvation is to obey: *"The obedient man will speak of victory."* The soul, that gains such victories, afterwards tastes the sweetness of the spirit and of the hidden heavenly manna: *"To him who overcomes I will give the hidden manna"* (Rev. 2:17). But the easiest manner of practicing obedience is to keep the heart close to God and united to the Sovereign Good; for then the soul, at every call of obedience, determines at once to do what is commanded. Like wax, which when brought to the fire, melts and takes the impression and form that are given it, the soul abandons her own will to execute that of her Beloved. *"My soul melted when my beloved spoke"* (Cant. 5:6). As Paul was much devoted to the divine exercise of intimate communication and loving conversation with God, our Lord gave him a most exalted esteem for this great virtue; and he always sought to offer to God those sacrifices with which, as we give to God in them the best part of ourselves, namely, our own will, He is most pleased. These are acts of ready, entire, simple, and affectionate obedience. From his youth, even before he took the habit of the Passion, knowing the hidden treasure contained in holy obedience, he made a vow to obey not only his parents and other lawful superiors, but everyone who commanded him, according to the advice of the Prince of the Apostles: *"Be subject to every human creature for God's sake"* (I Peter 2:13). While he was devoutly praying one day in Holy Week in his parish church, on hearing those great words sung, *"Christ became obedient for us even unto death"* (Phil. 2:8), his heart was so struck that he kept saying to himself: "Jesus was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, and ought not I to be so." He then made a vow to obey all men for the love of God; and though, by the advice of his spiritual director, he had obtained a dispensation from it, he nevertheless obeyed, besides his parents, sisters, and brothers, even the persons who waited on him; and even in taking his food he wished to have the merit of holy obedience; he therefore depended on his family, and took no refreshment unless he was requested to do so; and though he was the eldest, and heir to the property of his uncle who left it to him, though he generously renounced it, he asked as an alms from his family the scanty nourishment of which he partook. The obedience of the young Paul displayed itself particularly in executing with the greatest

exactness whatever his bishop chose to order him. Having placed himself under the direction of that great man, Bishop Francis Gattinara, we may say that he did not take a step that was not regulated by obedience. Even in indifferent things he would not take a determination without the blessing of this worthy prelate. When Count Campi Patrizio of Alessandria, for the sake of the consolation he felt in discoursing with Paul whom he believed to be so dear to God, sometimes invited him to dinner at Castellazzo or Alessandria, Paul would not enjoy this pleasure unless he had the bishop's permission. Paul would not receive the favors of this pious gentleman without the merit of holy obedience. But when in the company of this his guide, Paul went to visit the Count, sat at his table with great humility and modesty, keeping his eyes cast down, receiving everything gratefully, tasting everything through politeness, but eating very little through mortification. He was once invited by a letter from this gentleman to go to Alessandria, as he wished to consult Paul on a weighty matter of conscience. The good youth replied that he would willingly go if he obtained leave from the bishop, who was his superior, and on whose commands he depended. Though the servant of God did not make his novitiate, the exercise of obedience and mortification of his own will, enjoined him by the directors of his own conscience, was for him equal to the severest noviceship that can precede the religious profession.

The new soldier of Jesus Christ, being thus exercised in holy obedience from the beginning of his fervent conversion to God, showed afterwards in the regulation of his whole life the progress he made in the perfection of this virtue. He was most obedient to all his superiors, in whom he recognized the person of God Himself. This is not the time to call to mind the obedience with which he executed every wish intimated by the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ; for to fail in this would be a very serious fault, and this sort of obedience is practiced by those who have not so much virtue; but we must remark that the servant of God obeyed with extraordinary faith, love, and humility. The mere mention of the Sovereign Pontiff filled him with respect; he uncovered his head and bowed, and I may even say, that every nod, every wish of the Vicar of Jesus Christ was to him an inviolable law. He believed he could do anything when the Supreme Pontiff honored him with a command. This lively faith and simple obedience gave him, as we have already said, strength to give, at an advanced age and when in a convalescent state, after an illness he had suffered a few days previously, a mission at Rome, in

the Basilica of St. Mary at Trastevere. This also produced wonderful effects in another severe illness that was judged to be incurable; for the servant of God, hearing from his companion that the Supreme Pontiff had said with a great feeling of charity: “I do not choose that he should die now; tell him that I give him a reprieve, and that he must obey. I will not have him die this time.” The humble servant of God, weeping through devotion and consolation, turned to our Crucified Lord and declared with lively faith, as we have elsewhere said, that he would obey his Vicar; he immediately became better, and afterwards regained his health so far as to be able to rise from his bed and celebrate holy Mass.

With profound respect and sincere reverence, the servant of God also obeyed the Prelates of holy Church, the pastors of souls, and ecclesiastical superiors; whenever he could, he assisted them by holy missions, spiritual exercises, and other works of charity, for the good of the souls committed to their care. He himself executed their orders as long as he was not prevented by his serious infirmities, which was for the space of fifty years. He never allowed himself to be so far carried away by fervor, that obedience had not at once power to stop him, even in the greatest excitement of preaching and moving the people. Sometimes on the platform, when he was exciting the people to compunction, and in order to obtain the result desired by his zeal, he was severely disciplining himself. The single word “obedience,” uttered by the Vicar General of Sutri, sufficed to make him give up the instrument which that good priest wished to take from him. There was not one among those whom he venerated as his superiors to whom he did not show exact obedience and submission. Though it might seem to him that he was treated with indiscretion, he did not for this dispense himself from the practice of that virtue, the merit of which he knew to be so much the greater, as the command is more hard and severe. We have elsewhere related what he had to suffer in the hospital of San Gallicano, where he faithfully practiced the advice of St. Paul, “*Obey your human masters with reverence*” (Eph. 6:5), taking all harsh treatment in good part.

As Father Paul was the Founder and Superior of his Congregation, it would seem that he had more reason to command than to obey; but as charity is ingenious in always finding means of exercising that virtue which is so pleasing to God, Father Paul knew well how to unite the authority and rank of superior with an obedience that was exact and most fruitful in merit.

After the Congregation had been founded, and the religious exercises arranged, the good

Father, though the superior of all, was most obedient to the signals, and punctually attended the choir and the other duties of regular observance, to the great edification of the community. It was his holy custom always to obey his spiritual director in such a manner, that, giving up his own will, he blindly followed holy obedience. After he had Father John Baptist for his companion, he obeyed him with the simplicity and docility of a child, as his superior; and when he could be his confessor and director, Father Paul, in all things, placed himself under his direction, and, as long as he lived, confessed to him and was directed by him, so that from that time it might be said that he did not take a step without his permission. He thus wrote to one of his penitents: "This morning, as it is the day, I will ask Father John Baptist to let me go to Orbetello, and if he allows me, it will be tomorrow that I shall be in San Francesco; and if not, we must have patience." We have already said that Father John Baptist, like a skillful workman, labored with hard and repeated blows to make of the soul of Father Paul a stone more and more pleasing in the sight of God, that it might be placed afterwards in the heavenly edifice. With sharp and biting words, and a contemptuous, severe, and rigorous manner, he humbled, mortified, and thwarted Paul in his most innocent inclinations. The servant of God preserved his humility and tranquillity, and sometimes said to his companion, who was more than once present at these mortifications, "Father John Baptist won't let me eat; we must have patience; he does it for my good; he mortifies me, and I am extremely obliged to him because he seeks the advantage of my soul." Regulating himself by faith, every director he had exercised over him the same authority and was readily obeyed by him.

After his good brother's death, he took for his confessor Father John Mary of St. Ignatius the Martyr, and to this religious he rendered the same obedience as he had done to his brother. Father John afterwards deposed on oath: "After the death of that servant of God, I came into the office of his confessor, and I can affirm that he was most submissive to what I said to him, and most obedient to what I commanded." And he adds that in the latter days of his life, the servant of God sometimes omitted to communicate, fearing some irreverence on account of the attacks of vomiting which seized him; but when he sent him word, through the infirmarian, that he was to communicate, because this irritation might be the work of the devil, the humble servant of God immediately obeyed, receiving Holy Communion on the appointed days. His obedience, which had for its rule those instructive words of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, "*Be subject*



*to every creature for the sake of God*” (I Peter 2:13), was not satisfied with this. He allowed himself to be ruled by his companion, in his office of infirmarian, as if he had been a child. These are his companion’s words, to which he deposes with the greatest candor and sincerity. He is better able than many others to bear witness in favor of Paul, having been continually occupied with him: “I was appointed to be his companion, therefore, Father John Mary said to him, ‘Obey Brother Bartholomew in everything as regards yourself,’ and the poor old man in consequence obeyed me like a child. If I told him not to eat more than three chestnuts, he ate only three. The servant of God liked fruit very much, and if I told him to eat one, or a half of an apple or pear, he would not eat more; of cherries I gave him about five or six, and he was satisfied. Sometimes I told him to go to bed, and at once he obeyed. When it was time to rise, and he wished to do so, if I told him to remain quiet a little longer, he obeyed; in a word, he was like a most obedient child in everything. When he was disgusted with food and could relish nothing, he would have liked to eat a raw onion or a little garlic. If I said I would not give it to him, he shrugged his shoulders and did not reply, only saying: ‘Patience, this shall be for the love of God.’ And sometimes he added: ‘You do well to mortify me thus. I am obliged to you.’ In a word, the things in which he obeyed me are so numerous that I cannot name them. I know well that I was greatly astonished and edified, as also were the religious who were present. I must confess that in truth I prohibited Father Paul many things, or caused others to do it, to try his obedience, to see what answer he would make. I have been always edified, for the servant of God, in all things that were either commanded or refused by me, showed the greatest obedience and docility.”

He had for infirmarian and assistant another brother, who commanded him even more resolutely, and, as he himself deposes, said to him with greater liberty, like one who possessed absolute authority: “Father, take this; go to bed; Father, you must say your Office, it is the time,” and similar things, which would have been indiscreet with a person less virtuous than Father Paul. The servant of God obeyed, and sometimes said most pleasantly when he was with seculars: “Ah, I am obliged to obey; see how he orders me; what am I to do?” Sometimes, in the same pleasant manner and with gaiety, he said: “Oh, what patience one must have with you!” and then said no more. On one of these occasions, when the brother said, “Perform the obedience, Father,” he said, “When obedience is in question, we must submit.”

Any one who, under pretext of his office or employment, desired to exercise his obedience

always found him ready. In the time of illness he was most exact in obeying the medical men and fulfilling their orders. Remedies were sometimes ordered for him, which, from his personal experience, or from his observations on the illnesses of other sick persons, whom he had always loved to wait upon, console, and assist charitably, he very well knew would be of no benefit. He took them, however, three or four times or more, and then wisely laid them aside, saying: "I have obeyed, and feel that they do me more harm than good; I have taken them through obedience, but our Lord does not will that they should do me good." This obedience sometimes cost him very dear, but he was not displeased on this account. He rejoiced in being able, to his own cost, to practice that virtue, which our Lord, for our love, exercised so far as to die on the Cross. After his long journey, in 1787,<sup>1</sup> to visit our retreats founded in the country, the poor old man, after his return to the Retreat of St. Angelo, was seized with a serious illness caused by fatigue. The religious, wishing to do for him all that was in their power, called in the aid of physicians. When they saw his state, they judged it proper to apply two large blisters, six fingers wide, to his thighs. The servant of God foresaw that these blisters would put the whole frame of his body in agitation, and would bring on his usual pains of sciatica, gout, and rheumatism, and he said so plainly; but as his opinion was not listened to, he submitted to that of others and obeyed the physicians; but it happened just as the poor sick man had said; the blisters caused most dreadful pains, which tormented him for forty successive days, and which he endured with wonderful patience, never uttering a word of complaint. He showed no less virtue in obeying a physician at Orbetello in another illness. The servant of God, by his severe penances, his numerous journeys made on foot through rains, winds, and fogs, without cloak or hat, and by the great fatigue he had undergone in missions, by his continual disciplines with chains, in a word, by every kind of austerity, had brought on an attack of excruciating pain, which rendered him incapable of moving in bed. The surgeon of the King of Naples, who was then at Orbetello, chose to make use of mercurial ointment, which the servant of God objected to, as he knew the violence of the remedy and did not wish to try it, as it was hurtful to him; but to obey the surgeon he overcame himself, and submitted to this treatment, of which, for the rest of his life, he felt the unfavorable effects. Such was the obedience of Father Paul, most prompt on every occasion, and always exercised with great presence of mind and tranquillity, the effect of his ardent desire to accomplish in all things the most holy will of God.

<sup>1</sup> This date is incorrect.

It seemed as if the Divine Goodness condescended, after the venerable Father's death, to give a visible attestation of the docility His servant had practiced during life; for when the mask had been taken with plaster, his mouth remained open; and though his body was as flexible as if he had been alive, his companion could not, with all his efforts, succeed in closing it, but feeling himself, as he attests in his deposition, inspired to speak to Father Paul's corpse, as if he had been alive, said: "Father Paul, you always obeyed me during life, I desire you to obey me also after death. As a mark of obedience, close your mouth." After these words he closed the mouth as he had tried to do before, and it did not again open, as various persons attest who were present. It might have happened accidentally, but the witnesses who depose it thought they perceived in it something supernatural.

The obedience of the servant of God being, as we have seen, so exact and virtuous, the spirit of Father Paul had certainly the characteristic of that true wisdom which, according to the Apostle St. James, lets itself be guided and ruled, for he passed his whole life in continual obedience to the holy will of God, manifested to him by the mouth of his superiors and directors, and his very death was a death accepted in the spirit of resignation to the loving dispensations of the Divine Majesty. It does not seem possible that he, who had made such progress in the safe school of obedience, should not have taught the practice of the same lessons, and should not have guided, by this easy, short, and safe path, those persons whom he governed and directed. In fact, from the sentiments he expressed in a letter to the Congregation, inculcating the practice of this holy virtue, we may know the great wish he felt that all should love obedience. "Ah, my dear brethren," he writes, "let there be, above all things in you, true and perfect charity, uniting your hearts in such a manner, that you may have only one heart and one will in God. Give yourselves so into the hands of your superiors, that they may do with you what they please, when it is not opposed to the divine law, *"may that never happen,"* and to the holy observance of the Rules and Constitutions. You know that Jesus Christ was obedient unto death, and the death of the cross; therefore, you ought to die to yourselves, burying your own opinion and judgment. Renounce, my dearly beloved, your own understanding, knowledge, and will, giving yourselves, like dead men, to your superiors. So long as you do not give yourselves, like corpses, into the hands of obedience, you will never taste what it is to serve God. Pant as eagerly after the destruction of your own will as the hart after the fountain. Let it seem to you that you have lost that day in

which you have not resisted your own will and submitted it to another. Often offer your will in sacrifice to God, and you will feel the greatest satisfaction. The more obedient you are, the more tranquil and indifferent you will be to one office or another, for you will be truly espoused to holy obedience and will love it in Jesus Christ, who is the Sovereign King of the obedient. Thus, you will render yourselves more capable of assisting the holy Church and our poor Congregation by prayer; for Jesus hears the prayers of the obedient.”

Writing in the same sentiment to a devout person, he expresses himself: “Our sweet Jesus allowed Himself to be clothed and stripped by the ministers of death at their pleasure; they bound and unbound Him, pushed Him to this side and that, and the most meek and Divine Lamb submitted to all. Oh, sweet meekness of Jesus, our supreme God! Continue to prepare yourself in every way like a meek little lamb; rejoice when your designs, though good, are frustrated; the time will come when God will enable you to bring them to true perfection.”

He wrote to a religious: “Well, my child, how are you? Does not your heart wish to ascend on high? But you must have patience and wait till the Divine Spouse gives you permission. I hear from Sister N. that you are ill of fever. I believe that you wish to be most obedient, and even after death. You know well that you do not have leave to quit your prison yet and go home to your country; for the poor Father, whom the Divine Majesty has given you to direct your soul, would wish, if it should so please God, to be with you to wish you a safe journey to heaven. And do you wish to leave me so soon, when the need is greatest. Let the work of the Congregation be completed, and then go in peace. I grant you permission. Laugh a little at my folly. ...I hope the Divine Majesty will forgive this foolish talk of mine.” The folly of the servant of God was holy folly, wiser than any earthly wisdom, and the worker of wonderful effects. The nun to whom he wrote recovered her health, and proved how efficacious were the lessons given by him who was both a most meek disciple and an excellent master in the virtue of obedience.

## **CHAPTER XXXI**

### **Of Father Paul’s Profound Humility**

Though every building is sustained by the foundation, and from its depth and solidity derives

whatever it possesses of security, stability, and firmness, nevertheless, that part of the building which is underground has ordinarily neither beauty, ornament, nor splendor. But in the holy city of God, of which every soul is a figure which forms in herself, by the grace of God, a most noble temple to the Divine Majesty, even the foundation is beautiful, noble, and entirely formed of precious stones; therefore, it not only gives to the edifice most lasting firmness, but also adds to it beauty and splendor, and it is also most beautiful to behold with all the application of the mind and consolation of the heart. This foundation is formed by holy humility. We shall easily understand how profound and excellent was the virtue of humility in Father Paul, if we consider that he was truly a Christian who, with the light of faith, continually meditated on the Passion and death of the great Son of God, where, as in a divine school, every virtue is learned of which Jesus crucified is a most perfect example and master; but in a special manner the virtue of humility, which by St. Paul is called the virtue of Jesus Christ, *“that the power of Christ may dwell in me”* (II Cor. 12:9), as being that which shone forth most brightly and clearly in our Divine Redeemer. In the Passion we see the ineffable humiliation of the great Son of God, who, being the Lord of Glory, the only-begotten Son of the Divine Father, and God equal to the Father, deigned to become, for our love, the opprobrium of men and the abjection of the people, and to die on an infamous gibbet between two malefactors.

In this divine school, therefore, Father Paul conceived a most high esteem for holy humility, and practiced and possessed it in so perfect a degree, that the practice of it seemed to be not only easy but natural to him. Employments the most contemptible in the eyes of men, the most atrocious insults, the most painful affronts, were all received by him with the same evenness of mind, and he seemed to derive from a food so bitter to our corrupt nature his most agreeable nourishment. True, it is that this virtue, which by its nobility and beauty, infuses esteem and veneration even into the hearts of those who do not practice it, drew towards him, against his will, great marks of respect, love, and gratitude; it is also true that, during the greatest part of his life, he had to exercise the office of superior, and to see all the members of his Congregation receive from him orders, advice, and direction; but amidst honors he seemed as if he were a dead man, unable to raise himself from the ground, so firm was he in holy humility. In his office of superior his whole method of ruling, and the spirit of his government, was true and cordial humility, the beloved daughter of holy charity. Without affectation, without effort, or artificial

manner, he so well united to authority, which always seems to carry with it something hard and burdensome, the sweetness and affability of humility, both in his voice and conversation, and in his manner and behavior, that humility might not become contemptible, and that authority might be beloved, esteemed, and venerated.

As much as this servant of God loved humility, did he detest and abhor, with the deepest hatred, the accursed vice of pride. His fear of being surprised by pride was constant and great, for, from that sin all others proceed, and he sought by every means in his power to keep at a distance from it. Bishop Gattinara of Alessandria, from the time he began to guide him, told him, as a wise director, that he must always guard against pride, vain glory, vanity, and presumption, and attend to the acquisition of true humility; that these vices may be compared to the little stone that threw down the great statue seen in a dream by Nebuchadnezzar; and as it struck down this great figure, which in all its greatness was broken to pieces and crumbled to dust, in the same manner, said the good prelate, these vices, though small, may, by increasing, cause the destruction of great sanctity. It is not to be expressed with what devotion, esteem and veneration Paul listened to the words of this wise prelate. He made them his constant rule, and when he became Founder, he used to say to his religious: “Children, and most dear children, be very vigilant over yourselves; remain passive in your nothingness; know that one little grain of pride is sufficient to bring down to the ground a great mountain of sanctity; therefore be humble and enter deeply into the knowledge of yourselves.”

Almighty God, who intended to raise him to great perfection, in order to ground him in that virtue which sustains the spiritual edifice, had given him a great knowledge of himself, and with so strong and clear a light kept before the eyes of his mind the sight of his own nothingness and miseries, that once when he was in interior dereliction, he said: “Our Lord has taken from me all other graces but the grace of knowing myself.” From this knowledge it was, that though, after undertaking, when about nineteen years of age, that new and fervent mode of life which he termed his conversion, he had not, as far as he knew, committed even a venial sin deliberately. He nevertheless always considered himself a great sinner, feared much regarding all his own works, and judged everyone to be better than himself. If it had been permitted, he would always have walked, as he said, with his hat in his hand, because he met in the streets so many persons, though he did not know them, who served God much more faithfully than he, who did nothing

that was good. For this reason, before the Rule had been approved, he always had his head uncovered through his lively faith in the Divine Presence, as well as through respect and veneration for the servants of God, whom he met without knowing them. The more he advanced in virtue, the more he thought himself filled with vices. Compared with him, every other person was not only good, but a saint; wherefore, when he had heard the confession of some great sinner, he had no sooner given absolution than he would, as he said, have knelt down to recommend himself to his prayers. And as he always had a graceful and pleasing manner of saying, with true humility and simplicity of heart, things which can never suit one who speaks with an air of mystery and ostentation, he added: "Compared with me, policemen may become, and may be declared, doubles of the first class, with an octave." So low was the opinion he had of himself as expressed in words that proceeded from the abundance of his heart.

As he thought himself so wicked and abominable, there was no person, however base, from whom Father Paul withdrew, or whom he considered unworthy of his friendship. He went so far as to embrace the executioner in public at Orbetello, as if he had been one of his dearest and most intimate friends. As the mind, when it takes delight in good things, ingeniously finds out images that strongly express and keep constantly before it these thoughts, Father Paul, full of the consciousness of his own unworthiness, imagined himself to be a horrible dragon under the sacerdotal vestments. As he went to the holy altar to celebrate, he kept repeating these words to himself: "*The hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners*" (Mt. 26:45). Fully persuaded that he was full of defects, though he could not usually find out any special failing in himself, he humbled and annihilated himself before God and others, to the great edification of those who saw him.

As the proud man, even from the best things and the things of God, wickedly takes occasion of fostering his pride, and converts into poison even the sweetest and most fragrant flowers, so, on the contrary, Father Paul, who was truly humble, took from everything an occasion of humbling and confounding himself. The dispensations from the practice of observance, which his infirmities obliged him to use, the requisite obedience to his confessor and to the physician, what humiliation did these things cause to the saintly old man! From time to time, urged by the interior conviction of his soul, he said with tears in his eyes that he did nothing good; that for his sins Almighty God had justly deprived him of the consolation of following the community; that

he was a pest and of no service except to give bad example and fool others in the service of God and holy observance. It is true that he did not become discouraged nor disheartened, but sought out new motives for confidence in the Divine Goodness; he was however deeply penetrated with holy fear at the sight of so many miseries. “Oh, poor Paul,” he would say, “with so many years of life, so many sacraments, with so many benefits, so many graces, so many Masses, missions, spiritual exercises, so many confessions, and other sacraments administered, how will he go before the tribunal of God! But I will not be afraid, ‘*The Lord is good to those hoping in Him, and to the soul that seeks Him*’ (Lam. 3:25). I confide in the infinite merits of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. I abandon myself wholly and entirely into the arms of the Divine Mercy. May the Divine Will be accomplished in me, by me, and over me, now and for ever.”

From this deep sentiment of his own misery proceeded a great contempt of himself, which from his youth was planted and deeply rooted in his heart by the grace of God, from whom alone can proceed sentiments so contrary to that esteem which each one is too ready to form of himself. The older he grew, the more he seemed to himself to be worthy of universal detestation. On this account he willingly employed himself in fatiguing, abject, and contemptible labors, as if they alone were suited to him. As long as he had strength, he would not allow anyone to sweep his room or make his bed for him, though he was half crippled. He often washed the dishes, cooked, waited on the sick, ate on the ground, knelt before the religious when they left the refectory to go to the church, and weeping and beating his breast with great humility, said to them, “Pray for this poor soul of mine.” On many occasions he asked pardon of the religious, especially on Maunday Thursday, before Holy Communion, saying with great feeling, “I ask pardon of Father Superior, of the priests, the ecclesiastics, and the brothers, for all the bad example I have given; pardon me for the love of God, and pray for me, who am full of imperfections and vices; pray for this poor soul of mine, for on my account the Congregation does not increase.” And in saying these words he wept bitterly. He was accustomed on these occasions to kiss the feet of each religious, but when he was more than usually infirm and could not practice this act of humility, he would say, “I should wish to kiss the feet of all the religious, but I cannot. I will kiss those of Father Superior. If I cannot do what I wish, I will kiss the ground, and thus, I intend to kiss the feet of all.” It is true that such acts are not rare nor extraordinary, but the spirit of humility and deep sentiment of his own miseries, the tears, the



sobs, the fervor with which the servant of God spoke and practiced such acts of humility were quite singular and peculiar to him. Therefore, at the sight of him the religious were touched and edified, and when any seculars happened to see him, they were lost in admiration to behold this good old man throw himself on his knees before them, earnestly and with tears begging them to recommend him to our Lord, saying, “Pray to God that I may save my soul.” Even among the novices he practiced these acts of humility with so much feeling, that it caused edification and devotion not only in public, but very often also in private. He asked pardon first of one, then of another, fearing, through his disagreeable manners, as he said, that he had given some occasion of annoyance. He did it with much more feeling when he clearly perceived that anyone was dissatisfied with him. The servant of God once gave a mild correction to a brother, who did not take it in good part, as he should have done, but sought to excuse himself, showing a little impatience and even anger. The servant of God, perceiving with holy foresight that this brother was to be gained by means of humility and mildness, bowing his head and extending his arms with great humility and affection, asked his pardon, saying: “Have compassion on me, brother, and have patience.” This humble mildness had so great an effect, that this brother entered into himself, repented of his want of virtue, and was edified with Father Paul’s humility. He sometimes asked pardon of the brother, his companion, when he should rather have reproved him, for, as he himself attests, he sometimes exercised the good Father’s patience, and yet the poor old man spoke to him with great humility, and sometimes took his hand suddenly and would have kissed it had he not quickly withdrawn it. Once Father Paul knelt down to ask his pardon, saying, as he was accustomed to do on such occasions, “Pray for this poor soul of mine, that God may show it mercy.” He said this, added the brother, with such a sentiment of humility that it made me weep.

In order, however, to show more clearly the feeling with which he practiced these acts of virtue, it will be well to relate here the expressions he made use of in a letter to one of our religious: “As I have a little time to spare, I ought to ask your pardon, which I do on my knees, if I write to you sometimes in a tiresome and melancholy way, expressing myself badly, for, believe me, I am in a most deplorable state, and may God preserve everyone else from such a state, *‘but I deserve to suffer in this way’*, and it is a miracle that *‘I am not confounded’* entirely. I have, for the most part, great difficulty in bearing with myself, and there are days (these, as we

have observed, were days of great desolation and tormenting interior dereliction), and almost all my days are such, when I do not know how to bear myself. Yet with great labor I endeavor to bear with others, but I always fail; therefore, pardon this poor man eaten up with vices. Pray for me and give me your blessing.”

It was because he was deeply convinced of his miseries and sins, as he said, that he so often declared in words, which came from the bottom of his heart and were the sincere language of his most humble soul, that he was the scum of the world. He often said that he was ignorant, that he had not studied. He wished this to be believed and made it known to all, even the youngest. Nor had he any fear of losing that esteem which he abhorred extremely. Once, when he went to make a visit to the Retreat of the Presentation, he assisted at a dissertation in philosophy, given by our young students. When he had left the room where the dispute had been held, he expressed to the Father Superior that he was pleased with the students; the superior said, “They would have been to be pitied if they had not done more, for they have had suggestions,” as he expressed it, “from your reverence.” The servant of God replied, “Suggestions from me? Do they not know that I have no sense?”

He always had a great opinion of what was done by others, and though he had a quick and penetrating mind, solid judgment, and great talents, one would have thought, to judge from his own opinion, that he was stupid, clumsy, and fit for nothing. He therefore said, when he spoke of anything done by others, “How well you have done this. I never should have managed it so well.” In everything, when the affair was of consequence, he took advice and willingly embraced the opinions of others, saying with great humility, “Father or brother so and so has good judgment; I am a poor ignorant man and can succeed in nothing.” Everyone can imagine how much these expressions confounded the religious who well knew the prudence and wisdom of the good Father. Much more were they astonished and edified by the protestations that he was constantly making that he was a horrible sinner. He said from his heart that he was the stench, the pest, the scandal of the Congregation; that he was like a raven amidst so many doves; that he was most unworthy to wear the habit; that he merited to be expelled as a scandalous person, to be forgotten, shunned, and abandoned by everyone as a filthy lump of dung; and that only the charity of his brethren could endure him without treating him as he deserved. Frequently, as if grieved to the heart, he repeated, “In the Congregation I leave you nothing but the stench of my

vices and bad example.” He feared to join the common recreation, lest, as he said, he should give bad example to the religious. Sometimes he said that he was a sink of vice, from whom nothing could proceed but putrefaction and filth. More than once he humbled himself even below the condition of beasts. Speaking with a religious, he said, “Today is the Feast of St. Ignatius. I have recommended myself heartily to him, for he is my friend.” “Certainly,” was the answer, “he is your friend for you are also a Founder.” “Be silent,” said Father Paul, “for though St. Ignatius is a great saint, I am worse than a beast.”

And, as in the exercise of holy virtue, he was cheerful and often facetious. Being one day at the Retreat of Terracina, on the Feast of St. Anthony, Abbot, after celebrating Holy Mass, he went and knocked at the superior’s door. Father Superior, hearing the servant of God ask whether he had blessed the beasts in the retreat, felt surprised and answered that he had not yet blessed them. “Then,” said the servant of God, between tears and smiles, which showed his conviction of his own miseries, as well as the pleasure he took in this pleasing act of humility, “when you go to bless them call me, for I have told brother Bartholomew, my companion, to put some ribbons on me, that I may be blessed. For I also am a beast.” And after these words he retired to his room, contrite and humbled. He even thought himself worse than assassins, saying, “I am worse than Mastrillo, the famous assassin; if I were known as I am, stones would be thrown at me.” He knew that wretched man well, and through compassion for his soul had long sought after him to help him to rise from his unhappy state. “Pray,” he would say, “for this poor sinner, for there is no one like me on earth.”

With the same sentiments, and with a vivacity such as cannot spring from affectation, he expressed himself in his letters, from which we will make a few extracts for the reader’s edification. “Let it suffice to you to know,” he writes to a devout person, “that my deplorable miseries increase without end and without relief. God be blessed. Do not speak of me but to recommend me to God, and to have me recommended. I wrote, two or three posts since, a letter to Sister N., in which, with the greatest plainness, sincerity, and humility, I showed her my poor soul at the foot of the cross, asking an alms. I showed it to her, horrible and disgusting, pouring forth filth on every side, meaning to signify my imperfections, that she might recommend me to God, but I have received no answer. Thanks be to God.” With the same feeling of profound humility the servant of God writes: “I have celebrated the feasts as usual, always plunged in the

ocean of my misfortunes and miseries. On the third of the coming month of January, I complete forty-three years; I wish I may not see the forty-fourth. I shall not be more perfect, for up to this time I am destitute of virtue. Oh, how it grieves me to live thus! I wish to leave the world soon, but may the Divine Will be one in me, and in all things.”

In another he says: “Paul’s infirmities are such that God knows them; his soul is all sickness and wounds, from which nothing proceeds but the filth of numberless imperfections and diseases. Ah! God knows where my most dangerous sickness will lead me. Let us pray God that it may bring me to a happy death.” Hearing that a holy soul thought he had some light regarding the good state of his interior, he answered: “I make no account whatever of what N. says of me, it is most likely the locution of his own mind. Certainly I am dear to God, and why? Precisely on account of being the wicked wretch I am.” He added, “That Jesus came not to call the just but sinners. Oh, how dear are we sinners to Him, and I more than others, because I have made Jesus weep more than all others. Tell all this to N., and tell him that Paul says all this with veritable truth, as he knows it in God.” “I rejoice in God,” these are his words in another letter, “for nails that keep me on the cross, though they are little, for I am not only little, but a most filthy and disgusting little insect.”

Writing to a worthy priest, he opens his heart to him: “Mine is horrible nothingness, which seems to me more horrible than hell, on account of the wickedness that may bring forth an infinity of sins. Ah, my Lord Jesus Christ, beware of me, for I shall be worse than Luther and Calvin if You leave me one moment! Oh, how greatly I fear myself!” Again he wrote: “I am more and more confirmed in the belief that, though our Lord will infuse great light into our young men, He will not give it to the wicked old man, *‘grown old in sins,’* (Cfr. Daniel 13:52) (which reproof he applied to himself). I see that I merit a thousand hells, and I greatly fear to lose the Supreme Good. Ah! pray for the most wretched sinner in the world; pray that God may be appeased!”

Through this most sincere humility he wished that others should not speak in praise either of him or of the Congregation. “Do not,” he writes to a penitent, “talk about me to the religious, say only what is purely necessary, according as the conversation may lead. The humble soul should speak of her Father with humility and reverence, and never with studied praises, which displease God, for to God alone is praise, glory, and honor due.” And to the same, “If you speak of me,

such we speak with disgust and also with compassion.”

“For this work,” (the foundation of the Congregation) he says in another, “we must thank God, and speak of it with great humility, for we have nothing to do with this work, as it belongs entirely to God. When shall we be so humble that we shall make it our glory to be the opprobrium of men and the abjection of the people? Ah! when shall we become attached to the breast of the charity of Jesus, our dear Spouse? When shall we become so little, that it will be our greatest delight to be the last of all, cast down in our nothingness, and we shall grieve to be esteemed and honored.”

The Ven. Father felt grieved to fill the post of superior, as if he had been an ugly statue, offensive to the eyes of all. “I wish to continue as subject,” he wrote, “for I know not how to govern, and, thanks be to God, the subjects do; and then the superiors of the retreats will not have to dispute with me, who am nothing but imprudence and ignorance.”

Persuaded of his incapacity, he desired that another religious, appointed visitor by him, and in all things subject to him, should treat him as the last of the subjects. He writes to him thus: “You will make the first visit in this retreat and, as I am the last, I wish to submit myself to it; you will therefore examine minutely into my conduct and I will receive every correction and penalty.”

Though Father Paul was consumed with zeal for the salvation of souls, he undertook the direction of them unwillingly, as we have seen, and this came from his considering himself incapable of this office. “I tremble,” he wrote, “when I think of directing and not having abilities for it. I am not fit to direct even an ant, and God knows that I have never been so presumptuous – I have always refused to do it, excepting when I have ascertained it to be God’s will, after long prayers and many tests.”

This humility made him always very vigilant and attentive in separating what was precious from what was worthless in the works he performed, attributing to God all the good he effected by his means, and to himself all the evil that he perceived. “Oh, what great things have I told you,” he writes, “but they are not mine, they are the works of the great Father of mercies! In the holy exercises the Divine Mercy has poured forth abundance of grace and heavenly lights, not on account of my poor labors, which are altogether offensive in His sight, but through His pure

charity and infinite mercy. Do not trouble yourself any more about the mission that has been interrupted at Pitigliano. I have adored and loved the will of God, and I remain quiet. Let us pray for him who has thrown cold water on his poor neighbor, and I fear much that it is I who have caused it by my sins. The graces obtained by that nun, and also by her brother, are certainly miraculous graces, but they have not been obtained through my means, though I was sent for, for I am a wicked man, more likely to provoke the Divine Majesty to chastise than to bestow graces. I do not wish to hear any more about these things. Give the glory to Jesus and to Mary, from whom the grace proceeded.”

He lost no opportunity of increasing in humility, and found an occasion for humbling himself in everything. The regularity, the exactness, and the fervor of the religious, who were, however, his pupils and his children, confounded him. The humble servant of God was able to say, with perfect truth, which virtue was always extremely dear to him: “In our poor retreats, Almighty God is served with great fervor, and from the information I have received from him who directs them, it is wonderful to witness the spirit of fervor with which they labor to acquire virtues, especially the young, who would do too much if they were not restrained.” This greatly humbled him, and he wrote: “Two of our most experienced religious request me to remain till Christmas, to celebrate it here in the retreat, for the consolation of all, and to keep them, as they say, in greater fervor of spirit in these holy days, though they have no need of me, because their fervent devotion and piety reproaches my tepidity. For merely to see them so devout in their holy exercises, practiced with so much readiness, modesty, and silence, is truly a subject for offering thanks to God.” And in another: “Let us ask the Divine Majesty to grant perseverance to the servants of God, who live retired here, who lead truly the lives of saints, and they will be my accusers on the day of judgment.”

With the same conviction of his miseries, this great servant of God wrote: “Amidst the storms and the desolation, justly merited by my crimes and tepidity, I experience some feeling of consolation, ‘*only*’ in the superior part, to witness the fervor, the regularity, and the good order, both in spiritual and temporal, that exist here. Thanks be to God. This is the case at St. Angelo. It is so in this Retreat of St. Eutizio, where everything goes on admirably. What excellent children, what holy young men! Oh, God, ‘*in truth unfeigned,*’ I am greatly ashamed to be with them at recreation and the acts of the community.”

Lastly, the wonderful works, which our Lord wrought to make known his virtues, were for him a subject of great humiliation. To a person who had written to him of having a vision of him in his absence, accompanied by holy effects, he answered: “I do not speak without reflection. I feel sensibly my dreadful miseries, the scourge of the merciful justice of God, and I also feel effects contrary to what you say. God makes Himself understood in various ways, and what He seems to work by me, or in my person, is the work of the Angel Guardian, who operates intellectually through Almighty God, in my person, for as the effects produced are not bad, but good, and proved to be so during so long a time. If they were my own, they would be horrible effects, caused by a devil in the flesh, to whom one could not trust.” And without relating here some other passages of his letters, it will suffice to say that he often calls himself with a sentiment of profound humility, a base and vicious old man, a wicked old man, plunged in vice, wretched, a great sinner, most needy, a stinking sepulchre, entirely unworthy of the apostolic ministry he exercised.

## **CHAPTER XXXII**

### **Of the Manner in Which Father Paul Sought after and Suffered Contempt, Outrages, and Every Sort of Insult**

The heart of the servant of God, being thus, as it were, oppressed with the burden of his own miseries, felt some alleviation in manifesting them to others. As he kept up in his heart a continual desire of humiliation and contempt, our Lord was pleased to afford him the opportunities that he sincerely desired and looked for. From the time that he was a secular, after he knew the value of holy humility, he wore his hair rough, his beard long, neglected his dress entirely, and hung from his hat a piece of a dirty handkerchief, and went through the country of Genoa, where he then resided. The insults and scoffs, which he desired, were not wanting to him, for the rude boys and the idle people, who saw him, vied with each other in hissing at him and making game of him, while the fervent youth rejoiced in his heart to be so treated in imitation of his beloved Redeemer.

But these were slight insults in comparison with those which he had afterwards to endure, increasing always in the love of holy humility. We have already said that as he was clothed, or

rather covered, with merely a rough tunic, without a cloak, barefooted, his head uncovered, he was sometimes taken for a madman, for a great sinner, deserving of that heavy penance, which they supposed had been laid upon him by a confessor, and on that account he was loaded with abuse, chased away, and rejected with great contempt. The servant of God found in these insults his consolation, his repose, and his peace, and by their means united himself more intimately to our Lord, who was pleased to become Himself the outcast of men and the abjection of the people. Insults, scoffs, and derision were to him precious gifts, and he considered them as his best friends, who most ill treated him.

A priest who had made himself remarkable by insulting him, fell dangerously ill and died. The servant of God went to visit the sick bed, as if he had been a great benefactor, assisted him during his illness, and never left him till he had breathed his last. Another priest reproved him publicly in church and said most unreasonably that he ought to inveigh against sin in preaching and not against the sinner. Father Paul, though certainly he had not given any cause of offense, went to his house humbly to ask pardon, doing what the priest ought to have done.

The humility and charity of the servant of God were more strongly manifested towards those who persecuted him for a long time, and sought to throw discredit upon him in every way, and towards those who sought to take away both his life and reputation, as may be seen where charity is treated of in the course of the story, as if injuries were a great act of kindness, of which he was bound to retain the remembrance, and to practice towards those who insulted him the most affectionate acts of gratitude and good feeling. It was his constant custom to remember those persons who had ever injured and calumniated him, to recommend them to our Lord by a particular prayer. So pleasing to him were injuries and contempt, in which, by the light of faith, he saw an abundance of heavenly treasures. Through this same desire to be contemned, he used to imagine himself, with great satisfaction, coming to a stop in the midst of his sermon on the platform without being able to say a word; and it seemed sometimes that this would happen to him. When he was younger and more vigorous, he heard confessions all the morning during the mission, and also after dinner not knowing how to refuse his assistance to the poor sinners that had recourse to him, nor did he leave the confessional till the bell rang for the sermon. The poor Father, feeling himself much fatigued, and his head confused, thought it very possible that he might remain on the platform without knowing what to say, as was natural. Lovingly embracing



his own abjection, he greatly rejoiced in the thought of such an event, because he would then be considered really as an ignorant man, which he desired.

The truth was, however, that he kept his subjects well prepared. If, sometimes he did not prepare himself as much as seemed necessary, because thought charity for his penitents he dispensed himself from it, as is usually the case in missions, because he had only God in Zion and trusted only in God, as soon as he mounted the platform to preach, our Lord infused into him so much light and inflamed his heart with so great fervor, that the force of his presentations and the fire of his words made the audience melt into tears. Thus, the Divine Goodness showed His approbation of the charity of His servant and of the labor he underwent for the goal of souls.

As our Lord always preserved the knowledge of the truth in his faithful servant, his love for contempt, his delight in his own abjection and his ardent desire for humiliation were never diminished. This virtuous desire possessed his heart till his death. He desired to die with all the external signs of a great sinner, and often begged with deep humility that when he was near death, he might be placed on the ground, or on a little straw with a rope round his neck and a crown of thorns on his head, to die, as he said, like a true penitent. And that after death, he might be buried without any mark of distinction.

When he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, he said many times, weeping: “My body ought, after death, to be burned under a chestnut tree, like that of a beast. But I am a son of the Church, and therefore it may be buried in a sacred place.” When he was seized with his last illness, he often requested, and ordered also, that if he should die in the hospital, where there was no burial place, his loathsome corpse (these are his words) should be put into quicklime, and his bones taken and carried by an ass to the Retreat of St. Angelo to be buried at the feet of his brother John Baptist.

Whereas the character of the proud man shows itself at once when he is reprov'd, for he becomes angry, resents blame, and like a delirious patient, turns against him who charitably seeks to cure him, Father Paul, on the contrary, who was truly humble, and a sincere lover of contempt and abjection, at the very time he received corrections showed the docility and virtue of his soul, receiving them with perfect peace and tranquility. His brother, who knew better than anyone the perfection with which he bore them, often gave him occasions of great merit. It will be well here to show by what spirit this good Father was led, and why he was so severe. Father

John Baptist was naturally of a very austere and rigid disposition, and Father Paul was, on the contrary, sweet and mild; it easily happened, therefore, that he found occasions or excuses for reproving his brother, when there was not a shadow of fault. But the reason why Father John Baptist so often reprehended Father Paul was the ardent desire he had of his perfection. This servant of God, being always recollected and always inflamed with ardent desires of perfection and sanctity, wished to promote in himself and others, and more particularly in his dear brother, a great diligence in the practice of the most perfect virtue. He said himself one day to a religious, afterwards Father Paul's confessor, "I wish to be irreproachable myself, and that others should be so also."

Father John Baptist also knew Father Paul's virtue to be very firm and sound, and that like good metal, it would bear the heaviest blow. He considered Paul a saint, and said so to others but very rarely, as he was extremely reserved in his words. Knowing, therefore, that he could rely upon him, he humbled him in private and in public, without much ceremony. If Father Paul was relating at recreation anything that could in any way turn to his praise, though he moderated his expressions judiciously, and sometimes spoke in the third person to conceal himself, Father John Baptist scolded him, interrupted his conversation, and said with severity to him, "*For not he who commands himself is approved, but he whom God commands*" (II Cor. 10:18). Father Paul either kept silence or humbly left the recreation. But if his brother had already gone, through consolation and joy for the correction he had received, he said joyfully to the religious, "Oh, he has given it to me."

Seculars sometimes came to the retreat, and among them a priest of great virtue, his friend, to whom, when Father Paul was ill, he gave an account of his indisposition, as is customary on such occasions. If Father John Baptist was there, he was ready to humble him; the archpriest of Vetralla, who is now dead, was present on one of these occasions and has deposed that, when the servant of God was speaking of his illness, Father John Baptist came in and reproved him sharply. Yet the good old man was only explaining in very moderate terms the pains he suffered in his legs. Father Paul, at the unexpected reproof, took off his biretta, bowed his head, and with great submission and humility received this rebuke without being troubled or excusing himself, only replying: "I was telling the archpriest about my illness." Father John Baptist immediately departed without waiting for another word. This pious priest was much edified by the great

humility and patience of Father Paul. If he was taking a little food to strengthen himself, Father John Baptist found some cause for reproof, mortifying, and humbling him. Or he immediately took away what was before him, when Paul appeared to eat with relish, or looked severely upon him, or said with harshness and roughness, "I shall witness your mortification." When the poor old man was resting at the hours the Rule allots for repose, though he often deprived himself of it in part, Father John Baptist, who occupied the next room and slept little, and after praying almost all night, wishing to go early before the community rose to adore the Blessed Sacrament and remain before it, had to pass through Father Paul's room, took the liberty of turning the window wide open saying, "Sleep, sleep, death will come and will find you sleeping," or else, "What a cowardly Founder you are!" The servant of God, who usually slept little, on account of diabolical vexations, rose nevertheless at once, without complaint, to obey his brother, though fatigued nature would willingly have taken a little rest at break of day. Father John Baptist seemed to seek occasions of mortifying him, and knew how to find a fault even when there was not even its shadow. A canon of Ronciglione came to our Retreat of St. Angelo to attend His Eminence Cardinal Erba, who condescended to honor that solitude with his presence. After the cardinal had departed, he suddenly threw himself at Father Paul's feet, saying: "Father Paul, I want a favor for my brother. I wish to have the sign you wear on your breast." The servant of God, who never knew how to refuse what was asked in this manner, felt a great inclination to yield, but nevertheless, through the low opinion he had of himself, would not give the sign that was requested; he excused himself by saying: "I cannot, for it is sown to my habit." The canon replied: "I will not rise till I have obtained it." "Canon, it is sown all round," answered the servant of God. The canon, quickly taking a penknife, loosened the stitches, took it away, and mounting his horse, departed. Father John Baptist, who was present, observed everything, and looking at Father Paul with a severe countenance, said to him: "Oh, you have given away your emblem, you have committed a fine act of ostentation, your sign will work miracles!" After saying these words, he went away, and the servant of God, bowing his head, said: "This is the first, it is nothing. What will come after will be worse." In short, Father John Baptist, always and in all things, endeavored to perfect his brother more and more in the practice of humility and mortification. On some days, his rigor seemed almost to be excessive, so frequently did he reprove Father Paul.

On one occasion, a mission was given at Tolfa, and for some reason Father John Baptist was reproving Father Paul, as was usual. The good old man, turning to one of his companions, said with a smile, "This is the sixth sermon today." Father John Baptist then added with severity, "Yes, yes, turn it into ridicule and make a joke of it," thus preserving that authority which he always exerted over Father Paul's virtue.

These mortifications were so pleasing to the servant of God, that when Father John Baptist departed to another life, he wept bitterly and was almost inconsolable, not so much for having lost in his brother a comforter, a counselor, and an example of great virtue, as because he had lost one who sharply corrected him. He went about saying, with tears in his eyes, "Now that my brother is dead, who will mortify me, who will correct me? I have just reason to weep, for he who corrected my faults is dead." And he often repeated, "Who will reprove me for my defects?" It was indeed most edifying and touching to see in Father Paul so much love and tenderness for his departed brother, joined with so great humility and so low an opinion of himself. Though with perfect uniformity he submitted to the most wise dispensations of Almighty God, he felt great pain at being deprived of him, who could at any time correct him. But this is the conduct of God's servants, to esteem more the wounds given by true friends than the treacherous kisses of enemies; to value the corrections of those who wish our good and to avoid the adulation of those who flatter us.

Father Paul was always most averse from hearing himself praised and from every kind of flattery. If any of our religious, on hearing anything related regarding them, appeared to think highly of his conduct and to value him, saying, "It is well with you, happy you," he immediately became serious and melancholy, changed the conversation, and sometimes went away. It is enough to say, that he bore with great patience the severity and continued harshness of Father John Baptist, but he could not endure that his brother should praise him, though ever so little, a thing, in truth, very remote from his natural inclination and from his custom. Let us hear it from a witness who was present, and who deposes to the fact on his oath. "Father Paul, being on a visit at recreation with the religious, when I was also present with a secular priest, uttered something that might turn to his praise. The conversation was on useful and edifying subjects. Father John Baptist, without reflection, said with a sort of cordiality, quite unusual in him, 'What wonder is it, if such things happen to you?' Father Paul, on hearing these words, changed at once his gaiety

into sorrow, burst into tears, and said in a voice stilled by tears and sobs, ‘This is the way to send me to hell, and to throw me under the feet of the devils.’ Having said this to mortify him, and to make him perceive his fault, Paul ordered him not to appear again in his presence, or to come near his room. That he might not enter the room unperceived, Father Paul shut himself up therein. This lasted three days, when, on the third day, Father John Baptist seeing the door open, secretly knelt down on the threshold, saying, “Are you yet pacified? I am come to ask your pardon,” and crawled on his knees to the middle of the room. At this sight the servant of God, whose heart was most meek, changing his severity into affection, tenderly embraced him.”

In this recital everyone will perceive, besides the profound humility of Father Paul, the virtue of his good brother Father John Baptist, and will know more clearly the good reason Father Paul had for esteeming him so highly. Many other records remain of the singular virtues of Father John Baptist. It is not, therefore, surprising that our servant of God valued him so much, and often said to his companion: “Father John Baptist is a holy man, secret in his works; your reverence will know everything. I know that he is continually in prayer, that he constantly weeps, and sometimes when I see him, hides himself, that he may not be seen even by me. He has the gift of tears and is always conversing with God.” This is the same as to say that he was truly guided by the Spirit of God and was perfectly fitted for the sublime office of teaching Christian philosophy and evangelical humility.

## **CHAPTER XXXIII**

### **Of the Abhorrence Entertained by the Good Father for Honors, for Every Mark of Esteem**

It is indeed most easy for him who allows himself to be led away by deceitful appearances and the passing glories of this miserable life to seek eagerly after honors and to take great delight in them. But he who is taught in the school of truth and of heavenly wisdom thinks of things in an entirely different manner, and follows a path entirely opposite to that of worldlings. Hence it was that Father Paul, who, as we have seen, possessed the true spirit of God. He diligently avoided honors and removed occasions which might turn to his esteem, as much as he loved contempt and reprehension. He gave holy missions because such was the will of God, and only

for His glory, taking care to attribute nothing to himself. He saw wonderful conversions effected, but he did not on this account take off the eye of his soul from the knowledge of his own nothingness. He did not grow vain with popular applause, which he abhorred as a plague, and as soon as the mission was over, left that same day, if possible, or early the following morning, to avoid the praises of the people and prevent their following him. He used to say with great feeling that he departed from missions like a chastised dog, persuaded that he had been an obstacle to the good of souls, and, at the end of the mission, with great sincerity and deep humility, he publicly asked pardon. And as the good Father was not ignorant of the snares of the enemy of mankind, who, if he cannot prevent us from doing good, tries to ruin those who are the instruments, and attempts to destroy, by the poison of vain complacency, those who endeavor to restore life to the sinner, he would have the same practice always observed by our missionaries, and woe to him who should fail in this. The Founder even counted the hours of their stay, and, says a witness who had reason to know, “If they delayed ever so little, they received a severe reproof.”

His ardent affection for holy humility appeared most visibly, and could, as it were, be seen in his heart at the time that he was preaching the word of God. For it was evident that in preaching he had no object but to make Jesus Christ crucified known and sincerely loved. If he preached, animated by true charity, he would willingly have kept silence, in order to preserve himself in humility. “Concerning this,” says his confessor in his deposition, “I remember a holy contest that Father Paul once had with Father Leonardo, that fervent missionary and great servant of God. They were both at Acquapendente, and it was earnestly requested that one or the other would give a sermon. Father Leonardo wished Father Paul to preach, and Father Paul, on the other side, desired that Father Leonardo would do it. Paul’s words and prayers were so efficacious, that the good Father yielded, and Father Paul was full of delight that this apostolic missionary, who was so deserving, should have precedence in the sacred ministry. Father Paul, wishing to draw further profit from this meeting, humbly asked Father Leonardo to give him some advice or maxim for his guidance in holy missions. At first Father Leonardo refused, being a man of profound humility, but overcome, at length, by the virtuous importunity of Father Paul, comforted him and said, “I am of the opinion that to be good missionaries our interior must be well ordered.” This pious and holy instruction pleased Father Paul so much that he engraved it in his heart and never forgot it. Thus, he gained double fruit from his humility.

The same spirit of humility, by which the Ven. Father was guided, caused him to avoid those places where he was honored. If he knew that he was esteemed in any place, he was very attentive that the handkerchiefs and towels he used should not be changed. If he perceived that this had been done, he immediately asked for it again, which he did at Celleri, where he was venerated with particular devotion. Nor was he satisfied till that which had been taken through devotion was restored to him. If he saw that seculars wished to kiss his hand through the esteem they had of him, he drew it back quickly, even though they were men; and during the last years of his life, when, on account of his lameness, he was carried in a chair by two brothers, he said to them anxiously, "Go on, do not stop, make haste."

So wonderful was his low opinion of himself, that he considered himself the most miserable man upon earth, unworthy of being esteemed, or of being in any way remembered. He sought, therefore, by every means in his power, to blot out every memorial that might remain of him after death. He said from his heart, "If I were able, and it were allowable, I would efface my name from the Pontifical Briefs, for I do not wish any remembrance of me to remain in the Congregation." He found out that in the Retreat of the Presentation, some writing, or attestation, were preserved, which it is thought were sent for by Father Fulgenzio of Jesus, one of our religious, from Alessandria, drawn up in due form, in which papers was contained an account of Father Paul's life, of his extraordinary penances, and other virtuous actions, that they might be of use for general edification, and especially for that of the Congregation. At once he set off to that place. When he arrived at the retreat to make the visitation, he gave a strict order that all the papers that in any way regarded him should be given into his hands. The order was so precise and given with such determination, that Father Superior and a brother, who had possession of these writings, thought they could not avoid obeying. They were quickly copied, word for word, and then the originals were given up to the servant of God, who burnt them, saying with deep feeling that he would not have any memorial of himself retained.

It was once told him that in the life of Bishop Emilio Cavalieri honorable mention was made of him. He asked for the book and the place, as if he wished to read it. But without looking at a single word, tore out of the book, with holy indignation, those pages in which he was named, protesting that his name was unworthy to be remembered and that he would not have it remain to posterity. This book is still kept at the Retreat of St. Angelo, and is a beautiful proof of the

profound humility and fervor of spirit of Father Paul. Our religious, who knew his feelings, were greatly perplexed when they wished to place in the octagon before the sacristy of Sts. John and Paul the inscription under the bust of Clement XIV, in which, among other words, are the following: "*Paul of the Cross, Founder, the Others His Companions.*" More than once he wished to hear it read before it was carved, but the superior at that time, bringing it to him copied in very small writing, always left out the word "*Founder,*" hoping that the servant of God, from his defective sight, would not perceive it. The good old man tried to read it himself but was never able to succeed from his bad sight. If he had done so, he certainly would not have allowed that word to be used, though it was done with the advice of prudent persons, who deserved attention. Though the servant of God made such efforts to remain concealed, his virtue, like a bright light, shone most brilliantly and was well known. Therefore, he was considered to be a holy man, and he himself could not help perceiving it, though it caused him much regret. "Oh, how greatly are they deceived in me," he would say. "But I have no intention of deceiving anyone, and if our Lord were to grant me to remain in purgatory till the end of the world, He would show me great mercy." It was a most painful wound to his heart to hear or to see that he was esteemed, or his actions valued. A letter once came from Bishop Emilio Cavalieri to Father Fulgenzio, in which the good prelate said that his brother, who was dangerously ill and almost dying, had been instantaneously cured by the application of an emblem of the Institute that the servant of God had worn, made to his breast by the same prelate, who also by this circumstance showed the opinion he entertained of the virtue and sanctity of Father Paul. Father Fulgenzio thought proper to read the letter to Father Paul, who on hearing it, began to weep through regret that this fact should be known, and that he should be esteemed. On another occasion the Master of Novices, then Father Peter of St. John, when Father Paul was at recreation in the novitiate, said to him in confidence, "Father, if you die at a distance from this place, leave an order in your will that your heart be sent here, for we wish to have it." These words were so painful to the servant of God, that as an ocular witness testifies, if they had given him a wound in the heart they could not have hurt him more, and with an inflamed countenance, and his eyes filled with tears, he said with a loud voice, as if he were ready to tear his heart from his breast, "My heart deserves to be cut into small pieces and thrown to the birds to be devoured, for it has never known how to love God. Ah, this heart deserves to be burned, and that its ashes should be scattered to the winds, because



it has not loved God!” Weeping he left the recreation and retired to his room.

The marks of esteem that he received from seculars were no less displeasing and painful to him. In the beginning, when he was at Mount Argentario, when he went down to Orbetello, the commander and all the officers showed the veneration they had for him. They made room for him when he passed, and by other demonstrations showed the esteem they felt for him. Only souls that are well instructed in the school of holy humility can understand the pain that these proceedings caused to the servant of God, who by his words, gestures, and humble manners refused these honors and even made use of entreaties to obtain that he might not be mortified with such marks of esteem, of which he believed himself to be quite unworthy. When he was being carried to Ceccano in a chair, as he could not walk, a woman, during the time that persons were speaking to him, cut off a piece of his cloak. The good servant of God, perceiving it, looked at her with a severe countenance, saying, “What are you doing?” and added that she ought not to have done such a thing. When he was traveling, it often happened that the people, with a holy indiscretion, cut his cloak and his habit. What pain did this cause to the good Father! He desired to fly as quickly as possible from the place when he saw himself honored, and perceiving it said in jest with holy humility, “They have cut my cloak, thinking me to be the Father Abbot, and I am the cook. Oh, if they knew me, they would run away as from a contagion. God wishes me to be confounded and humbled. May His most holy will be done!” Or he would say, “These good people are taking useless trouble. Oh, God, how blind they are! The judgments of God are different from those of men.” Turning to those who had the cloth in their hands, “Go,” he said, “go, make stockings for your poultry.” When he was being carried in a chair on another occasion, some men from Ceccano, where he had to give the meditation, showed great affection and devotion towards him. The good Father, entirely occupied with the knowledge of himself, said, sighing, “Ah, poor me! Who knows how much more pleasing to God are these persons than I am. They think they are carrying something precious, and I am nothing but a dead dog, and worse – worse.” The more Father Paul avoided honors, the more they were offered to him against his will, for honors follow true virtue, as the shadow follows the body. Thus, by a loving dispensation of God, the perfections of His faithful servant was rendered more manifest to the general edification. He was in high esteem, not only with the people and with uneducated people, but with wise and learned persons, occupying high dignities, and especially with many bishops,

who had him in their dioceses, or knew him by reputation. But when he was honored by these persons, he was greatly mortified, because by divine light he knew and respected, with deep veneration, the episcopal dignity. Though he was old, infirm, and afflicted with pains, he knelt down at the feet of bishops, and with lively faith said, “Let me kneel, for I know what the episcopal dignity is.” But the bishops of greater merit and zeal, who highly esteem a laborer that faithfully toils in the vineyard of the Lord, and takes some share in cultivating that district, which is confided to them by Almighty God, gave to the good Father unusual marks of their affection, satisfaction, and esteem. This continually increased his regret, his mortification, and his interior humiliation. Once when the servant of God was passing through Anagni, he met with the bishop of the city, and the bishop of Ferentini. These worthy prelates, with condescension and that spirit of evangelical humility so becoming to these who are the successors of the apostles, accompanied the servant of God through the city, placing him between them. The poor Father was obliged to yield and obey, but said afterwards to his director, “I never experienced such shame and confusion in my life as on that occasion.” But in order to know more clearly how far are the servants of God from the maxims of the world, and what is taught by the sublime philosophy of the Gospel, it was sufficient to see Father Paul returning from the audiences of Clement XIV. This Holy Pontiff could not have given him greater marks of his affection, tenderness, and, I might almost say, of the veneration he had for him, as has been named elsewhere. He spoke to him confidentially, made him sit down in his presence, and called him “My papa,” with expressions of warm affection. Yet the humble Father left the audience mortified, humbled, and interiorly afflicted, and even wept bitterly, for it seemed to him that his affairs were prospering, and that God wished to reward him in this world. To console him it required all the efficacy of the words and authority of his spiritual director. He could with good reason say to us afterwards for our instruction, “You see what favors they bestow on me; the Pope treats me with great charity, and yet these things do not make me vain, for I return home like a beaten dog, full of confusion and humiliation.” When His Holiness sent anyone to visit him, which he often did, the servant of God, humbled and confounded, exclaimed, “*Whence to me?*” (Lk. 1:14), I am the least among the sons of the Church!” or, “I am the least and poorest son of holy Church. Therefore I place myself under the Holy Father’s feet.” He was answered from the Pope, that the Holy Father placed himself at his feet. “Oh, God!” exclaimed Father

Paul, “How is it possible that the Vicar of Christ should humble himself to a poor creature like me? What great humility in the Holy Father! The Pope is a holy man.” Sometimes he was told, because His Holiness commanded it, “The Pope sends you his blessing and desires you to bless him.” At these words the servant of God, as if horrified, cried out, “What! The Holy Father, who is the fount of benedictions and possesses it in himself, wishes to be blessed by me? Oh, God! What humility.” And he was quite confounded and grieved to see himself so greatly honored. As the proud man at every slight honor exalts himself and becomes excited, this truly humble soul, on the contrary, became more and more humble amidst honors, and more wrapped up in his own nothingness.

From the very graces our Lord bestowed on him, he took occasion to humble himself profoundly. He was lame and unable to walk, loaded with pains and troublesome infirmities, and though he suffered with unconquerable patience, he believed that our Lord was punishing him for his grievous sins. Our Lord, who sometimes treats His servants with holy playfulness, when Paul, conversing familiarly with some of his friends, was seeking his own humiliation, worked by his means a miracle, which caused him still more mortification and confusion. When, during the summer season, he was giving the spiritual exercises in the Monastery of St. Ann at Ronciglione, he was taking his meal one morning in the company of several gentlemen and an ecclesiastic of the city. As the flies were numerous, and more troublesome than usual, these gentlemen tried to chase them away. The servant of God, perceiving their tiresome occupations, said, “I am a great sinner, but if I were a holy soul, I should send away these flies. I knew a holy man, who, by doing this,” and he made a sign of the cross with his hand, “made all the flies disappear.” Scarcely had Father Paul said this, than the flies disappeared and did not again disturb the meals during the whole time that the servant of God remained there. The poor Father, who did not expect such a prodigy, was so confused, that during all that morning he had not courage to speak again, but those who witnessed the circumstance were greatly astonished and edified.

As the foundation of the Congregation was a signal mark of his great piety, and ardent zeal for the glory of God, all who knew the humble heart of Father Paul could easily imagine the torment it caused him to be considered Founder of the Congregation. It was so painful to him that he could scarcely bear to hear the name; it was a great offense against him to call him

Founder. He said openly that it had never entered his mind to found. “I had no intention of founding the Congregation; my idea was to remain hidden and retired, doing penance, and serving God unknown. This is not the work of men; men have nothing to do with it. It is God’s work entirely. Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Congregation of the Passion, and I have been, as it were, a courier and lackey, who carries letters and messages for his master.” An eminent cardinal one day honored our Retreat of St. Angelo with his presence, and in visiting Father Paul, who was staying there, asked him with pious curiosity how he had contrived to found the Congregation. Father Paul answered with great humility. “Your Eminence, these are long affairs.” “But,” added the cardinal, “you are the Founder?” Father Paul, humbling himself still more deeply, replied with tears in his eyes: “The Founder, Your Eminence, is Christ crucified; I have defiled the work with my imperfections.”

Through the great grief he felt when he was called Founder, either in letters or in conversation, he could not help mildly complaining of it, and he said, in confidence with tears, to one of the religious: “Oh, if they who call me Founder and show some sort of esteem of me knew what stabs they give my heart, and what pain they cause me, through compassion they would refrain from saying such things. Nor would they give the least sign of their good opinion, for truly they confound and annihilate me, and would make me fall into dejection and pusillanimity, if I did not keep myself up by lively confidence in the infinite goodness and mercy of God and in the infinite merits of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. For by this esteem, and by reminding me of the foundation of the Congregation, they place before me my ingratitude, and recall to my mind that I have defiled and hindered the work of God by my sins. This is one of the griefs and interior trials that I endure on these occasions.” If he was closely pursued by questions from those who wished with devout importunity to know who the Founder was, he concealed himself as well as he could. One day in Rome, when waiting in an antechamber for the audience of a prelate, the servants of that dignitary surrounded him, asking who was the Founder of that Congregation, and Father Paul answered, “A poor sinner.” They repeated their question, and the servant of God always replied, “A poor sinner.” They could not draw any other answer from him, as he was much annoyed by their questions.

Through his profound humility the office of General President was most painful to him. He would have done anything to remain a subject, but being obliged, as long as he lived, to bear the

burden of the superiorate, he had to submit to the holy will of God, and make humility lovingly yield to holy charity. He protested, and during his latter years more frequently, that he was not capable of such a charge, that the Capitulars could not in conscience elect him, adding, that when the new superior was chosen, he should retire to Monte Argentario, and taking off the emblem, which is the distinction of the Professed, should make his novitiate and place himself under the direction of the master of novices, like every other novice, and write on the door of his cell, “Paul is dead.” When the time for the Chapter was come, kneeling before the Capitular Fathers, he begged them with tears and sighs not again to impose this burden upon him, entreating them earnestly on the contrary to give him a penance for his faults, and even to imprison him; he made renunciations full of humility, but all in vain, for the Chapter did not accept the renunciation, and in the end, his confessor, by the spiritual authority he had over him, obliged him to accept the office. Even the last time that he was elected General Superior, shortly before his death, he made his resignation, and it was most affecting and edifying to see that saintly old man, bathed in tears, appear before the Chapter with a rope round his neck to ask pardon and confess his faults in the presence of all the Capitular Fathers. He even entreated them to give him a severe penance, declaring that he had never known how to govern the Congregation, and that he deserved to be expelled from it as one unworthy to wear the holy habit. No one could see him without being moved by the vivacity and sincerity, with which he expressed the sentiments of his heart by the burning tears which accompanied his words, and the deep conviction that he showed of what he said. When elected General Superior, afterwards, against his will and without regard to his great repugnance, of which he made to God a noble sacrifice, it seemed as if his heart would melt away in weeping, and his eyes were two fountains of tears. In words interrupted by sighs and weeping, he said in public that it was a chastisement of the poor Congregation that a poor miserable sinner had been elected for their superior, full of vices, and who was going to the grave loaded with his defects. Since God permitted it, he would die under the load of fatigue to serve the poor Congregation, and as the religious advanced, as is customary, to promise obedience and kiss his hand, he embraced them with the affection of a most tender father, pressing each one to his heart, addressing to him humble words that proceeded from a heart filled with a lively appreciation of the weighty obligations that the office of superior brings with it, and of his own unworthiness and incapability. “My brethren, help me to bear the burden. By the

observance of the holy rules, you will give me consolation and become holy yourselves. I have always desired to retire to the novitiate, to prepare myself for death, for so far I have done no good.” When he was obliged, as is usual, to give notice of the election in circular letters, he could not, even in writing, refrain from expressing those sentiments which were so strong and so deeply fixed in his heart. “The judgments of God,” he wrote, “are inscrutable, the ways of God and the paths in which He guides us are unsearchable, and the dispensations of His Providence are incomprehensible. This consideration made the Apostle St. Paul exclaim: *‘O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways’* (Rom. 11:33). This consideration also terrifies me, and makes me tremble when I reflect, that I, who am so weak, ignorant, and above all, so wicked, have been obliged by holy obedience, enjoined in the Chapter, notwithstanding my resignation, to accept again the office of your General Superior.” These sentiments were deeply engraved in his heart; he greatly abhorred titles and marks of respect. He sometimes said, “How this Very Reverend disgusts me!” All his desire was to be treated frankly and with filial confidence. As he behaved with great cordiality and singular humility and sweetness, so that he could not be known for superior but by his charity, his kindness, and the splendor of his virtues; he was an implacable enemy to every other demonstration. When he went to make the visitation in the retreats, and the bells were rung, as is usual, this was a motive of profound humiliation. When he visited the retreat at Terracina, the last time that he was in the Province of Campagna, the religious, full of consolation and joy, came out to meet him, and at the same time testified, by ringing the bells, their respect, veneration, joy and love for their esteemed Father and visitor. Though he was deaf, he perceived the sound in a confused manner and asked what that noise was. He was told that the bells were ringing on account of his arrival and for a good beginning to the visitation he was going to make. The servant of God, with holy zeal and words that affected everyone, then said: “Why do you ring? Why do you ring? Ring for the dead, for I have never done anything good.” And, gifted with extraordinary strength, left the religious, though he had not before been able to move on account of his pains, and walked quickly to the church, reciting with abundance of tears the psalm Miserere and striking his breast, asking God’s mercy, nor did he cease until he reached the church. All the religious who were present were much moved in beholding the man of God, rich in so many gifts, humbling himself so profoundly and entertaining for himself so much

contempt.

In the most trifling practices of religious observance, the spirit of his humility also shone forth. Though he was the father and superior of all, he kissed, with great and astonishing humility, the hand of the superiors of the retreats when he arrived, and showed great respect for all the religious. He trusted all except one, and we will show from his own words who this one was. “I have confidence in all except Paul,” as he used to call himself. And he also said of himself, “My soul, you are farther from sanctity than heaven is from earth; you are more loathsome in the sight of God than dead dogs are in the sight of men.” Thus, he remained annihilated in himself, in his nothingness, in his miseries, repeating often those words of St. John the precursor, “*I am not*” (John 1:20), meaning that he was nothing and esteemed himself such.

All these traits of virtue and of profound humility, practiced with so much sweetness, are truly worthy of no small degree of admiration. To say the truth, in reading the records that remain to us of the saintly Founder, what surprises me more than anything is this: that the servant of God, by a special and singular privilege, amidst so many honors, in giving missions so famous, accompanied with applause and approbation corresponding to the great benefit he effected, never had a thought of pride to disturb that most humble opinion he had of himself. Hence, speaking to his director, and opening his heart with all frankness to him, he could say: “By the grace of God, pride never comes near me.” And he said on other occasions, “I should think I was a reprobate and damned if a thought of pride came to me.” He believed his miseries to be so great, that to have a thought of pride amidst them would be insupportable boldness, worthy of severe chastisement. He spoke of them to others, as if all must be convinced of his great unworthiness, going so far as to say that it was almost impossible that pride should assail him, and that he should think himself almost damned if it did come near him. Explaining, by a simile, the deep sentiment of his soul, he compared himself to a poor ragged beggar, covered with loathsome wounds, who, standing in a circle of nobles and gentlemen, could not have any feeling of pride. Hence he never had occasion to accuse himself of pride. “I, so great a sinner,” he said, “to be proud! God keeps open before me a great book, which is the knowledge of my sins.” If anyone chanced to speak of his presence as necessary to the Congregation, he used to reply, “If I thought myself necessary in this world, I should think I was damned. Our Lord needs no one.” And of so little use did he consider himself, that we cannot read, without tears, the

words which he addressed in his last illness to his companion: "How burdensome am I to the community! I am sorry to see you in continual exercise for me. I wish to send for the prior of the hospital of St. John, to see if, through charity, he will receive me into the hospital like the rest of the poor." "And I answered," says the companion in his depositions, "that it was not true that he gave us trouble, for he gave us consolation, and that we should grieve for his death when God took him from us, because he was a support and a comfort to us; that he did more for us in this way, sick as he was, than the whole Congregation together," and this was true. Father Paul wept at these words, and striking his breast, said with deep humility: "It is your charity which makes you bear with me, for I deserve nothing; I deserve that you should leave me like a beast, for I am a worse sinner than the bandits." Saying this, he turned to the Crucifix in his room, and striking his breast, said, "*My fault, my greatest fault.*" Then, taking his companion's hand, he said, "My dear brother Bartholomew, how greatly am I obliged to you!" This feeling that he was useless, burdensome, and troublesome was deeply fixed in his heart; he repeated it three times on different occasions, with great humility, and received everything as done out of charity to a poor miserable creature.

#### **XXXIV**

#### **Of the Meekness and Kindness of Heart of the Servant of God**

Our Lord, Who is the Sovereign Master of virtues, in telling us that we should learn of Him to be humble, and also to be meek and gentle of heart, wishes to teach us that kindness and meekness go hand in hand with humility. From this, as from an excellent root deeply buried in the earth, proceeds the sweet fruit of these virtues. Father Paul, having received from God a degree of humility so great and so rare, everyone must perceive that it was that very humility which produced in him that great kindness of heart by which he gained all those with whom he conversed, appeased immediately those who were unjustly irritated against him, and made himself the master of hearts, a virtue certainly very necessary to him who has to govern others and labor in the apostolic ministry, and which, in the servant of God, was so much more meritorious and excellent, as he was by nature warm, lively, and enterprising. It happened more



than once that one or other of our religious, through want of virtue, or a transport of passion, failed in respect towards him; and he, bearing all with tranquillity, serenity, and sweetness, gave, by his silence, a mild reproof to him who insulted him without cause. A superior of one of our retreats ordered that on a festival certain work should be done by the brothers, about which he was too eager, urged by a zeal that was not regulated by discretion. The good Father heard of this, and on account of his obligation as General Superior, and because he was deeply moved by seeing the honor of God in some degree outraged by this work, meeting the superior, said to him in a gentle manner that such work on that day was a scandal. At these words, uttered with so much mildness, the superior became enraged and lost all respect for the good Father. He did not complain nor reprove him for behavior so improper and so unjust; but turning to an ancient religious who was present, with great patience said, "What do you say of this man, Father?" On another occasion, when Father Paul was at the house of one of our benefactors, Father Paul said to the superior of another retreat that he did not approve of a project of his, because it did not seem to him reasonable; the superior would not be persuaded, nor would he yield, but on the contrary expressed his anger against the good Father in disrespectful terms. The modest Father did not employ his authority to silence him, as he might have done, but, all meekness and gentleness, placed his reasons before his eyes, that he might in time acknowledge his error and become sensible of the affection entertained for him by his superior and Father. Generally on those occasions he kept silence. If afterwards anyone who had offended him went to ask his pardon, he received him kindly; and if he thought it a suitable time, said to him, as he did to one of our religious, "We are yet alive!" wishing to remind him that it was necessary he should mortify his passions, which are never better known than at the times we ought to conquer them. Not infrequently he was beforehand with those who had offended him, going to meet them with the affection of a father, and showing them all the tenderness of his charity. He acted in the same manner with those who disobeyed his orders, though they were precise and important. He did not fail to admonish and correct him who had been in fault, but he did it with great peace and sweetness, saying quietly, "Why have you not done such a thing?" or, "For my sins I do not deserve to be obeyed; patience, God wills it. May His most holy will be done." If there was no chance of admonishing, or if the time was unsuitable, he was silent towards the person in error and said, "We must bear the Cross and have patience." Or, like a physician who delays to give a

remedy in the heat of fever, knowing that it would prove useless, “He is not now fit to receive correction; we must wait for a suitable time.” And, in many circumstances, knowing that we must charitably bear the burden that the weakness of others throws down, he said with great wisdom, “Such a one does not possess solid virtue; he has not practiced virtue. I must practice it” Thus, he regulated his conduct with holy discretion, and in all his words was humble, gentle, and sweet, entirely conformed to the most meek and humble Spirit of Jesus Christ.

When he met with greater obstinacy and resistance, the servant of God showed more gentleness and with holy industry found out the most ingenious ways of gaining an entrance into hearts, which he sought to gain, in order to lead them to God. In one mission he told the men from the platform, that, for the sake of order, they must go into a different place from the women; but, standing like columns, they would not move. The servant of God then, without another word, came down and threw himself at the feet of those who opposed him, begging them to go to the place he wished. They could not resist such humility and gentleness, but immediately obeyed. The curate of the place, who was observing everything, said afterwards to Father Paul: “Oh, how well you acted by doing as you did. On another occasion a missionary wished to employ authority and commands, and great disorder followed.”

The servant of God showed even greater meekness and humility towards a rude and insolent man, for, when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, after he had assisted through charity and nursed in the retreat a young man (*carbonaro*<sup>2</sup>), who was ill, not allowing him to depart till he was perfectly cured, the young man’s father, who perhaps imagined that the reception of one great benefit gave him a claim and a right to ask for another, was offended because the servant of God had not kept him as long as he thought proper, and went to complain of it to Father Paul, presenting himself before him in an angry manner, loading him with insults and abuse, and entirely forgetting the respect due to him on so many accounts. Father Paul merely replied, with great gentleness and meekness, “Do you not see, brother, that he has been charitably assisted, not only during his illness, but even until he was perfectly recovered?” and was much more inclined to ask pardon than to reprove the man as he deserved.

It would be fitting to relate here those conversions of obstinate bandits and other criminals, whom Father Paul gained to God by prostrating himself very humbly at their feet, kindly caressing them, pressing them to his heart, and other actions full of charity and sweetness. But as

we have related them elsewhere, the reader can look them over again, to convince himself more completely that the most inflexible obstinacy was generally overcome by that most humble gentleness which Father Paul practiced so well, becoming daily more perfect in the exercise of this sweetness and mildness; for he knew by experience that harshness and undue severity disturb the peace of souls, trouble consciences, throw souls into dejection, and often even into despair, while meekness, patience, gentleness, and humility are like a sweet melody that tranquilizes the fiercest dispositions. They are like the whistling of a gentle breeze, in which the Spirit of the Lord is felt, Who invites souls that are burdened to take refreshment and repose in the bosom of His goodness.

## **CHAPTER XXXV**

### **His Instructions and Maxims for the Acquisition of Holy Humility**

The charitable Father did not wish to enjoy alone the treasures contained in humility, but desired that all might participate in them. He inculcated its practice to all, particularly to his Congregation and his good penitents. Almost in every letter addressed to his penitents, the servant of God recommends them to cast themselves down into their nothingness, to humble themselves to the dust before God, and with great earnestness to seek and to ask of God the precious treasure of holy humility. The more advanced his penitents were in prayer, the more did he inculcate this great annihilation.

“Be humble,” he writes, “for one little grain of pride is enough to destroy a great mountain of sanctity...”

In another, “God is pleased with those who are little, and who become as little children. He keeps them in His divine bosom and nourishes them with that divine milk of holy love, sweet as new wine, which inebriates those who drink it; but this is a holy drunkenness, which makes us become wiser...”

“Humility and self-contempt free us from delusions. I hear that Father Thomas has succeeded well in the exercise, therefore I beg you to give him good advice, that he may avoid vain-glory...”

He wished humility to be the test of good prayer. “We see,” says this spiritual master, “that this prayer produces effects and desires conformable to the state and vocation, therefore there is no fear of delusion provided that the consciousness of our own nothingness exists, and goes on increasing, to have nothing, to be able to do nothing, to know nothing. Ah! the deeper we penetrate, the more horrible nothingness we find to annihilate in the infinite all. An ‘N’ and an ‘A,’ these two letters contain all perfection.”

He teaches the same doctrine in another letter. “May the grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Yesterday, the 9th inst., I received your letter, dated the 6th of last September. In reply I tell you, first, that I rejoice that you have interior and exterior sufferings and humiliations, and I rejoice that they are dear to you; you begin to be a disciple of Christ. It is true that what you practice are only little drops of suffering, but even in these you must humble yourself greatly, considering that in comparison of the sufferings endured by the true servants of God, yours are nothing, much more if you weigh them in the scales of the holy Cross of our Savior. Remain, therefore, in your own nothingness. Second, prayer, which humbles the soul, which inflames it with love, and which stimulates it to virtue and to suffering, is never a delusion. Third, fly, as from a plague, from those satisfactions which puff up, which cause vanity, which make you think yourself to be something, for they come from the devil. Therefore thank God, Who gave you light to drive them away and to know them. The right remedy for avoiding these delusions is true humility of heart, contempt, to annihilate oneself, and fly into the strong tower of the side of Jesus, and there take shelter and ask for help. Fourth, the light in your understanding, you mention, which inflames your will, is suspicious if it causes vanity. Therefore, disregard the extravagance you name and place yourself in the Divine Presence with lively faith and affectionate attention, conceiving a most high idea of the Divine Majesty, humbling yourself as much as you can. If the devil makes any tumult, go on keeping yourself in annihilation by the remembrance of your sins, your miseries, not daring to advance, but remaining fixed in the knowledge of yourself, and then the devil will be deluded; but you must be faithful in doing as I tell you. St. Francis Borgia, before he entered upon his sublime contemplations, used to spend two hours in meditating on his own nothingness and misery. True consolations and light from God are always accompanied with profound humility, with such a knowledge of ourselves and of the Divine Majesty that the soul completely annihilates itself, and would cast itself down under

the feet of all. They cause also heavenly intelligence, though not always, peace, love, joy, the practice of virtue, and the love of grace...”

Writing in conformity with these great principles that were so deeply rooted in his heart, he says in another letter, “Let us remain in our nothingness and not arise till God lifts us up Himself. Oh, when God wishes to raise up a soul, what sweet violence does He offer! I say sweet, but so strong, that the soul cannot resist. Continue, then, the presence of God in pure faith, and remain in the knowledge and meditation of your own nothingness, of your sins, miseries, etc., as well as you can, leaving your soul always free to follow the sweet inspirations of the Holy Spirit. I add, that though it may seem to you that you rejoice in sufferings and contempt, make no account of this; for even in this the devil may be concerned to raise vanity in the soul. It is better to esteem your own feelings and understanding as nothing but to remain in fear and on your guard, thinking of nothing but of executing the Divine Will. The world is full of snares, the truly humble alone can avoid them. Do not trust to yourself; though you think that your prayer produces good effects, do not make yourself a judge in your own cause. Diffident in yourself, adore the great Father of Lights in spirit and in truth. Blessed is the man who is always timid and fearful. Thus is it written, “To do good, and to believe that we do nothing good is a sign of great humility; there are, however, first degrees of humility. He who knows himself thoroughly, and knows God, is truly humble of heart. May God grant this to all. Amen.”

“He who makes himself the least,” he says in another, “including great doctrines in a small space, shall be the greatest; he who annihilates himself the most, shall be most exalted, enriched, and shall have a more certain entrance into that great closet, into that great wine-cellar, into that royal apartment, from which we pass to the secret closet, where the spouse converses alone with her heavenly Spouse.”

In order that even defects and faults might be of use for the acquisition of virtue, he writes to a devout person, “If some dust of imperfection clings to your soul, be not disturbed, but burn and consume it in the fire of the love of God, humbling yourself and tranquilly repenting, but with a humble, strong, and hearty repentance, and then continue in peace.”

He was most anxious that all should preserve holy humility of heart, from which proceeds gentleness of disposition, mildness in conversation, interior peace, and every good gift. In recommending its practice, he explained himself by very well-chosen similes, that his maxims

might be better understood. “Imagine,” he said, “that there is a great Lord, who, when at table with his friends, hears someone knock at the door with a great noise and with violence; he sends a servant to see who it is, and hearing that a poor man is so presumptuous, he is annoyed by his impatience and importunity and sends him away without an alms. Soon after another comes, who knocks at the door, but very modestly and humbly. Then the master says to the servants, ‘Go to that poor man who asks charity so humbly and give him an alms.’ The third comes and knocks so softly that he is scarcely heard, and the master sends him a good sum of money. Finally, a poor leper comes, who does not dare even to knock, but throws himself on the ground, waiting till the master sees him. The gentleman comes out of his house to go and amuse himself, and sees this poor leper. ‘What are you doing, poor man?’ he says, ‘Why do you not ask charity?’ ‘Ah, sir,’ replies the leper, ‘you are so great and good a gentleman, and I am only a poor ragged man, covered with leprosy. Therefore, I do not dare even to speak.’ The gentleman then calls his steward and says, ‘See that this poor man is cured and clothed, and give him a pension for his life.’” Then, making the application, he said, “Thus our Lord acts with us; the more we humble ourselves in His sight, the more He enriches us with His divine graces, and this we must do, particularly when in prayer we find ourselves dry, desolate, and abandoned; then we must greatly humble ourselves before God, acknowledge our unworthiness, and ask with humility the help and assistance of the Divine Goodness, suffering with humble resignation all that it pleases Him to send us, and to permit that which is contrary to our wishes.” He used another expressive simile for the same intention. “Imagine you see a sculptor who sends to the forest for a piece of wood to make a fine statue. The servants carry the wood to the shop, but in a rough and unformed state. The sculptor begins to smooth it, and takes, first the axe, then the plane, and lastly the chisel, and what does the wood do? How does it act? Certainly it does not resist, but allows itself to be carved till it becomes a beautiful statue. In this manner,” he added, “the Divine Artificer works, Who, to remove from a soul her imperfections, wishing, as it were, to polish her, allows the devil to torment her by temptations, then tries and purifies her by aridity and desolations. If she has patience and longanimity in bearing these trials, she advances to perfection and becomes a beautiful statue, worthy to be placed in the gallery of heaven.”

As it is very easy for him who receives honor and applause to take in them some vain complacency, which, the more pleasing it is to the palate of self-love, is so much the more

poisonous and hurtful to the soul, the wise Father, who had the salvation of his children at heart, watched diligently to find out if they abhorred, like true servants of God, the praise and approbation of men. If he ever perceived that anyone took pleasure in the honors that were rendered him, or other similar demonstrations, he did not fail to give him at once the antidote to the poison, that it might not gain an entrance into his soul. He advised him to make no account of such honors, but to love and greatly esteem holy humility. He removed from his mind the idea that he was holy, if he had conceived it. He forbade him to go into those places where he was esteemed and considered holy. Finally, as he ardently loved holy humility and the contempt of himself, he endeavored by advice, conferences, and letters to induce everyone to walk in '*a spirit of humility*.' On this account he was most averse from singularity and could not endure ostentation, which is the nourishment and incentive of pride, but wished each one to walk in the common way with fervor and exact fidelity.

His charity did not lose sight even of those who had abandoned him, after all the labor he had endured for them. In answering a person who, after leaving the Congregation, signed himself with some little ostentation in a letter addressed to Father Paul, Archpriest, Advocate, Theologian, he taught him in an ingenious way that he should glory only in the humility of Christ Jesus, subscribing himself Paul of the Cross, N. N. N., as if he meant to say: Paul of the Cross, who is nothing, who knows nothing, can do nothing, desires nothing, and wishes for nothing in this world but "Jesus Christ and the cross." This was all the wisdom that the servant of God practiced himself and taught others: to lead a hidden life in Jesus Christ and glory in contempt, insult, and in the Cross of our Divine Redeemer. This, to conclude in the words of this truly humble man, words full of learning, of spirituality, and of efficacy, this is a short method of becoming enriched with new and admirable gifts and graces, and of increasing in the love of God: namely, to behold with the eye of faith our own horrible nothingness, and as if terrified by the sight, to fly away '*to the inner desert*,' into the abyss of the Divinity, plunging therein our own horrible nothingness, receiving *passively* the divine inspirations, and with entire abandonment to God, allowing the Divine Majesty to carry on His divine work in the interior of the soul, in which '*the divine birth takes place*.' He who makes himself the most ignorant in this divine wisdom is most learned; here we understand, without understanding this, I say, because it cannot be explained. Oh, sacred ignorance, which makes us lose sight of all the wisdom and

greatness ‘*of this world,*’ learn in the school of the Holy Spirit the science and wisdom of the saints!

## **CHAPTER XXXVI**

### **Of the Supernatural Gifts Granted by God to Father Paul, and First of the Gift of Prophecy**

That light and power, which was granted by our Lord in such abundance to His first followers, and our great masters, by which they penetrated into the obscurity of the most hidden things, and worked great and astonishing miracles, though it continues to retain all its power of proving to every intellect the truth of our holy religion, yet the Divine Majesty deigns to renew the communication of His gifts, to grant His servants, even in times the farthest removed from that happy beginning, light to know and predict hidden things, and strength to work wonders, that by the goodness of their lives, that most pure religion, in whose bosom alone true and perfect virtue, as its unchangeable property, fructifies, increases, and is nourished, may receive an increase of heavenly splendor.

Our Lord was pleased to bestow gifts of this kind on Father Paul in abundance, as may be seen in the whole course of his life. Though he sought by every means to hide them, our Lord, for His greater glory, made them manifest and visible. Following the traces marked by the Divine Beneficence, since we have already spoken of the sublime virtues with which it adorned the soul of Father Paul, we will now speak of the gifts, *freely given*, which were bestowed upon him in great abundance. We will, in the first place, mention the gift of prophecy, which embraces the knowledge of hidden things, as well as the foresight of those which are to come. In both these ways, Father Paul possessed this great heavenly gift, as we have already witnessed in his life, and now we have to manifest it by a few facts, which we will select from a great number, for it would occupy too much time and space to relate them all. We have already observed how precious and true were the predictions made by him even at the time that he was living at Castellazzo. After he came to Monte Argentario, and in various places to which our Lord called him, while for many years he carried on the exercise of holy missions, the gift of prophecy was



often visibly manifested in him.

When he was at the Hermitage of Holy Mary of the Chain, near Gaeta, before he was a priest, some women had recourse to the servant of God, being in affliction because they had heard no news of their husbands who were on board ship; Father Paul desired them to return in three or four days for an answer. In the meantime, he and his companions offered up special prayers to God. The women returned, and Father Paul, with as much clearness as if he had seen it, told them that the ship, the sailors, and master had been in great danger of being taken and made slaves by the Turks, but that our Lord had liberated them, and that in four days more the ship would return to Gaeta, and the sailors would arrive safely at home. All this was perfectly true and was fulfilled according to the words of the servant of God.

Sigr. D. Fabbio Grazi, of Orbetello, the chief benefactor of our first retreat, was nearly at the point of death with a dangerous disease of the chest, which seemed to destroy every hope of life. He had received the last sacraments, was given up by the physicians, and seemed very unlikely to last much longer. His death being considered certain, a carpenter, named Joseph Buggiada, was ordered to make the coffin. Father Paul, being then at Orbetello at the house of the Grazi, was called to assist the dying man. In the morning, as Father Paul went to say Mass, he passed the carpenter's house, near that of the Grazi, and saw the coffin that was being made and asked for whom it was prepared. He was answered that it was for Sigr. D. Fabbio. Father Paul then said, "This time he will give a kick to this coffin." And, in fact, D. Fabbio recovered from that illness and survived a considerable time.

In the Monastery of Mount Carmel at Vetralla, in 1690, the disease and epidemic of tuberculosis gained an entrance, and several of the good nuns died of it. Every precaution was used to guard against the danger of infection, but several other nuns took it, and first one and then another died. During the infection of 1743, there were five or six nuns suffering from it, who all died in a few years of hectic fever, and the last, after an illness of several years, died in 1753. Everyone can imagine the affliction of these nuns, on account of the loss of their sisters, and of the fear that the disease might become general among the younger nuns, and that the monastery would fall into discredit, without the hope of anyone wishing to take the habit there. While they were in this fear and affliction, Father Paul went to give the exercises in that monastery, and being asked to pray that the convent might be freed from that infection, the

servant of God, moved with compassion on account of their affliction, exercised his charity, offered up prayers to God, and to gain more easily what he desired, had recourse to our Blessed Lady, who is the treasurer of all graces. On the second of July, the Feast of the Visitation, Paul sent for some water and blessed it with the relic of our Blessed Lady; he drank some of it, and desired all the religious to drink of it. Then he said with great resolution, “Be now at rest, this disease will not trouble you in the future; others will, but not this.” He added, “Fear not, subjects will not be wanting.” And, in fact, there have never been in the monastery fewer nuns than the appointed number, and sometimes they have been obliged to refuse those who wished to enter, not having any room. Phthisis, up to this time, has never shown itself in any religious, though there are in that monastery young nuns who have suffered daily from fevers, some for six, and some for about fifteen years, without, however, showing any symptom of consumption, as various physicians assert. What is more surprising is that when Father Paul made the prediction, there were actually in the monastery two nuns by names of Sister Teresa Margaret of the Most Blessed Trinity and Sister Figlia Maria of the Sacred Heart, both considered consumptive, or inclined to consumption since March of that same year. The first, Sister Teresa Margaret, had several times spit blood in quantities and was herself greatly afraid she should die of consumption, though she had drunk of the water blessed by the servant of God. Speaking to Father Paul, she made known her agitation, and he said, “You will die soon, but your death will be a sweet sleep;” and, in fact, on the last day of December, 1753, after the good nun had heard Mass and received holy communion, on returning to her cell, she felt herself attacked with fever, which was considered malignant. As the disease was judged to be very dangerous, she received the Holy Viaticum and all the sacraments. Being near her death, according to the servant of God’s prediction, she enjoyed great tranquility of soul and continually cried out, “*I will sing of the mercies of God forever. Come, Lord, and do not delay*” (Cfr. Ps. 30:13). By these and similar exclamations she testified her ardent desire of entering into that ocean of sweetness, of which she experienced a delicious foretaste. Turning to the infirmarian and the nuns who were present, she said joyfully, “The words of Father Paul are verified, when he said that my death would be a sweet sleep; quick, quick, I cannot wait longer!” After a short time, towards one o’clock, she died with the song of holy love on her lips, as the servant of God had foretold, and went to be united with her sweet Spouse, never again to be separated from Him. Father Paul was then at

Sutri, and was giving the exercises to the nuns in that convent, and without knowing of their death by any natural or ordinary means, he said to one of the nuns at Sutri, “A nun is dead at Vetralla, and she is now in Paradise.” This nun, who heard it, wrote at once to a nun at Vetralla. The wonderful gifts of the servant of God were more clearly made known by the circumstances that regarded the happy nun, Sister Teresa Margaret, who died of something perfectly different from consumption, though she was threatened with and even attacked by it, and also by those relating to Sister Figlia Maria of the Sacred Heart, who still lives and enjoys excellent health.

Father Paul made a similar prediction in the convent of Farnese, to which he had gone to give the exercises. As he was hearing the nuns in the confessional, according to rule, a nun by the name of Sister Cecilia of the Heart of Jesus, then a novice, came to his feet. This poor religious, while she was making her noviceship, was attacked by a disease which soon became confirmed consumption. She had spit blood in quantities several times, she was eaten up by a slow fever which brought her nearer to the grave daily, and showed all the other marks of this incurable complaint. Deeply afflicted to see the way of her so greatly desired profession closed, she remained in this state six or seven months, till she was near the end of her novitiate. Father Paul, who had been informed by the nuns of her state and requested to persuade her to resolve on returning home, when she was in the confessional, said to her charitably, “My child, I have bad news for you; you must return home, for, with this complaint upon you, the nuns cannot admit you to your profession.” The novice burst into tears, as she felt great regret at the idea of leaving religious life, and she said, to express the firmness of her resolution, “Oh, no, never!” Father Paul, touched with compassion for the fervent novice, then said, “Well, have faith, I will bless you.” He then blessed her with his crucifix, told her to make the sign of the cross and anoint herself with oil from the lamp of the Blessed Sacrament, and assured her that she would be cured and would make her profession, and that she need not fear. That instant the fever ceased; from that time no more blood was seen. She recovered her health, made her profession, and for twenty years, that is, from the time the servant of God spoke to her till the day of the deposition to this fact, she has never again suffered from that complaint.

Not so favorable, though no less true and certain, was the prediction he made to a religious of another monastery about the year 1761. Father Paul went during Lent to give the exercises for the last time in the venerable Monastery of St. Lucy at Corneto, and as he knew that at the last

carnival the nuns had given a representation, he scolded them very much, because, as he said, it was very unbecoming of the spouses of Jesus Christ to dress themselves like men for a recitation. He told a nun, by name Mother D. Angela Roselia Ricci, who had taken part in the play, that in punishment she would suffer for a length of time great aridity of soul, as, in fact, it happened after the servant of God's departure, and the nuns used to repeat, "Father Paul spoke the truth." But as the punishment came after the exercises, the nun, perhaps, thought little of Father Paul's prediction when he spoke to her and had little fear of his reproofs. One morning when she entered the confessional, breaking through the usual order in going, without the servant of God knowing it from any religious, she was immediately asked whether she had made a resolution not to act a part in any representation? She answered at once, "Yes." "How is that?" said Father Paul, "When you have already prepared one for this year?" The religious was astonished, for it was most true that she had prepared another play, had copied out the first act, and distributed the parts to others who were to take them; and of all this she had not said a word to the servant of God, nor had the other nuns told him that this nun was then going in.

As we have here mentioned Father Paul's opinion with regard to plays acted in convents, it will be well to add what he wrote on this subject to the superioress of another monastery: "You have done extremely well to put an end to plays; and when such occasions happen, or any others that are hurtful to the soul, endeavor with great firmness to prevent the offense of God, without fearing tongues, and if persecution happens, remain in silence, recollected in God, dead to all things but God."

Father Paul predicted, with great firmness, that a certain secular priest, by name D. Antonio Calvasi, an ecclesiastic of great virtue, who lived and died at Rome in the odor of sanctity, would be able again to celebrate Mass. This good priest had lost the sight of both eyes, so that he could not distinguish any object. In this afflicted state, he was deprived of the consolation of saying Mass, which grieved him much. Being one day invited to dine with his friend, Sigr. Antonio Frattini, one of our kind benefactors, and meeting there on the same day Father Paul of the Cross, these two servants of God had no sooner met in the house of this gentleman, than they embraced one another with such affection, that they appeared to be friends of long standing, though they had never seen each other, nor met before. After these mutual embraces, they stood affectionately side by side, when suddenly Father Antonio fell on his knees at Father Paul's feet

and told him, with tears in his eyes, that from his blindness, he was no longer able to celebrate Mass, but wished Father Paul to bless him and pray for him, that God would again grant him his sight, that he might celebrate once more and then die in peace, if it pleased God. Father Paul, with great confidence, taking the crucifix and with his face inflamed like a fire, placed his other hand on Father Antonio's head, blessed him and said with great fervor and recollection, "Be of good courage, for you will say Mass to the honor and glory of the most Blessed Trinity, and of the Blessed Virgin." With still greater fervor, he repeated, "Yes, you will say it; you will say it." In fact, the day after this happy meeting, Father Antonio was taken to the Church of St. Rocco, where he used to celebrate Mass before he lost his sight, and going into the sacristy, told the sacristan he wished to celebrate Mass. The sacristan, knowing his misfortune, asked if he could see. Father Antonio answered, "God will look to it." The sacristan, more to satisfy the pious priest than anything else, presented the missal to him, and opening it, placed it before him, upside down. Father Antonio looked at it and soon perceived that it was upside down. He turned it, and immediately recovering the sight of the eye on the canon side, he celebrated holy Mass, and continued to celebrate it as long as he lived, saying the Mass of the Blessed Trinity and of our Lady, according to the dispensation obtained from the Pope.

Agatha Frattini was in great danger of death, from a sore throat, which prevented her from swallowing the least thing, and from uttering a word. She remained two days in this painful and dangerous state, when, through devotion to Father Paul, she wished to be visited by him and gave a sign of her wish as well as she could. No sooner did Father Paul receive the messenger in the hospital of St. John Lateran, than he went quickly to the house, and on arriving blessed her with great charity with the crucifix and the picture of the Blessed Virgin, and then, with great confidence, said, "The gathering will burst tonight," and repeated, with greater energy, "Yes, it will burst. Jesus and Mary will grant us this grace in their mercy." The prediction was fully verified. In the succeeding night the abscess in her throat burst and discharged such a quantity of matter from her mouth, that she felt greatly relieved. Though she was quite well, later in the same night, a second abscess burst during a fit of coughing, and then again a third, which discharged a great quantity from her mouth. At the close of the night she was quite well, as Father Paul had foretold. That night the servant of God, who was anxious for the cure of this pious lady, was watching in prayer for her.

To Sigr. Antonio Frattini, who was asking the prayers of the servant of God on undertaking a journey into Tuscany, he plainly said that he might go and our Lord would preserve him from all danger both in going and returning. This pious benefactor found out the efficacy of the servant of God's prayers, and the certainty of his prediction. On his way, he escaped the imminent danger of falling down a precipice, when the horses taking fright, rushed from the road towards the precipice. When they had reached its edge, the foremost horse, as if arrested by an invisible hand, stood still, trembling, and remained so till Antonio and his companions got out on the other side and sought a place of safety.

Many persons, to their great comfort, experienced the truth of the servant of God's predictions. The two young daughters of a poor mother had left her in the company of a bad man. The afflicted woman had recourse to Father Paul, and he assured her that the unfortunate girls were then at Ginevra, but they would return, as well as the man who, like a hellish vulture, had led them away, and that they would repent. All three returned before a month had elapsed, and in returning showed true signs of repentance, and gave afterwards in atonement for the scandal that edification which was required.

He foretold to Venturino Lucchetti of Terra di Vallerano, that his only son, whose life was despaired of on account of a putrid fever, would recover, and that he need not fear. When Venturino returned home, he found his son better, and in a few days he had the comfort to see him cured.

He predicted to Giovanna Maria Sbarra that her brother, Philip Sbarra, whom she had left at home ill of a quotidian fever, would recover, and that at her return home she would not find him in bed, but in the square. In fact, Giovanna Maria, on returning home the following day, did not find her brother in bed, asked where he was, and was told that he was out of doors quite well. Then speaking to her brother and asking how he had been cured, they found by comparing notes that at the precise time that his sister was speaking to Father Paul, Philip improved, became free from fever, had rested at night, and rose the next morning cured.

He predicted to Father John Mary of St. Ignatius, who, when a youth, came to ask the habit. He had for many years suffered from a violent disease in the eyes. Paul told him that he would suffer no more from it, saying to him with a joyful countenance, "Be joyful you will suffer no more." In fact, he suffered no more from it then and afterwards, and Father Paul himself

observed, when some years later he saw his eyes perfectly cured, “You have changed your eyes; they were very large before, and now they are natural.”

To Father Valentine of St. Mary Magdalene, who feared he should become useless through the rupture of a blood vessel in his chest when he was studying, and because he was subject to a vomiting of blood, Father Paul predicted with certainty that his illness was nothing, and added, “When I say anything for certain, believe that I know it; you are to be a missionary, and this is a trial from God.” And though the disease went on increasing, and with fever coming on, the medical man thought consumption would inevitably follow. Nevertheless, the religious now sees Father Paul’s words, which he confirmed also on another occasion, perfectly verified, for he occupies himself in missions without any inconvenience to his chest, however great may be his labors in preaching and speaking.

He foretold to Sig. D. Nicholas Costantini, canon of the cathedral of Corneto, our kind benefactor, that he would be cured of a tumor which had grown to great size in his left knee and kept him in bed with great suffering. Paul comforted him with these words, “Be of good courage, Canon, for on Friday, the day dedicated to the Passion of our Lord, you will be cured. But I tell you that the mission will not be for you this time, and you will rise from bed the day that we depart.” Everything happened as the servant of God said, and even on the Friday, when the pain was very much worse, Father Paul again reassured him, saying, “Canon, take courage, have faith, for you are cured.” Scarcely had Father Paul left the room, than the tumor burst, and the hard part of the flesh became detached of itself, matter and congealed blood coming away in great abundance. Father Paul was summoned again, and he exclaimed, “Long live faith! Did I not tell you that you were cured? Let us praise God.” From that time he went on improving, but he was not allowed to rise from bed till several days had elapsed, and when he did leave his bed, it was on the Monday, following that Sunday on which Father Paul ended his mission.

He foretold the cure of D. Joseph Suscioli, canon of the cathedral of Sutri, his intimate friend, who was in bed, suffering greatly from an accident that happened to him when he was going to pour out some wine into a glass at table. The neck of the bottle broke suddenly in his hand, and feeling the glass wound his wrist, he shook his hand intending to throw down the bottle, without perceiving that the string of the bottle was twisted round his finger. By the violent movement of his hand, he struck the bottle against the table and his wrist against the broken glass, which

caused a larger and more painful wound. The injury, becoming worse and worse, brought him at last near death, as the corruption from the wound extended up the arm and had almost reached the shoulder. The medical men tried various remedies; a painful wound had been made on the elbow to relieve it, and, in the course of the treatment, a whitish substance, as long as the hand, was extracted from the wound. The poor invalid, growing worse, received the Holy Viaticum. Father Paul went more than once to visit his sick friend, and one day, while he was still in this state, the servant of God entered his room an hour after the wound was dressed, and as he came in appeared joyful and said with a cheerful countenance, “What will my religious say, Canon, when they hear that you are cured?” He approached the bed, began to squeeze the wounded arm in various places, without the sick man suffering any pain, as was natural. Then, with great charity kissed the arm three times, in those parts where it was uncovered, and departed. The sister-in-law of the canon, who was present, confident that Father Paul had cured it, wished to unbind the arm, but the canon wisely opposed this, and would not allow anyone to do it but the medical attendant. Being called, he came at once, and having unbound the arm, pressed it in different parts, and saw three drops of matter issue from the wound. Observing it closely, he saw that the wound, which threatened to cause death, had been cured by skill much more efficacious than his own, because it was miraculous. The fingers of the hand which had been benumbed recovered power, and the following day the canon rose from bed, and, without applying any remedy except keeping his arm in a sling, by the advice of the physician, who would not be wanting in caution, the wound soon became perfectly healed. Thus, the religious of the Passion were full of delight to hear that one of our kindest and best benefactors was cured.

The special charity and the lively gratitude with which Father Paul regarded his benefactors made him pray for them with great fervor, and often obtain from God the desired effect, and foretell with supernatural light that they would recover their health. Besides the benefactors of whom we have spoken, we must here mention what happened to D. Pompeo Angeletti, a most charitable benefactor of all the poor, and especially of Father Paul and his Congregation. This old man was at Ceccano, had reached the age of eighty, and was leading his life ‘*in an upright old age*’ when he was seized with a complaint in the chest, which gave great cause for fear because of his advanced age. His nephew, D. Charles Angeletti, afterwards secret chamberlain to Clement XIV, canon of St. Mary Magdalene, went to Father Paul, who was then at our retreat.



There he told him of his uncle's dangerous state and begged him to recommend him to God in his prayers. Father Paul answered that he would certainly recommend him to God, and added that he would not die that time. He then desired him to tell the sick man that he must remain in bed that day and the day following, but that on the third day he might get up, be shaved, and expect him, for he would dine with him. The message was given to the sick man, and through his high opinion of Father Paul, he felt sure of his cure. He obeyed the servant of God's order, remained in bed that day and the day following. On the third day he rose from bed free from fever, was shaved, and waited in expectation that Father Paul would dine with him. The servant of God went, and, with mutual consolation in this cure, these two friends met again, and from that time D. Pompeo remained in good health and survived nineteen years more, dying *full of good days*. Another time, Captain Angeletti, father of D. Charles, fell sick while Father Paul was at the Retreat of St. Angelo. D. Charles wrote to him, telling him of his father's serious illness, and the servant of God replied that he greatly regretted the illness of the venerable old man, for thus, with good reason, he called this pious and charitable benefactor – but exhorted him to keep up his courage, for he hoped that our Lord would restore his health that time. It was so. The captain recovered and lived several years longer. He was ill again in 1765, and the son, from his devotion and confidence in Father Paul's prayers, immediately gave him notice of it. The servant of God, who received light from heaven, could not answer as before, but wrote to D. Charles that he must be resigned to the Divine Will and be ready for any blow that might come from the loving hand of God. Therefore, he clearly understood that the death of his father was at hand. The captain died of that illness.

Father Paul was going to give a mission at Viterbo, when Count Peter Brugiotti, one of our benefactors, who had a great devotion to the Founder, came to visit him in the Retreat of St. Angelo. They began to talk of things regarding the mission, as it is believed, when, in the midst of the conversation, the servant of God suddenly said, with great eagerness, "Ah, Lord, do not permit such a thing in a person I love so much. You know that I did not desire to go to this mission!" The count was alarmed and began to fear that Father Paul was predicting the death of his father, then indisposed, whom the servant of God tenderly loved. He asked Father Paul if it were so. The servant of God answered, "No." The good missionary went to Viterbo and began the mission, and when he was preaching often uttered this exclamation, "Ah, Lord, do not permit

such a thing!” Another day, a little before the time he was to mount the platform, he left the house where he was lodging and met the count, who asked where he was going? “I am going,” said the servant of God, “to Bishop Abbati.” The count replied, “The bell has rung for the mission, you can go later.” “And, supposing he is not alive afterwards,” said Father Paul. “Now, I will go now; for I should not be in time afterwards.” He went at once to speak to the good prelate. As Father Paul left the bishop’s room, he was heard to say, “Oh, what a terrible misfortune, what a misfortune!” and in this affliction went to preach on death, perhaps to unite with the lesson Divine Providence was about to give. He was still preaching when a note was presented to him which told him that the bishop had been killed by an accident. The servant of God told the people of it, recommending to them the soul of their affectionate pastor. Partly from the suddenness of the accident, and partly from the sermon of the fervent missionary, who seemed to have wished to dispose the people to hear this news and to profit from his advice to be prepared for death, the whole audience burst into tears, and there was a general and an extraordinary commotion.

Father Paul foretold other deaths with that certainty which divine light gives. He was called one day to visit an archpriest who had a slight indisposition. He went, and as he entered the house, heard the bell which rings at mid-day. He knelt to recite the Ave Maria and the usual prayers, as is the pious custom of all good Christians, and at that time had an internal locution, in which God manifested to him that the archpriest’s death was very near, and that he must help him to prepare for his last passage and remove from him every hope that the trifling nature of the illness led him to cherish. The servant of God faithfully fulfilled the duty of ambassador of the Supreme and Divine Majesty, spoke to the archpriest with all possible charity and affection, and told him distinctly that he would die of that illness. A few days later the archpriest died.

When Father Paul was giving the exercise in a Capuchin convent at Farnese, as he was preaching one day, kneeling on the altar steps, he suddenly cried out, “Oh! you that are sleeping, in a few days you will die.” A nun was actually asleep, but naturally could not be seen by Father Paul. After the sermon, the exercises being over, the servant of God went to Ischia. The nun fell sick, and the others sent for Father Paul to come back to the convent; he at once replied that it was God’s will this nun should die. A few days later, she did die.

Father Paul, being in Rome about 1761 or 1762, was called by the coachman of the

Angeletti, in whose house he was residing, to visit his sick wife, who for five years had been confined to her bed from the effects of a humor which, on account of remedies used at a wrong time, had entered into her system. When he reached her room with her husband, he told her with other good advice that in her pains she must have recourse to God and repeat His holy name, a name of virtue and of salvation. As the woman in her impatience sometimes named the devil, she thought her husband had told this to Father Paul, but in truth the man had said nothing about it, as he assured his wife, when she gave him a look as if to reproach him. From the esteem this woman felt for Father Paul, and from the holy words with which he comforted her, she took courage to ask him to intercede with our Lord for her cure, or at least, for the grace of being able to communicate in the church. As for her cure, Father Paul answered, that she must not think about it, for our Lord intended this illness to be her purgatory, but that He would grant her the grace to go to communion in the church the following Sunday. Having encouraged her to recommend herself to God, and to think continually of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, he left her. But the husband could not understand how his wife would be able to do this, since even for the short time that it required to make her bed, she was obliged to be lifted by four persons and placed on a chair. Following Father Paul, he asked him what he thought of his wife's state. He answered that her disease could not be cured, and that on the eve of our Lady of Mount Carmel she would die, ordering him not to say a word about it to her for fear of alarming her too much. All took place as Father Paul had foretold. The following Sunday, having recommended herself to God, she rose up, dressed herself, and without any inconvenience, went to the Church of Our Lady the Liberatrix, to perform her devotions. After she reached home, as if her pains had allowed her a short respite that she might communicate in the church, according to the servant of God's prediction, she felt herself again attacked by them, and they continued without much change the whole week. The 15th of July, the eve of our Lady of Mount Carmel, arrived, and the husband remembering Father Paul's other words, went home several times to see how his wife was, but found her always much the same, without any great increase of her disease or any symptom of approaching death. "In the evening of that day," as he adds in his deposition, "when I returned home, I found that her illness had become worse, insomuch that she had received Extreme Unction, and becoming worse and worse, she died about midnight," exactly verifying the servant of God's prediction.

In 1761 or 1762, the servant of God wrote to Father Thomas Struzzieri, who was then at Corsica, as theologian to Bishop de Angelis, that Almighty God, irritated by the grievous sins committed by Christians, was preparing a severe chastisement to punish their offenses against Him. The two following years a scarcity of wheat prevailed throughout a great part of Italy, by which many persons died of hardship and hunger.

Many years before the prophecy was verified, Father Paul foretold that the church and house of Sts. John and Paul would be given to him, and the event took place as follows. The servant of God, being in Rome for the affairs of his Congregation, went one day to St. Pantaleo ai Monti, to meet D. Thomas Struzzieri, and then devoutly ascended with him the Santa Scala. Having taken the road that leads to St. Gregorio, they made the little ascent of Monte Celio to reach Sts. John and Paul. When they had reached the top, Father Paul asked Father Thomas what church and house that was? Father Thomas answered that the church was dedicated to St. John and St. Paul, and that the house belonged to the Fathers of the Mission<sup>3</sup>, who had their novitiate there. Then Father Paul, almost as if in a rapture, began to exclaim, “O God! My house, my house; it is to this house that I am to come, to remain.” Neither Father Thomas nor D. Francesco Casalini, his friend, to whom he confided what had happened, could imagine to what Father Paul’s words alluded. But when the church and house of Sts. John and Paul were given to the servant of God and to his poor Congregation by Clement XIV, of holy memory, it was made known by what light the servant of God spoke, and the truth of his prediction was manifested, and much more clearly, when, after his death at the Retreat of Sts. John and Paul, his venerable corpse was placed in the church itself.

With the same clearness, Father Paul more than once predicted the state of life which different persons were to embrace or the degree of perfection which our Lord destined for them. We will relate a few facts, and omit all the others which do not seem necessary after all that has been said of the gift of prophecy. When the servant of God passed through Civita Castellana, or remained there, he was charitably entertained by Dr. Ercolani, our kind benefactor, among whose daughters there was one, named Elizabeth, whom Father Paul used to call his little nun, though the child was only about seven or eight years of age at that time. The child disliked that name very much, as she had a great horror of the religious state, and she resolutely replied, “It is of no use to call me that, for a nun I will not be.” The servant of God, laughing, asked her why she

would not be a nun, and she answered, “Because I wish to stay with my mother.” The servant of God said, “Yes, for now.” But the child, more firm in her idea, answered, “I will always stay with her.” When Father Paul had departed, Elizabeth, through the esteem she felt, even at that tender age, for the servant of God, began greatly to fear that his words were a true prediction; she began to cry and said to her mother, “You will see, Father Paul tells me this because I am to be a nun.” Her mother, accommodating herself to the weakness of that age, comforted her, saying, “I do not wish it, you shall not do so,” and the child, taking courage from these words, said, “Say always that you do not like it, and then I cannot be a nun.” Thus, she comforted herself. Once, however, it seems, the servant of God took from her every hope of remaining at home, for, calling her, as usual, the little nun, her pious mother said to Father Paul, “How do you think she can be a nun, when she is always ill?” The servant of God replied, “Be tranquil, Mamma will take care of it,” for thus he named our Blessed Lady out of tender affection. The little girl who was present, greatly disturbed, answered, “But I will not be a nun.” The servant of God, holily jesting with the innocent child, said, smiling, “Do not be afraid that they will make you prioress; you are too little.” The child was not persuaded that she could embrace that state, nor was she freed from her aversion to the religious life, but retained her repugnance till she was nineteen years of age. In the meantime, our Lord, who disposes all things *‘powerfully and gently,’* caused the infirmities from which she suffered to increase greatly. Her mother, despairing of human remedies, took her to Rome to visit a picture of our Blessed Lady, which, under the name of our Lady of Carmel, is venerated at the Arco di Costaguti. During this visit, the young girl was freed from all her pains, and at the time of her cure, our Lord gave her a vocation to the religious state, and thus the servant of God’s words, “Mamma will take care of it,” were verified. It is true, that after three months she was again attacked by her pains, but this very circumstance proved more clearly the prophetic spirit in which Father Paul had spoken. Though the devout young lady suffered from all her other pains, she never again suffered from that which had been the greatest, and which would certainly have prevented her from taking the habit. To follow the interior voice of her vocation, she entered the venerable Monastery of our Lady of Mount Carmel at Vetralla, and made known her ardent desire to be received by these excellent religious. But these good mothers had a difficulty on account of the habitual delicacy of the postulant. Father Paul, going to the monastery for the profession of a nun, sent for Elizabeth Ercolani, through the prioress,

and when the young girl came into the servant of God's presence, he said, "Child, how are you? Do not be afraid, you will live and die in the religious habit." Then striking the threshold of the grate with his hand, he said, with great firmness, "You will be a nun here." In fact, at the end of the year, on the very day of the prediction, she took the religious habit in that venerable monastery, as Father Paul had predicted. He also foretold in that prediction that she would be able to follow the Rules and Constitutions, which was also verified. For, notwithstanding her indispositions, which still exist, the nun, who now bears the name of Sister Maria Vittoria of the Holy Ghost, has always been able to follow the community practices in wearing woollen clothing, in partaking of the common food, in attending the choir, and in similar observances, which might appear beyond her strength. This she has continued for sixteen years. When, on account of any greater indisposition, she enjoys those privileges which are charitably granted to every other on such occasions. It has been observed that she never recovers her health as before until after some time she leaves off remedies and returns to the regular Rule of the community.

The servant of God made other predictions, which, from the certainty with which he spoke, and from their perfect fulfillment, show with what light he foresaw what he said. But for brevity's sake we pass them over, and add only one more of this kind, which, from its particular circumstances merits to be related. This was made to Sister Maria Crocifissa, now a nun of the Passion, and superioress of the monastery under the invocation of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, founded at Corneto.

There was in Rome a certain Canon Carboni, who held a canonry at Evora in Portugal. Being an ecclesiastic of charity and zeal, he was trying to found a monastery under the title of our Lady of Sorrows, and kept up for this purpose a correspondence with Sister Maria Crocifissa Costantini, then a nun in the Monastery of St. Lucy at Corneto, as he wished to make use of her as foundation-stone of the holy work, which he was contemplating. It appeared likely that the negotiation would soon come to an end and the monastery be founded. In the meantime Sigr. Domenico Costantini, brother of Sister Maria Crocifissa, going to Rome in 1751 or 1752, went to visit this good canon, who told him that he had already obtained from Benedict XIV, of holy memory, all the necessary faculties for opening the monastery, showed him the house prepared for this purpose, and added that he would himself go to Corneto, or send someone else, to bring with all due care and convenience, the nun, Sister Maria Crocifissa, place her in the monastery,

and thus begin the foundation. Sigr. Domenico returned to Rome and Father Paul soon after came to his house. As he had directed Sister Maria Crocifissa in the way of God, he inquired of her from her brother. Sigr. Domenico answered that they should soon lose her, because she was going to found a monastery in Rome. The servant of God then said at once, "I know Canon Carboni very well, and he will do nothing in the work he is now contemplating at Rome." "How so," said Sigr. Domenico, "for all is arranged; the house is ready, the necessary permissions have been obtained, and he expects that in a few days the new Office of our Lady of Sorrows will come out, according to the petition which has been made." "Well," answered the servant of God, "I say again, that this affair will fall to the ground, and Sister Maria Crocifissa will not leave Corneto, but will remain for a work that I have to do." Sigr. Domenico, astonished at these words, told his sister what had passed with Father Paul, and she replied, "I have given my word to that worthy gentleman, and I cannot retract my promise." But it was soon seen with what light the servant of God spoke, for the canon was summoned to Portugal, and thus the affair of his monastery was terminated. It was not, however, understood for what work Father Paul wanted Sister Maria Crocifissa. At that time Sigr. Domenico had no thought of founding a monastery, which he did afterwards. He had a young brother, a secular, who, he thought, ought to embrace the married state in order to have children and keep up the family. He therefore thought of procuring for him an honorable settlement, promising to leave to any children he might have the inheritance of their common patrimony. This brother, however, being carried away by sudden death, and every hope of succession being thus at an end, Sigr. Domenico began to think of founding a monastery of nuns of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he did at last, after spending much time and labor in accomplishing it. When the monastery was finished, another part of the prophecy was fulfilled. Sister Maria Crocifissa, as Father Paul had long before foretold, and afterwards on various occasions confirmed, was one of the nuns, a special indult having been obtained from Clement XIV to allow her to pass from the Monastery of St. Lucy to that of the Passion, where she was also elected superioress.

We will close this chapter with the prediction that Father Paul made of the exaltation of Clement XIV to the supreme pontificate. The servant of God had never known by sight, nor spoken to, Cardinal Ganganelli, when in 1766 he had for the first time the honor and the consolation of paying him a visit in Rome, during which he was so much delighted and edified

with his virtues, and had at the same time so clear a light regarding his exaltation, that on leaving the audience he said to his companion, “Oh, he will be Pope.” When he returned to the place where he was staying, which was the house of the Angeletti, our benefactors, he said more explicitly: “Ganganelli will not finish thus. This cardinal will not stop here, he will go farther, *‘arising higher.’*” He several times repeated this and added that he hoped he would greatly benefit his poor Congregation. In 1767, the servant of God, again returning to visit the cardinal, told him frankly what our Lord in His exalted designs intended to make of him. The cardinal, as Father Paul’s companion, a priest who was present, attests, replied smiling, “We always wish to have things according to our own way.” The cardinal, through his great condescension, went to the Hospital of our Lord Crucified to visit Father Paul, who was confined to his bed by a fluxion in his legs. After he had remained some time conversing devoutly and cheerfully with Father Paul, before he left, as a mark of his tender regard, he affectionately embraced the servant of God, saying, “Father Paul, I should like to do something for your Congregation.” Father Paul, then, with great energy and fervor, replied, “The time will come, my Lord Cardinal, and you will do it.” Bishop Charles Angeletti, when he heard that Father Paul had said this, believed that he had predicted the pontificate to him, and from that time felt firmly convinced of it, as he himself attested to Clement XIV, when he was raised to the pontifical chair. Being asked one day by His Holiness if he had imagined that the choice would fall upon him, he frankly replied, “Yes,” because he remembered what Father Paul had predicted.

On several other occasions the servant of God, speaking according to the interior light God gave him, frankly said what our Lord put in his heart. But when, after the death of Clement XIII, the cardinals met in conclave, Father Paul explained himself distinctly to his confessor, and said that when he had said to Cardinal Ganganelli, “The time will come, my Lord Cardinal,” he had spoken with an extraordinary impulse and with supernatural light. When the Holy See was vacant, the servant of God prayed, and procured prayers, that the will of God might be accomplished in the exaltation of the Sovereign Pontiff, and it was then understood by those who did not know it before, that he had knowledge of the future election and exaltation of Cardinal Ganganelli. In order to be ready to go to Rome immediately after the election, Father Paul said to Sigr. Romano Tedeschi of Ronciglione, with that confidence which he felt, “You, who are at Ronciglione, by which the couriers pass, if you hear that Ganganelli has been made a Pope, send



a chair for me, for I wish to go and kiss his feet.” In the meantime, Sigr. Antonio Cenci of Capranica came to our Retreat of St. Angelo, of whom Father Paul asked the news from Rome and who was considered likely to be Pope. Antonio replied that reports favored Cardinal Stoppani. The servant of God said with a smile, “Oh, no, no; you will see Ganganelli, Ganganelli.” This was a month before the election of the Pope. There came also from Rome to the same retreat, Father Joseph Hyacinth of St. Catherine, one of our religious, for the General Chapter then at hand. Going directly to ask Father Paul’s blessing, he was asked by him: “What is said in Rome regarding the election of the new Pope?” The religious replied that Cardinal Stoppani was likely to be elected. “Oh, no,” said Father Paul, “he will not be Pope.” “Who then will be?” said the other. “Ganganelli,” was the reply. “How does your reverence know that Ganganelli will be Pope?” The servant of God looked serious, and like one who is recollected in God, said, “I know it, I know it for certain, as certainly as I hold this handkerchief in my hand.” He had reason to say so. As he afterwards said to his confessor several times, that he received clearer lights than he had about the foundation of the Congregation. As he said, he considered it as certain as a thing he held in his hand, through the light that our Lord gave him interiorly.

## **CHAPTER XXXVII**

### **Of His Discernment of Spirits**

The discernment of spirits, of which the Apostle St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians, is a supernatural gift, by which, penetrating with extraordinary and marvelous light into the interior of hearts, a right judgment is formed of consciences to guide and regulate them well. Father Paul possessed this gift, and it was manifested in him, even when he was a youth, as had been seen and as may be seen in many other facts of which we are about to relate a few.

When he was at the Hermitage of the Our Lady of the Chain, near Gaeta, there was in that town a married woman, who profess spirituality and was generally considered to be holy. It was said that she was constantly in prayer, and that she received from God and from our Blessed Lady singular favors and even extraordinary visits. Her director, as well as others, had a high opinion of her, but the servant of God, having heard and examined her with the attention that was

required, decided that she was deluded. It was seen after some time, that he spoke through the spirit of God, for it was clearly manifested that the woman was miserably deceived. Before Father Paul had any knowledge of Sigr. D. Luigi Pennacchioni, he, who was afterwards a priest, went, as he himself attests, to see Paul with some companions, Leonardo Ercolani, Dionisio Dionisi, and an ecclesiastic named Luca Dari. To each of them he manifested, in private, secrets which were hidden in their interior, and which were of great importance, penetrating to the knowledge of them by the light God gave him. He did the same, as the same witness asserts, for some women, discerning what was shut up within their hearts.

Among his religious, the Founder so clearly and so many times penetrated the hidden secrets of their souls, and for their advantage declared them to them, that some of them dared not appear before him if they had committed any fault, even secretly, for fear he might have seen them in the same manner as Eliseus saw Giezi. Many other most worthy ecclesiastics and seculars of great integrity attest that they have known from their own experience this great gift in Father Paul.

A gentleman, during the time he was governor of Toscanella, was perplexed about a case which he had to bring before the Tribunal of Rome. On one side he would not betray truth and justice, and on the other, fearing that the information, without great caution, might ruin two principal families of the town, was inclined to give it with some reserve, without injuring truth or justice. After reflection, this seemed to him the better way. Not to err, however, in so important an affair, he desired the advice of some servant of God, and confiding his intention to Dr. Federico del Bene, he advised him to go to Father Paul, who was then at the Retreat of Our Blessed Lady at Cerro, three miles from Toscanella, and offered to accompany him. They went together, and when they arrived, found the servant of God seated at the feet of the crucifix which he used to carry with him on missions. As soon as he saw them, he said, "You are welcome, Governor; do as you have determined regarding you know what, and it will be well for all." The governor and the physician were greatly astonished at this speech and understood well that Father Paul had, with supernatural light, penetrated into a secret which he could not know by human means. They conceived a greater esteem for him, and this went on increasing when the governor saw that by following the advice received in so extraordinary a manner from Father Paul everything succeeded happily.

It was of more frequent occurrence that Father Paul, by supernatural light, knew the sins of those who confessed to him before they spoke. A good ecclesiastic, canon of a cathedral, being ill in 1749, wished to make a general confession to Father Paul, who was then at his house. The servant of God began to assist him with great charity, and that the confession might be easier to the penitent, Father Paul told him to do nothing but answer yes or no, for he would make his confession himself. In effect, besides suggesting to him all that he had done and committed, in some things he did not put the question, but said with confidence, “You have done this.” It was precisely as the Servant of God said.

Father Paul also revealed to a countryman, who was confessing to him a great sin he had committed. He went to the Retreat of St. Angelo, with a letter from his master, to make a good confession to Father Paul. The servant of God received him kindly, began to hear him, and told him, without troubling himself, it would suffice for him to answer sincerely the questions he put to him. The peasant was not satisfied with this offer, but replied that for his comfort he wished to say what he remembered, for in his examination he had employed fifteen days. Father Paul, therefore, with great patience allowed him to say what he wished. The man finished speaking as if nothing else remained. Then Father Paul began to say to him, “The sin that you committed in the bushes at Fallari, in such a year, and on such a day, pointing out the precise time and repeating it three times. At these words the peasant, terrified, began to tremble seeing himself before a man who so deeply penetrated into his interior by the light of God and perceived that sin, which he had not remembered. But, encouraged by the servant of God’s charity, he completed his confession and felt great consolation and peace of heart.

The good Father embarked one day at Santo Stefano to go to Piombino in the royal sailing ship, commanded by Captain Michele Fanciullo, and through an adverse wind, not being able to reach Piombino that evening, the sailing ship touched the ground in a bay called Torre della Troja in the States of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. When arrived there the servant of God preached a long sermon to the sailors and said among other things, “I do not know how it is that Almighty God has not caused us all to be drowned in the sea, for on board there is a sailor who has not been to confession for seven years.” At these words, animated by great zeal, the sailors and the master were all terrified, but no one made himself known to be the person of whom the servant of God had spoken, though each one reckoned up the accounts of his own conscience.

The following morning they arrived at Piombino, and the master and the sailors would wait no longer to go to confession. All, one after the other, made their confessions to Father Paul. It was not known then of whom Father Paul had spoken, and this man, who had the greatest need of healing his wounds with the balm of confession, after his confession, told his companions that Father Paul had penetrated his heart and discovered his interior, for he was the unhappy man that had not been to confession for seven years.

When Father Paul was preaching during the missions, he several times, in the fervor of preaching, turned to one side and, pointing with his staff to one particular spot, said, “I see you; while I am preaching penance, you are offending God.” Each time that Father Paul said this, it was known afterwards that a wicked young man was making love precisely on the spot pointed out by the heavenly light of the fervent missionary, though he could not have seen him.

During his last illness, an ecclesiastic in holy orders came to the Retreat of Sts. John and Paul, wishing to speak alone with the servant of God. He was introduced by a religious, and after he had spoken to the servant of God, “I saw him,” says the same religious, “leave Father Paul’s room very much mortified. He called me aside and asked me, ‘Tell me who is this Father.’ I answered that it was Father Paul, our Founder. ‘But he is a saint,’ he replied, ‘for he has told me things that have astonished me; he has the spirit of prophecy. Oh, what a saint he is!’”

To complete what belongs to the discernment of spirits, it would be proper here to say how greatly the servant of God was assisted by our Lord in forming a just and wise judgment of the consciences he directed. Of this we have elsewhere spoken and have caused the reader to observe the great profit drawn by souls from following the counsels of Father Paul and giving themselves, under his direction, to the exercise of holy prayers in which this servant of God was so sublime a master.

## **CHAPTER XXXVIII**

### **Of the Miracles Wrought by God Through the Intercession of Father Paul**

Our Lord, who alone has the power of working things that are really miraculous, “*who alone works great marvels*”(Cfr. Ps. 136:4), delights also in working them by means of His beloved

servants, and making His power wonderful in His saints, “*God is wonderful in his saints*” (Cfr. Ps. 67:36), deigned in these latter times to work by means of Father Paul of the Cross singular graces and prodigies. We, for the edification of the devout reader, will relate a few of them here, without again mentioning those which we have related in the course of this history, leaving the others which have been deposed to in the Processes, by which we perceive clearly that from youth he was favored by God with the gift of working miracles.

When Father Paul was at the Hermitage of St. Anthony on Monte Argentario, a poor man went one day to see him, whose hands and part of his face were covered with a loathsome disease, like a leprosy, to recommend himself to the servant of God to be cured. Father Paul gave him his blessing, after which he went back to his house at Portercole. He slept quietly that night, and the next morning found himself perfectly well, without knowing what had become of the scabs of his loathsome and troublesome disease.

Sigr. Antonio Danei, an ocular witness, deposes that being once with his brother, Father Paul, at Naples, the servant of God blessed a sick man, already given up by the physicians, in the street of Santa Lucia, and the blessing was so efficacious that the next morning it was made known, contrary to all expectation, that the sick man was cured.

When the servant of God was making the visitation at our retreat at Terracina, a priest named D. Giuseppe Pontecorvo of Sonnino in the Diocese of Piperno, who for nine years had been infected with an obstinate and most troublesome disease, resembling leprosy, was taken to him. The poor priest came, assisted by two persons to enable him to walk. When brought before Father Paul, he explained his pitiable state and said that after many remedies his disease continued to trouble him greatly, and it did not allow him to rest nor to take necessary support and nourishment. Father Paul, desiring in him, above all things, an increase of virtue and perfection, counseled him to have recourse to God, our true physician, and to bear with patience the disease that afflicted him. Then placing his hand on the priest’s breast, he touched the diseased part with his hand and blessed him. D. Giuseppe returned home to Sonnino, and, on merely scratching, the crusts of disease with which his body was covered fell off at once, and at that time he was freed from the complaint without suffering any more from it.

A religious and priest of our Congregation, named Father Cosimo, who is now dead, was some years ago at the Retreat at Vetralla, when a tumor, or swelling, of extraordinary size

appeared on his knee. Sig. Girolamo Cosimo, a medical man of great skill and greater charity, was called to make every effort to save him. Every remedy was tried, but in vain, to reduce the tumor. It was resolved to make use of the knife. The evening before the day fixed for the operation, Father Paul went, as was his custom, to visit the religious. Having entered his room, Paul desired to see the tumor, and moved with compassion for the sick man, who greatly dreaded the knife, made over him, with his thumb, the sign of the cross. The tumor, though immensely large, and of an obstinate kind, suddenly disappeared. The surgeon came the next morning to use the knife. Having unbound the knee, he found it cured and the swelling gone down. At this sight, full of wonder, he said, "There is nothing here; what has happened?" His wonder ceased when he knew that Father Paul had cured him with a superhuman remedy.

In the city of Orbetello, Sig. D. Atanasio Grazi was in bed, ill of gout, when Father Paul, having to go from Monte Argentario into the town, went as usual to the sick man's house. Having entered the apartment to pay him a visit, he told him at once that he would get better. Approaching the bed, Paul made the sign of the cross on the painful foot with the thumb of his right hand and the sick man was instantaneously cured and rose from bed immediately.

We will here relate another cure, wrought by Almighty God by means of Father Paul, in the same house of the Grazi at Orbetello, in favor of a person whom, with holy charity, he had previously induced to practice holy prayer and to lead a recollected life in union with God. As her own words in her deposition are very expressive in their simplicity, we will hear them from her own mouth: "I was in bed, seriously ill of dropsy on the chest, and having been given up by the physician Dr. Giacinto Pippi, Father Paul came to my room to visit me. He asked me how I was, and if I wished to recover. I answered that I was very ill, and regarding my recovery, I said that I resigned myself to the will of God. Then Father Paul raised the crucifix which he wore on his breast, told me to sign my chest with it, and then left immediately. I did as he told me, and immediately felt as if my chest opened. I was that moment perfectly cured, and I said, 'I am cured.'"

She was, in fact, perfectly cured, and the pious lady who gave this testimony still lives. She was obliged, however, by her family, through excessive caution, to remain in bed two or three days longer, without any necessity, as she herself added.

We must not omit a wonderful cure wrought by God, through the merits of His servant, and attested by a great bishop, Palombella, Bishop of Terracina, a prelate of great learning and piety,

who made no difficulty in writing to Father Paul himself in these terms: “Sig. Grattinara recommends himself to your prayers. He had a young daughter ill, and having recommended herself to God, she recovered immediately by the application of one of your letters. *‘To the greater glory of God.’*”

When Father Paul went to Arlena, a little place in the Diocese of Montefiascone, to give a mission, he found there a married woman, by name Girolama Ricci, who for three years had been afflicted with such great deafness that she was not only prevented from hearing conversation, but even the sound of the bells. The poor woman was very wishful to be cured from her troublesome deafness, and the more so because her husband tormented her with reproaches. One night when Father Paul was leaving the church, she followed him, and, encouraged by her faith, took the servant of God’s cloak and touched her ear with it. Father Paul, who was always on the watch to preserve the treasure of holy humility, perceiving what the woman had done, said to her reprovably, “Now what have you gained?” But it was of no use for the servant of God to seek to hide the miracle which God wrought by his means, for the woman that moment was perfectly freed from her deafness.

Maria Maddalena Bruzzesi, of Caprarola, in the Diocese of Civita Castellana, had suffered in 1767 for more than a year from a serious illness, judged to be tuberculosis, because, besides fever, she had a cough and a continual spitting of blood. Seeing all natural remedies useless, she had recourse to Father Paul, who was then at the Retreat of St. Angelo. Going to that solitude with her sister Vittoria, she recommended herself to the servant of God with great fervor to obtain by his prayers the health she desired. Father Paul, with his fervor and words inflamed with holy charity, encouraged her to confide firmly in the Divine Mercy, and before she left, gave her two little pieces of cake, that she might eat them on her return home. The woman, on her arrival at home that evening, ate the cakes to obey with all simplicity the servant of God, who cured her with supernatural and heavenly skill. She then went to rest, and that night, a thing unusual to her since she had been attacked with that malady, she slept very tranquilly, whereas before, all her nights were uneasy. She rose in the morning, and feeling a great tendency to cough, began to cough and to spit blood again. After spitting a quantity of blood, she felt as if something became detached in her chest, and then spit from her mouth something like a stone, scarcely less than a nut, and afterwards was free from fever and from the other symptoms of that dangerous illness,

from which she has never suffered since. The invalid, being relieved from her sickness, showed the stone she had thrown up to a physician in Caprarola. Telling him all that had happened, the physician said, "Some saint must have prayed for you, for, without a miracle and a special grace, this could not have happened." Thus was the faith of this devout woman rewarded.

A girl named Gertrude, daughter of Domenico Ruggieri of Sutri, aged ten or eleven years, showed also a most lively faith in Father Paul's merits, and received in recompense the grace she desired. This little girl had a disease which for more than a year had tormented her in her right hand. The surgeon of that town, and another from Ronciglione, after trying every remedy, had given up the case as desperate. The poor little girl suffered greatly, but obtained neither a cure nor relief. The pain increased daily, and she felt corresponding pains, chiefly in the side and in the right shoulder. Her mother, pitying the innocent child, exhorted her to have confidence in Father Paul, and to have recourse to him when he came to Sutri, that he might bless her with the sign of the cross. When Father Paul came to Sutri, the woman with her little girl went to him and begged him to bless her hand. The saintly Father did so with a relic he had with him, and exhorted the little girl to have patience and trust in God. The child, not content with the benediction, ran after Father Paul to obtain something which he had used. Though the servant of God was surrounded with a crowd of devout persons, who flocked to see him and kiss his hand, she found means to penetrate through them all, approached him, and in the act of kissing his cloak, fixed her teeth in it and brought away a good piece. Delighted with her pious theft, she ran joyfully home, made her mother unbind the hand, put the piece of cloak upon it, and then had it bound again. After two days she told her mother that the hand pained her. "Be quiet, child," said the mother, "for Father Paul is curing you." In effect, the hand was unbound and found free from swelling, with the wound healed and also pliable and free to be moved about in any way. The mother and daughter, greatly delighted, acknowledged the cure to proceed from the servant of God's intercession. The mother said to her, "You see, child, that Father Paul has cured you." Her mother exhorted her to say daily a Pater and Ave in memory of the benefit received by means of the servant of God. The child answered that she would, and from that time began and continued to say it. If sometimes she failed to recite it, she felt at night, after going to bed, a pricking in the hand, as if for a warning and reproof of her forgetfulness. With all simplicity she said to her mother on such occasions, "Feel my hand prick." When asked by her mother if she had said the



Pater and Ave and perceiving her fault at once, said: “Ah, poor me! I have forgotten it.” Deferring no longer to remedy her failing, she recited the Pater and Ave and was speedily freed from the pricking she felt.

Signora Anna Amati, a widow at Falvaterra, in Veroli, had a son who was greatly troubled with a serious rupture. When Father Paul was for the last time making the visitation at the Retreat of St. Sosio, near Falvaterra, the pious woman carried him to the servant of God, trusting that by giving him his blessing, he would cure him. In fact, after being blessed by Father Paul, the son was immediately freed from his malady. Signora Teresa Spagnoli, now dead, wife of Sig. Vincenzo Mattia of Terracina, perceived in her left breast a tumor, which was judged to be cancerous, and she was obliged, to her great suffering, to submit to treatment for it. After various remedies, it was judged expedient to use the knife. That she might have better assistance, her husband took her to Rome and put her into the hands of excellent surgeons. After various consultations the knife was used, and after a long course of treatment, she did not recover perfect health, but felt some relief. But on her return to Terracina, she was, after some time, attacked with another tumor, as large as an egg, in the right breast. The poor lady was in great sorrow and affliction. She wished to conceal it from her husband, for fear of grieving him, but, by the wise advice of her confessor, resolved to make it known to him. For the happiness of this pious lady, Father Paul was then at our Retreat of our Lady of Sorrows, near Terracina, and having recourse to him with confidence, she made known her malady and her affliction. He heard her, and then said, “Signora Teresa, say nothing about your malady to anyone.” He then blessed her and sent her home full of confidence. After her departure, Father Paul said to his companion, who was present all the time, “This is a great misfortune, but I hope she will be freed from it.” On her return home she was freed from all pain in the part affected and after three days, on looking to see how the malady was going on, she found herself perfectly cured. What is very wonderful, not only had the tumor in her right breast entirely disappeared, but every mark caused by the knife in the left breast had vanished also.

Tomaso Pistoiese, of Soriano in Civita Castellana, was unwilling, I do not know for what reason, that Father Paul, with his religious, should found the retreat connected with the Church of St. Eutizio at Soriano. When working with two other companions near the retreat, to annoy the religious, he sang profane and abusive songs. While he was singing, he was suddenly attacked

with confusion of mind, great oppression in the heart, and pain in the eyes, so that he could not see. Father Paul passed, in going to Soriano, and seeing him raving with pain, caused him to be brought near to him, placed with confidence one hand upon his head, and at the touch the oppression of heart suddenly ceased, his mind became clear, the light of his eyes returned. He was perfectly cured. Thus, the servant of God practiced the revenge of the saints.

Father Paul, in passing through Ceccano, in the Diocese of Ferentino, in making the visitation to the retreats of the Province of Campagna, met with a poor woman, one of whose hands was crippled. All the remedies tried had been useless. With lively faith, she cut a little piece from the servant of God's cloak, applied it to the hand, and after an hour's time she had again the use of her hand and was enabled to fulfill all her domestic duties.

Father Paul used often to bless water with the relic of our Blessed Lady, and then give it to the sick, that they might drink of it with devotion. Through this blessed water our Lord wrought various wonders, some of which we will relate. Sig. Domenico Marchetti of Sutri was in danger of death from a malignant tumor in the throat, which after various remedies remained as obstinate as ever, when a person named Mattia Maire went to the Retreat of St. Angelo to tell the religious of the pitiable state of their dear benefactor. Father Paul immediately assembled the religious and all recited together the Litany of Our Lady for the sick man. He then blessed some water with the relic, gave it to Mattia, telling him that they had delayed sending for help too long, and he must make haste if he wished to find the sick man alive. Otherwise, he would not be in time. Mattia made haste, and on his arrival found him not only at the last extremity, but not even showing any sign of life. They had put a candle near his mouth, as is customary, in order to ascertain whether life still exists. Nevertheless, the messenger came in and said that he brought blessed water from Father Paul. A priest who was present took the water and put a spoonful into the dying man's mouth. Scarcely had he swallowed it than he revived and was soon able to take a little broth. That same day he was out of danger, and in a few days he was perfectly cured.

Sig. Giuseppe Maceroni was ill of malignant fever at Terracina, and so violent was the disease, that in a few days he was reduced to the last extremity and given up by the physicians, who said that he could only recover by a miracle. The sick man's mother had, at the beginning of his illness, sent to ask Father Paul, who was then at our retreat at Terracina, to celebrate some Masses to obtain the recovery of her son. But seeing the illness worsen, she went early one

morning to the retreat to seek consolation from the servant of God, and arrived precisely at the time Father Paul was going to the altar to celebrate Mass. The pious woman waited to hear it, and when it was ended, going into the sacristy, she threw herself at Father Paul's feet, weeping bitterly and crying out that her son was going to die, and that the physicians gave no hope. Therefore, he must think about it, and she entreated much more earnestly because, through grief, the father was in danger of dying with the son. The servant of God, moved with compassion, encouraged her and said, "Let me make my thanksgiving after Mass, and then we will speak." Father Paul went to make his thanksgiving, and after some time returned with Father Nicola of Santa Corona, a priest of our Congregation, to whom Father Paul said, with his countenance all on fire, "Sig. Giuseppe will not die." Entering the sacristy, he said to the lady, "Signora Maria, be happy, your son will not die this time; I will give you some blessed water; go home, give him a small spoonful and do not fear that he will die, for as soon as he has taken it he will improve. Before giving this water, say an Ave and a Gloria Patri, in honor of the most Blessed Trinity. And believe me, even if he were in his agony, he would not die, but would begin to mend."

The lady felt comforted by these words, and having received from Father Paul a little bottle of water, full of confidence in the cure of her son, returned home, where she found some remedies prepared for her son. She, who believed she had with her the true remedy, cried out, "What are remedies! What are remedies! This is the true remedy." She showed the little bottle of blessed water, given her by Father Paul, saying to those who were present, "Kneel down, all of you, and say an Ave and a Gloria Patri for Father Paul ordered it." Having said these prayers, she gave her son a small spoonful of the water. At the same moment he began to improve, and in a few days was quite cured and was able to go to the retreat to thank the servant of God and relate to him his illness and his cure. Father Paul answered with profound humility that he had no part in it, but it was due to the fervent prayers of his mother and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. The news having spread abroad of this cure through the water blessed with the relic of our Blessed Lady by Father Paul, many persons had recourse to the servant of God, to obtain some for their sick friends, in the hope that they would receive health from it. When it was given them to drink, wonderful effects followed, some of which we will relate.

At Fondi, Signora Evangelista Goffredi, aged 86, had been seized with a fit. When some of the blessed water was given her, she recovered her speech, which she had lost. At Pastena, there

was a poor woman who had miscarried and was in great danger; she received the Holy Viaticum and was thought to be near her end. She took a little of the water and was cured.

At St. Giovanni in Carico, which is in that part of Naples which is bounded by the Campagna, a person was most dangerously ill, had received the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, and was at the point of death. He was so happy as to receive a little of the water blessed by Father Paul. After drinking it he immediately recovered. The physician, who had given it, went to our Retreat of St. Sosio, at a little distance from the town, to visit the servant of God, to whom he related the wonderful event and said, as if transported with surprise at what he saw, that he would no longer use any remedy for the sick but this blessed water.

At Valentano, in the Diocese of Montefiascone, a man named Peter Paul Bartolaccini had been given up by the physician, and was more dead than alive, through a long and dangerous illness, contracted in the marshes of Tuscany, which, besides other bad effects, had so affected his throat that he could not swallow either food or drink. From his opened throat everything came out instead of passing into the stomach. In the meantime Domenico Francesco Barlini of Pianzano arrived, carrying with him an emblem of the Passion used by Father Paul, and having asked the sick man's wife about Peter Paul, whom he did not know to be ill, on hearing the woman tell him, with sighs and tears, the state of her husband, went to the room where he lay, and saw that he had rather the appearance of a skeleton than of a living man. He could not speak and gave few signs of life. Moved with compassion, he touched him, formed the sign of the cross on him with Father Paul's emblem, and then departed. After Domenico Francesco had left, the sick man fell asleep and slept for five hours, during which it seemed to him that a charitable person, in order to remove the disease which had taken such possession of him, was pulling the old skin from his bones to cure him. When he awoke, he was quite well, and with great joy he clapped his hands and called his wife, assuring her that he was cured. Asking for his clothes, he rose and dressed himself, perfectly free from the malady that had oppressed him.

The servant of God, as we have said, recommended the use of the oil of the lamp which burned before the Blessed Sacrament, and through the great faith and devotion towards this most Adorable Sacrament, which was so strong and fervent within him, and which he sought to enkindle also in others, many graces were obtained, some of which we will name. In Sutri, a poor man named Fulcinelli was confined to bed by a cancer, which consumed one leg, and

wished to receive a visit from Father Paul. The servant of God was conducted to him by Canon D. Giuseppe Suscioli. Entering into the sick man's room, he told him that he wished to sign him with the oil of the lamp that burned before the Blessed Sacrament, adding, "You ought to have all confidence in Jesus Christ, for the Holy Gospel assures us, that when He was alive on the earth, *'power went out from him and he healed'*" (Lk 6:19). The oil was brought, and the good Father began to sign the sick man, and, wonderful to relate, as Father Paul went on signing him with this oil, at that moment new skin was formed and the wound became healed. When he had finished, the gangrene entirely disappeared and the wound remained perfectly healed. Therefore, the sick man, entirely cured, rose from his bed.

These, among many others, which we have omitted, are the wonderful cures obtained by those who had recourse with confidence to the servant of God, and which manifest very clearly that Father Paul had received that gift which is called the gift of healing and extraordinary confidence of obtaining what he desired. There are other works, no less marvelous, which God, by His omnipotent virtue, wrought by means of His servant.

In a year of great scarcity of wheat, Father Paul was at Civita Castellana, at the house of Signora Girolama Ercolani. This pious woman, conversing with the servant of God, complained of the scarcity of wheat and said to him, with all confidence, that she had not even enough wheat for use in the house. "How shall we be able this year," she added, "to assist the poor? We shall be obliged to send them away without the usual alms of bread." At these words the servant of God, as if touched to the heart by that tender compassion he had for the poor, burning interiorly with charity and with his countenance on fire, with strong arguments and expressions, counseled the lady to give the usual alms, encouraging her to hope strongly and to confide in that God who has promised superabundantly to reward works of charity. Encouraged by these words, the pious lady began to distribute bread bountifully to the poor, to those who came to the door as well as to other needy and unknown persons. The grain did not diminish, which was miraculous, as Signora Girolama and her daughter witnessed. There were thirty quarts of grain measured exactly when the alms was commenced according to Father Paul's advice, and it was then November, and there were thirty quarts of grain in the magazine after this grain had been constantly used for the house and for the relief of the poor. This multiplication was, therefore, with reason, considered a real miracle, wrought by God, at Father Paul's intercession. The good lady and her daughter

were so much the more certain of it, as one or the other constantly had the keys.

A similar multiplication took place at the Monastery of St. Lucy at Corneto in 1749. In that year, D. Angela Margarita Forcella, a nun well experienced in domestic affairs and in the consumption of grain that was made there, was in charge of storing the grain. Having weighed everything carefully, she perceived that the grain could not last the season. Therefore, with confidence in the servant of God's sanctity, she suggested to Sister Maria Anzovini, who had the care of the magazine, that she should tell it to Father Paul, that by his prayers he might obtain from God that the grain should last the season. The good sister obeyed with simplicity, and carrying the message to the servant of God, he assured her, in reply, that the grain would be sufficient, but that when she entered the granary, she must never fail to recite the Creed on her knees, five times, in honor of our Lord's Passion. The sister never omitted this devout practice, and the grain not only sufficed for the season, but was even more than necessary, not without a miracle.

What we are going to relate is also a prodigy. One morning in January, about an hour before dawn, Captain Michele Fanciullo, then a boy, was on the shore of the Pino near Orbetello, drawing a fishing net with several sailors. As it had rained all night, and the weather was still rainy, the sailors and the master were all wet, and in this state were working. In a short time they saw Father Paul come up from the Retreat of Monte Argentario, which was three or four miles distant from the shore, barefooted, without a hat, as he used to walk in those early times, and approaching the fishermen, "Children," he said, "what fish have you taken?" They answered that they had good fishing, but in the meantime they noticed him attentively, and with wonder, for it seemed to them that he was not at all wet. Captain Michele Fanciullo, to satisfy himself, touched with his hand the servant of God's cloak and found it quite dry, to his great astonishment, seeing that in a walk of three or four miles, taken among wet trees and in the rain, which was then falling, the servant of God was not the least wet, walking uncovered as he did.

The servant of God was sick and was carried on a chair, by the help of eight persons, from Fianello to Borghetto on a day which threatened rain every moment. When they were on the road, it began to rain, but God, through the merits of His servant, and to reward the charity of these good Christians, wonderfully defended from the rain, not only Father Paul, but also all the others who carried him, so that the rain did not in any way touch them. Having several times to

pass the brook, they went with their shoes and stockings on into the water, and came out without being at all wet. Father Paul, to awake in them feelings of gratitude for so great a benefit, asked them if they were at all wet, and full of surprise, acknowledging the miracle, they answered, “No,” as was the case.

More wonderful still, because accompanied by many astonishing circumstances, was the miracle that our Lord wrought in favor of a pious Christian, named Mattia Maire of Sutri. He was sent by the Vicar General Picciotti to carry a letter of great importance from Sutri to Monteromano, where Father Paul was giving the holy missions. When he reached the river Biedano, he found it so swollen and heightened by the rains, and by that which was then falling, that there was no means of passing over it, without the risk of being drowned. The carriers themselves, who were very well able to ford and were in great haste to continue their journey, were stopped and dared not risk the passage. While Mattia was thinking what he could do, a guard came up on horseback, and hearing from him the reason of his going to Monteromano, full of confidence, said with simplicity, “Now I shall see if Father Paul is a saint.” Taking the bridle of Mattia’s horse, he prepared himself to make the dangerous passage on his own horse. The water covered the horses, so that nothing was seen but their heads. Mattia and the guard, as was natural, were completely wet, but they passed the river safely. When Mattia arrived at Monteromano, he presented the letter, and all who saw him were amazed, not knowing how on such a day he could have passed the Biedano. But the wonder ceased, when it was known that he had passed with confidence in the merits of the servant of God. Father Paul, having with kindness ordered refreshment for Mattia, gave him the answer, telling him to return to Sutri immediately. He opposed this, and all who were present said that on account of the rain then falling the river must be still more swollen. The hour was late, and that it was not fit to send back that poor man, so lately escaped from such great danger. But Father Paul insisted, saying that the Vicar General would certainly send another person if he did not receive the answer, so important was the business. “Depart,” he said, “I assure you of the divine protection.” At these words, Father John Baptist, Father Paul’s brother, who was present, said, “But do you assure him that he will pass the Biedano safely?” “Yes, I assure him of it; and,” he added, “even though the water should be as high as the tops of the trees, let him pass and fear nothing.” Mattia, animated by these words, pronounced with such great firmness, and confiding in the merits of the servant of

God, departed. When he reached the river Biedano, seeing the carriers who had not dared to risk the passage, he entered the water at once. The horse, wonderful to relate, walked on the water, as if it had been dry land, so that the carriers, who were on the opposite bank, could see the horse's shoes as he lifted up his feet. At this sight, they began to exclaim in astonishment, and like people of little piety, who frequently attribute to the devil the wonderful operations of God, cried out, "The devil must be carrying you, for we can see the horse's shoes." Mattia, passing the river thus easily, without even wetting his shoes, and continuing his journey, arrived safely at one o'clock in the night at Sutri, and found that the Vicar General, fearing some accident had happened, was just sealing another letter to send it to Father Paul by another messenger, precisely as the servant of God had predicted.

## **CHAPTER XXXIX**

### **Other Supernatural Gifts Granted to Father Paul**

Father Paul, a man truly humble of heart, was enriched with other gifts by our Lord, who delights in bestowing His graces and gifts on him, who, from them, takes occasion to humble himself more profoundly in the presence of his Benefactor. Father Paul had that gift, which St. Paul calls "*gift of tongues*," and we have seen how, when preaching at Orbetello, he was understood by all the soldiers in the garrison, though some of them were Germans and only understood their native tongue. We have also good reason to affirm that he had from our Lord what St. Paul calls "*word of wisdom*," for in sermons, in instructions, in familiar conversations, and in conferences, he spoke of God and of heavenly things as one who feels in them great relish and enjoys their delicious sweetness. And he also caused that others, who listened to him with good dispositions, should taste of it. He had a wonderful faculty of rendering clear and intelligible the most sublime and hidden things, and particularly the interior operations of divine grace in chosen souls, the effects of intimate and loving familiarity with God, and the safe path of contemplation. He had always at hand similitudes and comparisons, which at the same time cleared up the obscurity of recondite things, and infused veneration and high esteem for them with a strong desire to reform the life and purify the heart. Many have experienced this, who



have had the consolation of conversing with him.

We have elsewhere seen that, through the great furnace of love which burned in Father Paul's heart, two or three ribs on his right side had risen up. We have heard from many witnesses that when he spoke of prayer or other spiritual matters, his countenance became inflamed and on fire. When he celebrated the mysteries of our Redemption, he seemed to be carried out of himself by the ardent love that burned in his breast. Sometimes, in giving Benediction with the holy pyx, his countenance was so inflamed that it seemed to be on fire. When he celebrated the holy Sacrifice, or performed the sacred functions, he was seen to be bathed in tears, with a bright color resembling a seraphim. Speaking to a devout person of spiritual things, he became so fervent that his face was not as before, but all brightness, like a sun, that cannot be looked at. Sometimes in the servant of God the attraction of interior sweetness that carried him to the Supreme Good was so powerful that he was seen to rise from the earth and remain for a considerable time suspended in the air. We have elsewhere related that when he was once celebrating Mass in the Church of St. Lucy at Corneto, shortly before or after the consecration, he was raised up in the air almost two palms, a most sweet fragrance being perceived, to which no other perfume can be compared. Another time, during the mission at Latera in Montefiascone, when he was giving a discourse in the sacristy of the parish church to all the priests of the place, exhorting them to give good example and to hear confession with true zeal for the salvation of souls, he became inflamed with holy fervor and was seen to rise from the ground and go round the sacristy in the air, as if he were flying.

Of all these gifts, the gift of tears was most habitual in our saintly Father. "It is true that the love of God does not consist in tears, but in serving the Divine Majesty with justice, with strength of soul, and with humility. Nevertheless, when the water of true tears, which are those that proceed from true prayers, is given from heaven, this helps to enkindle more strongly the fire of the love of God and to keep it alive, and the fire assists the water to give coolness. Thus, the water of tears, being united with the divine fire, it cools and even freezes all the affections of this world." All these are the words of St. Theresa, that great mistress of prayer.

Our good Father had a great gift of these tears, as many witnesses attest in the Processes: "From youth, and even from his early years," says his confessor, "he had the gift of extraordinary prayer joined with that of tears." So great was his interior compunctions, the

abundance of his affections and his tears, that it is not easy to describe it. It was perceived that from the love that burned in his breast, his heart became easily softened. If he sometimes heard offenses against God related, he was grieved, he wept, beat his breast, sighed and groaned, saying, “My sins are the cause of it; my infidelities are the things that arouse the anger of God.” On every other occasion when he spoke of God, as he used to do almost continually, his face became on fire and he burst into tears of devotion. If he spoke in public or in private of the sacred passion of Jesus Christ, he then seemed to melt away, like wax before the fire. In visiting, as he often did, the most Blessed Sacrament, he was usually seen to shed tears of love and tenderness. In celebrating holy Mass, he was bathed in tears, and generally he did nothing but weep. If he sang Mass on great solemnities, in which the mysteries of our Redemption are commemorated, his devout chanting was joined with affectionate tears.

## **CHAPTER XL**

### **Of the Esteem for Sanctity in Which the Servant of God Was Held**

Though Father Paul was most desirous of being in the world like a dead man, whose life is hidden in Christ our Savior, and though he sought by every means in his power to hide himself from the eyes of men, to live to God alone, nevertheless, the exercise of virtue was in him so great and continual that it proved him to be a man of great sanctity and perfection. This opinion was commonly entertained of him while he lived. After his death, the fame of his virtues and his innocent and perfect life increases and spreads every day to the greater glory of God. We will not relate here the esteem and veneration which the religious, his children and beloved pupils, had for him, among whom, without the shadow of flattery, I may say there were men of great learning, especially in the interior ways of our Lord, of experience in the direction of souls and of true virtue. It will suffice to say that having him constantly before their eyes, not only did not diminish, but increased their opinion of his exalted virtues, and hearing his discourses continually inflamed them more and more with the holy love of God.

Extraordinary was the opinion entertained of him by many nuns in the numerous convents, where he gave the spiritual exercises, especially by those nuns that were most advanced in the

school of prayer, of interior conversation with God, and most experienced in virtue. These nuns considered and venerated Father Paul as a most sublime master in all the ways of holiness and as a man of heroic virtue.

Thus, many other persons of solid virtue, who, remaining in the world, “*with their heart set on higher things, they were disposed to ascend step by step from the valley of tears*” (Cfr. Ps. 83:6), seeking the fulfillment of the holy will of God, devoutly attached themselves to Father Paul, and always showed the highest esteem for him, for they saw that on all occasions he sought God alone, and guided them with wonderful sweetness and mildness, to execute in their state the holy will of our Lord. But omitting these, who, however, would merit a distinct mention, for brevity’s sake we will only name the opinion entertained of Father Paul by the people of those places where he lived or gave holy missions. We will speak, lastly, of some more considerable personages, who showed a remarkable esteem and veneration for him.

From the time the servant of God lived at Castellazzo, he was, as we have said, universally considered to be a saint. The innocence of his life, the austerity of his penance, the regularity of his habits, his charity, the fervent zeal with which he promoted the glory of God, were, according to the testimony of eye-witnesses, the cause of his gaining against his will the esteem of all and a high place in the consideration of every kind of person. Leaving all the other testimonials from which we have faithfully collected all the expressions used in this history, it will suffice to cite the words of Father John Baptist of Alessandria, former Provincial of the Order of Capuchins and an eye-witness, with whom all the other witnesses concur exactly. “The public opinion,” he says, “regarding Father Paul, was that he was a saint. It arose from his exemplary and penitential life, from his zeal for souls, as he applied himself to teach Christian Doctrine, and also to preach with the permission of Bishop Francesco Gattinara, then bishop of this town. The same idea was entertained of him by all sorts of persons, priests, religious, and nobles, and among others by Father Girolamo of Tortona, one of our Capuchins, who for some time was his confessor and recommended him afterwards to another Capuchin, Father Colombano Genovese, who was at Ovada or Savona, where Father Girolamo perceived to what a height of perfection Father Paul had attained. I know that he spoke of him as a man of sublime contemplation and perfection, and demonstrations of this were made by the great concourse of people who went to consult Father Paul on the interests of their souls. This opinion has been always universal and constant, and as

for myself, I have never thought differently of him, nor have heard that others did so.”

The reputation of the venerable servant of God was not bounded within the limits of his country and the neighboring places; but, as the light, wherever its splendor penetrates, makes us distinguish objects clearly, the bright virtues of this man of God, enriched with gifts and grace, gained for him universal esteem in the places where he was well known. When, with his brother, he was at the Hermitage of our Blessed Lady of the Chain near Gaeta, both were considered as saints. The help of their prayers was sought with great earnestness, and they were consulted as the true servants and intimate friends of God.

At Orbetello and the neighboring places, where he was better known from the length of time that he passed at Monte Argentario, he had the reputation of a saint, with both citizens and soldiers, for they saw his penitential life, his zeal for the salvation of souls, with the uninterrupted exercise of other virtues. Nor did this esteem diminish, but it constantly continued. When Father Paul, in his extreme old age, returned to Orbetello, on occasion of making a visit to the two retreats founded on Monte Argentario, the people, remembering his heroic virtues, rejoiced to see him, went to meet him, crowded round to kiss his hand, and, through devotion, cut off small pieces from his cloak, and made many other demonstrations of veneration and esteem, which the piety of the faithful teaches them to practice towards persons of special virtue and goodness.

To say much in a few words, Father Paul bore this reputation universally in the places where he gave missions. A discreet witness was able to say, “It is enough for Father Paul to show himself on the platform – the mission is made.” It was not necessary that the servant of God should give missions to gain this reputation of singular goodness. It sufficed that his virtue and merit should be known for the fame of his sanctity to be spread and divulged. This happened, not only in the ecclesiastical states and the marshes of Tuscany, where he labored in the apostolic ministry, but in the provinces of the Campagna, where many of our retreats are founded. The demonstrations of respect and veneration that the people gave him when he went for the last time to make the visitation, and chiefly those which he received at Pagliano, at Anagni, at Ferentino, Veroli, Terracina, Frosinone, Ceprano, and also at Fondi, are undoubted marks of the esteem for sanctity in which he was held. Persons of every kind flocked to him, asking his blessing, and giving him the name of saint, and they vied with each other in obtaining something which he had

used.

At Rome, where the virtue of the servants of God is so clearly distinguished, Father Paul had a great reputation for sanctity. From the time Bishop Struzzieri began to know him, which was when the servant of God first came to Rome, and remained there some little time for the affairs of the Congregation, he was held to be a saint. "I began," he writes, "to esteem him when I began to know him. And from that time I also knew that he was esteemed by others and considered to be a holy man." The reputation and knowledge of the holy life of the good Father, and of the heavenly gifts granted to him, becoming more known, esteem for him increased, and it extended into Tuscany, into the kingdom of Naples, through Lombardy, Piedmont, Genoa, and other kingdoms. This esteem was not merely felt by ignorant and uncultivated persons, but by men of wisdom and of great discernment, and as witnesses unanimously testify it has kept up and increased since his death, and shows itself by the veneration with which the servant of God is spoken of and by the pictures, pieces of the habit and cloak, or other things used by him that are constantly requested. In order to show more clearly the venerable Father's reputation for sanctity of which those were best able to form a correct judgment, who are more enlightened in spirit by the practice of virtues, by wisdom, and experiences, we will here name some personages worthy of special mention, who had a high opinion of Father Paul. The venerable Father Leonard of Port Maurice, a missionary, as all know, full of the Spirit of God, was with Father Paul once in a place where Father Leonard had given a mission. The people had a great wish to hear again the words of life from the mouth of that fervent missioner. He would not preach himself, but entreated Father Paul to preach because of the esteem he had of him. A contest of holy humility therefore arose between the two missionaries, which had its origin in the esteem and veneration which these servants of God had for each other.

The venerable Father Charles of Motrone, a servant of God of great reputation, because of great virtue, as everyone knows, was once at Civita Castellana, at the house of Signora Giroloma Ercolani, and speaking to that pious lady, he said, "I have heard a certain Father Paul of the Cross named, a great servant of God, reported to be the Founder of a new Congregation, whom I have never been able to see or to know." He manifested his desire of seeing him. Scarcely had Father Charles finished speaking, than there came a knock at the door, and it was Father Paul himself, who, having come to Civita Castellana, went to the house where he was charitably

lodged. Father Charles, being told of it, showed pleasure and satisfaction corresponding to the great desire he had of seeing him, ran to meet him on the stairs. When they approached each other, Father Charles asked, “Are you Father Paul?” and Father Paul, “Are you Father Charles?” They then affectionately embraced one another, remained in silence for some time, deeply penetrated with the lively sentiment and amiable sweetness of holy, fraternal charity, to the admiration and edification of all who were present. They then went up stairs and spoke together with the greatest confidence and perfect cordiality, showing to each other their mutual esteem and veneration.

Father Charles came once to our retreat at Cerro, where the Founder then was, and being met by Father Paul outside the retreat, he was no sooner seen by Father Charles, than he knelt down and would not rise till Father Paul gave him his blessing, though he only obtained it after a long contest, proceeding from holy humility.

Dr. Bartolomeo del Monte, a true servant of God, and a missionary of great zeal and usefulness in assisting his neighbors, deserves to be mentioned here with distinction. Every time that he went to Rome, at the time Father Paul was there, he not only went to visit him, but remained with him in private conversation, in which he manifested his interior to him, in order to receive advice from the wise Father. He sometimes said he had come to receive his blessing. Other ecclesiastics also, and especially excellent religious, showed the same opinion of Father Paul. The Rev. Father Mirani, Abbot-General of the Olivetan monks, often visited him and venerated him as a saint. Father Tomaso Maria Mamachi, now master of the Apostolic Palace, when his heavy occupations permitted, made from time to time visits to the good Father when he was sick, showing great esteem and veneration for him. Father Paul, who before he had the consolation of conversing with him, had formed a high opinion of him. After he knew him and spoke to him, he conceived extraordinary affection, respect, and veneration for this excellent man. The Rev. Father Tomaso Maria Buxadors, then General of the Order of Preachers, afterwards cardinal of the holy Church, the Father Abbot Gioanetti, now Cardinal and Archbishop of Bologna, showed a particular esteem for him. In a word, many ecclesiastical superiors, both cardinals and prelates, considered Father Paul to be a saint. Bishop Gattinara, who had, so to speak, the keys of the servant of God’s heart, knew all its secrets and directed him when he was at Castellazzo, said that the world would be amazed to hear the graces that God

imparted to His servant. Bishop Emilio Cavalieri, Bishop of Troja, a man of profound learning and singular virtue, as we have seen, had Father Paul come to Troja, through the opinion he had formed of his virtue after hearing him spoken of, and found that he had not been deceived in forming his judgment from the common opinion held of him. Bishop Pignatelli, Bishop of Gaeta, wished that Father Paul, before he was a priest, should give the exercises to his clergy at Gaeta. So great was his opinion of him, Bishop Eusebio Ciani, Bishop of Massa and Popolonia, who had experienced the usefulness of the servant of God in giving missions in his diocese, speaks to him in a letter dated March 10, 1740. "To serve so excellent and holy a person, I at once performed and granted what you desired." In a word, all the bishops who employed him to labor in their dioceses, either conceived a great idea of him or were confirmed in that which they already entertained. We will not repeat here what has been said of the esteem shown for Father Paul by wise cardinals. I will only add what is said in the Processes in these terms: "Among the cardinals in his early days, who showed a high esteem for the servant of God, were their Eminences Cardinals Cienfuegos, Corradini, Rezzonico, afterwards Pope, and Crescenzi; and in later years, Annibale Albani, the Pope's Chamberlain, Gentili, Besozzi, Erba, Odescalchi, Guadagni, Vicar of Rome, Sagripanti, Oddi, Valenti and Gonzaga, Secretary of State; and later still, Marco Antonio Colonna, Cardinal Vicar, the Cardinals Pirelli, Boschi, the two brothers Rezzonici, De Zelada, Migazzi, delle Lanze, Pallavicini, Secretary of State, and Pallotta," ...all cardinals, who, by their endowments, were, and are, the ornament and the glory of the Sacred College. Finally, we are obliged by every duty to make mention here of the esteem in which the Supreme Pontiffs held him. It will be well to hear it from a witness who had the best means of information regarding it. He says, "Benedict XIII not only received him kindly to his audience, but gave him permission to associate companions with him, and to live with them wearing his habit of penance. After ordaining him priest, joining his hands, he gave thanks to God, saying, 'Thanks be to God.' Clement XII declared him apostolic missionary *"for all of Italy and adjacent islands."* Benedict XIV greatly loved and esteemed him, receiving him to his audience with the kindest marks of paternal affection, going so far as to take the memorials from Father Paul's breast with his own hands, and honor them with his own handwriting. Once when the servant of God, to obtain a favor for the Congregation, had made use of the medium of a cardinal, the Pontiff mildly complained, saying, "Father Paul, when you want anything, come

direct to me.” In fact, besides other graces and privileges, he graciously approved for the first time, by apostolic rescript, the Rules of the Congregation, and finally, by his Brief of 15th April, 1746, confirmed them for the second time. Shortly before his death, he said to our religious in his illness, “We can do nothing more, but, nevertheless, we are ready to help you by every means in our powers.” Another well-informed witness adds that the same Pope, at the time that he wore the pontifical hat, through his esteem for the servant of God, asked Cardinal Albani how Father Paul was. The same witness adds, “Clement XIII succeeded to the Apostolic See, who had greatly favored, honored, and esteemed the servant of God, and had greatly aided the holy work of the Congregation, and had received Father Paul at his own palace in Rome when he was cardinal. He continued after his election to love and favor him in everything he could, protesting that he was a benefactor of the Congregation, and granting him, among other graces, permission to open the house in Rome.” When Clement XIV, who, when a cardinal, had greatly esteemed him, was raised to the pontifical throne, it is impossible to express the attention and marks of esteem that he showed him. I lay aside all attempt to remember the expressions which he gave to the servant of God, whenever he went to an audience, never receiving him without making him sit down in his presence, or in his own room, or on one of the seats of the pontifical throne, never permitting the servant of God to kiss his feet, making him keep on his biretta, and humbling himself, with a rare example of condescension, to pick it up once when it had fallen, making him take chocolate in his presence, even kissing his forehead, sometimes accompanying and supporting him with his arm, till he reached the hackney coach. We know the high esteem and opinion of sanctity in which he held the servant of God, and when he sometimes sent word that he placed himself at His Holiness’s feet, the pontiff used immediately to reply, “And I place myself at his feet.” Sometimes, when the Pope asked after Father Paul’s health, he used to say, “How is my papa?” When he was going into the country to Castel Gandolfo, he used to send Bishop Angeletti to ask Father Paul’s blessing in his name. During his attacks of illness, he sent him to visit him almost every day.

Finally, extraordinary were the marks of favor that, in proof of the great esteem and opinion he had of the servant of God, His Holiness Pope Pius VI, happily reigning, showed him in these latter times. Having honored Father Paul nineteen days after he was elected Pope with a most gracious visit, kissing his forehead, placing the biretta on his head, and bestowing upon him also



a Bull, in confirmation of the Institute and the Rules, and of all the graces and privileges already granted, with others in addition, expressing his ardent desire to comfort the servant of God before he died. When he heard that he was about to pass to another life, he sent him his apostolic benediction *‘for the moment of his death,’* and no sooner heard of his death than he said to Sig. Antonio Frattini, his *‘chief chamberlain,’* we do not wish you to be melancholy on account of Father Paul’s death, for he was a great servant of God, and we hope he is enjoying God in Paradise; and as he died on so great a feast as that of St. Luke, we read that *‘he constantly embraced the dying of the cross in his body’* (Cfr. Col. 1:24), and this servant of God has well imitated him. After the servant of God’s death, the fame of his sanctity went on increasing and spreading, as we have said, and as is manifest from the many postulatory letters of illustrious cardinals, zealous bishops, and worthy General Superiors of religious Orders, addressed to the Holy See to request the beatification and canonization of Father Paul.

## **CHAPTER XLI**

### **Of the Graces Obtained by the Intercession of Father Paul after His Death**

The Divine Goodness, to show that the death of Father Paul had been truly precious in His eyes, and to make known also the heavenly glory that his blessed soul was enjoying in heaven, besides having, by various apparitions, assured different pious persons of it, granted also, after his death, many graces to those who had recourse with confidence to his intercession. Leaving other apparitions and visions, we judge it well to relate one, which is wonderful in all its circumstances.

In the house of the Signori Gori at Oriolo, there was a little girl about six years of age, daughter of Sigr. Costantino Gori and Signora Teresa Leoni, by name Paula, who had received this name for the following reason. When her mother was with child, and near to childbirth, she became very dangerously ill and seemed likely to die, with danger also to the infant. When Father Paul had notice of it by an urgent mail, he answered that they should take the oil of the most Blessed Sacrament and sign the dying woman with confidence and she would certainly be freed from danger and would be safely delivered, which, in fact, happened. In memory of this grace the child received the name of Paula. After the servant of God’s death, the child took the

measles, which turned inward, caused a great gathering on the eyes, which, swelling enormously, appeared like two pieces of red flesh, discharging matter in abundance, which led the afflicted mother to believe that they were entirely diseased. The child remained in this painful state five or six months, almost deprived of sight. Many remedies were applied, but in vain, and the only relief the poor child felt was from being allowed to put on her head a biretta used by the servant of God, or to apply to it also his picture on paper. If one or the other fell off, she earnestly begged her mother to replace it. In her pain, on account of the relief she received, and that which she so surely hoped for, the picture and the biretta were highly valued. This innocent child remained constantly in bed with the windows closed, when one Monday, as her mother entered the room, the child said to her, "Dear mother, I have seen Father Paul." The mother answered, "You have seen his picture." "No," said the child, "I have seen him and he has told me that on Thursday I shall open my eyes." Being asked to say more clearly what the servant of God had told her, she related that he said, "Little Paula, do you know me?" "Yes," she answered. The servant of God continued, "Who am I?" "You are my Father Paul," she replied, for with holy innocence she called him, by whose means, in the great peril of herself and her mother, she had happily come into the world. The servant of God added, "I will cure you; on Thursday you will open your eyes, but tell no one except your mother." The prediction was exactly verified, and Father Paul kept his promise. The following Thursday, fever came on, her eyes opened, she became perfectly cured. Her eyes were clear, healthy, and free from the smallest spot, contrary to the expectation of the medical attendants, who asserted, that from this complaint, if the child did not die, she would be either blind or terribly disfigured. It is to be remarked that this child had never seen Father Paul's front face, nor any picture on canvass, yet when questioned by her parents regarding his stature, complexion, the color of his hair and eyes, she answered exactly, pointing out all the distinctive marks of Father Paul. If anyone in jest, or to be more certain of the truth, contradicted something as not true, she persisted with firmness that it was as she had said and had seen, and not otherwise,

Of the other graces granted through the intercession of the servant of God, we will select a few, for the greater glory of the Divine Majesty, who was pleased to work them. When the corpse of the servant of God was exposed in the Church, a young girl named Gertrude Marini, who had been tormented for three months with a troublesome fluxion in her cheek, without

receiving any relief from remedies, nor from the change of air which had been ordered for her, was in a very bad state of health, and in order to come to the Church had to overcome great difficulties, for being in bed she was greatly weakened. She felt much repugnance to rise and go the distance from the Church della Consolazione, near which she lived, to that of Sts. John and Paul. But encouraged by the neighbors and by her mother and sister to have recourse to the intercession of the servant of God, who had lately died, and to go to the place where his blessed corpse was, she consented at length. Reaching the Church, she was not able at once, from the crowd of people that surrounded the corpse, to draw near and kiss his hand, as she desired. But no sooner had she the happiness of approaching and touching his blessed body with her cheek, than she was perfectly cured, and so returned home to the surprise of those who had seen her ill.

Gertrude, widow of Giuseppe Moscatelli of Pianzano in Montefiascone, had a little granddaughter named Maria Catarina, the child of Anna Maria, her daughter, and a baby of nine months old, in a pitiable state from a painful scurvy that covered her with wounds. Her face was quite disfigured with this disgusting disease, and she suffered greatly, particularly in the eyes, which bled and were always shut. Everyone can imagine the sufferings of the poor little creature and the distress of the grandmother. In December of 1775, Gertrude had, after Father Paul's death, a rosary which the servant of God had used, and hoping to obtain, through his merits, the cure of the child, she put it round her neck and actually obtained what she desired, for, at its touch, the disgusting scales fell from her face, her eyes opened and became clean, moist, and perfectly clear, and remained quite healthy afterwards.

Letizia Ruspantini of the Grotte di San Lorenzo in the Diocese of Montefiascone, in 1776 suffered from a painful fluxion in her ears. A tumor had formed, and it was thought that it must be ready to burst. The excessive pain made her weep continually. Fortunately, she thought of applying to her ear a picture of Father Paul. No sooner had she done it, than the tumor disappeared and Letizia was cured.

At Orbetello, Maria Giuseppa Gagliardini had, in 1776, on the 27th of December, brought into the world an infant, on whose eyelids two small tumors, the size and color of a myrtle berry, had formed, which rendered it frightful. Having recommended herself to Father Paul, she took with great confidence a picture of the servant of God, applied it at night to the infant's eyes, and left it for the whole of the night. The following morning she went to see how the infant was, and

behold she saw that one of the tumors had disappeared. She recommended herself to the servant of God to obtain the completion of the cure, and coming back saw, to her unspeakable consolation, that the other tumor had also disappeared. The child was perfectly free from this infirmity and was not again subject to it.

At Ischia, in Acquapendente, in June of 1778, Signora Rosa Linda Castiglioni was attacked with spasmodic pains proceeding from the stone. In this state of pain and danger she took an emblem of the Passion that Father Paul had used, which she kept as a relic, and applied it, recommending herself with great confidence to the servant of God. The pain instantly ceased; but as it returned another night with equal violence, she was ordered the operation of the syringe. Feeling great repugnance to this, she had recourse again. With lively confidence in Father Paul, and after recommending herself to him for some time, a stone came away without any operation and she was freed from pain.

Maddalena Ciancaglione of Bieda in Viterbo, in September of 1775, was afflicted with a pain in her back, which, three months before, had fused in that part and tormented her greatly. One day the pain increased so much that the poor woman could get no rest. Remembering that she had in the house a picture of Father Paul, who was then dead, she took the blessed picture and with great faith and devotion said to Father Paul, "Have the charity to make this pain leave me, for I can bear it no longer." Scarcely had she uttered these words, than she felt the affected part touched by an invisible hand and the pain removed. She was perfectly cured and has suffered no more from it.

A sister in the Convent of St. Bernard at Nepi suffered from a most acute pain in her shoulder, and was so tormented that she could not rest at night if she lay on that side. She had also a great palpitation in the artery, which, with the other infirmity, rendered her unfit for her duties. The good nun applied to the part affected a little piece of Father Paul's handkerchief, and behold, she slept tranquilly, lying on the affected side. She was freed from all pain and from that time has been always able to rest on that side which before was so painful.

In the Convent of St. Clare at Civita Castellana, Sister Maria Innocenza of Jesus, a nun professed many years, had never been able to keep Lent because the abstinence food caused vomiting and other symptoms. She regretted having to use dispensations which were, however, judged necessary, and she wished to be able to follow the community. One day in October of

1775, she felt herself interiorly urged to recommend herself to Father Paul, who had shortly before died at Rome. She went before a picture of the servant of God and with all confidence said to him, “My Father Paul, you were so great a lover of regular observance, obtain for me the grace to be cured so that I may follow the Rule of my Institute.” After this prayer she obtained the grace, was perfectly cured, and, in November that same year, was able, in Advent, to eat abstinence food and fast. She has continued it on all other fast days, both of the Church and of the Rule. She now, to her great comfort, feels better when she eats abstinence food, which injured her so much before, a thing which, in the opinion of a skillful physician, could not happen naturally, much more as no medical art assisted in the cure.

Maria Diana, wife of Nicholas Reali of Soriano, had been tormented from April of 1776 with heart trouble. She suffered so much pain that she could not rest day or night. She was obliged to spend them all in most troublesome watching. When she ate anything necessary for her support, the pains increased so much that she felt as if she must die every moment, and she generally rejected what she had taken. Many remedies were applied, but with little or no relief, for, if one day she was a little better, the pains returned with such violence, that the poor woman thought she must die. She was considered to be in continual danger of death. In this state she continued for many months, until February of 1777, when she felt herself moved to recommend herself to Father Paul of the Cross. She had recourse to Father Paul with great confidence of obtaining a cure; and to revive her faith in a greater degree, took a small piece of Father Paul’s habit, and putting it in a little water, swallowed both together. It was then two o’clock at night. She went to bed, slept quietly, rose quite well the next morning, has never suffered any more from this complaint, and now enjoys good health, considering Father Paul as a great saint. At Pereta in Soana, many women were in danger of death in childbirth, and on a little piece of Father Paul’s habit being applied, they were safely delivered.

Giacomo Miniocci of Bieda in Viterbo, in June of 1776, was attacked with a carbuncle of a very bad sort, from which it was thought he must die. He was twice bled, but received no relief, and on the fifth day the pain that he had in his side increased so much that he could not rest at all. It was thought that opening the vein again might relieve him, when a woman suggested to him to recommend himself to Father Paul of the Cross. She offered to bring him a picture of the servant of God, which she did. He took the picture, and applying it to the part affected, the pain ceased

instantaneously and the sick man was perfectly cured, rising the next morning in good health.

Margaret, wife of Giuseppe Fanti of Soriano, had been ill all April of 1778, with daily fever and pains in her bowels, which gave no rest, and allowed her scarcely to take any nourishment for her support. All remedies being useless, her husband brought her a picture and some of Father Paul's hair. She placed the picture on her chest and the hair on her head, and the fever and pains ceased.

At Ischia, struck by paralysis, Maddalena Battella's jaws were dislocated, and her mouth open so that she could neither eat nor swallow, nor utter a word. She remained fifteen days in this state, no remedy availing her. Two teeth had been taken out to assist her in opening her mouth. Having the use of her senses, a picture of Father Paul was offered to her by a good priest, and with great fervor she recommended herself to the servant of God, saying, "Ah, Father Paul, give me a little of your faith, for I wish to confide in you." Signing herself with the blessed picture, she felt her jaws restored to their position, began to eat and to swallow and to speak so as to be understood.

A youth of Bassano, of Sutri, by a fall had broken his arm. As the case had not been carefully attended to, he did not recover the use of it. According to the opinion of the medical men to whom he presented himself in Rome, there was no hope of a cure. Seeing every human remedy useless, he resolved to have recourse to the servant of God, Father Paul of the Cross. Going to his sepulchre, he prayed with confidence, and immediately began to be able to use his arm. He left for Bassano, and in a few days was cured, and then, full of consolation, returned to the sepulchre to render thanks for the favor.

In November of 1770, at Pereta in Tuscany, Rosa Spadini, a young woman about thirty was ill in bed with an inflammation of the chest and a severe pain in the head. Various remedies had proved useless and she was given up by the physicians. In this danger, a piece of Father Paul's habit was brought to her, applied to her head and to her chest, and immediately she fell asleep and slept for two hours, placidly and soundly, after which she felt greatly relieved, free from fever and headache, and soon recovered perfectly.

We have it in the Processes that many, after recommending themselves to the servant of God to make a good and holy confession, experienced in confession remarkable compunction and were greatly comforted. We will relate what happened to Sigr. Venerando Colombo, of the

parish of Sts. Celso and Giuliano in Banchi, by profession a silversmith in Rome. He had for some time desired to make his general confession, but though he went for this purpose to several churches, most likely through the work of the enemy who puts obstacles in the way, he had never done it. When, hearing of Father Paul's reputation for sanctity, he came on the 22nd of October, 1775, to his sepulchre, and kneeling before it, said, with confidence, "Father Paul, if you are the servant of God you are said to be, obtain for me true contrition for my sins." Scarcely had he pronounced these words, than he felt himself shake all over, and his heart became inflamed with singular fervor. Comforted by the hope that his prayer had been heard, he went to a confessor, telling him what had happened and asking to make his confession. As it was late, the confessor put him off to another day. Returning home and going to rest, he awoke several times in the night, hearing some one say to him interiorly, "Go to confession at Sts. John and Paul." When it was daylight, he went to our Church and, finding a confessor, opened his heart to him. The day following, leaving his house and wishing to come back to finish his confession, when he reached Campidoglio, it began to rain. He did not know whether he ought to go on in the rain, but, with courage and confidence in the servant of God's merits and invoking his help, he went from Campidoglio to Sts. John and Paul in the rain and, wonderful to relate, he himself saw that, though it rained very much all around, he was not the least wet. When he reached the church, his clothes were quite dry. Having finished his general confession, he felt great spiritual consolation, attributing it to the servant of God's intercession, the gaining what he desired.

About two months after the servant of God's death, at Pomerance in Volterra, Maddalena, widow of Marcantonio Biondi, obtained through Father Paul's merits a wonderful cure, which we had better hear from the witness who drew his deposition from the attestation of the surgeon, and from a letter of the Bishop of Volterra. "Maddalena, aged seventy-three, had long suffered from a skin disease with ulcers in the right foot, beginning from the exterior malleoli, extending to the corda magna and to the tibia, and as high as the half of the tibia and fibula." It must be remarked that this wound came when Maddalena was thirty, and it had never been possible to prevent the continual breaking out of the wound, as the skillful surgeon attested on oath. "The remedies used during the last three years," says the witness, "were always useless, though Domenico Bartolini, the surgeon, and his predecessors had used all the best specifics and remedies of the art. For if she improved a little, it was only for a short time, and this proceeded

from the part being diseased by the length of the complaint, or from the infirmities of the patient, insomuch that being visited by Bartolini on the 18th of November, 1775, the disease was found to be worse than it had been. Maddalena, having obtained a small piece of Father Paul's vest, instead of the remedies ordered by Bartolini for the wound, put this little piece upon it, and then, without any dressing, bound up the leg. Feeling that it did not hurt her, she did not unbind it and passed the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of that month remaining on both the mornings of these days in church on her knees. On the evening of the twenty-fifth, through curiosity, she wished to unbind the leg and see how it was. To her astonishment, she found it perfectly healed of all the wounds, flexible, not swollen, but natural like the other. The following day, Bartolini, being told of it, affirmed that this could not have happened without a miracle.

A few months after Father Paul's death, Dr. Lottario Arrighi of Castel del Piano in the Diocese of Montalcino brought from Rome a picture of the servant of God. There was a child named Giovanni Giorgi, who for two or three years had her right eye so obscured and darkened, that if she shut the left, no longer distinguishing objects, she saw nothing but confused shadows. Many said it was the beginning of cataract. As soon as she knew there was a picture of Father Paul, she ran to the house of the doctor, and kneeling before it, earnestly begged him to restore the sight of her eye. Leaving the house, continuing to pray, she entered the church while a function was going on, and, to make trial whether she had received the favor, she shut her left eye. To her great consolation, she felt the effects of the benefit she had obtained, for she saw clearly and distinguished those who were in the church and the six candles at the altar. After the function at which she was present, she went back to Sigr. Arrighi to venerate the function<sup>4</sup> and to thank the servant of God. From that time forward, her sight became so clear that she could, even with her right eye, do those things that require the best sight, as threading a needle, etc. She began to do fine work, as she had desired, in order to gain in her state of poverty an honest livelihood.

Many other wonderful graces might be related here, especially those which were attested on oath by those who received them, and by others who witnessed them. But as we determined to use only the Processes, and even of the Processes we have not judged it necessary to relate all the graces granted by our Lord at the intercession of His servant, we will here finish our little work,

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the lady went to church to attend the "function" and then returned to the doctor's house to venerate the "picture" of the servant of God.



fully convinced that from what we have said, with the gifts and graces that have been described, as with a bright and shining light, proportioned even to the sight of persons who understand the least in spiritual things, our Lord is accustomed to attract veneration and esteem to the virtues of His faithful and beloved servants. May others, having them always before their eyes and walking faithfully in their footsteps, be united with them forever in God, who is the blessed end of our journey and the center of the most perfect and holy union.

## **SUPPLEMENT**

**to the**

**Life of B. Paul of the Cross**

Being a collection of letters written principally by the Very Rev. Father Dominic of the Mother of God, or addressed to him, illustrating the way in which the foundation of the Congregation of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in England was first thought of and afterwards effected.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It having been found that the Life of the Blessed Father Paul of the Cross would exceed what could be contained in two volumes of this Series, and yet not suffice for three, the Editor made a kind offer to the Passionist Fathers now in England to fill up the vacant space with whatever matter they might propose as suitable. The Very Rev. Father Eugene of St. Anthony, Provincial of the body in England at this time, has, in consequence, presented the following letters, written principally by Father Dominic of the Mother of God and Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, his successor in the office of theological lector at Rome, and different English friends, with whom they corresponded on the subject of the first foundation of the Congregation in this kingdom. These were in part found among the papers left by the late venerated Father Dominic, or contributed by such of the above-named friends as had preserved some of them. We regret that many have been destroyed, or lost, which would have given greater continuity and completeness to the collection. It has been thought well, for the better understanding of these letters, to give some introductory details concerning the various writers of them, which will prevent such frequent interruptions of the reader by long notes, as would otherwise be necessary. These details have been furnished, principally at the desire of the above-named Provincial, Father Eugene, by the Rev. Father Ignatius of St. Paul, formerly the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer, now Rector of the Passionist House near London, who was one of the first Englishmen with whom Father Dominic conversed and one of the persons best acquainted with the other writers of these letters.

It was in the month of March, 1830, between five and six weeks after his conversion to the Catholic faith, that Mr. Spencer entered the English College at Rome to study for the priesthood. He had not been there more than two days when his acquaintance was sought by Miss Letitia Trelawny, who was then in Rome with her father, Sir Harry Trelawny, a venerable old man of seventy years of age, head of one of the most ancient and respected families of Cornwall, who was at the time preparing to receive ordination from the late Cardinal Odescalchi, afterwards Cardinal Vicar of Rome, who finally resigned all his dignities and ended his holy life as a Jesuit Father. Miss Trelawny was the first of her family who had returned to the faith of her ancestors. This had happened by an extraordinary grace when she was quite a child, we believe about eleven years of age. Her father, who, though head of the family and owner of the Trelawny property, was a clergyman, and held two of the family livings, respected the conscientious convictions of his daughter, and used, when the distance was not too great, to send her to Mass at the Carmelite's convent at Llanherne in Cornwall in his own carriage, although he himself yet remained devotedly attached to the Church of England, or rather, we may say, to those remains of the ancient faith which yet exist in that Church and distinguish it honorably from the other bodies of religionists in this country. His heart and feelings, in fact, had always been Catholic, and his conversion seems simply to have been a natural adhering to what he had always loved, the first moment he knew where it really existed. He would say little about his conversion to Mr. Spencer but this, "I found my religion in the Catholic Church, and of course I joined it."

Who knows what hidden treasures of the same kind our holy Church, without knowing it, may yet possess in England, which will, in God's time, be developed as this was? He had now been twenty years, since the time of being received into the Church, always desiring to officiate as one of her priests, but withheld by certain difficulties, which at length, at this advanced age, he overcame. In the early part of the summer of 1830, he passed through the successive steps of ordination, from the tonsure (when this Cardinal, his attached friend, cut off some of the old man's few remaining white locks) to the priesthood. For this last step he had to be prepared by learning to perform the ceremonies of the Mass; no easy task for one at his age. The Cardinal had to find him a teacher; and, as Sir Harry Trelawny occupied apartments in the Dominican convent of Santa Sabina, which lies not far from the Retreat of Saints John and Paul, he applied to the General of the Passionists to appoint one of his Fathers for this service. The choice fell on Father

Dominic, then theological lecturer there, probably to gratify his well known predilection for England. But Sir Harry could not talk Italian; Father Dominic as yet knew no French; so they could not converse. It was Miss Trelawny who discovered the heavenly flame of charity for our people, which had been for more than seventeen years consuming that heart, and conceiving justly that Mr. Spencer, recently brought to the knowledge of Catholic truth, must be engrossed with the desire of imparting this blessing to his country people, and would be delighted to meet with a heart, in this respect, like his own, she made it a point to introduce him to Father Dominic, and thus was begun that mutual friendship which lasted till the death of Father Dominic in 1849. We will not say terminated then, for in the Catholic Church friends bound together by such ties are not divided but more closely linked by death. In the autumn of this year Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps came to spend the winter in Rome. It is not known, perhaps, to our readers what there was to unite this warm heart to Mr. Spencer's. As the latter has explained, in a short account of his conversion, which he wrote at the request of the Bishop of Oppido, in Calabria, who wished to encourage the faith, and animate the charity of his diocesans, by making known to them the case of one so mercifully rescued from the chains of error, Mr. Phillipps had been the instrument by which it pleased God to lead Mr. Spencer to the faith. ( This account Mr. Spencer wrote in English. It was translated for the Bishop by Dr. Gentili, whose friendship Mr. Spencer had lately formed, and who was at the time convictor in the Irish College, where he was following his studies of Theology, and at the same time preparing himself, by the practice of our language, for the mission in England. The English narrative was afterwards printed by the Catholic Institute.)

On his arrival at Rome, as what interested these two friends in the eternal city was not so much its treasures of bygone days, not its pagan antiquities, nor its wonders of art, not so much even its holy places and relics of ancient departed saints, as its living treasures of grace and piety, Mr. Spencer took him immediately to Saints John and Paul. The following letters will abundantly prove how well he calculated on the result of bringing together two such spirits as these. It falls in with the object of this preface to give some details of Mr. Phillipps' conversion, of which we believe no genuine account has ever yet been printed. Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps is the eldest son and heir of Charles March Lisle Phillipps, Esq., of Garendon Park, Leicestershire, formerly member of Parliament for that county. He was placed, when quite young, for his education with the Rev. Mr. Hodgson, an intimate friend of Dr. Ryder, then Bishop of Gloucester, near which town Mr. Hodgson had a living, where he received his pupils.

Little Ambrose had heard a good deal about Catholics, as all English children must who grow up in families like his, where religion is seriously attended to. But it need not be said that the most of what he heard was descriptions of their fraud, their cruelty, and superstition. This had excited his curiosity to see for himself what these Catholics were. His first opportunity was offered him at this school, which an old French priest, the Abbe Giraud, who was acting as missionary in the little Chapel at Gloucester, used to visit once a week to give lessons in French. The little boy used to ask leave to walk part of the way home with the Abbe, and plied him with abundance of questions, which the old man simply answered, and thus began to enlighten his mind with the truth, the first gleams of which he eagerly pursued, catching at every occasion of learning more and more of the Catholic religion. On Dr. Ryder being translated to the See of Lichfield, his tutor was called, by his friend and patron, to Birmingham, where he became minister of Christ Church. He brought his pupils with him, and it was here that, at the age of fourteen, after three years' search after truth, in which he had none to assist him but God, who promises that those who seek in simplicity shall find, Mr. Phillipps was received into the Church by the Rev. T. M. Macdonnell, pastor of St. Peter's Chapel, Birmingham. It might be three or four years afterwards that Mr. Spencer, then Rector of the parish of Brington, in Northamptonshire, first heard mention made of the strange, and to him inexplicable, fact of this youth's conversion, and of his devotedness to his new creed, little thinking that this was an instrument prepared by God to bring him, too, to be a devoted lover and servant of that faith which he then reckoned himself bound to oppose, and, as far as in him lay, to uproot in these kingdoms. This conquest was gained on the 29th of January, 1830, the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, the greatest champion which the Church has produced for the conversion of Protestants. After his visit to Rome, during the autumn and winter of this year, that is, in the summer of 1831, Mr. Phillipps returned to England and in 1833 was married to Miss Laura Clifford, niece to the late, and cousin to the present, Lord Clifford. In one or two of his letters Father Dominic, by mistake, calls her niece to Lord Clifford, probably from seeing Lord Clifford so much older than Mr. Phillipps, and supposing that his cousin would be too old to be his young friend's wife. In one of his letters Father Dominic, in a strain of great fervor, calls down blessings on Phillipps's marriage, and on himself, wishing him a numerous and holy offspring from his marriage and great successes to attend him in his efforts to restore our divine religion in England. If, after reading this letter, one should go to Grace-Dieu Manor,

Mr. Phillipps' residence, and see him there, after twenty years, in health and happiness with his wife, surrounded by their twelve promising children, and then accompany him round the neighborhood, and in a district where, at the time when this letter was written, hardly one Catholic existed but himself, one should visit the great Cistercian Monastery, and the many flourishing missions which have arisen under his protection, though yet he has but very limited means, the whole country breathing, as we may say, a Catholic air, one might well say the good Passionist's prayer has been greatly blessed; and one might picture to oneself a bright future, not only to that neighborhood, but to all England, when his other constant and fervent prayers for this country shall have borne their full increase.

We now proceed to say something of another person who bears so distinguished a place in Father Dominic's thoughts and letters at the period of this correspondence. It is the Rev. James Ford. His acquaintance with Mr. Spencer first began in the year 1820, when both were traveling for information and amusement in Italy, before entering on the profession to which both were destined, of clergymen of the Established Church. When, at the close of 1822, Mr. Spencer, having received deacon's orders from the Protestant Bishop of Peterborough, began to act as Curate of the parish of Brington, near Northampton, where he was subsequently Rector. Mr. Ford had for some months past been settled as Curate of one of the churches in the town of Northampton. Their acquaintance was thus renewed, and it grew into a most affectionate friendship, of which the entire end and aim seemed to be their mutual improvement and advance in virtue and devotion and in the fulfilment of their duties as pastors of the souls with which they judged themselves to be entrusted. In one passage of these letters it will be seen that Father Dominic speaks of Mr. Spencer as the disciple and Mr. Ford as the master; saying to Mr. Phillipps, that as he had succeeded so well with the one, he wished he might with the other, and, in fact, these expressions might well be applied to them. Mr. Ford, before the time of receiving orders in the Church of England, had retired to the sea side, to prepare himself for this step by reflection and by reading such works as Anglicans would recommend on such an occasion. He there was, as it seems, overpowered with a sense of the great truths of religion, and devoted himself, with ardent zeal, to spiritual exercises, as he understood them. Among other things, meeting with some discourses of Bishop Beveridge, and other old Anglican divines, on the excellence of fasting, he entered on its practice with such vigor that he was soon reduced to

extreme weakness, and obliged, by medical authority, to discontinue it, but in other respects most warmly followed out the movements of devotion which had been awakened in him. When Mr. Spencer first met him again in Northampton, he well remembers how he was astonished at the change he observed in the happy bright youth he had known in Italy. He saw the same amiable, winning character, but there was a total renunciation of all amusements, and even of society, that he might be without reserve occupied about his flock. Mr. Spencer has often been heard to repeat, that it was principally to the conversation and example of Mr. Ford, that he owes the renewal in his mind of feelings of early piety, which had for many years lain dormant, or rather had been wholly quenched, and the first awakening of zeal in his heart for the salvation of others. Who can sufficiently wonder at the depths of the unsearchable counsels of God? Mr. Spencer now more than twenty-three years a Catholic, this friend of his still an Anglican clergyman, now Prebendary of Exeter. It would be irrelevant to the object of this preface to enter on a discussion of causes which might be considered as leading one in a course so widely distinct from the other. It is enough to say, that three or four years after this renewal of their friendship, Mr. Ford was married to an amiable young lady of fortune, in the neighborhood of Northampton. It was his friend Mr. Spencer who married them. He was afterwards much reduced by illness. He had to relinquish his cure, and had been, with his lady, spending some time, for the recovery of his health, at Pisa, when Mr. Spencer, after his conversion, came to the English College at Rome. This led Mr. and Mrs. Ford to take a journey to Rome to see him, and, at the same time, to see the wonders of that city, which Mrs. Ford had never visited. They spent a week together, and it was during this time that Mr. Spencer took this friend likewise to Father Dominic, with whom he had several conversations in the beautiful garden of SS. John and Paul, to which allusion is repeatedly made in the following letters. From the details just given, and a consideration of the circumstances of this new acquaintance, it will appear not wonderful that the heart of Father Dominic should have been moved with such overflowing tenderness and affection towards Mr. Ford, as he expresses in his letters. For nearly twenty years he had been praying unceasingly for the conversion of England and burning with most ardent desires to work at it in person. Here was the first Englishman, not a Catholic, with whom he had conversed, and it was one whose winning appearance and manners, whose beauty of character, and the intelligence of whose conversation added exceedingly to the impression which this interesting circumstance would

naturally make on his feelings. In reading the letters which he afterwards addressed to him, and what he wrote about him, we seem to see an overwhelming torrent of affection breaking out, as though from a vast reservoir held up and accumulating for many years. Can it be that the object of such affections and of so many prayers will not at length receive that light and grace which has been so earnestly implored and, we trust, is now yet more earnestly implored for him by that loving soul? We put forth these details in the hope that others may be moved to join in the assault on heaven in his behalf and prevail with Almighty God to glorify His own mercy and to honor holy prayer by crowning these prayers of Father Dominic in due time with success.

We now pass on to another person whose letters form a considerable part of this collection, Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus (*del costato di Gesu*) who, succeeding as he did to Father Dominic's office as theological lector at Rome, when the latter was sent by the General to govern the new house of the Passionists at l'Angelo, near Lucca, seems also to have inherited a great portion of his zeal for the conversion of England. He received the habit of the Passionists in May 1818. He was a man of great learning and of amiable characters which gained for him the affections of all his brother religious, but especially of his own students. He wrote many works of instruction and piety, as *Le Armè della Fede* ("The Arms of Faith"), *La Scuola di Gesu appassionato* ("The School of the Suffering Jesus"), *Istituzioni di Eloquenza Sacra* ("Instructions on Sacred Eloquence"), a work in two volumes, intended specially for the students of the Congregation, and *Sante industrie per conservare il fervore concepito negli Spirituali Esercizi* ("Holy Plans for Keeping up the Fervor Gained during Spiritual Exercises"). The last of his works, which he completed just before his death, which happened in 1844, was the life of the venerable Monsignor Strambi, Bishop of Macerata and Tolentino, of the Congregation of the Passion. His correspondent, Mrs. Edward Canning, who, as it may be seen by the few of her letters to him which have been preserved, was one of the most devoted instruments which Providence put into action for bringing the Passionists to England, was daughter to Mr. William Spencer and grand-daughter of Lord Charles Spencer, brother to the grandfather of the present Duke of Marlborough. She has written an interesting account of her conversion, entitled "Recollections of a Convert," printed in French and English; also a little treatise on the cross, full of pious and beautiful sentiments. She is pleased to recount the fact that it was in her house that Father Dominic sought and found his first lodging when he came to England to remain. She then



lived at Brompton.

It may be well, in fine, to give some account of the way in which the Congregation of the Passionists has advanced and prospered in England since the period of this correspondence, and how far Father Dominic's glowing expectations were realized before his death, and have been since. There is no doubt he underwent great and painful disappointments, and so, likewise, the Congregation, to which he belonged and which he took such delight in planting in this kingdom, has had to struggle forward through many troubles and much discouragement. Does this, however, intimate that the fervor and joy with which he had looked forward through so many years to being led by God to labor and to die in England, and to plant his Congregation here, were inordinate, that his was not a true vocation to this enterprise, and that his hopes for the Congregation will not finally be realized ? By no means; otherwise, we might argue that even the first vocation of the apostles was not true, and that the fervor with which they corresponded with it, especially the ardent feelings expressed by St. Peter, were displeasing to our Lord. For they had little thought then of the sort of conflicts which were before them. When their tribulations first arose, they too were beat down and disheartened; but they rose again and accomplished their mission, and the Church which they planted has triumphed over all her enemies. Father Dominic used often to say, "I looked forward always to difficulties and trials in England, but if I had known how great, and what they were to be, I hardly know whether my courage would have borne me up to face them. Is not this according to the usual dealings of Providence? Almighty God works with instruments, not of angelic perfection, but weak, as are all men. The weak things of the world He chooses to confound the strong; He suffers these weak instruments oftentimes to droop, to faint, to complain. See how Moses speaks again and again during the passage through the desert. How Joshua was cast down at the unexpected repulse before Hai, But God's work was accomplished, and His faithful servants were rewarded and glorified. Instead of giving, in all cases, to those whom He chooses for the execution of His great designs a clear knowledge from the first of what they will have to encounter, and the courage and graces necessary to accomplish their work to its perfection, He often puts before them but a partial view of their difficulties, and bright prospects of the good they will work, and of the glories to follow; so that they willingly, and with joy, follow His call, and it is afterwards through tribulations and contradictions that He perfects their virtues, ripens them for their crown, and often gives them their crown, too, by

taking them out of this world before they have seen much of the fruit of their toils gathered in. It seems clear that Father Dominic hoped quickly to see Mr. Ford converted. This gentleman was the first object on which his zeal for our people was actively exerted. Had he known at that time, that after nearly twenty years, he should die in Ragland, leaving Mr. Ford where he was, it might have greatly checked the ardor of those prayers for him, which God, we will yet hope, chose should be offered for that soul in order that in His own good time, He might enlighten him by answering them. So, likewise, when, after twenty-eight years of sighs and disappointed hopes, Father Dominic set foot in England, he fully expected that he should at once begin his missionary career, that ample good speedy would be the blessed harvest, and that he should soon be surrounded with a large troop of zealous young English Passionists, eager to labor under his direction. He often related how, under a severe disappointment of his expectations of quickly beginning to work in England, he had been comforted by an interior voice, which he believed came from God and which in words, distinctly pronounced within him, or, at least, by a clear impression on his mind, repeated to him the promise made by God to Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). But how did it fare with him? When first he landed in England, in 1841, he had expected to be immediately put in possession of the house at Aston, near Stone, destined for his first foundation. He had to return without even seeing it. After nearly twelve months, he returned again with a companion and was lodged at Oscott College. One of his letters written to Mr. Phillipps, the day after his arrival this time, with an accompanying few lines from Mr. Spencer, places him before us full of eagerness to begin his work. He had, however, to wait there between four and five, to him, long, weary months, before seeing the scene of his labor. At length he came to Aston on the 17th of February, 1842. There he began to work among the people, especially in the neighboring town of Stone, giving instructions and preaching with wonderful zeal and assiduity, even before he could be well understood in English, and extraordinary was his success during that first year or two, while he remained fixed at home, not being yet able to undertake missions conformably to our Institute in other distant places. By the way in which he expresses his feelings, in the records which he wrote of his proceedings at that time, and which, according to the practice of the Congregation, are preserved in a book at St. Michael's Retreat, Aston, it is evident that he was indulging bright visions of that town soon becoming almost all Catholic; but his patience had to be exercised here again. During the

succeeding years, some of his first converts slackened and went back; few were added to the number, and he was almost regretting that such forward steps had been taken at the commencement. But all seems now to be resuming brighter promise than ever. On occasion of his funeral, when his body, having been conveyed from the place of his death, was borne, accompanied by a procession of his brethren through that town of Stone, to be interred at Aston, some of the old Catholics, his first friends, observed the feelings expressed by the people, and when they heard many of the Protestants, who had so often in that first year of his work among them followed him with nicknames and ridicule through the town, now speaking of him with heartfelt respect, they felt as though he was now making his entry in triumph to take possession of the hearts which he had so zealously laid siege to, but which had till then repulsed him. It made them entertain bright hopes of better days; in fact, what may not be expected, for Stone, now that the Bishop of Birmingham is founding in that town the novitiate of the Sisters of Penance, and the ground on which Father Dominic built his little school is soon to be occupied, as we understand, by no less than fifty religious sisters. With the same ardent hopes did Father Dominic commence his work at Woodchester, the place where, as he relates himself in his preface to the first volume, a second foundation was given to the Passionists by the generosity of Mr. Leigh, the convert, on the recommendation of Cardinal Wiseman. He would surely have been greatly mortified had he known then that so soon after the consecration of their splendid church there, his brethren would have to quit this foundation. This has been the case; but how well has God made compensation. Almost at the very same time, the Benedictines made over to the Passionists the possession of their house at Broadway in Worcestershire, which has become the novitiate of the Congregation in England. And the Oratorians gave them, with princely generosity, their beautiful church and house at St. Wilfrid's, near Cheadle, which now is their house of studies. As in the realms of bliss there are known no jealousies, no personal or selfish feelings, whatever there may be of such feelings even in the true servants of God here below, our good Father is well content with seeing the work he began at Woodchester ably and happily carried on, not, indeed, by his own brethren, but by the children of St. Dominic, who now occupy that house.

Had he written his preface a few months later, he would not have omitted mentioning the new prospects which had then opened to him, when he was called, in the year 1848, by Cardinal

Wiseman, then Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the London District, to found a house in the vicinity of London. Perhaps not one of his undertakings inspired him with greater joy and hope than this. Oh, if he had had this to speak of in his preface, he would indeed have given vent to expressions of gratitude to his Eminence, who became thus, a third time, the patron of our Congregation in their most important establishment. He used, however, to say that no foundation of ours went on well which was not founded on the cross. According to this sentiment there is nothing to make us doubt of glorious results at St. Joseph's Retreat. Father Dominic, before he died, had to undergo the mortification of detaching his affections from the first house which had been given him at West End, Hampstead, and resolving on a removal of the Community to the Hyde, near which it now exists. It was not long before the prospects which this new position offered to his zeal again quite captivated his heart. Though his constitution was quite broken and he was filled with infirmities, he would sometimes speak of the large District which was now to be the immediate object of his care, as if he were a young man beginning life full of buoyant hopes. Had he foreseen the disappointments, the discouragements, and the train of crosses through which his successors have had hitherto to make their way towards their full establishment in this place, his ardent, eager spirit would have had some more rough shocks. God, however, was satisfied with the amount of labor now gone through by this His servant, and on the 27th of July, 1849, he died as any true Passionist might be pleased to die, in the midst of his work, on a journey to visit one of our houses. Not alone, indeed, for he had with him one of his own priests. Excepting this, he died as one abandoned by all men and all things of the world. The London foundation, and the Congregation in general, in England will, we trust, have to fight and struggle, but come out of all their troubles in due time, strengthened and improved by each successive blow, accomplishing again and again the type chosen by our Lord to represent the way in which all that is good has ever been matured in His Church. "Amen, amen, I say to you, except the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remains alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

As we have made mention of other foundations in England, we must not overlook another to which Father Dominic gave some attention before his death, but did not live to see it in an advanced state. This is St. Anne's Retreat, Sutton, near St. Helen's, Lancashire, where a beautiful church has been built for the Passionists, with a religious house adjoining it, by Mr. John Smith, a railway contractor, at his own sole expense. This gentleman is a most remarkable

case of successful industry, combined with noble generosity. He takes delight in recounting how, after being brought very low by untoward circumstances, he had to begin life again by going to work as a laborer, without a sixpence in his pocket, at the first making of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway; how, his employers, seeing he knew what he was about, enabled him to employ a few men under him; how from this step he came to be a contractor on a small scale, then on a great scale, and at last to realize large sums. He always wished to do something for his religion. He has given twelve good acres of ground to the Congregation of the Passion and built upon them a handsome gothic church with a tower and steeple, all in stone, which, as he loves to say, will stand for ages, and a portion of a monastery adjoining to it, sufficient for the present small community. The Passionists then have five establishments in England, abodes prepared for the numerous family, the ‘gens magna,’ which was promised to the good Father. As he was approaching his end and felt his vigor gone, he used to say, “I shall not see in my lifetime the promise accomplished. I suppose it is to be seen after my death.” There are, in fact, a greater number of students and of novices than ever they had in his days. May these, by their virtue, realize the ideal which the good Father must have formed to himself of the new generation of Passionists in England. While speaking of the development of the Congregation of Passionists in England, we will step back, as it were, for a moment, and take a glance at the state of Father Dominic’s first establishment, the Retreat of the Holy Cross, at Ere, near Tournay, which he intended as a stepping-stone towards England. We will simply state, as a sign of its prosperity, that, during this present year, it has sent forth two filiations. One has been established in the Diocese of Arras, in France, between Boulogne and Calais; another in the Province of Limburgh, in Holland.

Besides these we may here mention one made directly from Rome, sent last autumn with Dr. Connor, Bishop of Pittsburgh, in North America, consisting of a company of three priests and a lay brother, to found a house in that town, or rather near to it, opening to us a way to the new world and, we trust, to many souls a way to a better and eternal world.

While speaking of the way in which Father Dominic’s bright hopes have been, in so many instances, first disappointed and almost crushed, and then justified and realized, we reserve for the conclusion of our remarks the achievement which, though perhaps one of the least difficult and laborious, may perhaps be confidently affirmed to be the most honorable and glorious of his

life, especially of his career in England, that is, his receiving into the Church Dr. Newman and his companions at Littlemore. To call Dr. Newman a convert or a conquest of Father Dominic, we should consider incorrect. We will here express the hope that one day a circumstantial account may be given us by the only hand which is capable of giving it, that is, by his own, of the steps by which that great mind was led to the point where it has now found its rest; our disposition would be to say that Almighty God reserved to Himself to bring about that conversion, from which He proposed to draw the great results we hope for, as He thought fit Himself to work that of St. Paul, though in so different a way. The change in one case being as remarkably gradual as in the other it was sudden. He was, however, pleased to honor the ministry of His Church in both cases, and what Ananias did for Saul, Father Dominic did for Newman. In general Father Dominic labored and left it to others to reap. Here another, not man, but God Himself, had prepared and cultivated and watered and then called this faithful patient lover of England to gather in, without labor, this sheaf of England's choicest wheat, full-ripe. We regret that we have not original letters by which to illustrate the entire story of this transaction, which, as far as it went, was what we may call a finished perfect work. Two letters, however, will be met with in the series, one of which, particularly, will give an idea of what the joys of his heart must have been when he saw this work finished, by showing what he felt at the first distant prospect of such a conclusion, when he could have had no idea that he was the chosen instrument to bring it about. The main circumstances of this interesting narrative are as follows. About the beginning of the year 1841, while Father Dominic was settling the first house of the Order in Belgium, a letter appeared in the "Univers," from a young member of the University of Oxford, which overwhelmed with surprise those who had not been in the way previously to mark what was going on there, that is, who knew not the gradual but rapid progress of many of the brightest spirits of the place towards Catholicity. Father Dominic could not resist the impulse of endeavoring to forward this work of grace. He wrote a long answer in Latin to the writer of this letter, whose name was yet unknown to him. A reply in Latin was returned, to which allusion is made in a letter from Mr. Spencer, dated from Barmouth, in 1841. To this Father Dominic replied in a Latin letter, of which a translation is given in its place. The writer of the first letter in the "Univers" was Mr. Dalgairns, one of Newman's companions at Littlemore, now priest of the London Oratory. He kept the lead of his associates in the great race for truth, which from his

writing that letter he may be supposed to have had then. He was the first of the community of Littlemore who saw his way to be received into the Church. This took place at Michaelmas, 1845, and it was St. Michael's Retreat, Aston, where Father Dominic then lived, to which he was drawn to seek admission into the Church. The short correspondence, four or five years before, and one visit paid by Father Dominic to Littlemore, gave him sufficient acquaintance with him to make him the object of his choice for this important service. Father Dominic was preparing at the time to go to Belgium to visit the house of Ere, and asked Mr. Dalgairns whether it would be agreeable to his friends and himself that he should on his way pay them a second visit at Littlemore. It being agreed to, he went to Oxford, and reached it late, Oct 8, 1845. He had traveled outside a coach in heavy rain and was found by Mr. Dalgairns and another of the community, who went to bring him to Littlemore, drying himself at a fire in the inn. On reaching Littlemore at eleven o'clock at night, the first thing he had to do was to go again to the fire. While there, as he writes, Mr. Newman came into the room, knelt down to ask his blessing and the favor of being received into the Church, as did also Mr. Bowles and Mr. Stanton, and the whole community received the holy communion at his hands the following day. Who can doubt that Father Dominic felt now that all his prayers for England, all his disappointments and labors, past and future, were more than repaid by this unlooked for joy? And who will say that such a feeling was mistaken or exaggerated? We conclude with expressing the humble desire, and asking the pious readers of this preface, to pray that God will grant that all Father Dominic's brethren who succeed him may follow the example of his self-devotion to the work to which they are called, and may confidently wait, as he did, for the fruit of their labor from the hand of God, who sooner or later will crown with rewards, beyond their expectations, all who serve Him with fidelity and perseverance.

## LETTER I

To the Rev. Father Dominic of the Mother of God\*

From Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

36, Piazza di Aracoeli, Rome

Nov. 29, 1830

(\* In the original text, the order is "From" and then "To".

Rev. Father,

I cannot find words to express the great consolation I received from reading your very beautiful prayer for our unhappy England. It is a soft plaint, which seems to come from that heavenly Dove, spoken of by St. Paul, which intercedes for us with unspeakable groanings. Oh! if all the English Catholics had the same zeal and the same compassion for their own miserable country; it would be at least permitted to us to hope for its approaching conversion! Let us pray our good Jesus to inspire the same sentiments into their hearts. It appears to me a good sign of the will of God, regarding England, that a priest of the most devoted Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and one too who lives so near the house of our great Apostle St Augustine,\* should entertain such affectionate sentiments towards our country. Oh, I really hope that the time is coming when God will show His infinite mercy on the land of so many saints and so many martyrs! Only fifty years ago, to offer to God the most Holy Sacrifice in England was judged a crime deserving the severest chastisement of the law. But lo! religion is persecuted in France and the French priests have no place of refuge. God, who does all, softens the hearts of the heretics; the British Parliament, with the consent of its august and clement King, repeals this impious law, and the priests of France flee into England. Behold the first step towards the conversion of our country. I owe my conversion to a French priest; and how many others can say the same! At this moment the Catholic faith is daily increasing in England, and I have reason to believe that within fifty or eighty years, this my dear, but unhappy native land will be entirely Catholic.

Let us always pray for this to our dear and divine Jesus, through the intercession of His most holy Mother, and our English Saints, St. Bede, St. Winefride, St. Dunstan, St. Edmund, St. Anselm, St. Thomas, St. Hugh, St. Alban, St. George, patron of England, and all our holy protectors. Rev. Father in Christ, I hope you will always remember me,

Your friend and child in Jesus Christ,

Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

Mr. Phillipps alludes to the Camaldolese Convent of S. Gregory on Monte Celio in Rome, where S. Augustine lived when he was sent to England. It stands close to the Retreat of Saints John and Paul.

## LETTER II



To F. Dominic  
From the Hon. George Spencer  
English College, Rome  
June 14, 1831

Dear Rev. Father,

As this is, I think, the third or fourth letter which I ever undertook to write in Italian, it may be expected that you will find a good number of mistakes in it. Nevertheless, it is my duty to thank you in some way or other for the news you send me of your happy arrival at Lucca, and also for the friendship you testify towards me at present as during the past. Yesterday, I received your letter, which would have made me ashamed of not having yet fulfilled the promise I made you to go and become acquainted with the Father Lector of Saints John and Paul, your successor, had it not been for the interior feeling which told me, that this fault in me did not happen through any forgetfulness of your person, which will be always dear to me, but through a defect in the manner of disposing of my time. I do not wish to excuse myself by saying that I had no time, because there is always time for everything, if we do but employ more skill and promptness in managing our affairs. And here is the proof of it in the present case. As soon as your letter came, I prepared for this duty. Yesterday evening I had the pleasure of being introduced to the new occupant of your room. Although I was disposed to be rather melancholy at seeing no longer there my so much esteemed friend, yet I experienced great pleasure in finding a successor so worthy of him and so deserving of regard in every respect. I thought of what you had said to me about him; and it appeared to me that you had described him exactly. He seems to me to be a person full of piety, prudence, and learning. I should say that his character is more like that of my countrymen than the greater part of Italians, as his manners are more serious and reserved than is ordinarily to be found amongst them. In both characters there are many things to be admired, especially where grace and the Spirit of God holds dominion. We have reason to thank the Lord who lets us see how varied are the perfections of His servants. I received in due time the little prayer for the conversion of England, which was exactly conformable to my wishes. I took it, together with the book of devotion and a relic of Father Paul of the Cross, to the young person for whom I had asked it. The exchange was altogether in her favor. Instead of a prayer book that

was clumsily got up useless, and even hurtful, she was now in possession of one well bound, beautiful and new, and what is more, full of devotion. She begged me to give you her respects and thanks.

With regard to your proposal of my publishing an account of my conversion, it has often occurred to my mind to do so. But I think the proper time for this has not yet arrived. In the first place, I should like to become more perfectly grounded than I am at present in the exact knowledge of the religion which I have embraced, before publishing anything which perhaps might compromise me. Still, if I were commanded by my superiors to do so, I should have no fear in undertaking it with the assistance of God. When I return to England, it is probable that much will be said against me by Protestants; and that not only Catholics, but likewise my own family, and all who wish me well, or take an interest in me, will request me to write an account of my conversion, in order to stop the mouths of those who, by a perversion of facts, will seek to calumniate both me and the religion I profess, my family itself, and all who treat me favorably. If I published anything now, there are many to be found who would do all in their power to counteract its effect and to load me with ridiculous and perhaps calumnious insinuations. What would my family say? See what you have brought upon us and yourself by your indiscreet writings. You see, then, I should prefer to wait until they themselves oblige me to write, to clear myself from aspersions which will bring dishonor on my name and theirs; and then I shall have them on my side, instead of their being against me. In the meantime I wish to give myself up entirely to acquiring more completely the spirit and knowledge of religion, and so adorning my mind and heart with the wisdom and virtues of Christ, without thinking of other people's affairs, unless when a favorable occasion presents itself. Thus do my superiors direct me, and by acting thus I hope God will recompense me with abundant fruit in due time. Notwithstanding this rule I have laid down for myself of remaining tranquil, I find myself led to do a good deal without seeking occasions. Yesterday I received a copy of a letter written by Prince Hohenlohe\* to Miss Letitia Trelawny, which gives me something to do as I will now explain. This Prince, concerning whom I have spoken to you, is famous for the miracles he has wrought in favor of diverse persons who have asked his prayers in corporal maladies especially, and also in the matter of conversion. By means of a family named Millingen who were Protestants, but now are partly converted, Miss Trelawny found an opportunity of writing to the Prince, to beg his prayers for

her own family, and through her great charity towards me she was pleased that mine should partake in the same good, and likewise that of Phillipps. In fact she wrote to him in favor of all, and the Prince replied, with the greatest kindness, that at eight o'clock in the morning he would pray for all these families according to the following order:

On the Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, June 21, for the Trelawny family; on July 20 for that of Spencer; on the 21st for that of Phillipps; and on the 22nd of the same month for that of Millingen. Miss Trelawny begged his prayers also in behalf of Lady Clifford, daughter of the Cardinal, who was then grievously ill; and the Prince says he must pray for her next Sunday, June 19. But God has otherwise ordained. This lady died a month ago, consequently his prayers must avail for the repose of her soul. I give you this information very briefly, not doubting but that we shall have the benefit of your particular prayers at these times. I must now conclude this letter, which I send on the same sheet with one which I write to Miss Trelawny, who will take the trouble of forwarding it to you. Believe me to be, with all the respect and love I am capable of,

Your most devoted servant,  
and I presume to say, brother in Christ,  
George Spencer

\* Prince Hohenlohe was a German nobleman and priest of great piety and virtue. Many years back he used to be applied to from all parts for his prayers, and many well-attested cures were worked by his intercession. He died a holy death about the end of the year 1849. During the latter years of his life he was not much spoken of.

+ Mrs. Millingen was an English lady, who was living at Rome at that time with her daughter Miss Cornelia Millingen. She was a convert and brought up this daughter Catholic. They were intimate friends of Miss Trelawny.

### **LETTER III**

To Mr. A. L. Phillipps  
From Rev. Father Dominic  
L'Angelo di Tramonte, near Lucca  
July 16, 1831

Dear Sir,

As a favorable opportunity presents itself to me by the departure of the Very Rev. Father Vincent, a Dominican, who is about to be sent to England by Sir Harry Trelawny, allow me, my dear Mr. Phillipps, to offer you my sincerest and humblest respects, and beg you at the same time to transmit the enclosed letter to Mr. Ford, the Protestant clergyman, who is well known to you. Sir Harry Trelawny, who is now here at Lucca, has informed me of your happy arrival at Paris; I hope by this time you will have reached England, where, perhaps, you will be able to breathe a more tranquil air. I should like to hear frequently something about your health and about the progress our holy religion makes in that Island, which is never absent from my poor heart. Ah, who will give me the wings of the dove to fly thither?...I hope... Oh, happy day! Oh, happy moment! I rejoice in the hope of one day being able to reach it. O dear England! O beloved nation! When shall I see thee! And when shall I behold thee returned again to the loving bosom of our Holy Mother the Church! Then shall I be able to say, *'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation'* (Lk. 2:29). I hope and wait for the time of the Divine mercies. *'It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of God.'* I am here at Lucca in the role of superior of this new house called dell' Angelo di Tramonte. I am very well in health, very contented, waiting in silence and hope for the time appointed by God. Mr. Spencer has written me a long letter, mentioning amongst other things the days on which Prince Hohenlohe has signified that prayers are to be offered up for you, for Mr. Spencer, and for the Millingen family. These days will be on the twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second of the present month. During them we shall make a triduum, and we hope Sir Harry Trelawny and his daughter will be here. I beg you not to forget me in your prayers, as also to do me the honor of believing me to be irrevocably,

Your devoted humble servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

P.S. Be so kind as to direct Mr. Ford's letter, since I do not know where he is at present.

## LETTER IV

To Rev. Mr. Ford, Protestant Clergyman

From Father Dominic

Ritiro dell' Angelo di Tramonte

July 16, 1831

Allow me, my dear Mr. Ford, to direct to you this humble letter in attestation of the warm affections I bear you, and the sincere desire I have of serving you. I can assure you, from the time I had the honor of making your acquaintance in the domestic garden of our house of Saints John and Paul at Rome, I have never forgotten your person, nor shall I ever hereafter be able to forget it, carrying it, as I do, engraved on my heart. You may then easily conceive what are the ardent wishes, what the prayers, I daily present to the Lord...I hope you have received the two very long letters I sent you. I should be glad to hear something about them, as also I should like to know whether there is anything in them concerning which you have difficulty. These I beg you to state to me with all freedom, and I promise to give you satisfaction, as far as circumstances and my poor talents permit. You may do the same as often as you are in difficulty about any point whatever of the Catholic doctrine. My dear Sir, we live for truth, and not for sophisms; if we seek truth simply, we shall easily find it, and it will free us from our bonds. O my God, O my sweet Redeemer, what are we doing if we do not faithfully follow Thy teaching? Ah, my heart, what dost thou seek if thou dost not seek thy God? My soul, what art thou doing if thou dost not think of thy salvation? Ah! what does it profit me to gain the whole world if at last I lose my soul? My God, grant that no one may be lost; grant that in company with my dear Mr. Ford, I may arrive at the possession of Thee; grant that the whole world may be united in one fold under one shepherd. *'Let them be of one fold and one pastor'* (Jn. 10:16). This, my dear Sir, is the prayer I continually offer up to the throne of the Divine Majesty. May God, of His goodness and through the merits of Christ Jesus, deign to hear me.

Through means of Mr. Spencer, I received your salutations, which were very grateful to me, but it will gratify me still more to see your own handwriting. Whenever you wish to write, the direction is as follows: 'Lucca, per l'Angelo di Tramonte.' I shall wait impatiently for an answer to this. Meanwhile I beg you will do me the honor of believing me to be,

Your most humble, devoted, and obedient servant,  
Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

## LETTER V

To Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps  
From The Rev. Father Dominic  
L'Angelo di Tramonte  
October 19, 1831

Honored Sir,

Yesterday, Sir Harry Trelawny arrived here and presented me your compliments, which were more pleasing to me than you can imagine. I do not know whether you have received another letter which I sent you through that Dominican Father whom Sir Harry Trelawny sent to England. There was likewise enclosed in it a second for Mr. Ford, a Protestant minister with whom I had already treated in Rome on matters of controversy; I have not yet received an answer. I would wish most ardently to get some information concerning this minister, Mr. Ford. Oh! how much I have at heart his eternal salvation! Oh! how much I have at heart the return of that Island to the Catholic faith! If, with my death, I could obtain such a grace, oh, how willingly would I die! Well, I hope, *'in hope against hope (Lam 3:26). It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of God.'*

You complain of my letter being too short, but I did not think I ought to extend it farther, in order to leave room for Miss Trelawny to write on the same sheet. For the rest, oh, how willingly, would I have opened my heart to my dear Mr. Phillipps! Would to God I might have the happiness to see you again and enjoy your sweet conversation; but can I hope? I beg you to tell me what you think yourself on this point. I also beg you will give me some information regarding the state of the Catholic Religion in your Country. Does the course of conversions still continue? are churches founded? are the clergy good and zealous? Etc. Oh, beloved England! *'Who will give me wings to fly, and I will fly?'* You have requested me to say something of what we treated of in Rome, but what can I say? Ever since I left that city, I have been able to learn

but very little regarding our common friends, my dear English gentlemen, who are there. Here I am in this little corner of the earth, occupied about anything but what occupied me in Rome, but still I am content, because this is the most amiable will of our loving God. The Honorable Mr. Spencer has written to me once, but it is now some time since. I believe he is still in Rome. With regard to the other affairs of which we treated in our agreeable conversations, I scarcely know what to say – I would prefer to speak by word of mouth, rather than to write about them. I shall therefore wait the moment when either you will return here, or I shall have the pleasure of coming into that part of the world where you are.

I hear you are about to get translated and published in English that little work which I had the honor of presenting to you when in Rome, entitled: *Il Pianto dell' Inghilterra* (“The Lamentation of England”), and that you intend to add also a preface. I thank you for the honor which you are pleased to confer on my productions, an honor which I am sure they do not merit. If this be your intention, I beg you will add some suitable remarks, and, amongst other things, inform the reader that the largest part, which terminates with these words, ‘*I await to welcome you in the Lord,*’ was written in the Holy Week of 1825; the second part, which is shorter, was written two years later, when the writer was immersed in grief at not seeing even a ray of hope with regard to the state of England, and this is the reason why, in this part, you find expressions which are stronger and more emphatic, expressive of the most profound affliction of the heart.

In it there are some things which may perhaps hurt too much the feelings of our dear departed brethren, especially what regards the intercession of Mary. It would be well to add some suitable notes in these places. You might say, for instance, let not our separated brethren be offended if they hear from the mouth of a Catholic phrases expressive of Catholic sentiments.

The third short part which commences, ‘*O how good is the God of Israel,*’ was written just at the time when I received the intelligence of Catholic emancipation in England. These remarks seem to me necessary, in order to account the better for the diversity of style and expression, which will be observed.

At present I have neither time nor occasion to occupy myself in matters of controversy, nor in the study of the English language. If God is pleased that I should occupy myself in these things, it will be for Him to present me the opportunity and afford me the proper means. You will excuse me if I do not write with my own hand; I am acting in obedience to your commands; for,

if you remember well, you told me, before leaving, that I should cause some one to copy the letters I sent you, in order that you may be able to read them.

I finish this, my letter, by begging ardently to be recommended to the Lord in your holy prayers, and of promising to do the same also for yourself, your family, and for all our beloved England. I beg you to do me the honor to believe me to be, what I always am,

Your most humble and devoted Servant,  
Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

## **LETTER VI**

To the Rev. Father Dominic  
From Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps  
Garendon Park  
Oct 29, 1831

My Dear and Very Rev. Father Dominic, my beloved friend in Jesus Christ,

Several weeks have passed since I received your letter, so interesting and so much desired by me. I should have answered it sooner, if I had not been so engaged in going from one house to another of my friends and relatives, to pay them visits after my long absence in Italy when I was not able to do so.

I hope, Very Rev. Father, you have not thought that I had forgotten your kindness and friendship shown me in the past year when I was at Rome, and had the pleasure of visiting you in your Retreat of Saints John and Paul. Ah! I always remember it and always shall. It is impossible for me to forget those happy conversations I had with your Reverence and those words full of unction and grace, which I heard from your lips. Ah! what beautiful things you told me, nay, I might say, promised me regarding the conversion of our dear England to the holy faith! Of this, namely, of the conversion of England, I can say much. I believe it will one day arrive, and that this day is not far distant; nay, I can assure you that we see every sign that we can desire, that this event, so much desired, is very near.

Surely there is much yet to be done, nay, very much, for the obstacles are not few; but our



most divine Catholic religion makes constant uninterrupted progress; nay, greater and greater progress every day, so that we may be sure that the entire kingdom will, in a short time, return to the Faith.

Your beautiful and devout “*The Lamentation of England*” I have translated into English and published, and I doubt not that the publication of this Tract (*trattato*) will do a deal of good. I read a little of this to one of my friends, a Protestant minister, and he greatly praised it and appeared much edified. I hope, my Dear Father Dominic, that your health is better than it was in Rome. I remember you were suffering there from a fever, but I trust that the air of the vicinity of Lucca has done you much good, and that it will put you into condition one day to come to England to preach and to establish here your holy Congregation of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have received some letters from time to time from our good friends, Sir Harry Trelawny and his daughter, in which they have told me much concerning your new Retreat of L’Angelo, near Lucca, and of your labor among the good people of that neighborhood. I would wish now to give you some information of the state of Catholic affairs in England. This year we have made great progress. Seven or eight new missions have been founded, from which we have received great good and spiritual fruit. All these missions have been established in the district of our Bishop, viz., the Midland District of England. There have been many conversions of Protestants. In the town of Leicester, the metropolis of our county, more than a hundred persons have embraced the Faith this year. And last Sunday our good Bishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to them, and I was very much edified.

Our political affairs go on badly. Of these it will not be so interesting to you to receive news; but it seems to me that even in these things Divine Providence works for the good of the Church and for the extirpation of heresy. We may say that England at this moment stands on the brink of a revolution. All the bonds of society are convulsed and, as it were, broken. In various parts there are secret incendiaries. In some towns insurrections of the people, with the loss of life amongst the inhabitants; it seems to me that the people are raving for the destruction of the Protestant Church, as well as for a reform in the laws and constitutions, so that we may say that England is disorganized by a revolutionary spirit. We who are of the aristocracy fear this spirit very much, a spirit which springs from the pride of human nature and from that fatal science of the world

which so much predominates in England; but at the same time I cannot do otherwise than recognize the hand of God in all these events, and I doubt not but that from these troubles the Lord will bring round the overthrow of heresy and the greater exaltation of the Catholic Church. My very dear friend, I hope you always continue to pray for the conversion of England; much yet remains to be done before our entire conversion, but to the hand of God nothing is difficult. I hope also you continue to pray for me, who am a poor sinner. What a consolation will it be for me if you will have the charity to pray for me! Oh, my friend, pray for me to Jesus in the most holy Sacrament, and to Mary, our most sweet mother! Recommend me, in particular, to the prayers of your young men, who are so edifying and so powerful with the Lord. I can not say what a great consolation it has been for me to receive that letter of filiation to the Order of the Passionists.\* Sometimes it seems to me as if I had for my special protector your venerable Father Paul of the Cross, and I have had tokens by no means equivocal of his goodness and his powerful intercession. But, Oh! when will England be converted? Ah when? *'May Your kingdom come.'* I wish to live for nothing else but for the conversion of England. Nothing else but the extension of the kingdom of Christ ought to occupy the heart of a Christian. What else but this have we promised in our baptism, when we made a vow to renounce the devil and to follow the standard of our Redeemer? What else do we intend but this as often as we sign ourselves with the sign of the most holy Cross? Such is my desire, to spend all my life and to make every effort for the conversion of England. But who am I that I should form this desire! I who am so great a sinner and unworthy altogether of doing anything for God. To be employed in the services of such a Lord is really too great an honor for me. But the weaker I am, the greater will be His glory. Oh! then pray for me...I shall be impatient to receive accounts of you, so that I hope you will have the goodness to write me another letter (longer than the former) and at your earliest convenience. The letter to Mr. Ford, which you enclosed in the one directed to me, I have not sent because I do not know where he is.

When you write to Mr. Spencer, it will be easy to find his address. I am now at the end of my paper.

Very Rev. Father, I humbly ask your blessing and your prayers once more; in the meantime, with every sentiment of Christian friendship, believe me always to be,

Yours most affectionately in Christ and Mary,

## Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

\*The General of the Passionists at this time, from whom Mr. Phillipps received the patent as a benefactor of the Congregation, which he calls his letter of filiation, was Father Antony of St. Joseph, who received the habit in 1787. He was elected General in 1827, and held the office twelve years. He died in 1849 in the office of first Consultor General. The name of benefactor in the sense here meant, is given to certain friends of the Congregation, of whom there will be one, sometimes two, in the principal towns of Italy, which these religious are used to visit. They on their part are ready to give them hospitality and to perform for them such good offices as they are in need of; being admitted, in return, to a participation in the spiritual goods of the Congregation.

### LETTER VII

To Father Dominic

From the Honorable and Reverend George Spencer

English College, Rome

Dec. 29, 1831

My very dear Father Dominic,

I have received your second letter, and I lose no time in commencing a reply, although this being the Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, the protector of our college, we are so much occupied, that I shall not be able to finish it at once. Immediately on receiving your first letter about Mr. Ford, I wrote to him, directing my letter at once to himself, but either through my fault, or the fault of the post, it has not reached its destination. I hope, however, that this blunder will not have frustrated your charitable intention regarding him, for in writing to Mr. Phillipps three weeks ago, I told him what you had requested of me on his account, and suggested that he also should write. It seems to me that God may be pleased to make use of that dear friend of ours to bring to its completion the undertaking you have begun with so much zeal, that of converting Mr. Ford. I begged Mr. Phillipps to avail himself of this occasion to open a correspondence with Mr. Ford, from which good might result. I sent to Mr. Ford a miniature which he had ordered here, through Mr. Sisk of this college, who accompanied Mr. Phillipps to England. I sent him your papers by another hand, that is, by an English lady, and waited long before being informed that he had received either.

At the request of the painter, who feared he had lost his labor, I wrote to Mr. Ford in the month of November, and some days ago I received his reply. I here translate and send you what he says of your writings. “The reason,” he says, “why I delayed so long a time acknowledging the receipt of your parcel is that I wished at the same time to send in full my opinion concerning the MSS., but, to tell the truth, they are so long, and I am at present so much occupied, that I have not been able yet to read more than the half. They contain a series of arguments which require much reflection, and it seems to me better to defer my judgment than to speak inconsiderately on an affair of such importance. When you write to Father Dominic to Lucca, present him my respects, assuring him that I am always full of love and esteem for him, and tell him that his labors for my good will not be lost, if he will accept the serious attention with which I shall treat his pious and talented papers as some compensation for his trouble.”

Although I cannot translate his words elegantly, you will understand from this sentence, as I send it, the state of our friend. As he has under his care a parish in the town of Exeter, I believe he must be very much occupied, and for this reason does not set himself with more earnestness to study the great questions of Catholic truth.

What we have to do is constantly to pray to God that He would give him more grace to see the importance of it, but it seems to me that we must have patience before we see the fulfilment of our desires for England. Conversions go on always increasing. I have heard of the conversion of a nobleman of the House of Lords, and of a noble lady, who, they say, are very zealous. Here, in Rome, two servants have been converted lately, but the greater part remain insensible. For us this is an exercise of patience; we must go on working thus till God vouchsafes to bless our labors.

Regarding the cardinalate, the report of which the Protestant gentleman has spoken at Lucca has not yet reached my ears. I do not believe the Holy Father has any thoughts of it, as I have not even been presented to him since he was made Pope, excepting in company with the whole college when he was in the neighborhood of Monte Porzio, on which occasion he did not say one word to me in particular. I can assure you, it would give me the greatest displeasure. My prayer is that God would grant me a life like that of His Son and the apostles, in poverty and tribulations for the Gospel. I must submit if it be his will to raise me to any high worldly dignity, but it would be to me the same as to say that I am unworthy of the heavenly state which I long for upon earth.

Jesus Christ sent the apostles in poverty. St. Francis Xavier, St. Dominic, and so many other great missionaries preached in poverty, and I wish to do the same if it be the will of God.

Recommending myself to your constant prayers,

I remain,

Yours most sincerely,

George Spencer

## LETTER VIII

To Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

From the Reverend Father Dominic

L'Angelo di Tramonte

Jan. 15, 1832

J.X.P.

Dear Sir,

A little after I had posted the last humble letter, which I addressed to you, I had the honor of receiving your most esteemed one, dated Oct. 29th. You cannot easily imagine what sweet consolation it brought to my heart. In it your very person seemed delineated. I read the real sentiments of your truly Christian heart. How dear also to me was the happy news with which you favored me, concerning the progress of the Catholic religion in your country! Ah, yes! I hope to see all England not only Catholic, but holy, as it once was. The Divine Goodness will vouchsafe to overcome all the obstacles that intervene; *'the crooked way will go straight, and the rough ways smooth'* (Lk. 3:5).

With regard to what you write about Mr. Ford, I wrote immediately to Mr. Spencer, who answered that the place where this gentleman lives is Exeter, and that it is sufficient to direct as follows: Rev. James Ford, Exeter. He has there the care of souls in a parish. He wrote to Mr. Spencer, who had the kindness to translate a passage of his letter where he makes mention of me. I will repeat it just as Mr. Spencer translated it. "The reason," he says, "why I have so long delayed to inform you of my having received your parcel is this, because I wished at the same

time to give you in full my opinion of the MSS., but, to say the truth, they are so long, and I am at present so occupied in various things, that hitherto I have not been able to read more than half. They contain a series of arguments which require much reflection, and it appears to me better to defer my judgment than speak inconsiderately on so important an affair. When you write to Father Dominic at Lucca, give him my compliments, assuring him that I am ever full of respect and love for him; and tell him that his labors for my good shall not be lost, if the careful attention with which I shall peruse his pious and talented writings will serve as some kind of return to him.” So far the aforesaid minister, from whose words it may be argued that he is not altogether alien from the truth, but rather has need of a strong grace to touch his heart and make him apprehend the importance of the affair, nothing less than his eternal salvation being concerned therein. “It belongs to us,” adds Mr. Spencer, “to pray God to grant him more grace to see the importance of it.” “It appears to me,” continues the same, “that God perhaps wishes to make use of our dear friend (Mr. Phillipps) to bring to a conclusion the enterprise you commenced with so much zeal of converting Mr. Ford.” I say the same, my very dear Mr. Phillipps. It seems to me, also, that God wishes to make use of you to bring to our holy faith Ford the master, as He made use of you to bring to it Spencer the disciple. I shall not fail to get prayers offered up to God for this end. You ought to be engaged in the field of battle, and I hope that finally we shall have the victory. Oh, what a consolation it would be to me to hear that Mr. Ford has become a Catholic! I know not what more agreeable thing could befall me, except it were the conversion of all England. Oh, happy day, when wilt thou arrive? Oh, moment the sole expectation of which is enough to fill my heart with a sweet delight! Oh, delay, how sad thou art to me! *‘How long shall I cry out through the day, and you will not listen? Will you be angry forever, Lord?’* (Ps. 79:5) – No, no! I hope, I hope, I hope... *‘I await your salvation, Lord.’*

I confess, my dear Sir, that I cannot touch this subject without feeling my heart moved. Ah, England, England! How long, how long? *‘Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged!’* (Ps. 119:5) Compassionate my folly; I shall never die content until I see England again returned to that mother from whom she was taken away four centuries ago. One thing I hope, and it is this, that dear Mr. Ford is one day to be one of the strongest supports of your new-born Church. Ah, I could go on without ever finishing, but I must needs finish.

This day, the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Mr. Spencer begins in Rome his

apostolic ministry; today he makes his first sermon to the Roman people in the Church of the English. Oh, what a fortunate commencement! Certainly that ought to be salutary which commences in the name of the Savior. Oh, how great are my expectations! God, without doubt, has not shed so many graces on that soul to serve for his own profit alone; I rather believe that He has done it in order that he might carry the holy name of Jesus ‘coram regibus, et gentibus, et filiis Israel.’ Most sweet name of Jesus, be thou in his mouth and in that of my dear Mr. Phillipps, as oil poured out, which may softly and efficaciously penetrate the hardest marble, and so also may it be one day in the mouth of Mr. Ford. I hope, I hope...

I am very well in health, amidst a people of true followers of Jesus Christ, where it appears to me God is served in spirit and truth. I place great confidence in the prayers of these good Christians, whom I endeavor to interest in behalf of our dear England.

A few days ago I received a visit from Miss Trelawny, while staying in a village where I was giving my first mission.\* Within a few days I hope to see her again, together with the baronet, her father. What excellent people! I conclude, because I think I have fatigued you enough. When shall I be able to see you again? Tell me something about it. If you think proper to honor me frequently with your letters, be certain you will do me one of the most agreeable things in the world. Ah, if you could give me in your answer a favorable account of Mr. Ford! I hope...

Adieu, my dear Sir, I shall never forget a person so dear to me as yourself, of whom I am, and shall ever be, invariably and constantly,

The most devoted, humble, and obedient servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

\* The village in which Father Dominic gave his first mission was in Pieve di S. Michele di Moriano, Diocese of Lucca. This mission began on the 27th December, 1831, and lasted twelve days. His companions therein were Padre Bernardo della Vergine Addolorata and P. Pio del Nomedì Maria, who is now first Consultor General. The employment of Father Dominic was that of catechist, which he fulfilled with the greatest diligence. The mission was attended with much fruit.

Before this mission Father Dominic had been to give a Retreat to the clergy of Camajora, in the same Diocese of Lucca, together with Padre Antonio di S. Giacomo, actual Provost General. It lasted nine days and succeeded well. On the 28th of March, 1832, he went to the city of Pisa, together with F. Bernardo, to give a Retreat to the ecclesiastics about to be ordained. April 8th, 1832, he proceeded to Lucca itself to give a Retreat there in the hospital of the Invalids. It lasted ten days and afforded great comfort and satisfaction to the poor inmates. August 26th, of the

did a great deal of good, and the parish priest at their departure said, amongst other things, "I never could have believed that so much good could be effected in so short a time."

## **LETTER IX**

To Father Dominic of the Mother of God

From the Hon. and. Rev. George Spencer

English College, Rome

April 7, 1832

My dear Father Dominic,

It is fifteen days since I received your letter, and I do not know whether you have yet heard anything in reply on my part. The reason of my not having written to you at first in person was, that I have been under the hands of the physician, on account of a spitting of blood which came on, and on account of which they put me in bed for twelve days, without allowing me to write, or read, or speak, or eat, or move, more than was absolutely necessary. I felt no pain or bodily sickness, but when a blood vessel, though small, is broken in the lungs, great care must be taken for fear of the consequences. Thanks be to God, these days of perfect rest have turned out well with me. I am now up again and feel nothing but an extreme weakness, which naturally follows from privation of one's ordinary food and so many days passed in bed.

I hope the sickness has happened to me not unto death, nor to deprive me of that strength with which I hoped to serve God in His vineyard, but for His own greater glory, this being a much more effectual admonition than all that can be gained from words or books, to make me see my own perfect nothingness without the continual support of the Divine arm. I do nothing else but pray God, and I beg you also to unite with me in this prayer, that the Lord may give me true humility. Then I am sure I shall be more and more strengthened for all the works to which He shall call me in His service. While I lay under this sickness for the first three or four days, before I could tell what turn the thing would take, I saw clearly how wretchedly poor were my health and my strength. I hope in God never to forget the lesson. There was never any imminent danger, but only a fear that, if the complaint was not presently cured, a dangerous affection of the lungs might ensue. Now they give me good nourishment, and I have nothing else to do than



regain my strength, which I hope to do before long, as I have suffered nothing in health, and the rupture of the blood vessel appears to have been a thing purely accidental.

When I received your letter I sent it to Miss Trelawny, begging her to write a proper answer, as she knew as well as myself the probability of my ordination, etc. I wrote myself to P. Develaschi the information which he will have communicated to you about the Church, which the bishop has assigned me in England, but I told him nothing definite about my approaching ordination. It is true I hoped, the news of my illness in England might probably lead to my return to my native country within a short time, but when I spoke to the rector, he said he did not think of my being ordained till Christmas, and that I should return to England towards the Easter of 1833. I cannot tell whether my illness will make my superiors in England think that the climate of Rome does not suit me, and that I ought to return immediately to be cured. I myself do not attribute this attack to the air of Rome, nor do I see why I should return for this cause, but perhaps God intends in this manner to incline the will of my superiors, and certainly I shall return Him thanks, whatever way He may choose to bring me back amongst my brethren.

I have not had any letters directly from Phillipps, but I have heard news of him, that he is well, and that religion progresses in his neighborhood. Everything conspires to give us hope that the light is about to shine over England, but the moment is not arrived. This pestilence which is so grievous in London, and other large towns of England, will, it appears, produce great spiritual good, and, we hope, lead to penitence and amendment, not only Protestants, but also Catholics.

Recommending myself again to your prayers, recommending likewise our college, and the whole English Church,

I remain,

Your most attached friend and servant,

George Spencer

## **LETTER X**

To Father Dominic of the Mother Of God

From the Same Mr. Spencer

English College, Rome

May 21, 1832

Dear Father Dominic,

I am in Retreat, waiting for my ordination, but I cannot dispense myself from the duty of giving you notice of the day and place appointed for this ceremony, and for my first Mass, that I may have the advantage of your prayers, as you promised me. I have also to thank you for your two letters, and for the very great concern you have always shown for my temporal and spiritual welfare.

In reply to your invitation to L'Angelo\* I need only relate the circumstances in which I find myself. Ten days ago I received orders from my bishop, Dr. Walsh, to proceed to England without delay. When that letter was placed in my hands, I was at Fiumicino with our rector. The bishop already knew the circumstances of my illness and my partial recovery, and simply on account of my health had resolved to hasten my return to my native country. You know the value and security of obedience and will agree with me, that I ought not to doubt of anything.

As it belonged to the rector to determine the day of my departure and the mode of traveling, he thought proper that immediately after my ordination I should proceed by sea. The first festival day that presented itself for the ordination was that of St. Philip Neri. Judge, then, what was my joy when, after that day had been fixed upon, I discovered that it was also the Feast of St. Augustine, the first Apostle of England, sent by St. Gregory. Moreover, the rector who gave me this news, had, without being asked by me, thought of requesting the cardinal vicar (which request was in fact granted) to perform the ceremony in the Church of St. Gregory, on the Celian Hill, the very place from which St. Augustine took his departure for England. It seems to me that Providence wishes to give me some good omen. It is enough if I have faith and humility. The rector intends also to present me on that day to the Holy Father to receive a blessing, which we hope may be in some way efficacious, like that of his great predecessor.

With regard to the visit to the Retreat dell' Angelo, which you propose to me, how great a pleasure would it be to me to pass days and months in your society, and under your direction, but it appears God does not choose it at present. May His holy will be done. I have to return to England without our being able to see each other first; let us content ourselves with the hope of beholding one another for eternity in heaven. It is better for us that He should not grant us in this

world all the consolations we desire. If you feel any regret at my inability to visit your house, you may console yourself, and even rejoice for my sake, that my health is such that my superiors think me able to return to my country, if not as a missionary, at least according to my ability, to do something for the cause of God. Nothing need be apprehended from the voyage because God, who calls me, can give me the strength necessary to correspond with His holy call. I do not doubt, therefore, to find myself safely in England in two or three months, and if God is pleased to preserve me from accidents until my arrival there, may His holy will be praised for ever. In fine, I recommend myself again to your prayers, and beg you to believe me always,

Your most devoted friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

G. Spencer

P.S. Mr. James Ford has lately written to me, and, as always, speaks of you with expressions of sincere affection.

\*Father Dominic, having heard of Mr. Spencer's illness, invited him to the Retreat of L'Angelo, in Tramonte, near the city of Lucca, the metropolis of the small duchy, that by the benefit of that soft and temperate climate he might more easily be restored to health.

+ The rector of the English College at Rome, during all the time that Mr. Spencer remained there, was Dr. Wiseman, now Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

## **LETTER XI**

To Father Dominic of the Mother of God

From the Same Mr. Spencer

Casa Saladini Arsina, Lucca

June 4, 1832

Dear Father Dominic,

I need not explain by letter how I was detained in Leghorn about ten days, waiting the arrival of the steamboat to carry me to Marseilles. The interesting part is that Providence has thus

procured me the unexpected pleasure of passing some time with my dear friends in this house, and also of visiting L'Angelo before going to England. On Saturday afternoon I came to Lucca. Yesterday, after having said Mass at the altar of the Holy Face of our Lord in the Cathedral, I made my way hither. The weather being unfavorable, and being still obliged to take great care of my health, though, thanks be to God, I am greatly recovered, I could not undertake to make an excursion today, but tomorrow, please God, I will come to see you at L'Angelo, and by the advice of Miss Trelawny, I send this letter today to give you notice of my visit. I shall leave this place in a light carriage of the country, and hope to start at half-past six a.m., after having said Mass and taken collation. Miss Trelawny tells me I shall be able to reach L'Angelo at about half-past nine. What I propose to myself is to pass Tuesday night with you and your community and to return to Arsina after dinner on Wednesday. It is probable that Sir Harry Trelawny and his daughter will accompany me as far as Pisa on my return to Leghorn; in this case we shall leave this place very early on Thursday, in order that I may say Mass again in the cathedral of Lucca; we shall remain in Lucca a few hours to see the holy places, and then I shall return to Leghorn, and my dear companions will retrace their steps, unless Miss Trelawny should be disposed to accompany me as far as Leghorn, that we may together visit the Madonna di Montenero. Thus I tell you my plans so that, if you have any suggestion to make for their improvement, I may be able to avail myself of it. What pleasure do I promise myself in seeing you once again; but it is not the pleasure which I seek, and I wish you to think of nothing but of preparing me better, by your advice and discourse, for worthily accomplishing the great work which God has given me to do. What need has a newly-ordained priest of support, that he may with due devotion and affection perform the holy functions with which he is charged. Let us, therefore, pray that this visit to L'Angelo may be for my spiritual good and for our mutual consolation. If the weather should be bad tomorrow morning, do not expect me; I must submit to the will of God and not hazard catching cold. But I trust the weather will clear up and that nothing will interfere with my plan.

Believe me, your most devoted friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

G. Spencer

## LETTER XII

To Mr. Phillipps

From Father Dominic

L'Angelo di Tramonte, Lucca

June 6, 1832

Dear Sir,

I have written you two letters since the one I sent by the Irish Dominican priest, but I have heard no account of either. They must have been lost by the way, or for want of a proper direction they missed their destination. I have received an answer, however, to that which was sent by the aforesaid priest, and also to the one I wrote in union with Sir Harry Trelawny and his daughter. You cannot easily conceive what consolation your valuable one of the 19th of October, 1831, afforded me. I could not contain myself for joy while reading it, and seeing therein described the dispositions of your heart as well as learning the happy progress of our holy Catholic religion in your Island.

No less was my consolation in seeing again, quite unexpectedly and when I was least thinking of it, our dear Mr. Spencer, who, by a loving disposition of our good God, came here on occasion of his journey to England. I received intelligence of his sickness with extreme sorrow. I likewise heard of his ordination, which was accompanied with many circumstances which seem all to announce the great things God intends to work by his means, and which you may learn from his own mouth. I had written to him, begging him to visit us here for some time, in order to reestablish his health by a change of air, but he had answered me that this was impossible since, immediately after being ordained priest, he had to go to England by sea. I had placed my soul in peace, adored the Divine dispositions, and offered to God a sacrifice of the hope of seeing him again, at least for the present, when, the other day, I received a letter from him, informing me that he was here with the Trelawnys. You may imagine the joy I felt; I set out from home immediately and went to visit him. Yesterday I had the happiness of conducting him to our house, dell'Angelo, where he is now staying till tomorrow. I thought proper to profit by this convenient opportunity of sending you a letter, that I might have the sweet consolation of again seeing your handwriting, and hearing accounts of yourself and of the progress of religion in that

kingdom which has interested me so much for more than eighteen years.

I beg you, therefore, to do me the great favor of communicating to me some intelligence concerning yourself and our dear England. What, then, is my dear Mr. Phillipps about? I believe his heart is lighted up with a holy flame, as that of the apostles on the approaching Pentecost. Oh, may this blessed fire inflame it to such a degree as to enable it to consume, by its ardor, the iniquities of the English people. May it burn with holy love and ascend to the loftiest height of Christian perfection. This is my prayer for you during these days. I beg you also to pray for me, that God may convert me entirely to Himself and make me a fit instrument to do something for His glory. Ah! my sins and my want of correspondence with His Divine grace render me unworthy of receiving more and incapable of doing any good. Still I hope in His Divine Mercy.

What is the state of our beloved England? I have heard unfavorable news regarding its political condition, and this has caused me extreme affliction; but God is powerful enough to draw good even from evil. And I seem to behold amidst all these troubles certain rays that announce the light which will in a short time be spread throughout those regions. Ah, my God, “I enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” Grant, O Lord, that the blind may open their eyes to behold the light of Thy truth. May the Divine light dissipate the fearful darkness which libertinism and heresy have spread over those countries. *‘The islands await you and will call upon your name. Lord, pardon your people, and do not abandon your name in shame.’* Oh, how often do I repeat these things from my heart to the Lord for the universal Church and for England in particular! May His Divine Majesty vouchsafe to hear my voice through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen, amen, amen! I endeavor to interest in this matter all the pious souls I happen to converse with, and certainly in this Duchy of Lucca, there are a good number, and I hope their prayers will be heard.

I have been here for this year back, in quality of superior of our house, in which we have opened a novitiate. At present there are twelve novices, who give good hopes. They assemble every day in a chapel, over the altar of which hangs the devout picture you were so kind as to leave expressly to the Passionist novices for the purpose of interesting them for England. I trust they will not fail to present their petitions to God, night and day, for that kingdom. I continue to be busy in preaching, and endeavor as well as I can to lead souls to God. But I can do very little. I know, however, that God can do all things, and I shall be able to do all in Him, *‘I can do all*

*things in Him who strengthens me*' (Phil. 4:13). How willingly would I go to England along with dear Mr. Spencer! But the time destined by the Divine Mercy for this is not yet arrived. I hope, however, that it will arrive. I hope one day to see with my own eyes that kingdom which for so many years I have borne engraved on my heart. *'I know in whom I have believed, and I am certain'* (II Tim. 1:12). Oh, what a sweet consolation for me is the thought of being able to embrace, again, my dear Mr. Phillipps! O wished for time! O happy day, when wilt thou arrive? Ah, how every hour of delay appears to me a thousand years. I beg you to give me some good hopes on this head. I shall remain impatiently looking for your answer, and waiting at the same time for the happy moment wherein I shall see you again, either here in Italy or (what I should still more desire) in England. May God vouchsafe to comfort me; may God also be merciful to us both, that so we may meet together in the company of all our dear Englishmen above in heaven to praise and bless the Divine Majesty throughout all ages. Amen.

I am, my dear Sir,  
and will ever be, your most humble,  
most devoted, and obedient servant in Christ,  
Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

### **LETTER XIII**

To the Rev. James Ford

From Father Dominic of the Mother of God

L'Angelo

June 6, 1832

J.X.P.

How is my dear Mr. Ford? How desirous I am to hear from him! It is now some months since I wrote to him, sending my letter under cover to Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps, but I have had no reply. I have, however, had the consolation of receiving your obliging compliments through Mr. Spencer, and yesterday he read to me that part of the letter which you last addressed to him, in which you made mention of me. I assure you, my heart was filled with an inexpressible joy on

hearing the good dispositions of your heart and your zeal for our holy religion. Oh, how did those Christian words you used pierce my heart, *‘These things are in my heart always, in my mouth frequently; this is my better wisdom: to know Jesus and him crucified!’* Ah, then, my dearest friend, you seek only our Lord Jesus Christ; if it be so, you must infallibly find Him. *‘Everyone who seeks finds’* (Mt. 7:8). This is the promise of the very Truth itself. But, dear Sir, if you wish with certainty to find Jesus, seek Him not amidst the ties of flesh and blood. Whilst the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph sought Him amongst their kinsfolk they found Him not; then only did they find Him when they turned to the holy temple of God. *‘They found him in the temple’* (Lk. 2:46). Thus it is, thus it is, my dear friend, flesh and blood not only cannot conduct us to Jesus, but they are obstacles to our finding Him. *‘Go out from your land and away from your relations,’* was said to Abraham, *‘and go to the land I will show you’* (Gen. 12:1). *‘Hear, O daughter, says the Lord to our souls, hear, O daughter, and incline thine ear, forget also thine own country and the house of thy father’* (Ps. 45:10). *‘The enemies of a man are his family,’* are the words of the same, our Lord Jesus Christ. If, then, my dear Sir, you would find Jesus, go to His holy temple, to that temple which was built by Himself and founded on a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. This is that ark which alone can save us from perishing in the waters of the deluge; this is that pillar and ground of the truth; this is that supreme tribunal to which we must appeal. *‘There, everyone who asks, receives; who seeks, finds; and who knocks, it is opened’* (Mt. 7:8). But out of it all search is useless. But, I think I hear you say, here is the great question, where are we to find this Church? Ah, dear Sir, it is not difficult to one who seeks with a true desire of finding it. It is set on a very high mountain. In consequence it is visible to all; it can be found by all who seek for it with a true heart. In the writings which I have had the honor to send you, there are some things which may assist you in this enquiry. But you say that you have not yet had time to consider them with due care. Yet, my dearest Sir, I hope you will easily find time, if you reflect that our most important affair is that of our salvation. What will it profit us to think of others if we neglect ourselves? I know that you labor much for the benefit of many erring souls, that you seek to bring them back to the right path, but I would not that your own soul should suffer. Ah, no, my dear Sir, our own salvation should be our first object, and then that of others.

Whenever there may be difficulties in these writings, or in whatever other way obstacles may



arise, I pray, I conjure you, by the love you bear to our Lord Jesus Christ, not to be held back by them, but to propose these difficulties, and if you will honor me so far as to propose them to me, I will endeavor, to the best of my ability, aided by the Divine grace, to satisfy you. Do not fear that I shall be wearied or annoyed; no, dear Sir, may God grant that I may be enabled to be of any service to you. How willingly would I give my very life for this end, if it were necessary. I know that you represent to Mr. Spencer the disagreement of our theologians on the dogma of justification, as an obstacle, but the disagreements which there may be on this matter certainly do not regard the substance of the dogma. They only regard the manner of explaining it, which, in truth, is of but little importance, provided all be agreed, as they are, on the dogma itself, and all are disposed to submit their judgment to the infallible judgment of the Holy Catholic Church. And, supposing any one of them not to be so disposed, he, from that moment, ceases to be a Catholic. If, then, you have upon this, or on any other points, special difficulties, I again pray you to propose them with your wonted candor, and I, in simplicity and good faith, will endeavor to satisfy you. Oh, how easy it is to find the truth if we proceed thus! Dear Sir, I abhor all those questions and disputes which proceed not from a heart sincere and loving the truth. We are not born to dispute, but, truly, to save our souls. And this should be our only concern. *‘What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul?’* (Mk. 8:36) I have never forgotten you from the time when I had the honor to make your acquaintance, and you may imagine how heartily I recommend you to the Divine Goodness.

Yesterday, I had the consolation to see here in this our house, dell’ Angelo, our friend Mr. George Spencer, who is still with us till tomorrow, when he is to depart for England, whither he will bear with him the half of my heart, if not indeed the whole; since if the heart is more where it loves than where it lives, I may venture to say, that, loving England so tenderly as I do, my heart is more there than in Italy or in Lucca. May God vouchsafe to draw to Himself all the hearts of the children of Adam. Amen.

By a most happy and unexpected concurrence of circumstances, there happens to be also in this house Don Gaetano Nuti, the priest from Pisa, with whom you had so much conversation during your stay in that city. He offers up unceasingly to the throne of the Divine Mercy fervent supplications in your behalf, and I hope his prayers will be heard through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you should think proper to honor me with an answer, the address is ‘Al P. Domenico Superiore, Passionista, Lucca, per l’Angelo di Tramonte.’ You may write in English if you choose, because I am able to understand that language, though I am not able to write or speak it for want of practice. I shall, therefore, reply in Italian, a language which you understand perfectly.

I beg you to favor me with your address, that my letters may reach you with security. I hope you will remember me, a poor sinner, full of miseries and iniquities, and will pray to the Lord for me, as I can assure you that I shall never forget you, hoping one day to embrace you again in this life, and to live eternally with you in heaven to praise and bless the Divine mercies for ever. Amen.

I am, my dear Rev. Sir, and will for ever invariably be,  
Your most humble, most devoted,  
and most obedient servant in Christ,  
Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

#### **LETTER XIV**

To Father Dominic

From Mr. Phillipps

Garendon Park

July 27, 1832

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

My very dear and beloved friend F. Dominic.

I had yesterday the great consolation of receiving your very sweet and amiable letter, which you have had the kindness to write to me by means of our dear friend, the Rev. Mr. Spencer. You will have great pleasure in hearing that this good and noble priest is now in England. You will derive no less pleasure from the consoling news of the great improvement in his health. I trust confidently in the Divine Goodness that within a little it will be completely reestablished. Mr. Spencer is now with his noble father, Lord Spencer, for the first time since his happy conversion to the holy faith. I hope he will make some impression on the heart of his father; he will at least

have a very powerful, nay an all-powerful, means in the holy and divine Sacrifice of the altar. He writes to me that during his journey from Italy to England, he did not fail one single day to approach the Divine Altar, and that all his consolation is placed in this treasure of the Holy Mass. Oh, how powerful is the hand of the Lord! and with what sweetness and facility does He change the hearts of men! I cannot think of the conversion of Mr. Spencer without the greatest admiration for the goodness of our most amiable Jesus. Oh! what a thought! only three years ago this our friend was a Protestant minister of this heretical Church of England, and now he is a zealous and most pious Catholic priest! This is truly the work of the same hand that in past ages stopped St. Paul in the course of his opposition to the holy Church of God. It appears also to me that God looks for something great from him; indeed I have no doubt of it. And here, my dear Father Dominic, is another proof that the Lord has heard the prayers which you have not ceased to pour forth these eighteen years in behalf of poor England. I have received safely all your other most sweet letters, and am sorry that I did not answer them sooner; I beg your pardon and hope to write more regularly for the future. Yours are to me a truly heavenly consolation and give me great courage in the way of the Lord; I beg you for the love of God to give me often these favors; above all, I pray you to tell me all your ideas regarding the conversion of England; it will afford me real edification; especially tell me all you learn from God in holy prayer respecting this matter, or whatever else is connected with England. I remember well all you told me in the holy city of Rome, and this remembrance serves at once for a consolation and encouragement to me, and not only to me but also to many other good priests and servants of God here in England. What you told me of that vision of the Venerable Father Paul of the Cross, in which he saw so many delightful things in England, and amongst the rest the foundation in this kingdom of the Order of Passionists. This is a most consoling thing and gives us assurance that the time of the Divine Mercy is not far distant. I have related this vision of the Ven. Father to many, both priests and laics in England, and the relation has given them great courage and a secure confidence that all will go well. I will tell you, my dear Father in Jesus Christ, a thing I heard only last Sunday. In this county of Leicester, at a distance of about twenty miles from Garendon, there is a monastery of Dominican Friars. It is new, and the only one in England. Well, in the garden of this monastery there lives a holy man, full of pious simplicity, who acts as gardener. This man often says, "The conversion of England is at hand. The young priests of England will see that

happy day, and will say Mass in the old churches, which for three centuries have been in the hands of heretics!” What a beautiful prediction! How is it possible that God should permit so many of His servants to be in such error? I cannot believe it, but on the contrary am full of hope and confidence. On the other hand, the idea of the approaching conversion of England does not rest solely on the prophecies and visions of servants of God. Even daily occurrences give us reason to hope for it. In every part of England new missions are opened; the Catholic bishops have begun no less than five during the two past months of May and June. What is more, there are numerous conversions every day. But some one will say: if you have no other signs, the epoch for the conversion of all England is distant indeed. But I reply: no, no, it is not so distant as you imagine; what we see now is the dawn of the clear day that begins to open on this dark kingdom. But the interval between the dawn and the rising of the sun is not great; so it will be with England, according to my opinion. Ah, my dear and beloved Father Dominic, I often think of you, and I cannot express how sweet and consoling is the remembrance of you and of all the kindness you have shown me. I am very much pleased to hear that you have recommended England to the prayers of so many good people in Lucca, and that your novices pray for it before that picture of the Blessed Virgin. Let them pray also for me, a most miserable sinner, that Jesus may grant me the grace of serving Him with my whole heart, and of suffering a thousand deaths rather than offend Him by one single mortal sin. Let them pray likewise for me to my beloved Mother Mary, through whose patronage and protection I hope to gain my eternal salvation. And you, my dear Father Dominic, pray for me and remember me in the holy Sacrifice of the Altar. I shall never fail to unite my poor prayers to yours, and especially the Office of our Lady, which I say every day. I have a small picture of Ven. Paul of the Cross and do not fail to recommend myself every day to his prayers and protection. From this practice I derive great consolation because, by reason of that paper of filiation you gave me in Rome, I consider him as my father and protector. That Passionist heart you gave me now hangs over my bed and serves as a remembrance of you and of the Passionists. The day will come, I have no doubt, wherein you, my dear Father Dominic, will come here into England to found the Order of Passionists, and I hope to assist you in this holy enterprise, if my sins do not render me unworthy. But pray for me; I cannot tell you how much the enemy of souls makes me suffer on this head; I entreat you to offer up your holy prayers for me. Jesus and Mary will reward you for it. I beg you to

recommend me to your angelic novices, that they may pray for me to the Queen of Angels; I hope they also will come some day into England. I have translated your *Lament for England* into English and had it printed. I assure you great edification has been the result,

Adieu my dear Father Dominic,  
ever yours most affectionately in Jesus,  
Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

## LETTER XV

To Ambrose L. Phillipps, Esq.

From Rev. F. Dominic

Lucca, L'Angelo di Tramonte

August 17, 1832

J.X.P.

My very dear Mr. Phillipps,

May Jesus and Mary reign always in our hearts.

I could not easily express the overflow of joy which I experience at the sight of your most beloved handwriting; you may, however, imagine it by what, as you tell me, you feel at the sight of mine. "*Judge by what you yourself experience.*" I am going to write to you again in obedience to your injunction, without which I should not have taken the liberty to do so for fear of being too troublesome.

Not being content with enjoying your most amiable letter all myself, I no sooner had received it than I read it to all our religious in this house. Then I read it also to the novices, who, as one might say, were beside themselves for the exceeding consolation it gave them. I have not the least doubt that the religious, no less than the novices, will continually pray to the Divine Majesty for you and for our dear England, and I hope that God will vouchsafe favorably to hear the prayers of these good souls. I endeavor to interest in the cause, as far as I am able, persons of both sexes and of every class, specially when I meet with good Christians. I shall have engaged about a thousand to pray for England. I hardly ever write to anyone without imploring of him to pray for England, but especially when I write to our religious and our nuns of the Passion. All

tell me that they do it and will do it perpetually for the time to come. This gives me great consolation and always increases my hopes of the return of that kingdom to the Holy Catholic Faith. In regard to your wish to know more particularly what I think of England, I can only assure you that for eighteen years till now I have always entertained the most lively confidence in the recovery of that kingdom and never lost it, even during the time when there did not appear a ray of hope; as you may infer from that prayer entitled the Lamentation of England, which I wrote precisely during those years. This hope has been always on the increase since I had the happiness of making acquaintance with you and with Mr. Spencer. Much more it increases on my hearing the good accounts which you are so good as to give me. As to any special revelation on this subject, I am not the person to receive such favors, nor have I sought for them, being content with the revelation given us through the divine Scriptures and the holy Church. I am a poor sinner, not worthy that God should make known His divine secrets through me. I do not on this account, however, lose my hope, which rests not on my merits but on those of my Lord Jesus Christ. I hope then much, very much. *'I know in whom I have believed'* (II Tim. 1:12). As to the entire return of England, if we mean a mathematical entireness, I look on this as a thing very difficult. I should be exceeding happy at a moral entireness. So I am not discouraged at seeing that the progress is somewhat slow and not so immediate as we should wish. It may be better that the work should go on more or less slow, but with maturity and reflection, and that thus the ground should be gained, as we say, inch by inch. If the nation declared itself Catholic in a mass there would be reason to fear that many would do it for secondary motives and without reflection. But advancing at a slow pace, we walk more securely. Any way, this is a work of God's own, and we have to let Him take His own way, having a care on our part to follow faithfully the path which the Divine Mercy lovingly points out to us.

Oh! how consoling to me have been the happy reports which you have given me of our dearest Spencer! Ah, my God, who could sufficiently praise Thy bounty for all the graces which Thou sheddest on that pure soul! Every time that I reflect on the profusion of graces which God pours forth on that heart, I feel myself filled with courage and cannot do less than praise the Divine Goodness. I am confident that such graces cannot be for his own salvation alone, but for the salvation and conversion of many. I hope that God will make use of him, as formerly He did of S. Augustine for the conversion of England, and perhaps of other nations likewise. If you have

the opportunity of seeing or writing to him, I beg you to convey to him my most sincere regards.

Not less does the sweet hope console me, which you give me of coming to England to found there our Congregation. Oh, happy day, when wilt thou come? when? oh, when? It is true that I am an instrument too inadequate for so holy a work. But God can make use of whom He pleases, and that is my consolation. If I had abilities equal to my wishes, I should be fit for great achievements; for as to my desires, God knows whether they be great or not. Ah! could I but sacrifice my life and give my blood for my most beloved brethren of England. I hope, however, that if I give not my blood, I shall at least exhaust my strength for them.

You are happy since you have it in your power to do that which I, at present, cannot. Ah! my most dear, most loving, friend, work away as you do on a great scale for the glory of God and for the salvation of our brethren, '*There is a reward for your work*' (Gen 15:1). And what reward is this? '*I am your reward exceedingly great.*' God will be your reward. And do not suppose that because you are not a priest, you are less capable of working. You can do perhaps as much, perhaps even more than if you were a priest, teaching by your example not only seculars but ecclesiastics how one must live to be a good Catholic. Do not be alarmed at the troubles which you tell me of. No, my dear Sir, those are precious gems, which God gives to His faithful servants. The way of the cross is the only way which leads to heaven. Be of good courage then. God is faithful and will not permit that we should be tempted above our strength. Like a loving father, if with one hand He smites us, with the other He supports us. In the time of the greatest difficulties, revive your confidence and say with Job, '*Although he should kill me, I will trust in him*' (Cfr. Job 13: 15), or with David: '*I hoped in the Lord, let me never be confounded.*' (Ps. 30:2).

I went yesterday to see Sir Harry Trelawny, who is staying in this Duchy of Lucca, and I gave him and his daughter your dear letter to read. You may conceive what was their consolation, particularly as they knew nothing till now of the arrival of Mr. Spencer in England. Miss Trelawny charged me to give you her respects and to ask you about your family, particularly about your sister. She wishes to know if she perseveres in her good intentions of becoming Catholic.

If you will kindly answer me, I assure you that you will confer on me a most especial favor. But if this should draw you away from other more profitable occupations, I beg you not to

inconvenience yourself. You will answer when it is convenient. If you find it easier to write in English, pray do so; for though I cannot yet speak English, I understand it tolerably well. I write to Sir Harry Trelawny in English, and he answers me in English, but I make blunders. If it pleases God that I should learn that language well, He will give me the means for it.

Is there any hope of again seeing you in Italy? Be it however in Italy or be it in England, I hope before my death to embrace you, and I hope, in the end, to be your companion everlastingly in the glory of the blessed in heaven. Adieu, my dear Mr. Phillipps. I am unchangeably,

Your most devoted and most obedient servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

## **LETTER XVI**

To Father Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

Wolverhampton

September 1, 1832

My dear Father Dominic,

I begin for the first time a letter to you in English. I hope you have so far advanced in your knowledge of our language, since I saw you, that you will have little difficulty in understanding me. At least you will be able to read an English letter better than I can write one in Italian. God grant that this event of your receiving an English letter may be a step towards the accomplishment of your long continued wishes, to be at length, not only a correspondent with England, but one of her apostles. It is now six weeks since my happy landing at Plymouth. Since that I have spent some weeks with my father, who received me with the greatest affection. I have found also my brother Lord Althorp, my former superior, the Protestant Bishop of London, and all my other relations and friends disposed to treat me in the same way. None of them, as yet, have shown any disposition towards the Catholic religion. All are contented that I should continue to exercise my ministry with diligence as long as I do not interfere with them. And what is more than this, Dr. Walsh, my bishop, had, as I found, already begun to correspond with my



father and explained to him the way in which he intended to dispose of me, and obtained from him a full consent to his plans. You will rejoice with me at these happy circumstances, which at least give comforting prospects for the future, howsoever insufficient at present to satisfy my wishes. Soon after I came home, I sent to Mr. Ford the letters which I brought for him from yourself and Abbate Nuti. In his answer, he appeared well pleased with both; but as yet he does not alter his mind on the all important subject of the Catholic Faith. He declares, however, that he is still ready to hear and weigh our reasons. So let us persevere to the end in our prayers and hope for good success with him and many more...

(Oscott College, September 11) I have been traveling about from place to place since I began this letter and not had time to go on with it till now. I had almost determined not to send it at all. Though it is not such a letter as you deserve from me, it is better than none, and it will be enough to assure you of my love and esteem for you, which I trust will never fail, but go on increasing every day... I must now conclude.

I am your affectionate friend,  
George Spencer

## **LETTER XVII**

To the Rev. Mr. Ford

From the Rev. Father Dominic

Lucca, l'Angelo di Tramonte

Feb. 6, 1833

Reverend Sir,

It is already some time since I wrote this answer to your amiable letter, and I should have dispatched it immediately, but I have not been able to find a convenient opportunity. Now, however, that an occasion has been presented to me, I will avail myself of it with feelings which you may easily imagine. Ah, my God! would that I might go in person where my letters go! Oh! that I might have the happiness to embrace my dear Mr. Ford! Would that I could send my heart as easily as I send my sheets. If I might at least express on paper correctly the tender affection

which I entertain for you, I am sure it would make some impression on your heart, warm and pious as it is. Permit me at least, my dear Sir, to pour out my heart on this paper and to describe to you my sentiments with the sincerity which your goodness encourages. You well know that one who loves also fears. And one who fears and loves, cannot but express his fears to the person he loves. I fear, my dear Sir, and what do I fear? I fear for your eternal welfare. I fear that months, years, nay, your whole life should pass by before you resolve on taking that step which would nevertheless be so necessary. And if this were to be the case, what would become of my dear friend? Ah, good God! I know well what we are taught by persons of authority, that although, out of the true Church there is no salvation, it may yet happen that one will be saved, who, although materially out of the Church, nevertheless belongs to it really, provided always there is in him good faith, founded on invincible ignorance of his error. Such a one, though he may seem to be out of the true Church, may be said to be of it because, having entered it by holy baptism, he has never gone out from it, for no one can go out from the Church without his own fault. Such a one, if he lives conformably to the light which God gives to his children and keeps himself from offending God, does not lose the grace which he received in baptism and may be saved. This I know and believe. But here is the great question: Does this inculpable ignorance always exist? Oh! how easily may this ignorance become culpable, especially in persons who study. And will it be an excuse for anyone in this case. No, my dear Sir, no more than the enemies of our Divine Redeemer deserved to be excused. For, although these were in some way ignorant of His divinity, *'If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory'* (I Cor. 2;8), yet their ignorance was culpable, was sinful. What if such were the case, my dear Sir, with you also? Ah! my heart trembles at the thought. In this case you would be forever lost. What would avail under this supposition all the good works which you are continually engaged in? Alas! all would be lost, and lost forever. Be not angry, I beseech you, dear Sir, with one who loves you as he does himself, and would, if it were necessary, shed the last drop of his blood for your eternal salvation. Tell me, then, do you discover anything in your heart which opposes these lights which God would impart to you? Yet it is not necessary that you should tell it me. I will rather say, examine yourself dispassionately before God, to whom nothing can be hidden, whether any human motive withholds you from becoming a Catholic. Would it be perchance your affection for your wife and children? I do not think so, for you would have no

need to be separated from them. Would it be the shame of confessing that you have hitherto been deceived, the fear of being called by other Protestants a shallow, inconstant man, without force of character? Or is it the principle that a man must follow the religion in which he is born? or any other similar cause? Ah, my dear friend, if this were the case, what would become of you? You might say in your defense that you have carefully examined into the truth and have followed the religion which seems to you true. Yes, you might say this to me, or to others like me, but could you say it as well before the Divine tribunal, at which we must one day appear? Dearest Sir, what would it avail us to appear innocent and seem holy before men, if we are not so before God? Well did St. Francis of Assisi say, "Such we are, as we are before God."

My good Sir, years pass and pass too quickly. Our death is every moment approaching more nearly. Our life is a shadow, a breath, a nothing. And what if death surprised us in a state in which we would not wish to die? Ah, let us reflect that the time of this present life is given us solely that we may employ it well in seeking the truth, till we find it, and following it when found. Ah, then, my dear, my very dear Sir, seek the truth with all possible ardor, if you have not yet found it, and embrace it the moment you have found it. '*Work while it is day, lest darkness overtake you*' (Jn. 9:4).

I acknowledge myself to be troublesome and intrusive. But believe me, it is love which makes me so. You will never be able to conceive into what anguish this throws my heart. Ah, if this very moment God left it to me to choose whether to go to heaven (which I have never deserved), leaving you in danger of being damned, or to remain with you exposed to danger, but yet with the hope of gaining you, I should without the least hesitation choose the second alternative. God, who knows my heart, knows that I lie not. There does not pass a day, there does not pass an hour, so to say, that my dear Mr. Ford comes not into my mind. I know not how it is, but it must be allowed that it was a strong tie which bound me to you the first time that I had the honor to know you. When I reflect on the force of it, I am obliged to confess that the hand of God alone could have framed it. Such being my conviction, I embrace this sweet bond, and regard it as something sacred and divine. Yes, I hold it so fast that it seems to me it never can be broken by any created power, neither by angels nor by powers, neither by things in heaven nor by things on earth. But, alas! this very bond must by main force be broken if we are not to live eternally united in heaven. Ah! how the fear of this terrifies me! Ah, my God, let it never be! My

sweet Jesus, by Thy most sacred passion, and by Thy most precious blood, let not that tie be burst asunder, which Thy hand has bound on me so powerfully. These are my continual prayers, my dear Mr. Ford. And what are yours? Are they not the same? I believe it... but then... what can keep us asunder?...

My dear Mr. Ford, I beg you, by the love of our dear Redeemer, condescend to read the papers which I send you, and then by the same love, I beg of you to let me know what effect they may have produced upon your heart. If you have any fresh difficulties, whether in relation to these papers or on any other point of the Catholic faith, I beseech you, for the love of God, do not count it too much trouble to note them diligently and forward them to me by the first opportunity. If in anything I can be of service to you, I will never refuse, while God preserves to me this my thread of life unbroken to labor for the benefit of one I love so much. I shall await the result in silence with the greatest anxiety. Ah! if I might but receive by your first letter the knowledge which my heart longs for! If not by the first letter, may I receive it, at least, before I finish this my frail life. I hope it. Amen, amen. 'Fiat, fiat,' through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and glory for all ages, world without end. Amen, amen. I am, for evermore,

My dear Reverend Sir,  
Your most devoted, most obedient servant,  
Dominic of the Mother of God,  
Priest of the Congregation of the Passion

## **LETTER XVIII**

To Mr. Ambrose Phillipps  
From Rev. Father Dominic  
Retreat of S. Mary of Pagliano  
Feb. 6, 1834

My most beloved Mr. Ambrose Phillipps,

Having, for some affairs of mine, taken a journey to Rome, I had the honor of receiving your

message through Lord Clifford, who also gave me the consoling news of your having married an excellent young lady, his niece, who is pregnant and near the time of her delivery. May God vouchsafe to bless with fulness of His graces this marriage, as He once blessed that of Abraham with Sarah, of Isaac with Rebecca. May there spring from it a numerous race of saints, who may cause the religion of our fathers to flourish again in that Island, which never ceases to be the beloved object of my desires. Ah! dear, beloved England! If the blessings of heaven upon thee shall be according to what I wish thee, thou wilt indeed be blessed. And if they descend on my dearest Mr. Phillipps according to the same rule, what will be his lot? He will be a hundred and a thousand times blessed. Like another David he will overthrow with his sling the proud giant, and will enrich himself with his spoils. He will be another Moses, who will bring his people from under the hard slavery to which their fatal separation and schism have subjected them; a new Paul, who will spread the light of the gospel from one end of the kingdom to the other. Oh, dear Sir! you may conceive if ever I forget you. I assure you that I never approach the sacred altar without offering for you the spotless victim to our heavenly Father. It seems to me as if I had not the power to offer it to His Divine Majesty but in your company. Thus may He vouchsafe to accept the offering which we unite in making to Him of His only-begotten Son; and by the merits of this well-beloved Son, may He deign to cast a look of mercy on our dear separated brethren, and so bring them back to the fold. *‘There will be one sheepfold and one shepherd’* (Jn. 10: 16). Oh, happy day when this shall take place! Shall my eyes see thee? Yes, I hope it. *‘I know in whom I have believed’* (II Tim. 1:12).

And our dearest Spencer, how is he? I hear that he is busily occupied, and that his labors are blessed by God with most abundant fruits. Oh, my God! what consolation did I experience at hearing this! If you have the opportunity to see him, I beg you to present him my most sincere respects, and tell him to be so good as sometimes to remember this poor servant of his, who never can forget him. Would that I could perform the part of Moses while he so worthily performs that of Josue!

Allow me now, my dear Sir, to tell you something about myself and how we are in Italy. I have been twice in danger of death by a violent inflammatory illness. At the first attack I lost about eight pounds of blood, which I was all the while offering in union with the most precious blood of Jesus for the conversion of our dear England. I received the holy Viaticum. All thought

that I was near death. But to tell you the truth, I little thought it, because I never thought I should die before seeing my England Catholic. Many times death has come near me, but I have always laughed at it, and it has not dared to make a closer approach. I am now convalescent. I am not in stout health, being threatened with disease of the chest; but what of that? *'For when I am weak, then I am strong'* (II Cor. 12:10).

It is more than a year since I have seen the Trelawny family. A few days ago, however, I saw at Rome a granddaughter of the baronet, who has lately become a Catholic, and I hope that her brother will shortly do the same.

I had hoped to see you again in last September, as Monsignor Acton told me you would be coming to Rome at that time. My hopes have, however, been in vain. Am I then not to hope to see you again in this life? No, I will hope to see you again in this mortal life, and then to live with you in our heavenly country. If you think well to answer me, the direction is as follows:

Roma, per Paliano,

S. Maria di Pugliano.

I am, Sir, always and invariably,

Your most devoted humble servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

## **LETTER XIX**

To M. Ambrose Phillipps

From the Rev. Father Dominic

Paliano

March 17, 1836, Feast of St. Patrick

J.X.P.

Honored Sir,

I have received a letter from Father Angelo McMahon, the Carthusian monk, whom I knew in Rome, and who is now residing in the Great Chartreuse of Grenoble in France. This Rev. Father tells me that you are desirous of receiving letters from me, as also of seeing a house

founded for us Passionists in England. With regard to my letters, I have from time to time written to you, but it's now three years since I have received any answer. The last time that I wrote to you was when I had the honor of a conversation with Lord Clifford, who gave me accounts of you and, among other things, said that you had married one of his nieces, and that this your lady was pregnant and near the time of childbirth. This gave me great consolation, as I hoped that thus you would not only have heirs of your name, but that the piety and religion of your heart would descend to the children whom God would give you. I begged the same Lord Clifford to offer you my respects when he should have returned to England. At the same time I wrote to congratulate you, but I have received no answer. Perhaps the letter has been lost. But is there hope, my dear Sir, that I shall see you on this earth? Is there hope that I shall cross the sea and convey my body to that Island whither, twenty-two years ago, I sent my heart? Ah! beloved England, shall I one day see thee? And shall I see thee brought back to the one fold of the Catholic Church? I hope it. Twenty-two years I have cherished this hope. I have never abandoned it, and hope never to abandon it for the time to come. I have endeavored to interest in this object all the good souls which I have met with in these parts, and I have found many so fervent that they willingly offer themselves as victims to the Divine Goodness, ready to suffer all that a creature can suffer without offending God, provided God will show mercy on the nations separated from the Church, especially on our dear England. Of these souls I have found many. One of them, a few days ago, not a little reanimated my hopes by telling me still to be expecting the time fixed by Divine Providence and not to fear because God and the Blessed Virgin take thought for that Island efficaciously, and I shall one day be satisfied. O my God, when will be that day? When, when? Ah! my dear Sir, let us pray that it may be soon. I, for myself, can do nothing, but you can do something. Do then what is in your power, and God will be with you.

How fares our dearest Mr. Spencer? It is three years since I heard of him, though I have written to him. The reason may be because he knows not the direction of the letters. But if you, or anyone else, should wish to write to me, you can direct the letter to Rome, at the Retreat of Saints John and Paul. Though I do not live there, the religious of that Retreat will take care to forward it to me wherever I am. I entreat you to give me the consolation of again seeing your handwriting, and to send me accounts of your family and of the Spencer and Trelawny families, of the state of the Catholic religion in those parts. Above all, I beg you to tell me if there is any

hope for me to come thither some day and once more in this life to embrace you and, likewise, my other dearest friends in England. May God give us the grace at least to be united in the heavenly court. Adieu. My dear Sir, I am, irrevocably,

Your most humble, devoted servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

## **LETTER XX**

To Rev. Father Dominic

From Ambrose Lisle Phillipps, Esq.

Grace-Dieu

April 5, 1836

I.H.S.

My dear and beloved Father Dominic,

The day before yesterday was Easter Day; and among the graces and consolations which our Lord sent me on that day, certainly not the least, was that most interesting and most amiable letter which I received from you. Accept in return my most affectionate thanks. I assure you, dear Father, that I not only received your last letter, written more than a year ago, and your amiable message sent me through Lord Clifford, but I also wrote to you a long letter, addressed as you directed me. So that if you have not received one, it is the fault of the post and not mine. To say the truth, I am too much interested in keeping up my friendship with you, my dear and Very Reverend Father, to be able ever to forget you. You are always present in my heart, and in the remembrance of you I find a sweetness and consolation which I cannot express. Moreover, I always continue to cherish the hope that one day, and that, too, through my means, however unworthy, however great a sinner I may be, you will come to establish your holy Order in England, and will see that Island for which you have, for twenty-two years, offered such fervent and loving prayers. Oh! my friend, continue praying. I am confident that the extraordinary progress of the Catholic religion in England, during the last five years, is owing almost entirely to your prayers and to those of your holy Order of Passionists. I assure you there is nothing



which would give me greater consolation than to establish this Order in England. Meanwhile, pray that I may not be unworthy in the eyes of my blessed Jesus one day to accomplish this work, which I so ardently desire.

My dearest Father, I hope to embrace you once more in England. Meanwhile, I salute you in the heart of Jesus and in the heart of Mary. What you tell me about the conversion of England is most consoling. What that devout soul assured you the other day, that God and the Blessed Virgin take thought efficaciously for England, is a thing which really makes me beside myself. Yes, I am sure that Jesus and Mary do take thought efficaciously for our dear England. What little I can do to advance the good cause in my country, I do and will do always with the help of Mary, my dear Lady, to whom I daily consecrate myself with new fervor. During last year I have joined with Lord Shrewsbury in founding a monastery of Trappist monks near Grace-Dieu. You have no doubt heard of this Order. It is very austere. The monks follow the Rule of St. Benedict without any mitigation. They eat neither flesh nor fish, nor butter, nor eggs. They never speak except at a certain hour every day. They sing the Divine Office and preach in their Church. They now wear their white habit, and it is the first time that England has seen the monastic habit since the pretended Reformation of the sixteenth century. The monks sing their Office at midnight. On Easter Day I was present at the divine praises at that solemn hour and was filled with consolation such as I cannot express. It seems that our Lord will do great good in England by means of these monks. In this neighborhood there are at this time a great many conversions. In less than a twelvemonth, or thereabouts, more than three hundred Protestants have embraced our divine faith in the parish of Grace-Dieu alone; and in every part of England the Catholic religion is making great progress, so that the heretical ministers are raging with a degree of hatred and violence which can hardly be expressed. In this mission of Grace-Dieu we have already formed a Catholic school to educate children in the principles of the true Church, and it will console you when you hear that there are at present one hundred and sixty-six boys and girls in it. And the most extraordinary thing is that these children are all born of Protestant parents. Nevertheless, their parents are well satisfied at seeing them educated in the Catholic faith. It was a most consoling thing to me to see these children come in procession to visit the most Blessed Sacrament in the Sepulchre, on Maundy Thursday, and to reflect that only one year ago they were without the light of faith. Blessed for evermore be God and His most holy mother, Mary.\*

One of the most convincing signs to my mind of the near conversion of England is the general opinion which actually prevails among all classes of Protestants, that the time is approaching when the Catholic faith is destined to prevail a second time in this kingdom. Yes, the devil knows well that the time is drawing near when he will be bound by the chains of that angel who from all ages is predestined to bind him and bury him in the abyss. Meanwhile, pray, pray, excite everyone in Italy to pray; with prayers we can do all things. Write to me often, and believe me that I am always united with you in spirit in your holy Order, of which you will remember you gave me the diploma. Pray for me, for my wife, and my children; pray also for the conversion of my father, who is yet Protestant. My dearest wife salutes you, and I assure you that I am, and ever will be, my most dear, beloved Father Dominic,

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus and Mary,  
Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

\* The fact of three hundred Protestants having been received in one year at Grace-Dieu may seem to some incredible, but it was really so. In one day there were received fifty-two. When Mr. Phillipps says that the one hundred and sixty-six children of the school were all born of Protestant parents, of course it does not mean that all the parents were still Protestants. But that many of the parents, not yet converted themselves, were pleased to see their children in the school.

## **LETTER XXI**

To Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

From Rev. Father Dominic

Retreat of S. Sosio, Martyr

May 27, 1836

J.X.P.

A.M.D.G.

Honored Sir,

On my return from a mission in a town of the adjoining kingdom of Naples, I found your very dear letter of the 5th of April.

You cannot easily conceive the sweet and charming emotion it produced in my poor heart.

Oh, my God, I seemed to see the heart of my dear Mr. Phillipps poured out upon those pages and breathing a most sweet odor of Jesus Christ. Oh! that my heart might in like manner be poured forth on this paper! It is true, it would not diffuse the like sweet odor, because it is far, indeed, from being impregnated, like yours, with divine holy love. Yet I would hope it would at least send forth an odor, and that powerfully, of holy love for all my dearest English, to whom I have from my early years consecrated all the affections of my heart and, in a special way, for my dearest Mr. Phillipps and his dear family, which I know not yet with the eyes of my body, but which I know well indeed with those of faith. Tell me, dear Sir, shall my eyes indeed see that dear family of yours, which I love so much without having seen them? Yes, yes, you answer; and the time will not be long. But when? I reply, when shall it be? Soon, soon, you tell me to hope. But, alas! this soon is very far off to me, as every hour seems to me a thousand years, till I see my dear England and may shed my blood or, at least, be spent with labor for it. You tell me you cannot at present, but that you expect abundant means to enable you to undertake the building of a retreat for us. I shall pray God you may soon have them. I will add, meanwhile, a remark which will, I think, much facilitate the thing. Do not think that so much is required to prepare a house for a few poor Passionists. It is not necessary, that it should be as that of Saints John and Paul. I should be content to live in a house fit for a peasant, built in some open field, or in a wood. Nay, I should be happy in a cabin made of straw, or in a cave dug out in some rock, at least till some little dwelling might be provided, built of stone. We should not need either to go with a numerous community; we might come at first two or three persons, and with these commence God's work. Add to this, that for us nothing is needed but only and simply a dwelling. There is no need to think of providing funds or income, as we live on the voluntary offerings of the faithful. In other words, we live on what is furnished us by Divine Providence from day to day, through the charity of the faithful. *'Having food and clothing, with these we are content'* (I Tim. 6:8). I am perfectly confident that God would not suffer us to die of hunger, if once we were there, though we should have nothing but a poor hut or a cavern to shelter us. That Heavenly Father, who gives food to the immense family of the birds who *'neither sow nor reap'* (Mt. 6:28) would certainly be well able to feed three or four poor Passionists. I say thus much, if you have had sufficient means, before receiving those future resources you expect, to found a house of Trappists and to establish a school for education, where there are already one hundred and sixty-six children learning the Catholic faith, how much rather might you be able to prepare a dwelling

for three or four Passionists! For the present a cottage would suffice, such as those in which I imagine your peasants live, and a little chapel to celebrate Mass, which would require but very little expense. For our living afterwards and our food, God will attend to that; you need not have a care for income or resources of any kind.

I am also most confident that, if there came three or four of our religious to England to open a house, there would not be wanting, certainly, charitable persons, who would charge themselves with providing us with a poor common sort of house where we might live with less inconvenience. I know that the English nation wants neither money nor generosity towards the ministers of the Gospel. In this way, after you have, so to say, laid the first stone for the establishment of the Passionists in that kingdom, there will not be wanting, certainly, some one to lay a second, a third, and a fourth, and then say, my dear Sir, is not God able to clothe and feed us? Oh, yes, we must trust in the Divine Goodness. “When I sent you,” says Jesus to the apostles, “without bag, without provision, was anything lacking to you to live?” I am, therefore, more than sure that nothing needful for life (and this is all we speak of) would be wanting to the poor Passionists, even though they should come to England without any sort of provision. I should take an exceeding great delight in the working out of this enterprise so long desired. And I shall be happy also, if it pleases God, to employ your person, so fondly dear to me, to carry it out; and it would be some displeasure to me, if this work for the glory of God was to be executed by means of anyone besides. I am then in anxious expectation of a favorable reply. Oh, my good God! Oh, that I might immediately receive your letter, in which you might say to me, “Father Dominic, come with two or three companions. God will provide!”... I hope it.

In this case, however, you would have to address yourself to our Father Superior General, who is that same Father Anthony of St. Joseph, who sent you that patent of benefactor and of filiation to our poor Congregation.

I learn from your dear letter the immense progress which our holy religion is making in England, and the part which you bear in this work for the glory of God. Oh, how I rejoice at it! But my happiness is not complete yet. And what is wanting to complete it? You can easily conceive it is the entire return of the whole kingdom to the Catholic faith. I shall not die happy if my eyes do not first see England Catholic.

Not less consolation do I receive from the news you give me of the birth of your children. O my God! vouchsafe to make my dear Mr. Phillipps another Abraham, father of many faithful

souls, and his wife another Sarah, mother of consolation to the children of the Church. How dear to me are the salutations you send me, as well from yourself as from this your lady. Yes, my dear Sir, I will remember always, '*eternally and beyond,*' both you and your dear family, which God has given you, and which He will multiply to you for His own glory and honor.

I will not fail to pray for your father, and I will endeavor to engage to do so all the good souls around us here, that they may offer a sweet violence to the Divine Heart in behalf of all our separated brethren, but especially those who belong to your family, as also to the Spencer, Trelawny, and Millingen families.

What is the news of our dearest Mr. Spencer? If you have occasion to see him, I beg you to present him my kindest regards. The same I say of Miss Trelawny, who, as I hear, is in trouble, but I know not where she lives.

We have already two Irishmen, Passionists, very good, one of whom has already made his profession and is studying philosophy in this house. The other is still a novice. I hope that one day they may be able to go to England to preach the word of God.

I write to you, my dear Sir, with all liberty and prolixity, depending on your goodness to excuse me; as you tell me you wish it. I beg you to do the same by me, who am, and always shall be,

Your most humble, devoted, and obliged servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

The above letter was never sent. Father Dominic thought it right to send it to the General for his approbation, and we here subjoin an extract from the General's letter in reply. These letters were found among Father Dominic's papers (original English editor).

## **LETTER XXII**

To the Rev. Father Dominic

From the Most Rev. Father Anthony of St. Joseph, General of the Passionists

Saints John and Paul

May 31, 1836

J.X.P.

Dearest Father Consultor,

I have read yours of the twenty-fourth of this month, and that enclosed for Mr. Phillipps. I am much edified at your boundless confidence and courage, and if I had three or four good companions for you, I should have no difficulty about sending your letter to Mr. Phillipps, just such as it is. But, *'herein is the task, the effort.'* Your paternity is strong in spirit, and I pray God to increase to you this blessing; but you have a weak body, so that you cannot risk the fatigue of catechisms, and can hardly go through a course of private exercises; without a miracle, then, you certainly could not stand what you offer this gentleman to undertake; but supposing you might expose yourself to such labors and stand them, and I could make up my mind to send you, I know not whether it would be so easy to find you companions of a like spirit and courage with yourself, when we came to the trial. I fear it much, nay, very much, and without this what should we gain? To trust in God is all well; but to send religious on such an enterprise, without the necessary spirit and courage, is certainly not consistent with sound and holy prudence, which must never be separated from confidence.

It will give me pleasure that Mr. Phillipps should maintain his good intentions; I also will not fail to pray to our Lord to open the way for effecting His and our wishes; wherefore, when your paternity writes to him, let him see that you and I also have a grateful sense of his good wishes and readiness to serve us, if it should please God to open a way. I also approve that, in order to facilitate the affair, you should tell him there is no need of a house like Saints John and Paul, but that a habitation will suffice with little cells and a little church, and so forth. Keep to general expressions and do not come so much to particulars, nor speak of the attempt as so perfectly easy. And let us not have such bursts of zeal, otherwise he might be roused to excessive ardor for the cause all at once, and then what will be done? I send you back, then, the letter that you may remodel it a little, as I do not think it prudent to send it just as it is...\*

\* In consequence of this letter from the General, the former letter was never sent by Father Dominic, and another was written in its place, modified in its expressions. We prefer publishing the suppressed one, as showing in a more characteristic form the spirit of the writer.

## LETTER XXIII

To the Rev. Father Dominic

From the Honorable and Rev. George Spencer

West Bromwich

Sept. 3, 1836

My dear Rev. Father,

It is now a good while since I received your most encouraging and yet mortifying letter; encouraging by its direct tendency to inspire anyone with new zeal for the service of God, and mortifying by being calculated to put me to shame, seeing that I, living on the spot, have so much less ardor for the conversion of England, my own country and under my eye, than you have, though a stranger and at so great a distance; and also as I find myself so often tempted to weariness, and actually growing weary of troubles which you are so earnestly longing for. Indeed, I have remarked, ever since I came back from Rome, how the pious souls there continue to pray and labor for the conversion of England with all the power they can apply to the work, while in England people in general seem hardly ever to think of it as a possibility. Indeed, I find myself, as at first sight it appears, suddenly altered for the worse since I came home and had to begin contending in my own person for the Faith.

I know that difficulties I must meet with in this work; but before I came to the point of encountering and feeling their weight, I formed a very imperfect idea of what they are, and though I know that in a day God is able to change the face of this whole country, I find it not easy to imagine this being actually done, while living in the midst of it, and seeing with my own eyes and observing in so many directions marks of worldly mindedness and of an unbelieving proud spirit which the new religion of Protestantism has engendered here. From a distance, as from Rome, one does not see these things so plainly. The carelessness of some and the bigotry of others among Protestants are so great and so obstinate and incurable that it appears almost in vain to attempt anything with them. If we had bright examples of piety and holiness among the Catholics to put before them, it would be the most effectual means of moving them to attention. But we have to lament continually the coldness of the generality of our own body; the great vices and scandals of a great many, especially of the poor Irish, who come to settle in England and form a great part of our congregations; and the quarrels and jealousies, and disunions, which prevail so widely and so commonly, even among the clergy. I find from all these causes a great disappointment of the bright hopes of speedy progress which I entertained when first I came to England. Being disappointed and baffled in my too sanguine expectations, I have had a hard

struggle to keep up my spirits, particularly as about a year ago I was attacked with a return of the complaint of spitting of blood, for which I had to leave Rome, and was obliged for a good while to give up all active exertions. Though I can get on very well again now with preaching and working in a moderate degree, I am still incapable of that kind of continual animating activity by which I kept up my spirits for two or three years.

What I have now been saying will perhaps throw a gloom over your kind heart. But do not consent to it. You must, I am sure, have seen when we were together that I was extravagant in my ideas and plans. I do not know how I could have learnt to know myself perfectly without some internal mortification; so be thankful with me that I have been disappointed. I have never given way to despondency, and, please God, I shall rise again into a state of ardor and confidence, I hope, more desirable and more acceptable to God than ever I have known, as being built on a better foundation of humility. The report which you heard of my brother's conversion, you will probably before now have heard contradicted. There was no foundation for it. None of my family, nor of Phillipps's, have intimated as yet a doubt about the Catholic religion arising in their minds. It is marvelous how they can continue all together in this way so long, tottering on the sandy foundation of their Churches, without seeming to suspect they are in the wrong. God has His own wise purposes in all this, and we must put from us afar off all murmuring and discontent. If we are not comforted with obtaining what we wish for in the full and brilliant success of our labors, how clear it is we have cause in this very circumstance to be most thankful on our own account, though we have to be afflicted on account of the poor souls which refuse the light. As far as we ourselves are concerned, certainly their obstinacy ought to be looked upon only as the means of acquiring new humility and with that all perfections.

God will best know when it is suitable to His wise purposes to bend their minds. But I need not give you admonitions how to regulate your feelings about England, for which you continue to entertain such earnest charity.

Whether the Passionists will find a settlement here depends on His will alone.

You must have heard that Phillipps has founded a monastery of Trappists, an Order which would seem amongst the least likely to find their way into England. But here they are, and they are flourishing and looked upon favorably by all the people. An opening may soon be made for you as unexpectedly. We may reasonably conclude that it is the purpose of God to bring this about. By His having inspired your Venerable Founder, yourself, and so many others of His



children with such desires and prayers for this end, I am fully in the disposition to assist in bringing you and some of your companions among us, if the occasion is offered. In fact, after receiving your letter, I was for some time revolving in my mind how this might be done. I have had thoughts of a large town in my neighborhood (Dudley), where I have been for two years at work establishing a mission, but have been obliged to give up my active exertions because of my illness last year. As yet that place has not a chapel nor regular missionary establishment. Only a Methodist Chapel has been hired, and a priest lives there who was formerly my companion here. I have fancied that a religious house might be placed there as well as anywhere else, and so two objects gained at once. I mentioned my idea to my friend, but it did not appear possible to be accomplished, at least for the present, and I have nothing immediate to propose.

The idea you had that my brother might assist us is, of course, to be abandoned; I can only say that the object has a place in my heart, and if it were the will of God to make me instrumental in bringing it about, how happy should I be.

Dr. Walsh, the Bishop of this district, is very desirous of seeing all sorts of religious Orders established within the bounds of his jurisdiction. Some of our secular clergy give way unhappily a little to the jealousy which you well know does sometimes exist against the Regulars; the Jesuits particularly have been discountenanced in some quarters of England. Our Bishop has no feeling of this kind, and only desires to see Catholic missions established in all places by whatsoever persons are disposed to do it in due order. He is about to take a journey to Rome very shortly.

I saw him today, and understand that he may probably be in Rome about the first of November. He will be mostly in company with Doctor Wiseman, the Rector of our College. If providence should open to you a way to communicate with him in person, he might be led to pay particular attention to your wishes; but of course you cannot command your own movements, nor be able to get to Rome. In an affair of this kind, we must not be too eager to force circumstances into correspondence with our plans, but rather let our plans be guided by circumstances. I do not see why you should not, without impropriety, lay your history before him and tell him all the extraordinary things which seem to connect your Order with England, and let him judge what to say or do. I leave at his disposal all my property and means of all sorts; if he is induced to employ any of them in your behalf, he may. I will tell him, if I can, before he goes, that I have written to you thus. This may be a sufficient introduction for you to him if you choose

to avail yourself of it.

We must commend the matter to God and our Blessed Lady, whose blessed patronage I am thankful to say I have learnt to appreciate and value more than I did when I was at Rome, since I have been involved in so many perplexities in which help like hers was so necessary.

I beg now to be remembered, with all belonging to me, in your holy prayers.

I am, my dear Rev. Father,

Your most affectionate and obliged,

George Spencer

## **LETTER XXIV**

To Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

From Rev. Father Dominic

Saints John and Paul, Rome

March 4, 1837

J.X.P.

My very dear Sir,

In the course of last spring, I received your very kind letter of the 5th of April, 1836, to which I replied by a long letter, in which I told you many things relative to our project of coming to that country, to which for twenty-three years my heart has been bound. From that time to this, I have not heard from you again. But a few days ago, I received a note from Lord Clifford, in which that worthy gentleman tells me, among other things, that you desired to hear from me. He also gave me information of three churches which you had already built in your neighborhood, one for the Trappists, one for the use as a Catholic school, and a third near your own house. He added that at the coming Easter would take place the dedication of all these three churches. I rejoiced in the Lord at such happy news, and I returned thanks to the Divine Goodness for having deigned to afford you the means of doing so much good. I hope in a short time to be able to pay my respects in person to the said Lord Clifford and to obtain from him some additional information regarding my dear Mr. Phillipps and our dear England.

I am now going to give you some account of myself and of our affairs here. By the Divine

Mercy I enjoy good health, and am always doing what I can for the conversion of my dear separated brethren of England. But finding myself at such a distance and deprived of means to do more, I am obliged to content myself with the following exertions. First, I have written a great variety of works, which may with time be of some use towards the object; secondly, I have prayed as much as I could and have tried to engage more than a hundred truly good souls, whom I know here in Italy, to do the same; and I assure you that very many of these pray so unceasingly, and with such fervor, that they give me every reason to hope that our most merciful God will soon open the gates of His infinite mercy. Many of these are so earnest (in this work) that day and night they do nothing else than raise their pure hands to the throne of the Almighty and offer continually the victim of the adorable holocaust in the sight of God for the salvation of their separated brethren. Ah! if these poor afflicted people could see the interior of so many pure souls, if they could listen to their prayers, if they could behold the sacrifices which these make for their eternal happiness, they would cease, I think, to look upon the Church as a prostitute, a cruel step-mother, but would soon acknowledge her for that chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost, which can contain within its breast no other heart than that of the sorrowing dove, which mourns continually the loss of her dear young ones, for the safety of which she would be always ready to give the last drop of her blood.

My dear Sir, I can assure you that my heart, although so hard, has been much moved and softened at this consideration. Ah! if I could! Ah! if I was permitted, I would wish to cry out aloud and to make myself heard to the hearts of my dear separated brethren. I would wish to tell them so many things, that finally I would either cease to live by continual cries or else they should cease from their obstinacy. But I cannot, I cannot make myself heard. For charity's sake, since at least you may be heard, tell my dear separated brethren that in the Catholic Church there are thousands of hearts that languish for them. Of them I can safely say that, if even the glory of heaven were offered to them by our good God, they would refuse it to remain still longer on the earth, in order to lend assistance to those who are obstinately determined to perish. *'I wished to be cut off from Christ for my brethren'* (Rom 9:3). I have seen myself at the point of death; the only thing which caused me sorrow was that I had not been able to labor so much as I desired for the salvation of my brethren. If this be the case with me, who am so wicked, what will it be with so many holy souls whom I know and with so many others with whom I am not acquainted? Ah! let us hope that their prayers will not be made in vain. I hope, I hope: *'I know whom I have*

*believed and I am certain that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him against that day'* (II Tim. 1:12).

So much the more I am determined to hope, as there begin to appear some rays of cheering light, not only from the consoling information which I have received, among others, from Dr. Wiseman, with whom I spoke some months ago, but also from the prospect of my soon coming near to my dear England. If I cannot actually come to it, I will get as near it as I possibly can, that I may behold, at least at a distance, that Island, which for twenty-three years I have carried engraved on my heart. You will perhaps know that a foundation has been offered us at Boulogne in France. Many indeed are the obstacles which this holy work meets with; many are the efforts of the infernal enemy to hinder it, but I hope they will be frustrated. Who knows if I may not, in the approaching spring, come at least on a visit and embrace in England my dear Mr. Phillipps! Ah! my God, may this come to pass!... Oh! happy day!... Oh! how shall I express my feelings when it comes? I do not know myself; but I am sure my joy will be excessive, and tell me, my dear Sir, will you not also rejoice? I cannot but think you will. Well, today I shall go to Lord Clifford and hear what he has to tell me. If I can, I shall also give Dr. Wiseman a call.

My search after Lord Clifford and Dr. Wiseman has been useless, because I have not met with either one or the other. But I hope I shall be able to see them before I leave Rome, where I am now giving a course of exercises in a college. After Easter I shall return to the retreat of my residence. If, however, you will reply to this, direct your letter to Saints John and Paul, and the religious will take care to send it to me. I hope that yourself and family all enjoy perfect health. May God vouchsafe to render you another Abraham, the father of many believers, and your wife another Sarah, a mother of consolation and joy to faithful souls. May the fruits of your holy marriage be as young olives which will be a crown for their parents in time and for eternity in heaven.

I know nothing now about Miss Anna Letitia Trelawny and her family. If you have an opportunity of seeing them, I beg you to give them my respects. Some months ago Mr. Spencer wrote me a very long letter, wherein he gave an account of his occupations and apostolic labors, the fruit of which, however, he said did not correspond to the desires of his ardent zeal. I answered, encouraging him as much as I could. I do not, however, know whether he has received my letter. In case you should see him, present him my respects. One of his cousins, a Catholic lady residing at Boulogne, is anxious to get us there. Many other English, and not a few French,

have the same wish. I hope the Divine Majesty will at length comply with the desires of so many pious souls and give also to me the unspeakable consolation of embracing again my dear Mr. Phillipps in England.

Believe me, my dear Sir,  
your ever most devoted, most humble and obedient servant,  
Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

P.S. After the above letter had been finished; that very worthy nobleman, Lord Clifford, was pleased to come in person to pay me a visit in this house of Saints John and Paul. He spoke to me about you, and about the great things you are performing for the glory of God, and also about a miraculous cure that has occurred in those parts. Praise be to God for all, for ever and ever. Amen. Adieu, very dear Sir. I hope to embrace you either in London or Boulogne. I see the devil is making all imaginable efforts to hinder my going, but I hope they will be overcome by the power of the Almighty and the intercession of our dear Mother Mary. Adieu, adieu, etc.

## **LETTER XXV**

To Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus

From Mrs. Canning

Place d'Alton, No. 24, Basse Ville, Boulogne-sur-mer

Tuesday, March 14, 1837

(Written in French)

Very Rev. Father,

I am not sure that it will not be an indiscretion on my part, but I am so desirous to thank you myself for your remembrance, which is very precious to me, and to tell you myself how my heart is devoted to you, that I cannot resist it. From the first moment that the Abbé Bernard had spoken to me of the Passionists and of their views on England, my heart was with you. I said at once, Oh, that I might be useful to them! I said it, however, rather with an ardent wish than with the hope of ever seeing this wish gratified. After Monsr. Bernard's letter, giving me this hope, my longings and my prayers were to gain from God the grace to become worthy to be of some little service to you. What a grace! what a glory for me! if at length our good God is about to grant it to me.

I know not, my Rev. Father, whether you are as yet aware that I am your countrywoman. Yes, Italy, dear Italy, gave me birth. An Italian Cardinal gave me holy baptism and my first blessing – an Italian priest consecrated me to the Blessed Virgin, when I was but a day old, that is, recommended me in a special way to her – the first prayers which obtained my conversion and all the graces which God has given me were offered for me in Italy. O saints of my native land, how often has my heart thanked you. With what gratitude do my thoughts revert to those moments which my memory cannot reach! The only day which I call properly my feast, in the course of the year, is the day of my baptism, when your countrymen, my Reverend Father, who are also mine, prayed so earnestly for me. Judge, then, how thankful I must be to Monsr. Bernard for having put me in correspondence with you; how much also I have to thank you yourself for consenting to accept any help from me. After Monsr. l'Abbe Haffreingue had paid me his little visit, I kissed the scapulars which he brought me from you; I took them as a pledge that my prayer is heard. But, can you guess, my Very Rev. Father, what I am so bold as to ask of you? A little letter from yourself, to tell me that you accept me, not as a lady of the world who offers her mite to your holy work, but as your daughter, a daughter of the Passionists; what a happiness! as one entirely devoted to you – as a kind of novice to whom you need only say or send word what I can do and I will do it. If our Divine Savior inspires you with the thought to accept such an offer, I shall think myself invincible. To venture to make this offer, I ought, humanly speaking, to have much more power, much more wealth, much more influence, more health, and, above all, more virtue than I shall ever possess. But, wretched as may be the instrument, if God chooses it, it will do all that this good God wills that it should do. I feel so powerfully drawn to you and your holy work. It is a happiness so far beyond my hopes to bear the least share in it, that at the same time that to be as the smallest grain in the scale will content me, yet nothing which God shall tell you to ask of me seems to me impossible. O Saints of my native land, what are my obligations to you, and what shall I not owe you yet! Through you the first graces, the first benedictions reached me; through you will come to me the greatest consolation which I can have in this world; that is, to do something for the glory of Him who has done so much for me, and the consolation of still belonging to you. Your prayers have blessed my first moments, and your prayers will bless my last, by gaining for me the grace before that moment to merit heaven.

I am working for you, my Rev. Father. I am embroidering you a rochet<sup>5</sup>; a very inferior one indeed. Such as it is, I expect that your good Fathers of Boulogne will count themselves my debtors for it, since needle-work is the thing in the world which I do the worst and most against the grain. I shall soon recover the language of my first years which I have been allowed to forget, that I may be able to ask their blessing. I ask you yours, my Very Rev. Father, and if I do not ask your holy prayers, too, it is that our good God seems to tell me that I have and shall yet continue to have them.

Your most devoted daughter,  
Louisa Canning (born, Spencer)

## LETTER XXVI

To Mrs. Canning

From the Abbe Haffreingue

(Without date, but evidently written after reading through the preceding letter of Mrs. Canning.)

Madam,

According to your permission, I have taken the liberty of reading your letter, the contents of which I entirely approve. I now have reason to think that it will prove not to have been a groundless hope on my part that Providence had destined you to second this great, this important enterprise of the Passionists in behalf of your country. You will then second it, Madam, with the piety and zeal which belong to you; you will make this your leading pursuit. Both the Passionists and your humble servant will reckon on your influence and your activity. It would be well that before they come you should write to your friends in England to prepare them. Do not forget, Madam, that, in taking upon you to support a great undertaking, you must expect to meet with a thousand contradictions, and these from persons who ought to second it. The works of God have no other way of advancing; they go forward in the midst of crosses and difficulties; but I believe you have too much faith and perseverance to be surprised or discouraged at this...

In haste your most humble servant,

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<sup>5</sup> A vestment like a surplice.

Haffreingue.\*

\* It may be well to state that the Abbe Haffreingue is a priest of Boulogne, remarkable for his spirit of noble enterprise. He is now drawing towards a happy termination, a great undertaking to which he has devoted the latter portion of his life; that is, the rebuilding of the Cathedral at Boulogne, which was destroyed in the great French Revolution, and the restoration of its ancient Episcopal See, which since the destruction of the Cathedral has been annexed to that of Arras. He lends his hand to all good works which are within his reach. Among others he has a remarkable zeal for the conversion of this country. More than thirty years ago he began an association of prayers for the conversion of England, which had considerable extension. It was this direction of his zeal which made him take up with great ardor the project of bringing the Passionists to Boulogne as a stepping-stone to England. Difficulties arose to prevent the accomplishment of this purpose, which ceased for a time to be so interesting when the Passionists had obtained a house, with the same view, in Belgium. But Monsr. Haffreingue still remains their devoted friend. It was from this house that Father Dominic took his departure to cross the first time into England, and he is now earnestly desirous of their settling near Boulogne, for the sake not of England so much as of his own people.

## LETTER XXVII

To Mrs. Canning

From the Rev. Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus

Rome

April 7, 1837

J.X.P.

Madam,

I can only attribute to a mistake caused by your charity the terms in which you express your high regard for me and your desire to receive letters from me, who am a poor religious, without any sort of merits to recommend me. Wherefore, I can only say, Madam, that your gracious and benevolent letter has penetrated me with feelings of the deepest gratitude. I beg to offer you my thanks.

You tell me that the establishment of the Passionists at Boulogne and in England is the object of your prayers and of the continual desires of your heart. I have been greatly rejoiced to learn from you this earnest and charitable desire you have, that our institute may quickly be planted in



foreign kingdoms. I pray God to increase the faith which He has given you and the love you have for His most holy passion, of which the Passionists are preachers, their vocation being to preach Jesus Christ crucified and thereby to convert sinners and sanctify souls. I feel all the utility and importance of this establishment, but I cannot dissemble to myself its great difficulties, especially after the non-success of several attempts made by the Abbé Bernard and the Abbé Haffreingue and other distinguished ecclesiastics, who ardently desire it and have taken a most lively interest in it. I pray that their attempt may be crowned with the success which their apostolic zeal deserves; we will omit nothing to become worthy that God should graciously accept this united prayer, and to animate with new zeal those who are so devoted to the holy work. The offer which you, Madam, make of your faculties, your possessions, your influence, and of yourself, to the Order of the Passionists is of infinite value in our eyes; your intentions are too commendable not to merit our gratitude and the approbation of God, who will not fail to reward them. We are truly thankful to you for all your charity, and for the trouble which you have already gone through for the Passionists, and for the offer of aid towards their traveling expenses into France and in all their other wants, in a manner worthy of a true Christian and faithful follower of Jesus Christ. I indulge the hope that God will grant you that greatest of all consolation that you wish for in this world, namely, to see the Passionists at Boulogne. Then, when they are established in some proper place in that district, enjoying your favor and kind protection, they will certainly communicate to you their spiritual goods and will regard you as their mother, as now they look on you as their sister in Jesus Christ, and their benefactress. Till this happy day comes, let us constantly pray God to hasten it!

I have not the honor, Madam, to know you, but since first I heard you spoken of I have been in admiration of the life which you lead, so conformable to the truth and to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I render thanks to God, as often as I remember you, and I never go to prayer without praying also for you that He who has begun the good work in you may make it perfect unto the day of Jesus Christ. Then I pray that all which concerns you, your circumstances, your health, may be equally prosperous.

I regret that my occupations have not allowed me to send you this letter, which you asked of me, sooner, and that my ignorance of the French language has not permitted me to write in a manner more suitable to your station. I beg you to excuse me, Madam, and to accept the feelings of high regard with which I have written these few lines.

In fine, Madam, I beg you to write in my name to the Abbé Bernard, as soon as possible, to say,

1. That I have received his last letter of the 1st of March.
2. That we must not any longer press for a formal approbation by the French government of our establishment in France, for, considering the present position of affairs, the sovereign Pontiff will perhaps not insist on this condition; the Father General consents to this establishment, provided the government simply grants toleration to the Passionists in France and permission to wear the proper habit of the Order; and provided also the Bishop of Arras is willing to allow this establishment in his diocese.
3. That the foundations in Belgium and in England will be treated of after the Passionists have been settled at Boulogne.
4. That I thank him for his zeal concerning the translation and publication of the Meditations on the Passion, and for the copy which he commissioned Father Magallon to give me.
5. That I have sent to Lille a small case with some relics, images, and Agnus Dei's, directed to the Abbé Bernard.
6. That M. le Chevalier Drak is charged with bringing to Rome the books of which he speaks in his letter.

I salute you in Jesus Christ, and all the brethren who are with me salute you. Salute the Abbe Haffreingue in my name. Pray to God, Madam, for me, and accept the assurance of my high regard.

I am your most humble servant,  
Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, Passionist

## **LETTER XXVIII**

To Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus

From Mrs. Canning

Boulogne

1837

If I could make so bold, Very Reverend Father, I should wish to speak to you on your affairs.

I say make so bold because, in the first place, you must know far more about them than I, who have just missed seeing the bishops on their return, and it is rather from you I ought to ask how you find them disposed towards your holy enterprise; secondly, because all that I could say to you would be concerning my holy cousin, Mr. Spencer, who has spoken to me, half under the seal of secrecy and wholly under obedience of his bishop, without whom, said he, he would not consent to take the least step towards the object which he would love the best in the world. The account, then, which I am about to give you of my doings may lead to something or nothing, just as Divine Providence will dispose of matters; but I would not wish you to act upon it, nor to mention it in England before hearing from my cousin himself, for he gave me no commission, and my eagerness to tell every thing is perhaps an indiscretion, which, however, I trust God will excuse in consideration of its motive.

Being then in England, I was determined I would make acquaintance with my cousin, whom I had never seen. The superior of the convent, where I was on a visit, wrote to him, and he came, I think forty miles to see me. We talked a great deal about our dear Passionists; he seemed to me to be to the full as devoted to you as I could wish, but all under the orders of his bishop. He said he had two projects in his mind if his bishop agreed. First, there was a Mission a few miles from where he lives, without a chapel. He was ready to give either £100 a year for the mission, or £2000 all at once to build the chapel, and he added that if Lord Clifford would give what they said he intended to give in England, instead of at Boulogne, altogether there would be a nice little sum to begin with. His second project was that Father Dominic should come with two or three others, and that all should live with him till Providence should open a way. But after saying all this, he would, as it were, retract it, adding, I can do nothing without my bishop and you must not even speak of it before I see him. After staying nearly three days at the convent, he took me to his house that I might see his Father Confessor; all this on account of the Passionists. This Father Confessor, says he, is the bishop's right hand. I was delighted with him; he seemed as zealous in your favor as we could be. He was suggesting that the bishop should give you the old college of Oscott, as he had built a new one which might be entered next year. He said that there was great need in England of a house where priests might make retreats. In short, I am persuaded that in him you will have a powerful advocate with Bishop Walsh.

My cousin took me also to dine at the college with Dr. Weedall, whom perhaps you know, as he has been a long time at Rome. He spoke to him about the project, and he saw nothing to

object to in it, but recommended silence till his Lordship should come.

This, my Very Reverend Father, is all I have been able to do in England at present. I have put off writing to you one day that I might see Mr. Haffreingue. He told me there was nothing as yet concluded at Boulogne; but he will speak to you himself about all that.

My cousin is all of the mind that you should come at once to England; but he will probably himself write to Father Dominic. I say again, I have no mission, and I should not have written to you at all before knowing something more positive, if I was not anxious to thank you for your good letter and for your box, which each and all have given me such pleasure.

The above letter is translated from a copy of the original kept by Mrs. Canning. The copy has no date, but it must have been written in the summer of 1837.

## **LETTER XXIX**

To Rev. Father Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

Wolverhampton

March 15, 1838

My Dear Father Dominic,

I came today from my house at Westbromwich, on a visit to my Bishop, Dr. Walsh, and he tells me that he is on the point of sending a young alumnus to the English College at Rome.

I have not time to write a long letter, but still I must not omit so convenient an opportunity of making you once more recall me to your mind, so full of charity to all, but especially to me.

I can never think of you without thinking of the conversion of England, which I hope is not far distant, although prejudices and indifferentism and vices are still terribly abundant everywhere. But, God is supreme, and if He is mindful, as I hope He is, of the ancient saints of this kingdom and of all those glorious martyrs who, in the years of persecution, have shed their blood for the diffusion of the true faith in our country, who can say that He may not, in a short time, change everything? You will believe that I have learnt with great satisfaction what has been done lately at Boulogne, in France, towards establishing in that city one of your houses. But it

seemed to me, and also to Mrs. Canning, my cousin, who wishes to cooperate with all her power in this work, that if a house is to be founded for England, why not in England itself? Mr. Haffreingue, the French priest who has interested himself in this affair at Boulogne, has given us to understand that, having no other design than the good of England in this foundation, if it were possible to transfer it into our country, he would willingly consent.

I do not know how this may be brought about, but I am confident that our Bishop has a very great esteem for the Order of Passionists, and that if an opportunity should present itself, he would be glad to see them in his Diocese. And I have to tell you that a short time ago a rich Catholic gentleman died, leaving the residue of his property to our Bishop. The heirs-at-law have disputed the will, but there is great reason to hope that the Bishop will gain the cause, and then he will be in possession of about £150,000 sterling.

All of you must pray that God may give success to His cause, which is at the same time that of the Church, and then, if it be the will of God that you should labor for England, that the Bishop may be directed by him to employ for this object a portion of this money.

Finally, I beg you to constantly renew your prayers for my family every Friday, if not otherwise engaged. I offer up my Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for my family and also for that of Phillipps, Trelawny, Millingen, and Trail. I pray you will make a perpetual memento of this intention in your Mass on Friday, and recommend me to other holy souls, of whom you know and direct so many.

On Thursdays, also, I regularly say Mass in honor of the most holy Sacrament for the conversion of England. It seems to me that nothing is more necessary for opening the currents of grace upon this kingdom than to make reparation for all the outrages and insults which people of all sorts, as well as private individuals, the parliament, the king, and the laws themselves, have offered to this great mystery for so many years. If you are willing to join from time to time in this intention, I shall be very much pleased.

Now it is time to finish.

Believe me your faithful friend in Jesus Christ,

George Spencer

**LETTER XXX**

To Mrs. Canning  
From Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus  
Saints John and Paul, Rome  
Aug. 21, 1838

Madam,

Your letter of July 29 shows how uneasy you condescend to be on my account, and I take occasion hence to thank you for your tender concern for me, begging you at the same time not to be afflicted about me, since, after all, we must see and accept everything in God and from the hand of God, who disposes all things with love and wisdom for our good. Our good God gives me that portion of health which I have need of for His glory, and I ask no more. My last, being written by another hand, was not on account of my great debility, but from want of time. For the present I am, thank God, tolerably well, though in a weak and precarious state. I bless God, however, for treating me with so much mercy, and I hope He will not take me out of this world without my first seeing the Passionists settled either in France or in Belgium.

I do not understand why the Abbé Bernard looks on the establishment of Passionists in the Diocese of Tournay as a hopeless affair, after my having already twice written to him that it will be taken in earnest into consideration under the new General, the present one being at the close of his office, and that everything promises a favorable result.

I do not know what to say about your coming to Rome. If God inspires you to take this journey for His glory and for the salvation of your soul, or to find in the holy city some new incentive of piety, devotion, and faith, I approve it with all my heart; but if it be but a journey for curiosity and your own satisfaction, for greater liberty or pleasure, to have something to talk of on your return, and to be able to distribute relics among your friends, then, Madam, allow me to say, it seems to me, that for such trifling advantages, it is not quite conformable to Christian simplicity to expose oneself to so much dissipation and expense; still less does it agree with that interior recollection, with that habit of hidden retirement, with that estrangement from the tumult of the world, which are the pearls of great price, composing the treasure of an interior soul, such as I suppose, Madam, yours to be. I should not have taken this liberty if you had not asked my opinion; and I do not now intend to give it to you as an infallible law nor to cross directly your pious intentions. Therefore, consult your confessor. Meanwhile, be consoled at, perhaps, not

seeing the Passionists at Rome, as there are well-grounded hopes of your seeing them soon in France.

The Foundation at Boulogne has never been set aside or abandoned, but only delayed, on account of circumstances with which the Abbe Haffreingue is well acquainted. In an instant Almighty God can smooth all these difficulties and render all easy. Let us be souls of great faith, great confidence, and great prayer, and we shall see wonders.

If Mr. Phillipps comes to Boulogne, tell him, if you please, to honor me with a few lines on the state of affairs in England. Tell me what steps must be taken to negotiate an introduction into that country, since next year the Order will have a new General, and it would be well that there should be found in readiness some elements or rudiments of information on an affair of such importance. As to the books which I wished for, I intended to have given up the thoughts of them, because it came into my head that perhaps you would not tell me the cost of them, nor let me pay for them. But as you are so good as to press me so kindly to tell you what I want, I do so, fearing, however, that at last I shall become burdensome to you. I have, then, for a particular reason, a pressing want of the Bible lately printed at Lyons, in small 8vo. and of the book called *Concordantie Biblicorum* of the last edition at Lyons. I know not how to repay all your charity. If my poor prayers will suffice, be sure, Madam, that in my spiritual exercises and my sacrifices you hold a special place at the head of all my friends, and that I continually ask our Lord to make you all His own, to detach you entirely from this fleeting world, and to fill you with His Spirit, so that your passage through life may be accomplished with the flight of an eagle, without ties to hold you back. O I entreat you, ask of our good God the same thing for me! Do not forget to join to this your prayers for our entrance into France and England. Salute the Abbé Haffreingue, the Abbé Bernard, and Mr. Phillipps, if you see him.

When I shall have received the books to the following address, “Roma, Santi Giovanni e Paolo de’ Padri Passionisti,” I will give you notice.

Meanwhile, believe me to be with sentiments of gratitude and veneration, Madam,

Your most humble servant,

Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, Passionist

## LETTER XXXI

To Mrs. Canning  
From Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus  
Rome  
Jan. 22, 1839

J.X.P.

Madam,

Your last letter, dated from England, has been for me a subject of high and sweet consolation, capable of making me for a time forget the anguish which is at every moment caused in me by the afflicting spectacle of a world which goes daily more astray. I have blessed our Lord for His mercies towards us, and especially for the precious opening which His Divine Providence is now making for a colony of Passionists in England. He has not forgotten His ancient prediction in favor of an Island which one of our Popes used to call the land of saints... I have not yet spoken of this matter to Lord Clifford; but I have sent him a note to invite him to an interview on the subject. However, what you tell me is enough to convince me of the good state of things, and to make me look on our settlement in England as a thing very feasible. I have given your letter to the Father General and also to Father Dominic. They have determined on the answer to be given you on the principal point, about which there will be no delay.

It is above all necessary that your honored cousin, the Rev. Mr. Spencer, or Mr. Phillipps, or both together, should address a letter in form of a petition to the General Chapter of our Order, which will soon be assembled in Rome. In this letter they must state, 1, the need and the desire of the people of such or such a district or county to have some Passionist missionaries; 2, the consent of his Lordship, the Bishop of the place to their establishment in his diocese; 3, the approbation, at least passive, of the government; 4, an account of the place which is offered for our lodging; that is, a very poor house and a little church; 5, what support we may reckon upon from persons of distinction, who should be mentioned by name. The conclusion of the petition must be a formal request to the venerable Chapter for three or four religious missionaries to be Catholic apostles of England.

This petition may be drawn up in French, but it must be in a handwriting legible and intelligible to a set of poor Italians, such as we are, and on the paper which will unfold, in the form of a Roman memorial; that is, with the name of the petition on the front page, which must



be blank, headed only with the address to the Rev. General Chapter, in the following form. ‘To the Venerable General Chapter of the Passionist Fathers’; the whole enclosed in an ordinary envelope, addressed to the Most Rev. Father Procurator General, resident at Saints John and Paul, Rome. This envelope, for the sake of economy, may and ought to contain what you will be pleased to answer me individually; I mean the inside of the envelope itself, without any farther paper, as our most Rev. Procurator will convey it as it is to me, provided the petition has another envelope equally directed to the most Rev. Procurator General.

The members of the approaching Chapter, with whom I have already spoken, are very well disposed. Therefore, do not lose time, but dispatch the document as soon as possible. For if we let pass this occasion of treating an affair of this importance in a full assembly of the Fathers who have a voice in such matters, the execution of the purpose would be indefinitely retarded.

Let us hope that our Lord will hear the prayers which I have caused to be made by our religious for this holy undertaking, and that He will accomplish the designs of infinite mercy on misguided England, where the triumph of His grace seems approaching, as we may judge by the conversions which are multiplied there, as well as in America and Asia. Let us have confidence in God, dear Madam, and we shall reach the haven as though borne on His Almighty arms. You, who labor like an apostle for the glory of God, and of this new, or at least not ancient, Congregation of the Passion, may count on the prayers of all its members by virtue of your title of benefactress. For myself, I entreat you incessantly to continue the efforts of this zeal for His glory, but tempered by peace, resignation, and humble submission to His unchangeable decrees. Amen.

I have written to the Abbe Haffreingue to renew the negotiation for Boulogne, as a house there would be of no small advantage as a port or a depot or stepping-stone to England. I am eagerly awaiting his reply. I think you might give him a stimulus.

I am still in expectation of the two volumes, of which you speak, and which you are so kind as to promise me as a present, notwithstanding my reluctance to burden you thus. You shall be informed as soon as I receive them, and I have the honor to offer you, by anticipation, the assurance of my heartfelt gratitude.

Let us, then, not desist, while waiting for our Lord’s time, lifting up our suppliant hands. He knows when and how He has to act by us for His own glory, which thus becomes our glory too.

Be so kind as to remember me to the excellent Mr. Spencer and the zealous and dear Mr.

Phillipps, whom I salute from my heart and to whom you will oblige me by communicating this letter immediately, so that they may, without loss of time, attend to the drawing up of the petition in Roman form, as I have explained above.

Do not forget me, I beg, in your holy prayers; depend on mine which are due and pledged to you, as, I must at all costs prevail with our good God to make you a saint, if you are not one already; that you may be all His, and that dissolved in Him, you may no longer perceive that you are yourself. Amen.

In the pleasing expectation of a charitable answer I am, Madam,  
Your most humble and obedient servant and sincere friend,  
Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, Passionist,

## **LETTER XXXII**

To Rev. Father Dominic

From Monsignor Acton (Afterwards Cardinal)

Monte Citorio, Rome

April 7, 1839

Very Rev. Father,

I have not been able to find the translation of Mr. Spencer's letter, and I now remember that I sent it with the original to Propaganda. I will take care to get it back, and, meanwhile, I enclose you these few lines as a petition, having been earnestly entreated by the same Mr. Spencer to interest myself in the bringing about a happy conclusion of this affair.

With most profound respect,

I am your most devoted and most obedient servant,

C. Acton

**COPY OF THE MEMORIAL OR PETITION**, which is alluded to above, drawn up by Monsignor Acton and presented by Father Dominic to the General Chapter, led, as we shall see, by the succeeding letter from Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, to the first formal resolution to effect a foundation of Passionists in England.

Most Reverend Fathers,

The Rev. George Spencer, apostolic missionary in England, knowing how great is the zeal of the Congregation of Passionists for the conversion of that kingdom, it having been an object so near the heart of your venerable Founder, begs most respectfully to state that circumstances appear to indicate that the moment may be approaching in which our Lord, in the counsels of His mercy, is preparing something great in favor of that same kingdom, in which anciently there flourished, in such magnificence, all the religious Orders of the Church. It would be of the greatest advantage if there could be brought thither also the devoted sons of the venerable Father Paul, who, by their example and by their prayers, might be the instruments there of great good. Mr. Phillipps, a Catholic proprietor, is willing to make an offering of a house in the county of Leicester, which might lodge six or seven religious. A devout lady, recently converted, engages to give every year the sum of fifty pounds sterling, two hundred and twenty-five Roman dollars; and there are grounds to hope that farther resources will not be wanting from the alms of the faithful. Your memorialist hopes that your most reverend assembly, taking this affair into consideration, will be pleased to accept an offer, which promises so well, and to enter on negotiations for carrying it into effect. In this hope, he offers the assurance of his profound veneration, etc.\*

\*We think it well here to append in a note an extract of a letter from Monsignor Acton to Mr. Spencer, received a short time previously to the presenting of the above memorial. It does not bear directly on the principal matter treated of in this correspondence, that is, the foundation of the Congregation of the Passion in England; but it will show how zealously interested the pious writer was in the great object which the Congregation, after the example of their Blessed Founder, had so much at heart, and which drew them to our shores, the conversion of England.

Rome, Dec. 8, 1838

Hon. Rev. and Dear Sir,

Nothing could be more consoling to me than the interesting accounts given me by Lord Clifford of your meritorious exertions in the great cause which excites all the wishes of your heart, and all the energy of your cooperation, the promotion of religion and the extinction of error in our common country. But, as the conversion of men is the work of Divine grace, you have very properly instituted a holy association of persons, joining together in prayer, to obtain from the great Giver of all good gifts that which on the part of man alone can meet but with

obstacles. Moved by your pious example, I have requested from the Nuns of several communities in this country one communion every week to that great intention. Miss Hartwell, a convert, and now a Nun of the Discalced Carmelites, has, at my request, introduced this devotion in her Convent and begged it in other Convents of her Order. A venerable Bishop in this country told me he had been in the habit, for many years, of praying for the conversion of England. Everything seems to indicate that God, in His mercies, has some design upon that country, whose influence over a great part of the world must have been permitted for some good...

God bless your endeavors and crown them with success. Recommending myself to your worthy prayers, I beg leave to remain,

My Dear Rev. Sir,

Yours very sincerely and affectionately,

C. Acton

### **Letter XXXIII**

To Mrs. Canning

From Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus

Saints John and Paul, Rome

April 12, 1839

J.X.P.

I can at length write to you, Madam, with assurance and with the most sweet consolation, that the establishment of the Passionists in England is determined on. The General Chapter has received and granted the petition of the Rev. Mr. Spencer, presented in his name by Monsignor Acton, and has decreed that some Fathers of the Order should go to that much loved Island, to effect the foundation of a house of Passionists, and at the same time to work at the salvation of souls under the authority of the Bishop. But it was considered necessary to ask for a little time, in order to provide all that will be proper, as well for their journey as for their lodging here. Nevertheless, if this arrangement and this delay in any way put out of course the measures taken by the Rev. Mr. Spencer, or are of any inconvenience to him or to Mr. Phillipps, the Father General is willing to send the Fathers destined for this mission at once. Meanwhile, I beg of you to write to me immediately something positive, which may regulate our course. Father Dominic

and Monsignor Acton have likewise written to Mr. Spencer in the same terms and beg for a decisive answer. Be so good also as to tell me how the journey must be made, and all else which you judge necessary for me to know. I thank you in the name of the Chapter and of the whole Order, for all the interest you constantly take about us, and I entreat you to persevere in it until the holy work is accomplished. Blessed be our good Lord who has accomplished our wishes and our prayers. Have the kindness to write to me and to pray for me. It only remains for me to renew to you the assurance of my gratitude and of my sincere esteem.

I am, Madam,  
your most humble servant,  
Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, Passionist

What the circumstances were, which delayed the execution of the above decree, does not clearly appear from any letters preserved. Whatever the case might be, when, sometime later, the offer was made of an immediate settlement in Belgium, this was accepted and acted upon.

#### **LETTER XXXIV**

To the Rev. Father Dominic of the Mother of God  
From the Hon. And Rev. George Spencer  
St. Mary's College, Oscott, near Birmingham  
March 5, 1840

My dear Father Dominic,

I write to you in English, not doubting that, as you told me some years ago, you would be able to understand me in that language. You are by this time quite familiar with it, especially as you will have been studying it with new zeal, since circumstances have opened to you a nearer prospect of coming to England, or, at least, near it. I have not been so happy as to have much to do in forwarding your present prospect of coming almost within sight, we may say, of the land of your pious desires. I have not been worthy of this honor, but in seeing the work carried on by others who have risen unexpectedly to undertake it, I have a better assurance that Almighty God is ordering all things for you, than if I had exerted myself more to forward your coming. Since the Chateau d'Ere has been given to your Order, to found there a Ritiro, I have done nothing but

mention your intended settlement there in a Catholic magazine, published at London every month, and, without my asking for contributors, some sums have been sent to me voluntarily, in all amounting to thirty pounds sterling, or about seven hundred and fifty francs.

And now I must entreat your prayers for myself; I have been, for nearly a year, placed in the college of our district, where I have the religious instruction of about one hundred boys of the best Catholic families of England and Ireland. Nothing can be of more importance to the country than that a holy spirit of piety should be poured forth in this house, from which priests are furnished to a large portion of the country, and so many youths brought up for the most distinguished Catholic stations. I hope you also pray continually for my family. None of them have yet begun to turn to the Church. But we must not despair. God is certainly pleased by our perseverance and He has power, when He chooses, to satisfy our long, continued desires.

May God, in His mercy, bring you at length to help us.

I am your affectionate friend,

George Spencer

## **LETTER XXXV**

To Mrs. Canning

From Rev. Father Dominic

\*Freidmont, near Tournay

June 19, 1840

J.X.P.

Madame,

I assure you I could not withhold my tears on reading your very dear letter. With great pleasure we will say Mass, according to your intention, on the 23rd of June. That is the day of my baptism, Ah! Madam, how happy I am at having left the beautiful Italy to come to this country. I care nothing for the beauty of the country. I care only for the fulfilment of my prayers. It is now twenty-six years and a half, Madam, that I have been desiring to leave Italy to see our most beloved England. Oh! how near am I now to seeing it! I hope it...

But would it not be possible, Madam, to see you at our house at Ere? I hope also for this. For the present allow me to offer you my respects, with those of my companions, who are with me

here. I beg you, to excuse my bad writing and my mistakes, for it is the first time of my writing in French.

I will expect you, Madam, at Ere, and am

Your most humble and obedient servant,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

\*At Freidmont is a large establishment under the care of the Brothers of Charity. They have the charge of at great number of lunatics. This is their principal object, but they also give accommodation to priests who wish to live retired. It appears that Father Dominic and his companions stayed with these good Brothers some days while the house at Ere, which is about four miles distant, was being prepared to receive them. A close friendship was thus formed between the two houses, which still continues. One of the Passionist Fathers goes to Freidmont every week as confessor to the Brothers.

## **LETTER XXXVI**

To Mrs. Canning

From the Abbé Bernard

Enclosing the Above

Lille

June 20, 1840

Excellent Protectress of the Missionaries,

I have just received this letter from Father Dominic, directed to you, enclosed in one for me, and, as it was not sealed, I have read it and add a word of my own.

You also will, no doubt, shed tears on seeing that he and you were baptized on the same day! God was preparing his work long before!

And now how are these poor people to get on at Ere? Belgium will give them nothing; nothing but an alb or two for their chapel. They have neither chalice nor ciborium. I am going to lend them my chalice till Providence sends me some funds.

Father Dominic's confessor foretold, before he left Rome, that he would have to suffer great hunger. I would wish not to be the occasion of it.

During the time I was with the Fathers, I thought I could see that they are men of the greatest

merit, whose dependence is solely on the cross.

They have already made acquaintance with the Jesuits at Brugelette, and I believe they will become attached to each other, but all that does not give bread.

Would that Mrs. Canning and Mr. Spencer might bring them some pounds sterling out of the stores of England.

Yours most sincerely in Jesus Christ,  
Bernard, Priest

(The Abbé Bernard is now Vicar General of Cambrai.)

## **LETTER XXXVII**

To Father Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

St. Mary's College, Oscott, Birmingham

June 19, 1840

My dear Father Dominic,

How wonderful are the ways of God, that I should now be sitting down to write a letter in English to you on the affairs of the English mission, in which I see you engaged as fully, I hope I may say, as myself. I will not spend more time now in expressions of my joy and admiration at these circumstances. We have no leisure, thank God, for useless words. The thing is to proceed to business. When we have, both of us, worked a little longer up hill, against the difficulties which beset us both, in working in our respective spheres for the common cause, we shall in due time have the comfort of talking them over, and relating to each other the merciful ways in which God has helped us through them, as I trust confidently He will. I have today received your beautiful letter of the 11th June. I was intending at the first moment of spare time to write to your excellent friend, Monsr. Fiévet Chombard, in answer to his letter, in which he gave me notice of your being arrived with some companions at Lille.

The principal object of my letter would have been to speak of the young man whom I proposed as a subject for your Institute. Monsieur F. told me that as you had arrived, I had



nothing to do but to send him at once. Mr. F. said that you would want someone to teach you how to pronounce English. I have no idea of doing anything in this way without my bishop, so I asked Dr. Walsh. He, being informed that Dr. Wiseman was a great friend to your Institute and was interested about your settlement at Ere, recommended that as Dr. Wiseman is coming very soon as our Coadjutor Bishop, we should wait to receive his advice about it. I entreat your prayers for this college, where I hope it will not be long before I see you.

I am yours most truly,

George Spencer

### **LETTER XXXVIII**

To Father Dominic

From the Right Rev. Wiseman (Now Cardinal)

St. Mary's College, Birmingham

Sept. 28, 1840

(Written immediately after his arrival in England from Rome, as Bishop Coadjutor for the Central District.)

Very Rev. Father in Christ,

If, on my way through Belgium, I did not go to visit you, this was not only for want of time but also from my having heard from a French priest, who was coming from Tournay, that one of your community, whom I naturally concluded to be your Paternity, was actually in England. I hoped then to find you here but have been disappointed. It seems to me that the moment of your coming to England is not far distant. Our good Bishop, Mgr. Walsh, has already fixed his eyes on the house and mission of Aston Hall, situated in the country, and not far from the residences of the Earl of Shrewsbury and of Mr. Phillipps,\* formerly a convent of nuns, afterwards a Franciscan house, and therefore well suited for the purposes of a religious community. There is annexed to it a very extensive piece of ground, which may yield at the rate of £40 a year, fit for the pasture of cows, as, in this country, people use a great deal of milk, and, moreover, an annual stipend of about £80 for the support of the church and mission. The house, with its garden, is surrounded by a moat, which may be filled with running water, so that it is a perfect retreat. The only difficulty which I foresee is in regard to the service of the parish, since it is necessary that there should be instructions given and confessions heard in English. Under the circumstances,

however, I recommend to your Paternity to write on the subject to the Most Rev. Father Provost General to obtain his permission for you to come and examine everything. If you think fit, you may also forward to him this my letter. The relics, which were given me in charge at Rome for your Paternity, are coming with my luggage by sea and will soon be here.

I recommend myself earnestly to the fervent prayers of all your community, as also of the community of Saints John and Paul. I am, with every sentiment of sincere respect,

Very Rev. Father,

Your most devoted humble Servant,

N. Wiseman

\* There appears here a geographical mistake. Mr. Phillips's residence in Leicestershire is at a very considerable distance from Aston. This mistake would be very natural, as Cardinal Wiseman had but just arrived from Italy, and as yet could have seen very little of the Midland Counties of England.

## **LETTER XXXIX**

To Rev. James Ford

From Father Dominic

St. Mary's College, Oscott

Dec. 2, 1840

J.X.P.

My dearest Sir,

Do you remember still your old servant and faithful friend in Jesus Christ, Father Dominic, the Passionist? On my side, I can assure you that I have never forgotten you from the first moment that I had the honor to know you in Rome. Eight years had already passed since I heard any news about you, though I have constantly asked after you, and I know not whether you have received a long letter which I addressed you in answer to one which I received from you in Lucca, when this very day, since my arrival here for a short visit, Mr. George Spencer has given me an account of you. I have been consoled at this, though not in the degree that I should have desired. When will it be allowed me to hear the news that you have determined to embrace the Catholic religion? Yes, this would indeed console me. I hope it. I know that you are good, that you love Jesus Christ and His religion from your heart. You cannot then but be afflicted at seeing

this most holy religion profaned by so many, who lacerate and tear it into pieces, as I may say, sparing nothing of that which it possesses, however holy. Its dogmas, the most sacred and the best established, of the Trinity, of the Incarnation of the Word, etc., are called in question. Every Protestant assumes the right to examine everything, even to the symbols of the faith, and to correct that which our fathers have settled and so many martyrs have sealed with their own blood. What way is there left to put to silence these innovators, who become more numerous every day? I can see no other way than to fall back upon the venerable, unshaken authority of the holy Catholic Church, which, being founded by Jesus Christ and based upon a firm rock, has not changed and will never change, but, more steadfast than the sun, remains always the same. Let her voice be heard and it is enough. Ah! if all the true lovers of Jesus Christ would come to this point and would make common cause, what a happy result might be hoped for. But if people will follow no road but that of examining and if each one will set himself up as supreme judge of faith, we shall dispute in vain. There remains no authority to put to silence proud insubordinate spirits. Every Protestant will think himself to have a right to protest anew against his own particular church, since the founders of Protestantism have taken the liberty to protest against the definitions of the universal Church. In this way, where will matters end? Ah! may the end be to make an end of protesting against the Catholic Church, and all will end well. I know that many wise Protestants begin to acknowledge the truth of what I say. I hope you also will do so. Would to God I could go to see you! How much might I say to you on this subject! I cannot, however, do so. I must, in a few days, return to my residence in a new house, which we have opened in Belgium, near Tournay. Could not you come thither? How much I should desire to embrace you and open to you my heart and my desires; I hope to see you again before I die. I hope, too, yes, I hope to see you in heaven, with your good lady and your dear children. I hope you will one day be not only a Catholic but an apostle of the Catholic faith. But when, my dear Sir, when? Take notice that years pass by, and that eternity approaches, which will never pass. Let us not uselessly waste the time which God gives us to work out our own and others' salvation. *'While we have time, let us work'* (Gal. 6:10). Ah! if I could with my blood cooperate to the salvation of the precious souls redeemed by Jesus Christ, how gladly would I shed it. But I am good for nothing. If I am good for anything, I wholly dedicate myself to the service of my dear Mr. Ford. I am then, Sir, and always shall be,

Your most humble and obedient Servant in Jesus Christ,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

A few lines added by Mr. Spencer.

St. Mary's College, Oscott

Dec. 3, 1840

My dear Ford,

Padre Domenico, having given me this letter to put into the post, I am happy to have the occasion of once more reminding you of myself. I don't know whether you ever have had distinct information of my being established here ever since April, 1839. I find this a place which agrees better both with my feelings and taste and my health, than any that I have yet been in, I think. I hope I may hear again soon of your welfare. You may imagine with what pleasure I greeted Father Dominic in England after twenty-seven years of longing desires on his part to come here. He has as yet no habitation here, but I trust it will please God to accomplish at length his wishes and to place him among us. One of the first topics he spoke of after entering this house was yourself. God grant you and I and he may be one. With my best respects to Mrs. Ford,

I am yours most affectionately,

George Spencer

I wish you would come again this way and see me here.

## **LETTER XL**

To Father Dominic

From Mr. Phillipps

Grace-Dieu Manor

Dec. 3, 1840

(Written in Italian)

My dear and beloved Father in Christ,

I have heard this moment that you are at Oscott. Oh, what delightful news. Oh, how much I rejoice in the Lord at it! At length an apostle, a man of God, is come into England. We have seen at last accomplished the prophecies of your venerable Founder, Father Paul of the Cross, regarding the foundation of your Institute in England. We see at length the effect of so many prayers offered to God by your Institute for the conversion of this kingdom. Oh, thanks be to God, the giver of every good. Oh! thanks be to Mary, to whose intercession we owe this and many other favors. But, my dear Father, you are at Oscott, and will you not come to Grace-Dieu to see and embrace again your friend and brother, who loves you so much in Jesus Christ? I cannot believe that you will return to Belgium without first seeing me. It would be too much cruelty. Come, then, and give me this consolation. I shall say no more at present, as I hope to see you soon and to speak to you *'face to face.'* My wife sends you her best compliments, and desires to see and become acquainted with you.

I am yours most affectionately,

Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

## **LETTER XLI**

To Father Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

St. Mary's College, Oscott

Feb. 4, 1841

My dear Father Dominic,

I am well aware that you must be spending your time in much anxiety and fears about the accomplishment of your holy enterprise of settling in England; but these fears will have been tempered by confidence in God. In flying to God for relief and help, you will have been gaining so much increase of grace and wisdom, as will make you more and more fit to do great good in England, when the happy time comes at last of your being fixed among us. I might have given you some satisfaction sooner, but I have not been solicitous about doing this, for the same reason as I mentioned above, because I know that you have communion with God, and he is your

comforter, and you have prudence, charity, and patience, and will not, like some, quickly imagine that you are forgotten and neglected because some exterior observances of civility are omitted towards you. I am led into the neglect of many duties as a correspondent, from not making the most of my time, so as to find leisure for writing letters, besides attending to my employments here. I sincerely desire that it may please God that in a more substantial way I may show my friendship for you, and my wish for your success. I was hesitating for some time whether to write anything for the public on the subject of the Passionists. There was some danger of opposition being roused on the part of some who might take advantage of the existing laws, which forbid the entrance of religious Orders into England. But after consulting several prudent persons, I have determined to write confidently. I was too late to have a letter inserted in the Catholic magazine for the present month of February, but notice has been given in it, that a letter from me on the subject of prayers for the conversion of England and the prospects of the Passionists in England would appear in the next number at the beginning of March. If this has as good an effect as when I said something about the Passionists about a year ago in the same magazine, I shall have enough for your wants to send you very shortly. I give you notice of this now, in order that you may, with your brethren, pray for me that I may write and speak on this and on every subject as it may please God, and that He may prevent ill-disposed persons from opposing our good designs. I have seen Mrs. Gandolphy since you were here, and she promised something towards the expenses of your brethren traveling from Rome. Others have also promised to contribute. We must, therefore, go on trusting in God. Dr. Wiseman is now in Dublin, where he was invited to preach and to meet the Catholic bishops of Ireland, who are assembled together. He writes in great joy at the spirit which he sees rising among them, to exert themselves for the conversion of England. You will soon be working with us in person, I trust. Till then, you must work for us by your prayers more and more, and, above all, that we may be worthy to become instruments of such a great work as the salvation of souls.

I am, my dear Rev. Father,

Yours most affectionately,

George Spencer

## **LETTER XLII**

To Father Dominic  
From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer  
St. Mary's College  
April 8, 1841

My dear Father Dominic,

I have not been much of a helper to you as yet, but I have some intelligence to send you, which will show that God is raising to you better helpers than I am. I have not written many letters to individuals about you because, firstly, the place which is intended for you by Dr. Walsh is not yet vacant. I do not know whether there is any immediate prospect of having it at our command, till which time it would not be worth while that you should take your journey here or bring subjects from Rome. In the second place, I was waiting to see what the effect would be of my writing two or three letters about you in the Catholic magazine. Among others, I wrote to Mrs. Hutchinson of Edinburgh, the lady who sent me the first donation of ten pounds last year, and asked her whether she knew anything of the prospect to which you alluded in your last letter, of an opening for the Passionists in Scotland. She told me that Sir William Stewart, lately a convert to Catholicity, is the person from whom there are expectations of a place for you. Since she wrote, I have had a letter from Dr. Gillis, the Coadjutor Bishop of Edinburgh, who enclosed to me a letter written to him by Sir William Stewart, to tell him that he can give ground for your brethren in various places. He mentions three. First he speaks of a spot which Dr. Gillis and he had looked at together, and thought would do very well for a house or a church, but here there would only be two or three acres of indifferent pasture ground. There is another place near the town of Dunkeld, where there would be thirty acres, partly wooded, a most beautiful situation, and capable of being made productive, but no house. Sir William, however, would give assistance in building one. Another place there is, where there is a small farm and house (the only one vacant on the property), which he would give about September, or sooner if really necessary. Sir William Stewart adds these words: "You may believe that I should do everything in my power to add to the comfort and supply the wants of these good men. I say so sincerely, and I hope you may count on it." Dr. Gillis, in sending me this letter, says that as far as he is personally concerned, he should be delighted to see the Passionist in the district. I have written today to Dr. Gillis, to tell him that I should send you an account of these proposals and to assure

him that you would not be wanting in zeal to correspond with them. You will be able to hear a good deal more about Scotland from Mr. Edgar. When I mentioned this letter from Dr. Gillis to Dr. Walsh and Dr. Wiseman, who both are in the house, they said it was very pleasing, but they will not hear of losing you from this district. You must, however, get brothers from Rome sufficient for both objects, and though we have some delay, God will bring it all about.

I am happy to tell you that the Oxford people are making most rapid advances towards Catholicity. The circumstances of their progress are not public. Dr. Wiseman knows them, but is not allowed to tell them. He declares positively that soon there will be most astonishing things brought to light, such as the most sanguine people have not thought of. So we have only to wait in patience, pray, and sanctify ourselves, and soon God will call on us to do something for the good cause, better than we have yet done.

I am yours most affectionately,  
George Spencer

### **LETTER XLIII**

To Father Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

St. Mary's College, near Birmingham

June 8, 1841

My dear F. Dominic,

You have had to be meriting graces for England by the exercise of patience. It is a happy thing to be assured that all our affairs are in the hands of God; for without that assurance, in such a case as yours, we might be discouraged. But you will not be discouraged, I trust, because you will have a happy confidence that God, who brought you thus far towards the fulfilment of your long cherished desires, will not fail to complete His work, if you only continue patient and faithful, unless it be indeed that we in England prove unworthy of having the presence of you and your companions among us, and you have to seek your reward elsewhere. But yet I hope that we shall, none of us, be disappointed, but that God will give us full compensation for all the time during which we have been waiting. Mrs. Canning came here as she told you she would; but it



was not the will of God that she should succeed in her wishes of opening the way for you, at least not at this time. Dr. Wiseman had nothing to say to her, except that he and Dr. Walsh were still in the same mind as they had been since the time that you were here; still desirous to have you and your brothers settled in the District, but unable as yet to put into your hands the house which they intend for you. The Priest who is placed there cannot yet be removed; but Dr. Walsh is himself now in the neighborhood of that house, and intends to take measures on the subject before he returns. But he is hindered again from proceeding as he would wish about that or any other affair by an attack of illness, under which he is now laboring. All will be right in due time. I should be very sorry to lose you from our district by reason of this delay; though, if it be God's will that Scotland should have the benefit of your first labors for this kingdom, I will not be jealous of the preference which God gives to that people by sending you there. Whichever place you come to first, I trust it will not be long before you can send a new colony to the other. I have heard no more since I last wrote to you about the prospects in Scotland. I entreat you not to lose courage, but to go on working for us by your prayers, more and more earnestly, until you have to begin laboring for us in person. God has His own plans and will not be hurried by us. I beg you will give my respects to Mons. Fiévet Chombard and the Abbé Bernard. I hope I shall one day make their acquaintance personally.

I am, my dear Father Dominic,  
Your faithful servant in Christ,  
George Spencer

#### **LETTER XLIV**

To F. Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

St. Mary's College

July 3, 1841

My dear F. Dominic,

Your letter, which I received yesterday, expresses such feelings that I am convinced you will soon attain your end; for that perfect conformity to the will of God and that readiness to sacrifice

or delay our most favorite schemes, if it be His will, is the great thing necessary, I believe, to make Him remove all difficulties and give us all that we wish. Dr. Wiseman tells me today that in three weeks' time he and Dr. Walsh will be together in Belgium. They are going to pay a visit, I believe, to Lord and Lady Shrewsbury, who are staying at Spa. Dr. Wiseman will also desire to see Monsgr. Fornari at Brussels. Certainly, not the least object they will have will be to see you and your community at Ere. I hope they will be able to arrange everything with you for a speedy establishment in England, which, as far as I can judge, is just ripe for the entrance of such as you are. Only continue now till you come to prepare yourself for the trials and disappointments which the prejudices of Protestants and the coldness and indifference of Catholics will certainly occasion you. Only persevere to the end, trusting in God, and if all others disappoint you, He will not. I am going, next week, to join Mr. Phillipps and his family in North Wales, where he is about to spend some time on the sea-coast. I shall be there till the end of our vacation. I do not like being so long out of the way of my work, but it is reckoned advisable for my health that I should go. I hope to be preparing, while there, to return with better dispositions, more wisdom, and more humility to my post. I will forward your letter to Mrs. Canning by the next post.

I am,

Your faithful friend and servant in Christ,

George Spencer

## **LETTER XLV**

To F. Dominic

From the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer

Barmouth, North Wales

July 23, 1841

My Dear F. Dominic.

You cannot yet have heard of the fate of your letter to the Oxford men. You do not yet know whether it ever was sent to them, and I now send you already a long and beautiful answer, which I am sure you will be delighted with. I sent your letter to Mr. Bloxam of Magdalene College, and it is by him that this answer has been forwarded to me. He tells me that the author desires that his

letter should not be published, but, of course, you did not think of doing this. From reading this answer to you, and from other writings which are being published from Oxford, it seems to me, more and more, that we ought to do everything in our power to encourage them, and that it would be a great advantage if the Holy Father could be made acquainted with their position and induced to give them encouragement. But the main thing is that we should continue constant in our prayers and never cease till circumstances are brought round, and they are, in one way or another, united with the Church.

You will, I hope, soon see Dr. Walsh and Dr. Wiseman; I trust they may make arrangements for your quickly coming to England. In the meanwhile, what a comfort it is to you that you have already begun your work for us by this correspondence with Oxford.

Believe me,

Yours most sincerely,

George Spencer

P.S. I am staying here with Mr. Phillipps and his family during our vacation; but I shall, I hope, be at St. Mary's College again before the Assumption.

## **LETTER XLVI**

To Father Dominic

From Dr. Wiseman

Aug. 2, 1841

(Written In Italian)

Dear beloved Father,

I write to you, as I promised, to inform you that I am in Belgium with Dr. Walsh, and that next Friday we shall be at Brussels, where we expect you in the house of the Apostolic Nuncio to speak about our common interests. Will you be so kind as to write a line in answer directed hither?

Believe me,

Your most obedient servant in Christ,

N. Wiseman

## LETTER XLVII

To the Community at Littlemore

From the Rev. Father Dominic

Ere, near Tournay

1841

(This letter is written in Latin, as Father Dominic had not yet learnt to write English. It is his second letter to them. The first we have not seen and as that was rather a controversial letter, it is not so suitable to this collection, which is intended to display the feelings and movements of F. Dominic's heart towards England, as the moving power which under God brought the Passionist here.)

J.X.P.

Most dear Brethren in Christ,

Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me. I cannot, my dearest brethren, contain within my breast the excess of my joy. I cannot restrain it from breaking forth into exterior signs of gladness. It is right that my heart and my flesh should rejoice in the living God. I would wish I had innumerable tongues, that I might duly and worthily praise the Divine Goodness for the multitude of tender mercies which this same Divine Goodness has abundantly poured forth on my most beloved English people. Whatever grace, whatever good it pleases God to shed forth on you, I reckon as so much conferred on myself. My heart is so bound to you that I look on you always as a part of my heart. I have always most ardently loved you; I have always longed for you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. But forgive me, if I have not always had so good an opinion as I have of you now, since I have begun to observe you more closely, that is, since I have read your works, especially that dearest letter which you have sent to me, your unworthy servant. I speak in the plural number, first, because I know not who is the author of it; secondly, because I believe you all are of the same mind and of the same judgment. The reasons which moved me to an unfavorable opinion were these: 1. because I read in all books that England was infected with the errors of Protestants, and that the Anglican Church was not simply schismatical but almost entirely Calvinistic; 2. because many years ago, about twelve, while I lived at Rome, I knew a certain priest or, more properly, a *minister* of the Anglican Church with whom I entered into controversies regarding religion and faith, and he certainly was

not so well disposed towards us. He did not admit the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, nor the authority of councils, especially of the Tridentine, nor the veneration of the saints, nor transubstantiation, etc., and asserted that the Roman Church, and all others in communion with it, had fallen into many and most grievous errors. This being the case, I thought all other ministers of the Anglican Church who profess the faith of the thirty-nine articles, to have the same opinions, and consequently that those articles actually contained the doctrine of the Calvinists and other Protestants. This was the cause of my groans, and at the same time of my bad opinion of those articles and of all who followed them. On one part, a desire of your salvation pressed me on; on the other, the prejudiced judgment I had formed was greatly against me. Hence my groans, hence my sighs and tears, hence the bitterness of my heart. I do not mean that I ever lost my hope of your conversion and salvation, but I did not think you so well disposed. But let us give unceasingly thanks to God. Your numerous works and writings, great and small, but principally your dearest letter, addressed to me, have brought me light, joy, and gladness. Not that I think everything accomplished; there appear yet some things to be desired. Would that it were true that the Anglican bishops had maintained the faith of Cardinal Pole in its integrity! We should have to examine whether Parker and his successor did retain the faith of Pole; but I am unwilling now to dwell on this question. What I have thus far learnt of your dispositions is so delightful, that it surpasses all expectation. He who has begun the good work, He will complete, confirm, and establish it. To Him be glory for ever. Amen. May God bless these dispositions, may He cause these seeds of salvation, these pledges of glory to shoot forth by the dew of His grace. Truly I may say that you are not far from the kingdom of God.

I thank you, dearest brethren, for your good will towards me. If you have yet anything which may increase my gladness concerning your welfare, I beg of you refuse not to impart it to me. Above all, tell me if there are many in the English Church who agree with you, and who, like you, are so well disposed. Oh, how happy should I be to be assured of this! I hope, however, it is the case, and I think I may gather it, not doubtfully, from your letter. Fear nothing, dearest brethren, on my side. I am prepared to accept and explain all that comes from you in good part; although some things may not be quite exactly correct; hoping that God Himself, of His goodness, may give you not only a perfect understanding of Catholic dogmas, but also strength, by virtue of which you may at length break through the bonds, if any there be, which keep you still severed from us. Then will we together sing with joy – the snare is broken and we are

delivered. It seems undeniable that one of these snares to be broken is the profession of the thirty-nine articles. For although they might in a manner be explained in a Catholic sense, yet you yourselves well know that they may equally, nay, more easily be understood in a sense not Catholic; therefore, as you very well remark, the Catholic Church does not admit nor approve them, as it never did admit the dissembling professions of faith of certain semi-Arians, which, though they did not exclude the Catholic sense, were yet not sufficiently removed from the sense the Arians. A profession of faith must be clear and open as you yourselves acknowledge and declare. Let us hope that God will grant to us that we may together profess with the mouth what we together hold with the heart, so that not only with one mind but with one mouth we may glorify God and gladden the Church after her so many groans and so many tears shed at the most bitter tearing away from her of the children which she had borne to Christ. I hope I shall not see death before all these things are accomplished. What joy will it be, not only on earth, but also before the angels of God. What will be my joy! What my exultation! What glory will accrue to God most high from so happy an event! What advantage to the holy Church of God! What may not be hoped for from this union! What might we not do for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Now we labor separately for the conversion of the heathen, especially in Asia, where our brethren labor unto death; then, as I hope, we shall labor in the vineyard of the Lord in perfect union. Oh, how good and how pleasant it will be for brethren to dwell together in unity! But when, my dear brethren, will that day dawn? I hope it is not far distant. Meanwhile, let us all pray together, let us weep a little over our sins, and the sins of our forefathers, that God may have mercy on us, because we are greatly filled with contempt. Our enemies have laughed us to scorn. All the heretics, all the incredulous, all atheists, all infidels meet together against the Lord and against His Christ. All tear to pieces the bosom of the Church. We might, and we ought, to oppose an impregnable rampart against their efforts; but while we are divided, we cannot so effectually resist them. We must labor, then, that first this most desirable union be obtained. For my part, I would not refuse to shed all my blood. Tell me, brethren, if I might do anything for so great a good, and most gladly will I spend and be myself spent for you. Meanwhile, let us together pray to God that He would bring to nothing our enemies. I have never hitherto ceased to pray for you, nor will I cease for the time to come; nay, I could not cease if I would. Do you also pray, most beloved brethren, for me, and for the salvation in common of us all. I hope sometime to see you and to speak with you, that our joy may be full.

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

## LETTER XLVIII

To Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps

From Rev. Father Dominic

St. Mary's College, Oscott

Feast of St. Bridget, October 8, 1841

J.X.P.

My dearest Sir, most beloved in Christ,

Here I am again in England, come here to stay, as I hope, and to work all the time of my life for the glory of God and for the salvation of the dear souls redeemed by the most precious blood of Jesus Christ. Yesterday evening I arrived here at Oscott with one of my companions, a Passionist priest, Irish by birth. I have left at our house in Belgium six religious and two novices. That foundation goes on well, and there is plenty to do for the glory of God. I hope now for plenty to do here. I do not know how long I shall have to stay at Oscott, nor when I shall be able to go to our mission because I have not yet had time to speak with either of the two bishops who are here. I hope, however, soon to see you again either here or at our future house; for I know not if I shall be able to go to you at Grace-Dieu. If I cannot go there in body, I will gladly go in heart to embrace in Jesus Christ yourself, as well as our good Doctor Gentili, whose labors I hear have been blessed by God with great successes. *'He is my brother; may he increase a thousand, thousand times.'*

I have brought with me from Belgium a quantity of manuscripts, which in due time I will do myself the honor of presenting to you. I should wish to have a few copies of the paraphrase of the prayer of Jeremias. If you think well, you might send them here to Mr. Spencer or bring them yourself to our future house.

I entreat you to give my most respectful compliments to your worthy lady, your sister-in-law, etc. Believe me what I am, and always shall be inviolably,

Your most humble servant in Christ,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

The following few lines from Mr. Spencer to Mr. Phillipps are written on the same sheet as the above, the day after (editor).

St. Mary's Coll.

Feast of Saints Denys and Comp., MM.

1841

My dear Ambrose,

Having the commission of forwarding this letter from Padre Domenico, I add a word of my own, though I have not much to say except that all goes on here as usual. Padre Domenico tells you he is uncertain when he is to go to his mission, and so am I. I tell him the beginning of his mission is to exercise patience. No wonder, after the devil has kept him out of England twenty-eight years, that he should keep him shut up and silent in England for some twenty-eight days or even weeks. He can always be learning English. It is a wonder that he is here at all, and at that we must rejoice.

I look forward, as to a happy epoch, to your next visit with Mr. Sibthorpe. Your labor is not lost in bringing these men here. The effect will, I trust, be seen soon springing up.

I am your affectionate brother in Christ,

George Spencer

I make my first preaching in the cathedral tomorrow.

## **LETTER XLIX**

To Rev. James Ford

From Rev. Father Dominic

St. Mary's College, Oscott

Feast of St. Andrew, Avellino, Nov. 10, 1841

J.X.P.

My very dear friend in Jesus Christ, Mr. Ford,



Behold, at length the hour so much desired by me has come; that is, the hour of my coming to England, not to see it only for a few days but to remain and to spend in it what little period of life it pleases God to grant me. After twenty-eight years of desire, His Divine Majesty has vouchsafed to grant my prayers. I shall never be able sufficiently to thank nor sufficiently to correspond with the Divine Goodness for so great a favor. My duty is to do all I can. I will therefore seek to employ all my weak powers for the glory of God and for the salvation of my dear brethren in Jesus Christ. Now, since you are yourself one of those most dear to me on this earth, and particularly in this Island, I was scarcely landed when one of my first thoughts was to enquire after you. I asked several persons, but no one was able to give me any account of you or to tell me where you now are. At last, Mr. Spencer has advised that I should write a letter, which he would send to one of his friends, who would certainly know the place of your residence and be able to forward it to you safely.

Here I am, then, dear Sir, about to give you some account of myself and a trifling token of the esteem I entertain for you. I am come here to England with a companion, a Passionist priest, by birth an Irishman, being invited by Dr. Walsh and Dr. Wiseman, in order, after having learnt the English language, to work at founding a house and novitiate, where we may train some subjects who also may labor in the vineyard of our Lord. Now I am staying at Oscott with my companion, expecting the time for going to our mission. This is all that I can tell you of my present position. Oh! how desirous I am to know something of yours, and especially what are your sentiments regarding our union in one sheepfold under one shepherd. I know that this union is ardently desired by all good Christians and is promoted very diligently by the wisest and most zealous members of the Anglican Church. This last night I have had the sweet consolation to sing Matins at midnight with two most respectable gentlemen, who were formerly ministers of the Anglican Church, and shall continue the same practice every night. You may more easily imagine, than I can express, what a pleasure is this to me. But how much greater would the pleasure be if I could have you also for a companion in singing the praises of God. But can I hope it? Yes, I hope it. I hope it. This hope I have always kept alive in my heart, from the first moment that I had the honor of knowing you. I should not be able easily to go and see you at your house. It will be much more easy for you to come and see me in the house which I hope shortly to have, not far from hence. I shall, therefore, be expecting you, and at the same time expecting the moment when I shall know or see that which my heart so much desires in regard to

you.

If you are so good as to answer me, you may direct the letter to our dearest Mr. Spencer, who will take care to forward it to me. I beg you to believe me, what I invariably have the honor to declare myself,

Your most devoted and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

The following lines are added on the same sheet by Mr. Spencer.

My dear Ford,

You will join us, I am sure, in our satisfaction here, at seeing Padre Domenico at length among us, as he announces to you. I hope, indeed, it will not be long before you and he may see each other once more. I should be myself, also, truly happy to see you. Let us hear where you are and how circumstanced. Would it not suit your health, and so conduce to the advancement of whatever work you are about, to take a trip this way sometime? I heard of you at Northampton some time ago. I went to visit my brother at Althorp, on Michaelmas Day. At Northampton, where, of course, I spent some time, I made my regular call on Miss Jewel, who said she had seen you. I think she told me where you were, but I cannot remember. It is to her that I intend enclosing this letter for you, as Father Dominic states. The place to which Father Dominic is going, in order to establish a house of his Order, is Aston Hall near Stone, Staffordshire, where there is a large house, which once was a monastery but has been for some time in the hands of the Bishop, untenanted. It seems just prepared for him. I do not know when I heard from you, or you from me. It is a long time, and I shall be very happy to see your writing once more; much rather to see yourself. Give my truest regards to Mrs. Ford. I hope you will never suffer my not writing to you for so long to lead you to the idea that I forget you and her and the many happy days we have had together once. I long to renew such intercourse as that used to be with you; but how is it to be? God knows, and to Him I will never cease to pray for it.

I am, yours most affectionately in Christ,

George Spencer

## LETTER L

The following letter is the only one which we shall now produce, written by Father Dominic in English without correction. It will be judged how well he succeeded in learning English for a man who was so far advanced in age before beginning.

To. J. D. Dalgairns, Esq.

From Rev. Father Dominic

Littlemore, near Oxford, Aston Hall

S. Linus Papa et martyr, Sept. 22, 1845

J.X.P.

*‘Blessed be God who has not set aside my prayer nor His mercy from me’* (Ps. 65:20). It will be more easy for you to imagine than for me to declare the pleasure which your kind letter gave to me. Oh, what happiness, what joy to my heart! Come, then, my dear Sir, come, and I shall be happy to receive you, not only into my poor house but also into my heart. Do not think that a very long time will be required for confession and other things necessary. Two or three days, and perhaps one day only, might be sufficient. *‘God gives abundantly to all and does not hold back’* (James 1:5). The way of coming may be this. You may go to Birmingham first; when you are at Birmingham, take the train for Stafford, in the Liverpool station, or line. Our house is far from the Stafford station, five miles, situated in a little village called Aston, and is well known by the name of Aston Hall. In the afternoon there are some coaches going from Stafford to Stone, which pass not far from our house. You may come by them or you may walk, as you please. Suppose you prefer to walk, you may leave your luggage in the house of Mr. Antonio Vitta at Stafford, and he would think of them and send them here by some conveyance. I hope it will not be difficult to find our house, since, by the grace of God, you have succeeded to find out the way to heaven. Come, then, come. I shall remain at home waiting for you. I was to go next Sunday to Cheshire for a retreat, but I shall send there one of my companions in my place.

Will you be so kind as to present my best respects to the Rev. Newman, Mr. St. John, and to all your holy companions of Littlemore. Oh, my dear Littlemore! I love thee. A little more still, and we shall see happy results from Littlemore. When the Reverend, learned and holy superior of Littlemore will come, then I hope we shall see the beginning of a new era. Oh, yes, yes. We shall

see again the happy days of Augustine, of Lanfranc and Thomas. Yes, yes. England will be once more the Isle of Saints and the nurse of new Christian nations, destined to carry the light of the Gospel ‘*to the nations, to kings, and the children of Israel*’ (Acts 9:15).

I am afraid to tire you with my bad handwriting. *‘I do not wish to write with pen and ink; I hope to see you soon and speak face to face. Greet everyone by name and pray for me.’*

Your most faithful servant in Jesus Christ,  
Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

P.S. I hope you will receive in time this letter. I have received yours, three days after it was written.