

**The Life of Saint Paul of the Cross  
Founder of the Congregation  
of the Cross and Passion**

**1694-1775**

**Volume 2 – 1741-1775**

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**CHAPTER TWENTY**

**MISSIONS TO THE SOLDIERS AND INHABITANTS OF ORBETELLO,  
PORTERCOLE AND PORTO LONGONE**

**1741 - 1742**

There is a similarity between a Religious Order and an immortal soul. Each has its own special grace that prepares it for that work that Almighty God wills it to accomplish.

Now that the Congregation of the Passion has its official mandate from the Holy See "to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified," we can examine what is this grace, what is its efficacy, and what will be the fruits it will reap. Soon, we will see Paul of the Cross take his flight from his aery on the heights of Monte Argentario, and spread the wings of an apostle. It is almost meridian of this fiery sun whose flame will enkindle the world.

Paul is forty-seven years of age - the age of maturity, of vitality, the age that produces more thorough and more lasting results than the age of youth. Moreover, he was, by an extraordinary grace, endowed with a rich disposition which never withers with age nor fades with time, but ripens to a richer and more fruitful maturity. He will carry the fire of his zeal undimmed, even to his very last years, and more often than in the preceding pages we will relate one miracle after another.

Once again it is the field of battle. Whilst invaders redden with human blood the earth they devastate, and conquests far from satisfying their ambition, yet too much for their own sepulcher, God makes their greed redound to His glory, to the triumph of His Church and to the salvation of souls.

The death of the Emperor, Charles VI, was the beginning of the famous War of Succession against Austria, a war immortalized by the heroic cry of Hungary, "Let us die for our Queen, Marie-Therese." Pretenders struggled with one another to possess different sections of Empire. The Kings of Spain and of the Two Sicilies claimed for the Infanto, Don Phillip, Lombardy, Parma and Placentia, and had heavily reinforced the garrisons along the coast of Tuscany. On their side, the Austrian troops were advancing and massing their forces. Everything presaged the approaching thunder of battle.

The commanding General of the armies of the League, the Duke of Sangro, desiring that his soldiers prepare themselves for battle like true Christians, invited the Saint from Monte Argentario to preach a mission to them at Orbetello, Portercole and Porto Longone. The apostle went down to Orbetello, accompanied by his chosen companion, Angelo d' Stefano, still a novice. On an open plain a platform had been erected from which Paul preached to a vast assembly of soldiers - Italian, Spanish, French and Swiss.

God repeated here the miracle He had worked in the early days of the Church. Although Paul preached in his native Italian tongue, yet each of the foreign soldiers understood every word as though it had been spoken in their own language and

missed not a word. The sermons, like a two-edged sword, penetrated every heart, even the most hardened in sin. At the tone of his voice, now fearful and threatening like justice, now affectionate and pleading like mercy, the tears, the sobs, the cries of fear or of hope that were heard on every side made the scene one of indescribable wonder.

Emotion reached a climax when the Saint scourged himself with a heavy iron chain until his shoulders were lacerated and streaming with blood. The officers nearest the platform rushed forward and snatched the bloodstained scourge out of his hand, whilst the cries of distress and pity rent the air. From the lips of all came the pleas, "Pardon. Pardon. Mercy. Enough, Father. We are converted."

"Men and women, soldiers, even persons of the highest rank, all who had been at enmity with others," said an officer who was an eye-witness, "were reconciled there in public and begged pardon of each other. Then were carried to the platform and placed at the feet of the preacher obscene and profane books, dice, etc., which Paul burnt in the presence of all, a sight which in itself excited those assisting him to repentance."

Scarcely had he descended the platform than all, rich and poor, officers and soldiers, assembled in a body around his confessional. Let us quote the simple and sincere testimony of a soldier, which we are compelled to abridge.

"Father Paul preached with such fervor that his very face seemed on fire, and the tone of his voice filled the hearts of sinners with terror? It penetrated to the very depths of their soul, and they were converted indeed, the power of the word of God was visible. ...The terror that Father Paul aroused during the beginning of his sermon was tempered by the gentleness with which he concluded. He softened all hearts and encouraged them to trust in God and to hope for pardon. And the people, moved to contrition, shed abundant tears. I saw it all with my own eyes. ...It is quite true that the seed Father Paul sowed in preaching, he reaped in the confessional. He showed such tender charity in hearing confessions that several soldiers, who feared to go to confession because of their many sins, were persuaded by their companions who had already been. And they, too, found in the missionary charity, understanding and an extraordinary gentleness towards all, especially towards the greatest sinner and the most wretched. I have heard this from the soldiers themselves. ...It is indeed true that the preaching of Father Paul produced astonishing conversions in Orbetello..."

Among the soldiers in the Swiss regiment were a great number of Lutherans and Calvinists. When they saw the effects of this mission, the like of which they had never seen in their own religion, awed by the burning charity of the apostle, overcome by the power and the sanctity of his words and, at the same time, enlightened by divine grace, they exclaimed, "Such a preacher can only be the preacher of truth." And through the true apostle they found the true Church.

They came in a crowd to the platform and proclaimed publicly that they wished to abjure the errors of heresy. Among them was a young man of noble bearing, who exclaimed in good Italian, with the conviction of faith that moved all hearts, "I abjure, I detest and I despise the sect of which until this day I have been a member. I am convinced that it is false. I confess and believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the one true Church established by Jesus Christ."

Who could express the tenderness with which Paul pressed them all to his heart.

With paternal solicitude he instructed them in the truths of the faith and prepared them himself for their reception into the Church. The number of abjurations, which could be counted in the circumstances, amounted to seventy. Such, therefore, is the power of a saint: to see him, to hear him, to meet him is, in itself, an evident demonstration of the truth of the Catholic Church.

God blessed and ratified the words of His apostle by the most astonishing prodigies. We will relate only some of them, so extraordinary are they, that if they were not found in the most authentic sources, the Processes of Canonization, we would not dare to mention them.

Here is one which showed the authority of the Saint over the powers of hell, and filled the hearts of all with a salutary fear. One night, after the heavy fatigue of the day, Paul was taking a little rest. A sergeant of the regiment of Namur ran to the house and, beating loudly upon the door, shouted, "Father Paul, come quickly. Hurry. At headquarters the devil is trying to carry away one of the soldiers." The Missioner arose quickly from his bed, took his crucifix and ran to the scene. Surrounded by a tumultuous crowd, as many people as soldiers, he saw with his own eyes the unfortunate soldier, white and trembling with fear, being carried by an invisible power. "Save me," shouted the victim. "The devil is carrying me away." Paul first commanded the evil spirit and then spoke to the soldier, "Fear not. I am here to help you. Repent of your sins; that is sufficient." At the same time he endeavored to inspire in him a great confidence in the mercy of God and in the merits of Jesus Christ, urging him to break all pacts with the devil.

Those present, and especially the soldiers of the regiment, were seized with terror. Paul commanded with authority the enemy of souls, who eventually took flight. The soldier was disfigured after such violent blows, and was so weakened that he could scarcely stand on his feet. Father Paul asked him if he could see the devil. The soldier replied that he could not. Then he begged Paul to hear his confession. The Saint put a rosary around the neck of the soldier and told him not to be frightened, for he had in the beads a powerful protection against the forces of evil. Then he added that he would hear his confession in the morning.

Next morning the soldier was waiting, but, as he was French and did not speak Italian well enough to make his confession in Italian, Father Paul took "him to the Chaplain of the regiment. It is easy to imagine the joy of the soldier. For the rest of his life he showed his gratitude for the favor he had received. One day at Rome, meeting a Passionist, Father Philip of the Holy Savior, he said to him, "I am the soldier that Father Paul, during the mission at Orbetello, delivered from the hands of the devil."

There was another soldier, resolved to make his peace with God, who had gone to kneel at the feet of Father Angelo. While he was accusing himself of his sins, he suddenly felt himself being dragged violently by an invisible power. With all his strength he held on to the confessional, but this mysterious force dragged not only the penitent but also the confessional and the confessor. The witnesses of this strange scene went in haste to tell Father Paul that the confessional was moving down the church. The people were terrified, and their cries were rending the air when the Saint arrived. He put his beads around the neck of the penitent, commanded the evil spirit and, taking the trembling soldier under his mantle, led him to the sacristy where he heard his confession, thus freeing him from the pursuits of the devil. The soldier experienced

such peace of soul and such tranquility of heart that he wished to die in the grace of God. When he re-entered the church this desire became stronger, almost irresistible. Then, raising a tomb stone, he threw himself into the grave, believing in good faith that, to assure himself of heaven, he was permitted to bury himself alive. Father Paul came to the scene and ordered the soldier to come out of the grave, but the soldier did not easily yield. A further command was necessary. The Saint, relating the incident to a priest, said with a smile that it was more difficult to get this poor sinner out of the grave than it was to snatch him from the power of the devil.

One evening, while the Saint was preaching in the Church of the Holy Cross, which no longer exists, he stopped suddenly and exclaimed, "My poor brothers, my poor brothers." He came down from the platform and walked to the door, followed by all the congregation. A vast fire was raging on the mountain. The forest surrounding the Retreat of the Presentation was on fire. The Saint made a sign of the cross and at once the flames were extinguished. A pillar of smoke, like a black cloud, arose into the air and then disappeared.

Towards the end of the mission, Paul ordered a solemn procession of penance. The people marched in a long double row, then several thousand soldiers, modest and devout, followed by the clergy covered with ashes, and the holy Missioner, barefooted, with a cord and a chain around his neck, a crown of thorns on his head and a heavy cross on his shoulders. He was followed by the highest dignitaries, magistrates, army officers and a host of others. From time to time the procession halted; the zealous Missioner, then, delivered an inspiring sermon, arousing in all hearts a horror of sin, a love for Jesus Crucified and a firm resolution to be faithful to God until the very last breath.

The closing of the mission was for all a day of joy and of triumph. After the sermon and his final exhortation, the apostle of the Crucified imparted the Papal Blessing, a fruitful and divine blessing, for through the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself, blesses souls. The Lord gave proof of it in the circumstances by a prodigy of mercy. A soldier, in spite of the example of his companions, remained unshaken in his obstinacy, and even at the solemn moment of the Papal Blessing, when every head was bowed, he alone looked up... But, he saw Christ on the Cross, which the Missioner was holding, detach His right hand and bless the congregation. Grace triumphed. Deeply moved, he wept; this sheep, who had strayed for so long, now returned to the fold.

According to his usual custom, the humble apostle fled from the triumphant demonstrations of the crowd. He escaped from them to hide himself in the obscurity of his poor cell like the angels who, after their mission on earth is completed, return to their heavenly home.

But, alas, the joy of this day was dissipated by an unexpected tragedy which plunged a family into grief. When the people were dispersing after the blessing, a child of the Benetti family, named Vincent, fell from the balcony on which he had been playing to the street below; he lay there motionless and lifeless. Everybody, even the doctors, said he was dead. The poor, frantic, distraught mother uttered heart-rending cries which brought tears to the eyes of all. "The holy Missioner. The holy Missioner," she cried in a voice that could come only from a broken-hearted mother, a grief-stricken plea that invokes a power capable of restoring a dead son to her mother's love. A

messenger left at once and reached Paul as he was about to step into the boat to cross the lake. Retracing his steps, the Saint soon reached the distressed family. He took the child into his arms, as though to revive him with his own breath. ... And life returned. The child leapt joyfully into the mother's arms, and her happiness at that moment was a joy to behold.

After two days of prayer and rest at the foot of the crucifix, the Saint resumed his apostolic labors. He preached a mission, first at Portercole and then at Porto Longone. The same triumphs, the same abundant fruits of grace and the same divine operations resulted there as were seen at Orbetello.

Even the passing of the years could not destroy the fruits of these missions. The divine seal of a mission is shown by perseverance. Perseverance is an unfailing proof that the apostle had not merely scratched the surface by arousing fleeting emotions, but that he had penetrated the depths of the soul and laid there solid foundations of faith based on a true and unassailable conviction.

"During the time that I lived at Orbetello," said an officer, whose testimony we have already quoted, "the inhabitants of that town were fervent and practiced their religion regularly. This was the fruit of the labors of Father Paul of the Cross. Several officers in the garrison at Orbetello, friends of mine, were so moved by his preaching that they changed their lives and persevered in the practice of all the Christian virtues. In short," he added, "such was the result of the mission which Father Paul gave at Orbetello when I was living there, that the whole garrison was seen to return to God. Officers, soldiers, and civilians, everybody refrained from even lawful pleasures and amusements. I have seen all this with my own eyes."

These soldiers always retained the most affectionate veneration for the holy Missioner. When he passed before their barracks, they gave him military honors, although the humble Servant of God begged them to refrain from those demonstrations to which, he said, he was not entitled. Several, particularly the officers, to whom the Saint had given small crucifixes in memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ, wore this precious memento around their neck, and some wore it unto their death and were buried with it.

Paul never ceased to be solicitous for their eternal welfare. From their barracks and garrisons they would raise their eyes to the Retreat of Monte Argentario, where the Saint, their beloved Father, seemed like an angel of heaven to protect and console them beneath the shelter of his outstretched wings.

Here is an incident which reveals the powerful influence that he exerted upon the minds of the soldiers. There were two Spanish soldiers who were burning with deadly hatred one for another; one had struck the other with the blade of his sword. An insult of this kind demanded the customary reparation by blood. When Paul heard of the incident, he resolved to save them. It was a mission, very delicate and very difficult, for not only had he to encounter the deepest hatred, but also the false point of honor, the 'amour propre' of which an officer is so jealous. His charity, however, found its way into their embittered hearts and brought about not only a reconciliation but also the beginning of a sincere and lasting friendship.

A soldier condemned to death was about to be executed. The Apostle was there with his crucifix in his hand, exciting him to repentance, purifying his soul in the

redeeming Blood of Jesus Christ, tempering for him the fear of death and opening for him the gates of heaven.

While the Saint was preaching a mission at Porto Longone, in the Isle of Elba, a condemned soldier was being led to the place of execution. Some officers came to Paul and told him that this soldier was more unfortunate than culpable. Inflexibility of military law compelled them to condemn him to death, but thoughtlessness was the reason why he had become a deserter. They pleaded with him to obtain a pardon from the Governor. Paul hurried to the palace and begged for an immediate interview. The servants answered that, after the Governor had signed the death warrant, he would not interview anybody until the execution had been carried out. The order was formal, absolute and irrevocable, and thus they could not admit him without themselves exposing themselves to danger. Paul begged and pleaded with them, for the love of God, to say to the Governor that it was imperative that he should speak to him at once about a matter that would not admit of the slightest delay. The servants at last yielded to the pressing pleas of the Saint. When the name of Paul was mentioned, the Governor allowed him to be admitted.

The General was sitting alone in his apartment, his chin on the pommel of his sword, the blade pointing to the ground, waiting motionless until the news was delivered that justice had been done. Without stirring himself, he greeted the man of God in a curt manner, whereas he was usually so amiable and affectionate. "Father Paul, what do you want?" "Your Excellency," replied the Saint, "I seek pardon for the condemned soldier." "It cannot be granted," replied the Governor, knitting his brow. And to the strongest motives, to the most pressing pleas of Paul, his reply was always the same? "I cannot. I cannot." Then, inspired by the Holy Spirit who inflamed him with holy zeal and invested him with superhuman power, he cried out, "Ah well. Since your Excellency cannot grant pardon, may God then grant it." And he struck the wall with his hand. At this blow the palace, from roof to foundation, shook and tottered as though in the throes of a violent earthquake. "Yes, yes, Father Paul," exclaimed the General, rising from his chair and trembling with fear, "the pardon is granted."

As we are speaking of the Saint's apostolate among the soldiers, it will not be out of place to relate in this chapter another incident, although it did not happen until the year 1748.

One morning, at daybreak, the Major of the garrison at Orbetello gave a note to a boatman, named Diapozza, bidding him to take it in all haste to Paul, who was at the Retreat of the Presentation, and to bring the Father back to the garrison of Saint Barbara, where there was a soldier in the power of the devil. As Diapozza was wending his way up the mountain path to the Retreat, he met the Saint coming down with a companion; they were reciting the Litany of Loreto. The note was delivered to Paul who, without reading it, put it into his pocket, saying, "Let us continue. Let us continue. I know all about it." He continued to recite the Litany. When they arrived at the lake, all entered the boat together. The Saint then said to the messenger, "You were sent to bring me for the soldier, were you not?" The messenger, in his astonishment, could not refrain from asking Paul who had told him about it. "I know it," replied Paul. "I know it."

And all the while at headquarters, the scene was one of turmoil and confusion. The devil was raising the soldier into the air, and no physical effort could prevail over this diabolical power. In vain did the strongest soldier use his strength. When Paul

arrived, he began the prayer of exorcism, but the evil spirit only mocked him. "This man has sold his soul to me for money." "You have never minted money." said the Saint, "therefore, you must have stolen it; moreover, the contract is unjust, because this man's soul is not his own, but it belongs to the One who has created it." Paul continued with the exorcism. The devil could resist no longer and took to flight. The soldier fell to the ground unconscious. Immediately on recovering, however, he made his confession with extraordinary signs of repentance. His comrades, too, frightened by what had happened, wished to be freed from the burden of sin weighing heavily upon them. Father Paul spent the whole day in hearing their confessions.



## **CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE**

### **MISSION AT VETRALLA - TWO DISCIPLES LEAVE HIM - OTHERS SEEK TO FOLLOW HIM - FOUNDATIONS AT VETRALLA AND SORIANO**

**1742 - 1745**

The life of a soldier of Jesus Christ is but the story of his battles for his Divine Master. The battles of Saint Paul of the Cross are always glorious battles and crowned with the immortal crown of victory.

No sooner had the apostles of the Passion been enlisted among the soldiers of Jesus Christ by the profession of religious vows, than the Bishop of Viterbo requested the holy Founder for a mission in Vetralla. The indefatigable apostle, although weakened by the fever, which he had contracted whilst preaching at Piombino, generously acceded to the Bishop's request. He himself opened the mission on Low Sunday in 1742. Once he was among those who needed his priestly ministrations, the zeal that ever filled his heart gave, as it were, an added and renewed vigor to his physical strength, and this mission was marked, as others had been, with glorious triumphs. One of these was the conversion of an obstinate sinner whose crimes filled the whole district with fear and terror. But the words of the Missioner so penetrated the depths of his heart, hardened in sin and malice, that he was withdrawn from the depths of iniquity and, henceforth, led a life of virtue and austere penance. This sinner wept bitterly over the sins of his past life, made public reparation for the scandal he had given and devoted himself as completely to exercises of piety and practices of heroic charity as he had formerly to sin and evil.

His affection for the Saint knew no limit, for it was by him that he had been regenerated in Jesus Christ. He could not bear to be out of the presence of the Saint, and pleaded with him to be his companion on all his journeys. He considered it an honor to be able to render the Saint even the slightest service. When the Saint set out on a journey, the converted sinner, under the pretext of taking his horse out for his own use, was really making it available for the use of the Saint. When he saw Father Paul weak and exhausted, he pleaded with him not to walk any further, but to ride the horse. When Paul refused, he begged, "O good Father, will you not do me a service? I feel faint. You ride the horse" The Missioner perceived the simplicity of this stratagem, but rather than disappoint and sadden him, complied with his wishes. Sometime later, this disciple dedicated his life to the service of the sick in a hospital at Vetralla and spent the rest of his life in works of heroic charity, an example of Christian virtue, until his last hour. Supported by the strong arms of his beloved Father in Christ, he breathed forth his soul in peace.

The blessing of Almighty God was on this mission in Vetralla and was the means of a real interior renewal of fervor throughout the district. Enthusiasm for the Missioner, inspired by their deep affection for him, was so intense that they desired him to remain always with them, that they might be near him who had brought them heavenly treasures with the goodness of virtue. But the apostle of the Crucified was needed elsewhere. The inhabitants, in order that they might in some way be united to him, conceived the idea of founding a monastery in their midst, a monastery similar to the one that had been built on Monte Argentario,

The General Council met for this purpose on May 20, 1742. One of the leading

officials spoke to the members in these words, "You all know, my friends, what marvelous good was accomplished in this town last April through the mission given by Father Paul of the Cross. It is certain that we shall derive even greater blessings from his occupation of Saint Angelo, if the Father should decide to found a Retreat there, as though he had never departed from us. This is my own firm belief, and I recommend to the Magistrates to make known to Father Paul the universal desire of all citizens and to ask him to make the necessary arrangements to come with his Religious to take possession of the hermitage." This proposition was agreed to and voted for unanimously.

The building they wished to give Father Paul was an old Benedictine Abbey dedicated to Saint Michael. It was about three miles from the town, in a great forest on Monte Fogliano. The offer greatly pleased the holy Founder, and, although his Religious were still few in number, he placed his confidence in God and accepted the offer. Immediately, the inhabitants of Vetralla took the necessary steps to obtain consent from the Congregation of Good Government to transfer this foundation to the new Institute.

But every work of God must bear upon it the impress of the cross. It pleases God to make of the lives of the saints a strange mixture of consolations and of trials, consolations to be a support for human weakness and trials to enrich their souls with treasures of virtue and of merit. During the winter, the heart of the Founder was again wounded deeply when a novice, Angelo di Stephano, returned to the world. The loss really saddened the Saint who regarded this Religious as a pillar of the new Congregation.

Another sacrifice and separation yet awaited him. For some time now Father Anthony, his brother, had shown signs of great relaxation. The Saint, with that kindness which tempered the severity of all his reprimands, had tried to restore him to his pristine fervor, but all his efforts were in vain. There is no doubt that Paul loved with a tender love his brother, who was already a priest and who had given missions. But the interests of God and the welfare of the Congregation were of greater concern than the ties of flesh and blood. Sad at heart and disappointed, Paul dismissed his brother. He preferred to see the Institute reduced to two priests and two lay-brothers, rather than allow relaxation to creep in.

This was indeed a severe blow to the Institute. Although the existence of the Congregation was not destroyed, at least it compromised the new foundation. A certain community seized this opportunity and obtained from the Congregation of Good Government at Rome a prohibition against the people of Vetralla handing over to Father Paul the hermitage of Saint Angelo. On February 8, death had deprived the Saint of one of his most powerful protectors, Cardinal Corradini.

At this particular time Paul felt within his soul that God had abandoned him, while his body was subjected to the fiercest onslaughts of the powers of hell. Into this desolation and darkness of soul, there shone a ray of consolation - a letter from Cardinal Rezzonico. "I am delighted to hear," he wrote, "that you are disposed to accept a Retreat offered you by the people of Vetralla. Although you will not be able to make a foundation with only three or four subjects, do not abandon the contemplated project. I trust Divine Providence will send you subjects so that you will be able to fill the new Retreat. Fear not the opposition of the enemy who wages war

against you. I am confident that you will overcome the difficulties, and the enemy will flee in confusion. Strength and courage, these I pray constantly God to grant you. I thank you for the charity of your prayers, and I wish you the abundance of heavenly blessings" (July 14, 1742). These words were not only a ray of hope, but they were to be a prophecy.

From Piedmont, from Tuscany, from the Papal States there came priests, clerics, and lay-men in great numbers, all seeking to be admitted to the Congregation of the Passion. Every cell was soon filled, and all the novices were fervent in soul and generous in heart. Paul offered fervent prayers of thanksgiving to heaven for this unexpected increase in numbers. We will only mention two of them, Father Mark Aurelius and Father Francis Appiani, both very spiritual men.

The first had been an exemplary member of the Congregation of Christian Doctrine and the superior of the college at Civitavecchia. He had seen Paul and had listened to all his sermons during a mission in that city. Under divine inspiration and with the permission of his General, he came to Paul seeking to be a member of the new Institute and to follow Jesus Crucified along the way to Calvary. He was a man of deep piety and profound learning. In spite of his delicate health, he had a great love of penance. Father Paul used to say of him, "Believe me, he is a great worker on the missions and in every other way. Oh, the greatness of Divine Providence."

The second applicant, the last of the Appiani family and a Prince of Piombino, had desired to receive the habit of the Passion as early as 1735. His mother was resigned to the sacrifice asked of her, but his father, although holding the holy Founder in high esteem, could not consent to his son's departure and compelled him to remain in the world that he might settle down and marry. Francis, courageously withstanding the assaults against his vocation, used to write to Father Paul and unburden to him his anguish of soul. "To all these propositions," the holy Director answered him, "say with modesty and with frankness and sincerity, 'I cannot offend a great Princess to whom I have pledged my word, and who has accepted me as her son, and as her spouse.'" In his humility this young Prince asked to be accepted as a lay-brother. "Do not speak," the Saint answered him, "about serving as a brother, or in any other state. You will act under obedience and, if God wants you to be a priest, you must willingly resign yourself to His holy will." Following the advice of his prudent director, the young Prince later obtained from his father permission to be a secular priest. When his father died, he wished to give the whole of his rich patrimony for the foundation of a Passionist Retreat on the Isle of Elba, but when he found that he could not achieve this object, he came to Monte Argentario to give his life to the Cross of the Savior.

Inspired by the words, but still more by the example of the holy Founder, these novices led a life of fervor and mortification, in recollection and silence that one saw flowering the virtues of the monks of the desert. The modern Thebaid was Monte Argentario. In a holy envy each one strove to humble, to abase, to mortify himself more than his companions. They loved prayer and in this holy exercise spent several hours, both by day and by night.

At this time the Saint's brother, Anthony Danei, knocked on the door of the monastery, sad and repentant, and earnestly besought to be re-admitted into the Congregation. Paul, who had already refused his request several times by letter,

remained inflexible. But the Religious, moved by the tears of the suppliant, pleaded with the Founder to give him another chance. Anthony, although good natured enough, again proved unstable and was forced to leave. In the world he was a holy priest and regretted all his life his lack of perseverance in the Congregation. After his brother's death, he gave a glorious testimony to his virtues and his miracles in the Processes of Canonization held at the tribunal in Alessandria.

Pope Benedict XIV had recently created new Cardinals, and amongst them was Prosper Colonna of Sciarra, who was made Abbot Commendatary of the Three Fountains. This prelate, learning of Paul's successful labors for the sanctification of souls in the territory under his spiritual jurisdiction, became greatly attached to the Servant of God and to the humble Institute which he had founded. When he learnt of the difficulties that had been raised against the foundation at Vetralla, he used his influence with Cardinal Riviera, Prefect of the Congregation of Good Government. This Cardinal, too, allied himself to the cause of Paul but wished first of all to know the mind of the Sovereign Pontiff on the matter. His Holiness gave instructions that all necessary faculties were to be granted without delay. "It is just to add," says Saint Vincent Strambi, "that much of this success was due to the Abbot Garagni, who hastened to tell Paul of it in a letter dated October 12, 1743."

"I can tell you," wrote Abbot Garagni, "for your consolation that the way is open for the extension of your Institute. Do not cease to pray or to have prayers said. It seems to me that God wishes you to be in more than one place in the neighborhood of Rome..."

On December 29, all necessary authorizations for the foundation at Vetralla had been granted.

While these discussions were taking place about Saint Angelo, Paul was requested to make another foundation near the 'Confession' of Saint Eutizio. (A 'Confession' is a place where a martyr suffered death. It is called by that word because it was there that they confessed the name of Jesus Christ.)

Before telling of the actual occupation of these two Retreats, a brief description of the latter place will be of interest to the reader.

A traveler, leaving Vetralla, first climbs to the summit of Monte Cimini, then descends the opposite slope, passing through a heavily wooded forest of oaks, and then stretches out before his eyes the district of Soriano, one of the most picturesque territories of the illustrious Princes of Albani. In the depths of the valley, which stretches out across a vast plain to the very banks of the Tiber, there is a small church built over a crypt, and behind the altar is the tomb of Saint Eutizio. There is also a gallery of catacombs that leads to a vast sunken cave in the ground, and in the midst of which there is a basin into which the water from the roof flows. This basin is the 'fountain of Saint Couronna', a virgin and martyr, and possesses remarkable healing properties for the cure of the sick.

In this holy sanctuary the martyr, Saint Eutizio, a priest of the church of Ferento, within the thick hedge that surrounded the place, lived a hidden life during the last persecution of Diocletian. Here, he celebrated the sacrifice of the Mass, buried those who had died peacefully in Jesus Christ or who had gloriously shed their blood for the faith. At last, he himself fell into the hands of the persecutors and suffered horrible

tortures at Ferento. The sword of the executioner brought him the crown and the aureola of martyrdom. "His holy relics repose there," says Saint Vincent Strambi, "and distill a true manna." (It is a kind of mysterious liquid that comes from the tomb, and to which is attributed a supernatural efficacy.)

After this sanctuary was abandoned by a community of priests who had labored zealously and fruitfully throughout the district, Paul preached a mission at Vetralla, and Cardinal Alexander Albani was staying close by at Soriano. The Cardinal, hearing the praises of these new apostles of the Cross, Paul and his companions, believed that they were sent by heaven to continue the holy, apostolic work in this locality. On his return to Rome, he sought further information from Abbot Garagni, and told his brother, Cardinal Annibal Albani, of his plans. The latter was Camerlengo of the holy Church. He fully approved of the proposal. Then, returning to find Abbot Garagni, he arranged with him for the new foundation. All of this was unknown to Father Paul.

The two Cardinals Albani obtained all necessary permissions from Pope Benedict XIV. His Holiness commissioned Cardinal Valenti to write to the Governor of Soriano and to the Bishop of Orta and Civitavecchia. Here is an extract from his letter, which is dated December 11, 1743.

"For the spiritual welfare of souls, His Holiness has resolved to establish in the Church of Saint Eutizio some priests who are members of a new Congregation, entitled 'The Passion of Our Lord'. For this purpose the Holy Father has desired to speak to the Cardinal of the Church of Saint Clement, who duly thanked His Holiness for his holy and paternal solicitude. ...Your Lordship, therefore, should use his authority to command, to favor and to establish this work, and thus to execute promptly the wishes of His Holiness..."

The Bishop was delighted to learn that these zealous missionaries were soon to reside in his Diocese.

Abbot Garagni, whose devotion to the Saint remained constant since the time of his warning from heaven, hastened to write to the holy Founder, begging him to come to Rome as soon as possible on a matter of the utmost importance. After spending Christmas with his Religious, Paul left for Rome. Thinking he was about to encounter further difficulties in connection with the foundation at Vetralla, it was with relief and with astonishment that he learnt of the favorable disposition of the Cardinals Albani for the foundation of Saint Eutizio. Paul believed that God willed him to settle here instead of Vetralla. So after thanking the Cardinals, he returned to Monte Argentario and brought joy to the hearts of all with these good tidings.

A letter came from Cardinal Riviera within a short time notifying Paul of the orders of the Holy Father, viz., that he was to proceed without delay to the foundation at Vetralla.

Paul was in a dilemma. What was to be done? His Religious were neither adequately prepared, nor were they of sufficient numbers for two simultaneous foundations. But the visible Head of the Church, the Vicar of Christ, had spoken, had issued a command. The Founder, after consulting Father John Baptist and Father Fulgentius, no longer hesitated. He decided to take possession of the two Retreats. Providence, which had provided the buildings, would also supply the inhabitants. He also decided to seek a dispensation from the Sovereign Pontiff which would allow him

to advance the profession of the novices. For those who were not yet priests, he obtained the privilege of having them ordained under the title of 'mense commune' - common table.

The Saint immediately went to Viterbo to discuss with the Bishop the foundation of Vetralla. From there he hastened to Rome where he remained only two days. (January 27, 1744) Cardinal Albani himself undertook to obtain from the Holy Father the favors which Paul sought and sent him to Soriano to begin, as soon as possible, a mission, the fruits of which would be continued by the new foundation.

The Apostle left Rome at once. He travelled via Orta to ask the necessary permissions from the Bishop, who, seeing him frozen by the cold and worn out by fatigue, wished him to stay at his own palace, regarding him as an angel of God. As soon as Paul regained his strength, he went to open the mission. Abundant fruits crowned it with success,

Before the mission closed, Paul received a letter with two Apostolic Rescripts from his Eminence, Cardinal Annibal Albani. The first authorized him to dispense the twelve novices from whatever time he considered suitable, the second gave him permission to present for ordination to the priesthood a certain number of clerics on the title 'mense commune'.

On February 15, 1744, Paul closed the mission, blessed the people of Soriano and hastened to Monte Argentario. He was overwhelmed with joy when he saw his novices giving signs of extraordinary fervor and mortification. He admitted twelve of them to religious profession. Then, without any delay, accompanied by nine Religious, he set forth to found the two new Retreats.

On March 6, 1744, they arrived at Vetralla, and preceded by the clergy, the magistrates and the people who had come to meet them at the gates of the city, they went to the Cathedral. After adoring the Blessed Sacrament, they were led in triumph to the house of the chief Magistrate, where the Canons of the Cathedral and the dignitaries of the city desired to wash their feet, in spite of the protests of Paul and his Religious. The next day the solemn entrance into the new Retreat was a scene of touching simplicity. All assembled at the Cathedral to the joyous sound of ringing bells. Paul, with a rope around his neck and a crown of thorns upon his head, arrived with his Religious, and taking up the cross began to sing the Litany of the Saints. The procession then moved off. The whole city accompanied them to their new home. On their arrival a Notary read the act of possession. Then the Saint was celebrant at a Solemn High Mass. Above the high altar was an old painting, a work of an excellent artist, depicting Jesus upon the Cross, a mystery which reminded all of the purpose of the new Institute and added greatly to the fervor of the occasion. All present were greatly edified by this ceremony, which inspired them with devotion.

The Saint left four Religious in this Retreat with Father John Baptist as Superior. Ever afterwards Saint Angelo was very dear to the heart of Paul of the Cross. He loved to withdraw to its solitude and to enjoy that silence which is so ardently desired by the saints. It was indeed a place of solitude, for it was situated three miles from the nearest dwelling and hidden in the midst of the woods. It incited one to prayer, and in those surroundings the regular observance could not but flourish.

The next day, with similar solemn celebrations and outbursts of joy, the holy Founder took possession of the sanctuary of Saint Eutizio. Father Mark Aurelius was appointed superior of this Retreat, with three Religious making the community. When the holy Founder was venerating the tomb of the martyr, the stone on which he usually offered the Sacrifice of the Mass gave forth the mysterious 'manna', in great abundance, and at that spot which Paul's hand had touched. Five drops were to be seen, of extraordinary size and as brilliant as pearls. Through this prodigy the martyr, Saint Eutizio, seemed to offer a joyous welcome to those who had come to live near him, in order to prepare themselves to preach the truths of faith which he had confessed at the price of his blood.

Saint Vincent Strambi relates,

"The blessings of the Lord were upon this foundation. The illustrious Albani family has always shown intense delight and a special affection for the poor Congregation, lavishing favor after favor upon it.

"As soon as the foundation was established, Prince Horace wrote to Father Paul to express his joy and his pleasure, 'Amongst the many obligations I have towards my uncles, the Cardinals, I regard as one of the most important that of the mission which your Reverence has given in my territory at Soriano, a mission that has done so much good for my people, and also the foundation of your wonderful Institute in the Retreat of Saint Eutizio. From the very beginning, I perceived a singular satisfaction, a satisfaction which has increased more and more, as I think that I will soon see, thanks to your zeal, a revival of a spirit of deep piety throughout the entire district. I thank your Reverence from the depths of my heart for being the principal cause of untold blessings. I thank you for having given me so many motives to esteem your merits and the merits of your Religious. That is why I am ready to serve and to assist them to the utmost of my power.

'I recommend myself to your holy prayers, in which I have the greatest confidence.'

"Thus spoke the pious lord," Saint Vincent adds. "May it please heaven that these wishes be fulfilled day by day and resound to the greater glory of God."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THOMAS STRUZZIERI - SERIOUS ILLNESS OF THE SAINT - BENEDICT XIV APPROVES THE RULES - PROMISE OF SALVATION TO THOSE WHO JOIN THE INSTITUTE - FIRST CANONICAL CHAPTER

1745 - 1748

One day at Rome in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Monte Rione, the Saint was kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

A priest entered the Church, came up to the altar, knelt in prayer and then went into the sacristy. A mysterious voice drew the Saint towards this unknown priest, so he followed him. When they were face to face, the priest said, "You are Father Paul of the Cross." "Are you not Dom Thomas Struzzieri?" asked the Saint. They embraced one another as though they were old friends meeting for the first time after a long separation.

The priest had heard of the marvelous apostolate of Father Paul and of the foundation of his Institute. Paul had heard of Dom Thomas Struzzieri, who was one of the most eloquent preachers of the time. They encouraged each other to work for the *glory* of Jesus Crucified and for the salvation of souls.

From this very first meeting, they were united in the bonds of a deep friendship, which increased with the passing of time. Then Dom Struzzieri promised the Founder to become a member of his Congregation. He wished to depart at once for the solitude of Monte Argentario, but his friends, judging by the standard of human prudence, tried to dissuade him from his intention. They used to say to him, "How can you, at your age of 40, endure the austerities of an Order but newly founded, an Order as yet not firmly established? You could not stand it for long. You will be compelled to return to the world. You already have a good position, wide influence and a prosperous future, both because of the nobility of your family and your extraordinary ability. You will ruin everything."

Paul himself prayed for this soul, his Religious prayed and he asked prayers of other saintly souls. He wrote to one of his friends, "Be so good as to ask Sister Columba, who is a great friend of ours, to pray unceasingly for a great apostle who has an inclination to join our Institute. He would be one of our greatest missionaries. Oh, how I wish to have him. Tell Sister Columba to pray fervently. I hope her prayers will be heard. In her charity, let her never forget us day or night, as also your Lordship, especially when you celebrate holy Mass."

Two years passed. Paul again met Dom Struzzieri in Rome, and, by a divine illumination, seeing the interior trials which disturbed him, revealed in detail the cause of his anxieties. The will of God was made manifest; grace had triumphed; this soul of so many prayers followed the Saint to Monte Argentario, and on February 2, 1745, received from the hands of the Founder the habit of the Passion. Henceforth, he would be known as Father Thomas Mary of the Side of Jesus.

He was indeed a rich conquest. Saint Vincent Strambi says, "This apostle was indeed of the greatest value. Born at Sinigaglia of a noble and illustrious family, he brought with him wide experience and outstanding talents, a deep and profound learning, eloquence gentle but powerful, which had been well tried in the apostolic works of the priesthood. Added to this was a voice, deep, resonant and pleasing, so that Saint Leonard of Port Maurice, another celebrated missionary, could not find adequate words to express



his admiration for all his qualities. But, greater by far than all these gifts, was his exceptional prudence and solid piety.

Thomas Struzzieri is now a simple novice in the smallest of the Orders. Through humility he became greater in his cell than he had ever been in the golden palaces of his paternal home or in the carved pulpit of the great basilicas, where his eloquence had filled the hearts of all his listeners with profound admiration. We possess some of his writings that describe his novitiate days. All who read his words cannot fail to be deeply impressed. His soul burst forth into canticles of love, into songs of heavenly delight. Here are some of his own words.

“When I stepped into this holy retreat, I believed that I was entering paradise. Here, there was a deep silence; the very walls breathed holiness. The Religious seemed to me as angels, for their sanctity made their faces radiant with a heavenly beauty. Such was their love for poverty that each one studiously sought the least and the poorest things for himself, such as the most patched and the most worn habits. Such was their love of mortification that the vigilance of the Superior was necessary to ensure that they ate sufficient to maintain their strength. How often they would deprive themselves, now of one thing, now of another, and very often they would fast on bread and water. If the things allowed by the Rule were wanting, or if there was a scarcity of food, none made the least complaint, for them this was the will of God. They loved to mortify the sense of taste by mixing with their food bitter herbs or powders. Almost all of them had the gift of prayer, and after Matins some would remain before the Blessed Sacrament until Prime. They were always deeply recollected, keeping their eyes lowered so that no distraction might cause them to forget the presence of God. Even the recreations were a school of prayer; they never spoke of the world or of the things of the world, but only of God and the lives of the Saints, of souls to be saved and of the joy and happiness it would be to shed their blood for the Faith. One would leave recreation with a new fervor, with an ardent desire to labor without ceasing and to suffer much for the love of God. Their obedience was perfect. To know the will of the Superior was sufficient, and they would fulfill it immediately. Charity was practiced to such a degree that each sought to bear the burdens of the others. Each would accuse himself in order to excuse the others, and never did I hear an uncharitable word spoken against another Religious.”

If the other Religious were admired by Dom Struzzieri, they, in their turn, had the greatest admiration and veneration for him. A worthy emulator of their virtues, the lips of his soul remained on the wound of the Heart of Jesus, to which he had consecrated his name, and from this source of perfection he drank copiously a mysterious source of light and of peace that filled him with delights, which he had not previously experienced. Indeed, it seemed to him a veritable paradise. Each night, in his dreams, the Saint appeared to him and conversed for a long time with him about heavenly things. Awakened from this ravishing ecstasy for Matins, he would rise and go to the choir to sing the praises of God with his heart aflame with holy love. In a short time he became a perfect religious. The holy Founder, with an apostolic dispensation, considered him worthy to make his profession of first vows after two and a half month's novitiate.

Father Thomas Mary, during his religious life, was a model of virtue, of humility, of charity and of penance which he had learned to practice in his constant prayer. He was a zealous and indefatigable missionary, a wise administrator in the most important works of the Institute and a great support to the holy Founder by his devotedness, both by his

works and by his counsel.

But although within monastic solitude, where he had hidden his life under the shadow of the cross, the fame of his genius and the renown of his virtues could not remain concealed. In 1760, Pope Clement XIII called him away from Father Paul of the Cross. Father Thomas Mary was sent as the theologian of the Apostolic Visitor to Corsica, Bishop d' Angeli. This position was a dangerous one as the island was in revolt against the Republic of Genoa. The people believed that the Bishops supported their oppressors and drove them into exile. There were many outrages against religion. A deep hatred burned fiercely in the hearts of all against the ministers of the Church, so that walls were broken down and churches were profaned. Father Thomas won the hearts of the people and calmed their restless and rebellious hearts by his gentle eloquence. In the midst of unbelievable labors in this rocky country, and, often at the peril of his life, Bishop d' Angeli became ill and was forced to leave the island. Father Thomas was left in charge as Vicar General. His Excellency spoke so highly of him at Rome that the Holy Father made him Apostolic Visitor and appointed him Bishop of Tienina. This honor in no way lessened his zeal. Rather, it increased it. At last the powerful force of religion overcame the hostile cries of national independence, far more successfully than the military forces of powerful leaders could have done. Father Thomas, by his charity and his prudence, soothed restless souls and brought peace to the island. He was loved by all as the most gentle of fathers. But one of his works, the most worthy of a religious and an apostle, we relate here that all may know how intimately united are the children of God. It is the charity with which he welcomed, consoled and fed 4,000 Jesuits, heroic and holy confessors, who were cast up on these beaches, half-dead, as the result of the most brutal, inhuman torments, the most diabolical that only the ingenuity of the powers of hell could devise.

Genoa ceded Corsica to the King of France. The hierarchy of the Church was established once again, and in 1770 the visit of the holy pastor came to a glorious end. Hearing of his good work, King Louis XV offered him the title of Metropolitan of the island. But Father Thomas was not interested in worldly honors, and his one desire was to return to his monastery at Monte Argentario and to continue his life of solitude and prayer. The King wished to give him some token of his esteem and gratitude and sent him 10,000 francs. The apostle had already left and the money was delivered to him on board his ship. He sent it back to the cathedral Chapter to be distributed to the poor.

Clement XIV appointed him Bishop of Amelia, and, later, in spite of the tears of his flock and his own regret, the Pope transferred him to the See of Todi, where he died in 1780 in the odor of sanctity.

We have now given a biographical note on this religious, a great and holy man, whose glory reflects to the honor of his spiritual father, Paul of the Cross.

A necessary accompaniment of grace is sacrifice. Paul led each of his sons to God by prayer, tears and sufferings, and Satan made him pay dearly for each one of them. Father Thomas Mary cost him some of his greatest sufferings. It was in the middle of winter when Paul brought him from Rome to Monte Argentario. Already wearied by long and arduous journeys, and exhausted by incessant labors, he fell ill. So intense were his sufferings that it was feared he would not recover. His children were again deprived of his presence for he was removed to Orbetello to the house of a generous benefactor. But in spite of every attention and remedy, nothing relieved his distress of body and of soul. The pain was so acute that the Saint would sing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin in a soft and

plaintive tone to prevent himself from crying out with pain. He could eat only with the greatest difficulty, and the little food he did take caused him extreme nausea. For 40 days and for 40 nights he did not close his eyes in sleep. It was heart breaking to listen to him, as he begged and pleaded with his eyes fixed upon the picture of Mary.

“O Mary, just an hour’s rest.” But his prayer was not answered. Then in tears he would ask, “A half an hour, then.” But again he was not heard. “O Mother, my loving Mother, please, a quarter of an hour, only a quarter of an hour.”

Mary, his Mother, knew that God did not wish to give either rest or respite to the sufferings of this beloved son. Rather, God Himself added to the bitterness of his bitter chalices terrifying abandonment: terrible phantasms, desolating thoughts, indescribable anguish, far worse than the terrors of death, the ‘terrors of hell’ which crushed his soul and made of him a living martyr. The powers of hell were also at work and, goaded on by malicious hatred, they tormented him unceasingly in body by flogging him until he was black and blue, in soul by temptations to despair.

Paul endured it all with exemplary patience and total resignation to the will of God. For five months there was no relief. When his Religious visited him and sympathized with him, he would say, “There is an eternity of happiness awaiting us. What are the sufferings of this passing world!” But if, in this crucible, his body acquired infirmities which were to remain until the end of his life, his soul lost nothing of its vigorous activity. What courage is revealed in the numerous letters he wrote during this period of trial. When it was a question of the glory of God, the sanctification of souls and the welfare of his Institute, he thought neither of himself nor of his own sufferings.

The reader will remember that the Rules had been approved in the most simple form. The Vicar of Christ had promised to approve them by an Apostolic Brief when the number of houses and subjects had increased sufficiently. That moment had now come. And in one of his journeys to Rome, Paul made his request to Pope Benedict XIV, who immediately appointed a commission of three Cardinals, some of the most illustrious of the Sacred College, to make the second examination of the Rules. These were Cardinal Gentili, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council, Cardinal Girolami, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and Cardinal Besozzi, a Cistercian, who was famed both for his piety and his learning. Each of them, and in particular Cardinal Besozzi, had told Father Paul that they were hopeful of a happy decision,

The examination was on the way to a good beginning, but the Saint feared the wiles of Satan, who was always ready to defeat his projects. On his return to solitude, he exhorted his Religious to implore the protection of heaven by their prayers and tears. Nor were these fears groundless. As soon as this examination of the Rules became known to the enemies of the Institute, who had been hoping that it would collapse, they now feared that it would be consolidated. Hence, they conspired to destroy it by every means in their power, both secret and overt. Everywhere they were sayings, “Why should there be another Religious Order in the Church when already there are so many, ancient in years and venerated for learning and sanctity. And as there are other Orders dedicated to propagating with zeal devotion to Jesus Crucified, what need is there for the approval of another, solely because the members wear, with great affectation, a “sign” upon their breast.” Such complaints, and indeed many others, could be heard on every side. Nor were the enemies of the new Institute content with merely circulating these reports around the city, but they tried to persuade the Cardinals of the Commission to reject the Rules.

At the first session of the Commission, Cardinal Girolami seemed entirely changed. He strongly recommended that the request of the Founder should be refused. The reasons he submitted were based on prudent judgments. The Rules of the new Institute were, in the judgment of all, beyond the strength of human nature. It would be, he feared, influencing the Holy See to grant them approval. It would be to expose the Holy See, in spite of its divine guidance, to criticism if they were to submit to the desires of those who, with a zeal which was certainly sincere but lacking in understanding, demanded too much of human frailty. Moreover, such excesses of austerity would end by wrecking the health of the strongest, would cause them to seek relaxation and, as a result, where they had hoped for a sure path to heaven, they would find instead the path to eternal perdition. Thus, because of his profound reverence for the Holy See and because of his solicitude for the salvation of souls, after a thorough examination, he concluded that they should not recommend the approbation of the Rules.

Cardinals Gentili and Besozzi held the opposite opinion. This is their reasoning. The Rule of the new Institute had already been approved once by the reigning Pontiff. It should also be considered that, as the sons of the Passion increased daily in numbers, so they remained faithful to the regular observance and were zealous laborers in the apostolate.

The session finished without any definite conclusion being reached.

Some weeks later the Cardinals assembled again. Cardinal Girolami, seeing that his adversaries were adamant in their opinion, proposed a compromise: some mitigations should be introduced into the Rule. Gentili and Besozzi accepted this proposition, but it is not known for what reason.

Cardinal Albani, although not a member of the Commission, watched over the entire discussions so that no injury would be done to the new Institute. Learning from Cardinal Gentili the result of their last session, he hastened to acquaint the holy Founder of the result. Paul was sad at heart. He, who so loved absolute poverty, which he called the 'standard of the Congregation', was particularly grieved because of the recommendation that the houses of study be allowed to possess and to have a fixed income.

He discussed the matter with Father Thomas Mary, and, convinced that God desired absolute poverty in the Institute of the Passion, he replied to Cardinal Albani. His letter was so powerful in reasoning, written with such ardor and enthusiasm, that the Prince of the Church shared the Founder's opinion and submitted the matter to the Supreme Pontiff. The Holy Father, in order to settle the difficulties, appointed him Prefect of the Commission. The presence of Albani in itself was sufficient to dispel all suggestion of fixed income. However, Cardinal Girolami continued to propose new modifications. To be more certain about the position, they considered it necessary for the Founder to be present,

Nothing could restrain Paul, neither bodily suffering which still weighed heavily upon him, nor the fatigues of another journey. In February 1746, he arrived in Rome. Cardinal Albani provided hospitality for him with the Minims at the retreat of Saint Andrew. He was their Cardinal Protector and wished the Saint to receive every possible care in his weakened state of health.

The appearance of Paul, his kindness and his humility, saved the whole structure, and drew Cardinals Albani, Gentili and Besozzi more closely to his cause. However, Cardinal Girolami continued to raise difficulties and caused endless delays, so that no final decision was reached. He became ill, and the Sovereign Pontiff, who had very much

at heart the new Institute, excluded him from the Commission. This was the end of the dispute. Victory was in sight. After making a few minor alterations to the Rule, such as the use of sandals, at all times and in all places, and restricting the fast and abstinence, apart from those imposed by the Church, to Advent and three days a week for the rest of the year, the three Cardinals gave unanimous consent on March 27, 1746, to the second approbation. The following day, Monday of Passion week, Cardinals Albani, Gentili and Besozzi informed the Holy Father of their decision. The illustrious Pontiff, showing his intense pleasure at the decision, wrote the Rescript for the publishing of the Brief in his own hand.

What was the joy of the holy Founder at this news? Let us listen to his own words of gratitude and of love that surged forth from his soul. As God's plans for him became clearer, his heart was enraptured and his soul rejoiced with exceeding joy. He sent the news to Monte Argentario.

"Dear and beloved Father Fulgentius,

"May charity inspire you with compassion for a soul so poor and so imperfect as mine." (Paul is always conscious of his own nothingness, whenever God glorifies him. Then he raises his thoughts to heavens.)

"Thanks be to God, on Monday of Passion Week, March 28, the day on which we read in the Gospel of the Mass, 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink...', the Vicar of Jesus Christ signed the Brief for the approbation of our holy Rules. Yesterday, I was at the feet of His Holiness to express my gratitude. And what can I say of the great Providence of God, which has willed, in spite of the most active opposition, that this favor would be granted to us before the great days of the Passion. Your Reverence will remember that it was at the same time at the opening of our Retreat at Monte Argentario. We are unable, in spite of all our efforts, to make a solemn entry and to celebrate Mass before the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

"'Nos autem gloriari oportet in crucem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi.' These were the first words that were sung in our Church. These are wonderful things indeed. ...I am more and more convinced that the Congregation is truly the work of God. This is the general opinion in Rome, both of Religious and of Prelates. ...God has assisted me. It is, I can truthfully say, a miracle of his mercy that such an important matter has been concluded so quickly. I will arrange later for the solemn thanksgiving. In the meantime let each one of us be sure to praise and to thank the Most High (March 31, 1746).

The Brief, in which Pope Benedict XIV confirmed the Rules of the Discalced Clerics of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ, was published on April 28. (Approval was also granted, after a separate examination, for the ceremonial of clothing and profession.)

Cardinal Albani defrayed the expenses, and in the month of May carried the Brief himself to the holy Founder, who was staying for a few days at the Retreat of Saint Eutizio.

With heart overflowing with gratitude and humility, Paul wrote to Father Fulgentius,

"On the feast of the Commemoration of Saint Paul, June 30, be so kind as to begin the solemn triduum of thanksgiving with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It is to conclude on the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin. There is to be a general Communion on each of the three days. I wish you to have a solemn Mass celebrated on

the feast of the Visitation for my intentions. All be so good as to pray very fervently to obtain the spread of the Congregation, for an apostolic spirit and for a great holiness of spirit. In a word, ask Jesus to grant all of us His Holy Spirit. I have said all in few words.

“But for myself, a wretched creature who destroys the work of God by my wicked life, what shall I say? I prostrate myself at the feet of all. I ask pardon for all my wicked, lax, tepid and scandalous life. For though in appearance a religious, I yet lack the spirit of a religious. I beg them to ask the Divine Majesty to pardon me for all my sins, which are very serious; indeed, they are more than serious. And if through my fault I should not give good example in the future by great sanctity of life, let them beg the good God to take me out of this world, but at the same time grant me the grace of a happy death. For the love of God, do not refuse me this act of charity. I tell you definitely, I am sure, I am most certain that, if you correspond with the graces of your vocation, God will make saints of you all. I know what I am saying...” (June 23, 1746). “I know what I am saying” Here we have a true revelation. The saints conceal the favors they receive from heaven, but at times, a word, a sigh or an ejaculation reveals them. It is necessary to understand them to seize upon them when they are uttered. Evidently, we have some revelation which the Founder receives from God, some divine promise of special graces reserved for those who join the Congregation of the Passion - God will give them the crown of the saints.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amongst the first companions of the holy Founder, there were four who had a great reputation for sanctity; their life and their death were marked by miracles, but as the Church has not passed its judgment, we must speak with reserve.

These are Bishop Strambi, who has been declared Venerable, Father Struzzieri, and Father John Baptist, the saint's brother. The reader is already acquainted with these religious. There was a lay-brother, James of St. Louis, whose biography is before me and from which I will give a few extracts.

Brother James was a true model of religious perfection, an open, simple and pure soul. He knew how to make a true apostolate out of his humble duties as porter, cook and refectorian. With what faith and reverence he served the apostles of Jesus Christ, seeing in them the Divine Master Himself and the sacred character of the priesthood. When he accompanied the priests on a mission, his modesty was in itself an eloquent sermon. Merely to see him was to feel oneself raised upwards to God. And even at Port San Stefano, when Father Fulgentius was preaching, the people were more edified at the sight of Brother James beneath the platform than they were at the words of the eloquent missionary.

From Monte Argentario, where he received the habit and was professed in December 1742, he was taken by the holy Founder to the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oaks, near Toscanella. After two and a half years, he became ill. A priest, who was one of the benefactors of the Congregation, Don Phillipo, wishing to take care of him, had him moved to his home at Celleri, where this saintly Brother gave up his soul to God on the vigil of the feast of Our Lady's Assumption.

Brother James' death was marked by miracles. There were instantaneous cures on the day of his burial. A rainbow appeared in the heavens, quite different in color from any other. It was pure white and very brilliant, beautiful as all the wonders of God are. The rainbow began at Monte Argentario, passed over the house containing the remains and

ended at the Retreat of Toscanella. The people were insistent, even to violence, that his body should not be taken back to the Retreat of his brethren.

There are many other miracles, some of them quite recent, that have been worked through the intercession of Brother James. Since the death of the holy Founder, there are many other religious who have died in the odor of sanctity and who have been known for miracles.

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The reader will not be astonished, now, at these words of the Saint. This self-abnegation, this contempt of self, was constantly on the lips of the holy Founder; he accustomed us to those things, and we have already explained this mystery of the saints, who consider themselves to be the greatest sinners in the world.

The Vicar of Jesus Christ had now approved the Institute of the Passion with his supreme authority. The time had come for the canonical election of the superiors of the Institute and, in particular, for the election of the Superior General.

At the beginning of April 1747, the most distinguished members of the Congregation came from all the Retreats to Monte Argentario. Though few in numbers, this Chapter was, nevertheless, extraordinary because of the sanctity and the heavenly inspirations of those who composed it. On April 10, the election of the Superior General was unanimous - the Founder himself. The disciples of Paul wished to have the consolation of being governed by him who had laid the solid foundations of the sacred edifice with so many tears and with so many prayers.

The Church, in approving the Congregation of the Passion, had raised it to the nobility of Calvary. It must then have its coat of arms, its banner and its motto. They adopted the 'Sign' as Mary, the Mother of God had revealed to the Saint, and as Pope Benedict XIV had approved. However, they placed on the right side of the 'Sign' an olive branch, and on the left a palm, symbols of the divine conquests of the Passion of Our Lord: peace and victory - victory over hell and victory over the world; peace between heaven and earth, peace between God and man.

The holy Founder complained about this burden of government which his sons had laid upon him. He begged them and pleaded with them to relieve him of it, but all in vain. Then, bowing his head in humble submission to the will of Divine Providence, he accepted the office. Ever afterwards, the Religious could choose none other than the venerable Founder for this great office of Superior General. How wise they were is well demonstrated in the following chapter.

We proceed now to see how perfectly the Saint ruled the Institute, and how, through his prudent government, it became conformed to the Spirit of God.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE**

### **HOW THE SAINT RULED HIS RELIGIOUS**

Before telling the reader of the Saint's manner of ruling and pointing out its distinctive character, a few general observations may prove enlightening.

Goodness is the supreme characteristic, the splendor of the moral beauty which is called sanctity.

Should there be degrees in the perfections of God, one could say that goodness is the first of the divine attributes, since it is the powerful, magnetic force which unites all things to Him. At His grandeur, His justice, His immensity and His eternalness, my mind is filled with astonishment; but His goodness penetrates my heart and captivates my soul.

Goodness is a just and harmonious mingling of gentleness and strength. Strength alone without gentleness would be unyielding rigor; gentleness without strength would only be weakness.

Nothing is more gentle than true strength, nothing stronger than true gentleness. "She reacheth, therefore, from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisdom 8:1).

In all of God's works - creation, redemption, sanctification in Jesus Christ, the Church, the Saints - what strength and what gentleness may be seen.

At this very moment an example enraptures Christian souls and casts the wicked into confusion. What gentleness in the immortal Pope Pius IX. What invincible strength, against which all the assaults of the powers of hell are in vain.

Such, too, is the harmonious union of these two virtues, which we have already seen in the life of Saint Paul of the Cross. We now see them shine with a brilliant radiance. Let us enter the cloister and observe him as he governs his little flock. "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom" (Luke 12: 22). (It may be well to give a warning against the error of some souls in reading the lives of the saints. They take from the saints only what suits their temperaments; one may be so impressed by strength, that one falls into rigorism, another from gentleness falls into weakness. Unite both qualities and one will act like the saints.)

God had inspired Paul with the plan for this new Religious Order and had endowed him with the necessary strength and constancy to found it and to establish it in His Church. At the same time, God seems to have engraven on his soul the method he was to follow in governing it. In this, Paul of the Cross is really extraordinary. He was directed, it appears, in all his actions by the invisible workings of divine grace. Completely a stranger to the false prudence of the world, always and in all things, he placed the will of God and the glory of God before the temporal interests of his Institute. Once he felt certain that a particular work was pleasing to the Divine Heart, he pursued it with earnestness, but he never began any enterprise with precipitous haste or without mature deliberation on the work itself or upon the means most suitable to achieve its success. The advantages of a particular occasion set him to work at once. He was never intimidated by the fear that some obstacle would impede him or by the thought that he would be more profitably engaged in some other undertaking. But whether he took his time or not, he was always completely master of himself, acting with the tranquility of a soul that is intimately united with God. "To act in any other way," he used to say, "could never attain success." In



matters of great importance, wise as he was, he would never rely solely on his own judgment. In long and fervent prayers, he would seek light and guidance from God and seek the counsel of others with the greatest of humility. He often repeated these two texts of holy Scripture, "I, wisdom, dwell in counsel, and am present in learned thoughts" (Proverbs 8:12). "My son, do thou nothing without counsel" (Eccles. 32: 24). This was indeed his rule. Whenever he heard an opinion just and wise, he immediately took note of it without regard to the position of the one who had given it.

A faithful custodian of the maxims of the Divine Master, he never sought to separate these two virtues which Jesus Christ demands - the simplicity of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent. Prudence in his actions was always linked with candor and simplicity. There is nothing more captivating than to see him act. Christian simplicity was the basis of all his policy and the soul of that vast wisdom which foiled all the crafty plots of his persecutors. "By dint of dealing in worldly affairs," he used to say sadly, "I have well nigh lost the childlike simplicity which I learnt on the knee of my mother." He desired that his Religious be free of dissimulation. He would say, "I am a Lombard. What I have in my heart, I have also upon my lips." When at times he received an evasive answer from one of his Religious, perhaps in giving him to understand that a work in its beginning was almost completed, no matter what was the motive, he was astonished and deeply hurt. If he heard anyone tell a lie, then a bitter complaint escaped from his lips. On many occasions supernatural illumination revealed to him the truth, which was being withheld from him.

His brother, Anthony, related an incident at the Processes of Canonization. After leaving the hermitage one morning, he secretly ate five figs, then wiped his lips carefully so that no one would detect his fault. He thought himself perfectly safe, especially as Father Paul was at prayer, and could not possibly have seen him. Imagine his astonishment when the Saint said to him, "So, you have eaten figs without permission." The culprit was inclined to deny the accusation but, completely disconcerted, eventually admitted his guilt. "Well," added Paul, "in a few days, you will be struck down with fever as a punishment for your disobedience." As Paul had predicted, he was a victim to fever, an attack which was all the more severe because he had eaten the figs without permission.

On another occasion, Paul and Anthony were travelling together. Paul asked a question, and Anthony, in reply, told a lie. The Saint severely rebuked him, "In order that you will avoid telling lies in the future, I will tell you exactly what you are thinking of at this present moment. Such and such a thing...such and such a place... Anthony was astounded at hearing this revelation, not only of his thoughts in general, but all the precise details accompanying them.

It seems that the Saint could never be prejudiced against any person. Believing himself to be the least of men, he showed to all the deepest respect and reverence, and manifested on every occasion sincere proofs of his affection when he met them. But there was another effect of his childlike simplicity. He abandoned himself completely to Divine Providence, as a child in the loving arms of its mother. When he had decided upon the most appropriate means to accomplish a particular work, whether for himself or for the Congregation, then he entrusted the success of his efforts to God alone. He did not approve of the exaggerated concern of superiors about the material needs of their houses. Speaking in a tone that reflected his deep trust in God, he told them to place all their hopes in Divine Providence, for they who trust in God will never be abandoned. On

another occasion he said, "When there were three in your community, God provided enough for three; when it grew to ten, enough for ten; and now that you are many more in number, He will provide ample for all. All that is necessary is that you be good religious, faithful in the observance of the Rule. Then you will never lack for anything that is in accord with our state of poverty."

The truth of the encouraging words of the Saint was constantly proved by experience. His sons were always provided not only with what was necessary for themselves but often with such an abundance that they could give to others, even during those times of universal distress and want. During one of these occasions, the Saint wrote, "The vines have been ruined by the frost; the crops will yield such a meager harvest of grain that it will not be sufficient to supply the needs of the people; yet, in spite of all this, the granaries and storehouse of our heavenly Father will save us from want."

And it truly seemed that the Master Himself rivaled his faithful servant in encouraging the sons of Paul of the Cross to a lively confidence in Divine Providence, as their trust was rewarded by manifest prodigies.

One day some hunters, after having hunted in vain through the forests of Monte Argentario, came to the Retreat seeking food to appease their hunger. The Saint wished them to be attended to immediately. The only food in the house was a little bread and wine. The hunters themselves related that after they had been served, there was left for the Religious only a few beans - enough for one serving. Paul, however, wished these to be cooked. These few vegetables, scarcely sufficient for one, were multiplied in the cooking, so that each of the Religious had an ordinary portion. Nor was this the end of Divine goodness; the Religious were still in the refectory when a benefactor brought along to the Retreat a basket of other food.

The Religious of another Retreat, one day in winter when the snow was falling heavily, were without bread and without hope of obtaining any. Such a fierce and furious torrent was racing along the roadway, that any attempt to cross it would have been disastrous. Dinner time arrived. Paul quietly told the Religious to go to the refectory. As usual, he was confident that God would not fail to provide for those who trust Him. They had not been long in the refectory when the Brother was called to the door. Standing there was a stranger whom they had never seen before and who, without uttering a word, gave him a basket of white bread. The Brother quickly, and with great joy of heart, brought the unexpected offering to the refectory, and then returned to the door to thank this mysterious benefactor. To his surprise he had disappeared. Then all began to search for him, but he could not be found. There was not even a trace of his footprints in the snow, which lay heavily on the ground.

These and other similar incidents reveal the prudence and the simplicity of Paul of the Cross. These qualities - prudence and simplicity - adorned his method of government with an inexpressible charm. Another quality - amiableness of manner - made him beloved by his sons, who found his burden light and his yoke sweet. Austere though he was towards himself, yet he was always indulgent towards others. He never permitted himself anything that he would refuse to his Religious; rather, he would deny things to himself that he would willingly grant to others. And when speaking to his Religious, he never commanded or ordered them but begged of them as though he were asking a favor.

The virtue of justice was likewise manifested in the government of Paul of the Cross.

He would not permit the Religious to be deprived of anything that the Rule granted them. On one occasion he severely reprimanded a Rector who had incurred a heavy expense in installing water on the property and, as a result, was compelled to economize on the food and clothing of the Religious. At Monte Argentario, Father Fulgentius was publicly corrected because indiscreet fervor had allowed him to make the community rise fifteen minutes before the time prescribed by the Rule. The Saint forbade any incursion into the time of repose, even one minute, for they were not to be deprived of that which was their right. "As for offices," says Saint Vincent Strambi, "it was furthest from his mind that they were titles of exemption or positions of rest. Rather, it was the saying of the Saint that a superior ought to labor more constantly and to suffer greater inconvenience for the service of the Congregation or for his Retreat." In choosing Superiors, the good of the Congregation came first; he considered only merit and ability. It did happen, sometimes, he proposed to the Chapter as candidates for a particular office those lacking the ability to fill that office, and who would not be accepted by the Chapter. Though he understood this, it was a way in which the Saint acknowledged the virtue of his subjects.

In Saint Paul of the Cross the virtue of justice was inseparably linked with the virtue of patience. No matter what were the faults of his subjects, he was never heard to reprove them in a loud voice or in a tone that even faintly suggested either anger or indignation.

He used to say that "corrections given with sweetness cure every wound, but correction given with harshness, instead of curing one, will make ten." To a Rector who did not follow this advice, he wrote, "Try to act with gentleness, speak always with an undisturbed mind and with a quiet voice and you will obtain more beneficial results; your Religious will be more and more contented." That was always his own manner of acting - gentleness and patience when giving correction.

One day he was correcting a Brother. Although the correction was given with gentleness and kindness, the Brother answered in an angry tone of voice. The Saint, without uttering another word, bowed his head, and then, opening wide his arms towards the Brother, said to him, "Have compassion on me, my dear Brother; be a little patient with me..." The Brother, completely confused at this extraordinary manifestation of charity, fell at the feet of the Superior and shed abundant tears.

But the virtue that endeared him to the hearts of his Religious was his charity. Never did they approach him without being comforted in their pain, strengthened in their weakness and directed in their difficulties. The charitable Father had a balm for every wound and a consolation for every sorrow. He did not wait until they came to him; he could see that they were in need and anticipated their wants and desires, and endeavored with all his soul to satisfy them. How he watched over the health of his Religious. He wanted all his subjects to be in perfect health, so that they could attend with great fervor to the regular observance and devote themselves with zeal and vigor to the apostolic ministry. The food for the Religious, though poor according to the Rule, had to be carefully prepared with spotless cleanliness, and he even went so far as to learn how to prepare the food so that it would be appetizing and nourishing. Before anyone set out on a journey, they had to see the Saint on the day before their departure. He was most attentive to every detail and assured himself that nothing that they needed was lacking. He made them take some food with them and collected for them the best that was available in the Retreat. If the journey was to be one of long duration, he described the route and told them where they could find a place of rest along the way. Upon their return,

what a welcome awaited them. He embraced them with deep affection and inquired of them an account of even the most insignificant happening. When he saw anyone heavily burdened by the obligations of the observance, he immediately dispensed him; often, he deprived himself of his own food that he might give it to one of his children.

But it was towards the sick that the charity of the Saint reached its zenith. He recommended to Superiors that they spare no effort to lighten the sufferings of the sick. To provide the remedies they needed, Superiors were not to consider the expense and, even if necessary, they were to sell the sacred vessels in order to obtain what was necessary for them. His compassion and love for the sick was revealed in every way, and though he was burdened with many responsibilities, he would always find the time to visit them several times during the day.

He served the sick with his own hands, prepared for them the remedies prescribed, and consoled and strengthened them in their sickness by his words of compassion. The treasure hidden beneath the veils of suffering, he wished them to find. Thus he exhorted them constantly to imitate the resignation of the Son of God upon the cross. He remained with them, not wishing to leave them, until he saw them completely and with a holy joy abandoned to the divine will.

If the sickness was serious, he would not allow them to be left alone. Day and night, there had to be someone beside the sick bed that they might not be deprived of consolation of soul or of any relief of body.

During those times when the Saint himself was lying on his bed of pain, he felt the sufferings of others far more keenly than the pains racking his own body. It was edifying to see him rise from his sick bed and, assisted by the Brother, or struggling along on his walking stick, go along to visit the cell of one of his sick Religious. When his infirmities prevented him from going, he sent another in his stead to ask on his behalf how they were and if there was anything they needed.

Towards the sick in other Retreats, whom it was impossible to visit, he was with them in mind and in heart. He wrote letters to the Rectors that bespoke his tender compassion for the sick. He recommended to their charity the needs of the sick. "Poverty is good," he often said, "but charity is better." Again he wrote, "For the proper care of the sick, one needs to be either a mother or a saint." And Paul of the Cross had the tender compassion of a mother because he was inflamed with the charity of a saint.

How difficult it is to express his tender affection for the young Religious. He desired that they be cultivated like delicate flowers, which would blossom under the warm rays of kindly and tender solicitude. He would not permit them to be given a penance to fast on bread or water or to be severely penanced in any other way, repeating often, "It is from the maintenance of health, especially in our young men, that the exact observance flourishes."

On those occasions when the Saint came to the Novitiate house for the ceremony of clothing young men in the religious habit, his face revealed the joy of his heart at the sight of these young men, who had fled from the dangers of the world to seek the sheltered safety of the regular observance. From the very beginning he made them partake of his tender charity. And when they passed from the Novitiate to the house of studies, his heart accompanied them, for he never ceased to show them proofs of his paternal solicitude. He was insistent that they should be given the opportunity, from time to time, to recreate

among themselves. As far as he could, he undertook their direction himself, and omitted nothing that would encourage them to make progress, not only in studies but also in the love of Jesus Crucified.

To avoid delaying too long on this particular subject, we shall content ourselves in describing one trait of the Saint's character, which depicts in an admirable manner his constant and tender affection for the young men of the Congregation.

A class of students were about to leave for another Retreat, where they would begin their course of Philosophy. Before they left on their journey, they sought from their venerable Father his blessing. The Saint took a picture of Our Blessed Lady. As a sign of affection, he autographed it, offering it to the students and said, "You have neither father nor mother. Behold. Here is your Mother. Take her unto yourself" Then, looking upon the group of young men kneeling around him, he began to weep. "Listen to me, my sons," he said. "I shall not live much longer, and now I wish to give you three souvenirs to take away with you. Keep them ever in your mind. First, I recommend to you purity of intention because in this is the secret power of transforming dross into gold. Cultivate purity of intention in your study, and ever strive to study for the glory of God and for the assistance you will render to your needy neighbor. Next, make for yourselves an interior tabernacle where you can treat with the Sovereign Good, who dwells within you, as our holy faith teaches us. During your study, pause from time to time, withdraw into yourself and inflame your faith. Say to yourself, 'O infinite Goodness'. Allow this ejaculation to penetrate your whole being as a fragrant perfume. In the morning, after the example of Saint Bernard, make for yourself a bouquet of myrrh of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and then, throughout the day, compassionate Him, saying, 'O sufferings of Jesus'. And finally, I recommend to you custody of the eyes, which is the heavenly guardian of recollection." After saying this, he again began to weep and gave them his blessing.

If the manner of government of the Saint was gentle, still it was strong and animated with zeal. He was ever vigilant as to the manner of behavior of each Religious. When it did happen that he found anyone of a stubborn nature and incorrigible, he first of all used gentleness and kindness. When this failed, he then acted in such a way as to make even the most courageous tremble with fear. And when any of his Religious abandoned the Congregation, he allowed them to leave, saying, "I am more concerned about the observance than I am about subjects; God Himself has no need of men; few subjects, but good." Minor faults he corrected with kindly but firm solicitude, for he wished that nothing should hinder his Religious from attaining the perfection of sanctity.

One of the Religious had the habit of resting his head against the wall while reciting the Divine Office in choir. Paul reproved him for his irreverence and admonished him to chant the praises of God in a becoming posture and with deeper recollection. Without a moment's hesitation, he sent off to another Retreat a Brother who had been guilty of a slight fault against fraternal charity. Another Religious had shown himself too familiar and too frivolous in the presence of a benefactor who had called to visit the Saint. He was corrected for this fault and warned that he must acquire that religious modesty and decorum that is expected of a son of the Passion.

It is not to be thought that the Saint was inflexible in his corrections. Once a Religious showed himself to have been humbled, or that he repented of his fault, it was as though he had withdrawn into a sacred sanctuary where he was inviolable, and the kindly Father could no longer maintain his attitude of severity. "One day," says Saint Vincent

Strambi, “many of the students fell upon their knees before him and begged pardon (I do not know for what fault). Immediately, the face of the Saint became serene and joyful, and he said to them with a smile upon his face, ‘Now, be severe if you can ... What can I do ... Stand up now, for you have won me over’. ...” Then he began to speak joyfully with them, as a loving Father towards his sons.

In all his dealings with his subjects, he never gave any correction that tended to warp or embitter their character. With the discretion and discernment of the saints, his corrections were suited to the virtue and to the temperament of each particular soul. He never passed that limit where one ceases to profit by the correction, and, instead, is hurt by it. He imitated always the example of his Divine Master, “Who did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” Very often, like a loving Father who knew that if the human heart is to be captivated, it must be handled with a delicate and gentle touch, tenderness and understanding took the place of severity.

But nothing revealed the burning fire of his zeal as his continual care to imprint on the souls of his sons of the Passion the three virtues which he had laid as the foundation of his Congregation - Poverty, Prayer and Solitude.

Poverty! That his children would appreciate and would love this virtue, he called it “the glorious standard...the inviolable rampart” of his Congregation. “I recommend to you,” he said, “holy poverty; if you are really poor, you will be saints. But if you seek for riches, you will not only lose the spirit of the Congregation, but the love of the religious observance will no longer be seen in you.” “The sons of the Passion of Jesus Christ,” he said, “should be stripped of every created things; the Congregation itself must be poor in spirit and in reality, and, if it shows itself as such, it shall preserve always its initial vigor.” The Saint himself was extremely solicitous for the practice of this virtue of poverty. The clothing of the Religious had to be poor, the food poor, the cells poor, the buildings poor, for he knew that the practice of poverty fosters the progress of the perfect common life, so very dear to his heart. To inspire in others love for the common life, he wrote often, “What happiness there is to be found in the common life. When the common life is perfect, oh, what a treasure it yields to souls.” The life of the Saint was in perfect accord with his thoughts, for he never possessed anything for his own exclusive use, no matter how small its value, so great was his desire that all things be held in common by the Religious. To understand poverty as Paul of the Cross practiced it, it suffices to consider his own life, and the cell in which he lived. There, we see a small wooden table, two or three straw chairs, a straw mattress resting upon bare planks and covered by a poor covering of wool, a crucifix, an earthenware holy water font, and a few pictures of the cheapest kind on walls. Such was the precious furnishings of this admirable son of Jesus Christ. Among the poor it was his longing to be the poorest of the poor.

Great was the love of Paul of the Cross for poverty; great was his love for prayer. “If we are to be men of prayer,” he used to say frequently, “God will make of us, poor and lowly though we be, instruments of the most beautiful triumphs of His glory; but without prayer, we shall never become anything worthwhile.” When he saw that any of his Religious applied himself to prayer more than his companions, he willingly sought advice from him. After the spirit of prayer had been cultivated in the soul, he exhorted his sons to preserve this spirit by the remembrance of the Presence of God. “This practice,” he said, “makes your prayer continual and uninterrupted.” Completely absorbed in this subject, he would say, “There are people who greatly desire to visit the holy places and magnificent

temples. I do not condemn them for it; but always I say that we, ourselves, possess a grand sanctuary, for we are the temples of the living God, and the Blessed Trinity dwells within that temple. To withdraw into this temple is a devotion truly sublime." By word and by example, his children were inspired with the desire to treat most intimately with God dwelling within their souls, and to them he communicated his own deep spirit of prayer.

To safeguard this interior solitude, the Saint erected a protecting fortress - exterior solitude, for the former cannot exist without the latter. He called the houses of the Congregation 'Retreats', for the very word itself recalled to his mind, and to the minds of all, love of solitude. As much as it was practicable, he established his foundations away from the habitations of men, for he wished that his Religious, after apostolic labors, should find in this solitude, in the pure and tranquil air of the solitude, refreshment for both body and soul.

When the Religious set out from the Retreat, he would count the hours until their return. He took care, too, that they did not, upon their return, relate worldly happenings of towns and cities. "This would mean," he said, "to bring the world into the cloister."

The Institute, founded by Paul of the Cross, was to combine the spirit of solitude with the zeal of the apostolate. Therefore, the Founder inspired in his sons a love for apostolic work, saying to them, "A missionary, because of the innumerable blessings that he brings to souls, is of greater value than the monastery itself" Another time he would say, "It would be better to suffer the loss of a Retreat than to lose a missionary."

When the time came for the missionaries to leave the Retreat for a mission, with joy and happiness he poured forth on them affectionate blessings, not easily described. He embraced them tenderly and said to them with tears in his eyes, "Oh, if I were but thirty years younger, I would go through the world and preach the mercy of God."

The return of the missionaries was also an occasion of great rejoicing. The Saint would venerate them, weary and fatigued after their apostolic labors, as victims of charity, bearing in their bodies the glorious stigmata of sacrifice. He pressed them to his heart, embraced them affectionately and ordered that they be treated with honor and attention. He would even wait upon them himself in the refectory. In this way he manifested to all the dignity of the apostolic ministry.

What joy the holy Founder experienced to see reigning in his Religious family true and cordial fraternal charity. For him the religious life was a school of reverence and charity. He demanded of the priests the greatest respect for the Brothers and of the Brothers the greatest reverence for the priests, for they were sharers in the priesthood of Christ.

He willed that the whole community be concerned about the needs of each, and that each be concerned about the needs of the whole. By constant sacrifice - the continual giving of himself for his sons - he destroyed selfishness, which is the pest and the bane of communities, and he taught them devotion and respect for one another, which can make community life a source of great peace and joy, for he who does not know how to give himself, does not know how to be a true father.

To depict the method of ruling with a single stroke, to paint that trait so essential to an understanding of his character, in accordance with the prescriptions of the Rule, he was all generosity and kindness. But outside the Rule, he showed unshakeable firmness. It is this attitude that preserves the spirit of Religious Orders and prevents them from

departing from their first fervor.

Such was the manner in which Paul of the Cross ruled, a method redolent of prudence and simplicity, of gentleness with firmness, of strength without rigor. It was a method that inspired his sons to an ever greater fervor of spirit and an ever increasing love for the regular observance. As the sons responded to the words and to the example of their Father and Founder, so did the sight of them bring real peace and consolation into the heart of the Father. And he assured his sons that there were more than sixty of their brothers in Christ - all those who had died - who now enjoyed the everlasting joys of the kingdom of Heaven.



## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR**

### **FOUNDATIONS AT CECCANO AND TOSCANELLA - REQUESTS FROM BISHOPS AND PEOPLE FOR OTHER FOUNDATIONS - A VIOLENT TEMPEST THREATENS TO DESTROY THE CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION**

The new army of soldiers of Jesus Christ produced eminent fruits of virtue, and the fragrance and the perfume of their virtues spread far and wide.

Ceccano, at this time a large town and a flourishing city of the Roman Campagna, envious of the good fortune of Monte Argentario, St. Angelo and St. Eutizio, desired to have in their midst a foundation. The people of Ceccano offered a building that was suited to the requirements of the spirit of the Institute, being poor and in solitude, and yet not too far distant from the city. This building was formerly a Benedictine Abbey. Close by was a small church, Saint Mary of Corniano, where was venerated an image of Our Lady, which according to a legend, had been miraculously discovered.

The inhabitants of Ceccano made all the necessary arrangements, and then, as quickly as they could, approached their Bishop, Bishop Borgia, Bishop of Ferentino, believing that the authority of the Bishop would hasten the arrival of the Passionists. The Bishop had encouraged his people in this holy project, not merely by word but also by alms, for he had at heart the welfare of his flock. Writing to the holy Founder, he pleaded with him to accept their offer and to make a foundation in his Diocese. Paul sent Father Thomas Mary to Ceccano to examine the site and the building, and when he learnt that it was suitable in every respect for men of study and of prayer, he wrote to the Founder. Upon the recommendation of Father Thomas Mary, Paul decided to accept the offer and to make the foundation.

The Saint celebrated the feast of Christmas at St. Angelo and, choosing from that community seven of the Religious for the new foundation, went on to St. Eutizio where he chose others to accompany them to the new Retreat.

It was early in the year 1748, a time when the winter season was most rigorous. Before they set out, Paul addressed them. He spoke with such eloquence and depth of feeling on bearing the fatigues and privations of the journey courageously, and proposed to them, as their example, the example of Jesus Christ in His Passion. His words inflamed the hearts of all with a lively desire to spread devotion to the Passion and to labor for the glory of God. When they set forth on their long journey, they carried themselves like soldiers who rejoice to follow a brave leader. For provisions en route they relied only on their confidence in God. Their enthusiasm, zeal and fervor were further manifested by the fact that they shed their sandals and walked barefooted. For days they travelled along unknown paths. Their hardships were most rigorous, but always edified by the encouraging words of their Founder, they journeyed along with gladness of heart.

At last they reached Ceccano. There, they found the inhabitants awaiting them; their arrival was the occasion of great rejoicing. Even the Bishop was there. He had come from Ferentino to add solemnity to this auspicious occasion, and he welcomed the Religious of the Passion with sentiments of profound joy. For the night the little band received hospitality in the Angeletti household. The next day, the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, according to the usual ceremony and with acclamations of intense gladness, the holy Founder took possession of the new Retreat. It was January 14, 1748.

On that day God Himself was pleased to show, by a miracle, how pleasing to Him this

new foundation was.

After the solemn ceremony, many of the people remained to have lunch in the grounds. They sat around in groups and spread their modest provisions on the grass, chatting gaily among themselves. But the wine failed. And the spirit of gaiety that had prevailed now languished. Paul learned of this unfortunate happening. Coming into the midst of them, he noticed that in a corner was a small barrel. He told those around to drink from it. "Providence," he said, "will never fail us." And there came from the lips of all, the single cry, "How can we drink from it; the barrel is empty." To prove the truth of their words, they turned the barrel upside down. It really was empty. "What does that matter," replied the Saint with assurance, "fill your glasses from it." One of the men, very timidly, came to the barrel and poured from it, and wine flowed from it as though it were full to the brim. Then each drank in his turn, and there was more than sufficient for all. It was with eyes of admiration and veneration that they looked upon the Saint.

It should not be said that this incident is of slight importance. For who can really understand what power over souls has that apostle whom God, before the eyes of men, crowns with the power of miracles.

Once Paul had encamped his soldiers in the midst of the people, he did not delay long before he sent those soldiers forth to wage the battle of the Lord.

A few days later he sent into the neighboring district Father Thomas Mary, with several other priests, to preach the word of God. The Saint himself opened a mission at Ceccano, but after three days he fell ill. This caused great anxiety among the inhabitants, for they feared they would lose this holy man whom, as yet, they but little knew. The Angeletti family took the Saint into their home and lavished upon him every care and attention. But Paul loved poverty more than his own life, and even in sickness wished to share with Christ the privations of the cross, and all this attention distressed him. When sufficient strength had been regained, he departed from these kind benefactors and returned to the Retreat. That journey, in his weakened state, or the lack of suitable remedies at home, brought about a relapse. But he was ever the apostle. From his sick bed, he enquired about the results of the mission and was greatly consoled to learn that the attendances were excellent, and that the people were flocking to confession.

Away at St. Angelo, Father John Baptist learnt, by a heavenly inspiration, of the illness of his brother and recommended him to the prayers of the Religious. God heard their prayers. The Saint regained his strength and was able to set out for Rome.

Paul went to Rome to seek from the Holy Father the title of 'mense commune' for a number of his clerics. The presence of the Pope before him, and the realization enlivened by faith that this was the Vicar of Christ upon earth, caused deep emotion in his heart. The Holy Father encouraged him by saying how pleasing to him was the apostolic zeal he had always shown, and expressed his satisfaction at the foundation of the new Retreat, and then granted him the favor he sought. The Holy Father, with paternal kindness, said that he wished to spare the Founder the fatigue of the long journey to Rome, and thus he would appoint an intermediary through whom the Saint would be able to treat indirectly with him. The kindly welcome of the Vicar of Christ was a consolation to the heart of Paul, who saw in the Pontiff none other than Christ Himself. He received the approbation as though it had been granted by Christ Himself,

His arrival at St. Angelo was the occasion of rejoicing among the Religious. He told

them of the success of the new foundation at Ceccano, for which all offered fervent and grateful thanks to Almighty God. For some time the Saint remained with them, and then, burning with desire to see again his first Retreat of the Presentation, he set out for Monte Argentario with expectant and joyful steps.

But soon he had to choose a community for another foundation for which there had been many requests over a long period.

In 1743 Paul had preached a mission at Toscanella, a town of Etruria. The results of that mission were so astounding that the inhabitants wanted these apostles of the Passion to be always among them. For a long time the matter of a foundation had been under discussion, until Pope Benedict XIV, by his supreme authority, removed the obstacles that delayed its execution. In April 1747, when the Pope came to Civitavecchia to inspect the buildings that had been erected because of his generosity, the Holy Father entrusted the work of the foundation to the Bishop of Toscanella, Bishop Abbati.

It was not until the following year, 1748, that the holy Founder, accompanied by some of his Religious, left Monte Argentario on a journey that keenly resembled so many others by the hardships and sufferings that were encountered. The night was spent at Montalto. The journey on the following day was one of untold suffering. Such demands did this journey make on Paul that he collapsed before he reached the town of Toscanella. It was only by literally dragging himself along that he reached the town itself. Instead of the rest and comfort that they expected to find there, only bitterness and disappointment awaited them. Not the least thing had been done in preparation for their arrival at the new foundation, which was a small sanctuary, Our Lady of the Beech-tree, that was sheltered by a grove of green shaded trees. Beside the church, there was an old, dilapidated hermitage. Nothing had been done to make this dwelling habitable, nor had any preparations been made for the supply of those things that the religious would need. The very sight of the building that was to be the future home of his sons was enough to break Paul's heart. Undoubtedly, Paul wished them to love and to practice poverty; but he did not expect them to expose themselves to the ruin of their health, which would most certainly have happened, perhaps even the risk of death, if they were in this damp unhealthy ruins.

There was no alternative for Paul but to return with his Religious to St. Angelo. When the Bishop heard of the proposed departure, he strongly opposed it and made arrangements for them to be lodged in one of the houses in the town. He then called together the civic leaders, opened a subscription list to which the Bishop himself, in the presence of all, gave 500 crowns in honor, he said, of the five Wounds of Christ. The example of the Bishop aroused the earlier enthusiasm of the people, and within a month all the necessary repairs and arrangements were made to the ruined hermitage and church. On March 27, in the presence of the people who had come from all parts of the district, the ceremony of blessing and opening of the new foundation, presided over by the Bishop, took place, and the sons of the Passion formally took possession of the new Retreat, from which they would offer unceasing prayer to God.

It would be difficult to express in words the cost in suffering and sorrow that the Founder had to pay for this foundation at Toscanella. A letter written with the simplicity and candor, which so characterized him, reveals the heartaches attached to this foundation.

"I will not speak of the bodily sufferings I have to endure rather I will tell you of the bitter torments of soul that assailed me on this journey. Nor will I make any reference to

contradictions. The new house was solemnly opened yesterday, but of all the Retreats we have established, this is the poorest. As for myself, never have I had to endure such anguish and anxiety of soul, neither am I free from other worries as well, But why? God alone knows why. Yet I am hoping for great things from all this. The Religious are contented and happy here, and I hope that their presence and their work will bring untold blessings to the souls living in this district."

But the trials were by no means at an end. God willed by a secret disposition of His Providence to leave them in the greatest indigence. The 'Poor of Jesus' had very little to eat; one day there would be nothing but a few vegetables; another, but a morsel of bread. They accounted it a feast if some kind benefactor should bring along a thin soup of black vermicelli.

There was a day when there was scarcely a thing in the house to eat, and yet on that very day Paul said to them, "As this is a fast day we will have only a light collation for lunch, but in the evening God will provide," And the confidence of the Saint was well rewarded. Towards evening a stranger came to the door of the Retreat and gave them a basket of bread. Paul, who was always attentive to the needs of others, especially the younger Religious, ordered that a nourishing soup be prepared. As they lacked all cutlery, they set to work to fashion for themselves, out of reeds and wood, spoons and forks that were truly worthy of holy poverty. The community, poor and hungry though they were, were filled with a celestial joy.

The privations and the sufferings of the small community were all united together in the heart of the Founder. In his humility, he believed that all these sufferings of his sons were due to his presence among them, and so he decided to return to St. Angelo. His decision brought sadness into the hearts of all, for it seemed to them, that if he were not present to sustain and strengthen them during times of affliction, all support and all strength would be lacking. But the Founder promised to remain with them, in spirit and in heart. After he left, he obtained for them from Almighty God that abundance of necessary things that was always lacking whilst he was there with them.

A pious woman from a small town called Pranzano, Lucy, whom the Saint directed in the spiritual life for many years, came to the Retreat the following morning. She said that she had come because of some interior force that she could not resist. She enquired as to the needs of the community. Before the Saint had departed, he had told them that this very person would come to the Retreat, and that she would provide them with most of their needs. When Lucy returned to Pranzano, she went about the district begging goods for the servants of Jesus Christ, for she was poor herself in worldly goods, but extremely rich in spiritual treasures. The provisions that Lucy obtained for the poor Religious, she loaded upon two asses, and hastened to deliver them to the Retreat.

It was noticeable from this time onwards that the attitude of the inhabitants towards the new Religious in their midst changed, and they returned to that fervor which inspired them to invite them to dwell amongst them in Toscanella; and they continued to supply the missionaries with the goods they needed.

As the new Institute continued to expand, both in the number of subjects and in the number of houses, so too did the apostolic work of the missionaries extend to wider fields. No matter where their Retreats were, no matter where it was that they preached the word of God, there in that very place there was to be seen a great improvement in the behavior of

the people; the standard of morals was higher; scandals disappeared; the true Christian spirit flourished; piety was seen everywhere; the love of Jesus Crucified was enkindled in the hearts of all. In the Roman Campagna, where Father Thomas Mary and his companions preached many fruitful missions, the harvest of souls was so abundant and the enthusiasm of bishops, priests, and people so great, that the new Congregation of the Passion was so venerated that all demanded a foundation in their own Diocese. The Saint could only accede to some of the requests made to him, but the very thought made him rejoice at the enthusiasm aroused in the hearts of priests and people for the new Congregation. He could see in all this the operation of Divine

Providence, which wished to sanctify souls through them and, at the same time, add a greater luster to this newly formed Institute.

But soon there was to arise against the Congregation such a storm of bitterness and hatred that it seemed doomed to destruction. After the storm had passed, there would be the shattered ruins of what had been the glory of Paul of the Cross and his companions. God would permit it, for was it not fitting that the Congregation of the Cross and Passion should be visibly sealed with the sign of the cross - the sign of Christ's glorious triumph. The powers of hell with Satan at their head would wage an incessant warfare against the divine work to destroy it, against that Institute which the powers of hell hated.

False accusations were sent to the Vicar of Christ at Rome about the Religious of the Passion. They were accused of scandalous crimes, and so the report continued. Religion, even the Church herself, would suffer unless these wicked men were immediately suppressed. Even learned men were drawn to support these lying charges, and believed that by so doing they had rallied to the service of the Church and of religion. Benedict XIV, however, acted with discretion and prudence when faced with these accusations. He did not wish to destroy with his own hands that which he himself had built. As the Supreme Pastor it was his duty to enquire into these reports, and entrusted this investigation to a secret congregation of Cardinals, whose duty it was, he said, to examine very carefully the Founder himself and his Institute, and to discover what manner of men were his followers, and what was their behavior when on missions, and what was the doctrine they taught in their preaching.

Terrible though this assault was on the Congregation and upon himself, and devastating though its effects were on the soul of Paul, yet he neither lost that confidence in God who always comes to the assistance of the just, nor that tranquility of mind, which the servants of God enjoy, who in their work for their Divine Master have no other motive than that of the glory of God. Neither did the Saint seek the support of those Bishops who had on previous occasions given him marks of their respect and veneration, and who would have willingly rallied to his call and to his defense, had he sought it. They would have pleaded eloquently the cause of the calumniated Institute. That respect they had always shown him was a certain pledge of their loyalty and affection,

These winds of persecution, far from casting distress into his soul, served only to enkindle the flame of his charity, and it was a token of the treasures of divine love which would one day be bestowed upon his loyal sons.

One day at recreation, when recounting the bitterness of this particular trial, he said joyfully, "It does happen that when a thunderbolt strikes the summit of a mountain, it lays open a mine of gold. You yourselves will see that thunderbolt expose a hidden treasure.

God Himself will make great good come from this severe trial.”

How unsearchable are the ways of God. By this persecution He wished to bring forth into the brightest light the virtues that were hidden in the darkness. The lying accusations, the rigorous investigations of the Cardinals, served only to reveal in the new Institute a rich treasure of sanctity, a truly apostolic zeal, and the purest of doctrine and teaching. Pope Benedict XIV had brought this Congregation into being by his word of approval; now he saw it emerge from the fierce storm of calumny and hatred more glorious and more illustrious than ever. He rejoiced in his own heart, and promised for the future a more solicitous interest in the welfare of this Religious Order.

Though this storm had ceased, though this battle had been won, yet neither in the Founder himself, nor in his followers, was there a lasting assurance of peace, for many other combats had to be sustained, and others storms to be weathered.

When the false accusations had first been hurled at the Saint and his Institute, his enemies had also invoked the public laws against the foundations in the Roman Campagna. They further wished to destroy Ceccano and other foundations, although they had been requested by the Bishops and the people, and Paul had merely acceded to their wishes. This was another blow against the young and struggling Congregation. Was it not to be feared, then, that the severing of the branches of the tree, still so young, would so affect its vitality that the tree would die? This tender tree, watered by the tears of Paul of the Cross, and cultivated so assiduously by labors of prayer and pain, was in mortal danger. Is it to be wondered, then, that fear and sadness filled the soul of the Founder? And God refused him, during the whole time of this trial, those lights and consolations that would have lightened the burdens and healed the wound of his breaking heart.

Ever solicitous for the perfect fulfillment of the counsels of the Gospel, and assured, too, that to overcome this trial it was necessary to rely on the intervention of heaven, Paul did not consider for a moment the thought that he should take this matter to a court of law. But the Bishops and the people undertook his cause and, in spite of the expenses entailed, they defended with unrelenting tenacity the rights of the persecuted Institute. Paul wrote to them and begged them to discontinue their efforts on his behalf, “I have written over and over again.” he said, “to put an end to the legal proceedings, I have protested to them that I do not wish to gain possession of a house in that way, but only by the ways of peace.”

Paul did not nourish in his heart any feelings of rancor and spite against his enemies, but rather, on the contrary, cultivated a special affection for them. If he could not excuse the action itself, at least he could excuse the motive that had spurred them on. He wrote to the Religious at Ceccano that they were to yield to their adversaries and to abandon the Retreat as soon as his letter reached them.

The news of the intention of the Religious to abandon the Retreat soon spread among the inhabitants of Ceccano, and they were sad at the thought of it, and took every precaution to ensure that they should not leave the Retreat.

On the day when the first group left the Retreat, the report circulated rapidly that the Fathers were already on the road. Immediately a body of men assembled, armed with every kind of weapon, and pursued the departing Religious. If they could not persuade them with their pleas to return to the Retreat, then they would drag them back by force. The Religious, seeing themselves surrounded by this fierce body of armed men, were truly fearful at first, but after they realized that the men were only hostile in appearance and this was but a

demonstration of affection, their fears vanished. They explained that they were leaving the district only because they were under obedience to leave. The men would not accept this explanation. The Religious, desiring that the gathering should break up peacefully, and that all should return home at once, promised to return to the Retreat and to write an account of all that occurred to their Father and Founder.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE**

### **FURTHER TRIALS - THE SAINT VISITS CECCANO - LETTERS FROM CARDINALS REZZONICO AND CRESCENZI - ECSTASY AT ROME - JUBILEE MISSION AT ROME - JUDGMENT PASSED IN FAVOR OF THE INSTITUTE - FOUNDATIONS AT FALVATERRA, TERRACINA, PALIANO, MONTE ALBANO (MONTE CAVO) - VISITATION OF THE RETREATS 1754 - 1758**

The great protector of the Institute of the Passion, Pope Benedict XIV, saw with deep sorrow the storm of persecution that was launched against it. Of this Institute he had said when first approving the Rules, "This is the last to come into the Church, whereas it seems that it should have been the first." And from that time he had never ceased to regard it with favor and to assist it in its progress and development. Now that a furious tempest was raging against the members of that Institute, he entrusted to a Congregation of Cardinals the responsibility of investigating the accusations made against them, and whose judgment in this matter would be final.

The determination and audacity of the adversaries of the new Congregation forced them to appear before this supreme tribunal and enter into many violent debates with the Bishops and people. For two long years they pursued their determined and unrelenting attack upon the infant Congregation, seeking to win their cause by any means at all. They carried their attack so far as to restrain the Religious at Ceccano from continuing with the construction of a new monastery and, in the meantime, the Religious had to live in the old building, which was in such a state of disrepair that it afforded them no protection from the cold and rain, and as a result many of them fell ill. The illness of Father Thomas Mary brought him to death's door, and when this sad news reached the holy Founder, it was a further blow to his already saddened and breaking heart. The loss of Father Thomas Mary would not be merely the loss of a son; it would be the loss of one who had been his staunchest and most loyal support.

How strange are the ways of Divine Providence.

Surely all this was a particular disposition of God, who wished to test in the crucible of suffering the virtue of the followers of the Crucified. This Retreat, founded in the Patrimony of St. Peter and by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, was persecuted so ruthlessly that life for the Religious was nothing but a living martyrdom. They had nothing of their own, and yet they were forbidden to seek alms through charity for the necessities of life.

The holy Founder came to them to share their sufferings. He tried, by his saintly exhortations, to raise them from their anguish and misery to a more lively confidence in the goodness of God, but affliction and want had so depressed their spirit, that it was only the constancy and the courage of the Founder himself that inspired his sons to imitate him.

The Saint himself was deeply concerned. Human aid was not available; therefore, he would have recourse to the divine. He pleaded with his Divine Master for bread for his children, and his tears, united with the prayers that came from his lips, touched the loving heart of a merciful God. Paul was still praying when there came to the door a venerable old man with two mules, whose back was bent under the heavy burden of the bread and oil he was carrying. The Saint was called to the door. As he greeted the generous



benefactor as an angel sent from heaven, he blessed the divine goodness which had shown itself towards him and his sons. He went to call Brother to attend to the needs of the benefactor and his animals, but when the Brother went to the door, there was neither man nor beast to be seen, nor was there any trace of them in the snow upon the ground. This clearly showed the hand of God, who at times comes Himself to supply the needs of those who have left all things to follow Him.

Other favors followed this one, which sweetened the bitterness and lightened the burden that filled the heart of Paul of the Cross,

As the details of these constant and bitter persecutions are related, surely we must pause and wonder what those Cardinals, Rezzonico and Crescenzi, were doing, who had professed themselves so devoted and so loyal to the holy Founder?

Cardinal Rezzonico had been appointed to the See of Padua; Cardinal Crescenzi, after his return from France, where he had been the Papal Legate, had been appointed to the See of Ferrara. When word reached them of the attacks and the accusations against the Congregation, each immediately wrote letters of encouragement to their beloved friend. "Do not fear," they said to him. "From these unjust accusations there shall come a greater glory to God."

But God, who is a jealous God, reserved for Himself alone the consolation and the sweetness that He would bestow upon his faithful servant.

On the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, the Saint was in Rome attending to those matters that were under dispute. Weary after the continual tramping of the city streets, he retired to his room to rest. An hour later, his companion came quietly to the door, and not hearing any sound from within the room, thought that the Saint was asleep. He returned two hours later, expecting that by this time the Saint would be awake. He called him several times, but there was no response. The companion, fearing that something had happened to the Saint, opened the door. It seemed to him as though he was in heaven, for so deep was the peace and the happiness that penetrated his soul. The Saint was radiant in appearance with a light far brighter than the rays of the sun. Seeing all this, he exclaimed, "Now I understand, Father, why you did not answer me. All for your Reverence and nothing for me." At these words the ecstasy ceased, and the Saint said, "Silence. Tell nobody about what you have seen."

God Himself, together with His Vicar upon earth, worked together for the relief of the anguish and anxiety of Paul of the Cross.

The Holy Father gave public testimony to the respect and honor and esteem, in a very special way, of the servant of God and of the Institute that he had founded.

The year 1750 was to be celebrated as a Jubilee year. The Holy Father desired that the people of Rome would be models of Christian virtue to all those who would come from all parts of the world to the Eternal City for the Jubilee celebrations. And the means to achieve this would be by a series of missions, given throughout the City in fourteen churches. Missioners, renowned for sanctity of life and apostolic zeal, as well as for their eloquence, would be chosen. Of those whom the Holy Father chose was Paul of the Cross. His selection was an evident proof to all that the calumnies and vicious attacks against him had not in the least lessened the affection of the Holy Father for the Founder and his followers. Paul was deputed to give his mission in the huge and magnificent Basilica of St. John of the Florentines; the thought of the responsibility frightened him. He

did not believe that he was worthy of such an honor, nor did he consider that his preaching would arouse the piety of the faithful as they listened to the word of God in this vast and beautiful Basilica. He entrusted to Father Thomas Mary the work of preaching on the eternal Truths; he also appointed Father Thomas Mary as the superior of the mission, whose duty it was to attend to all matters, small and great. Father Mark Aurelius was appointed to give the instructions on the Catechism, while the Saint himself would give the Meditations on the Passion.

The more the Saint sought to humble himself, the more did God exalt him.

On the third day of the mission, Father Thomas Mary fell ill. Paul had not only to preach in his stead, but also to bear the full weight of the responsibility of the mission. For the sermons, five Cardinals were constantly present, and the eloquent words of the apostle of the Crucified moved them to tears. Not only was there enthusiasm among the people over the preaching of the Saint, but this enthusiasm spread throughout the whole of Rome. All wished to hear the eloquent and fervent sermons of Paul of the Cross. The effect of his words was greater than was ever anticipated, and the treasures gained by souls were immense. It was said by all that it was impossible to listen to the Saint, as he preached on the Passion of Christ, without being moved to tears and without again being reconciled to God.

The joy that God gave to his servant during the Jubilee year was only a prelude, a foretaste of a complete triumph over the enemies arrayed against his newly-founded Congregation.

In the following year, the Cardinals of the Commission gave their decision about the matter entrusted to their judgment. It was to the effect that the Bishops and people were well within their rights in rallying to the support of the apostles of the Passion, and that for the future these Religious must be allowed to live at peace in those monasteries that they had already founded. They were also to be permitted to continue with the work of founding the other three monasteries, which had been suspended during the past two years because of the legal battle.

Of the three new foundations, the first took place at Falvaterra on the border of the Pontifical States, near the Kingdom of Naples. The site selected was an old and venerated sanctuary dedicated to St. Sosio, about a mile from the town. In this hallowed spot, many graces and favors had been granted. The fame of it attracted daily a constant stream of pilgrims. As early as 1748, the inhabitants of Falvaterra wished for a foundation. Their desire for a foundation had been inspired by a mission given by Father Thomas Mary. They decided to build a monastery for them quite near the sanctuary of St. Sosio. They continued with the work, and the support given by Bishop Lorenzo Tartagni, enabled them to make great progress.

During Holy Week, 1751, the holy Founder set out from Ceccano with twelve Religious to make the foundation. From the time of their arrival, the example of their life of prayer and penance in the Retreat, to those who came to venerate the relics of St. Sosio the martyr, and their apostolic zeal amongst the inhabitants, produced abundant blessings upon the souls around them.

Terracina was the site of the second foundation. This, too, was in the territory of the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples. How this foundation came to be made may be explained in the following way.

The Bishop of Terracina, Monsignor Oldi, a Carmelite, was an old friend of Father Thomas Mary. When the Bishop learned that his friend was the superior of the new Retreat at Ceccano, he sent him, together with a letter assuring him of a constant friendship, a gift of some vegetables. The venerable Bishop wrote that he was sending a gift in the hope that it would supply the needs of the community in some small way. When the letter arrived, Father Thomas Mary was away on missions. Although the Saint was at the Retreat at the time, he was ill in bed. In his weakened state, the Saint thought of asking one of the Religious to answer the Bishop's letter and to thank him for his thoughtfulness and generosity, but an interior voice seemed to say to him, "Arise, and write to the Bishop yourself and ask him for a foundation."

This truly seemed a divine inspiration, and then Paul remembered an incident that had happened twenty-nine years before when he was on his way for the first time to Gaeta with his brother John Baptist. As they passed along the shores of the lake, his gaze was irresistibly drawn to the summit of the mountain that lies behind Terracina. There, on the highest point of the mount, as though the veils of the future were raised, he saw the Retreat that he himself had founded. At the recollection of this incident, so many years before, came to his mind, he could not doubt the wish of heaven. He arose from his sick-bed and wrote to the Bishop, expressing his sincere thanks for the act of charity, and concluded by saying that it seemed to him that it would be for the greater glory of God and for the spiritual advantage of souls, if his Lordship would consent to the foundation of a monastery in his Diocese.

The Bishop did not delay in answering. "The site that you have suggested to me as a suitable place for a Retreat has many advantages, and is most adapted to your purpose. There is sufficient land for a garden, and building materials are there in abundance. As for myself, I am delighted with your suggestion and hope that you will begin the work immediately. To help you in this project, in honor of the five Wounds of Our Divine Lord, I will make a donation to you of five-hundred crowns, which will be only the first of my gifts to you." The Bishop then told his flock about the proposed foundation and urged them to be generous in supporting it. Very soon the Retreat was completed and there arose on the summit of the mountain a house of prayer. (On the site where the new Retreat arose, there had formerly existed a palace of the Emperor, Sergius Galba, the ruins of which are still to be seen to this day, and even now attest the magnificence and splendor of the imperial palace. The monastery has been built on the very walls of the ancient palace, while the vaults below are still preserved. "Thus," says St. Vincent Strambi, "on that very spot, where there had been a palace of the pagan Emperor, God willed that a Christian church and a monastery should be built, from which the praises of His divine goodness should resound by day and by night.)

Then followed those violent persecutions of which we have already written. The Bishop of Terracina was one of the staunchest supporters of the Saint and acted as an impregnable fortress against the attacks launched against the new Congregation. He ordered the work of building the new Retreat to be continued without delay, and by his generosity greatly facilitated the work itself. The encouragement and the assistance given to the Saint made the death of the Bishop in November 1749 a great loss. And it was left to Bishop Palombella, the worthy successor of this noble Bishop, to have the satisfaction of completing the new Retreat.

Bishop Palombella showed himself worthy of his dignity, for in him was to be found

holiness of life and the ardent zeal of an apostle. Being a Religious of the Order of the Servants of Mary (Servites), he wished the new monastery to be dedicated to Our Blessed Lady under the title "Our Lady of Sorrows". Under the patronage of the glorious Queen of Martyrs and with the enthusiasm of the whole populace, Paul took possession of the building with eleven of his Religious on Sexagesima Sunday, February 6, 1752. Although weary and exhausted after the long and arduous journey from St. Angelo to Terracina, the holy Founder immediately devoted himself to the work of the apostolate in the new district by preaching Christ and Him Crucified. The seal and the charity of the apostle of the Passion made a deep and lasting impression on the faithful, who expressed their appreciation by continual generosity to the newly-arrived missionaries.

Another foundation, three miles from Paliano, had been offered to the Saint, and although he had accepted the offer, many obstacles prevented him from establishing a Retreat until November 23, 1755. It was during a mission preached by the Passionists that the inhabitants of that district first thought of asking them to settle amongst them. Imbued with this desire, they approached their pastor, Cardinal Gentili, Bishop of Palestrina, and sought his approval and begged him to offer to the holy Founder the sanctuary, situated in the picturesque surroundings on the summit of a hill, called "Saint Mary of Pugliano". It was in this sanctuary that a very old image of Our Blessed Lady, believed to be miraculous in its origin, was venerated. The Cardinal offered this sacred sanctuary to the Saint and asked him to grant him and his flock the favor that they all desired of having a community of his Religious in the Diocese.

When the storm clouds had vanished from the horizon, and the final preparations had been made for their arrival, Paul sent Father Thomas Mary, the Provincial, with eleven Religious to make the foundation. The virtue and the zeal for souls that had inspired the people to ask for the new Religious was the source of continual edification throughout the surrounding districts. The hill became a holy mount, under the maternal protection of the august Queen of Heaven.

Another foundation had been made by Paul of the Cross, but God willed that the Congregation of the Passion should expand even more, that his faithful servant might have other refuges of peace and prayer.

On the highest point of the mountain, called today Monte Cavo, and formerly Monte Albano, the pagans had erected a temple to Jupiter Latius. To this temple, the Romans and the inhabitants of Latium used to flock for the celebration of the pagan feasts; they worshipped their god by the offering of human sacrifice, and partook of other orgies that are too shameful to be related. When the Roman Empire fell, this temple also fell. Then Christianity conquered paganism, and the Christians raised on the ruins of the pagan temple a church in honor of the Blessed Trinity. Now the priests of Jesus Christ offered to the true God of heaven the perfect sacrifice of the all-holy Victim whose Precious Blood washes away the sins of the world. But this hallowed shrine had to be abandoned. The frequent storms that lashed the mountain top wrecked the church and the monastic buildings. The Colonna family undertook to restore them; on Palm Sunday, March 19, 1758, a community consisting of twelve Passionists took possession to unite earth to heaven by the mystic chain of prayer and expiation. And from that time earthly creatures, in union with the angels in heaven, have sung on the summit of the mountain the eternal victory of the Cross.

(Since that time a new wing has been added to the building and a bigger and more

beautiful church has been erected, thanks to the piety and the generosity of the Cardinal Duke of York, Bishop of Frascati, who himself consecrated the Church. There are two inscriptions in Latin that perpetuate, in marble, his memory.

On the day I arrived at this Retreat, I noticed four lightning conductors upon the roof. I soon understood why they were there, for that very morning there were no less than eleven blinding flashes of lightning. No doubt the continual lightning there was the reason why the Romans had dedicated this temple to the thundering Jupiter.

The whole mountain is wooded, and through the woods can be seen the paths around which the returning victors wended their way, as they climbed to the temple, to lay the fruits of their victories before Jupiter their god. On the stone is to be seen the letters, V.N. (Via Numinis).

From the monastery one enjoys a magnificent panorama; far in the distance is the open stretch of water and the misty silhouettes of the mountain peaks; on the plain beneath is majestic Rome, with its thousand cupolas shining in the morning light; to the right is the town of Frascati, with its villas and its shady groves; below the mountain stands Castel-Gandolfo and its Papal Palace, and the lake of glistening waters of blue, the remnants of an extinct volcano. To the left is Albano and its villas, the whole of the scenery of this glorious haven of peace and solitude is a harmonious blending of nature and of art.)

Paul was not able to be present for the actual foundation ceremony. The beginnings of religious life in this new monastery were one of extreme want; everything was lacking except an unbounded confidence in God. The holy Founder, in his charity and compassion for their sufferings and deprivations, wrote to them,

“Your sufferings are a precious gift from His divine Majesty. It is His will that, like precious stones, you will be more deeply and more firmly set in the golden ring of charity. It is His will that you should be victims, offering and being offered as holocausts to the glory of God in the sacred flames of suffering. It is His will that by the sacrifice of yourselves the fragrance of your virtues may spread far and wide amongst men. How I hope that these foundations, so near to Rome, may ever increase the glory of God.”

Difficult though it is to make a beginning, more difficult by far is it to maintain those beginnings and to bring them to perfection. And so it was that the holy Founder never ceased his vigilance nor lessened his solicitude towards the new foundations. As an attentive gardener observes the delicate seedlings that he has sown in the garden, so the holy Founder could not but be watchful and attentive for the plants he had sown and watered with sweat and tears, until they should first take root, then blossom, and finally bear abundant fruit. He visited them often, each in their turn, and, although weakened by penance and the heavy burdens of an active and zealous apostolate, he made those journeys always on foot and willingly accepted the hardships that accompanied them.

His life of hardship and austerity was occasionally interspersed with heavenly consolations and sweetness that were consonant with the generosity of his sacrifice. In order to avoid a long delay in our historical narrative, we shall reserve all these for a special chapter.

The Visitation of the Retreats by the holy Founder, so penetrated with the spirit of God, was surely an occasion of great rejoicing. How attentive he was as he listened to his sons as they confided to him the bitterness of their trials, the heroism of their struggles, and their ultimate victory. How gently he raised from their wearied shoulders those heavy

burdens of anguish and anxiety that could very easily have tarnished the beauty of their spiritual life. How edified he was at the sight of the joyfulness of his sons, living under the standard of holy poverty and with simplicity of heart and with joyful fervor. How he filled their souls with zeal for the conquest of the souls of men.

Paul of the Cross, Religious! How he exhorted them to a love and fervor for the regular observance.

Paul of the Cross, Mystic! How he inspired them by his word and his example to an ever-growing, consuming and burning love for the Crucified Christ, whom they had vowed to love and to serve.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX**

### **THE DEATH OF POPE BENEDICT XIV - THE SAINT FORETELLS THE SUCCESSOR - POPE CLEMENT XIII - THE SAINT BUILDS A CHURCH - A NOVITIATE AT MONTE ARGENTARIO - FOREIGN MISSIONS/ENGLAND.**

**1758 - 1761**

On the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, May 3, 1758, the whole of the Christian world was plunged into mourning. Pope Benedict XIV was dead. The Holy See had lost one of its most illustrious Pontiffs, and the Catholic Church had lost one of her most brilliant sons.

Deep sorrow there was throughout the whole of Christendom; deeper sorrow was there in the heart of Paul of the Cross. He saw the Church, the flock of Christ without a Pastor; he saw his own beloved Congregation deprived of a father who had loved it dearly. To his saddened heart there came the remembrance of the innumerable benefits that the deceased Pontiff had bestowed upon him; every house in the Congregation, with the exception of the first, had grown under his protecting hand. The youthful army of the soldiers of Jesus Christ Crucified had been cast into many seething battles, but had emerged triumphant because of the might of his powerful arm. He, the Founder, poorly clad and barefooted, had always been received by the Holy Father with paternal affection, and never had he left his illustrious presence without a new favor having been conferred upon him.

If gratitude is the hallmark of a noble soul, surely it is to be found in a more excellent way in the souls of the saints. It is to be wondered, then, that the grief of Paul of the Cross was deep indeed, for he was always appreciative of the least sign of interest in himself and in his sons. There ascended to heaven from the lips of Paul and his Religious an unceasing prayer for the happy repose of the soul of this eminent Pontiff, though each was confident that this soul was already enjoying the eternal happiness of heaven. This confidence was aroused by the remembrance of the holy works throughout a saintly life and, especially, of the peace and tranquility of those last hours on the feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross.

The sorrow and sadness of the Saint were due to no other motive than that of a feeling of gratitude. Already a heavenly light had revealed to him the person of the new Pontiff, one strong and courageous, who would uphold the dignity and honor of the Holy See and who would also take under his personal protection and safeguard, as a cherished possession, the new Institute of the Passion.

The Religious were one day speaking among themselves about the forthcoming Conclave for the election of the Pope. Paul was there. The Religious asked the holy Founder whom he thought would be the new Pope. But as Paul did not answer, each of those present named the Cardinal of their choice. Suddenly, the holy Founder interrupted them, "And what would you say if the new Pope was to be Cardinal Rezzonico?" As though with a single voice, all exclaimed, "Such an election is utterly impossible. Cardinal Rezzonico is a Venetian, and there is such antagonism between the court of Rome and the Republic of Venice that, surely, the Sacred College would not elect a Cardinal of that city." The reason offered seemed to exclude all possibility of the election of Cardinal Rezzonico.

All waited to hear the Saint admit that their reasoning was right, and that he was wrong, but the Saint remained silent. All knew from experience the significance of that attitude. Paul always wrapped himself in a veil of silence after he had allowed to escape

from him some of the favors that he had received from heaven. But those present were now convinced that the Saint uttered a prophecy. Indeed, the words were prophetic. To the consternation and amazement of all, when on July 6 the successor to Benedict XIV was announced, and it was found to be Cardinal Rezzonico. There were many difficulties at the Conclave, but these had been overcome in view of the high esteem and reverence all had for the saintliness of Rezzonico, especially those at Padua, where he had been Archbishop.

Paul was overjoyed at the news of the election. He saw, however, that there were storm clouds threatening to engulf the barque of Peter, and the need there would be of a strong and capable pilot. And so Paul asked his Religious to offer fervent thanks to God for the Pontiff that had been given to them.

The reader will no doubt recall the many ties that there were between Paul and his Congregation and the new Pontiff, the many kindnesses that had been lavished on the Congregation, the affectionate letters that had been written to the Founder, the generous hospitality that had been afforded to the two brothers, and the direct influence of Cardinal Rezzonico with Pope Benedict XIV on their behalf. The Cardinal had proved himself to be devoted to the Congregation and to Paul the Founder in the past. What is there that he could not do for them now as Supreme Pontiff.

On July 8, 1758, Paul wrote to the Master of Novices.

"I announce to you that Cardinal Rezzonico has been elected Pope. Father John Baptist and I will now go to Rome, pay our respects to the newly-elected Holy Father, and whilst there we will raise the question of solemn vows for our Institute and ask him permission to establish a house in Rome."

When the brothers arrived in Rome, they had not long to wait before the Holy Father received them with marks of deep affection. They spent a considerable time with him during which the Holy Father recalled the occasions before, when as Archbishop of Padua, they had spoken of divine things.

The kindly reception given them by the Supreme Pontiff encouraged Paul to ask for solemn vows for his Religious and for a Retreat in Rome. The Pope listened to Paul and said that he would be only too happy to grant him these favors, but he wished that these requests be formally petitioned. He pointed out to the holy Founder the method he should follow in order that they should be granted. After receiving the Apostolic Blessing, the brothers, Paul and John Baptist, left the Papal palace happy in heart at the friendliness of their reception.

Immediately after his return from Rome, Paul set to work to prepare the formal petition for solemn vows for his Institute. As the Pope had suggested, he sent the petition to Cardinal Crescenzi, who had been called from Ferrara to Rome. The Cardinal, on behalf of Paul, presented the petition to Pope Clement XIII, who, according to the usual procedure of the Holy See, delegated the matter to a commission of Cardinals in February 1760.

Paul, who had only the one desire in all his works - the perfect fulfillment of the will of God - awaited the decision with a holy indifference. But time was precious. Age was taking its toll on him and infirmity and weakness laid hold of him more often than before, so he multiplied his journeys, wrote an even greater number of letters and, without relying on the support of men, powerful and devoted though they were, he entrusted the success of his petition to God alone.

"It is true," he wrote, "that Cardinal Rezzonico, as Pope, can be most favorable to



us, provided, of course, that God wishes us to obtain many blessings and favors from His Holiness. For success in the matter that we have laid before the Holy See, let us pray unceasingly. The whole of our poor Congregation is united in prayer with the souls of fervent friends that we may be allowed to take solemn vows."

On August 28, 1760, we find him writing, "If the petition we have made to the Holy See is granted, it will certainly be an extraordinary favor, for the times in which we are living are to be lamented."

Concerning the question of solemn vows for the Congregation, the holy Founder remained in darkness and uncertainty. "I feel," he wrote to Father John Mary, "a fierce conflict taking place within me. I have grave doubts, constant fear and an invincible repugnance to intervene in this matter." Encompassed by fear and filled with doubt, he wished to be certain of the will of God. The prayers of the Religious were intensified, and the sacrifice of the Mass was offered. Then the darkness in his soul vanished before the heavenly illumination, and on the very morning when the Cardinals were to meet for the final discussion of the matter of solemn vows - November 23, 1760 - Paul said to one of the community, "Our petition will not be granted. You will see." The truth of these words was soon verified.

What was the reason that determined these distinguished Cardinals, who always acted with prudence, wisdom and maturity of judgment in all of their decisions? The reason may be given in the words spoken by the Saint some months before? "The times in which we are living are to be lamented." The events that occurred on every side, in every country, witnessed to the truth of his words. Everywhere - in France, in Portugal, in Spain, in Austria, and even in Italy - everywhere there was a conspiracy to disband the Religious Orders. The enemies of God were fanning the flames of revolution, and its ominous flare was to be seen spreading on every side. It was at this time that the persecutions launched against the Society of Jesus by General Marquis Pombal in Spain were imitated by leaders in other countries. It was warfare waged by the powers of evil in one concentrated attack upon all the Orders; the most powerful first, then the others. After the storming of the bulwark of the Church, then the Church herself would be attacked. After the Church had been destroyed, then earthly thrones would fall a prey before the onrushing forces of evil, and then society itself would crumble and be laid waste in a field of carnage and destruction.

There seems to have been no doubt that the Commission of Cardinals had a foreboding of disaster as they saw the uprisings against religion.

In those times, under those circumstances, the founding of an Order was in itself little less than a miracle. The holy Founder adored the decrees of God and offered fervent thanks to Him for having made known to His servant what was the divine will.

After this explanation, it will be readily understood why Clement XIII accepted the decision of the Commission of Cardinals, who recommended that the Religious of the Passion should not be permitted to take solemn vows, in spite of his devotion to the Founder and his earnest wish to grant him the favor he sought. For Paul, however, this refusal was an occasion of rejoicing. Though refused this one request, the Holy Father granted him many others.

Paul of the Cross was always a personal friend of Pope Clement XIII. The Holy Father was always happy to hear news of Paul and of the progress of the Congregation. He recommended himself and the government of the Church to the prayers of the Founder. As the Pope was occupied with the affairs of the Holy See, he had little time in which to write to

Paul himself, and so he entrusted to his nephew, John Baptist Cardinal Rezzonico, to write on his behalf. There was one occasion, however, when the Holy Father wrote to Paul. In this act it would be difficult to say who is the more worthy of praises, the highest dignitary in the Church who condescended to write to this poor and humble Religious, or the humble Religious who was honored by such an unexpected privilege.

This letter, written by the hand of the Supreme Pontiff, brought Paul unalloyed joy. We know of his profound veneration for the Vicar of Jesus Christ; between this august personage and himself there was, to his mind, an infinite abyss, and he could not understand how the Supreme Pontiff could humble himself by writing this letter. Before he read the letter to the community, he told them that they should listen to it with the respect that is due to the reading of something sacred. When the bell sounded for dinner, he said to the Religious, "I have no appetite for food because I am surfeited with happiness."

There is another happening that also testifies to the affection and esteem of the Holy Father for Paul of the Cross.

At Ischia, in the Diocese of Acquapendente, there was no church that was a fitting place for divine worship. In vain had the Bishop sought to persuade the people to build a church. But his efforts and his words went unheeded. The Bishop, then, had recourse to the Saint and invited him to give a mission at Ischia and, at the same time, to use his influence over the people by overcoming their obstinacy against the work of building. After Paul had preached to them during the mission, he exhorted them to begin work on a new church; his zealous words won their hearts. They promised that they would do as he asked. No sooner had Paul left Ischia than the project was opposed, and the good intentions of the people vanished. When the news reached Paul, he wrote to the Canon, to whom the supervision of the building had been entrusted, to be of good heart. Stand firm. Imitate the constancy of Nehemiah, who in raising Jerusalem from ruins, worked with a trowel in one hand while he protected himself with a sword in the other. Remember Saint Teresa of Avila. How many were the obstacles that stood before her, yet they only intensified her burning ardor to establish her convents. This great saint believed that opposition was a manifest presage of the glory which the completed works would render to God."

Encouraged by the words of the Saint, the Canon did stand firm. One day, when the matter of the new building had called him to Rome, he received a letter from Paul, who again reminded him that the work called for great courage. The Canon showed this letter to Cardinal Gentili, who wished to keep it as a treasured memento to show to his friends. The letter passed from one hand to another until it finally came to the hands of Pope Clement. After the Pope had learned of the opposition, he gave instructions that it must cease at once, and the work of construction must be immediately begun. To assist this work he made a gift of a hundred golden pistoles. Thus, another holy project was furthered and fostered by Saint Paul of the Cross.

The Bishop of Ischia was so delighted with the impetus given to the work, so dear to his heart, that words failed him when trying to express his gratitude to the Saint.

"Words fail me," he wrote to Paul, "when I try to thank your Reverence for the many blessings you have brought to Ischia. Not only have you restored peace and harmony among my people, but you have aroused them from their apathy and inspired them to undertake the building of a church that is needed so very much. To you, dear Father, I express my sentiments of everlasting gratitude. Though it is not within my power to repay you adequately for your many services rendered to my flock, yet I pray that God Himself will

reward you with abundant graces and blessings in His own good time. I know that it is from God alone that your Reverence awaits the reward for all your apostolic works. In your charity I ask you to remember me in your holy prayers..."

Another project was soon to be accomplished, one that the holy Founder had desired for a long time. From the beginning of the Congregation, it was with dissatisfaction that he saw the Novitiate, attached to the Retreat of Monte Argentario, for it seemed to him that it was too close to the earth. He desired a house for the novices on an elevated site where the young men could flourish like delicate plants, far removed from the world, away up in the heavens, a secluded haven of solitude where the soul would develop in the quiet silence, where the very air and the beauties of nature would foster recollection of mind and of heart, and the spirit was free to wing its way to God. The soul was not the only consideration of Paul. He believed that a higher position would enable the novices to live in a healthier atmosphere. As early as 1753 he had obtained from the King of Naples a site for this Novitiate and, then, as he inspected it with the staff in his hand, he traced upon the ground the plan of the building that he would erect on the very spot. Money was lacking when he began the work of building, but God, to whom he placed his entire confidence, did not abandon his trusting servant. In 1761, a mile from the existing Retreat of the Presentation, another church and monastery arose, though it was of small proportion, yet it possessed a graceful appearance, and its seclusion and solitude made of it a refuge from the world and a sanctuary wherein the soul, undisturbed by the vain and fleeting sounds of worldly pursuits, could contemplate the things of heaven.

With the permission of Cardinal Colonna, Abbot Commendatory, the Saint went in procession to lead the novices from the Retreat of the Presentation, and to install them in the new house, dedicated to the patronage of Saint Joseph, the chaste spouse of the Virgin of Virgins. The holy Founder was happy in the thought that he had his children under the heavenly protection of that great master of the spiritual life, who had been trained in the school of virtue by Jesus and Mary,

Paul offered fervent prayers of thanksgiving to God as he saw in the field of the Church this vine of the Lord, and his most earnest desire was that this vine, the Institute of the Passion, should grow rapidly and extend its apostolate throughout the length and breadth of the empire of the world, which the Master had entrusted to it. "Pray," he said, "pray very much that it will spread throughout the Christian world, even into the dark regions of paganism."

The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda seemed to have divined the secret longings of Paul of the Cross, for it made a request to him for missionaries for the foreign missions. At the request, Paul was delighted. He thanked God for the signal favor that had been granted his poor Congregation of being numbered among those ardent and generous apostles, who would cross the oceans and penetrate the wildest countries, in their search for souls, at the cost of suffering and hardship that they might lead unbelievers into the one true fold, and by their missionary labors extend the kingdom of God. Paul already visualized his Congregation adorned by the blood of martyrs, and at the thought of all these things, he cried out, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who alone works wonderful things..." He hastened to share with his Religious the honor that had been conferred on the Congregation, and at the news each of them volunteered for the foreign missions. They were eager to depart and seemed like those heroic soldiers who, on the eve of battle, vie with one another for positions the most dangerous and yet the most glorious. All could not go; those not chosen by the Saint were envious of the honor of their companions. "They are

waiting,” he wrote, “for the final call from Propaganda.”

The threat of war had caused a general blockade of the ports; the missionaries could not leave. While they were waiting for more peaceful times, death claimed the oldest of the apostles of the Crucified. Father Thomas Mary of the Side of Jesus, as we have already related, had to leave with Bishop de Anglia for Corsica. These circumstances deprived Paul of the consolation that would have resulted from the reports of their apostolic labors amongst those “sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

Of all the countries that were a fertile field for apostolic and zealous souls, there was one more than another that found a constant place in the thoughts of the Saint – England. Since the time when he made his retreat of forty days at Saint Charles, many were the tears he shed, many were the sighs he uttered and many the pleas he made to God for the return of England to the faith. He often said that England weighed very heavily on his heart. “England! England!” he used to repeat with deep emotion. At other times he would exclaim, “Let us pray for England. I cannot restrain myself from praying for this country; every time I am at prayer, this poor kingdom comes into my mind. For more than fifty years I have prayed for the conversion of England. At Holy Mass each morning I make a special remembrance of this intention. I do not know what the designs of God concerning England are; perhaps He will show mercy to it and lead it back to the faith. As for ourselves, let us offer fervent and constant prayers and trust in the Divine Mercy for its conversion.”

One day the Saint was lying upon his sick bed. The Brother infirmarian, bringing him something to eat, found him in an ecstasy and had to call him three times before Paul was aware of his presence. The Saint then exclaimed, “Where have I been? I have been in England, thinking of her glorious martyrs. How fervently I was praying for this kingdom.”

On another occasion, as he was celebrating holy Mass and praying for the conversion of England, Jesus Crucified raised the veil of the future. Paul saw England as she would be. Did the Saint see this country still covered with the darkness of error, or did he see it radiant with the light of the truth? Did he see England a Catholic nation? We do not know, for there is no definite evidence on this matter, although the latter state would be the more probable.

But this we do know with certitude. The Saint saw his sons of the Passion laboring for souls in England, where the blood of martyrs had crimsoned the earth. After Mass the Saint said, “Oh, what have I seen! What have I seen! I have seen my own Religious in England.”

England. The tears, the sighs, the prayers of Saint Paul of the Cross, the apostolic labors of his sons will not be in vain; they will yet make the seed of the word of God grow and develop upon your shores.

Yes, you will become an isle of the Saints. There will come a day when you will weep bitterly for the harm you have done to the Church, your loving Mother.

(Let us add a note to explain how the prophecy of Saint Paul of the Cross was fulfilled. A young man, after receiving Holy Communion, went to pray before Our Lady’s altar at the Retreat of St. Angelo. Suddenly, there appeared before him a brilliant light, and a voice said, “You will be a Passionist, and you will found several Retreats in England.” This young man received the habit of the Passion and became known as Dominic of the Mother of God. Years later, while on his way as Provincial to make Visitation, his horse stumbled and both horse and rider fell into the river. Dominic said, “I am not to die here, for I have not

yet seen England.”

In 1840 Monsignor Bernard, Vicar General of Cambrai, after a vain attempt to establish a Passionist Retreat in France, settled them not far away and on the boundary of Belgium. The Superior of this new house had been chosen by the General, but a change was made. Father Dominic was appointed instead. The Passionist apostle of England was already on the way.

In 1841, at the request of Cardinal Wiseman, Father Dominic crossed to England and founded several retreats, and brought into the Church a great number of converts, among whom were several of distinction - Mr. Galgairns, John Henry Newman and others. It was Father Dominic who received into the Congregation Lord Spencer, an Anglican clergyman, who became Father Ignatius of Saint Paul, and who was later elected Provincial.

Father Dominic died in the odor of sanctity on August 27, 1849, at the early age of fifty-six. His body remains incorrupt and rests at the Retreat of St. Anne, near Sutton. After his death he appeared, crowned with a halo of light, several times to one of the Passionist priests.)

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN**

### **BY THE PASSION OF CHRIST, THE SAINT IS RAISED TO TRANSFORMING UNION - WOUNDS, AFFLICTIONS, THIRST OF LOVE - CREATURES RAISE HIM TO GOD - HIS POWER OVER NATURE**

**1761 - 1765**

In order to tell or, rather, to sing the marvels we are about to relate in this chapter, one would need the tongue of an Angel and the heart of a Seraph.

May all have pity on us, if, concerning these lofty regions of love, we are able only to stammer, if our words do not radiate this consuming fire of which we speak. O Jesus Crucified, what glorious and holy things you perform in the souls of your chosen ones!

We have seen that Paul, even from his early days, was inflamed with love for the Divine Redeemer. As the years rolled by, the sacred fire of love increased in intensity until it became a vast conflagration which consumed his entire being. We have seen him in his earliest years, as soon as he had begun to meditate on the sufferings of the Savior, cast himself into this fathomless and limitless sea. Then, bursting into tears, he became oblivious of himself in the ardent colloquies, in the darts of love that escaped from his youthful heart. So ardent was his love that he would cry out, "O my most loving Redeemer, what must your heart have suffered during the Scourging! ... O so much! ... O what torment, what agony has the sight of my sins caused you!" He called Him "His Sovereign Good, the Heavenly Spouse of my soul." Then sorrow, love drew from these reflections lofty ideas that words cannot express, because it would require the inimitable power that gives to words wings of fire. Paul then offered himself in sacrifice - to suffer, to die with Jesus Crucified. Such a desire raised him to rapture and to ecstasy. Soon, in reflecting on the Sacred Passion, he passed the stage of discursive meditation. As soon as he said, "A God scourged ... A God crucified ... A God dead", his mind could form no other thought, and his heart was absorbed in this interior silence, which is the highest expression of love. Then the heavenly Spouse drew to Himself the soul of His beloved servant. He communicated to him in an ineffable manner His own sufferings. He made him taste heavenly delights by plunging him in the depths of His own Divine Heart.

It is true, according to the ordinary workings of divine grace, these favors were only of short duration; nevertheless, the fruits were manifold. Paul retained always an ardent love for the Redeemer and an insatiable thirst for suffering. Then, although desolate and abandoned in soul, he desired no alleviation; rather he feared to be deprived of his suffering. He besought his crucified Master; he pleaded with Him not to be deprived of this divine treasure. Cold, heat, hunger, thirst - all bodily sufferings - seemed to him so sweet and filled him with such joy that he called them the pledges of God's love, the precious jewels of the Sacred Heart. Not content with scourging his innocent body and mortifying himself in every possible way, one day he drew the heated tongs from the fire and burned deeply over his heart a cross and the Holy Name of Jesus, an immortal sign that followed him to eternity.

The life of Paul was a constant ascension towards the highest degrees of divine union. And the Divine Spouse of his soul endowed him with a sublime understanding of the most secret mysteries of heaven. One day, after Holy Communion, he was rapt in profound recollection. Suddenly, he felt his soul ravished in God, united at the same time by a bond of love to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, and elevated to a very high and sensible knowledge of the Godhead. Absorbed in the sovereign, infinite Good, he tasted for a moment the

unspeakable delights of divine love. This union and this knowledge enriched his soul with heavenly wisdom. Amongst other things he learned that the Crucified is the door through which the soul enters the temple of holy love and arrives at the deifying transformation to lose itself in the infinite All. ("It is by this door," says St. Teresa, "that we must enter if we would have the Sovereign Majesty unfold to us great secrets." Life by Herself - Chapter Twenty-Two.)

Paul also understood how, from the pure love of God, if we can express it thus, the soul descends again to Jesus Crucified. So deeply did he penetrate this secret that he could only express it in divine language.

"The soul," he said, "absorbed in pure love without images, in pure and naked faith, when such is the good pleasure of the sovereign Good, finds itself suddenly plunged into the ocean of the sufferings of the Savior, and with a single glance of faith, sees them all without any operation of the mind. For the Passion of Jesus Christ is a work wholly of love, and the soul, finding itself entirely lost in God, who is Love, who is Charity, experiences a fusion of love and sorrow; the mind thoroughly penetrated with this, reposes and finds itself plunged into a sorrowful love and a loving sorrow."

If such was the interior fire of love that burned within him, what effects did it have upon his bodily frame? His love for the God of Calvary so inflamed his heart that it was manifested in the glow and radiance of his countenance; the habit over the heart was scorched as if it had been burned by fire. The Saint also experienced continual and painful palpitations of the heart. These increased in intensity on Fridays - the day of the death of his God. It was an unspeakable martyrdom which caused him to groan. Only in tears could he find any relief. He always tried to conceal in silence this mystery of suffering and love. If others were to hear his sighs and groans, he would reply that he suffered greatly from a secret malady. As his love grew in intensity so also increased the intensity of his palpitations. His heart, not able to be contained within the narrow confines of his chest, three of his ribs - on that part on which he had burned the Name of Jesus - were visibly raised. A learned doctor observed this whilst attending him when he was ill at the Retreat of Vetralla.

The doctor described it as an unnatural phenomenon and could only attribute it to a love of heroic vehemence. Moreover, two witnesses, worthy of belief, who had learned of the extraordinary fact - the one Father John Baptist and the other from the Saint himself - gave testimony concerning it in the Processes of Canonization.

The Servant of God, as we have already said, was accustomed from Holy Thursday to Good Friday, during the whole time the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the Altar of Repose, to remain kneeling motionless before the sepulcher, contemplating the sufferings and death of the Divine Savior. Now on one of those evenings, whilst he was pouring forth his love in abundant tears, he was ravished in ecstasy and filled with torments and delights. It was then that our Divine Lord engraved on his heart the sacred 'Sign' (like the one worn on his habit) and around it the instruments of the Passion. From that moment his ribs expanded to make room for his enlarged heart, enlarged by love.

The very life of Paul was already a prodigy. This vast furnace of love, too strong for the vessel of clay that contained it, would soon have consumed it, had it not been preserved by divine power. But his body was nothing but a heavy chain that held his soul captive. Oh, how he wished to break the chain. How he wished to be free to fly to the only center of his life, Jesus Christ, to whom he was drawn by an irresistible force. Imprisoned

by the bonds of his mortality, he suffered indescribable swoonings, or rather he went about allowing his overflowing heart to pour itself forth in intense sighs. He could be heard to cry out again and again, "I wish to be reduced to ashes for love. I wish to sing in the fire of uncreated Love." Could he moderate these outbursts of the soul? "No. No." He would add, "I wish to cast myself like the moth into the flames of love and there, in the silence of love, to be lost and to be consumed in the Divine All."

The wound of love so parched and dried his heart that he felt that not even torrents of water could quench it. He would cry out, "Ah, to quench my thirst ... I would need the oceans. What I am in need of ... is an ocean of fire and love to drink." Then, turning towards Jesus Crucified, he besought Him to lessen the fire of his thirst at the inexhaustible source of His Sacred Heart.

The Crucified took pity on this torture of love and heard the pleadings of His servant in an extraordinary way. One day, after receiving a more abundant share in the sufferings of the Passion, Paul felt his palpitations more violent than ever and his thirst more consuming. Torrents of tears seemed to bring no relief; he felt that he could bear this martyrdom no longer. Seeking for the alleviation of his thirst, searching for strength to support him in his mortal weakness, he fell on his knees before the crucifix. There, no longer able to bear his anguish, he pleaded with the Divine Redeemer to hide him within His Sacred Wounds. "O God of Love. What return you make for love."

At that moment the image of the Crucified became transfigured. In its place appeared the One it represented - Jesus Crucified. He loosened His Hands from the cross, lowered them towards Paul, raised him to Himself, pressed the servant to His Heart, and, placing the lips of Paul at His Sacred Side, quenched his thirst at the very source of life and strengthened his soul with the hidden delights of Heaven. For three hours the Saint remained there with the Master in ecstasy. During the whole of that time - as Paul himself later confided to a holy soul - he seemed to be in Paradise, (This subject was represented by one of the best painters of Rome, L. Cochetti (Romano), in a large and magnificent painting which our Fathers presented to the Sovereign Pontiff at the Canonization of the Saint. Two exact copies of this work, made at Rome, still exists - one in our Church at Bordeaux and the other at Ere, near Tournay in Belgium.)

Love enkindles love, just as fire increases the intensity of fire. This divine embrace, far from easing the thirst of Paul, only tormented him the more, stirring up ever more the flame of love that burned within his heart. His life, henceforth, was a life of love alone; within him all was love; he thought that he alone, of all creatures, was without love. He sighed for the happiness to possess always this sacred fire. "O sweet embrace, O divine union." He cried out, "When will we be inflamed as the Seraphim?" He did not know what to do to prove his love, "What will we do to please our sweet Jesus? I wish that our love was so intense that it would set on fire all who came near us, not only our neighbors, but people of all places, of all tongues, of all tribes, of all nations, in a word, all creatures, so that all might know and all might love the Sovereign Good."

On his apostolic journeys, or on his way to visit the Retreats, it seemed to him that all creatures were so many voices pleading with him to love God. The beauty of the flowers, in gardens or in the fields, affected him in an extraordinary ways his eyes would sparkle, his face would be radiant, and as though unable to bear the delights their song of praise excited in him, he would touch the flowers with his stick, saying to them, "Be silent. Be silent." "If you walk into the garden," he wrote another time, "ask the flowers you see there, 'Who are you?' They will not reply to you, 'I am a flower.' No, but they will say, 'Ego vox, I



am a preacher. I preach the power, the wisdom, the goodness, the beauty of the great God.' Imagine that you hear this reply, and then let your heart be absorbed by it, penetrated with it and entirely steeped in it."

Many people from Fabrica, where the Saint had concluded a mission, wished to accompany him as a mark of their affection and respect. The servant of Jesus Christ appeared in the midst of them, his face radiant with joy. When they arrived at a place called the Five Oaks, Paul, seeing the countryside carpeted with grass and flowers, began to speak of the beauty and the grandeur of this colorful sight, of the creatures raising themselves to their Creator. "O great God. Oh, the greatness of God," he cried out. Such was the delight of his heart, that he was raised in the air about two palms. He remained thus in ecstasy for some time with his arms raised to heaven. Those accompanying him were seized with astonishment and wonder, and shed abundant tears at this sight.

The Saint, returning to his senses, continued his conversation in a natural and an easy manner, seeking to conceal what had happened.

Returning one day to the Retreat of St. Eutizio, he turned suddenly to his companions and asked, "Whose fields are these?" "Gallese," replied the companion. Paul asked again, "Whose fields are these?" The companion did not yet understand the meaning of the question. After continuing for some distance, Paul turned to him again, his face shining as the sun, his voice quivering with emotion, "Whose fields are these? You do not understand. They are God's." Transported by love, he was raised in the air and continued for some distance in this manner.

On another occasion he was going from Terracina to Ceccano. When he arrived at the wood of Fossanova, he left the road to visit the church of the monastery where the Angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas, had died. On returning to the pathway, he began with ardor in his voice, "Do you not hear the trees and the leaves pleading with us, 'Love God. Love God.'" Further along he told his companion to go on ahead. When the Religious stopped to look back at the Saint, he saw him resplendent as the sun. The Saint came up to him, repeating, "And how is it that we do not love God? O how we should love God." He seemed to desire that the heart of his companion should be enkindled with the burning coals of the vast furnace of love which consumed his own soul.

When he continued his journey on the road to Rome, it was all men, the whole universe that he wished to set on fire with love. He said to everyone he met, "My brothers, love God. Love God, who is so worthy of being loved. Even the very leaves of the trees cry out to you, Love God. "

His companion and all the strangers wept and were enraptured. So great was the loving fervor of his exclamations that they could not be adequately expressed by cold and lifeless words. He could no longer restrain himself; heavenly intoxication, the folly of the saints which the saints alone understand, possessed him and made of his life a martyrdom of ineffable delights. Paul really suffered a martyrdom because he was an exile upon this earth, when he had already experienced the heavenly reward that God reserves for His laborers.

Paul, having attained the heights of sanctity, saw in the beauty of Nature only a reflection of the divine beauty of the Author, God Himself. Listening to the harmonious chant of love of creatures, he ascended in spirit to the eternal source of all harmony, of all beauty.

When man has completely destroyed in himself the reign of sin and humbly submitted to the law of God, then creatures become submissive to man, whom God created to be their lord and master, and inanimate things seem to be endowed with the power to discern the divine seal in the elect of the Masters; fire becomes a refreshing dew, water as solid as crystal, and even the wildest beasts as affectionate, docile lambs. Who has not read the stirring accounts of the martyrs? Who has not heard how lions, tigers and bears came to kneel at the feet of the Saints? Who does not know of the crow of St. Paul, the first hermit, and of the lion that came to assist at his funeral, the hyena of St. Macarius or the wolf of St. Francis of Assisi? And as for Saint Paul of the Cross, we have already seen the waves, the storms, obedient to his voice, and the waters of heaven respect him. These marvels are repeated often during his lifetime.

On one day when Paul was sick and being carried on a stretcher from Fianello to Borghetto, it began to rain heavily. God regarded the merits of his servant, and rewarded the charity of those who were carrying him by preserving from the rain, not only the venerable Father, but also his charitable companions. More than once they had to cross several ditches, yet they remained quite dry, although the water had been up to their knees. During the journey, Paul, to arouse their sense of gratitude, asked them if they were wet. They replied with astonishment that they were not.

Another time, the zeal of the Apostle aroused certain libertines, because by his preaching some of their victims had escaped from their devouring clutches. They planned to revenge themselves on Paul by putting poison into his soup. The Saint took the food without the slightest suspicion. But the poison respected a life that was consecrated to God. The only effect on the missionary was that he re-doubled his efforts to shatter the fetters that bound these slaves of the devil and to save them from their sins.

Paul, on another occasion, wished to travel from Fullonica to Porto-Ferraio. There was only one ship in the port and this had been stranded for four days on account of a storm. The captain said to Paul that it would have been a pleasure to take him, but he could not do so, because his ship was not seaworthy. His ship was stuck fast, and he had not the means to launch it into the deep. "Have no fear," said Paul, "sail with me, and in the name of God put your ship out to sea." "At that," says an eyewitness, captain of the royal felucca, whose testimony given under oath we cite: "The captain, with his sailors together with my own, set to work to refloat the boat. It was buried in the sand and withstood all our efforts. Then Father Paul came to their assistance. Holding his crucifix in one hand, he was able to launch it with the other. In a moment the ship was afloat. In the opinion of all, it was a miracle that it could have floated in the condition it was in, and with so few helpers. I saw Father Paul sail off to Porto-Ferraio with the captain and the sailors. The journey was uneventful. On their arrival, after all had disembarked, the planks of the ship opened and it sank to the bottom. I have also knowledge of this fact from several inhabitants of the Isle of Elba, where this happening was very much discussed."

Our Divine Savior worked more than one prodigy in favor of the persons who placed their trust in the merits of the Saint. A man, Mathias Maire of Sutri, had been entrusted with a letter of the Vicar General, Picciotti, for Father Paul, who was then giving a mission at Monte Romano. The messenger arrived at the Biedano to find the river so high from recent rains that he could only cross with danger. There were also several other riders there, who knew the ford very well. Although they always travelled at great speed and were accustomed to take risks, they would not attempt the crossing. While Mathias was wondering what he should do, a Religious of the Order of St. Francis arrived on horseback.

He learnt the reason why Mathias was going to Monte Romano and said to him in all simplicity and confidences, "Let us see if Father Paul is a saint." Taking Mathias' horse by the bridle, he led him across the river. The two mounts plunged into the deep waters, side by side. Poor Mathias and the Franciscan were wet to the waist. With only this slight discomfort, they reached the opposite side. Mathias soon arrived at Monte Romano and delivered the letter. Everyone was amazed that he had crossed the Biedano. The astonishment rather increased when they learnt that it was due to his trust in the merits of the Saint. Paul received him with kindness and hospitality. When Mathias had regained his strength, Paul gave him the reply and told him to return immediately to Sutri. The messenger and those present advised against his return. They said that since the rain had not eased the river would be even higher, and the hour was late. It was not right, they said, to expose the rider to a risk similar to the one he had but recently taken. Father Paul insisted. He said that the Vicar General would be sure to send off a second messenger because the matter was very urgent. "Set out then," he said, "and I assure you that God will protect you." Father John Baptist then asked his brother, "But do you guarantee that he will cross the Biedano without danger?" The Saint replied, "Yes, I assure him that, even though the water has risen to the tree tops, he may cross with confidence and without fear." Mathias, encouraged by such definite assurances, set out. He came to the bank of the river and found the other riders still afraid to cross. He himself plunged in without hesitation. The wonder of it! His horse walked on the water as though on solid ground. The men, who were on the opposite side, saw the horse raising its hoofs. Like superstitious men who attribute to the devil the works of the Lord, they cried out, "It must be the devil who carries you. We can even see the shoes on your horse." Mathias was filled with joy as he crossed the river, not even his boots were wet. He continued the journey and arrived safely at Sutri one hour after sunset. The Vicar General, fearing an accident had happened, was at that moment sealing a second letter for another messenger to deliver, just as Paul had foretold.

Let us now see how the animals obeyed the voice of the Saint.

Paul was preaching one day in the public square of Orbetello. Suddenly, two oxen broke away from a cart, loaded with wood for the military garrison, and ran madly into the street leading to the square where almost the whole town had gathered for the sermon. At the sight of the animals, confusion, terror and panic seized all. They began to scatter on every side. Paul understood that this was a wile of the devil and shouted in a loud voice, "Let no one leave the square. This is only an artifice of Satan to destroy the fruit of the sermon." With crucifix in hand, he faced the beasts that were already on the square and commanded them with authority to leave at once. As if they respected the voice of the Creator in the voice of His minister, they immediately turned and went down through the market place to the gate of the town.

Travelling one day in the Roman Campagna, the Saint overtook a workman who, furious at his two obstinate oxen, was shouting terrible blasphemies. Paul reproved him with paternal charity and tried to induce him to control his temper. Instead of being calmed by this admonition, he was aroused the more and shouted many more blasphemies. Then with eyes blazing with anger, he turned on Paul who had corrected him, and he seized his gun and pointed it at him. Paul, trembling more from the horror of the blasphemies than from the danger that threatened him, seized his crucifix as his weapon of defense. "Since you do not respect the Lord," he said, "your oxen will." As he said this, the beasts knelt before the crucifix as though they understood and wished to make reparation for the outrage uttered against their Creator. The workman, seeing this miracle, dropped his gun, fell on his knees at the feet of the Saint and humbly begged for pardon. He followed the

Saint to the place where he was giving a mission, made his confession and was reconciled with God.

The Convent of nuns at Farnese was infested by poisonous snakes. Because of fear, the regular observance was not kept. The Religious begged the Saint to free them from these pests. Paul in his humility did not believe that he could do so. The Nuns then asked Cardinal Rezzonico to speak to Paul on their behalf. The Cardinal wrote to Paul, "I would be very disappointed if this letter finds you already on your way, so that you will not be able to help these Religious by entering their Convent and freeing them from the snakes and vipers that infest it. They begged me to make this request of you, for they have confidence that God will hear the curse that you will put on these venomous creatures. If this letter finds you at Farnese, will you please grant them this consolation? I give you full permission to enter the cloister." The Saint willingly fulfilled the wishes of the Religious and their protector. The Lord heard the prayer of Paul so visibly that at that very moment they fled and were never again seen in the precincts of the cloister.

The miracles that God performed through the ministry of His servant deeply humiliated the Saint, and sometimes humility itself was the cause of another miracle.

He was giving the spiritual exercises at the Convent of St. Ann at Ronciglione. One day after dinner, many persons of the town, among them an ecclesiastic, came to visit him. There were many flies in the room; they were particularly troublesome. The visitors were weary of brushing them away. Paul, seeing their annoyance, said to them, "I am a preacher, but if I were a saint, I would drive these flies away. I know," he added, "a holy man who in this manner - he made the sign of the cross in the air - made them instantly disappear." Hardly had he finished speaking, when the flies swarmed together, flew away and never troubled them again during the rest of their visit. Paul, who had not expected this result, was so embarrassed that he could not speak. The visitors were no less edified by his silence than surprised by the miracle.

The Saint, at another time, was ill in the house of a great benefactor at Civita Castellana. Two canaries were singing joyfully in an adjoining room. To enjoy their melody the better, he begged the host to bring the birds to his bedside. The latter replied that the canaries were timid birds and would stop singing immediately. "Bring them, bring them," replied Paul, "and we will see what they will do." When the birds had been placed near the Saint, they looked at him for a moment. Then, as though they realized what he desired, they flapped their wings, manifested their joy in many ways at being able to please him and burst forth into song. They sang so sweetly that even the owner listened with surprise. The Saint himself was visibly affected by the singing and was moved to utter tender affections of love towards God. It could be said that the Saint and these little creatures sang to the God of infinite Love a sublime hymn, the like of which had never been heard before. The ecstasy began to pass. Shedding many tears, Paul perceived that his benefactors were looking on him with religious surprise. When he had completely regained the use of his faculties, he begged the host to take the birds away. But the timid birds, although far away, continued their delightful song for a long time.

Praise be to You, Jesus Crucified, for the wonders of love that you perform in your saints by your Adorable Wounds, by your Sacred Passion.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT**

### **BY THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SAINT BECOMES A ZEALOUS APOSTLE - THE SOURCE OF HIS APOSTOLATE - HIS METHOD IN GIVING MISSIONS**

**1761 - 1765**

Paul had now passed his seventieth year. He still bore the traces of his life of mortification and suffering in the infirmities of his body. Death, which was near, would bring to an end his long career as a zealous apostle. To avoid unnecessary repetition, and for greater clarity, we have found it necessary to interrupt the narration of his missionary activity, although in reality this work only ceased on account of the gravest infirmities, and on rare occasions. We will now take a glance at his missionary work and group together the outstanding features of his fruitful apostolate.

Let us first examine, in this chapter, the source of our Saint's apostolate and the method he used on missions. In the following chapter we will relate the fruits and the most outstanding wonders of his labors. The scene of his apostolate was Italy, where he labored for the sanctification of the people by missions and of the clergy and religious by the spiritual exercises.

What was the source of his apostolate? From what divine source did he draw the power to arouse that indescribable enthusiasm among the people, so that even learned doctors, priests, Bishops, Cardinals and the Sovereign Pontiff himself were astounded?

One day Paul, in an outburst of apostolic zeal, pleaded with Jesus Crucified to save sinners. He reminded Him that to redeem their souls He had shed every drop of His Precious Blood. Penetrated by a lively sentiment of humility, he believed himself to be covered with the guilt of sins and guilty of the basest ingratitude. "I pray for others," he cried out, "while my own soul is in the depth of hell." This humility and fear touched the Heart of his Crucified Master. "Your soul," replied the Savior with ineffable tenderness, "your soul is in My Heart."

This was the source, this was the principle of Paul's apostolate - the Heart of his Divine Master. In this sanctuary he began from that moment to live the very life of his Crucified God. The thoughts and the sentiments of Jesus Christ were his thoughts and sentiments; his zeal was inflamed by the zeal of Christ dying on the Cross; the charity of Jesus Christ embraced the universe to save all men, so the charity of Paul of the Cross sought to embrace the whole world. Jesus, in the Garden of Olives, seeing before His eyes the sins of the world, seeing souls, in spite of His Passion, miserably lost, was crushed with sorrow and fell into an agony while His sacred Body was bathed in the sweat of His Precious Blood. Paul, seeing the Blood of a God shed in vain for those miserable victims who fall every day into hell, so identified himself with the sufferings of the Redeemer that, it might be said, Christ could be seen in him.

Pale, weary and overwhelmed with the anguish of his agony, he seemed to be ready to breathe his last, and he would weep bitterly. He was often heard to cry out, "A God crucified! . . . A God dead! ... O love! ... O marvel of charity! ... O ungrateful creatures! Even the very stones cry out! ... The Eternal Priest is dead, and you do not weep; you must have lost the faith if you do not shed abundant tears." Very often, at the sight of the image of Jesus on His cross, he begged Him and pleaded with Him to crucify him too. It can truly be said that Paul's prayer was heard, for we shall see him die upon a

cross of pain.

The Heart of Jesus was the perpetual sanctuary of Paul's soul. There, in the furnace of Divine love, his own love was consumed. The soul of Paul of the Cross was filled with the desire to be an instrument to destroy the reign of sin and to spend his life in reparation for sin. Within the Divine Heart, the Lord gave him, as it were, a mission.

One day, whilst in ecstasy, Jesus sheltered him in His Sacred Wounds. By divine illumination He revealed to His servant the vast kingdom of sin, and, after having shown him the horrible malice of sin, He so inflamed his heart that He made of Paul a veritable apostle. Behold, then, the secret of his fruitful apostolate. Behold, the inspiration that ever spurred him on to wage a ceaseless war against sin, against the world and against the devil. Behold the power that endowed his physical powers with a renewed vigor. Neither bodily weakness, fatigue, suffering nor persecution could restrain him, for he was the valiant soldier with weapons always ready. Through him countless souls were wrested from the jaws of hell, defeat after defeat was suffered by the enemy of souls - the devil - and the cross of Jesus Christ was the glorious standard of victory.

The sanctity of Paul of the Cross was another reason for the success of his apostolate. A victim of love and of reparation for the sins of the world, his life was a continual crucifixion. This, in itself, was an eloquent sermon on the crucified Christ. Before the approbation of the Rule, even on missions, he would take for food only a few vegetables, a little bread and for drink, water. On rare occasions, and then only to obey his host, would he add a few drops of wine to his water or accept a little more substantial food. But soon it happened that as a result of his excessive labors and fatigues, he completely lost his appetite, and then he could eat only with effort and repugnance. Apart from meal, at times he would eat nothing. After he had preached a long sermon and heard many confessions, he would go to quench his thirst before the Blessed Sacrament, and more than once, he was granted not only refreshment for soul but also for body. He would speak to our Divine Lord with that candor of soul that is a characteristic of the saints, "O my Jesus, You have said, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.' It is for You, now, to allay my thirst. In truth, in truth, Jesus has given me to drink. On one occasion especially, my thirst was completely quenched. A doctor has since told me that this burning thirst could be the cause of a dangerous fever, and I have an obligation towards myself not to expose myself to this risk, and that I should take something to drink after I have preached. This doctor will be the ruination of me. Patience."

At night Paul treated his wearied and exhausted body no less rigorously than he had during the day. He took but a short rest, and that was upon the floor. Often he would remain kneeling. When the body clamored for rest, he would drive sleep away by severe penances.

It sometimes happened that the curiosity of Paul's host led him to find in his room his instruments of penance. God permitted that they should take away those that were frightening even to look at. There is, first, the discipline now preserved at Gaeta, of which we have already spoken; then another of five thongs with leaden pellets and iron points on the end; a heart and a hair shirt, also of iron and studded with sharp points; two chains, at the end of which were attached spurs and hooks. There is also, in the room he occupied at St. Angelo, a wooden cross with 186 iron points. The Saint wore this on his breast to arouse in him the continual remembrance of the sufferings of the Savior. I will not speak here of his hair shirt. He also scourged himself with an iron chain, a little smaller in size than the chain worn by convicts. Paul used it especially during the time of

missions, offering himself to God as a willing victim of expiation. In this way he fulfilled the great law of the substitution of the innocent for the guilty.

He also had a scourge of many thongs; he would mercilessly strike himself with it. Those who heard and saw him would cry out with pity. One day when he was scourging himself in this manner, one of the members of the congregation climbed on to the platform to take the scourge away from him. Paul did not see the person coming and struck him a blow with such violence that it gashed his arm. The Saint made the sign of the cross over the wound, and it was immediately healed. It was as though Our Lord would recompense by a miracle the hand that offered such a sacrifice. Later, when he learnt that these chains were preserved in the Retreat of the Presentation at Monte Argentario, Paul threw them into a deep well, saying, "You have made an invalid of me; you will not do the same to others."

In the last years of his missionary life, he made use of a discipline of steel strands that were rounded off at the ends, but the edges were as sharp as razors. During some of his mission sermons, especially when he preached on hell, he appeared on the platform with a rope around his neck, a crown of thorns on his head and blood flowing down his face.

In addition to all these sufferings, he endured the fatigue of long and frequent journeys, always barefooted and bareheaded, clothed in his rough habit, bathed in sweat in the summer and frozen and almost dead with cold in the winter.

His weakened body could not support the weight of these austerities, so the Saint often became ill. Though hardly able to stand, he would continue his apostolic labors, so pale, so emaciated in appearance that he aroused compassion in the hearts of all. With his brother, Father John Baptist, he was on his way to preach a mission at Farnese. When they were approaching the town, he asked a man whom he met to go and tell the Pastor that they were coming. The messenger set out and, after fulfilling his task, added, "For one of the missionaries you can prepare a grave, for he appears to be more dead than alive."

One mission was hardly finished before the apostle of the Crucified would begin another. Between missions, there was hardly time for him to breathe. This happened for the greater part of the year. We can conclude without error, then, that the life of such an apostle was in itself a marvel. That the life of Paul might participate more abundantly in the power and fruitfulness of the Redemption, God Himself intensified and increased his sufferings.

Sometimes He abandoned him, as He had abandoned His own Divine Son during the Passion to the fury and the onslaughts of the devil. Later, we will relate some of the attacks of hell upon the servant of God.

The holy Founder did not expect his sons to labor as he had labored, nor to imitate the rigorous penances that he had imposed on himself, especially in the early days of the Congregation. On the contrary, he commanded that they take advantage of the modifications made by the Pope, and that they also follow the advice that Christ gave to His Apostles, "Eat such things as are set before you" Luke 10, 8. In this matter he permitted no singularity and demanded that each Religious conform to the common practice.

One day, Father Mark Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament asked the Saint how he

would act towards those missionaries who sought permission to abstain from meat during the time of missions, following the example of another missionary of great fame and virtue. "I would take them off the missions," replied Paul, "The holy Rule is explicit on this point. If other Orders act as they do, it is because their Rule says nothing on the subject. By keeping the Rule, you preserve humility and health; if you do not keep the Rule, you risk the loss of both." He used to recommend to the priests whom he sent on missions to take the necessary food, "If Our Lord," he would say to them, "found it necessary to endow you with a superhuman strength, you could go for many days without food; but since you have not this grace, you must be ruled by prudence for the work is very fatiguing." Very often he repeated these words, "Honestavit illum in laboribus et complevit labores illius." What he meant was that one must first keep himself fit for the work, and then one would be assured of the blessing of the Lord upon it.

Never did he undertake a mission without the assurance that the work was the will of God. Rather than be led by a false and capricious zeal, he would not make a step unless he was called by his superiors and sent with their permissions. He ordained that the same rule should be faithfully observed in the Congregation. If anyone praised his work, or that of his Religious, he would rejoice in the Lord; if they did not, with a holy indifference he was content that the work had been done as the will of God.

Let us now speak of the method he followed upon missions.

Paul first notified the Pastors of the day the missionaries would arrive. He wrote them concerning this matter. The letters he wrote were full of respect and, at the same time, breathing the fire of his zeal. He set out with his companions always barefooted. When he arrived near the place of the mission, he sent word of his arrival that he might make a solemn entry into the town. Immediately after his arrival he would preach to the people a message of peace and pardon. In the parish he would deliver a fiery and eloquent sermon, saying that he brought peace and war, peace with the Heavenly Father, war with sin and hell. Then he would take Jesus Christ as the Mediator of peace and the Captain for the war, assuring them all that if they were led and assisted by this Leader, victory over the enemies of salvation and reconciliation with God were certain. To the singing of hymns they entered with order and piety into the Church where he preached the opening sermon.

During the mission he prescribed two instructions on the Catechism, one early in the morning to enable the country folk to go to their work. This was an explanation on the Commandments given with clearness, simplicity and earnestness and lasted for an hour. The second, for about half an hour, treated of the dispositions necessary to receive the Sacraments worthily. This was in the evening. Paul ascended the platform after the instruction and began the sermon on the Eternal Truths.

On some occasions, especially during the early days of his missionary work, he organized processions and arranged for other ceremonies to take place.

The Saint realized the advantage that was to be gained by reciting prayers of sorrow for sin to dispose men to make a good confession. That is why he gathered them all into the church in the evening, half an hour after the Angelus. One of the missionaries excited them with ardor to contrition. Paul forbade women to approach even to the door of the church; he told them to remain in their homes during this time and to pray for the conversion of sinners by reciting five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. This exercise took place five or six times during the time of the mission.



Each evening Paul ordered the bells of the parishes to be rung in mourning, an hour after sunset. This was the funeral knell, which reminded sinners that, dead to grace, they were dead in the sight of God. In order to implore the divine mercy for sinners, everyone had to recite an Our Father and the Hail Mary five times in honor of the Sacred Wounds of our Divine Lord.

The zealous missionary used, also, to choose influential men of good character whose duty it was to reconcile enemies and to restore peace among families.

Paul always prepared his sermons by diligent study, but more particularly by prayer. In the Sacred Wounds of the Savior, he placed his strength and his eloquence. Before mounting the platform, he would kneel at the foot of the crucifix. From this source, his soul drew that divine strength that overcomes every obstacle. Often kneeling on a board, studded with little iron points, he asked for a renewal of strength for himself and of grace for souls. One day the master of the house where he was lodging suddenly entered into his room. The missionary quickly concealed his instrument of penance, and, to avoid suspicion, said, "Behold, where I study my sermon - at the foot of the cross."

His prayer ended, he went to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. There, he recited the Athanasian Creed to re-animate his faith, that he might preach according to the advice of St. Paul the Apostle, "But as from God, before God, in Christ we speak" (II Cor. 11:17). Rising up he would say, "The moment has come, O Lord, for your mercies to be glorified." Then he ascended the platform.

First, he gave some practical advice according to the light that he received from heaven or according to the needs of his hearers. In the beginning of this sermon, he observed the rules of sacred eloquence; but as the sermon continued, he followed the inspiration of grace and allowed the Holy Spirit to direct his words, to whose inspirations he was so responsive. Very often, without losing sight of his principal theme, he would digress. The admirable effect of the burning affections that burst from his heart showed that the change was due to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

His voice was strong, pleasing, clear, ardent and penetrating. No one could resist the powers of his eloquence. "It is impossible, after hearing Father Paul," it was said, "not to love God, for everything about him breathes love for God and love for souls. One feels that he desires no other end and seeks no other purpose in his work but the glory of God and the salvation of souls."

On fire with zeal, his features were radiant and his eyes flashing fire. Sometimes he turned pale with horror at the mention of sin or at the thought of souls in sin. Sometimes he could restrain himself no longer and burst into tears. This was not unusual in him.

When he treated of the Eternal Truths, it was sufficient to see him to be terrified. His look, his gestures, his voice - everything about him - expressed the terror that seized him. "You could almost see him trembling," says an eye-witness. "He could terrify others because he himself was terrified." A brigand said to him many times, "Father Paul, when I see you on the platform, I tremble from head to foot." An army officer, who was directed by the Saint, also said to him, "Father Paul, I have fought in many fierce battles. I have faced the fire of cannons. And I have never known fear. But when I hear you preach, then I tremble from head to foot."

When he preached on Hell, his hair literally stood on end and his eyes were as balls of fire. "O what a dread necessity," he would say. "O what a dread necessity to hate for

all eternity the God of love, who loves us from all eternity. Never to see God! Always deprived of God!" And he would repeat, "Always! Never!" He spoke these words with such cries of fear that it seemed his heart would break. He trembled, he groaned, he wept and the pleading in his voice forced all his hearers to tremble and to weep with him. Yet, no matter what was the subject of his sermon, he changed his tone towards the end of the discourse. His words and whole being bespoke gentleness and tenderness as he pleaded with souls to return to God. He inspired hearts with such confidence and love that even the hardened and obstinate could not resist his passionate pleadings.

When he spoke of Heaven, one left the earth with him; one seemed to see the eternal splendors of the heavenly kingdom; one seemed to enjoy the unspeakable delights of Paradise. "Father Paul," some learned doctors said, "speaks better theology than we do. He himself tastes the delights of heaven. That is why he speaks so eloquently of it."

Preaching on the Blessed Eucharist, the Sacrament of Love, his sermon was a song of love, a hymn of the Seraphim. He was often in rapture, surrounded by a radiant light.

But the Passion of Christ was the subject dearest to his heart. Then it was that his soul uttered sighs, and his eyes shed abundant tears. "It is certain," the people said of him, "that Father Paul will one day fall dead in the platform while preaching on the Passion of Christ." He often repeated with deep emotion, "A God in chains for me! ... A God scourged for me! ... A God dead for me! ..." From the feeling with which he uttered these words, one could see that he had penetrated into the sanctuary of the divinity, that ocean of infinite goodness and perfection. He was overcome by the power of His love. No orator could preach on the Passion of Christ like Saint Paul of the Cross.

This eloquence, because its source was the Crucified of Calvary, produced abundant fruits of salvation. Often his discourses were interrupted by the weeping of sinners, who beat their breasts and publicly confessed themselves to be sinners. Paul had sought them and had delivered them from the very arms of Satan.

The people came from everywhere to listen to him and to go to confession to him. Not only persons of distinction. But also the uncultured and the unlettered sought Father Paul of the Cross, because they knew that he would be kind and merciful. As a doctor, always full of tenderness, he took particular care with them. He used to say that the robbers were his best friends; he loved them from the bottom of his heart. And these robbers, conquered by his love for them, loved him in return with deep affection. To win them to God, the Saint made use of all the means of gentleness and influence. He pitied them in their sufferings. He welcomed and embraced them. To say all in a few words, he became a father to them that he might break the chains of sin that bound them. It became a common saying to signify that someone was a great sinner, "You have need of Father Paul of the Cross."

It would take many books to relate the extraordinary conversions that God worked among this class through the ministry of the apostle. We have already related some of them, and we will see others in the following chapter. Paul won them back to God, aroused them to sincere repentance and assured them of forgiveness. The words he spoke to them testified to his solicitude for inspiring them with confidence, "Have great courage now; have no fear, no concern for the past. I take upon myself all the sins you have ever committed. You have only to think of the future. I accept full responsibility

before God of all your sins.” Regarding this, the devil, one day, tried to disturb Paul. Whilst he was before the Blessed Sacrament, the devil put this thought before him, “Miserable one, you have made yourself responsible for the sins of others. At the judgment I will accuse you of them.” But the Saint, remembering that Jesus Christ is the victim of propitiation for the sins of the whole world, immediately sought to pass the responsibility to the Savior. He said to Him from the depths of his heart with filial simplicity, “Lord, you see that I have accepted the sins of others because of my love for You. Remember this and take them all on to Yourself.” After transferring this burden of sin to the Divine shoulders, that had carried with the Cross all the iniquities of mankind, he regained his peace of mind and heart.

If Jesus Crucified was the source and the principle of his apostolate, the Crucified was also the means that the Saint used to move the people. The Passion moved him; the Passion likewise moved the sinners. Always, after the evening sermon, he preached a meditation on the Passion. Not only in this special discourse, but in each of his sermons, by holding Christ Crucified before the eyes of the people and by showing them the Wounds of the Savior, His Precious Blood, he raised up by the Infinite mercy those who were weighed down by Eternal justice.

Towards the end of the mission, he made a more solemn discourse on the Passion of Christ. He reserved this for himself as the supreme effort to conquer souls who had, up to this time, resisted the word of God.

The apostle of the Crucified was astounded by the marvels of grace which were bestowed abundantly upon souls by this all-powerful means. “I see ever more clearly,” he said in a letter, “that the most efficacious means to convert obstinate sinners is the Passion of Christ, preached according to that method which the Divine goodness, the Uncreated and infallible goodness, has approved through His Vicar on earth.”

Although the Saint multiplied the exercises, nevertheless, he prescribed them with prudence and discretion. This was necessary to bring to a successful conclusion any enterprise, but especially those that entail fatigue. When his strength began to fail, he had to moderate his ardor; he then heard confessions in the morning until midday. He heard confessions again in the evening, after he had rested for a time or, rather, after having recollected himself in order to recommend to God the success of his preaching.

The Passion of Jesus Christ was the most efficacious means he could use to assure the success of the mission. The Passion was also the sure means to provide that the effects of the mission would endure. To obtain this, he exhorted his hearers to meditate on the cruel sufferings of the Redeemer or, at least, often to recall them to mind.

“For myself,” he used to say, “I have converted by the Passion the most obstinate and hardened of sinners, robbers and all classes of people. When I again heard their confessions, sometime later, I could not find any matter for absolution, so complete had been the reformation of their lives. This was due to the fact that they had been faithful to the advice I gave them to meditate upon the sufferings of Jesus Christ.”

For those who had not yet experienced how sweet it is to approach the Wounds of the Savior in prayer - the fountains of sweetness and life - he used to adapt himself to their state. “Begin,” he would tell them, “by making your meditation in the morning for a quarter of an hour; make this prayer before you leave your bedroom. If you do this, you will see that everything will go well with you, and you will live far from sin.”

The mission lasted for a reasonable time. The length was determined by that prudence which knows how to consider both the needs of the people and the benefit they would derive from the mission. As soon as Paul had closed the mission, he would depart. But he always carried away from that place an ardent affection for the good of those souls whom he had assisted along the way of salvation.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE**

### **CHRIST CRUCIFIED COMMUNICATES TO THE SAINT'S APOSTOLATE THE VIRTUES OF THE CROSS: MERCY, POWER, JUSTICE, LOVE, WISDOM AND PROTECTION**

The apostolate of Saint Paul of the Cross was the apostolate of the Cross inspired by an unfathomable love for the Crucified, It was this love that infused power into his activity; it was this love that gained for him an abundant harvest of souls.

We have already seen how the harvest, which the great missionary reaped in the field of the Church, was blessed by God. But in order that our historical narrative might not be spoiled, we have had to leave behind many ears of corn. Now we will glean for these.

Wherever the inspired voice of Paul was heard, a complete renewal of life followed; virtue flourished; the implacable hatreds, so frequent during this period, were overcome; peace was restored in families; mental prayer and devotion to the sufferings of the Redeemer were practiced. The people, overjoyed with this transformation of souls, and believing that the wonderful spirit of early Christianity had revived, would cry out, "Father Paul is a saint! We have a new apostle of Christ Crucified!" At the end of the mission, they could not bear to see him leave them. They gathered around him to accompany him a great part of the way, recommending themselves to his prayers, kissing his hand, his mantle, even the footprints his bare feet had left in the dust of the road.

The holy missionary seemed to have received from Jesus Christ, dying on the Cross, a particular skill in transforming robbers into 'good thieves'. We have already related some of these conversions which were held as wonders, both by their fame as well as by their numbers. We will now relate a few more of the outstanding ones.

The Saint was going one day to preach at Monticano when he met a band of robbers on horseback. These, edified by the holiness of Paul, wished to escort him on his journey. The Saint began to speak to them of God, of the soul and of salvation. With that unction, which he used on every occasion, his words impressed them deeply. Under the charm of his words, these men, accustomed to crime and murder, felt their hardness of heart soften and their fierceness of nature disappear. They accompanied him, attentive to his words, when one of them noticed that the feet of the man of God were cut and bleeding and leaving bloodstains in the dust. At once, all dismounted. Each of them offered his horse. Paul thanked them but graciously refused the offers. The robbers were deeply concerned about his condition. But what could they do? When they arrived at a place where the road was more thickly covered with thorns and stones, they stretched out their coats on the ground and forced him to walk on this improvised carpet. Being unable to withdraw from him, whom they had but recently met, but whom they already loved as a father, they did not fear to accompany him even to Monticano. Armed from head to foot and banded together they crossed the streets in silence, entered into the church and waited for the apostle to open the mission. They listened with respect to the word of God. When the sermon was finished, they quietly withdrew to the forest. Each day they returned until the mission was closed.

But the robbers went further than merely listening to the word of God. Choosing, for fear of the crowd, a late hour of the night, they came one after another to Paul for confession. They renounced their life of crime and were ever afterwards fervent Catholics.

Here is another incident which reveals the heroism of Paul's charity.

A notorious brigand had sworn that he would not rest until he had driven his stiletto in the heart of his enemy, a nobleman of Orbetello. The latter feared to leave the city lest the brigand, ever ready to strike, should entrap him. Many persons had used all their influence to appease the fury of the robber, but all their efforts were in vain. Paul heard about this implacable hatred. His apostolic charity always moved him to try and conquer such sinners. He declared that he would go himself to meet the robber. But all attempted to dissuade him from his purpose, telling him that by so doing he would be endangering his life. But heedless of the peril, Paul, armed only with his crucifix, set off for the hideout of the robber. Finding a man armed to the teeth, he asked him if he were so and so. "Yes," replied the bandit in a tone of voice that would have frightened one less heroic than Paul of the Cross. The Saint took his crucifix in his hand and knelt down. "I have come," he said, "for the sole purpose of asking a favor of you in the Name of Jesus Christ. I will not leave here until you have granted it." "What do you want?" "That you pardon the nobleman of Orbetello and that you cease to terrorize him." "Father Paul," cried the robber, conquered by grace, "stand up. I cannot refuse you this request. You are the only one who could have obtained it. Yes, I pardon him from my heart."

At the suggestion of the Saint, he signed an act in which he promised to leave the nobleman in peace, whom he had hitherto pursued in hatred. Seeing before him a subject almost disposed for complete conversion, Paul spoke to him of God with his usual charity. The brigand was silent for a moment and deeply recollected. Then he asked to go to confession. He abandoned his plan of vengeance and adjured his life of robbery and murder. His band then appeared on the scene; the leader gave the order that none of them were to trouble in any way the nobleman whom he had pardoned. The apostle, not content with having converted the chief, seized the opportunity to speak of God and His mercy to the accomplices. Touched by grace, all of them went to confession in that very place. Paul then left them. They were joyful in their reconciliation with God. Paul was even more joyful at the rich conquest of souls. At Orbetello the people were waiting anxiously. As it was late and he had not returned, they feared for his life. His return with the report of his triumph filled every heart with joy, but the most elated was, naturally, the nobleman. Now delivered from threatening danger, he could live in peace in the future. He always cherished for Paul sentiments of profound gratitude.

The news of these conversions spread rapidly throughout the length and breadth of Italy and were related in the hideouts of brigands, hidden in the forests or on rugged mountain slopes. Many of them sought an opportunity to lay at the feet of the Saint the burden of their crimes. Let us relate one example.

The Saint was going with Father John Baptist to Montemarano, a town of Tuscany. He had to pass through a forest, and it was evening. To recollect himself in God, as was his custom, he sent his companions on ahead. Without warning, an armed brigand rushed upon him, seized him roughly by the arm and ordered him, in a tone that would tolerate no refusal, to follow him into the forest. Paul was filled with terror at the assassin's brusque command. After walking a few yards, overcoming his fear, he asked why he was wanted. "Forward. Forward." replied the bandit, tightening his grip on Paul's arm. Paul believed that his last hour had come and commended his soul to God. When they were in the deepest part of the forest, this criminal threw himself at the feet of the Saint. "Father," he pleaded in all humility, "Father, for the love of God hear my confession." "My brother," answered the Saint, "you could have told me this earlier." "I am sorry, Father, but I thought that if I did not use force with you, you would have refused." "Yes, I will be delighted to

hear your confession,” answered Paul, “but first allow me to go and reassure my poor companions.”

When he returned to explain to Father John Baptist, he found him in tears, praying to God and fearing a terrible tragedy. Then the Saint returned into the forest, where he found his penitent weeping with sorrow. He heard the confession. Once again he had placed on the way of salvation another thief.

The most tender charity was the secret of these conquests. Paul used to say that sweetness attracts, while harshness repels. Concerning this, he used to tell an instructive story.

During a mission a man came and whispered to him, “Father, will you hear my confession; it is twelve years since I have been to confession.” Paul listened to the confession with extreme charity. Seeing the penitent so joyful and so filled with consolation, he asked him, “Why, then, have you deprived yourself of this happiness for so long?” “Well, Father,” he replied, “at my last confession the priest was hard and harsh. He drove me away, sayings ‘Get out of here; you are damned.’ Terrified by these words, I did not dare to enter the confessional again.” It was many years afterwards that this sinner met the Saint. He ran to meet him, kissed his hand and said, “Father Paul, since the time you last heard my confession, I have, by the grace of God, remained faithful to my promises. I have never fallen into sin.” What power there is in sweetness.

We could relate many wonderful conversions of women who, imitating the sinful woman in the Gospel, also imitated her in their repentance. Often, in the middle of a sermon, moved by the Saint’s eloquence, they would cry out, “I am a sinful woman. Pardon. Pardon for the scandal I have given.” And in the presence of these edifying scenes of emotion, it was not long before the whole congregation was uttering cries of repentance and sorrow.

We will relate one fact which will surely be of interest to the reader, as misfortune always does. It concerns a young blind girl of Orbetello.

Without any apparent cause, this girl became blind. It was a cruel affliction which made her bewail her misfortune for eight months. One day the devil persuaded her that God had really abandoned her and, if she would abandon God and think no more about her soul, every trace of sadness would vanish. Alas, she succumbed to this diabolic temptation, believing that only in despair could she find contentment. From that day forward not a tear flowed from her eyes nor did a sigh come from her lips. She lived in this deplorable state for many months. Then it became known that Father Paul had arrived in the town and was staying at the house of his benefactor, the Grazi’s. The sister of the afflicted girl, no doubt inspired by heaven, took her to the Saint.

Father Paul had just celebrated Mass. On returning to the sacristy, he asked for the blind girl. When she had been brought in to him, he said to her, “Julia, you need two graces: light for the soul and light for the body. Let us see which of these two you desire most.” And without giving her time to reply, he added, “Sight for your soul, is it not.” And extending his hand, he placed two fingers on the eyes that were blind. “These two fingers,” he said, “have just touched a great and holy Thing, the Bread of Angels.” “Sight for my soul,” cried Julia, as if she had returned to herself. “Sight for my soul “ The divine Light flooded with brightness the soul of the blind girl. She hastened to regain the grace of God and enjoyed from that moment a pure and unalloyed consolation, greater than she had ever enjoyed before, greater even than when, with the eyes of the body, she could

contemplate the beauty of the heavens.

In all this we see the mercy of Jesus Crucified towards sinners, bestowed on them through the ministry of Saint Paul of the Cross. Now let us consider the power of Christ Crucified.

God often gave to the voice of the apostle a supernatural strength and power. On the Isle of Elba a man on horseback was making his way towards Porto-Ferraio. When he arrived at a place called Elbetro, he heard resounding in his ears these frightening words: "Hell ... Eternity." He stopped. Filled with astonishment, he looked to see where the words were coming from. But there was nobody in this solitude. He spurred his horse on and galloped off. "Hell ... Eternity." These words, more terrifying than before, sounded again in his ears. Seized with terror, he dismounted, knelt down and implored the God of mercy to pardon his sins. He continued his journey, still in terror. At Porto-Ferraio he heard the explanation. The words that he heard were the very same that Paul was uttering in his sermon at Elbetro - two miles away.

A similar thing happened to a shepherd, a sick person and a doctor. It is not without interest that these heard the whole discourses as the shepherd was minding his flock, the invalid was on her bed of suffering, the doctor was on his way to the country to attend a patient. (The voice was heard more than 4 miles away.) Jesus Crucified also manifested His power in answer to the zeal of the apostle who wished to be present everywhere so that he might save souls wherever there was a soul to be saved.

Paul had finished his mission at Piombino. Accompanied to the port by people of all classes, he boarded a ship. They waved and shouted farewell. Favored by the winds, the vessel was soon out of sight. All returned home. Amongst them was a Doctor Gherardini who, returning to the town, called on a patient. To his astonishment, he saw Father Paul coming out of the room. "Father Paul," he exclaimed. "Is it really you? But I have just accompanied you to the port. I saw you with my own eyes disappear from sight, far away over the sea. And now I find you here." "Not a word about this, Doctor Gherardini," replied Paul. "No, not a word about it," Paul said again. "I came to perform an act of charity." And immediately he disappeared.

One morning, as the Saint was unvesting after Mass, a man came into the sacristy and said, "Father Paul, will you hear my confession. It is ten years since I have been to a priest." "Do you want all the bystanders to hear you?" replied the Saint. Then turning to those who were present, "Do not believe that; he only said it that he might be the first to go to confession." "I tell you, Father," replied the penitent, "that it is ten years since I have been to confession." The holy Founder asked him to wait until he had finished his prayers of thanksgiving after Mass.

How ready is the Divine goodness to fill the hearts of repentant sinners with love. There, where iniquity had abounded, grace did more abound. This sinner, for years so far from God, new in the vehemence of his sorrow, violently and unmercifully struck his breast with a stone. The Saint had to restrain him. But what was even more extraordinary was the manner in which the sinner had been brought to the feet of the confessor.

While he was coming to the village where the missionary was preaching, the devil appeared to him and threatened to take him away. We can easily imagine his fear. While staying at an inn, he heard a voice during the night saying to him, "Go to confession to Father Paul." That is the reason why early next morning he could call the Saint by name, although before that moment, he had not heard of it.



Another time, on the morning of the general Communion, the Saint returned to his lodging to take a little rest, for he had not been able to do so during the preceding night. But a man appeared at the door and asked to go to confession. "My brother," the holy missionary said to him frankly, "I am so weary that I really must rest my head for a little time. Could you not go to one of my companions, and without delay you will be consoled?" Hardly had the Saint returned to his room when an interior voice said to him, "You must hear this confession." Paul went out at once and recalled him. "Father," the penitent said, "if I have come along this morning for confession, it is only because you came last night to bring me." "But how is that possible?" asked the Saint. "It is quite true," was the reply. "Last night you said to me, 'Come to confession'. The Saint admired the marvelous workings of divine grace, and used to say with humble gratitude that his guardian Angel sometimes helped him in the conversion of sinners by assuming his bodily appearance.

This conviction of Paul finds its confirmation in the following incident.

One day, in the church of Monte Argentario, Father Louis of the Sacred Heart of Jesus saw an old army officer deeply recollected, and who appeared to be burdened with a grave anxiety. This priest approached him and asked kindly if he could do anything to help him. "Is Father Paul here?" he asked. When he learned that the Saint was absent, he seemed troubled, and with a sigh in his voice, said that he wanted to go to confession to him. "If you do not want Father Paul particularly, there are six other confessors available." "Would you, Father, hear my confession?" "Certainly." "Very well then, I will make my confession to you." And he followed the priest into the Chapter Room where there was a striking crucifix. Hardly had the officer seen it, than he ran to cast himself upon his knees before it, and striking his breast he exclaimed with heart-broken sobs, "Will He pardon me, Father? Will He pardon me?" "Since He has brought you to His feet, that is surely proof of forgiveness," said the priest to arouse his confidence. "Father, for fifty years I have been living in sacrilege; for fifty years I have been tortured with bitter remorse. Nothing could make me overcome the shame I felt. But one night in my sleep I seemed to see Jesus Christ crucified with His holy Mother and Father Paul of the Cross. The latter drew from under his mantle a flashing sword which he brandished threateningly and said, "Go to confession at the Retreat of Monte Argentario or I will kill you." Then the Blessed Virgin, having pity upon me, made a sign with her hands for him to cease. I found myself bathed in a cold sweat when I awoke. Well, even after that, I had not the courage to go to confession. Some days later, I had a similar dream, but far more terrifying than the first. Father Paul rushed at me with the same menacing sword, saying, "Now there is no remedy for you." Once again our Blessed Lady told him to let me live, and that I would go to confession. I awoke bathed in sweat and trembling with fear. And from daybreak I have been on my way, and here I am at last. I have come to see if there is still mercy for me."

Father Louis welcomed this soul with priestly charity. The old officer opened his heart to the graces of heaven, and tears streamed from his eyes, contrition and repentant love mingled with the Blood of Calvary, to bring to him peace together with regained innocence. "Father," he said as he arose from his knees, overcome with joy of heart, "since I could not go to confession to Father Paul, would you please tell him the story I have related to you so that in his charity he may pray for me."

When Father Louis met the holy Founder upon his return he said to him, "It seems to me that your Reverence fills the hearts of poor sinners with fear and dread." Then, according to the permission that had been given to reveal what had happened, he related the incident. "O my God," replied Paul in humility, "this is not the first time that my guardian

Angel has appeared to souls in the form of myself.”

Very often, on account of the vast concourse of people who had come from all parts of the district to hear him, Paul found it necessary to preach in the open or in the public square. Many times the devil sought to frustrate the efforts of the missionary by causing storm clouds to appear in the sky. But Paul made the sign of the Cross in the air and the clouds disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. This prodigy occurred in many places, but the most striking of all took place at St. Flora.

Paul was preaching in the public square. The sky was cloudless; the weather was calm. Suddenly loud claps of thunder were heard, the sky became dark and threatening, and rain seemed about to fall in torrents. The people were terrified and were preparing to run for shelter. “Remain here,” Paul cried out in a loud voice. “Do not be afraid. This is only the work of the devil who is angry and is jealous of the benefits that your souls will receive.” With crucifix in hand he made the sign of the Cross. At that very moment the storm broke in all its fury, and the surrounding land became a vast lake. But where the missionary and the people were assembled, not one drop of rain fell. At the sight of this extraordinary happening, all shed tears of joy. The Saint was so filled with zeal and fervor that he cried out that he would do penance for sinners. With a discipline he scourged himself. So violent were the blows that the discipline broke; one of the pieces flew through the air to land upon the roof of a neighboring house. Then, taking a chain, he continued his penance. A priest climbed on to the platform and snatched the instrument of penance out of his hands. This is another way in which the athlete of Christ continued his apostolic work to confound the enemy of salvation.

Another instance of the power of the Saint was given during a mission in the district of Montalto. Night had fallen and Paul and a companion stayed at an inn. Not long after they had been seated, Paul heard a man utter a blasphemy. He rose to his feet. “Traitor,” he cried out. “Do you know what you are saying? You will change this stone into blood.” And hitting the stone which he held in his hand, there came forth drops of blood. At the sight of this, the blasphemer fell on his knees before the Saint and humbly begged for forgiveness. The next day he went to confession to Father Paul and firmly resolved to avoid all sin, especially the sin of blasphemy.

If Jesus Crucified revealed His power through the ministry of the apostle of the Crucified to free souls from the yoke of sin, He also severely punished those hardened sinners who resisted the pleadings of the apostle or who made a laughing stock of him.

At Pitigliano, there were six men who were annoyed at the missionary’s condemnation of the sins which they themselves had been committing. Not content with publicly mocking the preacher, they assembled at the time for the sermon in a pharmacy adjacent to the church where they kept pounding a bronze gong and creating an infernal din. The congregation could not hear a word of the sermon. The Saint sent a messenger to ask them to stop making the noise and also reminded the chemist that during the mission his shop should be closed. The latter sent back an impertinent answer, “What right has Father Paul to dictate to me? I do not wish to close the shop.” The others replied that, since they were in a private place, they could do as they pleased. From this den of iniquity they continued to disturb the mission.

After a short prayer, Paul cried out, “Unhappy man, you do not wish to close the shop? Well, your shop will remain open but not for you.” And he added, “Let all of them take care, for the anger of God is ready to strike them.” The scandalous behavior of these

men caused deplorable effects. A great number allowed themselves to be turned away from the mission. Paul, with profound grief, announced that the hand of God would soon punish the culprits in an extraordinary way. One of the six, perhaps the most guilty, died a miserable death like the wicked Arius; his dead body was found in a house of ill-fame. Soon afterwards, his accomplices also met untimely ends. The chemist suffered reverses in business, which reduced him to bankruptcy. He was forced to hand over his property to a stranger. His shop remained open, according to the prophecy of Paul, but not for him. Finally, God afflicted the whole town by sending a pestilence which caused the death of 700 of the inhabitants.

How the apostles of Jesus Christ waged war on the disciples of Satan. How they make them tremble and fear.

At Magliano, six or seven persons resisted grace and refused to repent of their sins. "How I pity those who fear the Divine mercy. They fall beneath the blows of Divine justice." Within a few months all had perished miserably. One was drowned and another murdered; this one died from a fall, that one struck down by a thunderbolt.

Often a mission is a last grace offered by God to obstinate sinners.

At Caparbio, a man lived a life of public scandal. The missionary visited him and with burning zeal tried to break the sinful chains that bound him. The sinner pretended to repent, but truly terrible things happened. On the night after the visit from the missionary, he fell into sin and, on the very same night, was struck down by the justice of God and died a miserable death. The Saint used these examples of sudden and unprepared deaths to preach on the torments of hell. The impression was so deep and lasting because the congregation knew the persons concerned and the sinful lives they had led as well as the circumstances of their deaths.

But generous souls, truly Christian souls who received the word of God with faith, were visibly rewarded. The Lord showered abundant graces upon them, on their families and even on the fruits of their labors.

Let us give just one example to follow those we have already related. This incident happened at Canepina and at Vallerano in the same season. The vines were frozen and dried up and leafless; the fruit was small and shriveled. The people of the district, entirely dependent upon the fruit of the vines for their livelihood, were naturally in a state of fearful anxiety. Paul feared that their concern over material needs would interfere with the needs of their souls. He turned to God and pleaded with Him. Then, he said to them, "Be converted and repent, my beloved friends, and I assure you that God will give you an abundant harvest." Their trust in his words was not unfounded. The devotion of these people was rewarded by a yield of fruit more abundant than they had ever seen.

In the village of Arlena, in the Diocese of Montefiascone, a lady named Jeronyma Ricci had been deaf for over three years. She could not hear even the sound of the church bells. She deplored her affliction because it deprived her of the consolation of hearing the sermons of the missionary. One evening, she stood at the door of the church waiting for the Saint to pass by. As he was passing, she secretly cut off a piece of his habit and applied it to her ears. The missionary perceived it and said to her in a severe tone, "Well, what have you now?" - "Now, I have the good fortune of being able to hear you," she replied, for at that instant she regained her hearing.

At Orbetello, a young girl of twelve suffered from a persistent fever. She was

gradually becoming more pale and more depressed. The Saint visited her, and looking on her with pity, told her that her illness would last for a long time because God wanted to use it for His glory, but that the day would come when her cure would be discussed everywhere. For fifteen years this poor girl remained between life and death; many times her physicians had given up hope for her; and many times she had received the Last Sacraments. The Saint came back to preach a mission in this town. One day the sick girl desired to hear once more a sermon of the missionary. She begged her parents to take her along. Not to disappoint her, they carried her in their arms to the church. Towards the end of the sermon, she fell unconscious. All believed that she was dying. Paul came to her, made the sign of the Cross over her and went away. The dying girl opened her eyes. The fever had left her, and she was completely cured. The whole city could not believe the report. Now they saw in perfect health, the one who for many years had been lying at the gates of death. She lived for many years and testified about this miracle in the Processes of Canonization.

Let us now see how Jesus Crucified manifested His Divine wisdom through the voice of His apostle, Paul of the Cross. He had already enlightened Paul from his youth with a superior knowledge which raised him to the highest degrees of heavenly understanding. And so the eloquence of the Saint was more divine than human.

Love will attempt more than human strength can perform, but Heaven will sustain the lover in his desire for sacrifice.

On one occasion, in the middle of a sermon, the Saint felt so weak that he thought he would fall to the ground. Raising his eyes to the crucifix, he said, "Lord, strengthen me." At the same time a voice, similar to his own, continued the sermon. The surprised apostle listened in silence. Understanding by an interior illumination that it was the voice of an angel sent by God to help him, he blessed the Lord and thanked Him with all the fervor of his soul. The congregation did not realize the wonder that was being enacted before their eyes. But they could not doubt that there was something supernatural about the sermon, for never did human words produce such abundant fruits. Emotion, excitement and enthusiasm were general; the effect was as extraordinary as the cause that had produced it.

But there is a still more extraordinary manifestation. On the Feast of Pentecost - the year is unknown - the Servant of God, burning with love and zeal, was entirely absorbed, transformed in God. He ascended the platform whilst in ecstasy. Then with childlike confidence, he said to the Holy Spirit, "Since it pleases you to leave me in this state, You must preach instead of me." And it was the Holy Spirit Himself who preached the sermon. The Saint, still in ecstasy, remained silent. But what a scene in that immense congregation - astonishment, compunction, sorrow and repentance everywhere. "Oh, what language," each said to his neighbor. "Oh, what language. It is none other than that of the Holy Spirit." The Saint replied within himself, "You are right, you are right. It is quite true." And with uplifted eyes he uttered aspirations of love and humility, saying, "Oh, what graces I have received ... Yet there is nothing in me but ingratitude and iniquity."

This prodigy was repeated at other times. For during his preaching, according to the Saint's own testimony, it often happened that God withdrew him from himself and suspended the powers of his soul. Then the Holy Spirit continued the sermon. We must not be astonished, then, that this irresistible force and sweetness which operated through Paul of the Cross wrought so many astonishing conversions.

Christ Crucified, with His divine lips, also suggested words to his apostle. We find this marvel in the mission in the Church of Saint Laurence in the Diocese of Montefiascone. Let us leave the narrative to a witness, Joseph Paci, then a Canon and later Archpriest of the same parish.

At last, the concluding day of the mission arrived. Father Paul was to give the Papal Blessing. Wearing a surplice, he ascended the platform. "I stood on his left holding the mission crucifix. (This crucifix is preserved in a chapel of the Castle near Acquapendente.) When the sermon began, I heard a mysterious voice. Father Paul repeated exactly the same words to the people that I had already heard. I was amazed. I began to wonder where this voice was coming from. I knew that there was no one else on the platform except Father Paul and myself, so I had to believe that this voice was not human, but divine. It continued throughout the whole discourse. The sermon produced such an effect that there was not a person in the congregation who did not shed abundant tears. The words would have softened a heart of stone."

The enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. When the Saint descended from the platform, all gathered around him to kiss his hand and to give other marks of their veneration. But suddenly he disappeared from their sight. Thinking that he had hidden himself, they searched with torches throughout the whole night. But though they looked everywhere, they could not find him. All their anxiety was allayed when they learned that, at the time he disappeared, he had been transported by supernatural power to a neighboring district, the Grotto of Castro.

The Wisdom of God also helped the apostolate of Paul of the Cross by revealing to him future events and the most secret thoughts of the human heart.

The Saint had come to Viterbo to give a mission. Count Brugiotti, a devoted friend, immediately called upon him. During the conversation, Paul suddenly interrupted him and cried out, "Lord, do not permit such a misfortune to be inflicted upon one I love so dearly." "Is it the death of my aged father you foresee?" inquired the Count. "No," answered Paul and remained silent. During the mission, he often repeated, "Lord, do not permit this to happen." One day, just before the time of the sermon, he left all in haste, sad and troubled in heart. Along the way he met the Count, who asked him where he was going. "To the Bishop," replied Paul. This was then Bishop Abbati. "But, Father Paul, the bell has already sounded for the sermon. You can go afterwards." "And if afterwards, he was no longer alive? Let us go at once, at once. I must go there now. If I delay, I will be too late." The Servant of God had a long and secret conference with this worthy prelate. Coming away, he was heard to sigh, "What a terrible misfortune, what a terrible misfortune." He returned to the church and, more eloquent than ever, he preached on death. Suddenly, he stopped. "At this moment your Bishop is dying. Your Bishop is dead. Let us pray for the happy repose of his soul." He fell upon his knees and in a sorrowful tone recited the 'De Profundus'. When he had finished, a messenger rushed into the church, passed through the crowd of people and gave the missionary a note announcing the sudden death of the Bishop. This fatal news, which had confirmed the word of the Saint, increased the bewilderment of the congregation and threw the church into a scene of bitter grief and mourning.

Often, Paul of the Cross was given a special light to discover sins, those sins hidden deep in the recesses of the heart and long forgotten by the sinner or those banished from the mind in bad faith. We cannot relate all of these incidents. Besides, there is a similarity amongst them all.

He would first listen patiently to the accusations of the penitent. If any sin was forgotten or concealed through shame, he would say to them, "And that sin which you committed on this day, this year, in this place?" Hearing such precise details, the sinner would begin to tremble. "Courage, my child, courage." The kindly missionary replied, "God has sent me for no other purpose than to heal you. He wants to make you a saint." It was by these illuminations that he understood the designs of God upon souls.

Another time during missions, God would reveal to him the sins that were then being committed in the parish. If this light from on high came to him during the sermon, he would interrupt his discourse, saying, "I see, even at the very time I am preaching on repentance, that there are souls offending God by sin." Afterwards, it was learned that in a particular place, at the time indicated by the preacher, that some crime had been committed.

Paul, one day, embarked at the Port San Stephano for Piombino. A storm drove the boat on to the coast of Tour de Troia. "I do not know," said the Saint, "why the sea has not swallowed us all. There is someone on the ship who has not been to confession for seven years." One of the men came forward, trembling, "I am the guilty one. I am that unfortunate one." The Captain, the sailors and all on board the ship then went to confession.

We have already seen the tenderness with which God looked upon His servant. We might add here some striking incidents of His special divine protection.

Paul and two of his Religious were travelling through a forest. Fatigued from the journey and weak from starvation, they were walking along with difficulty when they met a man and a woman coming from Valentano to their country house. These invited the Religious to their home to regain their strength. The man even wished to wash the feet of Father Paul. He found embedded in them several long thorns which he drew out. His heart was moved with compassion at the sufferings of the Saint. These benefactors treated them as though they had received Jesus Christ Himself. Their act of charity was to be amply rewarded.

Later, the lady fell ill and was in danger of death. Father Paul was, at the time, at Montalto ready to embark for Monte Argentario. Suddenly, he changed his mind and set out for Valentano instead. God had enlightened him as to the dangerous condition of his benefactor and the violent temptations to despair that were assailing her. When Paul arrived, he found the lady unconscious. "Angela," he said to her, "why do you allow these doubts to disturb you? Don't you know how good God is?" At the sound of these words, the invalid regained consciousness and with it complete confidence in the Divine mercy. Soon she was perfectly cured.

The Saint, with Father Fulgentius of Jesus, had to embark for Bolseno. He begged the owner of the ship in his charity to give them a free passage. The man harshly refused and remained deaf to the humble pleadings of the Saint. Paul recommended himself to God. Then he saw a gentleman, richly clothed, on horseback. The rider approached him and said, "Are you Father Paul?" He paid for the passage of the two Religious, greeted them and, without listening to their words of gratitude, departed.

On another occasion, Paul, weary and exhausted, was resting under a tree. He arose quickly and said to his companion, "Let us go away from here. It is not safe." Hardly had they left when the tree fell to the ground with a thundering crash. Had they remained where they were, they would have been crushed to death.

During a severe winter, the Saint was returning to Monte Argentario, weary from the journey, pierced with cold and shivering from nervous exhaustion. He fell to the ground, almost in a faint. It was in a lonely place. There was no hope of human assistance. He thought that he must surely perish. "Lord," he prayed, "must I be deprived of the assistance of my own Religious? I beseech You, do not permit this. Nevertheless, I abandon myself to Your loving protection." He felt himself raised from the ground. He opened his eyes. He saw two angels of radiant beauty smiling upon him and carrying him tenderly. "How great is the Providence of God," he cried out. Then, he found himself at the gate of the Retreat.

It was during another severe winter, on another journey, long and arduous, to open a mission. Travelling in such conditions would tell heavily upon his weak constitution. But the salvation of souls and the glory of Christ Crucified called him. He set out with Father John Baptist. After walking for hours, the cold and the fatigue and weakness reduced them to such a state that they could hardly stand on their feet. They feared that at any moment they would drop from sheer weariness and exhaustion in this deserted spot. More sensible to the sufferings of another than to his own, Paul encouraged his brother to be brave. In this desperate necessity, he had recourse to the angels with his usual confidence. An invisible hand seized him and took him, in the twinkling of an eye, to the end of his journey. Not finding Father John Baptist there, he asked that the same assistance be given him. At once he found his brother alongside of him. Both knelt and thanked God for His protection. Inflamed with this manifestation of Divine Providence, they began the mission with increased fervor and zeal.

We have related many astonishing miracles. Glory be to You, Jesus Crucified, who work such wonders for Your apostles. They, dying to themselves, place all their strength in Your Cross.

Yes, if we always seek to efface ourselves, then You will make shine upon our ministry Your Power, Your Mercy, Your Justice and Your Love. You will look down upon us as a tender Father looks upon his beloved sons.

**CHAPTER THIRTY**  
**SPIRITUAL RETREATS TO PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS - BY THE PASSION OF**  
**CHRIST HE GUIDED SOULS TO DIVINE UNION**

**1761 - 1765**

The picture we have delineated of the Saint's apostolate would be incomplete if we were not to say a few words on his spiritual retreats to priests and religious, and upon his spiritual direction of souls, guiding them in the ways of mysticism with sweetness and knowledge.

We cannot number the occasions on which he preached these exercises. It was in the precincts of the sanctuary, especially, that he poured out his soul in perfect freedom. No longer was it the struggle with the miseries of the world, a struggle so often unfruitful because in that battle he met souls who were not disposed to receive the imprint of the divine operations. But in the sanctuary, he was in the natural atmosphere in which his own soul thrived. He breathed the air of his heart, the air of purity, the air of light, the air of love. There, he spoke as a priest to priests, an apostle to apostles and a saint in the assembly of the saints. He had only to speak of his own soul, and he would sing to his God and to Christ Crucified.

With what reverence he appeared among them. From the time of his youth, when he had assisted at an ordination to the priesthood in the church of Bishop Cavalieri of Troia, he had made the resolution to remain always standing in the presence of a priest. He saw in the priest the permanent Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the participation in His eternal Priesthood of the bloody immolation of Calvary for the redemption of souls. With what fervor he exhorted them to correspond to the sublimity of their vocation, they, who in their own destiny carried the destiny of souls, in their sanctity, the sanctity of their flock, in their eternity, the eternity of the souls entrusted to their paternal care and solicitude.

One day at Latera, in the Diocese of Montefiascone, he spoke to the clergy of the obligation of good example and priestly zeal with such fervor that he appeared to emit rays of light, and was seen elevated above the ground and moving about in the air as though supported by an invisible power.

Priests felt themselves inflamed with a new love for God and for souls by his burning words and, at the same time, inspired with a renewed courage for sacrifice and the fulfillment of their sacred duties. If he found anyone who, from their contact with the world, had tarnished the radiance of their own soul, animated by the charity of Jesus Christ, Paul would cleanse it from the heart and make it shine again with brilliance, the sacerdotal crown.

In the enclosed sanctuaries of the virgins consecrated to Christ, he appeared as an angel in the flesh. It cannot be expressed with what loving care he tended this garden of the Divine Spouse, how he perfumed it with the fragrance of his own virtues. He wanted to establish in every convent an exact observance of the rule, a constant peace and a perfect tranquility. He desired to inflame each soul with a burning love for the heavenly Spouse. These fervent daughters admired in him his ardent zeal, his intimate union with God, his detachment from all creatures and his admirable gift for the direction of souls. They had such esteem for his holiness that they did not hesitate to ask him to perform miracles.

It has already been related in this Life how the Saint freed the Convent of Farnese



from snakes in answer to the prayers of the nuns. In the same Convent, a novice, Sister Mary Cecilia of the Heart of Jesus, was suffering from TB. Each day was bringing her nearer to the grave. She had all the symptoms of this incurable malady. For six or seven months she had been in the Convent, but now she was very unhappy because she feared that the Superiors would not admit her to religious profession. The Superiors begged Father Paul to advise her to return home. The Saint spoke to her in the confessional, "My daughter, I have bad news for you. You must return home. Your illness is an impediment which will not allow the Sisters to admit you to profession." "No, never," she replied in tears. "Very well then," answered the Saint, moved with compassion, "have confidence. I will bless you." Paul blessed the novice with his crucifix. Then he added, "Take some oil from the lamp before the Blessed Sacrament and make the sign of the Cross over yourself with it. You will be cured. You will be allowed to take your vows. Have no doubt about it." At that moment the fever left her. The novice had no more hemorrhages. Her health improved, and she had no recurrence of the disease. She was able to testify to this fact twenty years later.

The Convent of Monte Carmel at Vetralla was also infected with this dread disease. Many of the religious had died from it in spite of careful precautions. Within a few years, five or six had perished from it. The Nuns were very concerned. They feared that the contagion would carry off the younger religious, and this would bring discredit upon the Convent and turn many postulants away from them.

In 1753, when Father Paul came to give the retreat, they begged him to ask God to free the Convent from this disease. The Saint had pity upon them. He stormed heaven with prayer and had recourse to Mary, the treasury of all graces. On July 2, the feast of the Visitation, he blessed some water with a relic of the Blessed Virgin. He drank a little of this water himself and gave the rest to the Sisters. "Now, remain in peace," he assured them, "this evil will not trouble you again. You will have other sicknesses but this one, never. Do not be afraid. You will not be wanting in subjects." From that time the Convent was always filled with postulants. They even had so many applications for admission that they were forced to refuse many. "As for TB," says Saint Vincent Strambi, "there was not one single case of it in the Convent again, as many doctors can testify."

But what is still more marvelous is the fact that at the time of the prophecy, two of the Nuns had been suffering from the disease since the preceding March - Sister Teresa Margaret of the Holy Trinity and Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus. The latter had, for a long time, enjoyed perfect health. Paul said to Sister Mary, "You will die soon, but your death will be a gentle sleep." A few months later, on December 31, the Sister heard Mass and received Holy Communion. On returning to her cell, she was taken with another illness, according to her doctor. That evening she received holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction. Her soul was filled with such tranquil peace that she did not cease to cry out, "I will sing forever the mercies of the Lord. Come, sweet Jesus, come. Do not delay." She experienced a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. Turning to her sisters, she said to them joyously, "Father Paul said that my death would be a sweet sleep. See for yourselves the truth of his words. Quickly! Quick! I can wait no longer." And this canticle of love which she began to sing in exile, she continued in her eternal home, united in spirit with the choir of virgins who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

At that moment the Saint was giving a retreat in the monastery of Sutri and said to one of the sisters, "A nun has just died at Vetralla. She is already in heaven." A letter was written immediately. The reply confirmed still more the opinion of these consecrated souls

of the sanctity of the Servant of God.

Religious houses, in all parts of the country, asked Saint Paul of the Cross to give them spiritual retreats. Even if he was merely passing through the town, they would ask him to give them a conference on spiritual matters.

Very often the Passion of Christ was the subject of his exhortations to the various communities.

At the Carmelite Convent of Vetralla, he was speaking to the Nuns on the love of God and used for his text, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me." He treated this subject with such fervor and with such burning expressions of devotion that he was completely carried away by the sermon. In order to encourage them to be generous with God, he told these seraphic virgins of Carmel that the most efficacious means to unite themselves with the God of Love was Holy Communion. He encouraged and recommended them to approach without fear the banquet of the Angels.

"This discourse," says Saint Vincent Strambi, "left the community so fervent and so filled with love that even today when the Gospel of the Mass contains the text, 'If any man thirst...', the sermon of Father Paul is always recalled."

We will include here an incident which is perhaps not without interests as it treats of a religious vocation and the prophecy of the Saint in regard to it.

When he went to Civita Castellana, Paul always accepted the generous hospitality of Doctor Ercolani, one of our great benefactors. The Doctor had a daughter, seven or eight years of age, named Elizabeth, but whom the Saint called "my little nun." As Elizabeth had no desire to enter the Convent, she would become very annoyed and would reply in a determined tone of voice, "Why do you call me this? No, no, I have no intention to be a religious. I do not want to be a nun." "Why not?" asked the Saint. "Because I want to stay with my mother." "For the moment, yes." "No, always. No, always," and Elizabeth repeated these words with a determination that might well be called obstinate.

After the Saint had left, Elizabeth, who had heard it said that the Saint looked into the future, began to fear that he was thus speaking a prophecy, and would run to her mother in tears, "You will see. Father Paul speaks in this way because I have to be a nun." The mother tried to calm the fears of the child by saying, "But I do not give my consent. No, you will not be a nun." "Always say that, Mother, and I will never have to be a religious." These assurances allayed the fears of Elizabeth and made her quite happy again.

The Saint called again, and this time he took away all hope of her remaining at home with her mother. When he referred to her, as usual, as "my little nun," the Mother said to him, "Why do you wish to make her a religious when she is so delicate?" "Do not fear," he replied, "the Blessed Virgin will take care of that." Elizabeth, on hearing these words, cried out impatiently, "No, I do not want to be a nun." The kindly Father, who enjoyed teasing this little girl, added, "Have no fear, my child, you will not be a superior; you are too small for that."

Elizabeth Ercolani grew up, but her extreme repugnance towards the religious life increased. At the age of nineteen her health became worse. Losing all hope in human remedies, her mother took her to Rome to visit the image of the Blessed Virgin under the Arc of Gostaguti, venerated under the title of Our Lady of Carmel. Whilst praying there, Elizabeth received, together with an instantaneous cure, the precious gift of a religious

vocation. Thus, was fulfilled the words of the Saint, "The Blessed Virgin will take care of it."

Obedient to the inspiration of heaven, Elizabeth applied to the Carmelites at Vetralla for admission. The superiors made difficulties about accepting her because of her delicate health. At the time Paul was at the convent for the profession of one of the nuns. He asked the Mother Prioress to bring Elizabeth to him. He said to her, "My daughter, how are you? Have no fear. You will live and die a religious." Then, striking his hand on the door of the enclosure, he continued? "In here you will be a nun." Exactly one year after this prediction, she received the holy habit. Father Paul had also assured her that she would have sufficient strength to observe all the prescriptions of the rule. This point was also verified. "Sister Mary Victoria, Elizabeth's name in religion, has always been able to follow the common observances in spite of ill-health," writes Saint Vincent Strambi. "Her manner of life was no different from that of the community. Whether in regard to clothing, food, assistance at choir and the other acts of the observance, she was able to keep the rule for sixteen years and still keeps it at this time, although such a life would appear to be beyond her frail strength. When, by reason of a more serious indisposition, she makes use of those dispensations that are granted in like circumstances, she never recovers her health until she puts aside all remedies and follows once again the practices of the common life."

It was not only the spouses of Jesus Christ living within the cloister who placed themselves under the direction of Paul of the Cross, but also souls living in the world, like doves living outside the ark: virgins, widows, noblemen and priests.

This experienced master of the spiritual life formed by prayer a choir of pure souls consecrated to divine love. Keeping them faithful to the duties of their state, he wished them to have their conversation in heaven with the angels and with God.

His letters manifest the great skill he acquired in the science of the saints, a science which he himself learnt at the feet of Christ Crucified. A learned director, thoroughly familiar with the teachings of the mystics, he was above all a man of prayer, led by the Holy Spirit to the summit of holiness. With what charm, with what amiability, with what vigor he was able to dissipate fears, to cure scruples, to arouse courage, to prevent illusions, to disclose the snares of the devil, to draw benefit from imperfections to the advantage of the soul and to inspire the soul with humility, contempt of self, distrust of its own innate weakness and absolute confidence in God.

On this subject we will only say a few things. Because there is so much that could be said, we will treat more at length in a separate volume on the spiritual methods of Saint Paul of the Cross. We will only deal here, in a general way, with his qualities as a director of souls and his principles of direction. From the letters of direction that he wrote, we will see how he speaks the true language of solid spirituality, a spirituality that is devoid of useless speculations, free from all delusion, simple yet sublime.

The first quality required in a director of souls is discernment of spirits. This discernment is not really the gift of prophecy or that penetration of consciences that discovers the secrets of the heart. We have seen that Paul possessed this gift in a superior and an eminent degree. Discernment of souls, in its ordinary meaning, is a special light to know the source of the interior movements of the soul and to judge correctly concerning the method of direction suited to each individual soul. It is in God that a director sees souls, understands souls and studies souls. This requires a clear light to

discern whether the operations have their origin in human weakness, the suggestion of the devil or the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is a matter of fundamental importance as we can easily understand. Without this light the soul could be led astray.

Saint Paul of the Cross possessed the Spirit of God which penetrates to the depths of hearts and discerns the different movements of the soul. This Spirit made him eloquent as he instilled sweetness and grace into souls. It was one, yet multiple in its admirable effects, for it adapted itself to the state of each soul. Sometimes, it raised him to the heights of sanctity with the perfect, sometimes lowering him as a tender Father to the ways of the beginner. Yes, he possessed the Spirit which made him speak as a master concerning all truths; it overflowed from his own soul to fill other souls with hope and love. How can we doubt that he was moved by this Spirit? His teachings, so opportune and so prudent, the facility with which he understood the needs of souls and applied to them an appropriate remedy, the clearness with which he exposed the secret operations of God in the sanctuary of the soul, the certainty, the order and the uniformity of his instructions - all this could only be the Spirit of God. It could not be the product of the human mind which is so incapable of seeing with its obscure eyes the light of sublime truth, and is also so feeble, so variable and so inconstant in its expressions.

His principles in the spiritual life in the purification, the progress and the perfection of the soul were the Passion of Jesus Christ. For Paul, the Passion was the shortest, the simplest, the most certain way of stripping the soul of self and clothing it with God. The Passion was the door which leads into the delicious pastures of the soul. "Ego sum ostium," he would repeat in a serious tone of voice, "Ego sum ostium." "In the Passion," he would add, "there is no illusion. There is no illusion in the Passion."

It was in the contemplation of the sufferings of the Savior that he saw the most efficacious means to correct faults and to break with sin. "How is it possible," he would say, "to offend a God scourged, a God crowned with thorns, a God crucified? How is it possible, meditating day after day upon the truths of faith still to offend God? No, it is not possible."

As a prudent director, the Saint gave the necessary advice to acquire virtue. He wrote to a Master of Novices, "Father N. is beginning to have a gift of prayer. Watch, however, that he does not slacken in the practice of virtue and in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Let him begin his prayer always with some mystery of the Passion, and let him make pious ejaculations without making any effort to meditate. If God comes and draws him into the silence of faith and love, let the peace and repose of his soul not be disturbed by any particular reflections. I recommend, especially, that you instill into your novices the virtues of humility and contempt of self. One cannot emphasize this too much."

He wrote to a holy soul, "I thank the Divine mercy that He has protected you, and that you have kept the continual remembrance of Him. I desire that you allow yourself to be entirely penetrated with the love with which He has endured His sufferings. The shortest way is to lose yourself entirely in the fathomless abyss of His sufferings. The prophet calls the Passion of Jesus an ocean of love and sorrow. My daughter, this is a deep secret, revealed only to the humble. In this vast sea the soul searches for the pearls of virtue and makes its own the sufferings of the Beloved ... I am firmly convinced that the Divine Spouse will teach you this divine art. He will instruct you, if you remain in that interior solitude, far removed from all images, detached from all earthly affection, deprived of all creatures, all in pure faith and love."

In a letter to a religious, he wrote, "I have no doubt that you remain interiorly in the bosom of God, annihilated within, in a passive manner. This is the shortest way to lose yourself in the infinite All, passing through the divine door which is Jesus Crucified, taking upon yourself His sufferings. Love teaches all things, for the Passion of Christ with all its sorrow is a work of infinite love."

As the soul advanced in the degrees of prayer and the practice of virtue, the Saint gave prudent advice to help them maintain their progress. He wrote to one person, "Your letters bring me joy in the Lord ... Be faithful in corresponding with these precious gifts. They are a preparation for more abundant graces and for more sublime lights, which will inflame your soul with greater love for God. You will acquire solid virtue and be able to practice it in a heroic way. Realize, my child, that there is no need for you to meditate as you did in the beginning, but according to the direction I have given you. Love tends towards union, by which I mean that it appropriates to itself the sufferings of the Beloved."

After he had pointed out the way - appropriating to oneself the sufferings of the Beloved - the prudent director had only to watch carefully the divine action on the soul. He left them to God's guiding hand. "I do not want you to pray in my way," he wrote, "but in God's way. Allow your soul full liberty to take its flight to the Sovereign Good, according as He will lead it. The moth circles around the lamp and finally casts itself into the flame. Let your soul circle around the Divine light and allow it to plunge itself into the flame and be reduced to ashes."

Directing them always in humility and the practice of virtue, this great Master saw the souls entrusted to him advance towards the highest degrees of prayer, recollection, spiritual silence, repose, union and divine transformation, (Many persons, both lay and religious, directed by the Saint died in the odor of sanctity.)

We may be permitted to add here a few more quotations, provided that we do not make it merely a dry analysis. The reader will appreciate the charm and the unction that emanates from the Saint's own words.

"When you are completely annihilated," he wrote, "and filled with distrust in yourself, as you realize your own nothingness, ask Jesus for permission to enter His Sacred Heart. He will grant it to you immediately. As a victim, place yourself upon this divine altar where the fire of holy love burns eternally. Allow yourself to be penetrated to the marrow of your bones with these sacred flames. Let yourself be reduced completely to ashes. If the breath of the Holy Spirit raises these ashes to the contemplation of Divine mysteries, give your soul full freedom to cast itself into the abyss of this contemplation. How pleasing to God is this practice."

To make himself more clearly understood, the Saint used to make use in his teachings of familiar comparisons. "Look at a child; it caresses its mother, wraps its arms around her neck and falls asleep on her breast without ceasing to drink its milk. Thus, the soul, having manifested its affection, reposes in the bosom of God, the Heavenly Father, and does not awaken from this attention of faith and love without permission from Him."

"Remain in this repose," he wrote, "and, if your divine Spouse invites you to sleep, sleep in peace. Do not awaken without His consent. This divine sleep is a gift which the heavenly Father gives to His beloved children - a sleep of faith and love where one learns the science of the saints, in which the bitterness of adversity suddenly vanishes. O silence! ... O sacred sleep! ... O precious solitude! ... Always be humble. Always remain in true poverty of spirit, detached from all gifts, for we spoil them by our imperfections.

Make a sacrifice of continual praise, honor and benediction to the Most High, ever remaining in complete detachment from all things. Such a sacrifice should be made in the fire of love without ever leaving the sacred solitude.”

The Saint teaches that during interior repose God may invite the soul to make specific acts of prayer. “If the soul finds itself in a sweet solitude, in a sacred silence of faith and love, and experiences some movement, some stirring of love which leads it to pray for the needs of the Church, of the world, for particular aid or general necessities, it should immediately do so. But when this interior movement ceases, it should return to its repose in God. If the repose develops into a sleep of faith and love, it will be more profitable for the soul. The Divine goodness, I hope, will make you understand this language as long as you are humble and remain penetrated with the knowledge of your own nothingness.”

In the following passage, the Saint is speaking of those divine touches which move the soul to depart from itself, so that it may cast itself into the abyss of God.

“The stirring of love, which the Divine goodness gives you, must be carefully preserved in your interior. This is especially true after Holy Communion. For, then, Jesus already possesses your heart. You cannot love Him if you do not have with you the living source of pure and holy love, that is, the Holy Spirit. When God gives you this stirring, which is a particular favor of Divine love, allow yourself to disappear in the Infinite good. There, act as a little child and sleep the sleep of faith and love in the bosom of the heavenly Spouse. Love speaks very few words. See if this precious gift of prayer, which the Most High bestows upon you, gives you a profound knowledge of your own nothingness. Be careful to withdraw from creatures and remain only in God’s presence alone, with a keen desire for His greater glory, together with total contempt for yourself, practicing all the virtues, especially humility, patience, gentleness, tranquility of heart and peace with your neighbor.”

Let us see the way he explains how the soul loses itself in God in order to find itself again.

“You should remain entirely absorbed in God. Permit yourself to cast off your own spirit as a drop of water into the immense ocean of charity. Repose there and receive the divine communications without losing sight of your own nothingness. All things are learned in this divine solitude. We learn more in this interior school by being silent than by much speaking. Mary Magdalene cast herself at the feet of Jesus. She was silent. She listened. She loved. She liquefied herself in love. Keep always this prayer and this interior recollection to the presence of the Father, both during your work and in every place. Go out from yourself and lose yourself in God. Depart from time and lose yourself in eternity. I am on the sea shore. I hold a drop of water suspended on my finger, and I say to it, ‘Drop of water, where do you wish to be?’ It will reply, ‘In the sea.’ And what do I do? I shake my finger and let the little drop fall into the sea. Now, I ask you, is it not true that this drop is in the sea? Most certainly it is there. But try and find it now that it is in the ocean, its center. If it could speak, what would it say? Draw the conclusion and apply the parable. Lose sight of the heavens, the earth, the sea and its limitless shores, and every created thing, and lose your soul, as the tiny drop of water in the vast ocean from whence it came - that is God, the Infinite good, the Infinitely great.”

What language! To speak like this it seems one would need the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But let us continue. Here is that complete annihilation of the human ego, the

summit of the cross, mystical death with the God of Calvary in order to arrive at divine life. Then the soul can cry out, "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2).

The Saint held Jesus Crucified as the perfect exemplar of this death with its anguish and its thirst of love.

"Jesus prayed for three hours on the cross; it was a truly crucified prayer without consolation, either interior or exterior. What grand teaching. Beg Him to imprint it on your heart. How much can be learnt from meditation on the Passion. I have read that during His agony on the Cross, Jesus, after His first three flames of love, His first three words, remained in silence until the ninth hour praying all the time. I leave you to consider how desolate His prayer was. Remain on the Cross of Jesus. Make no other sound than the sigh of a child, 'Father, my Father, may Your will be done.' And then be silent. Continue to remain on the Cross until the happy hour of mystical death arrives, a precious death, more desirable than life itself. Then, as Saint Paul the Apostle says, your life will be hidden with Christ in God; you will find yourself in this profound solitude for which you long with complete detachment from all creatures. Now is the time to suffer in silence and in peace, perfectly resigned in your agony. It will bring you to mystical death."

But, if the soul dies, it is only to receive a new life; if it is stripped, it is only to be clothed with heavenly treasures. Let us quote some of the words of the Saint on this divine transformation.

"Thus penetrated with the knowledge of your own nothingness and detached from all things, cast yourself with confidence into the abyss of all good. Trust in the Infinite goodness of God to treat divinely with your soul, that is to say, to penetrate it by the rays of His Divine light, to transform it completely into Himself by love, making it live by the Divine Spirit, making it live by His life of love, a holy life, a divine life. Let the poor moth encircle the divine flame by its affections, its sentiments of humility, especially of faith and love, then cast itself into this Divine flame which is the very essence of God. There let it be reduced to ashes, there let it be more than dead, and it will live no longer its own life, but by the life and in the life of the Supreme Good. Such are the operations of His Divine majesty in souls which die to themselves, which abase themselves, which render to Him by humility and love all the glory of His gifts. Read attentively these wonderful teachings, but read them with a heart that is simple, humble and ingenuous. Imitate the oyster which receives the dew of heaven, closes upon it, and then sinks to the bottom of the ocean where it begets its precious pearl."

The reader must have noticed how the Saint, time and time again, to safeguard the soul from the snares of illusion and sterility, gave them for the touchstone of prayer the fruits that it produces, "The practice of virtue, especially humility and contempt of self."

We have not aimed at giving a complete portrait of Saint Paul of the Cross as a director of souls, but merely an aspect of his direction: the one that deals with the Passion of Christ. We desired to show how he could make the Passion of Christ the powerful lever by which the soul is raised to the highest contemplation by the 'ascensions of the heart'. It is with regret that we leave these precious spiritual treasures, which flowed from his pen and from his heart. The spoken word was delivered in the melodious and rich Italian language which is so adequate for the expression of every thought and affection of the heart.

This simple glance will, I trust, be sufficient to make us understand that to speak with wisdom and facility on the sublime subject of prayer, we must have first risen to these

higher regions of faith and love. Saint Paul of the Cross can take his place, then, among the greatest of the masters of the spiritual life.

Let us now resume the historical narrative.



## **CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE**

### **DEATH OF FATHER JOHN BAPTIST - THE TWO BROTHERS - FOUNDATION IN ROME - VISITATION OF THE RETREATS IN THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA - TRIUMPH - MIRACLES**

**1765 - 1767**

It is the year 1765 and the holy Founder is seventy-two years of age. He has spent fifty of those years in the laborious, most fruitful and most constant works of the apostolate. Who could estimate the number of souls saved by this indefatigable apostle?

It is impossible to express the sorrow of Paul when advancing years sapped his physical strength, while his soul still burned with apostolic zeal. His was the suffering of a restrained zeal, of a fettered love. Under the ice of old age, the Apostle still makes us feel the fire that burns within his heart.

At the beginning of this new phase in his life, he meets one of his most difficult trials. One morning in July 1765, he offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass at the Retreat of St. Angelo, when an interior voice said to him, "Prepare yourself for one of your greatest sorrows." These mysterious words did not at first make a deep impression upon him. The following day, at the same time, they were repeated, but this time far more vehemently within his soul. Paul is deeply concerned. He seeks for the meaning of these mysterious words. And before his mind comes the remembrance of Father John Baptist, his beloved brother, the faithful companion of his labors, of his penances, of his whole life; John Baptist, the powerful support in the great work of the founding of the Institute, the enlightened director of his soul, the confidant of all the secrets of his heart; John Baptist, more a brother by faith than by nature. God is about to call him. God is taking him unto Himself.

This thought is a blow, sharp and keen, like a sword thrust that pierces Paul's heart and wounds his soul. The union between the two brothers was such that there was but a single soul in two bodies; each lived more in the other than in himself; all that happened in the soul of one was reflected in the soul of the other. The trials of Paul, the darkness, the light, the persecutions of the devil, the consolations of heaven - his whole being expanded in the soul of John Baptist. Yet, at the same time, their characters were so entirely different. And what one would have thought most likely to separate them was really what united them by the strongest ties. Paul was gentle, friendly, although ardent, even violent by temperament, but a temperament that was controlled, a gentleness that was all the more admirable and amiable because it was a conquest of grace. John Baptist was more reserved, inclined to severity and even to harshness, but tempering this natural harshness was an outspoken frankness. In the one there was more of a seraph than of an archangel, in the other more of the archangel than of the seraph. The first emotion which arose in Paul's heart at the sight of some failing in one of his Religious was a gentle compassion. In Father John Baptist, it was severity and rigor. The actions of Paul always found in his brother a prompt and formidable censor. This is what makes him doubly dear to Paul; John Baptist was not only a brother and a friend but also a faithful guide in the ways of perfection.

Apart from the differences of character, there was complete harmony between the two brothers, the same longing for solitude and prayer, the same generosity in sacrifice, the same zeal for souls and the same love for Jesus Crucified. The life of Father John Baptist was intimately associated with that of his holy brother; he shared all the burdens

of his labors and all the joys of his heavenly favors.

Though John Baptist appears to us as harsh and rigorous, nevertheless, he was a saint. This was the judgment of his brother, who was himself a saint. "He is a holy man," he used to say to one of his Religious, "a man of deep and solid virtue. No doubt, your Paternity knows this. I know that he prays and weeps continuously. Sometimes I have seen him hide himself from me; he has the gift of tears and is in a state of continual union with God."

"There is preserved amongst us," writes Saint Vincent Strambi, "the memory of several incidents which reveal the virtue of Father John Baptist and which justify the high esteem in which he was held by Father Paul. The external appearance of the tree is a little rugged, it is true, but within there is abundant and fruitful life. He was a man of prayer, a lover of mortification and penance, and faithful in the observance of the Rule; he was more closely associated with the bitterness of the Cross than with its sweetness; his great soul courageously accepted the hardest of trials; he was always consistent and never contradicted himself, a zealous apostle, profoundly humble, an ardent lover of God - such was Father John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel. To him, the earth was merely a miserable place of exile, where he lived in continual fear of losing God and where he wept bitterly for the miseries of the world. "He was already ripe for the harvest of eternity," says St. Vincent Strambi. "He was one of those highly polished and artistically ground gems which deserve to find a place in the sanctuary of Heaven."

Father John Baptist caught a slight fever. The Doctor did not regard it seriously, but Paul said often with sadness, "He will die of it. I know what I am saying. You will see that my words are true." The fever became almost continual. Slowly consumed, certain that his end was approaching, the patient lay upon his poor pallet, always absorbed in a very high state of prayer. But God permitted the two brothers to taste the desolation of Calvary. A serious attack of gout nailed Paul to his bed, and thus each was deprived of the encouragement which the other could give to his soul. After a few days of abandonment in the suffering of Golgotha, Paul was slightly improved. Leaning heavily on his crutches, he dragged himself to the bedside of his dying brother, who was already near to death. In words of tender sympathy, he asked him, "How are you?" Inspired by the heroic words of Judas Maccabeus, John Baptist answered? "If our time is come, let us die bravely" (I Macc. ix,10).

Paul sat beside him and, in order to dispose him for the divine embrace of the Redeemer, spoke to him of the eternal beatitude of Heaven and aroused him to sentiments of faith, hope and charity, perfect abandonment to the will of God. Each day he returned to his brother's side to strengthen him and to assist him. He attended to his needs of body with his own hands. This loving solicitude reveals, in spite of himself, the deep sorrow that clutched at his heart. His brother, in turn, inspired in Paul complete abandonment to the divine pleasure. "Let us seek only the glory of Jesus Christ," he said. "Feed the little flock which the heavenly Father has entrusted to your care." Then, leaving him with counsels of wisdom and prudence, he repeated to him, "Go quietly, go quietly in accepting subjects. Go quietly in having them ordained. If you act in this way, you will have few in numbers, it is true, but it will be a company of elect, wholly devoted to the glory of God."

Often, to give greater strength to his soul, the Saint gave his brother absolution. He would ask him if there was anything disturbing his peace of mind and heart. "Nothing," answered the dying man. Seeing the last moment approaching, Paul begged

him to remember him in Heaven. The patient answered in all simplicity that he would do so. After receiving the Last Sacraments with angelic fervor, John Baptist entered upon his last agony.

All saw him in constant recollection, his mind fixed upon God who had ever been the one object in his life. Then Paul, according to the custom of the Congregation, summoned the Religious to the cell of death and recited the prayers for the dying. There was such piety and tenderness in his tone that all desired to be thus assisted at their last hour. Then, as if at that last moment, he saw upon his brother's face the first heavenly transfiguration, Paul intoned in a low but vibrant voice the 'Salve Regina' and this was continued by the sorrowing Religious. While the words of this beautiful hymn resounded in the humble cell, with a sigh of hope, there departed from this valley of tears to the eternal home, in the arms of his brother, John Baptist. It was Friday, August 30, 1769. John Baptist, beloved brother of Paul of the Cross, at the age of seventy, passed peacefully to the Lord, whom he had ardently loved and faithfully served.

We would be deceived if we thought that the saints are hard at heart and without feeling or emotion. No, grace does not destroy nature, but, on the contrary, it elevates, ennobles and transforms it. That is the reason why a saint, more than another, has a delicate, ardent sensibility.

Yes, let us admit it. The death of his brother was a deep wound for the loving heart of Paul of the Cross. And he did not pretend that he was not human. Sorrow, which his faith and love had restrained until the moment of death, was now allowed to burst forth and, like St. Bernard at the death of his beloved brother, Paul allows his tears to flow freely. "Flow, flow my tears, that have so wished to flow; he who restrains you is no longer with you. It is not for him who is dead that they flow. It is for myself who can see nothing more than to die" (Serm. 26). "Now that my brother is dead," Paul used to say, "who will undertake the responsibility of mortifying and correcting me? I have good cause to weep, for I have lost the diligent guardian of my soul." And he repeated, "Who will correct my defects and failings?"

But after this tribute of tears, raising his soul towards the adorable will of God, he placed his sorrow in the Wounds of Jesus Christ, "I have remained silent. I have humbled myself" – "obmutui humiliatus sum".

Without wasting time in fruitless and unavailing tears, he followed his brother into eternity by his prayers and by his love. A religion of Calvary, how consoling and how beautiful you are. How powerful you elevate man by divinizing his sorrow. The Saint, although scarcely able to stand, presided at the obsequies and placed this soul, which had been so dear to him, in the Blood of the holy sacrifice.

During the ceremony his voice revealed a blending of sorrow, of hope, of resignation and of love. Shortly afterwards, the Religious who succeeded Father John Baptist as his spiritual director, asked Paul how he felt. He answered, "I feel sorrows certainly, a deep, a keen sorrow. However, if God were to ask me, 'Do you wish that I raise your brother from the dead, I would do it. But it is My will that he remain in the grave', Immediately I would reply, 'I wish, O Lord, only what you will, and therefore I, too, will that he remain dead.'"

Such heroic virtue soon received its reward. Not long afterwards, while the Saint was meditating on these words, "Regem cui omnia vivunt", and was considering God as the Creator of all life, a heavenly light revealed to him that his brother was enjoying eternal happiness in Heaven. His countenance became radiant with pure, unalloyed joy,

and whenever he spoke of his brother, he cried out, "He is not dead! No, he is not dead! He lives in God."

Though Paul had lost in his brother as a strong support, he had the utmost confidence that his brother would assist him more efficaciously before the throne of God than he had done upon earth. Thus, with renewed courage he labored for the progress of the Institute he had founded.

For a long time he had desired to found a house in Rome. But seeing that the hour of Providence had not yet come, he thought of opening a Hospice there, that is, a small house, where some of the Religious could live, and where all the others could find a refuge when important matters called them to Rome. The following year, the Saint went to Rome and, with the consent of Pope Clement XIII, he chose a small house with an enclosed garden space that was situated in a street leading from the Lateran Basilica to the Coliseum. Then Paul returned to St. Angelo.

One of his most devoted benefactors, Anthony Frattini, a Roman nobleman, undertook to attend to all the formalities and to defray the necessary expenses to acquire the property. A few others, also, were eager to contribute to this holy work. When Paul learned that everything had been suitably arranged, he said with satisfaction, "This grain of mustard seed, sown by the hand of Divine Providence, will become a great tree. We shall see this prophecy fulfilled." He called the little house "The Hospice of the Holy Cross". He sent Father John Mary of St. Ignatius with two priests and a lay-brother, all men of solid virtue. In the midst of the Eternal City, as in a desert, they began a life of solitude and prayer.

As Signor Frattini was the trustee of the Institute, and as we are to meet him from time to time during this Life, the origin of his friendship with the holy Founder is interesting and deserves to be related. Each year Frattini went with his elderly father to visit two of his sisters who were nuns, one at Sutri and the other at Vetralla. These two nuns told him great and wonderful things about Father Paul of the Cross, and they aroused in him a desire to meet the Saint. Therefore, he came to St. Angelo and had a long conversation with the man of God. From that time they were united in the closest bonds of friendship. He never made his yearly visit to his sisters without seeking guidance for his soul from the holy Founder. He also wrote many letters seeking advice and consolation. His aged father became seriously ill. Anthony Frattini wrote to the Saint to ask for prayers. He received this prompt reply, "I will pray willingly for your father, although there is no need to be anxious about him. His hour has not yet come." As a matter of fact, the father was completely restored to health. But some time later he had a recurrence of the same illness. Again, the son wrote to Father Paul. Paul replied that he would pray for the sick man, but this time added no words of hope. Anthony Frattini feared for his father's life. He even felt certain that death was near. When he learned from one of the Religious that the Saint, in recommending the sick man to the prayers of the community, had stated several times that the aged father was a fruit ripe for heaven, the fears of the son were increased. Anthony, saddened at the news, prepared himself to accept with resignation the cross of sorrow soon to be laid upon him.

In other difficult circumstances, Frattini, by the prayers of the Saint, was himself delivered from peril and his wife miraculously cured. Seeing the heavenly gifts which Paul had received from God, he always venerated him as a saint and his devotion to him knew no limits.

The holy Founder, animated with that zeal which overcomes the weight of years

and the burdens of bodily infirmity, thought it would be pleasing and beneficial for his Religious of the Roman Campagna if he were to visit them once again and bless them for the last time. He notified them of his coming in the following words, "My infirmities and my advanced years make me believe that death is approaching. I have resolved in the Lord to come and say good-bye to you and to embrace you all, my beloved brothers."

The departure of the holy Founder was a sad parting. The Religious, with grief in their heart and tears in their eyes, feared that because of the long and difficult journey they would never see their father again. They said good-bye to him as he set out from the Retreat of St. Angelo for Monte Cavo in 1766. After Monte Cavo, Paul set out for Terracina. But he suffered such a recurrence of his infirmities there that he believed that he was dying. With the approach of spring, after four months of suffering, he was able to continue his journey. He celebrated Easter at the Retreat of St. Sosio and then went on to Ceccano and to Paliano.

Now that we have described the itinerary of Paul, let us accompany him as he goes from one Retreat to another. We march with him from one triumph to another. God is about to crown his life of humility, even here on earth, with an immortal crown of glory.

First, we will share the joy of his religious sons. They came from afar off to meet him. Joy, veneration, love and all the sentiments of filial piety appeared on their faces as they welcomed their beloved Father and holy Founder. We have already mentioned the tenderness with which he embraced them, the charity with which he listened to them, and how he consoled them and encouraged them to walk steadfastly in the way of perfection, the way of Calvary. But this visit, which Paul felt to be his last and in which, because of his physical weakness, he had to receive each of them as he was lying upon his bed, assumed an even more touching character. His words were pregnant with the sentiments of paternal tenderness, which welled from his heart, as he bequeathed his last counsels in this final farewell of a father to his family. His departure was a touching sight. His Religious wept; Paul himself was deeply moved as he embraced them and mingled his tears with theirs. They watched him as he disappeared from their saddened eyes, then they returned to their Retreat, silent and sad. The Retreat seemed gloomy and empty, like a building clothed in mourning, from which one dearly loved has departed.

How can we describe the enthusiasm of the people as Paul of the Cross passed by? What is this mysterious attraction that true holiness possesses? What is its divine charm? O how our guilty earth instinctively feels that heroes of virtue, friends of God, powerful intercessors are necessary to link it with heaven. Here is the secret of the attraction of the people towards such men who, marked with the divine seal, protect and save the world.

As soon as word spread that Paul was to come, there was great excitement in the cities, in the villages and throughout the whole countryside. On everybody's lips was the cry, "Let us go and see the saint." Crowds ran out to meet him. When they saw him coming, they shouted with joy, were thrilled with excitement and accompanied him to his lodgings. As he climbed down from the carriage - his age and infirmities had condemned him to this - they all thronged around him, some kissing his habit, others kissing his hand. Others would cut off a piece from his mantle or even his hair. Everyone wanted some memento of the Saint to keep as a precious relic.

At times, in order to avoid accidents, it was necessary to call out the militia. At Ceprano and Frosinone the crowd was so dense and excitement so tumultuous that the soldiers found difficulty in preventing the Saint from being crushed and dragged away by the immense gathering. Not even the houses of benefactors or the seclusion of the Retreats afforded a safe refuge. Here again, the people would gather and force their way in that they might see him, speak with him, hear him, even to enjoy the pleasure of seeing him for a moment.

The humble Servant of Jesus Christ, opening the arms of his charity towards all, would say a word to each, either about the soul or about God. To all he recommended meditation on the Passion and love for Jesus Crucified. When he stopped to celebrate Mass, the church would be filled as though for a great solemnity. To hear the Saint's Mass or to see him at the altar was a joy desired by all. His very appearance aroused faith, piety and sentiments which one had never before experienced. From one place to the next, the crowd would escort him a great part of the way, singing mission hymns which recalled to their minds that time of grace and pardon. As he passed along the roadway, the laborers in the fields left their work, abandoned the oxen and the carts, while they ran to meet him and to kneel before him and to receive his blessing. These were scenes of daily occurrence.

It was not only the uncultured or unlettered peasants that honored and venerated him in this way. There were also persons of the highest dignity and ranks: barons, counts and countesses, priests and bishops. As soon as the Saint arrived at Fondi, Bishop Calcagnini came to visit him. And after lively demonstrations of joy and esteem, he invited Paul to celebrate Mass in his chapel the following morning. A great crowd of people came to the Bishop's house and wished to assist at the Mass. But the Bishop would only share his joy with the dignitaries of the city, who received Holy Communion from the hands of the Saint.

At Anagni, while the Bishop was consulting the Saint on matters of the greatest importance in his Diocese, the Bishop of Ferentino arrived and also requested a special conference with Paul. The two Bishops then accompanied him through the city, one on his right and the other on his left. Paul sought to place himself on the side, but was forced to submit to the honor accorded him.

The crowd flocked around and followed the Saint to see him for as long a time as they could and to manifest their veneration, each in his own way. Paul, in his humility, felt such confusion that later he said to his director, "I have never felt so embarrassed and so confused as I did on this occasion." The seminarians and the little girls from the orphanage were brought to him. The nuns wrote letters to the Bishops, begging them to use their influence with Paul, so that he would visit their Convent and afford them the consolation that came from his words. Always obedient to the voice of authority, he went to many places at the request of the Bishops. He animated them to greater fervor by his inspiring conferences. To the children of St. Clare at Anagni, he discoursed on the text of the Apostle, St. Paul, "You are dead but your life is hidden with Christ in God." He was so filled with ardor and zeal that the nuns shed abundant tears.

These stirring demonstrations of affection and veneration caused the humble Paul of the Cross intense sorrow. It was not that he was tempted to vain glory, because for a long time he had attained that degree of humility where self-love is extinct. He had so experienced, so to speak, the All of God and the nothingness of the creature. Thus, none of these thoughts ever disturbed the tranquility of his soul. He was so penetrated

with the knowledge of his own nothingness, he told his confessor, with the simplicity of a child, that he could find no reason for the veneration and honor with which he was deluged wherever he went. He feared that these poor people had been led into error, and that he himself was responsible for it. That is what caused sorrow to his heart and drew from him sighs and tears. He lamented to see the world with such an erroneous idea of him. How he wished to flee from it all, to hide himself and to escape from the eyes of all so that none might be deceived.

To avoid the multitude that assembled when they learnt that he was leaving, he would depart when darkness and silence would favor his quiet passing. But he was always defeated, and God Himself took the part of the people and seemed as though He wished to test the humility of His servant.

What was the reason for these triumphal and universal demonstrations? The reader can easily understand. It was undoubtedly because all regarded him as a saint. It was also because "virtue went out from him and healed many." All believed that they could see in him a reflection of God; in fact they could see Christ Himself in him. When they came to him, infirmities of body and of soul would be cured, anxiety and darkness of soul gave way to peace and light, remorse yielded to repentance and Satan fled from hearts that had been possessed by him for many a year. Everywhere, mothers with their little ones in their arms would present them to him and beg him to bless them; the sick were either carried to him or dragged themselves along painfully when they heard that Paul of the Cross was passing by. By innumerable cures God glorified His servant. The more Paul tried to flee from these honors, the more they were bestowed upon him.

At Pastena, a woman was in danger of death from a premature confinement. When she was given a drink of this blessed water, at once the baby was born and the mother was cured.

Let us conclude with the following story of a mother's plea for the cure of her son.

At Terracina, Joseph Maceroni was suffering from a malignant fever. The doctor declared that only a miracle could save him. "Very well", said the mother. "The miracle will have to be worked." Early in the morning, she ran to the Saint, but she found that he was saying Mass. Immediately, when the Saint returned to the sacristy, she ran to him, threw herself at his feet and with tears glistening in her eyes, pleaded, "Father Paul, the doctors have passed a sentence of death upon my son. Father Paul, have pity on a mother. Pity, Father Paul, pity." The heart of the Saint was touched by these pathetic pleas, and he encouraged the mother with words of sympathy and compassion, "Wait until I make my thanksgiving and then I will speak with you." Paul went back to Father Nicholas of the Holy Crown and spoke to him, "Joseph will not die." When he returned to the sacristy he said to the mother, "Rejoice, my daughter. Joseph will not die this time. I am going to bless him with the blessed water. I assure you that not only will he not die, but he will be cured as soon as he has had a drink of this water. Before you give it to him, say a Hail Mary and a Glory be to the Father in honor of the Blessed Trinity, and believe me, when he takes a drink of this water, then he will be cured." The distressed mother left, and in her heart gave wings to her feet. On returning home she saw them preparing remedies for her son. "What is this?" she asked. "Here is the remedy. Now all kneel down." All knelt down as though electrified with these words of the mother. "Say a Hail Mary and a Glory be to the Father; that is what Father Paul commanded." After the prayers were said, she gave a glass of water to her son. He was cured at once. The young man soon returned to thank the Saint personally and told him

of the miraculous cure. Father Paul answered him with his usual humility. Paul said this miracle should not be attributed to him, but to the fervent prayers of his earthly mother and the all-powerful intercession of his heavenly Mother Mary.

In the midst of these prodigies, which are worked wherever Paul goes, in the midst of the rejoicing and the exclamations of the people over the miracles worked by heaven through his intercession, Paul completed the visitation. He returned to Rome and hastened to hide himself amongst his Religious at the Hospice of the Holy Cross (May 6, 1767).

But further honors awaited him even in his solitude. Immediately, when news of his arrival was bruited abroad, the greatest dignitaries of the city, Cardinals and, in particular, the Cardinal Vicar, who held him a long time, pressed to his heart, bestowed upon him signs of the deepest affection and of the highest reverence and respect. As soon as his strength permitted, he went to pay homage to the Supreme Pontiff. The Holy Father rejoiced to see the holy Founder again, conversed on familiar terms with him, and granted him the Apostolic Blessing.

At St. Sosio, the son of a widow named Anna Amati of Falvaterra was seriously ill with a hernia. The mother brought the sick son to the holy Founder, hoping that when he blessed the child, he would be cured. Indeed, an instantaneous cure followed the Saint's blessing.

Teresa Spagnoli, the wife of Vincent Mattia, an official of Terracina, had already undergone an operation for cancer of the right breast, when she was told that there was a cancer in the left breast. Teresa did not speak to her husband about it that he might be spared further anxiety and distress. She went to confide her distress of mind to the Saint. "Madam", Paul told her, "say nothing about your sickness to anyone." Then he blessed her. On returning home, all pain vanished. Not only had the second tumor disappeared, but even the scar from the operation.

At Ceccano, a woman who had lost the use of one of her hands came to cut off a piece of Paul's mantle. Placing it on the withered hand, she was instantly cured.

A little girl of eleven years of age, Gertrude Ruggieri of Sutri, ran a thorn into her right hand, and for over a year had suffered excruciating pain. The poisoned condition of the hand increased day by day, and the doctors had given up all hope of her recovery. The mother took the child to Father Paul, who blessed her with a relic, told her to be good and to pray fervently to God. As Gertrude was leaving the Saint, she kissed his mantle and bit off a piece of cloth. Happy in her theft, she begged her mother to apply a piece of the stolen material to the wound. Two days later she felt a stab of pain. "Do not be afraid", the mother said, "Father Paul will cure you." She removed the bandage and the hand had no mark at all on it. "See, my daughter," the mother said, "Father Paul has cured you. Now you will have to say an Our Father and a Hail Mary each day in gratitude for this favor." The little girl began to do this. If, at any time, she omitted the prayers on going to bed in the evening, she would again experience the pain of the wound. "My hand is throbbing," she would complain to her mother. "Have you forgotten the prayers?" "Yes, I did forget them." Immediately, Gertrude said the prayers she had promised to pray and the pain disappeared.

As news of these miracles spread far and wide, the enthusiasm of the people increased.

True humility flees from honors. So that people would not attribute these miracles



to him, the Saint blessed some water with a relic of Our Blessed Lady in the hope that all this praise given to him would redound to the honor of Mary. Many were the miracles worked by this blessed water. But how could we relate all of them here? They are so many that they would halt us at each stop of the way in our historical narrative of the life of the Saint.

At St. John in Carico, a city of the Kingdom of Naples on the border of the Roman Campagna, a lady was dying. No sooner had a drop of this water, blessed by the Saint, touched her lips than she was cured. The doctor who had declared her case incurable came to St. Sosio and with deep emotion related the incident to the Saint. "Now", he added, "I have found an infallible remedy for all my patients. I have no need to prescribe any other remedy than the water blessed by you, Father Paul."

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO**

### **ILLNESS OF THE SAINT - TERRIBLE ASSAULTS OF THE DEVIL - INTERIOR DESOLATION - 'EXILE OF HEART' - ABANDONMENT BY GOD - SONG OF LOVE**

**1767 - 1769**

The Religious of St. Angelo's longed to see their beloved Father again; his absence had caused them many anxieties. But scarcely had he greeted them than he was attacked by a violent fever, a kind of ague. The doctor was called; the invalid with simplicity placed himself entirely in his hands and underwent a treatment, which he knew from experience was not to his liking. The remedies, in fact, caused such a reaction in his body that they violently re-started his gout, sciatica and rheumatism, pains whose pangs he had endured many a time, but which on this occasion were a cruel martyrdom for forty days and forty nights, days and nights without the slightest relief. The holy Founder was no longer able to take anything to eat. His advanced age and the gravity of his illness, altogether, aroused grave fears, and during this illness the Saint received Holy Viaticum three times.

But the sufferings of his body were as nothing compared to the tortures of his soul: horrible abandonment on the part of God and furious assaults on the part of the devil.

As we have arrived at the culminating point of these strange trials that are so frequent throughout his life, we will be permitted to assemble them all here in the one chapter.

We are about to relate, in all simplicity, facts extraordinary but nonetheless authentic. It was the practice, some years ago in France, for hagiographers, before beginning on this subject, to introduce it with philosophical and theological dissertations, etc. We believe we are dispensed from this precaution for one simple reason. It is that the pretended free-thinkers who mock belief in devils and in the exorcisms of the Church, who are now in the present instance face to face with facts which surely should make them think. God has permitted that Satan should in our century mock these scoffers by strange phenomena which are only to be explained as the real intervention of the spirit of darkness.

Providence often uses the devil in the formation of the saints. It was necessary for our instruction that this resemblance be highlighted, this resemblance between him and Christ: Christ who delivered His own body into the power of Satan when His hour had come, the hour of trial in the desert, the hour of 'the power of darkness' in His Passion.

God knew that Paul of the Cross was a generous follower of the Crucified. God chose this Saint to humiliate the proud spirit, Lucifer, who roared with rage when he saw himself vanquished by a mortal creature. Our Lord, one day, told Paul, in the depths of his soul, to prepare for battles. "I wish to have you trampled underfoot by the devils."

The evil spirits did not delay in taking advantage of this permission. The sanctity of Paul infuriated them. But besides that reason, they unleashed their fury on him because of the breaches he had made in their kingdom of darkness.

Let us listen to Paul himself.

"The Retreat (Monte Argentario) is almost completed. I hope that we can begin living in it sometime in Lent. Oh, what a racket the devils create. God alone knows what

a state I am in.” It has already been related how the devils destroyed by night the work that had been done by day.

“It has not been for a little time, but for a very long time,” he cried out, “that one who has grown old in the Congregation, and in sin, hears throughout the night whistling that pierce his ears and make his body tremble. But everything passes away and nothing harms you, so we have been told. Fear not, fear not, for the Lord shall battle for you. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! The devil fears the ‘Alleluia’. It is a word from heaven. I am in the hands of the Divine mercy, but I am punished severely by the ministers of His justice and, more especially, by my own sins.”

These assaults of the devils, inspired by seething hatred, sometimes came in ways that may seem ridiculous, but were nevertheless distressing in the extreme. When this enemy of souls plans to annoy, his tactics are far from delicate. He considers all means to be fair. To succeed in his nightly attacks, he was not ashamed to become ludicrous by assuming the form of animals, not as God had created them but as monstrous caricatures. It seems that in acting in this manner, the devil is more wicked than proud, or rather that this is one of the punishments of his pride, that we should understand that every spirit, irrespective of the sublimity of his knowledge, whenever he desires to raise himself above God, falls below the level of the animal creation (Rom., 1:24)

Often the devils appeared to the Saint in hideous forms, as furious wild cats or as huge vicious dogs, or as terrifying birds of prey. In order to make their attacks more effective, they knew how to choose the most appropriate time: when he was sick in body or suffering from interior desolation of soul. After a long period of sleeplessness, Paul would be just falling asleep. Then, the devils would awaken him by whistling, shouting, creating an uproar close to his ear so that the sound seemed like the fire of heavy artillery. Paul would awaken with a start, trembling with fear. On other occasions, they would drag the coverings off the bed or jump on his bed like frightened cats. In his terrible sickness at Orbetello for forty days and forty nights, excruciating pain drove the sleep from his eyes. One evening, when the pains were less severe and overcome by weariness and exhaustion, he began to sleep. But, not for long. The devil began another assault in the room by continually slamming the door of a cupboard. The invalid awoke with a fright. Summoning all his courage, he gestured towards the devil with contempt and scorn. The pride of Satan was wounded. He fled from the scene, and for a time left the Saint in peace. Paul, who knew well how to unite joyfulness with virtue, smiled as he recounted this incident to his confessor, “What do you think of that? Does not the proverb tell us to let sleeping dogs lie? Yet, a poor man has to be aroused from his first sleep, when he had not slept a wink for forty days and forty nights. It is not right.”

Another time the Saint was sick in bed with the gout. The devil, to increase the pain he was already suffering, seized him by the toe, which was already in great pain, and twisted it with such violence that the Saint felt he was suffering the pains of hell.

Whenever Paul was occupied with any work that redounded to the glory of God or of the Congregation or the salvation of souls, for example, the devils would attack him with great ferocity.

If he began to pray or to recite his Office, hell seemed unchained against him. If he took up his pen to write about important matters, the rage of the devil was manifest by thunderous noise. If he spoke at recreation of the things of God, upon his return to

his cell, the devils were waiting to vent their wrath upon him.

At the time when he was working to found the Passionist Nuns, of whom we shall speak soon, the devil hindered him from sleeping. He was revising the Rules he had written. One night he was lying upon his bed when he was suddenly and violently hurled against the wall. The next day, asked by his confessor how he had acted, Paul replied with a smile, "God does permit the doings of the devil to cause harm but rather to draw good from them. They shall not do it again." He added, "Satan fears this convent (of Passionist Nuns) as he would a fire."

The good, which the Saint did for souls, provoked the devil to even greater fury. During the early days at Monte Argentario, he used to go to Portercole sometimes on a Saturday night for the spiritual welfare of his neighbor. He would spend the night praying before the Blessed Sacrament. The devils would try to frighten him with their infernal racket. But Father Paul, without taking any notice of it, would continue his prayer. In the morning he would perform his apostolic work and the success of his efforts were commensurate with such a holy preparation.

When he went on a mission, Satan followed him and made him pay dearly for the souls snatched from his diabolical power. He harassed him unceasingly. Scarcely had the exhausted missionary lay down to take a few hours of well-earned and much needed rest, than the devils would enter the room with the noise of a crowd of people. Sometimes they would jump on his bed and throw him on to the floor, crying out in fury, "You have come to torment me. You have robbed me of many souls." His meditations on the Passion caused them untold agony. They were forced to confess this by the lips of a demoniac whom a holy priest was exorcising. After having avowed that the Mass said by Father Paul tormented them greatly, they were asked if there was anything else about him that caused them agony. They cried out vehemently, "The Passion! The Passion!"

They would strike his innocent body during the night with such fierce blows that the Saint's legs would be black and blue. In the morning he would be pale, sickly and weak, unable to stand; he was forced to remain in bed. Many times he would return to the Retreat so exhausted that he could scarcely drag himself along. One day he was returning to Monte Argentario after a mission, when, at the foot of the mountain, at a place called Feniglia, the devils, in corporeal form, lined on either side of the road and beat him cruelly, like a soldier is made to run the gauntlet.

We are not able to relate all the ill-treatment that Paul received from this ferocious enemy, but the more Satan deprived the Saint's body of strength, the more vigor he gave to his soul. The Apostle became even more zealous for the conflict; Satan merely served to sharpen the apostolic sword.

To deceive the Saint more artfully, the devils occasionally appeared in human form. During his illness at St. Angelo's, which we described at the beginning of this chapter, soon after the death of Father John Baptist, Paul saw on one night in his room six or seven persons who said they were doctors. They said that, as they were in the neighborhood, they had heard of his sickness and had come to tell him to prepare for death, as his condition was incurable. They assured him of his approaching death on even stronger grounds, for they had learned from an apparition of his brother that Paul's death would occur the following Wednesday. These were unusual types of doctors. If they were trying to frighten him, they were greatly mistaken. Paul desired nothing so keenly as to leave this life of exile and to be united for eternity with God in Heaven.

However, when Paul failed to see among them Doctor Matioli, his regular physician, he replied that they should have spared themselves the inconvenience of the visit, as it would have been quite sufficient for his own doctor to have notified him of his approaching death. Amazed that they had not lessened in the least his conformity to the Divine will, the devils vanished.

Another time, Father Paul was staying with his companion in the house of one of his benefactors. As soon as they had retired to their room for the night, the devil appeared in the form of a man. He was of gigantic stature and terrifying to behold. Father Paul's companion, very frightened, called out, "Do you see? Do you see?" "Be calm," replied Paul, who was accustomed to apparitions of this kind. "Do not be afraid; it is not on your account that he has come." The next morning it could be seen to which of the two the enemy had paid attention. Paul's legs were black and bruised from the blows he had received during the night. "This Religious was not the only one who witnessed the ill-treatment the Saint suffered at the hands of the devils," writes St. Vincent Strambi, which probably implies that he himself had been a witness on several occasions

From the way he courageously endured such assaults, we can realize the heroism that the Saint needed to persevere to the end of his life. For the rest, he knew that with such an enemy he must neither fear, nor show fear, but to place his confidence and trust in God. Often he could have called for help, but he did not do so because he wanted to show his adversary that he did not fear him. Paul knew very well that the devil's audacity is greater than his power, so he used only one means to oppose this proud spirit - profound contempt. He would take hold of his crucifix and put his rosary around his neck, and then with authority he commanded the devil to depart in the names of Jesus and Mary. And depart he would. But it would not be long before he returned to the fray.

Exterior attacks are neither the most painful nor the most dangerous. The roaring of the lion warns us of danger. It is the silent serpent hidden in the darkness that is more to be feared.

These malicious spirits would enter into him, and there begin their assault. They would cause such extreme dejection, nausea, weariness and sadness that he revealed to his confessor, "Today, I am violently tempted to flee from here and to go and live in the depths of the forest." At other times they set his temper on edge and aroused within him such fierce inclinations to anger that in resisting them he proved himself to be a heroic martyr. At all times Paul was master of himself. On those occasions he would studiously avoid everybody, fearing lest a word of impatience should escape his lips; he wished to suffer all in silence for the love of God.

There were times when he was tempted to despair and to blasphemy and even, with ingenious diabolic reasoning, urged to commit suicide. Speaking with his spiritual director, he told him that he was strongly tempted to hurl himself out of the window. His greatest, his most poignant grief, was caused by the efforts of the devils to induce him to despair on account of the mystery of Predestination. They tried to disturb his mind with every kind of sophism and presented their lies with such cunning, that the Saint was hard pressed to resist. In times of desolation and the night of the soul, the 'father of lies' attacked him with greater constancy and clothed his lies with the semblance of truth.

But, all these temptations, while increasing his merit and reward, enabled him to

become a great master in the noble work of directing souls.

In teaching others how they were to fight and conquer the enemy, he reveals to us the secret of his own success. "To check the devil," he would say, "you must resist him with courage and show contempt for his rage and fury." He wrote to a Master of Novices, who had a novice that was being tormented by the devil, "I am not at all astonished at the temptations and conflicts which the devils stir up in me, for it is written 'the sinner shall be greatly punished.' But I am full of compassion for these poor, innocent children. You must oppose the devil courageously, snarl at him, so to speak, torment him by harsh commands. Write out commands; give them out in a loud voice, wearing a stole; paste them up in the room and with lively faith inform the devil about them, speaking with authority in the Name of Jesus Christ."

"Let your weapons always be faith, confidence in God and a deep humility of heart," he wrote to a nun; "Repeat your commands to the devil, ordering him in the Name of Jesus Christ to take himself far away from you, and to return to hell where his pride first sent him. Fear nothing. These diabolical apparitions, with the horrible temptations accompanying them, are excellent signs; and the pain they cause you is like a fire which will serve to purify you and to prepare you more and more for union with God. What glorious suffering! Deep humility! Silence, reverent self-humiliation before God! Behold the means by which we can soar to great heights. When you find that you are in interior solitude and reposing peacefully on the bosom of the heavenly Father, sigh like a little child. Tell Him not to permit the devil to molest you by these hideous apparitions, but, at the same time, humble yourself profoundly. Abandon yourself, nevertheless, to His holy will which must be your only food. Jesus always made His meat the will of His heavenly Father who willed to see Him plunged into an ocean of suffering. Be generous; beware of allowing yourself to be frightened by the devil; remain hidden in God; nothing will be able to harm you. When you see these apparitions, do not abandon prayer, but rather persevere in it; do not ever leave the place where you are praying, then the devil will leave you. Courage then! God wishes to make you a saint. May Jesus bless you."

But when he changes himself into an angel of light, then more than ever is the devil to be feared. As a good Father, always attentive to the well being of his children, Paul gave this advice to one of them.

"Regarding Confrater N., I also hope that his conduct is pleasing to God; but the devil often plays tricks under the pretense of doing good. A secret pride may be the result of these conflicts. It is necessary to tell him that since for a single venial sin one merits purgatory and its horrible punishment, it is not to be wondered at that the Divine goodness gives him, instead, a few trials and sufferings. Let him humble himself; let him resign himself and abandon himself with great confidence; let him always remain in the knowledge of his own nothingness."

The Saint himself followed faithfully this most important and primary lesson, that is in perfect agreement with the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

But were all these assaults of hell part of the Divine trials? For about 50 years, God left Paul in aridity and interior desolations; rarely did He let fall a ray of heaven on his soul as on the martyr's prison.

The Lord, who wished his faithful servant to seek Him for Himself alone, withdrew the sweetness of the communications and the abundance of lights which He had bestowed upon him at first. That God dwelt in the depths of his soul, Paul did not for a

moment doubt, but he believed that God was displeased with him.

Here is the last stage of the Passion, the summit of the cross, the abandonment of Calvary.

Peace, light and love - all have fled. The soul of Paul is plunged into an ocean of sadness, submerged in darkness. God has withdrawn Himself, veiled Himself in darkness and hidden Himself. Paul no longer sees Him in his soul, no longer feels Him in his heart. His faith seems to have vanished into a dismal night. Heaven opens not its gates to him, but hell yawns beneath his feet. Without solace, neither from heaven nor from earth, and he implores relief, he beseeches that a single ray of light illumine the abysmal blackness. Nothing! There is no reply! Nothing except the silence of death.

“Paul,” says St. Vincent Strambi, “had been tormented by devil and persecuted by men and stricken by God with most painful illnesses; but all these together formed but a fraction of the sufferings he endured. The sword of grief pierced his heart. The greatest agony of his soul was the lively fear of having lost God and of being deprived for all eternity of the Beatific Vision. Paul, who from his youth, charmed by the Divine perfections, had most ardently desired to be united to God, who had deprived himself of all things to enjoy Him the more, who would have sacrificed a thousand lives to please his Sovereign good, seeing, now, as it appeared to him, repulsed by God in disgust because He was displeased with him. Paul sees himself estranged from God and eternally lost, and, thus, in his desolation of soul he could find neither repose nor consolation. With the greatest longing his soul still sought God, but it seemed to him, his soul bruised and broken, was repulsed by God with equal vehemence to his ardent longing.”

O the abandonment of Calvary, the terrible exile of heart! O what frightful and frightening obscurity, anguish, agony and rending of his whole being. Not one drop of the bitter chalice of the Redeemer escaped the lips of the Saint. From the uttermost depths of an unfathomable abyss, tossed to the right and to the left, hurled high and cast low by tempestuous waves, his heart bruised and scarcely beating, he uttered this cry of distress, this dismal complaint, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me! Oh, what a state am I in. At every instant, I fear that the Lord will command the earth to open up and swallow me.”

“I am being assailed from every side,” he wrote to one of his Religious. “But God does not allow it to appear so. Often in my sleep, the torment possesses me and I wake up in a cold sweat. How many years I have been in this sad state! A heavy cross that well nigh crushes me has left me for a long time without the least consolation. I can compare it to a thunder storm which leaves in its wake a trail of utter destruction. I am, as a man, adrift in a heavy sea during a tempest, for whom there is no life line, neither from heaven nor from earth. However, there is a ray of hope, but it is so feeble that I only faintly discern it.”

“Imagine to yourself,” he added. “Imagine to yourself a sick man, shipwrecked, clinging to a spar; what terror for him in every rolling wave, in every buffet of the wind. He fears every moment to be his last. Imagine to yourself a criminal condemned to be hanged; his heart beats violently, he groans beneath the burden of his continual anguish. The suspense is unbearable. Every minute brings execution closer. Such is the state of my own soul.” Paul’s only solace in his hour of desolation and dereliction is his abandonment to God. As the forsaken Christ, when in the mysterious dereliction of Calvary, threw Himself into the arms of God. “Father, into Your hands I commend my

spirit." "I deserve justly to be abandoned by You," he cried out, "but I will always follow after You. I shall always be your child." At other times one could hear him in his cell, "I only wish well to my God, O Infinite Bounty of my Jesus. You avoid me, however, O Lord, but flee from me as much as You will, I shall always be yours; I shall follow you always; yes, I shall always be entirely yours."

From out of this ocean of trials, like one who raises his head above the waves, there were times when he would sing with a holy joy.

This song was the overflowing of a flooding heart. All the saints have sung this song: the red martyrs of blood on the scaffold and the white martyrs of charity on the altar of sacrifice. In the chants of love of Paul of the Cross, one could believe that Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila were singing again.

"By the cross holy love perfects the loving soul who offers it a fervent and generous heart.

"O that I could speak of the precious and divine treasures which the All-High has hidden in suffering.

"But it is a great secret known only to those who love; as for me, who have never experienced it, I must be content to admire it from afar.

"Happy the heart which remains on the cross in the arms of the Beloved and burns only of holy love.

"Even happier is the soul who, in pure suffering and without the least consolation, remains there transformed into Jesus Christ.

"Happy the soul who is detached from her suffering, having no other desire than to die to herself to love still more Him who wounds her.

"I give thee this lesson from the foot of the Cross of Jesus; but it is in prayer alone that you will comprehend it.

What an admirable composition. When Paul was in a state of aridity, darkness and divine abandonment, then more than any other time, did there burst forth from his heart burning accents of love and pure illuminations from heaven.

Then again, at the thought of being damned for all eternity, he trembled from head to foot, and he froze with fear; this fear he was able to communicate to his hearers.

Then again, he could, at the first word, discern the state of soul of those who sought his direction. Understanding their trials and difficulties, he knew how to inspire them with courage and to make them more generous. He would suggest efficacious means for overcoming temptations and to dispose their souls for receiving heavenly favors. He, himself, was in darkness, yet he radiated light; he himself was in dryness, yet he set hearts afire with love; he was desolate, yet he filled the souls of others with comfort and consolation. One who did not know the state of his own soul would have taken him for one favored by God with abundant consolations. But proficient in the spiritual life, he knew how to strive for perfection without those sweetnesss which are usually bestowed on beginners. The Lord, allowing him to remain ignorant of his own merits, did not reveal to him his own state of soul. This is the reason: accustomed as he was to console others, he could not of himself leave the abyss of bitterness in which he was plunged, nor could he sustain himself by the advice which he gave to others or



which he found in books. "My interior state," he told his director, "is so dark and obscure, and my path so interwoven with fears and terrors, that I find no manual capable of comforting or consoling me. I am reading the 'Mystical Treatise' of Tauler, and, though I find a little there, yet not all that I need to weather the storms that beat and buffet my soul."

We shall see again, reflecting in the soul of Paul of the Cross, some flashes of lightning. We shall again hear the roll of thunder, but it will be the thunder of a storm which becomes fainter and fainter, until it yields to the tranquility of his last days upon earth and to the eternal calm of the kingdom of Heaven.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE**

### **DEATH OF CLEMENT XIII - CLEMENT XIV - APPROBATION OF THE RULES - THE SAINT PREACHES THE JUBILEE AT ROME - PREPARES TO LEAVE FOR ST. ANGELO - THE POPE KEEPS HIM AT ROME**

**1769 - 1770**

On February 2, 1769, the Catholic rulers of Europe were responsible, because of their iniquitous and cruel persecutions, for bringing to an early grave a noble and saintly man. The great Pontiff, Clement XIII, was dead. In the eternal embrace of God, this heroic soul found eternal rest and the everlasting reward of his earthly combats.

The reader is familiar with the intimate ties which united Pope Clement XIII to Paul of the Cross. The grief of the Saint was not only the grief any Christian son feels at the death of his Mother, but it was also the keen sorrow of a heart that has lost a devoted friend. So profound was it, in fact, that despite his feeble condition, he wished to be present at the Divine Office for the departed soul of the Pontiff. "My sorrow is deep indeed," he wrote, "since I heard the distressing news. This morning I sang solemn Mass for the repose of his soul and to obtain from the Divine goodness a holy Pastor for the Church. I have placed the hearts of all the Cardinals in the Wounds of Jesus Christ, but especially that of Ganganelli."

After the Mass, he said to one of the Religious, "I have plunged the hearts of the Cardinals in the Blood of Jesus, but Ganganelli's heart, ah, with what splendor it shone."

Before the year 1776, the Saint had never seen Cardinal Ganganelli. It was in that year, for the first time, that he had the honor of visiting him at Rome. In this first interview, he was charmed by the personality and edified by the virtue of the Cardinal; he even had such a clear knowledge of his future elevation that he said to his companion as they left the audiences, "He will be Pope." An interior voice was saying to the holy Founder, "There is the Sovereign Pontiff, who will place the final seal on the Institute of the Passion."

We wonder here, in passing, at the Divine Providence, which united Paul in the bonds of intimate friendship with those Cardinals destined to be Popes in order to facilitate, in the midst of innumerable difficulties, the establishment of the new Institute. We have often remarked that the only support of this work was the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who had the gift of discerning the works of God, and the saints who are the instruments of those works.

When Paul had returned to the home of his hosts, the Signori Angeletti, he said with conviction, "Ganganelli will not remain as he is. This Cardinal will not remain a Cardinal; he will ascend higher."

In 1767, Cardinal Ganganelli came to visit Paul at the Hospice of the Holy Cross. After a friendly conversation, his Eminence rose and said to Paul, as he embraced him, "Father Paul, if I can do anything for you or for your Congregation, I am at your service." "Your Eminence," replied Paul, "the time will come when you will be in a position to do something, a great deal in fact, for us." And he repeated these words three times. The Cardinal pretended not to understand and remarked that rarely do events turn out according to our wishes. The Saint replied, "Not in accord with our wishes, but in accord with the Will of God." And, his face aglow, he turned towards Anthony Frattini, "There," he said, pointing to Cardinal Ganganelli, "there is the successor to the Pope, and you will see that I am right." And becoming more and more

animated, he added, "I am no prophet, nor am I a son of a prophet, but it is not myself that is speaking. It is God who makes me speak in this way. You will see it. Yes, you will see it." At these words the Cardinal turned towards Frattini, "Ah, Frattini," he said, and without adding another word, he placed his finger on his lips to signify that he was to keep the prediction of Father Paul as a secret.

During the Conclave, the Saint, while at St. Angelo, received a letter which informed him that public opinion had named Cardinal Stoppani as the future Pope. Reading the letter he began to shake his head and said to two of the Religious, "Stoppani? No! Ganganelli will be the new Pope."

Father Joseph Hyacinth of St. Catherine, who had arrived at Rome for the approaching General Chapter, went immediately to seek 'benedicite' from the Saint. "What do they say at Rome about the election of the new Pope?" asked the holy Founder. "The name of Cardinal Stoppani is on everybody's lips," replied the priest. "Oh," replied the Saint, "it will not be Stoppani." "Who then will it be?" "Ganganelli," Paul said. "But how do you know that Ganganelli will be Pope," asked Father Hyacinth. "I just know it," replied the Saint with a grave and recollected air. "I am certain of it."

He had reason to speak thus," says St. Vincent Strambi, "for he had revealed several times to his confessor that, except for the divine revelation that he had received concerning the foundation of the Congregation, nothing had been more clearly revealed to him than the election of Cardinal Ganganelli to the Papacy."

(When one considers the intrigues of the Roman Court during this election, one can truly say that, humanly speaking, it was impossible to predict the new Pope. "Among the Cardinals of the Conclave, there was one who little dreamed that he would be elected - Ganganelli. He was elected according to the usual procedure and unanimously. His election was not of long duration" P. CCRDARA.

The P. de NOVAES attributed the issue to a marvelous disposition of Divine Providence. See one of the most beautiful, historical monuments of modern times: "Clement XIII and Clement XIV" by P. RAVIGNAN, T.1., Ch. VII.)

A month before the Conclave, the Saint said to one of his benefactors from Ronciglione, Roman Tedeschi, who had called to see him, "When the messengers pass your home, as soon as you learn of the election of Ganganelli, send for me and take me to kiss his feet."

On May 19, 1769, the Vicar of Jesus Christ was proclaimed under the name of Clement XIV. It was Ganganelli. Immediately, Tedeschi with companions hurried to St. Angelo's, wishing that he himself could carry the venerable Founder, whose infirmities forced him to travel in a litter. On May 25, Paul was at Ronciglione very early in the morning. But as the people had flocked from all parts, each one demanding to speak to him, he spent the day there, giving advice, enlightenment and encouragement. The following day he set out for Rome, and in the evening he found himself amongst his Religious at the Hospice of the Holy Cross.

Meanwhile, the new Pontiff had not overlooked Father Paul of the Cross. One day, when he was conversing with Charles Angeletti, his private chamberlain and a great friend and benefactor of the Congregation, he said to him, "You will see that Father Paul will come to Rome." "Impossible," replied Angeletti. "Father Paul is so ill that he can scarcely move." "Just the same," answered the Pope, who knew the heart of the Saint so well, "you will see that he will come in spite of his infirmities." Learning of the

arrival of Paul, the Pontiff wanted to see him at once. He sent one of his carriages to the Hospice of the Holy Cross to bring the holy Founder to him.

A carriage from the Papal Palace! One can easily imagine the embarrassment of the humble Servant of God, seeing himself borne with so much honor to the Vatican and to the presence of the Holy Father.

The past, which naturally came to Paul's mind, was such a contrast to the present. Admiring the favors of Divine Providence, he said to his confessor, who was with him, "Ah, the many times I have made this journey bare-footed. The sufferings I have endured in this city to hasten the work of the Congregation." His companion replied, "Now you are receiving your reward."

When they arrived at the Palace after many difficulties, the Pontiff had arranged for Paul to be brought into his study. There, the Pope embraced him affectionately three times, made him sit down beside him and desired that Paul put on his skull cap. Many were the marks of affection he gave the holy Founder. Paul was moved at this demonstration to the point of tears. After a long and friendly conversation, and assured of the benevolence of the Sovereign Pontiff, Paul humbly begged for the solemn approbation of the Institute of the Passion. The reply of the Holy Father aroused lively sentiments of hope in Paul's heart. This audience lasted for an hour. Then the Pope took his saintly friend into his arms and with a signal mark of graciousness accompanied him to the door. To the respectful protests of Paul, he replied, "Allow me; allow me to practice charity."

On June 18, Paul presented a petition to His Holiness for the approbation of the Congregation and requested that the privileges and favors granted to other religious Orders also be granted to the Congregation of the Passion. The Sovereign Pontiff, who venerated Paul as a saint, again welcomed him, deigning to offer him a seat with his own hands, and obliged him to sit in front of him. Then he accepted the petition and a copy of the Rule, adding that he would examine them himself.

The Father Consultor General, who was with Paul, referring to the permission that Pope Benedict XIII had given to the Saint of gathering companions, presumed to say that a son of St. Dominic had given birth to the Institute of the Passion. "Oh!" interrupted Clement XIV, without giving him time to complete his reflection, "A son of St. Francis will bring it to perfection."

Paul, then, said to the Holy Father that he hoped, on the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, to visit the image of the Blessed Virgin venerated in the Borghese Chapel of St. Mary Major's, to thank the Mother of God for having obtained the confirmation of the Institute with new favors.

And on the Vigil of the Assumption, after four days of examination, the two commissioners appointed to examine the Rule, Bishop de Zelada and Bishop Garambi, who were rather slow, notified the Sovereign Pontiff of their vote of approval. The next day His Holiness sent his own confessor, Sansgiorgio, to inform Paul that his desires had been fulfilled, and that the Pope had ordered that the Brief of the new approbation of the Rule and the Institute should be published without delay.

It is difficult to find words to express how sensitive was the heart of the Saint to this delicate attention of the Vicar of Jesus Christ and to the maternal solicitude of his loving Mother, Mary, the Mother of God. Immediately, he withdrew to St. Mary Major's. Fifteen years before, in the same Basilica and before the same image, he had made his

vow to spread devotion to the Passion of Christ in the hearts of the faithful and to use all the means in his power to found an Institute for the same purpose. In spite of his age, he always recited the Divine Office standing, in gratitude to the Divine Savior and to his most holy Mother for the signal favor that had at last been granted to him after so many years of sighs, labors and anxiety.

In circular letters, he communicated his joy to his sons of the Passion, and ordered that in all the churches of the Congregation a 'Te Deum' and a Solemn Mass be sung before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in thanksgiving for such a blessing.

After a few days, the holy Founder went to thank the Holy Father, who welcomed him with his usual graciousness. After an intimate audience, Paul said, "Holy Father, how shall the expenses of the Brief be paid?" and, breathing lightly on his hand, he added, "I have no more than that." At this childlike and trusting simplicity, the Pope smiled and replied, "But the expenses are greater than you think, Father Paul. I intend to give you not only a Brief but also a Bull of approbation. Never mind. Do not be concerned about the expenses. I am well acquainted with your poverty." And Paul retired, filled with consolation.

When the Brief and the Bull, dated November 15, 1769, had been drawn up, Clement XIV entrusted it to one of his domestic prelates to carry it to Paul. It was the feast of St. Clement; this was a feast day gift from the Holy Father. This Bull, which contained favors and privileges, Paul kissed with sentiments of profound reverence. He placed it on the altar, summoned the small community and all sung a hymn of thanksgiving to the Divine goodness, whose graces are so liberal that one can never express adequate thanks for them.

It was in that same year, 1769, that Clement XIV, according to the custom of the Sovereign Pontiffs on their accession to the Apostolic See, proclaimed an extraordinary Jubilee. His Holiness prescribed that missions should be given in Rome to dispose souls to gain the Jubilee Indulgences. The Cardinal Vicar, Colonna, was to select able and zealous missionaries. The Pope nominated in particular the Apostle of the Passion, Paul of the Cross, if his strength would permit him to accept the invitation. The Cardinal himself came to the Hospice of the Holy Cross to convey to the Saint the desire of the Holy Father and eagerly urged Paul to respond to the wishes of the Pontiff. The aged Founder respectfully excused himself; he alleged that he was an old man, a semi-invalid, almost deaf and that he had been compelled to give up missions four or five years previously. At these words, the Cardinal replied, "I have heard, Father Paul, that you still have a strong voice. As for your deafness, it is sufficient that the people are not deaf."

Seeing always in the will of his superiors the will of God, Paul showed that he was quite prepared to obey the wishes of the Holy Father. Despite his weakened state of health, he prepared for this mission by study and by prayer.

The Cardinal Vicar offered Paul the choice of three churches: the fashionable St. Charles on the Corso, St. Andrew's in the aristocratic quarter, Our Lady of Consolation in the slum district. The humble missionary chose St. Mary's, saying that the Savior had sent him 'to evangelize the poor.' "He hath sent me to evangelize the poor." But His Eminence would not hear of such a choice. Filled with admiration for the humility of Paul, he wanted a vaster field, which would allow the Saint to scatter with more abundant fruit the seed of the word of God. So, he assigned to him the Basilica of St. Mary in Trastevere.

The mission was to open on September 12. A few days before, Paul was attacked with a violent fever. The Holy Father was sad when he heard about it and sent at once his own confessor to bring the holy Founder consolation of soul, and sent his own physician to care for the needs of his body. Such affectionate and kindly solicitude from the Vicar of Jesus Christ confounded Paul, who exclaimed in tears, "Whence does that happen to me, the least of the members of the Catholic Church?"

When, instead of the renowned and famous missionary, one of his sons was to replace him on the platform, all were visibly disappointed, yet disappointment yielded to sorrow at the news of his illness, and great and lowly alike came in crowds to visit him at the poor Hospice, to ask how he was and to inquire if there was any possibility of him being able to preach the mission,

The ardent desire of the people and the sorrow of the Holy Father lead Paul to the heights of heroism. Feeble and fatigued by the fever, which had but slightly improved, Paul rose from his bed, although it would have been better for him had he remained there. He went to continue the mission. "Such is the power of obedience to the Vicar of Christ," he remarked.

It was an inspiring and edifying sight to see the venerable and sickly missionary carried on to the platform to preach the word of God. But once on the platform a transformation took place in him. With one hand resting heavily on his walking stick, with head bare, feet bare, according to his custom, all his strength, all his vigor, all his zeal returned; the fire of youth shone in his face; his voice, resonant and sonorous and strong, waged incessant war against sin. Once again, tears flowed from his eyes as he described the sufferings of Christ on Calvary.

Soon, the city of Rome is rocked to its very foundations. The vibrant voice of Paul of the Cross is heard by all - nobles, plebeians, prelates and cardinals - as an echo of heaven, where he seems to be already dwelling. Daily, the numbers increased, and he was obliged to preach in the vast piazza in front of the Basilica. Yet even this space could not accommodate the milling throng, which overflowed into the distant neighboring streets. Many were the people who were forced to leave without having heard the voice of the Saint.

When Paul stepped down from the platform after the sermon, he was at once surrounded, all wanted to touch his habit or to kiss his hand or to see him. It was only with difficulty that strong men and a company of soldiers were able to save the Saint from being crushed by the crowd that pressed him from every side.

The Pope followed the mission in spirit, blessing the Saint and his work from his heart. Every evening of the mission, he listened attentively to a report on the health and the preaching of Paul of the Cross. Happy with the fruits that the people of Rome had derived from the mission, the Pope gave witness to his joy in these charming words, "Do not trouble him; let him alone," by which he seemed to say, "Greater things than these are yet to be seen."

The Sovereign Pontiff had spoken well; wonders were indeed seen. The voice of this aged and venerable missionary influenced the whole of Rome. His powerful voice seemed to be echoing in all the churches of the city, communicating an irresistible attraction to the missions in other places. Thus, did God wish to crown an apostolate of fifty years by a most spectacular and fruitful mission in the center of Catholicism, in the Eternal City of the great Apostles Peter and Paul.

Amid such a prodigious harvest, let us pick but one flower which, hidden from the world, distilled its perfume for God alone. The young Princess of Carigna, from the meditations of Paul on the Sacred Passion, experienced within her soul such a desire for heavenly things that she renounced the pleasures and attractions of the world, the brilliant soirees and the vain frivolities of the time. She began, with the consent of her husband, the Prince Doria, a life totally consecrated to God within the palace - as humble and as retired as though she were living in a convent. This sudden transformation naturally evoked criticism from the lovers of the world, who were vexed that their dazzling assemblies were deprived of a Princess, whose youthfulness, charm of personality and magnificence of fortune would diffuse gaiety into all their festivities. They went so far as to spread malicious rumors, even asserting that the Princess was a victim to scruples.

Paul was very distressed about these insinuations concerning the Princess and cried out in a grave and serious voice, "It would be a great glory for Rome, if it could boast the possession of many similar follies." By his words of consolation, Paul encouraged the Princess to be constant despite the gossip about her. Soon the radiance of her virtues manifested her to the eyes of all as the perfect exemplar of a virtuous Roman lady.

The holy Founder had preached his last sermon; it was the climax of his oratory. As he had done so frequently throughout his life, he hastened to escape the praise of men and returned to the poverty and solitude of the Hospice of the Holy Cross. There, hidden from the eyes of men, his life was spent in prayer and contemplation; there, he offered fervent thanks to God and to Christ Crucified for the final approbation of the Institute. His work now seemed complete. He had only one desire: to retire into the solitude of St. Angelo, and there to end his days in peace and to be laid to rest beside the remains of his beloved brother John Baptist.

To bid farewell to the holy City of Rome and to enrich his soul with the treasure of indulgences, in the month of October, he visited the seven Basilicas. The sight of the magnificent sanctuaries, the relics of the martyrs, especially of the Apostles Peter and Paul, his patron, filled his soul with new fervor. With the recollection of these holy sites in his mind, he was about to leave Rome, when the Cardinal Vicar, who had been informed of his intending departure, hurried to the Hospice to persuade him to remain in Rome. The Cardinal spoke of the matter to the Holy Father, who did not wish that Rome should be deprived of the presence of a saint. Thinking to keep the holy Founder near him, he made known at once the desire of his heart in the friendliest of ways.

"I know," said the Pope, "what you will do in the Retreat of St. Angelo - you will pray; you will pray for your own soul, you will pray for us, you will pray for the Church. But you can do that in Rome just as well." The Saint bowed his head in humble resignation. The will of the Vicar of Christ was for him the will of God; his only thought was to obey. Such prompt and ready obedience was extremely pleasing to the Sovereign Pontiff, who was an excellent judge of virtue. He admired the sacrifice that Paul was making, the sacrifice of solitude, in which his soul would be more intimately united to God. He made no delay in making recompense to Paul for the sacrifice he was prepared to make.

At Christmas time, the holy Founder went, as was his custom, to offer feast day greetings to the Pope. The Holy Father received him with the usual affectionate welcome and made Paul sit beside him. "Father Paul," he said, "seeing that you have

yielded so promptly to the desire of the Cardinal Vicar and also Our desire to remain permanently in Rome, it is just that We should think of obtaining a house and a church for your Congregation. We must do so; it is only justice; but give me time."

The Pope, in order to give the venerable Founder the consolation of offering the holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Christmas Eve, granted him special permission to sing the Mass in the chapel of the Hospice.

This unexpected favor filled the heart of Paul with joy, and he considered it greater than all treasures. With accustomed humility, he celebrated this solemnity with extraordinary fervor. The transports of his soul escaped as burning flames from his lips as he repeated, "O prodigy! O miracle! That a God should come to us." One cannot say what were the divine communications that filled his soul on this night of graces and blessings. The abundance of his tears, the glow of his countenance betrayed the sacred fire which the Divine Child of Bethlehem enkindled in his heart.

On Christmas morning, after celebrating his second and third Mass, Paul went to venerate the holy Crib in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. There, he remained, kneeling or standing, to assist at the Solemn Mass celebrated by the Supreme Pontiff.

All that day, his soul was rapt in the contemplation of these mysteries of ineffable love, "gently allowing his heart to ascend to the Eternal Word, towards Eternal Wisdom, which became flesh and dwelt amongst us" (Bossuet).



## **CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR**

### **VISITATION OF THE RETREATS IN THE PATRIMONY OF ST. PETER - BRIEF FROM CLEMENT XIV - SUMMONED TO ROME - TRIUMPHAL RETURN - SERIOUS ILLNESS - THE LAST SACRAMENTS - NEAR TO DEATH - SUDDEN RECOVERY**

**1770 - 1771**

It is the year 1770. Sometimes, in the middle of winter, there appears one of those days of glorious sunshine which stirs nature into life. Occasionally, too, during old age one glimpses a sudden return of the warmth of youth, which invigorates old age, and infuses into it a measure of strength. Such was the experience of the holy Founder.

Believing himself to be strong enough to undertake a journey, he decided to make Visitation of the Retreats in the Patrimony of St. Peter. On March 19 he went to ask permission from the Sovereign Pontiff and the Apostolic Blessing. The Pope did not wish to restrain the zeal of Paul, but stipulated that the holy Founder should always obtain the permission of the Cardinal Vicar. On this occasion, the Pontiff stated that he desired to bestow new favors upon him and, as if he had not already overwhelmed him with gifts, the Holy Father complained that the Saint was too timid, too reserved, because he had never asked for anything. "I admire your discretion," the Pope said to him but, nevertheless, ask, I beg you, ask when you are in need of anything and do not think that your requests will be troublesome."

Paul left the audience and went to see the Cardinal Vicar, who felt uneasy over the proposed Visitation. But, importuned by Paul's reasons, he finally consented on the condition that he would return to Rome no later than the feast of St. John the Baptist. The Cardinal feared for the health of the aged Passionist, especially if he was not back in Rome before the intense heat of the summer.

As he was on the point of leaving the City, Paul prayed for a long time at the tombs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, and placed his journey under their powerful protection.

On March 27, he set out with his confessor for Civitavecchia. The road was bad and a piercing cold wind was blowing. The aged Founder had had practically nothing to eat and suffered intensely. His companion said to him with a smile, "This is the road over which you have dragged a cart." "It was not a cart, but a heavy wagon. I used to come and go from Rome to Monte Argentario to attend to the affairs of the Congregation, always barefooted, in the depths of winter cold and in the middle of the summer heat. O how much I have suffered."

In the evening, he arrived, frozen with the cold, at an inn at Monterone where, after taking a frugal meal, he set about speaking of God to the people of the house, who in these remote parts only rarely had the opportunity of listening to the word of God. The words of Paul were but few, as was his custom, but they were full of unction and, spoken in so friendly and persuasive a manner and tone that they were listened to with rapt attention.

The next day, after Mass, he resumed the journey. At Civitavecchia, where all remembered his mission, at the entreaties of his benefactors he spent the day there, and crowds came to see him and to lay before him the anxieties of their soul.

The following day, he arrived at the Retreat near Corneto, founded a year before, and his arrival brought joy and gladness into the hearts of the community. The next day,

he opened the Visitation and preached the spiritual exercises to the community? His tears and his love gave him an eloquence that is only to be heard from the lips of the saints. On the feast of the Sorrows of Mary, and throughout Holy Week, he performed the sacred ceremonies. These days, so dear to his heart, his words, his exhortations and his conferences all were redolent of Christ Crucified.

After Easter, he directed his steps towards the much loved solitude of Monte Argentario and embarked at the port of Corneto. The ship was already under sail when a contrary wind arose. The heavy seas forced the captain to seek shelter at Montalto. The Saint took advantage of this enforced leisure to preach the word of God to the fishermen on the sea shore. As he was speaking, his thoughts centered upon God, and he did not notice that his hearers were cutting pieces from his mantle. This unique devotion soon received its reward. When the Saint asked them for a little piece of fish, they had to reply to him that they had none. "Well, my friends," said Paul, "cast your nets." "It would be a waste of time," all answered, "because it is not the right time for the fish." Paul replied, "What does that matter? Cast your nets just the same." More out of respect than from the hope of a catch, they cast their nets. In the first drag there was repeated the miraculous draft of fishes recorded in the Gospel: two hundred pounds of big fish, with an enormous sturgeon, which the fishermen ran to show the Servant of God, crying out in their gratitude and surprise, "Thank you, Father Paul. Thank you. It is a miracle. And we owe it to the efficacy of your prayers."

As the calm weather delayed the voyage by sea indefinitely, Paul had to take to the road once again. But it was impossible to hire a carriage. Then, placing his confidence in God, he determined to travel on horseback, despite his weak back. Thus about twenty-six miles was traversed in the bitterly cold wind and the incessant rain. At sunset on April 19, he arrived at Orbetello, where he had hoped to enter unnoticed. But his arrival was discovered and, with the speed of lightning, the whole town was soon aware that Paul of the Cross was amongst them again. Quickly a crowd of merchants and soldiers, of rich and poor assembled, all with the liveliest demonstrations of reverence and joy, accompanied him to the home of his benefactor, where he had to resign himself to receiving visitors throughout the entire evening. Though he wished to continue his journey the next day, to escape from all these honors and demonstrations, driving and heavy rain compelled him to remain there until the following day. Fortunate rain, which blessed the people of Orbetello and which they were not afraid to face in order to visit the Saint to ask his blessing, to kiss his hand and even his feet, and cutting off pieces of his habit and mantle. At length the crowd was so dense that it was only with difficulty that he freed himself from their well-meaning veneration.

The next day, impatient to see the solitude of his youthful days once again, he climbed the slope of Monte Argentario. Each nearing step brought back to his mind the memory of so many sufferings and yet so many wonderful favors. Tears flowed from his eyes and fell along the pathway, as he said, "O these mountains! What things they recall!" His emotion reached its climax as he saw his Religious joyfully coming down to meet him. As soon as he arrived at the Retreat of the Presentation, he opened the Visitation. He expressed his satisfaction at finding his sons in the fervor of holy observance and united by the bonds of holy charity. He encouraged them to walk always with zeal and courage in the footsteps of Jesus Crucified. One would have called it the zeal of a beginner, the care he took to make them all advance in the practice of virtue and in union with God.

Then he climbed the heights to the Retreat of St. Joseph. The novices came to

meet him, causing the echoes of the mountain to ring with their young and vibrant voices as they sung the 'Benedictus'. He was so moved that again copious tears flowed from his joyful eyes. His confessor, borrowing the words of St. Francis de Sales, said, "Has it rained, then?" "But," the holy Founder assured him, "how can you wish me to restrain my tears, when I recall that on coming to this mountain, I had with me no other provision than a piece of dry bread and about twenty dried grapes, which had been given to me out of charity at Pitigliano. Now, I see before me two monasteries, full of fervent Religious, who, day and night, sing the praises of God."

Paul remained several days at the novitiate. It afforded him special delight to be among this youthful community, in the first flowering of their souls, the sweet fragrance of love, the charm of innocence and charity which, embalming the sanctuary seemed to revive the youthful days of the aged Founder. He spoke to them as a Mother speaking to her children who are in need of nourishment. He delivered a discourse so fervent, that it drew tears from the eyes of all. Then, at their common recreations, he was the first to enliven them with a winning joyousness. The better to listen, the better to garner every word lest one word of the Saint might be lost, the youthful novices crowded around their Father and Founder.

One day, during one of these recreations, when all were hanging on his every word, as he unconsciously elevated them by an animated conversation on the glories of heaven, Father Peter of St. John, the Master of Novices, in a burst of enthusiasm, dared to say to him, "Father Paul, if you die far away from us, please bequeath your heart to the novitiate. We want to keep it here."

"My heart," replied the Saint, "my heart deserves to be hacked into pieces and thrown into the field to be the food for the birds of the air for never having known how to love God." After a moment's silence: "Ah, this heart," he burst forth, "should be burnt, reduced to ashes, and then the ashes scattered to the four winds, because it has not loved God." And he retired to his cell to lament the more freely at the foot of the Crucifix. The Religious were captivated at such deep humility.

While he was the source of edification to the Religious of Monte Argentario by his many virtues, he received a welcome consolation.

Before his departure from Rome, the Supreme Pontiff had exacted from Paul the promise that he would write him concerning his health and his journey. Paul had written to His Holiness from the Retreat at Corneto. He gave an account of the journey, of the regularity, the fervor and the peace that he found to be reigning amongst his Religious. This letter gave profound pleasure to the Pope, who in reply dispatched to him the following affectionate Brief.

"CLEMENT XIV, Pope.

"Dear Son, Greeting and Apostolic Benediction.

"From the other proofs We have already given you of Our Fatherly affection, you may easily gather with what pleasure We received your letter, which expressed so well your feelings towards Us and the Apostolic See, feelings marked with faith, devotion and respect, and which in an especial manner confirmed your love and that of your Congregation in Our regard, in assuring Us that you do not cease to beg the mercy of Almighty God, that He may direct and strengthen Our weakness in the exceeding responsible duties of the Supreme Apostolate.

"You could not give Us a better proof of your filial devotion, nor do anything more

in accord with the end of your Institute and the needs of Our charge, seeing that We have support and strength only in God.

“Courage, then, dear son; continue thus to deserve well of Us and of the universal Church; do not cease, both you yourself and all your Religious, from imploring that aid from on high which is so necessary for Us. It is by that that you will make a worthy return for Our paternal attention, and you will increase more and more Our most especial goodwill towards you and yours, a goodwill the most striking effects of which We promise you to prove always by the most signal favors on occasions.

“The affection We entertain for you and for your Congregation are such that We earnestly wish it may increase each day in virtue and in merit. With what pleasure We have read this account of your Institute in these districts. With what joy We have learned that it expands and prospers, all the time radiating the fragrance of holiness. Also, to make it flourish more and more, Our support, authority and favor is assured for you.

“You already know Our sentiments in your regard, but in assuring you of them once again, We desire this Brief to be a memorial of Our especial affection for you all. We exhort you, with the strongest pleas, to persevere in the path of virtue you have entered upon, and to strive, whilst helping Us with your fervent prayers, to preserve and increase always Our paternal benevolence for you, as well as Our joy at your progress.

“We add all Our prayers and We place under the protection of the Divine goodness the beginnings and the growth of your Congregation, and We lovingly impart to you the Apostolic Blessing to you, dearly beloved Son, and to all your Religious who are united to you in the spirit of humility and charity.

“Given at Rome, near St. Mary Major, under the ring of the Fisherman,

“April 21, 1770, the first year of Our Pontificate.”

This Brief, an immortal memorial of the limitless devotion and tender affection of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, Paul kissed devoutly and with an inexpressible joy. But suddenly his joy caused him to tremble, “Ah!” he exclaimed, “unhappy me; I greatly fear that the Lord will say to me at the end of my life, ‘Thou hast received thy reward during life.’”

Paul used so to increase his merits for Heaven by his sufferings that consolations seemed to him a loss of this heavenly treasure; he feared to be damned into hell because of them. His confessor alone had sufficient influence to restore peace in his soul, persuading him that God had granted these graces only for the benefit of the Congregation and for the glory of Jesus Crucified.

At Rome, however, they were not at all reassured concerning the health of Paul of the Cross; it was feared that his energies during the Visitation might be the cause of his death. He received letter after letter, all urging him to return. Feeling himself, in actual fact, declining more and more, he prudently judged that he ought to cease making the Visitation of the two other Retreats of the Province. He entrusted this work to Father John Mary of St. Ignatius, his confessor, and once more took the road leading to Rome.

But, on the way, his humility was again to be put to the test as he encountered remarkable demonstrations of veneration and honor. At his approach to Montalto, almost the entire population went to meet him. Accompanying him with triumphal rejoicings, all were there. Men, women and children, the aged and the sick all wanted to

see him, to speak to him and to receive his priestly blessing. In a word, it was the repetition of the triumphs of his Roman Campagna Visitation, which we have already described.

When the Saint could escape from this assiduous attention of the people, he exclaimed with tears, "Wretch that I am. I will have to be placed under lock and key, because I deceive the world. It is true that I do not have this hateful intention to deceive it, but it is nonetheless deceived, thinking me to be other than what I am." Immediately upon his arrival at Rome, he hastened to pay his respectful homage to the Sovereign Pontiff and to the Cardinal Vicar. Both expressed their happiness at his return, after an absence that had been too long in view of their intimate friendship. The blessings which Paul, during his laborious journey, had conferred upon souls and his Religious, the glory he had given to God, called for their rewards; this consisted, as always, in suffering, gout, sciatica and inflammation of the eyes - these kept him for some time confined to bed.

Nevertheless, the venerable Founder, even in the midst of his sufferings, occupied himself for a long time with an important and sacred task, namely, the foundation of an Institute of Passionist Nuns. The Rules he himself sent on July 1 to the Sovereign Pontiff, who entrusted their examination to a theologian of exceptional prudence and profound learning.

On July 26, the Servant of God presented himself for another audience. The Pope, who was indisposed, had given instructions that he was receiving no one. But with his saintly friend, he immediately welcomed, made him sit down at his side and paid him innumerable marks of affection. The presence of Paul was a refreshing comfort for the Pontiff who was finding himself a prey to persecutions that were undeserved and suffering cruel trials. Also, what a delight was his in seeing in Paul the appearance of a Saint, an upright and loyal soul. It was a consolation to the Holy Father, for so many official looks, intriguing, crafty, persecuting, who as faithful agents of earthly governments were besetting and tormenting his conscience. He said to Paul's companions, "Oh, how I value a conversation with Father Paul. Oh, what good has he done to my soul. This morning I had decided to refuse audiences to all, not even to the Secretary of State. I made an exception, only for my faithful 'Papa'." He expressed thus his love for his friend, Paul of the Cross. Indeed, every time he received him, the august Pontiff seemed to forget, in some measure, his own exalted dignity, such was his benevolence towards Paul. The Holy Father used to open his heart to him intimately and familiarly; he did not content himself with expressing the joy he experienced in seeing him, nor with merely holding him in his arms, as we have said, but moreover he embraced him, kissed him on the forehead and placed his hand upon his head. At one time, he even bent down to pick up from the floor the berettino which had fallen from the hand of the Saint.

Such familiarity did not lessen in the least the veneration which the humble Paul of the Cross bore for the supreme Head of the Church. His lively faith always filled him with reverential fear in the presence of the Vicar of Christ. When Paul heard blasphemies against this supreme dignity, he would exclaim, "If they had the realization of it that God gives me." His veneration was always increasing in the measure that he learned of the eminent virtues of the Supreme Pontiff.

Seeing Clement XIV, amidst the splendors of the Papal Palace, living in the simplicity and poverty of the cloister, Paul did not grow weary of admiring a soul so

dedicated to God and detached from pomp and worldly display. That is the reason that he often said to his companion after leaving the Papal palace, "Oh, the Pope will confound and condemn the religious on the day of judgment." He well knew upon what principles such a generous detachment from the perishable things of the world was based when, speaking together, as was their custom, about the soul and about God, the Holy Father said to him in a tone fitting the loftiness of the sentiments expressed, "I have only one fear, and that is to be like vapor, which, lifted up on high by the sun, becomes invisible. So, I hold it as a maxim that the dignity should not serve me, but that I ought to serve the dignity."

Paul had, moreover, on several occasions the opportunity of admiring the solicitude of the Supreme Pontiff. For a long time, the Saint had nourished a holy project. In his apostolic excursions he had seen a current of unbelief, which was sweeping away souls, and he had heard the first cries of the unholy way that threatened the Church and society. The clergy ought, then, to be ready at the hour of combat. To that end it was necessary to strengthen them in the spirit of their sublime vocation and re-ignite their zeal for souls. The Saint outlined his plan briefly to the Pope, who found it redolent of prudence and perfectly suited for attaining its object. He said that such was his own thought upon the matter, "You see, Father Paul, that our sentiments are one and the same."

The Pope recommended him to persuade priests, prelates and, above all, newly-consecrated Bishops to a faithful practice of prayer, to vigilance, to the constant study of Sacred Scriptures and to the ministry of preaching, which are the chief duties of the episcopate.

But the Saint admired especially the humility of the Pontiff. Sometimes, he would be told by order of His Holiness, "The Pope sends you his blessing, and asks for yours in return." "What!" he used to reply with emotion, "the Holy Father is the source of blessings; he possesses it in himself . . . and yet he wants me to bless him. What humility." One day, Clement XIV told him he was placing himself at his feet." "O God," exclaimed Paul, seized with astonishment, "is it possible that the Vicar of Christ abases himself in this manner before the lowest of creatures. The humility of the holy Founder is great. The Pope is a saint."

Before setting out for Castel Gandolfo, the Holy Father sent for Paul, opened his soul to him for an hour and a quarter, and recommended him to recite each day in community, for the entire time of his sojourn in the country, an Ave Maria for his intention.

Towards the end of October, the holy Founder was taken with a tertian fever, but it was not of long duration and did not prevent him from preparing himself in an especial manner for the feast of the Presentation, a most solemn day for him and for the entire Congregation. He passed the whole time of the Novena in profound recollection and intimate union with God.

When the confessor of the Pope, Sansgiorgio, had an attack of apoplexy, Paul, who held him in the highest esteem, hastened to see him. "Father Master," he said to him, "you have been at the gates of death, but have confidence for you will recover; I am sure of it." The sick man asked him for his blessing. Paul blessed him, and the invalid recovered, regained the use of his limbs and was soon able to rise from his bed and walk.

The holy season of Advent was approaching. Paul wanted to observe the fast

and abstinence ordered by the Rule. The infirmarian, the physician and the confessor obliged him to make use of a dispensation, but Paul took the special food only with difficulty and distaste. On the vigil of the Immaculate Conception, a feast so dear to his heart, he had to undergo an extremely violent attack from the devils - he knew not how to defend himself from them. He could have desired to betake himself into his interior as into a place of safety, clinging to God in a close embrace. But, in order to complete his pain, he experienced the most grievous desolation of soul. After a night of anguish, he was in such a sad state that he was unable to celebrate holy Mass or even to proceed to the Pope, who sent the papal carriage to bring him. Two Religious went to inform the Pope of Paul's state of extreme weakness. He was so deeply affected by the report and gave them forty crowns, enjoining them to provide every comfort for the invalid.

The illness, however, grew worse; the physician was unable to arrive at a diagnosis of the cause and the nature of the sickness. Thinking, however, that he had discovered symptoms of an intermittent fever, he bled the patient and prescribed quinine. Paul, who was perfectly aware of the cause of his illness, said to his confessor with a smile, "This is not an illness for the physician because it is an illness caused by the evil one, 'Lutin'; this is what he used to call the devil by way of pleasantry. Although the remedies only intensified his sufferings, he accepted them through obedience. But his stomach could no longer retain any food. They considered bringing him Holy Viaticum on December 18. Paul, knowing well that his hour had not yet come, said once more to his confessor, "This sickness comes from the devils, who have received from God the power to torment me, but not to destroy bodily life; so I do not think I am to die yet."

Yet, not trusting to his own judgment, he took all the measures as if he was about to appear before the judgment seat of God, and prepared himself for holy Viaticum with great fervor. In the morning, he said, "In truth, I know of nothing which disturbs me, but, to make an act of obedience to God, I desire absolution." After receiving it with the humility of a great sinner, he said, "All my hope is in the Sacred Passion of my Jesus. My Divine Savior knows I have always desired good, and that I have labored to make Him known and loved by all. I hope that He will exercise His mercy towards me. Oh, the poor robbers I have helped during my missions. They will pray for me." And he repeated the ejaculations with love and confidence, "My Jesus, mercy. My Jesus, mercy."

He received Holy Viaticum with fervor and with piety; the Religious were deeply moved to tears. In the evening, the illness became worse. The doctors judged the case as almost hopeless. When everyone had left the room, Paul said to his confessor, "But am I really ill?" "Yes," replied the priest. "Some time ago," answered the Saint, "Our Savior made known to me that I should have to pass through a great trial, but it would not be fatal, and my heart, at the sight of this trial, ran to embrace it immediately with great joy. If I am to die, will you have the charity to perform the obsequies without any pomp, here in the chapel. Then, when evening has come, would you see that I am carried secretly into the church of St. Peter and Marcellus, and there you could inter me without any honor. When my body has corrupted, put the bones in a sack, procure an ass, and bear them to the Retreat of St. Angelo and place them next to those of my brother, John Baptist."

The humble Paul of the Cross did not know that the Pope had commanded, should he die of this sickness, that his body be interred in the Basilica of the holy Apostles until the sons of the Passion had a church in Rome. When his confessor told him that the Pope had made arrangements for his burial, Paul was quite confounded

and speechless. Then, with a deep sigh, he said, "Ah! I desired to die in a place where no one would have been able to accord me any honor." As he was very much troubled, his confessor tried to comfort him by saying, "Obedience during life, obedience at death, obedience after death. Jesus, when He was dead, allowed His friends to bear Him where they wished." At these words, the holy Founder abandoned himself completely into the hands of God. At last, upon the confidant of his soul inquiring what were his greatest sufferings, he replied, "I do not think that I am going to die yet."

In fact, during the night, a healthy sweat and a peaceful sleep gave him an improved appearance, and he was able to take some nourishment.

In the morning, he received a visit from Cardinal Pirelli and Bishop de Zelada. "Never," he told them, "have I had less fear of death than on this occasion. Really, death is not frightening, but a welcome thing. If death is the loss of life, it is taken away from us by the same God who gave it to us." The improvement was maintained, and Paul recovered a little more strength each day. He even considered saying Mass on Christmas day, but the Holy Father, who was informed of the condition of the patient, deterred him from his intention because he feared a relapse. Paul had to be content with the contemplation in spirit of this great mystery of love. Feeling himself to be getting stronger, he said with a charming sweetness, "Princes grant requests on their birthdays; likewise on Christmas day, the loving Jesus has granted this to our Religious who wish me to live a little longer. I wish with the grace of God to change my life."

The hope of keeping him among them for a longer time cheered the hearts of his sons, when suddenly he suffered a relapse. On January 12, 1771, he remained unconscious for many long hours. A bleeding restored speech to him. But a raging fever took hold of him, accompanied by frequent faintings and such a prostration that all believed that he was at the point of death. On January 22, Paul asked for Holy Viaticum. The next day, the Divine Savior, in coming into that soul that was so dear to him, gave him a foretaste of the delights of Heaven. After his thanksgiving, his confessor relates, "I found him at perfect peace, and he told me, with a tranquil expression, 'Now, I no longer fear death; the Lord had almost assured me of Paradise. When a prince sends one of his servants into a distant country, he provides him with all that is necessary for arriving safely at his journey's end. The Lord, my God and my Father, has given me His only Son as Viaticum for the fearful journey into eternity.'"

His illness seemed to improve a little, but hope of complete recovery soon disappeared. Improvement and relapse alternated continually. On February 16, he again asked for Holy Viaticum. Then, wishing to die like Jesus Christ on the cross, poor and utterly destitute, he sent for his confessor, who carried out the duties of Consultor General, placed in his hands every object which he had had for his own use, and begged him, in most moving terms, to give him, as an alms, some poor garment to serve as a winding-sheet. At the same time he earnestly recommended the Congregation to his care. Afterwards, humbly returning upon himself, he said, "I accept death willingly; he who is guilty of high treason deserves death; I am guilty, so it is just that I should die." "But now," said one of those present, "you are no longer guilty by the grace of God." To this Paul replied, "Man does not know if he is worthy of love or of hatred. Nevertheless, my confidence is great; the merits of Jesus Christ are the foundation of my unbounded hope."

The dying Saint did not omit anything to provide for his eternal salvation. He also told his confessor to absolve him again at the moment he breathed his last. In tears, he



fell upon his knees and begged him to give him his blessing. The priest granted his desire and blessed him with his crucifix, saying, "May God give you His Holy Spirit, Concedat tibi Deus Spiritum Sanctum." "Now," said Paul, "go and tell the Holy Father, on my part, I wish to die a true child of the holy Catholic Church." The Pope, deeply moved, once more sent him the Apostolic Blessing with a plenary Indulgence to be gained at the moment of death.

But the fever once again lost its violence and, though in continual pain, the Saint was able to busy himself with the government of the Congregation and with the work of the foundation of a new convent for the Passionist Nuns at Corneto.

At last he was at the end of his ambitions, happy to have given a new family of virgins to the Cross, who rivaling in fervor his own well-beloved sons, would follow their crucified Spouse along the way of the cross to the hilltop of Calvary.

But these spiritual consolations no longer afforded strength to his ever-weakening body. At last the danger became again so critical that the doctors pronounced his condition as beyond the help of medical aid and said his death to be very near. His sons feared at each moment that death would deprive them of their beloved Father and Founder. Let us hand over the narrative to the Brother Infirmarian, the truth of whose words has been confirmed by the testimony of others. In his very simplicity, he has the ability to describe every detail of that occasion.

"I was at the Hospice of the Holy Cross," the Brother tells us, "near St. John Lateran when Father Paul contracted here at Rome a mortal illness which reduced him to the last extremity. Doctor Julian, a physician of the Hospital of St. John Lateran, applied his skill to the Saint and visited him every day. Seeing that the sickness was becoming worse each day, he said that the patient would surely die, and that he could not possibly survive even the week.

"The Procurator General and I both went to tell Pope Clement XIV that Father Paul was dying. We repeated to the Holy Father what the doctor had told us, both concerning the seriousness of the illness and the nearness of death. The saintly Pontiff, extremely distressed at the thought of losing his friend, spoke these words, 'I do not want him to die now; tell him I grant him a delay, and that he must obey.'

"We returned to the Hospice, overcome with joy at such a proof of kindness and at the prospects of a recovery, since the Pope desired it. We hastened to inform Father Paul of the Pope's command. Now, a really wonderful thing happened. Father Paul began to weep, then he turned with joined hands to the crucifix beside his bed, and spoke to it in these words, 'My crucified Jesus, I wish to obey your Vicar upon earth'. And, at the very moment he spoke these words, he was cured. Then he was freed of his disease and recovered his health. Only the infirmities of old age remained."

"Thus," writes St. Vincent Strambi, "the Lord yet again on this occasion showed how a lively trust and a whole-hearted obedience acts with a gentle violence upon His heart full of love, and cause Him to be ravished with extraordinary favors."

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE**

### **FOUNDATION OF THE PASSIONIST NUNS - DIVINE INSPIRATION - ASSAULTS OF THE DEVILS - A MIRACLE - THE RULES - APPROBATION BY CLEMENT XIV - THE FIRST SUPERIOR, MOTHER MARY CRUCIFIED**

**1771 - 1772**

The Passion of Jesus Christ already had apostles; they were, by the grace of God, in twelve Retreats, which were models of religious fervor, or else were in the world drawing countless souls to the foot of the Cross, where they would be cleansed from sin in the redeeming Blood of the Victim of Calvary.

Jesus Crucified was also calling to Calvary virgins consecrated by vows to His Sacred Passion. Spouses in mourning, wounded in heart by the Wounds of their heavenly Master, they will spend their life far removed from the vain clamor of the world, contemplating His divine agony, compassionating Him in His suffering, weeping over His death by night and by day, and saving the world by their life of prayer and sacrifice.

The origin of this Institute also bears the divine imprint of all the works of God. For the history of the foundation to be complete, it is necessary to go back some years, collecting the scattered references. Thus we shall see that all was from the hand of God. The cross marks the very beginning.

In the first years of the foundation of the Order, a holy soul, whom Paul was directing, received special heavenly light about the establishment of the Institute of Passionist Nuns. The reader is already acquainted with this soul, Agnes Grazi, whom Paul had in such a providential manner attracted to Jesus Christ during the mission he was giving at Talamone. Her life amongst her family was totally consecrated to God from the time Paul taught her perfect detachment from the things of the world in order to be united intimately to the Sovereign Good. He calls her, in his letters, his "very dear daughter in Jesus Crucified, Agnes of the Cross of Jesus." It had been revealed to Agnes that the Saint would found a convent of virgins to be the consoling angels of the Passion of Christ.

Paul did not fail to realize how pure and how pleasing to God was this chosen soul. He used to say of her after her death, "I wish that there had only been an instructed and holy pen capable of writing the life of the servant of God, Agnes of the Cross of Jesus." Always the experienced and prudent director, he desired to maintain her in humility. Weighing everything in the scales of the altar, he appeared, at first, to place too little value in such confidence. But, in prayer, he implored the Savior to make known His holy will. God clearly revealed that Agnes had indeed spoken under heavenly inspiration. The Saint waited for such a lasting work, the hour of Divine Providence. On June 18, 1749, he wrote to another soul under his direction, "Who knows when it shall please the Divine Majesty to begin the work of the foundation of the Nuns? I desire it, though peacefully! God awaits our prayers. This is one work that must be the fruit of prayer." Indeed, in prayer the Divine light revealed to him the marvelous means by which he should bring the work to fruition.

A rich Portuguese Canon, Joseph Carboni, had in mind the foundation of a convent at Rome under the title of 'Our Lady of Sorrows.' He had written regularly about it to Mary Crucified Constantini, a Benedictine nun in the Convent of St. Lucy at Corneto. His design was to use her as the foundation stone for this work. When at Corneto, the Saint went to see Dominic Constantini and asked for news of his sister,

Mary Crucified, whom he had been directing by letter and by personal conferences for several years. Dominic answered that she was about to leave Corneto to found a new convent. "I am also acquainted with Canon Carboni but his project will not be realized," said the Saint. "Why?" asked Dominic, "all arrangements have been made, the house is ready and the Sovereign Pontiff has given all the necessary authorizations. The Canon has told me that he was going to come himself, or send someone in his place, to lead my sister to the new convent." "Never mind," said Paul, "I repeat again that this project will not eventuate. Sister Mary Crucified will not leave Corneto. God will employ her for a work that I must myself establish."

Surprised at these words, Dominic hastened to the Convent of St. Lucy and informed his sister of his conversation with Father Paul. Sister Mary Crucified, amazed at his change, believed that the Saint wanted to deter her from her promise. "I have given my word to the Canon," she said, "and I cannot fail him now." It was soon to be seen that a revelation had been made to the Saint, for the Canon was suddenly recalled to Portugal on urgent business, and he thought no more of his proposed foundation.

Several years afterwards, Dominic Constantini, who had no children, decided to leave all his goods to his young brother so that he might contract an honorable marriage. But his brother died suddenly. Dominic resolved to dedicate his fortune to Jesus Crucified and to Our Lady of Sorrows by founding in the same city a convent of nuns, who would be obedient to Father Paul of the Cross and who would observe the rules that he would compose for them. His wife and his brother, Canon Nicholas Constantini, approved of his plan. The three of them, then, made the proposal to Father Paul, who accepted it and promised them the blessing of heaven. Permission was first obtained from the Bishop, the site was chosen and the work began at once.

When some old houses were being demolished, an ancient mural of the Blessed Virgin was seen to fall. Up until that time it had been concealed from view by another building. Although the whole house fell in ruins, yet the only thing that remained intact was the part of the wall on which was painted the image of Our Lady. This can still be seen above the altar of the convent chapel and is venerated with special devotion.

Paul was delighted at the enthusiasm of the founders at the work of construction. He expressed his joy in a letter, "We wish to found a convent of generous and saintly souls, dead to all creatures and resembling by their virtue and mortification the suffering Jesus and His sorrowing Mother. The Blessed Virgin will herself be the superior of the convent." But, soon he had a foreboding of the powers of hell. He warned the founders, and in his letters he encouraged them to stand firm in the face of the difficulties that were soon to arise. Trials would indeed come, but they would only increase the merit of this holy work.

As soon as the project became publicly known, the good people approved of it. Yet there were others who strongly disapproved and mocked the undertaking itself and its authors. The work was more than half finished when resources began to fail; the expenses were heavier than Constantini had anticipated. He was then compelled to suspend the building operations, which afforded further reason for the malicious to redouble their jeers and sneers.

Paul wrote to Dominic Constantini to reanimate his courage, "Let your Lordship be armed more and more with unbounded confidence in God; do not allow difficulties to dishearten you. God will let you see wonders. Only be courageous and generous. Pursue the work with humility and purity of intention, having in view only the glory of

God and the refuge you are building for the pure doves of the Passion. There, they will wear perpetual mourning in memory of the Passion of Christ. Drawing streams of tears from hearts overflowing with love, they will make of them a balm to anoint the Wounds of the Savior. Oh, what a grand work! Thank God, who has chosen you for an undertaking that will redound to His glory. Keep yourself humbled and annihilated in His presence, crying out, 'I am as nothing before You.'"

Dominic promptly resumed the work. When the building was nearing completion, he went triumphantly to present to the Bishop the contract by which he guaranteed that he would give all his goods to the convent after his death and an annuity of four hundred crowns during his life. This pension seemed insufficient to the Bishop, who required an annuity of five hundred crowns for each religious. Dominic, unprepared for this reaction, went away distressed. Further misfortunes overtook him, his enterprises failed and, that year, his harvests were very poor.

Again, the work was interrupted. By these obstacles God wished to test the virtue of his servant and to make more evident His own powerful hand in this work, as the Saint had foretold.

Paul, on his way from Rome in May 1766, passed through Corneto. Constantini confided his troubles. He added that for the provision of the whole year, he had only six bushels of grain, when a hundred, at least, would be needed to supply the needs of his household and his laborers. Paul asked him to take him to the granary, where he began to pray. Then, he blessed the grain and, turning towards Constantini, said to him, "Take courage and remain firm in your holy project for the glory of Jesus Crucified." The blessing of the Saint was fruitful. The six measures of grain, ground into flour would, have sufficed only until the end of May. And yet, although it supplied the household, the neighbors and the poor, the little supply was never exhausted; it lasted until August, that is to say, after the new harvest. The blessing of God was upon Constantini. He undertook certain enterprises with the Saint's blessing; all were so successful that he was able to complete the work of the convent. His confidence, henceforth, made him fear no obstacle.

While Dominic Constantini was erecting the sacred walls, Paul, in the solitude of St. Angelo, was drawing up the Rules for the chosen virgins, who would one day have the happiness of being his daughters in Jesus Crucified. Before beginning to write, he spent long hours in prayer and consulted two of his Religious, whom he knew to be learned with the science of the saints. Then, he wrote, "In these new constitutions, he preserved the same form of life that God had inspired him during his retreat of forty days at St. Charles in Castellazzo, but introduced certain mitigations suited to the spouses of Jesus Christ.

We cannot give a detailed analysis of these Rules here; let us briefly review them in general.

It is sufficient to read them to perceive how much the Spirit of God animated their author. One sees revealed in them, in some way, the soul of the Saint; one's heart is enkindled by the sacred fire in his heart; one breathes there the fragrance of heaven.

Paul placed, as the primary foundation of religious perfection, the Passion of Jesus Christ, the source of all the virtues. By continual contemplation of the Divine Redeemer, they would imprint on their souls His Wounds, His agonies, His death; they would die to the world and to themselves; they would be filled in Jesus Crucified with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Walking along in the footsteps of their

heavenly Bridegroom, like faithful spouses, they would progress in virtue, and finally, through His bleeding Wounds, they would arrive at the summit of the mount of perfection, would be united to God and would live only through Him and for Him - a life of love, a life 'hidden with Christ in God'.

The holy Founder could not but make Friday a day of special devotion. "Friday," he said to them, "will be a solemn day for the Sisters. Until dinner, they will apply themselves to meditation on the Sacred Passion, reading it and re-living it in spirit; they will make the Way of the Cross or some other pious practice, and exercise themselves in mortification, the better to honor the Passion of their crucified Spouse. On that day, one Sister, chosen by lot, will be dispensed from work in order to make thirty-three visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the memorial of the Passion of Jesus Christ. In that way she will particularly recall the remembrance of it."

So that the Sisters could converse more intimately with God and enjoy the delights of the Divine presence and of prayer, the Rule prescribes that they shall work alone in their cells, so that, as much as possible, they would keep themselves in the presence of God, making frequent ejaculations, after the example of the ancient solitaries and the Fathers of the desert, who, while toiling with their hands, would keep their heart and soul elevated to God. "But," says the Rule, "let them make it in a spirit of absolute sweetness and tranquility."

The life of the Passionist Nuns was, therefore, to be a life of work, of prayer, of peace, of repose of spirit, of holy delight, kissing in silence the Wounds of the Savior.

Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, is given to them as the perfect model of a soul, whose life was spent always at the foot of the Cross.

"Finally," the Rule continues, "as faithful servants and devoted servants, they shall address themselves to Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, invoking her in all the needs of their souls. Above all, let them take special care that each day they ascend in spirit to Calvary in order to contemplate and share the sorrows that Mary endured during the Passion and Death of her Divine Son." – "They should be content to taste only the fruits of which the Wounds of Jesus are the salutary source. They should always have at heart to increase in devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ."

As well as the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, they take the vows of enclosure and of spreading devotion to the Passion of Christ. But how were they to fulfill this last vow? Let us see.

In the first place, is not their life in itself the eloquent preaching of Christ Crucified? Without doubt, the world does not see, behind the hidden walls of the cloister, their immolation each day on the altar of the cross. But each stone of that hallowed wall seems to borrow their voice and say, "O Christian souls, forget not the price of your redemption."

And the convent bell, with its soft and mournful toll, though the sinner cannot hear it as it calls him to repentance, does it not recall the God on Calvary, especially on Fridays when at three o'clock it tolls for the dying and agonizing Christ? And from within the sanctuary, pure as the chant of the angelic choirs, does not the voice of these virgins sigh, "O worldly souls, if you would only think of the sufferings of Christ, could you love the pleasures of the world?"

Though the cloistered virgins are not in the world, a world of tormented, sorrowful and desolate souls, yet the world goes to them seeking words of peace, of light and of

consolation. How many young women, enamored of the vanities of the world, found in them only bitterness and deceit? But when they fled from frivolity to visit a convent, they breathed there the sweet perfume which permeates the enclosure of the mystical garden of the Divine Spouse.

Besides, is not prayer the most powerful of all apostolates? "To satisfy the obligations imposed upon them by the fourth vow," says the Rule, "let the Sisters direct their prayers to the adorable Wounds of the Savior. We declare here, for the peace of consciences, in what the essence of this vow consists: it suffices that they recite daily five Paters and Aves, and fervently beseech God to assist with his divine grace the missionaries of the Passionist Congregation, who propagate this salutary devotion to the Passion. They shall do their utmost to inspire this devotion in souls when they explain Christian doctrine and when they perform offices of necessity or charity, whether it be by their writing or by their words, whether among their parents or seculars."

Each order has its special grace. How great and fruitful, then, ought to be the grace of the Passionist Nuns. What a wreath upon the foreheads of these spouses of Jesus Crucified. For, according to the spiritual writers, devotion to the Passion is the source of all grace, the shortest road to perfection, the sure path to heaven and merits the incomparable palm of the martyrs, if only for a life of prayer and of tears spent at the foot of the Cross.

Such was the life of the Blessed Virgin. She lived always on Calvary, having always in her mind and in her heart the cruel torments of her Divine Son. Mary Magdalene, in the desert, begged Jesus Christ to teach her how she should spend the days of her exile. The Redeemer, in answer to her prayers, sent St. Michael the Archangel with a great cross which he planted at the opening of her cave, so that her whole life was to be nothing more than continual meditation on the sufferings of the Savior.

Such, too, was the life of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ.

Let us resume the account of this foundation, for which the Saint never ceased to implore guidance from heaven. On the feast of St. Mary Magdalene he celebrated Mass at the Hospice of the Holy Cross. Suddenly his countenance was inflamed, his eyes filled with tears. One of his Religious, who knew the state of his soul, concluded that God had granted him a special revelation. Such was indeed the case. This revelation made Paul more certain than ever of the Divine will for the establishment of the Institute of Passionist Nuns. The first convent was to be founded in Corneto. This Divine assurance communicated to him a power, an invincible power, against the raging of adverse winds.

"Your letter," he wrote, "has pleased me greatly. In reply I tell you that the convent should have been established this year; yet I suspected that it would be as it happened. The great works of God always meet with difficulties and numerous frustrations. I am up against them on all occasions. But the delay will redound to the greater glory of God, and the work will have a more solid foundation. It is necessary that the wind of persecution be allowed to blow, fanned by the wiles of the devil and of others who believe that they are rendering a service to God by their persecutions and contradictions of His works. I must have an audience with the Sovereign Pontiff about this foundation in order to obtain a favorable Brief and the approval of the Rules and Constitutions which the Passionist Nuns will observe. I conclude that I have unshaken

confidence that God in His goodness will grant all that is necessary.”

The Rule that Paul had written, with a pen dipped in the Blood of Calvary, was now finished. It needed only the sanction of the Church. But, before approaching the Holy Father, he wanted to see for himself the state of the new convent. During his last Visitation of the Retreats in the Patrimony of St. Peter, he had the consolation of seeing the convent at last completed. As soon as he returned to Rome, he himself presented, in July 1770, the Rules to Pope Clement XIV. The Sovereign Pontiff entrusted the examination of them to the Father Master Pastrovitch, a learned and holy priest, Consultor of the Holy Office and formerly Bishop of Viterbo. The report was most favorable. “These Rules,” he said, “are not only in conformity with the purity of faith, holiness of life and religious perfection, but I find them redolent of sanctity, prudence and discretion, and in harmony with the spirit of the Institute. One can surely hope that the souls, which will vow to observe them, will draw from them abundant spiritual graces.”

A similar judgment was passed by Bishop de Zelada, who had been commissioned by the wise Pontiff to make a second mature examination.

Clement XIV wished to approve them by a Brief, but Paul begged His Holiness to consent only to an approval by Apostolic Rescript, deferring the Brief until experience, the great master in all things, had revealed whether anything needed to be changed or mitigated. The Holy Father approved them by a Rescript which had the force of a Brief on September 23, 1770. The next day, Bishop de Zelada went to the Hospice to present personally the document to the holy Founder.

All that now remained was to open the convent for the pure souls awaiting their flight to Calvary. But the Bishop of Corneto was as determined as ever in his demand for the annuities that Constantini could not pay. Paul, from his bed of suffering, had recourse to the generosity of Clement XIV, who immediately commissioned his treasurer, Bishop Braschi, who later became Pope Pius VI, to grant to the new Sisters an annual pension of 300 crowns.

Every obstacle had been overcome. Now, we proceed to the inauguration of the new convent. Already at Corneto there were ten postulants impatient to hide their lives in the shadow of the Cross. Honor, charity and generosity marked their welcome. But another problem yet remained: the choice of the first Mother and Superior.

A Princess of Rome, of great piety, who had been a widow for some years, desired to join the Institute. She had asked advice of the Sovereign Pontiff himself, who rejoiced at the news and enthusiastically encouraged her to consecrate herself to Jesus Crucified. By a Brief he appointed her the superior of the new convent, giving her the faculty to found other convents and to incorporate them into the new Institute.

But was not Mother Mary Crucified Constantini to be the foundation stone of the sacred edifice, the first Mother Superior of the daughters of the Passion? How will the prophecy of the Saint in this regard be fulfilled?

The solemnity of taking possession of the convent had been arranged for the Monday after Low Sunday in 1771, on the day of the transferred feast of the Annunciation. Delegated by the holy Founder, who was ill, Father John Mary had arrived. A vast crowd from the neighboring districts flowed into the city for the edifying ceremony. The day and the hour of the ceremony came. But the Princess did not appear, though all waited. They waited in vain. For some unknown reason, she had

abandoned her plan. She fled and hid herself in a convent outside the city of Rome.

Paul, lying upon his bed of sickness, enlightened by a heavenly inspiration, said to the infirmarians "The Princess will not appear; she has changed her mind. The ceremony will not take place,"

One can imagine the murmurs, the criticism, the mockery of the people in Corneto, whose expectations had been dashed to the ground. There was also confusion in the charitable founders and disappointment in the pious postulants who had come long distances with a burning desire to leave the world as soon as possible. And there was the embarrassment of the parents who had accompanied their daughters to Corneto and knew not whether to remain or to depart.

Father John Mary hurried to Rome. He was astonished to learn from the Saint that he already knew of the misfortune and of the extraordinary change of mind of the inconstant Princess. "Go," said Paul, "go at once to the Holy Father and tell him of the desertion of her whom he had authorized to be the foundress and superior; beg from His Holiness permission to give the holy habit to these young women."

The Pope, displeased by this unusual happening, which he had not foreseen, immediately dispatched a Rescript, by which he granted to the Vicar Capitular the faculty to proceed without delay to the inauguration of the convent and the clothing of the young women with the habit of the Passion. Then, by another Rescript, he granted permission to Mary Crucified Constantini to go from the Order of St. Benedict to that of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ, and to train the new Religious in the regular observance as Superior and Foundress. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of the Saint. (The Venerable Mother Mary Crucified died in the odor of sanctity. I have seen her life in manuscript. It is an admirable one, even enhanced by prodigies; but upon them the Church has not passed judgment. Perhaps someday we will write her Life in our own tongue. I have also seen her portrait in our monastery of Sts. John and Paul in Rome. In its gracious, strong and energetic features, one perceives a great, noble, lofty and generous soul, worthy to rank with other illustrious foundresses, St. Teresa and St. Jane Frances Chantal.)

It was not without a manifest disposition of Divine Providence that the ceremony was postponed. It took place on May 3, 1771, the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross. Thirty years before, the first church of the Congregation on Monte Argentario, because of innumerable difficulties, could not be opened until the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Thus, the two churches, which share in common the title of the Presentation, were solemnly opened for divine worship on a day dedicated to the glory of the Cross, the triumphant standard of salvation and the distinguishing seal of the Congregation.

The ceremony was performed with great solemnity and amid universal rejoicing. Only souls captivated by the love of God and with solitude can understand the happiness of the new spouses of Jesus Crucified, as they received the holy habit of the Passion and passed through the doors into the cloister to enter into the peace of the children of God.

They began their novitiate at once with a fervor that was ever increasing. Such was their fidelity to the Rule that, after the year of probation, all were deemed worthy to be admitted to profession and wear over the heart the 'Sign' of the Passion.

Bishop Banditi, a worthy prelate of the apostolic church and who was later to be



elevated to the Sacred College of Cardinals, received their vows. He expressed his joy in a letter to the holy Founder,

“At last I can announce to you, Father Paul, that the eleven Sisters of your Institute have made their religious profession into my hands. The ceremony took place on May 20, 1772. It has brought me the greatest consolation. I have seen the convent filled with the Spirit of God. There is reason to hope that these Sisters will contribute greatly to the glory of God, to the glory of the Divine Savior and His Sacred Passion and to the universal good of this city. Yes, one can hope that God, touched by the prayers of these fervent souls, will bestow abundant blessings upon all.

“You cannot imagine the emotions aroused within me by this sacred ceremony. Before performing it, I wished to confer with all the Religious together, and with each one in particular, to be assured that their vocation was genuine and that they were embracing the religious state with the sincere desire of securing their eternal salvation... On Thursday morning, according to the Rules and Constitutions, the Superior, the Mother Vicar and the Consultor were elected. All took place in good order under my eyes. There was perfect unanimity.”

The Superior and Mother of their choice was Mother Mary Crucified.

After making their religious profession, the Sisters notified by letter the Sovereign Pontiff. The Holy Father, ever solicitous and full of charity, deigned to reply to them. This Brief reveals the spirit of the new Institute and the paternal benevolence of His Holiness in this foundation. It appears to us to be a fitting crown for this outline of the foundation of the Passionist Nuns.

“To Our dear daughters in Jesus Christ, the Sisters of the Passion in the city of Corneto,  
“Clement XIV,  
“Health and Apostolic Benediction.

“Your letter, which advised Us of your solemn Profession, has been for Us the subject of great joy. Nothing can be more pleasing than to see your Institute, approved by Us, enriched with those virtues which beget sanctity and perfection of life.

“You speak of the peace and spiritual consolations which you have experienced in your consecration to God. This gives Us every reason to hope that We shall be filled with ever increasing joy by your constancy and fidelity in the manner of life that you have embraced, and in this union of charity which reigns among you all. It is in that that We place Our expectations of you with great confidence. Nevertheless, We wish to encourage you and to exhort you earnestly to apply with the greatest fervor to imitate the wise virgins in the Gospel, whom the spouse found watching and awaiting his arrival.

“Be on the watch and never look back upon the world which you have left but, with your eyes ever fixed on Heaven, thank God continually for the signal favor that He has bestowed upon you. Bear engraven on your heart and on your mind the Passion of Jesus Christ our Savior. It is the ensign and adornment that glorifies you. It is the power and the beauty of your Institute. Let the Passion of Christ be the subject of your meditation, your study and your delight. If you have ever before your mind the Passion and Death of our Divine Redeemer, nothing will be difficult, nothing will restrain you, but in the very midst of pain and anguish, the contemplation of your Guide and your Spouse will obtain for you the sweet fruits of peace and of interior joy. For no satisfaction or joy

can be compared to this love which is full of heavenly sweetness, to this joy that Jesus Christ pours forth into the hearts that seek Him and meditates upon Him.

“If the world is thus crucified to you, and you to the world, and, if, in purity and simplicity of heart, you live only for Jesus Christ, your heavenly Spouse, and be perfectly faithful to the Rule of your Institute, from your convent will ascend the fragrance of virtue and an odor of sweetness. Then it may be said of you, and of those who, drawn by your example, will follow in your footsteps. She is beautiful among the daughters of Jerusalem.

“Finally, We beg of you, dear daughters in Jesus Christ, a thing that you will doubtless be most willing to do, for We have seen the piety and reverence that you bear Us. It is to pray always for Us and for the Church that has been entrusted to Our weakness. We promise to grant you, on occasions, all the timely assistance and benefits which flow from Our affection for you.

“As a pledge of this promise, We impart to you with all Our heart the Apostolic Blessing.

“Given at Rome, at St. Mary Major, under the ring of the Fisherman.

“July 25, 1772, the fourteenth year of Our Pontificate.”

In these words the Vicar of Jesus Christ encouraged these consecrated virgins who, far from the world, to keep themselves in meditation and recollection at the feet of their Crucified Spouse and find a delicious nourishment in meditating on His bitter sorrows.

If they are faithful to their vocation, they are impelled to imitate, day by day, the example of the Divine Redeemer. Thus, they will have the happiness of enjoying the unending glory and ineffable delights of Paradise. “If we suffer with Jesus Christ, we shall be glorified with Him” (Rom. viii, 7).

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX**

### **THE HOLY FOUNDER, A PERMANENT INVALID AT THE HOSPICE OF HOLY CROSS - CLEMENT XIV, THE JESUITS AND PAUL OF THE CROSS - THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF MAKES A GIFT OF THE MONASTERY OF STS. JOHN AND PAUL - CARDINAL BOCCHI**

**1772 - 1773**

We now return to the Hospice of the Holy Cross. We enter a bare cell where the holy Founder will bring forth in sorrow a new family in Jesus Crucified.

For about eight months, Paul's bed of suffering was for him the crucible wherein the gold is purified. In the Spring of 1772, sufficient strength returned to enable him, with the assistance of his infirmarian and the support of crutches, to go to the chapel where he heard Mass and received Holy Communion.

The Feast of Corpus Christi, the mystery of Divine love, filled his heart with boundless joy and infused vigor into his ailing body, and he wished to offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But his love had deceived him, as his strength could not withstand the demands made of it; for it was only by a heroic effort that he could stand up. After this, he would only celebrate Mass once a week. His health improved with the coming of the warmer season. On August 20, the feast of St. Bernard, early one morning he was again able to say Mass.

Surely, it was only the burning ardor of his soul that could thus overcome the weakness of his body, for as soon as Holy Mass was finished, he was not able to stand up. He spent his days, either lying on his bed or sitting in a chair in his poor cell, which was transformed into a school of virtue. The highest dignitaries and many priests came to see him. He would communicate to them his love for Jesus Crucified and would exhort them to meditate on His cruel sufferings. In these conferences, the venerable Founder seemed sometimes to forget his own pains and sufferings as his words became animated. His voice, at first weak, suddenly acquired a tone of marvelous richness.

One day the students from Propaganda College came to the Hospice and begged to be allowed to hear a few words from the lips of the saintly Founder. Paul was suffering more than usual. He sent a message to them that, unfortunately, to his great sorrow, he was not well enough to receive them. When the infirmarian told him that the students were disappointed and would have been content merely to see him, even for a moment, Paul asked for them to be brought into him, warning them, at the same time, that he was so weak that he would not be able to speak. But when he saw them around his bed, the young Levites who were destined to labor and to shed their blood for the faith, the aged missionary seemed imbued with a new vigor. His face became radiant, and, in a penetrating voice, as in the most active days of his zealous youthful apostolate, he began to discourse on the sublimity of their vocation. After he had spoken in this way for some time, he dismissed them. The students departed, their hearts enraptured by these inspiring words and prepared to endure every sacrifice to fulfill their glorious vocation.

Alone in his cell, the invalid spent the whole time in prayer and contemplation. While his eyes were fixed on the Crucifix, his mind and heart were absorbed in the sufferings of the Divine Redeemer. His soul, in its outpourings of love, allowed to escape from time to time ejaculations that were as darts of flame. When his pains

became more violent, then his colloquies with Jesus Crucified would be more affectionate and more ardent. When others had compassion on him and offered him words of encouragement, he would reply, "So great is the eternal happiness prepared and waiting for us that our earthly sufferings are as nothing." Often, too, in his excruciating pains, he would bless the Savior with transports of abounding joy. Sometimes, he would repeat the canticle of the Seraphim, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Savior'; at other times, this song of praise, 'Benediction, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, virtue, power in all ages be to our God.' Sometimes, the rays of heavenly light in his soul were dissipated by a mysterious darkness. God seemed to be so far away; God seemed to have abandoned him. Then, submitting to the Divine will, he would cry out with loving resignation, 'Treat me as you wish, O my God.' Never, never shall I cease to love You."

Yet, nothing was so edifying as his humility. One day one of his Religious urged him to recite the famous prayer of St. Martin, "My Savior, if I am again necessary for Your people, I do not refuse to labor." But Paul, seized with fear, as though assailed by a violent temptation, exclaimed, "God preserve me from thinking that I am necessary to anyone. If I thought I was necessary, the audacity of such a thought would certainly be my damnation."

Not only did he regard himself as unnecessary, but he even considered himself to be a useless member of the community and a burden upon his Religious. His concern upon this matter is revealed in his words to the Brother infirmarian, "O, what a burden I am to your community; I really feel sorry for you as I see you are always occupied with my poor self and my needs. Call the Prior of the nearest hospital, and I will beg him to admit me among the sick poor. The Brother infirmarian spoke to him and assured him that he was certainly no burden, but a consolation to every one of the community, and that each of them, at his death, would mourn bitterly over their loss. "It is your great charity, your great charity which bears with me," the Saint at once replied, "for I deserve to be abandoned like a beast of the field, like a criminal more depraved than the worst of brigands." Then, turning towards his Crucifix, he struck his breast and with profound humility said to the Brother, "Oh, dear Brother, how much, how very much I am indebted to you."

The least service done for him, he accepted as an alms and with great sentiments of confusion. He was almost unwilling to receive the charity of his religious, a charity without limits, it seemed to him. He would always say, "My dear Brother, may God repay you for your charity." He would often ask their pardon, as though it were his own fault that they had to suffer some minor inconvenience. He pleaded and begged that no unnecessary expense would be incurred on his behalf, and that, through love of poverty, he wished to die as he had lived, despoiled of everything. He could tolerate nothing which savored of luxury.

The Cardinal Vicar Colonna visited him one day and was deeply impressed by the poverty of his bed and sent him a white woolen quilt, brand new.

This gift so embarrassed Paul that he could not agree to use it. However, so as not to offend the charitable Cardinal, he allowed the Brother infirmarian to spread it upon the bed when His Eminence came to visit him. But throughout the whole time of the visit, Paul was ill at ease and felt as guilty as a criminal caught in the act of committing a serious offence. As soon as the Cardinal left the room, he ordered the unbecoming burden to be removed.

Paul was making of his infirmities an eloquent sermon and a fresh treasure of merits, when there came the day of July 31, 1773, a day on which two great victims were to be immolated to the God of Calvary: Clement XIV and the Society of Jesus. With regard to this deplorable occurrence, which the light of historical research has accentuated with its truth, we do not wish to consider anything except that which relates to Paul of the Cross.

For three long years, beneath the weight of age and infirmity, Paul, as we are to see, did not leave the precincts of the Hospice of the Holy Cross. Most certainly he was very distressed at the thunderbolt, for he loved and venerated the Society of Jesus. The Society in return loved and venerated him. This friendship we find recorded in a beautiful Greco-Latin epigraph inscribed by Father Lagomarcini, a Professor of the Roman College, in several books which he presented to Paul. As well as this, there is the memorandum written by Father John Mary of St. Ignatius, the intimate confidante and confessor of the holy Founder. In this testimony he affirms that on the subject of the suppression of the Society, which deserved so much from the Church, Paul had taken no part, nor had he given any advice, for the simple reason that his opinion had never been sought.

If we refer to this misfortune, which in its effects was so disastrous to all, it is only to recall a prophecy of Paul, which besides being worthy of narration, also attests his unchanging affection for the Society of Jesus.

In 1767, during the Pontificate of Clement XIV, Father Louis Reali, S.J., wrote to Paul and told him of the ceaseless persecutions which were raging at that time against his Institute. Paul replied, "With regard to the extreme straits to which this illustrious Society has been reduced, I can assure you that they also cause me deep grief of heart. The very thought of so many calamities makes me groan and shed bitter tears, as I see so many poor, innocent Religious persecuted with such violence, and at the same time, the devil to triumph, the greater glory of God to be diminished and so many souls to be lost, because they have been violently deprived of that spiritual nourishment which the Fathers of the Society, in every part of the world, have given them. In the face of such a tragic misfortune, I do not cease to offer special prayers to Heaven; yes, I hope that after so many fierce tempests, God, Who gives life and death, will have in mind to restore, in His own good time, the Society with greater splendor and glory. Such has always been, and such is now, the fervent desire of my heart." ("We possess," says Pere de Ravignan, who quotes this letter, "and we are fortunate to possess other testimonies that are no less explicit of the Servant of God in favor of the Society that he loved and venerated to the very end of his life; this is an authentic fact.")

These words, which later events have confirmed, were written by Paul with the clarity of a true prophet, as happened so frequently with him. One sees clearly foretold the DEATH and the RESURRECTION of the Society.

Certainly, no one at the time he wrote this could humanly foresee the one and the other, much less speak of it with such conviction. The first took place six years after the prophecy, the second forty-seven years. Then it was that from the womb of mounded ruins, under the life-giving breath of God, the Society was reborn and appeared rejuvenated and more vigorous by the persecutions that had assailed it.

When the storm burst in all its fury (We have not been able to find even one word of the Saint on this subject. He was content to praying silence for the illustrious victims and to bow before the secret designs of God. St. Alphonsus Ligouri acted in a similar

way.), the Saint was in his poor cell, His infirmities keeping him nailed to his bed. Towards the Autumn, however, he had recovered sufficient strength to walk a little, but leaning on his stick. His first outing was to the Sovereign Pontiff, who was due to leave for Castel Gandolfo. Paul arrived unexpectedly at the Apostolic Palace. The Holy Father, surprised and joyful at the sight of his venerable friend, who had been seriously ill for so long, welcomed him most affectionately. The Pontiff had celebrated Mass in his private orator and was returning to his apartments. He took Paul with him, made him sit beside him and insisted that he breakfast with him. Paul, finding himself once again in the presence of the Vicar of Christ, said to him with deep sentiments of reverence and gratitude, "Holy Father, if I am still alive, it is to Your Holiness that I attribute it. I have had great confidence in your Order which the Savior has heard." The Pope blessed the divine goodness as he learned from Paul's own lips how wonderfully he had been cured. Making a sign to Paul's companion to withdraw into an adjacent room, the Holy Father had a long and intimate conversation with Paul, which he would willingly have prolonged but, as it was the day for audiences, it was with regret that he had to send Paul away, but not before he had given him his customary signs of friendship.

Pope Clement XIV kept ever in mind the promise he had made to the Saint to give to his Congregation a monastery and church in Rome. Again, he was about to leave for Castel Gandolfo, when the Saint sent to him the Procurator General to offer his good wishes for an enjoyable vacation. In the course of the audience, His Holiness asked the Religious if it were true that Father Paul had had a brother named John, who was the faithful companion of his religious life. To the answer, yes, the Holy Father replied, "Joannes et Paulus – John and Paul." And then he lapsed into silence.

On his return from vacation, so that the Vincentian Fathers engaged in giving Spiritual exercises to the ordinands might be closer to the place of their occupation, the Holy Father made them transfer to the Novitiate of St. Andrew on Monte Cavallo.

In this very same year, on December 6, 1773, the Basilica and monastery of Sts. John and Paul were given by apostolic mandate to the Discalced Clerics of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ.

Thirty years before, 1743, Paul and Thomas Struzzieri, whose life we have recounted, were on their way to St. John Lateran. Passing by the monastery of St. Gregory, they went up the Coelian Hill. When they came to Sts. John and Paul, the holy Founder suddenly stopped and, turning towards Father Thomas, he remarked, "What is that Church? Who lives in that monastery?" To the reply of his companion, he added, "O God, my house. It is my house. There must I come; there must I live; there must I die. It was clear to Struzzieri that the Saint was in ecstasy, but he did not realize the meaning of the Saint's words.

That evening, on his way home, he questioned a priest friend, Francis Casilini, to whom Father Paul had referred. Father Casilini, after many conjectures, concluded that Father Paul was probably announcing the amalgamation of the Passionists with the Vincentians; such were the difficulties that faced Paul in founding the Congregation that the two Institutes would end by working together as one.

But after Clement XIV had granted this house to Paul, the divine inspiration of the prophecy was recognized, but especially after his death when his holy remains were laid to rest in the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul. In spite of the heavenly revelation, Paul never made any attempt to obtain the monastery; he did not even speak of it to the Holy Father. He thought of it only when the Pope promised him a Retreat in Rome.

The Saint did not delay in expressing his grateful appreciation. "I rejoice in God that Your Holiness has founded in the Metropolis of the world a place where continual remembrance will be made of the Passion of our Redeemer. This foundation will be for the whole Church an everlasting monument of the piety and zeal with which Your Holiness has imparted devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, that all may practice until the end of time." Having spoken thus, and despite his sufferings, he will force himself to celebrate holy Mass each morning, and so he adds, "Apart from the prayers which I offer night and day to the Most High for Your Holiness, I also remember you at the altar, and it seems to me with far more efficacy. It is at the moment when I allow the sacred particle to fall into the chalice that I place the loving and devoted heart of Your Holiness in the Precious Blood of the Redeemer. I earnestly desire that it be penetrated with the Divine Blood so as to produce more abundant fruits of eternal life among the faithful of Jesus Christ."

"More than ever before, I feel myself animated with the utmost confidence, and it is a very great consolation for my poor heart that the Most High will place His protecting arms around Your Holiness, and that the Blessed Virgin will ever hold you close to her immaculate and maternal heart."

These last words are striking. We shall see how the continual and fervent prayers of Paul of the Cross were heard.

The Pope was, according to the opinion of all, "sweet and conciliating in temperament," but the fury of the storms unleashed during his tormented pontificate will, nevertheless, precipitate him into an early tomb. Yet, during his last agony an extraordinary protection of God will be visibly apparent,

The holy Founder was preparing to transfer the little community from the Hospice of the Holy Cross to the new house of Sts. John and Paul. Cardinal Boschi, its titular protector, was delighted to install the Saint and prepared for him the highest honors. On December 10, he sent to the Hospice two of his most elaborate carriages and servants in handsome livery with the order that Father Paul was to make use of them to travel to the new house to take possession. The humble Founder could not resign himself to this ceremonial procession, but obedience had commanded him. All along the way, accompanied by his Religious, as he praised and thanked the Savior, the tears flowed freely from his eyes. Let us also follow him, let us ascend with him the Coelian Hill and enter this magnificent Basilica, which demands a twofold respect for we walk upon ground reddened with the blood of the martyrs.

The first act of Paul, in setting foot within the hallowed sanctuary, was a hymn of thanksgiving and of love. Prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, he adored God with sweet effusions of soul and venerated the relics of the holy martyrs. That same evening, Paul and the Religious of the Passion began in that holy place the everlasting chant, by day and by night, to which the choir of angels respond,

We think that it would not be uninteresting to the reader to be made more fully acquainted with this new abode of the Saint, which will be sanctified by the last years of his life, where his mortal remains will be venerated at his own altar, and which will also be the Thabor of his immortal transfiguration.

"The ancient Basilica is dedicated to the holy martyrs John and Paul, two brothers, officers of the court of Constance, the daughter of Constantine the Great. In vain did Julian the Apostate urge them to abjure the faith of Jesus Christ, and so he had them scourged secretly within their own house. In the fourth century, St. Pammachius, a

Roman Senator of the family of Gracchi and of the Scipios, converted the house into a church and founded nearby a monastery under the rule of St. Pachomius. After the death of his wife, Pauline, the spiritual daughter of St. Paul, he himself withdrew there. The noble Senator became a humble monk and, after a saintly life, his body was laid to rest beside the tomb of the holy martyrs John and Paul.

This Basilica, where St. Gregory preached one of his homilies, is massive and magnificent. It has three naves and priceless pavements. Its mosaics, its paintings by Pomerancio, its lofty granite columns, its porphyry lions, its white monumental marble where, in the company of the saints, cardinals, bishops and priests and distinguished persons all sleep their last sleep, add an impressive splendor. Towards the center of the Basilica, an inscription engraved in marble and surrounded by an iron railing, indicates the place where the holy martyrs shed their blood. Their relics rest beneath the high altar, and a handsome porphyry sarcophagus contains this precious treasure.

In the chapel to the left we have seen each day at the great centenary celebrations, on the occasion of the Canonizations, throngs of pilgrims from every part of the world and of every rank, from the humble peasant or the simple woman of the Roman Campagna, the Marches, Umbria or Naples, even to noble lords and ladies, priests, bishops and cardinals, there have we seen them, I repeat, kneeling before the precious relics of a poor Religious which they venerate within a crystal tomb, in the Passionist habit with the crucifix on his breast, the holy Rule in his hands, fervently and confidently invoking the name 'Paul of the Cross'.

How happy we are to see there in particular our own priests, bishops and cardinals from France. Several of them, with touching solicitude, expressed to us their desire to have in their Dioceses the sons of St. Paul of the Cross.

The Monastery itself, with its impressive and imposing appearance, presents to the eye a stately charm that harmonizes with and fosters prayer and silence. It usually contains eighty Religious. One wing is set apart for retreatants, where clerics and laymen may withdraw from the world. Beneath the large expanse of garden, is an ancient 'vivarium', or cave, hewn out of rock 'that used to house the wild beasts destined for the combats in the amphitheater and with subterranean tunnels leading to the Coliseum.

"Beneath this formidable grotto," according to a pious pilgrim, "are the prisons reserved for Christians and malefactors, whose punishments and death served as an amusement for the Roman people. I can think of nothing as frightening as the very atmosphere of this place, as one follows the flickering flame of the 'cicerone' as he guides and directs sightseers. The natural horror, which these sights arouse, makes one recall to mind the atrocities which characterized the last days of Paganism. And yet one knows that a similar civilization exists in our own day, that it has its own defenders and admirers." ("Impressions and Recollections" by Belamy)

From this monastery garden, one beholds one of the most beautiful, and at the same time, the most saintly panoramas of the world; quite near us is the Coliseum, the Forum, the Capitol, the innumerable Basilicas with their resplendent cupolas, and dominating them all, St. Peter's. All Rome lays before our gaze. From here one can see the Roman Campagna, in which the heights of Monte Cavo have already been described, and where our Monastery, appearing like a snowflake, seems to be lost in the heavens.



## **CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN**

### **THE SAINT GOVERNS THE INSTITUTE WITH A RENEWED ZEAL - PAPAL AUDIENCE - THE HOLY FATHER VISITS HIM - DEATH OF CLEMENT XIV - THE SAINT PREDICTS THE SUCCESSOR AND THE SUFFERINGS OF HIS PONTIFICATE - PIUS VI IN THE SAINT'S CELL - THE VIRGIN OF CERVERTERI - GENERAL CHAPTER - LAST REVISION OF THE RULE - PIUS VI CONFIRMS THE RULE**

**1773 - 1775**

Within the temple of an ageing mortal body, the soul of Paul of the Cross retains a perpetual youthful vigor. Transplanted into these new sanctuaries of the Savior, he flourished like the desert palm and multiplied like the cedars of Lebanon that raise their lofty heads towards the heaven, fill the air with fragrance and bring forth new fruit. Paul goes to impress on the new foundation, Sts. John and Paul, his own spirit of and love for the regular observance, of which we ourselves have personally experienced the efficacious power. He will be the model, the exemplar, of the entire community. There, amongst the Religious, whose lives have edified us so greatly, I seemed to see the Saint, I seemed to hear his voice, I seemed to perceive his presence within that hallowed Retreat, sanctified by his life and by his death.

Thirty Religious were installed in this new Retreat. And the last years of the holy Founder in this Retreat would be, as were the earlier ones, fruitful. As the hour of his eternal union with Jesus Christ approached, so much the more with renewed zeal he labored to establish his sons of the Passion in an exact observance, in a spirit of fervors; this would be the legacy that he would bequeath to them with his dying breath.

He chose for himself the smallest and the most uncomfortable cell, but one that was near the Blessed Sacrament. The entreaties of his children and the orders of Cardinal Palotta forced him to occupy another, which also was adjacent to the Church, but more comfortable and spacious.

According to his custom, he went at Christmas to visit the Supreme Pontiff, and this audience was as affectionate and as intimate as always. He sang Midnight Mass with such devotion that his eyes were filled with tears. He wished to say Mass again on the feast of the Epiphany, 1774, but as he was not able to manage the stairs, he had to be carried in an arm chair. He would go to the Church to visit the Blessed Sacrament, or to the sacristy to hold conferences with saintly souls, and to the other floors of the monastery to visit the sick. But the greater part of the time he remained in his cell, either praying or dictating letters to his secretary or he would call the Religious, individually or all together, and appoint them to their various duties. The conferences he gave to his Religious were redolent of heavenly unction as he exhorted them to become men of prayer and faithful and loyal servants of God.

Holy Week was approaching. This was the time when he placed no restraint whatsoever upon his burning devotion to the Passion of Christ.

He wished to celebrate the Mass of Holy Thursday and, for the last time, to give Holy Communion to his children. In the morning he delivered a 'fervorino' to the community on the love of Jesus in instituting the Blessed Eucharist. He concluded the discourse on the love and reverence that should accompany the celebration of the sacred ceremonies, which he called the obsequies of the Redeemer. The holy Founder spoke with such tenderness that his hearers shed tears. He besought them, then, to ask

pardon of one another, so that charity might fuse all into one heart in Christ Jesus. He himself was the first to make this act of humility. "This morning, my beloved sons, is the feast of love." Then sobs stifled his voice. "Oh, how many times," he began again, "have I, an unworthy priest, been nourished with the immaculate flesh of my Jesus, and yet I have never corresponded with so great a gift, never have I performed a good work. I have always been guilty of the basest ingratitude? Within the house, and without, I have given only scandal. That is why I humbly beg pardon, first from God and then from the Fathers Consultor, from the Rectors, the priests, students, brothers and servants. I beg pardon of the air I breathe and of the earth which sustains me. I beg pardon from all for the bad example I have given. This is not my only intention. Pardon me, each one of you, my brothers. This morning during Mass, I shall place all of your hearts in the Precious Blood of Christ and beg that at Holy Communion each of you will pray for me and for my poor soul,"

Only a saint could speak like this! What humility! What a touching scene! On the one hand, the tears and sobs of his children, who could not restrain their emotion, and, on the other, the humility of the Father and Founder, who had given them this heroic example.

Paul was then carried to the sacristy, where he vested for Mass. Supported on the arms of the deacon and sub-deacon, rather strengthened by the fervor of his own soul, he approached the altar. His face was radiant with an aureola of sanctity that all could not help but see. He wept throughout the whole time of Mass. During the procession to the altar of repose and the placing of the Blessed Sacrament in the sepulcher, the tears, that he had tried in vain to restrain, were now allowed to flow freely, and his heart seemed to dissolve with love and compassion for his Lord and Master. In order that the vestments might not be ruined by his abundant tears, he made one of his Religious dry them with a white cloth. At this moving spectacle the sacred ministers, the Religious, the congregation all wept with him.

During the sunny days of May, Paul was able to have an audience with the Sovereign Pontiff. Shortly after this, the Holy Father announced the day of his visit, the feast of the patron saints of the Basilica, John and Paul, June 26. Paul, in a spirit of faith, prepared for the arrival of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

After venerating in the Church the tomb of the holy martyrs, the Pope entered the monastery. The venerable Founder, as though he had seen Jesus Christ Himself, revealed his happiness of soul by his usual faith and piety, exclaiming, "This day has salvation come to this house."

The Sovereign Pontiff entered the room where a throne had been erected. Many dignitaries and ecclesiastics, as well as seculars, paid homage to him. Then he withdrew to the cell of the holy Founder where they remained together for a long time.

What transpired during this private interview? We know only that our Saint, doubtless under heavenly inspiration, spoke of God and of His infinite bounty in such a way that the Pontiff, with head bowed and arms crossed upon his breast, listened as though God Himself were speaking to him. The Holy Father appeared joyful and divinely consoled. At the coming of evening, it was necessary for the Pope to withdraw from such sweet communications. Leaving the cell, His Holiness deigned to give testimony to the joy of his soul, saying, "This is a holy house; this is a house chosen for the true servants of God."

This was the last earthly meeting of Pope Clement XIV and the Founder, Paul of

the Cross.

The health of the Pontiff, for whom the triple tiara was a crown of thorns and the Papal throne a cross, was grievously troubled. The violent and relentless persecutions of kings and princes had not only afflicted him in soul but also in body. On September 10, his condition was diagnosed as hopeless.

At this news, Paul would willingly have raced to the bedside of him whom he loved tenderly, but a serious relapse revived all his infirmities. In his distress of heart, he could only offer to Heaven his prayers and his tears for the dying Pontiff, fruitful tears and powerful prayers that ascended to the throne of God. Paul, as we have already related, had assured the Holy Father that the Savior would protect him, and that the Blessed Virgin would press him to her maternal heart. In order to soothe and console His Vicar in his last agony, God sent one of the great saints and devoted servants of His heavenly reign, St. Alphonsus Ligouri (St. Alphonsus, by a miracle attested by the. Processes of canonization, assisted the last moments of Clement XIV, although he was at least a hundred miles away.)

The Holy Father, resigned to his sufferings and his approaching death, received the last Sacraments and responded to the prayers for the dying. Pope Clement XIV, on the morning of September 22, 1774, between the hours of eight and nine, gave forth his soul to God.

The memory of this saintly Pontiff will be eternally cherished by the humble Institute of the Passion, which he loved with the most devoted affection, and which he firmly established in the Church by his Apostolic authority.

Paul was truly inconsolable, for his grief was in proportion to his love for the Holy Father. By his unceasing tears and his constant prayers, he pleaded with God for the eternal repose of this just and blessed soul. He immediately sent circular letters to each of the Retreats of the Congregation, ordering that the funeral obsequies be celebrated with all possible solemnity. As for himself, throughout the whole time of the Office and the Mass of the Dead in the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul, grief-stricken, he sat in his arm chair, at the foot of the catafalque, appearing like an orphan sorrowing for the loss of the most devoted and loving of Fathers.

When he was in his cell, he did not wish to receive anyone, not even a priest friend, saying that this was not the time to talk but the time to pray and weep. Never did he cease to make his prayers more efficacious by the abundance of his tears.

But a sudden transformation took place in him. His tears ceased to flow, and the face that had portrayed such sorrow and grief now became radiant with joy and happiness. "Today is a feast day," he exclaimed. "Today is a feast day." Then, turning to his secretary, who was alone with him while the community was in the refectory, he added, "Go and tell Father Rector to have another pittance served." From these words, from this sudden change one feels sure that God had consoled his servant by revealing to him the glory bestowed upon the dearly loved Pontiff. There can be no doubt about it, for in similar circumstances, when assured that a soul had taken its place in the ranks of the blessed in Heaven, he used the expression, "Today, yes today, there is a great feast in Heaven."

We have seen how the life of Paul was always intimately associated with the life of the Church, sorrowing when she sorrowed and rejoicing when she rejoiced. He saw the Church always being outraged as he perceived the ever rising flood of impiety. How

necessary it was, in these lamentable times of tempests, for a capable, strong and saintly pilot to guide the Barque of Peter. Paul would pray by day and by night and beseech his sons to pray that God would send such a Pontiff. God was soon to give him a revelation as to the successor of the deceased Vicar of Christ.

During the time of the Conclave, Paul often asked Signor Frattini, with special interest, for news of John Angelo Cardinal Braschi. The reply he received afforded him unbounded joy. Frattini had, for a long time, been closely associated with the Cardinal, and, as Paul had never asked a like question, naturally he was very surprised. His amazement was greatest, however, when one day the holy Founder said, "This morning, when saying Mass, I put the heart of Cardinal Braschi in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. May God bless him. Oh, what a tumult there was in the Precious Blood. What a tumult!" How this one prophetic word depicts the reign of the successor of Pope Clement XIV. The devastation throughout Europe, the bloody and sacrilegious ruins left in the wake of the French Revolutions: monasteries destroyed, churches profaned, thrones overturned, heads of Kings and Queens, and victims without number, rolling from the guillotine, and last, but not least, this Pontiff in his turn leaving one prison for another until he died an exile. Never was there a reign so full of terror and tragedy. Later, we shall hear a more explicit prophecy from the lips of Paul on this very subject.

Frattini did not understand all this at the time, but he realized that the words of Paul had been spoken under divine inspiration, when on February 15, 1775, Cardinal Braschi became Pope Pius VI.

This name, while arousing sympathy and compassion at the same time, recalls one of the holiest, greatest and noblest of the Pontiffs. This election filled Paul's heart with joy, and revealed once again how God had manifested to him the interior beauty of noble souls.

Pope Pius VI accepted, as an inheritance from Clement XIV, a precious legacy - his affection for the holy Founder and his humble Congregation of the Passion. It seemed as though he was impatient to give Paul and his sons exceptional proofs of it. One of the first visits he made was to Paul of the Cross.

On March 5, 1775, the first Sunday of Lent, after a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul, Pius VI went to the cell of the holy Founder. Paul was notified that the Pope was on his way to see him. Compelled by weakness to remain in bed, he was very distressed. "Imagine, just imagine the Vicar of Jesus Christ," he exclaimed, "coming to visit the lowliest and the least member of the Catholic Church." As soon as he saw the Pope enter his cell, his tears flowed abundantly, and uncovering his head, he spoke in a tone which faith alone can inspire, "To think that your Holiness has deigned to come to the least creature of holy Church, to a poor wretch, to a poor sinner such as I am."

The humility in words and in action of Paul of the Cross deeply moved the Pope, who kissed him on the forehead and told him to put on his berettino. But seeing that Paul could not bring himself to do so, the Holy Father graciously took the cap into his own hands, kissed it and placed it on the Founder's head. Paul, out of reverence for the Pope, removed it again, but the Pope once more put it on his head with touching insistence, "Holy Father," Paul said, "when your predecessor of holy memory died, I grieved bitterly over my loss, for I believed myself to be an orphan. But now I am no longer an orphan; I have a Father, and what a kind and loving Father."

Those who were present at this touching and affectionate meeting could not

restrain their tears.

“A perfect example,” writes St. Vincent Strambi, who was among those present, “a perfect example of graciousness, of charity and of humility that was truly worthy of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who was the most gracious, the most humble and the most lovable and loving of all men.”

The Sovereign Pontiff remained in the cell for almost a quarter of an hour, standing the whole time, deriving an inexpressible joy from the Saint’s conversation. He invited Paul to recur to him in all circumstances and appointed as intermediary, Frattini, present at the interview, and already named “Master of the Household.” Paul expressed his deep regret that he could not bow down to kiss the foot of the representative of Jesus Christ. The Pope, wishing to give him this consolation, leant against the wall and raised his foot on to the bed. Paul, with burning faith and ardent piety, kissed it. The Holy Father, on leaving, expressed his amazement at the keenness of mind of the aged Founder. His emotion at this visit would have been even more noticeable had he known that this was the last time he would see him alive,

Let us relate another visit, interesting and charming, undoubtedly arranged by God, to reveal to us yet another aspect of the soul of Paul, which became more illuminated the nearer it approached the brightness of eternal glory.

A holy virgin of Cerveteri, beloved of Jesus Christ, called Rosa Calabresi, at the age of eighteen felt herself called by God to a life of perfection. As she realized only too well that she could not attain the heights of perfection without an experienced spiritual director, she asked God to provide one for her. Father Paul of the Cross came to her mind. Although she had never seen him, yet she had heard many reports of the ardor of his zeal and the fire of his charity. With confidence she wrote to him concerning the state of her soul and asked him to be her spiritual director.

Paul willingly accepted. Soon he had guided her through the various degrees of prayer and contemplation to the heights of mystical union with God. Letters passed regularly between them, but as these were a testimony to her virtuous life and the heavenly gifts she had received from God, Rosa burnt them. During the ten years that the correspondence lasted, Paul never saw Rosa, yet he had perfect knowledge of her soul for an interior light revealed to him its most secret movements.

Shortly after placing herself under the direction of the holy Founder, Rosa was seized with grave fears for her eternal salvation, and in order to regain peace of mind she prepared to make a general confession. But she could not make up her mind to entrust to others her interior distress of soul. It was while she was a victim to these anxieties that she received a letter from her director, Paul, that brought her light and peace, “Foolish little one of Jesus Christ, fear not. Cast aside from this moment the idea of a general confession.”

On another occasion, a Passionist missionary, a great servant of God, was preaching at Trevignano, not far distant from where Rosa lived. She wished to go and hear the preacher, but her brothers would not permit it, so that Rosa was sad and disappointed. Paul knew of her sorrow by divine revelation. “How much more profitable it would be,” he wrote to her, “if you were to spend in prayer the hours you waste in useless weeping.”

Another time she had already written four letters to Paul without mentioning a scruple that tormented her. He reproved her, “It is about time that you told me you are

worried. Why do you keep it hidden in your heart? It is so necessary to calm you in good time.” And making known clearly to her the cause of her anxieties, which was the devil, he bade her to remain in the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of Lent, 1775, this spiritual daughter of Paul of the Cross came to Rome to see and speak with her spiritual director. But at this time the venerable Founder, as well as the burdens of bodily infirmities, had the added burden of desolation of soul to which we have so often referred. When he was told that Rosa was waiting in the Church to see him, he replied that though he wished to see her, yet his infirmities would not allow it. Not long after this Rosa called again. This time Paul was able to have himself brought in his wheel chair to the sacristy. There, they spoke for a long time of God’s gifts to the soul and of the soul’s response to these gifts. These spiritual conferences were held almost daily for six weeks, that is, during the whole time that Rosa was in Rome.

Paul, as we have said, had become deaf, but during these holy conversations he heard perfectly. Rosa astonished him by asking for an explanation. “My daughter,” he answered, “I am deaf, it is true, but I am able to hear when the things of God are spoken of. The reason is quite simple: God allows me to hear them.”

To spur each other on to glorify God, each told of the graces received. Paul was impelled by divine grace to speak and to reveal with candid simplicity. In a similar way to the great Bishop of Geneva, who revealed to Jane Frances de Chantal God’s operation in the soul, Paul told Rosa that God obliged him to make this intimate disclosure.

Paul also told Rosa of his interior desolations, and, like one asking advice, would say, “How does it seem to you, my daughter?” With great sighs, he would then exclaims, “Oh, what a fearful state I am in, after having tasted the consolations of God. My daughter, who knows if you will find me here tomorrow, for I fear that God may command the earth to open and to swallow me.” Then, he earnestly recommended himself to her prayers.

Rosa, admitted into the secrets of God, assured Paul that he was walking along the path that leads to Heaven, especially as he shared in the desolation of Calvary.

Paul and Rosa mutually encouraged each other to an ever increasing love of God. Their heavenly conversations, like fragrant incense, ascended to the throne of God, who deigned to honor them with His visible presence and by extraordinary favors.

We cannot but be affected by this scene, nor raise our hearts to God in thanksgiving. We seem to see two seraphim rejoicing in the glories of divine love. Let us also admire the secret designs of divine Providence which revealed to us, by this means, prodigies of grace in Paul, which we may not have otherwise known.

The holy confidante, after the death of Paul, would be capable of giving authentic testimony for the glorification of her spiritual Father because of these revelations. Because of the many divine manifestations that Rosa witnessed, we will not relate them here but in the following chapter. There, we shall see the last splendor of that sun, more radiant than ever, that sun which so soon will plunge into the ocean of eternity, there to shine with a new and everlasting brilliance.

Paul seemed to be overcoming both age and infirmity, and his zeal seems as admirable as in the most fruitful days of his apostolate. Until the very end of his life, he devoted himself to his Congregation and neglected nothing that would secure the exact

observance of the Rules. When Clement XIV had approved them, the Founder had begged His Holiness to grant, in the Bull of approbation, the authority to introduce the modifications which time and experience might deem necessary. So, he began to revise the Rules. He meditated on each part, begging by day and by night the light of the Savior, the intercession of the Saints, especially the Founders of Orders, and sought advice, also, from the older Religious.

Soon, he would convoke a General Chapter. Paul, seeing the day drawing near when he must leave his children and fly to the bosom of God, summoned not only the Capitular Fathers but all the Superiors of the Congregation. His intention was to bequeath to them his last recommendations for the wise government of the Institute, to consult them on the modifications to be made to the Holy Rule and to define permanently the extent of the observance. He wished that it could be justly said after his death to anybody who would wish to change them, "Transgress not the ancient limits imposed by your Fathers" (Proverbs xxii, 28).

Before the Chapter opened, he had a conference with each Religious, and, like a loving Father, gave them suitable advice, recommending especially to the Rectors of the various houses charity towards their subjects and diligence in exhorting them to attain religious perfection. He advised the Capitular Fathers to pray to God for light in the choice of a Superior General, who would govern the Congregation with wisdom and holiness.

The holy Founder could not be re-elected; he had already held office for that length of time prescribed by Rule. This knowledge filled him with great joy, because now he would at last have time to himself in which to prepare his soul to face God in judgment. When he learned that permission had been obtained by Apostolic indult to confirm him in office, he hastened to express his unworthiness and his incapability. He presented an exaggerated picture of his defects and miseries, adding that he thought that in conscience he could not be accepted. As he had never relied on his own judgment, so in this matter he consulted his director, who, to pacify him, wisely said that, should he be confirmed in office, he should candidly put forward his reasons for not accepting and then leave the decision to the Capitular Fathers, whose judgment would be for him the expression of God's will. The humble Founder submitted with the docility of a child and was guided in all matters by the opinion of his confessor.

The Fathers assembled for the opening of the Chapter. Then, the holy Founder, seated in a chair, was carried in with a rope around his neck as though he had deserved the gallows. He made culpa with touching humility, accusing himself of his negligence in governing the Congregation and begged from Almighty God and the Fathers forgiveness and a penance.

At the sight of the saintly Founder accusing himself like a notorious criminal, he, whose virtues astonished the world, the Fathers could not suppress their tears. When the votes were counted, Paul was found to have been unanimously re-elected. At this announcement, he could not but be shocked. He begged them to deliver him from such a responsibility, saying in all sincerity that he did not believe he could in conscience accept the office because of his lack of ability. The Fathers replied with filial respect and reverence that it was their belief that not only could they in conscience vote for him but that he could accept their choice. Paul, fearing to oppose the will of God, submitted.

The joyful ringing of the bells announced the election. The community, happy at having their beloved Father as Superior General of the Institute, assembled in the

chapter room. The holy Founder then delivered a moving discourse, beginning with these words, "My dear brothers, I deplore your misfortune." He developed this idea in accents of profound humility. Then, when the Fathers came in turn to make their obeisance, on their knees before him, and to promise their respect and obedience, he embraced them affectionately and, then, gave them his paternal blessing.

After the General Chapter had closed, he re-assembled all the Fathers and proposed to them the revision of the Rule, recommending some suitable modifications. In special assemblies each morning and evening, the holy Founder consulted them, proposing his own suggestions and listening to those made by the other Fathers. Although his strength was failing, he bore the fatigue for the good of his sons and of the Congregation.

When the work was finished, he warmly exhorted all the Religious to maintain peace and charity among themselves and to preserve as a treasure interior recollection. He recommended the Superiors to correct subjects only from a right motive, with a calm mind and a tranquil heart, inclining more towards leniency than to severity.

Paul, then, closed this General Chapter, which would never assemble again during his lifetime. His last word to the assembled Fathers had thus been that of the Divine Master to His apostles - CHARITY.

When those Religious, deputed by the holy Founder with the consent of the Chapter, had completed the revision of the Rules, he presented them to the Sovereign Pontiff, begging him to deign to sanction the modifications with his Apostolic authority.

The Holy Father, delighted to have an opportunity to show his paternal affection for the Institute of the Passion and, desiring that the Founder should have this consolation before his death, entrusted the examination of the Rules to Cardinals Delle Lanze and de Zelada with the injunction to examine them without delay.

As soon as a favorable judgment was passed upon them, the Holy Father published a Bull in which, while mentioning the Apostolic letters of approbation of his predecessors, Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, he confirms the said Rules, word for word, in their entirety, approving, too, of the changes in them. Moreover, he enriches with new graces and privileges the same Congregation of the Passion.

This precious Bull - 'Praeclara virtutum exempla' - was signed by the Vicar of Jesus Christ, Pius VI, at St. Mary Major's, on September 15, 1775, the first year of his glorious Pontificate.



## **CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT**

### **PORTRAIT OF THE SAINT - LAST TRANSFIGURATION**

**1775**

Alas! Soon our beloved Father is to be torn from us. Every sign points to it. Heaven so attracted him that his soul lived only in the high regions of contemplation. Soon, we will be orphans. Ah, as desolate children give one last lingering look at their dying Father to engrave his cherished features on their heart forever, so let us contemplate for the last time this majestic figure, the soul of this Saint, who is soon to go to add to the glory of Paradise.

First of all, one experienced an indefinable charm to find united in him the finest gifts of nature with the most eminent gifts of grace. Divine Providence had bestowed on him those qualities of soul and body in great abundance.

Grave, majestic and in command of every situation, he inspired confidence and commanded respect. The saintly appearance of him drew one nearer to God. God emanated from his whole being like a sweet odor of holiness, exciting devotion in hearts. All his traits harmonized perfectly - a fine physique, a robust constitution, an exquisite sensibility; his manner of acting was full of dignity and graciousness; his forehead was high and wide; his face was honest, straight-forward and frank; his eyes were bright and penetrating, normally revealing gentleness and benevolence, but when he was preaching, they became as pools of fire that struck fear into the hearts of his listeners; his was a compassionate voice, sonorous and resonant; his gait neither hurried nor slow, but full of relaxed ease and constrained vigor. His was an ardent, a noble soul; his mind clear, his intelligence vast and deep, his memory retentive, his will resolute and constant; his heart was easily moved, a noble and generous heart, as chivalrous as the knights of old. When Pope Clement XIV, who was a Cardinal at the time, saw him for the first time, he was impressed by his resemblance to these former nobles and from that time manifested a kindly affection for him. "Surely," the Cardinal said to himself, "I have found in Father Paul of the Cross a man of ancient stature."

It was easy to see, then, that he belonged in the family of great souls. The Church, also, such an infallible and trustworthy judge, has placed him in the metropolis of the universe in the class of those monastic legislators on whose brows genius blends its own particular luster with all the splendors of sanctity: the Eliases, the Teresas, the Benedicts, the Dominics, the Francises of Assisi, the Ignatiuses and others. (In the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, statues in white marble of the Founders of Religious Orders are erected.)

Vivacity and patience, strength and gentleness, prudence and simplicity, in a word, all the contrary virtues were united in an eminent degree in Saint Paul of the Cross.

Thus had God prepared this chosen soul for the mission which one day he would entrust to him. What qualities would be necessary for one to be a Founder, especially at a time of fierce, unleashed hostility and open diabolical warfare against all Religious Orders? A resolute and courageous soul, which nothing can discourage nor impede, neither the difficulties of the undertaking, nor the fierceness of the incessant combats which must he faced, nor the passing of time before results can be achieved. The life of Paul of the Cross is a continual effulgence of the most heroic virtues. We have watched this beautiful star since its rise first cast a brilliant luster and glow ever more brilliantly

without eclipse or intermission. We are now going to describe some scattered rays of his manly virtues.

His faith was the faith which Jesus Christ demanded in the Gospel: a firm, unassailable faith which knows no hesitation. This was the secret of his power over the souls of men and over the devils themselves. This was the lever with which he raised the world and induced God to work miracles. Often, one heard him give vent to his holy envy of the martyrs. Oh, how he would have wished, like them, to seal his faith with his blood. Everything about him, his words, his deeds and his life was rooted in faith, in pure faith, in naked faith. "Live by faith," was one of his most cherished maxims. "Oh, how I love those souls who walk in pure faith and in an entire abandonment in the hands of God,"

Through this spirit of faith, he lived always with his heart longing for Heaven, looking upon himself as an exile upon earth. One day, when conversing with his Religious, suddenly he was enlivened by a heavenly flame and cried out, "I cannot understand how it is possible not to think of God every moment of every day." At the same time he seized the hand of one of his Religious and said to him, "This is your body, is it not? These hands, arms, sinews are yours, are they not? Yes, without a doubt, since they are united to your body. Well, then it is more certain that God lives in us than that these arms are yours. That God lives in us is taught by faith, which is infallible. But, that these arms are yours, that is possible to be false, for the sense of touch can deceive us." At other times he would say, "You are the temples of the living God. Visit often the interior sanctuary and see that the lamps there are kept burning." He meant by these lamps the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Again, he would say with a smile, "Live in your cell." Or he would ask this question, "How do you get on in your cell?" And if one said that they did not understand, he would add, "Your cell is your heart. It is your soul, the temple of the living God where you live by faith. He would also say, "By constantly recalling to mind the presence of God, you can pray twenty-four hours a day."

Everything in creation, as we have already seen, raised his heart to God. Before the Rule was approved, he always went bare-headed out of reverence for the infinite majesty of God. After the Pope had imposed the use of a hat, if he was speaking to persons of piety, he would uncover his head because he considered them as living temples of the Holy Spirit.

He watched with exacting care over the orthodox teaching in the schools of the Congregation. When the tract on Predestination was being studied, he expressed his solicitude more than ever. "He would often come to ask us about this tract," said a Religious, "fearing lest we would fall into the subtleties which are in any way opposed to orthodox teaching." "I know certain students," he would say, "who, while studying this tract, became very fearful and full of doubts. They came to me as they were considerably worried, and I said to them, 'Qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam aeternam; qui vero mala, in ignem aeternam; haec est fides catholica - Those who do good shall enter eternal life; those who do evil shall suffer eternal fires; such is the Catholic Faith (Athanasian Creed). By these words you can dispel, as they did, every fear and doubt. In order to protect his Religious from suspect doctrines, he made the teachings of the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, a point of Rule and an article of his testament, recommending to his sons never to depart from the great master, St. Thomas.

Since the cruel trials of his youth had tested his faith, the victory had left in his

mind only light without shadow, as they say. From this came the respect, the love which he bore in such a high degree towards the Holy, Catholic Church, and towards its visible Head, the Vicar of Jesus Christ. By a special disposition of Providence, the Sovereign Pontiffs always showed him many kindnesses. He also offered fervent prayers to heaven for them; he ordered that each evening in the Congregation there should be recited for the Holy Father the Litany of the Saints with the prayer for the Pope. When he intended to say that word, he always inclined his head, recollected himself, and would say, "You speak of the Pope, that is to say, the Vicar of Jesus Christ." He was strongly convinced of the singular efficacy of the prayers of the Sovereign Pontiff in obtaining favors and graces from the throne of divine mercy. "Oh, how efficacious must such prayers be before God!" he would cry out. Let us listen to his cries of grief at the sight of the persecutions which the Church suffered then, as alas she does today. With the indignation of a son who sees his Mother outraged, he would tearfully exclaim, "Oh, how keenly I feel the adversities of the Church, our Mother. Oh, how cruelly do her tribulations pierce my heart. Yes, for it is my glory to be a true child of Holy Church. A thorn, yet more, a crown of thorns pierce my heart when I learn such distressing news. But I have great confidence that God will remedy that by humiliating those ungrateful sons who afflict her." The cause of the scourges, with which the divine justice strikes the world, he found in the sacrileges which men offer to the Spouse of Jesus Christ, and he adjoined this prophetic phrase, "Please God, may the chastisement go no further."

Paul united to the liveliness of his faith a generosity that was ever ready to make sacrifices. "Be magnanimous, my well beloved sons," he wrote to his Religious, "and bear in mind that we must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Crucified."

This austerity of faith clothed itself in a naive and tender simplicity which was allowed to burst forth freely during the celebration of the holy mysteries,

On Christmas Eve, he used to sing the Martyrology, and his voice would be choked by his tears. That night, before Matins, accompanied by the community bearing lighted candles, he would intone a hymn and lead a procession through the whole Retreat, carrying the Infant Jesus in a crib. He loved to contemplate the Omnipotence, the Goodness and the Wisdom of God wrapped in swaddling clothes. His tears, his spirit of recollection, his faith and his love would invite all his Religious to forget all else in order to absorb themselves in this touching mystery. He wrote, "A Child who is God! A God wrapped in swaddling clothes! A God on a handful of straw between two beasts of burden! Who shall refuse to humiliate himself? Who shall refuse to lower himself below all creation for the love of God? Who shall have the audacity to complain? Who will not remain silent interiorly and exteriorly during his sufferings?"

The greatest thought, the all-embracing, unique motive which penetrated, enlivened and absorbed the entire life of Paul of the Cross, which preserved the fragrance of innocence in his soul until his death, which made fruitful the labors of his apostolate, which sustained his austerities in the cloister and in the world, that which finally would consecrate his last sigh in giving to his soul the transfiguration of Heaven, was the thought of the PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST. Shall we return to this subject? We are far from having exhausted it; that would take volumes. But we shall include everything in a few thoughts. We shall show that the life of Paul of the Cross offers us one of the most vivid images of Jesus Crucified with His anguish and His sadness, His scourging and His crowning with thorns, His gall and vinegar, the fury of men and the rage of devils, the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and the terrible desolation of Calvary, and the piercing of the Sacred Side. To form in himself this divine

resemblance, Paul endured all his sorrows, sustained all his labors with a love that was always stronger than suffering or sorrow. "I remember," says one witness, "that, astonished by his way of life, I said to Father Paul, 'How did you bear such austerity?' "God has suffered so much for me," he replied. "Is it too much that I should do something for love of Him in return?"

The Passion of Jesus Christ he found again in the Blessed Eucharist which perpetuates the sufferings of the Passion down through the centuries, in every place. His visits to the Blessed Sacrament were very frequent; he would have wished to spend his life in adoration before the tabernacle, as the angels in heaven before the throne of God, or to consume himself, out of love, as does the flickering lamp in the sanctuary. In his old age, he would drag himself there often. During the Forty Hours devotions at Sts. John and Paul, he would have himself carried to the tribune in the morning and he would command that he be locked in, and that he be not disturbed for any reason whatsoever. On one occasion, when a person of distinction asked to see him, the Brother Porter ventured to open the door of the tribune to speak with him. Paul said to him, "This is not the time to be speaking to creatures when the Master of the house, the Lord of Lords, the Sovereign of the world, remains on His throne." By the movements of his heart and by a secret attraction, he would discern where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. If appearances deceived his companion, Paul would then enlighten him.

Once, a thief, who had committed a sacrilege, came to him to return a consecrated host. At the same time as the Saint felt the presence of his God, Jesus seemed to thrill with consolation in the hands of his faithful servant. Every Holy Thursday he would keep the key of the holy sepulcher, putting it around his neck, he would kiss it with devotion, saying, "This is the key of my treasure, of my Good, of my God!"

Paul loved Our Blessed Lady as tenderly as he loved a Mother. Mary had saved him from drowning during his infancy; Mary had produced in him, so to speak, the divine life, and had given birth, through him, to the Institute of the Passion. So what could be wanting in Paul's love for his heavenly Mother! Her solemnities were for him a renewal of fervor. He prepared for them by novenas.

The Immaculate Conception was always for him an article of faith, which he professed very strongly. He would say, "I would be happy to shed my blood for this cause...and in doing so, I am sure, I would procure great glory for our august Queen."

The Nativity of Our Blessed Lady enraptured him with love when he contemplated the great heart of the infant Mary, who after the heart of Jesus, the King of every heart, already loved God more than all the angels and saints.

We know with what holy transports of joy he celebrated the feast of the Presentation, which recalled to him his own consecration to God in the flower of his youth.

He prepared himself for the feast of the Assumption by what he termed 'Our Lady's Lent'. During the forty days preceding the feast, he deprived himself of every kind of fruit. Never, not even during sickness or convalescence or in his old age when he could only take very little food, could anyone persuade him to dispense himself from this act of devotion. "You see," he would say with charming gaiety, "I am like the leader of a band of robbers who would not eat meat on Wednesday, giving as his reason, that it was a day consecrated to St. Anthony, and yet he continued to commit murder."

But the Sorrows of the Queen of Martyrs touched his heart more than anything else and would move him to tears. With the same zeal with which he propagated devotion to the Passion of Christ, he spread devotion to the Sorrows of Mary. "If you go to the crucifix," he would say, "you will find Mary there; and where Mary is, there is her Son also." Sometimes, he would construct a dialogue of love between the Mother and her Son, but in so striking a way that his hearers would be profoundly moved. He compared the sorrows of the Son and of the Mother to two oceans, one flowing into the other. "The Sorrow of Mary is like the Mediterranean Sea, for it is written, your sorrow is as great as the sea, but from there one passes to a second ocean without limits, the Passion of Jesus. It is there, in that sea, that the soul enriches itself by fishing for the priceless pearls of the virtues of Jesus and Mary."

He would say, too, that the sorrow of sorrows for the Blessed Virgin was when she held her beloved Son dead in her arms. And he would add that Mary, having appeared to a soul as she was at the moment of her greatest grief, manifested traces of death, so much had suffering altered her appearance. He himself had been favored with this apparition,

Speaking one day with a priest on the Passion of Christ and of the sufferings of Mary, he withdrew from his sleeve a small image of the Mother of Sorrows, which he had begged from the brush of a noted artist. "Take it," he said to the priest, "I give it to you for it does not depict, as one wishes, the desolation of Mary. I myself have seen her much more sorrowful beneath the crushing burden of affliction." This image is still preserved today at the Convent of the Carmelites at Vetralla.

One day, towards the end of his life, at Sts. John and Paul, when Paul was making his thanksgiving, the Mother of Sorrows again appeared to him with her heart pierced with a sword and her eyes bathed in tears. She described her anguish in terms so plaintive that even a heart of granite would have been shattered to hear them. Mary made him understand that the intensity of her sufferings had been in proportion to the intensity of her love and the capacity of her soul, which was able to contain a whole ocean of sorrow. She complained of the false devotion of those who pretend to be her servants and to love her, and yet grievously offend her Divine Son. Then, too, this Mother of Mercy, desiring to come to the help of an unfortunate priest, revealed to Paul the state of his soul. When this priest came to see Paul, he was astonished to hear the Saint speak with assurance. "In my eyes your soul has the ugliness of the devil." Heaven had spoken and the priest, contrite and repentant, cast himself at the feet of Paul, who rejoiced at this wonderful conversion.

Permit us to say a word on the devotion of Saint Paul of the Cross to the angels and the saints. He honored with special devotion his Guardian Angel; the Archangel St. Michael, the protector of the Congregation; St. Joseph, the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin, and the great master of the spiritual life; St. Peter, prince of the Apostles; St. Paul, the fearless herald of the glories of the Cross; St. Luke, the great model of mortification; St. Francis of Assisi, in whom love had engraven the stigmata of the Savior.

He had a special devotion to St. Mary Magdalene, whom, he said, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin, had loved Jesus the most; St. Teresa, whose celestial doctrine he relished; St. Catherine of Genoa, who was a prodigy of divine love.

He also manifested a profound veneration for the holy relics, vessels of clay certainly, but sanctified by the practice of virtue and divinized through being members of

the Mystical Body of Christ and living temples of God the Holy Ghost,

If the virtue of Faith was worthy of admiration in Paul, no less worthy was the virtue of Hope. He saw himself, he would say at times, as a child whose Mother was holding over an unfathomable precipice from the heights of a tower. Who would believe that one would wish to cast oneself down! "Yet," he would confidently add, "I do not believe that God will allow me to fall into the abyss of hell." This is the reason why he reposed with complete abandonment in the bosom of the Divine Goodness, and the reason why, firmly sustained by Hope, he enjoyed peace and serenity of soul. Nothing could ever disturb the serenity of his soul. His hope seemed greatest when all seemed lost. "Everything is against us," he would exclaim, "and yet it makes me rejoice. God will be ever so much more bounteous towards us."

"What courage, what zeal, what tenacity have we not seen revealed where God and the glory of God and the interests of the Congregation were concerned. For the Congregation, did he not suffer great things - bodily exhaustion, disgust and humiliation for forty-seven years - before it was solemnly approved by the Church?

When, on his way to Rome for the first time, through snow, over the mountains and across flooded streams, had anyone asked this youthful hermit why he travelled alone, why he walked bare-footed, why he wore the garb of a poverty stricken penitent. Had Paul replied that it was because he wished to found a new Order of apostles who would carry the torch of faith throughout the world, would he not have been justly accused of foolhardiness? Had this young man defended his project, would he not have then been asked, "Who are your protectors at Rome? Where are your companions? What financial support do you have? What do you know about founding an Order? What aptitude have you for this special work?" "I have neither protectors nor friends, nor money, nor knowledge. I walk because God has directed me to walk, and I rely upon Him alone." What conclusion could we draw from such a reply? Surely, that this young man is animated either with unbounded confidence in God or that he is nothing but a presumptuous fool intoxicated by his own delusions.

And, now, Paul has firmly established his great work, fourteen houses of the Institute, as well as the Institute of Passionist Nun, have been founded. Many other foundations had been offered, but because the conditions attached to them were contrary to the spirit of the Congregation, he had refused them. Very often the work, as he himself expressed it, held on by the slenderest of threads, yet he had never hesitated. "You will see," he would say with assurance, "you will see. I know what the future holds for this Congregation. Great personages - priests, bishops, cardinals, Popes - frequently offered to use their influence on his behalf and to make their resources available, but he had refused because he relied only on God and the power of God,

Let us say now a few words on his charity. Is there anything further to be added to the marvelous deeds that we have already related, and which have so often drawn from us the exclamation, "Oh, what a seraph." We would still try to describe other excellent traits, but having seen him transformed through love into Jesus Crucified, does that not suffice to place Paul of the Cross amongst the hierarchy of those souls, such as the Francis of Assisi and the Teresas of Avila, whose seraphic love has astonished the world.

We shall still see in this venerable Father the same brilliant irradiations with sublime transports towards eternal love, a diadem of light which will crown his mortal

life.

Love of God is the principle and the measure of love for men. When Jesus Crucified enters into a soul, He does not enter alone. He enters into that soul, associated with the whole of mankind which He bears within His heart. That is why He illumines in this soul an inextinguishable and universal love, at the same time, from His Sacred Wounds, He pours forth an immense compassion for every suffering, for every misfortune, for every need. His is a loving, generous compassion which stoops to sacrifice and to self-immolation in order to alleviate all sufferings. Such was the charity of Paul of the Cross. He lived for men because he lived for God. Oh, how he wished, at the price of his own blood, to give to all men the only real and true good - light, truth, peace, Heaven, God. For one soul, like the Divine Master, he would be nailed to the cross, and like the great Apostle, he would consent to be anathema for his brethren.

No one loves the poor as the saints love them. Only the saints possess the secret of real charity, to give and to be given. Paul had become the poorest of the poor himself, and yet even in his poverty he could still give to the poor. To feed the suffering members of Jesus Christ he himself endured the pangs of hunger. "Give my soup to the poor," he would say, "give them also my portion of bread, for sinner that I am, I do not deserve them." To the end of his life, he would drag himself painfully to the door to give alms to the poor. Kneeling before them with head uncovered, with tears glistening in his eyes, he would beg them to eat. Then, he would encourage them to bear their poverty with patience for the love of God. Be of good heart, you poor of Jesus Christ, because Heaven is for the poor. How unfortunate are the rich, because their riches, if not used for good works, will serve only to torment them the more in the fires of Hell."

Often, with tears, he exhorted his children to a tender charity towards the poor. "Look upon the foreheads of the poor," he would say to them, "and there you will see engraven the Name of Jesus Christ." He wanted all of his monasteries to practice charity towards the poor who called. In times of distress, he exhorted his followers to devise some new mortification in order to give to the needy, thus sharing their sufferings with them. Great was his joy to see his Religious, with a holy emulation, depriving themselves of part of their food for the benefit of the poor.

With what delicacy did he not spare humiliations to those who concealed their need from the world. How ingenious he was to safeguard the innocence of those whom want exposes to danger.

One day he had just received a gold coin, but when two poor girls on the street asked him for an alms, he gave them this treasure, recommending to them the practice of virtue and devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ. He gave away even the furniture of the monasteries, together with a sum of money, to provide for poor girls at Orbetello, A dying woman was about to leave her daughter an orphan and exposed to the perils of loneliness and poverty. The heart of the Saint was moved by the danger threatening the girl and the condition of the Mother. "How I wish to help them," he told Father Fulgentius. The following night he appeared miraculously to the dying Mother and cured her.

Having given away all that there was to give, his voice then pleaded the cause of the poor of Jesus Christ. He begged, on their behalf, at the doors of the rich. Infirmary, sadness, pain - all found in him a consoling angel. Never did he preach in a town without bringing the balm of his charity to the hospitals and the prisons.

He helped, also, the suffering souls in Purgatory with unceasing prayer and

offerings of the Precious Blood. It was touching for one to hear the solicitude with which he excited others, especially his own Religious, to hasten the release of these souls through good works. Quite often, these souls appeared to him, pathetic in their helplessness, begging the assistance of his prayers. Then, moved by the sight of them, he would intensify his zeal and redouble his austerities.

One evening, Paul was about to retire for the night. Suddenly, a great noise was heard near his cell. "What is that?" he asked. At that moment the door opened. Afraid at first, Paul is soon reassured, as happens with those apparitions of good spirits. "I am," a mournful voice said to him, "I am that secular priest whom you were assisting with your spiritual counsel. I am condemned to Purgatory." "Why is that?" asked Paul. "For not profiting by your holy recommendations. Oh, how terrible are my sufferings. Have pity on me, Father Paul. Already, I have spent many long years in this purifying fire." "How could you have spent many long years in Purgatory," replied Paul, "when you have been dead but half an hour?" The soul testified to its astonishment, "Oh, how endless is time in Purgatory. How terrible are its torments."

It has been said that gratitude is the virtue of the saints. It can also be said that it is a flower of charity. Appreciative of the least favor, Paul always showed his gratitude. "It seemed," says a witness, "that there was nothing he would not give to his benefactors, the world and all it contained, the highest places in heaven." He was affectionately attached to them. When he recommended them to the prayers of his Religious, he infused into their hearts all his own affection and his own appreciation. Should the benefactors be suffering, or overtaken by misfortune, the whole community had to storm heaven by prayer for their timely deliverance. With a gracious charity he welcomed them when they came to the Retreat, and with a compassionate charity he visited them during their illness and assisted them at their deaths. At their death it was imperative that prayers be increased for them that they might enjoy eternal happiness as soon as possible. He prescribed special prayers for them in the Rule, several times each day and night, as well as the offering of holy Mass and the recitation of the Office of the Dead each month. In accordance with his recommendation that was accepted at the General Chapter, it was decreed that all our houses should make these same suffrages within eight days of their deaths, and that on all feasts of the Second Class, a Mass should be sung for their intentions. Let us add that during his life he worked miracles for all his benefactors, especially for the Grazis, the Constantinis, the Frattinis and the Angelettis.

There was also another class for whom he had a genuine affection, his enemies. His charity shone with all its brilliance in his conduct towards his obstinate persecutors, who sought every possible means to vilify him and towards those who would even make an attempt upon his life. Injuries were, in his eyes, as so many signal favors, a title to special benevolence.

One day, when accused by his calumniators, he, without making any attempt to justify himself, entrusted them into the hands of God, sayings, "Now I am obliged to give them a special remembrance in my prayers." Now, let us witness a characteristic, an even heroic trait.

A person well known to him began to hurl insults at Paul when he was on his way to Rome to seek the approbation of the Rules. The meekness of Paul, instead of calming the attacker, served only to infuriate him the more. Flying into a passion, he rushed at Paul, knocked him to the ground, struck him mercilessly and jumped on him



with contempt. The Saint allowed himself to be maltreated, as calm and as silent as Jesus at the Praetorium. One thing alone grieved him - the offence against God. Shortly afterwards, a friend of Paul's, Father Francis Casalini, seeing him pensive, questioned him. Paul replied, "Please pray with me for a soul whose salvation is in danger."

Assuredly, such charity begets humility, and humility itself took birth in the infinite abasements of the Redeemer. "A God humbled! A God degraded!" he would exclaim. And so he could never be satiated with the humiliations and insults that were heaped on him. The holy inebriation of the Cross was inspiring him with this utter contempt for self. When he went to celebrate Mass, he would imagine that he was a horrible dragon clothed in priestly vestments. He would say to himself, "The hour comes when the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners." "Jesus, my Savior," he would add, "take care of me. If you abandon me for a moment, I would become worse than Luther or Calvin." And so he would embrace the most wearisome and lowly duties as his special prerogative. Besides, for the whole time that he was compelled to remain seated in his chair, he never allowed another to sweep his room or to make his bed. Often, he would wash the dishes, work in the kitchen, serve the sick, eat while sitting on the floor, and kneel down before the Religious, humbly striking his breast and saying to them with tears in his eyes, "Pray for my poor soul."

Speaking one day with one of his Religious, he said to him, "Today we celebrate the feast of St. Ignatius. I have entrusted myself to him because of my love for him." "Of course," replied the Father, "he should be your friend, because he is also a Founder." Paul replied, "Be silent. St. Ignatius is a great saint, but I am worse than the least of men."

It was martyrdom of soul if he were given the title of 'holy Founder'. He would say, "Ah, if the people knew how it wounds me to the quick, they would certainly refrain from doing so, were it only through pity. They throw blood into my eyes. They bring to my notice my ingratitude and make me remember that I have spoilt the work of God through my defects. Jesus Christ is the true founder of the Institute of the Passion." One day a Cardinal said to him, "But you are the Founder, are you not?" "The Founder," replied the Saint, "is the Crucified God." At another time in Rome, when he was in the waiting room of a prelate, some servants asked him who was the founder of the Institute of the Passion, to which Paul replied, "a poor sinner." They asked again. "A poor sinner," was the reply.

A witness relates the following incident.

"One day a holy dispute arose between Father Paul of the Cross and Father Leonard of Port Maurice. They were together in the town of Acquapendente. Either the one or the other was asked to preach. After each had left the honor to the other, Father Leonard finally could not resist the insistence of Father Paul. At once Paul asked his advice on how a mission should be fruitfully conducted. At first Father Leonard refused to answer out of humility, but he eventually answered, "I am of the opinion that the essential qualification of a successful missionary is a well-regulated interior life." Paul engraved these words in his heart and never forgot them. (Paul of the Cross and Leonard of Port Maurice were canonized the same day.)

To humiliate oneself might appear to be easy, but to withstand the trial of both outrage and glory is the touchstone of humility.

Contempt, insults and humiliations of every kind Paul not only loved and sought, but he even found in them consolation, peace and contentment. Through these he

attained a more intimate union with Him who willed to become the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.

One could not say that he was insensitive to these things; that would not be true in the least. But, through his union with Jesus Crucified, he had gained the mastery over the outbursts of wounded human nature. Just as insults were a source of joy to him so, on the other hand, honors were a source of real torture.

If he picked up a letter or a scrap of paper that redounded to his glory, he would destroy it or cast it into the flames. He would say in all sincerity, "If I could, I would efface my name from the Papal Briefs. I do not want even a single remembrance of my name in the Congregation."

There was preserved in the Retreat of the Presentation some documents about the first years of his consecration to God. Father Fulgentius had diligently arranged to bring them from Alessandria with all necessary authorization. Hearing of it, Paul went at once to visit the Retreat. On his arrival, he gave a most definite command that the said writings that concerned him be given to him. The order was so authoritative as to brook no disobedience. But the Fathers and Brothers made a hasty copy of them and gave the originals to Paul, which he immediately burnt.

We have seen how acute was his pain when he was venerated as a saint. "To think that anyone could be deceived on my account," he would say. "It would be a sign of great charity if the divine mercy were to grant me Purgatory until the end of the world."

Bishop Cavalieri placed on the breast of his dying brother a 'sign' that had been worn by Paul of the Cross. Immediately, the sick man was restored to health. The prelate related this prodigy to Father Fulgentius, who believed that he should give the letter concerning this cure to the holy Founder. Paul read it and then began to weep bitterly.

A woman, profiting from Paul's preoccupation with another person, cut off a piece of his mantle. "What are you doing?" he said to her severely. "You should not be allowed such things." Often the same indiscretion was repeated during his journeys. Sometimes he would remark jovially, "They have taken me to be the Lord Abbot, and they have cut pieces off my mantle, and I am only the cook. If they only knew me, they would immediately flee from me as from the presence of a pest. God wishes to abase and humiliate me. May His holy will be done." At other times, he would say, "O God, how blind they are. The judgments of men are not the judgments of God!" "Go, go," he said to those who were bearing the piece away. "Go and make socks for your fowls out of it."

He avoided the places where he knew he would be honored. He watched that no one replaced the clothes he usually wore with others. Should he find that this had been done, he at once claimed them. When anybody approached to kiss his hand, he hastily withdrew his hand, not wishing to receive even this act of reverence from men.

In the last years of his life, as he was being carried in his chair, he would say to his Religious, "Go ahead! Do not stop. Keep moving." When seculars showed him some marks of veneration, he would say sadly, "Wretch that I am. Who knows that these people are not more pleasing to God than I am?"

We cannot omit to mention an incident which is not without interest.

One day, Father Paul with a companion was returning from the coast of Orbetello to Monte Argentario. A fisherman, who knew of Father Paul only by his reputation, greeted them and said to them, "How fortunate you are to be going up to that monastery where the saint, Father Paul, lives." These words were as a staggering blow to the holy Founder. He was quite speechless for a time; then suddenly he exclaimed, "Who is the saint to whom you refer? Father Paul?" "Yes," replied the fisherman, "Father Paul. Father Paul is a saint." Then the holy Founder, as though to correct his mistaken judgment, replied with a tone of assurance, "I can tell you quite definitely that he cannot be considered a saint." After these words, Paul continued his journey. But the fisherman, even more sure of himself now and in a voice almost of anger, shouted, "I do not care what he himself thinks, but I can tell you that he is a saint, a true saint, a really great saint."

It is difficult for us to understand how, in spite of so many honors and wonders, Paul did not exalt himself by the least trace of self-love. By an extraordinary privilege, never did the least thought occur that could lessen the humility of the Saint. He was able to say to his spiritual director with candid simplicity, "Thanks be to God, never has pride touched me. I would think myself lost, if I were guilty of a proud thought." He could not even conceive of pride being possible. Behold the portrait that he painted of his own character. He compared himself to a poor, ragged, derelict, covered in ulcers from head to foot. "Would it be possible for him to be puffed up with pride if such a man saw himself being led into the company of great lords? The idea that such a great sinner as myself being proud! God makes me read myself in a great book. That book is the knowledge of my sins." And so it happened that he never had occasion to accuse himself of the sin of pride.

There are many other revealing incidents that we could narrate of his humility, of his mortification and of his love of suffering and poverty, but we shall only add something of his perfect obedience and his angelic purity.

We have seen how, as a young man, he made a vow to obey everybody. Was not this obedience likewise heroic at Castellazzo, at Our Lady of the Chain and especially at St. Gallican?

In later years, Paul, who had become the Founder and the Superior General of the Congregation was obviously more in a position to command than to obey. But love could find the means of always practicing a virtue so beloved of God. A zealous lover of the Rule and the religious observance, he would appear at all the exercises of the community at the first call of the bell. Accepting his spiritual director as his superior, he would not allow himself to take even one step without his permission. He wrote to one of his penitents, "I shall ask Father John Baptist to allow me to go to Orbetello. If he agrees, I will see you early tomorrow at St. Francis; otherwise, you will have to wait patiently." In sickness, the aged Founder submitted to the infirmarian with a childlike simplicity. With profound respect, he obeyed the prelates of the Holy Church, the pastors of souls and ecclesiastical superiors. As we have seen, his obedience to the Vicar of Christ worked miracles.

Throughout the whole course of his life, we have inhaled, as in a garden, the sweet fragrance of virginal purity which arose from his soul, always as spotless and as pure as a lily. In his youth he had taken these words for his motto, 'to die rather than commit sin'. He preserved his innocence until his very last breath.

Referring to the days of his youth, he reproached himself for having been a little

too vivacious. He added that God had preserved him from the rocks on which so many of the young are shipwrecked. During his sickness at Orbetello, thinking that he was alone, he was heard to make this assertion before God, "You know quite well, O my Savior, that, with the help of your grace, Paul has never stained his soul by a deliberate fault."

Let us be on our guard lest we think that his virtue was the mechanical result of a phlegmatic disposition and a frigid, insensible temperament. On the contrary, Paul possessed an exquisite tenderness of heart, and a fiery nature, and a vivid imagination. If he had obtained the virtue of the angels, it was only at the price of constant and bloody combat. His youthful nature, endowed with rare natural gifts and with the added charm of acquired virtue that is not without peril, was often forced to encounter, even though he took every precaution, violent onslaughts which would have shaken one of less solid virtue.

The lily of purity shone with all the more brilliance in Paul of the Cross because he surrounded it with the thorns of an austere life and safeguarded it with the protection of inviolable modesty. He fled from dangerous occasions and was always distrustful of himself. According to the testimony of a priest, Paul's modesty had made him take him for an angel. On one occasion, Paul stated that he would prefer the executioners to pluck out his eyes rather than fix them on the face of a woman. At Orbetello he never looked at a Spanish noblewoman of beauty whom he directed, and who came to see him about works of charity. He recognized her only by her voice.

Purity, like a timid dove, fears snares everywhere. In all his dealings with women, Paul's discourses breathed a religious gravity and decorum, a heavenly fragrance. He knew how to curtail these visits. He desired that the door of the parlor should always remain open. His companion was warned not to be far away; he would say that the companion is like a guardian angel. No matter what the rank of the person might be, he never deviated from this rule.

One day, when a Princess wanted to speak to him about her spiritual life, someone inadvertently closed the door. The holy Founder, at once, cried out, "Open the door! Open it! The Rule forbids us to have the door closed." His exactitude on this point was such that one day he gave this as his opinion, "I have no trust in myself at all. I have always been as exacting in this matter, and that has made me guilty of discourtesy."

Discourteous though this may have appeared, yet it was based on that fundamental principle of a religious - the observance of the Rule.

Paul was extremely solicitous to prevent any attachment creeping into spiritual direction. "It is a theft in the sight of God." Such was his maxim. A lady recommended herself to his prayers. The Saint promised to pray for her. But she asked with a certain affectation, "Will you always think of me in your prayers and never forget me?" "No," he replied, "after speaking with persons like yourself and assisting them to the best of my ability, I recommend them to God, and then I take good care to forget them."

The reply may appear as a lack of courtesy. What the Saint was saying was that familiarity with these persons is a thorn which can ruin the beautiful lily of purity.

He was extremely desirous that the virtue of the angels should be resplendent in his sons in an eminent degree, and he wanted them to preserve with jealousy this flower of purity with all its delightful perfume. It is difficult to describe the fiery zeal with

which he exhorted them to model themselves on the modesty of the Savior. He would have them not only to guard their eyes and to restrain concupiscence, but to measure all their activities according to the rule of this virtue, which gives to everything nobility, decorum and dignity.

Paul of the Cross had attained such excellence in this region of heavenly love that even during his mortal life, God made of him a powerful protector of chastity.

At a mission at Palentano, he said to a young woman, "Daughter, be on the watch! God has revealed to me that your innocence will be severely tested." He encouraged her to place all her trust in God and to hope in Him for the grace of victory. Four years afterwards, on four similar occasions, this young woman was violently tempted. Not knowing what means to use to overcome the enemy, she invoked the name of Father Paul; on each occasion victory followed the combat.

The angelic purity of Paul irradiated all around him. It pleased God to make it known, often through miracles. Those who came near him or spoke to him perceived this mysterious fragrance of the virtue of purity. A heavenly perfume emanated from his body, his hands and the articles that he had used, and from rooms or cells that he had occupied. And this would linger for months, sometimes for years. At times, too, his virginal flesh seemed to be clothed with the anticipated qualities of the glorified body: impassibility, brightness, agility and subtility.

In ecstasy, we have observed him insensible to pain, encircled by a luminous brightness, elevated from the floor, passing through the air like angels, going out of a house through locked doors like Jesus Christ in the Cenacle, and present in several places at the same time. These phenomena were very frequent during his life. Let us now mention those of his last days, which were even more wonderful, in order to emphasize the fact that now he belonged less to earth than to heaven. But to give to the portrait of Saint Paul of the Cross the final stroke of the brush, a beam of the purest light would be necessary together with the hand of an angel and the colors which adorn the heavenly Jerusalem.

As we promised in the preceding chapter, we will now relate the prodigies which signalized the spiritual conversation of Paul with the holy virgin of Cerveteri.

While the holy Founder spoke of God, his features were animated and inflamed, so that he appeared transformed into one of the blessed in Heaven, burning entirely with love.

One day, rapt in ecstasy, he was elevated two palms above his chair. Drawing from the source of Divine Light, he reflected its rays and his face shone as the sun. On bended knees, at one time he would open wide his arms, at another time he would cross them on his breast.

On another occasion, when he was speaking of the Blessed Trinity, concerning which he had received a divine revelation, he experienced what St. John of the Cross underwent in treating with St. Teresa on the same mystery, from his countenance the splendor of heaven radiated brilliantly, more brilliant than ever, crowning his head with a halo of lights, a slight vibration gently coursed through all his members, the sign of an approaching rapture. The Saint, in his humility, wished to restrain himself. He clutched at the arms of the chair with both hands and pressed back heavily. His humility only served to enhance the prodigy. He was elevated in his chair to the height of a man, and his radiance illumined the whole sacristy. For an hour he remained in that position,

motionless. Again, aroused by a slight vibration, he gradually descended in his chair to the very spot from which he and the chair had been raised.

In one of these conferences, when Rosa expressed a certain doubt as to the state of her soul, Paul invited her to implore help from heaven before seeking a solution. So they began to pray, Rosa on her knees and Paul in his chair. At once there appeared a marvelous light. In this light, Jesus in the form of a Child of ravishing beauty, the apparition was too bright for the human eye to gaze upon. At once, the aged Founder, like one rejuvenated, prostrated himself upon the ground in adoration of the Divine Child and begged the Infant God to bless him.

This divine blessing aroused in Paul's heart transports of love which escaped in sighs and tears, "O Goodness! O Benignity! O infinite Love of the Eternal God who thus deigns to visit this wretched worm of the earth!" And being penetrated with this humility, which always inspires such profound and living contact with God, he added, "I beg pardon, I beg Your pardon for the countless faults, the acts of ingratitude and irreverence that I have assuredly committed in so many years of preaching, of receiving and of administering the Sacraments." But the Divine Child said to him, "Everything has been well done, yes, everything, and My will alone..."

As if to give Paul a pledge of assurance, He cast Himself into his arms and placed His arms around Paul's neck. Paul, at once, pressed the Divine Child lovingly to his heart, which became a furnace of love. Bathing the Child with his tears, he begged from Him the salvation of his soul. "The salvation of your soul," answered the Divine Child, clasping him more closely to His heart, "the salvation of your soul is as certain as it is that you are holding Me in your arms." And the Child disappeared, leaving the soul of His beloved servant inundated with blessedness. But his body retained its infirmities. As Paul could not rise, two resplendent angels appeared and raised him into his chair.

Mary, the Mother of God, had called Paul of the Cross to his heavenly vocation. Mary, it will be, will call him to eternal happiness.

One day Paul heard a voice calling his name and saw on a throne of glory, with the Divine Child in her arms, Mary, the Mother of God, resplendent with light. As always on such an occasion, Paul was able to cast himself with agility from his chair on to his knees spoke to him, and her words aroused unspeakable joy within his soul. Then she added, "My dear son, ask favors of me." She began to arouse his confidence by her gracious appearance and her captivating smile. Paul humbly begged the salvation of his soul. To this the loving Mother of God replied, "You are assured that the grace is granted." Coming nearer the Saint, she placed her hand upon his head, and the Divine Child did likewise. Then she announced to this favored soul that on a Wednesday, in the coming month of October, his soul, freed from the fetters of the body, would pass to its eternal rest.

The virgin of Cerveteri, Rosa Calabresi, had partaken of the rapturous joy of these divine apparitions, and an ecstasy deprived her of the use of her senses. When she passed out of the ecstasy, she saw only the aged Father, raised to the height of five palms, on bended knees, his arms outstretched in the form of a cross and his whole countenance radiating a most brilliant light. This rapture lasted for an hour during which there escaped from the lips of the Saint, from time to time, these burning ejaculations, "O Crucified Love! My Crucified Love!"

O holy servant of Jesus Christ, can we not but envy you? It was your privilege to be the last witness of the fire in the life of our Father and Founder, though this fire was

at the same time consuming itself. It was your fortune to behold the happy transfiguration to which suffering and love had led him and, yet, is but the prelude of that sublime transfiguration that he will receive from the hand of death!

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE**

### **THE LAST DAYS OF THE SAINT - FAREWELL TO HIS RELIGIOUS - FINAL ECSTASY - THE OPENING OF HEAVEN - HIS DEATH**

**June 1775 - October 18, 1775**

The days of which we are now about to speak are days of profound sadness; yet they are days of sublime joys. If it is to be the day of final parting, it is also to be a day of eternal reward.

From this time onwards, the life of Paul of the Cross is nothing but love without combat, peace without fear and of light without shadow. No cloud will ever more darken the perpetual serenity of his soul; one might well say it was the dawn of that glory, that happiness, which would know no decline,

Love had flamed to a conflagration that was gradually consuming the vessel of clay; his body succumbed to the divine yearnings. Having had a foretaste of the infinite Beauty, Paul could not withdraw his gaze from It. Solitude and silence were essential for him. Sitting in his chair or lying upon his poor bed, he would have the blinds drawn and the door of his cell closed, for he desired to be alone in order to commune with God.

But those who asked to see him were so numerous that, despite their reluctance, the Religious were obliged to bring in, now one, now another, principally ecclesiastics and persons of distinction. The holy Founder, far from giving expression to the least annoyance, graciously welcomed his visitors. The subject of his conversation was always love for Jesus Crucified. He persuaded all, prelates or cardinals, to make the Passion of Jesus Christ the nourishment of their life. In order to recall the memory of the Passion to them, he gave to each a small brass crucifix.

The students of Propaganda College, who had on previous visits been edified and encouraged by his saintly words, often on their walks came to Sts. John and Paul, hoping to have the good fortune of being invited in to see Father Paul of the Cross. The Saint never tired of receiving these young men, the hope of the Church and the future apostles of the Gentiles.

"My dear sons," he would say to them, "accustom yourselves to suffer for love of Jesus. Often excite in yourselves the desire of shedding your blood and devoting your life for the faith." He would tell them that they would never attain the heroic fortitude of the martyrs, if, during the day, they did not often think of the sufferings and the agonies of the Son of God. Then, with fatherly tenderness, he would ask them if they had a love for Mary, and, at their answer in the affirmative, he would add, "Love her; love her ever more and more. Mary is our Mother, for she has begotten us at the foot of the cross. Ah, my dear children, have ever present in your minds her sufferings, and compassionate her in her martyrdom of soul with all the love of your hearts."

These exhortations would so inflame the hearts of these students for the priesthood that they wanted to prolong their visit. Happy they would be if, on leaving, they could take some threads from his mantles; these they would bear away as a precious relic.

A foreign cleric in Holy Orders expressed the desire to speak privately with the Saint. This is the testimony of the Religious who had brought him in. "On going out from the interview, I saw the cleric in a state of amazement. Taking me aside, he asked me, 'Who is this priest?' I replied that it was our holy Founder, Father Paul of the Cross. 'But



he is a saint. He told me things that absolutely astonished me. He has the gift of prophecy. Oh, yes, he is certainly a great saint.”

The most constant of all in visiting the holy Founder was his great friend and benefactor, Anthony Frattini, Master of the Household in the Apostolic Palace. One of these visits was marked by an incident which deserves to be related.

One day Frattini was scarcely inside Paul's cell when Paul asked him for news of the Holy Father, Pius VI. Frattini replied that the Pope was very well indeed. Then, the Saint looked hard at him and said in an inspired voice; "I call myself 'Paul of the Cross', but I am such only in name. With far greater reason can the Holy Father take this title to himself - 'of the cross'. Tell the Holy Father, tell him from me, that he is stretching himself out on the cross well; he will have to remain upon it and remain upon it for a long time." At these words his face became inflamed, a stream of tears flowed from his eyes, and, turning towards the crucifix that he had used on his missions, he continued in a tone penetrated with sorrow. "The poor Catholic religion! Alas, O Savior, give strength to Your Vicar; give him light and courage that he may accomplish your holy will in all things." Then he continued speaking, lifting his outstretched arms, "Yes, I hope for it. Yes, I desire it. Yes, I wish it." After some other exclamations, no less animated, he came out of the ecstasy and, looking at Frattini, said to him, "Oh, there you are," as though he had only noticed him at that moment. Frattini, who was convinced that the Saint was going to announce through divine inspiration some imminent peril for the Church, was able to suppress his emotion, and, without giving any indication of what he had seen and heard, began to speak to the Saint as though he had but recently arrived.

Frattini had not the heart to relate this incident to the Sovereign Pontiff for he feared it would cause him too much suffering and sorrow. In fact, he did not reveal the occurrence to anybody. In 1779 he was invited to give testimony in the Ordinary Processes which had opened for the canonization of Paul of the Cross. He believed that in conscience he could still keep it secret, as he had declared to the Pope his unwillingness to give evidence in this case, for the reason that the Saint had said in his presence things that did not seem to him prudent to reveal. The Pope had replied that he could act with wisdom and moderation. But when the Revolution of 1789 broke out in France, seeing that the prophecy of Paul was beginning to be fulfilled, Frattini gave his testimony in the Apostolic Processes. The testimony had its perfect fulfillment when, to crown so many crimes, the Vicar of Christ, made a laughing-stock in his fortress, saw the extent of all the predicted suffering until he died at Valencia in the bitterness of exile. Perhaps that prayer which Paul, twenty-four years previously, had addressed to Jesus Crucified with so many tears for Pope Pius VI came to fortify the august martyr in his Calvary, like a consoling angel.

When the holy Founder became so weak that he was no longer able to say Mass, even in the little oratory adjoining his room, he arranged for a priest with a clear, distinct voice to celebrate there. Each day he heard Mass and received Holy Communion. On the feast of Corpus Christi, June 15, although he wished, through a heroic effort of love, to celebrate Mass, yet he was not able to come to the altar. From that time until his death, his strength noticeably failed. On the feast of Saints John and Paul, June 26, he fainted several times. Soon the only nourishment that he could take was a small quantity of a light beverage mixed with milk. But even this caused him acute suffering, and he could not digest it. In his simplicity, he would, at times, say, "I seem to have gravel in my stomach." The physicians made him try a little bread in water. For almost a month this was his only food; he could take but very little of it, and

then only once a day.

In the midst of so many sufferings, it was edifying to see him maintain serenity of soul and tranquility of heart. He would say peacefully, "I have no wish either to live or to die. Only what the good God wills." If any of the Religious showed him compassion, the Saint would say to him, while thanking him for his charity, "My sufferings cause you sorrow, do they not? But not to me. I keep myself in the holy Wounds of my Jesus." Convinced that his sacrifice would very soon be consummated, he added, "The earth is calling for the earth." A priest once remarked to him that he could get well again, but the holy Founder replied, "No." Such was the clear knowledge that he had of the disposition of Divine Providence in regard to himself. One day, at the moment he was taking the little nourishment that could be given to him, he had an attack of vomiting. The Religious, who were by his side to help him, saw how greatly he suffered. As soon as he was a little better, he said to them, like Judas Maccabeus, "But if our time be come, let us die manfully" (1 Macc. ix, 10).

When he was comparatively free from suffering and pain, he would occupy himself with the duties of his office, speaking to the Religious present in Rome and dictating letters, full of zeal and prudence, to those who were absent.

Paul remained faithful to his practices of devotion until the end of his life. He had always daily recited the third part of the Rosary; in his last days he would recite the fifteen decades. But since now, according to his own expression, he had begun 'Our Lady's Lent', his devotion became more fervent in that he had the riches of suffering with which to pay a tribute of love to his heavenly Mother Mary. So weak was he one day that the infirmarian, who was moved to compassion, said to him, "It is too much for your Paternity; do you not see that your breath is failing. Do not tire yourself, then, by saying the Rosary." But Paul, animated with fervor, replied at once, "I want to say it all the days of my life. If I cannot recite it with my lips, then I shall recite it in my heart."

Each year, on August 15, he would offer to the Queen of Heaven the hour of prayer that is called the 'hour of the Rosary'. He had it fixed at three or four o'clock in the morning. Even in his sickness he kept to this pious practice. Also, so as not to alter it, he begged one of his Religious to awaken him after the singing of Matins.

The holy Founder was declining each day. The doctor, fearing a relapse, judged it wise for him to be given the holy Viaticum. Paul knew that his death was not imminent, but joyfully and willingly he signified his wish to receive it in the presence of the whole community. He added that it would be more appropriate to bring the Blessed Sacrament from the Basilica.

Next day, August 30, his first Consultor brought the holy Viaticum to him, preceded by all the Religious, holding lighted candles in their hands and singing liturgical hymns. As soon as the invalid saw the Divine Master in the Eucharist enter his cell, he, who up until then could not make a single movement, stretched out his arms vigorously and exclaimed, "Ah, my sweet Jesus, I protest that I want to live and die in communion with Holy Church. I hate and detest all false teachings." Immediately, he recited the Apostle's Creed, making each word an act of faith. Seeing the Religious on their knees, and in tears, around his bed, he utilized this solemn moment to bequeath to them that same spirit with which he had begotten them in Jesus Crucified.

Two Religious, in an adjacent oratory, wrote it down as he was speaking. "Before all else," he said, "I earnestly recommend to you the holy precept which the Savior gave to His disciples on the eve of His death, 'By this shall all men know that you are My

disciples, if you have love one for another.' Fraternal charity, my dearly beloved sons, is what, with all the affection of my heart, I wish all of you to practice, those of you here present, as well as the many others who wear the habit of penance and mourning in memory of the Passion and Death of our loving Redeemer, and those, too, who in the future will be called by the divine mercy to this little flock of Jesus Christ. I beg you all, but especially the Superiors, to have at heart the spirit of prayer, of solitude and of poverty. If this spirit is maintained amongst us, the Congregation will shine like a star before God and men for all eternity. Have always, I implore you, a filial and devoted love towards Holy Church. Pray always for her and for her visible Head, the Sovereign Pontiff, and submit to her in all things. Labor for the salvation of souls like unwearying apostles, and instill into the hearts of all devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrows of His Blessed Mother."

After having spoken of his love for his benefactors, especially the reigning Pontiff, he was seized with deep sentiments of humility. "Ah, wretch that I am," he said, "see what I leave you as I am about to pass into eternity. I leave you only my bad example. However, I assure you that I have always had your sanctification and perfection at heart. Prostrate on the ground and with all the sorrow of my poor heart, I ask pardon of you, and I recommend my soul to your prayers, and, I hope, through the merits of His Passion and Death that the Savior may receive it into His merciful embrace."

Turning his head, he spoke to the Blessed Sacrament, "Yes, my dearest Jesus, sinner though I am, I hope soon to see you in Heaven and, in leaving my body, to give you the sweet kiss that will unite me to You for all eternity, and ever will I sing of your infinite mercies. O my sweet Jesus, I recommend to you the poor Congregation of the Passion, the fruit of your sufferings, cross and death. Bless, I beg You, bless all the Religious and benefactors of our Institute."

Then the Saint spoke with a loving tenderness. Let us attend carefully, we the sons of Paul of the Cross, since each one of us, says St. Vincent Strambi, ought to faithfully preserve the memory of these solemn words, "And you, O Immaculate Virgin, the Queen of Martyrs, through the sorrows which you endured during the Passion of your Divine Son, I implore you to give to all your maternal blessing. I place them all and leave them beneath the mantle of your loving protection."

Then he spoke, as it were, a last farewell, "So, I leave you, my dear brothers in Christ; I will wait for you all, yes, all of you, in Heaven. There, too, I shall always pray for the Supreme Pontiff, for the Church, which has all my love, and for you and for the Congregation and for all those who have a right to my prayers.

Again he spoke tenderly, "I leave my blessing to you all, the sons of the Passion, both present and absent." And raising his emaciated and trembling hand above his children, who could not suppress their sobbing, he blessed them for the last time. Then, he stretched out his arms towards the Savior and exclaimed, "Come, come, my Lord Jesus - Veni, Domine Jesu." And with his eyes filled with tears, he struck his breast, saying, "Domine, non sum dignus - O Lord, I am not worthy."

After this discourse he received the holy Viaticum. Everybody then withdrew to leave him in the silence of adoration and thanksgiving.

Such a fervent Holy Communion, instead of appeasing the longings of his love, served only to increase them. In order to have this grace as often as possible, the invalid would remain fasting and endure a burning thirst. He would wait until he had made a long thanksgiving before he would take a little broth or water. Frattini told the

Sovereign Pontiff about this fasting, and the Pope gave Paul permission to receive Holy Communion four times a week without fasting. Paul used this dispensation until the last day of his life.

Recalling the many favors that the Vicar of Jesus Christ had bestowed upon him and the Congregation, Paul again earnestly implored his children never to omit, in all the houses of the Congregation, the daily recitation of the Litany of the Saints for the Pope and for the Church. "If I am saved," he added, "as I hope through the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrows of Mary, I shall always be praying for the Holy Father. I leave to him, to remind him of this promise, after my death, this image of the Sorrowful Virgin; it will serve as a pledge of my gratitude."

Shortly afterwards, he repeated his promise to pray for the Pope so that the divine mercy will preserve him in health for a long time for the good of Holy Church, and may make him prosper in all his undertakings, and that he may will what is pleasing to God and carry it out with all possible zeal."

The holy Founder, always bright and cheerful, would console his sons. When necessary, he would advise them and exhort them especially to be faithful in the observance of the Rule and to be careful not to make the least change. He begged the Superiors to be extremely vigilant on this point. He remarked, "Those who have lost the spirit of their vocation are like noxious weeds in the field of the Savior which damage the ripening harvest.

He repeated the request he had made to the Superiors when he was seriously ill at St. Angelo's. "I despoil myself of the little which I have had for my own use. Please have the charity to give me, as an alms, a few scraps of clothing for my burial."

Paul received a visit from the General of the Dominicans, later a Cardinal of the Church, John Thomas Mary Boxadors, who held the holy Founder in high esteem. Paul recommended his little flock to him, telling him that he was leaving it under the protection of the Order of St. Dominic, an Order richly endowed with favors from the Blessed Virgin. He also asked for permission to erect the Confraternity of the Rosary in the novitiates of the Congregation and to grant the faculty to the Master of Novices to enroll all our Religious who desired to profit by this privilege. Father Boxadors willingly granted these permissions. Paul was elated in being able to enroll the members of his Congregation in this Confraternity, so rich in indulgences.

The venerable Founder was peacefully waiting the hour when his soul would cast off its mortal bonds. His pain and sufferings became so acute that he appeared to be a living image of the Divine Redeemer. His body, from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, was a mass of wounds. He could not find any relief for his tortured body, nor could he change his position in the bed. Though a raging thirst consumed him, taking even a drop of water served only to intensify the burning pangs of thirst. The violence of his sufferings would make him say, "It seems to me that my soul is being torn from my body. Throughout my entire body, there is not a space of four fingers that is free from sores and without pain."

In his cruel sufferings, he uttered neither a complaint nor a cry but remained always tranquil and at peace. At times he raised his eyes to heaven, and, joining his hands, would say, "May God be blessed," or again, showed by his gestures that he was adoring the Will of God and embracing it with all the love of his heart. One day his confessor, Father John Mary of St. Ignatius, said to him that Jesus wanted to make him die crucified like Himself. Paul, by the expression upon his face, showed that he was

delighted to be imitating his Divine Master. Often he would fix his eyes on the image of Jesus Crucified and the Sorrowful Virgin, and from this gaze he drew strength and joy for his last sacrifice.

Thus slipped away the days and the nights. The Religious could not understand how one, so weak, could possibly live without food. In their affliction they feared from moment to moment that he would begin his last agony. But he assured them that the hour of his death had not yet come. Father John Mary had a mission to preach at Tolfa, and was postponing his departure from one day to another, fearing that the Saint would die during his absence. The dying Founder knew this. Preferring the glory of God to his own personal consolation, he said to his confessor, "Go! Go in peace. I am not going to die yet." And being always animated by apostolic zeal, he added, "As you pass through Rota, exhort the good people there to attend and to profit by your mission." When the missionary, after receiving Paul's blessing, kissed his hand, Paul in his humility kissed the hand of Father John Mary.

About that time his secretary received a letter from Bishop Struzzieri, that early son of Paul of the Cross and now the Bishop of Amelia. Typical of saintly souls, he begged the holy Founder to wait for him to arrive in Rome, October 20. The words and request of the holy Bishop were reported to Paul in all simplicity. He replied with a smile, "Yes, write and tell him that I shall certainly wait for him."

Nevertheless, his voice was weakening and his strength failing from day to day. Sensing the approach of death and to fortify himself for the last agony, he desired the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. He arranged for it to be administered on the feast of the Divine Maternity, which is celebrated on the second Sunday in October.

On Saturday, October 7, he asked for the Sacrament with profound humility. To prepare himself worthily, he went to confession to Father John Mary, who had returned from his mission. On Sunday morning he received, as Viaticum, He who is the Resurrection and the Life. "Then, in order to be filled with the fullness of grace of Extreme Unction, he called for one of his priests," so says the narrator of his life, "and begged him to recall for him the effects of this great Sacrament. For he who could so admirably instruct others wanted, out of humility, to be instructed himself." And the one who had such a privilege and high honor was concealed from us by name - St. Vincent Strambi, at the time Professor of Theology at Sts. John and Paul and later Bishop of Macerata and Tolentino - a saint instructing a saint.

After Vespers, all the Religious knelt down around his poor bed, praying and weeping. The Saint followed the last anointing with prayers and tears.

The ceremony was almost ended when Bishop Marucci, the Vice-Gerent, arrived. He eagerly inquired of one of the Religious the state of the dying Founder. "Ah, Bishop," this son of Paul of the Cross replied in tears, "it is the last time that your Excellency will see our Father alive, for he is at the last extremity; he cannot live very much longer."

The Bishop went to the cell of the dying Founder. The sight of that face, on which the shadow of death was wrestling with the first rays of heaven, so deeply affected him, that he could not utter a word. When Paul made an effort to ask for his blessing, the Bishop begged him not to exhaust his failing strength. Kneeling down at the foot of the bed, he said this prayer in a loud voice, "May Jesus and Mary, our Mother, bless us." It seems that he was reluctant to bless a saint with the usual form that Bishops use. Without saying another word, he withdrew.

It may be said that the Saint was all the time in a continual agony; yet, in spite of it, to the great astonishment of the Religious, he still managed, hour after hour, to write a letter in his own hand to Rosa Calabresi, the virgin of Cerveteri. Before leaving earth for heaven, the thought occurred to him of bidding her a last farewell; he told her that he would die on the day after the morrow. After giving her some holy counsels, he concluded with his blessing and the assurance that they would meet again in Heaven.

On October 18, the feast of St. Luke, for whom the Saint had a very special devotion, he did not wish to break his fast out of reverence for the Blessed Eucharist. From the transports of love, it seemed as if he was receiving, for the first time, Him whom his soul would soon contemplate unveiled in unending vision. It was Paul's last Holy Communion.

Henceforth, he would look only to Heaven. In this union with the Supreme Good, he seemed to have no concern for the things of earth. He wanted to leave it with a kiss of love. More than ever, he wanted to remain alone with his God, not admitting anyone into his cell, except the Religious, his sons of the Passion.

But, that evening, some persons of distinction asked, in the most persuasive manner, to see him just once more. Convinced of the extreme generosity of the Saint, the Religious believed that they could not refuse their request. So they brought in the Bishop of Scala and Ravello, a Camaldolese Religious from St. Gregory's monastery, and a nobleman of Ravenna.

Paul, with unfailing kindness, welcomed them and gave to each a little crucifix, indicating by a sign that they were to meditate often on the Passion of Christ. The apostle of Jesus Crucified would end his life as he had begun it: though in agony he would still preach Jesus and Him Crucified. So moved were all, that on leaving the cell, they exclaimed, "There is no doubt that sanctity shines forth from him in every way. How fortunate are those priests. They possess a saint. Yes, he is a saint."

Towards midday, Bishop Struzzieri arrived suddenly and unexpectedly. As soon as he stepped from the carriage, he hurried to the cell of his beloved Founder, clasped his hand and kissed it. This joyful meeting of son and Father revived the dying man; he smiled and, uncovering his head out of respect for the Bishop, wished in return to kiss the prelate's hand. But the Bishop in his humility refused. The Saint greeted the Bishop affectionately, and then said to the infirmarian, "Tell Father Rector to give the Bishop every attention and to have him served by our own Religious. His servants are to be taken care of as well."

Thus did the holy Founder keep his promise to wait for the arrival of the Bishop before he died.

Paul knew that this was the hour, the hour of death. He asked the infirmarian to turn him so that he could see the large crucifix and a picture of Our Lady of Sorrows. He kept his eyes upon them until his last breath. The chill of death was on him. "Bring Father John Mary," he asked, "because my death is very near." The infirmarian answered that he could see no imminent danger, no more now than the doctor had seen a few hours previously. Paul insisted. "Yes, but call Father John Mary to come and assist me."

The community members were in the choir and about to sing Vespers. The Brother believed that he should stay with the dying Founder. Sitting down near his bed, he said to him, "Father Paul, would you not die willingly to fulfill the holy will of God?"

The Saint knit his brow and replied in a firm voice, "Yes, I die willingly to fulfill God's holy will." "Have courage then," added the infirmarian, "and place your confidence in the Savior." Paul stretched out his hand towards the images he loved. "There," he said in a voice quivering with emotion, "there is my hope - in the Passion of Jesus Christ and in the Sorrows of Mary, my Mother."

At the end of Vespers, the Brother called Father John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrer, the first Consultor. "Let someone assist me," asked the dying man of him. "My death is very near." Then, he passed into a peaceful agony.

The community was summoned. The Religious knelt down and began to pray around their dying Father and Founder. Father Rector said the prayers for the dying and the Religious answered the responses, as did Frattini and others who were outside the cell. The Father Consultor, delegated by the Pope, gave to Paul, with the Apostolic Blessing, the plenary indulgence for the hour of death and the indulgences of the Rosary and Mt. Carmel. Father John Mary, his confessor, again gave him absolution, according to the desire expressed by the Saint. During this time Bishop Struzzieri suggested to him acts of faith, hope and charity.

Then, the Passion of Jesus Christ according to St. John was read. The words appeared to revive him; he seemed to draw from this fount of salvation, to which he was so close, an abundance of peace, consolation and love. His eyes would dwell, at one time upon the image of Jesus nailed to the cross and at another on the picture of the Mother of Sorrows.

Throughout his illness, Paul had asked that he be allowed to die upon a pallet of straw, with a cord around his neck, a crown of thorns upon his head and clothed in the holy habit with the emblem of the Passion, the 'sign' upon his breast. His last desires were granted in so far as they could be. Father John Mary, in clothing him in the habit and passing the rope around his neck, said to him, "There. Now you are content. You can die in sackcloth and ashes."

All at once, the Saint appeared rapt in ecstasy. An extraordinary expression of joy and happiness appeared upon his face. With a smile upon his lips and his gaze upon heaven, he raised his arm and, then, with repeated gestures with his hands, he seemed to be begging those around him to leave a free passage so as to invite certain mysterious persons to approach. It is believed that at that moment he enjoyed a heavenly vision.

Such was indeed the truth. After his death, he appeared glorified to a saintly soul and revealed that at that moment he had seen descend, in the midst of resplendent light, the Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Luke the Evangelist, St. Peter of Alcantara, his brother Father John Baptist, and all the other members of the Congregation who had gone to Heaven before him. Following upon these were a multitude of blessed souls whom he had converted and saved during the missions he had given during his life.

Now the Saint seemed to have a foretaste of the eternal joys of Heaven, and, being unable to endure them, he let his arms fall on to the bed and closed his eyes. The Bishop of Amelia, Bishop Struzzieri, spoke to him, "Father Paul, remember your poor Congregation in Heaven. Remember all your poor children." The dying Founder gave a sign that he would not fail to remember them."

A moment later, while the words of St. John's Gospel were being read, "Father,

the hour is come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." Without a movement of his body, he appeared to fall into a peaceful sleep.

Already, the soul of Paul of the Cross was contemplating in glory Him whom his soul had ardently loved throughout all his sufferings. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, October 18, 1775, Wednesday. His age was 81 years, 9 months and 15 days.

At once, the bereaved and weeping Religious, like poor orphans, crowded around the holy remains. They reverently kissed the hands that had so often blessed them. They placed their heads upon the breast that had so burned with love for Jesus Christ, hoping to draw from contact with that now lifeless body the fullness of spirit which ought animate and inspire a true son of the Passion.

But soon, by one of those instinctive or divine sentiments, a phenomenon which accompanies only the death of the saints: sorrow, in spite of its bitterness, yielded to joy, and tears gave way to a heavenly consolation. .

Could this be a secret ray of the happiness of the blessed which descends from Heaven into souls and bursts into great light on the day of their immortal burial?

The other witnesses of this holy death, or rather of this glorious triumph, Frattini and the secular priests, exclaimed in the rapture of their souls, "Now, we have seen how the saints die."



## CHAPTER FORTY

### GLORIFICATION OF THE TOMB - CANONIZATION OF PAUL OF THE CROSS

Numerous prodigies soon announced to the world that there was another saint in Heaven.

He who had imprinted on himself the characteristics of Jesus Crucified should also be clothed in the characteristics of the glorified Jesus Crucified.

After His Passion and Death, Jesus Christ appeared to holy women and to His Apostles. Paul of the Cross also appeared to holy souls.

Scarcely had Paul breathed his last when Rosa Calabresi, praying in her room, suddenly perceived, as it were, a bright globe and in the midst a venerable person, vested as a priest, so radiant with light that she could not bear to look at it. In her amazement, she could neither think nor utter a word. A gentle voice, three times, called her by name, and, in order to reassure her, said, "Fear not. I am Paul of the Cross. I have come to tell you that at this very instant my soul is leaving my body and going forth into eternity to enjoy God in Heaven. There, one day, we will meet again." "O Father, beloved Father," cried Rosa in distress, "please pray to God for me that I may be worthy to rejoin you in Heaven." And the vision disappeared.

Rosa Calabresi was not the only one who saw Paul of the Cross, radiant with glory, at the moment of his death. Several others were also granted this favor, and among them a servant of God who had a deep affection and a high esteem for the Saint and who for several years was under his spiritual direction. She was meditating on the Passion in a church, when surrounded by a resplendent light, he appeared to her. He wore a white and red garment of incomparable beauty and brilliance. Surprised at first by this vision, but soon reassured, she asked the reason for this new garment. "It is the garment," he said, "of the purity of the angels and martyrs, and of the love which I suffered, especially in my union with the agonies of my Crucified Jesus. My daughter, I await you in Heaven." With these words he vanished. In the transports of joy of soul, she immediately returned home, described this vision in a letter to one of the priests at Sts. John and Paul, and begged him to inform her whether Father Paul of the Cross had really died. Checking the times, it is learned that the apparition took place almost immediately after the death of Paul.

These apparitions took place while Frattini was on his way to the Holy Father to announce the death of Paul of the Cross. The Sovereign Pontiff, under the impulse of that inspiration, which the Vicars of Jesus Christ possess, concerning the anticipation of saints, joined his hands and cried, "Oh, how fortunate he is. How happy he is." And turning to Frattini, he said, "Do not be sad; I forbid it. Father Paul was a great servant of God, and we are able to hold it for certain that already he has been admitted into the eternal joys of Heaven. His death took place on a glorious day, the feast of St. Luke, of whom it is said that he bore always in his body the mortification of the cross. He assured, then, that this praise also applies to the servant of God, Paul of the Cross."

Immediately, the Holy Father gave instructions that the body of Paul was not to be laid in an ordinary tomb, but that there was to be prepared for it a small monument in the Basilica, and that he was to be placed in two coffins, one of wood and the other of lead. All was to be done at the expense of the Pope.

The small picture of Our Lady of Sorrows, bequeathed by Paul, was given to the Holy Father. With what consolation he received it. He placed it in a silver frame on

which he himself had inscribed in Latin the words composed by himself, "To Pius VI, Sovereign Pontiff. Father Paul of the Cross, Founder of the Discalced Clerics of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ, bequeathed before his death this picture, which the Pontiff will venerate with especial devotion."

This picture was always a precious relic to the Pontiff. He placed it under a crucifix on the altar in his private chapel. The Holy Father never omitted to take it with him when he went from one residence to another, from the Vatican to the Quirinal. It is from the presence of this picture and of this crucifix that sacrilegious hands would drag him into exile; from this sacred spot the heroic martyr would rise with a tranquil countenance and courage of heart, with the words upon his lips, "It is the Will of God. Let us go."

Meanwhile, the news of the holy Founder's death spread rapidly throughout Rome. Rome was stirred at the news and distressed - prelates, religious, noblemen, children all united their voices to form but one cry, "The Saint is dead." On the same evening, October 18, the crowd hastened to the Retreat of Sts. John and Paul, demanding imperiously to see the sacred remains. But two Brothers were, at the time, preparing the body for the last obsequies. According to the Rule of the Congregation they clothed the Saint in the habit of the Passion, placing a violet stole around the neck, a crucifix between the hands, and in his own cell they laid him on a bare board with a brick beneath the head and sprinkled ashes on his forehead. After all these preparations were attended to, it was too late to allow the faithful to pay their respect. Therefore, only a few priests and special benefactors were admitted. During the night the Religious assembled around the corpse, praying, reciting the Psalms and watching in turn before the remains of the Saint.

The next day at dawn the body was carried down an inside stairway into the Basilica and placed in the nave, just as it had been in the cell, except for the addition of four lighted candles.

A numerous and sorrowing multitude had already assembled. As soon as the doors of the church were opened, they rushed in and crowded around the mortal remains. Some kissed his hands, others his feet, and all sought to obtain a relic from his habit or from his hair. But their piety went beyond the limits of discretion, for soon the habit of the Saint was in shreds. A barrier had to be erected, and a group of laymen were chosen to act as custodians of the body, allowing only ecclesiastics or persons of distinction to approach it. Rosaries, medals and pious objects were placed on the corpse and then distributed to the people, together with small pieces of his clothing.

From early morn, Masses were celebrated at the altars in the Basilica by his own Religious and secular and other regular clergy who had come to pay their homage to the Saint. Among those present was Cardinal Boschi, Titular of the Basilica, Bishop Marucci, the Vice-Gerent and Bishop Tiberius Ruffo, all who assisted at the obsequies. At ten o'clock the Office of the Dead was recited, which was followed by a Solemn Requiem Mass. The body remained in the Church, exposed to the veneration of the faithful, until the evening of October 19. Despite the torrential rain and the distance of the Retreat from the City, people were coming and going continually. The large naves of the Church were always crowded.

Devotion to Paul of the Cross was further inflamed by wonderful prodigies. That very day, from the holy remains, from the chaste victim immolated on Calvary, from that temple so dear to God, came a wondrous power. The face of Paul assumed a heavenly

beauty. It was the face of the Blessed in adoration it reflected; it was aglow with rays of light, and its very appearance raised hearts to God. One never tired of gazing upon it, "How beautiful he is. How beautiful he is," were the exclamations rising from every side. "It is the beauty of the angels." One holy priest, on kissing the hand, perceived a sweet mystic fragrance emanating from the chaste body and asked the Brother Infirmarian if it had been embalmed or anointed with perfume. The Brother replied that it was not so.

A clear liquid flowed abundantly from the face and feet; this was reverently collected on linen cloths.

A lady called Gertrude Marini had spent at this time three months in bed with a malignant facial tumor, which the doctors, after treating, declared to be incurable. Accompanied by her parents, she went to Sts. John and Paul. The dense crowd at first prevented her from gaining access to the body, but eventually, after many difficulties, she was able to touch it. Immediately, Gertrude felt herself to be cured. "A miracle! A miracle!" cried all those witnessing the scene, and this exclamation passed from the lips of one to another and was a climax to the universal enthusiasm.

Many other miracles signaled the burial of Paul, attesting to the powerful intercession that he was already exercising in Heaven. This day was a day of triumph rather than a day of mourning.

Night came. How can the body of the Saint be carried out because of the thronging crowd? The authority of the Vice-Gerent himself was needed before the doors of the church could be closed. The body was removed to the chapel called the Sepulchre because it was there that the altar of repose was built on Holy Thursday. When a plaster cast of the face was being taken, the mouth remained open; the Brother Infirmarian tried in vain to close it. "Father Paul," he said, "you have always been obedient to my instructions during your life. I wish that you obey me even after your death. As an act of obedience, I request you to close your mouth." And the mouth closed.

Then, in the presence of the Vice-Gerent, the Passionist Fathers and Brothers, and others, the Notary prepared the document of the identification of the corpse.

The habit, which the faithful in their piety had cut to pieces, was replaced by another. That they might have relics, the little hair that remained was cut off. The body remained perfectly supple. Some, through devotion, were placing rosary beads in his hands, which opened or closed according to their wish, without the least difficulty. It was at this time that an examination was made of the Holy Name of Jesus, surmounted on a cross, which the Servant of God had branded over his heart with a red-hot iron. They also saw the wonder of love which had caused his ribs to expand on the left side of the body. But nothing so impressed them as the radiance of his countenance, and all, including the Vice-Gerent, exclaimed, "How beautiful he is. What a pity that the body is to be buried so soon." After the bystanders, and especially the Passionist religious, had looked for the last time upon their Father and Founder, that the memory of his features might never be erased from their memory, they placed him in a wooden coffin with a few bricks under his head and a brass crucifix upon his breast. On his side they placed a glass tube covered with lead, bearing an inscription in Latin which was a resume of his life. The coffin was stamped with six seals, four of the Vice-Gerent and two of the Congregation. All then left the chapel and the door was locked. The Bishop himself kept the key.

Next day, as soon as the doors of the church were opened, a greater number

than ever were waiting. When they learned that the body of the Saint had already been sealed in the coffin, their disappointment was extreme. To compensate themselves for their disappointment, they went to the door of the chapel to pray there; some even cut pieces from the door to keep as relics. The people were all of one voice in complaining of the removal of the precious remains, thus depriving so many of the consolation of seeing him. Even the Holy Father expressed his regrets. His Holiness had thought of taking the heart as a relic, but the Superiors of the Congregation, unaware of the pious intention of the Pontiff, did not believe that they should deviate from the usual custom without an authoritative command from him.

On the evening of October 21, the coffin was examined and immediately placed in another of lead, which was also closed and sealed with the seals of the Vice-Gerent and the Congregation. These two coffins were placed in a third one of wood. Near this chapel, at the bottom of the nave to the left, they laid the venerable remains in a vault, which was soon to be adorned with a poor monument.

God made this tomb glorious and vivifying. It became the center of attraction for souls who came from everywhere and the scene of miracles. God was pleased to gratify the desires of the hearts of the pious pilgrims.

Few tombs of the saints have been glorified by so many miracles. We will recount only a few of them. Of the remaining, apart from those accompanied by unusual circumstances, most concerned the cure of body or of soul. Those which we are about to relate will give an idea of others and exemplify the powerful intercession of Paul before the throne of God.

Teresa Leone d'Oriolo was dying, and her death would also endanger the life of her unborn child. Her husband, Constantini Gori, wrote a letter to Father Paul, who was at the time an invalid at the Hospice of the Holy Cross. Paul first spent some time in prayer and then replied, "Have confidence. Both the Mother and the daughter to be born will be perfectly healthy." And it happened that the anxiety of Teresa yielded to the joys of Motherhood. The little girl, in memory of this favor, was given the name of Paula. When she grew older, her parents often told her to be good since she had a saint for a spiritual Father. At the death of the Saint, the little girl, aged six, became ill with the measles. This affected her eyes, which in time became covered with proud flesh. The eyes watered so much that the Mother believed that the sight had been entirely lost. Paula, for six months, was totally blind. All remedies were useless. The little girl could find relief only by pressing to her eyes a picture of her spiritual Father, Paul of the Cross, and a berettino that he had used. Each time Paula dropped one of these, she begged her Mother to pick it up for her. The blind Paula had to remain in bed.

One Monday morning, when the Mother entered the room, Paula said to her, "Mother, I have seen Father Paul." "It is his picture that you have seen," replied the Mother. "Mother, I tell you that I have seen Father Paul." Again, the Mother replied, "No, it is his picture that you have seen." "It was really Father Paul himself," answered Paula, "and he told me that next Thursday I will be able to open my eyes." "My child, what do you mean?" asked the Mother trembling, not daring to believe what her daughter had revealed. "He said to me, 'Little Paula, do you know who I am?' 'Yes, I know who you are.' 'Well, then, who am I?' 'You are my Father.' 'I want to cure you. Next Thursday you will be able to open your eyes, but you are to tell this only to your Mother.'"

Thursday came and Paula fell into a fever, then her eyes became clear and healthy, to the great astonishment of the doctors. It is to be noted that this child had

never seen Father Paul, nor had she seen a picture of him. Yet she explained in detail all the distinctive characteristics of the Saint. When, to assure themselves of the truth, they opposed the assertions of the child, Paula vigorously maintained the truth of what she had said: that it was Father Paul and nobody else.

One reads in the Processes that several people, who had recommended themselves to Paul of the Cross in order to make a good confession, experienced an extraordinary contrition and were filled with consolation. One incident of this kind is worth relating.

Venerando Colombino, a goldsmith of Rome, had desired to make a general confession for a long time. Although he had gone for this purpose into many churches, he had always postponed the confession, sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another, each suggested no doubt by the devil. The miracles worked at the tomb of Paul of the Cross made a great impression in the City, and Colombino hoped that he could find there peace of soul. On October 22, 1775, he visited the tomb of the Saint.

Kneeling, he prayed thus, "Father Paul, if you are as great a saint as they say you are, obtain for me true contrition for my sins." Hardly had he uttered these words, than he felt stirred to his innermost being. With sorrow in his heart and tears in his eyes, he sought a confessor, but as it was very late he was told to return the next day. All that night he could not sleep; an interior voice kept on repeating, "Go to confession at Sts. John and Paul." Early the following morning, he went to make his confession at Sts. John and Paul. The next day, returning again to the priest to complete the work he had begun with so much fervor, he was caught in the rain near the Capitol. Will he continue on his way? Will he return home? He hesitates. But invoking the help of Paul of the Cross, he continued on his way and arrived at the church. To his surprise he saw that not one drop of rain had fallen on his clothes. Colombino made his confession, which filled his soul with great joy and happiness, the joy of a soul reconciled with God. He thanked the Saint, his protector, and from that time onward devoted himself to making known the glory of Paul of the Cross.

The Canon, Vespasian de Sanctis, of Sonnino of the Diocese of Terracina, was very dejected. He was suffering from a serious and dangerous hernia. As his condition was hopeless, the doctor told him to prepare himself for death by receiving the Last Sacraments. On the same evening when it was expected that he would die, de Sanctis remembered that he possessed a small piece of bread which he had taken from Paul during dinner at the house of a benefactor. He asked for it to be brought to him, and then dropped a few crumbs into a glass of water. He fell into a deep sleep, which lasted throughout the night. The next morning on awakening, he found that he was completely cured; the hernia had disappeared. "Since then," adds St. Vincent Strambi, a contemporary of the Canon, "his health has been perfect."

Madeline Ciancaglioni of Bieda, in the Diocese of Viterbo, had for three months been suffering from a spinal affliction. One day, the pain became so acute that she thought she was going to die. Paul of the Cross had only been dead a short time. The sick woman took a picture of him and said with confidences, "Father Paul, please have the charity to cure me. I can do no more." At the same moment she sensed an invisible hand, which touched her on the spine, and the pain disappeared immediately, never to return again.

At the Convent of St. Clare at Castellana, Sister Mary Innocent of Jesus, because of her weakened state of health, had not been able to follow the usual

exercises of the community for many years. In her perplexity she went one day in October 1775 to a picture of Paul of the Cross and said, "Father Paul, you were so devoted to the regular observance yourself? I beseech you to obtain a cure for me so that I, too, may be able to keep the Rule of my Institute." Immediately she felt a new strength infused into her. She began to practice, like her religious sisters, all the austerities of her strict Order, so complete was her restoration to health. The doctors admitted that there was no natural explanation for this sudden and complete cure.

In the diocese of Soana, there were several women in imminent danger of death from puerperal fever. They touched a piece of the habit worn by Father Paul of the Cross and were cured, and their babies were born healthy.

It is true to say that miracles were worked so frequently, and proclaimed with such brilliance<sup>87</sup> the sanctity of Paul of the Cross, that it was necessary to collect the details of them in the Ordinary Processes. In September 1784, Pope Pius VI conferred on Paul the title of 'Venerable'. In May 1792, a decree granted permission to introduce the Cause of canonization before the Apostolic See. The Holy Father continued to promote it until February 20, 1788, an ever lamentable day, the day he was dragged from his palace, never to return.

Pope Pius II took to heart the Cause of Paul of the Cross after his triumphal return to Rome and proclaimed on February 18, 1821, the heroicity of his virtues.

Among the many miracles worked through the intercession of the holy Founder, two were proposed to the Congregation of Rites in order to obtain for him the honors of Beatification.

We will relate them briefly, based on the details found in the Processes themselves.

At Fondi, in 1816, Francis Mary Giorgi was suffering from congenital vomiting attacks and fits of fainting; these had caused an aneurism of the heart. At the age of seven, he was stricken with typhoid fever and was already given up by the doctors. His parents were resigned to his death and were already making arrangements for his funeral. The Father, remembering that he had a piece of the habit of Venerable Paul of the Cross, brought it out. He put the cloth in a spoonful of water and, turning together with his wife towards a picture of the holy Founder, he prayed that the Saint would obtain the cure of his son. The Mother remained before the picture, praying and weeping; the Father entered the room of the dying child and made him drink some drops of the water with the relic of the Saint. The child immediately opened his eyes and called for his Mother in a loud voice. The Mother, at once, ran into the room and, holding the child in her arms, asked him what he wanted. Francis replied that he wanted to get out of bed, and also that he needed something to eat. The anxious solicitude of the Mother would not permit her to gratify the desires of the child, but at his continual insistence she brought some food into him which he ate hungrily. Then he fell asleep and slept peacefully all night. The Mother, wishing to know if, in addition to the cure of the fever, the aneurism had also disappeared, placed her hand upon his chest. To her great disappointment she noticed that the palpitations were as rapid as before. Throwing herself upon her knees before the picture of the Saint, she prayed, "Father Paul, as you have given me the grace of bringing him back to life, please cure him of this other malady as well." The next morning, the Mother and the Father, who was a surgeon, approached the child to examine him and, to their amazement, they discovered that the aneurism had also disappeared. Francis, on waking, was full of

vigor and vitality. He arose from the bed, dressed himself and, after eating a hearty breakfast, went outside to join in the games of his companions.

There is another miracle, no less remarkable.

A young lady, Maria de Rollo, born in lowly surroundings at Roccasecca, a little village of the Kingdom of Naples, had for a long time endured a very severe pain in the left breast. Because of her feelings of modesty and delicacy, she was too embarrassed to reveal her illness, even to her Mother. In July 1844, she could bear the pain no longer. She spoke of it to her confessor, who gave her spiritual consolation and enjoined on her to reveal it to the doctor; Maria obeyed. Her distress was extreme when the doctor told her that she had a tumor, and that, if she did not follow the treatment prescribed, there would be no alternative but a serious operation and, unless she underwent this operation, she must surely die.

In October, the doctors discovered certain indications of cancer and said that the only remedy was an immediate operation. The girl could not make up her mind. That day she placed upon her breast a piece of clothing of the Saint and pleaded with him to cure her. However, the malignancy increased and caused horrible and frequent convulsions, unbearable pain, sleepless nights and nausea for all food. One Saturday Maria dragged herself to the Church to adore the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar. There, while recommending herself to the intercession of Paul of the Cross, she suddenly felt as though there was a burning furnace in her breast, so intense was the feeling that it sapped all her strength. For a moment she thought that she was dying, and recommended her soul to God. But soon her strength returned and she left the Church, returned home, and to her surprise found herself to be completely cured. She did not wish to reveal the miracle to anyone that evening; that night she slept more soundly than she had ever before. The next morning, she spoke of her happiness to two of her closest friends, who, on seeing her cured of the cancer, were overcome with transports of joy and published the news of the cure. Everybody united together to offer to Paul of the Cross fervent acts of thanksgiving. From that moment she enjoyed perfect health, and, after she was married, God gave her children which she was able to nourish at the breast.

While the Processes were examining these miracles, the immortal Pius IX was elected to be the Vicar of Christ. On his triumphal return from a sorrowful exile, where he was cast by a wicked and despicable conspiracy, the great Pontiff confirmed with his apostolic voice the miracles worked through the intercession of Paul of the Cross. On May 1, 1853, he solemnly inscribed his name in the ranks of the Blessed.

God continued to manifest the sanctity of the Servant of God by further miracles. Two more were proposed to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, so that the glory which the Blessed was enjoying on earth might raise him to the title and to the honors of the Saints.

How admirable is the Church in her prudence. It is indeed the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit who directs her. Everything concerning the narration of these two miracles we have verified with our eyes from the voluminous folios of the Processes. We will only summarize them now, omitting the details even though they make very interesting reading.

Rosa d'Alena, from a noble and distinguished family at Campo di Mile in the diocese of Gaeta, suffered from a cancer of the right breast which, through modesty, she concealed until increasing pain eventually compelled her to reveal it. But then it was

too late, for all remedies were useless; the tumor had become incurable. Rosa had recourse to Blessed Paul of the Cross, for whom she had a great devotion. When her prayers went unanswered, she decided to undergo an operation on the suggestion of her friends but against the advice of the leading doctor of Gaeta. It was with this in mind that she set out for Pontecorvo. Near this town, situated on a hill, was a Church and Retreat of the Passionists. She came here to go to confession before she underwent the operation, and to ask for a Solemn Mass to be said before the altar of the Blessed Paul. Looking upon a picture of him, this woman, more by her tears than by her words, pleaded with him to obtain a cure for her.

Soon she felt a burning heat in her breast; the tumor had dissolved and from it flowed a damp and warm liquid. After Mass she returned in haste to her lodgings and found the surgeon already there for the operation. To his astonishment he did not find in her breast any trace of the tumor. With fervent devotion Rosa thanked Paul of the Cross for his powerful intercession, and, with a joyful heart, she returned to her family. The surgeon, who had attended her, wished to assure themselves of the miracle with their own eyes. All were unanimous in admitting the truth of the miracle. The fame of the cure spread very quickly into the city and throughout the neighboring districts to the glory of the admirable Servant of God. (This lady, through gratitude, was present at the Canonization of the Saint. She also came to Sts. John and Paul the eve of and the day following the solemnity.)

The second miracle performed by the Servant of God was in favor of his own Religious. In 1853, the harvest was a total failure and the Passionists of the Retreat of St. Angelo, near Vetralla, were unable to receive from the charity of the faithful all the wheat which was necessary to sustain them until after the next harvest. With confidence in the Divine Goodness, they neither lessened for themselves, nor for others, the normal portion of bread. The Brother Porter asked the Rector if he intended, from the provisions of the Retreat, to feed the poor who were coming in great numbers, from 160 to 180. The Father Rector, in his charity, did not have the heart to send away the poor and destitute. He told the Brother to give them the usual amount without lessening it in the least. The Brother continued to give daily, to each of those who called, more than a half-pound loaf of bread.

When the Brother, who had charge of the granary, saw the pile of grain gradually decreasing, he wished to know how much still remained. On March 6, 1854, he measured it with the servant and found only nine roubles, which after winnowing was reduced to eight. Putting another small quantity with this, the total amount was then twelve roubles and seven and a half bushels. This supply, at the rate they had been consuming it during the past six months, would only supply the needs of the community until the first days of May. The Provincial, who knew that the Rector did not have the money to buy grain, sought in vain to borrow sufficient to tide them over until harvest time. Then he had recourse to Divine Providence, through the intercession of the holy Founder, Paul of the Cross. He ordered the Religious to invoke him with fervor for three days, as well as having the students recite every day, before the door of the granary, special prayers in honor of Blessed Paul. The Father and Founder heard the prayers of his sons and obtained from God a miracle.

It was almost the end of May and the grain should have been consumed, but there still remained a surprising amount. They measured it carefully, and, to the amazement of all, they found that there were still six roubles. They consulted not only the records of the Retreat, but also that of the gabelle (a special toll house which



collected a tax on the mixing of the grains), and it was clearly attested that, since March 6 until that very day, they had carried to the mill twenty-three sacks of wheat which was the equivalent of thirteen roubles and a few bushels.

God had multiplied, through the intercession of Blessed Paul, the wheat approximately seven roubles. The miracle was truly confirmed. The Religious offered to God and to their Father and Founder fervent prayers of thanksgiving. Redoubling, therefore, their confidence, they placed a picture of him in the granary and continued the prayers for a continuance of the miracle. From these six roubles they were able to obtain, until the harvest, sixteen bags - a total of eight roubles and a few bushels. There still remained a half bushel over. The inhabitants came from everywhere to the Retreat to ask for a few grains of this miraculous wheat. This was given to very many.

God, through the intercession of Paul of the Cross, had multiplied twelve roubles, seven and a half bushels to twenty-two roubles, seven bushels. Almost ten roubles of wheat miraculously added to the first had sufficed to feed, for nearly six months, thirty-six Religious, without counting those who came to St. Angelo for the Provincial Chapter, the numerous guests and the many poor of whom we have already spoken.

The authenticity of these miracles received the highest approbation, that of infallible authority. The Vicar of Christ proclaimed it in placing on the brow of Blessed Paul of the Cross the crown of the saints on June 29, 1867.

The Canonization of Paul of the Cross was an ever memorable day, a day of glory and a day of triumph for the Church.

From dawn till evening, cannon fire from the fort at St. Angelo echoed across the banks of the Tiber, down into the valleys and up to the mountain crests. Houses were gaily decorated and brightly illumined; the joyous peal of a thousand bells united with the harmonious sound of trumpets; the brilliance of a myriad of lights on the dome of St. Peter's glowed high above the city; everything foretold the time honored solemnity of Canonization that would take place the following day when new saints were to be proclaimed to the world.

Since the first streaks of dawn, an immense multitude began to cover the vast piazza of St. Peter's and to fill the Basilica.

Let us pause to consider the various paintings which represent Paul of the Cross.

On the facade of the Church, one depicts the Apostle preaching Jesus Crucified; under the doorway, another portrays his glorious tomb with the concourse of people who have come to venerate him, and the sick who ask him to cure them; in the interior of the Basilica, to the left, within the two arches nearest the Confession of St. Peter, another painting shows the two miracles which have merited for him the honor of the saints: the miraculous cure of the cancer and the multiplication of the wheat. Below, beside the Chair of St. Peter, there is a painting of the two apostles, Paul of the Cross and Leonard of Port Maurice, being taken to Heaven. The banner, which one of the Passionist priests will carry in the procession, represents the same scene as that of the painting which will be given to the Holy Father. Our Divine Lord has detached one of His arms from the cross and presses to His Sacred Heart the saint in ecstasy, while Paul replenishes his thirst from this divine fount.

The Basilica is adorned with rich and precious drapings, festoons and garlands, arranged with that grace entirely peculiar to the Romans. The flickering flames of more than fifteen-thousand candles blaze a trail of light on every side, one unending line of

candelabra forming from the arches and extending to the four corners of the cupola, like a brilliant conflagration. At the center of the vast nave, with a brilliance excelling all the others, sparkling with a thousand lights, glows the papal coat of arms.

The assembled congregation has waited long in patience. At half past seven the chant of the sacred hymns announces the progress of the procession as it leaves the Vatican. As the processional cross appears at the door of the Basilica, emotion seizes every heart. Truly, it is a glorious sight. Here are the Lord's anointed. Here are those Bishops whom one signal from Peter has brought together from the four corners of the earth: Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Oceania - the whole Catholic Church is represented.

At the end of this long and august procession, he appears whom every eye awaits impatiently to see. From the enthusiasm, which spreads from one person to another in an unbroken line, from the bowed heads and the bended knees, one perceives the presence of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, successor of St. Peter, Head of the Holy, Catholic Church. It is Pius IX, the immortal Pius IX, the gentle and dearly loved Pontiff, who advances majestically, carried on the sedia gestatoria, and blessing with loving affection his children prostrate at his feet.

"How beautiful you have been in that union, O Catholic Church. But at the same time, how strong you have been. Beautiful as Jerusalem, beautiful undoubtedly in your peace, when, wrapped in meditation in your rampart, you praise Him whom you have chosen, announcing His truths to His faithful. But how terrible you are, O Holy Church, when you march, Peter at your head, and the pulpit of unity, uniting all; hurtling down the heads of the proud and vanquishing all arrogance which raises itself against the knowledge of God; combating His enemies with all the power of His closely packed battalions; overthrowing them completely and with all the authority of ages past and all the execration of ages to come." (Bossuet, Sermon on the Unity of the Church.)

The ceremony of canonization begins.

After reciting the three prayers, the Pope kneels and intones the 'Veni Creator', which the congregation continues with an expression worthy of the magnificent solemnity. At the conclusion of the hymn, the Pope arises and from his inspired lips proclaims to the universe the sanctity of the heroes of charity and of faith. Then, with a firm and sonorous voice he intones the song of thanksgiving, the triumphant 'Te Deum', which twenty-four thousand upraised voices take up with enthusiasm. Simultaneously, the cannon fire of the fort announces to the listening city that the decree of canonization has been promulgated, and the bells of the Churches of Rome acknowledge it by their joyous peals.

Pius IX has now ascended the altar. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass begins. At the Offertory, three of the Cardinal Judges make successively the offering of the candles, of the bread and wine, of the turtle-doves, signifying the contemplative and the solitary life, of two doves as a symbol of the active life, but pure and faithful, and, finally, a cage of little birds, which are allowed to fly to the skies as a symbol of the flight of holy souls to God.

During this last and impressive ceremony, hymns appropriate to the occasion are sung. Never have the words of the Gospel, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church," received in its harmony a more solemn and moving interpretation. Three choirs of voices are raised in song, but voices which one finds only at Rome, representing the three states of the Church: the Church teaching, who makes decrees,

the Church of the faithful, who proclaim its faith, and the Church triumphant, who assures victory. These three states proclaim in emulation of one another the immortal destinies of the barque of Peter, and hurl a challenge to the powerless waves of frenzied godlessness, the closing words of the Gospel text: "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

How deeply are the people moved. How profoundly recollected they become during this Mass celebrated by the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Then, at last, the infinite Victim has renewed His sacrifice. The Supreme Pontiff, opening his arms and his heart to the kneeling congregation, bestows upon them the Apostolic Blessing and withdraws, overjoyed at the double testimony of loyalty and reverence, which his presence always receives.

By this venerable triumph of Peter and Paul, the Church has drawn the souls of those present more closely to the divine center of unity; she has proved once again her perpetual and virginal fecundity in crowning the saints with a diadem of eternal glory: the heroic martyrs of Gorcum, Poland, and Spain; the pure virgins of Pibrac and Naples; the illustrious apostles, Leonard of Port Maurice and PAUL OF THE CROSS.

O Paul of the Cross, O loving and beloved Father, hasten with your prayers the universal triumph of the Church and its visible Head, who will always remain blessed in our hearts. Obtain fervent apostles of the Gospel and, for our troubled times, peace. If it is still necessary to pass through bloody combats, may your holy example encourage and fortify and prevent disloyalty.

O holy Father and Founder, beseech for your sons the grace to walk always in your glorious footsteps, the way which your virtues, your zeal and your love for Jesus Crucified and the Virgin Mother of Sorrows has traced out for them.

And may we all, one day, united in glory with you, sons around their Father, sing throughout eternity the glory of the Cross, which alone has the power to raise fallen mankind to the heights of holiness and to make saints.

FINIS

## APPENDIX ONE

### THE APOSTOLIC BULL “SUPREMI APOSTOLATUS”

The Apostolic Bull “Supremi Apostolatus” is rightly called the ‘Magna Charta’ of our Congregation. It was issued by His Holiness, Pope Clement XIV, upon the request of St. Paul of the Cross. The Congregation had been approved by a Brief of Benedict XIV. In the meantime changes had been found necessary, and St. Paul desired a second solemn approval of the Rules with their changes. “Supremi Apostolatus” granted this together with the privilege of ‘exemption’.

A Latin text of the Bull is found in one of the appendices of our “Collectio Facultatum”. The style is rather strange for us today and we feel confident that many of our readers will appreciate the work done by Father Victor of the Sorrowful Mother (St. John Kenedy) of the Province of the Holy Spirit in giving us an English garb of the precious document. Passages here given with an asterisk are added by the translator to make the meaning clear.

1. “As We enter upon the ministry of the Supreme Apostolate recently entrusted to us, We realize that it must be an object of Our special care and solicitude, in so far as We are able under God, to neglect none of those things which are conducive to the promotion of the divine worship, to a deeper appreciation by the faithful of the mysteries of religion, and also to an increase of holiness in all men; in particular We realize that We must never neglect those who as Our helpers in the preaching of the apostolate devote their energy, industry and labors to the edification of their neighbor and the salvation of souls, who, moreover, unceasingly bring forth fruits of virtue in the field of the Lord, both now and, it is to be hoped, in the future; never failing to grant them, as greatly befits this Apostolic See, those favors and privileges which will, We trust, further the spiritual advancement both of themselves and of others.

2. It has been made known to Us by Our beloved son, Paul of the Cross, Superior General of the Congregation of Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his own name and in the name of all the members of the said Congregation, how Our predecessor, Pope Benedict XIV, of happy memory, specifically approved and confirmed by Apostolic Letters, in the form of a Brief, the Rules and Constitutions of the said Congregation; conceding at the same time the faculty of interpreting, clarifying, and even of amplifying and correcting the said Rules in General Chapters of the said Congregation, in so far as it may seem expedient in the Lord. (He tells Us moreover)\* how, by virtue of this faculty, the aforesaid Rules or Constitutions have, in the course of time, been explained, amplified, and put into better form by various General Chapters. Therefore, the said Paul has come to Us humbly entreating that We should be pleased not only once again to confirm specifically the Rules in their present form, but also, with a view to encouraging the spread of the Congregation and assuring its perpetual stability, to formally approve this Institute; to erect it by Apostolic authority into a Congregation of Clerics under the invocation of the life-giving Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ; to take it under Our special protection and that of the Apostolic See; to make yet fuller provision for its prosperous management and condition, as follows.

3. Desirous that the most high mystery and most powerful sacrament of divine mercy, the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which the very essence of all Christian hope and salvation is contained, should be ever fixed in the minds and the souls of the faithful; realizing that there is nothing more beneficial to Christian people than that, in

accordance with the apostolic doctrine of blessed Peter, all should be armed for the fight against the enemies of our salvation, and for the quest of the palm of victory, with the same thought, namely, that Christ has suffered in His humanity; and, hence, being of opinion that those who, by their preaching and example, endeavor to excite and inflame the faithful everywhere to joining in the companionship of the sufferings of Christ, should be honored with apostolic favors; and wishing to encourage with special favors the said General, Paul of the Cross, and the members of his Congregation and Institute who have taken up such a holy and praiseworthy work, and to accede insofar as We may in the Lord to their requests. We hereby absolve each and every one of them from whatsoever excommunications, suspensions, interdicts, or other ecclesiastical sentences, censures, or penalties they may be under, imposed for whatsoever reason 'a jure' or 'ab nomine', (but only insofar as this is necessary for the effect of these present letters), and will for the future consider them thus absolved. We accede to the petitions humbly made to Us in their name, and 'ex certa scientia' and by the plenitude of our Apostolic power, We hereby receive under Our special protection and that of the Apostolic See, the whole Congregation with the persons at present belonging to it, as also those who will in the future be therein received and enrolled, together with their houses everywhere which they now possess or will possess in the future; and so We perpetually establish. With like knowledge and authority, We commend and approve their Institute which has been fully investigated by Us both as regards its Rules and Constitutions, examined and approved below, and also the fruitful and abundantly testified experiment carried on for several years past; We erect and establish their union and society into a Congregation to be known as that of the Discalced Clerics of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of which will, in the service of Almighty God and the Church, sedulously observe four simple vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and of promoting amongst the faithful veneration for the most holy Cross and grateful remembrance of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, We supply for each and every defect whether 'juris' or 'facti' which may have occurred in its original establishment and erection.

Moreover, We hereby commend and approve the said Congregation's Rules and Constitutions (approved and confirmed previously by Our predecessor of happy memory, Benedict XIV, by Apostolic letters given at St. Mary Major's under the seal of the fisherman, 10 April 1746, beginning 'Ad Pastoralis') recently, by Our decree, considered, examined and opportunely recast, together with amplifications, additions, corrections and explanations which the said General and Clerics, using the faculty granted by Our said predecessor, Benedict XIV, considered in General Chapters to be opportune, and which We, by Our letters given yesterday, the 15th day of the current month of November, endowed with the added weight of Our approbation and authority. Further, We command and decree the unfailing observance hereafter of the said Rules and Constitutions by each and every member of the said Congregation, be he cleric, professed or novice, or lay-brother (not however under pain of mortal sin, simply according to their content and tenor). Moreover, all cases involving the Congregation itself or its members are to be judged and considered according to them. We command the General and Clerics to observe the following:

- i) that the habit heretofore worn shall likewise be worn hereafter;
- ii) that any persons whatsoever, be they secular clerics or priests, or laymen (provided they possess those qualities which are required by the said Rules and Constitutions, approved and confirmed by Us, as above) shall be

admitted into their Congregation and fellowship, shall be given the said habit to wear, and shall likewise be admitted, servatis servandis, to the profession of the said four simple vows, when the prescribed time of their probation is completed;

- iii) that those who have professed the said vows according to the prescribed rite may not be dismissed from the said Congregation nor dispensed from any of the said simple vows by anyone, be his power ordinary or delegated, and even though he possess the faculty, except Ourselves, the Roman Pontiff reigning at the time, the General Chapter of the said Congregation, and finally the General on the advice of his consultors and those mentioned below.

4. (The following faculties are also granted them).\*

- i) the possession and retention of the secluded houses which they now possess together with the garden estates belonging thereto;
- ii) the acquisition or re-erection of further such property according to the norms of their Institute, and with the permission and consent of those of whom in each case it may be required by general Apostolic constitutions;
- iii) the construction of further houses including in each case an oratory, church, moderate-sized bell-tower, guest rooms, cells, and working quarters, as required, and the inhabitation of these;
- iv) the maintenance of the way of life described in the Rule, and also the other observances of their Institute;
- v) the celebration in the said churches of Mass and the Divine Office according to the rite of the Holy Roman Church;
- vi) the reservation in the same, in a fitting manner, of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist and of Oil of the Sick, which they may administer only to members of their own Congregation when in danger of death;
- vii) the administration to the faithful of the Sacraments of the Blessed Eucharist and Penance, without prejudice to parochial rights;
- viii) the public exposition of the Most Blessed Eucharist to the veneration of the faithful, observing therein general decrees and diocesan legislation;
- ix) the delivery in the said churches of sermons and catechetical instructions;
- x) the celebration in the same of the exequies of members of the Congregation as well as any of the faithful who may choose to be buried therefrom, in no case however with prejudice to the rights of parish priests;
- xi) the possession in cities, territories and townships of hospices containing a private oratory, wherein they may celebrate Mass with the permission of the local Ordinary and, saving parochial rights, on all days of the year except Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday.

We strictly forbid any woman, under whatsoever pretext, ever to attempt or presume to enter the said houses or hospices, or go within the confines of the gardens attached thereto, once their boundaries have been suitably determined by the authority of the General or Provincial; nor may any woman be brought into these places. Offenders shall be visited with the same penalties as those laid down for violators of the cloister of male regulars.

5. (We grant them the faculty of)\* preaching the word of God publicly, giving sacred missions to the people according to the manner of their Institute, of administering the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist to the faithful in any other place whatsoever to which they may happen to be sent or called by the local Ordinaries. We hereby authoritatively permit and grant that while they are engaged in the said missions, or while travelling to give them, or travelling for any other reason, they may freely and licitly celebrate Mass an hour before dawn and an hour after midday, in any public church or apostolically privileged oratory.

They may hold general, provincial, and local chapters at the intervals or on the occasions indicated by the Rule; in these they may deal with matters regarding respectively the whole Congregation, the Province and the house concerned, and may make decrees they shall deem opportune; but it is reserved to General Chapters to interpret and clarify the Rules and Constitutions. Should it be learned by experience that changes, suppressions, or additions in the Rules and Constitutions are advisable, the General Chapter may decide to refer the matter to the Holy See. The same Chapter may dismiss, cast out, or expel from the Congregation professed members who so desire, or who are found unsuitable, or who are found to be with incorrigible faults, or finally who are found guilty of serious misdemeanors (see below). In particular the Chapters shall conduct the canonical elections in accordance with the prescriptions of the said Rules and Constitutions, the General Chapter electing the General for the next term and his Consultors, the Provincial Chapter the Provincial and his Consultors. Those so elected are to be considered as confirmed in office by the authority of the Holy See; they may not renounce the office to which they have been elected without the consent of the electing Chapter.

6. The General and Provincial enjoy full authority in their office to manage, arrange, and regulate all those matters which shall be recognized as allotted, committed and entrusted to them by the said Rules and Constitutions. In particular they are authorized to visit and reform the houses and members of the said Congregation, to correct, admonish, penance, and punish the religious if they so deserve; also to transfer them from place to place, all with no need whatsoever of the local Ordinary's permission. To the said General We concede and impart the faculty to dispense individual religious, given just and reasonable causes and in particular cases, from the observance of the Rules and Constitution of the Congregation, and even, with the advice and consent of his consultors and the Provincial concerned (or the majority thereof) to relax temporarily the rigor of some of the said Constitutions for whole houses or Provinces, as the vicissitudes of time or the needs of each case may dictate.

7. We hereby grant and decree that professed clerics of the said Congregation when found worthy in the judgment, in the Lord, of the General or Provincial, and at least three examiners appointed for the purpose by either of the latter, may be promoted and ordained, 'servatis servandis', to Orders including sacred Orders and the Priesthood, on the title of poverty, needing for this the dimissorial letters of the General or Provincial only; the ordination may be performed by the Bishop of the diocese in which they (the ordinandi)\* are 'de familia', or with the latter's permission, by any catholic Bishop holding favor and communion with the Holy See, those thus promoted and ordained can, may, and, as the case may be, ought serve in the ministry of the altar, observing the laws contained in the Apostolic Constitutions of Our predecessors, especially that of Pope Benedict XIV, of happy memory, on the ordination of regulars, beginning 'Impositi Nobis', and in the decrees and ordinances of the Congregation of

Cardinals appointed to interpret the Sacred Council of Trent. Should it happen, however that any so promoted to sacred Orders on the title of poverty come to be dismissed from the said Congregation, either at their own request or by the decree of the superiors (see below), these after dismissal must refrain from the exercise of the Orders received, and are to be considered suspended until such time as the Ordinary shall have judged that they will receive from interest on secure annuities, patrimonial or ecclesiastical, left to them, what will be sufficient for their due sustenance, as laid down in the sacred canons and synodal decrees.

Those who have received the order of Priesthood, that is, local Rectors and Masters of Novices, as well as others who have been delegated by any one of the said Rectors, by the General or Provincial, may, according to the tenor of the faculties granted, hear the confessions of and sacramentally absolve only members of the Congregation; but those who are found suitable by local Ordinaries and duly approved by them, may, according to the tenor of faculties granted them, also hear the confessions of and sacramentally absolve the faithful.

8. Should any professed cleric or lay brother of the Congregation decide that, because of ill health or physical weakness, or for any other just and reasonable cause, he will be unable to persevere in the Congregation, and accordingly request to be dismissed therefrom and to be released from the vows he has made therein; or, on the other hand, should the Superiors decide, after observation of his character and conduct, that a religious is quite unfitted to carry out the duties accordingly be honorably dismissed from it; or finally, should they (the Superiors)\* decide to cast and expel anyone from the Congregation because of some serious crime (which God forbid), incorrigible perversity of morals, or confirmed disobedience and obstinacy, (in each of these cases)\* We wish no steps to be taken towards the concession or decreeing, as the case may require, of such dismissals or expulsions other than as follows; the votes of all the Capitulars shall be taken, and (the decision made)\* in accordance with the judgment of the majority; outside General Chapters, the decision will be made by the General after conferring with his Consultors, the Provincial and local Rector of the Province and house respectively to which the religious in question belong, and after having obtained their consent (or that of the majority) which is to be sought in writing and which moreover they are bound to give.

Nevertheless, We hereby decree that in weighing the reasonableness of the causes for such dismissals, as also in decreeing the same, whether at the instance of the petitioners or 'ex officio', the greatest consideration is to be given to holy charity and Christian prudence; to the effect that should it be necessary to institute a process for the expulsion of one found guilty of crime or of incorrigible bad habits and shortcomings, We do not wish the application of the more severe points of cases and crimes as is done in ordinary trials, nor the drawing up of a formal process; rather We desire that after due attention has been given to the bare truth of the matter, and due consideration to the circumstances of person, place, time, etc., whereby the gravity of offences and vices is estimated, judgment and sentence shall be passed of such a nature as shall seem expedient in the Lord in view of the said Rules and Constitutions, all appeal and recourse being excluded.

However, just as those who are dismissed from the Congregation, whether at their own request or by the prudent judgment of the Superiors, may not be considered to have thereby contracted any stigma whatsoever which will bar them from the reception or exercise of Sacred Orders, provided they be found suitable and worthy for



the same, so also We decree that those who have been dismissed from the said Congregation for some fault of theirs but not, as We have said, as a result of judicial process, shall not thereby be liable to those heavy penalties which are laid down in Apostolic Constitutions (especially those of Urban VIII, of happy memory) for those expelled from and cast out of Orders of Regulars, except insofar as their crimes are in the external forum and duly proved therein, or are recognized as otherwise notorious and punishable by severe canonical censure.

9. Those who 'never sow or reap or gather into barns' have to live on the offerings of others. This is especially the case with those who labor ceaselessly day and night to give to others the food of the spirit. Therefore, to the said Congregation We grant and impart in perpetuity the faculty of questing and collecting alms from the devout faithful, particularly at these three times of the year: harvest, vintage, and oil-pressing. This they may do not only throughout the dioceses in which the Congregation has houses, now or in the future, but also, in times of need, in other dioceses in which it may not have a house at the time; in this case they must previously obtain the written permission of the Ordinary of each diocese in which they must needs quest for a definite or indefinite length of time. We forbid anyone to impede, disturb, or prohibit them from questing, receiving and collecting the said alms, no matter what the cause is, be it a right, custom, privilege, or indult, granted to whatsoever persons, congregations, or orders, even orders of Regular Mendicants; We hereby derogate from all the above, but only insofar as may be necessary for the effect (of this present faculty).\*

10. We also grant and concede to them the faculty of receiving and accepting any sums of money, also annuities of money or interest, and gifts of fruit, oil, and wine (provided there be no perpetual obligation of Masses attached thereto) which may come to them either by donation or other contract 'inter vivos', or by testament, codicil, or other last will, imperfection of formality notwithstanding. The occasion of such receipts may be the foundation of houses or any other whatsoever. This faculty is granted in suchwise that it carries with it no legal action.

11. With a view to encouraging all members of the Congregation, cleric and lay, professed and novices, to greater fervor in the performance of those devout practices which befit their Institute, and to a greater alacrity in fulfilling the duties of the said Congregation, We, by virtue of the mercy of Almighty God and the authority of His Apostles Peter and Paul, grant to each of them 40 days indulgence 'toties quoties' for assistance at any conference, public or private, whose aim is the calling to mind of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or moral reform; also for the performance of acts of worship, devotion, or mortification, in common or in private, which are prescribed by the Rules; and, lastly, for any work of spiritual or corporal mercy for their neighbor. The same indulgence is granted to all clerics, diocesan or regular, also of the said Congregation in the giving of missions and catechetical instructions to the people, and in the performance of other sacred ministrations to the faithful. It is extended also to those who go to the houses of the Congregation to make retreats, for the duration of the same.

Finally, by Our Apostolic authority and by the tenor of these present letters, We concede, extend, and grant to the said Congregation all privileges, indults, indulgences, and remissions of sin, faculties and spiritual favors which are, by apostolic authority, used and enjoyed now (or will be in the future) by all similar congregations of clerics, diocesan and regular, their houses (even regular), their Generals, and other superiors, officials, ministers, and other persons present and future. We grant all these in such

wise that they must be considered as having been granted (to the Congregation)\* principally, specially, and expressly (though not 'ad instar'), as having been hereby expressed and mentioned verbatim. Furthermore, We grant to the said Congregation, its members and houses, full communication in the merits of all prayers, fasts, penances, and other spiritual and good works performed in all orders of regulars.

12. We decree that these Our present letters are now and shall be always and in perpetuity valid, confirmed, and efficacious, and must receive and obtain their full and integral effects; at no time, under whatsoever imperfection, be it of subreption, obreption, nullity or invalidity, any defect of Our intention, or other defect however great, substantial, unthought of or unthinkable, or requiring specific and individual mention and expression, nor for any other reason demanded by law or custom, however just, as necessary to be expressed for the validity of these same letters, may they be censured, attacked, invalidated, withdrawn, summoned before the law, disputed, placed under legal term; against them no remedy of 'restitutio in integrum', 'reductio ad viam et terminos juris', or other remedy whether of grace or justice may be sought. These letters are not to come under general recalls of similar or dissimilar favors or ordinances, nor under suspensions, limitations, modifications, derogations, or other contrary ordinances made for whatsoever reason by Us, Our successors the Roman Pontiffs reigning at the time, or the Holy See, even though given 'motu proprio', 'ex certa scientia', or by the plenitude of powers on the contrary, they are to be excepted from them always and entirely. We decree that in this manner and no other are each and every one of the foregoing ordinances to be judged and defined by any judges whatsoever, ordinary or delegated, or the auditors of the Apostolic Palace, Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church (even though Legates a latere or vice-legates), Apostolic Nuncios, or any other persons at all, no matter what their prerogatives, privileges, dignity, or preeminence. (To this effect)\* We hereby withdraw from each and every one of them all faculty and authority to judge and interpret otherwise. This prohibition applies to all tribunals and instances, even though an attempt may have been made to the contrary, knowingly or in ignorance, by anyone, no matter what his authority.

13. And so We earnestly exhort in the Lord Our venerable brother Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, as also Our beloved sons and Ordinaries of places, in whose dioceses and territories monasteries, houses, and hospices of the said Discalced Clerics have been erected, or by God's blessing come to be erected in the future, or to which, with the permission of their superiors, the said Discalced Clerics may come, particularly if it be to perform their evangelical ministry, to receive them and cause others to receive them as eager workers in the vineyard of the Lord and to esteem them out of reverence for Us and the Holy See. No less strongly do We hereby enjoin on the said Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Ordinaries, before mentioned, that when there is need, as also when requested to do so on behalf of the said Discalced Clerics, they shall solemnly publish these letters and their contents either personally or through another or others, shall assist them by means of effective protection with regard to the same, and shall see to it with Our authority that they enjoy the contents of the same in all peace; they must prevent anyone whomsoever from unduly molesting them collectively or individually in regard to the same, and shall punish offenders whomsoever they may be with Our authority, right of appeal being excluded.

14. (These letters are to take effect)\* notwithstanding, insofar as is necessary, any regulations made by Us, or the Apostolic Chancery forbidding the suspension of vested rights, and the granting of favors 'ad instar', nor any other regulations conflicting

with these letters and their contents, no matter by what authority they were issued or are to be issued, nor apostolic constitutions and ordinances whether special or general; notwithstanding privileges, indulgences, or apostolic letters which may have been granted, approved, confirmed, or renewed for whatsoever orders of regulars or their members, no matter how worthy they may be of special mention, nor what their tenor or form, nor what derogatory (even derogatory of derogatory) or other stronger or unusual clauses, even invalidating, or other decrees in general or in particular, even if 'motu proprio', which they may contain, when these are in any way contrary to these present letters and their contents. All of the above will otherwise retain their force, but in this instance only and to the effect of these present letters. We hereby most widely, most fully, specially, and expressly derogate from them all, even though it be normally required that special, specific, individual, and verbatim mention or other expression be made, which would exclude general clauses having the same meanings; in this instance it must be considered that each and every one of them and their contents have by these present letters been fully, sufficiently, and word for word written and expressed; We derogate finally to whatever else may stand to the contrary.

In order that these Our letters may be made known the more easily to everyone, We desire that the same faith be given in and out of court to transcriptions or printings of them when signed by the hand of a public notary and sealed by some ecclesiastical dignitary, just as though it was the original that was being shown or produced.

It is permitted to no one to infringe on these letters in the absolution, reception, confirmation, approbation, erection, institution, concession, indulgence of faculties, and bestowal of privileges which they contain, not rashly presume to contravene them. Should anyone attempt to do so, he must realize that he will thereby incur the wrath of Almighty God, and of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome at St. Mary Major's,  
in the year of Our Lord, 1769  
the 16th day of November,  
the first year of Our Pontificate.  
C. Card. Pro-Dat.  
A. Card. Nigronus.  
De Curia: I. Manassei.  
Loco + plumbi  
L. Eugenius.  
("PASSIONIST" Vol. VIII. No.6)

## **APPENDIX TWO**

### **APOSTOLIC LETTERS: “PRAECLARA VIRTUTUM EXEMPLA” PIUS, BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD FOR A PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE**

#### **1. THE POPE DECLARES HIS WILL TO CONFIRM THE RULES**

The shining example of virtue which the Supreme Author of holiness does not cease continually to renew in His Church, in those especially who under the inspiration of Divine grace have put aside the allurements of the world to choose the better part and maintaining Institutes of apostolic life under regular discipline, not only for their own eternal welfare, but also for others who have withdrawn from the like attractions, Our Predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, have always endeavored to foster and with opportune assistance to procure that they more easily and securely pursue the path of evangelical perfection on which they have entered. Wherefore We, by Divine design presiding over the government of the same Catholic Church are devoting all care in protecting the stability of regular discipline and are appointing for the new laborers therein the Rules which after mature and lengthy examination are held to be more suitable.

#### **2. PREVIOUS APPROBATIONS OF BENEDICT XIV AND CLEMENT XIV ARE RECALLED.**

Moreover, Our Predecessors, of happy memory, and first Benedict XIV trusting that the rising Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ would be fruitful, approved for it certain rules and ordinations for it in the form of a Brief under date, April 18, 1746, for its formation and government. Then Clement XIV, on learning that the Congregation with increased membership was productive of virtue and Christian piety in the Divine field, by similar Letters in the form of a Brief, November 15, 1769, confirmed and approved the Letters already granted, as also the Statutes, Rules and Constitutions of the same Congregation, together with some additions and declarations many by other Apostolic Letters under seal in the same year 1769 of Our Lord's Incarnation, expedited in the first year of his Pontificate, took under his own and the special protection of the Apostolic See the same Congregation and its members and houses, and approving and praising the Institute erected and established that society into the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose members by the observance of the four simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and the promotion of devotion amongst the faithful and their grateful remembrance of the Passion of the same Lord Jesus Christ, render continual and useful service to Almighty God and the Church, be decreed, added, and granted other things which he considered would promote the stability, regulation, the increase and propagation of the same Congregation.

#### **3. DECLARATION THAT SOME CHANGES ENACTED IN THE RULES BY GENERAL CHAPTERS.**

Since it has been explained to Us recently on behalf of our beloved son, Paul of the Cross, General of the aforesaid Congregation, that in virtue of the faculty previously granted by Letters of Our Predecessors both of Benedict and the two Clements, the

Rules and Constitutions could be interpreted and declared in the General Chapters of the Congregations and, if experience showed some things should be changed, curtailed, or added, a report should be made to the Apostolic See; in the General Assembly held in May last in the house of Sts. John and Paul, donated to the Congregation by Our Predecessor, Clement, the members, under the presidency of Paul, thought to remove from the Rules some things of lighter moment, to add other points and make certain changes and, finally, were of unanimous opinion that such changes should be embodied in a new compilation of Rules in their individual sections.

#### 4. APPROBATION IS SOUGHT FOR THE CHANGES MADE AND ALSO A NEW CONFIRMATION OF THE INSTITUTE,

Accordingly, on behalf of the aforesaid Paul, the entire matter of the approbation of the said Rules has been humbly presented to Us, together with a petition for renewed confirmation of the Institute and that We enrich it with spiritual favors to carry on the apostolic ministry more effectively with greater benefit of the faithful.

#### 5. THE RULES ARE EXAMINED BY CARDINALS DE ZELADA AND A LANCEIS.

Nevertheless, before taking any steps in the matter, although as We perceive that the Congregation with God's blessing has already increased and new members continue to join in the diligent care for the salvation of themselves and others; still, justly relying on the great zeal for Religion, on the prudence and perspicacity of mind of Our beloved sons, Charles Victor Amadeus a Lanceis of the title of St. Praxedes, and Francis Xavier De Zelada of the title of St. Martin in the mountains, Cardinal priests of the Holy Roman Church, We have enjoined on them an examination of the Rules and sought their opinions, and since, after mature and lengthy investigation, they carefully weighed the Rules, adding their written agreement and commendation, they have earnestly asked Us that We deign to confirm and approve the Rules and Constitutions with Our supreme authority, and to sanction their observance so that the members of the same Congregation should strive to fulfill them.

#### 6. THE CONGREGATION IS CONFIRMED WITH APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY.

We, therefore, considering that the Congregation will progress and be more fruitful unto the sanctification of the people and in the end their eternal life the more earnestly the members preserve their original fervor of spirit, and the Religious, loving and practicing a strict poverty and by their prayers, vigils, penitential works, and preaching the word of God will procure their own salvation and the conversion of sinners, whilst instilling in the minds of all the remembrance of the most bitter Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, most willingly in virtue of Our authority We desire to protect this pious Institute and the Rules so that they may be more perfectly preserved. Wishing, therefore, as far as We can in the Lord to aid the said Paul of the Cross, Superior General, and the members of his Congregation with special favors and to absolve them individually from whatsoever excommunication, suspension, interdict, and other ecclesiastical sentence, censure and punishment, if they should be in any way bound thereby for the purpose only of enjoying the effect of these present letters, consenting thus to their request humbly presented to Us, from Our certain knowledge and the plenitude of Apostolic power, first of Benedict as also of the previously mentioned two

Clements, Our Predecessors, We confirm and approve the Letters regarding the erection and institution of the said Congregation with all the favors, faculties, privileges, concessions and indults contained and granted in them as if in the same manner, integrally, word by word, they were inserted in these present Letters according to their tenor. By Our Apostolic authority We confirm and approve by Our present Letters in their manner and form according to their tenor in their entirety in perpetuity.

#### 7. CONFIRMATION EXTENDED TO THE NEW COLLECTION OF THE RULES.

Moreover, this new collection of Rules and Constitutions have been examined and praised by aforesaid Cardinals Charles Victor Amadeus and Francis Xavier so that by Our present Letters they should be faithfully printed and made known to the present and future members of the said Congregation as if the entire Rules and foregoing Decree were inserted in these present Letters whereby We confirm and approve them according to their tenor and add to them the force and strength of Apostolic stability; We declare and even decree and sanction that each and every member of the said Congregation is bound to their full observance under pain of punishment inflicted by them.

#### 8. PLENARY INDULGENCE FOR MISSIONS & PAPAL BLESSING TO BE IMPARTED.

But in order to attract the faithful to the apostolic missions and spiritual exercises preached publicly in churches by the members of the said Congregation, or to the retreats for some days in their houses, in order that they may share in heavenly treasures of the Church, We, confiding in the mercy of the Omnipotent God, with the authority of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, to each and all of the faithful of both sexes attending such missions and retreats at the end, after having confessed and communicated, We grant and impart when they are truly repentant a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all sins mercifully in the Lord, to hold in perpetuity, moreover, to the members of the same Congregation for the time they are engaged in giving missions, We grant and permit, nay, We prescribe and enjoin that on the last day of such mission after diligently commending to their utmost to the faithful the devout remembrance of the Passion of Our Lord, that they can and ought to impart with the figure of Our Lord Jesus Christ hanging from the Cross, that they wear according to their custom, to the people the Blessing in Our name and that of the Roman Pontiff at the time as a pledge of Divine mercy and reconciliation.

#### 9. THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION ARE RECOMMENDED TO THE BISHOPS.

Finally, adhering to the commendation of Clement (Our) Predecessor, which he did not omit in his Letters, We earnestly entreat in the Lord Our Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops and Our beloved sons, the Bishops, in whose Dioceses and districts, houses, Retreats and Hospices of the said Discalced Clerics already exist, or with God's blessing will in the future be established, and to whom with the permission of their superiors they will present themselves for evangelical duties. We earnestly entreat that they be received out of reverence for, and as specially recommended by Our Apostolic See, and that they be engaged to preach the Word of God and to exercise other ecclesiastical duties and sacred ministrations in conformity

with (their) Rules. But We enjoin on the clerics themselves of the said Congregation that mindful of their Institute that they cooperate with the foregoing Prelates and labor with them for the good of the Catholic Religion, of Divine worship and the salvation of souls.

#### 10. CLAUSES CONCERNING THE STABILITY OF THESE LETTERS AND THE VIGOR OF THE RULES.

Moreover, the present Letters and their contents must always be observed as perpetually valid, stable and effective for the attainment of their objective, and never from any cause whatsoever, of subreption, obreption, nullity or invalidity, or defect of Our intention, or any other fault however great and substantial and requiring individual mention, or under whatsoever head and law, statute or custom however just which had necessarily to be expressed, noted, impugned, or retracted...\*

#### 11. INVALIDATING DECREE.

And accordingly and not otherwise than in the foregoing in detail by whatsoever Judges, Ordinaries, Delegates, even Auditors of the Apostolic Palace...\*...judge and interpret otherwise; if such be attempted willfully, or through ignorance, We declare it null and void.

#### 12. DEROGATION (OR REPEAL) OF CONTRADICTION,

We derogate as far as needed from the Rules of the Apostolic Chancery and whatsoever Apostolic Constitutions and Ordinations...\*...all things to the contrary notwithstanding...

#### 13. CONFIDENCE TO BE PLACED IN COPIES.

But in order that Our present Letters may come to the knowledge of all more easily, We wish that altogether the same faith be given to copies, even printed, signed by the hand of some Notary Public and certified with the seal of a person of ecclesiastical dignity in judgment and outside it which is attributed to the present Letters, if the originals be exhibited or produced.

#### 14. PENAL SANCTION.

Let no one, therefore, infringe this page of Our confirmation, approbation, concession ... or rashly dare to withstand it; if anyone, however, shall presume to attempt it, let him know that he will incur the displeasure of Almighty God and of His blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Mary Major's,  
the year of Our Lord, 1775  
the first year of Our Pontificate.  
A. Card. Pro-Dat.  
I. Card. de Comitibus,  
VISA  
De Curia: I; Manassei.

Loco + Plumbi.  
L. Eugenius.  
Registrata in Secret Brevium,

\* (NOTE: Sections 10, 11, 12 contain legal verbiage and many repetitions and is unsuitable for reproduction in an English publication. These sections are indicated by \*)

Translated by Father Bede of the Holy Family, C.P.



## **DECRETUM URBIS ET ORBIS**

Assuredly, Saint Paul of the Cross was one of the most eminent heralds of the Gospel sent by God in these latter days, as it were, in the eleventh hour, to instruct His people he has received full and abundant reward. Indeed, sharing in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and visiting towns and countryside, he dispensed to the faithful the words of life, heavenly food for souls. With a teaching adapted to the needs of the time, he strengthened the weak, healed the broken reeds, and converted the sinner to the day when, reaping in joy what he had sown in tears, he carried, in leaving this earth, an abundant harvest into the eternal tabernacles. But he has left his spirit to his disciples, whom he gathered under the standard of the Cross, so that they might work unceasingly in the vineyard of the Lord.

Raising him to the ranks of the Saints, the hand of God has made his glory shine before the eyes of men through extraordinary wonders, which have also drawn the attention of the Holy Father, Pope Pius IX. And so having taken counsel of the Cardinals and Bishops of the Roman Church, who have come in great numbers to Rome from all parts of the world in 1867 to celebrate the anniversary of the Prince of the Apostles, he inscribed this apostolic worker in the ranks of the Saints.

Paul had already received the highest honors of the altar when a great number of these same Cardinals, Bishops of the Roman Church, in order the more easily to inspire in the faithful a love of the Cross and the desire to know nothing but Christ and Him Crucified, asked the Holy Father, Pius IX, to extend to the universal Church the Office and Mass of Saint Paul of the Cross, Founder of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I, the undersigned, Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, transmitted their request to the same Holy Father. His Holiness has decreed by Apostolic Authority that, henceforth, the feast of Saint Paul of the Cross, with Office and Mass approved for the clergy of Rome on July 11 of this current year, would be celebrated under the rite of a Minor Double each year on April 28 and both by the secular clergy and religious of both sexes, by all who are obliged to say the canonical hours, observing always the rules of the rubrics.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

January 4, 1869.

CARDINAL PATRIZZI,

Prefect of Congregation of Rites.

DOMINIC BARTOLLINI, Secretary.

Loco + Plumbi

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**WISDOM:**  
 An angel preaches on behalf of Paul  
 The 'voice' of the Holy Ghost  
 Reads the secrets of the human heart  
 Foretells the death of Bishop of Viterbo  
**PROTECTION:**  
 Hospitality in a forest  
 Two angels transport him to Monte Argentario  
 Paul and John Baptist helped by angels

### **CHAPTER THIRTY**

#### **SPIRITUAL RETREATS TO PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS - BY THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST HE GUIDED SOULS TO UNION WITH GOD**

Retreats to priests and religious  
 Reverence for priests  
 Levitation, while preaching to priests at Latera  
 Solitude for Nuns; The TB Sister  
 Frees a convent from the ravages of TB  
 Sisters Teresa Margaret and Mary, Carmelites  
 "The little nun" - Elizabeth Ercolani  
 Spiritual director of souls  
 Discernment of spirits  
 Principle of the spiritual life - the Passion  
 The Passion, the means to correct faults  
 "Appropriating to oneself the Passion of Christ"  
 Means for progress in prayer: Recollection, Spiritual Silence, Repose  
 Divine touches:  
     Union  
     Mystic Death; Christ the Model  
     Divine life; Transforming union  
 The only proof of prayer: practice of virtue  
 Paul of the Cross, Master of the spiritual life

### **CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE**

#### **DEATH OF FATHER JOHN BAPTIST - THE TWO BROTHERS - CHOOSES A HOUSE AT ROME - VISITATION OF RETREATS IN ROMAN CAMPAGNA - TRIUMPH - MIRACLES**

1765

July                      Fifty years an apostle  
                              Revelation concerning death of John Baptist



August	Father John Baptist; The two brothers John Baptist dies in the arms of his brother Grief of Paul; Celebrates the obsequies God reveals the glory of Father John Baptist
1766	Paul chooses house in Rome; Anthony Frattini The new house is called the "Hospice of Holy Cross" The community; two priests and one brother
1766 November	Visitation of the Retreats of the Campagna An invalid for four months at Terracina Enthusiasm of all ranks towards Paul His humility in face of reverence and honors Innumerable miraculous cures
1767 May 6	Return to the Hospice of the Holy Cross

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO**

### **ILLNESS OF PAUL - TERRIBLE ASSAULTS OF THE DEVIL - INTERIOR DESOLATION – 'EXILE OF HEART' - ABANDONMENT BY GOD - SONG OF LOVE**

1767	Illness at St. Angelo; Viaticum three times Assaults of the devils upon him Reason for diabolic hatred; Mass; The Passion Means used to vanquish the devil Divine trials: Darkness, aridity, abandonment The summit of the cross, abandonment of Calvary Song of love
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## **CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE**

### **DEATH OF CLEMENT XIII - CLEMENT XIV - APPROBATION OF THE RULES - JUBILEE MISSION AT ROME - PREPARES TO LEAVE FOR ST. ANGELO**

1769 February 2	Death of Pope Clement XIII; Grief of Paul Prophecy concerning the successor Friendship with Cardinals destined to be Popes
May 19	Ganganelli elected Pope - Clement XIV
May 25	Paul in audience with Clement XIV Seeks solemn approbation of the Rules
June 18	Petition presented to the Pope Vote of approval by the examiners
August 15	Prayer of thanksgiving at St. Mary Major's Circular letter to the Retreats
November 15	The Brief and the Bull are published Clement XIV asks Paul to preach Jubilee Mission

September 12 Paul, an invalid, is carried to the platform  
 Abundant fruits of his preaching  
 The Princess of Carigna  
 The crown of his apostolic life  
 His desire to die at St. Angelo  
 October Clement XIV keeps him at Rome; Promise of a house  
 December 2 Midnight Mass at Hospice of Holy Cross  
 Attends Mass celebrated by Pope at St. Mary Major's

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR**

### **VISITATION IN THE PATRIMONY OF ST. PETER - CLEMENT XIV DISPATCHES A BRIEF - SUMMONED TO ROME - TRIUMPHAL RETURN - SERIOUS ILLNESS - THE LAST SACRAMENTS - NEAR TO DEATH - SUDDEN RECOVERY**

1770

March 19 Seeks permission to make Visitation  
 March 27 Leaves Rome "with his confessor; Monterone  
 March 28 Civitavecchia  
 March 31 Retreat near Corneto; Visitation and retreat  
 Montalto; Preaches to fishermen  
 April 19 Orbetello; Enthusiasm amongst inhabitants  
 April 21 Monte Argentario; Recollection of early days  
 Visitation of Retreat of Presentation  
 Retreat of St. Joseph, the Novitiate  
 "Father Paul, bequeath your heart to us"  
 Receives Brief from Clement XIV  
 Recalled to Rome; Triumphal return  
 June Illness after arrival at Rome  
 July 1 Submits Rules for Institute of Passionist Nuns  
 July 26 Papal audience; Reverence for virtues of Pope  
 Zeal and humility of Clement XIV  
 October An attack of tertian fever  
 November Novena in preparation for feast of Presentation  
 Predicts recovery of Pope's confessor  
 Observes the fast and abstinence of Advent  
 December 8 Unable to have an audience with the Pope  
 December 18 Receives holy Viaticum  
 Revelation that his hour of death was not near  
 Clement XIV seeks reports on Paul's condition

1771

January 12 Sudden relapse  
 Request for Viaticum; Recovery and relapses  
 February 26 Holy Viaticum; Papal blessing  
 Recovery  
 Foundation of Institute of Passionist Nuns  
 Relapse; Danger of death  
 Recovery in obedience to Vicar of Christ

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE**

## **FOUNDATION OF THE PASSIONIST NUNS - DIVINE INSPIRATION - DIABOLICAL ASSAULTS - THE RULES - APPROBATION BY CLEMENT XIV - FIRST SUPERIOR, MOTHER MARY CRUCIFIED**

1771

Origin of the Institute of Passionist Nuns  
 Divine inspiration; Agnes Grazi  
 The truth concerning this revelation  
 Canon Joseph Carboni  
 Dominic and Sister Mary Crucified Constantini  
 Prophecy of Paul concerning Sister Mary Crucified  
 Dominic Constantini proposes the foundation  
 The ancient image of Our Lady  
 Diabolic assaults against foundation  
 Work suspended and work resumed  
 Miracle worked in favor of this foundation  
 Writing the Rules  
 The foundation of Perfection, the Passion  
 Solitude; Prayer; Work  
 The Model, Mary at the foot of the Cross  
 The Vows of the Institute:  
     Poverty  
     Chastity  
     Obedience  
     Enclosure  
     Devotion to the Passion

Manner of fulfilling, vow of devotion to Passion  
 Special graces of Institute of Passionist Nuns  
 Revelation on foundation of Passionist Nuns  
 September 23 Clement XIV examines Rules; Approval  
 Pope removes an obstacle; Appoints Superior  
 Unexpected difficulty; Revelation  
 Papal authorization for inauguration of Convent  
 First Superior, Mother Mary Crucified Constantini  
 May 3 Solemn ceremony of inauguration

1772

May 20 Profession of eleven Passionist Nuns  
 July 25 Brief of Clement XIV to the Passionist Nuns

### **CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX**

## **PAUL A PERMANENT INVALID AT HOSPICE OF HOLY CROSS - CLEMENT XIV, THE JESUITS AND PAUL OF THE CROSS - POPE GIVES MONASTERY OF STS. JOHN AND PAUL - CARDINAL BOSCHI**

1772

Paul an invalid for eight months  
 Celebrates Mass on feast of Corpus Christi  
 Students from Propaganda College  
 The new white quilt from the Cardinal

- 1773  
 July 21 Clement XIV; the Jesuits and Paul of the Cross  
 Prophecy concerning the Society of Jesus  
 Papal audience  
 December 6 Papal gift of Sts. John and Paul monastery  
 Paul's prophecy concerning this monastery  
 Letter of thanks to Clement XIV  
 December 10 Cardinal Boschi leads community to new Retreat  
 The Retreat of Sts. John and Paul

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN**

**GOVERNMENT OF THE CONGREGATION - PAPAL AUDIENCE - CLEMENT XIV  
 VISITS PAUL - DEATH OF CLEMENT XIV - PREDICTION OF SUCCESSOR AND  
 SUFFERINGS OF HIS PONTIFICATE - PIUS VI IN FOUNDER'S CELL - ROSA  
 CALABRESI - GENERAL CHAPTER - FINAL REVISION OF THE RULE -  
 APPROBATION BY PIUS VI**

- 1773  
 Sts. John and Paul - Community of thirty religious  
 Papal audience at Christmas  
 December 25 Sings Midnight Mass

- 1774  
 January 6 Celebration of feast of Epiphany  
 Assumes the government of the Congregation  
 Holy Week; Ceremonies  
 May Audience with the Holy Father  
 June 26 Clement XIV visits Sts. John and Paul  
 September 22 Death of Clement XIV; Grief and joy of Paul  
 Prediction of successor and sorrowing pontificate

- 1775  
 February 16 Cardinal Braschi elected Pope - Pius VI  
 March 5 Pius VI visits Retreat of Sts. John and Paul  
 Rosa Calabresi and Paul's discernment of her soul  
 Lent Spiritual conferences; Confidante of Paul  
 May General Chapter; Re-elected Superior General  
 Final revision of the Rules  
 September 15 Pius VI confirms the Rules; Privileges

## **CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT**

**PORTRAIT OF PAUL OF THE CROSS - THE LAST TRANSFIGURATION**

- 1775  
 Natural gifts; Preparation for vocation  
 Supernatural gifts:  
 FAITH:  
 Firm, unassailable, generous  
 Spirit of faith; Vigilance over studies

Faith begets a love for the Church  
 Faith in the celebration of divine mysteries  
 The Passion; Eucharist; Our Lady; the Angels  
 Apparition of Our Lady of Sorrows

#### HOPE

Total abandonment to God  
 Confidence in the works of the Congregation

#### CHARITY

Towards God, neighbor, poor, sick  
 Apparitions of suffering souls  
 Towards benefactors, enemies

#### HUMILITY

Leonard of Port Maurice and Paul of the Cross  
 Humility in presence of honor and reverence  
 Desire to destroy remembrance of his name  
 The "Sign" worn by Paul  
 "Father Paul is a saint"

#### AUSTERITIES

Love of suffering, of poverty

#### OBEDIENCE

#### PURITY

A protector of the virtue of chastity  
 Invocation of his name; Safeguard of purity  
 Heavenly fragrance from his body  
 Body possessed qualities of the glorified  
 Elevations; Irradiations  
 Apparition of the Child Jesus  
 Angels return him to his chair  
 Apparition of Our Lady and the Divine Child

### CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

### LAST DAYS - FAREWELL TO SONS OF PASSION - FINAL ECSTASY - THE OPENING OF HEAVEN - THE DEATH OF A SAINT - SORROW AND CONSOLATION

1775

June

Peace of soul; Serenity without shadow  
 Recommends to visitors devotion to Passion  
 Students from Propaganda; The foreign cleric  
 Anthony Frattini and Paul's ecstasy  
 Mass celebrated adjacent to his cell

June 15

Celebrates Mass for the last time

June 26

Serious illness; Courage, resignation  
 Practices of devotion - the Rosary

August 15

"The hour of the Rosary"

August 30

Holy Viaticum; Exhortation to community  
 Papal dispensation from Eucharistic fast  
 Bequeaths to Pius VI picture of Our Lady of Sorrows  
 Despoils himself of every possession  
 Visit of the General of the Dominicans  
 Desire to die "crucified with Jesus"

	Apostolic zeal during last days
	Request from Struzzieri to wait; Promise
October 8	Receives Extreme Unction
	Visit of the Vice-Gerent
October 16	Writes to Rosa Calabresi; Announces his death
October 18-Friday	Holy Viaticum received; Fasting
	Welcomes visitors; Gives to each a crucifix
Midday	Arrival of Bishop Struzzieri, Joy of Founder
	Approach of death; Desire to be assisted
	Accepts death willingly to fulfill will of God
	"All my hopes are in the Passion of Christ"
	Commendation of souls, Reading of the Passion
	Request to die in habit and on straw pallet
	Final ecstasy, Divine apparition
Four O'clock	Death of Paul of the Cross
	Sorrow and joy of his sons of the Passion

## **CHAPTER FORTY**

### **GLORIFICATION OF THE TOMB - CANONIZATION OF PAUL OF THE CROSS**

1775

	Apparition of Paul of the Cross
	Pius VI, "How fortunate he is..."
	Instructions for burial
	Receives the picture of Our Lady
	Cry throughout Rome, "The saint is dead"
October 19	Veneration of the body of Paul of the Cross
	Funeral obsequies
	Numerous prodigies
	Heavenly beauty of mortal remains; Cures
Evening	Body laid in the Chapel of the Sepulchre
October 20	Veneration by the faithful
October 21	Body laid to rest in the Basilica
	Pilgrimages; Miraculous cures

1784

September	Pius VI declares Paul of the Cross a "Venerable"
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1792

May	Decree published introducing Cause of Canonization
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1798

February 20	Cause interrupted by exile of Pius VI
	Pius VII takes up Cause on his arrival in Rome

1821

February 18	Proclamation of "heroicity of virtues"
	Two miracles proposed for Beatification

1853  
May 1 Paul of the Cross declared "Blessed"  
Two miracles for Canonization

1867  
June 29 Paul of the Cross is canonized  
The solemnity of Canonization  
Prayer to Saint Paul of the Cross

#### **APPENDIXES**

- One: The Apostolic Bull "Supremi Apostolatus"
- Two: Apostolic Letter "Praeclara Virtutum Exempla"
- Three: Decree Urbis et Orbis