

The **Letters** of
St. Paul of the **Cross**

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Volume I
1720-1747

**The LETTERS of
SAINT PAUL of the CROSS**

VOLUME ONE

(1720–1747)



New City Press

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Translated by
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Edited by
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Distributed by
Congregation of the Passion
Holy Cross Province, USA
5700 N Harlem Avenue
Chicago, IL 60631

Published in the U.S.A. by New City Press
202 Cardinal Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538

Icon by Brother Michael Moran, C.P.

Cover Design and Maps by DMG

Photos from:

As a Seal Upon Your Heart. Father Paul F. Spencer, C.P.; John Pole, Photographer
S. Paolo Della Croce: Storia Critica. Father P. Enrico Zoffoli, C.P.

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Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Paul of the Cross, Saint, 1694-1775.

[Correspondence. English]

The letters of Saint Paul of the Cross / translated by Roger Mercurio, Frederick
Sucher; edited by Laurence Finn, Donald Webber.

p. cm.

Contents: v. 1. 1720-1747 — v. 2. 1748-1758 — v. 3. 1759-1775.

ISBN 1-56548-151-8 (v.1) — ISBN 1-56548-152-6 (v.2) — ISBN 1-56548-153-4
(v. 3)

1. Spiritual life—Catholic Church. I. Finn, Laurence. II. Webber, Donald. III.
Title.

BX2350.2 .P34 2000

271.'6202—dc21

[B]

00-061651

Printed in Canada

DEDICATION

*In this year of Jubilee,
the year 2000 of the Lord's birth,
these three volumes of the Letters of
Saint Paul of the Cross are dedicated to
José Agustín Orbegozo Jauregi
the twenty-second successor to the
Founder of the Congregation of the Passion
as General Superior
(1988-2000)
with deep gratitude and respect for his efforts
to shepherd this small flock on the road of fidelity
to the Passion of Jesus,
keeping alive in the hearts of his brothers and sisters
around the world
the memory of the Sufferings of Christ,
and to inspire the Passionist Families worldwide
to seek new ways to promote, preach, and proclaim
that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.*

May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in our hearts.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the night, the candle flame cast shadows on the wall of the small monastic cell as the priest dipped a goose quill into the ink pot and forced his fingers to put thoughts on the page on the tiny table. Paul of the Cross would use the late evening hours or the early morning hours before sunrise to catch up with his correspondence. He seemed to have had a personal shorthand as here and there abbreviations or a hurried "etc." would flow from his quill as fingers raced to keep up with his thoughts. Run-on sentences are not rare, and he often wrote his letters "in haste."

A conservative estimate would be that Saint Paul of the Cross wrote more than 20,000 letters in the course of his life. Across the years, some 2,000 of his letters have been gathered in the archives of the Passionist Generalate in Rome.

In 1924, after ten years of patient work with good collaborators, Father Amedeo Casetti published in four volumes the letters stored in the General Archives. In 1970 Father Cristoforo Chiari added some 175 letters which were discovered after 1924. Father Fabiano Giorgini provided a dozen letters to Passionists that surfaced more recently.

We have used all of the above for this translation. With the publication of these three volumes, this will be the only complete collection of the letters of Saint Paul of the Cross. We are following a chronological order for our edition. Until now, letters to an individual were published consecutively, which had the advantage of allowing the reader to follow the relationship of Saint Paul of the Cross with a particular individual. We believe that bringing together the letters that Saint Paul of the Cross wrote in one day, one week, or one month allows us to see his multifaceted activity and personality. Practical problems with buildings, diplomatic negotiations with Church authorities, direction of souls experiencing mystical prayer can be crowded into one letter-writing session.

The Italian proverb, "Every translator is a traitor," emphasizes the difficulty of conveying exact meanings from one language and culture to another. Father Amedeo was forced to bring Saint Paul's archaic spellings in line with 20th century Italian, break Paul's solid page of writing into paragraphs, and admit that Paul at times used words that no one now can understand. We hope our decisions on style and format will benefit the reader. At times we have broken up long sentences into two or more shortened ones. Because of Paul's complicated sentence structures, we have preferred a traditional style of punctuation with its emphasis that more is better. However, the style of capitalization is more contemporary with its de-emphasis on capitalization.

The original text abounds in participles and gerundive phrases that depend on a distant main verb. At times we have preferred finite verbs in our translation. In letters of spiritual direction, we have stayed close to the vocabulary used in the spiritual classics.

When Saint Paul of the Cross cited Scripture, he used the Latin Vulgate. Often he paraphrases in Italian and does not bother indicating chapter and verse! We have followed Paul's lead.

The 18th century had a rich variety of honorific titles for civil and ecclesiastical persons. There are no equivalents in 20th century America, so we have simplified such titles. The letters often call a bishop a "monsignor." Where we were certain that it was a bishop, we used "bishop." A diocesan priest could be styled "Don." However, others who were clearly not ordained priests shared this title as a sign of distinction. Paul often used a common title of "Mother" when addressing a religious sister. This does not necessarily suggest that this particular correspondent was a prioress or abbess.

Saint Paul addressed married and single women with the same title "Signora." Men are referred to as "Signore." We ordinarily have retained his usage.

When referring to distance and time or weight and currency, we have retained the standards of Paul's time. For example, in writing about a four-mile journey, Paul is referring to the Roman mile.

In some few instances, the date suggested by Father Amedeo is clearly wrong. A footnote will indicate this, along with the clear reason for the change.

When Saint Paul of the Cross wrote, he placed his location and date at the end of his letter. We have used the modern format where this information is at the head of the letter. If information is lacking, we indicate that with "—". Paul would often write a comment on the margin of the letter or on the outside. These comments are inserted after the date of the letter. The arabic number above the name of the correspondent indicates chronological order of the letter. The number in parentheses after the correspondent's name indicates the order in which letters were written to that particular correspondent.

Footnotes are employed to clarify situations, offer additional information, or define a word. We have profited from the studies of Fabiano Giorgini, Enrico Zoffoli, and many others. Where we have inserted our own words, we have placed them in brackets [].

At the end of each volume are indexes: a list of correspondents, a chronological catalogue of the letters with references to the Italian editions, a summary of important dates, a selected bibliography, and maps.

We are indebted to many of our Passionist brothers. Fathers Bonaventure Moccia, Fabiano Giorgini, Mirosław Lesiecki and Paul Spencer have been generous in their assistance. We also extend gratitude to the staff at New City Press for their guidance and patience in getting these volumes to the final stages. We and all who profit from reading these letters owe special thanks to the provincial and council of Holy Cross Province for encouraging the enterprise and defraying some expenses. May the Lord reward their encouragement and support.

Reading the Letters of Saint Paul of the Cross

During his retreat at Castellazzo in 1720, Paul wrote his Diary as a letter to his bishop. His last will and testament, dated August 1775, is his final letter. Between these two letters Paul was writing to popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, men and women in religious life, and many men and women of the laity.

When we read his letters, we should remember that Paul of the Cross is telling us about his hopes and dreams, his sacrifices and worries, his illnesses and sufferings, his prayer and mystical insights. Though he did not write an autobiography, we can come to know Saint Paul of the Cross by the same way we know his patron, Saint Paul the Apostle, by reading his letters!

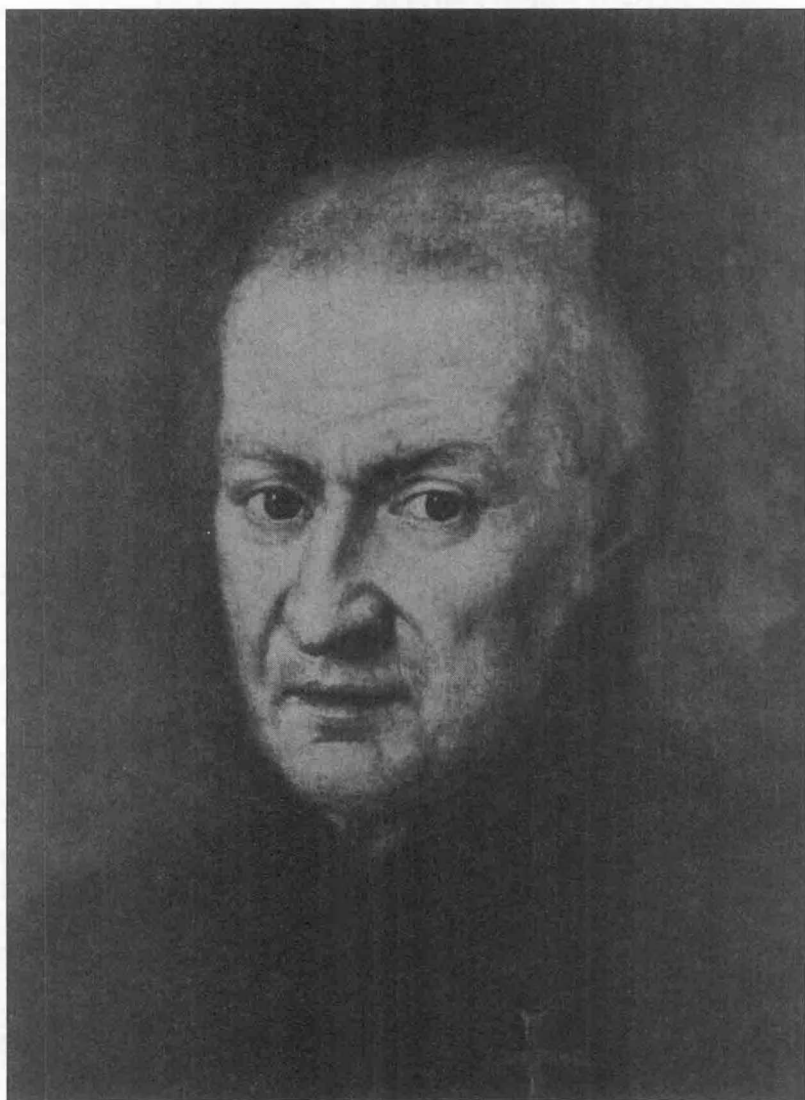
As we read letters of spiritual advice, we discover that his words of direction could easily have been written to us. Of course, the spiritual culture of his time differs from our own, but his words of encouragement enable us to understand the role of suffering in our life, and his advice on prayer shows us a way to intimate union with God. In reading Saint Paul's letters, you will discover how he adapted the mystical teachings of John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Francis De Sales, John Tauler, and others to the particular circumstances of each person to whom he was writing. We learn how Paul instructed men and women to meditate, to respond to God's call to a simpler form of contemplative prayer, to conform their lives to the sufferings of Christ, and to respond in charity to the needs of others.

Finally, each letter uncovers something of the spirit, the heart, the mind of this great mystic of the 18th century. We come to know the man himself and Paul as spiritual guide, founder, religious leader, kind confessor, ardent preacher, and zealous missionary. Yes, by reading his letters we meet a man burning with love for Jesus, a love that he experienced in his own lifetime, of which he wrote so personally to his contemporaries, and which today has the power to inspire as if Paul were just now offering spiritual advice to us. We pray that as you read his letters you also will meet Paul at the cross of Jesus and be drawn into that immense sea of love that is God.

Conclusion

We, as translators and editors, pray we have not been "traitors" to our sainted Founder. Our work was greatly facilitated by 20th century computers. We have only admiration and respect for Father Amedeo and utter amazement at the sheer dedication of Saint Paul of the Cross. His fidelity to ink and quill pen is consistent with his heroic sanctity!

Feast of Saint Paul of the Cross
Jubilee Year 2000



Paolo Della Croce

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME ONE

Roger Mercurio, C.P.¹

In the mid-19th century, the British statesman Benjamin Disraeli is reported to have had a discussion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. In this tale, the archbishop said to the prime minister: "What are we to do about the lower classes? We are losing them!" The ever cynical master politician Disraeli replied, "But, Your Grace, we never had them." One hundred years earlier, Paul Danei lived on the Italian peninsula during the period of history called "The Age of Enlightenment." The Roman Catholic Church, even at its center, was experiencing challenges to its very foundations. Scholars were attacking not only the faith of the Church, but they also were undermining the very moral principles of traditional, Christian society. Not only intellectual forces were chipping away at the Church, but also Catholic political rulers of the age in France, Spain, Naples, and Portugal were using their political power to weaken the influence of the Holy See in all of Europe.

In the midst of these great political and moral upheavals of the age, Paul Danei, a man born into a nation that was yet to be created, attempted in a small way to bring the light of the Gospel to those who were denied its comfort and promise. Italy was not to be formed into a nation-state until three-quarters of a century after his death. While the Holy See controlled what was to become central Italy, the great European powers quarreled for control over the many independent states in northern and southern Italy. The popes of the 17th and 18th centuries used a great deal of their energy in entering these various conflicts, distracting the popes from their role of spiritual and moral leadership. Despite these difficulties, great men did arise, brilliant beacons of light and of wisdom; among them were Alphonsus Liguori, Leonard of Port Maurice, Benedict XIV, and the author of the letters found in these volumes: Paul Francis Danei or, as he has become known, Saint Paul of the Cross.

Italy in the 17th and 18th centuries had an oversupply of priests, most of whom were poorly prepared to minister to the men and women of their age. Many Italian bishops of the 18th century failed to follow the example of Saint Charles Borromeo and did not provide systematic theological training for their priests. The lower classes, those most attractive to Paul Danei, were so burdened by their poverty and illiteracy that they were frequently ignorant of even the basics of their faith. The upper classes, so filled with political intrigue and power plays, more often than not showed the cynical indifference toward the poor and disadvantaged that would be mirrored a century later by Disraeli in his discussion with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

1. Father Roger Mercurio, C.P., is a member of Holy Cross Province. He has served as major superior and local superior for several years. Presently, he is in charge of the province archives in Chicago at Immaculate Conception Retreat and continues his studies of Paul of the Cross and Passionist history.

Hearing the Call

*I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.
Isaiah 42: 6-7*

On January 3, 1694, Paul Danei was the firstborn of a large family in northern Italy. During his formative years and as a young man, Paul helped his father in his tobacco business. Education for Paul was at best spotty, studying in a variety of schools as the family moved from place to place. During his early years, Paul's mother was a great influence on him, grounding him in a devotion to Jesus Crucified that would never cease growing. The stories he heard of the sufferings of Jesus caused a deep devotion to the Passion of Jesus from a very early age. With his younger brother John Baptist, he learned the value of meditation and prayer, which became a lifetime practice for both of them.

Paul recounts that in his nineteenth year he experienced his conversion. It was occasioned by a quite ordinary homily, but it was accompanied with a powerful grace that turned Paul to an ever deepening life of prayer and an immersion in the sufferings of his Crucified Lord. Gradually, he felt himself called to bring together men who would live in a prayerful solitude and go forth to proclaim the saving sufferings of the God-Made-Man.

By 1720 Bishop Gattinara of Alessandria judged Paul's inspirations to be sufficient to allow him to be clothed as a hermit. The bishop then ordered him to go into retreat and write the Rule of the Institute he hoped to establish.

During the forty days of his retreat, Paul not only put his dream into words, but also gave the bishop an account of the heights and depths of his prayer. This document is recognized as one of the finest accounts of mysticism in the 18th century.

Both the Preface to the Rule — his description of events up to the time of the forty-day retreat — and the Diary were written in the form of letters addressed to Bishop Gattinara. The first version of the Rule, written at this time, has been lost. The original was burnt at the express command of Paul of the Cross. This first volume of Paul's letters begins with these two documents, a proper beginning to the series of letters which reflect the life of this holy man of God.

These initial documents are fundamental in any effort to understand Paul of the Cross: his longing to be inflamed with divine love and his intense desire to be on the cross with the Suffering Christ. These initial experiences, written in Paul's own words, speak of his willingness to serve as a channel of God's grace in the formation of a new religious family in the Catholic Church. He speaks of a profound sense of unworthiness of such a call but also of his intention to accept whatever God would ask of him in the future.

Discerning the Call (1720-1727)

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"
"Here I am" I said; "send me!"
Isaiah 6:8*

The bishop, following Paul's retreat, assigned Paul to a small church in the countryside outside Alessandria where he would begin his life as a hermit. His duties included taking care of the physical upkeep of the church: the altar, the sacristy, cleaning the building, etc. His chief occupation, though, was to devote himself to prayer. The bishop discovered further talents in this young layman and encouraged him to teach the fundamentals of the faith to children and adults who gathered in this rustic chapel. Further, Paul began preaching spiritual conferences to sisters and missions or more formal retreats to lay people, simple laborers, on the estates of wealthy land owners.

After just eight or nine months Paul again found the call to gather companions so compelling that he sought and obtained permission from his bishop to go to Rome and present his case to the newly elected Pope Innocent XIII, seeking authorization to form a new religious family. His naivete was rebuffed at the doors of the Quirinal Palace, where he was sent roughly away as a beggar. Perhaps this date was Paul's lowest moment humanly speaking. This date is lost to history but occurred sometime in September 1721. After being rejected at the papal palace, he went on foot to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, the chief Marian shrine in Rome. He entered the small side chapel and before an image of the Mother of God professed for the first time the Passion Vow, the determination to spend the rest of his life seeking ways to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus in his own heart and in the hearts of the faithful to whom he ministered. This distinctive vow is the mark of every Passionist to the present day.

Shortly after this time, his younger brother John Baptist joined Paul on Mount Argentario. The life of the future Congregation began in these humble circumstances, a life of deep prayer, community life shared by two brothers, and an active apostolate of teaching catechism to the inhabitants of Porto San Stefano and Porto'Ercole, small towns at the base of this mountain. This relatively tranquil period lasted less than a year. Bishop Pignatelli invited them to Gaeta in the Kingdom of Naples. Then Bishop Cavalieri asked them to Troia. Cavalieri studied Paul's Rule and offered suggestions. He also arranged that Paul and John Baptist would meet Pope Benedict XIII on May 21, 1725, at which time the brothers received verbal permission to gather companions and live according to Paul's Rule of life.

Paul's life and apostolic work with John Baptist south of Rome were not satisfying, and so they accepted yet another invitation from Cardinal Corradini to journey to Rome and take up positions as spiritual directors and aids at the new Hospital of Saints Mary and Gallicano, continuing to live according to the Rule that Paul had written.

Corradini suggested that for reasons of the apostolate both Paul and John Baptist be ordained to the priesthood. Pope Benedict XIII ordained them on Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1727.

Sharing the Call (1728-1748)

*Thus says the Lord God,
who gathered the dispersed of Israel:
Others will I gather to him
besides those already gathered.
Isaiah 56:8*

Due to new regulations at the hospital, the two brothers felt that they could no longer live and work in Rome. With the blessings of the Holy See, Paul and John Baptist returned to Mount Argentario where they settled into the hermitage of Saint Anthony and returned to a more contemplative life of prayer, silence, and solitude. They continued their limited apostolate among the poor in the villages of this area. They also began an apostolate of hearing confessions and spiritual direction for individuals who came to the hermitage. During these days Paul, along with John Baptist, sought further the Lord's Will for them and the fledgling Congregation.

The bishop in the area asked Paul to give a formal mission in 1730 in his diocese. This is the first recorded mission of Paul as a Passionist priest. This experience of preaching parish missions, during which there would be a solid emphasis on moral formation and a constant appeal to the sufferings of Christ on the Cross as a remedy for the ills of the age, gradually informed him that this apostolate would be most appropriate for himself and for those who would follow him in this new way of life. In this simple, humble way Paul and his brother began to offer spiritual strength to the poor and neglected whom they encountered in the villages where they preached and ministered. The pope raised Paul to the rank of a papal missionary for all of Italy.

As the years passed, several young men expressed interest in joining Paul and his brother in this way of life and ministry. Among the first was Paul's younger brother Anthony. Many came to experience this way of life, but many also left, feeling that the rigors Paul and his first disciples endured were too much. By the early 1730s the need for a new and larger facility became acute. Experience taught Paul that some modifications of the lifestyle were desirable and even necessary for a healthy community. He developed a plan to build a large building, or "Retreat" as the residences of the Passionists came to be known, on Mount Argentario and close to the hermitage of Saint Anthony, where he and his first companions lived.

In bringing this plan for expansion to fruition, there were many delays caused by war near the town of Orbetello, opposite Mount Argentario. There was also some opposition from Cardinal Altieri, the ecclesiastical superior of the area. In addition, opposition surfaced from other groups of religious Mendicants in the area who felt threatened by another group that would be

begging for their necessities in the locality. But finally the first Retreat, the Presentation of Mary, was built and solemnly blessed on September 14, 1737.

Within four years, Paul was able to obtain approval of his Rule from Benedict XIV. With this approval, the members of the infant Congregation professed public vows as Passionists on June 11, 1741. The dream of the young man in Castellazzo had become a reality, companions had been gathered, an apostolate had been entered into with enthusiasm, and the Church had given its blessings upon this new expression of religious life.

Reading the letters from 1741 to 1747, we read where Paul still had many difficulties to overcome. The opposition of the Mendicant religious to Paul's establishment of new Retreats was a thorn in the side of Paul for several more years and would not to be resolved until 1750. There were also difficulties internal to Paul's enterprise that took their toll on his health and well-being. Members were asking for dispensation from their vows and returning to the diocesan priesthood. Students who were in formation returned to their native villages, claiming that the rigors of the Rule of life Paul had created and Rome had modified several times were too demanding.

The Holy See delayed formal approval of the Congregation until these problems could be resolved, thus offering even more frustration for Paul. Naturally enough, given that Paul was more than fifty years of age and due to the constant demands of the ministry and the responsibility of firmly establishing the Congregation in the Church, Paul's health began to decline. We read where he could not rise from his bed for months at a time, racked with fevers, arthritis, and the aches and pains of a body that was slowly wearing out.

In April 1746, Benedict XIV gave approval to the Congregation in a more formal manner, thus paving the way for further development of the Institute. As a result of the formal recognition by the Church, the superiors of the Congregation met for the first time at a General Chapter in 1747, electing Paul the first General Superior of the community, with his brother John Baptist and Fulgentius Pastorelli elected as his consultors. At the time of this first General Chapter Paul had established three Retreats: Presentation on Mount Argentario, San Angelo in Vetralla, and San Eutizio in Soriano

In the next volumes of the letters, even greater frustrations await Paul, to which he generally replies with patience and a trust in Divine Providence that is remarkable. In this first volume we begin with a young, idealistic man who had great dreams. We end, twenty-seven years later, with the Congregation of the Passion solidly established, with its first General Superior facing the problems of the age within the context of his culture and the ecclesiastical realities, and with Paul, the man of prayer, continuing to offer prudent wisdom and steadfast encouragement to men and woman through his letters.

*Happy the man who fears the Lord,
who greatly delights in his commands.
His posterity shall be mighty upon the earth;
the upright generation shall be blessed.
Psalm 112:1-2*

BEGINNINGS

(1720–1721)

"I desire only to be Crucified with Jesus."

The very first letter written by Saint Paul of the Cross is dated November 23, 1720, the day after Bishop Gattinara had clothed Paul in the black habit of a hermit. That evening Paul had begun a forty-day retreat at the Church of Saint Charles in Castellazzo in Northern Italy. The bishop asked Paul to begin writing the Rule for the new Community Paul hoped to found. Paul also kept a personal diary and wrote a Preface to the Rule. On December 2 Paul began the first draft of the Rule. Pius VI in 1775 would approve its final form.

Paul wrote both the Diary and the Preface to the Rule as letters. When the retreat was over, Paul presented the Rule, the Diary, and the Preface to Bishop Gattinara. The bishop read these documents and sought the advice of several priests for their judgment. Later, the bishop gave the Diary to Paul's lifelong friend, Father Paul Sardi. After Paul's death, Sardi sent the Diary to Rome. The text was lost in the mail, but, fortunately, Sardi had kept a copy which later reached Rome and has been preserved there.

PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL RULE¹

1

Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara (1)

[Castellazzo]

[1720]

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

About two years after the good God had converted me to a life of penance,² I, Paul Francis, poorest of men, a great sinner and least servant of the Poor of Jesus, was going westward along the Riviera of Genoa, when on a hill above Sestri, I saw a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Gazzo. As soon as I saw it, my heart longed for that place of solitude, but this longing could never be satisfied — though I carried it always with me — because I was occupied by the work I was doing as a matter of charity to help my relatives.

After this, I do not remember for certain either the day or the month, I remained as I was for some time but with a growing inspiration to withdraw into solitude. This inspiration, accompanied with great tenderness of heart, was given me by the good God. At the same time I had the idea of wearing a poor black tunic of coarse cloth called *arbagio*, the ordinary wool fabric found in these parts, of going barefoot, of living in very deep poverty — in short, by God's grace, leading a penitential life. This never again left my heart. I had an even greater inclination not simply to withdraw to the little chapel mentioned above, but it would be enough for me to withdraw into solitude either there or anywhere else. This I would do in response to God's loving invitation, for in his infinite goodness he was calling me to leave the world. However, as I was unable to follow this inspiration because my help was needed at home, that is, by my father, mother, and brothers, I always kept this vocation hidden in my heart, except I confided it to my spiritual director.

I did not know what God wanted of me, so for this reason I did not think of anything further, but I tried to free myself from household matters so as to withdraw from them later on. But the Supreme Good, who in his infinite mercy wanted something further from this poor wretch, never allowed me to disengage myself at that time, for whenever I was about to be free of everything, new difficulties arose. But my desire grew stronger all the time.

Sometimes I had another inspiration to gather companions who would live together in unity to promote the fear of God in souls — this was my principal desire. Although I paid no attention to the idea of gathering companions, it always remained in my heart. Finally, and in a word, I shall mention how long these desires and inspirations lasted — up to the time when I had the following vision. I cannot say for certain since I took no note of it. I would say two and a half years, more or less.

1. This letter, which Amedeo puts after the Diary, is actually the story of God's gifts and graces leading to his writing of the Rule.

2. This conversion took place in 1713.

Then this last summer — I do not remember the day or the month because I did not write it down, but I do know it was grain harvest time — on a certain weekday in the Capuchin church in Castellazzo, I received Holy Communion with a deep sense of my unworthiness. I remember that I was deeply recollected, and then I left to go home. Walking along the street, I was as recollected as if I were at prayer. When I came to a street corner to turn toward home, I was raised up in God in the deepest interior peace. At that moment I saw myself clothed in a long black garment with a white cross on my breast, and below the cross the Holy Name of Jesus was written in white letters. At that instant I heard these words spoken to me: “This signifies how pure and spotless that heart should be which must bear the Holy Name of Jesus graven upon it.” On seeing and hearing this I began to weep, and then it stopped.

Shortly afterward I saw in spirit the tunic presented to me with the Holy Name of Jesus and the cross all in white, but the tunic was black. I pressed it joyfully to my heart.

Whoever reads this should understand that, in seeing the tunic presented to me, I did not see any bodily form as if it were a man, no, but I saw it in God! The soul knows that it is God because he makes it understand this through interior movements of the heart and infused knowledge in the mind, but in so sublime a fashion that it is very hard to explain. The soul reacts as God intends but cannot describe it, either by spoken or written word. However, to be better understood, I shall describe a certain spiritual vision which God in his infinite mercy has granted me several times when he wished to entrust me with some particular suffering. When I was at prayer, I saw a scourge in God’s hands, and this scourge had lashes like a discipline and on them was written the word: LOVE. In that very moment God gave me a profound understanding he wished to scourge me, but with love. My soul ran quickly to embrace the scourge and to kiss it in spirit. Actually, when God in his infinite goodness had let me see this, special troubles befell me shortly afterward, and I knew for certain that they were coming because God had given me an infused understanding of them.

Now, I have written this by way of personal explanation and say that, according to the understanding that God gave me, I have greater certainty about what I saw in spirit with the sublime light of faith than if I saw it with my bodily eyes. For the latter could cause me to be misled by some illusion, but in the other case there is no danger according to the understanding God gives me. In this I defer to the judgment of my superiors, submitting to whatever they decide under the grace of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, when I say I saw something “in God’s hands,” I did not actually see hands, but the soul has from God a deep understanding, for it is in the Immense God. The same thing happened to me with regard to the tunic. It should be made clear that after God had drawn me away from the practice of meditation, that is, of pondering the mysteries by going from one to another, I no longer had any imaginary forms, as my spiritual director can confirm.³

3. Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti to whom Paul recalled these lights.

Now to continue to tell of God's wonders. After these visions of the tunic and the sign, God gave me a stronger, compelling desire to gather companions and with the approval of holy Mother Church to found a Congregation called "The Poor of Jesus." After this God infused into my soul in a lasting manner the form of the holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus and by me, least and lowest servant. Under obedience and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, I shall proceed to write this Rule. Let it be known that the intention God gave me with regard to this Congregation was none other than this: in the first place, to observe God's law perfectly, together with the perfect observance of his evangelical counsels, especially by total detachment from all created things with the perfect practice of holy poverty, so essential for the observance of the other counsels and for the maintaining fervor at prayer; in the second place, to have zeal for God's glory, to promote fear of God in souls by working for the destruction of sin, in a word, to be indefatigable in works of charity that our beloved God may be loved, feared, served, and praised by all, forever and ever. Amen.

May the Holy Name of Jesus be blessed.

An Insertion ⁴

The Rule, written in Paul's own hand, follows after the Preface. The original was destroyed, but some paragraphs were copied. The Rule contains lofty sentiments of the great meaning of a deep reverence for God and great love of perfection. In speaking of the discipline, Paul notes the following:

Since the discipline taken with moderation helps to stir up devotion, I ask the Poor of Jesus to take the discipline three times a week — on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday — in memory of the three hours Jesus hung on the cross. Besides, I ask each one to make an effort on Friday to perform all the practices of piety possible and especially some particular mortification.

Oh dearly beloved, he who really loves, whenever he brings Friday into his mind, has reasons to die. To say "Friday" is to name the day when my God-Made-Man suffered so much for me that he gave up his life by dying on the hard wood of the cross. Furthermore, dearly beloved, you must know that the main object in wearing black, according to the special inspiration that God gave me, is to be clothed in mourning for the Passion and Death of Jesus. For this purpose let us never forget to have always with us a constant and sorrowful remembrance of him. So let each of the Poor of Jesus take care to instill in others meditation on the suffering of our Jesus.

4. After this introduction there follows the text of the Rule written by Paul during his retreat of forty days at Castellazzo. Father Fulgentius Pastorelli had sought to secure the text which was found in the diocesan curia of Alessandria. Paul heard about this when he came to Mount Argentario. He wished all written memories of himself to be destroyed. The superior succeeded in having him wait over night and had as much secretly copied as has been published. Paul had his manuscript burned.

Conclusion of the Rule

I, Paul Francis, poorest of men, a great sinner and the least servant of the Poor of Jesus, have written this holy Rule on retreat in the parish Church of Saint Charles, Castellazzo. This place of retreat had been assigned me in the first days after my clothing by Bishop Gattinara of Alessandria. I began to write this Rule in the year 1720 on December 2 and finished on the seventh of the same month.

Before writing I said Matins⁵ before daybreak and spent some time in mental prayer. Then I left prayer full of courage and began to write. The infernal enemy did not fail to assault me, stirring up feelings of repugnance within me and making difficulties about my doing this. But since God had inspired me to this task, and as I had been given orders to do it, without more ado and by God's grace I set to work.

Let it be known that when I was writing, I wrote as quickly as if someone were dictating to me; I felt the words coming from the heart. I have written this to make it known that this was a special inspiration from God because for myself I am but wickedness and ignorance.

In all, however, I submit to the judgment of my superiors. May the Blessed Sacrament on all the altars of the whole world be praised and adored by all.

Paul Francis, Least Servant of the Poor of Jesus

5. Matins was part of the Divine Office during Paul's time: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline.

DIARY

2

Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara (2)⁶

[Castellazzo]

[1720]

Thanks be to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin.

Saturday, November 23⁷

[This] was the first day of my retreat at Saint Charles. Though unworthy, I went to Holy Communion. I was neither particularly recollected nor distracted. The rest of the day I was afflicted with a particular kind of melancholy which is not like that which one experiences in the troubles of the world. Rather, it is a certain interior suffering in spirit and heart, mingled with hidden temptations which are hardly recognized as such. For this reason they afflict the soul very much. One does not know whether one is here or there, so to speak, the more so because there is no sensible sign of prayer at this time. I realize that God enables me to understand that they purify the soul. Through the mercy of God, I know that I do not desire to know anything else nor to taste any consolation. I desire only to be crucified with Jesus.

Sunday, November 24

Though unworthy, I made prayer. I did not experience any particular spiritual uplift, but I had my usual interior peace, that is to say, a pure loving attentiveness to God in general, infused into my spirit. Then, though unworthy, I received Holy Communion and was recollected for some time and ended that way.

Monday, November 25

I was without sensible feeling at prayer, even distracted. In my Holy Communion I was recollected at first, then that ended. Most of the fervor I experienced was during the night while praying to the Lord for sinners so that He might be appeased with regard to the threatening scourge that I deserve because of my sins — as well as other prayers I refrain from citing. The rest of the day I was filled with affliction and melancholy — also tempted with compassion toward my family. Seeing people, hearing them pass by, and the sound of the bells irritated me.

In short, I seemed to have a heart that was buried without any feeling of prayer. Nevertheless, I had no desire for relief, and in my mind I was content to have these troubles. But this contentment is not felt, for at such a time there

6. Gattinara, born at Padua in 1658, was a member of the Barnabite Order. Pope Clement XI named him bishop of Alessandria in 1706. He was Paul's spiritual director and clothed him in the hermit's habit.

7. We must remember that Paul is twenty-six years old and not a novice in the spiritual life. He did not begin this retreat in order to experience sensible consolations. He desired "only to be crucified with Jesus."

is anguish of a special kind. There is a certain contentment that the most Holy Will of our dear God is fulfilled. But this remains buried beneath the ashes in the deepest region of one's spirit. I find it difficult to explain myself, and anyone who has not experienced this will have difficulty in understanding.

Tuesday, November 26⁸

Though unworthy, I made my nightly prayer, and I was dry except at the outset, when I experienced a very subtle and delicate interior sweetness. I received Holy Communion and was especially elevated in God with a very high sweetness and a certain warmth of heart which touched even my stomach. I knew this to be supernatural and it left me with great consolation. I know that I had some colloquies on the sufferings of my dear Jesus. When I speak to him of his torments, I say, for example: "Ah, my Good, when you were scourged, what did you feel in your Sacred Heart? My dear Spouse, how you were afflicted by the sight of my sins and ingratitude! Ah, my Love, why do I not die for you? Why am I not in agony?" Other times I feel my spirit can say no more and simply remains in God with his sufferings infused in my soul. At other times it seems my heart is shattered. The rest of the day, and especially at night, I was particularly afflicted and melancholy in the way mentioned before. Although this sadness did not take away my peace of heart, I felt great affliction since I had no spiritual consolation or any other. It seemed rather that I never had any. I know I told my Jesus that his crosses are the joy of my heart.

Wednesday, November 27⁹

I made my prayer during the night — at the outset I was very recollected and that lasted a little while. Then I experienced some disquieting thoughts and some temptations, which lasted a short time. My Holy Communion brought great sweetness and elevation in God, mixed with tears. Then I remembered how it was said that I would never endure this naked suffering. In that moment I had such joy and desire of suffering that the cold, the snow, and the ice all seemed sweet to me, and I desired to experience them with great fervor as I said to Jesus: "Your pains, my dear God, are the pledges of your love." Then I continued to rejoice in my beloved Jesus in great sweetness and peace without any activity of my mind, but in silence. Fervor in praying for the needs mentioned above never ceased.

I know I had, as well, a strong impulse to go to Rome for this great marvel of God, and I asked my Sovereign Good if he wished me to write the Rule for the Poor of Jesus.¹⁰ I felt myself strongly moved with great sweetness. I

8. On this day Paul speaks more clearly of his prayer on the sacred Passion. Notice his methods of praying on the sufferings of Christ.

9. For the first time Paul writes about the deeper reason for his retreat, namely, to write the Rule and prepare for his role in founding this community in the Church. The following day he will experience the consoling vision of the holy founders "praying for my intentions."

10. This title was inspired not so much as a dedication to the material poverty of Jesus, as to the lack of power and esteem that Jesus saw in his life and in his passion, as described in Philipians 2: 5-8.

rejoiced that our great God wished to make use of this great sinner; on the other hand, I did not know where to bury myself, seeing I am so vile. Enough! I know I tell my dear Jesus that all creatures will sing of his mercies.

Thursday, November 28

At prayer I was dry and a bit distracted. At Holy Communion I was recollected. Afterward, in my thanksgiving and prayer I had great tenderness with tears, especially as I prayed the Sovereign Good for the happy outcome of his holy inspiration that he has given me out of his infinite goodness and continues to give me. I recall that I prayed to the Blessed Virgin with all the angels and saints and especially the saintly Founders. Suddenly, I was carried in spirit and saw them prostrate before the Most Holy Majesty of God, praying for my intention. This happened to me in an instant, like in a lightning flash, along with a sweetness mixed with tears. What I saw was not in bodily forms, but in the spirit and with an understanding of the soul beyond my explaining. It quickly disappeared.

Friday, November 29¹¹

Again, unworthy, I received Communion and was dry and distracted in prayer. I would like to explain what happens in my distractions. When I am distracted, my soul remains at peace with God, neither more nor less, no matter how disturbing the thoughts may be that molest me. At night I say to my mind: "Go wherever you wish — here, there, everywhere — you will always go with God." What happens in these distractions, not counting those that are clearly temptations, I really cannot say, except that they are of indifferent things, and sometimes they turn out to be thoughts of spiritual things.

However, in line with the understanding that God gives me, and as I have come to realize, I know my soul remains always rooted in God and in his peace. But this is hidden and not evident to the senses, though the will is aware of this. It is the will which is the mouth and entry for the holy food of divine love. Even though it is fed silently, because of the hindrance from memory and intellect, which are lost in distractions, the will, nonetheless, remains attentive to its feeding on the love of God. At most, it does not relish the situation as much as when the powers of intellect and memory are at one with it.

It seems to me it is similar to a baby at the breast of its mother. With its mouth it sucks the milk even though hands and feet are gyrating about. Head can twist, bow, and move, but always it takes its milk because it never takes its mouth from the breast of its mother. It would certainly do better if it remained quiet instead of behaving as I said. Nevertheless, milk continues to flow down its throat because it never takes its mouth from the mother's breast. So it is with the soul. Our will is the mouth and never ceases to imbibe the milk of holy love, even though the powers of intellect and memory go astray. It is true that the will is more invigorated when all powers remain together and

11. On this day and the following Paul attempts to explain how he deals with distractions at prayer and how he prays with humility.

quiet. Since the Lord does not wish me to understand it otherwise, I cannot better explain myself.

Saturday, November 30 – Feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle

I was dry and distracted at prayer. At Communion I was recollected. Afterward, there were many tears. I remember I asked Jesus to make me humble in a supreme degree. I wished to be the lowest of humankind, the dregs of the earth, and I prayed the Blessed Virgin to intercede for this grace with many tears. I remember that I asked my Jesus to teach me what grade of humility would please him most, and I heard in my heart: “When you throw yourself beneath the feet of all creatures, even under the feet of the demons, this is the humility that most pleases me.”

I had already understood that to abase oneself beneath hell, under the feet of demons, that is when God raises one to paradise. For just as the demon wished to exalt himself to the height of paradise and for his pride was cast into the depths of hell, so on the contrary, the soul that humbles itself beneath hell itself makes the demon tremble and defeats him, and the Sovereign Good raises that soul to paradise. I know that everything comes from my God. To him be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Sunday, December 1

At both my prayer and Communion I was dry and distracted and also had some of the depression described above.

Monday, December 2

I was without feeling and distracted, both during prayer and at Holy Communion, but with this difference: at Holy Communion I was not distracted. Indeed, I am hardly ever distracted then. Dry and without feeling, yes indeed, but either before or afterward I nearly always seem to experience a movement of the heart which comes and goes so quickly that I am hardly aware of it. Then I remain like a stump for a longer or shorter time. May the gentle Giver of all good be blessed in everything.

Tuesday, December 3

All day long I was troubled with great afflictions. I had undergone the like while I was in the world, but not so keen and vehement. For my part, although I am in such a state, I experience a great desire that they continue. I can even say to you that when such afflictions or worries, I do not know how to name them, come to me, I seem to be buried in the depth of misery, to be the most desolate and wretched of men. Nevertheless, my soul embraces them, for I know this is the Will of God and that they are the joys of Jesus. I can say with Saint Teresa: “Either to suffer or to die.”

Wednesday, December 4¹²

I was recollected during prayer and also experienced a mild restlessness in my thoughts. At Holy Communion I had much sweetness. My dear God gave me infused knowledge of the joy the soul will have when we see him face-to-face, when it will be united with him in holy love.

Then I felt sorrow in seeing him offended, and I told him that I would willingly be torn to pieces for a single soul. Indeed, I felt that I would die when I saw the loss of so many souls who do not experience the fruit of the Passion of my Jesus.

When God gives me this deep understanding of the joy felt in seeing him face-to-face, that is, when my soul is united to him, it can no longer remain in my body, so to speak, because with the deep light of faith it sees itself in the infinite love of God; it senses a wish to be set free from the body.

I remember I once said that the body is the chain for the soul and holds it in bondage; and until God breaks the chain by the death of the body, the soul cannot fly to union and the perfect vision of its beloved Good.

Thursday, December 5

During prayer and at Communion I was at peace. At the beginning, that is, before receiving Communion, I had much tenderness and also much self-knowledge. I asked the angels who assist at the adorable mystery to drive me forth from the church as worse than a devil. But at the same time, my strong trust in my sacramental Spouse did not leave me. I asked him to remember the word he left in the holy Gospel, that he came to call not the just, but sinners.

Friday, December 6¹³

I was especially recollected, particularly during Holy Communion. Afterward, I had great peace and tranquility, along with a feeling of intense love. I was especially fervent in praying for sinners and for God to hasten to found this Congregation in the holy Church. I had a keen infused knowledge of the sufferings of my Jesus, and I felt so ardent a desire to be perfectly united with him that I wished to actually feel his suffering and to be on the cross with him.

These wonders cannot be explained with bodily comparisons because God makes them understood deep down in the soul with movements so spiritual that they cannot be explained; yet they are grasped in an instant. All the rest of the day I was dry and troubled with thoughts, but at peace.

Saturday, December 7

During morning prayer I was at peace, and then once more troubled with thoughts. At Holy Communion I was particularly recollected and uplifted with

12. After feeling that he was "buried in the depth of misery," Paul now experiences peace and joy. He does not mention the writing of the Rule during these days, but treated of this in the document called the Preface to the Rule.

13. On December 6 and December 7, when Paul finishes writing the Rule, he mentions that he prays for the founding of the Congregation.

tears to such an extent that my bones and stomach pained me, for I was shivering a bit from the cold, but then everything dissipated. This often happens to me. I know I have experienced bodily weakness before — oh, the infinite mercy of our Sovereign Good! After Holy Communion, I feel myself growing better and strong. According to the understanding that God gives me, this comes from the great strength which the soul receives from that angelic Food which has, in addition, the effect of strengthening the body.

I also had great fervor, mingled with tears, while praying for the conversion of poor sinners. I kept telling God that I could no longer bear to see him offended. I also had special tenderness in imploring God in his mercy to found the holy Congregation quickly and to send forth some people for his greater glory and for the good of their neighbors. I said this with great desire and fervor. I asked him to accept me as the least and lowest servant of his poor, and it seemed to me that I was unworthy to serve him as a scullion.

I had great self-knowledge. When God gives me this deep knowledge of myself, it seems to me that I am worse than a devil, that I am a smelly dung heap, as is the case in all truth. But never do I lose my supreme and most tender trust in my sacramental Spouse. I tell him that in giving me so many graces and such innumerable favors, he only displays, all the more, his infinite mercies, because he acts thus toward the greatest of sinners. In all things may his Holy Name be blessed!

Sunday, December 8¹⁴

At prayer I was at peace as usual. In offering the sufferings which my Jesus endured, I felt moved to tears, likewise in praying for the needs of my neighbor. At Holy Communion I was particularly recollected, especially in a sorrowful and loving remembrance of the sufferings of my Jesus.

This high favor, which the good God grants me at such a time, I know not how to explain because I cannot. You must know that in recalling the sufferings of my dear Jesus, sometimes when I have recalled one or two, I have to stop because my soul can say nothing more and feels itself melting away. I remain thus, languishing with great sweetness, mingled with tears, with the sufferings of my Spouse infused into my soul. Or to express it more clearly, the soul is immersed in the heart and in the sorrows of its beloved Spouse Jesus. Sometimes it understands them all and remains thus in God in this loving and sorrowful contemplation. It is very difficult to explain and always seems to be something new.

Monday, December 9

I was greatly troubled and molested by thoughts. At Holy Communion I was recollected, then dry, and then molested again by thoughts. In my petitions

14. Paul attempts to explain his prayer of remembrance of the sufferings of Christ. On November 26 he had written of his "colloquies" on the sorrowful Passion. On this day he explains a further aspect of his prayer on the Passion. He "stops" or "pauses" in silence, "melting away...in loving and sorrowful contemplation."

to God during my prayer at night, I was very fervent, especially in praying for the conversion of sinners.

Tuesday, December 10th – Friday, December 13¹⁵

I was dry, distracted, and tempted. I had to force myself to stay at prayer. I was tempted to gluttony and seized with hunger. I felt the cold more than usual and my body wanted some relief, and on that account I wanted to flee from prayer. By the grace of God, my spirit held out, but the violence of the assaults kept coming from both my flesh and the devil. For my part, I believe that the devil played his part, because I know he has a special hatred against anyone who prays.

Then, as I mentioned, my heart pounded. I was trembling from head to foot, my bones and my back ached all over. But by God's mercy, I kept repeating that I wanted to hold out even if I had to be carried away in pieces. This happened because my flesh wanted relief before the fixed time I had planned to remain in prayer. When the prescribed time came for me to leave, I remained on in peace and tranquillity, wishing always for more suffering. I asked God never to take sufferings away from me. This also happened to me on other occasions, and often. Blessed be God for it.

I know that this kind of prayer of suffering is a great gift, which God grants to the soul to make it a spotless robe of purity, a rock in the face of suffering, to such a point that it no longer takes any account of it. When by God's grace the soul reaches such a state, the Sovereign Good will inflame it with love.

Care must be taken not to withdraw from prayer at such a trying time because suffering would not be diminished thereby. On the contrary, without gain to itself the soul would be the more afflicted because it would see itself slipping into tepidity. However, I know that God makes me understand that the soul, which God wishes to draw to a high degree of union with himself by means of prayer, must travel along this road of suffering in prayer — of suffering, I repeat, without any sensible consolations so that the soul no longer knows where it is, so to speak, but has the deep infused knowledge which God gives it, that it is ever in the arms of its Spouse and is nourished by his infinite charity.

I know this and I also understood, but in a hidden way, that when I was enduring a particular suffering, that to him who overcomes will be given the hidden manna, which is what Sacred Scripture says. I understand "the hidden manna" to be the sweet food of holy love, that is, the soul resting in deepest repose with its beloved Spouse in prayer. Thanks be to God.

15. Paul begins a long period of interior suffering. He describes what one suffers who walks "the road of suffering in prayer." At the same time he writes about how one must conduct oneself during such trials. He realizes the fruit of such suffering is to be inflamed with love.

Saturday, December 14¹⁶

I was recollected and also experienced the aridity, distractions in thought, as well as the suffering referred to, but not so violent. At Holy Communion I was recollected and experienced tenderness in expressing loving affections for my sacramental Jesus. May he be praised and loved by all. Amen.

Sunday, December 15 – Wednesday, December 18

During these days I was dry, distracted with uneasiness and conflicts between the spirit and the flesh of the kind I explained above. I was assailed — sometimes more, sometimes less — with impatience, with desires to leave my prayer, and with temptations to eat, feeling an especially keen hunger. This occurred even at prayer. I kept asking my Jesus not to deliver me from them, but rather to make me walk the path of suffering. Whence it followed, by the grace of God, that, although I was in particular desolations, temptations, and interior afflictions, it did not occur to me to desire any relief.

During these days I was suddenly moved to shed tears, but they ceased almost immediately or at least remained for only a short time. Then I continued in the way I have described. But, by the mercy of the Sovereign Good, peace of heart did not leave me. I mean that I did not feel my heart troubled with scruples, but truly at peace with God. It even seems to me that I do nothing good, as is indeed true, but I trust in the great goodness of the Sovereign Good. May he be loved by all. Amen.

The continual desire for the conversion of all sinners does not leave me. I feel particularly moved to pray to God because I do not wish him to be offended any more.

Thursday, December 19

I experienced sweetness, mingled with tears, of special contrition for my sins, and this before confession and also afterward. Then it disappeared.

Friday, December 20¹⁷

I experienced some dryness and also some recollection, especially over the agonies of my Jesus. I remember that last evening, Thursday, I was saying that the memory of the sad and sorrowful day of Friday was something to make one agonize and collapse. I asked my Jesus to make me collapse with sorrow.

16. Paul's trials at prayer continue for several more days. He did not ask for relief. Finally, he experiences interior peace.

17. Throughout his life Paul put a special emphasis on Friday. In the Rule he wanted Friday to be observed with greater fasting and prayer. Paul calls it "the sad and sorrowful day of Friday."

Saturday, December 21 – Feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle¹⁸

I was greatly troubled by assaults and combats of the kind mentioned above. This is how it happened. The spirit, by the grace of God, wishes to subdue the flesh and make it stay submissive and obedient by uniting it to the understanding. The flesh, on the other hand, finds this hard to bear. Therefore, when it feels hungry, it wants to eat; when it is weary from work or kneeling for a long time at prayer, it wants to rest; when it is cold, it wants to be warmed; etc. On this account, I say, I have been very violently troubled by most of these things on this particular day. The spirit kept resisting and wanted to remain with God in prayer, although it felt desolate and afflicted. The flesh, on the other hand, did not want to. On this account the passions were stirred up with such intensity of feeling that my heart pounded and made me tremble from head to foot until my very bones ached. I came to the point where I felt I could bear no more.

Then the enemy appeared with temptations to impatience. He roused me to anger against the priests who were coming to say Mass, suggesting to me that they came too late. It seemed to me that I was being forced to make insulting remarks to them. At this point I called upon God and Mary to help me, and I kept saying to myself that I would stay there until all the Masses were said. This was to resist the temptation, for it seemed to me that I was being forced to leave.

When that was over, I felt assailed by temptations to the most frightful blasphemies against God. I seemed to hear myself interiorly repeating the most outrageous and appalling things; whereupon, I called upon Mary to help me. You must know that when in this state the soul feels as if it were utterly abandoned; it no longer feels any movement of the heart toward God; no longer does it remember anything of the special favors of the Spirit. It seems reduced to an abyss of miseries.

It is true, however, that although the soul is in great distress, these dreadful temptations against God disappear in a flash, and the Sovereign Good does not allow the poor soul to remain beset by them. In the secret depths of the heart, there is a certain hidden and almost imperceptible desire always to be immersed in sufferings of one kind or another. It is likewise true that with regard to these temptations against God, I pray to him to deliver me from them, from those diabolic locutions that lacerate heart and soul. It does not matter so much about the suffering, but the soul cannot endure the feeling of being thus tempted against its God.

18. Paul writes down various aspects of this "prayer of suffering." He speaks of the "assaults and combats" he has suffered: temptations to eat, to seek physical comfort, followed by temptations to impatience at the conduct of others, and finally temptations to blasphemy against God. Notice his different strategies. He remains longer at prayer when tempted to impatience. He serves the priests who seem to have come late for their Masses. He begs for immediate deliverance when faced with temptations to blasphemy. He also understands that even amid such trials God is with him and giving him strength and love. He even prays not to be set free, for he wants so much to suffer with Jesus. He appreciates the value of suffering, for by it one becomes more conformed to Jesus. In the afternoon his brother John Baptist visits with him.

At the same time I know that the glory of God shines forth therein and that the devil is confounded because in this resistance put up by the soul and in these sufferings — according to the understanding that God gives me — the Sovereign Good is pleased, and the devil is mocked and put to flight. I know, too, that God holds the soul in his embrace, although the soul, not realizing this, seems to be utterly abandoned in its overwhelming misery, and all this is mixed up in some way with the attacks I have referred to. If God, in his infinite mercy, did not give it special assistance, these things would terrify it.

For the greater glory of God, I must add one point. Namely, when I am in this state, which I have already been on some few occasions and for a considerable time, but not with such violence, I beseech Jesus Crucified not to deliver me from it. On the contrary, I desire it in order to suffer, and I have a certain fear that it will depart except, of course, those temptations against God, which I cannot desire unless God permits them for my greater mortification. The fear I mention arises from the soul's longing to follow Jesus in suffering. The profit which the soul gains from this can never be over-estimated; but it does not seek this, for love seeks not its own advantage, but only the glory of the Sovereign Good.

I had a conference with a very spiritually minded brother of mine. Indeed, I am unworthy to be called his brother. The subject of our discussion was the experience of spiritual sufferings. I told him that I hardly dared speak about sufferings for fear that they might disappear if any consolation were obtained from them, although this does not happen. I said that I had a greater fear of losing sufferings than another would have for the loss of his wealth.

Although it is true that sometimes my soul is troubled by the fear of losing its sufferings, I am never so troubled as to lose peace of heart on this account. I am careful not to mention them, save to him to whom I am obliged to do so under holy obedience. I will have enough courage to describe how sweet it is to suffer when I speak to one who suffers, but to tell him of all my own, which the Lord sends me, this I cannot do!

I would like to make everyone understand the great grace that God, in his mercy, bestows when he sends suffering, especially suffering devoid of consolation. Then, indeed, is the soul purified like gold in the furnace. Without knowing, it becomes radiant and is set free to take flight to its Good, that is, to the blessed transformation. It carries the cross with Jesus and knows it not. This arises from the number and variety of sufferings which make it forget everything and no longer remember that it is suffering.

I understand that this is a great and fruitful way of suffering, most pleasing to God, because the soul thereby becomes indifferent to such an extent that it no longer thinks of sorrow or joy, but solely of remaining conformed to the Holy Will of its beloved Spouse Jesus. It desires, above all else, to be crucified with him, because in this it is more conformable to its beloved God, who during his whole life did nothing but suffer.

In all things praised be the Sovereign Good, who in his infinite goodness has deigned to give his infused understanding to such a wretched sinner.

Sunday, December 22¹⁹

I was recollected with great feeling of fervor.

Monday, December 23²⁰

In prayer at night I enjoyed great peace, sweetness, and tears, with deep understanding of the divine perfections, especially of the infinite goodness. Then the rest of the day I was buried in desolation and exteriorly disturbed by thoughts of the future, aroused by the devil. By the word "exteriorly" I mean that the thoughts come in this way.

When the sea is swept by storms, the waters are raised by the wind and swell in huge billows. As these waves approach the rocks, they beat upon them as if they wanted to break them up and smash them to pieces. But not so! They beat upon the rocks, yes, but they do not break through nor do they smash them to pieces, though they may knock off a small chip here and there. No matter how great the waves may be, because the rocks are so hard, there is no danger that they would be shattered. Similarly, the soul at prayer is a rock because God holds it fast in his infinite love. It may even be called a rock of strength because the Sovereign Good imparts this strength to it.

Now the devil, envious of this high state of the soul at prayer, seeing that he cannot snatch it from the infinite grasp of the Immense Divinity, attempts, nevertheless, to disturb it to some degree. He assails it with temptations, or else with vain imaginings, or with different kinds of thoughts, or again, the better to deceive it, with his infamous lies. He does all this to distract it from deep attentiveness to God. Then what happens? Amidst these stormy waves of the devil, the soul stands firm like a rock, provided that it always remains firmly fixed in its beloved Good. These waves of thoughts, in fine, produce no other effect save to chip it a little, to distract it for a few seconds from this continuous, singular, lofty sight of its Beloved, even though, as I understand it, this is not diminished at such a time. I have said this the better to explain my meaning because there is really no question of more or less. It only appears thus to the soul. In fighting these attacks and repulsing them, the soul may appear to be at a disadvantage because it loses a little of its loving attentiveness and seems to be no longer in the embrace of its beloved Spouse. But God makes me understand that the soul is with him and that he is pleased to see it thus engaged in battle. This is more profitable for the soul since, as a result of what it suffers and endures in the struggle, it is purified like the rock, which before the storm may have been covered with debris, but after the storm is cleansed because the waves have washed it clean.

19. Paul does not share with his director the peace and fervor he experienced on this Sunday, the day after the severe trials. The diary has only a few words.

20. For Paul there is another temptation: to give way to anxieties about the future. In spite of the visions and assurances he had received from God, Paul will frequently be "disturbed by thoughts of the future." On this day he likened this temptation to the powers of mighty waves that break upon the rocks without shattering them. Often Paul had witnessed the power of the sea in a storm. Frequently he explains God's actions in one's spiritual life by recalling the power of nature!

A word of warning is necessary here. When these storms of troublesome thoughts arise, one must remain always fixed in God without taking any notice of them. When the enemy sees that he gains nothing thereby, he is put to shameful flight, perceiving that by God's help he is not feared. When I am beset by these storms of thoughts and other troubles, I turn to my God and say to him: "My Supreme Good, cast a little glance at the condition of my poor soul!" Then I pray that, if it be his Holy Will, he will deliver me from them, and then I carry on in this way. I must not fail to admit they give me a lot of trouble, but may they all be for the love of the Sovereign Good, to whom be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Tuesday, December 24²¹

I was more deeply recollected with tears, especially at Holy Communion. On this holy night I was recollected, but not to the same extent. I also felt much tenderness, especially remembering the infinite love of our dear God in becoming man, in being born amid such lack of comfort and in such poverty. Then I took my rest in God.

Wednesday, December 25 – Christmas Day²²

At dawn I went to confession with heartfelt contrition and great self-knowledge. Afterward, at Holy Communion I was dry like a stump and remained so nearly all day.

Thursday, December 26 – Feast of Saint Stephen, Martyr²³

I experienced a special elevation of soul, especially at Holy Communion. I wanted to go to die a martyr's death in a place where the adorable mystery of the Blessed Sacrament is denied. The Infinite Goodness has given me this wish for some time past, but today I had it in a special manner. I desired the conversion of heretics, especially those of England and the neighboring kingdoms. I offered a special prayer for this at Holy Communion.

I also had a special understanding of the Infinite Mercy. Our Sovereign Good made me realize the greatness of his love in inflicting punishment in this life so as to avoid an eternity of suffering. Because his Infinite Majesty knows the place where his infinite justice has prepared for the justly deserved punishment of sin, so his infinite mercy is moved by compassion to inflict

21. Paul had a great devotion to the mystery of Christmas. Frequently he advised his disciples to spend the holy vigil in prayer. In his later letters at Christmas time he wrote that Christ must be "born again" interiorly in one's soul. He frequently mentions that this "rebirth" follows from the "spiritual death" one has experienced.

22. This year Christmas Day itself is for Paul a day of spiritual dryness. The few words he writes down on this day strikingly remind us of his interior barrenness. This is the price Paul of the Cross must pay to have Christ "born again" in his soul.

23. On this Feast of the Saint Stephen, a martyr, Paul prays to be a martyr. Perhaps this desire led him to remember England and "the neighboring kingdoms." Paul prayed throughout his life for the conversion of England. Perhaps his prayers were heard when Passionist Father Dominic Barberi went to England in 1841 and established the Congregation. Dominic had the privilege of receiving Cardinal Newman into the Church.

loving chastisements, with which he warns his sinful creatures to amend their lives so that they may avoid eternal punishment and may give his service first place in their lives.

All this I understood in an instant with many tears, mingled with the greatest degree of sweetness.

Friday, December 27 – Feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist²⁴

Through the infinite goodness of God, I enjoyed great repose and tenderness, especially at Holy Communion. Through infused understanding and deepest consolation of the Spirit, I enjoyed a certain spiritual rest, mingled with the sufferings of the Redeemer, in which my soul takes delight. There was a mingling of love and sorrow. On this point I cannot give a clearer explanation because it is impossible to explain.

During the time I was serving Mass and while I beheld Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I kept asking him to send the seraph to pierce me through with darts of love. This comes from the loving impulses which the Infinite Mercy imparts to the heart. I also asked him to allow me to quench my thirst for his love by allowing me to drink from the infinite font of his most Sacred Heart, but this last happened to me at Holy Communion.

Saturday, December 28 – Feast of the Holy Innocents²⁵

In the morning I was dry and suffered from headaches. I remained thus for a while, until the longed-for moment of Holy Communion had come, after which I was moved by the Infinite Goodness to deepest recollection and to intense loving aspirations and colloquies with our beloved Spouse.

Then I recalled the flight into Egypt, made with such lack of comfort, with such suffering, and the sorrow of Mary and Joseph, but especially of Mary. Within my poor soul there was a mingling of sorrow and love with many tears and much sweetness.

Of all this the soul has a deep infused understanding, sometimes of all at one time, sometimes of one mystery only. But it understands these things in a moment without bodily forms, not even imaginary ones. God infuses them into the soul by a work of his infinite mercy and love. In the very same moment, in which the soul understands this in the most elevated manner, it either rejoices or is sorrowful according to the mystery. In the majority of cases there is always a mingling of holy satisfaction.

24. Paul's prayer on this Feast of the Beloved Disciple was inspired by the example of John, who at the Last Supper rested on the bosom of the Lord. It is interesting that Paul speaks of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Like John, Paul also "rests" on the Heart of the Lord. Like John, Paul also is filled with love and sorrow.

25. Paul gives a fuller explanation of the colloquy on the Passion as he speaks to the Lord or to Mary of the flight into Egypt on this Feast of the Holy Innocents. We should note that while he dwells on this mystery, he may include the entire event or remain on one or more aspects of the flight. He does not rely on "bodily forms or even imaginary ones." He stresses that this prayer seems to be "infused." There is a mingling of love and sorrow.

Later in the evening, I had a special sorrow for my great sins and failings, for my innumerable shortcomings, knowing myself to be an abyss of ingratitude. During the day I also had special knowledge of myself. I know that I told my Divine Savior that I could call myself nothing other than a miracle of his infinite mercy.

May his Holy Name be praised and magnified by all. Amen.

Sunday, December 29²⁶

In prayer by night I was at peace and also a little distracted. I had special recollection in offering his Most Holy Life, Death, and Passion, as also in my petitions, especially for heretics.

I had a particular impulse to pray for the conversion of England, especially because I want the standard of the holy faith to be erected so that there will be an increase of devotion and reverence, homage and love, with frequent acts of adoration for the Blessed Sacrament, the ineffable mystery of God's most holy love, and so that his Holy Name may be glorified in a very special way. The desire to die like a martyr, especially for the Blessed Sacrament, in some place where people do not believe, does not leave me.

At Holy Communion I was almost without feeling, and then distractions came on as well. Later in the evening, I was recollected and felt moved to make reparation for irreverences, especially in the church, feeling inspired to remedy these by admonitions, as indeed, by God's grace I have been in the habit of doing. I felt inspired to say: "Ah, my dear Jesus, would that we could flee instantly from this church, and that angels would carry away the Blessed Sacrament to a place where it would not be thus profaned by irreverences and grave misdeeds!"

I asked him to give me the grace to shed tears of blood, something I greatly desire.

Monday, December 30²⁷

I was at first recollected, and then at Holy Communion particularly recollected and also moved to tears. Afterward, for the rest of the day I was plagued with distractions, especially by thoughts of things in the future. The enemy represented to me that great tribulations would befall me, especially with regard to my family. I was also very downcast. In all things may the Will of our God be done. Amen.

26. During the night prayer, Paul mentions that he made "offerings" of the sufferings of Christ as he presents petitions to God for various intentions, but especially for heretics and for England. Again, we learn of Paul's desire to die like a martyr, especially like a martyr for the Blessed Sacrament. Paul speaks of his great devotion to the Eucharistic Presence of the Lord and of the manner in which he exhorts the people to an appropriate reverence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

27. During the next two days Paul begins to reflect on what his calling will mean to his family as well as what it will require of him. He speaks of "the great tribulations" awaiting them all. He continues to be "molested" by these anxieties. His response is to pray that "the Will of our God be done."

Tuesday, December 31 – Feast of Saint Sylvester

I was dry and distracted, but with internal peace, though molested with the thoughts mentioned above. At Holy Communion I was at peace, yes, but rather insensible and unmoved in my affections. Toward evening I was particularly recollected.

Wednesday, January 1, 1721²⁸

Through the infinite love of our dear God, I was raised up in spirit to great recollection and many tears, especially after Holy Communion, during which I felt keenly the sweetness of holy love. It seemed to me that I was melting away in God.

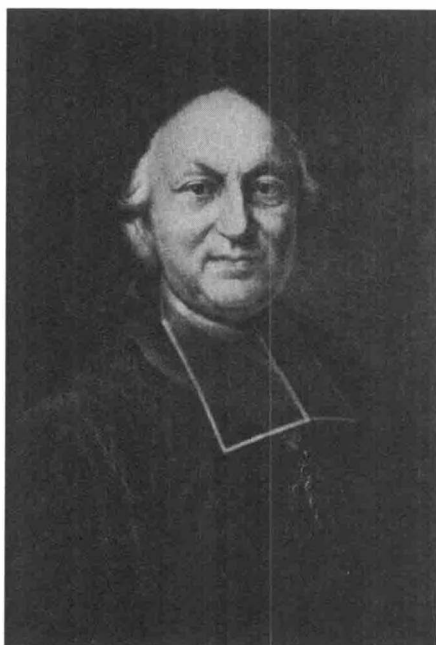
With greatest confidence, without weariness, and with exceeding sweetness I was relating my woes to Jesus. I told him of the scruples I felt with regard to a vow I had made to deprive my body of all unnecessary pleasures. Then I told him what he knows already, that when I am hungry, I feel pleasure in eating even a piece of dry bread. Whereupon, I heard an interior voice say gently: "But this is necessary." Then I felt as if my heart would break, and I burst into the most loving tears.

I also had knowledge of the soul united in a bond of love to the Sacred Humanity and, at the same time, dissolved and raised to a deep, conscious, and felt knowledge of the Divinity. For since Jesus is both God and Man, the soul cannot be united in love to the Sacred Humanity without being at the same time dissolved and brought to a deep, conscious, felt knowledge of the Divinity.

This wondrous and exalted marvel cannot possibly be set down or explained, even by one who has experienced it. It is impossible because the soul understands that God wills these gentle experiences and exceedingly high marvels because he who is Infinite helps the soul to understand these things. But to describe them afterward is utterly impossible. These are things which are experienced and comprehended in an instant, at least so it seems to the soul. For even if they should last for a full thousand years, it would, in my opinion, seem less than an instant because the soul is in its Infinite Good. It desires nothing else but his glory and his love, and that he be feared and loved by all.

I have had another very special grace, especially in contemplating the holy mystery of the Circumcision. Likewise, when serving Mass, I had such a deep light on the great love which God displays toward me and my misery, my ingratitude, my whole life, that I did not venture even to raise my eyes to look upon the picture of Mary — and always with an abundance of tears mingled with great sweetness, especially on seeing my Spouse Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament.

28. The final day has come. For Paul this is a day of "confidence and exceeding sweetness." Paul seems to be melting away in love. He also receives an "understanding" of the mystery of the Incarnation. At the same time he realizes that even though one may be given the gift of "understanding" this mystery, one cannot describe it afterward. The final grace of this day is a renewed and deeper awareness of God's love for him and his own unworthiness.



Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara



Bishop Emilio Cavaleri

IN SEARCH OF COMPANIONS

(1721–1727)

At Castellazzo, on Mount Argentario, and also at Gaeta and Troia, and finally in a Roman hospital, Paul seeks companions and the ministries to which he and his companions should devote themselves. In Rome Paul and John Baptist are ordained to the priesthood.

CASTELLAZZO (1721–1722)

Paul's retreat ended on New Year's Day of 1721. He presented the Diary and the Rule to Bishop Gattinara, who in turn had Paul go to Genoa to discuss the Rule with Father Columban.²⁹

On his return to Castellazzo, the bishop assigned Paul to the country Church of the Holy Trinity and later to the Church of Saint Stephen, which was closer to town. There Paul would remain the hermit-custodian of this church. He prepared for the Masses and services held in this church and kept the floor clean. In a short time he was more than custodian or sacristan; he began to teach catechism to the children, to lead the people in prayer services, and even to preach.

Paul realized the time had come to seek companions to join him at Saint Stephen's. There he wanted to form the first community of "The Poor of Jesus." Bishop Gattinara hesitated. He would not allow Paul to take this first step without the approval of the pope.³⁰

3

Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara (3)

Saint Stephen
Castellazzo

January 27, 1721

May Jesus Live!

Most Illustrious and Reverend Sir,

Very Venerable Lord and Patron and My Dearest Father in Jesus!

Since the devout servant of God, Paul Sardi,³¹ is approaching the feet of Your Most Illustrious Lordship to reveal the holy inspirations he is constantly receiving from the infinite mercy of our Supreme Good, I was unwilling to fail in my duty to inform Your Most Illustrious Lordship of those which I have received from God frequently regarding the vocation of this servant of God. Know, Bishop, that I have such an inspiration that he be in my company in this holy tunic that I can only with true heart prostrate myself at the feet of the Most High and implore him to give him to me as a companion.

At times, when I observe his perseverance in prayer and his devout recollection, I cannot keep from exclaiming with satisfaction: "Ah, what a saintly person!" It seems to me he must be seen as holy and that he must do

29. Father Columban, a Capuchin priest living near Genoa, was Paul's spiritual director in Castellazzo.

30. See the work of Father Gaétan on recruitment and all that Paul did to find candidates, "Recrutement, Formation, Gouvernement de Religieux," *Revue de la Passion*, Tonniens, 1934.

31. Paul Sardi was a young man of Castellazzo. He never joined Paul but did become a priest. Paul wrote to him throughout his life. Sardi testified at the canonical Processes leading to Paul's canonization. Only a few letters have been preserved.

great good for souls. This results from the strong beginning which our sweetest God grants him. To see this young man courageously trample human respect, despite being a beginner, leaves me stupefied. He fasts with perseverance and is unwearied in prayer. I have seen him spend the entire morning occupied with God in holy, prayerful exercises.

I bring this to the notice of Your Most Illustrious Lordship to let you know my opinion of this devout young man and, prostrate at Your Lordship's feet, implore you to console him by granting him as my companion, for it seems to me I should get a wonderful example from his holy life. I remain, however, indifferent, equally to having him as well as to not having him. And in my heart I feel intense peace, whether it be one way or the other. Meanwhile, I place myself totally in the hands of Your Illustrious Lordship.

After dinner Saturday, by the mercy of our dear God, I moved to Saint Stephen's. I can only tell Your Illustrious Lordship that your charity has provided me with a paradise of holy solitude, and that I am sure that, although Your Most Illustrious Lordship was not interested in seeking merit, nevertheless, the infinite generosity of our sweetest Spouse will grant it to you in abundance for using, and continually using, so much charity toward this abyss of iniquity. A place more appropriate, more devout, more withdrawn from the turmoil of the world I could not have found anywhere, unless I went to a desert. I hope that, if I cooperate with the holy inspirations of our dear God, this may be just the solitude where God has led me to speak to my heart.

Sunday, that is yesterday, I began going around with cross and bell to invite the people to praise God at Christian Doctrine, and through the mercy of the Supreme Good, all went along in good order, and for the first time, there was a particularly numerous attendance. I also had great fervor in announcing the word of God to them. When I was going down the street and, looking backward, saw the crowd of youngsters following behind me, my heart was so jubilant that I was forced to restrain my tears. I will not omit telling you that the demon employed all his infamous cunning — I am not writing of it here so as not to be too long — in order to disturb this work of God. I could only say: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Now I see clearly that it is the Holy Will of God that I employ myself in this way.

With regard to holy prayer and Holy Communion, I spent these past days in almost continual and, I might say, almost total aridity and desolation, and with the usual melancholy, mixed with distractions, as well as temptations. Some very horrid imaginings occurred to me, even at prayer, but I paid no attention to them. I know well that our dear Jesus is constantly making me recognize more my vileness and ugliness. I remained in prayer just as long as usual, neither longer nor shorter. My customary peace never leaves me. One morning I was in particular bodily pain, more so than usual, and was dry and afflicted, and I heard said to me: "There is all eternity to rejoice." So I remained thus in peace with God, desiring always to suffer more.

Fasting goes on as usual these past days. I have eaten only once a day, and I feel better. It entered my mind to eat only once every two days, but for the

present I will wait for a stronger impulse and then refer it to Your Most Illustrious Lordship, submitting it to your holy sanction and benediction.

I remain, placing you in the most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Most Holy, desiring that you may be all inflamed with holy love, and recommending myself to your holy prayers that I may finally amend my worst imperfections and ingratitude. Prostrate at your Lordship's feet, I implore the charity of your blessing, and I kiss the hem of your sacred garments.

Thanks be to God.

Your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship's most unworthy servant and son,

Paul Francis, the Least Servant of the Poor of Jesus

4

Sister Teresa Costanza Pontas (1)³²

Saint Stephen

Castellazzo

February 6, 1721

Most Reverend and Esteemed and Beloved in Jesus,

O sweetest troubles, treasured tokens from the Sacred Heart of our dear Spouse Jesus! Who can explore the magnificence of these precious treasures which our Sovereign Good uses to crown his beloved spouses? One who loves Jesus seeks only to suffer. I am consoled that you are one of the fortunate souls who walk the way of Calvary, following after our dear Redeemer. Happy is the one who follows this precious path, for one day she will sing in the company of the lovers of the holy cross: "Your crosses, dear God, are the joy of my heart."

How beautiful it is to suffer with Jesus! I could wish to have the heart of a seraph to explain the loving need of suffering that close friends of the Crucified cherish, for they know that where there are crosses, there will be crowns in paradise.

Therefore, let us use every endeavor to seek holy perfection, humility, obedience, and, above all, a continual resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure. You think what is happening is opposed to your good; to the contrary, you should know these are designed by your loving Spouse for your greater good. Yes, you must cry out continually to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lover: "Your will be done."

I will not fail to do as you ask, even though I am the most unworthy to make supplication to the All-Highest. I regret that you come to this great sinner, an abyss of iniquity. I will recommend you to my devout companions. And do not doubt; take heart, for the more one suffers, the more one is made

32. This letter was written to a nun of the Augustinian convent at Castellazzo and is Paul's first letter of spiritual direction. After his own days of suffering during his retreat, he now tells Sister Teresa how blest she is for sharing in her present trials. She is becoming one of the "lovers of the holy cross." The style is highly enthusiastic, almost poetic, and has been called a devotional hymn.

like our dear Spouse Jesus. I end by leaving you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, asking that you be all inflamed with holy love. Thanks be to God. I recommend myself to your holy prayers and those of your devoted sisters.

Your Reverend Ladyship's most unworthy servant,

Paul Francis, the Least of the Poor of Jesus

I implore you to visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently and to suggest this to others. Remember this poor sinner.

5

Sister Teresa Costanza Pontas (2)

[Castellazzo]
1721³³

May Jesus Live!

Most Reverend Mother in Jesus,

Our consolation should be entirely in Jesus. I know that not the words, but the infinite charity of our Lord consoled you. Wherefore, let us thank God for this! I shall not write at length, but will simply say that, if you wish to attain the summit of perfection, be wholly enamored of assiduous prayer and employ yourself in the lowliest offices of your convent. Thus you will constantly endear yourself to our Spouse Jesus, who seeks naught in his dear spouses except humility and obedience, for in these two virtues rests the principle of perfection. Then if you are busy and cannot give all the time you desire during the day to holy prayer, prudently take time at night.

Oh, what beautiful converse to go away and remain in the company of angels before our sacramental Spouse! Such are the pure embraces of paradise. Come, let us take courage and never let the sorrowful remembrance of Jesus' pains depart from our heart. Thanks be to God.

I am brief because I still have a discourse to give here at Saint Stephen's. Some day this week I will write a bit more at leisure. Excuse my delay in answering. Know that I was busy enough. As for what you told me, have no doubts.

I recommend myself to your prayers and leave you buried in the furnace of holy love of our Crucified God.

Your Reverend Ladyship's most unworthy servant,

Paul Francis, the Poor One of Jesus

33. This letter has only the year as the date. Probably it was written shortly after the first letter of February 6, 1721.

Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara (4)

Castellazzo

March 11, 1721

Live Jesus!

Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord,
My Respected Patron and Most Beloved Father in Jesus,

The reverend nuns of this place desire to hear the divine word pronounced by the mouth of this great sinner, and for this reason the Reverend Mother has so informed me through her agent. Hence, being desirous of serving these devout religious by encouraging them more and more toward perfection, I was unwilling to fail — such is my duty — to secure permission from Your Most Illustrious Lordship so that I might with great liberty proclaim religious perfection to these devout souls.

So I am asking your permission and your blessing. The discourses, assuming your permission, will take place on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays and will always include a devout meditation. Meanwhile, I await the charity of Your Most Illustrious Lordship's holy blessing, either written or oral, when Paul Sardi reaches the feet of Your Most Illustrious Lordship.

I must tell Your Most Illustrious Lordship that I constantly feel more impelled to leave for Rome. It is true that I would like to go to the holy mountain of Varallo for the sake of devotion since I cannot go to Jerusalem, where my dear Jesus suffered so much for me. I had this desire of going to Varallo even while I was a secular. Now it keeps coming to me. Wherefore, I would like, if such be pleasing to Your Most Illustrious Lordship, to leave for the said mountain after the third Friday of March. Then, returning from the holy mountain, [I will] give the people general instructions in doctrine, invite them to greater and greater perseverance, and warn them of a terrible plague if they do not — so I feel myself inspired. Then, with your holy benediction, I will depart for the feet of His Holiness, as I so much desire.

My dearest and most reverend pastor, I beg you, for love of Jesus Christ, to console me by granting me permission to enable me to carry out the holy inspirations of my dear Spouse Jesus. Then, as to companions, I shall say no more, knowing for certain that when I am at the feet of His Holiness, God will reveal his mercies to the whole world. My confidence in my Crucified Lord is such that I am more than certain all will succeed. God gave me the inspiration and a very certain sign that God wills it. What should I fear? I would believe I sinned by infidelity were I to doubt.

Meanwhile, not to weary you by keeping you reading any longer, I continue to leave the affair to Jesus, begging him ever to increase the fervor of your people and prosper them. Prostrate at your sacred feet, I kiss the hem of your pastoral garments and beg your holy blessing. Thanks be to God.

I recommend myself to your charity in your holy sacrifices.³⁴

34. Paul often requests of priests and lay people to be remembered in their "holy sacrifices." It is not clear whether Paul is referring to ordinary sacrifices or to the Mass. Holy sacrifices will not be capitalized unless the context is clear.

Your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship's most unworthy son and servant,

Paul Francis, the Least of the Poor of Jesus.

About Paul [Sardi] and the other one, I told them to do as God inspires them. As for myself — I say this with all my heart — I am indifferent whether they come or not. Indeed, I can tell you that I never felt so indifferent, believing positively that will be the Will of God. When Paul asked me to write about him, I refused, but told him to place himself in the hands of God and not to fear. Thanks be to God.

7

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (1)³⁵

Castellazzo
April 12, 1721

Most Illustrious Lady and My Revered Patroness,

Now that I am involved here in public preaching with a goodly attendance of the local population as well as outsiders who are so eager to hear the divine word that they are coming here to listen to the summons of God, and knowing for certain and being informed that on the two days following Easter there will be a great number of outsiders coming for the nourishment of their souls, I wish to beg Your Illustrious Ladyship to dispense me from coming to you until a later time, provided there is no disadvantage to your people and those round about; I mean as long as news of my coming has not been spread around. However, in case people have already been invited, I put myself at your disposal and now await your esteemed desires.

However, if you wish, we could go half and half, that is, Easter Monday here, Tuesday and the next day with you, if you so desire. I will come for the whole day, making sure I arrive in the morning. Then I can continue for three days or the whole week. I will take as much time as suits Your Illustrious Ladyship. And now I place you and your entire household in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and with humble reverence declare myself always,

Your Ladyship's most unworthy servant,

Paul Francis, Least of the Poor of Jesus

35. The marchioness was the wife of Claudio, a wealthy landowner at Rettorto. Of Paul's letters to her, thirteen have been preserved. Paul was very close to the entire family and laborers whom he served in many ways. A son became a Jesuit and two daughters entered the convent. The marchioness herself became one of Paul's earliest followers.

John Baptist Danei of Saint Michael the Archangel³⁶

Civitavecchia
September 9, 1721

May Jesus Live!

My Dearest Brother in Jesus,

Dearest in the Lord, I arrived at Civitavecchia on September 9 with excellent weather, and I can tell you that I had no problems except for the first day. I have made this trip with great fervor of spirit. Give thanks to God on my behalf. I have had such courage that I could go to the end of the world out of love for our dear Jesus. There has been no fear in my heart.

When I am in Rome, I will give you news of everything. I hope we shall be together in this world and in heaven. Greet everyone in Jesus Christ, and I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Most Holy. I recommend myself to your prayers and those of all our brothers and sisters in Jesus. Thanks be to God.

This morning I will enter quarantine in the isolation hospital of Civitavecchia. I expect to be here a little more than ten days. I can state I have been treated with much charity.

Your unworthy brother,

Paul Francis, Least of the Poor of Jesus

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (2)

Castellazzo
December 29 1721

May Jesus Live!

Most Illustrious Lady and My Revered Patron,

The peace of Jesus, our Good, which exceeds all understanding, preserve your heart. Blessed forever be the infinite liberality of our dear God who is pleased to afford me for my greater profit constant occasions and examples of holy humility. I see this especially in your dearest favor. For what I ought to have done, Your Illustrious Ladyship has accomplished. May the infinite goodness of our sweet Jesus grow continually in this jewel of paradise and melt it in his holy love.

I acknowledge the good wishes Your Illustrious Ladyship is pleased to extend to me, a most vile creature and your unworthy servant. May our dear

36. Paul writes from aboard ship. John Baptist, Paul's brother, had visited Paul during his long retreat. Paul was on his way to Rome to seek the pope's permission. On his arrival in Rome Paul was driven from the papal palace, which in those days was not the Vatican, but the Quirinal. Refused even an entrance, Paul sought comfort in praying to Our Lady at the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. There he felt inspired to take a vow to continue his efforts to found a new religious Congregation dedicated to the sacred Passion. On his way back he stopped at Mount Argentario and obtained permission from the bishop to live in a hermitage there. Returning to Castellazzo, Paul was joined by his brother John Baptist, who received the habit on November 28, 1721. Bishop Gattinara gave Paul and John Baptist formal permission to leave his diocese in order to continue their dedicated life on Mount Argentario. They would now be under the direction of Bishop Salvi of Sovana.

Infant Jesus reward you by inflaming your heart and transforming you in his divine love.

I read with consolation the account which Your Illustrious Ladyship gave me of your spirit. I completely thank our dear God for the graces it has pleased him to give you. You should know, despite the fact that you find yourself in such dryness and desolation, your soul does not cease to acquire great treasures. But before I tell you how to acquire these great treasures, it will be well to mention that I prayed before writing this. Accept what I write as a light granted to me, a most miserable sinner, for your spiritual comfort.

Yes, you should know that our sweetest Jesus is preparing and purifying your heart by this spiritual aridity in order to transform it afterward through his kindness in his holy love, and to grant what you are asking, the gift of holy prayer, an angelic gift, which, being such, was obtained, as you already know, by the saints with great tears and sighs and penance. I hope strongly in the great liberality of our Highest Good that he will grant this to you.

Don't be troubled at not being able to lead a life of austerity and penance like some of the saints; work in your proper state with that prudence and discretion which the Infinite Goodness will teach your heart. And then do not doubt. Your state is not suited to the use of severe afflictive penances. Never, except for urgent necessity, omit holy prayer, spiritual reading, and the exercise of virtue, especially of holy obedience, humility, and meekness. Then doubt not that God will make you all his — to say it in one word — a saint.

When you are in aridity, if you can, withdraw to your room and take the crucifix into your arms and with all your love kiss his sacred Wounds, especially the sacred Side, using these ejaculatory prayers: "Oh! Jesus my Good, you are all mine and I am all yours." "Oh! my heart's sweetness, let me repose sweetly on your sacred breast." "Most loving Heart of my Spouse Jesus, who suffered so many afflictions through your whole life, shall I not suffer aridity for love of you?" "Yes, yes, my Jesus, either to suffer or to die." Make use of these and others as the Holy Spirit suggests, and do not fear.

In the meantime, not to weary you longer, I remain in most humble obeisance to you and, likewise, to the Illustrious Lady Cecilia and all your sons. May Jesus sanctify them for you. My brother joins me. I beg you, for charity's sake, to recommend me to our Lord in your prayers. Thanks be to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin.

Your Most Illustrious Ladyship's most unworthy servant,
Paul Francis, Least of the Poor of Jesus

MOUNT ARGENTARIO AND CASTELLAZZO (1722–1724)

Paul and John Baptist left Castellazzo on the first Sunday of Lent in 1722. They reached Mount Argentario on Holy Thursday, April 2. After Easter they stayed at the hermitage of the Annunciation in solitude and prayer. On the weekends they would come down to the fishing towns of Portercole (Porto 'Ercole) and Porto San Stefano at the foot of the mountain. There they attended Mass and taught catechism. Bishop Salvi insisted that they must not seek other young men to join them. When Bishop Pignatelli of Gaeta (south of Rome) offered them a place and ministry in his diocese, they accepted his offer. It seems, however, that a need arose back in Castellazzo and the brothers returned there. Because John Baptist got sick, they stayed longer than intended. There are five letters preserved from 1723–24, all written while delayed at Castellazzo. If any were written from Mount Argentario at this time, they have not been preserved.

10

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (3)³⁷

Castellazzo

January 1, 1722

May Jesus Live!

Most Illustrious Lady and My Revered Patroness,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be in your heart.

Last evening, the Feast of Saint Sylvester, I received a letter from the Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop Fulvio Salvi, bishop of Sovana, in which he advises me to bring only one companion, telling me that the consent of the visible head of the Church of God, that is, the Supreme Pontiff, is necessary both to remain withdrawn in that holy solitude and also to be purified there like gold in the crucible. Of this I shall give you no further information, as I write in haste.

I beg Your Illustrious Ladyship to endeavor with the charity of your spirit to instill Dominic with sentiments of resignation to the most Holy Will of God. Know that I knew nothing of his withdrawal or leaving home, nor of his having scabies or anything else. I was somewhat astonished when I heard of it. He told me, although not the last time he was here, but the time before, that he is making the Novena to the Blessed Virgin first, and also I think he said that of the Nativity, imploring God to enlighten him. Then he would come here to us in order to discuss the inspiration the Infinite Goodness would have granted his heart, and then we should understand each other. However, it was not my intention for him to leave his home so soon. Enough! I think that he is

37. Paul explains why he cannot take a certain Dominic along with John Baptist when they leave for Mount Argentario. Already Paul is having a problem with the bishop of Sovana.

fervent. In all may God's Holy Will be done. So then, I beg you to tell him to be patient and to have no human respect about returning home, as this will be a trial from God to refine him still more. In the meantime, if he maintains himself in his good vocation, God will then give him what is best for his salvation. Excuse my boldness. I know your prudence and, more still, the Holy Spirit will instruct you how to perform this work of mercy. Later, when I have more leisure, I shall write something to him.

Today is the grand Feast of the Circumcision of our dear Jesus, the day when he willed to be given this sacred Name of Jesus. Truly, I am praying Jesus to imprint his sweet and Holy Name in your heart as well as in that of the Illustrious Donna Cecilia and all your illustrious sons. I recommend myself to your devout prayers. My brother joins me in making you a most humble bow. May Jesus be your consolation. Thanks be to God.

Your Illustrious Ladyship's most unworthy servant,
Paul Francis, Least of the Poor of Jesus

I implore Your Illustrious Ladyship not to trouble yourself to reply. I ask you simply to advise me by a line or two, or orally to the bearer, whether Dominic has gone to see our Illustrious and Very Reverend Bishop. If he has not, suggest to him not to go, as nothing can be done. I am as above.

II

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (4)

Castellazzo

January 13, 1722

Blessed be the most Holy Name of Jesus.

Most Illustrious Lady and my Revered Patroness,

I received your esteemed letter Sunday evening and a discipline, which was enclosed in it. May God reward you for the charity you exercise toward me and for your cooperation for the destruction of my self-love, of which I am so full. I thank you for your pious interest in my welfare. Be assured that I am not so fervent and not so detached from myself that this enemy of mine, my body, will be endangered from scourging so as to injure my health. Also, the infinite goodness of our dear God will teach me discretion of spirit so as to chastise it only so far as to keep it subject to the soul and to praise the Supreme Good with it. May our Divine Redeemer fill your heart to overflowing with his holy love. Do me the charity of remembering my miserable soul in your devout prayers, and I ask the same of Donna Cecilia. I place both of you in the sacred Wounds of our Savior and humbly bow to you. Thanks be to God.

Your Ladyship's most unworthy servant,
Paul Francis, Least of the Poor of Jesus

Sisters and Brothers³⁸

Saint Stephen
February 21, 1722

*May the most holy peace of Jesus Christ,
which exceeds all understanding, preserve our hearts.*

I, Paul Francis, your brother, a most miserable sinner and most unworthy servant of the Poor of Jesus Christ, am by divine decree about to leave these parts to go and follow the holy inspirations from heaven. I am going to withdraw into solitude to invite not only rational creatures, but also irrational and insensible nature to accompany me in weeping for my great sins and in lovingly praising God, whom I have offended so much. But before making this holy retreat, I did want to leave you, my brothers and sisters, with some spiritual advice in order that you may be inflamed with greater fervor in the holy love of your most loving God.

First of all, observe God's holy law exactly. Fear with a holy filial fear that loving God, who created and redeemed us. You know, dearly beloved, that the more tenderly a son loves his father, the more he fears to displease, injure, or offend him. Let it be that way with you, dearly beloved. Always have this holy fear of offending God. It will be a bridle to restrain you from falling into sins. Love this dear Father with an ardent love; cherish a tender and reverent confidence in him. In short, may all your actions, all your words, sighs, pains, travails, and tears be all sacrificed to his holy love.

Persevere in this divine friendship and frequent the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. When you approach the sacred altar, let your greatest aim in doing so be that your souls may ever more and more be dissolved in his holy love. Oh! dearest ones, I say nothing to you about preparation, for I think you do what you can. Remember, it is a question of performing one of the holiest possible actions. Our dear Jesus could do nothing more than to give himself to us as food. Then let us love this dear Lover and be very devout toward the Blessed Sacrament. In church we should tremble with reverence. Let no day pass without making mental prayer for a half-hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, on the sorrowful Passion of the Redeemer. If you can, make more, but at least never neglect giving this much time.

Continually call to mind the sufferings of our Crucified Love and realize that those great saints, who are now triumphant in holy love up there in heaven, attained their great perfection by this road; yes, exercise yourselves in this celestial practice as much as you can, especially on Communion days. Familiarize yourselves with ejaculatory prayers and accustom yourselves to make them with your heart. For your greater profit I am jotting some down:

"Oh! dear God, would that I had never offended You." "Hope of my heart!" "Rather to die a thousand times than sin again." "Oh! my Jesus, when shall I love you?" "Oh! my highest Good, wound my heart with your holy love." "Anyone who does not love You, oh dear God, does not know you."

38. Before leaving Paul wants to offer his sisters and brothers some spiritual advice. This letter reminds us of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* of Saint Francis de Sales.

“Would that all might love you!” “When will my soul be on fire with your Divine Love?”

ACTS OF RESIGNATION: “Your Holy Will be done.” “Welcome, afflictions, I embrace you, I press you to my bosom. You are jewels sent to me by my Lord.” “How beautiful to suffer!” “O dear hand of my God, I kiss you. Blessed, moreover, be that sacred lash that strikes me so graciously.” “Oh! dear Father, it is good for me that you humble me.” “Dear Good, my God, your scourges are the joys of my heart.” “Yes, yes, my Jesus, to suffer or to die.” And others according to your devotion and particularly acts of resignation to the Holy Will of God.

Be of good heart in afflictions, and know they are the most certain signs that you are friends of God. Offer frequent acts of sorrow for sin and acts of love of God. You can do this when walking, working, or even in the company of others, for in the end, although your body is surrounded by people, still your heart is not. Hence, you can do every good with your heart, even in the midst of the most serious occupations. Have a tender devotion to the Sorrows of Mary, to her most Holy and Immaculate Conception, to your guardian angels, your patron saints, and especially to the holy apostles.

Learn to love holy obedience. Oh, if you but knew how dear to God is this heavenly virtue! The truly obedient are saints. Remember that our gracious Jesus was obedient unto death, to death on the cross. Who would not learn to love holy obedience at the sight of God-Made-Man, who, rather than depart from holy obedience, yielded up his most holy life on the hard tree of the cross? There are souls in hell that fasted and did penance, but because they were not obedient, it was to no avail, and now they are burning in fire. But as for obedient souls, go as far as you will through those corridors of death, and you will certainly not find one.

In the first place then, have a deep respect and reverence for father and mother. Obey them blindly; I mean without talking about what they command you. Remember that father and mother, like our superiors, hold the place of God. Now think with what exactness we are bound to obey, respect, and reverence them. Speak to them with great respect. For the love of God, avoid answering them back, especially with unbecoming words. Help them lovingly and console them with great charity in their afflictions. Wait on them in every need, in sickness and so on. In short, remember it is they who gave us our corporeal being — with divine aid. So avoid displeasing your father and mother by disobedience, bad conduct, etc. Otherwise, you will fall out of favor with that great God, who, after chastising you with temporal scourges, has power to plunge your soul into the eternal flames of hell. May God free all of us from them. On the other hand, by obedience, as I hope, you will receive eternal blessings in this life and heavenly glory in the next. Courage then, dearly beloved. Live the holy law of God, live holy obedience. Obey, obey, obey, for I hope to see you saints in heaven, and pray that I, too, may acquire this celestial jewel. May God grant it to us all. Thanks be to God.

Humble yourselves to everyone for love of God. This is the advice of our dear Jesus, who tells us to learn of him for he is meek and humble of heart.

Speak charitably to everyone, especially to your elders. Reverence everyone, especially priests.

Whichever one of you has to manage the temporal affairs of the house should do so with gentleness, patience, and humility. If you have debts, beg your creditors, should you be unable to pay, to have compassion on you out of love for God. Control your temper. If others owe you anything, try to secure payment without going to court. Have pity on everyone, especially the Lord's poor.

In managing your affairs, remember to always consult your elders, especially father and mother. They should come first. Do nothing without their permission. When you have to travel, if the journey is to be a long one, remember to go to Confession and Communion first, and then get the blessing of father and mother. Strive to hear Mass daily. When prevented by necessity, hear it in your heart, that is, by desire. While I am speaking of desire, desire often to unite yourself with the Lord in a holy spiritual communion. To sum up, do all you can to be true servants of God. Suffer tribulations willingly; remember they are pledges of God's love. The greatest sufferings are reserved for the greatest servants of God. Have courage and do not fear the multitude of your afflictions — make a bundle of them and place it on the bosom of your soul, perfuming it with the fragrance of patience.

Finally, I beg you always to remember that holy precept of love which Jesus taught his disciples at the Last Supper before going to his death: "My beloved apostles, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Oh, what gracious words! The example is clear. Love one another, love one another, my dearest brothers and sisters. Remember, you will never please God if you do not love one another. Let there never be any dissension among you, and, if ever any sharp words should pass among you, be quiet at once and do not keep on talking. Let not disdain take possession of your hearts. So I repeat to you with Saint John: love one another, love one another, for in this is the love of God known. Show great love toward God's poor.

Obey one another, especially the younger toward the older — although with you there should be no seniority. Be humble, wait upon one another, console one another. I particularly recommend that you respect your sisters much, showing them all possible deference, treating them charitably, and assisting them in all their needs.

Read some spiritual book every day. Avoid idle companions as you would the devil. Go to church often to adore the Blessed Sacrament and reverently visit the altar of Mary. Do this especially before going to school and inculcate it also on other children. In short, remember to do whatever you can to serve God, keeping his holy law, inflaming your hearts more and more in the holy love of God. If you do otherwise, remember that you will experience the scourge of the great God in this life, and hereafter you will be buried in its wrath and fury in the eternal flames of hell — from which may God preserve us all.

I also leave you then in the sacred Wounds of Jesus, under the protection of the Sorrowful Mother, praying to her in particular to bathe you and the whole family in her sorrowful tears that you may have a continual remembrance of her sorrows, and that she may give you perseverance in the holy love of God, strength, and resignation to suffer. Take Mary Most Sorrowful as your protectress and never cease to meditate on the sorrowful Passion of Jesus Christ.

May God in his mercy grant all of you his holy benediction, and you also pray to God for me.

Thanks be to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin.

Your most unworthy brother,

Paul Francis, Least Servant of the Poor of Jesus Christ

13

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (5)

Castellazzo

October 24, 1723

May Jesus Live! May Mary Most Holy Live!

Your Most Illustrious Ladyship,

May the grace of the Holy Spirit sanctify your soul. I have received your esteemed letter, in which I read the desire your Ladyship has to know what spiritual exercise you should follow to prepare yourself devoutly for the sacred Solemnity of All Saints. Dear God! Your Ladyship is asking enlightenment from a blind man? Nonetheless, to show my obedience, I will not neglect to share with you whatever inspiration I have from God.

As our dear and adorable Savior has informed us in his holy Gospel, that he who fails to deny himself and carry his cross cannot be his disciple, so all the saints who wished to be true disciples of Jesus continually studied this holy lesson and actually put it into practice. Now these holy heroes well know the immense good continual abnegation of self has brought them.

Most Illustrious Lady, let this be your practice not only for this solemnity, but also for the whole of your life. Do not be frightened at the difficulties, for God, Infinite Kindness, will be your strength, your comfort. Cry out, cry out with Saint Paul: "I can do all things in God who strengthens me." That God with infinite love has made his saints holy. If you are faithful in your vocation, he will make you holy as well. So have courage.

If Your Illustrious Ladyship wishes to add some special prayers beyond continual mental prayer, which shall be always on the Passion of Jesus, our supreme Good, or upon some other mystery of his holy life, you can recite as a vocal prayer three Our Father's, Hail Mary's, with the Glory Be to the Father, thanking the Holy Trinity for the graces given to all the saints. You may add the hymn *Placare Christe servulis* with the Magnificat antiphon from First Vespers³⁹ and the prayer of the vigil.

39. Vespers was the afternoon part of the Divine Office, the official prayer of the Church. Major feasts had special psalms, hymns, and prayers on the vigil (First Vespers) as well as on the feast day (Second Vespers).

I am not prescribing external mortifications, whether with regard to eating or others. I simply say that by accommodating yourself to others you will be able to perform acts of great virtue in this way.

I sense the aridity you are experiencing in holy prayer. Oh! how you ought to thank our sweetest Savior, for by trying you in this manner, he makes you the companion of so many of his dear servants, men as well as women. Never abandon this heavenly exercise, no matter how great are your trials. One day there will arrive a sun of such warmth that it will melt these mountains of snow. I mean that when God has proven your fidelity, he will fill you with a heavenly fire of love that will scatter this dryness and desolation. Where you feel yourself weak, be more on guard. With one's neighbor there is no better medicine than holy meekness.

Now I conclude by thanking you in the Heart of Jesus Christ for the charity you have done us, as does my brother, who continues in his illness. Finally, leaving you in the sacred Side of Jesus, as also the Illustrious Cecilia and all your illustrious house, and asking your prayers, I am in Jesus Christ,

Your Illustrious Ladyship's most unworthy servant,

Paul Francis, Most Unworthy Hermit

14

Sister Maria Elena Zerboni (1)⁴⁰

Castellazzo

October 24, 1723

May Jesus Live!

Most Reverend Mother,

Yesterday, I received your esteemed letter, in which I read your devout sentiments that made me certain that you have not forgotten to remember in your prayers this poor sinner. May Jesus, our Infinite Goodness, reward your charity. I do not know whether God will permit us to meet and have a devout conference. In all things may the Holy Will of God be done. If my brother were not ill, we would no longer be in this region. May the most holy designs of Providence be adored.

May the Father of Lights make your novice as well as all the religious more and more fervent. With all my heart I thank in Jesus Christ the Most Reverend Mother Teresa, the Reverend Mother Julia, and her sister for the charitable remembrance they made of us. Finally, I am asking the Lord to bless them with his holy and eternal blessings and the fullness of his holy love. I beg the charity of their devout prayers and end by placing you in the most sacred Side of our Divine Savior, along with all the other religious, especially those mentioned above.

Your Reverence's humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis, Most Unworthy Hermit

40. Sister Maria Elena Zerboni was a religious in the convent of the Annunciation in Alessandria.

Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara (5)

Saint Stephen
Castellazzo
November 26, 1723

May Jesus Live!

Your Excellency,

I did not want to pass over giving you the news as to the way my brother again succumbed to a tertian fever.⁴¹ We were forced to turn back, although we were already at Genoa and had looked up shipping. Since we will be forced to remain here all winter, we will always be eager for any commands of Your Excellency. While we humbly ask for your prayers in the Holy Sacrifice and close with a devout kiss for your pastoral robe, let us rest in Jesus. Thanks be to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin.

Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant and son in Christ,
Paul Francis, Unworthy Hermit

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (6)

Saint Stephen
Castellazzo
December 21, 1723

May Jesus Live!

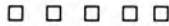
Most Illustrious Lady,

May the holy love of Jesus, our highest Good, be always in your heart. The arrival of the great Solemnity of the Holy Nativity gives me the occasion to wish Your Ladyship and all your illustrious house the holy peace that our Divine Savior is accustomed to pour on his most beloved. I, although most unworthy, will not omit begging the Most High to enrich you with heavenly treasures, especially his most holy love. I beg Your Ladyship, for the love of God, to do the same for me. My brother John Baptist humbly extends devout good wishes for the coming holy days to you as well as to all your illustrious household. He continues to be bothered with the remains of his tertian fever. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus. Thanks be to God.

Your Illustrious Ladyship's humblest and most unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul Francis, Most Unworthy Hermit

41. This is a malaria that reaches its peak every third day.



GAETA AND TROIA (1724–1726)

Paul and John Baptist left Castellazzo in the spring of 1724. This time they went to Gaeta with the permission of Bishop Salvi. They resided at the hermitage of Our Lady of the Chain and the shrine of Our Lady of the City near Itri at the invitation of Bishop Pignatelli. Then, at the invitation of Bishop Emilio Cavalieri, maternal uncle of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, they went to Troia. He hoped they would form a community in his diocese. They also visited Rome for the Holy Year in 1725 and were presented to Pope Benedict XIII, who orally granted them the permission to gather companions. Fortified with this papal blessing, they returned to Gaeta once again. They resided with other hermits, taught catechism, and even preached the ordination retreat for several young men. The letters of this period, although few, indicate Paul's impact upon men and women associates. Letters are from February 7, 1726 to August 29, 1726. For Bishop Cavalieri there is an Italian study by D. Vizzari and G. A. De Sanctis, C.P., entitled Santo Alfonso, Santo Paolo della Croce, Monsignor Emilio Cavalieri. Several letters published in this study that the bishop wrote to Paul are quite informative.

17

Sister Maria Elena Zerboni (2)

Castellazzo
February 3, 1724

May Jesus Live!

Most Reverend Mother,

I am sending my brother to receive the charitable offering made to us by that holy sister. We will not fail to offer it as well as those given by Your Reverence to God, although we are unworthy. We will ask the Supreme Giver of every good to transform you in his holy love. And now, asking for your devout prayers, I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus as well as your holy sisters and all the religious. I will not fail to visit your holy convent when I come to Alessandria with my brother to receive your requests. Thanks be to God.

Your Reverence's humblest and most unworthy servant,
Paul Francis Danei

Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (1)⁴²

Our Lady of the Chain

February 7, 1726

May Jesus and Mary Most Holy Live!

My Lady,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be in your heart.

I have heard from Catherine, your sister in the Lord, that your spirit is greatly agitated with scruples and other fears. I rejoice with you that the Divine Goodness is beginning to accustom you to battle in order to have you share in the crown of glory, which His Divine Majesty gives to those who are faithful. Ah! Signora, do you not see that these scruples and fears that you have not confessed well are clearly temptations of the devil, who wishes to turn you away from the path you have begun and to have you abandon prayer and Communion?

Believe me, Signora, laugh at this evil enemy — I am speaking in accord with the teaching of the saints. He is enraged to see you serve God and for that reason tries to upset you in this way. The greater number of the servants of God have suffered, and do suffer, similar upsets. Therefore, rejoice that Jesus our Good puts you among the number of his servants, male and female. Take courage, my Lady, this storm will soon pass and great peace will come. Continue your accustomed exercises, especially prayer and Holy Communion. Confess your failings as you see them and do not disturb yourself. Rest assured that your worries come from our enemy. Get rid of him with acts of confidence in God.

“Ah, my Jesus,” you should say, “shall I doubt you, who are my dear Father, my highest Good? Shall I doubt the pardon of my sins when by your mercy you have washed me in the Precious Blood? Ah! no, my God, I do not doubt; I trust in You.” Use other sentiments as God will inspire you.

I have no more time to write. I simply ask you to continue to recommend me to God in your prayers, as I will do for you. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus and sign myself,

Your humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis

Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (2)

Our Lady of the Chain

February 16, 1726

May Jesus and Mary Most Holy Live!

My Dear Lady,

May the infinite goodness of our dear God be ever praised. He is never satisfied with multiplying his graces! Oh! how much I rejoice that the divine mercy has visited your soul with his holy peace, a peace beyond every sense,

42. Nicolina P. Martinez was a holy woman from Gaeta, mother of a priest, Father Emmanuel Martinez, who was a friend of Paul and John Baptist.

one drop of which exceeds all the delights of earth, however great they might be! Courage, my Lady. Since you honor me with the name of “brother,” in Jesus Christ I do the same for you. I will call you my beloved “sister” in our sweet Jesus. And I tell you that the visit the Giver of All Good has paid you is to make you always more grateful, corresponding to his divine call by persevering in the exercises you have entered upon. Do not be frightened when you find yourself in the sufferings previously experienced, for you should know that it often happens that they reoccur. Our Divine Savior visits his dear servants — male and female — with touches of sweet consolations, and then tests them with trials to see whether they are truly faithful.

So, my Lady, be always of good heart, for you have had many experiences of the Divine Goodness, placing you on a good path so you can hope that you will arrive at the port of safety. Let us make our prayer, be confident in God, distrustful of ourselves, and have no doubts that God will be our Way, our Life, and our Truth. In charity pray much for us, and may the Divine Mercy reward the benefactions which you continue toward us with an eternal reward. So I hope.

The Divine Goodness has weaned Catherine, your sister in Christ, and, if she is faithful, as I hope, she will see the great mercies that God will work in her soul. I have great hopes for her, founded on the infinite goodness of our dear God, who enriches with great blessings and innumerable graces those souls who with great fidelity remain crucified with our dear Savior and live abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure. May God be ever blessed!

Your humblest and most unworthy servant,
Paul Francis

20

Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (3)⁴³

Our Lady of the Chain
April 21, 1726

Alleluia!

My Dear Lady,

Oh! may our great God be ever blessed and praised that he has been pleased to have us reach the most solemn feast of the glorious Resurrection. Let us then sing in company of the Blessed Citizens: Alleluia — Praise the Lord! Oh! what a victorious word that is! This is the song of praise sung by the victorious citizens of paradise. Alleluia is not a sound found on earth; it is a hymn of paradise. To sing it one needs to be despoiled of one's old self and clothed with the new self, who is Jesus Christ, that is adorned with the holy virtues, for the acquiring of which our great and victorious Captain Jesus Christ paved the way. To him we sing Alleluia forever.

Ah, my Lady, I wish that we will sing this together forever in paradise. I hope for that. So as not to tire you, I wish you the holy peace of Jesus, our

43. This is a beautiful commentary on the word *Alleluia*. Paul is so identified with the memory of the Passion that we might easily neglect his devotion to the Resurrection.

Good, as well as your husband, for whom I beg every good from the Divine Goodness, and for your son and all the household. Thanks be to God.

Your Illustrious Ladyship's humblest servant,

Paul Francis of the Poor of Jesus

My brother John Baptist joins me.

21

Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (4)

Our Lady of the City

May 26, 1726

Alleluia!

My Lady,

May the most holy peace of Jesus Christ always guard your heart. As Father Erasmus Tuccinardi, chaplain of this sanctuary of Our Lady of the City, has occasion to be going there, I beg you to have the charity to lend us the two volumes by Saint Francis de Sales that treat of the most holy love of God. We will return them within a month or so. You can entrust them to the said Father Erasmus.

Meanwhile, not to weary you, we continue to recommend ourselves to your prayers and wish you every good. We are,

Your Illustrious Ladyship's most humble servants,

Paul Francis and John Baptist

22

Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (5)

Our Lady of the City

June 3, 1726

Live Jesus and Mary Most Holy!

Most Illustrious Lady,

May the holy love of God be always in our hearts. Amen.

The esteemed letter I received, along with the books, has given me reason to thank the Infinite Goodness for the mercies he imparts to your soul. Oh! true God, how I rejoice to learn of the loving trials the Heavenly Father causes in your spirit. Be assured that the afflictions you suffer are the best possible proofs. Your temptation to abandon the path you have begun is the howling of the enemy, who is enraged at seeing you walking the way to paradise. You must laugh at the infernal monster and make acts of confidence in God, and the enemy will be confounded. Above all, never abandon holy prayer and protest vigorously that you will die a thousand times rather than abandon God, who with so much tenderness invites you to his most holy love.

May the Lord reward you for the care you have for us, which is based entirely on holy charity.

I received Father Francis' letter and have answered it. Courage, then! Let us not lose sight of our dear God nor be frightened by trials. They only will be crowned who are faithful in God's holy service. Sufferings, temptations, and

every sort of trial are the portion of God's dearest children. Don't forget to keep on recommending us to the Lord in your prayers, as we will you. As we greet you in the Lord, we assure you that we are without fail,

Your Most Illustrious Ladyship's most humble servant,

Paul Francis of the Poor of Jesus

As to what you tell me of Signore Felix of Gensa, when Father Erasmus arrives, he will tell you verbally what you desire to know.

23

Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (6)

Our Lady of the City

June 21, 1726

Hail Jesus and Mary Most Holy!

Most Illustrious Lady,

May Jesus, our highest Good, be our only consolation. In truth, a devout soul ought not seek any other consolation than in this dear Savior and in his cross.

I rejoice, my Lady, that the Divine Goodness continues little by little to despoil you of consolations. This is a sure sign, if you are faithful, that he wishes you to share in eternal consolations. The renewed presence, here at our sanctuary of Our Lady of the City, of our sister in Christ, Catherine, recently returned from Fondi, affords me the opportunity to show you by this letter that I remember you in my unworthy prayers. At the same time this lets you know that the Divine Goodness wants to deprive you once more of frequent conversation with this servant of Jesus Christ, for her conduct is tending that way. In accord with the light given me by God, she is to act this way in order to follow the inspiration of God. Your Ladyship should not believe this comes from any other purpose than God's greater glory, for this soul will be behaving in the same way with others as well. I am not saying she may not visit Your Ladyship's home occasionally for a pious conference, but it should be infrequent and the visits brief. Be assured you will experience greater satisfaction and spiritual advantage if your conferences are held rarely than if often. Moreover, this is being done with advice. I recommend myself to your devout prayers. I shall gladly receive news of your spiritual profit, as I hope. May God be the one object of our desires and our love. With this, I remain in Jesus Christ,

Your Illustrious Ladyship's humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis

My brother John Baptist joins heartily in this.

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (1)⁴⁴

Our Lady of the City
August 29, 1726

Live Jesus and Mary Most Holy.

Most Illustrious and Reverend Signore and Esteemed Patron,

May the most holy cross of Jesus, our Good, be always planted in the midst of our hearts so that our spirit may be grafted into this Tree of Life and produce fruits worthy of penance through the infinite merits of the death of the true Author of Life.

I received your esteemed letter the day after the Assumption and answered it promptly, but did not send it. Why? I cannot say. One of the reasons, it seems to me, was that you mentioned in your letter that yours was a reply to the first one I had written to you.

Dear Father Erasmus, do not believe the memory of you and your deeply loved and esteemed person has escaped my memory. Certainly not! So I pray the Father of Lights to dissolve us in his Holy Love so our souls, liquified in this Divine Love, may become one by union with our High Good God.

Ah! when shall we imitate perfectly our Savior, who emptied himself? When shall we be so humble that we glory in being the opprobrium of men and the abjection of the people? Ah! when shall we have become like little babies clinging to the breast of the most holy love of Jesus, our dear Spouse, Father, and Teacher? When shall we be so simple and childlike that we consider it a great advantage to be made out to be the least of all, to be cast aside as nobodies, and to be pained to be esteemed and honored? Ah! when, when? Out of charity pray that the Lord will give us the grace.

We do not know whether there are any letters for us at the post. If we had some friend, we would ask him to try and find out.

Sylvester, our dear friend in Christ, has insisted that I ask Your Reverence to make up the expenses for the grain given to your relatives. He has mentioned this several times, but he sees no success. Out of the respect and love he has for Your Reverence, he has not made any further moves and will await your answer. Then, if he does not receive satisfaction, he will go to court. May Your Reverence have compassion toward him. He acts thus to meet his needs.

I end by kissing your holy hand and warmly recommend myself to your prayers. My brother John Baptist does so as well. He, thanks to the grace of God, is much better. We humbly send our greeting to the master of the house and wish him every good thing. Thanks be to God.

We will speak to you of our business in good time.

Your Reverence's most humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis of the Poor of Jesus

44. Tuccinardi was Paul's confessor at this time and a longtime friend. At one time Tuccinardi gave serious thought to joining Paul and John Baptist on Mount Argentario. He died at Gaeta in 1763. Seventeen letters written to Tuccinardi have been preserved. This letter was sent to Tuccinardi at the Annunciation in Gaeta.

ROME AND ORDINATION (1726–1727)

Paul and John Baptist have arrived in Rome. There they will live and work at the new hospital Cardinal Corradini is establishing in Rome. Their service will continue the ministries Paul had been engaged in, namely teaching catechism, preparing people for the sacraments, and teaching them how to pray by remembering the Passion of Christ. It seems that the constitutions of the hospital included the possibility of Paul and John Baptist being ordained, something that Bishop Cavalieri had told Paul he should plan for. The seven letters to Tuccinardi that Paul wrote from Rome help explain Paul's decisions at this time to be ordained and then later to return to Mount Argentario (Spencer, As a Seal Upon Your Heart, pp. 78ff).

25

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (2)

Rome

September 21, 1726

Most Illustrious Reverend Father and Esteemed Patron,

Behold, we arrived at Rome well, thanks to His Divine Majesty. We did not have to make another trip. God has arranged things differently. We are established in the hospital, which seems more in line with our agreement to be totally sacrificed to Divine Love.

The opening has not taken place. In eight or ten days, the pope will consecrate the church, and then we all will come together with joy to embrace our dear Jesus in the persons of his poor ones.

We have spoken to the prior with regard to Rose, and he will be happy to receive her. He would like her to come in November. There will be a novitiate — for women it will be about five years. So there will be time to test her vocation. However, I am writing to her that she should make prayer, seek counsel, and then decide; here she will find her God. There will be much to suffer and to mortify herself, especially to tend toward self-contempt to a great degree.

Let all be done quietly with great love and prudence.

She ought not renounce her possessions, that is, her dowry, until her novitiate is complete. She will have no expenses beyond that for the trip. Take some time to examine the business and then write to me. I am still waiting for the reply from Rose, to whom I am writing, and I include Signore Notarianni. Out of charity pray for us. We salute the master of the house and all, in particular Reverend Rosilli. Let them pray for us.

Salutations in the Lord to Master John, his wife, and all the household — to all quietly.

Your Reverence's humble and unworthy servants,
Paul Francis and John Baptist, Brothers

26

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (3)

Hospital of San Gallicano
Rome
November 20, 1726

Most Illustrious Reverend Signore and my Most Esteemed Patron,

It is fourteen days since Rose has come to this hospital. I did not inform you immediately because with the rain I could not send it to the post. Now I write on her part that she finds herself very well, in great peace, consoled, and happy to be in the holy place for the service of Jesus Christ and his sick ones. I hope she will succeed well, as she spends herself with love in nursing and is well regarded by the Reverend Prior as well as others. She has opportunity to do whatever good she wishes and has been assigned a quiet room. In short she is more and more resolved to persevere until death in this sacred place.

Her spiritual life goes on as usual; she has no inspiration to choose a director. She confers with me on her spiritual needs, and I have the permission from the Reverend Superior. I find myself very insufficient — I say this as I feel it in the Lord. I have asked her to pray to God that he provide her with a guide in accord with the Sacred Heart of God. She is doing this, as I believe, and tells me her spirit is much repelled from taking such a step. She asks that I do her this charity as you yourself did. I have highlighted my insufficiency, and she replies in the same way and tells me that, if I am not going to do it, she wants to take her direction in her spiritual journey under the advice of Your Reverence. However, I have informed you of all this with the consent of our beloved sister in Christ. And so I place myself under your judgment, as God will give his light, as we hope, and will provide her the guide that pleases His Divine Majesty.

At present she continues with much fervor to the glory of God and the edification of those around her. God be blessed and praised in his dear servant. I and my brother pay you our humble regards and inform you that we find ourselves well off here. In good time I will inform you further. I had wished to write Reverend Rosilli, but I am waiting to give him fuller information of what God is doing for his glory so that he may be more consoled. We salute him in the Lord. Pray for us. Rose joins with us.

Your Reverence's humble and unworthy servant,
Paul Francis

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (4)

Hospital of Santa Maria and San Gallicano

Rome

January 4, 1727

Most Illustrious Reverend Sir and Revered Patron,

I do not know whether one of our letters which we wrote to you, along with Rose, has reached your sacred hands. Waiting for a reply from one post to the next made us delay so long in writing. Now, we will not wait any longer, and we are telling you, therefore, we feel much obliged to God for his Divine Providence in placing us here. Rose is more and more satisfied at being here and praises His Divine Majesty for the grace he has granted her. This is such a precious vineyard or, to express it better, a furnace of charity; none could be better. Blessed be God.

In spirit Rose places herself at your feet and assures you that she continues as always. She recommends herself to your devout prayers. She is at peace and goes ahead in her exercises with greater opportunities for perfecting them. The choice of a spiritual director is still to be made. She wants to wait, for she is not in the least inspired at present as into whose hands to commit the guidance of her soul. However, by her fruits we know she is walking in spirit and in truth.

Meanwhile, God with his light will teach us his Holy Will. Here she is beloved by all in the Lord. Finally, recommending ourselves to your good prayers, we close with a kiss of your holy hands. Together with Rose we salute in Jesus Christ Catherine of Genoa and all her devout sisters, and we recommend ourselves to their prayers. Nor do we neglect Signora Nicolina, our worthy benefactress, and others in the Lord.

Your Reverence's most lowly and unworthy servants,

Paul Francis and John Baptist, Brothers

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (5)⁴⁵

Rome

March 15, 1727

Most Illustrious Reverend Sir and Revered Patron,

Last Saturday, March 8, a youth from Itri came with news of Your Reverence. I had already intended writing for the post that very day, but he told me that he will come in the evening to pick up my letter, which I had already written. But I did not have the good fortune to see him again. Hence, in the love of God I beg Your Reverence to excuse me because the next ordinary post was not until today.

45. Paul informs Tuccinardi that he and his brother will be ordained soon. They are not being ordained as priests of the diocese of Rome, but under the title of hospital service (letter to Pope Benedict XIII, February 4, 1728).

Rose is doing nicely and assures you with all humility that she continues as usual. She discusses the affairs of her soul with me. From the fruits it is clear that she is walking in the holy path of Crucified Love. I cannot tell you more because I am writing in haste.

The superiors want us to be ordained priests, with permission from the Supreme Pontiff, and to continue in this habit and life as we are. We have already received tonsure and minor orders and will surely be promoted to two sacred orders, or at least one, this Lent.

I do not have time to tell you at length the dispositions of Divine Providence in this event. I assure you that the belief that I am burdened with so many imperfections makes me fear lest, through my own fault, all will work to my greater punishment. For charity's sake pray the Lord fervently to protect us in our great necessities.

I have not yet had an opportunity to get the small phial, but when Catherine, Rose's cousin, comes, I will send it to you. Indeed, I beg you to have the charity to let her know that Rose greets her and says, if she wants to come this Holy Saturday or Easter, come. However, if she wishes to wait until we say Mass, that will be Corpus Christi at the earliest. Let her decide freely.

We humbly salute Canon Rosilli, to whom we are so obligated, and beg him to excuse us. As soon as possible we will give him a full report. Meanwhile, pray for us. We bow most humbly to you and kiss your sacred hands.

Your Reverence's most lowly and unworthy servant,
Paul Francis

29

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (7)

Rome
April 15, 1727

Live Jesus and Mary Most Holy!

Most Illustrious Lady and Revered Patron,

May the most holy peace of Jesus Christ guard your heart and all your devout household.

Although I have had no further news regarding the progress of your soul in holy love, my heart could never doubt that our good God must be pouring the fullness of his benedictions more and more upon your spirit. Ah! Illustrious Lady, who would not love this Father of Mercies, who invites us with so much compassion and urges us to run after his heavenly aroma? Oh! how sweet are his divine attractions! Let us run, let us run, Signora, after this dear Lover of our souls, casting ourselves more and more completely into the bosom of his most holy love! Let not the difficulties frighten us, our daily faults, our great miseries, for these are but the throne of his mercies. If he hides, he does so for no other purpose than that we may become more humble and learn to hope beneath the shadow of his wings and, afterward, to reveal his Divine Face to us by means of holy faith and thus gladden our hearts the more by means of holy love. Finally, I recommend myself to your devout prayers and those of

your devout household, as does my brother John Baptist, humbly saluting in Christ the Illustrious Marquis, Lady Cecilia, and your sons.

Within a short time we shall both be priests. Perhaps some day we will take a trip to Lombardy for the greater glory of God, and then we shall have an opportunity for a little talk on the mercies of our Divine Savior, Christ Jesus. May he be blessed forever.

Your Illustrious Ladyship's humblest and most unworthy servant,
Paul Francis Danei

30

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (6)

Rome

June 11, 1727

The most holy peace of Jesus, our Good, guard our hearts.

Most Illustrious and Reverend Sir and My Revered Patron,

First of all, I need to beg your forgiveness. I will not say for my forgetfulness, it was not that, but for my ingratitude.

On Sunday we celebrated our first Mass. We were ordained priests by the Supreme Pontiff. Out of charity pray for us so that we may correspond with holiness of life for the many benefits the Lord has given us.

Rose places herself humbly at your feet and affirms to you that she remains ever the same. Her journey in the way of the Lord seems to me to be good and without deceit. I judge this by the fruits which are very good. It would take too long of a letter to give you an account of everything. My duties prevent me from extending myself in writing. Being a priest obliges me to great things, and I must study in accord with what is possible for me.

Let us see each other in the Heart of Jesus at the holy altar. I greet all in the Lord, especially the Most Reverend Basili and the sister in Christ of the House of Gensa, Anthony and all his house, and the Most Reverend Master Di Casa. Finally, wishing you every good, I leave you in the Lord as I kiss your sacred hands, as does my brother. Give me your blessing.

The cleric Anthony is bringing you the small bottle which you were asking about. Once more, I beg your pardon.

If possible, do not send letters by the post since I do not use it.

Your Illustrious Reverence's most humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Francis

Anna Massari Danei (1)⁴⁶

Rome

August 18, 1727

May Jesus Live!

Our Dearest Mother,

You should have no doubt that the notice we received of the death of our father caused us great sorrow, especially since we did not have a very clear account of it. But we soon adored the most Holy Will of God and prayed His Majesty to console you. Dear Mother, remain joyful since we hope for certain that he is in paradise. Make the whole family remain joyful. I am not writing to them because I will speak to them. Soon the two of us will leave here and come to assist them in their need. Today, when we received the letter, we went to seek permission. We will await to do this when it will be most expedient. In a short time we will depart. We hope that it will be at the beginning of September. Pray for us. We will say Mass tomorrow and other days for the soul of our deceased father.

Your most loving servants,

Paul Francis and John Baptist

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (8)

Rome

October 31, 1727

May Jesus Live!

Your Illustrious Ladyship and my Revered Patron,

May Jesus be the sole object of our hearts and our desires. This past Sunday we arrived in Rome in good health. For that be glory and praise to the great Father of Mercies.

How I rejoice in thinking of the graces the Lord is imparting to your soul and the good will this same Savior has given Your Illustrious Ladyship to run from virtue to virtue until you attain to the consummation of holy union with our Supreme Good. Oh, true God! With all my strength I dare exhort Your Illustrious Ladyship to abandon yourself more and more completely in the loving bosom of our dear God, undismayed by aridity, desolation, or anything else, but pressing forward magnanimously. Oh, how pleasing to His Divine Majesty is this loving abandonment of our will to the Will of God! I earnestly recommend myself to your devout prayers.

I took the letter to your Reverend Brother, but I did not find him as he had gone to Tivoli with Father and others. I left it with a religious to give to him.

I humbly salute Ladies Cecilia and Elenora and all your sons. Lady Elenora will do me the charity of informing me of her entrance into religious life so

46. Anna Massari, Paul's mother, was the second wife of Luke Danei. Luke's first wife was Maria De Grandis, who died childless in 1690, five years after being married. Anna Massari and Luke Danei were married in 1692. They had sixteen children; six survived into adulthood: Paul Francis, John Baptist, Joseph, Anthony, Teresa, and Catherine.

that I also may share her joy in the Lord. In conclusion, I make a most humble reverence to Your Illustrious Ladyship and to your entire household. Thanks be to God. My brother joins me in signing myself,

Your Illustrious Ladyship's lowly and unworthy servant,
Paul Francis

33

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (7)

Rome

December 20, 1727

May Jesus Live.

Most Illustrious Sir and Revered Patron,

Your Reverence has many reasons to complain about my negligence in writing. However, you should be aware that the death of our father, whom God has in glory, as I hope, had taken us to Lombardy for serious concerns of charity. As soon as we arrived, after two months journeying, we were stricken with tertian fever. I went eighteen days without celebrating Mass.

But to further admit my thanklessness — or as it stands before the Lord — I would not have written even now if Rose had not, as it were, put the pen in my hand. I write in her name and in the Name of the Lord.

Rose is revealing briefly the state of her soul to you, as I am well aware, since I believe this is in accord with the Will of God, seeing that I have refused to do so many times. She lives in great peace within and in the gifts of God, especially concerning holy prayer. She has great purity of conscience by the grace of God, as far as my weakness can discern. She has daily Communion, and the prior is satisfied with this. She has much more fervor because of this.

She continues to practice her mortifications, as far as she can, with great submission. I do not write more since I know how well informed you are with regard to this devout soul. Above all, she strives to practice virtue. She says that in all this time she has heard the divine word from the putrid trumpet of my mouth. She says she has had rich feeding, and that one word gives her such recollection that it lasts at times for three or four days. I give the glory of this to God, and I told her that God, in order to have her witness his mercies, speaks to her through one who is a pestilential and infected trumpet — and that is the truth — so I ought to weep tears of blood.

I have asked her to pray to God so that he will inspire her as into whose hands she should submit her spirit. I have even suggested the prior of this hospital, but she is not inspired to do that. Quite to the contrary, she has much reluctance and repugnance of spirit.

I have refused many times to hold conferences and undertake her direction, telling her of my great insufficiency. She has always asserted that in prayer she is moved internally with great peace to treat of her spiritual state with me and not with others. Finally I gave in, but always with the permission of the superior for myself and for her to do so rarely.

At present I cannot, and ought not, continue, for the prior claims that this could give rise to a practice of others who would want to be directed by staff

of this hospital. He is right about this. So Rose finds herself in some constraint, but she is resigned and asks me to find her a spiritual director. I will do this very happily and will take care to inform him of the spirit of this soul, who is very dear to Jesus, as I hope.

So both she and I would like to have your opinion. She asserts she wishes to do the Will of God in everything and has found it in the mouth of this minister and especially in you, who have guided her with the help of God.

Above all, she has strong opposition of spirit to allow herself to be guided in spiritual things by the prior of this place. Neither do I feel inspired that she do that. He is a good servant of God with an entirely active way of life. I do not believe he would be able to give attention to the guidance of a soul on the way to a great union with God in holy prayer. Please send us your opinion.

After I have recommended this business to God, I feel drawn to confide her to a very learned and pious servant of God who is engaged in guiding devout souls. Rose says that with your opinion she will submit to whomever God decides by means of me. You see, Your Reverence, how humbly she accepts your decision.

Jesus console you at this coming Christmas with his peace. My brother says the same. Both of us, along with Rose, recommend ourselves to your devout prayers. Thanks be to God.

Write to me or to Rose as God inspires you.

Your Reverence's humble unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

MOUNT ARGENTARIO:

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

(1728–1737)

When Paul and John Baptist, as ordained priests, left Rome to return to Mount Argentario, they faced several important concerns. 1) There was need to regularize their canonical status. They finally received the title of missionary apostolic. 2) Paul became involved as spiritual director of many fervent souls, including Agnes Grazi, Sister Cherubina Bresciani, Francis Appiani, Thomas Fossi, et. al. 3) There were problems from the war and Paul's role as chaplain and peace-maker. 4) Paul began his ministry of preaching missions, retreats, etc. 5) To found the Congregation he sought companions and followers. He searched for property on which to build his first monastery or "Retreat." He was delayed by war and by opposition from Cardinal Altieri. Paul will enter the Retreat on September 14, 1737. The letters of these years reveal the many dimensions of Paul's life, his personality, sufferings, holiness, and zeal. Above all, we learn how he was on fire with love!

SETTLING IN (1728–1730)

During the first years on Mount Argentario, the correspondence with Father Erasmus Tuccinardi is quite helpful in our understanding of how they "settled into" life as priest-hermits. They spent a good deal of time studying and praying. Both Paul and John Baptist read the Scriptures prayerfully. Eventually they received faculties from the local bishop to minister to the people at nearby towns on weekends. The first letter to Agnes Grazi mentions that they were giving missions. Finally, on February 23, 1731, they requested Pope Clement XII to grant them the canonical title of "the missions." Paul used this title in signing a letter on December 16, 1732.

34

Pope Benedict XIII (1)⁴⁷

Rome

February 4, 1728

Most Holy Father,

The two brother-hermits, Paul and John Baptist Danei, priests of the Hospital of Saints Mary and Gallicano, humble petitioners of Your Holiness, inform you that they lack the necessary courage to function, especially in drawing blood, as all the assistants are required to do for the complete care of the sick. This procedure is necessary for the cure of the sick in accord with the bull of Your Holiness. It has been decided to replace us with two assistants who are trained for such necessary procedures. Whereas the said brothers were ordained under title of the aforesaid hospital with a simple oath of perseverance, and are now obliged to withdraw without having at present any title, they ask Your Holiness to allow them to celebrate Mass for one year, hoping in that time that the Lord God will provide them with some benefice or patrimony.

47. Paul writes to Pope Benedict XIII for the dispensation from the oath of perseverance and the concession to offer Mass for one year. This request was furthered by Cardinal Corradini and granted by a rescript, dated January 28, 1728. Chiari puts this letter under the date of February 4, but it seems that the letter would have been written before the date of the rescript. Pope Benedict XIII was pope from 1724 to 1730 and ordained Paul and John Baptist to the priesthood on June 7, 1727.

Saint Anthony
Portercole
March 11, 1728

May Jesus Live!

Most Illustrious and Reverend Sir and Revered Patron,

May Jesus always be the one object of our love. Amen.

Up until now I have not been able to give you an account of our departure from Rome and from the hospital to Mount Argentario. So I resolved to do that now in a brief account as to how Divine Providence brought us here by very hidden ways. Many happy events have occurred since our return from Lombardy. Among these was my illness for most of the winter, while both of us had been sick almost all summer. The common opinion was that the air was not good for us. In fact, after we got here, I, for one, am feeling very well. Moreover, we found out that when they set out the rules for the hospital, they put down as one of the principal procedures for curing those having skin diseases the drawing of blood from the head. While this service is a very charitable one, we do not have the courage to offer it. In fact, we were never commissioned to perform this service. We were fully occupied in all the other offices of charity, especially in the spiritual aid of the sick, but not in this. So once we saw His Eminence the Cardinal Protector, who for the good running of the place and greater consistency in the community, had made it obligatory that everyone be employed in the blood-letting procedure and in other services of charity, which I leave out for brevity's sake, and since we do not have a mind in accord with our mode of living to do so, they procured for us with all charity a brief from His Holiness so that we could withdraw into solitude and preserve our way of life. By the grace of God it turned out to be so.

With regard to Rose, I referred her to a priest in Rome who is a good servant of God and experienced. I would have had him for my own spiritual director. This is as much as I can say. Out of charity pray for me that we always do the Will of God. May he be always praised. Amen. Do not bother yourself to reply since we do not use the post except for some particular need. May we see each other in Jesus Christ.

Your Reverence's humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

48. Notice that Paul points out the regulation for blood-letting was put into the codes of the hospital while they were away. This seems to be something not demanded of them when they took the oath of perseverance.

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (9)⁴⁹

Saint Anthony
October 19, 1728

Live Jesus and Mary Most Holy!

Illustrious and Reverend Sir in Christ,

"Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our tribulations."

The charitable remembrance that Your Reverence holds for us obliges us always more to be thankful to you in our poor prayers.

It would be our blessing, and we would thank our Supreme Benefactor greatly, if his grace brought us together. The decision is of great importance and there is great need to recommend it to God and confer with a person of great light, if His Divine Majesty gives you knowledge of someone like that.

{You should have no doubts that this place is fit to foster the highest perfection, and it is sufficiently distant from people.}⁵⁰ All the more so because God has provided a fine layman who is clothed like us and attends the exercises of our calling. We had not asked for him, but God willed him and he has stayed. We are very satisfied with him since he takes care of all the necessary business here. That allows us to give ourselves more to recollection and attention to prayer and the like. I admit I do not correspond to these great blessings from God. Pray His Divine Majesty to pardon my great shortcomings.

I do not know how your troubles are going along, so I don't know what to say about them, so much the less since I am blind in every respect. I hope that His Divine Majesty will take care to purify me in this way. When a soul tries to do as much as it can to unite itself with God and, on the other hand, cannot find peace in the duties and place it finds itself, I would say, but I have no confidence in myself, it is a sign that His Divine Majesty wishes something else, especially if there are internal inspirations.

{This is a very small Retreat; there are only two rooms and the church. But the recollection and holy silence would keep us in peace even if we were a hundred. God does not want for ways to provide rooms, etc. We do not think about it, and by the grace of God we live despoiled of everything, at least in desire. May the Holy Will of God be always fulfilled.} Pray for us. In closing we pay you our humble reverence while kissing your sacred hands.

My brother joins me.

Your Reverence's humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

49. Father Tuccinardi had written that he is thinking of joining Paul, who is filled with joy about the suggestion that they may be able to work together in this place so "fit to foster the highest perfection."

50. This letter to Tuccinardi is found in both Amedeo and Chiari. Chiari's version is the full version; Amedeo's version is within { }.

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (9)

Saint Anthony

November 11, 1728

Viterbo for Portercole.

May Jesus and Mary Live!

Most Illustrious Lady and Revered Patron,

The most holy peace of Jesus, our true Good, which surpasses all understanding, guard your heart.

With great consolation in the Lord, I received your esteemed letter, to which I have not had an opportunity to reply sooner. Therefore, I beg you to pardon the delay.

First of all, I am very happy that the Divine Providence of our good God has drawn your daughter to enter the convent of the Annunciation. I hope that this great Father of Lights, who has begun this work, will bring it to perfection by imparting the desire and efficacious graces so that she will belong entirely to the Divine Heart. Thanks be to God, from whom every good comes, she has made a good beginning before her entrance. I have, therefore, well-founded hopes that she will be a holy spouse of Jesus Christ, entirely consecrated to his service by the vows of religious life when the time shall come.

I would gladly have written to her, but I was unwilling to do so without your permission. Meanwhile, I beg Your Illustrious Ladyship to urge her to be a friend of holy obedience, humility, silence, and solitude. To obtain this, let her be very fervent and assiduous in holy prayer, etc., and, above all, trample upon human respect and regard this miserable world only with contempt. When Your Illustrious Ladyship will have given me permission, I hope, God willing, to write her a long letter, if I can. I confess I shall first spend some time in prayer before writing.

Then, concerning what it has pleased you to tell me of your spirit, I say very frankly that every evil is born of leaving off holy prayer. However, do not be fearful, but trust in God.

I give you good news that the Divine Majesty has great riches and holy lights prepared for your soul. Hence, you must go often to this dear Father by means of holy prayer in order to become more and more enamored of him and to receive his celestial riches and thus become pleasing to him.

I repeat that it is especially necessary that you make prayer because you are subject to many vicissitudes. In order to receive everything with resignation and bear all with fortitude, you must go often to be nourished in prayer, to be nourished, I shall say, on that hidden manna which His Divine Majesty gives to those who persevere in this heavenly exercise.

Do not be scrupulous, however, nor allow your spirit to be troubled when you must omit it for some legitimate cause. Do not go on trying to philosophize and examine too closely whether or not the cause was necessary. It is sufficient that you can prudently think it is so. If you can, make it up another time.

Do not leave off prayer on account of aridity, affliction, etc. Remain before your God, wholly absorbed in his love, detached from all satisfaction. When

you find yourself in such a state, help yourself with occasional darts of love, such as: "Ah, my God, my true Good, I am Yours!" Then remain peacefully in his presence even though you cannot meditate, which does not matter. With regard to these affections or loving darts, do not force your spirit in making them, but do so gently, for now you must not be governed as in the beginning. Afterward, if it seems to you that you have done nothing right, do not be disturbed. Rejoice at being so poor and needy before God, and that he alone is infinitely rich and is able to enrich you in an instant.

Furthermore, banish melancholy from your heart. Even if you do fall into some defect, never be disturbed, for that would be a greater evil than the fault itself. But having humbled yourself before God, speak to him with daughterly love, for example: "Ah, dear Father, see how one of your daughters treats you. Ah, how sorry I am," etc. Then lift up your heart immediately, rejoice in God with aspirations, etc. I am ending my writing, but the hope I have always entertained for you grows always greater. Ah, Signora, your heart will exult in the Lord your Savior. I say no more to you. I recommend myself to your prayers, as does my brother. May God be always the one object of our hearts. Finally, enclosing you in the Divine Heart of Jesus, I am,

Your Illustrious Ladyship's humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

38

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (10)

Saint Anthony
December 9, 1728

Thanks be to God!

Most Reverend Father in our Dearest Christ,

On December 1 we received your letter with its enclosure. The concern you are having with the parish of Saint Peter, and so on, may be a warning from His Divine Majesty not to consider it. I am not aware that I have ever spoken with such frankness. I am writing what is to be found in the book in front of me — and nothing of my own. Here is what can be gathered.

"If the evil one sees a priest who is upright, blameless in his person, and living with integrity, what does he do? The evil one will involve him in a church so that, when he fails to do his duty like a good curate in charge of the souls of others, he comes to lose his own soul. In this way the demon gets indirectly what he could not hope to gain directly."

Think this over carefully, think this over carefully. See whether you are called to this. Take time, counsel, and fervent prayer, and have complete disinterestedness.

See, my dearest friend, how my heart is speaking. Pardon my ardor and attribute it to the affection, based entirely in the Heart of Jesus, that I have reverently always entertained and still retain. Christmas is drawing near. I wish you the fullness of the heavenly blessings that His Divine Majesty is accustomed to bestow on his dearest lovers.

Pray much for us. I ask you to greet in the Lord our dear benefactors, should they ask about us, especially our sister in Christ, Catherine of Gensa, and her sister, Signora Nicolina, and others. We pray for them daily. Let them do the same for us, and may God inflame all with the fire of his love. Amen.

I am writing to Canon Di Stefano in this mail. If one letter is lost, the other may have the good fortune to arrive. I am writing to him alone and without any inclusion.

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Francis Danei

39

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (10)⁵¹

Saint Anthony

January 3, 1729

May Jesus be always in our hearts. Amen.

Most Illustrious Lady,

May God give me the spirit to be able to correspond to the humble title with which Your Illustrious Ladyship in Christ offers me. I need so much to be a fitting minister of the Most High, but my great sins render me too unworthy. However, I trust the infinite charity of our good God to illumine my blindness, that I, as his most unworthy minister, may announce to you his heavenly doctrine, which, passing through another, issues from the perennial fountain of his divine mercies, the source of every good, and thus his paternal Providence will give you a share in the merit of holy humility.

I rejoice in the Lord that the fruit of holy prayer is already beginning to be renewed in you. If you persevere, as I hope, you will sing of victory to the glory of the Most High.

I must first tell you that to draw greater fruit from our Lord's teaching, you must listen to the Word of God, either oral or written, as if Jesus Christ himself were speaking to you. He himself left this record for us in the holy Gospel: "He who hears you, hears me."

I tell you that it is a most excellent and holy thing to think of the Passion of the Lord and to make your prayer on it. This is the way to attain to holy union with God. But you should realize that the soul cannot always do as in the beginning, and that you must go along with the impulses of the Holy Spirit and let yourself be guided as His Divine Majesty wills. You tell me that you do not know how to make prayer except on the Life, Passion, and Death of our Savior. Continue this way with the blessing of the Lord, for in this holy school true wisdom is learned. That is where the saints and others learned.

As long — note this carefully — as you can meditate as at first, do so; for this is what you should do. But, for charity's sake answer me one little thing.

51. From the opening paragraph Paul's prayer offers us some idea of his interior dispositions as he entered upon his long missionary career. He feels quite unworthy, prays for enlightenment, even as he hopes he would become a worthy minister of God. He then continues his instructions from the previous letter as he advises the marchioness how to simplify her prayer. At the end he asks her to reread this letter. It contains a profound instruction on making mental prayer.

Are there not times, and possibly most of the time, that you are in a state where you seem unable to do anything; you cannot meditate; your mind is in great obscurity, filled with distractions and such disgust with spiritual things that you feel like running away; that you are full of weariness and boredom? I believe I have observed this to be so. When this happens, here is the way you are to act.

Act thus. For example, this morning you were ready to meditate on the dolorous Circumcision of Jesus, or some other mystery, according to the arrangement, etc., or your devotion had been selected for your meditation. Lo, you experience such dissipation of spirit that you do not know how to go about meditating. This is a sign that God wants you to pray more in faith — I am speaking about your spirit — and with greater purity of intention, stripped of every self-satisfaction, in which our own senses have the greater part. Remain wholly attached to the divine breasts of God's holy love, sucking the milk of his holy love. I pray that God will make you understand what he has inspired me to write. However, if you do not understand it so clearly now, I hope in His Divine Majesty that you will understand it better in a short time. Now then, let us come back to ourselves.

When you find yourself as I described, remain sweetly in the Presence of God and reanimate your faith without forcing head or chest, firmly believing that your dear God is wholly within you, outside you, in your heart, in your soul, in your body, in every place — the heavens and the earth are full of His Divine Majesty. Oh, what a pleasing thing this is!

Let us say with Saint Augustine: "O my God, I went searching for you outside of myself, but I had you in myself, within myself." Yes, plunged into the immense sea of his love, deeply recollected with great faith and reverence, speak to your God in spirit about the subject you had chosen for your meditation. For example: "Ah, my sweet God! Dear Jesus, what pains you experienced in your painful circumcision! O, my sweet God, what suffering in your most innocent and tender years! Why does my heart remain so insensible to it?" Or as God inspires you. These colloquies should be made very sweetly in pure faith and without spiritual strain or seeking images. If during this time you feel your heart filled with peace, compassion, or other sentiments, according as God wills, pause there, all recollected in God, like a bee upon a flower, and suck the honey of holy love in devout silence. If afterward you feel drawn to continue making more loving acts in the form of a colloquy, do so, but pray in peace. And so for the other mysteries.

At times it will happen that even when you do as I have said above, you will, more or less, still remain in great obscurity and aridity, and will be powerless to do anything. Indeed, it will seem to you that you remain there wasting your time, which is not true. No matter, remain thus in the Presence of God like a poor person asking an alms of its great Father. But you will say: "To me it seems I do not pray, but rather waste time." Quite the contrary. Indeed, this is a most pure and disinterested prayer because you are stripped of self-satisfaction. I pray you to reread this letter, etc. Strive to strip yourself of every desire except that of pleasing God and doing his Holy Will.

In order to please God, eat, drink, and sleep as your state requires. Abandon yourself completely to his Holy Will and leave to him the care of everything. However, diligently perform the duties of your state. Bury all anxiety, worry, etc., in the dear Will of God. Often make such acts as: "Ah, dear Will of my God, how I love You! Be forever fulfilled!" "Ah, dear afflictions, welcome! You come from the Will of my God," etc.

I have reached the end — and the paper as well. I am enclosing a letter for your daughter. Will you be so kind as to seal it, as I am not doing so as I do not want to make so many folds. For the rest, accept my desire to serve you for the greater glory of God and to cooperate toward your perfection. Recommend me earnestly to His Divine Majesty. Each morning I place you in the Side of Jesus, with the marquis, your sons, and all your household. May God fill you with his heavenly blessings.

Your lowly and unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

Father John Baptist greets you in the Lord.

40

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (11)

Saint Anthony
August 11, 1729

Most Reverend Father,

Your Reverence already knows much of our life. And now the heavy task of hearing confessions until the end of this Lent has been placed on our weak shoulders. Despite our unwillingness, after a short examination we were forced to agree. I am the one used mostly since my brother functions rarely. So it will be I who has the burden by order of our superior to give doctrinal instructions in Portercole. So for this reason I have many occasions to employ myself in this sacred ministry, in which I will have the consolation to cooperate in the salvation of souls who are so much in love with the Lord and who are always making progress in holy prayer and in the fruit they gather from it in the practice of the holy virtues. God be forever praised!

See what a need I have that you pray much for me. My poor soul is much inclined to solitude. And although I am here all week, not going down except on Sunday, nevertheless, I am very desirous to free myself even from that. May the Holy Will of God be done in all. I desire that it take place with perfection for all. Amen. My brother affirms the above.

One who loves you in the Lord, your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (12)

Saint Anthony
September 7, 1729

May Jesus and our dear Mother Live.

Most Reverend Father,

This morning, the Vigil of the Birthday of Mary, I received your welcome letter, which gives me reason to rejoice much in the Lord for the information I have about your dear person.

"Be of good heart, dear one, for the time has come for you to be cured. Night will be as illumined as day. As his night, so is his day." A great difference takes place in the Presence of God; rejoice in this Divine Presence. Allow yourself to be despoiled, my dear one; allow yourself to be deprived of all pleasure. Do not look your sufferings in the face, but accept them with resignation and satisfaction in the higher part of your soul as if they were jewels, and so they truly are. Ah! let your loving soul be detached from all that is created and pay no attention to its suffering nor to its enjoyment, but give all its attention to its beloved Good.

What does it matter if your soul is afflicted or that everything is in a storm? Your ship will never be wrecked. Do not lose confidence in the Great Pilot, who is guiding it into port. May our rest be in great suffering. He who is transformed into Jesus through love does not find a place to rest except on the precious cross. O dear Cross, dear Cross, Holy Cross! when will I glory in nothing but you, most Holy Cross? "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As to fulfilling your obligation of charity toward your mother, all will be taken care of. God will provide for everything. We will speak in another letter. I have many things to say to you, but now I am not able. Everything is in the hands of the Lord — letters and everything else.

Everyone greets you. Pray for us, dear brother. Do not speak of your inspirations to anyone who could block you. That is a saying of the servants of God. Pray for me and for the successful outcome of a business for the service of God about which I will give you information. It will be of great satisfaction to you. It pertains to us and, I hope, to you as well.

One who loves you in the Lord,

Paul Francis, a Poor Hermit

Pope Benedict XIII (2)

Saint Anthony
December 12, 1729⁵²

Most Holy Father,

Paul and John Baptist Danei, brothers and priest-hermits, humble petitioners of your Holiness, prostrate at your sacred feet, state that they are not yet provided with a sacred patrimony; therefore, at the end of January 1730, the permission they have from Your Holiness to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will terminate. Therefore, they ask Your Holiness to extend the permission for another year so that they will not be in this solitude deprived of such a great spiritual aid for the benefit of their souls and those of the neighbor. They shall not be wanting in continual supplication for the prosperity of Your Holiness.

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (11)⁵³

Saint Anthony
May 22, 1730

*May that most holy fire, which burns in the Heart of Jesus,
consume all in love. Amen.*

Most Illustrious Lady,

In the esteemed letter from Your Illustrious Ladyship, received with the arrival of my brother Anthony on May 20, I heard of the death of Lady Cecilia, who, I believe, was precious in the eyes of God. I trust greatly that the Divine Goodness may have received her into the bosom of his infinite mercy. I adore the designs of the most holy and fatherly Providence of the Most High. I know that Your Illustrious Ladyship will abandon yourself entirely to his most Divine Good Pleasure; therefore, I say no more.

The cross has grown heavier, has it not? I have no doubt at all. Thanks then to our True Good, who fastens you to the cross. "O dear Cross! O Holy Cross! Tree of Life on which hangs Eternal Life! I salute you, I embrace you, I grasp you to my breast!" Ah, dear Lady, such ought to be your sentiments in your present circumstances. So be courageous and seek to imitate the brave women of Wisdom. Your lower self will draw back from bearing such a weight, will it not? But your rational self, the highest point of your spirit, will quiet itself in the most holy pleasure of God. I have a certain expectation of this. Do not pay attention to your trials, your aggravations with the household, and other afflictions. Rather, give your attention to our Crucified Love, Jesus, who is the

52. This is the date on which the request was granted. Paul's letter to the Pope is not dated and was probably written a few weeks earlier.

53. Paul's younger brother Anthony brought a letter from the marchioness when he came for a visit. He stayed and joined Paul and John Baptist. Future letters will inform us of his ordination and ministries. Paul gives the marchioness instructions on the acceptance of suffering, writing from his own experiences.

King of Sorrows and Pain, so that all will seem sweet. Keep your heart in God on high.

Right now it is true that you will not be able to give so much time to prayer and other exercises. But I will give you — with my usual confidence founded on Jesus Christ — I will give you, I say, a rule to pray always. He prays always who does what is right. Therefore, I ask you to familiarize yourself by means of faith in staying in the Presence of God in all your doings, and God Himself will have you acquire this practice little by little. It will happen that you may spend hours preoccupied and not remembering God's Presence. That does not matter. For by the power of your original intention you will have worked with merit.

However, do not leave off arousing your heart and your spirit to your Beloved Good God, but do that gently and without straining head or breast. Say, for example: "O my soul, how can you be unmindful of your God? Ah! my God, you are with me, in me. I live entirely in you and of you. O my soul, look upon your God with the eyes of faith! God lives in you. You breathe in God, you walk with God, you work in God. O Joy! O Love! O Fire! O Love!"

Get accustomed to making such acts. When God enters your heart as you are making the acts of love, stop, and like a bee take in the honey. Ah! my Lady, when I reflect that my soul is the temple of God and that God lives in me — that I live, breathe, and work in God — oh, how my heart rejoices! Every affliction seems light and sweet to me. Little by little you will learn this. This is a way to pray continually. It is not necessary to be always repeating your acts; do it from time to time. For when the soul is aroused and looks toward God in faith, it should be allowed to rest in peace on the bosom of God, like a loving child.

O my Lady, this is a lofty wisdom and not given to any except the humble of heart. Experience will teach you what a lofty exercise this is. Proceed joyfully in peace before His Divine Majesty and persevere in your holy exercises as far as possible. I never cease to recommend you, along with your entire household, in the Wounds of Jesus when at the holy altar. Your sons and all the house are guarded with great mercy by the goodness of God, and most of all, your own soul. Then rejoice, and let us be inflamed the whole day with love and become all aflame. May the flames penetrate to the marrow of our bones! O dear flames, O sweet fire, Oh! when shall we be so afire that we inflame one another! I am at an end.

Out of charity, pray much for me and for all of us here. God guard you with great love. I tell you that you will be to the glory of God. Live entirely in his holy love. Live for love and from love. Amen. Amen.

The Masses will be celebrated punctually.

When you are able to write, simply address me with my name. Thus the letter will arrive.

Your unworthy, humble, obliging servant,

Paul of the Holy Cross of Jesus

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (13)⁵⁴

Saint Anthony
June 14, 1730

May Jesus Live!

Very Reverend, Most Dear in Christ,

I believe you have received my letter, addressed through the usual channel of Signore Santilli, etc., which I sent through the courtesy of the usual persons. Now there remains nothing more to say to you but to bless the infinite goodness of our Good God, who, after having separated me from the world in order that I might follow with greater perfection the precepts of his most holy Gospel, has had a brother join me, who by his fervent life serves like a stimulus in running the way of the Divine precepts. He also disposed by his great Providence that another brother, a youth of about twenty years, who has completed his fundamental studies and made the holy exercises with the greatest piety possible, be clothed like ourselves with the same habit. He has very willingly embraced the manner of life according to our vocation. May he persevere therein, and I hope in the infinite mercy that he will continue to give more and more glory to God. He has the desire to do well and causes me to hope that he will become a laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.

I have no doubt that his holy resolutions will endure in his heart. There will, of course, be temptations, but "hoping in the Lord, I shall not yield. We have passed through fire and water and you have led us to a refuge." Ah, my beloved, let us keep our hearts on high, and God will make us leap over the mountain if we do not banish from our hearts his holy inspirations. Courage! Here we must come to some resolutions. Prepare yourself to come to the pure air, to withdraw "in the clefts of the rock" in the most holy Wounds of Jesus and "in the cave of the rock" of his most holy Side.

Here, God is praised day and night, but I am "a man of unclean lips." Alas! I am very ashamed of this because of the love of my God. Therefore, courage. Jesus invites you to give your last goodbye to the world and to come to promote his greater glory. Doubt not. Here your heart will rejoice and His Divine Majesty will cause you to enjoy that peace "which exceeds every sense," although thorns will not be wanting. Should it be otherwise for the servant of a God who was crucified?

About assistance to your mother, you already have my opinion, that is, Mass offerings, which I trust in God will not be lacking, will serve as convenient alms for the situation, and, I believe, you will be able to give her

54. This letter shows Paul's method of vocational counseling. He begins by mentioning what it has meant to him to have his brother John Baptist as a constant companion and inspiration. He recognizes the gift of Providence in the coming of his other brother Anthony, who has been recently clothed in the habit. Then writing directly to Tuccinardi, Paul warns him that the time for a decision is near. There is danger of losing God's inspiration. He offers Tuccinardi a way of providing for his mother and urges him to have the courage to be one of the first, living, priestly foundation stones of this new community. He ends with brief explanations of his love and wishes for him. Did Tuccinardi re-read these final few lines so much that the original page was damaged at this place? Paul continues to advise him in other letters. Father Tuccinardi never joined Paul on Mount Argentario.

as much help as if you were there. Examine the matter well before God. If you can, confer with the Very Reverend Don Angelo Di Stefano, to whom I am writing and inviting him also to put into practice the holy inspirations of his holy resolutions in order that, having talked the matter over together, you may resolve to come. If one cannot, the other must not fail, for the Holy Spirit does not wish any delay when the way is open, because from circumstances we know well the most Holy Will of God. You may also confer with him concerning your relationship with your mother, which was mentioned above. Take his advice. "I, wisdom, dwell in counsel."

I will say no more. I hope in God that we will praise His Divine Majesty together in this solitude and prepare our hearts for the Lord. I continue to write for my consolation and profit. The authorities are very much of our opinion. God disposes the heart. I received a letter from a great prelate in Rome who greatly desires the progress of this holy undertaking and wishes to give it every help. The Retreat is small, but God is great and will very soon increase it, as I hope. Let us lay the first living stones, especially priestly stones — and you will be one of these.

Oh, how grand ...⁵⁵ Oh, what edification ... I close and desire you ... Ah, most dear, when ... May Divine Love penetrate us ... we will inflame each other. Oh love! O Jesus ... I will say no more. Pray. Greetings in the Lord to all.

Your most unworthy and affectionate servant,
Paul Francis, who loves you much in the Lord

45

Marquis Claudio Del Pozzo⁵⁶

Saint Anthony
July 25, 1730

Praise God!

Most Illustrious Sir and Dear Patron,

May that Great God, who is the Supreme Giver of every good, reward Your Illustrious Lordship for the kindness shown us and for your trouble in sending the dimissorials⁵⁷ for our brother Anthony, your most humble servant. Gratitude, which is so great in the eyes of God, will always urge us, and likewise our brethren, to beg the divine clemency for the prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, of Your Lordship and of your entire illustrious and devoted household, which I hope the great Father of Mercies will fill with his heavenly blessings. Not to weary you further, we, together with the brethren, express our most humble reverence to you, to your most worthy wife, and to all your sons, begging Your Illustrious Lordship to give us your commands. In closing I always remain and so sign myself,

55. The original letters are damaged where ... are inserted and are not legible at this point.

56. The marquis was the husband of Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo.

57. This is a document required for ordination. Only in 1769 did Paul have the right to issue this document for his own members. See letter to Canon Polycarp Cerruti, August 21, 1744, for reference to Paul's desire to issue the dimissorial letter himself.

Your Illustrious Lordship's most unworthy and obligated servant in the Lord,

Paul Francis Danei

I request the favor of Your Illustrious Lordship to pardon me the inconvenience it will entail to have one of your servants take the enclosed letter to our poor mother. You will have the merit of this favor, in addition to your other works of charity, before His Divine Majesty.

46

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (14)

Portercole
September 20, 1730

J.M.J.

Very Reverend and Most Beloved in Christ,

Your most welcome letter was a consolation to me because of the news you gave me concerning the brothers, servants of the Most High, who are about to sacrifice their lives to the eternal love of God.

Concerning the weeds that have been scattered, I have already informed Signore Calcagnini. He will inform you of my poor reflections because I love you both as one heart and one soul.

Up to the present time they have not arrived. If they should still be with you, tell them I am writing to dear Calcagnini at length. Oh, how great is the crown to persevere in face of so many trials and in view of our heavenly paradise! Oh, if they are still there, tell them that their reward is exceedingly great and the palm of victory is already prepared for this great battle. Constant perseverance.

We have recommended to the Divine Mercy the good soul of Signora Quastaferro and hope that the Divine Goodness has received her into the bosom of his mercy.

Tell Signora Nicolina that the Masses she mentions will be celebrated, and we are not unmindful of the alms she gave us.

I cannot write to Signore Davide now, but I will write as soon as possible. Kindly tell him that I have already celebrated the Mass as requested by him, as I will write to him.

I close by saying that I am here in Portercole, passing through and going to the mountain. Therefore, I embrace you in the Lord, together with my brothers, including Anthony Mary, which is the name of the last brother cleric. God be blessed. I hope in due time my most dear dolphin will also be caught in the net. Thanks be to God.

Your unworthy servant and obligated brother,
Paul Francis Danei of the Poor of Jesus

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (15)

Saint Anthony
November 29, 1730

J.M.J.

Illustrious and Reverend Patron, My Dearest in Christ,

May Jesus Christ, the one sweetness of our hearts, render you eternal reward for the charity you continue. We have already received the cloth, the oil, and the large basket from Signora Nicolina. However, nothing has as yet arrived here; all is still in Porto San Stefano. I am writing the enclosed for her. Do me the favor of readdressing it.

Pardon the delay in writing. There are many things to be done for the service of God; consequently, I could not write sooner. The parish priest whom I met with Clino promised me to return after settling his affairs. I pray the Heavenly Father that he will cause his Holy Will to be done by him as well as by us.

The ship is at sea without sails and without oars, but it is steered by the Great Pilot, who will absolutely bring it into the port safely. The ship is battered by storms and winds, but this only makes the power and wisdom of the Great Pilot, Jesus Christ, shine forth. May Jesus Christ live forever, for he gives us the strength to suffer every hardship for love of him. The works of God are always under attack so that the Divine Magnificence may shine forth. When everything crashes to the earth, that is when they can be seen to rise to the heights. "The Lord slays and brings to life, brings them to Sheol and back again."

Our dearest P. D. Angelo, more and more solid in suffering the tests from God, will be going out on missions and other works of piety for the local population.

I am not speaking of the departure of the pastor because I do not know what God wishes to reveal. I want to believe what he promised, as I mentioned above. Let everyone pray for us that we may triumph over our enemies, who are heavily armed against us, so that God may give us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I greet you lovingly, along with all my brother companions, as well as Signore Calcagnini, with the hope that one day we will rejoice over good news and give the glory of it to God. However, I confess that everything always seems good to me because the most holy and adorable Will of God is fulfilled. For the principal point of a devout life is contempt of self and perfect union with the Divine Will, which may His Divine Majesty grant to all. I end by kissing your holy hands and asking for your holy priestly blessing.

Your Reverence's humblest and most unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (16)

Saint Anthony
December 16, 1730

May Jesus Live!

Dearest Friend,

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your heart in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I was not on time for the last mail to respond to your appreciated letter, which I received. What can I say now by way of reply? I will say with the Apostle: rejoice when you encounter a variety of temptations. Yes, my dear friend, rejoice in your heart and exult in God our Savior. This is the time of trial in which the Infinite Good has you share his chalice. Ah! my beloved ... to the last drop ... without caring what must be drunk ... I even say, pardon my fervor, embrace it fervently, be like one ... so that the Will of God be done ... and all this is to be found except that ... may God set us free. This winter, this darkness, will pass. You will see the light and your heart will know how sweet the Lord is.

With regard to the desires you tell me you harbor, I say they are a clear sign that the great Father of Lights desires a life of greater perfection, hiding yourself from all the entanglements of the world so that you can, with greater fervor and ease, take in the milk of Holy Love at the breast of his infinite love. Consequently, it is necessary that you accept them with great gratitude and with a strong and constant resolve to put them into practice whenever your Heavenly Father opens the way, which I hope will be soon. Right now I do not feel myself inspired to tell you to come — however, God knows how much I have it at heart to embrace you with a kiss in the Lord — in order to proceed with the salt of prudence and discretion ... as pleases God. In time we shall see how ... Providence disposes things ... so that not ... I do not say that, only I hope ... to sing with jubilation from my most unworthy heart. In your servants, Alleluia, God will be consoled, Alleluia. I do not ask all ... my God, that he send workers to the harvest ... Let yourself be abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure.

With regard to assistance for your mother and sister, etc., I am confident in God that a way will open to give them the help here that you provide there. Therefore, think over all these aspects. It is necessary to give time in order to work with charity and with simple prudence and silence. Take special note of this point. I have no more to say now; I am writing as things are developing. Try to do all you can in holy peace to prepare to hasten your departure from the world by retiring to the clefts of the rock and the cave in the rock. I will give you the reason and the way ... to proceed, when you will be here. Pray for me ... We embrace you in ... Although ...

To the Most Reverend Signore D. Erasmus Tuccinardi, whom I love in the Lord, directed as appears in his return address and according with his desire.

Your most unworthy, obliged servant,

Paul Francis Danei

Agnes Grazi (1)⁵⁸

Saint Anthony
December 30, 1730

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Today I leave for the holy mission, although I am in the midst of my sad storms. But if God be glorified, it does not matter. Accompany me with fervent prayers for the conversion of souls, and keep faithful to the holy rules which I have given you, especially to contempt and annihilation of self. If the sweet Bambino draws you to his crib, go freely and in the bands of the swaddling clothes leave a petition for the needs of the unhappy one who is writing, especially that God will inspire him for the good result of this Retreat. On my return, and after being rested, I will come to hear you. Humble yourself, distrust yourself, and study in the mirror of the Divine Infant. Study, I say, how to make yourself nothing, poor, small, dead, crucified, buried to all things. Jesus Himself will teach you.

I would desire that you do not occupy yourself with imaginations, but leave your soul in holy liberty to fly and repose in the Supreme Good, all inflamed, astonished, amazed, absorbed in the infinite perfections, especially in this Infinite Goodness that reduces itself in our humanity, etc. The contemplation of these holy days opens a grand way for you, and may Jesus bless you according to his heart. Amen.

The poor sinner,

Paul, who is leaving now

58. This is the first letter to Agnes Grazi. Agnes was born January 28, 1703, a twin with her brother Vincent. Her parents were Mark Anthony, a military captain, and Maria Borsoni, who died April 4, 1718. Their children, besides Vincent and Agnes, were Athanasius, Fabian, Julia, and Elizabeth. The Grazi family was prominent in Orbetello and had a large home in the city and vineyards nearby. Mark Anthony's brother was James Grazi, a zealous priest. Agnes attended Paul's mission at Talamone, which was probably the first formal mission Paul conducted. From then until her death, Agnes became Paul's dearest disciple. One hundred and sixty-six letters written to Agnes are preserved. These are precious letters, giving us a wonderful example of Paul's direction in mystical prayer and leaving for us precious insights into his own life of mystical prayer and suffering. There are two biographies in Italian: *Agnese Grazi; sua vita*, by P. Francesco, 1949, and a more recent one by Dismas Giannotti, *Fuoco dell'Argentario*.

LEGAL AND SPIRITUAL MATTERS (1731–1732)

50

Pope Clement XII (1)⁵⁹

Saint Anthony
February 23, 1731⁶⁰

Your Holiness,

Paul Francis and John Baptist Danei, priests and brothers, and another brother who is a cleric, most humble petitioners of Your Holiness, prostrate at your sacred feet, wish to explain that they were promoted to the priesthood by Benedict XIII of holy memory with the title of service to the sick in the Hospital of San Gallicano in Rome. But, whereas this title does not allow engaging in holy missions, which we are now exercising in the diocese of Sovana, and more particularly in the region of Mount Argentario, where they are living together in the hermitage of Saint Anthony, as is clear from the accompanying letter from the bishop of Sovana, humbly ask Your Holiness to grant them a brief under title of the mission and include the brother who is a cleric.

51

Pope Clement XII (2)

Saint Anthony
February 28, 1731⁶¹

Most Holy Father,

Paul and John Baptist Danei, brother priests and hermits, humble petitioners of Your Holiness, prostrate at your most holy feet, reveal that they are not as yet provided with a sacred patrimony. Whereas, at the end of January 1731, the permission to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass, granted by Benedict XIII of holy memory, lapses and since they are without a patrimony, they request Your Holiness to extend the permission for another year so that they will not be in this solitude deprived of the great spiritual advantage for the benefit of their own souls and those of their neighbors. They shall not omit continually to supplicate the Most High for the preservation of Your Holiness.

59. Pope Clement XII served as pope from 1730 to 1740.

60. This is the date on which the request was granted. Paul's letter to the Pope is not dated and was written earlier.

61. This is the date on which the request was granted. Paul's letter to the Pope is not dated and was written earlier.

Saint Anthony

July 19, 1731

Most Eminent and Reverend Signore and Revered Patron,

The Divine Providence of the Most High God brings it about that the whole population of Orbetello is eager to build a Retreat, along with a church, dedicated to the Presentation of Mary Most Holy, on the property of Saint Anthony and under the jurisdiction of Your Eminence, as Your Eminence will see in the petition which the Commune sends you. Since the place where we now are has only two narrow cells, along with a small church, it cannot give lodging to us and anyone moved by God to withdraw from everything, not even those who would make a retreat. There is no way open to build a larger edifice on account of the poverty of the Commune of Portercole, despite their desire to do well by us. That Commune finds itself unable to accomplish its pious wishes, a fact known to us by our having tried, since it is about ten years, with interruptions, that we have withdrawn to this mountain. The exceptions were the short time we worked in Gaeta, called there by Bishop Pignatelli, bishop of that town, and another short time where Divine Goodness had us at the Hospital of San Gallicano. You can inform yourself about this from His Eminence Cardinal Corradini and Bishop Crescenzi.

Wherefore, prostrate at the feet of Your Eminence, we offer ourselves as your most unworthy servants and subjects, and ask whether Your Eminence believes he could succeed for the greater glory of God and the good of souls to take under his paternal care and be willing to pursue the matter so that the petition be granted by the Sacred Congregation. Your Eminence will see the same petition made by the Commune. From the orders of Your Eminence we will come to know the most Holy Will of God, and any outcome whatsoever will be sovereignly dear to us as sent by the Good Pleasure of the Most High. May God be ever blessed. In the meanwhile, we recommend ourselves to your prayers and kiss your sacred purple, asking your blessing.

Your Eminence's most unworthy priests,

Paul Francis Danei and Companions

62. This is the first letter to Cardinal Altieri. Holding the office of ecclesiastical superior of the Tre Fontane Abbey (Trappist) in Rome, he had jurisdiction over Orbetello, including some of the property on which Paul was planning to build his first Retreat. Paul had many difficulties with the cardinal during the following years.

The Councilors of Orbetello

1731

Most Illustrious Sirs,

Paul Danei, most unworthy priest, along with his companions, who for about nine years have been living a penitential life in this part of Mount Argentario, humbly inform you that they have taken residence in that section under the jurisdiction of Portercole. They have given timely assistance to the spiritual needs of souls there and at San Stefano, and are engaged at this time with sacred missions in the diocese of Sovana, as everyone knows. As a result they have received, and are receiving, their temporal support from the citizens and inhabitants of this town, who are now inspired by God and are disposed to establish a Retreat on the property of Saint Anthony for the greater service of His Divine Majesty and the spiritual benefit of the people. This property is under the jurisdiction of the Commune of Orbetello.

However, since the property belongs to the priory benefice of the Collegiate Church, we humbly ask for the kindness and zeal of the Illustrious Councilors to find apt means to obtain this property by assigning fitting recompense for the exchange. Trusting in your charity, we bind ourselves to assist, as far as we can, with our feeble strength, and to pray His Divine Majesty to bless you and keep you free of all evil.

Signore Matthew Sancez (1)⁶³

Saint Anthony
February 25, 1732

Most Illustrious Sir, My Revered Patron,

This year we have not received the contribution of wine as we usually did from the people of Orbetello since no one took the trouble to obtain it for the sake of the Retreat, etc. Since we find ourselves in need, we have recourse to your kindness — it is clear that the Goodness of the Most High has provided you with so great an abundance so that you can show yourself rich toward the poor — by asking you to provide two or three barrels of wine, such as we can use also for Masses. At the same time, let us know how you would be served. If you would desire Masses, let us know the number. For sure, we do not, and shall not, ever cease to beg the Divine Goodness to reward you eternally. Out of your love for God pardon us. Necessity has forced us. Meanwhile, we desire every good for you. Greeting you with a sincere heart, we leave you and all your house in the sacred Side of Jesus, and are always,

Your Illustrious Signor's humble and unworthy servants,
Paul and John Baptist Danei

63. Sancez was a prominent man of Orbetello. He and his family were great supporters of Paul and the Congregation.

The Bishop of Alessandria (1)⁶⁴

Saint Anthony
March 31, 1732

Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord and Father in Christ,

The Providence of the Most High God has so guided matters that a certain priest, James Grazi by name, from one of the principal families of Orbetello, has offered to provide a patrimony with an income of forty Neopolitan *scudi* in favor of our clerical brother, Anthony Mary, so that he may be ordained for the glory of God. We have thought of accepting this offer in order to raise our brother to sacred orders until such time as His Divine Majesty disposes differently regarding our vocation.⁶⁵ Thus prostrate at the feet of Your Illustrious and Reverend Lordship, we beg that dimissorial letters be sent for all the sacred orders. He is already of the age required for the subdiaconate and diaconate. Furthermore, in view of the great distance of our Ordinary from here and still more on account of the great need of the Retreat, I ask your Lordship to dispense from the interstices.⁶⁶

I can assure Your Illustrious Lordship of the good will of this young man and of the zeal with which, by the grace of God, he performs the duties of his vocation, his necessary studies, and so on. All this is also known to the Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop of this diocese. He is very well satisfied with the young man.

The mercy of God has also guided events that a Retreat of penance will be opened for us and our companions, etc., in the territory of the city of Orbetello. This Retreat will consist of a church dedicated to the Presentation of Mary Most Holy, a day of benediction for us since it was the day on which we started the life in which we now live.

There will be about eighteen small and poor cells in the Retreat. Beyond this there is to be built a retreat house not only for the clergy of the neighboring dioceses — just about all the clergy in this unhealthy territory of the maremma are without a seminary — but also for laymen who, from time to time, would want to withdraw to make a retreat. A great amount of material is already on hand, and we will soon lay the cornerstone. I tell all this to Your Illustrious Lordship, as our pastor, in order to recommend this holy project to your holy prayers and those of your beloved flock. This Retreat is to be built on Mount Argentario, near where we now are.

For some time already we have had the privilege of the title of mission as well as the brief for indulgences and the papal blessing. We are working in this diocese with many blessings from God. All this has moved us to accept the

64. Gattinara had been transferred to Turin as archbishop in 1726. Bishop Charles Vincent Ferreri is now the bishop of Alessandria.

65. Paul is referring to the title under which candidates are ordained. Anthony Mary can be ordained under the title of patrimony.

66. Interstices refer to the time required between ordination to subdeacon, deacon, and priesthood.

patrimony because we have great need of another priest to remain in the Retreat while we are out on missions and also for other purposes, all of which I can assure Your Illustrious Lordship are for the glory of God and the welfare of our neighbor.

After the Retreat is built, we hope to obtain from the mercy of God the grace to rely on Holy Poverty and will have no need of a patrimony, especially as we see others desirous of joining, who cannot now be accepted on account of lack of room.

Your Illustrious Lordship will pardon my interrupting you, and prostrate at your feet with profound reverence, together with my brethren, I kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral robe and beg your holy blessing.

Your Lordship's humble, unworthy servant and son in Christ,
Paul Francis Danei

56

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (2)

Porto San Stefano

April 9, 1732

While giving a mission.

May Jesus Live!

Your Most Reverend Eminence and Revered Patron,

I could not reply immediately to your honorable letter because, when I received the post, I had already left. Blessed be God! I see that this work is going to be prolonged, for we have not succeeded in having the exchange accomplished. I adore the designs of Divine Providence that so disposes. Nevertheless, I cannot prudently doubt that all of this is coming from God because of the end for which it is being done, in accord with the solid judgment of servants of Jesus Christ who are well learned in the science of the saints, and it is for the glory of His Divine Majesty and the good of souls.

As for further information for Your Eminence, I have no way of supplying more than we have humbly supplied. Without our asking, the Commune has written twice to Your Eminence. The assistant marshall also has written you. I would ask Your Eminence, if you want to be further informed, that you would inquire from the archbishop of Turin, who was once our pastor, or from the bishop of Sovana or from His Eminence Cardinal Corradini or from Bishop Crescenzi. Let Your Eminence command me as to what I ought to do further in this business, and for the glory of God I will do it. But further means are unknown to me.

As to information from the prior, I can no longer have conversation with him since on Easter Tuesday I am leaving to take up our mission preaching in this diocese of Sovana, as was prescribed by our Ordinary and as announced to the public.

We had no part in the petition to the Sacred Congregation; that was the doing of the Commune of Orbetello. I had not even seen it.

The prior, some time back, told me that the information would not have been sent without the express permission of Your Eminence. God has so

disposed things. "May the Name of the Lord be praised." I have no further interest beyond pure charity. For that I willingly extend my poor efforts.

Let us abandon the business into the hands of God, who knows the great needs of this region. The necessity there is for the formation of its ecclesiastics and other great needs. God be blessed.

I remain prostrate at the feet of Your Eminence and ask for your prayers and holy blessings.

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Francis Danei

57

Frances Lucci (1)⁶⁷

Saint Anthony
December 16, 1732

May Jesus Live!

My Sister in Jesus Christ — such is the sweet title used by Christians in the early Church,

I am not writing to send greetings as is done at Christmas time among friends and relations — certainly not — for my state and my ignorance prohibits that. I write to move dear men and women servants of God to compassion for my spiritual miseries so that in the coming holy feasts they pray for the most needful one among all sinners.

So pardon me if I dare to disturb you and bother you with my most unworthy self. My needs are great, my imperfections beyond counting, my sins multiplied as the sands of the sea. Therefore, with my face on the ground, I am asking for the charity of men and women servants of Jesus Christ that they placate His Divine Majesty for the wretch I am, who has so angered him. Know that I speak the truth, unfeigned, and as I see it in the Lord. My sister in Jesus Christ, pray much for me and have the other good souls with you pray.

On December 28, I will leave for the mission in Piombino and surroundings. We will not be in Orbetello until February 4, when there will be a mission during the carnival time.

I hope for the glory of God they will get to work in a short time on the Retreat and without delay. It seems as though they have overcome the greatest difficulty. There is need to pray much to the Lord. My bodily sickness continues, even more the spiritual. I have had the fever for a week and am not very well now.

This Easter we will come by Pitigliano on our way to Proceno and Castel Ottieri on missions. We will stay with you for a few hours.

For my part, tell Frances,⁶⁸ but quietly, that I have no way to direct her, for I am at a distance and have no knowledge of her spirit, whether in writing or

67. Paul had given a mission earlier that year in Pitigliano. Frequently after a mission someone deeply moved by Paul would write to him and he would respond. At times a longer correspondence would ensue. There are nine letters to Lucci during the next ten years.

68. This Frances was probably the Frances Camillucci mentioned in the December 26 letter to Frances Lucci.

in spoken word. I am not fit to direct anyone, not even an ant. God knows I have never entertained such a presumption and have always refused to engage in direction, except when I have known that God wished it after long prayers and many proofs. Tell her to remain recollected in the Presence of God, hidden from everyone, poor in spirit, a lover of contempt, mortification, and all the virtues; to let people say what they will; to love God; to plunge ahead; and to pray for me. She should be careful to rise at an early hour as long as she is not sick. I would not write in this way unless I desired that she be inflamed with love. Amen.

Signora Frances, I salute you in the sweetest Side of Jesus, and, if you wish to honor me with your commands, address the letter: Viterbo for Orbetello. But do not write until around the end of January since I will not be there. I plan to arrive at the beginning of February. Write if you have requests; if not, do not write. Pray for me. Live Jesus!

Your true servant in the Lord,

Paul Francis Danei, Missionary of the Holy †

58

Frances Lucci (2)

Saint Anthony
December 26, 1732

J.M.J.

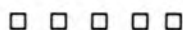
Signora Frances,

A few days ago I took occasion to write you a short letter to recommend myself to your prayers, as I did to other devout souls. I said I was departing for Piombino, but my fever has kept me back. I will leave, God willing, within two or three days. Frances Camillucci has written me, and I am obliged to reply to her. Since I want this kept entirely quiet and known only to God, to me, and to you, I am making bold to include my reply, asking your goodness to have it end up in the right hands. I beg you do all this secretly so that no one will have occasion to write and oblige me in that way to engage me in the arduous work of holy direction, for which I am unfit and incapable. Enough!

The greater glory of God makes me ask an inviolable secrecy from you. For now I have agreed to give some counsel to this good soul, but I have done so after long prayer, etc., and since I saw no other way open. Therefore, I am asking secrecy. Pray for me. I hope not to give you further inconvenience for a little while. But if our sister wishes to write, include her, for that will be agreeable to God. I beg every blessing for you from the Lord.

Your true servant in the Lord,

Paul Danei of the Holy †



DELAYED BY WAR – GIVING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION (1733–1735)

European powers became involved in the election of a new king for Poland. Spain took advantage of this struggle to fight the Austrians in Italy. They took Naples and then attacked the "Garrison States" at Orbetello. Paul mentioned this conflict in several of his letters. It is known in history as the "War of the Polish Succession." The Grazi family decided that their younger daughter Elizabeth be sent to a convent in Viterbo with Agnes as her companion. Agnes remained there from April 1734 until May 1737. Paul wrote to her there. He will also get involved as the priest serving the wounded and dying on the battlefield when Orbetello comes under siege. He will have friends on both sides, saving the city from being bombed as the Austrians (called "Germans") surrender to the Spanish forces. Under these circumstances the building of the new Retreat was delayed, and Paul had to be careful where he went for missions. At the same time he will begin correspondence with several very holy individuals.

59

Rose of Gaeta⁶⁹

Piombino

March 19, 1733

*May the Love of Jesus
be the one object of our desires.*

Beloved in Jesus Christ,

I would be truly false to the Faith I profess and for which with divine assistance I am willing to shed all my blood, even to the last drop, if I were not to offer your spirit suggestions and unassailable thoughts for rejoicing and exulting in God, our sweetest Good, since I see your spirit is battered with storms of temptations and other anxieties.

Listen, my dear sister, listen to the words the Holy Spirit speaks through the mouth of Saint James the Apostle: "Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials ... Blessed is the one who perseveres in temptation, for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life." All this is from Sacred Scripture. Elsewhere it says that God will try all his holy servants as gold in the crucible, and there are many other beautiful statements which are capable of giving consolation to any afflicted heart. This is said for all of us who have need of it.

I now come to the special status of your soul, and since I know something about your way of life — however, for a long time I have had no news of it —

69. Rose came under the direction of Paul while he was in Gaeta. She was a nurse at San Gallicano.

I say to you, nevertheless, that in the midst of your storms, you must remain strong as a rocky headland battered by waves, without ever leaving off your usual exercises. Remain detached from your own comfort, from rejoicing and understanding. I would not say this did I not know that for some time God has been drawing you to holy prayer. The just one lives by faith. O sister, how beautiful it is to remain in pure and living faith in the Divine Presence through holy prayer with loving attention on our Beloved Good and without any feeling of this, without rejoicing in this sweet Divine Presence, which puts the heart in paradise without our knowing it is so. O my sister, this is an excellent prayer of highest detachment, in which the faithful soul seeks not itself, but God, and rejoices in the higher part of the soul to be crucified with Christ. I beg you not to pay attention to the noise from the lower part of your spirit, but simply remain vigilant to crush the wicked suggestions of the enemy with a simple act of your will, without forcing head or breast. Faith, love and humility will teach you great things. At the time of these struggles, it is best to cast our will into the loving bosom of the Divine Goodness so that it becomes all transformed into it. Say, for example: "O dear Will, O sweet Will, O gentlest Will. Will that I love, I adore. Yes, my God, as you will so I will," etc. These and other affections, etc.

With regard to your resolution to retire, you should not do that at all, but wait and make up your mind when this storm will have passed. Meanwhile, remain rooted in the Will of God without making a decision. Then, when God will have quieted your heart and once more filled you with his inspirations, make your decision. Doubt not, stay happy, and believe me that now you are going well. Trust in God that in a short while you will give me news of your improvement. God be blessed. Pray much for me, for I am almost continually engaged in holy missions. Right now I am in Piombino to give nourishment to the people during Lent with the holy word of God. We salute all your house and the sisters in Jesus Christ, also Catherine and the others.

All of you pray for me and for the building of the Retreat, which started on March 4. They are working on it with zeal. Thanks be to God.

Your true servant in the Lord,
Paul Danei

60

Agnes Grazi (2)

Saint Anthony
June 3, 1733

May Jesus be always in your heart.

Signora Agnes Grazi,

Just now I received your letter with the box. I beg you not to inconvenience yourself in any way, but simply give me occasions to serve your soul with all the zeal that His Divine Majesty inspires. I need only say that on Friday I will be in Orbetello and there we will speak to the glory of God. Meanwhile, I ask

the Lord to reward you for your charity. In ending, I leave you in the most holy
Side of Jesus Christ, where I am without fail,
Your humble servant in the Lord,
Paul Danei

61

Agnes Grazi (3)

August 2, 1733

Jesus and Mary be praised. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening, at the first hour of the night, I read your letter with the usual notices. You are full of imaginations which are subject to infinite illusions. Believe me, I am much afraid that in your frequent imaginary visions you are being tricked by the devil — however, as far as I can tell, by the grace of God you are without fault. Nevertheless, it is necessary to flee from them, cut them off constantly without any outburst, but with a humble and quiet spirit, especially when you seem to see me and speak to me. Oh! this is the devil beyond doubt, who under the color of good wishes to trick you and sees to it that you look toward the creature and lose sight of the creator, and in that way makes a fool of you.

The devil is not in a hurry; he goes a step at a time; he transfigures himself into an angel of light and even takes on the appearance of Jesus, of Mary, of the saints, and even of spiritual directors. But, believe me, in this there is the work of the devil, especially when he commands it is the Will of God that I come often to see you because of your extraordinary happenings, which are not such in truth. You hear him say: “Yes, that is what I wish.” This speech comes from the devil and not from God, for God does not will my spiritual damage, and coming there would cause me to lose much time, to leave prayer, not to rise for Matins, and other things I do not mention. Ah! damned devil, you shall not overcome her.

When God decides that I should come, he will make me know that. For the rest, since there is no danger now for you, I need not make a change without great necessity.

Therefore, I command you to cast away such things, that is, all these imaginations. When you hear or see me, spit at the images. Even when you seem to see imaginary images of Jesus and Mary, spit at them, intending to spit in the face of the devil, who wishes to trick you. Believe me, I speak in the name of Jesus Christ. Make nothing out of the locutions, etc., but have an esteem of virtues and your exercises.

Do not hold long conferences in prayer about my needs. Simply recommend me to the mercy of God, that I save my soul and fulfill his most Holy Will. Continue your prayer in pure faith, lost in God in a spirit of humility and annihilation. Carry on the bosom of your soul a corsage of the pains of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary.

Do not lose sight of our Good God, remaining continually in the Divine Presence. Try to do some work during the day while treating with God heart to heart. Continue your Communions as usual. If imaginations come, or other visions, drive them away instantly, distract yourself, and then return to holy prayer in pure faith, seeking only God and his glory, and live dead to all that is not God.

Write me only every two weeks and to the point; I wish you to write this week if there are any more imaginings.

Make nothing of the fact that you seem to be held back within when you say to God that you will be deceived. That seems to be a sign that you are not. Know that the devil can cause this. Oh! how clever is that beast! Believe me, I know these things. I have made a bit of study in them for the glory of God. So be of good heart. God will free you from all deceit. Be sure of that.

Continue your practice which goes well. Obey me and do not hesitate. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul, Your Servant in God

62

Agnes Grazi (4)

Saint Anthony
August 10, 1733

Jesus and Mary be praised!

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always in your heart. Amen.

I have received your letter and in reply tell you that it is best to obey the priest with regard to Communion. In this way you will make a great sacrifice to God of your will and maintain peace with this priest, whose intentions are good, as you ought to believe.

God's great servants of old communicated only rarely, but because they were well disposed, they received such a great abundance of grace that in a short time they made flights to perfection. Have your heart always prepared to receive Jesus; often invite him to come in with burning desires. However, I am telling you to keep your heart peaceful, without upset. Should the world turn upside down, maintain your peace of heart. Nothing can separate us from God except sin. And that you do not will, so live Jesus! Keep your heart always directed to paradise.

Put into practice what I have written or given orally, and keep yourself recollected; keep your spirit raised aloft; take what nourishment you need out of love for God; sleep as much as you need so that your head may be clear and prepared for your exercises of piety.

God bless you; pray for me. I leave you in the most holy Heart of Jesus and am always,

Your true servant in the Lord,

Paul Francis Danei of the Holy †

Father Erasmus Tuccinardi (17)

Saint Anthony
August 13, 1733

J.M.J.

Most Reverend and Dearest in Christ,

Paul, your poor servant, recommends himself to your prayers, and although I could not come to you there, as you will hear from Signore Calcagnini, ask him to continue his accustomed charity of providing a bit of oil. For this purpose I am including a letter to Reverend Father Davide because there was no further opportunity to write. Would you please ask him that when Divine Providence allows, he obtain some oil in Sori and forward it to Signore Calcagnini with his letter, which will be sent to me safely. For the rest, I refer you to the letter of our dear Joseph, which I believe he will share with you.

Since I was unable to do so, I need to ask you to encourage the servant of God, Catherine, to have great trust in God, assuring her that her life is good. At least we ought to hope that after these great storms, she will have great peace. I recommend myself to your prayers for my great needs. I end at your knees and beg you to bless me.

If I am wrong about the relationship of Father Davide, readjust things. Greet Archpriest Olia, who was once pastor at Sperlonga and is now nearby you.

The younger archpriest is asking me to obtain permission from the Illustrious Bishop to come and preach missions in that locality. But there has not been time to do that. Please make my excuses. If the pastors, or he himself, will petition the bishop, when we have finished in the diocese of Acquapendente and the island of Elba, then we will come there. They should let us know if they decide it is not expedient for them to write to the bishop; in that case, I will do so. But the initiative ought to come from the pastor.

Your true servant,

Paul Francis Danei, Missionary

Frances Lucci (3)

Saint Anthony
August 27, 1733

J.M.J.

The peace of Jesus be ever in your heart. Amen.

I take courage to write you these few lines and recommend myself to your prayers, and of all devout souls, for my needs are so great. I have not written more because you have not given me occasion to do so. You have done well. You already know what I have said at other times, that is, I fear even thinking about giving direction since I do not have the ability. It is enough that you recommend me to God. Besides, you do not lack knowledge of servants of God to counsel you.

I have need to go to Naples for our Retreat. Therefore, I have not written more to you nor to Mistress Delle Grotte about the business at Piombino. Now I am telling you that before my departure, I have written to the gentlemen the opinions of Signora Lucrezia and received the answer that they had taken counsel. After my arrival I wrote for the same purpose and have received absolutely no reply. I understand, however, because there is widespread influenza in Piombino. Let it be. I am not worthy to cooperate in such a holy undertaking. May the Name of the Lord be praised. Do me the charity to advise Signora Lucrezia about everything in the way I have set it down here.

If we are well on September 9, the mission in Farnese will start and then continue in the whole diocese. I have ordered the purchase of certain legumes in Onano, eighty pounds or less. From Onano they will be transported to the house of Signore Botti since he has taken on the task of ordering one of his servants to be on the lookout for their arrival. Then your brother may have the opportunity to send them to Caparbio on his beasts, doing me the favor of getting them there. But I'm in no hurry, only if he has the opportunity.

In charity ask our devout deaf sister to pray much to the Lord that I do his Holy Will. Let her offer some Communions when she can, like Frances, as well as yourself. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus and am always,

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul Francis Danei, Missionary

65

Agnes Grazi (5)

Saint Anthony
September 6, 1733

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I have just received your letter and do not have time to reply, for the servant wishes to leave. I am reserving Monday when I will be in Orbetello early. We celebrate Mass here. On Monday evening I must be at Marciano without fail. I will have to stay in Orbetello for three or four hours since I need to speak with the general, the vicar, and others. Tell this to your uncle. Then we will go to Vigna for the midday meal, but he can go earlier if he wants since we will not be leaving Orbetello until 15 hours.⁷⁰

Stay strong and pleased in God, who will always free you from every evil.

If possible, you can go to Communion a bit early and then come to Saint Joseph's, and there I will see you for at least an hour. If you do not have the book on the Seven Sorrows, have Signora Marianna give it to you in my name. I have need of it. Then I will get it back to you. Jesus bless you.

Paul, Your Servant

70. In 18th century Italy, time was calculated from the evening Ave Maria bell, which changed according to the time of sunset. Paul's reference to 15 hours would probably mean 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning

Agnes Grazi (6)

Portercole

September 15, 1733

Signora Donna Agnes,

I received your two letters, but since I was sick, I was unable to answer. Right now I am a bit better, but still recovering. I tell you it is necessary to close your ears to what the world is saying and make nothing of it whatever, but walk ahead in living faith, serve God with great fidelity, and suffer all these trials which His Majesty is pleased to send us for our good.

I am displeased to hear of the great irreverence to the church, and I will manage to go into the pulpit for the glory of God on my way to the mission. I desire that this be kept secret, etc.

Regarding the conduct of your spirit, I come back to what I have said and written at other times; for now there is no need to change anything.

I have come to Portercole to have healthier air and to have the church close to my room so I can offer Mass.

I pray the Lord to reward your entire house for the charity you continue toward us. The time will come when they will not all prevail. Now I will say no more, for I am wearied and weak in my head. Pray for me and remain content in God. The Lord bless you. Greet Signora Marianna in the Lord. Tomorrow evening I leave for the mountain.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (1)⁷¹

Saint Anthony

December 14, 1733

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts.

Most Reverend in Christ,

I received your letter a few days ago and say in reply:

First of all, you are not to disturb yourself with regard to the obedience that you tell me you did not fulfill. It was not my intention to be as rigorous as you conceived it. So do you not see that you are mistaken to believe you had disobeyed, when, in fact, it was not so? In fact, you did all in your power to obey. The sister shows herself stubborn, being unwilling to agree not to come into your room any more. Enough! Study to be compassionate with her, speak to her with love, but with holy modesty and gravity, for in this way you will

71. Paul gave the Spiritual Exercises to the Poor Clares of the convent of Santa Anastasia in Piombino during Lent of 1733. This letter is the beginning of a long series of forty-six letters (1733–1761) to Sister Cherubina Bresciani (Zoffoli, *S. Paolo della Croce*, Vol. III, pp. 146–161). A number of letters are also recorded from Father Fulgentius to Sister Cherubina. The letters to Cherubina reveal a soul advancing to the heights of mystical prayer. After becoming more acquainted with Paul's own life by reading his letters, the reader could profit by a continuous reading of the letters to Cherubina to appreciate Paul's spiritual teaching.

win out, etc. Keep yourself in the Side of Jesus Christ and thus you will love her with a pure and holy love. If she enters your room, do not show annoyance, but bear with her and speak to her in few words. Then recollect yourself in God in a holy silence.

In choir think of her, but always in the Heart of Jesus Christ, and restrain your passion so that you do not become angry. Do not speak at all there. Say to your heart: "My heart, love this dear sister! Love her because she is the image of your God! Love her in the blood of Jesus Christ! Oh, my poor sister, I love you in God! I feel for you! I wish to be no longer embittered toward you!" Say all this in spirit and sweetly. If it is spoiled by some resentment, follow that up by asking forgiveness. Above all, do not be disturbed, but humble yourself sweetly before God. Have no doubts that in this disobedience there was no sin since it was not a true disobedience, etc.

With regard to prayer, all is well. The Lord gives his servants two lessons each day, one of affliction and the other one of restoration, so that we may remain humble and be strengthened. Do not be pained over your aridities, which do great good to the soul because they render it humble. Do not be disheartened, but be confident and make use of darts of love for God and great acts of resignation. "Yes, dear God, I will what you will."

Do not worry about the wound of love. It is nothing. What I desire is that you live by faith. "The just one lives by faith," is what Scripture says. The Presence of God: rest your heart in God with a sacred silence of love, as I told you. The memory of the Passion of Jesus: make a corsage of all his pains and place it in the bosom of your soul, and let your soul be filled with holy love and sorrow. Be humble, abandon yourself to God, live detached from everything, even spiritual consolation, etc., truly poor in spirit, completely a child on the bosom of your sweetest Savior. Doubt not that God will teach you wonderful things and overcome every human impediment. Drink, my child, at the font of eternal life. By all means drink, for whoever drinks at this sweet fountain will never thirst eternally.

With regard to not eating on the day of Holy Communion, I do not approve of that at this time. In good time, yes, when God wills. Eat lightly on that day. Be resigned when your Communions are cold, etc.

Right now I am not thinking of writing our bishop because for a long time there has been no way to send my letters because of the imminent scourge of the war and the siege of the fortresses. Let us placate God, who is enraged at our sins. Poor Italy is in great desolation and ruin. May God be propitious to her in his mercy. If a way of writing comes, I will let you know and tell you how to manage that. If not, let us write in the Wounds of Jesus Christ.

I grant you permission to wear the iron bracelets around your knees and arms on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday for an hour and a quarter each day. On Friday five quarters in the morning and five in the afternoon, putting them on at 21 hours.

On Friday sleep clothed on the chest, but without shoes, etc., with a good blanket beneath, covered with a cotton blanket, and on top of the board place a poor cushion — for now show your obedience in this way. Apply the

discipline no more than I have told you. Recite the antiphon of the Madonna. Wear the cincture as I told you, but not too tightly.

On Wednesday, Friday and Saturday take your wine well watered. If you notice some failing, use more wine, especially to aid digestion. On other days do as before. As to your scruples about how sick you were, forget them. They are temptations. You are scrupulous over something well done; do not give it a thought.

I am writing to Sister Xaveria. God wants her entirely his; I have great hopes of that. Console her much; that will be a great charity. Once you have performed your charity, leave in peace. Love silence, internal and external solitude in choir or in your room. Be gentle with all. Presence of God. Repose in God. Abandonment in God. Recollected in God. Love him much and pray for poor me. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus Christ.

68

Agnes Grazi (7)

December 16, 1733

May the sweetest Jesus always reign in our hearts!

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.

Yesterday, after I had written a short rule for the distribution of your exercises in accord with your present state — as noted below — I received your letter. I thank God that by his infinite mercy he takes away sensible feelings of devotion so that, detached from everything, you may live abandoned in God and learn in prayer to adore his Immense Majesty in spirit and truth.

I understand then that you cannot meditate as at first, nor make a composition of place, and that your spirit suffers and tries to force itself. Thanks be to God! Act as follows.⁷²

Place yourself in the Presence of God with a pure and simple loving attention to that Immense Good in a sacred silence of love, resting your spirit entirely in this sacred silence on the loving bosom of the Eternal God. When this recollection ends, arouse your spirit gently with a dart of love: “Oh, dear Goodness!” “Oh, Infinite Love!” “Oh, dear God! I am yours.” “Oh, Infinite Sweetness!” Use these and others as God inspires you.

But be alert so that, if, in making one of these darts of love, your soul grows peaceful and recollected in God, there is no need to make further acts. Rather, continue this loving silence, this repose of your spirit in God, which contains in itself, in a higher way, all possible discursive acts that we could ever make.

When you do not feel this inner peace or recollection, and your soul still cannot meditate, just accept the situation. Keep your soul always in loving

72. Paul follows Saint John of the Cross on how to direct a person entering upon the prayer of simplicity, which becomes more passive and even infused. Paul continues his advice to Agnes in the following letters to her and will repeat this teaching to many others.

attention to God with the highest part of your spirit. In such a time remain before God like a statue in its niche, deprived of all consolation.

With regard to vocal prayer, recite the following because I see you have overloaded yourself: a third part of the rosary, three Our Father's and Hail Mary's to the Holy Trinity, thanking them on Mary's behalf with these three prayers: "I adore you ... an Apostles' Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be to your guardian angel. Another to the saint for whom you are named.

Three Our Father's, Hail Mary's with Glory Be's, thanking the Holy Trinity for the graces given your holy advocates in heaven. For the Seven Dolors, as you are now doing. For the Wounds of Jesus, your accustomed five. From now until Christmas, forty Hail Mary's. In honor of Saint Francis, an Our Father and five Glory Be's. Nine Glory Be's in honor of the nine choirs of angels. And on the feasts of your patron saints, honor them with some further special devotion, as the Holy Spirit inspires you.

If, while saying these vocal prayers, you feel drawn toward mental prayer with a profound recollection, leave off the vocal prayer and follow the mental. Afterward, continue the vocal prayers. Give each their time. Recite your prayers without hurrying, gently with your spirit in God. For now, I cannot come to Orbetello. Pray for me and God bless you.

Your true servant in the Lord,
Paul Francis Danei

Here below is a written distribution of your time.

J.M.J.

Rules for distribution of time for Signora Agnes Grazi:

1. As soon as you are up in the morning about an hour of mental prayer, followed by spiritual communion.

2. If you can go to Mass, go. If not, patience.

3. The rest of the time until midday meal do your work with your mind on God in a sacred silence. Answer when you are asked with all sweetness, good grace, and charity.

4. Half an hour before the main meal⁷³ read a bit and then place yourself at the feet of the Crucified, if you can, for a quarter of an hour or thereabouts.

5. Take your main meal in peace. Practice a discreet mortification.

6. After the main meal stay in recreation with the others with all sweetness and charity. If you find need, rest a bit.

7. Until 23 hours,⁷⁴ or a bit more, work with your mind on God. Then prepare yourself for mental prayer and give it an hour.

8. After evening meal⁷⁵ take a bit of recreation. Then retire. Make your examen of conscience, your spiritual reading, and go to your rest. Say your accustomed night prayers.

I recommend the Presence of God from which comes every good. God bless you.

73. *Pranzo* is Italian for dinner or main meal in early afternoon.

74. 23 hours would be late afternoon.

75. *Cena* is Italian for supper, which is taken in the evening.

Agnes Grazi (8)

Saint Anthony
February 25, 1734

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts!

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always in your heart. Amen.

I received your letter quite a few days back, but could not reply because God so wished.⁷⁶ Now, since the clamors are dying down and the postal service functions, thanks to God, I am responding.⁷⁷ I am very happy that you have found a good confessor. God knows how much I am consoled by that. You should profit from the holy advice and counsels he will give you, and you ought to grow thereby.

Regarding what you have to say about scruples, I say now what I said before. Use those rules. I desire even more that you take counsel of your Father Confessor and do what he tells you. Pray much for me. I continually recommend you to God. If you see Signora Suplizia Rosilli, tell her that I pray for her at Holy Mass that she persevere in the good she has begun, and tell her not to abandon prayer at any time. I say that to you as well. Both of you should pray for this poor, sinful priest, that he may fulfill the most Holy Will of God. Thanks be to God.

Your true servant,
Paul Danei

Agnes Grazi (9)

Orbetello
March 17, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The peace of Jesus Christ be always in your heart.

This evening, March 17, I received your letter, dated March 5. I read your laments and the anguish you felt that I wrote not as a spiritual director but simply as an ordinary person. However, God knows how much I wish to benefit your soul, and not a day passes that I do not recommend you to His Divine Majesty in the Side of Jesus Christ. When I wrote, I did so in haste. It did not seem necessary to extend myself further since, thanks to God, you are provided with a good confessor. God knows how much I rejoice in the Lord over that. Oh! let us move on — let us thank God who continues his divine mercies toward us.

Regarding what you have to say to me about your prayer and the dryness you are finding there, I tell you this is a hidden treasure, and that God intends

76. Agnes is probably at the convent and boarding school of Saint Dominic in Viterbo since Paul mentions postal service and that Agnes seek a confessor.

77. Paul is referring to the War of Polish Succession spilling over into Italy. Many families moved to the Papal States. Viterbo was in the Papal States.

by this to take away all your contentment so that God alone will be the satisfaction of your fulfillment

Oh, my daughter, fortunate is the soul that is detached from her own rejoicing and feeling and self-seeking! This is a deep lesson. God will help you learn it, if you put your pleasure in the cross of Jesus Christ by dying on the cross of the Savior to everything that is not God.

The aversions you are experiencing, the trials, the mockery, the derision, the scoffing should be received with great gratitude to God.⁷⁸ These serve as wood for the loving pyre to consume the victim of love. With regard to your bitter feelings, drive them off gently by showing yourself cordial toward everyone and, at the same time, make internal acts of charity, but sweetly, for example: "O dear souls of Jesus, I love you in the Heart of Jesus, who burns for love of you. O blessed souls, love Jesus for me!" These acts should be made at the fine point of your spirit with all sweetness. I give you leave to make others as God will inspire you.

With insults, be quiet and show yourself as good wax; show yourself liking them for love of God, my daughter! Cherish contempt of self.

With regard to prayer, follow the usual rules I have given you. In dryness rouse your spirit with loving acts. Then repose in God without sensing him, without enjoying him. It is then you show yourself more faithful.

Make a corsage of the pains of Jesus and keep them on the bosom of your soul, as I have already advised you. Now and then you can arouse a sorrowful and loving memory, speaking sweetly with the Savior: "Oh my dear Jesus! how I see your face black and blue, swollen, spat upon! Oh my Love! I see you all one wound! Oh my sweet one, I see your bones crushed. Ah, how much pain! Ah, how many gasps! Woe, how many slaps! Ah, my most sweet love, you are all one wound! Ah, dear pains! ah, dear wounds, I want to keep you always in my heart. O Eternal Father, behold my Jesus, who is all wounds! Behold your dear Son in so many pains. I offer him to you for the remission of my sins, and those of the whole world, in thanksgiving for your blessings, etc."

I have given you this by way of example. I leave you in holy freedom to do as the Holy Spirit inspires you. I wish, however, once you have called to memory the suffering of Jesus, that you continue your loving repose in God, a holy, loving silence, all lost in God, adoring him in spirit and in truth.

You can practice these rules even at the time of Communion, making a memory of the Passion of the Lord, before and after, when the Lord moves you to do so.

Submit all the information of your soul to the Father Confessor. Tell him outright how I have directed you, that I hold it dear, and put everything under his charitable review. Tell him that I instructed you in meditation and that you have made it constantly, but then God has wished you to walk in another path. So with the counsel of the saints, I have given you the direction that you are following. If God wishes to despoil us, let us allow him to do so. Do not leave off the practice of the holy virtues nor lose the dear Presence of God. Keep in

78. Agnes seems to be having a rough reception at the convent and boarding school in Viterbo.

mind the memory of the Passion of our dear Jesus. But the meditation must go according to his way, not ours. Rules are given, but God is Master. Let us abandon ourselves to him. Let us trust him. Let us be entirely unclothed so that God can clothe us in his own way.

With regard to your scruples, do as you have been doing, as I have told you and you have written me. The internal sense of ease that comes after you have followed the mode prescribed is evidence that your soul has not been tarnished, and you have not consented to temptations.

I give you permission and would wish that, if you are willing, you would show my letter to your Father Confessor. I would consider it a favor if he were to correct my errors. I am certain that I am greatly ignorant and imperfect. However, I leave you in complete freedom.

Signora Suplizia has embraced a prayerful life, and I would want her to keep quiet about what I said to her; otherwise, she will never have peace. I say nothing further.

I never received the crucifix, and I have written, it seems to me, twice — once I know for certain. There will be uproars going on.

With regard to Communion, go on all the feasts — at other times three times a week. During Holy Week as well as from Passion Sunday until Holy Thursday, go to Communion every morning, granting the confessor agrees with that. I submit to him with all my spirit. You do not need to confess every time since there is no need, thanks to God. It is enough to receive absolution on Sunday, or another day, and bring up some matter from the past. It is ringing two hours of the night, and I am here in Orbetello assisting a sick man. I come to an end by giving you the holy blessing of Jesus Christ. Pray for my most urgent needs. Thanks be to God. I leave you in the Heart of Jesus. Amen.

Your true servant in the Lord,
Paul Danei

71

Signora Laura Giannotti⁷⁹

Saint Anthony
March 19, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised forever.

Esteemed Lady in Christ,

The peace of Jesus, which exceeds all understanding, be always in your heart. Amen.

Yesterday, on my arrival at the Retreat, I found your esteemed letter, in which I perceive the fear which oppresses your soul. God be ever praised.

It is good to have fear, but it is necessary that our fear be that of children who fear and love. The Royal Prophet⁸⁰ says in the psalms that His Divine Majesty is pleased with those who fear him, but they must be those who hope in his mercy.

79. Giannotti is a lady from Corneto.

80. Paul's reference to King David, considered to be the author of the psalms.

You fear that you have not made good confessions because of lack of sorrow and purpose of amendment, and that you did not confess correctly. However, you tell me that you did what you could to confess your sins as they are in God's sight. At least that was the way you wished to set them forth.

O true God! Do you not see that this fear has no foundation whatever, and that the devil is raising it to block your spiritual gain by making you stumble in the service of God? Cast out this empty fear and trust in your dear Savior, who has washed you in his Most Precious Blood, one drop of which is enough to wash away the stains of a thousand worlds, even of all possible worlds. Help yourself by ejaculatory prayers, with darts of love toward God, and words of childlike confidence: "O Jesus, love of my soul, I trust in you! In you I believe; you I love! O Dear Blood of Jesus! O Precious Blood! O Sweetest Blood! in you are my hopes! Ah, yes, my Dear Savior, you have washed me, you have made me clean in the sacrament of Penance. You have forgotten my sins. It were utter folly to doubt that! O Dear Wounds! Most Holy Wounds, Divine Wounds! you are the object of my hopes! I do hope, yes, my God. And were I even at the gates of hell, I would hope in you!"

I have given you these words as examples. They will serve to cast out these fears that come from little confidence in God. Use them with a gentle spirit.

As for repeating your general confession, absolutely not! That would only upset you the more, seeing that you have already done so several times. I am telling you not to do that, unless you were to know for certain — so that you could swear to it — that you deliberately concealed a serious sin.

Concerning the advice you are asking of me with regard to your spiritual life, I do not know how to provide for you, mainly because I am unaware of what you are doing spiritually. However, to oblige you, I will give you some general reminders. First, give yourself to the exercise of holy mental prayer and meditate, especially on the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Arouse your spirit frequently with ejaculatory prayer. In faith keep yourself in the Presence of God. Do your work in the presence of this Infinite Good. Revive your faith frequently by putting yourself in the Divine Presence. Practice the holy virtues of humility, obedience, internal and external mortification — these are the foundation stones. Love self-contempt. Above all, perform everything with a great habit of resignation to the Divine Will. Make such acts frequently: "O Dear Will! O Most Holy Will of my God! I love you!" "Be ever blessed, Sweetest Will of my God, my Father!" "O Most Holy Will! Sweetest Will, be my food."

The food of Jesus was to do the Will of the Eternal Father. "Now my food will also be to fulfill his Holy Will." Abandon yourself to this dear Will. Ah! have absolute faith that true perfection consists in this, in doing the Will of God and contempt of self, etc.

Be peaceful in the hardships of your house, in whatever happens, in losses or successes for the family, etc. In this way the Will of God is fulfilled with greater perfection. Therefore, let your heart rejoice; be willingly on the cross with Jesus Christ; drink with joy, my sister, from the chalice of the Savior. O dear sufferings! O dear torments! O dear Cross! you are welcome. Let us

rejoice, therefore, that we are on our way to heaven, where hardships are over, and we will find joy in God forever. The greatest sufferings are those of the great servants of God. Let us embrace them, therefore, and give them welcome, at least with the higher part of our soul.

I ask you not to be solicitous about the present upsets nor about anything else. Abandon yourself to God as a loving child on the breast of its mother. Let us pray to the Lord that he be appeased. For the rest, leave the care of everything to him.

I readily will pray the Highest God for the needs you share with me and for your relatives. But put no trust in my unworthy prayers, for I am covered with numberless imperfections and merit rage rather than grace before God. I will place them in the Wounds of Jesus, and I will ask the Divine Goodness to enrich them with the fullness of his heavenly blessings. Be happy in God and serve him with all your heart, never leave prayer and frequentation of the sacraments. Since God has freed you from involvement in worldly miseries, you should be all God's. Give yourself and consecrate yourself to God. Be of good heart. You will see how sweet the Lord is. Pray for me and God bless you. I end by leaving you in the gentle Side of Jesus. Amen.

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul Danei

72

Agnes Grazi (10)

Saint Anthony

April 17, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Christ,

I received your letter, forwarded by Signora Marianna, and a little later I received the second one sent me by your sister Julia. I have nothing further to tell you beyond confirming what I have already said. With regard to prayer, continue as you are. Cherish the love of God before all creatures. To do that well, you need to be detached, even dead to them. Live reposed in God, in spirit and in truth, but let your heart be always humble, gentle, and aflame with love.

Continue to act as you are doing with the nuns. Love them all in God, but attach yourself to no one. Be the same with all, but do not cultivate any special closeness or friendship. Be reserved, modest, prudent in speech, agreeable to everything that is not sinful. Try to fulfill the desires of others rather than your own.

Do not be attached to spiritual consolations, etc. When a deep recollection comes over you from the Presence of God, accept it without attempting any other prayer. Abandon yourself to God, rest in God, and turn over to him the care of everything. Do not worry about tomorrow; live for the moment, fulfilling the Good Pleasure of God always. When rather profound consolations of spirit occur, it is a sign that God wishes to strengthen us so that we are prepared to suffer out of love for him.

Believe me, my daughter, crosses will not be wanting, and the more one advances in the service of God, the more suffering increases. This was the life of Christ, and this is the life of the servants of the Lord. Let us embrace the holy cross with all our heart.

As regard the exercises the Father Confessor asks all the lay persons to follow, if he wishes that, obey him promptly. Go to hear the meditations. Take the last place, but do not be tied down to the points of the meditations. Follow your own prayer as God leads you, all lost in God. Listen with devotion, but allow your spirit to be in profound recollection, reposing entirely in the Highest Good.

When he asks you to come for a conference, tell him you have no desire for that, and because of your ignorance, you have nothing to say about his meditations. Tell him that his meditations are devout and profitable, then repeat what I had to say in my earlier letter. However, if you are moved to have a conference, go ahead. Long ago, I gave you freedom to confer with anyone you would choose, and to take someone else as spiritual director. I confirm what I said. If you feel so inspired, do so — I hold that very dear. God knows that I say this from my heart, that I have no mind to direct anyone. But if you do not feel drawn to do so, I cannot, and should not in conscience, oblige you to have a conference with the confessor. I would then not be doing well. I should wish that you say to your confessor that your spiritual director has told you, and repeated it several times, that when you are in Viterbo he gives you permission to confer with whom you will and to choose any spiritual director that God inspires you to choose. Then tell him that, in fact, God has not so inspired you, and that you are unable to do so without putting yourself in great upset and perturbation. Then ask him to pardon you if you cannot say more than that, and that you are willing to obey him with regard to Communions and in whatever concerns your stay in the convent. Tell him that you are in the convent for six months, and, when that is over, whatever God wills will be done, and that you have no desire other than the Will of God. Ask him to be content with this and to pray for you.

As for your confessions, continue as I have said. Listen to the advice of the confessor with all reverence and humility, and retire in peace.

On the most holy day of Easter I leave for Acquapendente, but I will not be able to come to Viterbo because I am not too well. If God were to so dispose, I would greatly desire to visit Saint Rose; but it is morally impossible for me to come. Pray for me, for I am in extreme need. Without naming me, recommend me to the prayers of the nuns, and pray that God gives me great contempt for myself and that everyone know me for what I am and so take no account of me. But let all recommend me to God.

I leave you in the Side of Jesus and bless you in the Lord.

Do not bother to send me any letters until the end of May, for I will not be here, or perhaps at the end. If you have some need, write me in Acquapendente

since I will be there until May 9; that is the day for the papal blessing. But if there is no need, do not write.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

73

Agnes Grazi (11)

Saint Anthony
August 4, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in the Lord,

The peace of Jesus be always in your heart. Amen.

I received your letter, which I did not answer because I am in poor health. Now I assure you that I am always ready to be of service to your soul, but I leave you free to hold conferences and consult with anyone God inspires. Let this be said for ever and without any need to repeat it. I have asserted this other times.

I am concerned that the object of your prayer be the Passion of Jesus Christ, and that in the loving colloquies your soul be lost in God. But understand me clearly, I want you to leave your soul free to follow the loving attraction of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I am repeating what I have written earlier. It is necessary to make prayer not in our way, but in God's way. Yes, my daughter, when the soul feels herself all alone with God with a pure, holy, and sweet attention to God in pure and living faith, reposing on the sweet bosom of the Beloved Good in a sacred silence of love, where the soul speaks to God with this sacred silence more than if she used words, it is necessary in such a case to let it remain so and not bother it with other exercises. For God, at such a time, holds it in his loving arms and brings it into his cellar to drink the sweetest wine which germinates virgins. Oh, what a great message this always is!

I say no more because I am not entirely well. Continue your usual exercises, as I have said and written, and pray for me. God bless you.

Do not write by post, but send the letters to Marianna.

Your true servant in God,
Paul Danei, Missionary

74

Agnes Grazi (12)

Saint Anthony
August 10, 1734

May Jesus Live!

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I have already written you a letter in this post in which I said that I had received only three letters. But in using greater care I see there are four letters, so I am confident that none were lost. The one you wrote at the beginning of

Lent, I found after a couple of months in a sealed space. They forgot to give them to me here because I was away. So do not worry about it any further and remain calm. However, seal them well and send them securely.

Oh, if you only knew how much God makes me think about your soul that I may work toward its higher perfection. Believe me, I am astonished at myself. Therefore, be faithful to the Highest Good and abandon yourself always more to him. Believe that although there is in your life much that comes from your imagination and your own spirit, the depth is the work of God. Ah! since His Divine Majesty desires great perfection from you, he is performing a divine work to take his delight in you and to enrich you with his eternal goods. Be humble then, my daughter, be humble. Distrust yourself and entrust yourself entirely to God. Do what the one who directs your soul has told you.

In the other letter I have told you what is necessary, etc.

The great solemnity of our dear Mother is approaching. Oh, happy death! That great queen died of love, a death more desirable than life.

Ah! during these days pray much for poor Paul. I desire nothing but to be transformed into the Divine Good Pleasure. Ask our Great Lady that on this holy day she takes over the protection of her Retreat here, provides herself with great servants, and guides them in accord with the desire of her most holy Son.

On the vigil take only a little soup, no main course. Take water to drink, granted you are well. If not, take your normal meal. When all the nuns are seated at table, get on your knees on the floor in the middle of the refectory and take off the veil from your head and place it on the floor near your knees. Then make your culpas as follows: "Mother Abbess, I confess my fault, for I am a wicked person and have no good in me. I am completely imperfect and ask your pardon, and of all the religious, and I beg them to pray to God for me."

Do this with a humble, simple spirit, sweet and modest. If you hear a giggling, maintain your recollection in God. When you have done this, put the veil back on your head, kiss the ground, and go to the table. I have come to the end and have not yet closed my eyes, even though I have been to Matins and prayer. I am not doing too well, and I am awaiting a loving visit from Jesus. God bless you. Amen.

Your culpa should take place at the beginning of midday meal on the Vigil of the Feast of the Assumption, once the blessing has taken place and the nuns are seated.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (13)

Pitigliano

September 10, 1734

May Jesus Live!

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

On the occasion of writing to Sister Lilia,⁸¹ who has done me the charity of writing to me here in Pitigliano, where I am giving a mission, I am not neglecting to visit my beloved daughter in the pure Heart of Jesus. I tell her to preserve faithfully the directions that poor Paul has given her.

If you have a strong impulse to write about what is happening because there are extraordinary things and you do it to give an account to your spiritual director so as to avoid deception, I am satisfied and give you permission and my blessing.

I cannot write more because I am in a hurry. I pray Jesus to inflame you with love. I desire you to continue to ask God to make known to you his Holy Will. I have made a long trip to confer with two blood sisters, my daughters in Jesus Christ, who truly wish to serve God generously. I believe that God wants great things from these two souls. I hope they will come here to speak to me. They are rather young ladies, cultured, but all in love with God. I hope that one day they will be companions of our devotions. May Jesus live!

Your true servant in Jesus,

Paul

Agnes Grazi (14)

Orbetello

October 4, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always in your heart. Amen.

Friday, October 1, on my arrival from the mission at Santa Fiora, I received your dear letter, given to me by Marianna. I read with relish your complaints and resentment, which are dear to me regarding my person. But regarding your perfection, they displease me, for I wish you were a soul of great virtue, free of everything that is not of God, so that you might come to great perfection. Courage, my daughter! There is no need to be upset, for regarding my person you could not be wrong. I did not write because I was unable, partly because of sickness, partly because I was occupied with other affairs in the service of God. I have received your letters and have replied to those received with my letter to Marianna, my beloved daughter in Jesus Christ, who walks in spirit

81. Mother Lilia Maria of the Crucified was the superior of the Third Order Franciscan convent in Viterbo and other reformed convents. Paul wrote to her for many years but none of his letters to her have been preserved. She died in 1773 and was declared to have practiced heroic virtue and honored as "Venerable." Paul will mention her in several of the letters to Agnes.

and truth. So have patience and calm your heart, for I regard you with compassion and would have you all perfumed with the love of God and all the perfection which holy love brings forth.

I see that you have little humility in writing a bit resentful. I am edified that you have asked pardon for that. But do not ask that of me, for it is certain that I felt nothing, no affliction, but I feel much for you. Ask it of Jesus and do not concern yourself about what has gone a bit badly. Amend yourself and be humble for a grain of pride can ruin a large mountain of sanctity.

Understand, my daughter, I am always the one I have called myself. I am your father because God has willed to make use of unworthy me to give you the milk of holy devotion. If you wish me not to write more, as you said to me, I leave you free as I have always left you. For you well know that in this regard I am very detached. If I were so in everything, I would be holy. I told you before you left that in Viterbo there are good men, and, if you were to choose a director, I would be very satisfied, for I know well that I am exceedingly blind. Do that then, my daughter. Have no fear of offending me, for in that way you would please me since I know you will be helped much more than by this ignorant and most imperfect blind man.

I am always disposed to serve you where and how and when you will be pleased to command me. If I shall not be your father, I will be your servant always in Jesus Christ and, at least, have the good fortune to have cooperated in some way in your perfection.

Live humbly and with self-contempt, hidden from all, abandoned in God, crucified with Christ, happy only in being deprived of all happiness out of love for God.

If you will write this advice on your heart and follow it, you will be a true disciple and spouse of the Savior. Pray much for me. I am in extreme need and assaulted within and without and in a most deplorable state — the worst being that through my fault I am not a tree of balsam, as I ought. I am a swamp that exudes nothing but a pestilential stench. Pray and have others pray for this miserable one. I leave you in the sweetest Heart of Jesus, where I am and will be always.

I am going to give a mission at Giglio. At whatever time I can be of help to you here, command me with all freedom as to your and everyone's unworthy servant.

Your humble and true servant in Christ,

Paul Danei

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (12)

Orbetello

October 4, 1734

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

Illustrious and Esteemed Lady in Christ,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

On my arrival at the Retreat from the holy missions, which was Friday, the first of this month, your letter was given to me by Father Anthony, my brother — God knows how dear he is to me. Your Illustrious Ladyship has been pleased to give me news concerning her spirit, for which I have always desired every kind of progress in holy love. I have a lively hope in the Infinite Goodness that he will fill you with all plenitude of grace, virtue, and blessing, as I will always pray His Divine Majesty.

I, therefore, pray in Jesus Christ that your goodness does not belittle itself, even if it appears to you that you do not practice virtue with the perfection to which the Holy Spirit calls you, and that you fall into defects that, for the most part, are involuntary. Humble yourself sweetly before God, show him your wounds with a sweet reverence and sorrow, and ask him with daughterly love to medicate them. Then continue to run in the way of the divine precepts. Be of good heart, for there will come the day when you will give a final defeat to the enemy, and we will obtain victory for certain in Christ our Savior.

The greatest perfection of the soul consists in a total abandonment into the hands of the Sovereign Good. This abandonment embraces a perfect resignation to the Divine Will in all happenings that come. So when you experience some desire arise, or anything that gives an impulse to your heart, giving you a desire to do something that at that time is not in your power, we must allow that to die in the Holy Will of God. In short, when you become aware that your heart has lost something of that peace which comes when the soul has a lively faith in the divine presence, quietly look for the cause and, discovering that it comes from worries about the house or children and that there is no remedy at hand, immediately plunge yourself in God with a holy, loving rest. If you do not succeed immediately, help yourself with ejaculatory prayers, for example: "O dear Will of my God! O sweet Will! you are my food, my glory, my rest. As it is, dear Father, I wish no other food than your dear Will." Jesus Christ said to his apostles that his food was to do the Will of the Eternal Father. Oh, who can understand this divine saying to its fullest meaning!

I rejoice over the good confessors who assist you. Above all, I recommend to you the continual Presence of God. Work with your hands, but your heart with God.

I am like a candle that enlightens others and consumes itself. I preach, conduct missions, hear confessions, treat with souls of great perfections, who share with me their spiritual state. I find myself most imperfect, without virtue, a miserable tree, rotten, bearing only stinking fruit. This should cause me great

fear, but the Passion of Jesus gives me courage to fulfill my duty of serving His Divine Majesty for another day in accord with the Divine Good Pleasure.

Pray much for me. I have never neglected to make you part of my unworthy prayers. The love I bear for our poor Lombardy makes me desire to come there and pour out my poor sweat in the exercise of holy missions which the Divine Goodness is generously blessing down here. I submit to whatever His Divine Majesty will dispose, and, I hope, when His Divine Majesty wills it, he will inspire some pious person of credit and authority to cooperate with you. And then I will most certainly come to work in that dear vineyard of Jesus Christ.

I have nothing further, so I end by leaving you in the sweetest Side of Jesus, where I proclaim myself always,

Your humble, unworthy, least servant,

Paul Francis Danei of the Holy †, Missionary

78

Agnes Grazi (15)

Saint Anthony

October 28, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised!

My Daughter in Christ,

On my arrival from the holy mission, I received your welcome letter. I thank God that he grants you a part in the great treasure of the holy cross by insults, etc. Hold them exceedingly dear. Regarding the prayer you make on awakening and rising, continue that way, for it is going well. But when you feel drawn to a repose in God, lose yourself in the Immense Good. Leave off vocal prayer for mental prayer.

There is no need whatever to concern yourself about distractions and temptations that occur during holy prayer. Simply withdraw into the deepest part of your spirit, and there enter into the sanctuary to treat with God in spirit and in truth, mocking the exterior uproar of the enemy, who makes a clamor around the soul but cannot enter within. If you are humble, God will make you understand what I am saying here.

All your letters are always received; none have been lost. But I cannot provide you with what you request at this time. When your spiritual director does not wish to reply in order that your soul remains the more crucified, should a good daughter be in lamentation and nursing her pain? No, she ought to be quiet and be still. You are still a mere baby in devotion. But God will wean her and then she will act like babies who scream for a while, making themselves sick, until they are capable of taking solid food. You, too, will become accustomed to the solid food on which souls feed on the cross of Jesus.

Keep a Holy Advent and fast every day except Sunday. Begin from the Feast of All Saints until Christmas. I wish you to eat what is provided in order to avoid singularity. Do that, however, with great mortification, with prudence, and with disinterestedness. I want you always to eat what is necessary. In the

evening take only a collation except on Sundays.⁸² Take the discipline every day except feast days. On the Feast of the Most Holy Presentation of Mary, offer your Communion for me and renew your vow of virginity.

During Holy Advent humble yourself the more in considering the infinite goodness of God, who wished to reduce himself to our humanity, concealing himself in the unblemished womb of the Immaculate Virgin. Love this Infinite Good with the sweetest heart of the great Lady, Mary Most Holy. God will teach you.

Concerning that good soul about whom you made mention, if God inspires her to come to Orbetello, she may come. But in good time she should get permission from your uncle. Signora Fiora has enough rooms and could give her a private one in the apartment at the top of the house.

Leave everything to the Good Pleasure of God. Nothing more remains but for me to ask you to pray much to God for me. I find myself in extreme need. Do this for love of God.

I have written a letter to Mother Lilia of the Crucified but have had no reply. I would ask you to have her let me know whether she received it. If God has not inspired her to reply to me, I submit to the Will of God. It is enough for me to know that she has received it. If she wishes not to reply, she should let me know that. Write her a note in few words to tell her what I have put down here.

With regard to reading comedies with the lay personnel, don't do it! You are not obliged. Excuse yourself with humility and then remain recollected. Say that the one who has direction of your soul has prohibited that under holy obedience.

Regarding inner locutions and in all extraordinary happenings in prayer, humble yourself always. That will confound the devil and give glory to God.

Continue your practice of spiritual communions, which are going well. When God draws you to a profound recollection, repose in God in silence.

God bless you. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus, where I am always,
Your true servant in God,

Paul of the †

79

Anna Massari Danei (2)

Saint Anthony
December 15, 1734

Jesus and Mary be praised. Amen

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always in your heart.

I read in your letter the desire you have that I write you with my own hand. I do that very willingly. I am unable to say anything different from what I said and wrote in the past. All things end, eternity never ends. Blessed are they who suffer anguish, sickness, persecution, mockery, insults for the love of God; they are more fortunate than the rich of this world, than those who enjoy the

82. A collation is a lesser, penitential meal.

delights of earth. They who suffer for love of Christ help to carry the cross of Jesus Christ and, therefore, will be partakers in his glory in heaven, if they persevere. It is always necessary to ask for this in prayer and to dispose oneself so as to obtain this grace.

Let them never neglect mental prayer. Make it every day, even if you are there like a stone. Internal and external mortifications are the wings which carry us to God in holy prayer by raising our spirit to him.

Read good books, be a friend of silence, do not mind others' business, remain withdrawn, attend to self, and often raise your heart with holy acts of love toward God. Fortunate those souls who do this, for they will become saints. I know poor people in the world who do great things for God. Let us never leave off prayer, no matter if we are afflicted, poor, and abandoned. Fortunate those who do this, for they know the truth and flee from the lies of which the world is full.

I gave thanks for what you wrote about my sister Teresa. I rejoice over her sickness. God sends this to detach her completely from earth and give herself to the things of heaven so that she flee vanity and love contempt of the world and contempt of self.

I would have her retire a half-hour or more in the morning and a half-hour in the evening to a room with her little sister. There they can make their mental prayer on the Passion of Jesus Christ by first reading a point from the book entitled *The Gate of Paradise*. I would have Joseph withdraw either in the church or in his room. I say nothing to you because I know you have it always in heart — now more than ever — since we are nearing our death. Courage, great-hearted one! Let us love God and praise him always. I recommend obedience to all, and be humble, modest with all, especially with priests and the elderly.

I recommend that they take good care of their younger sister so that she grows up well behaved, in fear of God, modest, with all virtues, and very withdrawn.

Have no doubts that God will be propitious to you in life and in death. Give good counsel and good example to the children so they may serve God and be without blame before the Divine Tribunal.

We are all well here, thanks be to God. We are always praying for you and the whole household. Let them trust in God, who will be their aid in all their needs, spiritual and temporal.

Let them speak humbly of us and as little as possible, whether of our vocations or about our Retreat, for this always lacks humility, and God will give them a secret remorse on that account.

As soon as Father Anthony arrived here I wrote to the Marchioness Del Pozzo and enclosed a letter to daughter Monaca. I did this to reply to the letter she sent me. I believe it will have arrived. I sent it by post.

May God bless all of you; let them pray for us. All of us greet you in the Heart of Jesus. May you and all the family rest in the Side of Jesus. Amen.

Your unworthy, obedient servant,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (16)

Saint Anthony
December 23, 1734

Live Jesus, our true Good and the Joy of our hearts.

My Daughter in the Lord,

I am writing in a hurry because the mail is about to go out. Last night I received your letter, which gave me reason to thank God for the mercies he continues to give your soul. Fidelity, my daughter, great fidelity. Let us plunge ourselves ever more into this immense sea of love.

You do well to show yourself agreeable in everything. When there are plays or dances or other activities, go to the choir and say that your spiritual director has forbidden you to enter into such gatherings because they are useless and give you no pleasure but rather do harm. Then, politely and with good grace, take your leave and depart their company. If then they make you stay by force, set yourself with great modesty to contemplate the infinite perfections of our dear God.

I am going on missions in places nearby, and I will be away until Lent. I wish that during this time you write down what happens in your prayer day by day, if not every day then at least any more profound recollections, so that I may be able to examine them as your spiritual director and see whether or not there is some trickery in them. At present all goes well. Thanks be to God. There is no deception occurring with you.

When you write what happens, do it this way:

Today, of such a month, this happened to me in prayer, etc. State everything with great conciseness in the manner of a letter written to your spiritual director, for there is need not to trust in yourself.

Write down the desires that God gives you, the inspirations, and the insights and understanding that God gives you in prayer as though you were at my feet in the confessional. During prayer I do not want you to be thinking about what you will write to me. Do that afterward. It will be sufficient to set down the more special and extraordinary happenings. Just give me a general report on the rest as you have done up to now. When I have returned, send me the results.

Live entirely abandoned in the loving bosom of God, drink in the milk of his holy love, take your sleep at the breast of this Infinite Love, and do not wake until your Spouse rouses you.

From time to time, when this sleep of life eternal seems to wane, you need to renew it with a loving word, but sweetly and delicately, without noise at the summit of the soul. If you are truly humble, God will make you understand what I am saying.

My daughter in Jesus Christ, I want to tell you about your spiritual father, who finds himself in an abyss of miseries, much within as well as without. Although my soul has never been without its cross, now I am in such a state that I am frightened at the heavy assaults and attacks of my enemies. I deserve this because of my sins.

Say nothing about this because I am not writing to be consoled, certainly not, but only that you pray and have prayers said for this most miserable one, who finds himself in an accumulation of needs so extreme that there could not be worse. On the outside I put on a serene countenance. That is what God desires so that I do not frighten anyone. But within I am in a huge, tempestuous sea.

I am asking you, as I am doing with everyone, to seek for me from the Infant Jesus the grace of victory. Do not speak about this; only ask that they recommend my need to God.

On January 3, I will be forty-one years old. Offer your Communion for me. Ask your confessor there to give you permission to go to Communion for your spiritual director, who is in the condition I have written, and that he have compassion on his years.

I will take up the question of your penances another time. For the present, continue as you are doing.

I end by leaving you in the sacred Side of Jesus. As I give you a holy blessing, I declare myself,

Your servant in Jesus Christ,
Paul Danei

81

Marianna Alvarez (1)

Magliano
January 15, 1735

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letters, the one in Talamone and the other in Magliano. Your anxious desire, so often repeated, to go on missions is born of your little resignation and detachment. If you were detached from everything, you would have only one desire, that is, pleasing God alone in every place and time, without indulging in dislike and pain at anything except the displeasure of God.

So get rid of these thoughts and useless desires and rejoice to be where you are. When you are the more afflicted, then rejoice all the more, for then you stand close to the cross of the Crucified Savior. I desire that you exercise vigilance over your heart. Believe me, my daughter, that I never find my happiness so well as in passing my miserable life a moment at a time, without thinking of another moment beyond where I find myself at present. When tempests of various kinds come over me, I say to myself: "I wish to love God as much as I can in this moment, as if it were the last moment of my life. I wish to suffer with happiness now, without thinking of the future. My soul, fulfill the Will of God with perfection in this moment, as if it were your last. So, my soul, do this from now on. Live Jesus. Amen."

See to it that you never more, never more foster your desires to leave and to come here. I do not want your compassion. Think about compassionating

Jesus Christ, crucified for my sins, and let this be the last time you show sympathy for me.

Greet the senior commander and all his house. My vocation prevents me from doing baptisms for babies, and I would not do that for any reason. That is not for me. I welcome their good affection, and I thank them in the Lord. I end in a hurry. In Jesus Christ I greet your good daughters and Suplizia. Let go of your foolish scruples. God bless you. I am writing in haste.

I recommend the enclosed note to your charity.

Paul, Your Servant in God

82

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (2)

Mount Marciana

July 12, 1735

May Jesus be always in our hearts. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ Crucified,

Until now the Providence of the Most High has not willed that I reply to your letter because of the numerous duties of the holy mission. Now I have just a small bit of time to respond to you in haste, however, for it is night.

First, I tell you there is no reason to doubt that the temptation of spiritual jealousy is caused by the devil, who always seeks to assail a soul with cleverness. Make nothing out of it, spurn it constantly, and mock this monster of hell. Do not pay any attention to him in any way, do not dispute with him, and on your part hide yourself under the shadow of the holy cross, annihilating yourself before God with a confident humility. God has used this pestilential trumpeter to call you to a holy life. Therefore, it is no wonder that the devil, being so enraged, seeks to distract you with various suggestions so that you abandon holy direction, which you must believe is in accord with the Divine Good Pleasure because he who directs you is totally incapable. If he had not seen in faith that this gives greater glory to God and the good of souls, he would have abandoned it all instantly. The approval of the bishop, given without having been sought or desired, confirms this.

Receive with gratitude the graces God gives you and humble yourself much, remaining always in annihilation before God.

Make use of the old directives. I am not changing anything, whether for prayer or penances.

With regard to the convent, there is need for greater light. If God wishes such a thing, he will make it understood in grand fashion. For the present, it is not needful to occupy our hearts with such desires.

I have no more time. All I say is that you make the prayer for which God gives the direction. Since you know my heavy occupations, so you know I have no time to write, or for anything else.

From here it is most difficult for me to travel to you, both because of the air and because I have no occasion, etc. From the Mount, where I will be able, and will not fail, to give you some direction as God inspires me, not in any

other guise, but as the least servant of all. Pray for me. I am in a hurry. In the Heart of Jesus I am,

Your servant in the Lord,
Paul

83

Agnes Grazi (17)

Saint Anthony

July 26, 1735

Live the Love of Jesus!

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always in your spirit and in your heart. Amen.

I received your letter, and in reply I say to you what I have said other times. Under holy obedience you are not to be dwelling any more on the past. If some thought comes to you, humble yourself gently before God, strike your breast, and then cast away such thoughts as temptations.

Second, I tell you that you confessed well, you have confessed well. The upset that comes over you, this fear about the moment of death, this doubt that you have, comes from the devil, who incites you so that your mind may be stirred up, disquieted; therefore, you will not do anything well. No, my daughter, don't do this. Don't give heed to your enemy, but believe me who speaks as the minister of Jesus Christ and for the good of your soul! Be cheerful in God, for all this will pass away. When you find yourself upset, enter into the Heart of Jesus in spirit, in that furnace of love, and let that fire penetrate you completely and inflame you with holy love. You may say for instance: "O dear Jesus! O sweet Spouse of my soul! look on this poor sinner! See her who would be all yours. Ah! Love of my soul, purify me, inflame me with love. Ah! when shall I be all yours? O fire of love, of immense love! I love you, I love you ... " Use these affections, or others, as God inspires you.

At time of temptation say: "Yes, my Jesus, yes, I hope that you have pardoned me. I hope completely that my confessions were well made. My spiritual director has told me so. I believe in your minister and not the demon, who wishes to ruin me and take away my holy peace of heart. Be of good heart, my soul. God has pardoned you. Hope in him! O dear Father, my God, I believe in you; in you I hope; you I love. Out infernal spirit; depart from me! No more scruples, no more fears, no more doubts! Let the love of my Spouse Jesus reign in me. Live the Love of Jesus!"

Make such mental affections with your heart entirely in God, but sweetly and without forcing head or chest. I have written these by way of example, as God has inspired me. When the Lord inspires you with others, by all means use them.

All that you tell me in your letter amounts to nothing at all. Obey and be quiet.

If your prayer remains cold, God will warm it up. Let us allow time to do its work.

I recommend to you the Presence of God. But do not wear out your head; do it with a spirit of gentleness, sweetly reviving your faith. Live passionately for the love of Jesus. Let your delights be the Wounds of Jesus. Be his companion in the garden and make a bouquet of his feelings, agony, afflictions, pains, sighs, tears. Oh, the tears of Jesus! Make a corsage of them to carry always on the bosom of your soul to perfume it with love and sorrow.

I come to an end and leave you in the Heart of Jesus, the furnace of holy love. Pray for me, and God bless you.

Your servant in the Lord,

Paul Francis Danei, Missionary

84

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (3)

Capoliveri

August 12, 1735

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

The shortness of time and my important duties prevent me from writing at length.

I simply tell you to rejoice in the Lord, for everything goes very well. Your sickness is a special joy. It is possible that it will continue, and that you will live a crucified life, a bitter life in the view of the world, but sweet in God's sight. I do not want you to be saddened that you were chosen to guard the entrance in May. Take no thought for tomorrow; leave the care of it to God. To the extent that you dwell on these miseries, you lose sight of the Highest Good. Do not be pained at your aridity at Holy Communion, for then all the pleasure is Jesus', who feeds on your heart and transforms it in his divine love.

I am unable to write to Sister Alma Candida. Tell her in my name that she is to set aside her wish to write to me. While it is good, at this time there is no way to carry it out. There is need of more light. Read her this section, etc.

Tell Sister Xaveria that she remain happy in the Lord and make progress, and that she be careful never to forego Communion and never give the victory to the devil. There will come a light that will scatter the deep darkness.

Tell Sister Catherine that I greet her in the Lord. Let her continue to stand by the Cross of Christ and live all transformed in the Infinite Good. I would desire to write to all, but I am unable. Let them pray for me. I have great need of that, especially on the great day of the triumph of Mary Most Holy. I am always and without end your true servant and spiritual father,

Paul Danei

85
Thomas Fossi (1)⁸³

Longone
August 24, 1735

May Jesus be always in your heart. Amen.

Dearest,

I have just received your welcome letter. Since duties are not wanting to me, I do not have time to reply at length. I will only say that in the present circumstance you are not to trust yourself. When these absorptions occur, humble yourself completely. Have contempt for yourself. If the absorption continues, get up from prayer, go outside either to work or take a walk. Don't say these are ecstasies; you are not worthy of such things. Say to yourself: "A sinner like me deserves only to be deceived by the devil. Lord, protect me from such deceptions. My God, you know I am worse than a devil. It is a marvel, Lord, that you allow such a one in your presence! Get out, you beast, and humble yourself. Who are you, sordid creature? You in ecstasy? Those would be diabolical ecstasies! O abyss of misery! how dare you think of ecstasies?" Rather, believe you are guilty of treason against God and humble yourself in the depths of hell.

In such happenings make such acts of humility. Be fearful that the devil is making himself into an angel of light and bringing about such tenderness and false absorptions that they seem to be ecstasies. Make nothing of them; spurn them. Obey, and at the right time let me know how things turn out. Right now I have nothing more to say. God bless you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

86
Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (4)

Saint Anthony
September 3, 1735

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The Peace of the sweetest Jesus be always in your heart.

I received your letter last evening. Since it does not seem to me necessary to reply with precision to all your points, I will simply say what follows. Make nothing out of the uproar and clamors you are undergoing. Surely, they are the work of the devil, who is greatly enraged because you wish to be entirely God's and that you treat with His Divine Majesty in holy prayer. Oh, how holy prayer scalds the devil! So when this noise and uproar, fear or blasphemous words, and other temptations come upon you, resist them strong in the faith,

83. This letter begins a long collection of one hundred seventy-nine letters (1735 to 1773). Thomas Fossi was born in 1711 on the island of Elba. He met Paul in 1735 when Paul was giving a mission there. Fossi was a successful business man, married with a family. After his wife's death he was ordained and later joined the Passionists in 1768 and lived with Paul at Saints John and Paul in Rome. After Paul's death in 1775, Thomas returned to Mount Argentario, where he died in 1785.

and without leaving off your prayer. Arm yourself with the sign of the cross, recite the creed, and make strong acts of faith, hope, and charity. Then repose in God, mocking the devil who will leave in confusion. Know that these are good signs. I say nothing further. It is enough.

With regard to the sweetness you perceive at Communion, this is too material. Make nothing out of it. It takes virtues to adorn our soul.

The palpitations of heart that occur with contrition for your sins should be suppressed, if you can do so. If you cannot, cast yourself entirely into the furnace of the love of God and repose in peace.

As for whatever occurs, either in prayer or Communion or at other exercises, such as extraordinary sweetness, internal or external locutions, or strong imaginings bringing representation to your fantasy and more, make nothing of these things. In order to avoid deceptions, you will discern between the genuine and the false by the fruits they bring. The things of God, his gifts, bring a great knowledge of his Infinite Majesty and a great knowledge of one's own nothingness so that the soul would abase itself beneath the feet of demons — I will say that — so strong and vile is the feeling one has about self. The things of God cause a great detachment from everything, a great love of the cross and of suffering, a great acceptance of everything that is not sin, and exact obedience. They cause a great peace and heavenly understanding. They bring on a great inclination to holy prayer, etc. Sometimes they cause all these and other effects, sometimes only some. But it is true that they always bring a low estimate of self and a great reverence and respect for the Majesty of God.

The works of the devil, on the contrary, at the beginning may bring some peace and devotion, but it does not last. They principally generate a secret presumption and opinion that one is important, and bring on, if not immediately, at least after a time, perturbation of spirit, arousal of the passions, stubbornness of mind and one's opinion, whence comes lack of respect for the neighbor and love of one's opinion. These and others are the effects brought on by the works of the devil.

For now, my daughter, be careful and do not trust in yourself, but trust in God and always humble yourself. Don't be afraid for you are not deceived. Remain safe in God.

The certain path is that of faith, that is, to pray in lively faith with a continual memory of the Passion of Jesus. When you cannot meditate, as I have already explained to you in writing, repose in God in a sacred silence of love with a pure, but sweet and loving, attention to God in living faith. Oh, here there can be no deception! One who practices this well, prays twenty-four hours a day, for then one is careful to stay always in the presence of God, adoring him in spirit and in truth! Let yourself be moved by this precious spur which moves you to love God very much. Let this precious desire soak you completely and penetrate to the very marrow of your bones.

I am especially displeased with the deep sorrow and melancholy you felt over the sickness of that sister whom you loved in a special way in the past. This is a clear, clear attachment. Therefore, I forbid you to have private talks

with her. If that is necessary, let it be very rare and only when charity demands it. You are not to share any particular confidences with her. When she is with the others, speaks to her as you do to the others, etc.

I am leaving for the mission on the Birthday of Mary Most Holy. I am forbidding your penances. Once you are better, from the Feast of All Saints until Christmas I allow you to try the discipline for the space of a *Miserere*, but not on feast days. Do not write me until the end of November since I will not be here.

Get rid of all your scruples and be quiet about everything and, above all, about the prohibition of the confessor. Don't be upset about that since the bishop, I recall, gave you permission to speak to me about the needs of your soul whenever you wish. That would be even truer for writing. The bishop, I know, is pleased that I work with souls. May Jesus live! Pray for me and God bless you.

Tell Sister Alma Candida, my daughter in Jesus Christ, that she remain willingly on the cross of her weaknesses and repose on the bosom of her loving and dear Crucified Spouse, and that she pray for me to persevere with constancy, courage, and great fidelity. Thanks be to God.

Your true servant in the Lord,

Paul

87

Gregory Gualas y Puego⁸⁴

Saint Anthony

October, 1735

Jesus

Coming back here to Mount Argentario, I discovered that they are putting in a lime kiln to bring to completion the Retreat that has been half finished before the siege of the garrisons. The siege brought about the failure to complete the work. And I had doubts that with the damage done to the inhabitants of Orbetello during the siege, they would not be able to bring the work to completion. But now I see they are determined to go ahead with the building of the Retreat.

With regard to a Retreat on the island of Elba, we have never asked for that. I will await the pious decisions of the princess. Were she to decide to serve her people better with another pious project, we would accept from the hand of God a decision not to construct the prospective Retreat. All the more reason since we see that some who wished to come here are now changing their minds. If she will have decided to have it built, we would claim that this is the Will of His Divine Majesty, and, if it were not built, we will not fail where we can be of service to help these souls. And so we await the final resolution from Your Illustrious Princess.

84. Gregory Gualas Y Puego was a Spaniard on the island of Elba and helped negotiate for a foundation there, but the foundation was never made.

Agnes Grazi (18)

Orbetello

November 18, 1735

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am replying in haste to your letter, which I received the other day, since I am fully occupied with the mission. First, I am telling you that, if God wills that I be your spiritual director, I am always willing to fulfill the Holy Will of God and willingly be of service to your soul.

Second, with regard to the pain you had in conferring with the confessor of the convent, it would seem that God does not desire that you hold such conferences for reasons that I pass over in order to be brief. I do rejoice that God has had you stand a little while under the cross. Be there willingly and be prudent in answering the questions of the confessor. Answer with humility, simplicity, and brevity. Send me the writings whenever you wish.

I had you write for I was not able to receive your letters due to the siege of the forts. So to be able to examine your conduct, I ordered you to write with brevity as to how your prayer was going. It seems to me that you have written enough. For the present, do not write more, and see to it that you be utterly forgetful of self, putting no trust in self, humbling yourself in all things, and considering yourself a vile dung heap on which have fallen the delights of the Sovereign Good, but soiled by your filthy imperfections.

Send your manuscript well sealed. Live with a humble, gentle heart. When people come to converse with you, excuse yourself; recommend yourself to their prayers and excuse yourself. I refer to worthy persons as you inform me. Avoid speaking of yourself, and avoid speaking of your reports. Keep everything secret, and believe these are things of no importance.

You are not correct in saying that God does not want harsh penances from me. One like me, who has offended God so much, must do great penance, but I have not done that. God wishes penance from me, and I wish it.

I have no more time. I end in a hurry and tell you that I will not be able to come to Viterbo. It is more than five months that I have been continually at work. I need to remain for a while recollected at the feet of Jesus. Write when you wish and keep to the accustomed rules, which are going well. Be quiet in the Heart of Jesus, where I declare myself without end,

Your true servant in the Lord,

Paul Danei of the Holy †, Missionary

Francis Appiani (1)⁸⁵

Saint Anthony
November 22, 1735

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts.

Dearest,

Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth, our Life, be always the one object of our consolation. Amen.

The duties of the holy missions have kept me from responding to your welcome letter. Although another mission is looming, I cannot fail to satisfy your pious wishes. I do not know what to say to you regarding your cousin.⁸⁶ I have written to him the message enclosed, which you will be able to do me the charity of forwarding to him.

With regard to the Retreat,⁸⁷ in the last post I received a letter from Bishop Calcagnini⁸⁸ in which he tells me in kindest terms that in the next post he will give me an account of everything which he could not do up until now since he had just arrived from Rome.

I trust in God that everything will go in accord to the Divine Will. Be sure of my poor prayers, for I do not forget the persons in your household.

Live for now all transformed in God. Never leave off holy prayer and the reading of holy books and the presence of God at your work. Be happy that God is purifying you as gold in the furnace by means of the temptations that he permits. Persevere in your holy call, for God will make you holy.

Greet your parents for me. I end in haste and leave you in the Heart of Jesus.

Your true servant in Jesus,

Paul Danei, Missionary of the Holy †

85. This is the first of the twenty-eight letters written to Francis Appiani. He was the son of a well-to-do family of Elba, who as a youth wanted to join Paul's community. He was born in Rio on the island of Elba, February 14, 1719. Ordained in 1741, he entered the Passionist community in 1743. He was a missionary, a local rector, and secretary to Paul. Appiani died in 1759.

86. This is Mark Anthony Claris, about whom Paul wrote in the letter of August 14, 1736.

87. This is in reference to a Retreat on the island of Elba, which was not able to be founded due to the difficulties caused by the opposition of the civil authorities and the clergy.

88. Bishop John Calcagnini, son of Felicia Antonia Notarianni, knew Paul during his stay in Gaeta (Zoffoli, Vol. I, p. 287).

Reverend John Moretti (1)⁸⁹

Saint Anthony
December 1735⁹⁰

May Jesus Live!

Most Reverend and Esteemed Patron,

At this moment I received your respected letter from the hand of a priest we know. I would gladly be of service to Your Reverence by conducting the retreat. However, here it is highly inconvenient because of the constricted nature of the place. A further reason is that tomorrow we are sending our brother cleric with a lay brother who will accompany him to the bishop of Sovana since the cleric is to be ordained on three feast days. So there will be only two of us here without anyone able to do anything for us. Well, we will do our best.

You should know that the bishop of Sovana excused us from receiving retreatants since we do not have room for them, as I said.

Tell the priest in question that it will be well for him to bring a mattress and two sheets. Our straw ticks⁹¹ are very small and very hard.

With regard to expenses, I am saying nothing. What is good for us we willingly share with him. I end, extending a humble reverence, and recommend myself to your devout prayers and declare myself always,

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

Reverend John Moretti (2)

Saint Anthony
December 12, 1735

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father and Illustrious Patron,

I am summoning my courage to kneel at your feet with my humble note in order to ask you to concern yourself so that a certain young lady, Magdalene, daughter of Gennaro Tici, be given the dowry of charity that is customary in this city, etc. Then she can use it to open the way for her to enter marriage with the great King of Virgins in some holy cloister. Your Reverence will have the merit of this work of piety, and the young lady will pray for you. I pay my humble respects and declare myself always in the Side of Jesus,

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

89. Vicar general of Orbetello at the time of the foundation on Mount Argentario, Moretti favored the foundation, but was limited by the reluctance of Cardinal Altieri. He desired to be buried in the Passionist church on Mount Argentario.

90. M. Bartoli, in *Catalogo dei Religiosi Passionisti*, suggests July 14, 1734, as the ordination date of Father Anthony. The year 1735 was not written in Paul's handwriting.

91. This is a poor, hard mattress of straw.

Marianna Elenora Del Pozzo (1)⁹²

Saint Anthony
December 12, 1735

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts. Amen.

Most Reverend Sister in Christ,

May the purest love of Jesus, our true Good, and the effects of his divine grace be always the delight of your heart. Amen.

I received your esteemed letter, given me by Father Anthony, my brother. I could not reply to you at first because of my duties. I thank the Sovereign Giver of every good gift that he spurs your heart always more to give attention to that holy perfection to which his infinite sweetness has so graciously called you. What have I to say to you, I who am so poverty stricken, so blind, and imperfect — especially since you are in a place provided with servants of Jesus Christ who instruct you? In order to obey, I will only say that you should try for total contempt of self and true mortification, both within and without, and a complete abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure and detachment from everything created, whence is born the beautiful flowers of the holy virtues. With these foundation stones, to which are joined all the others — principally obedience, perfect annihilation, silence, external solitude, even more that of the heart — with these stones, I say, you will build a great palace of perfection. Or to put it better, with your cooperation God will build it in you and there take his delights.

But, you cannot do this without being strong; therefore, it is necessary to often take the food of holy prayer, the sacraments, and spiritual reading. Oh, fortunate those souls who are always lost in God with a living faith, continually remaining in the divine presence! Blessed are they who repose in the Sovereign Good and remain like loving infants, clinging to the breast of the infinite love of God, taking in the milk of holy love! O fortunate those who always arouse their spirits with inflamed darts and then allow their souls to fly into the loving bosom of the Highest Good! One word of love, spoken in a sacred silence without speaking, says much to gentle lovers! This will happen to you if you are truly humble, mortified, and obedient, and, if you delight in treating with God intimately, staying in his divine presence in all your works, working with your hands, but with your mind and heart treating with the Highest Good. Ah! this calls for greatest detachment.

Pray for me. Greet your Father Confessor for me. I suppose he is Father Paul Cerruti. Greet Sister Tullia Maria in the Lord. I always include her and all in my poor prayers. One grand greeting in the pure Heart of Jesus to that entire garden of spouses of Jesus Christ. May all become saints and wall up the doors of the parlors with a pact that cannot be broken and with the key of holy charity. Let us leave the dead bury their dead, but we have found life. What can we but be on fire with love? Let us seal the door in the face of all creatures so that our Spouse can delight in the little garden of our hearts. Where has my

92. Marianna Elenora was the daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness del Pozzo. She became a nun in the convent of the Annunciation in Alessandria.

pen taken me? I did not wish to write so much. Let them pardon my zeal. I desire all to be saints. Live Jesus and Mary Most Holy. Amen. I sign off by leaving you in the Side of Jesus and declare myself,

Your true, unworthy servant,

Paul Danei of the Holy †, Missionary

WAITING AND ENTRY (1736-1737)

The following months become a very difficult time for Paul. The Retreat is eventually finished, but Cardinal Altieri seems not to be in a hurry to permit it to be blessed. Paul writes to him again and again, but still no reply. To add to his suffering Paul became sick. He wrote of his sufferings, but notice how these days of trial help him understand more deeply the significance of suffering for a follower of Christ.

The months pass by, but the cardinal does not give his permission for the blessing of the church. During this time Paul wrote seven letters to the cardinal. He also traveled again to Rome, this time with Father Fulgentius. These were trying months for Paul. The spiritual letters from Agnes Grazi, Francis Appiani, Thomas Fossi, and Maria Cherubina Bresciani most likely brought Paul some peace, comfort, or simply loving support!

The blessing of the Presentation Retreat was held on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14, 1737. There are only a few letters written between the blessing in September and the end of the year. Of these, five letters are to Agnes Grazi, written on November 6, November 15, December 20, and two undated. There are two other undated letters in 1737, one to Maria Prudentia Angelini, the only one to her, and another to John Sancez. Both are instructions on how to pray.

93

Agnes Grazi (19)⁹³

Saint Anthony
January 6, 1736

*May the sweetest Infant, who is Love,
live always in our heart. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

Yesterday, I wrote you a letter in haste, for I was in Orbetello. Since I forgot to pay my thanks to the Reverend Confessor of Rose, I am doing that now, and I ask you, along with Rose, to do this for me. I already see that God is closing the path for me to come to Viterbo, for once I have finished the mission in Portercole and celebrated the Feast of Saint Anthony, I believe I will be required to perform a work for the glory of God and plan ahead a bit.

93. The War of the Polish Succession was coming to an end with a new king, Charles III, in Naples and Sicily, which will become the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Paul wanted to call upon him for support for the new Retreat. At the same time the bishop wanted Paul and John Baptist to give a mission in Portercole at the foot of Mount Argentario. Paul alludes to the mission which began after Epiphany and to his trip to Naples, which he sees as "a work for the glory of God." In the letter of February 8, 1736, to Frances Lucci, he also refers to this trip.

If God defers this for me, I hope to be in Viterbo before the end of this month; if not, blessed be God. If I come, I will receive the charity of the confessor of Rose. I ask her to greet him in my name, but let Rose do that. I greet her also in the Heart of Jesus.

Pay no attention to those locutions and make nothing of them. Humble yourself. There is always danger, especially when locutions are abundant and frequent. Then, certainly, there is danger.

I would want to know whether Rose is married. If she has a husband and sons, she cannot leave them, and I would never consent to her coming with you to Orbetello. If she is free, then all right.

Surely, today is a great day, but I cannot say anything about the Mystery for it is late and the bearer of this will leave soon for the post. However, when at the altar, I will place your heart in the loving bosom of the sweetest Infant. "Oh, Jesus, my Love," I will say to him, "in flame with love the heart of this daughter you have given me. Further, make her humble, simple as a child, and transform her in your holy love. Oh, Jesus, life of my life! joy of my soul! God of my heart! let her heart become an altar on which she sacrifices to you the gold of most ardent love, the incense of a continual prayer, totally humble and totally fervent, and the myrrh of continual mortification. Amen" Do this for poor Paul. God bless you. Amen.

The solemn day of the Epiphany, the Apparition and the Wedding of Jesus with his dear Spouse, our Holy Mother Church, is a day of a great Mystery of Love. You must reflect on it during the whole Octave and make three Communions in a row for me, and on the closing day of the Octave make the fourth. Request this favor of the confessor there and ask that he do me this favor. Greet him in my name and recommend me to his prayers. I kiss his sacred hands.

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

This morning, the Day of the Purification of Mary Most Pure, I arrived in Orbetello at the very moment that the bells were tolling to accompany our Julia to the her burial. I trust she is already in paradise and is beyond all the ills of this world. So, courage, and do as I have done. I have kissed the loving hand of God that struck this blow. Pray for her and console the remaining sister.

I will be glad to hear how things are going with your spirit. And I repeat what I have always said. Let us take our stand on faith, let us adore God in spirit and in truth. Give no credence to locutions, but cast them off. Hold no conferences with the holy nuns, not even with Sister Lilia, even granting they are all very holy. Open with God and your spiritual director and then silence.

I am writing in haste. I am in your home and was pleased to find myself here to console your uncle and the rest. All are well resigned.

Goodbye, my daughter. Love Jesus and pray for me.

Paul, Your Servant in the Lord

95

Frances Lucci (4)

Saint Anthony
February 8, 1736

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts.

The pure love of Jesus and the effects of divine grace be always in our hearts. Amen.

I have reason to bewail myself as an evil accountant, for up to now I have not replied to your letter. I assure you that my near departure for Naples kept me from that. Now, thanks to God, I am back and answer by saying to you, in the first place, I do not wish you to be philosophizing so minutely about your conduct. This is truly a loss of time. I assure you that to the extent you undertake these minute scrutinies, you lose sight of the Sovereign Good. It is my wish that you walk joyfully, all abandoned in God, guarding your heart so that no love of creatures enters there. Keep watch over this garden so that gradually you pull up all the weeds. Destroy them and burn them up with the fire of divine love, and plant there the flowers of the holy virtues so that the Divine Spouse takes his delights in you. Be courageous in rising up from failures without upsetting yourself, but humble yourself sweetly.

You have need to exercise yourself in external gentleness and, even more, internally with yourself, with one who serves and with any you serve. Above all, excuse yourself quickly from creatures in order to treat with the Creator, living always in high detachment from all that is created, at least in the highest part of your soul. I do not remember all you wrote, because I have torn up your letter as you asked me to do. However, it is not necessary to be so careful.

You may ask whatever is possible for me. I trust in God that we will fulfill his Holy Will.

Our Retreat will be completed this summer, at least the structure. We need to pray God to fill it with his servants.

I thank you in Jesus Christ for your charity and the inconvenience in sending the lentils. May God reward you.

Do not send your letters by the post, but as other occasions offer, for here letters are too expensive and poverty forbids this expense. Live Jesus! I am always more and more overwhelmed by miseries within and without. Many prayers are needed for poor me. God bless you. Amen.

If God wills that we hold a conference in the future, I will give you my poor opinion. I would wish there were a Retreat for young women who would provide for their living with the work of their hands. Saint Francis de Sales

wanted that. Oh, what a holy thing that would be! God be blessed. There is no need to think about that for now, but recommend it to God. I am always,

Your servant in Christ,

Paul Danei, Missionary

96

Agnes Grazi (21)

Porto San Stefano

February 18, 1736

Departing for Pisa.

Jesus and Mary be praised!

My Daughter in the Lord,

I received your letter. With regard to it, I have nothing more to say than to repeat what I have said so many times.

The just man lives by faith. The lover seeks no other pleasure than the pleasure of God; the lover desires to suffer and perform great services for God. No matter how much is done, it seems little to the lover; and no matter how much is suffered, it seems little to a lover. You call your sufferings, which are those of a baby, "the sufferings of hell!" Oh, how little you know about such things! These are mere nothings ...

If you wish to confer with the servants of God, I do not prohibit that. I have never prohibited it. But I would wish you do it in a holy and prudent way, that is, listen with all charity, attend the conferences they hold, but first excuse yourself by saying sincerely that you do not understand them. Then, if they wish to continue to speak, listen to them sweetly and take consolation in the best way God inspires you. With brevity excuse yourself so as not to multiply useless talk.

Do all with a holy liberty of spirit, giving as much time, little or much, as seems proper. Speak of yourself only in general terms, admitting that you, too, undergo some trials, protesting while you say this that you share this to encourage them and console them. Then excuse yourself in peace.

You tell me that you would wish to confer with Sister Lilia and tell her of your temptations and more. Listen. I do not have the conviction that Sister Lilia has the gift of direction. From what I think I understand, I say she does not have that gift for you. I want to hope that she has the light to govern her convent, but she does not have the knowledge to give direction. Therefore, I have forbidden you to have any conferences with her about your spirit.

Oh, God! You will not reveal your temptations to me, whom you chose as spiritual director after so many refusals on my part, and now you want to share them with a woman who may be very holy — God, however, ordinarily uses his priests to direct souls. I do not understand this!

I give you permission, as I have done in the past, to take up the affairs of your spirit with the confessor there, or with other priests, as it pleases you. How happy I would be if you were to do so! But God does not inspire me with regard to Sister Lilia. I even feel decidedly negative. But do as you wish, for it is not painful to me.

You are mistaken when you say that I had you take an oath not to ask me for penances. That is not true. Believe me, it is pure imagination! You may make this request of me, or from whomsoever you will choose as director in the future, and you will be doing well. Pay no attention to this oath. It is entirely a figment of your imagination. You may follow our old rules regarding penances but take your health into consideration.

Now I know personally the truth that God does not want me to come to Viterbo because when I consider coming there, God closes the way. Right now, when I thought of coming, see, I must go to Pisa for the sake of the Retreat. God knows that whatever he gives me to do, I do willingly. So see for yourself if I can come! God wishes things as they are. May he be blessed.

Regarding your plans, whether to stay there or come to Orbetello, don't think about that; leave the care to God and abandon yourself in him. I am eager to do all I can for your good, and I pray you were on fire with holy divine love.

You already know how much I desire to be free from the direction of devout souls. I certainly wish to abandon all and hope to do it soon. First of all, I am ignorant, imperfect, and blind. I have no light for myself, how much less for others. Second, my death is approaching, and I want to take care of myself and prepare myself. But every day there are more hindrances.

I leave you always free to treat of your conscience with any minister of God, but with women, no. Not even with Sister Lilia. I say no. She has not the light to direct you. She is good, I have always said that, but I am not aware that she has the spirit to give direction.

Why have you not gone to the confessor who is so learned; whereas, I would not have such genius and consolation, as God knows?

Do not speak of me unless you speak of a criminal condemned to the gallows, as one who is spoken of only with nausea, but also with compassion.

Pray much for me, as I do for you. Stay happy in God for things are going well and I am pleased.

Don't be sad over my trials. You do not know them, and you will never know them. I have shared enough in what I have written so that people pray for this infamous traitor, who betrays his good God at every minute.

If you wish to speak with Sister Lilia or write to her, do that with brevity and without touching on your interior. That is the way, as long as I will continue as your director, that God inspires me. When I am not in that position, I will not worry about you, although I will always be obliged to include you in my poor prayers.

Rose cannot come with you, as I told you at other times, for she is married and cannot leave her husband. Without the consent of Holy Church, that would be contrary to all law because she has not been divorced.

I have stolen this time for I find myself here in Porto San Stefano to take ship. Pray for me. It is night and I wish you "Good Night" in Jesus, whom I ask to bless you. I am always,

Your true servant,

Paul Danei of the Holy †

Write me as soon as I have returned.

Agnes Grazi (22)

Saint Anthony
March 8, 1736

Jesus and Mary be praised. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

On my arrival from Pisa to this poor Retreat, I received your letter, which was very satisfying to me because I see, thanks to the Lord, you are resigned to holy obedience. I know it is said that whoever is always obedient will sing of victory.

I am pleased that you converse with the servants of God, but with prudence and simplicity. Do not speak of your interior without a clear impulse from God. Strengthen everyone, say what God inspires you to say, and then withdraw from creatures in order to treat alone with the Highest Good. Oh, my daughter, God wants great things! He calls you to the highest perfection, and to reach that there is need of your cooperation That is done by annihilating yourself before God and your neighbor in genuine and very simple humility, with a complete detachment from all created things and from your own life, with a total transformation in the Divine Good Pleasure and a total abandonment in the abyss of infinite goodness to the extent that you can be said to be absolutely one with it.

When you feel moved to pray for your neighbor, certainly do that, but with great humility, trusting in God and distrusting yourself. Concerning everything else, follow our old rules.

I went to Pisa and God delivered me from great perils to my life on land and on sea.⁹⁴ May his most Holy Name be blessed!

Continue to pray God for the success of the Retreat and for me, who am most in need. After Easter I am going to Pisa to conduct holy missions, and then I go into the diocese of Grosseto. I will be away about three months. You will not come to Orbetello just now, and, I believe, you will remain where you are for the summer, but I do not know for certain. I write nothing more, for God knows my condition. God bless you and inflame you with his holy love. Amen. Give the enclosed letter to Sister Lilia. I would willingly send you the discipline, but I do not know how to do that.

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul of the Holy †

94. General D. Las Minas was so pleased with Paul's mission at Portercole that he recommended him to the Duke of Montemar for his troops at Pisa. Paul went there by boat and was caught in a terrible storm. He will return to Pisa after Easter for another mission and for one at Grosseto.

Agnes Grazi (23)

Saint Anthony
March 15, 1736

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In the last letter I wrote to you, I remember that I did not inform you that I had received your letters. Since I have read your letter with closer attention, I have seen that you desired that I tell you if I have received all your letters. Because they were delivered to me late, I did not inform you. So be at peace.

Humble yourself much when it seems you receive graces from God. At times it may seem that we are receiving, and it is because other servants of God are praying. Pay no attention to what that nun is saying that she has received all that she has asked for by means of you. Make nothing out of that, but rather fear divine justice. Oh, how many who seemed strong as the cedars of Lebanon and are now fallen! A grain of pride can ruin a mountain of holiness; therefore, be hidden from all. Retreat into the strong fortress of the pure Heart of Jesus, and you will be freed from every evil.

Take no notice of that temptation to vainglory. Despise it. This is a good sign that God wishes to strengthen you in this area and give you the contrary virtue.

I leave you free to write to your uncle about having your sister in the convent. Write and leave the outcome to God.

I believe I will write again before Easter, and then we will see after the mission, which I am going to preach in Pisa and the diocese of Grosseto. In the middle of June I will be here.

Friday is the Feast of my Most Holy Mother of Sorrows. Recommend me much to her so that there may be impressed on my heart her sorrows and the Passion of my Jesus. I desire that more and more, and I would imprint them on the hearts of all so that the world would be on fire with holy love.

You may communicate every day from the day you receive this until Holy Thursday, inclusive. Offer a Communion for me whenever you choose. It would be a great charity to do that on the Feast of the Sorrows of Mary. Continue to recommend our holy Retreat to God; it will be finished this summer. God has provided. May His Divine Majesty also provide great servants. Oh! how I hope that God will derive great good to his greater glory and the profit of our neighbors. Continue with the rules given you. repose in God, live in God, breathe in God, and burn with his love. Amen. God bless you.

Your servant in Jesus,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

Francis Appiani (2)

Portercole
March 23, 1736
On my way.

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Dearest One in Jesus Christ,

Oh! how dear to me was the letter I received from you this morning! The Giver of every good be ever blessed for affording me this consolation. Courage in Jesus, my son, and be of good heart, for God wishes to make you all his. Entertain no doubt whatsoever that God wants you in this Retreat, which is being built with eagerness and will be finished this summer. Believe me, it breathes sanctity, or to put it better, it invites to sanctity.

Ah! this is a place the Lord has prepared for those who love him. Be strong and constant in all the assaults of the enemy, especially the deceitful world, which seeks to rob your soul from the hands of God, to whom you are consecrated.

I hope the world will not win out and the Highest Good will be glorified. Flee all occasions and make yourself deaf to the voice of the world. If you behave with a sweet prudence with your father, you may be sure that in good time he will agree, even as your pious mother has agreed. I ask you to greet her in the Heart of Jesus, and your father as well. I am not writing him because I cannot. For now keep him happy, telling him you have no doubts that a good father, and he is such, would never keep his son from fulfilling the Divine Will, but would sacrifice the son to God as so many grand lords of royal blood, rich and powerful men, have done. Then do not reveal your secret and conduct yourself in accord with my counsel.

If anyone whoever suggests courtship, with modesty refuse them outright by saying you cannot do injury to a great lady to whom you have pledged yourself, and she has accepted you as son and spouse.

Be strong, my dearest son, strong! Great graces and great treasures are prepared for you.

At this time I cannot receive you, for I am on my way to a mission in Pisa. I leave this Easter. But have no doubts that I expect that God will console you this summer. You are not to think whether to serve as lay brother or otherwise. Follow obedience and, if God wishes you as a priest, you must obey. As soon as I am back from the mission, I will write you to see if all will go well. God will change your father's heart.

Do not be pained over the dryness you find in prayer nor over the distractions since they are involuntary. God purifies your heart in this way so that you may be disposed to unite yourself with great perfection to the Highest Good.

In such times revive your faith gently, see yourself on Calvary, concentrate your thoughts and loving attention on Jesus Crucified, embrace the holy cross, and allow your soul to imbibe some of the Precious Blood. Then say: "Oh, Infinite Good! I accept this anguish because this pleases you! Oh, my love! I

love you more than my heart, and I rejoice to be on the cross of suffering! Oh, dear trials! I embrace you as the joys of the purest Heart of my Jesus."

With regard to preparation and thanksgiving as well as for the preparation for holy prayer, I do not have time now to go into that, for I am overwhelmed with business. I will do that in good time; meantime, try to provide yourself with a booklet entitled *The Sumptuous Wedding*. I think the parish priest has it. You will see there are beautiful things there. True preparation, whether for prayer or Communion, is a living faith, a profound humility, from which comes a great knowledge of God and of our own nothingness. Have no doubt that God will teach you, especially when you are here. After all, the great master of prayer is the Holy Spirit. I do not want you to be straining your head or chest. At prayer give yourself some support, but with all reverence. Take an hour for mental prayer in the morning and about an hour in the evening before dinner — if you can, do it in church. During the day stay in the Divine Presence, read a bit, make use of ejaculatory prayers, but gently, walk in the country a bit to refresh yourself out of love for God. Do not keep the bow always bent; that is not possible. Above all, keep your strength the better to serve God. Believe me, the devil, when he does nothing else, will try to have you lose your health so that then you can do nothing. So discretion is needed. Eat what is necessary morning and evening. You may fast on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, but the ordinary fast. Apply the discipline on the same days for the space of a *Miserere*. You may wear the chain an hour on Monday, an hour and a quarter, or a bit more, on Friday, an hour on Saturday, and not more than that. I want you to eat and sleep as much as you need, and believe me, you will be giving glory to God. I know myself to be inspired to say that. You are young, indeed, and for now you must behave thus. When you are here, you will be stronger to take on more penance; otherwise, you will not be able to persevere. Our life is very penitential, yet very sweet and prudent.

For the present, do not write to me since I will not be here. When the mission is over, I will be the first to advise you as to what you ought to do. I come to an end by leaving you in the Heart of Jesus. God bless you. Amen.

Do not reveal your resolution to anyone except your spiritual director, and right now I am the one. Keep it in your heart and cultivate it by attention to your usual exercises.

Your true servant,

Paul Danei, Missionary

100

Thomas Fossi (2)

Portercole

March 29, 1736

J.M.J.

Dearest in Christ,

The letter you say you did not receive contained directions regarding the penances you asked me about. It was safely sent but not to you personally. I included it with a letter to the parish priest of Rio, and I know it was sent

safely to Porto Ferraio. I have received four of your letters, and I am answering two or three with this letter. I had already written you when, yesterday, a two page letter arrived. I am informing you of its reception.

It is not necessary for me to reply to all your points, nor could I. Today is Holy Thursday and, since the messenger to whom I consigned the first letter has not left yet, I will include this one.

I assert the truth in Jesus and tell you it is better to remain hidden and not be looking for visions. The devil is always on the alert to rob us of all our good. I do not want you to make a big deal of the extraordinary things you mention. Anyone who pays attention to consolations only loses sight of the great God of all consolations. Anyone who remains in his nothingness, distrusts self, and confides in God will not be deceived.

You do not know yet what it means to suffer, really suffer. Believe me, you are still a milk-fed baby. In a little while we will see how faithful you will be in real sufferings. In all truth I say you have not yet endured unmitigated suffering. I take little satisfaction that you magnify your sufferings, which are mere nothings. I pity you, for you are a baby, and God treats you as such. Flee publicity and singularity, keep your virtues hidden, and you will walk safely. I can write no more. I reaffirm all I have previously said and all former permissions. I break off in haste.

The bishop of Grosseto is asking me to postpone the mission in his diocese for good reasons, principally because he is going to Siena to seek a cure for his illness. I think he wishes to be in his diocese when the mission is going on. I am not sure where I will go there. I believe I will be in the mountain area.

I do not think it is good for you to expose yourself to the danger of coming here, especially at this time. Write more succinctly; that is sufficient. When there is no danger from the Turks,⁹⁵ then you can come. I embrace you in Jesus and am,

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross

101

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (5)

Piombino
House of Father James [Grazi]
April 13, 1736

Jesus and Mary be praised!

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

On Wednesday, while in Livorno, I received your letter, dated in March. There you gave me notice of the happy death of our Sister Xaveria. Who could have expected otherwise from a soul who had suffered so much for love of Jesus? I hope she will remember poor me and the small way I desired to see her a saint and cooperated in her perfection. Courage, my daughter, let us go

95. Danger came from pirates from the African coast who were under Turkish influence.

on preparing ourselves also with a total detachment from all that is created. I see that God desires that you be despoiled of everything and have no happiness beyond the happiness of doing the Holy Will of the Highest Good, reposing with deep humility on his loving bosom.

Follow your old rules. In prayer conduct yourself as you have done at other times. Prayer is to be made in the way of the Spirit so that when His Divine Majesty grants your soul a loving repose and wills that you remain in a sacred silence and high wonder at the infinity of his goodness, you must allow that and let yourself feed on God. Always, however, carry a corsage of the pains of our Love Jesus, on the bosom of your soul.

Regulate your penances, as I have told you, in accord with your strength and health. Ordinarily, do no more than I have put in writing or by word of mouth. Then keep me advised.

I arrived at the second hour of the evening, and now I am about to leave for it is dawn. God bless you. Pray for me and stay joyful in God, for I hope we will die a holy death and together praise our Supreme Good forever. Greet Sister Alma Candida, who is doing very well. I leave you in the Heart of Jesus. Amen. I end in haste for I am leaving.

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

102

Agnes Grazi (24)

Saint Anthony
April 19, 1736

Jesus and Mary be praised!

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Blessed be the Divine Providence, which has not allowed me to write to you before now, seeing that I found myself away, etc. Now I say again what I have said at other times, that is, these external manifestations, such as perfumes, lights, visions, etc., are always to be suspected. For this reason they are to be rejected constantly with a spirit of humility and confidence in God. If they are from God, they will have their effect. If not, by banishing them you do not give the devil a chance to deceive you. Therefore, I repeat that you be vigilant and not take stock in these things, but rather in virtues. Study to walk in faith. Oh, yes, this is the safe way.

With regard to reading the meditations for the religious, I say that since it has gone on for some days, let it continue. In case they press you to continue, when in that manner you make a return of charity and obedience, go along. But when you have read what is in the book, I do not wish you to continue in that direction, but rather leave your spirit in holy liberty, not forcing it to meditate on the points read, but rather to rest in God according to our old rules. Don't you remember what I have told you many times? Prayer is to be made in accord with the Holy Spirit? With regard to all else, follow our usual rules.

No good way has come to me to send you a discipline. So I keep it here to rust. I desire that such things be kept quiet. If I do not go out on missions, it is

likely that I will come and bring it with me. I end by greeting you in Jesus. Pray for me and God bless you.

Your true servant,

Paul Danei of the Holy †

103

Agnes Grazi (25)

Saint Anthony

April 26, 1736

May the sweetest Jesus live always in our hearts. Amen.

My Little Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In this post I received your letter. I should have much to say in reply, but time will not permit. This morning I had decided to leave for Viterbo. As soon as I made that decision, the weather changed and a contrary wind set in so that the boat that was to take me as far as Montalto could not set out. I adore the Divine Will that so disposes. I expect notice to leave for the mission, but if that is put off, I will come there when Signore James, your uncle, comes. Now I say to you what I have said many times: drive away with great strength these lights and fragrances, especially these lights. I hold them very suspect and believe that the devil is trying in this way to come into the picture to seduce you. But, I trust in God that he will never succeed. Make the sign of the cross with faith, spurn them, spit at them once or twice, and then say a creed. Act thus and do not fear anything. Hide yourself in the Side of Jesus. You say a certain soul has visited you, and I tell you that is not so. It is your imagination. You say you know it in God, and I tell you that by charity we must be united to everyone as with one heart, but such visions are not for you. Make nothing out of them.

Do not believe she sees her guardian angel. If her spiritual director has told her that, I do not praise, I do not blame, but with your permission I would that he spoke of the angel's virtues and encouraged her to imitate them, not of visions. I prefer that we walk in faith. This is surely the safe way. "Obscure faith, sure guide of holy love. Oh, what sweetness its certitude enriches my heart." So sang a devout soul.

Divine apparitions, when they are truly from God, at first cause a holy fear, a holy fright arising from the knowledge the soul has of God's greatness. Then they cause a great peace and union with God, along with a heavenly understanding and with much knowledge of one's nothingness, along with strong affections. They produce other marvelous effects in the soul. Sometimes they do not bring on this holy fear, but the soul remains clothed with so much light in living faith which generates an ardent love for the object loved, along with other effects noted above.

However, when a certain, superficial peace comes that generates a secret esteem of self, and we seem to be pleasing to God and to be somewhat in a state of perfection, oh God! then be on guard and drive such thoughts far from you and humble yourself before God. The one who is humble and obedient will sing of victory.

Understand, my daughter, you are not walking the path of deception; stay safe. I tell you not to walk with perturbation. I am saying, however, that your prayer is rather material and full of imagination. The time will come when your mind will clear, that is, will become obscure, and you will walk more in faith. These sensible things will cease, which, while they may be good, they are things for babes on milk. The just one lives by faith. "O dark night, night more lovely than day. Night which can unite the lover and the beloved, the lover transformed into the beloved." So sang a great saint.⁹⁶ He sang of the night of holy prayer in faith, but he sang of a night brighter than day. Courage! I end for I am in a hurry. I hope we shall speak. Pray for me and God inflame you with love. Amen.

Paul, Your True Servant in Christ

104

Agnes Grazi (26)

Orbetello

June 21, 1736

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

On my arrival in Orbetello for the mission, which started yesterday morning, I found your letter, in which there are many superfluous things, especially the long explanation of a certain party with whom I cannot cooperate, other than with my poor prayers. I can tell you that I have not received any letter from her ... I ... with the words ... put it with hope in God

...

... to place herself at the feet of a good minister of God. What you tell me about these servants of the Lord from Corneto, I am glad you have seen and have spoken with them; but I do not want you telling me that they read hearts. You are too ready to believe. I well know they are good; however, I know them only by name. Let us proceed slowly in speaking about certain things and being over credulous. I lay this down as a general rule.

You should not believe that I am coming for a mission where you are. That is not true. With regard to what you have written, you can send me whenever you wish, as long as you write only what is necessary. And do not be so quick to predict things, as is being done in these times, where there is great danger of deceit.

Take to heart the advice I have given you with regard to discerning whether the gifts of God are truly from the Lord or are deceits of the devil. I know I have given this advice orally and in writing with great clarity. Be careful in your behavior. Do not defend yourself with the nuns. When you have told them that you are not attached to your spiritual director and that you are leaving only to do the Will of God, say nothing more and be silent. Tell them that, if you are going to stay in a convent, you will not change from this one to another, but that you live under obedience to your father and uncle. And

96. Saint John of the Cross.

then do not defend yourself or me. Speak little about it, nothing about me, especially with the nuns. Pray for me and God bless you.

I write nothing further because I am not in a position to write. Remain in the Heart of Jesus. Amen.

Do not be attached to these nice things which you claim have happened. Humble yourself and remain in your nothingness. Seek God in pure faith and with most ardent love.

Your servant in Jesus Christ,
Paul Danei

105

Francis Appiani (3)⁹⁷

Saint Anthony
June 26, 1736

J.M.J.

Dear One in Christ,

The purest love of Jesus and the effects of his divine grace be always in our hearts. Amen.

On my arrival from the holy mission, I found your welcome letter, dated May 8. Oh! how much I rejoice that His Divine Majesty is having you walk the royal way of the holy cross! Alleluia! Now you begin to be a disciple of Christ. Blessed are you when men hate you, persecute you, and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice, for your reward is great in the heavens.

So rejoice when they call you crazy, without fear of God, and the like — then things are going well. Do not neglect your usual exercises. Be silent and deaf to all, and follow your pattern of life. Your reward is exceedingly great. The short way to respond to all those who insult you or upset you in any way is with a modest and sweet silence. It is certain that God wants you to be in this penitential life in which we live; the signs of that are overly clear. God will change the heart of your father. Let him say what he wants. Your spiritual father has spoken the truth, for your spiritual father has spoken with the light of God. Be strong and constant. This winter of agony will pass and spring will come with a holy peace that goes beyond all understanding.

Great is the reward that God has prepared for your holy mother because of the gift she has made to His Divine Majesty of her only son. Your father is not correct in saying that your vocation is not from God, but from the devil, and that you would sin mortally if you were to disobey him by putting your resolution into action.

It is true that God commands us to obey our parents, but only in things that are just and which do not impede our greater good and our perfection. When parents try to stop the execution of an inspiration from God, such as entry into religion in order to become holy, we are not obliged to obey them, except in

97. This letter shows Paul's advice for one who is entering upon a more simplified prayer life. He is following the teaching of Saint John of the Cross, whom he quoted in the earlier letter to Agnes Grazi, April 26, 1736.

the case where father and mother would be in great necessity of life and there was no other way to provide for them other than the assistance of their son. In such an instance the son is obliged to stay with them until the necessity is over.

But, a son is not obliged to obey a father with regard to staying in the world when God calls the son to a more perfect state. How many servants of God fled their parents in order to withdraw to the desert in religious orders? Did Saint Alexis sin when he fled? Did Saint Paula sin when she left her sons, and a bit later, when they wept as they followed her to the sea, did she sin when she refused even to turn around and look at them? Saint Euphrosyne fled secretly against her parents wishes. What more need I say? Oh! I would not end if I were to continue to cite cases in point.⁹⁸

I can sympathize with your father. Natural love makes him speak as he does. God will change his heart, I hope. For now, I will say no more. The opportune time will come, and one day this letter will be useful, or he may speak to the parish priest, and the principal force will come from your mother; at least let us pray to God. Say nothing to your aunt when she speaks up. Show yourself gracious to your father. Don't take to heart what he has said about it being a sin to follow your vocation because it is contrary to his will. That is false. I repeat what I wrote above.

Dear one! be of good heart. These storms will pass; calm days are coming. Pay no attention to your scruples. Get rid of them with a holy love of God by fervent darts of love. Trust that you have made good confessions, pay no attention to the devil, who is disturbing you, trust in God, abandon yourself to him as a child in the bosom of its mother. Be careful not to repeat your general confession. You did that well; be sure of that. God will have you draw great good from this anguish of scruples, and it will purify your heart like in the furnace so that you become a garden of his delights.

With regard to prayer in which you find your mind dark, this is a good sign since His Divine Majesty wishes to bring you to a prayer more in faith and more perfect.

For now begin to follow this rule: when you find difficulty in meditating and picturing the mystery and discoursing on it, allow yourself to stay with a loving attention on the Divine Majesty in pure and holy faith, all lost in the immense sea of the infinite goodness of God. Accustom yourself to a holy, loving repose in God, and remain there in a sacred silence, resting in the bosom of the Highest Good. Arouse your spirit with loving darts, for example: "Oh, Goodness! Oh, Love!" And then continue in a holy peace in God in a sacred silence. Oh, what a great prayer this is! God will teach you. When you can meditate, do so, but with a peaceful spirit and without strain.

98. According to legend, Saint Alexius, in the fifth century, left home on the evening of his wedding, living from then on as a beggar: "St. Alexius," *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, complete edition, edited, revised, and supplemented by Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater, Vol. IV, P.J. Kenedy and Sons, New York, 1956, pp. 123-124. Saint Paula of Roman (347-406), after some years as a widow, left her home and Rome to go to Palestine and live a monastic life: "Saint Paula," Vol. I, pp 171-172. Saint Euphrosyne, a young woman, was born in Pelopenncus around 854, left her home because her family wanted her to marry and she wanted to live a hidden life among the monks: "St. Euphrosyne," Vol. I, pp. 4-5.

If you cannot meditate on the Passion of Jesus, speak about it to His Divine Majesty with a loving colloquy: "Oh, my Love! what was the condition of your heart in the garden? Oh, what pain! Oh, how much blood! Oh, what a bitter agony! And all for me!"

When you have done this, continue your loving repose in God in peace and in sacred silence. Saint Bernard made a corsage of the pains of Jesus and carried it in the bosom of his soul. God will teach you everything, have no doubt of that. You can use the examples given for other mysteries as well.

If your prayer passes entirely in this peace, in this rest, in this sacred silence of love, no matter, let things be. At other times it will seem that you can neither meditate nor remain in this loving attention to God. It will seem that you are like a statue. Do not be pained, but continue in prayer for the time established. Simply stir up your faith in the Divine Presence and raise your spirit with some affection toward the Divine Majesty. Saint Augustine lamented by saying: "O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new, I went searching for you outside me and I had you within."⁹⁹ We have the treasure within ourselves. Oh! how happy we are who can treat with God whenever we wish! I trust this instruction will help you much.

You tell me that you think I have little to do. Oh! if you only knew my duties! They are always increasing. The other day I returned from the mission. Besides the mission, I conducted retreats for two convents of nuns. Thanks be to God.

The Retreat is coming to completion and would be finished if we had the brickwork. It is a place that inspires great devotion, a place God has prepared for his great servants. Pray that God grant me a time of penance to profit from the examples of the servants of God who will come. I hope that our God will console your island, if only it does not prove itself unworthy in not corresponding to the divine favors by burying the heavenly treasures given by God in the recent mission.

It is impossible for me to come there because of my many obligations. God bless you and keep you persevering. Gradually, I will give you advice as how you ought to act. Be at peace; be free to write me. Do not share your heart with anyone except your spiritual director. Greet him in my name and, if you wish, you can allow him to read this letter. I leave that to you, for if you are not inclined, don't do it. May Jesus live!

I ask you to please give the enclosed to the cleric Gemelli.

Your true servant in God,

Paul Danei

99. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, 27.

Agnes Grazi (27)

Saint Anthony
June 29, 1736

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Dear Daughter in Christ,

Last evening I received your letter. I rejoice that God takes all your happiness away to teach you to serve God with greater purity of intention. Oh, how good it is to be on the cross with Jesus without seeing that or knowing that. This is the shortcut to arrive at that happy death to all created things in order to live purely in the Uncreated and Immense Good.

At such times when the soul finds itself in this deprivation, the only thing to do is to sweetly revive one's faith in the Divine Presence and to stay lost in God, abandoned in that immense sea of love without concern for one's own enjoyment, but only for the Divine Good Pleasure. It is good, besides, to arouse one's spirit with some holy aspiration, brief and gentle, and continue in loving rest, uniting oneself more and more with the Divine Will, which is depriving one of all sensible consolation and satisfaction in order to clothe it with a new dress fully enriched with virtues. Then one is truly clothed as a spouse of the Sovereign Good.

Above all, I do not want you to go in search of sensing a sweet sensation, even in your palate, when you communicate. Oh, what deceptions one can encounter here! The taste of our sacramental Jesus is not experienced by the material mouth or bodily mouth, but with the palate of faith and love. The true perception of Jesus is to abase oneself in him, to be transformed in him by love, and to find oneself completely divinized. Our dear Savior accomplishes this work in us but asks for our cooperation with the exercise of holy virtues.

With regard to the absurdities that Satan puts into your head with regard to the death of our Sisters Xaveria and Catherine, make nothing out of them whatever. Do not even react and cast off the devil in confusion. You have done well to say that the Will of God was done, and I am grateful that you quickly dispatched the matter entirely.

With regard to taking up your penances once more, I am giving you permission, as I wrote you, according to our agreement, and nothing more, that is, an hour or less of the small chain on Monday, two hours on Wednesday, three on Friday between morning and the rest of the day, one hour on Saturday, or a little more. But I do not want you to wear the chain as a cincture for the present, only above the knee, except on Friday I allow you to wear it for an hour as a cincture, but not too tightly. The discipline four times a week.

But during the Lent of Mary Most Holy, which begins June 30, you may use the discipline every day that is not a feast. Eat no fruit during this holy lent. But if obedience demands, go ahead and eat it. The discipline should last no longer than the Litany of Mary Most Holy.

On Wednesday and Friday, I am willing that you sleep on straw, but with sheets. On other days sleep as usual. During the Novena of Saint Mary Magdalene, I give you permission for a complete fast, but take the soup

provided in the convent. I am satisfied if you forego the pittance, but if you feel strongly urged to eat, take some of it. On the vigil you may fast on bread and water, that is, if you are well. On one day of the novena, I give you permission to discipline yourself unto blood for the space of three *Miserere*'s said consecutively. Be satisfied with this for the present.

I give my highest approval to your living on alms, but you must do so, my daughter, with much discretion and good grace, imitating the poverty and humility of our Great Love Jesus.

Oh! my daughter, how rich you will be if you make yourself poor within and without. The dryness and insensibility is one foundation for a holy poverty of spirit that God wishes to give you so that your soul will acquire true liberty and riches, and become the garden of the delights of Jesus.

Oh, fortunate those souls that despoil themselves of everything in order to be clothed with Jesus alone! Oh, happy those souls who are all wounded with the pains of the Savior and carry them on the bosom of their soul, perfuming them with a loving, sorrowful remembrance. Be of good heart; we will arrive there with divine help.

Be careful then about this holy poverty. I give you a thousand blessings that when you decide to forego the pittance and, for the love of God, go to ask some small portion from your sisters, consider yourself most unworthy to eat from the scraps of the spouses of Jesus. Go, my daughter, but go with humble eyes, modest face, as did Jesus, when you receive your alms.

Do not worry, you will overcome human respect. God will give you the victory. Ask permission of the Mother Abbess that at least on Fridays and feast day vigils you take your meal at the door of the refectory or in a corner thereof, as do the poor who eat at the door of the houses of those who do them charity. Oh, how much I love this holy poverty of Jesus! I give you fullest approval and blessing, and, believe me, you have the confirmation from God in heaven.

God wishes me to write with a holy confidence that I have not had up until now, for I see that Jesus is multiplying his graces in you. So I write as a father does to his child. I write to you as your spiritual father. You have said, and already know, how I have refused. But now I do not wish to go contrary to the Divine Will.

I am happy that you have shown yourself insensible to the death of your sister. God will take care of your cousin. Recommend him to God.

If God wishes me to come that way, although right now I do not know how, you can give the booklet ...

With regard to the cincture, keep it for yourself, but if for devotion you wish to lend it to someone else, do so. Decency would require that you wash it when it is stained with sweat. I leave you in holy liberty. It is possible that God wishes to reform your convent somewhat, but I am not sure. I rather think yes than no, but say nothing about this to anyone. I will recommend the sick nun you referred to me to God. Tell her to regard her bed as the cross of Jesus and to be there willingly without desiring her health, at least with anxiousness. She should take her medicines and live abandoned to God. She is blessed. Tell her to remain hidden in the pure Heart of Jesus, where she will find comfort,

and, if she is cut off from the living and her youth, not to think of that, but to sacrifice herself as a holocaust.

I greet in the Lord the Reverend Mothers, the Mother Abbesses, past and present, Sister Hipolita and Sister Whilemena. Let them pray for me. I thank you for the charitable memory.

I salute in Jesus Sister Alma Candida. I am not writing for there is no need. She has given me no reason to do so.

The poor Retreat will soon be filled with servants of God, and I hope it will be completed this summer. Ask God to send holy men.

I leave you with the blessing of Jesus. I am back only a short time from the holy mission. I also conducted retreats at two convents of good nuns. Pray for perseverance.

Your unworthy servant and spiritual father,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

107

Agnes Grazi (28)¹⁰⁰

Saint Anthony
August 1, 1736

... I end and ask for the fullness of the divine blessing for you. When you are speaking of me with anyone, do not share anything that I write you. Simply ask them to pray for me.

It is necessary to recommend very much the Retreat to God. Many good things depend on that.

I leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus and I am,
Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

108

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (6)

Saint Anthony
August 2, 1736

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

A short while ago I received your letter, dated July 8. I reply I would be happy to come to serve the sick nun you point out to me, if the air were not so dangerous. My confessor forbids me to come for fear of dying. Besides, this case does not require my person. There are more important considerations, such as the outcome of this Retreat, the missions, etc. In the past I never gave thought to a second opinion about setting out on journeys; but now I do need to accept counsel and obey. In your vicinity there are ministers of God so the sick nun can take care of her general confession. And she would do well to take care of that immediately, while she still has her strength.

100. Only a fragment of this letter remains.

I leave for missions after the Assumption, and I am not sure when I will be back at the Retreat.

You are not correct when you tell me that you do not feel drawn to speak to your relative to console him. As I have written you in my other letter, charity is the queen of virtues. Enough! I know I left you in freedom, but who is she who says people of the world are no concern of mine? Is she a person of heaven? Humble yourself, annihilate yourself, become aware of your nothingness, your contemptibility. You are not even worthy to be trampled on by those you call people of the world. They can be a lot more spiritual than you are. Never speak in this way again. I tell you this not to make you scrupulous, for you are not, but that you will learn to be more humble at another time. God bless you and pray for me.

It is not certain, rather highly doubtful, that I am coming to Grosseto for a mission in October.

Tell Sister Colomba Serafina that, when she receives this letter, she should make her confession and delay no longer — so does God inspire me. Be careful and do it.

Your servant in Jesus Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

109

Agnes Grazi (29)

Saint Anthony
August 9, 1736

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.¹⁰¹*

My Daughter in Christ,

Yesterday, I received your letter. I see things are going as usual; so from now on there is no point in writing so minutely about all your imaginations; they have no importance. They come, for the most part, from your weakness of mind and your too lively an imagination. For the present, it will be sufficient to write: my prayer goes as usual with elevations as before. Write briefly the results that occur.

However, when there are any sufficiently extraordinary happenings, such as locutions that are clear and strong for your heart or mind, etc., then report them in detail. Oh! how those souls please me who walk in pure faith, in which they abandon themselves into the hands of God!

Of what use are these imaginations of seeing Sister Lilia, or the other ones, or seeing crystal balls with ribbons, as you wrote me the last time? These are useless things, through which the devil plays stupid tricks. The evil one is in no hurry; he goes softly, softly to better deceive. About these visions, upliftings, and lights, the more frequently they occur, the more they are to be

101. "May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always in our hearts." This is the motto that speaks of the spirituality of Paul, the core of his spirituality and the goal of his preaching ministry, which was to meditate on and promote the memory of the love of God revealed in a preeminent way in the Passion and Death of Jesus.

suspected. For now it is best, says a great saint, to refuse them always, to reject them with constancy, and not to trust them, especially with women where there is a livelier imagination. If you act this way, you will do well. If these things are from God, they will always have their effect; if they are from the devil, as is more likely, by rejecting them you free yourself from deception.

It is necessary to walk in good faith without alarming yourself and upsetting yourself. Do your part, then trust in God, and continue your prayer, but as much in faith as may be possible. The devil is trying to impersonate Jesus, Mary, and the angels.

I have read a fearsome thing, and can say I read it more than once. Saint Francis de Sales tells of a deceived young woman to whom the devil appeared in the form of Jesus Christ, recited the Office with her, heard him chant most sweetly, and raised her to ecstasy. The devil communicated her with a bogus particle in a splendid cloud, and, when she went to bestow alms on the poor, he multiplied the bread, etc. I am cutting it short. She was found to be deceived and proud, and, when reproof came, she showed resentment and impatience. The evil source stood revealed.

Oh, my daughter! let us stand well on guard; let us not trust in ourselves. But be of good heart because I trust in God that he will not permit anything like that in you, for God has inspired me to protect you with a solid foundation by making you walk in humility and contempt of self. However, there can never be enough of that.

So be at peace and do not disturb yourself. I have no time to write more, for the messenger is ready to leave for Orbetello. I have not received any letters except that from Rose, one in the previous delivery and the other now. God be blessed! Seal your letters carefully, and then God will inspire you how to take care of that. I do not want you to think any of your letters have been opened, but it is necessary to proceed cautiously, etc.

God knows how much it would please me if you were to confer with some spiritual director with regard to your soul.

We are close to the great feast. I have need of much prayer; God knows my condition. I had thought the Retreat would be completed for the Presentation, but who knows when it will be finished, despite the strong efforts expended and the alms collected elsewhere. But at this moment, alms are not to be found.

There is need for great light to manage such an operation. There is need for a great servant of God to take over. I find myself in a depth without a bottom, and I deserve no light because I am so unworthy that God does not grant it. Let all pray for me to Mary Most Holy that I reach a holy death and that, if it please God, let it be soon so that I not give greater impediment to the work of God.

With regard to what you have to say about bringing women together into our way of life, that calls for miracles and very clear and high revelations from God. But what am I saying! You are asking for something beyond my comprehension! I fear this work cannot go forward at all. According to my signs, it seems it cannot succeed, at least while I am living — this is most likely.

Oh, if only God were to inspire me to abandon this Retreat, who knows how willingly I would do so! I willingly await death to render partial tribute to Divine Justice. On the day of the Assumption, I ask the favor of many prayers, beseeching the grace of doing the Divine Will and preparing for my coming death. God bless you.

You sanctify people too quickly ... Speak of me only as of one condemned.

The unworthy priest,
Paul of the †

110

Ottavio Barbari (1)¹⁰²

Saint Anthony
August 14, 1736

J.M.J.

Illustrious Sir and Revered Patron,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

Some days back I summoned the courage to include with your letter one directed to Signore Thomas, your worthy relative. Now I am once more daring to ask you to carefully forward this letter to the son of Signore Appiani of Rio by entrusting it to a responsible person and consigning it to the proper hands.

I beg you, for the love of Jesus, to greet Signore Nicholas Garascon for me, to whom I have sent two letters dealing with spiritual affairs under my charge. One was directed to Capoliveri, the other to Rio to the aforementioned Signore Appiani. I believe that the letter of July 7 was not received since they have written that I have not answered their letters. I want to believe that the July 7 letter has not as yet come to Signore Garascon. Enough! May you perform this charity for love of God.

Take into your consideration, dear Signore Ottavio, a situation that has experienced your charity, and for that reason I dare, and continue, to recommend to you the poor Signore Mattia Alberti, a man quite skilled in his profession and God-fearing. For the love of Jesus, give him a partnership in the pharmacies. That will make him happy and help out his poor family. You will enrich yourself with greater merit and blessings, even temporally. I leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus, along with all your house.

Your true, affectionate servant,
Paul Danei

102. Barbari was a relative of Thomas Fossi and a resident at Porto Longone, Elba. The next letter to Francis Appiani is the letter Paul asks Barbari to deliver.

Saint Anthony
August 14, 1736

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts. Amen.

My Dear Friend in Jesus,

I was given your letter on Sunday morning, and God knows how precious it is to me, for I read in it the refinement with which God is treating your soul.

But you might say to me: "How so, Father? Refinements of love experienced in the way in which I find myself, such as in darkness and without any devotion in my spiritual exercises, etc.?"

Yes, my son, these are the best refinements of a loving God. The greatest trials are reserved for the souls most loved. No servant is greater than his master.¹⁰³ The whole life of Christ was a cross.¹⁰⁴ So then, all the life of a true servant of God must be on the cross with Christ.

Therefore, be of good heart. Ah! since the sweet Jesus wishes to do a work of love in your soul, it is no wonder that he permits great temptations and other trials. With these His Majesty intends to purify you as gold in the furnace so that you will be ready for close union with God. You are they who have persevered with me in my trials, and I dispose for you a kingdom, as my Father has disposed for me, that you may eat at my table in my kingdom.¹⁰⁵

This should serve you for your great consolation in Jesus Christ our Lord. So do not be annoyed with these temptations against faith and so on. Gently make contrary acts without straining your head. God wishes to enrich you with this virtue and others. That is why God permits the contrary temptation; so, too, with the temptation to impurity and others. I already understand that temptations to blasphemy come into the picture. Courage, courage, my son. God is treating you as he does his servants who were not exempt from these battles, and oh! how great! Be very humble, annihilate yourself before God, place yourself beneath the mantle of Mary Most Holy, ask as an alms a drop of her purest milk, and have no doubt that the enemy will flee. Greet her often with the Hail Mary, and often say: "Ah, my dear Mother, help, sweetest mother."

I give you good news. Once this battle is over, you will have great peace, great light, the gift of prayer, and union with God. Then your heart will exult in God our Savior. Wait on the Lord, act manfully! Above all, I rejoice much that God has taken away all consolation and candy for babies. Abraham, our father in faith, gave no banquet or grand feast when Isaac, so greatly desired, was born; but he celebrated when he was weaned. Learn the lesson.

This darkness of mind that you experience is a clear, evident sign that God wishes to lead you along the way of faith. My just one lives by faith. When you find yourself in this darkness so that you cannot meditate, keep yourself at peace with a loving attention to God in a sacred silence of love, taking in the

103. John 15:20.

104. *Imitation of Christ*, Book II, Chapter 12, 7.

105. Luke 22: 28-30.

sweet milk from the breast of the infinite love of God. Take your points to your meditation. But if you cannot meditate as you did at first, so be it. One loving word is enough to keep a soul in prayer for a long time. I see that God wishes to lead you on this path.

For example, you are prepared to meditate on Jesus Crucified and find yourself dark and unable. Make an act of love, such as: "O my Jesus Crucified! How are you, my Life, on that cross?" But if then you can go no further and your soul is at peace in a silence of love, lost in God, let it continue in that way. Oh, what a great prayer this is!

At times when you place yourself in the Divine Presence or give utterance to affections, you will find your soul at peace. Allow yourself to remain in that state and do not try to go on. If all your prayer continues in this fashion, that is good. Let God manage things as pleases him.

At other times, it will seem a waste of time to be there like a statue with no consequence. Remain in this deprivation. Simply revive your faith from time to time with some affection, but do it peacefully and only at the high point, so to speak, of your soul. Pay attention, my son, and humble yourself much so that God will teach you this great science of the saints. What I have said about prayer can serve also for Communion. I strongly recommend that you perform your spiritual exercises with a calm spirit, without strain to your head or raising your eyebrows and without efforts with your chest. While these manifestations smack of devotion, they are dangerous to health. Let go of these cursed scruples. Let yourself be on fire with holy love.

I highly approve taking worthy recreation; this is pleasing to God. Wise distribution of the time for your spiritual exercises is important. Give the glory of everything to God.

Let us talk about your vocation. You can have no doubts as to the Divine Will regarding the holy call that has persisted so long. O dearest one! correspond to what the Highest is asking of you. God is calling you to a holy life and for you, etc. So it is not to be wondered that the enemies make such an uproar. The world desires you and, therefore, plants so many snares. It holds out weddings, delights, amusement, happiness. The devil urges them and makes them seem sweeter and more pleasing than they are. The senses would embrace them willingly. What is to be done in this conflict? Retreat to the mountain. Save yourself on the mountain — but more on the mountain of myrrh that is Calvary — and see oneself in the divine mirror that overcomes the world.

This battle God permits for his great servants. And because they have overcome, they are now saints. My dear son, let the world howl as much as it likes. Spit in its face by paying no attention; regard it as hanged. Drink, my son, at the lasting spring of eternal life. Drink from the chalice of Jesus. It may seem a bit bitter to the palate, but how sweet to the stomach of the soul! Your pious mother understands this well, and, if you cannot convince the rest in any way, it will be necessary to flee. You are not alone here; great saints of God did that. What a great thing it would be for you to do likewise. Be patient for a little while longer.

The Retreat is moving ahead, and I hope we will enter by the Presentation. If not, then a little after. And if then you will wish to come and get used to the close quarters here, I would desire that very much. Saint Francis and his companions, at the beginning of his foundation, were under a poor porch, miserable enough and open to all the blows of weather. Regarding a habit, your mother should take no thought of that; we have everything here. In time, if she wishes, she can do us that charity and provide a pair of tunics. But now we have the cloth.

Moreover, I tell you that the Will of God for your coming here is known clearly by the agreement of your spiritual director, Father Doroteo of the Holy Spirit. When your spiritual director says the like, he is saying: "Now this is of the Holy Spirit." Besides, everyone here desires your coming with a true interior desire that comes from God — these are ministers of God here. Let Jesus live; therefore, fight manfully. The demon will set up many difficulties before you to change you. God has called you and will give you great courage and great grace.

Signore Peter Cavalieri of Longone should be coming from the island to be a lay brother.¹⁰⁶ But I want him to be a priest as soon as possible, for so does God inspire me. So you could come as his companion, for I will advise him as to when to leave. I would hope you can find some way to placate your father. If not, it is no great matter. "Go out trampling over father and mother."

I would wish to know the health of your mother, for I read in your letter of July 7, which I received only last Sunday, that she is ailing. Father John Baptist greets you in the Lord. He received your letter, dated July 7, but it was so late in getting here. You need to ask Signore John Ribera or Signore Ottavio Barberi to send them safely. I wrote them a letter at the beginning of July of my great concern in answer to your letter, which I consigned to Signore Nicholas Garascon.¹⁰⁷ At the same time I assigned to them another for Signore Mark Anthony Claris, your relative. I do not know where it went. We need to be more careful about this.

Both I and Father John Baptist received letters from the cleric Gemelli. The last time I answered him, I included one for you. Now I am unable to write as I have things to do. It is the Vigil of the Assumption. I will take care of writing in its own time. Write me soon, but only for the rest of August, for I am leaving on missions. I hope that in November your desires for the glory of God will be realized. I am collecting for the Retreat, which inspires devotion and invites sanctity, but alms are wanting for the furnishing. God will provide.

I end by greeting you and your mother in the pure Heart of Jesus. Oh, how dear to God is your good mother! Greet your spiritual director for me. I will write him in time. I am one lacking in words. I should send him a book in

106. Cavalieri was listed at Mount Argentario on October 10, 1736, and remained with the community until the end of 1742.

107. Ribera, Barberi, and Garascon were owners of boats. Paul used them to deliver letters and packages.

exchange for one of his that I have, but I am waiting until I can find one truly appropriate. Pray for me and God bless you. Amen. May Jesus Live!

Your affectionate servant in the Lord,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

112

Agnes Grazi (30)

Saint Anthony
August 22, 1736

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In the last post I received your letter, and since things are going as usual, it is not necessary to repeat the advice given. Avail yourself of what was already said, especially about continuing to cut off with great constancy the imaginary happenings which the devil can use for his trickery. And have no fear. Do not trust your heart to your feelings and especially not to the locutions, which, for the most part, are not for the greater glory of God and are, for the most part, from your own spirit or from the devil.

On September 5, I will be on mission, if God wills that I stay healthy. As for myself, I think I should not speak any more beyond this time; and you do the same with me. It is sufficient that you know my deplorable miseries increase without end and without relief. God be blessed. Do not speak of me except to recommend me to God and have others recommend me. I wrote a letter two or three posts ago to Sister Lilia, in which with great frankness, humility, and sincerity I let her see my poor soul at the feet of the cross, begged an alms of her, and revealed myself as a horrid, loathsome sewer running with corruption everywhere — I meant my imperfections — so that she might recommend me to God. But I have not had a reply. Thanks be to God. That will teach me at my expense to keep quiet and stay in my miseries without speaking. So you be the first one not to speak to me any more of my anguish nor to ask me about them. Write about your needs and nothing else.

While I am on the missions, do not write at all. But when I am back, give me an account of what comes to your memory. For the present, do not write. I am here for a short time. If there is need, write.

More and more I have the impression that you do not feel inspired to provide yourself with a spiritual director there in Viterbo, not even that philosopher-priest you told me about and of whom you have such a high regard and with whom you have corresponded. Believe me, I would be absolutely happy, for I also have thought of that in God, etc. You need to pray a lot about this so that God will provide for you. There is no need to take me into consideration, for who knows what will become of me. Now I am on missions again, and I am away.

Enough! In all I wish to do the Will of God, and I do not say that because I am unwilling to serve your soul and to wear myself out for you, but because I am very certain that I am unable to direct anyone, not even an ant.

When you write, I would wish you not to write on lines so close that I go blind trying to read.

Do not speak about the business with Sister Lilia, for I do not merit her letters. It is enough that she understands my letter and the openness and simplicity with which I wrote to have her recommend me to God. If a good occasion arises, you can tell her that. I am under the impression that you are not going to conferences with Sister Lilia or with other women. That would not be good. God bless you.

At this post I have not received your letters. When you write, you can do as before.

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

113

Thomas Fossi (3)

Orbetello

August 26, 1736

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

This morning, on returning to the house in Orbetello, I received your welcome letter, and I am replying immediately because the bearer wishes to depart. You need to bow your head to the Divine Will since that is the rule for all perfection. Serve God in accordance with your state. There would be need of the greatest light to decide what you are asking. If God wills such a decision, namely, to enter a monastery ... God would give most certain and clearest lights that could not be resisted, whether by you or your relatives. For the present, yield to your family with grace and good will. With regard to your spirit and other affairs, I do not have time. But please proceed with discretion and prudence, keeping yourself in good humor with all and without giving any mean looks.

Above all, keep your head and pray according to the rules you were given. He prays always who does what is right. Your mother does well, and I did not say what you wrote me. So make nothing out of it. I have no more time. God bless you. Let them pray for me. I leave off in a hurry.

Your true servant,

Paul

114

Agnes Grazi (31)

Saint Anthony

August 30, 1736

*May the lovable Jesus live
always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your letter, and it was very pleasing to me in several respects. Now I am surer than ever of the Divine Will regarding the

direction of your soul. You tell me that I am trying to avoid the Will of God because I have given you so many refusals to direct you. Oh, my daughter! if you only knew how much I desire to do the most Holy Will of my God in every undertaking. All my poor prayers have no other end. I wish nothing more. I desire nothing more than to be totally transformed by love into the Divine Good Pleasure. I beg my Divine Savior that he bring it about that my continual food be to fulfill his dearest and most adorable Will, and to do that with perfection, especially in such a delicate and intimate area as direction of souls, where there is need of sanctity, learning, experience, prudence, and a strong call from God. For this reason, not only to you, but also to others, I have given repeated refusals because I am aware of my inability, insufficiency, and great imperfection. However, notwithstanding, I have not succeeded because the souls to whom I have given these refusals have had strong urges and inspiration that I assist them. So as to obey the Divine ordination, I continue to serve them and will do so until God sees that I am unworthy of such a noble and divine function. It is necessary to pray much for me so that His Divine Majesty may grant me great assistance and light.

With regard to your telling me that you are detached from me, believe me, it has never entered into my mind that you, or anyone else, would be attached to this pestilential carrion, and, thanks to God, I conduct myself with such circumspection that it could not be more. I am careful to have the least possible attachment to the souls I direct, and never have I fostered it in order not to be a thief of love which belongs entirely to God. Believe me, I am most vigilant in this respect, for I seek only that a soul love her Sovereign Good most purely with the highest stripping away of all that is created.

This sharing that you experience with regard to the union your soul has with me, your spiritual father, although a bit mixed up, you have well understood. For God gives me the grace to experience that a soul is united in a bond of holy love, but so spiritual that there is nothing more, for all is founded on God.

I love all souls and in a special way those God has entrusted to me for spiritual direction. My soul experiences a completely spiritual bond with one more strongly than with another in accord with the level of love to which God has drawn that soul. Let me explain. If one soul has a greater level of love and union with God than another, as God lets me understand this, and as that soul is more loved by the Highest Good, so the bond of charity binds me with that soul. That does not mean that I am not united in charity with the others, but with this one more, that one less, as the Sovereign Good wishes. So be at peace. You have understood correctly.

I have nothing more to say with regard to direction, for I, too, have recommended this to our sweet Savior, and I see that he wills this. I am not refusing and will do it until death, if God so wills. But it is necessary that I do not trust in myself.

With regard to the elevations of spirit you speak of, there is nothing more here than at other times, so continue to follow the advice previously given.

There is nothing more pleasing to God than your annihilating yourself and losing yourself in your nothingness. This infuriates the devil and forces him to flee. You should do this with the twin eyes of faith, one on the Immense Majesty of God, the other on our nothingness. This is to be done with a calm and firm spirit and without internal noise. Distrust of these imaginative lights and locutions is the secure way.

If you were to act in a contrary manner, you would be mistaken and deceived. When locutions are external, they are the more dangerous, even when they seem to be holy. It is necessary to distrust them and reject them, as when you hear "faith, faith" or other things. Even when they bring peace, make nothing out of it because the devil, too, can cause a peace that is false and short-lived.

At the beginning the graces and gifts of God cause a holy fear — not always, but most of the time — and little by little they enlighten the mind and inflame the will with great ardor of love of God, filled with heavenly understanding, and cause marvelous effects: elevation of the mind in God, love of souls, zeal, love of virtue, for suffering, a supreme annihilation, a subjection to everyone. O my daughter, who can explain the immense riches the gifts of God confer on a soul! Enough! I assure you in the name of Jesus and Mary that in the essentials you are not deceived. While there are some things arising from your own spirit and sometimes from your enemy, who is moving in, he has not gained an inch. Stay in your nothingness.

I would wish you had given me an account of the act of humility you performed in the refectory, as I wrote you and in the manner as I wrote, and how it came out.

I rejoice that God visits you with sorrows! Oh, how much, how much I rejoice! Live Jesus! I would wish, however, that when you have such pain in your chest, you remain seated at prayer, but a bit lower.

In regard to your penances and Communions, continue as usual and not more. I will see and will write you as to Advent. Use your usual penitential practices without scruple, if you are partially well. But if your illness increases, charity and justice demand that you slacken a bit. On my return give me a complete account.

You tell me I do you a favor by having you not write when I am away. But you do not know whether God will be pleased. Let this be the last time that I hear you speak like that. I want a blind obedience and silence. All the time I am on missions, I do not want you to write. This is the Will of God given you by his minister. If something great and extraordinary should occur, then write, of course. But I can tell you that great things, great lights and gifts, are never forgotten by the soul. Regarding the day or hour they took place, it does not matter. The principal elements of the gift remain in our memory when it is important and extraordinary. When I will have returned, then you will tell me, as briefly as you can, what has happened.

State one time in which prayer goes a certain way, and then simply say others were like that, and I will understand at once.

I cannot write any more, for I have had pen in hand the whole morning for the glory of God and good of souls. Tomorrow, I slip down to Orbetello, and Saturday morning, September 1, I leave for the mission. Therefore, do not write any more.

I have not received an answer from Sister Lilia nor from Signora Marianna. With regard to Sister Lilia, tell her not to trouble herself more, for I will not be here; I am going away. Let her recommend me to Jesus; that is my need. For the rest, it is not important that she take the trouble to reply to me; that is not necessary. My letter was not important and needs no reply. Simply, I recommend myself to her prayers and those of her convent.

Courage. I am at an end and bid you "good morning." It is about time I give some oats to the donkey, my deadly enemy. Goodbye, my daughter. Pray for me, and I leave you in the Side of Jesus, the furnace and fortress of holy love. God bless you. I am ever,

Your true servant in God,
Paul of the Holy †

115

Agnes Grazi (32)¹⁰⁸

Saint Anthony
September 27, 1736

May Jesus Live!

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I have returned from the holy mission, loaded down with precious mortifications. The devils persecuted us with rage and men with good will, so I wish to believe. Enough. Much prayer is needed for storms are arising on every side, and we are battered by contrary winds. God be blessed.

Wednesday, October 2, I will start the mission for the military in Orbetello and will end on October 14. Then I will have to leave for a long and dangerous journey. This trip is a secret to all except you and me. I am telling you this in confidence.

Oh, if you only knew in what seas poor Paul finds himself! Pray much for me and have others pray. God bless you!

Greet Sister Lilia for me. She wrote that she hopes to come here after the grape harvest. But if I take my trip, I will not be here. If God places a barrier, I will advise her reverence and you as well. Thanks be to God. God bless you. If you wish, you are free to write.

Paul, Your True Servant in Jesus

108. Paul sees himself in terrible storms. The mission in Pitigliano ended amid opposition. Later, on December 11, 1736, writing to Frances Lucci of Pitigliano, he mentions this mission again.

Agnes Grazi (33)

Saint Anthony
October 3, 1736

*May the pure love of Jesus and the effects of divine grace
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In the regular mail I received your letter, and on my arrival at the Retreat, I was given another by Signora Marianna, dated August 14, and I believe this is the one you thought was lost. But by the grace of God it seems to me it was not lost at all. Your second letter pleased me more than the first, for I see that now things are going better than usual since your crosses have increased both within and without. Now you begin to serve the Sovereign Good! Now you begin to be a disciple of Jesus.

It is true that these small troubles of body and spirit are the first rungs of a holy and steep ladder on which generous and great souls climb step by step to the summit, where is found the purest suffering without any comfort, neither from heaven nor from earth. If they are faithful in not seeking happiness from creation, then from this pure suffering they come to the purest love of God without any mixture whatever. But these blessed souls who arrive at this goal are few and rare.

Ah! a soul that has experienced heavenly caresses and then finds it must for a time be deprived of everything; even more, to come to a place where, as it seems to the soul, it is abandoned by God; where it seems God no longer wants it, does not care for it, and God seems to be highly displeased with it; when it seems that everything it has done has been done badly — ah! I do not know how to explain myself the way I would want. It is enough to know, my daughter, that this is almost a pain of the damned — I will say that — a pain which goes beyond every pain. But if the soul is faithful, oh, what treasure it acquires. These storms dissipate and there come the true, gentle, and sweetest embraces of the Loving Jesus. For then God treats it as bride, and there takes place between God and the soul the holy espousals of love. Oh, what treasures.

You, however, my daughter in Jesus, are not yet on the first rung of this ladder. Nevertheless, I have wanted to write this to you so you will not be frightened when God places you, to some extent, into pure suffering without consolation. Then, more than ever, be faithful to God and do not leave off your accustomed practices.

And now is the time for these fears of yours, which lack any foundation, to cease. What has anyone who lives in the arms and bosom of God to fear? Perfect charity, writes Saint John, drives out fear, that is, fear of punishment, but not fear of fault. The true servants of God fear to displease the Sovereign Good, which is a genuine and holy fear of God. For the rest, cast off these fears of being deceived. You have never been, nor are you now, deceived. Trust in God. The work in your soul is done by the Sovereign King, who is its Sponsor, and has taken from you love of the world so that you might be totally consecrated and dedicated to his divine service. Be of good heart then! When

your spiritual father speaks, you must believe him, whether in voice or writing. He who hears you, hears me, Jesus says, when speaking of his ministers.

You are very blessed because God has provided you with a guide. It must be believed this is in accord with God's will, for the guide you have has refused to lead you so many times because he believed himself to be blind. But, God has given so many signs of His Divine Good Pleasure that now there is no room for doubt. Run then in the way of perfection and abandon yourself entirely to God and into the care of your spiritual father, to whom God has given all the concern of guiding you, etc.

With regard to your bodily sickness, abandon yourself entirely in obedience to the doctor. Give him a truthful account of your symptoms in modest, clear terms and with all brevity. When all that is necessary has been said, be still and let him proceed.

Do not refuse medication, but take the bitter chalice of Jesus with a gentle voice and be thankful to those who serve you in your sickness, agreeing to what they say. Accept everything like a sweet child who abandons herself in the arms and on the bosom of her mother. Lie on your bed as on the cross. Jesus prayed three hours on the cross, which was a truly crucified prayer without comfort within or without. Oh, God! what a magnificent teaching! Pray Jesus that I imprint it on my heart. Oh! how much there is to meditate on here! I have read that when Jesus was in agony on the cross, after the first three flames of love, that is, after his first three words, he remained in silence until the ninth hour, praying all this time. I ask you to consider what a painful prayer that was.

With regard to the other aspects of prayer, govern yourself as I have said and written. When something extraordinary happens, humble yourself much and sweetly cast away those extraordinary things about which I wrote. Then, with your mind resting all the more elevated in God, go on your way, allowing yourself to be fed on the Sovereign Good. He is the Protector of your soul and will make you walk in the ways he desires.

When the fruits are good, that is, when prayer leaves good effects in the soul — virtues, love for suffering and contempt, love for God and neighbor — there is no deceit. Prayer is to be made in the way of the Holy Spirit. I know I have written this to you earlier.

Concerning your penances, while you are confined to bed or taking medicines, leave off the chain and take on the penances God is giving you. When you are somewhat better, continue as before. I am not saying when you are completely well, for I am not sure you will ever be that. Enough. Be discreet and advise me about everything.

I was moved to smile when I read the letter from that good nun in the convent of Sister Lilia. I have never been at odds with good Mother Lilia, for I love her much in Jesus. I recognize it was a devout and loving word from this good nun, and I am happy with her simple speech and her devout joke. May Jesus live. He is the happiness of our happiness, and who does not wish Paul to be happy.

Right now our lay brothers are sick, and Father Angelo is sick in Orbetello. Thanks be to God. Paul continues with his sickness as God alone knows; his soul is very sick with wounds oozing a stench of infinite imperfections and evils. Ah, God knows where my dangerous sickness will lead me! Let us pray to God that he will bring me to a holy death. Of the rest, I will say nothing more. God bless you.

With regard to the statue of the Infant Jesus, the Mother Vicareess can keep it as long as she wishes to take care of it, for her care is more pleasing to God and better than mine. I would desire to have the virtues of this Sovereign Lord, who for love of us became an infant and has told us in his Gospel that, if we do not become like little children, we will not enter heaven. He is saying that, if we are not humble, simple, meek, and loving with these true virtues of a childlike soul, we will not enter heaven. Therefore, ask this dear Mother that she pray the Divine Infant to give me these virtues.

I am unable to come to Viterbo any more. God does not wish me to be in Viterbo. If you write to Mother Lilia, greet her for me. I hope to write her in a few days, but now I cannot. God bless you. Pray God for my universal needs. I see this poor Retreat in a miserable state, as it seems to me worse than I can say. Oh, what important things are happening, but not known to others. I do not know what God intends and where things are going to end. Everywhere I turn, I see only crosses, storms, opposition, outcries. I see everything soon smashed to the ground, and I am not talking about walls. God knows it all. I need much help and strong prayers. I leave you in the purest Side of Jesus, where I am,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

117

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (7)

Saint Anthony
October 10, 1736

*May the purest love of Jesus and the effects of his divine grace
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday, October 9, I received your letter, dated September 14. I confess in all truth that it was more pleasing to me than the others, for I see the beautiful work of love that His Divine Majesty is working in your spirit and the gifts of pain, desolation and obscurity, and precious insults. It is true that in comparison with the trials suffered by the true servants of God, your sufferings are nothing. So humble yourself and recognize your weakness and infirmity. We must adore the tremendous justice of God in the combats of Sister Colomba. Ah! my daughter, what can I say? I fear and tremble for myself, but I hope much in the Passion of Jesus that permission will not be given the devil to torment me in such a fashion and to incite me and set me contrary to my most lovable Savior. Up then! Let us walk in this valley of miseries and darkness, surrounded everywhere by enemies. Let us walk, I say,

with weapons in hand, fighting with great courage, but completely confiding in our Crucified Love, who will give us victory. Never doubt that in that tremendous moment you will not be found in the testing referred to, but we must hope in His Divine Majesty that he may give you the victory, that of a holy death, in which the Marriage with the Highest Good will be consummated — as long as you persevere in the good begun without turning back, as I hope. Continue then to exercise yourself in the holy virtues of holy poverty and self-contempt, loving the Will of God in all happenings.

With regard to prayer, when you find yourself in desolation and interior stripping and it seems you have no faith, love the Will of God in this darkness and stay on the cross of Jesus without comfort, continuing your silence and loving repose in pure and holy faith. And, although the lower part remains in a storm, with the highest part of your spirit remain in a pure and simple loving attention to the Supreme Good. It is well from time to time to revive your spirit with a loving word, made and spoken gently. You need not hold your meditation book in your hand, but give your attention to God, as much as you can, in a lively faith, not caring whether you feel anything or rejoice. Oh! what a holy prayer this is and in which Jesus alone has satisfaction.

Do not be further pained by what I wrote you about your cousin. I am displeased that he is so far away. For were he nearby, I would see to giving you some good mortifications without him being aware of it. But God will do it for me. It is certain you are not going to eternity soon. God will open the way to take that grand journey you feel eager to make in order to serve the Sovereign Good with greater perfection. Continue to abandon yourself as an infant in the arms of Jesus.

My daughter in Jesus, believe me, it is with much difficulty that I am writing, for I have had pen in hand for quite a while. Therefore, I say no more. Who knows whether God will have me land there when I will have to make a dangerous trip. I am not sure.

I have written as best I could to your cousin, and from his writing I see that he intends much. It would be good to help one's neighbors. Enough. He will see. I am satisfied that you hold a sacred conference every fifty or sixty days, but speak only of spiritual things. I give you my blessing for everything. It is good to help him where you can, and I look for a good outcome.

I prefer that the conferences be not too long. I leave you free to change the time. Speak with modesty, humility, and mortification of your senses. Speak of the holy virtues, of Divine Love, of the divine mysteries. Listen with humility to what he says to you and learn from it all to love God. Tell yourself you are having a conference with your guardian angel. When your cousin arrives at the parlor, invoke the Holy Spirit and make the sign of the cross. Encourage him to serve God with fervor and with contempt of self. I trust that God will find good in it.

I continue as usual. Thanks to God, I do not want for insults, suffering, etc. But compared to what true lovers suffer, mine are but droplets. There is need of much prayer for me. The Retreat would be finished if alms were not

wanting, especially lumber. Pray, for it is almost finished. Ah! please God that it may be lived in by holy servants of God.

I end and leave you in the Side of Jesus, in which I am always. God bless you.

Greet Sister Alma Candida for me and tell her I rejoice that she now begins to be a disciple of Jesus. Greet your Reverend Mother Abbess and Sister Hipolita and all. Jesus bless all. Amen. Let them pray for me.

Your true servant in Jesus,
Paul of the Holy †

118

Thomas Fossi (4)

Saint Anthony
October 10, 1736

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

Dear Friend,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

Yesterday, the ninth of this month, I received your welcome letter, dated September 6. In reply I say to you:

1. I rejoice that you have internal and external pains and insults. I rejoice more that they are dear to you; you begin to be a disciple of Jesus. It is true that these things which you suffer are only droplets of suffering, and that should humble you much, considering that in comparison with the anguish suffered by true servants of God, yours are no suffering at all, even less so if you weigh them on the balance of the Holy Cross of our Savior. So remain in your nothingness.

2. The prayer that humbles the soul, inflames it with love and stimulates it to virtue; suffering is never a deceitful prayer.

3. It is good to occupy yourself by working with the highest part of your spirit, which is the sanctuary of the soul, where the principal functions of faith, hope, and love take place. Therefore, it is right for you not to be concerned about any happiness, especially when it overflows to the lower part, a part too animalistic. Be content simply to relish God with the highest part in a living and pure faith. The just man lives by faith — as it is written — and so this loving attention to God in pure faith gives birth to the repose of love in God, in which the will loses itself completely in the Highest Good. Above all, it is necessary to be simple, with no curiosity of spirit and without seeking subtleties, but to live abandoned in God as a tiny infant, etc. For the rest, follow the rules I gave you in the past.

4. Flee, as from the plague, this happiness which puffs up, which makes you vain, and which makes you think you are something great. These come from the devil. I thank God that he gives you the light to reject them and recognize them. The proper remedy to escape these deceits is true humility of heart, annihilating oneself, self-contempt, and flight into the fortress of the Side of Jesus — there to find oneself and ask for help, etc.

5. When you have the sickness, such as you describe for me in your letter, so that it molests your body and brings on a fever, take the medicines that are prescribed for you. If then you have a sickness that extends to both spirit and body, after seeing you are improving for some days, according to your need, you may take up your practices as you did this time.

6. Take good care that you remain in your nothingness with confidence in God and distrust of yourself, always loving the Divine Will, which is an element of highest perfection. Follow this path and you will not be deceived.

7. That light you were telling me about, that you had in your mind and inflamed your will, if it then puffed you up, it is suspect. So it is necessary to pay no attention to such an extravagance that you mention. Place yourself in the Divine Presence with a lively faith, with a loving attention, keeping a very high concept of the Divine Majesty and annihilating yourself to the utmost of your ability. If the devil raises a riot, continue to remain in your annihilation with the memory of your sins, your own miseries, and do not dare to raise yourself further, but remain in the knowledge of yourself and thus the devil will be mocked — but it is necessary to do as I say. Saint Francis Borgia, before being raised to high contemplation, spent two hours meditating on his nothingness and his misery.

True consolation and lights from God always, always come accompanied with deepest humility and with such a knowledge of self and of the Divine Majesty that the soul annihilates itself to such a degree that it would throw itself under the feet of all. In addition, they generate a heavenly understanding, however, not all the time, and peace, love, joy, the exercise of virtue, a love of suffering, etc.

Let us remain in our nothingness and not exalt ourselves until God Himself does. Oh! when God wishes to exalt a soul, oh, what sweet violence! Sweet, I say, but so strong that the soul cannot resist. Keep in the Presence of God in pure faith and remain in the knowledge of your own nothingness, your sins, your miseries, etc. Second, you can, however, always leave your soul free to follow the loving breezes of the Holy Spirit.

8. When you give an account of your affairs, state your external acts of humility simply and without an abundance of words, etc. Never again use the expression “in the truth of Jesus,” which has no place. I already know that without you saying it.

9. With regard to conducting yourself as a defender of the faith, I have given you permission to lead a simple catechism, but first read very carefully *The Christian Doctrine*. Then you can say something further on the catechism, something about living well, but briefly and with simple and few words.

If you wish to have a small meditation on the Passion, keep the book in hand and do not expand from the reading except for some affection, an act of sorrow, a good resolution, an act of virtue, etc., in accord with the status of those meditating, etc. Encourage them with brief words to take up this holy exercise in the Presence of God and, above all, to attend to the duties of their state of life! Do this only on feast days and when the ceremonies in the church are over.

All should be done in a simple fashion, adapted to those to whom you are speaking, as though you were having a simple conference, standing alongside them in their circle, not standing higher or lower, but in the last place.

Do not plan to come here, but take care of the obligations of your status, for this is the Will of God.

Let your wife continue as I wrote the last time, living entirely abandoned in God and continuing her loving repose in the arms and sweet bosom of God.

Doing good to your neighbors ought not to be done by you with such fervor, for your state does not call for that; and we are not yet in such perfection of soul that you can accomplish this good work as it should be done. For now govern yourself, as I prescribed above, with brevity on the feasts and once the ceremonies are over.

Our Retreat is finished by this time and breathes devotion in every part. If there was not this lack of money, we could enter by the Presentation, but we lack lumber for the doors and windows. If you can find any there where you are, or obtain any in Marciana, it would be a great charity. Then it would be our task to have it brought here, in case you cannot load a small amount of lumber. Father Peter Cavalieri of Longone is determined to join us, but I want him to enter around All Saints so that he can take care of his business. As soon as he is free, he can return and be clothed in our habit.

Others wish to come, but the Retreat is unfinished. How much we would rejoice over a small supply of seasoned wood! Speak about this to your uncle and greet him in my name. It is not necessary that the wood be seasoned.

I salute your wife in the Side of Jesus. You must keep your heart in humility and modesty, encouraging her to perseverance. Then God will level the difficulty and open the ways, etc. ...

Goodbye, dear friend. I place you in the most pure Side of Jesus, and in his Name I bless you, along with your wife, etc. Thanks be to God. Pray for one another and much for me; I am doing that for you ...

I come back to remind you to make nothing out of the peace you enjoy in troubles and insults since even here the devil can mix in to have you become vain. It is better not to value your own opinion and understanding, but remain in fear and on guard without giving attention to anything other than doing the Divine Will. The world is overflowing with snares, but the truly humble are not trapped. Do not trust yourself, even if it seems to you your prayer ... brings forth good fruits, and do not act as judge in your own case. Be distrustful of self, adore the Great Father of Lights in spirit and in truth. Blessed is the man who is always fearful and in dread. So it is written. To do your best and to know that you do nothing good is a sign of being but a little humble; it is only the first level of humility. One who knows himself well in depth and knows God, this is the one who is truly humble of heart! God grant that to all. Amen.

Your true, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (34)

Saint Anthony
October 11, 1736

May Jesus, who is the fire of love, inflame our hearts. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter today, but I cannot respond to it adequately. I am not very well, for my illness is not over. I am still indisposed since my original fever came back tonight.

Oh, how good and sweet is the spirit of Jesus! Oh, how sweet his loving attractions! Oh, how lovable his Divine Providence! Continue to allow yourself to be guided by the Holy Spirit and make frequent flights into the most holy Side of Jesus, our Good. You will be there as in an impregnable fortress. Your enemies will raise a riot but will go away beaten.

I have not shared with you my thoughts about leaving here because I have none. Believe me, I am like an exile with no fixed abode. My post and my repose are the sweetest Will of my God. If God wishes me here, I stay here; but if God wishes me elsewhere, I will do his most Holy Will. As far as I can see, God wishes me here for the present. Therefore, may he be blessed.

Abandon yourself to God in all happenings and God will take care of the sister. Continue to recommend her to God that he dispose for the best. If God should so wish, so do I. If you cannot come here, we will have time to speak in the Kingdom of God.

I, too, have read the chapter of Jean Gerson,¹⁰⁹ so it will not be necessary for you to send me that.

It is certain that desires to go and enjoy God are good, for they are born of holy love; therefore, it is right to give them rein, that is, to give liberty to your heart to fly to the Sovereign Good with those holy desires, holy because they come from the Saint of Saints. I end for I wish to give some rest to my evil donkey. God bless you, and continue to pray for me. I leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus, in which I say I am always,

Your affectionate servant in Jesus,
Paul of the Holy †

109. Gerson was a theologian of the 15th century and a popular spiritual writer.

Agnes Grazi (35)

Porto San Stefano
October 24, 1736¹¹⁰

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

Yesterday, I received your letter, in which I see the mercies God continues toward your heart. But what does God want of my beloved daughter if not a great humility and total contempt of self and of all created things in accord with the holy rules of prudent charity and simplicity? What does God want of my daughter in Jesus Christ if not that she be humble, simple as a child, pliable and soft as wax, abandoned in everything to the Divine Will? Ah! may God impart these gifts to your soul so that by corresponding you may arrive at the highest union with God, a union that is reached only with humility of heart, a loving silence, and all the rules for virtue that poor Paul has written!

I do not have more time to write for the ship is about to leave, and God wants me to take this trip for his glory. I am sure of this, for I am placed in such an indifference that it could not be more. I hope in God to speak with you sometime, if God wishes that I come to Viterbo in November. But I am not certain of that.

My beloved daughter in Christ, I do not have time to write preparations for All Saints and Christmas. Do as before and remain in silence as much as you can. If occasions arise where you can speak for the glory of God, do so and then withdraw. A great servant of God kept silence from the Feast of All Saints until Christmas; on Christmas Night Infant Jesus appeared, embraced her, and gave her a chaste kiss on the forehead. After her death, although her body turned black after a long time, the spot where Jesus placed his kiss remained whiter than snow. Oh, divine kiss! Oh, dear embraces of love! When, my daughter, will we love like seraphim? When will we be on fire with love?

Goodbye, my daughter, the ship is leaving. I go in the Name of God and have great need of prayers. God bless you. I hope we will see each other, if Jesus so wishes. I am in a hurry and am in the Side of Jesus. Greet my dear Mother, Sister Lilia.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

110. It seems that this letter is to be dated 1736, for Paul is at Porto San Stefano, where "the ship is about to leave." Amedeo dated this letter 1736, but he stated it could be anywhere from 1734 to 1737 when Agnes Grazi was living in Viterbo.

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (8)

Porto Longone
October 26, 1736
Written in haste.

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I believe that by this time you will have received my letter with the one enclosed for your cousin, to whom I have written with all the emphasis possible, so I have nothing more to tell you. All the more so because I have no time. By chance I find myself passing through Longone to take a voyage for the greater glory of God. I pray that God will inflame your heart with his holy love, and that the practice of the holy virtues will always grow in your heart. Pray much for me. I have only enough time to tell you that I am always in the purest Side of Jesus. I am on my way to Livorno.

Your true servant in God,
Paul of the Holy †

Ottavio Barbari (2)

Saint Anthony
November 20, 1736

May Jesus Live!

Dear Don Ottavio,

The urge that Jesus gives me encourages me to write to you without ceremony and request you take care of the enclosed letter, addressed to your cousin. Since this weighs heavily upon me as a concern for the greater glory of God, I beg you by your love for the holy Wounds of Jesus to forward it by means of a trustworthy person and consign it into the designated hands or those of Signora Victoria, his wife. Please do me this charity, and in addition to the great merit you will have, I and your cousin will be indebted to you until death.

Greeting you and your wife in the pure Side of Jesus, I am,
Your true servant,
Paul Danei

Francis Appiani (5)

Porto San Stefano
November 25, 1736
On a mission of charity.

May the pure love of Jesus be always in our hearts.

Dear Friend in Jesus Christ,

I am answering your welcome letter, which I received yesterday morning, and I tell you in the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Saint James: "Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials." Ah, dearest, one who is not

tempted, what does he know? If God is treating you like his dearest servants, what more do you want me to say? If God permits temptations to gluttony, it is a sign he wants to give you the reward of an accomplished abstinence so that you might take off in flight to the highest contemplation. If you are tempted to spiritual vainglory, it is a sign that, if you trust much in God, he wishes to give you great humility. Rejoice, therefore, when you encounter various temptations.

One who remains in the arms of Jesus will not fall away. If you feel no sweetness and consolation at prayer, it is a sign that God wishes to take from you all satisfaction so that with the exercise of resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure, you will become a new man, entirely spiritual, and then experience how sweet the Lord is. Oh, blessed are they who arrive at pure suffering without comfort and continue to serve God! Ah! these are the truly faithful servants who enter into the joy of the Divine Master. Courage, dear one. God wishes to make you all his and, therefore, tries you and exercises you so that you may be a good soldier. Have no fear, dear one, for you will have the victory.

You will taste how sweet it is to have given the boot to the world. God is preparing a treasure of graces and blessings for you in solitude. Do not hesitate; follow your practices where you are until the time comes — and it will be soon. You did well to obey your spiritual director and not go to Communion during the Octave of the Dead. Obey always and you will sing of victory.

Do not worry about floundering on the rocks if you do not come here soon. God has you in his arms. Even though you do not sense the Divine Presence, it does not follow that you are not in the Divine Presence. The loving attention is not felt in the lower part of your soul and has withdrawn entirely to the higher part.

In a couple of months I hope you will be here in solitude. See, dearest one, people are overworking themselves on journeys to provide all that is necessary so that you may enter quickly. But Divine Providence is arranging things so that resources are not to be found so that delay will sharpen your appetite, and then we will run with greater zeal in the way of the Lord.¹¹¹ I am writing a letter to your father, and I am enclosing it to the parish priest. So he will act with prudence, read it to him at the right circumstances and time.

With regard to the temptations of compassion for your family or drowning at sea, spurn them. They are little flies coming from the malice of Satan.

Oh! what great compassion for parents the devil caused the saints! But they were not fooled by them. Oh! how many difficulties they had in front of them. But they overcame them. Because they overcame them, they are saints. At the right time, I will tell you how you are to come here, and you will see yourself well taken care of because you will be in the care of Jesus and Mary Most Holy.

Let us go ahead with the usual exercises. Now the devil will raise a riot all the more because the time is coming to leave your home and everything. Oh,

111. The Retreat did not open until September 14, 1737.

if you only knew the assaults made on me before I was vested! God freed me from everything.

There is no doubt that your call to our Congregation comes from God. If you are humble and obedient, you will see great good.

I was in Rome and the princess¹¹² continues to have the idea of cooperating for the good of Elba. Bishop Calcagnini told me that you are considering coming to our Retreat. Who knows who would have told him that; it could have been your mother. Enough. He told me when you were coming you would sell a house in order to found the Retreat, and the princess was to buy it. There is time for all this.

Take to heart what I have said and do not pass it on to other ears.

The Retreat is about finished. Windows are lacking, etc., but it will be done shortly. Patience is needed.

I mentioned above that I was writing to your father, but I see that I cannot do that for the night is far advanced. The benefactor, where I am staying, has gone to bed, and tomorrow the boat leaves. Know that I will take care of that, and better than the last time. I will write in a few days to your parish priest and will send him a book.

Pray for me. I am writing you without ceremonies and out of pure love, which I have for your soul in Jesus, and my desire that you be a saint. Amen. I end in haste and am always,

Your true servant,

Paul of the †

124

Agnes Grazi (36)

Orbetello

November 29, 1736

May our sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday, I received your letter here in Orbetello, and it pleases me much. Oh, may our good God be ever blessed, for he gives us a share in his cross! Take good care of these precious sorrows and pains, internal and external. The garden of Jesus flourishes with these because of the virtues they demand. I see, besides, that the Divine Goodness continues his mercies in holy prayer. His Divine Majesty intends the highest perfection for my beloved daughter and wishes a complete union with his Good Pleasure.

Thanks always to God that in prayer things are going very well. But these lights are always suspect because God is not giving your soul any understanding as to what they might be. If they were coming from the Sovereign King, certainly the soul would understand whence these brilliant lights are coming. Since you do not know that, you must be on your guard. Therefore, continue to reject them and hold them suspect. If God wants something here, he will make that clear. As for you, continue to follow holy

112. Elenora Ludovisi-Boncompagni was Princess of Piombino.

obedience, as I told you, and so you will give glory to God and have no fear of sacrilege. As for the visions of that servant of God, etc., who claims she is recommending herself to your prayers, act as I have told you in this regard as well and constantly reject such visions. This is the Will of God. If the desire of God is that you do otherwise than I am telling you, he will give us light on that.

Above all, I thank our sweet Jesus for the grace given you to show yourself gracious and obedient to the nuns who have forbidden you to give out as alms what the convent gives you. Oh! how much I rejoice that God disposes thus so that you become gracious on every side and detached from your own will, even in good things.

Our sweet Jesus allowed himself to be clothed and stripped by the agents of death in accord with their pleasure. Whether to be bound or unbound, whether they threw him here or there, he conducted himself like a meek Divine Lamb. Oh, the sweet meekness of our Highest Good, Jesus! Ah! my beloved, you see that God wishes to perform a great work in your heart and, therefore, is preparing you with pain and the exercise of virtue. Therefore, continue to conduct yourself to all as a meek lamb and be happy that all your plans are upset, even though they are good. The time will come when God will bring your plans to fulfillment and true perfection. For the present, however, you must condescend to their desires. Ask Mother Abbess, but secretly and with humility, to give you permission to give out as alms what you do not need for yourself, telling her you do not need so much. If she would be pleased to give you permission, then you can do as the others. If she refuses, be quiet and say no more, leaving the care of everything to God. If she grants the permission, and some nun were to ask why you continue to give things away, reply gently: "Because I have the superior's permission." And then be quiet.

Oh! how the devil is enraged because we wish to love our dear God, and for this reason he makes the uproar that he does. Love to be known, known only as a poor imperfect being. Rejoice to be thought stupid, weak in the head, and of no consequence. Love self-contempt very much.

Be patient for I am writing poorly. I do not have a good pen, so this will be very difficult to read. Continue to give me a clear account of the status of your soul and stay away from unnecessary things. What you are doing now is fine. Keep it up.

With regard to not having light as to what state of life you should choose, do not be at pains. God will give that in good time. Continue to live abandoned to God, and stay at the divine bosom like a small infant taking in the sweet milk of Divine Love, which is beyond all sweetness.

The sacred season of Advent is nearing, in which Holy Mother Church celebrates the memory of the Divine Espousal, which the Eternal Word made with our human nature in his Holy Incarnation. Contemplate, my daughter, this deepest mystery of infinite love and allow your soul complete liberty to be immersed in that infinite sea of every good. Ask and pray that soon the great Espousal of Love between your soul and Jesus may be accomplished — as well as for me, poor and unworthy as I am. Continue your usual practice of

prayer and mortification and penance. Laugh at and make fun of your little donkey, and relish the fact that His Divine Majesty scourges it with sorrow and pain. However, if you become feverish or have other serious ills, leave off your usual penances.

Poor Paul is surrounded with many duties and is trying to bring to perfection the work of this least Congregation. We need to pray much to God that the holy Constitutions and Rules, which I must soon send to Rome, be accepted. My condition continues as usual.

I am at a home here in Orbetello. Your uncle, thanks be to God, is doing better. Continue to recommend him to God. Rose was to Mount Argentario; I see she is a good Christian. Goodbye, my daughter, and may Jesus inflame you with love. Amen. I bless you.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

125

Francis Appiani (6)

Saint Anthony
December 10, 1736

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

Dear Son,

The time draws near to say farewell to the world. The devil in rage arms himself to attack your spirit. He is preparing for a great battle, and the arms he will use to attack are many. Along with others, there may be this one: compassion for your parents. It will seem like cruelty to leave them. Oh! how fierce was the struggle I experienced in this way! But it is not to be marveled at that someone so imperfect as I am be attacked in this way. It was the same for Saint Teresa when she left for the convent. She feared her heart would burst from her chest, such was her compassion for her father. The saints won out. Let us follow in their footprints so that we, too, may become saints. But this is the least. The evil will come in various guises: repeated temptations, melancholy, desolation, fear, horror, etc. I leave the rest to the prudence of your parish priest, who will tell you all and give you courage.

On the contrary, Jesus and Mary and all of paradise will await the outcome of this battle. Go out against the devil, dear one, armed with the power of Jesus Christ and with the lance of the holy cross. You will certainly triumph, and paradise will sing the song of your victories, which you will attribute to the power of your Savior.

Oh, what peace you will have after the battle! Oh, the crown that the Sovereign Good will give you! Courage, my dear one. Jesus and Mary await you here and will dry your tears. I will always be your servant, your brother, even your father, if God inspires you to make that use of me.

I assure you that as far as your temporal needs are concerned, I will have more care for you than I have for myself. And as far as the spiritual, you will have the same care I take for my soul.

Here you will have all as brothers in Christ, who will love you in God our Savior.

If I were not afraid that you would be assaulted with repugnance and disgust for this poor shack in which we live, for it is very confined where we are, I would invite you to come at this time. But I think it would be better if you wait until the beginning of Lent, as I am writing to your parish priest.

I am writing the letter to your father. Your parish priest will read it to him when you are not there. I hope God will inspire him and strengthen him that he will make this sacrifice willingly.

I am including a letter to a priest in Marciana. You will know who he is from the address. He has manifested keen desires to withdraw here ever since he was a deacon. We were there on a mission. Now I have invited him, for he is a good worker. Oh! be astonished at where the enemy is attacking him! You are in fear of the sea, but the Divine Pilot will guide the ship and be in command of wind and wave. I would like for you and me to have a talk and then become as companions.

Enough! May God guide the work he has begun and inflame you with Divine Love. I am always in the sweet Side of Jesus,

Your true, affectionate servant,

Paul Danei

Before your coming, we will write again.

126

Frances Lucci (5)

Saint Anthony
December 11, 1736

J.M.J.

Dear Friend in Jesus Christ,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

I received your letter and thank you in Jesus for the charitable memory you cherish of me. And I give you part in my poor prayers. May you double that charity for me and have it done by others, for I am in extreme need.

Do not be troubled about the mission. I have adored and loved the Will of God in that and am content. Let us pray for the one who threw this cold water on his poor neighbors. I am afraid I am the guilty one because of my sins.

I received the lentils sent from Onano, and I am much bound in charity because of the inconvenience caused you.

Let us continue to serve God in a bold way. Let us be minded to suffer with comfort and to be made out as the street sweepings of the earth. I end, leaving you in the sweet Side of Jesus, and declare myself always,

Your true servant in God,

Paul of the Holy †

May our sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

This is the second letter I am writing to you in the same mailing, for yesterday I received your long letter, on which I have something more to say.

You explain yourself at too great a length and write much that is unnecessary. I would have you write more succinctly, for I do understand you. However, if extraordinary things occur, say, for example, in these lights, in these locutions, etc., in these imaginations, or what the servant of God said, etc. ... but do put down what is necessary.

With regard to the cure of that secular girl, that could have been natural. Your hand would be capable of making her worse. Do not pay attention to the nuns when they say, "A miracle." That is ridiculous! Nuns are too quick to canonize. In their way of thinking saints are quickly made. Oh, how easily they believe there are miracles where there are none. Humble yourself, despise yourself, do not believe in yourself, and keep guard over your heart. The devil is not sleeping.

With regard to the vision of that servant of God, I command you under holy obedience, as your spiritual director, that you reject it and, likewise, all these lights and other imaginings. Faith, the loving vision of God in faith, that is the secure way. Pray for that servant of God whom that Jesuit priest spoke to you about; that suits me. But if it seems to you that you see her, reject that sort of thing.

In a word, spurn absolutely all visions whatsoever, and cut them off completely. Say you do not want it and seek God alone. Oh, how clever the devil is! You say this sight of her, clothed in white with a veil on, seems to you to be something from God and does not seem to be a trick. I feel altogether other sentiments in my heart, and God inspires me to order you to reject such visions of whatever sort they may be and to hide yourself entirely in God, to flee into the sacred Side, to annihilate yourself. But all this should be done without upset to head or stomach.

When it seems to you that you see Sister Lilia, etc., act as I directed above. All these things are subject to infinite illusions.

It is my intention that your discipline should be dry, without drawing blood, and for the time decided upon.

Oh! how much I would prefer that you confer with some learned and wise man because I am blind. But you do not feel that way. I bow to the Will of God.

I will end here, for I need to take care of confessions. Continue to recommend to God the miserable sinner, whom you know, and know he is in worse need and continues to be in fierce storms, within and without.

Ah! if God were only to grant me the gift of the death which I desire for his greater glory, oh, what good news! I end, leaving you in the pure Heart of

Jesus, and pray all fullness of blessings for you. Amen. Go! Continue to serve the Lord with fervor and practice the holy virtues.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

128

Agnes Grazi (38)

Saint Anthony
December 28, 1736

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Rejoice that you continue to drink from the bitter chalice of Jesus, which seems to be bitter, but is very sweet to the palate of the soul. With regard to that locution, which you heard from that servant of God, saying: "No, no, there is no deceit," pay it no attention whatever. Follow the rules given to you, and, if any imaginations come, reject them constantly. Simply pray for that soul whom that priest recommends to you, if it be capable of being prayed for. Oh! how the devil is aping Jesus in order to trick you. If God wished me to give consent, he would give me light. I have no feeling whatever regarding this soul, and that is a sign that an infernal snare of hell lurks beneath. Cast it all away.

You inform me carefully regarding everything that takes place in your soul when you explain well what is necessary, but cut short the petty, superfluous aspects.

I celebrate the feasts in my usual way, always buried in the sea of my difficulties and miseries.

On January 3, I will complete forty-three years. My wish is not to see forty-four unless I am more perfect. For up until now I am without virtue. Oh! how much I regret to live in this way. I desire to leave this world quickly. In all things may the Will of God be fulfilled in me.

I take note of your headaches and the rest. Take a bit more sleep so your head will be stronger — I have already said all that. When you improve, I willing would have you rise for prayer. However, take the necessary sleep.

Thank Sister Lilia for her greetings. I have greater need of prayers than greetings. I have already written her.

I see that new struggles are approaching. Who knows how I will survive! Storms continue, blackness increases, fears do not vanish, devils mount their assaults, men scourge with their tongues — struggles within, fears and darkness outside, stupidity, disgust and desolation, etc., etc. What can we do in such dangers, without taking account of those I do not mention?

Ah, death is more desirable than life! May it be death, if it pleases God to open for me the way to a blessed eternity. Amen.

There is always need to pray more to God for the needs of the Retreat. I see that not a few difficulties are ahead. I do not see any foundation stones.¹¹³

113. Paul is speaking about candidates to the Passionist life.

Perhaps there may be a good outcome if I could find a way to distance myself.
May that be pleasing to God.

Paul, Your Servant in God

129

Agnes Grazi (39)

Orbetello
January 3, 1737

In the most Holy Name of Jesus. Amen.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

Last evening I received your welcome letter, for I see that His Sovereign Majesty wills to bring to perfection for his greater glory the work that he has begun in his infinite mercy. May his Holy Name be forever blessed.

Your anguish, fears, and temptations are the signs of the loving work I spoke of above. Take account of them, with the understanding that I wish that your confidence in God grow always greater. Oh, my daughter, what are you hesitating about? What are you afraid of? You are in the arms of God and you are afraid? I must now say to you: "O daughter of little faith, why do you doubt?" That is what our Good Jesus said to Saint Peter when he feared the storm at sea.

You are wrong to be crying, my daughter, that you were not with me, together with Sister Lilia, at the Crib. The invitation was as much for you as it was for Sister Lilia. In spirit we were together on the Holy Night and we prayed together — that was my intention. But I remained buried as usual in ice, and I am certain you were more consoled than I. But neither you nor I ought to look for consolation, but for the great God of consolations.

I rejoice in those tricks of love that Jesus plays on my daughter in Christ. What are these fears, worries, afflictions, fear of deceptions if not loving tricks of our Highest Good! A mixture of love and suffering, suffering and love. Oh, if you only knew how sweet and pleasing to the taste of God is this mixture! So courage, for you are not deceived. I assure you of that in the Name of Jesus. It is true that the devil is trying to get into the act in order to deceive you, but has not this monster done the like with the closest friends of God?

With regard to these lights, torches, displays, and visions, they can come from a great weakness of head, from little sleep, as also from the devil. So there is no reason to pay attention to them. Cast them off, do not let yourself be upset, and make a mockery of them

Make every effort to come back to a prayer in pure and living faith, to seek God alone, and to live in him, allowing yourself to melt with love of him. Take your repose in His Divine Majesty, as I have said before. God will guide you in everything. Seek to stay detached in prayer and elsewhere from all that is not God. This is the great learning.

It is true I did not well understand in your letter about what I had written of that servant of God, but now I have read it more closely. May Jesus live! Oh! how happy I am that even in my letters there are nails which crucify my

beloved daughter in Christ. Continue to pray according to the directives I have given you.

Our dear Sister Lilia does not wish me well because she has been unwilling to console me with one of her letters. Tell her I am going to accuse her to the sweet Infant and his loving Mother and to Saint Joseph. I will tell them to mortify her by pouring into her heart a torrent of fire of love, that they inflame her completely — that will be my revenge. Give her my greetings. I am faring as usual. God be blessed. This morning, as I am writing, I complete my forty-third year. It will take just a half-hour to complete it since I was born just about sunrise, and now it is 14 hours. I end here for I wish to go to the foot of the holy altar and make a sacrifice of my life to Jesus, a sacrifice of love and sorrow. I wish to be a victim sacrificed as a holocaust. A holocaust is completely burnt up — nothing remains, not even bones, all to fire, all to flames, all to ashes. Goodbye, my daughter. God bless you.

Paul, Your True Servant

130

Father Bartholomew Cianchini (1)¹¹⁴

Saint Anthony
January 5, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Dear Friend,

May the pure love of Jesus and the effects of his divine grace be always in your heart. Amen.

I received your welcome letter, and in reply I repeat what I wrote in invitation before Christmas on the way to Rio. Go out from your family and go into the land that God shows you through me, his unworthy servant. You have no obligation to remain with your mother, who has no need of you. Read the Gospel. Let her enjoy your patrimony as long as she lives. Give her salutary advice for her well-being and then: "Arsenius flee, go out from your house."

The greatest mistake you have made is to leave off prayer. It is necessary to take care of that weakness and pain, and to give yourself to the Divine Presence in holy prayer, a crucified prayer. If you cannot remain on your knees, remain seated. The holy penitent sat at the feet of Jesus.

The Blessed Sacrament is the Food of the strong and the weak. It fortifies body and soul, when the due dispositions are present. Certain that the weakness you feel after Holy Mass is extraordinary, I will tell you what God seems to want me to make out of it. This is not only a punishment for failure to correspond to the divine call, but also a loving invitation to have you correspond with fidelity.

God is punishing, for His Divine Majesty permits the devil to bring about this weakness. I say it is a loving warning, for if you undertake a truly

114. Cianchini was a priest from Marciana of the island of Elba, who showed signs of a vocation to the Passionists, but did not persevere.

penitential life, as God calls you, with the holy inspirations he has given you, especially at the time of the holy missions, you will see you will become strong in the midst of discreet penance, and you will taste how sweet the Lord is. The devil will leave, overcome and confused. After your Mass you will experience marvelous effects in soul and body, worked by the infinite sacramental Love.

Concerning what you observed in the Host before and after the consecration — black spots, droplets, and holes — that is only a trick and certainly a work of the evil one on your imagination to trick you and make a fool of you.

Be very humble and trust in God, do not leave off prayer, and be cautious about seeking counsel. Saint Francis de Sales doubted you could find one in ten thousand who are able to give direction. But God makes the dumb speak and uses the weak and infirm for his glory. May Jesus live. I leave you in his Side and embrace you. Pray for me.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul Danei, Missionary

131

Agnes Grazi (40)

Saint Anthony
January 9, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday, I received your usual, long letter. I thank God for the favors he communicates to your soul. Be faithful in serving this good Father. Your letters, more or less, are almost all alike so there is no reason for me to expand myself. At every turn I am telling you what I have already told you other times. In these material and sensible occurrences, which are so lively and imaginative, there is always some danger. The devil very often inserts himself here. Consequently, the safe procedure is always to reject such imaginary visions and strip away everything that is not God, keeping your prayer in pure faith. For now, whenever such images come to you, always reject them with constancy, despise yourself, and say you are not looking for such things, but only for your God. Do this without strain of head or chest. Once you have done this, lose yourself entirely in God in accord with the rules I have given you. Let this be said once and for all.

I recognize, more and more, that you have need of a person experienced in these matters, learned and prudent. For that reason I counsel you to find such a servant of God and confer with him. I know that in Viterbo there are two or three priests, servants of God and directors of souls. There is a priest whom Rose knows. You could have her appeal to him for you. And there is the good confessor of the convent of Saint Rose as well as others. I do not mention the Frati, for they cannot come to convents and are not always permanent. In any case, if you come to know of the right person, by all means confer with him, leaving the others alone. Finally, I leave you in complete liberty.

I am obliged to act this way, and, if I were not willing to do so, I will be sinning. The language of the spirit is hidden from me, and I remain in a bottomless pit of deformity, blindness, ignorance. I am speaking the pure truth as I see it before God.

You will see, once you have begun, that you will find it better. Hold your conferences every month or less, as you wish. Pay no attention to the difficulties of the first days. Do not go over your general confession; there is no need of that. Tell of the way you began with meditation, how that changed and where you are at present. Give an account of the more important things that happened to you. I have some of your accounts, which I have not read carefully because of lack of time. Whenever you ask, I will send them well sealed. You can have him read them and afterward return them to you to be burnt. When he comes to know what is for your greater advancement, he will offer his direction and you will see that you will find this an improvement. I tell you this not because I do not have at heart the service of your soul, but I say it for your benefit, and in time you will see that I have done well and sought your greater good. For the rest then, I always leave you liberty of spirit.

Regarding Sister Lilia not being able to write, let her not be further concerned, for I am leaving and do not know when I will return. So she can write me only as usual, and not more, until the end of Lent, for who knows when I will return.

I am aware of the many letters which were written for these feasts. Good for those who can do so. I do not know where they find the matter to write so many repeated letters for a single feast, and when shall we be finished with feasts? God bless their conferences.

I desire that there should be no memory of me, whether in speech or writing; but only to recommend my soul to the Crucified as the worst sinner to be found, who is buried in darkness. May God grant that it be not burial in the shadows of death. If they will perform the charity of praying sometime to God that he keep me from the fall into hell, which I merit, they will be doing not a small charity. But as for writing to me about me, I have no concern whatever.

As for your penances, I order an hour and a half of the chain on Monday, two on Wednesday, three on Friday, and about an hour and a quarter on Saturday. That will be enough. As usual, discipline on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday for the space of the litany.

When you confer with some servant of God, as I hope you will, tell him of your past and present penances and the amount of time you occupy in prayer, and accept his decision. As for staying always on your knees at prayer, since you are not too well, that does not seem good to me. Sit down at times, or as you decide is best.

As for what you tell me of that religious, tell her you are not aware that you owe her anything. If she replies that, "Yes, you do," and, if it is something of little value, give it to her and do it with all charity. If it is a question of something of considerable cost, tell her with all charity that you will first seek permission from your superiors, then you will give it to her. Tell her that you

cannot do that on your own, for you are not aware that you are in debt in this case. But try to calm her down with a few words spoken in a humble and modest way, and leave in peace.

In a short while I will be leaving for a place I am not mentioning, and I do not know when I will return. Do not write until Lent except for the present post, for I will remain here until after the Feast of Saint Anthony.

God does not want me to find a remedy in anything whatever. May God be praised. I rejoice that God will always be glorified in his creatures. If I do not glorify him in heaven, I will glorify his holy justice in the hell I merit a thousand times over and more. Continue to recommend this poor soul to God. God bless you. I leave you in the Wounds of Jesus and am always,

Your true, obedient servant in Jesus,

Paul

Look carefully at the reason for which I am counseling you to have conferences about your soul with others. You will see it is good and comes from pure zeal for your greater benefit. Holy souls have acted in this way and managed to treat with men who were holy and learned.

Say nothing to Sister Lilia about me. Simply tell her not to inconvenience herself by writing me because I am going away and the letter could be lost.

When you write me, do not make speeches about my person in any way, but simply tell me what is happening with you. Pray for me.

132

Agnes Grazi (41)

Orbetello

January 24, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ Jesus,

I received your letter, but was unable to reply, for it was not in time for the post. I tell you with brevity that I see the divine work in you more and more clearly. Therefore, continue with your accustomed rules and instructions. When these visions you tell me of come to you, if they end with a union with God in living faith, there is no longer danger of deceit there. See, my beloved daughter, how indebted you are to God, who has freed you from deceit and will always do so. I do not want you to be upset with whatever happens to you in prayer, but in everything unite yourself to the Will of God. Oh, how much I rejoice that your prayer is in faith! This is the loving conduct toward which God has always inspired me to guide you.

Do not be angry with me, my daughter, if I have asked you many times to seek counsel elsewhere. This is because I do not trust myself. If you will look at this in the sight of God, you will see I did no wrong and, I trust, have pleased my God.

Now, I see always more clearly that God does not want you to take counsel with others, and I promise not to say that any more, unless God shall wish it.

I cannot deny you the assistance of God entirely; I would, however, like to have greater light for directing. May his Holy Will be done. See, my daughter,

God has placed in us a great union of spirit and a great detachment. I recognize that and give the glory thereof to the Highest Good.

For five days I have been at your home, assisting day and night our dear Don Fabio, for whose soul I have twice offered the prayers of final recommendation. Nevertheless, I hope he will get well, for this evening he seems to be improving a bit. I trust in God that he does not wish to give this pain to this pious house.

I am always more miserable, assaulted by demons and by men, scourged with their tongues, with calumnies ... besides my struggles within. Oh, how much I need the assistance of God and of prayers.

On Monday I leave for Rome, and I am going into battle to answer to points of the Constitutions and to overcome so many contradictions and difficulties.

Who knows how it will turn out! I trust in God. Pray and offer Communion for this affair. I am doing what I can to bring this holy work to a good end. But in confidence I tell my dearest daughter in Jesus that I fear that my sins and ingratitude are impeding it. There is need to placate God. I do not know when I will return, so do not write me, unless I first give you word.

When I wrote a few days back that I was leaving and did not tell you my destination, I thought I was first to take a journey for the mission, but now I am about to start out for Rome.

I have never prohibited you to write to and converse with Sister Lilia. Believe me, no one would be more to my liking, prescinding from the souls God has confided to me. So go ahead and write her, and speak of me as much as you wish so that she knows she has a duty to pray for me. I do not want you to take up anything pertaining to your prayers, neither with her nor with anyone else. I send her many greetings and am not writing now. I will do that in time. I have received her letter, which was very gratifying.

Tell her the reasons why I am going to Rome so that she may recommend them to God. The Retreat is about finished, and I hope we will enter it by Lent. Oh, God! the rage of demons, the uproar of evil tongues! I do not know where to turn — and God knows how it is within me. See, my daughter, how my soul pours itself out with you. Let us pray the Lord sends faithful servants. Marianna, my daughter in Jesus, has been constantly in the house to serve our sick brother, and she greets you warmly and, thanks to God, is doing well. Signora Maria Johanna, your sister-in-law, has begun to give herself to mental prayer, and I expect much good therefrom. She also wishes to be my daughter in Jesus Christ. Do not speak about this.

Goodbye, my daughter. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. Amen.

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul Danei of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (42)

Saint Anthony
February 9, 1737

Espousals of Saint Catherine

May the lovable Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter yesterday. It was very dear to me, for I see that the Sovereign Good continues to give the treasures of his graces. Oh, how much I rejoice that you are walking a bit more than at first on the royal way of the holy cross! Make much of these precious internal pains and external troubles. When you feel these inner pains, make the sign of the cross with your thumb over the place you feel the pain, saying: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus."

Go along with your accustomed recollection, lost entirely in God, and take your repose on the loving bosom of God like an infant. Oh, how much the loving soul says to its God in this sacred silence of love, in taking pleasure that God is that Infinite Good that he is! With one loving dart, with one word of love, the loving soul says much. God will make you understand what I am saying.

With regard to going to the convent of Sister Lilia, I tell you straight out that is not the Will of God. As long as you are to stay in a convent, it is better for you to remain where you are now. But things are adjusting perfectly. Your uncle wants you to come to Orbetello, and I agree with this since I believe it is the Divine Will.

It is true that I have spoken clearly of this with your uncle. He has said that, if you come here, he agrees that you be given a distant room for solitude. So as to help your prayer, you need not concern yourself with anything in the house except to go out a bit at times. You will be able to stay in church for the time agreed on and to go there every day. They will provide a poor cot for you if you are alone. If someone comes with you, there will be another cot in the same room. But take careful thought before bringing anyone with you. Rose is married — so much for that! This aspect needs careful thought. Your uncle has promised to take care of everything.

God knows how willingly I would come to Viterbo, and that for many reasons. But if you do not come here, in this Lent I hope to force myself to make the trip.

Do not share your spiritual life, not even with Sister Lilia, if you have the chance to speak with her. I give you permission to discuss indifferent things, but briefly. As for writing, that does not seem good to me. I am not forbidding you to write short notes to let her know how you are or to give her some general information.

I have an iron discipline with points. It is short and would not be convenient for that religious. However, if you can think of a way I can send it to you so you can make use of it as you desire, I will send it. But I do not know how to send it secretly. You will be taken care of either when you come here or when I come there. For now use the one you have.

Your sickness is a great discipline and a fine hair shirt.

If you were to use some small preservative, you might live a bit longer. It would be a small bandage on that area, not of iron, but of a lighter and more suitable material. It is necessary to do this with great secrecy. Take care of this. Do not kneel so much; seat yourself on a low chair. Magdalene sat at the feet of Jesus and the apostles were seated when the Holy Spirit came upon them. If the discipline does damage because of the movement, take only two strokes and without exertion. When you are here, God will provide.

Oh, how much the disciplines that God sends are pleasing to His Divine Majesty! The sickness you have is the mother of many sicknesses to hold you crucified with Christ.

I have not said anything about this because you have not given me occasion. Courage, my daughter, for if the walls of our prison are beginning to fall down and crash completely, then we will fly to our home. Oh, who will give me wings of the dove to quickly fly to the bosom of my God and take my repose in him! Let us desire this with ardor. Of myself I can say only that I cry out with the Holy Prophet: "Save me, O my God, for the waters have invaded my soul; I have come into the depths of the sea; the storms have all but drowned me." So God wills. Thanks be to God. Pray to God and have prayer offered that I die a holy death. Amen.

God enrich you with his divine blessings. Amen. I leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus so that you may burn with love forever. Amen.

Your servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

134

Francis Appiani (7)

Orbetello

February 19, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Dear Son,

Shortly after I arrived from Rome, I received your welcome letter, and I rejoice that your heart is always more resolved to belong entirely to God. May Jesus live, who has prepared infinite treasures of grace and blessing for you, if you are faithful in holding to your holy resolution to flee the air of the world and withdraw in holy solitude in order to sense and taste the words of life that the Sovereign Good speaks in the midst of sacred solitude to devout hearts.

So courage, dearest one! The Retreat is completed, the cells are finished. There is nothing more to do than to furnish the church a bit in order to make it better equipped to house the Divine Sacrament.

Oh, true God! it seems 1,000 hours before I will see my sacramental Lord in our church so that I can take myself for hours to be alone at the foot of the sacred altar, who will give the wings of a dove to make flights of love to His Divine Heart! Around the Feast of the Annunciation we will make our solemn entry. Right now it seems we cannot do it sooner, for we await the assent of

the king. If that is delayed a bit longer, we will enter at Easter. I have spent days in conferences or with pen in hand to give the last push to everything.

The devil is making an uproar and makes use of another one to cause us torment. May Jesus live, who, I hope, will give us the victory.

About the middle of Lent I will try to begin to take up your departure from your home to come to the house of the Lord with the embrace of Jesus and Mary. Now the devil is arming himself against you with greater rage. Oh, how many fears. Oh, how much sorrows for your parents he causes you! Oh, how many traps he will lay! What tricks! You must spurn them all. He who will overcome these difficulties and the other assaults of the enemy will be seated forever at the table of the great King of Heaven.

Arm yourself, therefore, dear one, with great trust in God. Be faithful to prayer and often feed on the divine sacramental Lamb. It may be that God will try your fidelity by permitting desolation, melancholy, and other anguish, which are the jewels God gives his dear ones.

Take heart, dear one, take heart; Jesus awaits you, Mary invites you, all in paradise encourage you and tell of the throne and the royal crown already prepared for you. You will be rewarded by His Sovereign Good for having abandoned this little bit of earth. I must end, for I am very busy. We will write again, but you should not talk over your status or your resolution with anyone whomsoever, but only with your spiritual director. Greet him in my name, and I believe he should have received my letter with a book. A letter was directed to him and to your father, along with yours.

I end and hope that in a short time I will embrace you in the Heart of Jesus, and that together we will praise his Holy Name and sing his divine mercies forever. Do not show yourself indulgent toward your parents in order not to cause them more affliction, but show yourself happy, constant, and generous, like someone who is being sent into the service of the Sovereign King.

I urge you to flee scruples and ask you to take legitimate recreation, but with holy people. Eat what is necessary and take due sleep, and in all this be at peace with God.

Goodbye, dear one. I embrace you in Jesus, and I am always without end.

I add that Father John Baptist is well and serves God with much fervor. And I hope I will not have to leave you too soon, as you are newly planted. However, may the Will of God always be done.

Greet the cleric Gemelli for me. I cannot write him, for I have too much to do. Goodbye.

Your affectionate servant in Jesus,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (9)

Orbetello

February 19, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Most Reverend Sister in Christ, My Daughter in Jesus,

On my return from Rome I received your welcome letter, and I rejoice that your heart is always resolved ever more to be all for God. I did not receive your other letter, the one to your cousin. I was speculating about sickness or some other accident. I thank you in Jesus Christ for the oil, the figs, etc., and I pray God to give you an eternal reward. But I ask you not to send me anything in the future. I desire only the charity of your prayers.

Since I am finding myself overwhelmed with the business of this Retreat, which, thanks be to God, is almost at completion, I cannot write at length. I have not even been able to read all that you wrote. I simply advise you to proceed with care in regard to certain exterior things, such as blessing the air during storms, etc. If you do that with the wood of the cross, do it fortified with obedience to your superior, but excuse yourself and ask that others perform this function. Be much on guard lest the devil play some damnable trick. Vainglory, if not driven off by humility, can bring down a mountain of holiness. Follow your former rules as for sleeping on a box, and let us wait a warmer season. I give you permission to sleep on Friday on a straw tick, but well covered. Give your attention to the holy virtues, especially to disparagement of self. I will gladly celebrate the Mass, though not immediately because I have earlier obligations.

I can only say that I have too much to do. There is need to pray much for me and have others pray for poor me, for I am attacked on every side. Pray that my ingratitude does not impede the holy work of this Retreat, and pray God to send it holy men who will praise his Holy Name. I leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus and promise to write when more time is available. God bless you and inflame you with love.

Greet for me in Jesus your Mother Abbess, the other religious named, and the whole convent. Tell them never to forget to recommend me to God. I confess I am so very, very much indebted to them. Out of charity may they pray for me.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (43)

Saint Anthony
February 28, 1737

*The Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday, I received your very long letter. There were not a few superfluous things that had been gone over at other times. God be blessed. In reply, I say you are to be faithful, constant, and strong in doing what I ordered, that is, give no credence to these lights, these visions, these imaginations, but reject them with great constancy, repel them absolutely, and make nothing of them. Should they come back, do the same thing but without losing peace or disturbing yourself.

If these things are of God, they will have their effect and the devil will remain confused. You need to be prudent with regard to your prayer and not try to do more than your body can bear. You already know that I told you to be seated when your prayer is prolonged. I am glad that you get up at night, but I want you to take your necessary sleep.

These imaginary visions, lights, appearances of persons, prospects, and so on are subject to infinite deceits; therefore, you must flee from them, get rid of them. So also locutions are not to be easily believed in, but act as I directed above since, if they are from God, they will have their effect, even if they are rejected.

God knows how the cure of your brother came about. When you claim that God gave this grace, thanks to Sister N., you are fooling yourself. I am very willing to believe that God heard the prayers of this very fine religious; but the grace was not due to her. I state this in accord with the understanding that God has given me with regard to the improvement of your brother's health. I can say no more. May his Holy Name be blessed.

It is true, it is very true, when you say I am an ingrate father, that I ought not be called a father, but an iniquitous sinner. Now listen. You speak correctly, but God has not wanted me to travel to Viterbo. I have wanted to make that trip, but God has blocked the path. You are wrong to cry while claiming you have crosses and suffering. Believe me, you do not know anything about suffering. God keep you from having a single day of what a poor soul, whom I cannot name, is undergoing. You are in continual sweetness, elevations of mind, affections, etc., and then you claim you are on the cross? Eh! Let's move on! You do not know, I repeat, what suffering is!

There will come a time, if you do not die soon, that you will know true suffering. I believe that in a short while you will be in Orbetello and will soon be in a convent without delaying at all at home. Do not say anything about this; do not write about it. I am telling you this in confidence. Then you will have little opportunity to talk with me, for I am not a friend of visiting convents. It is true that then, when things are arranged, you will come and the Will of God will be done.

When the time comes, you will know it will be a good thing to provide yourself with a learned and holy Father here — they are not wanting — as I have advised you so often.

But because I see that you insist and say that you are always inspired to have me, I bow my head and trust that God will assist me, and that when you are here, I will serve as best I can, but we will confer only rarely. When I come to Orbetello, I always have so much to do that I scarcely have time to fulfill the obligations of my state. My poor penitents do get to see me, but they rarely get to speak to me. I steal time to hear them in the confessional, but rarely, and that is good enough for them. In that way they are more deprived of contentment. It is true that they have the direction required. When you get here, you will see that to profit spiritually it will be necessary to allow others to write you very rarely and only with permission. For that reason you will not be permitted to write to anyone; simply say that this prohibition has been placed upon you. I do not wish you to lose time in unnecessary things. I do not say that you are never to write to some soul close to God, but only very rarely, once or twice in the year, or even less. You must die to everyone and live only to God and for God.

With regard to penances, we will soon discuss that here. Continue as you are doing for the present. I have always had the maxim to live detached from and free of all spiritual direction of souls for whom God desires direction. And for that reason I hope that God will not permit me to be deceived. But, oh! how much I desire to free myself of all and leave this noble, tiring function to learned and holy priests, for I experience that I am all darkness and deformity. I say this as it is and as I see it in God. Look carefully at all this and then take the decision that the Holy Spirit will inspire. As you write to me, could you not write to another servant of God who has light? I leave everything in the holy freedom of God.

Of myself I have nothing more to say; only that I am certain that God is displeased with me as an ingrate, for the more I seek for prayers, the more I see my affairs go from bad to worse. For this reason I would wish to bury myself from the eyes of all in order to better prepare myself for death, which I fear so very much, yes, exceedingly so very much. I would wish for this charity that you pray the Lord to quickly receive my soul in his grace so that I sin no more, for every day I am worse, ungrateful, and pestilential. I speak this in all truth so that you will have full knowledge of the one to whom you have entrusted your soul, and that it will serve as a motive to provide for yourself, if God so inspires you. But if in the event you can in no way do this, I say again, I bow my head. And God, who is the guide of souls, can make use of whom he pleases, even were he a devil. I have written this without forethought, but just as it flowed from my pen. I rejoice to be forgotten by all and I deserve that. If at times people remember a poor sinner and shed a few tears over my sins, they will be doing a great charity. Let them pray to God to give me the grace to die soon, if this please him, and to die well.

Pray God to inspire you, if it be his will, to burn all my letters. If you then feel such an impulse, throw them in the fire. God bless you and make you holy.
The Poor Sinner Paul

137

Agnes Grazi (44)

Orbetello
March 7, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Today, I received your welcome letter and thank God for the trials he sends me and sends you. What does it matter, my daughter, if your father, when it pleases God, takes hammer and nails to spiritually crucify on the cross of mortification the daughter God has given him? So Abraham was commanded by the Most High to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. So away with everything. Let it be as he wills. For if the Will of God is done, all goes well.

I reply as I have said so many times: all is God's work; be quiet. You must throw off, like a plague, the fear that upsets you. A filial fear, one that puts you always on guard in a fear of not pleasing God, of not serving him well, is a fear that works good. This fear never takes away peace of heart; rather, this fear increases it, for the soul distrusts itself and trusts God.

Follow the old rules with regard to guiding your spirit and put aside all doubts that you are deceived. Continue to make your prayer in the way of the Holy Spirit. One who rests in God with confidence and true humility will not be deceived. Above all, I recommend that you not be disturbed by these imaginary visions and locutions. Brush them off gently, make nothing out of them, and continue your loving repose in God. If you do as I write, you will be happy.

I have given you so many refusals for your direction because I do not trust myself. I have explained myself enough. The director ought to be very learned, a man of great prayer and wide experience. All this is wanting to me, and for that reason I refuse to give direction. Nevertheless, God knows what a great union of spirit there is between poor Paul ... but accompanied by the highest detachment, which is a true sign that such a union of spirit is founded in Jesus Christ. With all this I know myself to be blind, ignorant, and without virtue; and for this reason I refuse to direct anyone. But when God wills it, despite all the refusals, I am not able to do otherwise than assist the souls God has confided to me.

You have asked me whether I will remain here. I reply that my desire is to do the Will of God in every place. From what I can see now, I am to stay here and not go elsewhere, unless I go out on missions. I would ask you to continue with much warmth to pray God that he let you know his Holy Will, both for your direction and for all else. For if God wishes to use this poor blind man, I am not refusing. Believe me, I not only serve you but also I could not do so more willingly.

Do not be pained that in a transport of prayer you called your spiritual father an ingrate. Believe me, I understood it well and even had a good laugh over it.

You will not be coming to Orbetello for another two months. Abandon yourself to God, be content, and be assured that we will do the Will of God.

You need to recommend the business of the Retreat to God with great energy and perseverance. Do this with great faith, praying God to send holy men who will direct it. Do me this charity.

Oh, if you only knew the seas in which poor Paul finds himself. Oh, if God were only to let you know the state in which I am! I believe that you would treat of it with God more than you are doing. Blessed be God. I bow my head before Divine Justice. May the hand that afflicts me be forever blessed. I say all this to my daughter's heart in Jesus Christ not to bewail myself, but so as to beg alms, as I do with all, so that they pray for me.

I find myself with the burden of this Retreat, and I see it takes great perfection to govern it. I see the need of foundation stones. Enough! Let us recommend all to Jesus and Mary Most Holy.

I recommend that you conduct yourself with devout discretion as regard to eating and sleeping. For your longer prayers, remain seated with great modesty and recollection.

I read with displeasure that you danced to please the nuns. For this time, patience — but never again. You are to remain hidden and to be good and pleasing to God. But you are not to go to extremes. He who is a philosopher is not ashamed to be known as such and to dress as such. So, too, the servant of God must be recollected in every place, according to her rules, and not look elsewhere. Courage. I end here for it is night. Write to me and tell me everything with filial freedom, as God inspires you. I bid you "good night" and pray Jesus to inflame you with love. Amen. God bless you.

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

138

Agnes Grazi (45)

Saint Anthony
March 21, 1737

May the lovable Jesus be always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am your debtor for two letters that I received in two posts. But do not be surprised that the first was given me on Sunday. The other came later because the one to whom it was consigned did not bring it to me. I received the second on Wednesday when I was in Orbetello. I must admit I have little time; therefore, I cannot reply to everything. I will hold off until another time. Courage. Now that it is the Holy Will of God that I continue with your direction, here I am and ready. Oh, may God grant that I live to fulfill all the desires of my Sovereign Good.

With regard to you, my daughter, follow the old rules; things go well. Above all, I rejoice that you are completely hidden. Show yourself the same and reverent toward all the nuns without being partial to anyone.

Do not doubt that we will do God's Will, and continue to always beg this grace of Jesus — that he teach you his Holy Will.

Continue to abandon yourself more to God with a great detachment from all created things and a deep annihilation of self, which will bring about great results, and I hope that we will be inflamed with love. Oh, my daughter in Jesus Christ! when, when will we be dead to all in order to live only for our God? Ah, when, when? Oh, precious death, more desirable than life — death that makes us divine because all is transformed in God by love! Courage. Let us long for this death to all that is created. But in order to die, my daughter, it is necessary to suffer many pains. Who could ever express the pains they suffer who die a bodily death? It is enough to say they are so great that they separate the soul from the body.

Thus, too, in a way of speaking, it happens to the servants of God who die to all consolations. Oh, what desolations are endured, what agonies within and without, what internal and external strife! What dryness and sadness! What obscurity of mind! What fears of being deceived! These things occur because it seems to the soul that it is abandoned by God! All these, my daughter, are the dispositions and means of dying to all creatures and living to God alone and for God alone. But there is more that I know not how to tell you or explain.

Continue then to be despoiled of everything and to drive away imaginations and the other things which I have mentioned before. Pray in pure faith with a loving repose in God. Oh! how much is said to God in this sacred silence of love! Oh! how much the soul is enriched, for it comes from a loving abandonment that the soul has in the divine bosom of the Sovereign Good. Continue to make nothing of the imaginary visions, the lights, etc. Seek God, seek love, and do not worry. You are not deceived.

I wish that at prayer you be seated more, but somewhat low, as best you can manage. I say this because of the hidden sickness bothering you. That sickness can cause considerable damage, even threaten your life. While you are to be detached from your life, you are required to preserve it. We are not the owners, God is. Therefore, be seated after Communion and, if you have been a half-hour on your knees, sit down.

Go well bound and provide what is necessary for yourself — you know what I mean. If you do not have what is needed there, write me and I will provide it in secrecy. But I do not know how to send it now. God will inspire us how to manage it.

Get advice from some good woman who fears God. You could consult Rose or whomsoever seems good to you.

There is a particular, costly adhesive plaster which with the binding works marvelous cures — so I have been told by a doctor. See if you can find out about this and speak to Rose or someone else. They should speak of it to some

professor with secrecy, without giving out any names, masculine or feminine. I will end, for it is late. God bless you and inflame you with love.

Take it easy with the discipline. If you are considerably ill, leave it go or give yourself only seven blows to honor the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy.

Greet Sister Lilia and Signora Anna Vergari. If I have a little more time, I will write them a note for her consolation because I know the poor woman is suffering. But I rejoice, therein, for she is doing the Will of God and is being enriched with great treasures. Give her this message as you have opportunity. Thanks be to God.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

139

Maria Johanna Venturi Grazi (1)¹¹⁵

Saint Anthony
March 24, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised!

Short Regulation for Signora Maria Johanna Grazi:

1. In the morning let your first glance be to the Crucifix, your first sigh his wounds. Get dressed with holy thoughts, considering how Jesus was clothed after his scourging, and make the holy affections that devotion will suggest.

2. When you are dressed, prostrate yourself on the ground and adore God to thank him for benefits received with the usual prayers of a Christian.

3. Then make a half-hour of mental prayer, according to the rules which I gave you.

4. After your mental prayer sit down for a while to recall the lights you received, the affections and resolution you made, and especially the principal truth you used for meditation. Make a corsage of these and place it on the bosom of your soul in order to recall them during the day and to spiritually perfume your soul. For example, you have meditated on Jesus betrayed by Judas, then bound and led away by the cohort. So you form a summary of all the kicks the Jews give Jesus, the jerking with ropes, the drops of blood shed, the tears, the gasps, and so on, along with his infinite patience, he never opened his mouth, his kindness toward Judas, etc. Then make a spiritual bouquet of these, as I said above.

Then during the day you can say: "O my soul, where have you left your Jesus? Ah! be amazed that you have left him with the Jews! Oh, how much suffering he endured for you! Oh, how many slaps they give him. Oh, how many blows! Ah, Jesus my Love! how can I see you so afflicted for love of me and not die of sorrow? Why do I not love you with the love of a seraph? Why have I not imitated your patience? Ah, dear Jesus! I wish to do that!"

I have given you these as examples. You can do the same for other mysteries, reviving your faith and putting yourself in the Presence of God.

115. Maria Johanna Ventura Grazi is Agnes' sister-in-law. Paul gives her detailed instructions on how to pray and conduct her spiritual life. This is the first preserved letter of Paul's twenty-four letters to her. She testified at the Processes for Paul's beatification.

5. Then go about your duties. Work without haste or strain; work with diligence, but with a peaceful heart and relaxed spirit, remaining in the Presence of God; work with your hands, but with your heart be busy with God.

6. Before your midday meal, if you can, put in a little spiritual reading and, if it is possible, withdraw to a quiet spot and spend a quarter of an hour alone with Jesus and do as he inspires you, making a recall of the morning's meditation.

7. Go to your meal. Sit close to Jesus and Mary, and offer them some mouthfuls, for they are so poor. Present a pleasant appearance, but devoutly modest.

8. After the meal spend the time in a bit of recreation, if that is what your husband wishes. Remain in the company of the people with whom you had your meal.

9. After collation go to your work and continue until toward evening. When the 23 hour comes around, leave your work and close yourself off somewhere to make mental prayer until the 24 hour or a bit less.

10. After your prayer go about your household duties with a peaceful mind, thinking of God and with a holy, joyous, and modest countenance.

11. Take your evening meal as I suggested above and take it as a frugal meal, but eat what you need. I say frugal so that you will be more alert for prayer in the morning.

12. Then say your night prayers and those which you have decided upon as daily prayers. Before lying down read your meditation, if you can.

13. In undressing think how our poor Jesus was stripped of his garments before he extended himself on his bed, which was the altar of the cross. Make those affections that love inspires. Go to sleep with holy thoughts, but try to sleep so that you are more ready for prayer.

We will take up other exercises of penance in the confessional.

Ejaculatory prayers to be offered during the day:

"O Jesus, my love! would that you were never offended."

"O my heart, break with sorrow!"

"Ah! Infinite Goodness, when will I love you! When will I be burnt up with love!"

"Ah! my dear Jesus, how much you suffered for me! and I do not love you? O my cruel heart, why do you not love Jesus who is your life, your supreme good?"

I have given you these prayers as examples. Use those where you feel more devotion, but use them with a peaceful spirit, gentle and relaxed, without strain of head or stomach, but gently. Thrust your heart often into the pure Heart of Jesus in the Sacrament. Greet Mary and Saint Joseph often as well as your guardian angel.

In dryness persevere in prayer and make use of ejaculatory prayers, especially acts of resignation to the Will of God. For example: "O dear Will of my God, be you forever blessed! O sweet Will! be forever fulfilled in me and by all. O dear Will of my God! how precious you are! How lovable! How holy! Ah! when, when will I be all transformed into the Holy Will?"

You can use these and others in temptations, in melancholy, etc., by kissing the Wounds of the Crucified. In temptations affirm that you wish to die rather than abandon God. In dryness affirm that before you would leave prayer and a spiritual life, you prefer to lose life itself.

Above all, I recommend the exercise of the holy virtues, that you conduct yourself with great respect and good grace and sweetness with your husband and all the household. Above all, show yourself all grace and courtesy with those who try your holy patience.

Love the promises you made to be all for God. Take them to heart, lock them there with the key of fidelity and holy love, and then give the key to Jesus.

Courage. Be faithful, humble, and persevering and you will sing the divine mercies in eternity. May the Lord grant this to you and me and to all. Amen.

Live Jesus! in whose Side I place you. Amen.

Your true servant in Jesus,

Paul of the Holy †

140

Francis Appiani (8)

Saint Anthony
March 28, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Dear Son in Jesus Christ,

May the Passion of Jesus be always in your heart. Amen.

The other day I received your welcome letter, in which I read the struggles of your spirit, occasioned partly by the devil and partly by flesh and blood. Oh! may Jesus live always, for these are infallible signs of God's call.

These urges that you feel to seek solitude are from the Holy Spirit. From now on there is no need to hesitate, for the signs are so strong that they could not increase. And why should we expect that God wants to speak directly to us as he did to the patriarchs and the ancient prophets? Today His Majesty speaks and makes his will known through preaching or spiritual books or through servants of God, etc.

This cooling off that you experience and these contrary movements are operations coming partly from the devil and partly from nature, which resists embracing a holy life. This is the way God wants to try your faithfulness. "I feel another law contradicting the law of my mind." Oh! happy is the one who will be faithful in meeting and overcoming these difficulties, who does not give in to feelings for parents, but who looks toward the Crucified, who invites you to follow in so special a way. He will be father, mother, and all.

Oh, if you knew the conflicts that I encountered before embracing this life of mine! There was the great fear aroused for me by the devil, compassion for my parents, whom I was leaving in great need, as their only worldly hopes were entirely dependent on me, interior desolation, depression, and fears. I was afraid I would not persevere. The devil made me think I was deceived in thinking I could serve God in this way, that this was not the life for me, and so

on. There was much else that I do not mention. But the worst was that all devotion had ceased, and I found myself dry, tempted on every side. I had great dread even to hear church bells. Everyone else seemed to be happy except me. I could never finish laying out the heavy battles which assaulted me to the utmost when I was about to be vested and leave my poor home.

All this is simple truth. But there is much more that I do not know how to explain, and I am passing over it to be brief. So courage, dear one, for to the one who overcomes God will give the hidden manna and a new name. Saint Ignatius said to himself: "Ignatius, conquer yourself!"

All the other conflicts you tell me about in your letter are all the work of the enemy, as I told you above. If you are delicate, who was more delicate than Jesus? On the mountain here there are persons every bit as delicate as you, the more so because of weak health. Nevertheless, they persevere with great constancy. God, who strengthened Saint Arsenius, noble and delicate, or a Saint Anthony, a Saint Macarius, and so many other very noble and delicate persons who embraced a life infinitely more austere than ours, will give great strength even to you.

So I will say nothing further. If you want to come, leave home when you decide. I want to believe that your parents will surrender you to God willingly. Your parish priest trusts that things will go very well.

There is no question of your providing a habit from over there, but provide yourself with a couple of cassocks and breviary. If you cannot, God will provide somehow. However, the Retreat stands in not a small need because of past and present expenses.

For your trip, if you do not wish to come by sea, come as far as Piombino and then seek companionship for the land travel. Take Signore James Mattei of Marciana as your guide. You will find him trustworthy and knowledgeable regarding the route; he will be your companion with little expense. That would be the simplest and safest way. Do not hesitate, take heart, God will be with you, and I hope that God will be greatly glorified by your coming here. I have no more to say.

Before you receive this letter, we will be close to Easter. So you can celebrate Easter in your home and then leave in the Name of God and not allow yourself to be overcome with compassion, but with eyes upward and your heart entirely in God. Greet your parents for me in Jesus Christ, and tell them they should thank God for your decision and that you will be more profitable for them as a religious than you would be as a secular. Assure them that once here you will be assisted with all possible charity. Jesus and Mary will be father and mother and all. Goodbye, dear one. Jesus be with you in your holy voyage. Amen. Let me know of your departure for my arrangements. God bless you. Everyone here greets you, also Brother Peter, who has been vested and is doing very well. I would have sent someone, but that is not possible because of many affairs.

Your servant,

Paul of the Holy Cross

Agnes Grazi (46)

Saint Anthony
April 4, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I read in your letter of the loving visit of Jesus during your sickness, and I had expected that. May his Holy Name be praised. Amen. Courage, my daughter. Now is the most opportune time to show true fidelity to your Heavenly Spouse. Stay on your cross as long as your Heavenly Father wishes.

Oh, what beautiful virtues can be practiced in sickness, especially a total love for one's own abjection, gratitude and gentleness of heart to those who attend you, and blind obedience to the doctor and the infirmarian, always with a happy face. Stay on your bed as though you were on the cross of your Savior. Love to suffer your pains and fevers as God sends them. Speak little during visits when they occur, but keep yourself recollected in God with complete modesty. Sickness does not impede union with God, but increases it. Live then, my beloved daughter, in Jesus, entirely rested in the sweet Heart of your Sovereign Good. Continue your loving repose in God as a victim in holocaust, and pray to His Divine Majesty that he send fire from heaven to burn up and consume the victim. May Jesus live. Oh, whether we live or whether we die, we always belong to God. So offer yourself as ready to leave this world, that is, to die for the glory of God. If your illness gets worse, but I am hoping it will not, give all my letters and your instruments of penance to your sister Elizabeth and make her promise to return them to me well sealed. I say this to be safe and, perhaps, because of my weak faith. For an obedient daughter ought not to die without the permission of her spiritual father. I have not as yet given you that permission. To give it I desire to be present and to wish you a safe voyage to paradise. It is necessary that we make our contract clear. Away with you. You are laughing at my silliness. And I give you permission to laugh.

Turning my writings over is not to be done unless there is danger of death, and it seems to me that is not present as yet. I have recommended my ailing daughter to God through Jesus so that God will dispose of her as most befits his glory. I am not writing more, for I do not want to give you too much to read. Have no scruples about it being Lent and take the broth. For Communion, make use of frequent sacramental love with inflamed desires but without forcing head or breast.

Be joyful, for now you are being enriched all the more with the infinite treasures of the Sufferings of Jesus. I beg you to display your illness as little as possible. Oh, how much these tears offend me. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love Amen. Do not write to me if you are not able, but pray much for me because now our prayers will be heard, for we are more on the cross.

Paul, Your Servant in Jesus Christ

Francis Appiani (9)

Talamone
April 9, 1737

J.M.J.

Dear Friend,

The Passion of Jesus be always in your heart.

Divine Providence has sent to us the hermit of the Most Holy Madonna of Mount Marciana.

I want to let you know that I had already written my reply to your letter, in which I gave you final plans for your arrival in the holy Retreat, where God calls you to inflame you with his holy love. I included it in a letter to your parish priest over there so that it would get there safely. I addressed it to Doctor Pisanelli to forward. I hope you will have received it or will receive it soon. So I say nothing more.

This good hermit tells me and promises me that he will accompany you here after Easter. So prevail yourself of this good son and come happily, for he will make you a good companion. Come, dear one, for God and the most holy Virgin are waiting for you. Conquer the primary difficulties — the hardest step is to leave home. When Saint Teresa was leaving her home to enter the convent, it seemed to her that her heart would burst from her breast, but she conquered everything and now is a saint. Oh, the pain felt when leaving one's father! On your way, my dear one. Forget your people and your father's house.

I leave off in haste, for I am here in Talamone to do a bit of good for these poor people. Goodbye, dear one. Greet your parents for me and tell them I rejoice in God our Savior. I hope to soon embrace you. Close your ears to the empty sayings of the world which seek to block you. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your humble and unworthy servant,

Paul Danei of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (47)

Orbetello
April 12, 1737

*The Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter and can say it is dearer to me than the last time, for I see that my daughter in Jesus Christ is willingly on the Cross of the Savior. I rejoice in God that you make so little of your illness, and only to the extent that obedience to the doctor requires it. Here, it is necessary to be very exact.

Courage my daughter. Remain on your bed always more willingly since that is the Good Pleasure of God! Now is the time to feed yourself with great eagerness on the sweet food of the Divine Will. Remain then in a loving silence, but show yourself peaceful and sweet with all the nuns. Close

carefully the door of your heart and do not let tenderness enter, which creatures ordinarily experience when they are offered sympathy. So have a horror of being offered sympathy. Ah, my daughter, our Jesus was abandoned to the utmost on the cross; learn a lesson there. So on your way! I invite you to Calvary to be present at the funeral of our loving Jesus. Ah! I wish that for once we would remain so wounded by Divine Love that we would swoon from love and sorrow for the Passion and Death of our true Good. I will celebrate the Holy Mysteries during these most holy days, and I will always be putting the heart of the daughter God has given me in the pure Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Do the same for your poor father, whom God has given you. Goodbye, my daughter. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. I end in a hurry.

Paul, Your True Servant

144

Francis Appiani (10)

Orbetello

April 17, 1737

May Jesus Live!

May the Flame of Divine Love always burn in our hearts. Amen.

I believe you have received my letter, which I consigned to Signore Stefano of Longone. Therefore, I am not saying more, except that I agree Jesus is calling you into this holy solitude to speak words of eternal life to your heart, words which will be as sweet as honey. All of paradise awaits with jubilation your departure from your home and your family so that you may be a victim entirely sacrificed to the Eternal Love of the God of justice, sanctity, and truth. "Go out from your home and your relatives," God said in grand fashion to Abraham. Keep everything with secrecy in your heart so that the enemy may not rob your treasure.

Courage, my dearest. See the Lord Jesus, who is standing at the door of your heart, calling you. Oh, sweet summons of everlasting life! Oh, God, how can we give you worthy thanks? When the weather cools, you can plan your coming to this Mount of Myrrh. Until then, the Retreat will not be completed.

I am writing Signore Gregolini by way of reply to one of his letters in which he gives me news of his retiring to Saint Catherine's. But, I believe that God wishes him here as well. Therefore, I would be happy if you were to talk with him, but with great secrecy. When this Retreat is completed, I strongly believe we will establish another on the island, and we will all work together.

If God opens the way for me, when the time comes for your departure from the world for this Retreat, I will be there in person to embrace you in the Heart of Jesus and to take you with me to this holy place so that together we can sing the divine mercies. So courage and constancy! "Fear not, for the Lord fights for you."

I recommend discretion in your penances. Eat and drink what is necessary, and take some holy relaxation by walking outside, etc. ... Do not spoil your stomach because the devil wants that so you will not be able to do anything.

When you are here, you will see that everything is done with discrete and holy penance.

Greet in Jesus your holy mother and father, if that seems good. If not, don't do it. If it seems good to say nothing so that they do not ask questions, act that way. You will see that God will change hearts in his own time.

Be alert. If they lay many snares, and it could be that they will have you speak with some one or some authority, you must keep strong. Reply with modesty that you do not wish to be bound to the world and that you wish to follow a divine call. Reply with few words and, if they make long speeches in order to convince you with an appearance of good, maintain your silence. With your heart entirely in God, say only that you simply want to do the Will of God and wish to serve God and Mary Most Holy.

I close, embracing you in the Heart of Jesus. God bless you. Amen. Pray for me. This summer I am doing few missions, so you can write me when you wish.

Your true, affectionate servant,
Paul of the †

145

Agnes Grazi (48)

Orbetello
April 25, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter. I wish you to write me only what is necessary and without going into minutiae so as not to strain your head while you are sick. Continue to break away from these imaginations and make your prayer more and more in faith, entirely abandoned to God.

You did not rightly understand me when it seems to you that I said the saints did not dare to approach Jesus and embrace him, and that this privilege is granted only to us. You did not understand that at all. I come back to that. It is true that the saints stand in greatest reverence before God, but they are privileged to embrace him better than we can, for they are free of the prison of the body and have greater freedom to lose themselves in God since they see him as he is and rejoice openly. Therefore, their embracing is infinitely beyond ours, for they are entirely pure, entirely spiritual. I say no more, for I do not have the time.

With regard to penances and fasts, I forbid them completely until you are cured. Continue your prayer. I allow you to pray as much as you can either in bed or sitting up. Go to Communion as often as you can, and then go to bed to make your thanksgiving. Ask the confessor not to deprive you of the great medicine of eternal life.

I end and assure you that my affairs go from bad to worse. God knows how willingly I await death, for that would be a grace of the Lord. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul of the †, Your Servant in God

Agnes Grazi (49)¹¹⁶

Saint Anthony
May 9, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In my last letter I did not say that you were to pray to God that he reveal to you whether it was his Holy Will that this work go ahead, but that you implore him to illumine whomsoever he pleased, knowing well that you are not the one to receive such a revelation. Enough! Continue to recommend to God my extreme needs and those of the Retreat. Write me once more in this post and not any further, for in eight or nine days after the Feast of Saint Blaise you will be in Orbetello and will not be going to a convent, but will stay at home. Only Elizabeth will come with you, that is what is convenient. Have no doubt that I will be taking thought of you, more than you might believe. I will take care to open all the avenues so that you will belong completely to God. I end, for I am in a hurry because of all my duties.

Go ahead with the usual rules, but not with the penances. We will speak when you get here. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. Amen.

Be always more before God and hidden to everyone else.

Greet Sister Lilia for me and Signora Anna Vergari and all the souls you know. If they ask you to write to them, tell them you do not have permission to do that. I will not write after this post. Around May 20, they will be leaving here to pick you up and bring you here. Thanks be to God.

Paul, Your Servant in Jesus Christ

Agnes Grazi (50)

Saint Anthony
May 13, 1737

The pure love of Jesus be always in our hearts. Amen.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your letter, and I thank God that your horrible temptation has ended. You need be always prepared to do battle in order to fight courageously for the glory of God. Regarding your dreams, pay no attention at all to them. While it is true that God does sometimes deal with his loved ones by means of spiritual dreams, we need always to fear deception. The devil is an astute villain and mixes in with everything and wants to play the ape in everything, even things most holy, in order to deceive souls. For now it is better to reject these material things and remain in faith, seeking God alone and losing yourself in him in pure and holy love.

116. In these letters to Agnes, Paul will keep her informed on the plans for her return to Orbetello. Paul tells her that she will return with her sister to Orbetello and will not be entering a convent (May 9). He then sends her the model for a "reformed" convent, which he calls the "Divine Convent" (May 13). He writes her that her uncle will be leaving May 23 to bring her home (May 16). There is a letter to Agnes on July 16 when she is at Orbetello.

If you are moderately well, I give you permission to begin to fast on bread and water on Fridays. I hope Mother Abbess will agree when you tell her your spiritual director has allowed it. I also grant you this for the Novena of the Holy Spirit. Discipline as usual. I also agree that you should sleep clothed so you can get up more quickly to praise God. I grant you permission to take seven strokes of the discipline immediately on rising at night in order to arouse your spirit with this slight suffering of the body. On Friday sleep on the box with a pillow under your head, and, if it is cold, use a cover against the cold.

I find myself in extreme calamities and struggles. The Retreat is finished and the church very beautiful and devotional, but difficulties increase, and I do not know when we will enter. Devils do not cease their uproar, and human agents as well. Thanks be to God.

There is need to multiply prayers to the Most High, most of all for poor me, as I am in the most deplorable state that any poor creature could imagine. There is need to pray God that he be appeased since I see he is most justly outraged against me, who have offended him so much and am so ungrateful. So I thank you in Jesus for the charity with which you have placed me under the mantle of Mary Most Holy. But you must decide to place me under the feet of all creatures; do this under obedience. I am indebted to you for your devotion of the Holy † and for the flowers given to our sacramental Jesus. I would desire to have enough to do Jesus much honor.

I decided not to give the note to Brother James. It did not seem good to me, especially since at the beginning it is necessary to ground him well in humility. Therefore, I burnt it. Ask Sister Reginalda to pardon me and give me a penance for the fault, if there is any. My intentions were good. Greet her in the Lord.

Greet in Jesus Christ the Mother Abbess and all the religious, as it seems good to you, especially Sister Hipolita, who cheered me up with the loving visits that God is paying her.

Listen, my daughter, you desire a convent that would be more reformed. Since I see that your desire is a good one and comes from God, I have thought to console you quickly. Therefore, I am permitting you to enter such a convent as I am sending along. Read and reread. You will find it a good pasture. The title of the convent is The Divine Convent. Enough. You will understand and, I hope, it will please you.

Greet your confessor. I end and leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus and pray he will bless you in eternity. Amen. Here there is continual fasting. I tell you this since you wanted to know.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

We want to make the novena in honor the Holy Spirit, together with all the devout souls in the world, especially with those souls God has entrusted to me for direction. Believe me, that among these there is one soul of great virtue and highest prayer whom God seems to want to use for some great work for his glory. Do not speak of this to anyone, only recommend us to God that he inflame us with love. Amen.

Thank Mother Abbess for the artichokes and cheeses, but she is not to send any more because we do not serve them here. God will reward her in any case. Amen.

Divine Convent

Perfect detachment to be clothed with Jesus Christ.

1. Allow oneself to be deprived of all lights, all news, understanding, interior and exterior consolation, of all affections and desires.
2. In this stripping there is to be the strictest poverty of spirit, allowing oneself to lose everything, to be immersed and absorbed in the Divine Will without seeking one's own gratification, at least not in the lower part of the soul.
3. In this poverty make acts of complacency over the infinite riches of God and be complacent to be the poorest in the world, within and without.
4. In such a complacency, do not desire another state of prayer or anything else than that in which you find yourself at the present moment until the end of one's life.
5. Make an examen on this poverty, rich with every good, to see if you are faithful and not complaining interiorly or exteriorly except during necessary conferences.
6. Repeat such acts of complacency very often.

148

Marianna Alvarez (2)

[May] 1737¹¹⁷

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in the Lord,

I am minded to speak in the Wounds of Jesus Christ without further ceremony, for now is the time to leave off ceremonies.

We are coming to the time of the novena in honor of the Holy Spirit, in which loving souls use all their strength to make the novena with all the devotion possible. Therefore, I do not wish to neglect providing your soul with this reminder. First of all, I wish you to make this novena as did the apostles who, as soon as Jesus had ascended into heaven, returned in company of the Virgin Mary and the other holy men and women, one hundred twenty in all, to the cenacle and never ceased praying and inviting the Divine Spirit to descend into their hearts and set them on fire with his love. That is what I want you to do. From the day of the Ascension until Pentecost stay in spirit in the cenacle with the apostles and the other holy ones to invite the Holy Spirit to come into you and make you all aflame with love. Continue your usual method of prayer. Prayer is to be made not in our way, but in God's way. Lose yourself in God, keep yourself recollected, do not be at the window or door without

117. Ascension Thursday was celebrated on May 30, 1737; Pentecost was celebrated on June 9, 1737.

necessity, and speak as little as you can. Keep a complete fast, except on feast days as they come. At noon, so as not to upset the house, eat as the others do — at least take the soup. Do not eat meat. If there is nothing else, take a couple of eggs, but not in the evening. There have a lenten collation. Take the discipline every day for the space of the usual litany. Wear the little chain every day for about an hour, and no more, in the morning. On the vigil, fast from water and wine. Take Communion, if you can, seven times during the novena.

In the morning begin your prayer with an Our Father and seven Hail Mary's and seven Glory Be's and an Apostles' Creed. Greet this holy band for me with a Glory Be and tell them that poor Paul awaits their alms.

Make these prayers with your hands joined and your eyes raised to heaven, and say seven times: "O Holy Spirit, Love of the Father and the Son, inflame me entirely with love." At midday, that is before the meal, on your knees recite seven Glory Be's and then with hands joined and eyes to heaven say: "O Spirit of infinite light, infinite sweetness, come into my heart! Come, O Infinite Good! Come, Immense Love! Come, true and only God, into this poor penitent heart! Come, my Love! Come, my Sweetness, O my Light, my Happiness, O my Treasure, O my Riches, O my True Good, O my only Hope, O my God, O my All. Come, for I languish for love. Come, for I can no longer bear not to love you. Come and set me on fire to the marrow of my bones." Then say a creed and greet the Holy Virgin with the Hail Mary and receive her blessing. Greet her on my behalf with a Hail Mary.

Do this also in the evening before beginning your mental prayer. I ask you in making these acts to allow your spirit to be filled with peace and love. Make these acts gently and, if love causes you to be silent, be silent and continue with eyes raised high and, if you will, with arms spread wide, as long as you are alone.

Tell Signora Suplizia to make the novena as best she can, but to fit it in with her household. She may take the discipline seven times in all and fast five times and communicate as usual.

Your Servant,

Paul of the †

149

Agnes Grazi (51)

Orbetello
May 16, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Your uncle tells me that on Tuesday, May 23, he will leave for Viterbo in order to bring you to Orbetello. So I am now waiting to see what Divine Providence will dispose.

I read your letter and pray God will give you a grateful heart and much love to the one who favors you so. Be on guard, despise yourself, and reject everything that is not God. Enough! We will be speaking about these things.

I am continually more burdened with tribulations, etc. I thank you for the charity of continuing to pray to God for me. Thank Sister Lilia for me and tell her that in time I will do my part. For now I cannot because I have not a little to do to save myself from a horrible storm in which I find myself.

Let all pray for me.

The poor sinner,

Paul

150

Agnes Grazi (52)

Orbetello

May 22, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday, as I was going out, I received your letter, and it does not please me to learn that you talked to so many about the affair of your brother, Don Vincent. What need was there to discuss this affair with Brother Anthony, with Rose, with Sister Lilia, when the whole business was not clear? Would it not have been better to take up the matter with me? Now I am telling you that all of you have been wrong. Sister Lilia, however, spoke with more prudence than any. Ah, there is no need to be so fast to believe things!

Don Vincent did receive the money and on his coming to Viterbo, which will soon take place, he will bring the money exactly as he received it. I am sure, for this was ordered by your father. So console yourself that everything will go as it ought. These are certainly frivolous upsets and have no basis at all. In the future do not involve yourself in such affairs. Now I do not want you to be scrupulous, but simply humble yourself before God and accuse yourself for safety as follows: "Father, I accuse myself of certain fear and suspicions which came to me that a person closely connected to me by blood had used a certain amount of our family money in a wrong manner. I did not hold that for certain, and, if in any manner I have offended God, I accuse myself of that." And say no more.

In the next post I will write to Sister Lilia, who just yesterday sent me the Holy Infant. I am unable to express how dear it is to me since it was sent to me by such a true servant of God. So greet her much, much in Jesus Christ.

I am not writing more now because I do not have the time. Continue to pray for this holy work, so much under attack, and for the perseverance of a devout priest who is already with us. He has renounced everything to serve God. The tears of his relatives, which would have moved stones, did not deter him. I had witness of these.

Father Anthony is laboring under a high fever. Let us pray God to decide for the best, as he sees it. I have been told that when the carriages are on hand, they will leave here to pick you up. Poor Paul has more need of help than any, for he finds himself in a state that continually worsens. Courage, my daughter. Stay happy in the purest Side of Jesus and do not lose your peace, even if the whole world falls apart. I end by leaving you in the sweet Side of Jesus, in

which I declare myself always. Jesus inflame you with love. Amen. I am not sending the letters sent to you here in order not to make the package too bulky.

151

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (3)¹¹⁸

Saint Anthony

[June 20] 1737

Feast of Corpus Domini

J.M.J.

Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal,

The two poor brothers, Paul and John Baptist Danei, least servants of Your Eminence, were chosen by Divine Providence, who governs all things, to build a church and small monastery as a Retreat on this mountain. Now both are complete. They prostrate themselves at your feet and with all earnestness beg and pray by the merits of our Savior Jesus and by the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy and by the blood shed by all the martyrs for the holy faith and the Catholic religion that, once more, Your Eminence confirm the permission given to bless the church and provide for reservation of the Most Holy Sacrament and grant us permission to enter the Retreat, built with so much labor, that they might be able to celebrate the Holy Mysteries, to sing the praises of God day and night, to give themselves to prayer, to work at their studies, and to enable themselves to better serve their poor neighbors, especially in these depressed and abandoned salt marshes.

Not only the two Danei brothers but, in addition, three priests and four lay brothers as companions humbly prostrate before Your Eminence and make the same petition and pray Your Eminence to have compassion on them. At present they stay in a poor hovel that is so small and miserable it moves people to pity when they see how many we are who live in it. It is true that our four lay brothers sleep in a poor cabin, and because of the restricted space now that the hot days are coming on, we are molested by an army of fleas and other filthy things, and there is no escape.

If it seems insufficient to Your Eminence that we have obtained ample royal assent, as His Excellency Count Garini, General of the Army of the Kingdom of Naples, has written me; along with the consent of the General Council of the people of Orbetello, which has been confirmed twice by Prior Bausani; and all we have been able to do to humbly obey the requests of Your Eminence; if all this seems insufficient to Your Eminence, seeing the presence of opponents to this work of God, as has been conveyed to me by persons worthy of belief and who have labored for the realization of this work for the pure glory of God, who raise difficulties for Your Eminence, then it will be

118. Paul writes to the cardinal, seeking permission to bless the Retreat and church. There are problems and objections. The cardinal wants the church blessed as a private oratory without reservation of the Blessed Sacrament; therefore, the faithful would not be able to fulfill their Sunday obligation or to receive the sacraments in this private oratory. Paul struggles with this, writing seven letters to answer the objections: June 20, July 5, July 12, July 25, July 31, August 15 (Assumption), and August 29, 1737.

time to disperse our company. We will wait patiently on that God who would not have permitted these impediments if he did not know and will by these very means to draw a greater good for his glory and the benefit of his people.

In order not to be wanting in any way on our part, we add that we would be content that, if all the difficulty with the exchange continues, the exchange be abandoned so that Your Eminence would proceed to give permission to bless the church, as above, and allow us the Blessed Sacrament. For it is not reasonable that nine religious be deprived of this infinite sacramental Love in the light of all developments that may occur. We would further ask you to approve our entry into the poor dwelling that we have raised by God's help and that of benefactors. This building is built on royal territory and the king himself has given us one hundred doubloons to help with the building. So there can be no doubt whatever regarding his consent. This was granted most amply by the king, as you well know and as you were fully informed by us.

We have walked in simplicity of heart from the beginning when the first stone was laid, and this was done with permission of the interim vicar of Your Eminence, who at that time was Prior Bausani. Several requests were made for approval of the exchange, and the answer was that everything was in order from the time we had the hundred doubloons from the King of Naples. Search was made for the text of the document obtained a few years back, the document sent at the very beginning to Your Eminence, and since the search was unsuccessful, we appealed to Marshall Garmi, at that time the general of the forts, to try to dispatch this business. The answer from him was that everything had been done. But he, like ourselves — I want to believe with good intentions of the one who told us — was mistaken. God be blessed.

Now then, we have come to an end. There are always more difficulties. When one is overcome, we see another raise its head. So it would seem that this business will never end. Therefore, we are all the more placing our confidence in God, who knows our intentions that we are seeking only his glory and the good of these souls who are so needy and neglected. We are leaving everything in the compassionate arms of Your Eminence, that you may receive us as your servants and sons and help us so that we may pursue that perfection to which God has so lovingly called us, assuring you that we will never, never cease to supplicate the Divine Goodness for Your Eminence so that His Divine Majesty will ever increase your heavenly gifts, and you will have the consolation and the great merit to have cooperated in the eternal salvation of so many souls, more especially of those the Divine Goodness entrusted to you. We end by making our profound reverence and kissing the hem of your purple robe.

Your Eminence's humble, unworthy, obedient servants,
Paul and John Baptist and Companions

Signore Salvatore

Saint Anthony

July 3, 1737

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

Most Illustrious Sir and Revered Patron,

Thanks be to God! At the end Jesus has conquered. May his Holy Name be praised forever. I suppose it is superfluous to tell you about the letter from His Eminence the Cardinal, for I think you have been informed of everything. All that remains is for me to make up a small part of my great debt to your dear, esteemed person by asking you with all my affection to come on Sunday morning to the Retreat of the Presentation to assist at the blessing and to offer to that great Queen all the labors you performed for this work of God. Know, my dear Salvatore, that I expect you here and, if not, I will complain to Mary Most Holy.

We will take a little time to talk together about an affair of greatest importance for the complete establishment of the Retreat, and in that way overcome all the difficulties of our cardinal. God gave me this idea the night that I spent awake without a minute's sleep. Live Jesus! Mouth speaks to mouth.

This ceremony will be a private one, at least as regard to an open invitation, and is known only to our principal friends. If you know how to do it, you might find a horse at the orchard, but I do not know how to manage that. You will have to take the trouble to arrange for a horse to be there.

I suppose that the vicar general is a bit uneasy about this ceremony. I say this to the heart of my dear friend Salvatore. Therefore, I ask you to summon your prudence and persuade him to take heart, reminding him that since His Eminence says it is a private oratory, we will not solemnly install the Blessed Sacrament. Besides, where we are now we have a private oratory and still have our functions. There is no lack of ways for you, Signore Salvatore. I end by embracing you in the pure Side of Jesus and absolutely expect you here on Sunday.

Dear Signore Salvatore, since the altar has three ledges, we need eighteen candelabra. I have provided for only twelve, so I need to borrow six. They should be low and short and gilded. See whether you can do something and take them to the home of Signore Grazi.

Your true, affectionate and obligated servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (4)

Orbetello
July 5, 1737*J.M.J.*

Your Eminence,

When your directives were received with your esteemed letter of June 29, your vicar general came to our Father John Baptist, my brother, to inform him of the directives for entry into the house of Retreat and that a private oratory has been established for the use of those living there since, for the present, nothing more can be provided.

And now, for the fulfillment of these arrangements, I have asked your vicar to bless the church, where we would avail ourselves of the oratory to celebrate the Divine Mysteries. Your vicar has not wished to do this since he does not have the positive commission and faculties from Your Eminence because this strictly reserved and so known to all.

Therefore, since I find myself and my companions in the crowded space of the hermitage of Saint Anthony under the jurisdiction of Portercole, and in view of the excessive heat that is continually increasing, it is no longer possible to live there because it is so small and unable to accommodate those who come for the ministry of retreats and other works for the glory of God as ought to be carried out, as I have represented to Your Eminence.

For these reasons, as I renew my most urgent supplications, even those of the priests gathered here, I beg you to empower your vicar to bless the church so that we can celebrate there because we are unable to live there and then go to celebrate in the hermitage of Saint Anthony, which is a mile-and-a-half distant on a miserable path, without serious threat to our lives, especially in this weather.¹¹⁹

A stronger reason is the fact that in this mail Your Eminence will receive a formal contract on the part of the Grazi family, guaranteeing the maintenance of the building as well as all necessary sacred furnishing for twenty years.

Furthermore, in accord with your directions, recourse has been taken by this Commune to obtain another royal assent, and with this all the actions for the exchange with Prior Bausani will be complete. So would Your Eminence kindly inform us, for with all the information provided once more you will be able to make a report and vote as requested of you by the Sacred Congregation.

Your Eminence, the great merits that enrich your soul and the souls who live abandoned in these salt marshes and who will be saved by means of this holy work for God, for which Your Eminence has borne so many fatigues to the great edification of the inhabitants, not only give joy to my poor heart, but also give me the liveliest hope that Your Eminence will work for the speeding up of this work to a happy conclusion for the greater glory of God and Mary Most Holy in her Presentation in the Temple, to whom we, too, will forever offer the great inconveniences Your Eminence embraces, and we will beseech

¹¹⁹ Paul refers to "miles" because distance in kilometers did not come into use until after the French Revolution.

her to grant you an eternal reward. And now we offer our profound reverence and recommend ourselves to your holy prayers as we kiss the hem of your sacred purple.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

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Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (5)

Orbetello
July 12, 1737

J.M.J.

Eminent and Reverend Signore,

With the most humble veneration I need to have recourse once more to the great protection of Your Eminence with regard to our poor Retreat. You have already decided to order your vicar general to advise the representatives of this city that it is necessary for the enactment of the new exchange to convoke a new General Council for the approval of the consent previously given. This has been done before in the Apostolic Approval obtained by Prior John Baptist Bausani under date of April 10.

Upon receiving this, I petitioned these citizens, and they tell me everything has already been completed, for under date of April 13 everything was approved and put in order. They gave me an authentic copy, which I gave to your vicar.

As to obtaining a new consent from the King of Naples, I was told this is not possible for reasons this city gave me to forward to Your Eminence, to whom I humbly submit the most urgent need pressing upon my brothers gathered together to move into the new Retreat, even before the changes are made for reasons well known to Your Eminence. I resubmit these to the purest eyes of Your Eminence, and kissing the hem of your sacred purple, I pay you most profound reverence and beg your holy prayers and holy blessing.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (10)

Orbetello
Presentation
July 15, 1737

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The other night I received your letter, and I see that you are wondering why I have not written. I am puzzled that you did not let me know that you received the small booklet which I sent you. And now I see that you did receive it. I tell you, therefore, that I do not have your letters nor those of Sister Alma Candida.

Whence you have no reason to complain if I did not answer. They must have been lost.

I rejoice in the fruit of your retreat, and I also ask in my name that you develop these new plants. I will pray at the sacred altar that they enrich you with all perfection.

You should not marvel if the retreat made you feel guilty. God is guiding you on another path, although in essence it is the same, but God wishes us to make prayer in his way. The spiritual life has its beginning, its middle, and its end. Do not believe that one acts in the middle as one did at first.

Live then abandoned in God and rest in him. Follow the old rules that I set out for your direction. Be happy with your pains and other indispositions, which are dearer to God than all voluntary penances, for in these there is nothing of our own.

With regard to temptations, use the advice which I have given before and have no doubts that God holds you in his divine arms.

As for the dryness and other desolation you experience in Communion and in other exercises, I tell you to rejoice to be in such a state, loving to be in the Divine Will. Be assured that in this way God is taking away self-love and readying you for great graces.

Give my thanks in the pure Heart of Jesus to Mother Whilemena and Sister Alba Diamante for the favor of the oil, and assure them that all here will pray the Divine Majesty to give them an eternal reward.

Give thanks in the Lord to Reverend Mother Abbess and Sister Hipolita for the charitable memory they keep of me as well as all the other religious. I greet them in the Side of Jesus and say to them that I will never forget to make them part of my poor prayers. They should do the same for my great needs.

Our poor Retreat is finished and breathes devotion. We are nine poor religious in all, that is, five priests and four lay brothers — all resolved to serve God. Persecutions have arisen, both from devils who are unchained and also from men. We have not taken solemn possession but wait moment by moment. Pray God that my sins do not tear up this plant, from which I hope to see copious fruits.

There is no truth whatever that Signore Marocco was ever clothed in our habit, so those are baseless rumors that are being spread and are not to be believed.

I will send the bottle to Porto San Stefano so that as soon as the boat leaves from there, I will consign it to you in care of Signore James, to whom I am including this.

I end by saluting you in the sweet Side of Jesus, and I pray the Sovereign Good to grant you the fullness of graces and blessings.

Greet Sister Alma Candida and, if there is any need, write.

Your true, unworthy servant,

Paul Danei

Agnes Grazi (53)

July 16, 1737

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ,

Just now I received your letter, and I hope to give you my reply by voice tomorrow, for Father Anthony gives me some news from Rome about the blessing of the church. It is necessary for me to come there. For now, I tell you that too much sugar gives babies the worms. The life of Jesus was all crosses.

You must remain in fear and trembling, but still trust. When I speak of fear, I mean a filial fear. In these great sweetnesses and elevations of mind there is always danger that the devil is playing a trick. So one who annihilates self, despises self, throws self into nothingness, and attributes all to God and nothing to self avoids all these tricks. Enough! We will speak together in the confessional.

I would wish that you did not ask Brother Anthony whether he heard you when you called. Oh! if you only knew what pain I suffered in this. He says, "Yes, he heard you."

I leave everything where it is, but I do not wish souls I take care of to go back to these things in which there are so many dangers.

The devil is not in hurry, and I have heard of horrible things. Do not speak about the war, the Germans, or anything else.¹²⁰ Recommend all to God. Poor Paul is preparing himself for new strife, new crosses, and he will embrace them willingly when God sends them. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love.

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (6)Saint Anthony
July 25, 1737*J.M.J.*

Your Most Reverend Eminence,

I understand from your vicar general that it is the intention of Your Eminence to have recourse to the Holy See to obtain an apostolic indult that would reduce to the rank of a private oratory the most decent church Your Eminence has in this region. Your Eminence can make sure of this by having an episcopal visitation or any other way that seems better to you. We cannot go along with this for many reasons. Mainly, if it is merely a private oratory, the shepherds who come to this part of the mountain, and others, would not be able to satisfy their obligation of hearing Mass, as Your Eminence has

120. In the War of the Polish Succession, France and Spain opposed Austria and Russia for the right to determine the king of Poland. The Spanish army defeated Austrian forces on Italian soil in 1734. Spanish Don Carlos was crowned King of Naples and Sicily as Charles III. Initial treaty was signed in 1735, but the final peace was not ratified until 1738.

informed me. We have done everything with the permission of Your Eminence, and you have shown yourself, in your charity, pleased with this work, both by word of mouth and in writing. The cornerstone was blessed with permission from your interim vicar general, who is one authority with the Ordinary. Your Eminence, toward the end of last autumn, while I was in Rome, wrote to your vicar general to bless this church and so informed me by word of mouth.

At this time all the difficulties that arose have been taken care of, and this was done precisely as Your Eminence demanded. You were sent the contract furnished by the Grazi family, agreeing to the maintenance of the sacristy and the furnishings. We have managed to fulfill everything Your Eminence prescribed and it is morally impossible to do more. So many feast days have gone by that the population of Orbetello and the surroundings are awaiting the ceremony and are amazed with the delay, when everyone knows that Your Eminence, as Ordinary Pastor, can give the faculty to bless the church and make it public in accord with the Council of Trent. Since you are able to do that, they do not understand why you are unwilling.

We attribute it all to our sins and, humbled before the Most High, we exclaim: "Your judgments are just and true, O Lord." The truth is that to promote this work for the pure glory of God and the good of the souls entrusted by the Most High to Your Eminence, we were sent and have passed through many dangers to life by land and by sea. In doing this we were moved by the great needs of this region.

If Your Eminence could only know in depth, you would not be able to stop weeping inconsolable tears, for living in the Garrison States are very many nationalities. So I leave you to consider in what condition your poor lambs find themselves. If they were to have someone to rouse them, things would be better.

In everything we adore Divine Providence and, although we have not been able to obtain the permission requested and begged for with such powerful reasons, we are in real necessity. A final decision, when there appears no other remedy, is to disperse all our company, who have been serving God with such fervor, especially in these times of so many rejections, since we cannot continue as things are now.

Nor will God demand an accounting of this from us since, in accord with the understanding that God has given me, we have done what we could. Three times we conducted missions and many times conducted retreats for the nuns and clergy. Whenever we were asked, we gave our assistance to the people. For several years in Porto San Stefano, we looked after the advantage of these souls, who at our arrival were completely ignorant, even of the principal mysteries of our Faith.

We undertook missions, Lenten and Advent courses, and, thanks to God, we followed the holy counsel: "Freely you have received, freely give." At Giglio we had a mission. So we cannot fathom the fact that Your Eminence is denying us permission, except it be because of our sins. We remain abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure and are disposed to withdraw somewhere to

prepare ourselves with greater attention and devotion for a holy death, which we can well expect soon in view of our many exhausting labors. Whence it is absolutely necessary that we resolve to preserve that peace so necessary for profit on the way to heaven, although for such a long time we have been assaulted, within and without, because of our work, and all this out of love for the sheep who are so neglected.

However, I will not omit, after so many hardships related to you, prostrating myself this last time at your feet, but repeat my supplication. Ah! Eminent Father, Most Reverend in Christ! how can you allow these servants and sons in Jesus Christ to be forced out of pure necessity to abandon this work? For if Your Eminence is not minded to grant the permission, which I am well informed you can grant as Ordinary, then it is necessary that we withdraw since it is impossible for us to continue in this excessive heat to walk more than a mile to celebrate Mass, all the more because in this air and this region we are always afflicted with much weakness and sickness because of our labors from study and other burdens which our vocations brings with it.

I ought not omit to mention and point out to Your Eminence that a high ranking personage, occupying a dignified position in the Church, has invited me to conduct missions in his city and diocese, and has asked me several times for two years that I establish a Retreat there. Up until now I have answered that I could not give the missions since I find myself in these great troubles and these poor souls still surround me. For the love God, may Your Eminence give us a final word. In case you do not think you can agree to blessing the church, then allow us freedom to go elsewhere with your blessing. Do not withdraw your protection so that we will not be objects of suspicion and in infinite struggles on left and right, and we then may leave in peace and do good to souls where we are called. My heart could not refrain from saying this because God wills it. Your Eminence has opened the way to promote the greater glory of God and the good of souls elsewhere. Nevertheless, I desire strongly that your soul be enriched with great treasure.

If Your Eminence thinks it necessary to obtain a brief in order to make our church a public oratory to the consolation of so many souls, or however better you judge, would it not be better for Your Eminence to obtain that brief? Ah, Most Eminent Lord, the souls under your care recommend themselves to your zeal. We do not merit anything whatsoever, but the fatigue, the sweat, and the blood of Jesus do. Pardon the length at which I write. The necessity and the good of souls, so much retarded, have all forced me to set out these final thoughts and resolves of mine, while I only await your venerated commands in order to execute them. Finally, I pay you my profound reverence and ask for your blessing and holy prayers.

Your Eminence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (7)

Mount Argentario

July 31, 1737

Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal,

Having called upon the Divine Name and his Divine Light, we come once more to prostrate ourselves at your feet with our respectful request, and we take courage in Jesus Christ to speak as sons to a father.

Your Eminence, how can your compassion bear the burden of allowing so much pain to afflict us two poor brothers and our companions, who have come together in the Name of God to serve the Sovereign Good, by delaying so long to give them permission to bless a church which they have built with all propriety for the worship of His Divine Majesty?

By the grace of God, our hearts cannot reprove us as having given any reason for Your Eminence to delay this blessing for such a long time, neither for the church building, which is the best suited that Your Eminence has in this district, nor for the provision for the upkeep of the building or the sacristy in view of the conditions Your Eminence prescribed. Consequently, Your Eminence, how can your good heart allow the suffering and pain, the inconveniences, and not a little wonderment in people, near and far, who have come to know about the situation and cannot comprehend the cause of the delays? And doesn't this leave it open for many people to make up stories in many ways, as I have been told?

Your Eminence well knows that when you instructed us through your vicar to serve the people committed to your pastoral care, we did not delay a single moment in obeying. Three times we preached missions in Orbetello, a fourth time if you count the retreat given at the convent and for your clergy. Besides, there were other retreats and sermons given in Porto San Stefano, along with missions and doctrinal instructions given frequently, without mentioning what was done on the island of Giglio. And we are ever ready to obey Your Eminence whenever you ask us.

Finally, Your Eminence, grant us out of love for all the work and suffering undergone by the Incarnate Word for the salvation of our souls the right to celebrate the Divine Sacrifice in this church, which we have built with divine assistance. Your Eminence should be aware that at present we are forced to walk a mile and more to celebrate. It has happened, and well may happen frequently in the future, that in this air, since everyone of us labors with poor health, in order not to risk the clear danger of incurring a grave illness, we will leave off celebration or attendance at Mass on feasts. I tell you this in order not to burden our consciences so that God will not demand an account from us at his dread tribunal.

If the liars and persecutors of this work of God, who are not wanting, and we know for certain there are such, continue to set out difficulties and calumnies to Your Eminence in order to block this work for the glory of God — although we can hope Your Eminence will not give them much of a hearing

— in that case, with God's help we will continue to suffer and pray for them, and continue to make our way to celebrate at Saint Anthony's, so long as God wants us here on the mountain.

I am unhappy that we are not going out in the midst of these poor souls to give the missions where we have been requested, but we cannot, due to the delay of this business.

We have done all we could so that the Divine Mysteries would be celebrated in our new church and that the praises of God would be offered there to the help of the poor souls in this most needy district. In the future we will continue to inform Your Eminence with our unworthy letters, and we will use all diligence and continue to suffer all that Divine Majesty wishes for us. With profound reverence, asking for your blessing, we affirm we have always been, are, and will be invariably,

Your Eminence's humble, obedient, unworthy servants,
Paul and John Baptist Danei

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Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (8)

Mount Argentario

[August 15,] 1737

Feast of the Assumption

J.M.J.

Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal,

With the greatest reverence I read the venerated intention of Your Eminence to reduce to a private oratory the most beautiful and proper church there is in this vicinity. Your Eminence could verify that by having a visitation by a bishop or anyone who would please you more. We cannot agree to this for many reasons. Principally because if it is merely a private oratory, none of the poor shepherds or others who often come to the mountain could satisfy the precept of attending Mass on feast days. And how could we have our own functions and celebrations on the principal solemnities which are forbidden to private oratories?

We have done everything with the permission of Your Eminence, and in your charity you have shown yourself pleased with our work, both in your writing and by word of mouth. The cornerstone was blessed for a church, not for a private oratory, and that with required permission of the interim vicar general, who forms one authority with his Ordinary. Around the end of autumn of last year, while I was there at your feet, Your Eminence wrote to your vicar general that he was to bless this church on a feast day of our choice, and you also so informed me with your own voice.

Now, all the difficulties that have come up have been overcome, and all that Your Eminence has asked to be done has been done. You have been sent the contract agreed to by the Grazi family, which is the richest in Orbetello, to maintain the sacristy and building. So all has been done that could be done to fulfill your commands. It is impossible to do more.

Your Eminence should know that the King of Naples has given with great concern his contribution for the conservation of this church and Retreat so that his soldiers and officials might come to make a retreat, as many desire to do. That would be possible for them, as well for ecclesiastics, but not possible if there is only a private oratory.

On this mountain there are two small hermitages, one of which is Saint Anthony's. They are public chapels, where any priest can celebrate and administer the sacraments of Confession for both sexes and Communion, as we ourselves have done. And this church, so well designed and devout, should be simply a private oratory?

At the feet of Your Eminence, I will tell you confidentially that when I was in Orbetello, one of the principal officers of the king asked me when the church, which was built with so much zealous cooperation of the king, will be blessed. I tried to answer him, as God inspired me, as best I could, saying that I hoped it would be soon.

But how is it we have not received from the Court of Rome the agreement of the king for the exchange? I, not knowing what to reply, said: "We believe all will go well, for His Eminence, our Pastor, is well disposed to our project." But he replied: "If the royal assent has not been accepted, someone will write the king that in Rome the royal assent has no weight." "Sir," I replied, "it is not necessary to write to the king; the royal assent will have its good effect."

Then he added: "Father Paul, you know who are opposed to this work? Priests and Mendicants who fear that this will take away their alms — all this out of cursed self-interest. All the officials and all the populace know very well, and they know that Cardinal Altieri, as Ordinary, can give the permission for the blessing of the church according to the Council of Trent. If he can, why is he not doing it?"

Your Eminence, I have given you a faithful account of the above, and what was I to reply? I simply say that Your Eminence should never fear that this Retreat would damage your clergy. We will oblige ourselves with a legal document not merely not to seek alms, and we have never done that, but to give back to the citizens of Orbetello the alms they would offer.

Concerning the exchange, if Your Eminence finds a difficulty there, it is not important to enforce it. This property will be rented, and the rent will always be paid a year in advance. For the love of Mary Most Holy, assumed into heaven, grant us permission to bless this church at least as a chapel for hermits, as are all the other rural churches of Christendom.

If Your Eminence believes, as some have informed you that there are no people coming here to hear Mass and go to confession — actually they come from distant places in the salt marches — they have informed you badly and, to speak charitably, the devil has made use of a their false zeal to block the great good to these poor ones who come up the mountain to purify their souls in the most holy Blood of Jesus Christ by means of the sacrament of Penance. The truth is that at the fearful tribunal of the Sovereign Judge, who will with his light illumine the things hidden in darkness, these miserable scoundrels will know, but without any profit, the ruin they have brought to souls.

I tell you this from information I have received from the majority who are in favor of this work of God. I have wanted to lay out to Your Eminence all my feelings after I celebrated the Divine Mysteries to seek light on this most holy day, and so that I will not have to repent at my death for having kept silence and say: "Woe to me for I was silent." Finally, while hoping for the favor here asked and paying you profound reverence, I ask your blessing and prayers, and end by kissing the hem of your purple robe.

Pardon me, Your Eminence. I add that we will oblige ourselves with public contract to always have three priests here — Your Eminence asked for only two — and four lay brothers, even when we are at time of missions.

Your Eminence's humble, unworthy, obedient servant,
Paul Danei

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Thomas Fossi (5)

Mount Argentario
August 26, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Son in Christ Jesus,

I received your letter with the one included from your wife. Since your letter is all taken up with a repetition of your pains of body and soul, I can reply to it with few words and say:

There is no need to be always looking at your sufferings and philosophizing minutely on them, or reflecting so much on yourself to see whether your sufferings please you or not and whether you take pleasure in them. Leave off these reflections, but continue to do the right things in simplicity, loving the Will of God in every event and keeping yourself truly beneath the Holy Cross without reflections and useless subtleties. When your mind turns to such reflections, cut it off immediately; for the extent that you reflect on the sufferings and so forth, you lose sight of the Sovereign Good. It is better to remain on the cross without any further inquiry. I would not have you going along philosophizing whether you are enjoying or whether your afflictions are increasing or whether this is a good sign or not. You should not be stopping at such things, unless you want to act as your own director. Rather, turn and abandon all care to the Heavenly Father and to him who directs you.

The way to free oneself from deceits is to humble oneself well, not to trust oneself, to recognize one's nothingness, to annihilate oneself before God, and to abandon one's self with filial confidence in the arms of God.

With regard to prayer, if you cannot put in that much time, it is not important. He always prays who does what is right.

Attend to the work for your household, and in that way you will do your duty, keeping yourself attentive to God and frequently plunging your spirit into the immense sea of divine love. It is not necessary to check up minutely whether this plunge was done well, whether you were attentive to God, and so on. No, dear one, these are useless cares. I repeat, you must go about doing good simply as children do.

You did well to follow the doctor's orders, and, if you are not cured, it is not important, for you did your duty. Take care to maintain your health, eat what is necessary, and take the sleep you need. In that way you build up your strength, if that is God's wish and for your good. So now take glory in Christ for your weakness, but without the kinds of reflecting referred to above, and pursue the good.

As for penances, for now be content with what God gives you. These are infinitely better than those we take on ourselves.

In prayer occupy yourself with the mysteries of the holy Life, Passion, and Death of Jesus; but if your soul relishes being alone with God in a humble, holy, and loving rest, let it remain thus. Frequently and gently renew your attention in pure and holy faith.

With regard to holy matrimony, I cannot give you any counsel. If I were there and I heard both of you in the confessional frequently, then after careful and diligent consideration, I might resolve things as best I can. But from here I cannot and ought not, for I could be in danger of deceiving myself, as experience proves. Offer fervent prayer to God that he let you know his Holy Will. I expect much good for you and entrust you to the infinite good to complete the work infinite charity has begun.

Be happy, my dear Thomas, especially when you are more afflicted, and believe that the work is from God. So cheer up. The storms and darkness will pass and there will come a holy light. Have no doubt of that. For now, continue on the path begun as best you can. Go to Communion at least every week, even twice a week on feasts. Do not be too long on your knees; make your preparation and thanksgiving sitting down on a low chair. The penitent Magdalene sat at the feet of Jesus; even the Apostles were seated when they received the Holy Spirit.

Oh! oh! listen my dear son. You are not to blame yourself for the illusions you report to me. God is permitting them to teach you to stay on guard and not to trust yourself. For the rest, God will keep you from all harm.

Listen to the wonderful text of Scripture in Tobias, Chapter 4: "But this everyone is sure of who worships you, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned; if it be under tribulation, it shall be delivered; if it be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to your mercy. For you are not delighted in our being lost because after the storm you make a calm, and after tears and weeping you pour in joyfulness. May your name, O God of Israel, be blessed for ever."

I wanted to copy this entire text, which gives me great consolation and courage in my tribulation and, I hope, it will be so for you. Reflect on these words and recite them before God and give no thought whether your sufferings are great or small, or your desires. But simply and purely love the Divine Will in itself and without reflections. I wanted to repeat this point, for it much impresses me.

I hear you wish to have news of the new Retreat. I can tell you that, thanks be to God, it is finished and breathes devotion; the church and choir are most proper. There is none like it in the area. It is true that all hell is up in arms as

well as men who persecute us. We are assaulted on left and right, within and without. Enough! Part of the difficulties have been overcome, and I hope the rest will be defeated soon. We already are living in the Retreat, but the church has not as yet been blessed because of the uproar mentioned above, which has succeeded in delaying the work of God. It is true that we expect the permission from Rome in a short time. Let us pray for those who calumniate us and persecute us.

We are nine in all, five priests and four lay brothers. All wear the habit that the unworthy one who writes wears, and all are fervent except the one replying to you. Ah! let us pray that God does not permit this plant to be uprooted. Let us pray much.

Courage, my dear one. I am ending, but I end by loving you in the pure Side of Christ. I hope that we will do good. Take care to grow well and do not neglect your exercises, at least not prayer, as you indicate to me, as well as the Most Holy Sacrament and recollection of heart. God will teach you his Holy Will. I have read with pleasure the condition of your daughter — how she is being brought up and how her mind is growing. Oh, if God would grant that before I die, I would see the mother and daughter consecrated to God, and the father also sacrificed to the glory of the Sovereign Good and the salvation of souls. Enough. Let us think of nothing beyond doing the Will of God. Goodbye, my dear one. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love.

Paul of the Holy \dagger , Your True Servant

161

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (9)¹²¹

Mount Argentario

August 29, 1737

J.M.J.

Most Eminent and Reverend Cardinal,

It will be for the highest glory of God and the great edification and spiritual help of our neighbor if Your Eminence, as I infallibly hope, will communicate your favorable report to the Sacred Congregation, as Your Eminence thought worthy to inform me in his venerated communication. We assure Your Eminence before God that we have always proceeded most sincerely and in all simplicity and, above all, with the greatest possible obedience to Your Eminence. Then if the reports have been submitted by whatever means and have been reviewed by a person favoring the work of God, we would have nothing more to do.

My conscience does not reprehend me, thanks be to God, on this business. As far as the royal assent, which Your Eminence wanted strengthened, I, in order to obey you, had determined to go to Naples but was prevented by friends out of fear that I would lose my health and even my life, because of the stormy weather, which was threatening at that time. Shortly afterward, the

121. Unable to obtain the permission of the cardinal for a public oratory, Paul finally submits everything to the Will of God.

judge from Naples, along with all the officials for this area, assured me that after using all diligence they could not obtain anything more since His Majesty is opposed to giving more than one approval for any project. They wrote Your Eminence to that effect. Your Eminence, what could I do? Was I not obliged to believe a public official, such as the general, who said the same thing, that is, that the king does not repeat concessions? In addition, Your Eminence, he asserted there is no one, whether private or royal official or any other, who would dare to make such a request to the king for fear of receiving a severe reprimand or worse.

So I do not know what more I can do except, as I have always done, abandon the whole project into the hands of the Almighty, who knows well how to clear away all the difficulties in his own time and to use whom he will for his greater glory.

Regarding the two public oratories that are connected with hermitages on this mountain, we have found them to be such, and I believe it has been so beyond the memory of man. There is no reason to doubt that they were established by the authority of the bishop who takes care of the visitations. Masses are celebrated there by priests of all sorts and for all times and for all the solemnities. Whereas, if they had been private oratories established by apostolic brief, as Your Eminence informed me, they could not have been used in the way they were used. We, ourselves, have celebrated Holy Thursday here, and the bishop was always in agreement, even though we now live collegially under the authority of the Ordinary.

I can add for Your Eminence a more recent example. For twenty years, under the jurisdiction of Your Eminence, the Grazi family built a church on their holdings around Albigna with the permission of Your Eminence, and there celebrations are held for all times by all. All these country churches, or we may wish to say country public oratories, were erected and opened with the permission of the Ordinary. In Portercole, beyond the gates and to some distance, there is the Church of Saint Rock, built by a dear benefactor after the first War of the Garrisons. There celebrations are permitted without limitation, and it was built with the permission of the Ordinary.

There are the Churches of Our Lady of the Vineyard and of Saint Blaise, which are not far from Orbetello. The Church of Saint Blaise is a wretched chapel, but it is treated in the same way as the others. I have seen the same in Lombardy and everywhere else I have traveled.

This is all I can say to obey Your Eminence with regard to what you requested.

And now, seeing that by our faults we are unworthy to receive the favor which Your Eminence could so easily bestow, we are having recourse to the Holy Apostolic See to obtain a brief for a private oratory as You Eminence prefers. With this we are content since in this way we will have more opportunity to stay at the feet of the Crucified, and in this way the road is closed for us to help our poor by administering, as we have done up until now, the holy sacraments of Confession and Communion. Only when we are asked to give missions will we go out to other dioceses where we are called to

conduct missions. We trust that the mercy of God will have pity on these poor men who desire to serve him all their days with all their hearts, and he will cause the apostolic brief to be soon expedited, seeing that His Divine Majesty knows we no longer know what to do and that half of us are sick. For various reasons this cannot continue.

All our hopes now rest in his infinite goodness. We return thanks to our Crucified Love, who has closed to us all the ways of men so that we may place more confidence in his paternal protection.

With profound respect, recommending ourselves to your prayers and seeking your blessing,

Your humble, obedient servant,

Paul Danei

162

Agnes Grazi (54)

[Mount Argentario]

August 29, 1737

May the pure love of Jesus be always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

Today, I spent the whole day with pen in hand, and I hope I have fulfilled the Will of God, for I was working for the poor Retreat. Today, I found myself more deeply rested in God, and it was that way at the holy altar. God be blessed.

Remember, my daughter, that yesterday, during our devout conference, I told you that once, when I had to pass through a heavy storm, I found myself before my sacramental Love and my soul flew in spirit to embrace that Infinite Love exposed on the altar for the adoration of the people. Then I heard my Savior speak this sweet message: "My son, he who embraces me, embraces thorns." Do you believe, my daughter, that my soul fails to understand that our Jesus is a sea of infinite sweetness? Certainly, I have understood that, but God made me understand something further with the words: "He who embraces me, embraces thorns." Just as our good Jesus willed that his life on earth should be passed always in the midst of the thorns of pain, sufferings, fatigues, privation, agony, contempt, calumny, sorrow, nails, thorns, and a most bitter death on the cross, so he made me understand that in embracing him, I would have to live my life in the midst of pain. Oh! how my heart exulted and embraced every sort of pain. But I have been unfaithful. I want to die of sorrow. I have wanted to explain myself in case you have not well understood me; but understand me now, so as not to be mistaken.

Oh! what holy thoughts I had today while walking. Thoughts of charity and love and union with God for my soul and for your soul. O True God, what will our hearts be like when we swim in that infinite sea of sweetness! What will it be like when up there in heaven we are all transformed by love in God, and we will be happy with that infinite goodness with which our God is happy? What will it be like, my daughter, when we will sing in eternity the divine

mercies, the triumphs of the Immaculate Lamb and of Mary, our Most Holy Mother!

What will it be when we sing without ceasing that eternal Trisagion, "Holy, Holy, Holy," and when with all the saints we sing Alleluia! This will always come from our hearts, our spirits. When we are united to God more than iron is united to fire, for without ceasing to be iron, it seems to be all fire; so we shall be so transformed into God that the soul will be completely divinized. Oh, when will that day come! When, when will death come to break the wall of this prison! Ah, that will be the day of our espousals, of our marriage, in which our soul in the highest fashion will espouse our dear Jesus and will be seated forever at the heavenly banquet table.

I have extended myself longer than I ought. Behold what confidence in God has expanded my soul with you. But, is it not right that a poor father sometimes should have an outburst of love for his daughters? Let us love God; let us make ourselves very small so that God will make us great.

Above all, keep the usual rules for fleeing deceits and especially continuous humility, self-contempt, silence, resignation — all bound in the golden chain.

Pray for me as usual. Jesus bless you. Amen.

You need to pray for Father Anthony, for his health seems not at all improved.

Paul, Your True Servant.

163

Cardinal Lawrence Altieri (10)

Presentation
October 29, 1737

J.M.J.

Your Eminence,

With all possible reverence and consolation of my spirit, I am obeying your venerated commands, received in this ordinary post, with reference to the information on Donna Maria from Giglio, daughter of Vincent Lubbiano.¹²² Your Eminence should be aware that on the Feast of the Birth of Mary, I found myself at Porto San Stefano to work for the poor fishermen and the rest of the populace by preaching the divine word and taking care of confessions, as I had been urgently asked to do by these people. It was then that the lady came from Giglio. I had no knowledge of her previously but was instantly asked to pray over her and perform an exorcism over her.

I refused strongly, all the more so since I did not have permission for it and also because a poor worker who is in the middle of a mission and hearing confessions cannot give himself to such a task, which demands complete

122. Paul writes from "the Retreat" on Mount Argentario to Cardinal Altieri about an exorcism he conducted in September at Porto San Stefano. This is the only letter in which he mentions diabolical possession. In the Passionist archives in Rome there is a note that Martin Di Rio was a Jesuit who wrote an article in 1599 about magic arts.

dedication and not a little time when there is question of using the ordinary means.

They were so insistent that they forced me to yield, and so I wrote to Orbetello to obtain the permission from the vicar general. Actually, I did not write myself, but the chaplain did so on the part of those who were with the lady.

The vicar general decided to send the faculties, and one morning the lady came to the church at a time I was besieged in the confessional with a crowd of poor fishermen. As soon as she got into the church and caught sight of me, she began to shout out. From the confessional I issued a silent command and she became quiet.

She then came to make her confession and had scarcely knelt at my feet when she began, once more, to make an outcry. I repeated my silent command that she be quiet, and she made her confession with complete devotion, etc. ... I then gave her Communion, and I assure Your Eminence that she is a woman who reveres God greatly.

In the evening, after I had preached to the poor people, I had everyone leave the church. In prayer I recommended the business of the lady; then I had her brought in. She had not come until then; someone went and brought her into the church. In the presence of the chaplain and two trustworthy women who held on to her, and with the church locked I began the exorcism according to the prescription of the Roman Ritual.

She manifested some reactions with shouting, howling, twisting, and thrashing her body about. I pursued the exorcism with all my strength and used the strongest prescriptions of our Holy Mother Church. And so I continued for about an hour, binding the evil spirits to leave the woman. And she did become quiet and free of the pains she first endured. According to what I am told, she slept quietly and she ate. Previously, she did that only with great pain and difficulty, as is usual with those so afflicted. She did not stop thanking God.

She returned to Giglio, and from there they told me she was doing well. But from there they let me know that she is once more in her first condition. I am not surprised at that and attribute that to my fault and weak faith.

She did not give any extraordinary signs, such as speaking in Latin or other languages, but did show other signs which make me fear that she was possessed. I assure Your Eminence, however, that I am hard to convince in this area, especially when it comes to women who are given to strong imaginations and often believe what is not so. And there are other sicknesses which not rarely imitate the actions of the obsessed. I have heard experts say that.

But since there are all kinds of evil spirits, as our learned Martin Di Rio tells us, it takes very experienced men to discern, and it is, above all, necessary that they be men of great love of God and armed with the liveliest of faith. Before God I say in truth as I feel, and I do not lie, that I am most unworthy and very far from that level. Therefore, I would not know how to act with the woman except to recommend her to the Sovereign Giver of all that is good.

I am, however, disposed to do all that Your Eminence is fit to command me; and in order to obey you in giving my opinion, I see myself prostrate at

your feet to fulfill the obedience. But I say that it seems good to me to make use of the care of doctors to determine whether the sickness may be natural. If they see it is not natural and, if nothing helps her sickness, then in order to take away all apprehension, make use of some expert servant of God who will perform the exorcisms.

It is certain that this shouting cannot go on in church and in approaching the Blessed Sacrament or prayer, etc. These are bad signs and usual with the obsessed. But, I submit all to your wise judgment. I will write to Giglio, to the archpriest, as you have commanded me, and I will send him my opinions.

Would that the brief for the private oratory come soon, as I mentioned in my previous letter.¹²³ I place myself once more at your feet through today's ordinary post, in which I give you the information you asked from me. I should leave for a mission in Umbria, where I have been asked for. In that event, when I go, I will take with me only a priest companion. Three priests will remain at the Retreat with four lay brothers.

I end, prostrate at your feet, and ask your prayers and holy blessing. With profound reverence, I am your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul Danei

164

Agnes Grazi (55)

Presentation

November 6, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter with the note and do not have time to respond to everything. I simply tell you what I said at other times. These frequent visions are always dangerous; therefore, you must reject them constantly, but without strain of head or stomach. Let the entire work be of your will, annihilating yourself before God, spurning the visions and not willing anything like that, and despoiling yourself as much as possible. When the fruits are good, the tree that produces them is good; when prayer and what happens in prayer bring with them humility, charity toward God and one's neighbor, love of suffering, knowledge of one's nothingness, from which comes self-contempt, and a great ardor in loving the Sovereign Good, in such cases there is no deceit for the devil cannot produce effects like these. Then be on guard and do not believe in any lights, but be strong in the fear of God, praying His Divine Majesty to free you from the snares of the enemy.

Never make anything out of the union in spirit you sense with me. Flee from that, for even here the devil can be playing his tricks. Reject that gently and cling to the Crucified. As for praying for me and for yourself, that is good because it is the effect of charity.

123. At the close of the letter Paul writes about a brief for a private oratory promised by the cardinal. On August 31, 1737, the Holy See granted Paul permission to celebrate liturgical ceremonies and administer the sacraments in the Church of the Presentation.

Make nothing out of the impulses that you sense. I assure you I have not given you any commands since I have come here. So take your necessary sleep and during the night, after you have prayed a couple of hours, go back to sleep. When it seems to you that I am giving you an order, make nothing of it. Continue with your work in hand, in the time and place you are, without paying attention to such visits, impulses, or voices. Here, too, the devil can be mixing in to have you lose sleep, ruin your health, and lose your peace.

I cannot come down below, as you ask, for the servants of God down there. So you can tell them to follow the rules and advice they were given, for they are walking well. In good time, if God wills, I will assist them.

I thank God for the consolations that continue in your soul, and you should thank God, for poor Paul finds himself close to hell. God be blessed that in his just judgments he wills me to walk in this way.

Pray God to give me time for penance and contrition for my sins and light to know them and grace for a happy death. Jesus bless you and inflame you with holy love.

At your first chance write a note to Signora Candida and tell her that the robe cost thirty-one *paoli*,¹²⁴ and the one who accompanied me forgot them. So I will send them to her by a safe person and consign them secretly. Let her know I have written.

Greet Signora Maria Johanna for me in Jesus Christ and encourage her to serve God.

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

165

Agnes Grazi (56)

Presentation
November 15, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

In reply to your letter, given me by Brother Hyacinth, I say to you, in the first place, that your all too frequent imaginary happenings are much to be suspected. I fear that the devil is contriving to play his trick — I trust he will not succeed. However, continue to obey the directions given you. Reject them, spurn them with the intention of scorning the devil. Go to prayer empty of all desire beyond that of pleasing God. I wish that in your approach to prayer, that after your act of faith in the Presence of God, you hold for certain that you are a stinking manure pile, a creature running with pus, a crawling heap of worms. Then say: "O my soul, what a stench you are for your God!"

When these visions or imaginations come to you, annihilate yourself and consider yourself worse than a pile of manure. Believe that a pestilential odor exudes from you. Seek mercy from God and be astounded that hell does not swallow you up. The devil is playing the ape and knows how to transform

124. A *paolo* was a monetary unit or coin in the Papal States during the time of Paul.

himself into an angel of light, even taking over the likeness of Mary Most Holy, of the saints, or even of Jesus Christ himself. The devil can cause a false peace and false consolations, so do not trust yourself. The correct thing is to bury yourself in faith.

Above all, never again make that comparison to the Holy Trinity. These are incomprehensible mysteries, and we are not able to understand them — least of all you, you poor, ignorant woman. The greatest consolation that I have been able to have in this life is not to know, nor be able to comprehend, the marvels of the Divine Mystery, which faith discovers for me. I rejoice in God and tell him he would not be my God, that immense Infinite Good that he is, if I, a vile little worm, were able to understand his marvelousness. I rejoice that only he can comprehend that. In this way I quiet myself and am very happy to believe in the obscurity of faith, although it is a darkness clearer than light.

So then, when such understanding comes to you, say: “I am a poor, clumsy ignoramus. I believe all that my Mother, the Holy Catholic Church, believes and teaches. I believe that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Spirit is God; and that there are not three Gods, but one, single God in Three Persons. The Father has no principle, nor is he begotten by any. The Son is begotten eternally by the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. There is one Eternal God in Three Divine Persons. We believe and adore in the simplicity of holy faith, and so end up well.

That union, and so on, that comes to you from my heart, although you write of this with a right intention, that is, since I assist you with holy direction, there is no way I want you to write in this way, but give all the glory to God and annihilate yourself in God. To state it better, say that it comes from the pure Heart of Jesus and not from the heart that is a den of demons, a tree of dragons!

We need to purify our affections and make sure they are directed completely to the love of God alone. Ah, how self-love can steal, under the appearance of good, some share of our heart! You are not to entertain so much compassion for me. I do not want it, nor do I desire it. I do not merit the compassion of anyone. I, who have offended God, deserve that all creatures shout out: “Death! Death to the traitor. Execute vengeance.”

I have always said, and I tell you again, that the foundation of the work is good and is of God; there is no deceit in what is essential. But in the number of imaginative happenings, the locutions, and so on, there is much danger, and for that reason flee these things. And, as I have always said, make your prayer in faith, in a loving rest, or in the way that God leads you. To sum up, conduct yourself as the Holy Spirit guides you, keeping to the rules given you. It is not necessary to write me at such great length or so often or always going over the same things. It is enough to write what is necessary. God bless you and inflame you with love.

Above all, when spurning these imaginative happenings, do it without straining your head, for that is not necessary. Do it gently, renouncing these things with an act of will

Your servant in God,
Paul of the Holy †

166

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (11)

Presentation

Orbetello

November 20, 1737

May the sweet Jesus and his † live always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On my return from the missions to the Retreat, I found your letter, and only God knows how dear it was to me for the precious news I read there of your conduct. Onward, my daughter. Now you begin to be a disciple of Jesus Christ! I am very happy that you once more are going without a chemise, as long as you maintain due decency and modesty. I hope that little by little the Divine Majesty will teach you his Will and give you the grace to fulfill it. I am not writing at greater length for there is no reason to do so since I do not see anything new in your soul. I am sorry that I must leave to preach the Advent sermons. But if you will write me, I will inform them here at the Retreat that they are to forward your letter since I am going to Scanzano about eighteen miles away and will answer you from there.

I am sure that I did not receive two of your letters, so it must be that they were lost. May the Will of God be done. I have received the letter of September 22. Try to send your letters securely and address them: Signore D. Francis Carascon, Commissioner of War. Put two copies of the address inside with the directions for them. I also will tell them about this. Signore Carascon is stationed in Orbetello and will send me any letters safely.

Now listen, my daughter in Jesus Christ, I trust in the good God that he who has begun this work will bring it to perfection. Oh, if you only knew with what a loving eye God regards you! Courage, then!

Continue with the rules you have been given about prayer and all the rest. Take your repose completely in God, treat one-on-one with the Sovereign Good, remain in your nothingness, cast this nothingness into the Infinite All that is God, and let yourself be lost in that infinite sea of love.

After not a few troubles, an apostolic brief was issued. On September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the principal feast of our newly born Congregation, we made our solemn entry and had the blessing of the church and Retreat. I had the part of leading the way with the cross held high with a rope around my neck and eight companions followed me, five priests and four lay brothers. A discourse fitting to the occasion was delivered and the sacred ceremony came to a close. All my companions are clothed in the same habit as I wear. In all we are nine, besides one who waits to be vested. They all serve God with fervor except the unworthy one who writes to you. The

principal difficulties are coming up now, for shortly I must go to Rome and place myself at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff for the approval of the Rule. What frightens me is the fact I am in no wise prepared. So you see, my daughter, that you have done well to pray for this work. Continue now to pray for it from your heart, and I assure you that you will have part in the merit, as much as if you had actually shared our vocation. I hope and am confident that before dying I will have good news. But as for now God knows the seas in which I find myself. I have need that you pray much for me.

When you address me in a letter, or otherwise, do not use the word "daddy." For although you do so with great simplicity and love, it is a worldly term. It is better that you call me by the tender name of "father," for God, the great Father of Mercies, has given you to me as a daughter in the pure Heart of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. I end by leaving you in that Heart which is the King of Hearts. Greet the Father Confessor and the Mother Abbess for me and all the good religious. Let them pray for me. God bless you and inflame you with love.

Greet Sister Alma Candida for me; I desire that she be all God's and live only for God. Let her remember her holy resolutions.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Missionary

167

Agnes Grazi (57)

Presentation
December 20, 1737

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your letter, which was open because you did not seal it. Since there was no paste, it was left open. All I have to say is that you should be careful about this. I understand what you are saying about Father Anthony. May God grant him a safe trip, and once he returns he is not to come there, but to the mountain. If he wants to hold on to his vocation, he needs to stay withdrawn. I will not give in to flesh and blood.

I am astonished that you tell me you are worried that you do not know what title to give me. When have I ever asked for titles? The son of a poor tobacco shopkeeper — a beggar, born poor and living as a beggar, despised and most miserable — merits a title! Oh, you are much deceived and still do not know me, although you ought to know me. Continue, therefore, to address me just as you always have. If you have anything of special importance to tell me, do so when it pleases God. If it weighs upon you, write me, for at present I cannot leave here. Follow the advice I gave you with regard to your spiritual conduct and do not trust yourself. Remain in pure faith and love.

With regard to my leaving here, I will leave in the best way I can. But when I have fulfilled my task, I should hide myself and allow myself to be seen little. I hope that I will be able to do this more and more. I have made

strong resolutions during these holy days, for that is what God wills. He who is much with men comes away less a man.

As regard the Holy Night, I say that they will dine late, and before they leave the table, it will be three or four hours after the Ave Maria bell. I want you to show yourself pleasing, but very recollected and modest and quiet in speaking for an hour after you have dined. During this hour converse with whomsoever you will. Then go to your room and settle into prayer.

Spend part of the time of your prayer on your knees, the greater part seated, but I leave you free. At 5 hours I think the bells will ring, so you will be able to stay in contemplation of the great mystery until the service has finished. Take care to take a nap in the first part of the evening, at least at 6 hours, and then get up and stay in prayer to the end of the day. Really, I cannot give you a rule. For this night I leave you free and give the merit of obedience for all that you do.

I am not giving you any devotional practices, for it is a fool who is writing from after Matins until now. Use the advice given in the past. Caress the Divine Infant frequently and have Mary Most Holy anoint your heart with her holy milk and mix that with the tears of the Infant. Annihilate yourself, despise yourself, humble yourself, but gently, for if Mary Most Holy sees that your heart is tiny and infant-like in humility, she will allow you to embrace the dear Divine Infant. In this Holy Night, more than ever, I recommend you to His Divine Majesty and wish you a Holy Christmas; however, I already extended my wishes on the Day of Mary's Expectation of Birth.

I have nothing more to say of myself. Do me the charity of continuing to recommend me to the Lord, especially on the Holy Night. I will be always more obligated to you.

Do not worry about having called me an ungrateful father since, to a large extent, I am. However, do not be scrupulous about that, for it was said with good intent. I cannot write more, for it is a nobody who is writing this letter. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am and will be ever,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

168

Agnes Grazi (58)

Presentation
[After July] 1737

Live the holy †.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last evening I could not say everything, for it was night and I wrote in haste. Who knows if you understood the letter? In the prayer of faith, in which the soul rests in the love of God, and in these other elevations which leave the soul humble, fervent with a love of suffering and virtue and to do great things for God, there can never be deceit. But in the imaginings of the mind and so on, often, often the devil moves in to deceive the soul under the color of good. Truth is found when the soul is entirely united to God and distrustful of self;

this does not happen when the devil is present. It is from the fruits which result that we judge, as I have told you at other times. This beast has not spared the great servants of God; but because they were humble, they made a fool of him. So the rule, my daughter, is the rule of the saints: reject such things of every kind. If they are good, they will bring their effects; if they are evil, the devil will leave confused and beaten.

But in rejecting these things there is no need to force your head or strain your spirit, but humble yourself gently, invoke the divine help to drive off the imaginings, and continue your prayer in God.

If these visions continue, make little of them, as if they were the flies of summer, and get on with your loving devotion with your Highest Good. Go ahead and write to Sister Lilia, the Mother Prioress, and to whomever you want, but write with prudence and as little as possible. Pray God he give me the strength and patience and grace to die a happy death. If God inspires you to withdraw to a convent, I concur with all my heart. God will provide you with many servants of God to counsel you. Jesus bless you.

Your Servant,

Paul of the †

169

Agnes Grazi (59)

—
1737

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am including a letter to Mother Lilia. Please do me the favor of forwarding by post to her. I received your letter and have no more to say except that your soul should not repose in the gift, but in the Giver, keeping to your vileness and nothingness and that you merit nothing but hell and have become worse than nothing because of sin. I am most fearful with regard to what you tell me about Don Fabio and other officials who were watching you at prayer, and what they said. Be aware that the devil can make use of the tongues of men to rob you of the treasure of God by causing you to be proud. Avoid such things like the plague. Hear them with displeasure and take yourself away as best you can. When you hear such things, humble yourself before God, ask his pardon, and pray that he does not punish you as you deserve. Despise yourself, hate yourself as a sewer, as one guilty of the death of Jesus, God and Man, and as one who has offended God so often. Continue with your regular rules for prayer and the rest as we agreed at our conference. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Brief Instructions for Preparation for Meditation:

First, make an act of faith, believing firmly that you are in the Presence of God. For example: "My soul, you are before God — go where you will, you are always in the presence of the Divine Majesty of your God. You are entirely in God; you are the Temple of God; you are filled with God; God is within and without you. O my God! O my Highest Good, I adore you. From the depth of my nothingness I adore you. O my Great God, I wish I could adore you with the reverence of which your saints adore you. I invite heaven and earth, the sea and all things to adore with me. Come dear angels, come saints, come souls of the earth, come all creatures to adore with me our dear God."

Act of Humility:

"O my Lord! O my true God! Oh, how dare I stand in your presence! The angels tremble before you, the heavens are not clean in your sight, and I, a vile worm, a sordid creature, an abyss of sin, dare to treat with Your Divine Majesty? Ah, my God! Ah! my true Good! I am not worthy to stand before you. I deserve to be in the pit of hell."

Take yourself deep into the knowledge of your own nothingness and in the knowledge of the immensity of God, and draw out acts of humility, self-contempt, and contrition.

"Oh, God, how unhappy I am to have displeased you so often. Oh, God, what have I done! Oh, my God, I am sorry to have offended you! Would that my heart could break! Oh, my Love! would that I could die in pain for having ever offended you, who are infinite goodness! Jesus, my dear one, no more sins. No more, my love, no more ..."

Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin, to your patron saints, especially Saint Joseph and Saint Teresa.

"O dear mother, Mary Most Holy, assist me in holy prayer. Pray for me. Pray, O guardian angel, pray you saints in paradise, especially you, Saint Joseph ... Ah! Jesus, give me your holy light out of love for Mary Most Holy."

Then meditate by slowly reading the book word for word. God will give you light. Do not doubt and remain assured.

Where you feel devotion, stop. Then make prayers of thanksgiving and of petition. End with an Our Father and Hail Mary.

Short Method for Offerings:

"My God, I offer you the holy lights you have given me in this holy prayer. I offer you the resolutions I have made with your help. I offer you my poor heart and wishes to always love you. Oh! that I might have everyone's heart with which to love the Sovereign Good! Oh, that I might be on fire with love. I thank you, O Infinite Love, for all the graces you have given me, and as a thanksgiving I offer you the Blood of my Jesus and the Heart of Mary Most Holy."

Here, you can invite the saints and all creatures to thank the Divine Goodness. Then make your petitions. Ask for holy virtues, especially humility, obedience, and love of God and your neighbor. Pray for everyone. End by making a spiritual communion.

I have no more time. Pray for me and become holy. God bless you.

Your servant in Jesus Christ,

Paul

Salutary Advice for Signore:

Most exact observance of the holy laws of God. Put into practice the execution of all the means to observe them, guiding oneself as follows:

1. Go to Communion every two weeks and to Confession every week, always with devout preparation, as the holy books instruct us.

2. As a good Christian, immediately after rising spend at least a quarter of an hour of mental prayer on the Last Things or on the Passion of Christ. There is nothing more useful and meritorious than devotion to the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy.

3. In leaving the house take your first steps to the church and adore the Blessed Sacrament for the space of the *Miserere*.

4. Attend Mass every day.

5. Practice abstinence and mortification, especially on Friday, depriving yourself of something that pleases you most and, if possible, to fast on this day with a prudent fast.

6. Mortify one's eyes by not staring at women in the face.

7. Avoid evil companions even more than the devil. Use recreation modestly and in moderation. In short, live a life worthy of a true Christian.

Maxims:

Place yourself on your bed, as upon the cross, in the position of the agonizing Jesus and call yourself by name and say: "Ah, John, who knows whether this will be the last night for you? What lot awaits you? Heaven or hell? O great and endless eternity! O keys of fearful eternity, where will you lock me? Into heaven or hell? Think, oh, my poor soul! O vain pleasures! O vain riches! O vanity of the world, you are not made for me!"

Ejaculations: "O dear Jesus, save me!" "Ah! dear pains!" "Ah! my great sins, where have you brought me!" "Oh! how many times I have crucified you!" "Oh! that I could die of sorrow!" And others as devotion suggests.

Pray much for me and God bless you. Amen.

SEEKING PAPAL APPROVAL

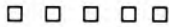
OF THE RULE

(1738–1741)

Finally able to reside in the new Retreat, Paul faces two big challenges. He must obtain papal approval of the Congregation and the Rule, and he must secure companions. To obtain approval he needed companions, for it was only by keeping the Rule with companions that he could solve the objections raised by the authorities in Rome. But without approval few would be willing to join him in his new Retreat! He must also be ready to go to Rome at any time his presence is needed. Paul will continue his mission work and receives the title of "Apostolic Missionary" with the right to preach missions throughout Italy.

We follow him during these years as we read the letters he wrote from 1738 to 1741. Even in one letter he might treat of all these challenges. He does find time to give Agnes a hurried hour as he passes through Orbetello to or from a mission, and to write a few lines to Appiani, Fossi, Sister Cherubina, and others.

The new pope, Benedict XIV, will give papal approval of the Rule on May 15, 1741.



APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY (1738–1739)

Paul continues in his mission work, even with an eye on the possibility of going to his home area. He also keeps in touch with his spiritual disciples. Above all, he keeps in contact with Rome, where his friends are working to get the Congregation approved, but decisions are delayed by the death of Clement XII in February.

172

Agnes Grazi (60)

Rome

January 17, 1738

J.M.J.

Live the Holy Cross.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

Behold me in Rome attached to the cross of my beloved Jesus. I already see not a little trouble, but I am confident God will overcome everything. This next week I hope the Constitutions will be presented to the Sacred Congregation. That demands redoubled prayers. He who has seen them came away edified. I do not know what the outcome will be, but I hope for the best, and I do not anticipate anything else except to grasp the cross in a strong and close embrace.

Continue, my daughter in Jesus Christ, with the old rules for your interior and annihilate yourself always more and more, entirely distrustful of yourself. Let the loving breeze of the Holy Spirit carry you wherever the Divine Goodness pleases. Do not speak about me except to have them recommend me to God, and show yourself indifferent to whatever happens. If you wish to write me, give your letter to your uncle or send it to the commissioner. God bless you and inflame you with love. Do not tell any of the devout souls that I have written to you. Have people pray. I am, and will always be, in the Side of Jesus,

Your true servant,

Paul of the †

Pope Clement XII (3)January 22, 1738¹²⁵

Most Holy Father,

Paul and John Baptist, Danei brothers, priests of the diocese of Alessandria della Paglia, Province of Milan, living in the Retreat of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy on Mount Argentario, humble servants and petitioners of Your Holiness, prostrate at your most holy feet, declare that whereas they were ordained to the priesthood with title of service to the sick by Benedict XIII of holy memory and not being able to continue in their service to the sick because of their indispositions were granted a change of title by the special permission of Your Holiness to that of holy missions, which they now exercise in dioceses to which they are called. They, therefore, ask the extreme kindness of Your Holiness to grant them the faculty to continue giving missions within Italy with the consent of the Ordinaries. And to bring greater profit to souls, they ask that Your Holiness give them, in addition, the faculty of bestowing the apostolic blessing and the plenary indulgence to the missionary priests as well as to all the faithful of both sexes who, being truly penitent and having confessed their sins, have gone to Communion on one day during the mission.

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (12)

Presentation
February 10, 1738

Live the Holy Cross.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On my return from Rome, I received your letter with the other document and flowers. That document regarding assignments,¹²⁶ God knows how many they are, I have not read it, but I will read it later more slowly and respond with the grace of God. I give you heartfelt thanks in the pure Heart of Jesus for the great charity you continue toward me, and I pray the Highest Good to enrich you with all the fullness of his grace and blessings. I am very confident before God that the affairs of your soul go from good to better.

I find myself somewhat at sea with the continuing difficulties to be overcome for the establishment of this work. More and more I fear that my ingratitude may block the way. The Constitutions are in Rome and who knows whether I may not be called once more this Lent to hear the decision of the Sacred Congregation. Believe me, I have much need of prayers. All this I say to your heart and no further.

125. Paul requests the title of missionary for all of Italy and the right to impart the apostolic blessing with a plenary indulgence. January 22, 1738, is the date on which this request was granted. The letter was probably written earlier in January.

126. "That document regarding assignments" probably refers to tasks around the convent, e.g., cooking, door keeper, sacristan, etc.

I have written to Sister Alma Candida, and she is wrong to lament, for I am certain that I answered her and included a reply to her cousin. However, I am just now writing again. If she only knew my duties and my little strength, then perhaps she would not attribute it to my fault, for it is simply my incapability. I have found myself with a heap of letters to answer, beyond those greatly pressuring me to answer. God knows how things are with me.

Live Jesus! I hope in a short while to write more at length. Greet Sister Reginalda and tell her that the booklet pleased me much. I rejoice that she is so fortunate with the illness she tells me about. Oh, she is a thousand and a thousand times fortunate, for she has such a sign of predestination! Oh! how I want to say wonderful things to her! Let her go to the Crucified, and he will speak to her heart.

Greet the Father Confessor, Mother Abbess, and all. I leave off in haste. Follow your old rules for virtue, prayer, and so on. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. Amen. The lay brother you are asking about is doing well.

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul Francis of the Holy †

175

Marchioness Donna Marianna Della Scala Del Pozzo (13)¹²⁷

Presentation

February 11, 1738

J.M.J.

Illustrious Lady and Devoted Patroness,

It was with joy of spirit that I received your letter, dated December 3. Accordingly, I thank the Sovereign Good for the mercies he continues toward your soul and the grace imparted to your daughters by the Divine Goodness with the call to the religious life. This gives me reason to rejoice much in God, all the more for your spirit will be the freer and have more time to treat one-on-one with the sweet Savior in holy prayer.

I would gladly conduct a mission there on your estate, but in addition to the things that I am required to do here, at least for the rest of this year, I could not come that distance for one small estate. I would need to have a campaign of two or three months. Enough! Who knows? If God will open the way, I am willing. All the more so since just now, while I was in Rome, I obtained an apostolic indult to give missions in Italy. This gives me reason to have the bishop grant me permission to conduct missions throughout the diocese and even for the other nearby dioceses of Acqui or Tortona. This is a project for the Marquis; and I would hope he would succeed with much fruit in this, for things are quite different than at first, etc. In case he should succeed, let me know months before so that I do not engage myself in other work. Right now

127. The marchioness evidently asked Paul to preach a mission to her laborers on her estate. Paul pointed out to her what would be necessary for him if he returned to Lombardy to preach missions. He would have wanted to return there, but too many things tied him down at this time. In 1743 he did give a mission in the archdiocese of Genoa, but encountered difficulties with the civil authorities. There are no further references about preaching in the north nor of visiting there.

I am to give a mission in the diocese of Città delle Pieve, close to Perugia. I do not know if I will finish this in two campaigns. Pray much for most needy me, and be certain I never lose sight of your soul or that of the Marquis and all your house. You are always in my prayers. I end by leaving you in the sweet Side of Jesus, where I declare I am always,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul Francis Danei, Apostolic Missionary

176

Agnes Grazi (61)

Presentation
February 22, 1738

J.M.J. †

The peace of Jesus be always with you, beloved daughter in Christ,

I received your letter and rejoice in the thoughts therein. You will do well to remain solitary and come for a conference when God wishes. Most of all, it is better to have the conferences in the confessional, but if God wills them at another time, I will let you know by holy obedience. One who does not wish to be deceived must open her heart to the spiritual director, and that is what you need to do. But once you have done your duty, withdraw to treat with God. For the rest, do not be pained by these tears which come from a heart that is still infantile, for this is what infants do when the mother refuses them milk or if she goes into another room. Humble yourself and quiet yourself in the name of God. This is not a sin, but only an imperfection of childlike tenderness.

I write in haste. Continue to pray for me because I have extreme necessities. Continue with your usual exercises with total detachment from everything created, completely dead to yourself in order to live for God alone, and abandoned to his love like a small child. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. Amen.

Poor Paul, Your True Servant

177

Agnes Grazi (62)

Presentation
February 28, 1738

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Tuesday morning, after I have celebrated the Divine Mysteries, I will come to Orbetello, and you should be in the large church. I want no one to know that I am coming, not even Father Anthony. I received your letter and will reply in voice on Tuesday, God willing. I remain a stinking heap of manure, more and more, and I drip pus from every pore. I have need of prayers. God be praised. I am sending you the letter for Sister Lilia. If you are careful and very brief in writing to her, you will do well. I am not speaking of writing to your spiritual

director; there, it is necessary to write as much as is necessary. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

178

Frances Lucci (6)

Presentation
March 3, 1738

J.M.J.

Dear Signora,

I received your short note as well as your letter and the lentils. Now that I am back from Rome, I can answer. I thank you in Jesus Christ for your charitable attention and pray His Divine Majesty to give you the reward.

As to the temptations you mention, as it is a goodly piece of time since I received your letter, and after that I soon had to leave for Rome, I do not have a clear memory as to what these temptation were. It seems to me they were concerning faith. So I say to you that this is the least dangerous temptation and brings great good to the soul who remains faithful in the fight. There is no need to dispute with the temptation, but simply to humble oneself before God and make acts of lively faith, believing all that His Divine Majesty has revealed to the Church.

Other temptations, if you are faithful, work great good; they humble us, instruct us, purify us as gold in the fire. Because you were acceptable, said the angel to Tobias, it was necessary that temptation tests you, and by the term temptation is meant every sort of trouble. Take heart then and, above all, be humble, but with true humility of heart that makes the soul despise itself and remain subject to all. Be faithful to God and never leave prayer. Pray for me.

God bless you. Do me the favor of giving the enclosed note to Isabella Tagliabassi.

Your true servant in God,
Paul of the †

179

Francis Appiani (11)

Presentation
March 3, 1738

J.M.J.

Dear Son,

I received your letter, which was very dear to me. But, I would wish you were more fervent in prayer. Be careful never to leave it, for that would be your ruin. Oh, happy are they who are willingly crucified with Christ! What do I wish to say? Oh! happy are they who are faithful when suffering every pain for love of Jesus! Oh! the great treasures they acquire in remaining in a dry and desolate prayer! Courage, dear one. After the storm a calm will come.

Now is the time of trial and you must suffer the trial from God. Because you were acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation prove you, said the angel to Tobias. Woe to those who under the trial from God leave the path on which they began, for they give themselves to iniquity and then to damnation.

Be strong and constant. Love self-contempt; put human respect under your feet; be exemplary, modest, recollected and withdrawn; speak little; and use your time partly in prayer, study, and spiritual reading. Walk in the Divine Presence and get accustomed to ejaculatory prayers. It is not possible for me to come there to conduct a retreat because I am too loaded down. If God wills, he will open the way in his own time. May God will that the designated work be fulfilled. Greet your parents for me, especially your mother, your parish priest, and others. I am, and always will be, in the Side of Jesus. I ask you to readdress the enclosed letter. Do not write me for a little while, for I must be going out.

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

180

Agnes Grazi (63)

Presentation
March 18, 1738

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

At this moment I received your letter and, since I am about to celebrate Holy Mass, do not have time to reply adequately. The virtue that most pleases God is resignation to his most Holy Will. Many times His Divine Majesty has us desire great things, but does not wish the effect. Many times we ask a favor of God and he grants it in another way, for that is more expedient for our better good. You desire and ask that I come on Friday. If I do not have necessary business, I would hope to come. I am pressured by what I must do for many.

To the extent that it is the Will of God that I assist you, I will not hesitate. But you ought to be calm and more resigned. When I decide to leave, show yourself more indifferent; this is true virtue. So then, if God opens the way for me to come, I will come, and that could be "yes." But if my duties increase, I will not come.

Regarding experiences of union in prayer and other lights, keep careful watch on yourself, carefully examine the effects. If they produce greater knowledge of self and more self-contempt, a greater love for virtue, for suffering in order to give glory to God and grow in perfection to please God the more, and other marvelous effects — if they are of this kind — be quiet, for they are from God. But do not trust in yourself; remain in a holy, filial fear of God. Believe that God is treating you like an unweaned infant, for you are weak. The strong ones who have good teeth eat hard bread. Let this be a motive for you to humble yourself.

Overcome your temptations with humility and a holy fear of God. The devil is afraid and flees from the humble who distrust themselves. Have no

doubts that God will draw good from all this, and you will come out victorious on the Cross of Jesus Christ.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows you can go to church. If I come, it will be early. But there are difficulties. If I do not come, go to Communion. If by a certain hour, I have not arrived, do not distract yourself by being on the watch. If I come, I will see to it that I find you and will come to you. God bless you. Amen.

Your weak, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

181

Agnes Grazi (64)

[April 3, 1738]¹²⁸

Evening of Holy Thursday.

†

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter yesterday, but did not have time to answer. I am waiting until Monday evening when I will be there on my way to a mission. Now is not the time to write, rather to weep. Jesus is dead to give us life; all creatures are in mourning, the sun is darkened, the earth quakes, rocks are rent, the veil of the Temple is torn. Only my heart remains harder than flint. I will say no more. Make yourself a companion of the poor Mother of the dead Jesus. Imitate and ask of dear Magdalene and John where their hearts are. Then allow yourself to be flooded with the sea of the pains of Jesus and Mary. I end at the foot of the cross.

On Easter Monday remind Signore Vincenzo that at about noon, or a little later, he should send a boat to the orchards, for I have much to do in Orbetello.

The Crucifier of Jesus Christ,
Paul

182

Father Ottavio Spezi

Città delle Pieve
April 11, 1738

J.M.J.

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

Most Reverend Prior and Reverend Patron,

Tomorrow evening about 22 hours, or when it is best for the people, the holy mission will enter this house, mandated by the zealous pastor of this diocese, but even more by the Supreme Pastor of souls, Jesus Christ. People from Old Mongiovino and Colle di San Paolo may join us.

128. Because this letter does not have a year, Amedeo put this letter to Agnes Grazi with the other undated letters to her. The reference to Holy Thursday indicates that April 3 was in the year 1738.

Therefore, I request Your Reverence to inform the people so that they may be ready to profit from this great treasure. The entry of the mission takes place as follows:

With the ringing of the bells the clergy and people assemble, the first cleric or first pastor takes the crucifix. I presume that will be your function.

The procession proceeds in this order. The pastor goes ahead with the crucifix, followed by the clergy, who chant, "You have blessed the earth, O Lord," and the people answer, "May He be praised forever," and so on. Behind the clergy the men should file in with good order, and behind everyone else the women. This is our practice for this service. When we come to the head of the place where there is room, the people are to be stationed in this way: the women on one side, the men on the other, and the clergy between them. The missionary will then deliver a discourse. When that is over, he will take the crucifix from the pastor and intone, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," and lead the procession into the church in the same order as before. The first discourse will then follow.

This is all I need to tell you with regard to this ceremony. We will take up further details step by step. Meanwhile, I recommend myself to your holy prayers, and with all respect I declare myself sincerely, as I finish in haste,

Your humble, unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul Danei, Apostolic Missionary

Above all else, I ask you to make the announcement to all the parishes mentioned.

183

Father Stephen Lavitelli (1)¹²⁹

Acquapendente

May 27, 1738

May Jesus Live and his dear †

Very Reverend Father and Revered Patron,

Poor Paul, unworthy servant of the parish priest of Misiano, is always mindful of the charitable treatment received from your care. May the Divine Will be adored that has deprived me of such a dear companion. But I hope and trust that he who began the good work will bring it to perfection. Haste allows me only time to say nothing more, but simply to embrace you in the pure Side of Jesus and to recommend myself to your devout prayers.

The miserable one who is writing is now in Acquapendente, where he will be occupied until Friday, when he will go to Torralfina to open a mission. The one who writes asks you to bless him.

Your unworthy, true servant,

Paul

129. This is the first letter to the parish priest of Misiano. Lavitelli was quite attracted to Paul's spirituality, even receiving the habit that year. He could not live the austere life of those early years, so he left Mount Argentario and returned to his parish.

Presentation
June 13, 1738

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am writing this letter to visit your spirit in the pure Side of Jesus. I believe it is being attacked by a small storm. Because I strongly wish that you take profit in the way of Holy Love, I am writing the following points.

First, God wishes you to be detached from all created things and dead to all that is not God, deprived of all human consolation, and that your heart know no comfort, except that which God gives you and that which come from God through his sacred minister, when you least expect it. So, my daughter, let your fears cease. God is your Father, Master, and Spouse. Abandon yourself more and more in the divine bosom of his Holy Good Pleasure and constantly stick to the exercises, both prayer and Communion, which have been prescribed for you in the Name of God. Let the devil roar as much as he wants.

Relax your penitential practices a bit, at least until you have gained more strength, or even leave them off altogether, especially if you feel very weak on account of the indisposition mentioned to me by Father John Baptist. With regard to that, I am sending you a packet of wild roses, which is an astringent. You take it powdered in a little broth, water, or wine, as you choose. The dosage is as follows. Grind it to powder in a little dish, and then take as much as you can fit on a half *paolo*, a *grosso romano*¹³¹ as we say, but no more. Then take it with broth, water, or wine, as I said. If the first does not have an effect, take another. I have never tried it, but I have been told about it by someone who used it under orders of a good surgeon. If you wish, you can consult a doctor where you are.

With regard to holy prayer, follow your usual procedure. Take care to do all in a growing faith, seeking simply the love of God and his greater glory, and, above all, cut out the visions and imaginations. Annihilate yourself more and more. Be hidden to all and open only to God and to the one who guides you in his name.

I am always more disposed to assist your soul to the extent that God wills. Since I am certain it is his Holy Will, I will not spare myself any effort for your greater good; but you must keep yourself in complete detachment. Whereas I have resolved not to come to Orbetello except for extreme necessity, for good reasons which I hope God approves, therefore, if you have any need, write me with the usual freedom and sincerity as at first so that when God wills, we will have occasion to confer face-to-face.

Poor Paul remains more than ever immersed in a depth of miseries, desolations and storms. God knows how dear death would be for him. Pray

130. Paul conducted missions after Easter until the summer heat began. He is back at the Retreat and takes up his correspondence, sharing the difficulties he is undergoing.

131. Another reference to a coin in circulation at that time.

much for this miserable one and for the Retreat because this holy work seems to be crashing to the ground. It is so much persecuted. I am preparing myself for this, for my sins merit that.

If God inspires you, write me an account of your spirit and send me that writing so I may have a chance to examine it. But I leave you always in holy freedom.

Jesus enrich you with the fullness of his grace and blessings. Amen.

Give the letters to the Retreat servant boy, who is coming on Sunday, and tell him to hand them to me. May Jesus live. Amen. Greet Signora Maria Johanna for me. Tell me what harm and what profit you derive from my letter and my guidance.

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

185

Francis Appiani (12)

Presentation
June 14, 1738

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Dear Son,

I received two letters from you, the first dated April 15, the second dated May 8. I did not reply because I was conducting missions. I am back only a few days. In reply I say that anyone who wishes to serve God in an outstanding way must suffer outstanding anguish and outstanding afflictions. The temptations you write about are the tests from God to see whether you are faithful. Therefore, fight manfully, for after the battle peace will come. In all truth, there are good signs, so in these horrible fantasies flee to Calvary and hide in the pure Side of Jesus. Make a fool of the devil there.

Above all, do not abandon prayer, even if you are forced to keep yourself there with the pain of hell. Jesus persevered in agony and sweat blood. You have not come to that as yet, so you are wrong to be crying. If you ever leave prayer, mortification, and the practice of the holy virtues, you will find yourself in a hopeless abyss of ruins. Remain in the Presence of God and rouse your spirit with ejaculatory prayers, with darts of love toward God, and repose in the divine bosom like an infant on the bosom of its mother, but with supreme confidence.

It is well that you learn a lesson from your parish priest. I do not have time to write further. Pray for me, for God knows my status. There is no expectation that I might be able to come to the island at this time. I am too occupied with missions, and on the first of September I leave once more.

Pursue the good and do not be philosophizing so much about yourself or your actions. Proceed with the upright intention of the pure love of God, and let the devil roar as much as he wants. Stay withdrawn and speak little. God bless you, and I am always,

Your true servant,
Paul of the Holy †, Apostolic Missionary

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

Tonight, a letter was carried to this Retreat with much anxiety, but little necessity. In it I read not a few blunders. You write that you have seen the Eternal Father and so on, and you have given double thanks to the Eternal Father and his God because I remained there four days. Can there be a greater error than to give double thanks to the Eternal Father and his God? What's this? Perhaps there are many Gods? Ah! I feel for your ignorance and God excuses it. This would be an error in faith. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. There are not three Gods, but only one God. The Son became incarnate and is Jesus Christ, true God, who is only One God with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

This is the Catholic Faith. I well know that you believe all this, but you make a fool of yourself wanting to soar so high and into things too subtle. Get down to earth, you who are ashes! Reject these material visions and flee from them because they are open to infinite deceits.

God is pure spirit and cannot be comprehended by us, for he is incomprehensible. We need to adore him in spirit and in truth, and lose ourselves in him with simplicity, humility, and love in a living faith without images or figures. The holy humanity of Jesus can be comprehended when His Divine Majesty wishes, but we must not seek such visions, but believe and adore. "Blessed are they who have not seen and believe," Jesus told Saint Thomas. Jesus is God, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Let us thank His Divine Majesty for the light given us in our holy faith and keep our feet on the ground. To keep to a prayer in pure faith, lost in God without forms or visions, is a more secure way, as I have told you so many times. Use these rules and you will not go wrong.

Then I read further in your letter: "I have prayed the Most Holy Virgin and the Most Holy Trinity and all of paradise," and so on. Oh! what ignorance! what blindness! How can this be? You are going to pray first to the Most Holy Virgin before the Most Holy Blessed Trinity? The Most Holy Trinity is God. The Most Holy Virgin is the purest and holiest of creatures, and she is an intercessor for us before the Most Holy Trinity. So it is necessary that we pray to Mary Most Holy that she pray for us sinners to the Holy Trinity. In that way pray to the saints that they intercede for us before God.

You claim you have prayed to God for your family and have obtained all. Humble yourself a lot more, for I do not know in what way God has given his grace to anyone. And I am saying this in God, as I see it, and it is pure truth. God may well have given this grace to your family because of good things they have done, not because of you.

For the love of God, get rid of these material visions and stay all lost in God in pure faith and simplicity. Remain in your nothingness and you will

realize that all that is in you is pure nothing. When you cast out such things, do not force your head. Perform your part sweetly and with humility. If they continue, go right ahead and persevere in rejecting them, making nothing out of them, with your mind rested in God, lost in his holy love. In that way you will mock the devil and walk uprightly.

I do not feel inspired to come to Orbetello, for there is no necessity. You have good and holy rules, use them. Do not write me for two weeks. Write the letter on the Vigil of Saint James, and on his feast day send it through the Retreat servant.

During this time go to Communion three times a week: Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. If there are any feast days, go then as well. On the rest of the days go to the church, prepare yourself as though you were going to receive Communion, and make a spiritual communion. You can do this several times in the day if you wish, and that would be a good thing. If God inspires you, you need to follow the inspiration. For now, act as I say, and you will have the merit of holy obedience and remain at peace. As usual, continue with your prayer and for the usual time, according to the rules given you. The person who called you a saint must have an evil spirit on her tongue. It is well to spurn such things. It takes more to make saints! If during this time something extraordinary occurs, or serious temptation, write me in order to avoid deceit. But if it is question of these ordinary sillinesses, it is not important. Pray for me, and God bless you.

Your servant in Christ,
Paul

187

Agnes Grazi (67)

Presentation
July 16, 1738

Live the holy †.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am sending you this precious book that treats of frequent, even daily, Communion. With your own hands give it to Father Francis and ask him to read a chapter every day, for it teaches important things, especially the first chapter and the tenth chapter, which I have marked. Ask him to pray to Jesus for poor Paul that he have pity on the poor wretch who is so persecuted. Tell him the poor, unworthy one wants souls to know God and burn with love of God, and for this end there is no other way than to allow them to receive the Blessed Sacrament, the living font of holy love. If you wish to read this present chapter to him, do read it.

Continue to embrace your dear Jesus as usual, and go ahead with your prayer. Live entirely annihilated before God, hidden to all, dead to all, and

alive for God. Poor Paul remains tightly nailed to the cross of Jesus. God bless you. Amen. If you have any necessity, go ahead and write me.

Your true servant,
Paul

188

Francis Appiani (13)

Presentation
July 16, 1738

J.M.J.

My Dear Son,

I received your letter and, since I have little time, am hastening to reply and tell you I do not like that you philosophize so much on your conduct. While the books you say you have read are all good, they were not meant for you. Let those who guide you read them, and you seek the good with simplicity, humility, and a pure intention. It is not necessary to have your mind always fixed on the Divine Presence. This belongs to the perfect and even these do not always have this gift. Seek the good and raise your spirit to God frequently, but without straining your mind. Do not be upset over your defects; humble yourself much and strive to amend.

Do not be frightened about what you tell me. God permits the devil to assail you in this way, but for your great advantage, so that you can draw the finest gold from the true knowledge of self. Learn to be fearful of yourself, to flee all occasions, and to trust not in yourself, but in God. The rule prescribed is good, but I believe it would be a burden and a cause of scruples for you.

Make your mental prayer, morning and evening, and your accustomed Communion as well as study in accord with your state. Do not load yourself down with so many vocal prayers, but recite the ones you use well. Help yourself with ejaculatory prayers. Rest your spirit with some licit recreation and take the necessary sleep. When you take your solitary walks, listen to the sermons of the flowers, the trees, the bushes, the heavens, the sun, and all the world. You will find they preach of love and praise of God, and invite you to magnify the greatness of the Sovereign Artist, who gave them being.

Flee your scruples like the plague. They cause the soul to lose immense treasures. Pursue the good, entrust yourself to God, do not try to acquire perfection with the strength of your arms, but proceed as gently as you can. When you are thoroughly humble, God will give you everything.

Do me the favor of sending the enclosed to Poggio. Live devoutly, happily, but flee silliness which dissipates the spirit. Have no doubt that God holds you in his divine arms, and that the time will come when he will reveal his Holy Will to you. Greet your parish priest for me as well as your mother and father.

I end by embracing you in the pure Side of Jesus, in which I am always,
Your true servant in Jesus,
Paul of the Cross, Missionary

Agnes Grazi (68)

Presentation

July 23, 1738

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday, I received your letter full of complaints, and at the right time I will issue your penance. But is it possible that after all the instructions you are unwilling to mortify yourself and be quiet in voice and writing, no matter what I say to you? Holy virtue, where are you? Enough! We will make out the accounts and you will pay up for everything at one time.

Today, I received a second letter from you through Magdalene, and I see the stupendous graces God sends you, but you are always more imperfect. But whoever wishes to live in that beautiful Heart needs to be unshaken against all winds and all storms.

God treats you like babies who, if they fall, the mother takes them into her arms, holds them to her breast, and embraces them. Ah, Agnes, you ingrate! When will you stop being so sensitive at what your father says, when, even if he were to flay you or stone you, you ought to be silent?

For your penance enter into the Heart of Jesus. No, kneel at the door of that great Heart and, humbling yourself, beg pardon for all your imperfections and lack of gratitude. Then, when you have permission, enter. But make yourself tiny and then all afire and burnt up until the wind of the Holy Spirit lifts the ashes on high and you are lost in the immense depth of the Divinity. Amen. If ever again I hear the complaints, then I will certainly make myself heard.

I am always in a worse condition, and I behold God always more indignant with me. There is need to cry out to God that he have mercy on me. Perhaps one of these days I will find myself in Orbetello, but I do not know for certain. When God wills, but I would prefer not to come, for it does me damage in many ways. But may the Will of God be done. Amen. Jesus bless you. If your illness continues, call the doctor so that he may make you better.

Paul of the Holy †, Your Unworthy Servant

Agnes Grazi (69)

Presentation

August 4, 1738

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

The pure love of Jesus and the effects of divine grace be always in our hearts. Amen.

I received your note, which was dearer to me than the others, for in it I read the news of the drop of suffering that you are drinking willingly from the loving chalice of Jesus. Oh, how precious are these pains in nerve and bone! Oh, how necessary it is to hold them dear. I wish that even in your pains you annihilate yourself and make nothing of them, without fixing your thoughts on

them, without, so to speak, looking them in the face. Above all, I would not have you show them in your exterior, or at least as little as possible. Show yourself, as much as you can, with a serene and happy face as the true lovers of the holy cross are accustomed to do. I said you are not to look your pains in the face and not fix your attention on them. By that I mean with the higher part of your spirit, for you already know that the lower part cannot help feeling them. If it did not, there would be no pain. I say this so that you do not lose sight of the Sovereign Good, but remain on the cross as a victim of love, united to our sweet Jesus and all on fire and consumed by the fire of his infinite love.

O my daughter, this is a high science understood only by the truly humble of heart. Therefore, remain always deeper in your annihilation, in total self-contempt, desiring only that in the estimation of creatures you be esteemed as a stinking sewer of excrement, in whose vicinity everyone holds their nose to avoid the stench. With such sentiments of total annihilation and despoilment throw yourself with all confidence into that depth of every good, and abandon the care of your soul to that Infinite Good to perform his divine operation in you, that is, to illumine it with the rays of his divine light and transform you entirely into himself by love, to make you live of his Divine Spirit so that you live a life of love, a divine life, a holy life.

Let this poor butterfly, after flying around this divine light with the wings of the desires of humiliation and, above all, of lively faith and charity, thrust itself into that divine light that is God himself, and there be reduced to ashes and more than dead so that it will live a life not its own, but the life of the Sovereign Good. These are the heavenly works that His Divine Majesty performs in souls that annihilate themselves, that make themselves as small as possible, that give all the glory to God for his gifts, and that return them with a humble and loving surrender in the Divine Sight as a sweet incense.

Read these sentiments with attention, with a heart humble, simple, and open as a mother-of-pearl or a seashell that receives a drop of dew falling from heaven and, penetrating to the depths of the sea, fashions it into a precious pearl.

I tie all this together and say that in prayer, after you have prepared yourself with great faith and deep humility, you allow your soul the freedom to fly to its Good, as a butterfly, and allow God to impress you with the light, the grace, the love that pleases His Divine Majesty. In the act of holy prayer lose sight of everything, and these very gifts, and fix your thoughts, your heart, your mind and your whole self only on that Sovereign King, who out of his infinite goodness is pleased that a poor little woman like you should treat with him in this angelic conduct of holy prayer.

If your pains continue, let up on your penances. In this I allow you to act on your own sense of things. But the truth of the matter is that when the body has the penance that God sends, voluntary penances must be lessened. However, there are loving souls who even in sickness do not entirely relinquish their penances. I am not there, and so I cannot know how strong you are. Therefore, govern yourself as I have advised you at other times. If your

illness increases, leave off the discipline and hair shirt. If things are the way they were when I was there, you can continue, but more lightly.

Continue to recommend poor Paul to God, along with the rest you know about. I do not omit remembering you before the Almighty at the altar. My heart has no greater desire than to do the Will of God in all situations; however, for this it is necessary to remain waiting until His Divine Majesty grants me the grace. If your sickness continues, stay in bed or, at least, get up later. To the extent that you can, see that someone accompanies you to the Divine Table and remain seated, at least as long as you are sick. I mean to say that you be seated when you feel burdened. And I don't want you to become scrupulous about ... use the freedom of the dear children of God.

I end by telling you that your inability to write me is not important. When God wishes, he will give you the strength. Continue to keep yourself detached from all that is not God and to keep on pruning away whenever you feel your heart in any spiritual union with creatures in order to separate the dross from the purest gold of holy love.

One never prunes enough. But when you have done your part and a union ensues, and you rise up a bit into God and are more in love with God and virtue is more strongly impressed, in such a case there is no point in hesitating. These are spiritual realities, as I have said and written.

Let us not doubt. Let us trust in God and let us distrust and fear ourselves, and we shall not be deceived. God bless you. Amen.

I am sending you two letters for Pereta. Do me the favor to have them sent to the boat so that when occasion offers, we can have them forwarded. Thanks be to God.

If letters come for me by post, have them sent to me by Peter. I am telling him to expect them.

Your servant in Jesus,
Paul of the Holy †

191

Agnes Grazi (70)

Presentation
August, 8, 1738

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

Father Fulgentius tells me that you want me to write to you, but I do not know what to write other than this grand letter "†". Read this for it has every good. I wish that when you are a bit better you go to Communion. You will see that the Divine Doctor will comfort you, and you will do well. Then you will continue your life as before.

Now, I am writing you another letter: Detachment from everything, Death to everything, Annihilation under everyone. Keep your mind despoiled of all imaginations and forms, for then you are better disposed to remain lost in God,

who cannot be found under images or forms, but only in pure and living faith. Pray for this most miserable and needy person in the world. Jesus bless you.

Paul, Your Servant in Christ

192

Thomas Fossi (6)¹³²

Presentation

August 9, 1738

Live the Holy Cross.

My Dear Thomas,

Some days back I received your welcome letter, and in reply I tell you what I have always told you. It is necessary that you live the life of a good married Christian in your household and take care of the duties of your state in life — that means looking after your family. You are aware that I have always said this and maintained these instructions. This is the Will of God. You can also be holy in the midst of your business when this is directed to the pure glory of God.

You also know what I have always said regarding the holy sacrament of marriage and the duties you ought to fulfill. But I ought not go any further, for that does not pertain to me, but to the one to whom you make your confession. So pick out a good and holy confessor who is learned. You are well acquainted with the whole island; therefore, make the choice that God inspires and humbly submit your conduct to him, for you know how many are my duties, and I cannot direct you from so far away. You know I have told you this many times; so much so that calumnies are not lacking. But this would not disturb me were God to will that I should assist you nearby.

A half-hour meditation in the morning is enough for you. Go to Communion once a week. Make a spiritual communion each day, and more often than that. Then keep yourself in the Presence of God and in that way there will be a continuous prayer in the midst of all your business. If I have allowed you to go to Communion twice a week, I did this to strengthen you more for your troubles, which I pray you to embrace with great constancy and to continue to serve God according to your state in life. Then let people say what they want, for the world is evil and can only complain against those who do not go along with it.

Eat what is necessary for you and stay healthy to meet the needs of your business. Your weak body has no need of afflictive penances. Accept willingly the penances that God sends.

With regard to marriage, I should not get into that, for it does not pertain to me. Conduct yourself as His Divine Majesty directs and in accord with the holy lights that are not wanting to one who desires to be truly humble.

132. Fossi is a married man with a farm estate on the island of Elba. In this letter Paul offers him some basic principles for living the spiritual life in his state as a married man and parent. Paul will return to these guidelines again and again. He is apparently following the teachings of Saint Francis de Sales in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

I simply tell you that I want you to be happy in a holy way, to be even-tempered with your family, to eat what is necessary. Keep your heart recollected, but without strain in your head — the same for your wife. If God wants anything more, he will open the way. You know my many duties, so do not bother writing me, the better to avoid worldly murmurings, for I am obliged to act this way for the greater good of my state and the glory of God.

If you will be truly humble, lights will not be wanting to help you walk on the way to heaven.

Do not get depressed over anything; show yourself happy in your house and diligent in your business — so, too, for your wife. Courage! Live Jesus and his Cross! Amen. Pray for me and show great courage in embracing the cross, the standard of true servants of God. Amen. I leave off in haste and am,

Your true, willing servant,

Paul of the Holy †, Apostolic Missionary

193

Father Bartholomew Cianchini (2)

Orbetello

August 26, 1738

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Beloved in Christ,

I received your letter this morning and am replying to it in haste, for the messenger wants to get going. “Blessed is the man who suffers temptation.” But “blessed” is he who is faithful and does not desert holy prayer, which is the most efficacious means to overcome every assault for the one who is truly humble. God loves stout hearts. “The lazy man wills and wills not.” So speaks the Holy Spirit.

There is much to be said about your bodily pains, but time does not allow that. God willing, I will speak to you at the right time. You should not come here in the autumn because I will be on missions. I leave on the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy and will not be here until the end of November. Take your time about giving us help, for this Retreat needs only the favor of the Highest Good, and His Majesty knows how to provide for it. Our priests, who are cloistered here, are walking strongly toward holy perfection. God bless you and pray for me. Do not trouble yourself to confer with a blind person, such as I am. Thanks be to God. In haste, I am,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

I request the forwarding address for the enclosure, but in your own writing.

Agnes Grazi (71)

Soriano

September 9, 1738

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I forgot to tell Commissioner Carascon to have a book from the Ambrosiana sent to me. It is entitled *Treatise in the Form of a Dialogue for Spiritual Directors and Confessors of Nuns* by Father John of the Most Holy Trinity. Also send *Exercises of the Love of God* by the same author. The commissioner had them, but if he does not, have the charity to let him know from me that I would like him to send them as soon as they come. If you cannot tell him, ask your uncle to take up the matter, which is urgent. Greet all the household for me and do me this charity. I am writing in haste for I am leaving.

Your true servant,
Poor Paul

Father Stephen Lavitelli (2)

Città delle Pieve

September 15, 1738

Most Reverend Father and Patron,

With the greatest edification, the day before yesterday I read your esteemed letter, in which I find the pious desire of this loving people and, even more, of their dear Shepherd. God knows how much I would rejoice at their coming to this mission, but I am afraid they would not have time to return home, even though I have set the mission for 21 hours. If it seems to Your Reverence that they would have time to return, their coming would be dear to me. Thursday would be good, for I will have a sermon, God willing, that should produce much fruit. I could not invite them to the penitential procession because that will take place at night. I will certainly expect them for Sunday. Arrange things so that they will have already made their confessions. I am writing in haste, offering you my humblest reverence, and recommending myself to your devout prayers and those of all your people, and declare myself always,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul, an Unworthy Missionary

Agnes Grazi (72)

Città delle Pieve

September 25, 1738

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter and am stealing time to answer briefly. Accept from the cross the sight that one who serves God is little loved. Ah, poor Christianity! You know well that one who loves God is persecuted. But God

will be the Protector. What cannot be remedied must be referred to God, and I recommend this to him. So you should let it pass in silence and in retreat, both with your sister and with the rest.

Be faithful, my daughter, to that dear God who has visited you with so much mercy and make a continual incense of the graces to His Divine Majesty. Continue to despise yourself, to annihilate yourself, and to live abandoned like an infant on the loving bosom of God. Allow yourself to be guided by him and to follow your usual rules. I have no more time, for I am occupied in giving the retreat to the nuns. I ended the mission on Sunday. Pray that we stay well. Jesus bless you. Greet your uncle and the household for me. Do not bother writing me at this time since I will be away.

Paul, Your True Servant in God

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Father Stephen Lavitelli (3)

Città delle Pieve
September 26, 1738

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father and Patron in Christ,

I heard with great pain of your sickness, and then I consoled myself with the reflection of the great treasures Your Reverence will have acquired. It seems more and more to me that His Divine Majesty wills a life of high perfection for you and wants you to be a cooperator in the spiritual growth of many. I do not have time to say more. I am extremely busy with the retreat at this convent. I rejoice in God over your recovered health and pray that the cure will advance the glory of God. Pray for poor me. I embrace you in the purest Side of Jesus.

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

198

Agnes Grazi (73)

Presentation
November 5, 1738

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your letter and would wish to reply in person, but I cannot. I simply say that to know whether the gifts you receive in prayer are from God, you need to look at the effects they produce, that is, greater humility, self-contempt, detachment from all things, love of suffering, great charity toward one's neighbor, and purity of soul and body. But it can happen that one receives gifts from God and then is tempted.

I have experienced some fear with regard to what you are telling me about this devil who seemed to want to sin with you and caused certain feelings in your flesh. These are things to be careful about and much to be feared and call

for great caution. Enough! Have no doubts whatsoever, trust yourself to God, fly to your castle which is the holy Side of Jesus, and have no fear. Offer the Precious Blood of Jesus to the Heavenly Father and pray that through the infinite merits of that Blood you be delivered from that brutish monster of impurity.

Write me if anything further has happened and give me complete details so that I can offer you, with the grace of God, devout remedies. Blessed Angela of Foligno and other saints have suffered immense pain in this way for years. But I have high hopes that God will spare you from this cruel beast, for there is so much danger here.

With regard to what you tell me happened on Friday, if it ever happens again, drive such a thing away. Say you wish only to embrace Jesus and his cross, and repeat such acts with great constancy. The devil often takes the form of an angel of light and seeks all kinds of stratagems to seduce you. Sometimes he brings on certain false fervors which take one to excess. The fruits make everything known. Enough! We will speak together when God so wishes. Hold to your usual rules: flee from all visions and lose yourself completely in God. These loving awakenings in the night are good since they raise you up into God and are in pure faith. Here, there is no deceit; but you must keep yourself in a repose of obscure faith.

With regard to a retreat with the nuns, I cannot do that. I have too much to do to prepare myself for missions. Please make my excuses to Mother Vicaress. I did give them the retreat last year, so it would be better to have someone else, Father John Baptist or the Advent preacher. I am not proposing anyone. Let them seek whomsoever God inspires, but let them excuse me and do me a great charity. I would be ready to serve them a year from now, if I am alive.

Certain ones think that you are attached to me, but I know that is not so. It is always necessary to fear the fiery beast of self-love, which is a dragon with seven heads and mixes itself into everything. There is nothing that I fear more and makes me guard my heart so that I be not corrupted. The love of God is jealous! A grain of inordinate affection for creatures is enough to ruin everything.

I tell you this because I want you to be holy, and so I cut off everything that is not of God. But there is never enough pruning. Always cut away, my daughter, for that will give God great glory. The less consolation you have from creatures, the more you will have from God. I am speaking of the consolation derived from speaking with a spiritual director. The ancient and great saints had conferences very rarely and they were great saints. Courage and be happy in God. I do not spare myself in working for your soul. I am in a hurry. Since I have written a large stack of letters, my head tells me I can do no more. Jesus bless you. Amen. Live Jesus!

Your true servant in Jesus,
Paul of the Holy †

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I could not reply sooner to your letter, given me by one of our priests who was down there. I am reading what you have written to me regarding your direction, that is, that it is no longer the Will of God that I direct you. When such a light comes from a quiet spirit and it is in prayer that God has you know that, then after due consideration, if it is approved, you are to follow it. I have no other desire than to do the Divine Will. This is what all my prayers tend toward; that is the goal of my desires. Whence, if you know it is not the Will of God that I assist you, go right ahead. It is sufficient that you do not desert the God who has given you so many graces. Serve God, praise God, and walk toward holy perfections. Even if I am not assisting you, that is not important, for I have always believed I am a blind mole and a weak reed. Do not desert your path, follow it faithfully, and for direction make use of the one God inspires you to choose. I will be completely happy, for His Divine Majesty has always done me this favor of seeking nothing beyond his entire glory.

What oppresses and frightens me is to hear you say that you have lied to me and have concealed things and have not been frank. Oh, this is what terrifies me! I do not believe it, and I maintain that you are saying this with a heart that is under temptation, oppressed by storms occasioned by passion and temptation. I repeat that I do not believe this, for I know Agnes and it is clear to me that she has always come with sincerity. But since I am a blind man, if this ever happened, there is a remedy. It is enough that I tell you that, if you lied and deceived me, and this is absolutely clear, if you do not want to tell me the truth, there are not wanting those to whom you can go to confession. If you want, there is Father Fulgentius or anyone else, Father Francis or Father Alonzo, or whomever you choose. So that confessing your fault you will remedy the evil done and, not having confidence in me, you can choose another minister of God. If you are humble, God will increase his graces.

I have always sought to serve your soul only for the pure glory of God. That is enough for you. Do not lose in an instant so much good. Humble yourself before God, have recourse to him, and he will give you great help. Do not hesitate.

I am not coming to conduct the retreat because of the news I have received. For the greater service of God, Father John Baptist will conduct the retreat for the greater good of all the religious. You do not know the whole matter, and you have not had the experience. God can have you desire things that it seems he wills, and then it turns out otherwise. This is to test us so that we may learn to resign ourselves to his Holy Will.

On my part I say to you that in regard to direction, it would be better that you provide yourself someone, whether in Viterbo or where you think best.

And I will be always ready to serve you and all, if not as father, then as the universal slave of all creatures. God bless you. Amen.

With regard to Communion, go where you think best, for I leave you in holy freedom. If you pray for poor sinners, I will be among them as Captain General.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

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Reverend John Moretti (3)

Presentation
November 30, 1738

The priest, Father Hyacinth Arcari, well known to the Eminent Cardinals Corradini, Ruffo, Pico della Mirandola, also to Her Excellency Princess Rospigliosi, and nephew of His Eminence Cardinal Altieri, and known as well to me for many years, arrived in Orbetello without my having known he was coming and not in any way expecting him. Since he is new here, I did not think to have him call on Your Reverence nor was there anyone here who thought to suggest that to him. I was displeased over this and without a moment's hesitation gave an account to Your Reverence, as was my duty, and obtained your consent. Whereas the time prevented his coming to the feast, I came in person to bring his required documents, well authenticated, with which Your Reverence in your graciousness remained satisfied. Then came a letter from Rome for him, which followed the renunciation of his assignment and which necessitated that he go on Thursday with all haste to the post office to make out a power of attorney with a notary.

Whereas this priest was making a closed retreat until Christmas in order to recollect his spirit, and to the extent that he was instructed to make his journey as on retreat, with great recollection and speaking only as was necessary, and then return to take up his retreat by Father Fulgentius, who is the confessor for the house, he did this with great edification. All this is based on the rules of masters of the Spirit who forbid even looking at buildings and similar things so as not to distract oneself.

The mistake then, if it can be called a mistake, took place innocently and for most holy ends. Therefore, I did not believe Your Reverence ought to have been so outraged at so small a thing and at what was done for such an upright end.

Finally, out of the love for that God "who humbled himself and became obedient unto death," and prostrate at your feet, I beg pardon, also in the name of the priest, to whom nothing has been said in order not to upset him for such an innocent mistake, and ask you to be satisfied that he continues his retreat. When that is finished, he will come to receive your orders. Perhaps you will not be willing to concede me this grace, but let it be granted fully and he will come, and not only he, but also all the others for the greater glory of God and the confusion of hell.

I could not believe that the goodness of our vicar would deny anything so just, all the more so because you are aware how much I have venerated, served, and obeyed you in all the circumstances in which you commanded me.

And God knows in what waters you would have found yourself, if the Providence of God had not caused me to intervene. I cannot speak about it, and have never spoken about it, to you, and will not, for it is a secret thing. This is all I will say that you may know how I esteem and venerate you as superior in place of His Eminence, and I would wish all ecclesiastics would obey and respect you as does this Retreat. At the Tribunal of God all will be known.

The superiors of this diocese have always treated us with distinction and have availed themselves of the advice of Saint Paul, and I know the bishops value their good fortune to have workers in their dioceses, using them with great success for the greater glory of God, and to give them heart to work.

Enough! I bow my head to the designs of the Divine Good Pleasure, and for this reason I wish not to stop working day and night. "If I were to please men, I would not be a servant of Jesus Christ." Dear Father Vicar, please remember that Paul and all the Retreat are your true servants and are eager to obey you in everything that is not contrary to our Constitutions. Recall all the times this Retreat provided workers for the nuns, for the missions, and so on. Remember to continue your charity so that they do not sink down and lose courage and come to abandon the work to go elsewhere to gather greater fruit. I do not say this of myself, for I hope to leave my bones here. I stay here gladly, for here I find my disgrace, small satisfaction, and persecutions. Your Reverence knows better than I. I am waiting for the letter carrier and the reply to my letter so I will know what I am to do. I remain at your feet, asking you to bless me. I affirm myself as,

Your Reverence's humble and unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Frances Lucci (7)

Presentation
December 10, 1738

J.M.J.

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you. Amen.

Some days ago I received your letter, along with the lentils, sent from Onano. I thank you heartily for your charity, which you continue toward me. I pray His Divine Majesty to deprive you of all that is created so that you may be clothed only in Jesus Christ and with his virtues, especially those dearest to him: humility of heart, meekness, self-contempt, seraphic love, dead to all and alive to God.

Father Charles is doing well, and I hope he will take giant steps toward perfection.¹³³

133. Father Charles was a native of Pitigliano and joined Paul at Saint Anthony and was vested in 1737. He was already ordained. He took his vows June 11, 1741, when Benedict XIV gave the first approval to the Congregation. He was dismissed in 1741, but returned in 1746 and

I did not pass through Pitigliano since I was in a hurry and surmised it would not be the time for me to stay. Where I do not have things to do, I do not stop. For the rest then, I am always the same as to my affection in the Lord for your region, and, if I can serve you, all you need do is command me, and you will find that I love you in God. I am pressed, so pray much for the very needy one who is writing. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am, and will always be, in the Side of Jesus,

Your true, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

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Thomas Fossi (7)

Presentation
December 12, 1738

May Jesus Live!

Dear Friend,

With great satisfaction I read your letter and did not reply earlier because God so disposed. I recognize always more the divine work in your soul. If you continue to live abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure, you will be blessed. It is the plan of God that the devil makes such an uproar around you for his greater glory and the greater profit of your soul. Settle down, dear one, in your suffering without philosophizing on these pains, and pursue the good like a simple child. The servant of God makes continual prayer, not, I say, on his knees, but with a loving attention to the Divine Presence. And the more he is deprived of sensible consolation, the better.

Holy continence is the work of God. Encourage yourself to persevere and encourage your wife.

The light you received is genuine, but it is not the time to follow it. God will open the way. Meanwhile, say: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." Mock your enemy and rejoice to be a victim sacrificed in holocaust to the Supreme Good. A holocaust is completely burnt up and becomes ashes. That is what God wishes of you, that is, that you be burnt up by the fire of trials, and then from these ashes will come a spark of the fire of love that will inflame everything. Believe me, I am not deceived.

I rejoice over your conference with the Jesuit priest, and I hope he cleared up my mistakes with his holy sweat. That vow was not necessary, and for my part I would counsel you to stay with your freedom. But you do as God inspires you. Your present way of life does not call for severe fasting, for your health is too insecure. Temperance and moderation make for a continual fast. Pray His Divine Majesty for poor Paul, who finds himself in a pit of miseries. Here the servants of God continually grow in perfection, while I go only downward.

once again took vows July 22, 1747, but was again dismissed January 23, 1750. His baptismal name was Charles Augustine Salemmi. He will be mentioned in further letters.

Greet your wife for me and encourage her to holy perseverance. I am not writing to your sister-in-law. Follow Jesus Crucified so that he may show you the way to paradise.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

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Father Stephen Lavitelli (4)

Presentation
December 18, 1738

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father and Patron,

May the sweet Infant Jesus, who is born in our commemoration at the coming solemnity, enrich your spirit with all fullness of grace and heavenly blessings, and confirm you in the holy resolutions you have made to consecrate yourself entirely to God's greater glory and the salvation of souls.

I have rejoiced to hear that you are improving in health.

We already have another priest. I think I mentioned him to you. If he perseveres, as I hope, he will be able to do good for souls. Right now he seems well resolved.

God knows how much I would rejoice if you were to come into our solitude for the greater service of God, "who has begun the work and will also bring it to completion." Amen. If you will give me exact information on your pious intentions, I would be very grateful to you. Keep me recommended to the Lord. Meanwhile, as I leave you in his sweet Side, I sign myself,

Your Reverence's unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

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Agnes Grazi (75)

—
1738

With regard to the request that I write to you about the spiritual exercises, it is best to abandon all the care of that to God. But if you were able to nicely induce the Mother Vicaress to go along so that she would forget the idea of using me, it would be a great favor. For God knows my condition and all the business I am managing. I give myself over to God's desire. May he be forever blessed ...

Agnes Grazi (76)

Signora Agnes,

I received your long letter with all the unnecessary things you write about. God knows my condition; this night I have exhausted my head and have written not a little. If my head continues as now, things are going to be really bad. I cannot come to give the retreat. Father John Baptist is coming. I am not doing this to avoid serving the nuns, but in order to do the Will of God. The Mother Vicarress herself invited Father John Baptist from the outset and knows what I said to her. God bless you. Amen. Do what is right and stay happy ...

Agnes Grazi (77)

Presentation
February 7, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your second letter last evening, and I am in such a state, filled and overfilled with so many calamities, horrible darkness, and an infinity of other miseries that I do not know what to answer. My poor head and heart are utterly without any light whatsoever. So I do not know what to say to you except to encourage you to persevere in the good you have begun. Let people say what they want. Above all, chase away all these visions, which are very dangerous, as well as those experiences of union about which you report. They are too material and without foundation. So do your duty, as you have been doing, but do it now with greater constancy, spurning them. If they persist, make nothing out of that, as if they were toads. Conduct yourself in this way; otherwise, you will go astray.

When you say you saw me praying for you at 11 hours, that is not true. I was not at prayer at that time. These happenings could have a natural explanation, so you need make nothing of them. Not all the movements of the heart and lights of the mind come from grace. Often enough the devil or nature is to be found here. The truth of the matter is that grace is known from the effects produced.

Speak clearly to Father Francis, but with humility, and tell him that rather than give scandal and have him complain, you will not go to Saint Francis in the future. And ask him to give you the best advice he can.

Speak to him with the above words or with whatever seems best to you and as God inspires you. I would prefer you go to other churches. You could go to the cathedral or to the nuns' church and on Friday visit Saint Francis. Speak about this in the confessional to Father Alonso and tell him the way you proceed. Greet him warmly on my behalf and ask him in my name not to tear himself away from performing this great good, which will win him a great

reward. Tell him, moreover, that I think it better for you to attend the large churches in order to avoid wonderment and chattering on the part of those who know nothing of the spiritual life.

Get to the church as early as you can, for Father Alonso will give you Communion at an early hour when people are not around so you will not attract attention. You can always go to Communion in the large church. God will give you light, and Father Alonso will willingly do you the service. Father Francis and the others will have nothing to talk about. Act in this manner and God bless you. Amen.

Make arrangements with Father Alonso for the time and be in the church a half-hour beforehand.

Say nothing to Father Francis, speak only with Father Alonso on my behalf, and do it without telling [Father Francis]. On Friday, after going to Communion in the cathedral, go to visit Saint Francis. Since you made your preparation at home and about a half-hour in the church, tell Father Alonso that you have made your preparation at home.

Your servant in Christ,

Paul of the Holy †

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Thomas Fossi (8)

Presentation
March 3, 1739

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Dear Friend,

Just now I received your welcome letter and have little time to reply. I will send the reply with our brother Peter Cavalieri, who is going to Longone for some business affairs and then will return to the Retreat. I rejoice that the mercy of God allows you to know more and more your nothingness. This is genuine knowledge. Above all, I rejoice that you follow this path. I hope that God will make his Holy Will known.

When certain visions come that reveal hidden or future things, there is need to hold them suspect and drive them away with great constancy by humbling yourself and affirming that you seek nothing but God. Spurn the devil and make a fool of him. To reject these things is always the best since they are not of God. If they were of God, even though you reject them, they would bring inexpressible riches. While on the contrary, you avoid the deception and gain much for yourself. That is the way to conduct yourself when imaginary visions and the like come to you. Walk in lively faith because this is the safe way. There is no need to allow yourself to be oppressed by a fear of being deceived. Trust in God, for the devil, even when he cannot make other progress, seeks at least to upset the soul.

It is true that the devil has assaulted you with many snares. As you know, I agree. That is why I have written. But, thanks to God, he has not won his way. So there is need to be always on guard with great annihilation, always in the arms of the Highest Good, abandoned like a baby, with a simple, pure,

humble love, and attentive to that object of infinite love, while always carrying, impressed on your heart, the seal of love, the memory of the pains of the Savior.

If you are moderately well, I am satisfied that you get up early and make an hour's prayer and in the evening a half-hour or more — but only a little more. On feast days and Fridays you can lengthen it a bit, as your strength allows. However, I do not take back what I believe I have already told you: I wish your prayer to be continual, that is, with a loving awareness of God in pure faith with holy aspirations or awe at that inexhaustible sea of every good, or complacent that he is the only one who truly is, or a holy admiration over his infinite greatness, or similar things. But with the understanding that this be done with gentleness without strain, without external signs with your head or face, but in all gentleness. For your penances, continue as is. Right now God does not inspire me further. At most, on days you are not fasting, do not eat more than pasta except for real necessity. On Fridays take only a collation at night. In the morning take only dinner, and that, too, should be a fast meal.

I am writing briefly to your sister-in-law. Greet your wife for me in Jesus Christ. Tell her to follow the path she has undertaken and that God has prepared great treasures for both of you.

I am out of time. I simply ask you to keep me in your prayers since I am in extreme need. After Easter I am leaving for missions and will not be back until June. All spring I will be busy with missions until the second week of Lent, with the great blessing of God for the fruit.

I end by embracing you in the pure Side of Jesus, in which I declare I am always,

Your true, obligated servant,
Paul of the Holy †

I am sending the unsealed enclosure so that you can read it. You can read it first, if you want.

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Agnes Grazi (78)

Presentation
March 7, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Nothing except sin can take us away from God. All the contradictions and persecution from men and demons cannot take an inch from the Highest Good. If we are faithful, these trials help to unite us more closely with His Divine Majesty. I would wish that you do not let your heart be moved an inch, and that you would not be upset by the events taking place. God is permitting them for your great good so that you may learn to deprive yourself more and more of every affection for earth and to die to all that is not God. I would have you behave with your relatives as if they were not such. Pray much for them, but stay apart. When there is need, speak briefly, treat them gently, and then withdraw. Do this constantly. As soon as you have taken your meal, take your

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leave and find your recreation with the angels or, better yet, with the King of Angels, but do not put yourself in formal prayer. Since there is no garden in which you can walk a bit, take your walk alone in your room, while the others remain talking at table, and Jesus will walk along with you in the garden of your heart. Therefore, you must be vigilant to keep it well pruned and clean and well ornamented with virtues, especially such gems as are dearest to Jesus, like true humility, from which comes annihilation and true self-contempt.

Above all, never justify yourself nor defend yourself, but suffer everything in silence. And as you ought not defend yourself, far less should you defend me. So do not speak of me, as if you did not know me. Speak of me only with God. Act in this way and you will be happy. Let us allow ourselves to be defended by God. If you cannot write to me, then do not write. You have your customary rules very clearly. If I can, I will come some day to the confessional before going on missions.

Oh! you just do not know the game of love God is playing in these happenings. Give thanks to God for what is happening. Nothing, I say once more, can take away Jesus, our Good. Death to all, to all. Rejoice to be deprived of everything in order to possess God. I am writing this letter after Matins and after a week of fierce storms, and I am still in the midst of them.

Do not leave off offering the Precious Blood of Jesus for me to the Eternal Father, that he may give me the grace to change my life and die a holy death.

Trust in God that your conduct is good, and in prayer follow the usual rules, and after a deep annihilation allow your soul to lose itself entirely in the Supreme Good, contemplating his infinite perfections as the Holy Spirit leads you. Imitate the holy angels either by breaking forth in excesses of loving praise or resting in a deep wonder at that Infinite Good — now in a high and loving wonderment, then in a sacred silence of love or complacency. To sum up, I repeat, you must make yourself smaller than an infant and remain in the divine bosom, in which, as in a mirror, the soul gazes in faith on the Infinite Greatness.

Above all, never cease to compassionate the sweet Jesus with the Sorrowful Heart of Mary Most Holy and to compassionate Mary Most Holy with the Sorrowful Heart of Jesus. In this way make a mixture of love and sorrow. These two most holy hearts are two furnaces of love, even one single furnace. Throw yourself into this loving furnace so that all the poisons of imperfection can be destroyed and that you may become a pure bread for the Table of the King of Glory. Above all, cry out to God for me as usual with a lively faith so that we may be heard. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. Amen. Do not take the trouble to write me. That is not important. In time I will tell you everything.

Your least, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (79)

Diruta

April 29, 1739

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am writing in haste, for I am leaving for the Holy House.¹³⁴ I hope to be there by May 4, if the weather remains good. Remember what I have told you and, above all, be faithful to God, always more and more annihilated before His Divine Majesty and obedient to all for the love of that God who became obedient even unto death. Stay apart as much as you can and preserve silence, which is the key of gold that locks up the great treasure of the other virtues which God has placed in us. Live despoiled of everything, make a continual sacrifice of yourself to the glory of God, and rejoice to be crucified with our dear Savior.

Guide yourself in prayer in accord with the advice given you, and guard against the tricks the enemy is accustomed to employ.

I am as God wills, and I believe I will not be lamenting any more. I have ended two missions, attended by thousands of people. God blessed them. On my return I will have another in the area of Todi. After that, who knows? I think I will have to give another mission, so I am not certain when I will be there with you. Jesus bless you. Live happily on the cross of Jesus. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Signora Victoria Fossi¹³⁵

Presentation

June 11, 1739

J.M.J.

Dear Esteemed Lady in Christ,

On my return from the missions, I found your letter and thank God for keeping you persevering in his divine service. If you persevere, you will be happy in time and in eternity.

Your fainting spells will not allow you to increase your penances; I say this on the authority of your husband. Continue to do well what you can in accord with your state in life, for that pleases God. Anyone who keeps her mind on God while at work is always praying. The one who is more humble, patient, charitable, and more resigned to the Divine Will is the more perfect. Pay attention to these virtues and in that way you will most please the Lord.

134. The "Holy House" is the Holy House of Loreto, the house in which the Archangel Gabriel visited Mary, and which, legends declare, was transported by angels to Italy.

135. This is the only letter to the wife of Thomas Fossi that has been preserved. In the final line Paul refers to 1741 instead of 1740. This is either "a slip of the pen" or he did not want to mess up the letter by correcting the text!

I do not have time to say more. I am exhausted and much overburdened. Pray for me as I end in haste. If you come by here on the journey to the Holy House, you will not find me home, for I will be out on missions and may be in Umbria. I am speaking of the coming spring of 1741.

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the †

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Agnes Grazi (80)

Presentation
June 13, 1739

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Just now I received your letter, and I thank the Supreme Good for the mercies he continues to bestow on you, for I greatly desire that Agnes be pleasing to God with great fidelity. Therefore, I do not fail to fear, and I would that you, too, did fear, but only with regard to yourself, that you are capable of every evil and incapable of any good. The one who loves most has the greatest fear of offending the beloved. But this fear does not cause upset, but brings peace, because it makes the soul annihilate itself always more to the extent that it sees itself favored by God. This is how I wish your preparation should be to receive greater gifts from God: annihilation that is always more profound, nausea over your own wickedness and foulness, frequent examination of your past ingratitude in order to humble yourself before God and to know your vileness the better. For the rest, my daughter, allow your soul to fly into God. Let your self burn and melt away.

I cannot come there for on Monday Signora Girolama and her people are to visit the Retreat since she has never been here. So I will not come until the end of the week or at the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. If you have something important to tell me before Father Anthony leaves, briefly write me tomorrow and give the letter to the servant to give to me without anyone seeing it.

Pray for me because I am buried beneath the wrath of God and under his fearful scourge, just punishment for all my sins. Oh! how deceived you are in your opinion of me. I end for the carrier wants to leave. Jesus bless you.

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Sister in Christ,

The grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you.

A few days back I received your letter, in which I see that your life goes as usual. But you are saying that the confessor at your place is unwilling that you be under anyone else's obedience for direction. I have nothing to say about that since I am but a poor blind man.

I would wish that your prayer were more in faith and less in imagination. Enough! When God wishes, he will make it cease. Accustom yourself to treat with God in pure faith, lose yourself entirely in the infinity of his love, take your repose on the divine bosom, and arouse yourself frequently to think of God with holy affections. If you are simple and obedient, God will teach you.

Thanks be to God, Father John Baptist is well. Therefore, pay no attention to the worldly gossipers. I am as deaf to chatterers as I am to the calumnies of the world.

You have asked me to send you the Bambina, but I have not seen your brother. If I knew a safe person, I would send it. But I do not want to entrust it to the sailors, lest they damage it since it is waxen, even though it is in a box. If God opens a way, I will send it at such a time. I thank you in Jesus for the charity of the oils, but I do wish you would not inconvenience yourself. With regard to a hair shirt, you can ask the permission of your confessor, as your companions have done. But use it with all discretion. To wear several times during the week is all right, but to wear it continually needs more light. I await your commands. Pray Jesus for this poor, most needy sinner.

The little poem is good, for it comes from a contrite and humbled spirit. Continue to do what is right and flee all occasion that might bring on tepidity. For this reason you should reveal to the confessor what happened to you at the comedy, so he will learn not to ever put you in such a temptation again.

Enough! God will give you light. The next time overcome yourself and do not go along with the common current. When the right time comes, tell him that God is not pleased to have such worldly vanities in convents. Ah, poor Christendom! I hope that God will purify it, and please God that it will not be some horrendous scourge, which I greatly fear. Pray God much for me; I am in extreme need. I leave you in the Heart of Jesus, in which I am always,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul F. D. of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (81)

Presentation

June 28, 1739

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ,

I received your note, overflowing with much worries about my health. O Martha, you are solicitous and worried about unimportant affairs. This is what Jesus said to Saint Martha. Only one thing is necessary, and what is that? To love God, to think of God, and to do all that you can to please him.

I do not want you to speak about me nor to write about my person or my sufferings, except when I will ask you directly or write that to you. For the rest, tell me and write to me of the things that concern your spirit and so on. When you have some light or union of spirit with me, tell me about that, for sure, so that we can know whether it is good or a trick. But be about despoiling yourself, as we have told you, losing yourself in the immense sea of divine love and losing sight of all creatures in order to be mindful of the Highest Good. Oh! this is a heavenly doctrine and the way to arrive at purest love in spirit and truth, annihilating oneself more and more before God.

Courage, my daughter. Take heart, for God will bring to completion the work begun in you. Distrust yourself more and more, and lose yourself entirely in confidence in God. Leave the care of everything completely to him.

With regard to medicine for my stomach, tell Doctor Farina that I thank him, but now I have no need and ought not upset my stomach with medicine. If God wishes me to get sick, then I will put myself in the hands of a doctor, but more so in the hands of God. For now my stomach is passably well, as suits my poor state.

The potion of dry roses has not been found as yet. If found, they will send it to you. Continue to pray for me so that His Divine Majesty will have me do his Holy Will at whatever cost and without sparing myself. This is the pure intention with which you should pray for me and for all others.

Be faithful to God, withdrawing and guarding your heart in silence and self-contempt, and be subject to all with cordiality, modesty, and so on. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am and always will be in God,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (82)

July 9, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

This evening at nightfall, I received your letter, written Monday. I am sorry that I was not able to reply as I would have wanted. This does not come from not wishing to, but not being able to, for I am more and more in a terrible

abandonment and in horrible miseries, and, in all truth, I do not have a single light from God. I feel myself in such a lamentable state that I am not capable of one good thought nor able to think how to utter one spiritual word. Whence I would wish that God would provide someone to counsel you, for I am in extreme need. And although it seems as though your conduct is according to God, there is great need of advice. But in the absence of men, God will be your guide. God knows what he wishes, but the deplorable state in which I am in the darkness of hell keeps me from knowing anything. The just judgments of God are something to be feared and adored!

I cannot and do not know how to say anything else than that you should humble yourself much, don't trust in yourself, and fear God. One who is humble will not be deceived. From here on out it is necessary to practice this obedience every day by praying God to take me from this world. I am no longer any good to you. So pray God to grant me a good and holy death. Make this prayer with faith. Do not believe what your own spirit tells you about me, that is, that I am deceived, for the facts I personally know show the contrary.

On Sunday I will send your book that we have here. Read just the practice of virtues. I have not received any letter from Sister Agnes. It seems they have not done anything.

I did not understand what you wrote about the instructions you wanted me to give you. I do not know when God wishes me to come there. Regarding myself, I think I will stay buried here in my horrible miseries, waiting for the death that God will send.

Send the servant on my behalf to Prior Guglielmini, asking him to send me our book, for it is time. I have already asked him three times to send it to me. If he does, do not say anything. If he does not, he will make me come down, but I am little inclined. Send it to me. May Jesus bless you. Amen

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

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Agnes Grazi (83)

Presentation
July 18, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter this morning, and in everything I adore the Holy Will of God. If you will correspond to the graces God gives you, you will be blessed. I am not in favor of withdrawing from helping either your soul or those of others. But since I see myself in a pit of misery without a bottom, and especially under the fearful scourge of an omnipotent God, therefore, I know I am incapable of any good, for I do not merit light or grace, but only punishment. I experience more and more that God is very angry with me and has taken away his graces, a just punishment for my very grave faults. For to the extent that my unhappy days increase, so do the divine scourges. Thanks be to God. You are much mistaken in what you think of me. It were better for you to placate God with multiplied prayers.

I will have occasion to come to Orbetello on Wednesday, perhaps sooner, but do not make any plans. When I am there, I will know better what I will do. With regard to the locutions, make nothing out of them. I will tell you why in person. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

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Agnes Grazi (84)

Portercole
July 23, 1739

May the love of Jesus always be in our hearts. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am advising you that the business of Don Vincent with the soldier has been taken care of. I am writing Father James regarding that. Thank God over this, for the soldier in question, in addition to the punishment inflicted on him, has been reprimanded by his commanding officer and has emerged a lamb. I have wanted to tell you this so your mind will not be disturbed by any apprehensions. So now, by annihilating yourself more before God and taking fire in that flame as a holocaust, take flight to the Highest Good. While in that holy annihilation and absorption in God, remember to pray for this poor, unhappy sinner, who is writing and who affirms he is always more desirous to see you all inflamed with the divine fire that burns in the sweet Heart of Jesus, where he who writes is always,

Your true servant,

Paul, who is truly a nothing

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Agnes Grazi (85)

Presentation
July 29, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

This morning I received your note, but you do not say anything about receiving my note which was sent you while I was in Portercole to take care of the affair between the soldier and Don Vincent. I gave you information about that and enclosed a message for Father James. I would wish to know whether he received it so as to do what I am to do. If it was not given to him, do not do anything about it. Just let me know.

I would not know what to tell you about the things you write except to repeat what I have said and written so often. Prayer that leaves the soul with the effects you describe is never a deceit. When it produces great humility, self-contempt and self-knowledge, a desire for virtue, and love of God and neighbor, there can be no devilish trick sneaking in. However, it is necessary to be always on guard, to fear God, to distrust self, to be detached from gifts, and to refer all back to him. Always fear to offend him by not being faithful.

Be equally content whether to have or not to have these gifts. Do not worry about that upset that happened. It is clear it was the work of the enemy.

If God wishes, I will be in Orbetello toward the end of next week, around the Feast of Saint Cajetan, but I cannot be sure. It will be when God wills it.

So place yourself in the hands of God and all abandoned in him, as a ship without oars or sails. With the annihilation already mentioned, reduce yourself to ashes and dust, as you are in truth. Then let the Holy Spirit come and carry this dust and ashes aloft, and lose it in that depth of Fire that is the very Godhead.

I do not know what to say to you, for my unhappy state is only slightly less than that of the damned because I am experiencing a true abandonment by God. There remains for me but a tiny light of hope, very small, which so far does not seem snuffed out. If it were, I would be utterly lost. Ah! the scourge of God strikes me in a degree beyond explanation, and I fear it will always get worse. Things that I had believed were to succeed have in a short time turned to naught, which would not give me pain. But, to have clear knowledge of things I am not mentioning, oh, what agony!

Jesus bless you. Amen. Pray His Divine Majesty that he scourges me with mercy and saves my soul, which cost him so much. I fear with much reason that I am losing it. I end,

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

218

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (14)

Presentation
July 30, 1739

May Jesus be our Way, our Truth, our Life. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Your letter, which I received some days ago, gives me reason to bless His Divine Majesty. You think that the affairs of your soul are going badly; I tell you in the Name of God that they have never gone so well as now. Oh, how much I thank God! Do not be frightened at these temptations, and know that His Divine Majesty permits them to refine you in humility and to sink deep the foundations of the spiritual edifice that His Majesty has decided to build in your soul. You should know, my daughter, that spiritual profit is not measured by sweetness, but by the exercise of the holy virtues and the grace of God. There are things which cause me to rejoice. Especially do I recommend that you hold on to your joy in holy poverty. I rejoiced greatly over that search you made to find a poor garment for yourself. Maintain that rule until death.

Continue to wear that vest of camel skin three times a week and, on days you do not wear it, wear a knotted rope. I know that God wants you to be his dear penitent, but to be that perfectly requires that you be very humble, despised, annihilated, and so on.

With regard to the penances from your confessor, do not be pained over them. You are not obliged to ask him for permission to write me. The permission of the Mother Abbess is sufficient. Give her my greetings and tell

her you profit in writing me, and ask her to allow you to continue to write me secretly, not letting others know, for she already knows how the devil can make something out of this, especially in convents. Therefore, there is need to do it secretly. Give the letters to your brother, the captain. Saint Teresa did this and often made use of her brother.

I do not know whether the bishop will favor this, for it is many mailings ago that I have written him in a spiritual matter, not for myself, but for the need of a soul. He has not answered, and I do not know why not. It may be that he is sick or away from his See, for I directed the letter to Siena and Massa. My conscience does not charge me with any offense toward him. I know that I have not lacked tongues and pens that scourged me after the missions in that blessed island. God have mercy on us. Keep this in your heart. You need do only what I told you, all the more because the bishop, if you will recall, has already given you permission.

I feel myself strongly moved to say a word or two about prayer. Oh! listen, my daughter. You know that by the grace of God I have full knowledge of your soul. Therefore, I want to speak precisely to your present conduct. Your preparation for prayer should be an entire annihilation of yourself before that Sovereign Majesty. I would wish that you reduce yourself to absolute nothing, and then with lively faith cast these ashes, this nothing, into the All, who is God. There take your repose and allow yourself to be carried by that loving breath of the Holy Spirit to lose yourself in that abyss of love. Oh, what a great lesson this is, and God wishes you to walk in this way.

I would rejoice much, but God would rejoice even more if my daughter in Jesus Christ were to sacrifice herself entirely as a holocaust to the Supreme Good. Do you know what it means to be sacrificed as a holocaust? That means to be entirely burnt up, to be completely aflame and totally consumed in the abyss of the fire of holy love. In ancient times, when they sacrificed a holocaust, the entire victim was burnt up to the glory of God. So you should throw yourself into that divine fire as a victim of holocaust and allow yourself to be burnt up. All this should be done without picturing or imagining it, but in a living faith, in spirit and in truth. If all your prayer passes in this way, oh, what a wonderful prayer! Do not force your head or stomach, but work gently and very spiritually. God will teach you everything. When you are well burnt up, there will come that sweet, soft wind that will carry these ashes upward and lose them in that divine fire, in which you will lose yourself in order to find yourself the richer. Oh, fortunate loss! Oh, richest loss! Hidden treasure is never like this!

Hold your soul in freedom and let it pray in the manner of the Holy Spirit. When God gives you light to know your ingratitude, it is a sign he is calling you to contrition. When God allows you to speak of his Passion, do so, but with quiet and sweetness, allowing love and sorrow to flow together. But when God wills that the poor butterfly, after spiraling around the divine light, would burn up within it and there rejoice in that sweet light and that sweet fire of love, you must allow it so and not arouse it from this sweet sleep.

Maintain a loving attention to God, from which is born that sacred silence of love, which is such a great way of speaking to the ears of the Divine Spouse. Allow yourself to be raised to the contemplation of the divine perfections: either the infinite grandeur or the immensity or the infinite beauty or goodness or so on. Let your soul repose in a loving marvel and stupor from which will be born a complacency that God is the Infinite Being that he is. In this complacency the soul rejoices, jubilates, has a feast, and is happy over the riches and greatness of her beloved good. Ah! what a great knowledge this is, my daughter! And God wants you to come to this, if you will annihilate yourself, despise yourself, and practice all the virtues, as I have said. See what a letter I have written you after I rejoiced. I see that God has given me light, so regard it as a treasure from God, for in me there is only evil, blindness, ignorance, and all defects.

I have never had a thought of abandoning serving your soul. I well know and experience that from the beginning God had confided you to me and willed that I serve you. I have done this willingly. Pray for me, who am in an abyss of tempests with the water up to my neck. But I am still holding on to the plank of the Holy Cross and, I hope, I will not be shipwrecked. Pray much for this poor Retreat that God will send holy workers, especially in these times when they are so needed. I fear much that I am an impediment. Pray God constantly that he take me.

I believe I will be going on a mission to Giglio and will pass through Porto San Stefano and will bring the Bambina with me. I will entrust it to a safe person so that it can be delivered to you with the understanding that it remain in your possession until you die. Then I desire that it be returned to the Retreat. I will write this out so that you can tell them.

I sent the bottle to the chaplain of Porto San Stefano, and he wrote that he would send it securely. May God reward the charity of everyone.

Greet your Mother Abbess for me and your companion sisters, who serve God in penance, and recommend me to their prayers. I rejoice in Jesus over their holy resolutions. May they be faithful, humble, and distrustful of self in order not to turn back. Jesus inflame you with love, my daughter, and make you holy, as I wish and pray the Lord. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

Father Jerome Berardi¹³⁶

Presentation
August 13, 1739

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Prior,

Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, be always in our hearts and be your eternal reward for the charitable and prudent attention with which Your Reverence has managed to obtain the relic of the Holy Cross. Please keep it safely in your possession until an opportunity comes for a trusted person to bring it. I would ask you not to consign it to anyone without a letter from me, seeing what we are dealing with. I grieve with you over the behavior of N. and N. I am unhappy because of the offense to His Divine Majesty. May God forgive them. Do not afflict yourself because of me. I cherish you as before.

Father Fulgentius is replying to you and says he did not receive your letters, but do not be disturbed. This notice is sufficient, the more so because it may be that the mails are late. If I am not overdoing it, I ask you to greet Signore Tonelli most cordially for me. I wrote him when the cleric returned, recommending him highly to you. I remain under obedience to you and ask your devout prayers. In the holy Side of Jesus, I am always,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,

Paul Danei

Agnes Grazi (86)

Presentation
August 17, 1739

J.M.J.

*Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life,
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday evening, I received your letter, and I tell you in all truth that it gave me reason to thank God more than usual. May God be ever praised for his gifts. Amen.

You did well to make the examen which I sent you in writing and which I want you to repeat, for it is always necessary to stay in holy fear so that our hearts do not get attached to things of earth. God is jealous of our hearts. The care of the true servants of the Most High consisted principally in this: to keep themselves always annihilated before God, to be subject to every creature, and to be despoiled of every earthly affection. They always feared there was not enough of this. So listen, my daughter. That peace you experience as all lost in God while making this self-examination is a good sign. For while it is necessary not to trust in our feelings, it is good to take a frequent look at our heart to see whether it is seeking anything other than God or whether it is

136. Berardi was the prior at Monteleone.

desiring something other. It is enough that this be a means of uniting oneself more with God. To walk more securely, the best thing is to let all desires die in God. Continue in this fashion and have no doubts.

Let the devil roar as much as he wants. You know where to hide; the impregnable fortress is ready. You understand me. I mean the sweet Side of Jesus, where is found every strength, sweetness, comfort, and in one word, every good. Do not be surprised that after the fiercest storms of temptation, your soul usually finds itself more united and more peaceful and more in love with God. That is the way our One and Only Good is accustomed to act after his poor soldiers have fought. It is true that the soul, in addition to giving him thanks, needs to annihilate itself even more, knowing that the victory comes entirely from God, holding it as an infallible certain truth that since one is a pure nothing and being nothing, one would not be capable of doing anything else but fall from its present nothingness into a worse nothingness of sin. Everything is due to God — to God alone honor and glory — so return to him the incense of all his gifts. Oh! who understands this truth to its depths? Oh! how much one would fear for self? Oh! how much one would reduce self to nothing. Oh! with what filial confidence one would lose self in God, who is the true All, losing sight of all created things in order to be transformed into the Uncreated and Immense God.

I read that your illness continues, but I rejoice that Jesus, the Divine Physician and most loving Spouse, comforts you, soul and body.

As much as you can, do not omit to embrace him in the Great Sacrament of his love, and give your heart free rein to pour out its affects to this Infinite Love. Give it full liberty to aspire after the glory which is prepared for you because of the infinite merits of Jesus. Oh! now is the time to open the way for you to desire, and to desire more ardently, that wonderful paradise where we will be in one eternal feast, incessantly praising our Sovereign Good and without danger of ever losing Him. If you must remain in bed, take your sleep in God and let everything be lost in the immense sea of love. At the same time you can be on your bed as though on the cross of your Divine Spouse. I can see that the walls are crumbling and the poor prisoner wishes to fly free to her homeland, which the dear Jesus has purchased with his Precious Blood. But take note that in leaving prison, you must be clothed in a dress of ashes on which is written: "I am a pure nothing. I am an abyss of every evil. You alone, O my God, are the One Who Is, and from you I expect every good through the merits of the blood of my Jesus."

When you come forth from your prison with this poor dress of ashes, with the inscription of your nothingness, God, who is all, ordains that, divested of that ashen dress, your soul be clothed with queenly robes, dyed with the Blood of the Divine Lamb and bejewelled with his divine virtues. Thus regally clothed, you will be brought to your throne to be seated forever at the Divine Table and to sing forever: "Holy, Holy, Holy; You alone are Holy; You alone are Lord; You alone are Most High, Jesus Christ." Let your heart rejoice in these truths that I write to you and give you complete freedom to aspire for this

glory. Then return to your nothingness with one eye on high and the other below on your ashes.

Continue to pray for the Retreat as before. Allow your soul to follow the divine leading. I have said, and say again, that prayer is to be made in the way of the Holy Spirit.

Laugh at the devil, who rages when we pray — even more so for having suggested that you and I are deceived. Oh! what a rage this beast has for us! Let us trust in God that we will conquer.

I am somewhat better, but there have been days when I thought I was going to be really in trouble. I am referring to physical health.

My poor soul is the same as always with greater sharing of crosses, but I embrace them by the grace of Jesus Christ. My greatest desire is to be entirely consumed by the Divine Will. This is what my soul aspires after. Because it is so imperfect, it cannot obtain this grace that I so often have desired, asked for, and had others ask of God. I will come to hear you when God wills, and when you least expect it. God wills that we be subject to all creatures — Saint Paul preached that. If any of ours come down there, do not manifest any desire that I come. Do not even speak of me except for a simple inquiry, as you are accustomed to do. When you can write, let me know whether your illness continues or gets worse, and, above all, let me know how you find Communion and prayer, as you usually do. But if you are utterly exhausted or find great difficulty, do not attempt to write. You can give the notes to Magdalene, to whom I am entrusting this. If your sickness should become very serious with danger of death, send to have me called. I am hoping this is not the case, and that it will be necessary for you to carry your cross a bit longer and to remain for a while imprisoned. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

221

Father Stephen Lavitelli (5)

Presentation
August 20, 1739

J.M.J.

Dear Reverend Father,

I have received with joy the news that Your Reverence gives me from Anthony and his greetings to our religious, along with the notification concerning the relic. I had that already from Monteleone. So I beg the Divine Majesty to grant you an eternal reward for the inconvenience you experienced and for which I consider myself much obligated. With humble reverence I recommend myself to your prayers. I end in haste with the honor of naming myself,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul Danei

Agnes Grazi (87)

Presentation

August 1739

Jesus be always in your heart.

My Daughter,

I am letting you know that on Wednesday, the Feast of Saint Dominic,¹³⁷ I will be in Orbetello at an early hour, and I am thinking of celebrating Mass at the Altar of the Holy Rosary to recommend myself to the great patriarch, son, and servant of that great Queen, Mary Most Holy. There we will be at the High Mass together and feed on the flesh of the Immaculate Lamb, Jesus. I am not coming for any further business. Therefore, I do not want this known by anyone. Although I am writing to your uncle, I did not let him know, so be quiet about the matter. Get yourself dressed early, granting that you are well enough. For after I have conferred with you as long as necessary, I will celebrate the Holy Mysteries.

I would wish that my daughter in Jesus be entirely burnt to ashes in that divine furnace. But it is necessary to prepare well and to die to everything and to become a well-dried log so that it can burn immediately. Amen. Jesus bless you, and I leave you in the sweet Side of Jesus, where I say I am ...

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (15)

Presentation

September 7, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter last evening, but did not reply for it was not necessary. If you will do what I prescribed for you in my last communication, you will do very well, especially concerning prayer, in which it is not necessary that you be continually concentrating on your sins. After you have humbled yourself and gently aroused contrition, you must allow your soul to fly into that abyss of infinite love. Use the advice given you and make nothing out of the phantoms of the night. Laugh at the devil and humble yourself before God.

As for your penances, you do well to guide yourself with your confessor. Since he is nearby, he can know better than I how strong you are. I am pressed for time and must leave this Wednesday, as I am going to conduct retreats for two convents and act as confessor, having canceled a mission for this autumn because everyone is overly busy.

I will send the Bambina with a safe person. But you need to be a bit patient, for I have just returned. I will be going personally to Porto San Stefano to send it. The Retreat is being persecuted by devils and men, the latter out of good intentions, but the Most High is our Protector. We are eight in all, and you are

137. This letter would seem to belong in August 1741, since in 1741 the Feast of Saint Dominic was on Wednesday.

not to give notice of this to the gossipers of this world and not to distract me with worldly gossipers. Pray God that this tree be not unfruitful, but that with a merciful pruning the Retreat will prosper. Thanks be to God, things are going better than ever, due to the fervor of the servants of God and the protection of the superiors in the Church. Jesus bless you. Amen. I will also send you the cross you asked for.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

224

Agnes Grazi (88)

Farnese

September 14, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter and rejoice over it in Jesus Christ. Now, believe me, I do not have even a breath of time. I can only say that I wish Agnes be always more burnt up and annihilated in God, all transformed into the pains of our Savior. Oh, how much I rejoice over the memory that you keep of the pains of our Jesus. Courage! I have no more to say. Continue on your way and use the advice given. As for that person, I advise you to be silent and suffer. Work, suffer, be quiet. May Jesus live. Amen. I am not so forgetful as you think, and, if all the fire I desire would come, Agnes would be one flame, and the fire would attack even the walls and burn up everything they touch. I am pressed for time. Jesus bless you. Continue to pray for me. Greet Signora Maria Johanna, but quietly so that no partiality may seem to be there since I am not saying anything to the others. Tell her to continue with her practices. I hope to be there around October 14. Thanks be to God.

Your true, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

225

Agnes Grazi (89)

Corneto

October 3, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your long letters, one in Farnese and the other here in Corneto. You have no idea of my tasks, which keep me occupied fourteen hours and more each day, and which give me no time to read or write. I have read your letters and there is much to be said regarding them. You are too quick to say with certitude that God is making you write and makes you say, etc. Oh! how difficult it is to know that. Don't be so trustful of yourself, and be more humble because God is not accustomed to let things be known so clearly in these trifles as you think. Enough! There is no question of sin here. I rejoice

that His Divine Majesty tries your patience. Conduct yourself properly with that person who is simply an instrument, and continue to govern yourself as you tell me, for that goes well. Recommend yourself to God and do not trust in yourself.

I do not know what to say to Signora Suplizia, for I do not have the light and my rules keep me from entering into marriage affairs as I already said to her. However, if she feels opposed, as you tell me that she pulls away from the man, then it is necessary to proceed slowly. If she seems inspired not to accept him, let her speak plainly and without human respect and withdraw to her parents. But I leave her in freedom, and my name, in any case, should not come up since that is not proper. Tell her what I am writing. I leave you in the Side of Jesus and am in all haste,

Your poor servant,

Paul of the Cross

Greet your uncle and the family.

226

Agnes Grazi (90)

Presentation

October 6, [1739]

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I hear from Magdalene that you would desire to speak with me face-to-face. This cannot happen until Monday evening or Tuesday morning, for I will come to receive the letter to go to Farnese. I suspect the devil is making an uproar. But you must laugh at that evil one, for in everything he will emerge with a broken head. If your affair did not succeed, you must adore his Holy Will with all peace and union with the pleasure of God. Often, with regard to prayer, God gives strong feelings which seem to guarantee that the petitions will be heard, and then the outcome is quite the opposite. That does not mean that this prayer has been a deceit. God simply permits this so that the soul may learn to be most faithful to God, even if, when asking for bread, God gives her stones. These are tests from God so that we stay on guard and not trust in ourselves and our feelings at prayer. Feelings can have a natural source or come from our imagination, which makes us believe what is not so. So enough! The one who hopes in God, who is strong in faith, draws good from everything.

It has happened that God has given strong inclinations for prayers for affairs entirely noble and then has delayed the grace for years and years so that one perseveres in prayer. Therefore, rejoice that you are called to cry out to the Divine Throne. Now I command that you quiet yourself in God and think no more about the matter. But simply love God and follow your accustomed practices, annihilating yourself more and more and confessing that you are unworthy of any good.

Pray for your family, but with indifference. Think no more of it, but be careful to be dead to everything, confiding in God alone. Make nothing out of

your feelings; stir up your faith and strengthen yourself in faith. As for the great feelings you experience in prayer, protest that you do not want them, that you seek God alone and want to live in him, love him, and so on. I will have more to say face-to-face. Jesus bless you. Amen. It is not important that you write, for I will soon be down there.

Your servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

227

Agnes Grazi (91)

Presentation
October 15, 1739

J.M.J.

May Jesus be always in your heart.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ,

Do not be wondering why you do not see me. I do not have a fit habit since I have not been able to rid it of the lice I picked up away from here. These lice have every reason to feast on this carrion. I adore the divine dispositions in everything, which right now prevent me from coming. Be aware that I am telling you with great secrecy that I have not had, as long as I have lived, a piece of business more important and more pressing than what I have at hand. This demands my entire attention, and so I ask you to give yourself to prayer and offer Communion so that all comes out to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, as I am hoping. I am so weak that not a few fears come upon me, and so I have need of great light, great strength, great virtue, and, above all, great union with God. Cry out, therefore, my daughter, at the throne of the Most High, implore our Mother of Sorrows and all the saints, especially Saint Michael, supplicating and beseeching that, if this business is not to issue in the purest glory of God, he put impediments in the way that it may fail. Pray, too, that my severe imperfections are not a barrier.

Remain joyous in God; you are not deceived. I have told you that many times, but you are deaf. Annihilate yourself more and more, and you will see what great mercies God will bring about. Next week, God willing, I will make every effort to come, and I will remain almost an entire day, for who knows when we will be able to have a conference in the future. Abandon yourself entirely in God and lose sight of everything, annihilating all in God. Jesus bless you and inflame you with holy love. I break off in a hurry. Have no scruples and then tell me everything.

Your true, unworthy servant,
Poor Paul of the Cross

Presentation
October 16, [1739]

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

I received your letter, which was filled with temptations and tears. In trials virtue is known, and you have reason to humble yourself not a little. If you were more resigned, you would not speak the way you do. I could not be in Orbetello because I had reason to go to the Retreat to change clothes as well as many affairs necessary for the service of God. I judged the conference we had was amply sufficient, all the more so because I promised to come again soon. If I did not come yesterday, it was because I had no habit to change into, as I wrote, and my occupations are so many that for me, who am so weak, I experience not a little fright. But I entrust all to God. I did not know how to satisfy you more than with the letter I sent last evening. You are dealing with a person who does not know how and is incapable of mortifying you, for I am always going along with everything. So when things do not go your way, you complain and lament.

What need was there to go chattering with the man you mention to me? I am stupefied. Humble yourself, resign yourself, and quiet yourself in God that he may cure you wounds. With regard to going elsewhere, I leave you at liberty. Do as God inspires you and provide for yourself with whomsoever seems best for you since I am happy with whatever God wants. I will not do anything further for your soul since I cannot and do not know what more is to be done. I have not assisted another soul as I have assisted you. If I have not served as was needed, you must pardon the lack as coming not from ill will, but lack of competence. There was no one here who was blocking my coming, only my duties. It is the Will of God that I give myself to these for his glory and the salvation of souls. This morning I did not celebrate because the burden wore out the donkey and made him sick. If you cannot pray for the Retreat, I will not speak of that. It is under the protection of the Most High and of Mary Most Holy, Mother of Sorrows. Jesus bless you and make you humble, resigned, and holy as I desire and pray in the Lord.

Your poor nothing,

Paul of the Cross

Agnes Grazi (93)

Farnese

October 22, [1739]¹³⁸*Jesus and Mary be praised.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

A little while ago I received your letter. I scarcely had time to read; therefore, I am not answering what was in it. I hope to be in Orbetello for the Vigil of All Saints or at least by November 4. Pray for me, here as a prisoner to serve the dear prisoners of love for Jesus Christ. I mean the nuns of Farnese, for whom I am giving a retreat and have been at it for fifteen days. God is helping me. I ended missions for the present. Since I am not strong, I am not going to the diocese of Pieve. May Jesus live. I do not have time to send you a letter. God be blessed. The confessional awaits me.

Poor Paul, Your True Servant in God

Greet all your family and, in particular, Signore James.

Agnes Grazi (94)

Presentation

November 16, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last evening I received your note with a letter, and I rejoice that God is keeping you in a holy recollection, etc. Never leave the recognition of your nothingness and total distress of yourself and fear of the Divine Majesty, but have a filial fear and be humble and sincere. To maintain fervor of prayer, to grow in Divine Love and knowledge of divine things, solitude of your room and your corner is highly necessary, and treating as little as possible with everyone, even family, except for what is purely necessary. The rest of the time employ yourself in that holy repose of holy prayer and contemplation of God in a true annihilation and death to everything created. If you act in this way, you will be happy in time and happier in eternity.

I do not know when God wills that I come to Orbetello, the more so because of my grave sins. I am in such a state of anxiety, desolation, and abandonment that never in my whole life have I been in such a miserable state. Although my life has always been full of darkness, calamities, and multiple scourges, now I am in such a state that there has never been the like, not only because of the incidents that take place outside and the persecutions, murmurings, and jibes from people, which I willingly embrace to humble my pride, but even more the tremendous battering from demons, and, what is more horrible, the fearful scourge from an indignant God, which is upon me. That makes me feel something of hell, even in my lifetime. I sigh for a holy death

138. Amedeo assigns this letter to 1739, but because Paul says he is in Farnese for fifteen days, 1739 is probably an incorrect year.

through the merits of the Passion of Jesus, and I wish that everyone pray for me.

Now I am persuaded, and more than certain, that His Divine Majesty does not want further work from me that I had believed I ought to accomplish. His Divine Majesty has given me very palpable signs of this, and this has increased my desolation. At the same time it helps me more to resign myself to accept everything as a punishment for my great pride and in correspondence to the gifts of God. I see, or better stated, I foresee that in a short time the Retreat will be desolate and that scourges of all kinds will increase, and that I will be crushed and dead under the great weight — even now I am on my way to that. Out of charity pray His Divine Majesty to be placated and give me light to know well my great evil and a great contrition to bewail it, and so dispose myself to die under the lash of the mercy of God. Perform this charity, as I am telling you here, and pay no attention to the opinion you have of me, for the devil is clever and transforms himself into an angel of light to trick us. God makes me know with clear signs that he is enraged and does not want to make further use of this perfidious creature. I hope that I will be saved by the infinite merits of his most Holy Passion.

With regard to your conduct, as far as faith enlightens me, you are walking well. Continue your practices, as I have told you, and be secret with all, love silence and distance from all, and day and night treat with God.

Treat those imaginary visions just as I taught at other times. That is, cut them off and humble yourself. If they are of God, even if you cut them off, they will succeed and produce their customary effects of humility, self-contempt, love of virtue and suffering in order to love God the more and unite you more closely with him, and other graces beyond explanation and not possible to put in words.

Be of good heart for His Divine Majesty will bring to perfection the work begun. Pray His Divine Majesty for all in the Retreat that the Lord comfort them and give them the grace of perseverance. If His Divine Majesty wills that they leave here — as of now there is no such danger — it will be a sign that he wills something else for me, that I leave here and go across the earth and strive to cooperate in the salvation of some soul. I always hope to do that. To sum up: that the Will of God may be accomplished in time and in eternity in all things is what I desire and nothing else. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Say nothing to any living soul of what I am telling you. Let it all be buried.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

Paul of the Holy †

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (16)

Presentation
November 19, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter and you never cease to do me good. God reward you for the charity of the chick peas. I will send you the sack for other opportunities. I am sorry that I could not send you the Bambina, but I do not trust doing it. I fear they might smash it as happened to me with a beautiful Bambino that a servant of God, a daughter in Jesus Christ, tried to send me. It arrived completely broken, and she had to do it all over again. If I come to give a mission, as they tell me, I will bring it with me. But who knows if they will agree over there, or if the bishop will have other assignments for me.

If that vest of camel skin is not harming your health, you may wear it with the blessing of God. But to wear it over long periods of time, it would seem there will be damage to your health. So it would be well to use discretion. Examine everything at the foot of the Crucified, the more so because you are not well. Enough! I say once more, if it does you no harm, go ahead wear it.

As for myself, I am more and more immersed in crosses, etc., and have reason to believe that God is very angry with me. Recommend me much to God so that he be placated and give me the grace that I die transfixed with true sorrow that I have offended God and with the impression of his Passion on my heart. Follow your usual rules for prayer, etc., as I have told you and written to you. Give greater vent than ever to your affection to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, etc.

The right time for the mission would be after the Feast of the Epiphany, but if agreement has not come before Christmas, along with faculties, I will be going elsewhere.

May the Holy Will of God be always done so that, if I come there, I hope in God that it will be more fruitful than the last time. I am in haste,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (95)

Presentation
November 30, 1739

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last night I received your letter with the note from the sister of Father Fulgentius. I would gladly have come for her sake, but God knows my condition in soul and body. I think I had a fever the night before last and yesterday and last night. God knows what it was like. So we must proceed in God's way, not ours. Nevertheless, I would have come, but you see what the weather is like. To have come would have exposed me to clear danger of

getting really sick. Tell that young lady that she should enter the convent and live in peace without thinking of the future. I already said that to Father Fulgentius, who is making every effort to have her become a religious in that convent school, as she seems to be inspired to do. So I have set him on the path he has to take, and I believe he will do all that is possible. She should remain quietly in the Will of God and abandon everything to the direction of this true servant of God, her brother, who looks on her not with the eyes of flesh and blood, but purely in God. Let him act, for he hopes that his sister does neither more nor less than what God wills. With regard to spiritual direction, tell her to abandon herself to the direction of her good brother and with great openness tell him all, for she will find great good in that way. Do this in my place since I cannot come at this time.

Saint Francis de Sales was a spiritual director for his brothers, sisters, cousin, his mother, and father. I would say of all. So console her, encourage her to discreet penance, to prayer, above all, to virtue, and not to worry about tomorrow. Let her abandon herself to God like an infant. May you know how to convey all this. I am sending her purposely to the gardens so that this good daughter will be able to have her conference with Father Fulgentius before he leaves.

Now, we come to our business. I have no doubt that God does not want you to follow your old ways. Nor am I refusing, nor will I refuse, to assist you. And you will be able to see readily whether I love your soul purely in God. God knows that I desire that you would love God more than the seraphim, and all my effort is to keep you despoiled, alienated, and dead to all creatures, for God wills that Agnes be hidden, silent, despised, crucified, dead, and buried in the depth of her nothingness, in order to be better disposed to be transformed into her Divine Spouse, Jesus Christ. Oh! if you were to obey me in this, you would see great steps toward perfection, and, by the grace of God, I would not be complaining about your obedience.

You are still imperfect, even most imperfect, but God will bring you to perfection. With regard to prayer, I need only say what God wishes me to say about this. I can say that God is the Divine Worker and say no more. Continue to annihilate yourself with filial confidence and allow yourself to be taken by God where and how he wills. Take your long sleeps on the divine bosom of that Infinite Good. Do not allow creatures to awaken you. I would wish that during these days, especially, you raise your soul aloft to the contemplation of the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, and that you make some flights of spirit to visit the Immaculate Lady, pregnant with the Son of God. In humility at her feet ask permission to enter that chamber of love, her purest heart; there, love your Divine Spouse, whom you will find so small, and repose in that virginal nuptial room. All this is to be done in pure faith, in spirit, without images, but all immersed in God, in whom everything is understood. Allow your soul to repose there, absorbed in a high stupor and loving wonder, seeing with faith the Immense become so small, Infinite Grandeur become so humble, for love of humankind, etc. I am not saying you are to do this in my way, but in God's way. Let your soul have a holy freedom

to receive the divine impressions in accord with the Divine Good Pleasure. Prayer is to be made in the way of the Holy Spirit as the Infinite Good desires.

With regard to the imaginations and dreams, laugh at the devil and doubt nothing. Believe me, you have not committed the shadow of a defect. Leave all on my conscience and under holy obedience do not take these scruples to the confessional, nor those you mention regarding lack of faith, nor anything else.

When God wills, I will hear you. Make your confessions as usual and nothing further. Keep silent about me, for there is nothing there — only a diabolical fantasy to upset you. You are mistaken when you say I am not treating you as when you came from Viterbo. And I tell you in the Side of Jesus, I desire always more perfection and sanctity for your soul, and I would desire to see you once truly dead to everything in order to live completely in God. If I write or speak a harsh word, you need take it in good part. I want to always have a steel knife in hand to eradicate and eliminate every weed that comes up in the garden. You understand what I am saying. I endeavor to keep your soul clean of all that is not of God.

Now I preach to others and do nothing myself. Now I am talking about myself. I see I am living further and further from perfection and always more under a scourge. Yesterday and last night were a day and night of hell, more than usual, for both soul and body were much assaulted. When I can, I will come, but I do not know when. Be quiet and think only about loving God, placing everything in him. As for Father Basil, do here what God wants and nothing more. If it seems good to you, burn this letter once you have read it. If you do not feel inspired to burn it, do whatever God wills. Pray for this poor shipwrecked one. God bless you. Amen.

Above all, I command you to cast off these scruples and remain secure and peaceful on my conscience, for there is not a shadow of anything in the matter. Burn them up, my daughter, in the fire which burns in that divine cell. God wishes to take his repose in a peaceful heart and not in one disturbed with diabolical scruples.

Continue to annihilate yourself more since God will make that hellish beast run off beaten. Speak no more about me or the Retreat. I will not speak to you about them because I do not wish you to be thinking about us anymore.

It is not a work destined for me, for I am a rock of scandal. Pray God to have me die contrite, humbled, and truly penitent.

Your servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

This morning I received your letter and observed many things that merit examination. I would wish that certain imaginary happenings be cut off as much as possible in order to avoid being deceived. The essential in what you have written is not a deceit, but is an affair of childishness. In all these elevations, if your soul grows in knowledge of God and of your own nothingness, and knows vividly that this is true, things are going well. But it is always necessary to maintain yourself always more in God with filial confidence and high purity of intention, and then give yourself to His Divine Majesty. Certainly, too frequent unions make me fearful; you must continue to cut them off. I am speaking of my opinion. The final word is that it is your duty to follow the divine attractions. I am not in favor of the too frequent conferences you are holding with M. Angela and others. Now and then I would not object, but frequent does not seem good to me. When they approach you, excuse yourself quickly, a half-hour or a little more seems enough, but do not be scrupulous. You are too quick to join with spiritual people and too fast in sanctifying them. This one is a good soul. But a saint, let us go slow!

I am not able to come to Orbetello. I remain in horrible calamities, and I have laid down a rule that without necessity I will not go down the mountain. If there is a necessity for me personally for the sake of the Retreat, I will go. If not, I will send a letter. You may write to me.

I know clearer than day that God does not want me in this business. If he wanted me to assist my neighbor, he would give me what is necessary, especially for the direction of souls. God alone knows my condition, in what an abyss of miseries, more and more horrible. And you cannot persuade me otherwise, which would be outright pride, for I well know the doctrine of the saints. Write me of your needs once a week if you have need. I am firmly resolved to bury myself here except at the time of missions and other things that need my personal attention. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Tell Magdalene that foolish women are not to come to see me here. And tell her she had better repent, for if I know of it, she will never again see my face.

I hope to give you more direction in writing and with living voice. I know what I am talking about, so do not speak to me about having to come to take medicines, for I am doing well.

Paul, Your Servant

Agnes Grazi (97)—
[1739]*J.M.J.*

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am adding what I did not write and what I did not tell Magdalene.

I am thinking of coming early Wednesday morning, and, if you show up at the nuns' church, it will be more convenient for us to have our conference. Then I will go and celebrate Mass in that church. But who knows if there will be enough Masses? Enough! Find out for yourself. But it will be necessary to be there early, for I will be in the church of the nuns when it opens. If there is no one to accompany you, ask Magdalene to come to your home early so that she can go with you. I do not want others to know. However, it is possible that I will come to your home first to drop off the lantern.

Learn from this to resign yourself more at another time, believing firmly that the great God of Majesty is the Sovereign Patron of Hearts and has his Will done in accord with his Good Pleasure. If your sickness increases, you will need to talk to a doctor. However, I am of the opinion that your illness can be cured only by the Divine Physician. Enough! If you are not so indisposed that you judge it expedient, we will look at things when I come. I trust God will work his Holy Will. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your servant in Christ,

Paul of the †

Father Stephen Lavitelli (6)—
[1739]*Jesus*

Father Paul, missionary, salutes the parish priest of Misiano and asks whether he will have the charity to contribute twenty or twenty-five medals to be given to the nuns for whom I am conducting a retreat, as you are aware. We had the medals and the indulgences, but by inadvertence they were sent to the Retreat in a basket given to someone who was leaving here.

THE NEW POPE ELECTED (1740–May 15, 1741)

Paul had been hoping to seek further approval of the Rule with the help of Cardinal Rezzonico, who had been recommended to Paul by Cardinal Corradini. Unfortunately, Pope Clement XII died on February 6, 1740. The conclave to elect a new pope lasted six months. On August 17 the archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, was elected and took the name of Benedict XIV. In September Cardinal Rezzonico, in an audience with the pope, told him of Paul's new Congregation. Pope Benedict was very favorable. The cardinal assured Paul that he should now come to Rome and, while staying in his palace, would be received by the pope. At this news Paul began a campaign of prayer for the success of this project. Paul went to Rome in November. He met the pope, who appointed a commission to study the Rule, consisting of Cardinals Corradini and Rezzonico, with Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni as secretary. The following letters should be read with this as background.

One of the first and closest companions of the founder was Father Fulgentius Pastorelli. Born June 17, 1710, he was ordained to the priesthood in the diocese of Pitigliano on May 30, 1733. He became acquainted with Paul and joined him on Mount Argentario in 1735, being vested in that year. Fulgentius joined the small community in the original hermitage of Saint Anthony. He shared in the blessing of the Retreat on September 14, 1737. Four years later on June 11, 1741, he took public vows with the other first religious when Benedict XIV approved the Rule. When he received the letter of November 19, 1740, he was rector at the Presentation Retreat and also novice director.¹³⁹ Later when Paul lived at San Angelo in Vetralla, he wrote quite frequently to Fulgentius. We are fortunate to have these letters, for from them we have Paul's own account of many of the difficulties of those early years. Unfortunately, Paul did not keep the letters Fulgentius wrote to him. Fulgentius died April 16, 1755, in the Grazi house in Orbetello and is buried in the Presentation Retreat.

139. The Italian text of the Rule and Constitutions of 1746 continued to call the master of novices the "director," as did the text of 1741 (*Regulae et const.*, p. 160).

Frances Lucci (8)

Presentation
January 20, 1740

J.M.J.

My Esteemed Lady in Christ,

Three days ago I arrived in the Retreat, returning from missions, and found your most welcome letter, in which I discover that your charity does not allow itself to be overcome by my demerits, and I want to be grateful to you, as you already know. The lentils have been received, and I thank your charitable attention to this. If I pass close to your place, I will be able to see you from a distance, but I believe I will not be traveling that way, as I have missions in another direction. If God opens the way, I will always be ready to serve your people as well as any other. May God pardon the one who has closed off this possibility, as he has blocked this wonderful good elsewhere, especially in these salt marshes. It is necessary to adore God and tremble.

You are complaining, but if you knew how things are with me, your troubles would seem to be roses. I know what I am talking about.

Continue on your path. Trust in God and do not make the mistake of being wanting in confidence in him who assures you that he will grant you the perfection of your soul's desires. God has accepted the noble sacrifice you have made of your soul and body with the vow of virginity, having renounced all the happiness that the world could have given you — if that could be called happiness and not rather a most bitter torment. So now it will be the care of His Divine Majesty to conserve and enrich you with all the fullness of graces and blessings. You must remain humble, distrustful of self, treating with those of a different status as plague-ridden, with whom one treats at a distance and with great caution. Never leave prayer, watch over your heart, frequent Communion and spiritual reading. I am pressed. Greet Angelina for me. Let her pray for poor Paul and live entirely in God and for God, and have her pray for me. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love.

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross

Agnes Grazi (98)

Presentation
January 30, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

Just this moment I received your letter and have read it. It is not necessary to send by the post, for I will be there soon. I think it will be the evening of Mary's Feast, but I am not certain. Be on guard lest the devil play the ape! From what I can see, the work seems to be of God, but you can always annihilate yourself more. Fear God with a holy fear and fear for yourself as capable of every evil. Cedars of Lebanon have fallen because they did not fear

for themselves and trusted in their own opinions. One who lives abandoned in God will not perish. Jesus bless you. I am in a hurry, for I am on my way to celebrate the Divine Mysteries.

Paul of the Cross, Your Servant in Jesus

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (17)

Presentation

February 17, 1740

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On the occasion that Father Anthony, our brother, goes to preach at Longone, that is, at Marina, I am answering your letter. I am unhappy that I do not have the time to read it again, for I cannot find it among my file of letters.

I want to tell you that I am not pained because I could not come there to give the mission, and so you ought not to afflict yourself. And do not think it is your fault, but the high Providence of God, who wished to provide himself with other workers who will do infinitely more than I could. The suffering that has come has resulted in great profit, and you are not to take it on since God is punishing me, not you. But he is punishing with a loving hand, and the more I see my affliction grow, the more I will trust in God.

Do not be scrupulous about what you have to say about your confessor nor with regard to your horrible temptations. Be quiet and let it be on my conscience, for not only have you not sinned, but also there is great merit there. As you wrote, you did what you were able to do. Be at peace. The temptations were tests from God to purge you. Humble yourself much. What God intends is that after the storms, calm will come. As for the horrible things that happened, since your will abhors them, there is no sin, only merit. In dreams we are not in charge of ourselves. It is enough that when awake we make contrary acts.

Continue on your path. Let anyone say what they will. Follow the rules given you and remain all abandoned in God. Read the letter I wrote you on prayer, which should cheer you up much.

I am writing in great haste because Father Anthony is leaving. If he were going by sea, I would send you the Bambina. But God will provide the occasion. I am keeping it here for you. Jesus bless you and make you holy as I desire. Pray for me and for the business of the Retreat, which, I hope, one day God will be placated and bless it. I am always in Jesus,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

Father Anthony Danei of the Passion (1)¹⁴⁰

Orbetello

March 7, 1740

J.M.J.

Dearest Brother,

A few minutes ago I received with joy your letter of February 26. I thank the Most High for the merciful assistance given to your wearying trip, especially in the rigors of this cold. I hope you will do well, if your intention is right and purely for the glory of God, as I hope. I am glad you are in the house of Signore Mattei. Please give him my cordial greetings and assure him that in this Retreat we will make a perpetual remembrance of his charity. I beg you not to be content with simply being dignified. Because you come to preach in the habit of a newly born Congregation. and because everyone has an eye on you, and because you are in a garrison where a mission¹⁴¹ took place, therefore, it is necessary to preach more with prayer, with caution, with recollection, with modesty, and with extreme care in speaking, careful about the words you use.

Here, we have not received any alms from the military person who is known to us. However, if it seems expedient, seeing our great needs, you might think it opportune, if you see an opening and can discern a good outcome, to speak to the colonel of the foreign soldiers and to an official of the regiment of Sguizzeri.¹⁴² Bring forward short, efficacious reasons to let them know the great work lacks resources so that they might come together with secrecy to obtain an abundant alms for the building we have in hand, (†) protesting to them that, if this building did not exist only to house servants of God, you would not be saying anything, and recommending that they ask their subjects to be quiet about the matter so as to remove any shadow from the preachers around there.¹⁴³ They could explain this matter to their subjects in an assembly. I hope that God will give you light to cooperate in this work so that you may be enriched with merits. Such a secret alms from the military ought to take place during Lent, for after Lent there will be another preacher. Conduct yourself as God inspires you.

Dear Father Anthony, I beg you to be a mirror of piety. Pray with great devotion and preach with zeal to garner souls. Stay withdrawn. Do not be affected in your speech or conversation, but be charitable and gentle with gravity and maturity.

140. Anthony is the brother of Paul of the Cross.

141. The mission was directed to the military in the first half of January 1736 (Zoffoli, Vol. III, pp. 1272-1273).

142. "Foreign soldiers" refers to mercenaries of various nationalities. *Sguizzeri* are soldiers of Swiss origin.

143. Paul's insistence on secrecy derives from the fact that the regulations prevented any request for alms except in case of extreme necessity or in "pure necessity" (*Regulae et constitutiones Congr. SS. Crucis es Pas. DNIC*, p. 44, lines 9-18). There was also a desire to avoid giving alarm to those who were responsible for collecting alms for the preachers of Lent. The "†" is in the original and was intended to draw the attention of Anthony.

We are well. The chapel is done up to the dome.¹⁴⁴ For the rest, we are confident in God, and I am somewhat hopeful

Give my greetings to Francis Di Matteo, our benefactor, and to Don Solimeno.¹⁴⁵ Keep yourself from the necessity of accepting invitations to dinner. I recommend this much to you. Greet all who will inquire about me, etc.

I will write about Livorno later; for now I do not feel inspired. We will see then and will write you. Let me know how Lent is going and the state of your health. Here, we are praying for you. Jesus bless you and enrich you with all fullness of blessings. Amen. I am here in Orbetello by accident. Father James¹⁴⁶ had come down with a dangerous fever, but it is better now, and I ... I have not spoken of it and showed myself as usual. But you will do what you have decided since I cannot do it, or at least do it rarely, in order to avoid sensation. All this needs to be based on the love of God,¹⁴⁷ on abnegation of self, edification of one's neighbor, in fine, in true charity which excludes our resentment and includes our profit in our self-contempt.

I would add that you should consult the doctor who cured me. Do not try to keep Lent if he tells you it would be harmful to do so. Thanks be to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin. Observe the known rules.

Your Servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (18)

Presentation
May 31, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On my return from the holy missions, where I was yesterday morning, I received your letter, which pleased me much in Jesus Christ. I rejoice in our Amiable Savior over the tests that His Majesty is pleased to give this daughter, whom his infinite goodness has confided to me. In the choice made of you as entrance guardian, there is no doubt of the Divine Good Pleasure seen clearly in the command of your superior. So you must be pleased in God to exercise that office and never leave it for any reason before the time established to bring it to a close. And now, remain indifferent for any other office that may be imposed, accepting it as though blind and without answering a word. In this duty, where you find yourself through Divine Providence, you will always find

144. This was a chapel in honor of Saint Michael the Archangel that began in 1739 (Cioni, "Storia delle fondazioni," *Bollettino*, 1923, p. 244).

145. Di Matteo was probably the same benefactor "Mattei" of whom Paul speaks of at first. Solimeno was someone else whom he knew in the town.

146. James Grazi, uncle of Agnes Grazi, was directed by Paul for many years. The Grazi family always provided generous hospitality for Paul and his religious.

147. Paul feared that the people would be astonished that the Passionists, an infant Congregation, would begin asking for alms.

your Divine Spouse, who will be there as companion and enrich you with graces and help to fulfill your duty well. I wish you to abandon yourself more and more in that immense sea of love. I want you to live of the life and in the divine life of Jesus Christ. You will succeed in this if you annihilate yourself before God, if you humble yourself to all, if you make yourself the dirt of the convent. Never leave the parlors when the nuns are speaking there. Take notice whether they are speaking of worldly things, and without human respect warn them with charity and inform the superior when you see you are unable to remedy the situation. If the superior does not correct things, go to the confessor so that he can inform the bishop. Be respectful toward all, reverent toward all, so that they will not speak to seculars without great necessity. But do this with a spirit of meekness and charity. You should not speak without necessity and reply briefly to those who come with a spirit of recollection and then return alone to the hermitage of your heart to treat one-on-one with your Divine Spouse.

Oh! my daughter, Jesus shouted in a loud voice during his preaching: "Let him who is thirsty come to me and drink." Oh! daughter, let us approach this divine font and drink to satiety, but without ever satisfying ourselves. Whoever drinks at this fountain, drinks in rivers, seas, but seas of fire! Therefore, say to Jesus: "O my Spouse of my Life, O Font of Love, grant me, as alms, a sip to drink. Oh, how thirsty I am, dear Jesus!" etc., etc. And then approach the Heart of Jesus and drink and take care of your thirst, drink the rivers of Divine Love, drink the seas, but rivers and seas of fire!

I am ending for I am out of time. I have already let you know that we received the oil and figs, and we thank your kindness for this new benefaction.

I have not sent the bottle because I am leaving on missions and will send it later. If there is a good opportunity, I will send the Bambina, which has been waiting here for you such a long time. If with passing of time you would desire to employ yourself in producing little leaflets to give out for the devotion of the faithful, it would be a thing pleasing to God. Pray much for me because I am still under the merciful scourge of God. I shiver not a little and fear the Divine Justice. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your true, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (19)

Presentation
June 5, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On my return from the missions, I found your letter, which gave me much satisfaction, for in it I read your pious resolutions on perseverance and so on.

I have already answered by post. I think that you have not received it since I sent it in the ordinary way. In it I give you good advice for the position that Divine Providence has given you. And God knows how much I rejoice in the

Lord that my daughter is being tried in this way. This is how His Divine Majesty will draw her to great perfection.

Now I am taking the opportunity with safety to send you the Holy Bambina, which I have already blessed according to the rite of Holy Church. I ask you to treat it with great veneration, but in your cell. Only during the Novena of the Holy Bambina should it be displayed for the devotion of the nuns in choir, as they do for all the solemn novenas, with lights and lamps, which ought to remain burning, that is, the lamps, during the whole novena. If they wish for the Octave, the candles should be lit only when the novena is conducted in the choir. Keep it covered with a small curtain. Draw it aside for your needs and, if you wish, every time you make your prayer before this statue.

You will see that you will receive great graces for yourself and your neighbor. Offer the Bambina often to the Eternal Father as his dear daughter, to the Eternal Son as his dear mother, to the Holy Spirit as his dear spouse. When you have made such an offering, take it in your arms with great devotion and with a rope around your neck, and offer yourself for the extreme needs of poor Paul and the Retreat.

Love will teach you great things. You can have a small urn or a cradle made for you, as you think best.

I am in a hurry. I simply tell you to remain willingly on the cross, watch over your office carefully, do not leave the nuns alone when they go to speak in the parlor, make suggestions to them, and correct them with charity. Speak little with everyone, be alone in your heart with your Divine Spouse, make frequent spiritual communions, and assist in spirit at all the Masses. My daughter, drink to satiety at the perennial font of the Heart of Jesus. Frequently ask him to give you to drink.

"My Jesus, poor Cherubina is thirsty. For charity's sake give her a little to drink. You have put me in the parlor; I am thirsty, my Spouse. How much I thirst! Inebriate me with love. Amen."

I end and ask for you the fullness of blessings. Amen.

I come back to the other letter. My daughter, I wrote this maxim from my heart: work, suffer and be silent.

Keep the Bambina in your cell except for the novena.

I am sending the bottle. I have already taken care of details in the other letter.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Agnes Grazi (99)

Presentation
June 15, 1740

J.M.J.

Live our highest sacramental Good.

My Daughter in the Sweet Jesus,

Today I read a good deal of your writings. I know it to be the Will of God since I had commanded you to write so that I might be informed as to your conduct, in order to guide you rightly and admire the infinite goodness that has deposited his treasures in a creature so imperfect. Enough! I hope to have more to say face-to-face. I simply repeat what I have said so many times and have written so often. You must annihilate yourself more and more, despise yourself more and more, throw yourself beneath the feet of everyone, allowing your soul the holy liberty to take high flights to the Sovereign Good as God carries you, and to act like the moth spiraling round the flame and burning itself up in it. So your soul should spiral round that divine flame within and be entirely burnt up in it, especially during this sweet Octave of our Sacramental Love. Ah, my daughter, eat, drink, be inebriated, fly, sing, rejoice, exult, make a feast for your Divine Spouse.

I end for I am in a hurry. I continue buried always deeper in the horrible abyss of my miseries, which do not diminish, but rather increase. Ah, poor me! There is need to beseech God that he be placated and have mercy on me and give me the grace to die contrite. Jesus inflame you with love and have you die in his spirit and of his divine spirit so that you may live, breathe, and do all with the life and in the life of the sacramental Jesus.

I am sending you a flask of water of *merangoli* for your indisposition. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your true servant in Jesus,
Paul of the Cross

Agnes Grazi (100)

Porto San Stefano
July 7, 1740
Leaving tomorrow.

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

A little while ago I received your letter, but I have not received the one from Monday. It could have been sent to the Mount by mistake. I am reading what you are telling me about the graces received during these days. Since there are some things mixed in that are a bit too material, I do not want the devil mixing in here. I think you have done your part in accord with the instructions given you.

In the first letter you write me, explain a bit more the effects that these graces are producing and how they leave your soul after prayer, etc.

It is good if they leave you by producing a deep annihilation and by bringing on a keen desire to be despised, abhorred by all, forgotten by everyone, comforted by no one, etc., and more importantly, a perfect union with the Divine Will, a true obedience, which brings with it a complete distrust of self and a true and blind subjection to your spiritual father, along with an obedience and yielding to everyone as if they were your superiors, etc.

In addition, a true death to all that is not God carries with it a continual remembrance of the Highest Good that makes your soul rest with great peace in God, etc., as well as an ardent love of God and your neighbor, and, likewise, a greater love of remaining on the cross with Christ, of suffering much for him, of being abandoned by all, despised by all, unknown and hidden from all, of being deprived, if this were pleasing to God, of all interior and exterior satisfaction and simply being laden with crosses, pains, abandonment, etc.

And all this should be summed up with a total transformation into the Divine Will.

When prayer is accompanied with these graces, as you write me, and it leaves the above effects, then it is certain you walk without being deceived. So be very vigilant, examine your heart carefully; I mean, see whether your soul is strong in true annihilation, self-contempt, love of suffering, etc. If you find it so, things are going well. But in all this you need to give the glory to God because all this work is not ours, for in us there is nothing but imperfection and misery, etc.

Continue to give your soul freedom to fly to its God as it is borne there by that loving divine wind, etc. That light that you experienced over your head when you prayed for Maria Angela, along with the other visions, etc., if they come again, cut them off as I told you before; for if God sends them to you, they will have their effect. But it is necessary to reject them, drive them off, and humble yourself much in order to avoid the deceits of the devil, for he is clever, etc.

As for the other unions, I make nothing out of them, for I experience contrary effects. Therefore, I would wish that you annihilate these experiences in God. And to make myself plain, I want you to lose yourself entirely in God without paying attention to anything else.

Pray for me that God give me true contrition and that I save my poor soul. I am much afraid there. Do this under obedience.

I am going to the Retreat tomorrow, since I am not experiencing any good result from the whey I am taking. So I am leaving.

Tell Maria Angela to inform that good Father that she does not feel she wants to share her soul with anyone but the one who is directing her. And you can tell her as well that, if she is minded to hold a conference, I give her permission. So let her tell the priest in question that I have not forbidden her to hold a conference if God so inspires and gives her permission to do that. Let her explain things in this way to the priest so that he will come off persuaded. If he then continues to question her, and she does not feel she wants to answer, let her ask his blessing with all humility and withdraw in peace. If it is

convenient, she can go to Don Alonso, etc., and she can go often to Communion at Saint Francis, for they will gladly cooperate.

Jesus bless you. Amen.

I do not know when I will come to Orbetello because the deplorable state I am in gets worse all the time. I hold for certain, by the signs that God gives me, that he desires the grave for me, etc.

Greet Signora Maria Johanna and Don Vincent for me in Jesus Christ.

244

Agnes Grazi (101)

Presentation
July 10, [1740]

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am writing in haste. Bartholomew arrived just now and gave me the note in which I see what you have to say. The letters were here this morning, and no one was inconvenienced, even though they were delivered at night. They were put in the little opening of the door, so you have no reason to be concerned. Since things are so, there is no reason to be pained, even if the world turns upside down. I thank God that things are going in accord with the Divine Good Pleasure, but it is always necessary to be fearful of oneself and entrust self more and more to God, begging him to continue his lights so as to annihilate self more and more and to be the more grateful to God. If I do not write to answer you and Maria Angela, it will be a sign that on Saturday, the Feast of Mary Most Holy of Carmel, I will be in Orbetello at the opening.

Jesus bless you. Continue with your usual prayer and other practices in accord with your holy directives. Hold your soul in its holy freedom in order to make your flights to the Beloved Good as you shall be raised up by the loving breath of the Holy Spirit. Greet Maria Angela in Jesus and tell her to get rid of her fears and lose everything in God. Jesus bless both of you. Amen. I end in great haste, as it is night.

Paul, the Unworthy Servant of the Lovers of the Cross

245

Francis Appiani (14)

Presentation
July 29, 1740

J.M.J.

Dearest Son in Jesus Christ,

May the great Father of Mercies be blessed for ever, who with supreme Providence disposes all things strongly and gently.

I thank the Divine Goodness that has with such gentleness opened the way for you to fulfill the holy goodness and inspirations which have been in your heart for so many years. I would be there immediately if I were not prevented by the change in the weather which would put me in danger of my life, as you

well know. I will wait until it cools down and we have good rains after the Assumption.¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, I would like to conclude a work that I hope will bring about much glory to God and spiritual profit to souls.

You could not have accomplished a holier work than using your patrimony to found a Retreat on the island of Elba, in which His Divine Majesty will be praised day and night and work for the eternal salvation of souls until the end of time. Take care to nurse this inspiration by paying attention to the acquisition of the holy virtues, to prayer, to holding off from involvement in worldly affairs, to close attention to your established practices with devout discretion, and, above all, to keeping your plans very secret until the proper time. For contradictions will not be wanting, and the devil will do all in his power to find people who, under the color of false piety, will dissuade you.

The signs of the Divine Will are all too clear in this affair: perseverance over many years, closeness to God, your two relatives who with firm intention work to bring the foundation to reality, and, above all, the agreement of your good mother. These are, I repeat, the clearest and most evident signs that His Divine Majesty wills to be served in this work, so much to his glory. Encourage your good mother, strengthen her to persevere in the working out of this great affair, and assure her that when I come there, we will make decisions for the greater glory of God, even for her withdrawal into a convent. But it may turn out that I will suggest to her a way of managing her life that would be holier than if she entered a convent. Enough! I trust that His Divine Majesty will reveal his Holy Will. Meanwhile, let us not cease to pray and to keep everything tightly secret since this is the way the saints acted.

Greet your mother for me in the pure Heart of Jesus as well as Signora Domenica, your cousin. Tell her to abandon herself completely to the Divine Good Pleasure. Greet your spiritual director for me. I am aware that he speaks in accord with the preferences of God.

Before ending this letter, I recommend to you a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Here is a way to practice that. You should visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently, especially at hours when there is no one there, for such visits are more pleasing to him. Then prepare yourself with sentiments of profound humility and contrition. After that you must ask Jesus to admit you into his Divine Heart. Enter there in spirit. Love that Infinite Good there, and praise and thank him for what he has done and suffered for us, especially for having given us his life for food in the great Sacrament of Love, sacrificing yourself as a holocaust to the Divine Majesty on the altar of his Divine Heart and allowing yourself to be set on fire by the sacred flames which burn in that sweet heart. The Holy Spirit will teach you more if you know how to humble yourself. In that Heart place the business of the Retreat and ask help to bring it to a perfect end.

148. In the 18th century it was believed that malaria was transmitted by air infected by fumes arising from the swamps. Therefore, Paul did not want to breathe the infected air during the journey from Argentario to Piombino. The rain purified the air and so it was possible to travel without danger.

I end by embracing you in the sweet Heart of Jesus, who is the King of Hearts. Asking the Sovereign Good to grant you the fullness of divine blessings, I confirm myself as,

Your very loving, humble, affectionate, and unworthy servant,
Paul Danei of the Holy †

246

Agnes Grazi (102)

Presentation
August 1, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your long letter. The first page was filled with useless and superfluous matters. I wish you would learn the style in which the men and women servants of God wrote.

Regarding the rest, these are known to me and are as usual, so it is not necessary to repeat them. Therefore, do not write about your prayer, unless about some extraordinary things which have never happened before. The other aspects you can tell me when we speak. In a few words much can be conveyed.

You have understood many things in a wrong sense, for he was not a real prophet as you said, etc. You did not understand what I said to you, for instance, about a vow to adore the Blessed Sacrament at a distance when on journeys. I never said we take such a vow, but that it is in the Constitutions. Then the business of that cleric from Rio. He is not a priest, as you were thinking. There was no need to think otherwise, for I simply asked you to recommend him to God, and you can do that without seeking lights, for it is none of your business to seek further. So recommend my affairs in general as well as others, etc.

If your illness increases and you cannot get to church, stay in bed and make your prayer from there and make frequent spiritual communions. Continue your exercises as usual, and let people say what they want. Silence, refusal to get involved about not being understood, is the way to close the mouths of the idlers. Greet in Jesus Christ Signora Marianna Johanna and Don Vincent.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

247

Agnes Grazi (103)

Presentation
August 4, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

May that divine fire, which Jesus came to light on earth, always burn in our hearts. Amen. Now, my daughter in Jesus Christ, I am writing you a letter that

I hope will be of great profit to you. May the Holy Spirit illumine my mind so that this will happen. Amen.

That great God of Majesty, who with so much gentleness has drawn your soul to a knowledge of his divine mysteries by means of holy prayer, allows you to learn by means of his most unworthy minister that it is his Holy Will that you lose yourself more and more in the immense sea of his divinity with a continual exercise of love, which you ought to draw from the perennial font of the Heart of the gentle Jesus Christ. You cannot pass to the contemplation of the Infinite and Immense Divinity without entering by the door of the Divine Humanity of the Savior and by imitating faithfully his high virtues, especially that profound humility and annihilation in all his holy actions that he taught so divinely.

So then, in accord with your present status of spiritual conduct, you must lose sight more and more of all creatures and all imaginings there are, and go deeper and deeper into the knowledge of your true, horrible nothing, and make a complete emptying in order to bring about a greater dying to self and all created things. Then throw that nothing into the All that is God, and there be lost in depth in such a way that, forgetful of self and all created things, you have no other thought than of that object of infinite perfection. Oh! how fortunate is that soul who hides herself as a pure nothing in that great Heart of Jesus and, there, passes by means of holy contemplation and loses herself in the Infinite Divinity and, there, rests in a holy vision of pure faith without images or figures, and lives deprived of all desire for comfort or spiritual delights.

The shortcut to arrive at true union with God, which I have repeated so often in word and writing, is that described above. One who studies the science of nothing comes to know the true All that is God.

Never will I have repeated this truth sufficiently, and never will you have humbled yourself and annihilated yourself sufficiently. Study here, my daughter, what the science of the saints imparts. This annihilation produces a continuous abandonment and total resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure, leaving to God the care of one's perfection and living despoiled of all consolation. I mean to say, one must not stop and take pleasure in spiritual satisfaction, but simply repose in God. For to think of one's satisfaction in prayer, and taking complacency in that, is dangerous. To the extent that one thinks of that, one loses sight of the Beloved Good. You must be so engulfed in God that you lose sight of all that is not God. From this truth I conclude that we need to be totally distanced from spiritual consolation and take our complacency solely in the Divine Perfections and his praises.

This great hidden treasure of perfect, holy annihilation produces a great love of suffering, of staying on the cross with Jesus happily, without opening one's mouth, no matter how much nature complains, and without ever manifesting oneself to creatures — it is necessary to be secret to all without ever complaining or without justifying oneself. It is necessary to die, as far as possible, to nature, to feed oneself on the maxims I have given you, to rejoice

in not having pleasure in anything — not in eating, not in sleeping — even rejoicing and seeking to feel only pain in everything.

From now on, when you leave your room to go to refresh yourself, ask on your knees that Jesus and Mary accompany you. Take them with you to dinner and the evening meal, and at every bite and sip ask for their blessing in spirit. Do this with one glance in spirit, desiring always in spirit to be fed by that Divine Bread of life eternal. Love will teach you great things if you remain in your nothing, under the feet of all, and hold for certain that, if creatures could detect the stench of your horrible nothing, you would be regarded as the plague. From this there should arise a great flight of love into the Heart of the Sovereign Good in thanksgiving for his infinite goodness that he endures you. Be at table, and on other occasions, as dead to all, without human respect, without caring what they talk about. But listen to the sweet voice of the Divine King and Divine Queen, who are your table companions between whom you are seated. When you have taken the charity of your food, act like a poor woman and withdraw with humility, and go to have a little recreation with your Divine Table Companions face-to-face in your room. If you are questioned, reply briefly, but do not enter into their table talk, as one dead. My daughter, we are making our way to eternity. We must not lose time. One who does not advance goes backward.

Now, I will sum up all that I have written. Let it be your practice to remain in your true nothingness in a genuine self-contempt, being nauseated at yourself. Then, with a profound reverence, enter into the pure Heart of Jesus and, there, lose yourself in that immense sea of divinity in pure faith and without images or figures.

Obscure Faith, Secure Guide to Holy Love! Oh! what sweetness your certainty brings to my heart. This can be sung in the Heart of Jesus when God so wills.

This sacred darkness of Holy Faith is illuminated by the resplendent ray of the Divinity, which makes it brighter than the sun. Locutions and visions, as you know, are to be always cut off. You are not to stop at them, but are to pay attention only to God. If they are the work of God, they cannot be impeded. If the devil is mixing in here, by cutting them off and humbling yourself, he turns out confused.

Do not give in to human respect when you need to remain in bed. Take your sleep in God with that sleep we understand here. Let people say what they want. If they say you are sleeping, do not respond, do not justify yourself, but rejoice to be despised and hidden. If they then say it is wrong for you to sleep so much, respond by simply saying: "I am not sleeping, but I remain here because I am a poor piece of carrion, weak and sick." Then continue to lose yourself in that loving sleep, all liquified in that divine fire. Be reposed on the cross and rejoice that this is your bed, but consider it a bed all afire, and let everything be reduced to cinders.

God has had me write this letter, notwithstanding that I am in my usual, most deplorable state that frightens me always more. I fear and tremble before the just, inscrutable justice of the Most High. You must continue to pray for

our usual needs, principally that we receive this grace to stay in pure nothing, dead to all and all lost and transformed into the Divine Good Pleasure. Oh! how confused and frightened I am that what I write about, such great perfection, will be the evidence against me at the Judgment of God, for I am infinitely far from practicing what I have written — even always more ungrateful to God, vicious, and corrupt in everything, in everything!

Tell Maria Angela that on Saturday I will send her the book and the letter. But I do not want her to write me any more, not from her place nor from Gaeta, because, you know, I have not allowed devout souls to write me from where I have given retreats and, much less, for one who is merely passing by. Enough! I repeat, she is not to write to me, for God does not inspire me to receive letters.

Jesus bless you and consume you down to the blood and the marrow of your bones in the fire that burns in his gentle Heart, whence you may drink that divine fire by the seafuls.

Paul of the Cross, Your Useless Servant

248

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (20)¹⁴⁹

Presentation
August 9, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

May that fire which our loving Jesus came to ignite on earth always inflame our hearts.

Last Sunday I received your letter, which was very dear to me in Jesus Christ. I see the desires God has given me, and now gives me, for the advance of your soul are going forward; but, I am not yet satisfied. I received the box with the leaflets, but I wish that you would not inconvenience yourself further, for these are enough. I received the other letter from the assistant, and between the purging I had to undergo and my laziness, I did not reply. But God will bring good out of this delay because I hope in God that in the letter I am now writing my daughter will taste the hidden manna. So may the Holy Spirit be in my mind with his divine lights, and in my heart and in my pen, to assure this. Amen.

I begin then in the most Holy Name of God. One who wishes to find the All, who is God, must cast themselves into nothingness. God is the one who by essence is the one who is: "I am Who am." We are they who are not, for dig as deeply as we might, we will not find anything but nothing, nothing. And one who has sinned is worse than nothing since sin is a horrible nothing, worse than nothing. God, out of nothing, created the visible and invisible world. But from sin his omnipotence cannot create anything because sin is a horrible

149. Paul continues in this letter with a beautiful treatise on passive prayer. Paul does seem to be writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to whom he prays will be in his mind, heart, and pen! The one-verse hymn, "Oh, Obscure Faith..." is found earlier in the letter of August 4, 1740, to Agnes Grazi.

nothing that opposes the Infinite Being of infinite perfection. It is true that the Infinite Good, who can draw good from evil itself through justification of the sinner, here performs a greater work of omnipotence than if he were to create a thousand worlds more vast and more beautiful than this one. For in justifying a sinner, he draws him from sin, an abyss darker and deeper than nothingness itself.

My daughter, read this point with attention in order to learn to remain in your nothing and to annihilate yourself before God and before all creatures, putting yourself under the feet of all, humble and scorned out of love for God. Now I will say much in a few words and sum up all I have written previously or personally spoken to you, such as the rules necessary for your spirit. Now we must change the scene. Be attentive then and open your ears and expand your heart so that like a seashell you may receive that drop from paradise to fashion a precious pearl in order to bring it to the treasury of your Divine Spouse; bringing it to that treasury will be the only rightful restitution of what is not yours because you are nothing and have nothing to give.

Now is the time to begin to be weaned and to learn how to adore with greater perfection, in spirit and in truth, the great God of Majesty. And to do this you must humble yourself, annihilate yourself, sink into the depth of your nothingness, get rid of all images of creatures, and then in pure faith lose yourself entirely in God. Take your rest there on the divine bosom, but without any picturing, for God does not fall under our imagination since he is a pure and simple spirit, a boundless abyss of infinite perfections. Oh! how happy is the soul that, dead to all created things and free of all images of creatures, remains totally immersed in that immense sea of love and rests there in that sacred silence of love, which is a language so pleasing to His Divine Majesty. Oh! Obscure Faith, Safe Guide of Holy Love! Oh! what sweetness your certainty brings to my heart! ... My daughter, stay in solitude in your interior. Close the doors of your sense to all creatures and treat one-on-one with your Highest Good there. The just man lives by faith, for his life is God, and this dear God is to be found in the obscurity of faith, which the loving soul finds clearer than the light of day.

You tell me that you are able to make little prayer. I want you to make it twenty-four hours a day. What do I mean by this? I mean that you are to be always within yourself and totally annihilated before God, giving your soul freedom to make those flights of spirit as the loving breath of the Holy Spirit moves you, or being pleased that God is that infinite goodness that he is, your soul now in admiration, resting suspended in a high wonderment of love while contemplating his infinite perfections. Give yourself the freedom to sing, if from this comes a song, such as the "Holy, Holy, Holy" or an "Alleluia" or "You alone are Lord, you alone are holy, you alone are most high, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen."

These outbursts of love should be sung in spirit, but when God so wills. You know you have the freedom of the spirit, along with the impulses that God grants your soul. If your soul then wishes to remain in a silence of love on the divine bosom, let it repose in that way. To state it briefly, you must allow

yourself to be guided by God as he pleases. The devil is enraged that I am writing this letter and often causes me to make mistakes and erasures, but the evil one will end up beaten. Now I want to teach you a beautiful secret as to how you can love your gentle Spouse the more and, as a consequence, remain in a continual prayer.

Once you are completely reduced to nothing, scorned, and lost in your nothingness, ask Jesus permission to enter his Divine Heart, and you will receive permission immediately. Then fly in spirit into that Heart, and there offer yourself as a victim on that Divine Altar, where there always burns the fire of holy love, and allow yourself to be penetrated to the marrow of your bones by that holy flame, allowing yourself to be reduced to ashes. If the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit raises up these ashes to the contemplation of the Divine Mysteries, allow your soul to be entirely engulfed in that holy contemplation. Oh! how pleasing to God is this practice!

Take note that this flight in spirit is to be made in the Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Tremble out of sorrow there for the irreverences he receives from wicked Christians and, even worse, ecclesiastics and from men and women religious who answer his great love with ingratitude and sacrilege. To make up for these many outrages, a loving soul ought to offer herself as a victim, totally burnt up by holy love, and to love him, praise him, and visit him often for those who ill treat him. Visit him especially at such time when there is no one who pays him court. Oh! how much I would have to say on this subject, but time does not allow me to do so.

I want my daughter to remain in this Sacred Heart always, but in pure faith and without imaginations. There I want you to love, adore, praise, and magnify our greatest God. There you should be making colloquies of love or be speaking to him of his Passion or of the sorrows of our dear mother or offering this great Heart to the Eternal Father, and so on. Love will teach you everything.

But when your soul desires to remain in a silence of love, allow it to do so while you drink at that divine fountain of the most holy water that flows from that Heart. You should know that one who drinks here must drink generously. I mean to say you must drink Love by the rivers, by the seas of that fire, and let all be reduced to ashes. Before you read this, invoke the Holy Spirit with the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*.

You are not to take any account of the temptations you write about. This is simply one of the trials that can come to a soul wishing to be all God's. This temptation is the queen of temptations. But the one who is faithful in the fight will come off with great treasures. Remember, one is not worthy of divine contemplation who has not suffered and conquered certain fierce temptations. Have much courage for the victory is ours, of course, in Jesus Christ, who enters the fight for us. Your soul gives no consent, my daughter. Although it appears to you that you are all immersed in the business, the work is entirely that of the devil. Not even your body is disposed for such things. But God permits this for our great good. The signs are evident that you did not suffer shipwreck. Your peace of heart, despite the fact that some fear remains, and

the incessant desires to love God and to serve him in penance are some of the signs.

All these are signs that you remain in the arms of Jesus, who fights in you and for you. So when you go to confession, mention something from the past, but do not go into the general confession you made to me. Simply accuse yourself of impatience, past lies, and then say: "In general I accuse myself of the sins I have committed, and I am truly sorry and wish to amend." In that way you will receive a valid absolution. I am unhappy that the good father does not understand the work of God, etc. He understands for others, but God is not permitting him to understand in your case. Believe on my conscience that there never was any sin in these battles, etc. Stay happy in God. There will soon be a warm sun which will melt these mountains of snow. With regard to your penances, stay with what you are doing, but do not add anything further. I am hoping that God will permit that months will not go by until we will talk face-to-face since I will arrange that I come that way when I have to travel for some business, which I hope will be for the great glory of God.

With regard to that lady about whom you wrote me, tell her to continue to abandon herself to the Divine Will and give her the advice necessary for prayer, virtues, etc. I will recommend her to God. Perhaps it may do her more harm than good, for I am always further from the true service of God. I will do the same for your other relative.

When the boat goes, I will send the box, the basket, and the sack.

For the love of God, do not go to all this inconvenience. Enough! I do not accept anything, only the poor Retreat, which exists much obligated to you in God. Keep the Holy Bambina as long as you live, and keep it by you except for exposing it for the Novena and Octave of the Nativity of Mary. Let it stay in the convent. However, you do not have it as your own, but only under obedience. I have extreme need of prayers, for I am in fierce storms within and without, as is usual for me. Ah! I greatly fear that God is very, very angry with me. Let us seek to placate him. My daughter, do your part and have others do the same. At my coming, if God will have me arrive there, I will carry the cross, etc.

Let us pray His Divine Majesty that he give perseverance to these servants of God who are in this Retreat. They truly live as saints and are the ones who will draw up the bill of accusation at my judgment. Oh, how much I fear! How much! I do not know if I have ever performed an act of virtue with perfection. Pray His Divine Majesty to grant me true contrition that I may die truly penitent. Amen. Jesus bless you and inflame you with love. Greet your Mother Abbess for me in Christ as well as Sister Guglielma, etc.

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Reverend James Grazi (1)

August 16, [1740]
On arrival.

J.M.J.

Paul, the unworthy servant of the pious Grazi family, especially of Father James, loving benefactor of the Retreat of the Presentation, humbly dares to ask you to accept his excuses for our community if we return the eggs, butter, and cheese — they would go bad since we have not been able to eat them at this time — with the understanding that we can accept them later. Meanwhile, I extend my humblest reverence and affirm with all my heart and wish best greetings to the captain and to all.

Your most unworthy servant,
Paul

Agnes Grazi (104)

Presentation
August 23, [1740]

J.M.J.

My Daughter in J.C.,

This morning I received your two letters. Since Maria Angela is going away tomorrow, it is not convenient for me to come, for now she will not have time to speak with me. I am writing in haste. Take care to put into effect the advice given you and humble yourself more and more. Make your prayer in pure and holy faith, abandoning yourself to God, and annihilating all these imaginings of creatures. Take yourself to true union with God in pure faith without images, etc. Continue with your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as God draws you, and make your prayer with elevations in God as the Holy Spirit leads you. In fine, the usual rules are in place.

I am always more and more beneath the scourge of the wrath of the Omnipotent God. I see things crashing to earth, and I do not know if they will be repaired. Pray God that he save my soul through his infinite mercy and grant me true contrition and patience to suffer these heavy contradictions. I do not know when I will come to Orbetello since I am not able to do my own will. Ask God to give light as to what should be done for this poor, God-forsaken Retreat. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul, Your Servant in Christ

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The blessed light of the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with the high science of the saints. Amen.

I am sending you a holy directive for guidance of your spirit from the midst of the storms that are coming closer and closer to drowning me. May the Divine Will, that arranges this, be ever adored, praised, and magnified.

Canzonetta¹⁵¹

The soul, in firmest faith obscure
Beholding Ultimate Desire,
The All-pervading Flame most pure,
Flings self in that Consuming Fire.

Nell'oscuro della fede
Gode l'Alma quel Dio che crede
Sempre tutto in ogni luogo
Consumandosi in quel gran fuoco.

Pierced through with keen but sweetest fire,
Her single thought on God intent,
Her humbled heart's one sole desire
Poured out in sheer abandonment.

Ivi brucia dolcemente
Stando in alto colla mente
E col cuor tutt'umiliata
Vive in Dio abbandonata

To every fair created thing
The gateway of her heart she closes
Makes a garden for her King;
With Him there speaks and there reposes.

Stando sola d'ogni cosa
L'Alma amante si riposa
Nel diletto suo Signor
Consecrandogli tutt'il cuore

150. Paul breaks into poetry in a beautiful hymn which he calls "Canzonetta." He writes as the storms around are almost drowning him. There is a partial text of the *Canzonetta* in a letter to Sister Maria Cherubina on June 26, 1742. Also, in the Processes, II, 337, there is the text submitted by Mother Rosalia at the canonization Processes. Father Jude Mead, in his *Workbook*, gives a translation by Mother Mary Agnes of Owensboro, Kentucky, together with his own commentary. This translation is by Brother Richard McCall, C.P., 1892-1962, professed in 1917.

151. *Canzonetta* means "little song." In the letters of Paul, five poems are written by him. Two are only one stanza; one has three stanzas; and another has seven. The longest contains twenty-nine stanzas. All of them are found in the letters to Agnes Grazi, though short verses are repeated in letters to Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani and to Mother Mary Crucified. Paul wrote these mystical poems at a time when he was occupied in giving missions, founding a new Retreat, and seeking papal approval of the Congregation. These were also years of interior suffering for him. This poetic inspiration, at least in his letters, hovered over Paul only during this short period in his life. Comments of the Passionist nun Mother Rosalia Casamayor at the Processes of Corneto throws light on this gift.

"I remember that in regard to Agnes Grazi, Father Paul once told me that on one occasion she [Agnes] had written of some extraordinary favors which she had received from God in prayer. He added that he did not know how to answer her, for at that time he found himself afflicted with his customary aridities of spirit, but, after recommending himself to God, he sat down at his table to write. The Lord at that moment communicated to him such lights that 'although [these are Paul's words] I did not intend to write a poem and had never studied poetry, my entire response to her [Agnes] was in verse!'"

Then from the sacrificial stone
Herself into the depth she throws;
Immersed, engulfed – His, His alone
Lost in the sea of her repose.

There, by slow degrees awaking,
She salutes her sweet Spouse, solely,
And rejoicing goeth singing:
“Alleluia, Holy, Holy.”

Would you learn to sing this song?
Pray in silence in your cell,
On the cross content so long
You must be to sing it well.

There, your tender Savior see
Crucified for love.
May He teach you lovingly:
“Mourn My Sorrows, mourning dove.

“If you contemplate My Pains,
You will see there is no part
Of My Body, being slain,
Free of bloody wounds that smart.

“See My Face through spittle-smears,
See My Mouth, in bitterness,
Eyes obscured by blood and tears,
See the crown My Temples press.

“Crowned with roses? Nay, with thorns
Which have pierced them through and through
See! There is not one who mourns
‘Mid the impious ingrate crew.

“See! from hands and feet there start
Nail-dug springs of agony.
See My Body, every part
Gashed and torn most piteously.

“See the passage in My Side
By a lance-thrust open thrown,
See a room wherein may bide
One who loveth Me alone.

“Oh, if you had ever learned Oh!
How My Heart in sorrow broke!
I, their Savior, mocked and spurned
By My own ungrateful folk.”

E poi tutta sull’Altare
Si sacrifica al suo Sponso
Abissandosi in quel gran mare
Ove trova il suo riposo

Qui svegliandosi poco a poco
La saluta il dolce Sposo
Ed allegra va cantando
Alleluia, Santo, Santo.

Se tu vuoi far saper cantare
Stanne in cella ad orare
E se vuoi far buona voce
Sta contenta sulla Croce

Ivi mira il Redentore
Crocifisso per amore
Che ti dice tutt’amante
Compatisci al mio dolore!

Se contempli le mie pene
Tu vedrai che non v’è parte
Del mio corpo che non sia
Tutta piaghe, tutta sangue.

Mira il volto sputacchiato,
I miei occhi eclissati,
La mia bocca amareggiata
E le tempia coronate:

Non di rose, ma di spine
Che l’han tutte lacerate
E non v’è c’hi mi compiangia
Fra le turbe empie ed ingrate.

Mira ancor le mani e i piedi
Che da chiodi trapassati
E la vita tutt’intera
È da piaghe traforata.

Se rimiri poi il costato
Che con lancia fu squarciato,
Capirai ch’egli e la stanza
Di chi m’ama sproprio.

se tu sapessi quanto
Il mio Cuor fu addolorato
Per vedermi tant’offeso
Dal mio popolo così ingrato.

Ah, My child! And have you known
All the meaning of my speech?
I would have you dwell alone,
'Til you grasp the things I teach.

Day by day more childlike be,
And your loving breast adorn
With the jeweled filigree
Of the sorrows He has borne.

If you wish to learn and keep
Science highest, most divine,
Enter in His cellar deep,
There to taste His noble wine.

Still yourself inebriate,
Rest in high forgetfulness,
Stripping self of things create
Seeking God and nothing less.

Strip your mind of things that end
By enduring abnegation;
Through faith's twilight comes the Friend
In transforming visitation.

When you feel the Lord draw near
With that milk He would impart,
Drink, confiding without fear,
Drink! expanding all your heart.

Should the jealous demon roar,
Striving to destroy your rest,
Enter by the furnace door
In your mighty Savior's Breast.

Be not troubled by the fear
Roused by that fierce monster's art;
Let it gently disappear
In your Jesus' loving Heart.

Run to Mary, to your Mother
Loving Mary, Queen of all;
Quickly, loving trust shall smother
All your fears, if you be small.

Here fades my singing all away;
The storm around me checks my strain.
Think not I keep a festal day,
Who swim in seas of pain.

Hai inteso, o mia figliuola,
La lezione che t'ho insegnata?
Per ciò voglio che stia sola
Fin che l'abbia ben imparata.

Fatti sempre più bambina
E fiorisci il tuo petto
Con la gioia ricca e fina
Del penar del tuo Diletto.

Ma se vuoi ben imparare
Questa scienza alta e divina
Entrar devi in cantina
A gustar quel grand liquore

Non lasciar d'ubbiacarti
Per restar in alto oblio
Procurando di spogliarti
Sol di quel che non è Dio.

Cerca sempre che la mente
Resti sgombra dal creato
E con viva fede oscura
Sta in Dio trasformata.

Quando senti che il Signor
Ti vuol dare quel dolce latte,
Succhia pur senza timore
Dilatando tutt'il cuore.

Se l'inferno fa rumore
Per levarti dalla pace
Entra in quella gran fornace
Del gran Cuor del Salvatore.

Non far caso de' spaventi
Che ti mette il fiero mostro
Ma procura che sian spenti
Dall'Amor di Gesù nostro.

Corri ancor alla Regina
Nostra Madre Alma Maria,
Che i terror spariran via
Se serai ben picciolina.

Io finisco di cantare
Perchè sono in gran tempesta
Non pensar che faccia festa
Nell'orribili mi penare.

When you pray to Love Supreme,
Of your riches I would borrow.
While His love and kindness stream
Ask for me some greater sorrow.

That my contrite heart may turn
Wholly into bitter tears,
For His glory only yearn
Give to Him alone my years.

This my wish, my sole desire,
That my self may be no more,
Wholly changed by Love's sweet fire
Into bitter pains He bore.

Oh, but could His Passion be
Ever, ever in my heart,
And my soul in charity
Flame in holy prayer, apart.

Yet, I still a space would grieve
For the sorrows of our Queen.
Then, this vale of tears would leave
For the Land where she is seen.

My singing ends, my sight grows dim,
For clouds drift 'round me dark and dull.
Do you conceal yourself in Him,
In Jesus' Heart all beautiful.

Prega intanto Il Sommo Amore
Che per sua gran bontade
E infinita critade
Dia al cuor un gran dolore.

Acciò che tutto contrito
Mi converta tutt'in pianto
E 'l mio cuor tant'impietrito
Ei divenga tutto santo.

Vorrei tutto consumarmi
Per amor del Sommo Bene
E del tutto trasformarmi
Nelle sue amare pene.

Oh! se la sua Passione
Fosse sempre nel mio cuore
E bruciassi assai d'amore
Nella santa orazione!

Ma vorrei ancor languire
Per dolori di Maria,
Per andar poi a gioire
In sua dolce compagnia.

Io cantar non posso più
Che ho la mente tenbrosa
E tu resta tutt'ascosa
Nel bel Cuore di Gesù. Amen.

Praise to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin.
Your useless, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

252

Reverend James Grazi (2)

Presentation
September 5, [1740]

J.M.J.

Honorable Sir,

Brother Peter had a small fever on Wednesday. Today he has another, but it is a light one. Nature has brought some relief with vomiting and general improvement. So there will be no need of purging. He needs only take some cinchona,¹⁵² which can be gotten from Signore Mattia, who can send us a flask

152. A quinine derived from the bark of a cinchona, used especially to relieve a fever in antimalarial treatment.

of it. He wishes to have some blood drawn, at least with cups.¹⁵³ For that reason he will come tomorrow at an early hour for that purpose. I hope he will be well within two days and then return here. In the meantime there will be a chance for them to practice charity.

In any event, I will leave on Mary's Feast since the mission has been announced for Wednesday evening. I end in haste, paying you my respects,

Your indebted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Holy †

253

Agnes Grazi (106)

Presentation

September 19, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last evening I received your note, about which I would like to say much, but I reserve that for a more opportune time. I do say, however, that according to the doctrine of the saints, to pretend to know things of the future in prayer, especially of such minor importance as the business of Don Fabio, is to put oneself in clear danger of being deceived by the devil. Oh, how many souls have been deluded in this way!

I continue to recommend the business to God and have had others do so. But God keep me from making that a precept of obedience, as you speak, in order to know their opinion. That would be a way of tempting God, a great boldness. Make sure you never again mention such things to me. I am sympathetic to your ignorance and the good intentions that you have had in this business. I need not tell you what I think about this business because I do not think about it much. I simply recommend it to God, and so should you. Live totally despoiled regarding it, and once you have recommended it to God with lively faith and confidence, do not think on it any further. Live detached, abandoned entirely to the Divine Will.

Tell Don Fabio not to depend greatly on it since it is a thing difficult to achieve. Whence he must confide entirely in God with a right intention and a firm resolution to serve him well, whether the outcome is good or bad. God is capable of solving anything. If he wills to be served in this way, may he be blessed. If not, may he be blessed.

I gave you that kind of permission, a thing I have never done and will never do again; and that for good reasons, mainly as an act of submission to your brother, who asked for it. As for me, I am outside the situation, etc., in order to see whether His Divine Majesty would wish to have me do a work for his service, which I had this in mind, and for that reason I asked for a rigorous secrecy. However, it may be madness on my part. In that case I will have reason to humble myself, and the devil will gain a good laugh. Tell Don Fabio

153. Suction cups rather than leaches.

what I have written elsewhere and anything further that God inspires you to say.

Continue your prayer with great detachment from all that is created, free from everything and entirely annihilated in God, etc. Do not stop making acts of continual abasement, of pruning, etc. Live apart from everything that is not God and without any anxiety over the outcome of this business. But continue to pray with fervor, with faith, and with lively hope in God. For that God who drew everything out of nothing can also do this as well as other things, etc., and that would surely be a great grace.

Above all, tell Don Fabio not to trust in this thing, but entirely in God. If it does not succeed, let him not be upset, but quiet in God, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen. You are not to have any thought about this or send me anything, for I do not wish that. Exercise holy poverty and dispossession of everything.

Paul of the †, Your True Servant in God

254

Agnes Grazi (107)

Presentation
September 26, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last evening I received your two letters and already know what you are saying regarding everything. I ask you to tell Don Fabio with all secrecy and before the post arrives, that in case God has granted the grace, I recommend to the person to whom it was granted a great secrecy, and promise her that he will help her in any need. But make the promise in strict, perpetual secrecy. However, it is necessary not to depend on such things because feelings in prayer sometimes have us leaning one way and God wants another. Tell that to Don Fabio, etc. Let him hope in God, not in himself.

You should see to it that your prayer is always more internal, in pure faith, with great self-annihilation, etc., not seeking your comfort, but God's great contentment. In temptation proceed as usual. Pray much for me and for the good of the Retreat, etc., for God knows my state. I write with great haste. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul of the Cross, Your Servant in God

255

Francis Appiani (15)

Presentation
October 1, 1740

Dear Son,

I believe you shall have received my letter in the mail. Now I can tell that affairs in Rome have begun very well, and His Holiness has been informed by

an Eminent Cardinal, our Protector,¹⁵⁴ and was very pleased with the work. His Holiness has directed that I come to his feet with the Constitutions. So at the end of this month, I will leave. From Rome I will give you an account of everything by post and whether the negotiations come to conclusion for the glory of God.

Oh, see how His Divine Majesty disposes things! There is need to pray that the Lord bless the work. Above all, I pray you to keep all this very secret. Tell only your mother and make her promise not to tell anyone.

So I cannot come to the island now. But as soon as I have returned from Rome, I hope that we immediately put our hand to the project. In all of the island I do not believe there is a better place than Monserrato, and I believe that God will want it in that holy spot. In that case it will be enough to see to it that the princess buys the house where the officials are housed and with a few other things. I believe that will suffice. The Retreat will be convenient for the whole island, in good air, isolated, etc. Enough! We will talk. Above all, there needs to be great secrecy, even in this, since the devil does not sleep. The saints acted in this way. For the love of God, let it not escape your mouth, not even with your spiritual director. I end in a hurry. Follow your usual exercises. I have sent the regulation to your mother. Greet her in Christ. Thanks be to God.

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross

256

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (21)

Presentation
October 19, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter and rejoice more than usual because I have read in this letter the great letter of the holy †. O my daughter in Jesus Christ! believe me, the affairs of your spirit have never gone so well as now. I assure you that in these interior afflictions and external insults are hidden the great treasure of Holy Love, for by these means His Divine Majesty intends to prepare your soul to receive the most sublime gifts of heaven. Be strong, therefore, and constant. Bear yourself always with great meekness, patience, humility, and silence, remaining abandoned in God like a little lamb. In that way let them cut away your wool with great peace, standing mute and adoring the Divine Good Pleasure in every happening.

I had believed I was going to pass your way on my journey, but His Divine Majesty arranged otherwise since I had to leave on a business for the great glory of God. Therefore, I am writing to all the convents where I have been that they pray incessantly that His Divine Majesty disposes that everything will turn out in accord with his own wishes.

154. Cardinal Charles Rezzonico, the future Pope Clement XIII.

Do not be pained at what happened after your wrote to the bishop. Believe me, His Divine Majesty is using these means to refine you as gold in the fire. Do not justify yourself any further. You did well to reassure the Mother Abbess and the superior so that they would know the truth for the peace of the convent.

With regard to the person who is coming there frequently, etc., and your speaking in secret with the superior so that she might forbid such friendship, do not trouble yourself anymore. Simply recommend the affair to God; you have done enough.

Believe me, now that your position at the turn¹⁵⁵ has ended, you will enjoy much peace in God if you will be faithful, humble, obedient, in love with self-contempt and silence. Above all, I recommend to you a holy internal solitude, and I pray that you make your flights of spirit into the sweet Heart of Jesus. Lock yourself in there with the golden key of Divine Love, placing this precious key in the pure Heart of Mary, Mother of Sorrows.

Do not be saddened that you have left off your penances because of your sickness. You will take them up again when that is the Will of God.

I am letting you know that the affairs of our vocation have never had such a promising beginning. Around November 8, I believe, I will leave for Rome, unless something intervenes. I tell you this in secret; however, I am writing the Mother Abbess that she pray for this and have others pray for it without explaining further.

If you get any notice of this good priest, send me word here.

I thank you in Jesus for the legumes, etc., and I pray His Divine Majesty to give an eternal reward to those who gave it. I hope that before Lent we can hold a holy conference. It will be my task to obtain the permission for it and also for confession, but only for you.

I will take care that the small sacks will be sent to you.

Now, my daughter, is the time to make great pleas and fervent supplications to the Most High for this holy work. I have great fear that I am an impediment to it. Offer to the Eternal Father the Precious Blood of his Only Begotten Son so that he be placated over my ingratitude and give me the grace to do his Holy Will. If the work is not to give him glory, then let him block it and give me a place and time for penance to weep for my great faults.

I am writing in haste and pray the Lord grant you every true good and the fullness of his divine blessings. Tell Sister Guglielma that I will recommend the affair she writes about to God, as she asks, and to pardon my not replying, for I am so busy.

If you wish to write to me, send the letter before November 8 because I will not be here after that.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

155. The "turn," from the Italian *ruota*, is the circular door located in a wall of a contemplative convent through which objects can be passed in and out of the cloister without a direct meeting between two persons. There is no visual contact in using this arrangement.

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday morning before celebrating, I received your letter on the Feast of Saint Ursula. I recommended your intentions to the saint, as you asked. But for myself you cannot expect anything good since I am always in a pit of evil and every day I go on getting worse. I fear much for my eternal salvation. Now we are making the Novena for All Saints to beg light from God for the affair for which I am going to Rome. But, believe me, I do not have hopes for a favorable outcome, quite the contrary. If things come out well, it will be a miracle from God. I find myself always in deeper darkness, and the thought comes to me of forming four words to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Enough. Right now we have the final hurdle, and it could turn out that my planned presentation will fall flat. God might wish in this way to force me into a profound solitude to save my poor soul. May the Will of God be done in everything.

Let your life continue on its path, for it is proceeding well. But always have greater fear of God and distrust of yourself, be hidden, secret, withdrawn in silence and in continual recollection. Exercise profound annihilation, but give your soul freedom to take its flights to God. Be like a dry garden that receives the rain from heaven. Abandon yourself with great steadiness and without reserve into the hands of God so that he can do with you what he pleases. Stay away from your imaginings and be on guard for the tricks of the devil, who roams around like a lion seeking to devour us.

One who trusts in God and remains humble will not be tricked. I say once more that you should be brave and have great freedom of spirit to make those flights which His Divine Majesty wishes and receive with great praise and thanksgiving the graces of his treasures.

If nothing pressing occurs, I will not come there until after the noon meal on All Souls.

Now, more than ever, is the time to pray for the unhappy one who is writing, for I am in extreme need. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Reverend James Grazi (3)

Rome

November 19, 1740

J.M.J.

Dear Sir and Revered Patron,

On Sunday evening we arrived in Rome, safe and sound from the sea, which was no small grace of God. We are staying with our Cardinal Benefactor, who with rare charity has afforded us a secluded apartment. Our business has commenced, and it will take some time to begin to remove the heavy difficulties that oppose us in the arduous affair. Within a few days we will see the pope, after which he will be informed on everything.

We have abandoned everything into the hands of God so that he will dispose what will be for his glory. I ask you to convey my respects to the Reverend Vicar and have the kindness to inform him that I have looked up his Eminent Cardinal, who seems to be a corpse rather than a living human being. He can scarcely say a word and raised no questions on anything. It will be my obligation to inform the cardinal about the Father Vicar, as I have already done briefly. I spoke to him mostly about the people for the preparatory meeting and about his attention to the affairs of the Curia, etc. But I found no opening to take up the other matter, which Father Vicar knows about, for the reason cited above. Consequently, let us abandon it to God. If you have occasion to write, address it to Paul of the Cross without putting in the house address, for letters reach me safely. Take good care of yourself and stay joyous in God. Greet all in your household, and I reaffirm myself,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (1)¹⁵⁶

Rome

November 19, 1740

*J.M.J.**Jesus be always in our hearts.*

Dear Father Fulgentius,

On Sunday we arrived in Rome, healthy and without drowning,¹⁵⁷ which was no small favor from God.¹⁵⁸ Our affairs are beginning well, but the time

156. Paul is in Rome working on the approval of the Rules when he wrote to Fulgentius at the Retreat of the Presentation. Note how he takes time to offer suggestions on celebrating Mass or on cloth for habits, as he also sends greetings to the brothers and clerics.

157. Italian literally means "without water." Because in the previous letter to James Grazi, where Paul says they arrived "safe and sound from the sea," Paul is probably referring to drowning rather than to a rain storm.

158. It was November 13, 1740. Paul's brother John Baptist of Saint Michael the Archangel is with him.

is ahead for us to speed things up. His Holiness¹⁵⁹ has not yet been approached since it is necessary to have the information ready.

Let them continue to pray His Divine Majesty that his Holy Will be done and to overcome the great difficulties, as we hope, confiding in the Infinite Good that all will work out to the greater glory of His Divine Majesty.

The Masses for Signore Thomas have not been celebrated because our Eminent Cardinal Protector,¹⁶⁰ in the house where we are lodged with extraordinary charity, wishes us to take his intentions. So you should celebrate the others. If things go well, as I hope, it may happen that we will not return alone. May the Will of God be done.

Carry the cross with your usual patience and charity, and encourage all, especially the clerics, to serve God so that they do not immerse themselves more in the things of the world.

With great affection we salute in Jesus our beloved brothers, Fathers Charles and Anthony, the cleric, and Brother Peter.¹⁶¹ I embrace all in the Side of Jesus as well as Your Reverence, and desire that you all be holy.

I forgot something. Purchases were made for seven habits of fairly good cloth, and I hope that it will be there by Christmas, but it first must be dyed. If the cloth from Casentino¹⁶² has not come, see that it is stopped, for we have taken care of that in another way. Order the wheat from Magliano, as I told you, and tell them at Pereta¹⁶³ not to send the cloth in the future, granted that it has not already come, for we have provided for that in another way. I end by embracing you in the Lord. Jesus bless all of you.

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

260

Reverend James Grazi (4)

Rome

November 25, 1740

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

I believe that you will have received my letter, included with one to Father Anthony. Now I have a new task for you and attribute it to your charity, etc.

I have had the chance to see Signore Athanasius several times, for he came to see me with Signore Lambardozzi.

159. Pope Benedict XIV, elected August 6, 1740.

160. Cardinal Charles Rezzonico (1693-1769), later Pope Clement XIII.

161. Father Charles Salemmi, professed in 1741 and dismissed in 1750. Father Anthony Danci, brother of Paul, entered in 1730 and was dismissed definitively in 1761. Brother Peter Cavalieri of Porto Longone entered in 1736 and left around 1742. We do not know to whom "cleric" refers (M. Bartoli, *Catalogo dei religiosi passionisti*, p. 276).

162. Casentino was a zone of the Province of Arezzo in Tuscany. There was a factory there that made coarse, heavy wool fabric.

163. Magliano and Pereta are towns of Grosseto Province, not far from Argentario.

I am in hopes that God wills to bless our affairs, which seem to have taken a good start. For now I cannot say more, for I am writing in haste and must go as extraordinary confessor to a convent of His Eminence. I close by greeting you humbly in the Side of Jesus, where I am always. Greeting all your revered household, I end,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

261

Agnes Grazi (109)

Rome

November 25, 1740

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

I received your letter and desire that you live more hidden and under lock in the pure Heart of Jesus in a true annihilation in lively and holy faith. Here, things seem to be making a good beginning and the Constitutions are already under the scrutiny of the Vicar of Christ. But, no one knows how things will turn out, and we have not as yet been at his feet. Get rid of those ideas about obtaining financial support for our Retreat, for there is no way open for that. I do not think there is a cent to be had, nor are we looking for that because there is no expectation for that. God will provide in another way if he wants us to build.

Do not speak to anyone of the things I am telling you about our affairs, but recommend the work all the more to God, and offer the Precious Blood of Jesus to the Father for that purpose.

Account and esteem that friend who is trying you as if she were a treasure. Continue with your exercises and make nothing out of your impressions, for they are much mistaken and are coming from your nature and the wish that our work has a successful outcome.

You must pray to God with lively faith and great confidence and, above all, with great humility. And make use of the directions given you in writing. I end in a hurry. Jesus bless you. For the present, do not write me, for I am busy serving a convent.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

John Francis Sancez (2)

Rome
House of Cardinal Rezzonico
December 7, 1740

J.M.J.

Dear Sir, Revered Patron,

Whereas I cannot come in person, I wish you a successful journey with this humble note, and I assure you that I will not cease to make supplications to His Divine Majesty to grant that wish. I am emboldening myself to send along the bundle we spoke about and a letter of great importance for the Retreat. I ask you to have it delivered as soon as possible, seeing that the messengers go to Orbetello very often every day, as I believe. They live in the tower of the Retreat. For the love of God, pardon this inconvenience and attribute my boldness to your great charity, which I have experienced on various occasions.

I end with a humble reverence, paying my respects, and have the honor to sign myself as,

Your humble and devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

Cordial greetings to your father and all his esteemed household.

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (1)¹⁶⁴

Presentation
December 28, 1740

J.M.J.

Illustrious Sir and Revered Patron,

Thanks forever to the Supreme Giver of every good gift, we have arrived safely at this Retreat to the great consolation of the companions gathered here for the wonderful beginning, by which the work has come about and for whose perfection you have contributed so much, and to which you will contribute more and more. May the sweetest Name of Jesus be ever blessed that after so many storms in which this poor little boat found itself — and these are not yet over — we hope it will be guided strongly and gently into the calm harbor of the divine mercies.

You will have the great merit to have cooperated so much to have spread the devotion to the most Holy Passion of Jesus, our true Life, and to the perfection that many souls will attain by this means. I have a great expectation of this. I ask you never to cease beseeching the Most High to bless your holy desires so that the work you so much desire may be solidly established. Finally, I recommend to your holy zeal the spread of this work and to see to it that those who work on the Constitutions leave them in their original form, just as His Divine Majesty has inspired them, with the exception of those

164. Paul writes this letter to one who recently had become one of his strongest supporters in Rome. This letter, as others written at this time, shows us how Paul "fought" to preserve the Rule as much as possible, while recognizing the need for some changes.

points that His Holiness has ordered to be removed or added, and retain the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. We have desired that ardently for so long a time, as I pressed on you when I was there, seeing that the church is so proper and that in this vicinity there is not one like it in which the Office is chanted day and night, a church well supplied with all necessary sacred furnishings. Moreover, we find ourselves blocked because the devil is persecuting us with rage and people are opposing us, though with good intentions, as holy charity forces me to believe.

I would ask of your piety that we be not burdened with greater tasks than we have now in conducting missions, etc. The bishops have never obliged us to leave our solitude — in which one's spirit rests at the feet of the Crucified to restore itself and comfort itself in a holy recollection of prayer from the weaknesses and distractions which human frailty runs into, even in the holiest services for one's neighbor — in order to attend ceremonies they have on feasts in the country around the Retreat. This is more necessary because our solitude is three miles distant. In such a case we would be obliged to leave off performing the services in our own church as required by our Constitutions. So I beg you not to add such a burden, in addition to serving the neighboring populace on missions, catechetical instructions, and assistance in the confessional by one deputed for such an office by the rector of the Retreat, as we have been doing up until now.

For the love of Jesus Christ, you will pardon my pressuring you and attribute that as much to my ardor and the fact that I am pressed by the great charity with which you always deign to treat me. Would you then do me the favor to address any commands you have to "Viterbo by way of Farnese," where I will be to conduct a retreat at a convent by orders of the bishop. Meanwhile, prostrate at your feet, I pay you my deepest reverence and end by begging your holy prayer and blessing,

Your devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Representatives of Cellere

Presentation
December 28, 1740

J.M.J.

Most Illustrious and Magnificent Gentlemen,

On my return to the Retreat on the day before the Vigil of Christmas, I found the excellent and prestigious letter of your most illustrious gentlemen, which has left me very edified over the holy zeal which you manifest for your revered public, for whose improvement I would willingly contribute my poor and useless labors, if the inscrutable, sweetest Providence of the Most High had not prevented this project that I have had for some time. And now I have the lot of informing you that I am willing to serve you in testimony of the reverent affection in which I hold you and which I will always continue.

Our cause has been well started in Rome for the establishment of a work which should give great glory to God and profit to all our neighbors, granting that my grave sins do not impede it. A brief should be issued soon, and that necessitates my being in the Retreat to deal personally with many important details for the great advantage of souls and for future consequences.

Whereas God wills to make use of this useless, evil creature, I must bow my head and go along with the adorable designs of his Divine Will, which so disposes things.

If, all of a sudden, I find myself free, I will not fail at the next carnival time to be of service to you. However, I am going to Farnese after the Epiphany to serve a convent by order of our Eminent Cardinal Protector, who lodged me in Rome with rare charity in his own home and has asked me to undertake this task. When that is over, I will return to the Retreat immediately for the affairs I mentioned. If, when I am in Farnese, I am informed of delays in the proceedings in Rome, I will undertake to be of service to you at that time.

I am honored to sign myself, confident in the piety of your illustrious persons, who know the good will that I continue to have to obey you. I offer you my deep reverence, and with respect I again affirm myself to be,

Your obligated, humble servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Unworthy Missionary

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (22)

Orbetello

January 7, 1741

On departing.

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your letter, in which I see that testing from God has come. I want my daughter to be very faithful in suffering it with great annihilation of herself, from which comes a loving silence and a great abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure, and a resolution not to come down from the holy cross without permission of her sweet Crucified Spouse. I recommend to her fidelity in the practice of virtue in accord with our established rules, for there will come a time when her spirit will swim in a sea of consolations and drink the rivers of the fire of Holy Love.

I came back from Rome on the day before the Vigil of Christmas, and I left our affairs in an excellent beginning. They examined the Constitutions before I left, and we await only the execution of the brief. If my sins do not block that, it will be sent this month, as our Cardinal Protector promised me. And, I hope, I will see myself clothed with all the members of our least Congregation. I see God wishes to send holy workers, and it is necessary to pray God that he remove the forces who are persecuting us, that is, the devil and human beings who are acting with good intentions, as I believe. I will try, either on going to or coming from Longone, to see you for a conference.

I am writing in haste, for I am leaving for Farnese to conduct a retreat for a convent. I will return January 22. I am not able to come to your convent. Thank the Mother Abbess and let all continue to pray for our work and for me. Jesus inflame you with love and bless you. Amen.

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (2)

Farnese
January 10, 1741

J.M.J.

Illustrious and Reverend Patron,

I thank the infinite tenderness of our Sovereign Good God, that with such mercy he wishes to maintain the concerned heart of Your Reverence to be always more eager to meet our needs and to cooperate with so much zeal for the establishment of our Congregation so that in the near future it will be able to enroll fervent soldiers under the holy sign of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, so as to promote in all hearts the devout memory thereof and become strengthened by divine grace like a wall for the House of Israel in order to be a barrier against the immensity of evils that threaten to inundate the world.

You have certainly taught me that the most efficacious means to exterminate vice and plant true piety is meditation on the bitter pains of our Divine Savior. Since the greater part of the faithful live in forgetfulness of how much our Divine Savior did and suffered, they drowse in a horrible swamp of iniquity. It is in order to arouse them from this detestable lethargy that zealous workers, truly poor in spirit and detached from all that is created, with the trumpet of the divine word and by meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ, may reawaken these poor sinners, who are seated in darkness and the shadow of death, so that God may be glorified in the number of souls converted and in many others who will give themselves to the practice of holy prayer and, thereby, to a holy life.

Ah! do not relax in your zeal, my friend. Pardon me if my poor heart speaks so ardently, for it is moved by a burning desire that our Sovereign Good be no longer offended, although I am an ingrate and traitor who has offended greatly. So urge the Eminent Cardinals who are the Protectors of this holy work to take care that our affair be quickly presented to the Holy Father, who has shown such care for this work, which is concerned with promoting in the hearts of all devotion to the Holy Passion of Jesus, our true Life. In all confidence I can inform you that when I received the longed-for news of his election as Sovereign Pontiff,¹⁶⁵ although I had never known him as cardinal, I felt in my heart an extraordinary movement, never before experienced at such an event, as well as other effects which aroused in me a lively hope that he

165. Pope Benedict XIV.

would be the holy and zealous shepherd who would provide for the piety so much forgotten in Christendom. For that reason my spirit broke out in affections of praise and thanksgiving to the Highest for the mercy shown his people.

I am writing my unworthy letter in haste, just as soon as I received your esteemed letter, for I am occupied in giving a retreat at this convent. I give thanks to the mercy of God that we will have the chance to serve you in our poor Retreat of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy for as long a time as will please you — and to us it will seem always too short — and be able to edify ourselves and profit from your holy example. With regard to that soul you tell about, I submit all to your prudent disposition. Meanwhile, I offer you my profound reverence and thank you for your indefatigable zeal, with which you assist our project, and ask always more for your holy prayers and sacrifices, and constantly reaffirm that I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

If you wish to honor me with your worthy commands, I will be here until January 18, and then I will return to the Retreat, not having any further missions, for I am waiting the request and for Cardinal Corradini. I have written to him in this post. He informs me that he will have sent it by the middle of this month. I have also written to Cardinal Rezzonico.

Once more, if my eagerness is not overdone, I recommend to your piety the holy sign of our salvation, asking that we may have the good fortune to wear it outside and, even more, within our hearts to the confusion of hell. In case you do not write me here, please address: Viterbo for Orbetello at the Retreat

...

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Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (3)

Viterbo for Orbetello
Retreat of the Presentation
March 10, 1741

J.M.J.

Your Illustrious Reverence and Revered Patron,

Yesterday, on arriving from Longone, where I was giving some missions, I found a venerated page from Your Reverence, in which I see the charitable care of your dedicated heart for the establishment of this Retreat and the approval of the Constitutions, along with a generous rescript. This causes me to adore and love the Divine Good Pleasure that can will only what is best and, even more, assures me of the sweet and loving Will of God in such an outcome since his Divine Majesty has deigned to put it in the heart of the Eminent Protectors, and yours, to whom the Sovereign Monarch has confided the process of this project by means of the sacred order of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. For him we never cease to make supplication to the All-Highest, that he grant him light and great courage to overcome the enemies who persecute the Holy Church and restrain the pride of those who with poisonous license

and false errors ravage the poor Catholic world, bringing them strongly and sweetly to the loving sheepfold of Jesus Christ.

The same is done for all those who cooperate with their zeal, efforts, and work for the holy intentions of our Most Holy Father, especially for the Eminent Protectors and for you. But, I greatly fear that my evil life may impede the effect of so many prayers, which many souls dear to God make to the Highest Good. Above all, I greatly fear to be an impediment to the work begun. Nevertheless, I hope that the Infinite Good will not allow himself to be overcome by my ingratitude and will plant this smallest mustard seed in the field of his Church so that, watered by the Divine Blood of Jesus Christ through the preaching of his most bitter pains, it will bring forth fruit in time.

With regard to forwarding the Constitutions and rescript, I ask you to request His Eminence Cardinal Rezzonico to give the task to the postmaster of Rome that he send it securely addressed to Signore Felix Quarti, postmaster of Viterbo, to whom I am writing. He can send it securely to Orbetello. Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, inflame your heart with his holy love and grant you an eternal reward for all the good done to us. With profound reverence and respect, I reassert that I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

268

Agnes Grazi (110)

Presentation
April 3, 1741

Jesus and Mary be praised. Amen.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am replying to your note, brought to me by Bartholemew, and I tell you it is not the Will of God that I come to Orbetello to speak with the priest-preacher. For if it were the Will of God, I would be in good health and my poor condition would not be continuing. I can scarcely get around this Retreat because of the increasing pain from my sciatica; the pain reaches almost to my feet. So I must stay nailed here like a poor, sick soldier, lazy and useless. God be blessed.

Regarding your understanding that on Thursday you are to be prepared to die — although you ought not trust locutions because they are always subject to being deceitful — nevertheless, I am of the opinion that you need work more and more at your perfection in order to take flight with greater purity to you Divine Spouse. Profound annihilation, totally immersed in that bottomless depth of Divine Love and in the Red Sea of the Passion of Jesus. In that sea, which is born of the Infinite Love of God, is the most efficacious means to prepare oneself for a holy death.

Walk always more simply, humbly, secretly, and faithfully in observing your rules for holy direction, and give your soul freedom to go to God in the way the His Divine Majesty draws you in holy prayer, etc. Fall more and more in love with flying to the Sovereign Good, aspire ardently after him, and let

your soul languish with the desire of going soon to enjoy him. But quickly return to throw yourself into your nothingness, to a recognition of your unworthiness, from which should come a greater trust in God, who is doing so much good for one who remains so ungrateful to him. Then rouse yourself to magnify the divine mercies. Pray much for me, who am always more needy, as I remain buried always deeper in the abyss of my miseries and under the scourge of God because of my grave sins. Jesus bless you. Amen.

During these holy days I, more than ever, have remembered you to God from the holy altar.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Father Dominic Giovagnoli¹⁶⁶

Orbetello
April 6, 1741

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father and Esteemed Patron,

In your letter, which I received the day before yesterday, I sense the great pain of your spirit. But you should not make more out of this than a single fly in summer. Be assured then that it is a question of diabolical phantoms, which you must spurn. Reject them with lively faith in God; resist them strongly. Resist the devil and he will fly from you.

My Dear Father Dominic, try it my way. Cast out such suspicions, and, when they come, recite the Creed and arm yourself with the Sign of the Cross. Do not doubt at all and, believe me, these are good signs for your soul that God wishes you well, and for this reason this rabble of Satan seeks to disturb you. I will recommend you to God. So take courage and continue your devotions. Greet all your household cordially for me. Meantime, I embrace you in the sweet Side of Jesus and sign myself,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Signore Francis Dottarelli¹⁶⁷

Presentation
April 12, 1741

J.M.J.

Jesus and Mary be praised.

In reply to your letter, which I received by today's ordinary post, I tell you that due to certain ailments that afflicted me, I have not had the time to write you about fulfilling your pious intentions. I do see that you are holding steady

166. This letter was sent to Ischia.

167. This letter was sent to Toscanella.

regarding your vocation, which makes me rejoice much in God. So you should have patience to wait for two more mail deliveries. Then I will advise you concerning all the things you ask and of the time for your departure. I think that will be at the end of April or the beginning of May. This fits in with certain good purposes that are known to God. Meanwhile, be faithful to God so that His Divine Majesty will give you the light necessary to walk in the path of perfection. I forgot to tell you that since you are becoming a lay brother, you must be prepared for humble assignments, part of that vocation. I envy those who are thus occupied. If it were my choice, I would exchange willingly with them, and God knows I am not lying. Jesus bless you. Pray for me. I end in haste,

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

271

Reverend John Moretti (4)

Presentation
April 28, 1741

Reverend Father and Esteemed Patron,

The other day I received a letter from Very Reverend Miliani, in which he recommended to me the priest, Father Gerolamo Mais, and, if it be possible, to shorten the time of his retreat so that he could attend the wedding of his brother. And now there are two boats from Giglio in sight, which probably will sail tonight, so I am asking the kindness of Your Reverence to give him permission to leave. For this reason he will show up at your feet today, asking that the piety of Your Reverence will deign to grace him and dispense him from part of the time, etc. I assure Your Reverence that he has conducted himself well and with edification, prompt at all the exercises of piety that we have here, both day and night, as well as the exercises of penance. I have much hope in God that he should give a good account of himself with edification for all.

I recommend to your charity poor Viviani so that the wedding of his niece with Tenente, to whom she is engaged, take place. Meanwhile, with a profound reverence I end while asking your blessing, as do the others at the Retreat, and confirm myself as,

Your Reverence's humble and devoted,
Paul of the Cross

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday, I received your letter, in which I see that the Highest Good continues his mercies with the nasty little worm, who is less than nothing. O Agnes, why are you not reduced to ashes by this great fire? Why do you not take into your heart this immense sea of the pains of Jesus? But we cannot do this, for we are nothing and worse than nothing. That the great Father of Mercies, who has begun this work, will bring it to perfection is my hope.

Continue then with your usual rules, and next Wednesday, God willing, we will talk. Continue to pray for my needs and our needs.

Today, I received a letter from Cardinal Rezzonico, in which he tells me that they have approved the Rules and all is settled. This next week a rescript will come from the pope, so we wait by the moment for everything to be completed. Humble yourself much before God and continue to pray, along with us and others who are praying, and there you, as most unworthy, take the last place. I do not know how the Constitutions were dealt with since he did not tell me ... We will in all things do the Divine Will.

You must continue to pray the Sovereign Good that he send holy workers, especially for that good priest who carries the Cross of Malta and is close to entering. I intend this bit of news for you alone.

Take account of your sorrows and allow the Sovereign Artist to file away the rust so that your soul become more beautiful in his divine eyes. Yearn after holy union more and more and fly away to your eternal rest, for:

The crucible flame-bearded lip
All dross from precious gold can strip
More lofty, more divine the art,
More keen the flames that cleanse the heart.

Nelle pene si raffina
L'alma amante, come l'oro
Che si purga nel crogiolo
Con quell'arte alta e divina

My child, if now you come to me
To learn this art, this mystery,
This new, this bitter wine to share
This dread, this precious cross to bear

Se tu vuoi che te lo dica
È un segreto assai nascosto
L'ubriacarsi di quel mosto
E portar la Croce amica

Know that the cross grows dear, grows bright
To one who loves the Primal Light;
Who, hurt and trembling, dares to try
To suffer and repress the cry.

Si! è amica assai la Croce,
Di chi ama il Divin Sole
E si studia quanta puole
Di patir senza dar voce

I have no more time. Tomorrow is the great feast, and poor Paul is "of the Cross." You must cry out much for me so that I may always be a true, loving follower of the cross. Jesus bless you. I end in haste,

Paul of the Cross, Your Servant

Francis Appiani (16)

Presentation

May 15, 1741

J.M.J.

Most Reverend and Dear One in Christ,

I have not replied until now to the letter handed to me by the priest-preacher, nor to a second received a short while back, nor another from Rio because of my many duties and because of the illness that came over me. However, right now I am much better. Another principal reason for my delay in replying was because I thought I would give you full information on all that is happening to us. Now I can tell you that we have been informed by our Cardinal Protector that the Constitutions have already been signed by the cardinals deputed for that by His Holiness and, I believe, that at this hour the favor will have been granted. So we need be patient and await what God will dispose and abandon ourselves to the divine dispositions. For in this business there is no room for haste, but one must proceed when and how God wishes. When everything has been determined, I will give an account of it.

I have not seen any letters at all from your cousin. Try to see how they were sent.

Concerning the state of your spirit, I would like you to pursue the good with simplicity and without so much reflection, which makes you lose time. I have told you several times that the Master of prayer is the Holy Spirit, and we must pray as he wishes. So when you feel that your soul enjoys being at rest and all lost in God in a sacred silence of love, let it continue in that way. For if your soul is attentive to God in pure and holy faith, or when it feels an impulse to conduct a colloquy of love or loving discourses on the divine mysteries, or moved to make petitions for its needs and those of one's neighbor, then it must be allowed to do just that. To sum up, one must follow the loving breath of the Holy Spirit. This rule holds for the time of Holy Communion, where it is necessary not to neglect the prescribed acts of virtue, but everything is to be done in a spirit of peace, etc.

Scruples are to be consumed in the fire of divine love and not to be allowed to disturb you, etc.

In desolation and aridity, one must love the Will of God, who wills this, and rejoice in the cross with Jesus Christ, abandoning oneself in all things to the Divine Good Pleasure, and be pleased to be deprived of all satisfaction for love of God, who is the soul of our happiness.

Live then with your heart raised up in God and do not allow yourself to be crushed by sadness, and be sure that one day you will see the warm sun that will scatter these clouds. If His Divine Majesty opens the way and sends men, as I am hoping will happen soon, I will be over there and everything will settle down.

Let us allow ourselves to be guided by God and never fear. I greet your mother and your cousin in the Lord. Let them pray for me since I have need

of prayers. Meanwhile, I embrace you in the Side of Jesus and reaffirm that I am,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

FIRST PAPAL APPROVAL OF RULE (1741)

On May 15, 1741, Pope Benedict XIV signed the papal rescript approving the Rule written by Paul and somewhat modified by the commission of cardinals. This approval made it possible for Paul and his companions to take the four public vows called for in the approved Rules.

Paul announces the good news of the papal approval of the Rules and the profession of the four public vows by himself and his companions. He describes his joy and holy wonder in the presence of God's gracious bringing to reality his dream of long ago. He gives a report of the life the community will live as well as the apostolic goal the pope has assigned the Congregation to fulfill. Paul finally uses the occasion to invite young men to join the newly approved Congregation.

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Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (4)¹⁶⁸

Orbetello

May 18, 1741

J.M.J.

Illustrious and Reverend Patron,

Let every spirit praise the Lord! And let all creatures magnify the infinite mercies of that great God, who not allowing himself to be overcome by my malice, has deigned to bring to a conclusion this work, entirely his, using with a secret, sweet disposition the care, diligence, and charitable labors of your person and that of the Eminent Protectors, for all of whom the Great Giver of every good gift has prepared riches of inestimable merit for time and eternity because of the many souls, I hope, that will be saved through this means.

Oh, how sweet is our most amiable Savior! How sweet his divine spirit! Oh, how lovable his goodness! After the storm he gives us calm; after the clouds, a clear sky. May his Name be praised forever. The gratitude with which this least Congregation will continue perpetually toward your person I do not know how to express with my pen, nor can I do so. We will pour forth our hearts as much as possible before the Most High at the holy altar and in all our most unworthy prayers in order to keep in memory with a charity unfeigned a great benefactor who has brought about so much good for us.

We are waiting by the moment our knight, and I am hoping, please God, that he also is bringing the right to reserve the Holy Sacrament, for I know by experience that His Eminence Cardinal Altieri was slow to concede this.

And would that we were able to have our sacramental Love with us when we make our holy retreat in preparation for the renewal of our simple vows

168. Garagni had much to do with achieving this papal approval so Paul responds to him at once.

and to do what has not been done, especially to ready ourselves to be signed with that holy sign of salvation, which will indicate to all peoples that we are set apart to preach the bitter sufferings of our Jesus and to promote in all hearts true devotion to these sufferings, a means very efficacious to blot out the many evils that flood over the poor Catholic world. Such evils force the God of Majesty to send fearful punishment on this world. I assure Your Reverence that we will not cease to pray in supplication to the Most High to be appeased, but I fear and tremble because the world is so wicked that, unless God visits it with a scourge, in my opinion, it will not amend. Experience allows me to discern this myself. I cry out, nevertheless: "Correct us in mercy, lest you be angry and reduce us to nothing."

If ever we have the good fortune to serve Your Reverence in this Retreat, that will make our consolation overflow. We assure you that you are completely the patron of this Retreat and of us, your unworthy servants. If the mercy of God were to inspire you to cooperate once more by sending us a candidate, I ask you to think how much the Sovereign Good would be glorified. To him be honor and glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I come to an end, finally, and with all our religious I pay you our profound reverence and ask you to continue your holy prayers and strong protection for us, and without fail I reconfirm myself to be,

Your obligated, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

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Canon John Baptist Randone (1)¹⁶⁹

Presentation
May 20, 1741

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father and Revered Patron,

I am keenly affected by the sickness that has come to Count Garagni, our venerated patron and great benefactor. In just the last post we sent our humble, reverent, and heartfelt thanks to him for the great assistance he gave for the establishment of this least Congregation. All the while he saw fit to keep me informed on the entire proceedings. Accordingly, you may assure the count that gratitude forces us to keep him perpetually in our prayers and holy sacrifices, and now, more than ever, I have asked that prayers be multiplied, begging the Divine Goodness to bring back his former health. God knows how much this is in my heart for the greater glory of God and the profit of our neighbor. I have high hopes that God will bless these holy desires, and we will not fail to pray for this and have prayers offered by others. We have thanked God for the blessing of the favor of the apostolic rescript. Your Reverence saw fit to send us a copy. I ask you in my name, and that of all of us here, to thank

169. John Baptist Randone was secretary to Count Bishop Garagni. These two were first in Rome, where they met Paul. There are various letters to and from them that demonstrate their dedication to the Congregation. They were responsible for several good vocations to the Congregation.

the count for the great charity which he continues to show us. We are expecting to receive the rescript at any moment from the hand of the knight. I assure you that my poor heart greatly rejoices in the fulfillment of the Divine Good Pleasure. All our religious have shared this joy. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. If my boldness is not too much, I would like you to favor me with any news on the improvement of the count for my consolation and that of all here. I would also ask you to put us at the feet of His Reverence, recommending me to his prayers and your own. Meanwhile, I leave you in sweet Side of Jesus with all esteem and veneration. I sign myself,

Your humble and devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular¹⁷⁰

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Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (5)

Presentation

June 1, 1741

J.M.J.

Reverend Father and Revered Patron,

Thanks forever to the Giver of every good gift, our knight arrived Wednesday evening at the Ave Maria, all filled with holy resolutions to belong entirely to God. He handed me a letter from Your Reverence, bestowed with your accustomed charity, which I continue to hold in high esteem, veneration, and great appreciation since I have the role of humbly offering my useless service to your venerated person, to whom I know not how to nor can I express how much my poor heart feels obliged and strictly bound in the pure Side of Jesus, for whom I do not leave off, and will never leave off, offering my unworthy prayers so that His Majesty will deign to consume you as a victim of holocaust in the flames of his infinite love, and that, as an instrument for the greater glory of God, you may make him praised and blessed by all peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations.

I received the Constitutions, along with the rescript to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. And just this morning we are celebrating with great solemnity and will place it in the tabernacle after we have celebrated Solemn Mass, at the end of which we will solemnly sing the *Te Deum laudamus* in thanksgiving for this great blessing.

My great disgrace is that there is in my heart not a spark of true love of God. If there were, I would not resist the blows, nor would I merely fall unconscious, but fall dead and be reduced to ashes at the sight of such graces and mercies that the Divine Majesty grants to this horrible nothing and most detestable monster of ingratitude.

I have read the Constitutions and see that God has directed his heart, his tongue, his pen, and all, for they remain in essence as the Divine Goodness inspired them. And whatever has been taken out or added does not touch the

170. The Rule was finally approved and now Paul can use the title.

essentials, for in this beginning our Great God, who strongly and gently disposes everything, has permitted this, but in time His Divine Majesty will make his Divine Will known quite clearly.

Oh, what an immense divine work this is! Oh! the high and secret Providence with which His Majesty brought it to this point. Now I experience what a bishop, a great servant of God, told me years ago; namely, that this was all the work of God and that His Majesty would bring it to its end with wonderful, hidden, secret ways and beyond anything thought of by me. So has the unworthy one who writes come to understand; so have said other souls of high perfection. Ah! Illustrious One, out of charity have compassion on me and pray that the mercy of God burns up entirely this imperfect me and changes me into another person and sends holy men so that we can stand as a wall for the House of Israel and can cooperate for the destruction of the many evils that are in the world.

In the next post I will send the letters that the knight spoke about — he pays you profound respect and is well pleased — for I cannot write today and the post leaves tomorrow. I would like to send the plan of this Retreat so that you could place it at the feet of His Holiness and that he might bless it. But I cannot get that done right now, for it requires a professional hand. I remain prostrate at your feet, asking for your blessing, and pay you profound reverence, as do all in the Retreat.

Your Reverence's humble, obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

277

Francis Appiani (17)

Orbetello
June 2, 1741

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

Thanks forever to the Sovereign Good, yesterday, the Feast of Corpus Christi, Solemn Mass, along with the *Te Deum*, were celebrated in thanksgiving to the Divine Majesty for the granting of the grace of the confirmation of our Rules and Constitutions. This ample grace came through the Holy Father, the Supreme Pontiff, on May 15, and I received the Rules and Constitutions, along with a rescript and apostolic seal, on Wednesday night. A holy and pious priest, a knight of Malta,¹⁷¹ whom the Holy Father is allowing to join our least Congregation and will be vested in a few days, brought the Rule and rescript to us.

The Congregation has the title of Least Discalced Clerics Regular of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ. We wear a mantle reaching to the knee, hat on our heads, and sandals on our feet except at the Retreat and on missions. On our breasts on the left side of the tunic we have a white cross in the middle of a heart formed with white lines, and within the heart is written

171. Father Angelo Maria Gabriele Di Stefano.

Jesu Christi Passio. We wear this also on the mantle. Oh, see, my dear son, the great work of God! I hope that His Divine Majesty will have it make great progress.

Yesterday, we placed the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. We have not had that up until now, for the Congregation had not been established as yet. So I hope to be able to come to the island within the month of June to establish the Retreat there. But it is necessary to be quiet so as not to open the way for the devil, etc.

You may share with your mother and in secret with your parish priest. When the establishment is confirmed, you can tell everyone. I am writing with great haste, for I am burdened with business. I have need of prayer so that God will give me the light and strength to do his Divine Will in everything. I end by embracing you in Jesus and declare myself always,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

It will be necessary that we come together about the Retreat — the best site, etc. — on my arrival in Rio.

278

Canon Blaise Pieri (1)¹⁷²

Presentation

June 8, 1741

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father,

This evening after dinner, I received your welcome letter, and I am replying to it during the time of silence since all the members are in their cells for sleep before rising for Matins

Oh, how sweet is the sweet spirit of our Jesus! Oh, how great, how immense, is his love. How infinite his charity! He brings calm after the storm; and after clouds, the clear sky. May his Name be blessed forever. Amen. Amen.

I had already determined to give you an entire account of all that the admirable Divine Providence of the Most High has worked, as seen by my puny and darkened intelligence, for this work has been guided by God in a way incomprehensible to me. You should know that the holy Rules and Constitutions have not been changed in what touches their essentials; there were some small and insignificant things removed, which do not merit notice. But with time I strongly believe that God will make his will known for these things as well.

The Congregation is established with the title of Least Discalced Clerics Regular of the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ our Savior. A tunic is worn,

172. Canon Pieri of Vetralla was deeply impressed by Paul and requested him to give a retreat to the Carmelite nuns there. Thus Paul became acquainted with the nuns, especially Sister Colomba, as well as the clergy and laity. After a very successful mission at Vetralla in April 1742, Paul was able to make the second foundation there, the Retreat of San Angelo. This letter shows how close Paul was to Canon Pieri and Paul's high esteem of Sister Colomba.

as you are aware, with mantle to the knee. We are granted the great sign of salvation, terrible to all hell, consisting of a white cross planted on a heart and formed with white outline. Within it there is written the noble name of Jesus with the title of his Passion in white letters. A fourth vow is taken to promote devotion to the Passion, as you are aware. There is a perpetual fast, very discreet in practice. Outside the Retreat I told you we eat whatever is provided. There are three hours of prayer: at midnight after Matins, after Prime, and after Compline. All the hours of the Divine Office are spread out through the day. There is time given for recreation. We sleep as you saw. To sum up, nothing was touched. His Holiness has limited us to one House in a diocese, as was in the Rules. And I hope to inform you soon of the establishment of a second House on the island of Elba, where I am going next week.

His Holiness has sent us a most worthy candidate who was vicar general of the Grand Priory of Barletta, a priest and religious of the Jerusalemite Order, whom he dispensed willingly to allow him to pass to our least Congregation. He is very pious and learned, and he has published. He is in good health and has a good complexion and is about your age or mine. He is able to give missions and has done so.

The favor of approval was carried here by him, and on Thursday, a day consecrated to the great Solemnity of Corpus Christi, our infinite sacramental Love was placed in the tabernacle of the church. Those assembled here have found it a paradise of spiritual consolation to reflect that after so many years, our loving Shepherd, Father and Master, has come to stay day and night with his least sheep, poor sons and ignorant disciples. Oh, how much I would like to say! Silence is imposed on me in order not to increase your suffering. Ah, dear and esteemed Father in Jesus Christ, do not cease to offer great thanks to the Infinite Love, and beg him to quickly increase these Least Discalced Clerics Regular of the Passion so they may imprint on the hearts of all ...

I am in a hurry and have no time to say more. My heart would like to say wonderful things to our Sister Maria Colomba, a true servant of the Most High. She is entirely imprinted with a great sign of Crucified Love, but my pen cannot express my thought. I admire this blessed dove on the fruitful olive tree of the cross. She does not carry the olive twig in her mouth, as did the one that flew from the ark. No, she takes in from that great tree of life the divine oil which, ignited by the flame of divine love, consumes everything as a holocaust victim to the Highest Good. Oh, fortunate Colomba! You have found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Oh, how much my heart would say to you, but you know that Paul is the greatest sinner! I think you understand this in God. Pray for me. Let yourself be consumed entirely on the altar, roasted, singed in that oil which boils, that you, because of your exceeding courage, imbibe from that fruitful tree of the cross, which I, through my own fault, do not know how to taste.

Morning is coming, and I have other letters to write. Pray for poor Paul, who is always worse, and tell Sister Colomba to pray for me ... Let her pray that God send great workers ... God is so much offended, the world stands in ruin ...

Be patient and pardon my blunders ... greet in the pure Heart of Jesus ... Sister Colomba, and tell her to inform me ... say something about the Passion of Jesus, etc., so that you learn this great science of love. Pray for me and bless me.

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

279

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (23)

Rio
June 16, 1741

J.M.J.

May our gentle Jesus live!

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Before leaving the Retreat to come to this island, where I have come to establish another Retreat, I received your welcome letter. I do not have time to reply adequately because I am leaving today. I am sharing some of the news. Thanks to our Jesus, our Rules and Constitutions have been approved by the Sovereign Pontiff under title of The Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics Regular with the dedication to The Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus. We are allowed to bear the admirable sign of salvation with the sweet Name of Jesus and the name of the Passion written in white letters within a heart, on which is placed the holy cross in white. We have this on both tunic and mantle and are wearing it now since we made profession of our vows last Sunday.

Oh! how gentle and sweet is our Jesus, for after the storms, we have calm; after the clouds, a clear sky. Courage, my daughter, and spend yourself before God that the infant Congregation, given milk at the bosom of divine love, may be bathed in his Precious Blood. The devil rages. Paul is in a storm and the Great Pilot steers him. Pray that the foundation of this Retreat may be secured. Jesus bless you. I am writing in haste, for I wish to get going.

You may share with the Mother Abbess and all the nuns so that they may praise and thank God. Do not use my last name in writing, rather write "of the Cross."

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

280

Francis Appiani (18)

Orbetello
June 23, 1741

J.M.J.

Dear Son in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday, I arrived in Portercole, where I found His Excellency, the Prince of Sangro, very inclined to favor the project, and in this post he is

writing to the king and sending a summary. He hopes to have the royal assent so that soon we can begin the foundation of the Retreat. Accordingly, we must multiply our prayers so that His Divine Majesty will bless the work begun and encourage these good priests, namely, Fathers James, Peter, and Francis Gregolini,¹⁷³ so that with brave hearts they prepare themselves to be together as the foundation stones of this spiritual edifice. You, more than ever, must be faithful to God and pay no attention to the battles with the infernal enemy, for you will come out victorious. I am writing in haste. I greet in the pure Side of Jesus your mother and Signora Domenica; I leave them in the pure Heart of Jesus and sign myself always,

Your humble, obliged servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

281

A Religious Sister (1)¹⁷⁴

Vetralla

June 24, 1741

J.M.J.

Reverend Mother,

I have received your letter and tell you that, if you wish to walk well and without deceit, you must imitate Jesus Christ, who made himself obedient even to death on the cross. Jesus is pleased that humble souls who are well disposed should receive him frequently in the Blessed Sacrament, but he does not wish that they have the boldness to approach and receive him when they are not permitted by his ministers who hold his place. Be careful then not to go to Communion when you do not have the permission of your confessor; nor should you undertake the least penance without his permission. Otherwise, you will be deceived by the devil.

I see in you much self-love and very little humility, for when you see yourself refused in something, such as Holy Communion, you do not remain quiet, but you are disturbed and indulge in outcries. If I were there, I would not allow you to go to Communion except when the whole community goes. At times I would prohibit you even then, for I see that you are not mortified. In the future I beseech you to blindly obey your confessor. If he gives you permission, you may go to Communion; if he denies you permission, remain quiet, say nothing, and do not be quarrelsome — otherwise, it would be a clear sign that you are on a path of being deceived by the devil. This shows, too, that your consolations are false, false ecstasies. The upright person is known by walking in obedience and humility. Anything else is completely deceived.

Do not write me, for I have too much to do. Jesus bless you.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

173. None of the three entered the Congregation.

174. This letter was sent to Civita Castellana.

Viterbo
July 6, 1741

J.M.J.

The Holy Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts.

Several days ago I received your letter, in which I see that the merciful proofs of God are continuing. We must bow our heads to them and kiss the loving hand that administers the blow. With such a union with the Divine Will, we are disposed to receive inexpressible treasure and blessing, temporal as well as eternal. Therefore, be faithful to God in observing the divine precepts and in continuing the practice of the devotions shared with you by voice and in writing. I will not repeat them for the sake of brevity.

Right now it is impossible for any of us to come there because of the horrible weather and danger from the Turks. Besides, I need to stay at the Retreat, for just now our Supreme Good, our God, has opened the bosom of his highest mercies to bring it about that our Rules and Constitutions of our Congregation have been approved by the Sovereign Pontiff. We have the title of Least Discalced Clerics Regular of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ, and to that end bear the holy sign on the breast of our tunic and mantle. The Rules were not changed at all. We have the task of giving missions, in which we must promote devotion to the sacred Passion by meditating with the people after the mission sermon as well as in other exercises. We take a fourth vow to that effect. In all this it is necessary to thank God and to speak with great humility, for we had nothing to do in this work. It is all God's.

If God will open the way, and I hope he will, for me to come there to conduct missions, I would have the chance of seeing you and consoling you in the good God, who is the one object of our consolation.

Meanwhile, let us have lively faith in Jesus Christ and in the merits of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, that they have never abandoned you, but provided for you with mercy and will always assist you from the infinite concern that they provide for the needy, body and soul. I ask that all have great respect for their mother, consoling and assisting her in all things, fleeing from any worldly and libertine companions, for the world is very evil, and I strongly fear an imminent and great scourge. Let us be well prepared and walk in the bosom of the divine mercies and not beneath the scourge of his wrath.

Let them take heart that God wishes much good for them, and let them repose in the pure Side of Jesus, together with their mother, to whom may the merciful God grant the fullness of grace and blessings and, I certainly hope, for all the house, for which I continually pray His Divine Majesty.

I ask that our sisters live very withdrawn, modestly and devoutly, and place all their confidence in God without thinking of the state God wills for them since he has care for all. Jesus bless them. Amen. It is not good to be writing often, especially at this time, since the letter may be lost.

175. Paul writes this long letter to his mother to share his happiness with her. He admits he would like to give missions nearby and so be able to visit her. He suggests that some of his priest-friends might wish to join him, now that the pope has given this initial approval.

Although we are Discalced Clerics Regular, we wear sandals except that on missions we are barefoot.

May God grant that some of the good priests there would decide to withdraw with us, especially Paul Sardi and Father Pulziani, the confessors of the nuns, the more so because now we are about to found another Retreat.

If Joseph wants to speak to them about this, it would be well, reminding them of the urgings which came from God and which they have had for years. If they come to such a decision, let them write me by the post. I will tell them how to proceed and how to travel here. If they do that God will make them saints, and they will go to heaven with thousands of souls with them, who God, using them, will convert. The letters should be addressed to Father Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular, in the Retreat of the Presentation, Viterbo for Orbetello.

You can tell them we wear the ordinary clerical tunic of rough cloth with woolen underclothing, the mantle to the knees. On the tunic and mantle we wear a holy sign consisting of a white cross, mounted on a heart, on which is written in white letters the sweet Name of Jesus with title of the Passion. On journeys we wear a hat. We sleep on straw ticks and arise for Matins at night. There are three hours of prayer during the day as well as time for study, examen, lessons, conferences, and recreation, which takes place after the noon and evening meals. During the night and the rest of the day we remain in silence at work. The day passes as though it were a minute. While in the Retreat, it is a Lenten life, but prudent enough. Outside, we eat whatever is provided.

The Constitutions contains forty chapters. Read this description to them and greet them in Jesus Christ. Tell them they will make a fine group of Lombard priests who will give glory to God and edify the whole world. Thanks be to God and to Mary.

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

283

A Bishop (1)¹⁷⁶

Presentation
July 6, 1741

J.M.J.

Your Grace,

Whereas the loving and gentle Jesus has opened the bosom of his highest mercy to cause the one who rules in the place of God on earth to approve the Rules and Constitutions of the Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics Regular of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ, and given them the right to wear on the breast of the tunic and mantle a sign consisting of a white cross mounted over a heart, on which is written in white letters the Name of Jesus with the title of the Passion; furthermore, he has sent a very worthy man

176. This might be the bishop of Alessandria.

to this least Congregation; so I humbly ask the piety of Your Excellence to deign to open the bosom of your great charity for all these least ones gathered together and to engage yourself with the Most High that soon they may grow in spirit, in numbers, and in great fervor and zeal to serve the souls of our neighbors since that is the first end for which this poor Congregation was instituted. For that reason they take a fourth vow to promote in the hearts of the faithful, on missions and in other exercises, devotion to the Holy Passion by meditating with the people after the mission sermon and in other exercises of piety.

So that Your Excellency may have a clearer idea of the Institute, I would emphasize that our Rules and Constitutions were allowed to remain in their essence except for a very few things which do not touch on the essentials of the Institute. They were approved as written because they were based on the infallible truth of the Gospel. In the Retreat there is a continual fast, but very prudent and adapted to the weak as well as the strong. When away they eat whatever is provided for them. For mental prayer they have an hour after reciting Matins, another hour after Prime, and another after Compline. The rest of the hours are scheduled for study and other exercises. Recreation takes place after noon and evening meals. Apart from these times, silence is observed except when it is necessary to speak. Clothed in the tunic, they sleep on a straw tick. The clerical dress is the tunic, mantle, sandals, and a hat for the head. In the Retreat and on mission they go barefoot. All this is laid down in the forty chapters of the Constitutions.

I wanted to give Your Excellency this brief notice as witness of the service and obedience I profess toward you, assuring you that when Your Excellency would be pleased to call us to work in his beloved vineyard to promote, there, devotion to the Sufferings of Jesus, a means very efficacious to destroy iniquity and set souls on the path to great sanctity, we are most ready to obey him.

I would have complied with this least part of my obligations to Your Excellency, if I had not been constrained to go to the island of Elba to negotiate the foundation of a second church and House of our Congregation, seeing that a benefactor wishes to cover the cost. We need only the royal assent to put everything in place. We have no reason to doubt that the assent will be given because of the petitions made by the people to the king. Let what is good in the eyes of the Lord be done.

If the Divine Goodness were to send some fervent priests of your pious city who aspire after solitude, beyond all the expectations of the servants of Jesus Christ, oh, how much that intent would please me! The zeal of Your Excellency could contribute much so that the Name of God would be glorified among his creatures. I end, prostrate at your feet, asking your prayers and holy blessing, and with profound reverence I sign myself,

Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

J.M.J.

Dear Reverend Father,

Last evening I received your letter, in which I am reading what you have to say about your cousin. I am replying that, here and now, I judge things are not completely from above, but there is something of your lively imagination involved. So I say to you, make nothing of the situation and reject these imaginations. For if God wanted that project, he would make it known with miracles. Besides, there is no need of such a Congregation in the Church since we have a religious group, the Servants of Mary, who have been instituted in order to preach the Seven Sorrows of Mary and wear the image of her heart, pierced with seven swords.

So continue your path with great annihilation and let yourself be entirely abandoned in the loving hands of God. When you hear such locutions, even if they seem good and bring on tears of joy, etc., get rid of them promptly, humble yourself, and affirm that you seek only the pleasure of God.

I have read a great lesson here. The saints who have written on this teach that such things are to be promptly rejected. If they are good, they will have their effect even if rejected; if they are not good, the soul remains free of all snares. All agree that these locutions, visions, and the like are subject to a thousand snares. There are some that are good, but the greater part are illusions of the devil, who makes himself into an angel of light and under the appearance of good, bit by bit, insinuates a secret pride, which can scarcely be detected by very enlightened men, and so he draws the soul to ruin. Therefore, I tell you to constantly reject such things, humble yourself much, and have no fear. God inspires me to speak in this way, and I know I am not mistaken. If God wanted such a thing, there ought to be an intense light, even for me, since you say you feel inspired to speak of this to me. I do not have such light.

Regarding the Retreat at Longone, I hear that the devil has made a great uproar, and there are persecutors and calumniators at hand reviling me, etc. The Augustinians are opposed to it, but I suppose they will not accomplish anything. However, if they block it being done at Monserrato, it may be that God wishes it in another place. If it were at San Querico, there would be water there. If the princess would concede that, it would cut off all strife. For now it is necessary not to speak of it, but to wait until things are resolved in Naples. I expect there will be a resolution by next Wednesday. The point is that there is no way to come over there before the height of summer.¹⁷⁷ In that I love and adore the Divine Good Pleasure. Tell Signora Domenica to pray for this; do the same yourself and have others pray. Things like this should be part of the

177. *Sol leone* means the sun is in the sign of the Lion, constellation of Leo, that is, in early August during the hottest weather.

prayers of the servants of God. God fill you up with all blessings. Greet your mother and everyone.

Your true, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

285

Agnes Grazi (112)

Presentation
July 22, 1741

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday, I received your letter, in which I see what you have to say to me regarding that good daughter who is upset because I did not go to confer with her. Believe me, I feel much for her since I am the cause of it all. Although I had promised to come there, in all truth I forgot. If I had remembered, I would have come to serve her in what she asked. I believe that God has arranged this for her good, all the more so since I feel myself inspired to direct her no longer. In any case, on my return there I will listen to her and give her the advice I deem necessary and recommend her to Father Lazaro.

It is necessary to take everything in good part, and as for what she had to say about me, make nothing of it because in truth what am I if not a pit of evil, of horrible miseries, and worse than nothing? God has permitted her to speak as she did so that I might be better known to all. And she came to the opinion of me that she ought to have. Your charity to your neighbor makes you suffer too much with me and that displeases me. You should look at everything with a simple eye. Do not defend me and do not justify me, not before God or before creatures.

You want to know how I am doing. You should know I am more and more buried in the abyss of my evils and under the thongs of the most fearful scourges of a God enraged at me. I strongly fear for my eternal salvation; however, I hope in the infinite mercy of God. Pray for me as you do for other poor sinners, not otherwise. Simply pray with the greatest intensity as if for the most abandoned and most needy.

Regarding that person, I tell you that I have an entire veneration for him, a high conception and esteem of him. He does much good with fervor and promptness. I hope he will overcome every temptation. The other person was not the one whom you know. To sum up then, he is a good enough soul, and I expect much good from him. Pray much for him, that he may always do what is more pleasing to God, and believe that he is a great blessing for our work since he is very pious, learned, and prudent.

Continue your way in true humility, despoiled and dead to all creation. Never cease staying in the Holy of Holies of the Heart of Jesus; love him with his own Heart. Allow yourself to be penetrated with lively sorrow for the outrages of others done him in the most adorable Sacrament and make reparation with humiliations, adoration, affections, praise, and thanksgiving. Make yourself always smaller with knowledge of your nothingness and then

allow yourself to be carried by that loving breeze wherever it pleases His Divine Majesty. Whoever will be the most humble will be the greatest; whoever will be most annihilated will be the most exalted and enriched and have the most secure entry into that great room, in that great wine cellar, in that winery, in that royal salon, from which one passes into the deepest chamber, where the bride treats all alone with her Divine Spouse. The gentle Heart of Jesus is all this and infinitely more. In that Heart the soul is transformed and divinized and loses self completely in this abyss of infinite perfections. And there, all roasted, incinerated, melted, liquified in that flame of immense love, sing the mercies, the triumphs, the magnificence, the marvels of the Immaculate Lamb. Jesus enrich you with the fullness of his blessings. Amen.

Be faithful in everything, remember to do what I said, and speak no more of this young lady. Pray for her and even more for me. For the more I see of things of this world which make me tremble, I find myself in a state that could make the whole world tremble. I pray that His Divine Majesty will deliver all creatures from that punishment. Thanks be to God.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Clerics Regular

286

Agnes Grazi (113)

—
July 1741

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am replying in haste to instruct you that when Father Angelo Maria comes, you are to speak to him with prudence and charity, without having him learn in any way what I have said to you about anything whatever. Be well on your guard. Speak to him indifferently, listen to him with reverence and humility, and reply as God inspires you. But respond to what he will say with few words, sweetly, charitably, and prudently with brevity, etc.

This priest is a good servant of God, willingly listens to me, and treats me and the others with complete confidence and charity. Consequently, I have extended myself to agree that you may speak with him, for I know it pleases him to speak with someone who has a fair basis in prayer, even though you are at the beginning of the perfection to which you ought to aspire in order to be pleasing to God. Do not presume to talk about me. Speak of me only when it is really necessary and in line with his conversation. A humble daughter ought to speak of her father with humility and reverence, and no more than that, without affected praise, which displeases God, since praise, honor, and glory are due to God alone.

Enough! I know you remain attentive to God within, buried in your smelly nothingness. God will guide your tongue with holy, prudent, and brief words.

I am not coming because I cannot. Jesus bless you and pray for me, for I am in continual and heavy storms as usual.

Paul of the Cross, Your Servant

287

Francis Appiani (20)

July 31, 1741

J.M.J.

Dear Son in Jesus Crucified,

I adore the divine dispositions in the sickness of your mother. God knows how willingly I would have come, if I were not on the verge of getting sick and, much more because of the change in weather that would put me in great risk of life. Nevertheless, I spoke of this today at our Chapter with the entire community, and they advised me that it is not good for me to place myself in such great peril, especially now in the height of summer. All the more so in view of what Signore Gregolini writes that the sickness of your mother is a malignant fever that has lasted nine days and the doctor has given up hope, so we may fear that at this hour your mother may have passed to eternity. But there is reason to give glory to God that such a good mother has so laudably come to the end of her life and is now enjoying the Sovereign Good as the reward of the fidelity with which she served him. If she has improved, and I have no doubt of that, we will see each other at a better time.

In case His Divine Majesty has taken her, you must unite yourself gently to the Holy Will of God and kiss the loving hand that struck the blow. In that event, you will be free to come here and sanctify yourself. But in the meantime, the Retreat may take shape in another form if we do not succeed in Monserrato.

With regard to the will, I would not keep her from making one. Although seeing her so healthy previously, I told her that the right time would be when we actually make the foundation of the Retreat. But now that she is sick and in grave danger, she should make her will, as, I believe, she has done. But in case she has not done so, you, as sole inheritor, will have the freedom to fulfill all her holy intentions.

I will be expecting a reply by post. If you will work it out, I will come in person in the month of September to receive it. But first take care of the household and see to it that there is no unfinished business. I have already written to Signore Gregolini by post and asked him to share my letter with you. In it I suggested that the best solution would be for you to come here, and then God will take care of the Retreat. And since there is no word from Naples, I come back to what I wrote in that letter concerning the affair.

My dear Signore Appiani, now is the time to show your fidelity to God and free yourself from the attacks of the devils, who will get people to dissuade you from your holy intentions. Be careful to pay no attention to anyone since trickery will come around masked with an appearance of piety. Be strong and

think about the great good that will come to souls by cooperating with your money for the foundation of the Retreat, etc.

If your mother has died, I beg you not to be stuck in melancholy, but make loving acts of filial confidence in God, loving that Holy Will in every happening. The holy servants of God have acted in this way, and we read that "deprived of parents, they distributed their goods to the poor and for other pious works, and so, free of all worldly cares, they serve God the better in holiness of life in deserts and caves of the earth ..."¹⁷⁸ Much courage. God wishes to make a great testing of you to make you a great saint.

Give me complete information by post and hold to your holy intentions. As regard the question of Signora Domenica, that is a business that needs great light. I believe it will run into many difficulties in Rome. I know there was a great servant of God who tried a similar project, and there was no way to bring it to pass. So we must wait and see what God wants, praying with great humility. For the devil is clever, and I fear that a trick of her imagination is involved.

I end, embracing you in the Side of Jesus, and declare myself,

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Here, there will be prayers for your mother, and immediately upon receiving word in case of her passing to a better life, we will conduct funeral rites for her as a benefactress and as foundress of the Retreat, for that was her intention. I finish in haste and am ...

Your letter was received an hour ago. On the outside of the letter do not write "Fra," but as usual we are Discalced Clerics and not "Frati."¹⁷⁹

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Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (1)¹⁸⁰

Presentation
August 2, 1741

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

Most Reverend Canon,

I place in the pure Heart of Jesus the consolation I felt this morning when I received your venerated letter, in which I see the great zeal your piety has

178. We do not know where Paul found this passage, which is seemingly inspired by the letter to the Hebrews 11:36-38.

179. In the strict sense "Frati" signifies a member of one of the Mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans. The Passionists were classified with a structure similar to the Mendicants.

180. This is the first of seven letters Paul wrote to Canon Cerruti, now the penitentiary of Alessandria, formerly one of Paul's spiritual directors when Paul was a young man in Castellazzo. This is the longest letter Paul wrote during this time of spiritual exaltation on the papal approval. Notice that Paul understands that this approval, although ample, as he wrote, would become a solemn approval when there were more members and two more Retreats. Paul mentions that he wrote to the archbishop of Turin, Bishop Francis M. Arborio Di Gattinara, who as the bishop of Alessandria was Paul's director and had clothed him in the habit in 1720.

preserved for this least, newborn Congregation, which after many storms has been blessed by our Great God by having it approved by his reigning Vicar. However, since there is only this one Retreat and six priests and two lay brothers, all true servants of the Most High except the unworthy one who is writing, His Holiness thought it best to approve us for now with an ample rescript inserted at the end of the Rules and then wait to give solemn approval when the number of members has increased and there are more Houses. Right now we are waiting the opportunity to open two more Retreats. Benefactors have come forward to take care of the expenses to establish these Houses.

So in order to reverently obey you as I ought, I am giving you a brief account of our Rules, which are the ones inspired by the Great Father of Lights and which you looked over and examined. Only a few things were added or taken out for the firmer establishment of the work, in accord with the lights which the Merciful God saw fit to communicate to me in the course of the years and during which experience taught me much. Be patient with the verbosity of the account of the Institute, which I am giving you in testimony of the obedience and changeless servitude which I profess to you.

The primary end of the Institute is to attend to one's own perfection by total detachment from all created goods by living in rigorous poverty, in prayer, and in fasting. The secondary end, but primary for the glory of God and salvation of souls, is to dedicate oneself to the holy apostolic labors for the conversion of souls and the promotion in the hearts of the faithful of devotion to the most Holy Passion of Jesus, both during missions and other exercises of piety, by giving a meditation to the people after the mission sermon, as I have said repeatedly. And we take a fourth vow for that purpose.

Our clothing consists of a clerical tunic of black, rough cloth with a mantle to the knees, without linens under the tunic, but only woolen undergarments. Over the tunic comes a mantle. On the left side of the breast we wear the admirable sign of the Holy Passion, consisting of a white cross above a heart in which is written in white letters the name of Jesus with title of the Holy Passion, in accord with the clear light I had some twenty-three years ago, as Your Reverence well knows. I can better explain with God's help the information on the title. That title is written entirely in white letters, *Jesu Christi Passio*, and it inspires much devotion. We wear sandals on our feet in accord with ancient custom and a hat on our head when going on journeys. In the Retreat we go barefoot.

In the Retreat the fast is perpetual, but very prudent. It can be endured by both strong and weak, as was carefully examined in Rome. Outside the Retreat we eat what is provided for us. We live in rigorous poverty, without income and without questing from door to door. We live from what comes from the spontaneous charity of benefactors. Thanks be to God, we have not wanted for anything.

The spiritual exercises consist in rising at midnight to recite Matins, followed by an hour of mental prayer. There is also an hour after Prime, a half-hour at Sext and an hour after Compline. He who is engaged in study for the neighbor may celebrate Mass a half-hour after Prime. He is also dispensed

from the half-hour at Sext on the judgment of the one who is studying. The rest of the day is employed in study, no one is exempt from that, in spiritual reading, examen, besides conferences as scheduled. Recreation takes place after the noon meal and after the slight collation in the evening. Outside the recreation times, silence is observed except for cases of necessity. All the time is so well distributed that the days pass like minutes. As a matter of fact, I am robbing the silent rest before Vespers today to write this letter so that I may be prompt at the exercises of the community.

We have discreet exercises of penance, like sleeping on straw ticks, covered with a small blanket for winter, and straw pillows. If sickness occurs, we use a mattress but not sheets, always wearing our poor tunic in which we ought to die. Dry disciplines are taken four times a week. During Advent and Lent there is discipline every night as well as during novenas. If one has a greater spirit of penance, he must seek permission of the rector and spiritual director, but it chiefly depends on the rector.

Information about the vows is well explained in the chapters of the Rule, which contain forty chapters. The vow to promote devotion to the Passion is well explained. It consists in preaching, that is, meditating aloud for about a half-hour after the mission sermon, but without leaving the platform or pulpit. It is done immediately so as to instruct the people in holy meditation. This can also be done in catechisms, in the confessional, in conferences, etc. One who is not able to hear confessions or preach, in addition to the common prayer, makes a half-hour meditation on the Passion, praying His Divine Majesty to spread the devotion across the whole world and to give his spirit to those who do the preaching, etc. The lay brothers and clerics must do this as well. In this everything is explained and takes away all scruples. All this underwent rigorous examination for six months in Rome. Even the Sovereign Pontiff read the Rules.

The Retreats are to be founded in solitude so that the workers, worn out by their apostolic work, can rest their spirit at the foot of the Crucified in prayer and fasting, apart from all the noise of the world. While under the vow of poverty, it is allowed that when lacking food, questing is permitted out of pure necessity for the day. But so far this has never happened, and I hope it never will, for that Great God, who opens his hand and fills every animal with blessings, will provide always for his poor servants so that they will not be forced to distract themselves and go questing.

Furthermore, we can found one House in each diocese so that we may attend to the needs of souls there. The Houses should be founded on islands, the salt marshes and other abandoned places. But we are not excluded from going wherever we may be called by the Ordinary of any diocese whatever. The superior has the title of rector and the superior over all the houses is called head superior.¹⁸¹

The men here, in addition to the three brothers, are three priests, great servants of God, two Tuscans and the other from the Kingdom of Naples, a well-learned man, pious and a Doctor of Sacred Theology. He was vicar

181. "Head superior" is *preposito* (first position) in Italian.

general of the great priory of Barletta, a Knight of Malta, etc. He came from outside, notwithstanding his fifty-three years of age, and he is the first in choir, assiduous for all the exercises, indefatigable, etc. All seems sweet to him, not only the fast, but also the poor sleeping, etc. For now there are no further men for the work is newborn and fresh, and my grave sins, I fear, will not allow us to go forward. The two lay brothers are very good sons, especially the youth, who is a man of high prayer and great virtue, etc. We need holy workers, dearest and most reverend Canon. If they were present, we could quickly found many Houses, etc.

You were the first up there to know the mercies that God imparted to poor Paul and the first to cooperate closely with our dear rector. Now there remains for you the labor of working as hard as you can for the greater glory of God, in addition to pouring out fervent prayers to the Most High to see to the sending of good young priests and young clerics or lay men who, even if they are not gifted to preach right now, at least have passable fundamental studies and a strong resolve to serve God. They can acquire more skills here since they will be under the direction of that learned and pious servant of God. I can inform you of the best way to come here with ease.

After receiving the approval, the urge to come to Lombardy to conduct missions came back to me strongly. I would like to believe they would be blessed by God, as were the missions in many of the dioceses of Tuscany, Umbria and other States of the Church, whether in the countryside or in cities. The great God of Majesty, who uses the weak and ignorant of this world, has deigned to give me the gifts of some ability, I speak to your heart for your planning, giving me the light to adjust my preaching and instructions as well as for the moral theology needed for confessions, and I am occupied with further study, which I have managed to continue as much as possible.

So if God inspires you to open the way for me to come into your diocese to conduct holy missions, and in that way open the way for others, you could deign to speak to the bishop and his vicar. If I were able to make an autumn campaign, I would come willingly, all the more so since I would hope to take back with me a good worker to increase our newly born Congregation.

With regard to royal assent, it would be enough to write to the archbishop from whom I have received a most cordial letter in this post, which you may soon have. I believe it may not be necessary since I am a subject of His Majesty, our King.

I leave the task with you; it seems to redound to the greater glory of God. I said I would gladly come in autumn, for I have other engagements for spring and am busy with other affairs in the service of God. As for other missions that I would be giving in these parts next autumn, I could hold off on those until carnival since down here snow does not bother us because it does not last.

I have not written the bishop of Alessandria because of my many occupations, especially at this beginning of things, and because of a trip I made to the island of Elba to negotiate the foundation of a Retreat there. All hell has armed itself against us there. In testimony of my reverence and obedience I am writing him, however, in this post and am giving him brief

information of the approval we received. I have written about this only to the archbishop of Turin, as well as about some other matters of great importance.

I can give you news, too, that we have an apostolic indult to conduct missions for all of Italy with consent of the Ordinaries, along with the power to grant the apostolic blessing and plenary indulgence.

I am overcome with stupor at seeing myself occupied in such sublime duties. Such a thing never entered my mind. Ah! I confess to the truth, all that I am is buried beneath my horrible nothingness, and I stand in fear and trembling for the heavy account I will have to give in being the dispenser of the treasures of the Most High. Through holy obedience God has willed to entrust to me not only missions in many dioceses, but also convents of holy virgins, where I have conducted retreats and served as extraordinary confessor with great blessings from God in the bounteous fruit His Majesty willed to bring from it. Moreover, he has entrusted to me the holy direction of some souls who are enriched with stupendous gifts of God at highest prayer. I tell you this because the experience of their heroic virtue and their walking in pure faith makes me believe they are not deceived, all the more so because they have remained faithful. Oh, great God! who could ever have believed this smelly sinner could walk in these paths? The height of the riches ... how incomprehensible are his judgments, beyond investigation are his ways! Dear Canon, I do not know what more to say because so many are the ways I have traveled, so many temptations, sicknesses, tribulations, persecutions, calumnies, etc., that I know not how to express them. I have endured, for God has always freed me, but they are not yet over. In the midst of so many mercies, I am always worse, always more imperfect. Oh, who will give my eyes fountains of tears, and I will weep day and night. Help me with your holy prayers and do what you can for our needs. If there is any decision, please let me know by post. Address the letter: Viterbo for Orbetello. Greet your vicar general and all your reverent household.

Prostrate at your feet with all in the Retreat, I ask your blessing and with profound respect sign myself,

Your humble servant and unworthy son,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

I enclosed a copy of the approval inserted in the Rule and sealed, etc.

Mother Mary Crucified Costantini (1)¹⁸²

Presentation
August 10, 1741

J.M.J.

Long live the Holy Cross.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I have not replied to your letter until now because there were not wanting to me duties and crosses, which I want to always kiss as precious pearls. I read with consolation the information you sent me on your spirit, and I see that the Divine and Sovereign Majesty is the one who is working his mercies in your soul. You need to be faithful in corresponding to them by annihilating yourself more and more before His Sovereign Majesty, getting rid of all the gifts and remaining in complete nakedness and annihilation and, at the same time, making a sacrifice of all these gifts by placing them in the censer of your heart so that your coals, set alight by Divine Love, may burn them up and have them ascend as a sweet incense to the Highest Majesty of the Sovereign Good. By going through this stripping, the soul remains in its true nothingness and does not look at the gifts with attachment, but looks at the Highest Giver in order to love him the more and to dispose itself in this way for greater graces. Read this section carefully; it will help you a lot.

Above all, allow yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit. Stay in your annihilation, and, when you feel the divine attractions and impressions, follow them with the invitation that comes from God. Then remain all lost in God in a sacred silence; now resting all absorbed in a loving stupor in the contemplation of the divine perfections; now breaking out in divine praises; now penetrated with love and sorrow over the pains of Jesus, etc. But see that you do this without any play of the imagination, remaining in pure faith and without any picturing. Then you will be walking with greater security. Dark faith is the sure guide of holy love! O what delight its certainty brings to my heart.

Now, I will tell you something about my extreme needs. Know, my daughter in Jesus Christ, that my torments are growing, both from the rage of the devils and from well-intentioned people. If God does not give me great strength, I fear collapsing under the load. I mean to say that even my weak body will give way and death will put an end to everything; however, I trust that His Divine Majesty will take me into the bosom of his divine mercies. I say this to your heart in secret.

I see the work has been born, but I also see that it is very evident that it could die at its birth, for I do not see any beginning of servants of God coming to be the foundation stones on which to build the spiritual edifice. It may be that once I am out of the way since I am an impediment, His Divine Majesty will provide.

182. Mother Mary Crucified would become the first Passionist nun. Note how Paul writes to her of his fears and sufferings. Again, he mentions the need for candidates, lest the Congregation die at its very birth (*Saint Paul of the Cross: Letters to Mother Mary Crucified*, translated and annotated by Father Silvan Rouse, C.P.).

I am preparing myself for everything, and I simply resign myself and abandon myself to the Divine Good Pleasure, ready to see the work done or undone, just as God wills. My heart is in such straits, that it seems to me I have never been like this before. It even weakens my body. I am sharing all this in secret with you, my daughter in Jesus Christ, since it is proper that a poor father should share his needs with his children. So pray much for me since my needs are great. Offer the Most Precious Blood of Jesus and the Sorrows of Holy Mary to the Eternal Father and ask for support, aid, and mercy for this poor sinner, who finds himself in such calamities, which I embrace willingly out of love for Jesus Christ.

I will be waiting to receive your letter to learn how your interior life is progressing, etc. Cry out to God, my daughter, and ask him to be moved with pity for me and to strengthen all those gathered here. They are all very resolved to serve God. Ask God to send others according to his Divine Heart. Jesus set you completely on fire with holy love and bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (24)

Presentation

August 22, 1741

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I sense in your letter the consolation you feel over the approval of our Rule, but I assure you that the work is not finished because the infant establishment still lacks holy workers to give it milk and other spiritual nourishment so it can grow. Otherwise, this Congregation will die off as soon as it reaches birth. For that reason pray that God sends holy workers.

The temptations you write about are flies. You should make nothing out of them since they are good reasons to make you humble.

Take heart then and continue your practices with great fervor, loving to be alone with your Divine Spouse. The choir and the cell are the earthly paradise of the true servants of God. I am writing in great haste, waiting until I can speak with you, whenever God wills that to happen. Pray for poor Paul, who is in not a few tight spots, so that God may make use of him and all his affairs as it pleases him. Greet your Mother Abbess and Sister Hipolita and all the others. Leaving you in the Side of Jesus, where I declare myself to be,

Your true servant

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

I add that for the foundation we spoke about there are many difficulties. I am not so fortunate as to see that affair accomplished. May the Will of God be done.

Agnes Grazi (114)

Presentation
August 26, 1741

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Next Wednesday, God willing, Father Angelo Maria will be in Orbetello with Father Anthony, but I do not think they will be dining at your home. They are coming only to show their respects. He is also coming to speak to the doctor about being purged. Then they will go for two weeks to Rio on the island to enjoy a change of air. For good reasons I have agreed to this. I think he will come to look for you, and you may be able, after your Communion, to go to the nuns and find a place for him. Treat him cordially with natural modesty and no artificiality, and with few words give him confidence in God so that he will carry his cross joyfully and with a brave soul suffer the trial from God, etc. Tell him, but with great prudence, whatever God inspires you to say, but recommend yourself to God so that you, as a poor ignorant one, may speak with all reverence and humility and with few words that are well weighed. This week I will have the grain milled, and then I will send it. However, may Signora Maria Johanna have the patience for a while to bake bread for us, until we have the equipment to make it here.

Be entirely in God in your nothingness, sacrificed as a holocaust in the bouquet which I told you is on the altar of the Heart of Jesus. Pray for me.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Francis Appiani (21)

Presentation
September 1, 1741

*May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dearest and Most Loved Son in Jesus Christ,

Since I am engaged in a very grave affair that is very important for the spiritual advantage of the newly born Congregation, I cannot come over there. Therefore, in my place I am sending Father Fulgentius, a great servant of God, and Father Anthony.¹⁸³ Father Fulgentius is a soul very united to God and has been chosen as spiritual director for the retreat and director of novices. He will speak with my heart and give you a helping hand with excellent advice to adjust your business and proceed with great secrecy in establishing the Retreat over there when the time comes.

Meanwhile, you are forming an excellent and holy resolution to fly to this holy Retreat, where you will be received in the clefts of the rock of the Wounds of Jesus, our true Life. I would like to be writing to your mother that I am so happy over her recovery, but I cannot. I promise her that after you

183. Father Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus and Father Anthony Danci.

shall have celebrated your first Mass, I personally will bring you. I think I will have them send a letter so that you can celebrate on the Holy Nativity of Jesus Christ.

Courage then, dear one. Make this generous withdrawal and be sure that God will make you holy and I, in the Name of Jesus Christ, will be your servant, father and all, and will serve you in the Lord with infinite satisfaction. As long as I live, you will be with me at all times and on all occasions, and we will sing together on our journey: "How great is the glory of the Lord."

May your mother make this sacrifice to God and so make sure that she will ascend in the Divine Presence as a welcome and sweet incense, and she, even as a woman, will be received as the sacrifice of Abraham. Father Fulgentius and Father Anthony will have more to say in the Name of God. To avoid many rumors, let it be known that they are coming to conduct a retreat.

With regard to settling your business affairs, it would seem you should bring in your parish priest and another friend who is a servant of God and leave the house as a possible foundation of the new Retreat, etc.

Since I do not have time, I am writing these notes to the beloved priests, Fathers Gregolini and Garbaglia, etc.

My Dearest Brothers, Francis Gregolini and James Garbaglia,

I read in the letter of our beloved Signore Appiani of your holy resolution that you have formed of sacrificing yourselves entirely to the Sovereign Good in this least Congregation; if I were not occupied in a very weighty affair, I would have come to embrace you all in person. To that end I am sending our dear Father Fulgentius of Jesus and Father Anthony as companion. The servant of God will speak with my heart and he will have you read our Rules so that you can examine everything closely. I assure you that they are very sweet to the spiritual palate, if you come with the dispositions that Father Fulgentius will suggest to you in the Name of Jesus Christ, and will have you come to the mountain of holy perfection.

Come then in the Name of Jesus Christ, for I wait to serve you, help you, console you in all the ways my weakness of poor spirit will permit. I do not have the time to write as I would like. I ask you to leave your affairs all well adjusted. So as not to give rise to protests on the part of relatives, you can say with all truth that you are coming here to make a retreat. Once you are vested, you can let them know over there. In that way the blow will not be so painful to flesh and blood, and it will be done with greater prudence. Even now your relatives can enjoy a peaceful sharing of your patrimony, though you cannot renounce it for a while.

Ah! I expect great things from your coming. Father Garbaglia, according to the little light that I have, will soon be able to take care of any assignment whatever and gain many souls for God, and Father Gregolini will be able to settle himself in and do great work with catechisms, meditations, and in the confessional.

I say nothing more, but commit myself to what our dear brothers, who have come to announce to them in the Name of Jesus, will say for their departure

from the land of Egypt and of the world to take their rest in the promised land of holy religion, where one who is strong and faithful in the trials from God breathes the air of paradise. I end by embracing you in the sweet Side of Jesus.

My dear Signore Appiani, I will share with you everything and the grand designs of Divine Providence when you arrive here at this Retreat.

Greet your mother and Signora Domenica for me. When they are vested in the habit of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, they will fulfill a wonderful decision. Then the son will bear the livery of the Passion of Jesus and the mother that of Mary of Sorrows, and so they will make a great harmony for all paradise.

Tell Father Gregolini that the direction of novices is undertaken by Father Fulgentius, and Father Angelo¹⁸⁴ takes care of studies. But when he is here, we all work together for his greatest good.

I end, embracing you in the Side of Jesus, and I sigh for your expected arrival. Pray for me and Jesus bless you. Amen. I break off in a hurry.

The weeds sewn regarding the departure of Father Angelo are not true.

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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The Bishop of Sovana

Viterbo for Orbetello
September 15, 1741

Illustrious Sir,

His Excellency, the Prince of Sangro, Captain General of the Royal Garrisons of Tuscany, has requested me to conduct holy missions for all the soldiers of these garrisons. Next Wednesday, September 20, I have the first one here in Orbetello and, when that mission is completed, would like to go and open the mission at Portercole and then at Piombino. Therefore, by mandate of the prince, I am coming to the feet of Your Excellency, requesting that you grant all the faculties necessary for me and my companions. I also request Your Excellency to grant faculties for reserved sins to all the confessors during the mission and to grant me the right to use confessors approved by their Ordinaries, even though they be from outside your diocese.

I also ask Your Excellency to grant the faculty to commute and dispense vows, to dispense the impediment of seeking the conjugal debt between married persons who are related closely by blood,¹⁸⁵ as well as any further faculties you have power to grant according to the disposition of the Council

184. This is Father Angelo Di Stefano, the Knight of Malta. Paul underlines the presence of Father Angelo to discredit the rumors of his departure, which would have confirmed the difficulty of living the Passionist life.

185. Paul is seeking the faculties to remove canonical impediments reserved to bishops. Another such request on Paul's part is found in his letter to the bishop of Viterbo, February 7, 1742.

of Trent, since this is what is customary for Ordinaries to grant to missionaries, as Your Excellency has instructed me.

I ask the piety of Your Excellency to give me an answer, as soon as possible, to my request for my instruction because I have the burden of getting to the garrisons quickly and need to get to the diocese of Viterbo. Out of love for Jesus, pardon my mistakes. I am writing this in a hurry, for the post is about to leave. I am here in Orbetello, making arrangements for the mission for next Wednesday.

I end with a profound reverence, prostrate at the feet of Your Excellency, asking for your venerated commands in the next post. Meanwhile, I recommend myself to your holy prayers and ask for your pastoral blessing, constantly affirming that I am, in haste,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Regular Cleric

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Agnes Grazi (115)

Porto San Stefano
October 13, 1741

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am about to leave for Piombino. Because I did not have time to tell you some necessary things, I am writing this note to tell you that when you hold the crucifix in hand, remain there with your holy affections and kisses of devotion. As soon as you have completed your devotions, you are to abandon yourself in the immense sea of divine love, entering by the door of the pure Heart of Jesus in pure faith without images. Lock yourself in that great Holy of Holies and lose yourself there entirely in that bottomless sea of the infinite love of God, rising to the contemplation of the infinite grandeur, beauty, riches of the Highest Good, taking your complacency in him, melting in that great flame like a grain of wax, placing yourself on that aromatic bouquet of the pains of Jesus and, there, all aflame, be reduced to ashes as a victim in holocaust. All this should be done in pure faith in that great Heart and all lost in the Infinite Divinity.

And who will set fire to the bouquet of aromatics? Do you know who? It will be that flame of love which makes the Heart of Jesus suffer so much. Learn this lesson in the school of true annihilation, and you will have learned great things. If the devil makes an uproar with temptations or imaginations, as you tell me, make nothing out of it, as though it were a fly above. Break away immediately when in kissing the crucifix it seems to you that it is flesh; break off and continue in faith because the devil may be playing a nasty trick to ensnare you.

In addition, I tell you to continue your prayer for me and my companions from the Retreat and for the conversion of souls. Walk in pure faith, breaking away from imaginative and certain material things, as I said above, for in that way you will escape all snares.

My daughter in Jesus Christ, do not lose sight of your nothingness. Allow yourself to be despised, laughed at; let them say what they will, and, if they correct you for anything, do not justify yourself; but, be silent, quiet, dead, blind, deaf, mute, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Read a little of the *canzonetta*, etc., for you will always learn, and the other notes.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Francis Appiani (22)

Piombino
October 18, [1741]¹⁸⁶

J.M.J.

Dear Appiani,

Last Monday I arrived in Piombino and opened the mission, which will end on the coming Wednesday, October 25. So if you wish to come, you can clear up your affairs and be here on Tuesday of the coming week, or Wednesday, when I will be awaiting you. I am mentioning this to Signore Garbaglia and Signore Gregolini.¹⁸⁷

Then I will know their decisions. They have read the Rules and are informed on everything. God has given his impulses and is not obliged to give more since what they have are quite enough. And the Holy Gospel speaks clearly. We have a surer prophetic word ... and that is more than human speech.

The bell is ringing for the mission, and I have no more time to write. Greet you mother for me and ask her to make her sacrifice with a good will, as she is doing. Give Signora Domenica¹⁸⁸ the book that Father Fulgentius is sending her. He will send the chestnuts when the sailboat comes since we have traveled overland. I am breaking off in haste. Jesus bless you. If you have not yet resolved to come, do not write me further about the business. I do not have time to waste. I embrace you in Jesus and am,

Your servant,

Paul of the †, Discalced Missionary

Father Angelo is with me. He and Father Anthony greet you. I received the letter from Signore Gregolini, and I expect to leave for the Retreat with him and Signore Garbaglia.

186. In the Italian text of Amedeo, a letter directed to Signore Francis Appiani, sent from Piombino, is dated October 18, 1733. We judge that this letter must be dated in 1741. In 1733, Appiani would have been only fourteen years old. Thus it has been inserted under the date of October 18, 1741. Paul is writing about the mission at Piombino in 1741, not the earlier one in 1733. He is suggesting that Appiani join him and the two other prospects (Garbaglia and Gregolini) when he returns to the Retreat. In addition, Wednesday, October 25, occurs in 1741, not in 1733.

187. These were aspirants who did not enter the Congregation.

188. This is the aunt of Father Francis.

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

I received your letter yesterday, but since I was attacked by a severe fever after I gave the papal blessing, and the same thing happened to Father Angelo, I did not have a chance to read your letter nor to reply. And now we are on the point of leaving so that, if we find ourselves attacked by fever, we may be able to find ourselves home in the Retreat. Therefore, I ask you to do my farewells with the parish priest, to whom I confess that I am very obligated, and to your mother. I rejoice over the noble sacrifice she is making in giving her son to the Sovereign Good. I will write from the Retreat and will respond to everyone. I break off by embracing you in the Side of Jesus, and in haste I declare myself, greeting you in the name of our companions and embracing you from a true heart,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

—
[1741 or later]

Most Reverend Father and Patron,

On my return from the holy mission Saturday night, we found James, a good young man, in Orbetello. He came to the Retreat as my companion. I assure you that we are very happy with him and hope he will make great progress in virtue. He is prompt to rise at night and at all the exercises of the Congregation. He is experiencing some pain in his leg, where he had trouble, but it will go away. He is now on his knees more than he is used to or was accustomed to, so I have told him to stand or be seated until he becomes inured to the exercises among us. He is at peace and happy to find himself away from the noise of the world, where one breathes an air poisoned with so many evils pouring in from all sides.

After a trial of two weeks, or a little more, he will be vested, and I trust in the Merciful Lord that he will give him the strength to persevere. Believe me, he has high regard and love for your person. Right now I have no further news for you. The young man is very grateful for your helping him to leave the world and recommends himself much to your prayers — much more so does the poor one who is writing because he is so much more needy. He asks me to

189. This is the last letter we have in the glorious year of 1741. Paul has had missions for the military in Orbetello, Portercole, and Piombino. He concluded the mission in Piombino with a great fever and hastened home. The rest of the year finds him very ill and finally living at the Grazi home in Orbetello.

have you greet his confessor in the Lord and recommends himself much to his sacrifices as well as to Signore Duca.

After Christmas I will take up missions once more. I ask for your generosity not to deprive me of the help of your holy sacrifices and prayers. I ask the same of Signora Celia, your worthy sister. I end with my devout reverence, and in the holy Side of Jesus declare myself with a sincere heart,

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Cardinal Marcellinus Corradini



Cardinal Marcellus Crescenzi

SEEKING PAPAL APPROVAL

AS A CONGREGATION

(1742–1745)

Paul recognizes that there need to be more members and more Retreats if the Pope is to approve the community as a Congregation. Paul writes: "I will allow Divine Providence to guide me."

“SMALL AND WEAK FOUNDATIONS” (1742)

Because of “two very serious sicknesses,” Paul could not return to the Retreat of the Presentation until January 16. He writes that he was very near death. Two of the priests had vocational problems. Father Angelo Di Stefano has returned to Rome and Father Charles Salemmi is determined to stay in Piombino. Realizing he must have another Retreat and more candidates, Paul also realizes if his own health does not improve, the Congregation itself might disappear. Yes, his dream rests on very “small and weak foundations.”

298

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (6)

Presentation
January 17, 1742

J.M.J.

Illustrious and Reverend Father,

The Lord will take care that neither I nor our religious will ever forget your venerated and pious person, to whom we are again and again obligated on so many accounts, principally for having with so much zeal cooperated for the establishment of this least Congregation. And I can assure you in all truth that all the religious as well as I, who am so unworthy, make continual remembrance of you in our poor prayers and holy sacrifices. Up until now I had not written, for I did not know of your return from Turin to this gracious city.

I am persuaded that the zeal of your generous heart moves you to promote the advancement of this work by speaking of it to those who can lend a hand to its progress. But I can tell you that up until now the Sovereign Good has left it on its small and weak foundations, seeing that we have vested only two novices, one priest and one a lay brother. They persevere with fervor. Beyond that an inscrutable Providence of the Most High has permitted that up until now I have been sickly and have had two very serious sicknesses since October. In the second one I was close to death, and without a special favor of God I would, beyond any doubt, be dead. My sickness was such because the foul air breathed in the salt marshes at the time of the missions brought me to such an end. Now, thanks to God, I am in perfect health and have ended my recuperation. Just yesterday I returned to the Retreat with a great sense of peace, which I have not had to the same extent for a long time.

Father Angelo Di Stefano came here filled with good resolutions, made his retreat, and was vested, but in a short time he experienced certain pains in his side. He consulted the doctor about it, and the doctor told him to absent himself from the common life. He did that for a while and then resumed common life. But in the winter he claimed that the cold, suffered going

barefoot, caused stretching of his nerves. I asked the doctor about that at the time I was nursing my worse illness. I counseled him to dress as he did at first and to put on shoes. I judged that due to his advanced age he could not put up with the sweet rigors of this vocation. So on the Feast of the Epiphany he left for Rome, while I was staying here in Orbetello recovering. His departure has been more a profit than a loss to the Retreat since he was not able to accommodate himself to the others and showed himself rather aloof. The poor man had good will but lacked courage. He helped me on the missions and was also taken by the tertian fever, from which he quickly recovered. That helped me to encourage him in the resolution he came to. I confess before God and men that these happenings have not moved my poor, imperfect spirit one inch. I force it to greater trust to see this work flower and bring forth fruit in good season. The war,¹⁹⁰ accompanied with the passage of these troops, has caused some servants of God who would have come, even from Lombardy, to delay.

We may have a Retreat in Umbria and on the island of Elba as well, but we must await the mercy of God to be appeased with my sins and send workers into his harvest. I had a letter from Umbria a short time ago.

Your Reverence, who with great charity has done so much to promote this work, strengthen your pious heart all the more in God our true Good, and be sure that His Majesty wishes to bless you much and give you great lights and high inspirations for souls, who, I hope, walk in truth, not feigned. When there are more workers, I will let you know so that you may use your zeal to complete the holy design you wished to share with me. I assure you, again, that we will multiply our prayers so that the merciful God will allow you to fully accomplish your holy intentions.

I end, prostrate at your feet, along with Father John Baptist and all the companions, praying that you continue your holy prayers and strong protection for us, and with profound reverence I kiss your holy hands and confirm myself as,

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

299

Frances Lucci (9)

Presentation

January 24, 1742

J.M.J.

Esteemed Lady in Christ,

Poor Paul comes begging your goodness to do the following charity, which I ask for in the love of Jesus Christ. You should know that during the time of my grave illness, which brought me close to death, Father Charles, who at that time was sick, though not seriously, and because of his poor regulation of his life, had relapses every so often, resolved finally to seek a change of air. He has done so by leaving for his area in order to come back well. He wanted to

190. This is the War of the Austrian Succession.

talk to me before leaving, but that was not permitted. There was a rigorous prohibition by the doctor against anyone coming in to see me so that I would not be bothered with business, etc, with grave danger to me. I learned that he left many days later. But from what has been told me, he left much tested. Father John Baptist and Father Fulgentius, true servants of God, tried to keep him to the rule in eating so that he would not have a relapse, a thing he regarded as very hard, for he had a good appetite. Moreover, there is now a temptation to remain where he is to assist his father, notwithstanding he made a valid profession.

Father John Baptist has written Canon Borzi before Christmas, asking him to persuade Father Charles to be firm in his vocation, promising him that the poor Retreat will do all it can to assist his father.

I have written to the Canon on this matter. I have also written to Father Charles in meekest terms and have no reply whatsoever. I know Father Charles has written a friend in Orbetello without having the charity to console poor Paul, who has always loved him and esteemed and treated him as did all the others.

I do not know what to list as the reason except to attribute it to my sins. I desire, however, that you speak with Father Charles and Canon Borzi to know his decision, seeing that they have not had the charity to reply. The profession of Father Charles holds; it is valid, as Father Angelo has already written to him. If he has himself dispensed without just cause, the dispensation is fraudulent, and at the Tribunal of God they will give an account of it. If he should fall into such a ruin and clothe himself as before, I know he will send his habit and mantle to the Retreat. This is simply justice, and the major superiors will have the heart to do that, especially the bishop there, for he is a true servant of God. But, I hope the devil will not win out, all the more because I have had experience of Father Charles, and he will not allow himself to be overcome by flesh and blood. I am anxiously waiting for your answer and hoping you will do an apostolic work by persuading Father Charles to persevere in his vocation, for he who saves his life, loses it. That is the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

I am writing in haste and do not see anymore, for it is dark. Pray much for me. I end, praying for you every fullness of blessings, and am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

I add by asking your great charity to persuade with gentle and efficacious reasons Father Charles not to allow himself to be overcome by flesh and blood, that is, with assistance to his father, since this temptation has been with him a long time. He wrote of it to Canon Borzi. The canon, with great zeal and charity, relieved him by telling him that his father was not in such need, even more since we can help him from here. The poor Retreat can give him an alms as before, and for the future as much as we will be able. Take on this apostolic task and persuade him in accord with this letter. If he refuses to agree, read it to him so that he will be without excuse before God. Such charity earns for you unexplainable merits.

*J.M.J.**Live Jesus and his Holy Cross.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Your letter was given me by Father Fulgentius, and I can perceive more and more the refined and noble work that the Sovereign Good is working in the soul of Agnes, whom I desire to receive the divine urgings with great thanks and despoilment and highest annihilation, so as to be more and more in love with that Infinite Beauty and Goodness, who is pleased to enrich with his highest treasures the most miserable, pestilential, and weakest among his creatures, who is the one to whom I am writing, and who has been entrusted to the weakest, most imperfect, blind, and ignorant among all men by that Sovereign Architect, in order to cooperate in the raising of a magnificent structure, in which he wishes to take his delights. For that Architect is accustomed to make use of the most miserable creatures on earth so that all may know that the work in the conduct of souls, an exalted work, is entirely his.

Courage! That great vessel of election, the great Doctor of the Gentiles and Preacher of the Truth for all the world, the feast of whose admirable conversion we celebrate today and of whose name I bear unworthily, gloried only in the Cross of our Savior and carried the Name of Jesus to the nations. Paul was completely in love with Christ Jesus and exclaimed with a fiery tongue: "May God will that I glory in no other thing than in the Cross of my Lord Jesus Christ." Then he said that he carried in his body the marks of Jesus Christ. I am preaching this lesson this morning to my daughter, whom the Lord has consigned to me, that she is not to glory in anything, but to remain crucified and to bear the wounds of Jesus in her body through the various pains His Divine Majesty permits that she have. You must remain on the cross with a high repose and joy of spirit, and that is done with a total abstinence from external comfort from creatures, continuing the practice of the virtues already emphasized, that is, with internal and external solitude, which brings on greater recollection, whence is born humility, silence, patience, charity, etc. Be among the living as one dead.

That little corner is a devout room, and, if you feel the sweet presence of the sacramental Jesus there, as you told me when I heard your confession when you were sick in bed, take account of that. Humble yourself before him, embrace him frequently, accept him in spirit but in pure faith, and offer him to the Divine Father. Throw yourself into that flame that burns in his most holy Heart and allow yourself to be reduced to ashes. Then allow the loving breath of the Holy Spirit to strew this nothing of your ashes into the Infinite All of the

191. Paul shares with Agnes his reflections on the Apostle Paul's love for Christ Crucified on the Feast of Saint Paul's Conversion. He explains "the fire of divine love," which he wants Agnes to experience in her prayer.

Divinity. Oh! God will teach you this high science; I do not know how to teach it. But make yourself always smaller and simpler in your nothingness.

In this way no creature will be able to keep you from your loving embraces of your beloved sacramental Good. I desire that you be more and more hungry for, in love with, languishing, and melting away in love for this Infinite Love, who is a fire of love.

And now I can say that I remain always more in a stormy sea. Enough! I can say no more. I fear the justice of God. Continue to cry out for poor me and for the needs of this holy work so that God will provide his true servants. But they cannot come from the Thebaid or from Egypt, as you are praying, for they are no longer in these deserts. That golden age has passed. Pray God to send them because he knows where they are, and he does not lack ways. Offer the Immaculate Victim and believe that God will hear us.

Father Charles makes me fear more; there is need to ask the grace through Holy Mary and Saint Ann that he not lose his treasure.

I will not be able to come there until the end of February since I see that I am again in danger. Yesterday, I thought the fever was coming back. Besides, I must not displease those in the Retreat, all of whom want to be able to see me. When I come, God willing, I will come alone.

I no longer know what to do. I see myself in a very tearful state, more than you could possibly imagine. I fear and say no more.

Jesus bless you and transform you entirely in his Holy Love.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

301

Bishop Alexander Abbati (1)

Presentation
February 7, 1742

Your Excellency,

Prostrate at the feet of Your Excellency, I am seeking from your apostolic zeal the aid of your devout thanksgiving to the Most High for the mercies granted this miserable sinner in giving me a time for repentance and freeing me from the death that was close upon me in the serious sickness I suffered, including a relapse after I recovered by God's grace from the first attack. Now I am in better health than before, and for some days I am back to the common life. I have always had the desire to serve Your Excellency with a mission for your beloved people in Vetralla before my sickness intervened. Now, according to the information from Father Blaise Pieri, ordinary confessor to the venerated convent, you ardently desire to have this mission. And since I now have no obligation elsewhere, in order to humbly and reverently fulfill the

promise made to Your Excellency, I could conduct the mission after the Second Sunday of Easter.¹⁹² That seems to be the thought of Father Blaise.

Therefore, I am asking your great charity to supply the necessary faculties, as amply as possible, for the greater good of souls, especially the faculty for reserved cases during the time of the mission, for both the missionaries as well as for other approved confessors, even from outside the dioceses, as long as they are known and approved. I would also ask that you grant to me and my companion all that you can in accord with dispositions of the Council of Trent.

I would also ask the concern of Your Excellency to have notice sent to me of the other places to which I should go when the mission in Vetralla is over since, if I am not to continue there, I would plan to end my spring campaign elsewhere. I will await with devout eagerness your venerated commands, along with the faculties referred to above, and your holy pastoral blessing. Meanwhile, I end with a profound reverence and kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral vestments and sign myself

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular, Missionary

302

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (25)

Presentation
February 19, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

May Jesus Christ our Life be always the light, the guide, the comfort of our hearts. Amen.

I received your letter sometime back, when I was ill. Now I have a second. In reply I say you are not to have any scruples with regard to what you said to your confessor because you told him the truth that you have the necessary permission for your penances. If you are passably well, you may continue to wear the hair shirt as you formerly did, wearing it with obedience. With regard to the little chain that Sister Hipolita gave you, go slowly since wearing that hair-shirt skin is very painful and, it seems to me, that is enough, the more so because you have poor health. Follow your usual pattern as to disciplines. When you have certain indispositions, let it go completely. In short, conduct yourself with prudence and discretion in order to endure.

Be very prudent in dealing with your confessor. If God lets you know he is a man of deep prayer and united with God, in such a case confer with him regarding your soul. But if God desires that, he will give strong and sweet inclinations, and with sweet attraction draw you to holy conferences. If you do not feel this, continue your prayer as usual, and, if he asks anything of you, reply with prudence and be brief. Accuse yourself of your defects and then when you received absolution or his blessing, leave without further words. Be

192. Second Sunday of Easter was *Domenica in Albis*, or White Sunday. This was the last day the catechumens wore the white robes of baptism.

hidden toward all and open with God alone. Pay attention to the holy virtues, etc. I have nothing further to say since you did not speak to me about your interior life of prayer or temptations.

Pray for that person you mentioned to me as well as for his nephew, but do not embroil yourself with anyone. Remain as withdrawn as you can. Pray God to set them on the right path, etc. You should be hidden in the holy Side of Jesus and allow your soul to lose itself entirely in the immense sea of love. Let yourself be in a holy silence of love or in holy amazement at the Infinite Good, falling more and more in love with him, always carrying on your heart the sweet corsage of the bitter pains of Jesus so that you are penetrated through and through by them. Glory only in the Cross of Jesus Christ, and with the exercise of heroic virtues be his true imitator.

Regarding that nun whom you mentioned to me and who wants to repeat her confession, etc., I am not replying to that since she will have been well instructed by her confessor. Do not forget to pray for me because I am in extreme need of prayers. Thank the Most High for deigning to spare my life so that I may do penance for my sins. I can tell you that I was on the brink of death; so much so that in Orbetello the news spread that I was dead. In fact, I experienced a bit of the horrors of that fearful passage in which one experiences in a minute what is not known at other times. Let us live with all the perfection we can and make sure we do not experience the torment of death, as it is written: "The torment of death does not touch them." Rather, let us aspire with great peace in the holy Side of Jesus. Live happy in God. Shun, like the devil, melancholy, fear, fright, etc. Be humbly annihilated before God so that His Divine Majesty will draw you totally into himself with the attraction of holy love.

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

My family name is no longer "Danei," as you wrote, but "of the Cross." I have not sent the box because I did not have the opportunity. I will take care of it, etc.

303

Reverend John Moretti (5)

Presentation
March 8, 1742

Very Reverend Vicar General,

This evening, one half-hour after the evening bell, I received the folio from Your Reverence, along with the letter of Father Charles. In answer I am obliged to reverently tell you it is neither necessary nor proper for Your Reverence to grant the dimissorial letters he is seeking. The man who brought Father Charles' letter to you is now at the Retreat and has handed me a letter from Father Charles. In his letter he asks that I grant him permission to leave the Congregation for the known reason of supporting his father. I have replied to him through Father Fulgentius. Since I am not certain that he has a just cause to leave, I cannot in conscience grant his wish. However, if he can

establish this necessity and affirm it on oath, then in view of the sworn testimony, I, along with the consultors, will grant the permission in accord with the Constitutions approved by His Holiness. So it is necessary to wait his further actions, which he will present to Your Reverence in answer to your letter and mine. Then I will come down there and resolve the case with wisdom and prudence. If he presents the sworn testimony, it will not be necessary that he go to Rome for absolution. That could be given by the bishop, etc. I end at your feet, begging you to bless me, and with all esteem, veneration, and a profound bow I declare myself,

Your humble and devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

I add that the husband of the daughter of Father Charles' mother is willing to assist Father Charles' father. With all this taken together, he has no excuse.

304

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (7)

Presentation

March 21, 1742

On the point of leaving for missions.

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Bishop,

Prostrate at the feet of Your Reverence and with sentiments of devout gratitude, I can only desire for your pious heart in the holy days the most penetrating and delicate feelings of that infinite love, which for our salvation plunges the Son of God in the sea of bitterest pains, so that swimming with holy contemplation in this great sea of love, you will be ever more enriched with these high treasures that a loving soul is accustomed to gather from this richest mine of all virtues and every good so that Your Reverence, entirely transformed through love into Jesus Christ, will rejoice in the fullness of the ineffable sweetness of his glorious resurrection.

Whereas I know that your devout spirit, regarding all earthly satisfaction as nauseous, aspires only to be a true imitator of Jesus Christ and truly devoted to his most sacred Passion, and whereas I know this well and can experience it, seeing Your Reverence with so much zeal and without sparing yourself any fatigue or obstacle, procured the establishment of this Congregation, entirely dedicated to spread devotion to the Passion of our Savior, so in these days prayers will be multiplied even more by all of us brothers so that His Divine Majesty will complete to overflowing his holy desire. I assure Your Reverence I will have the people at the holy mission that I will open after the Second Sunday of Easter in the diocese of Viterbo pray for you. Viterbo contains part of these salt marshes. I was asked to give this mission by the bishop of Viterbo. When this mission is over in the salt marshes of this jurisdiction, I will not be able to proceed to further missions in Tuscany due to the present reports.¹⁹³

¹⁹³. Paul is referring to the war.

When I returned home some days back, I was in conference with a priest, a servant of God, who encouraged me in the work begun. But I was so assaulted by men and demons, especially at the time of my mortal sickness since — from certain information acquired after I became completely well — the devil made use of a certain person who with false zeal spread weeds among these poor lambs who have come together. If it were not for a great mercy of God, all would have been cooled in fervor and would have abandoned even their vocation. Oh, great God! how am I to show myself grateful for such an exalted and superior charity?

The servant of the Most High told me that four miles from Marino there is a beautiful, solitary mountain, where there is a monastery which housed the Trinitarians. It is now nine months since they left and I do not know why. He urged me to obtain that place for our Congregation, adding it would fit well with us since the Roman marshes are nearby and other dioceses. And since that Retreat would be under the jurisdiction of Cardinal Corradini, I am begging him in a letter, with the same message to Cardinal Rezzonico, to ask His Eminence to hold off giving it over to anyone since I have good reasons to believe that in the near future we could take it over with the increase of members. In such a case they would help these poor in the salt marshes and the Roman countryside.

Besides, notwithstanding all the diligence of Prince Sangro, so far the royal assent for the Retreat on the island of Elba has not been obtained. However, there have been very favorable dealings with this court, but we are in the midst of too many rumors of war, etc.

For the love of Jesus Christ, pardon my outpouring of words and the enthusiasm that drives me, but if God inspires you to take part with the cardinal for the contemplated Retreat, you would be doing me a great favor. In order to obey Cardinal Corradini, who has deigned to write me, I am asking you to wait until Cardinal Rezzonico has made the first approach in case it is necessary to have recourse to Rezzonico, in order not to increase Corradini's aggravation due to his weakened condition. When the one cardinal has explained the need to the other cardinal, then there may be an opportunity for you.

If Your Reverence wishes to do me the charity of letting me know your wishes, I would ask you to write me in Vetralla, that is, Viterbo for Vetralla, where I will be staying until April 15, and then I go elsewhere. I am engaged by that great servant of God, Sister Colomba, sick in bed for twenty-four years, who, illumined by the Highest, has managed to have me directed to go to her without my having sought it in any way. She is well known to His Holiness, who has conferred many favors on her, principally to have Mass celebrated many times in her room. Oh, what great courage this great soul gives poor Paul! Oh, what great faith she has in the spread of this holy work! I am only a coward with little faith, and in the presence of storms I lose heart too easily. Enough! I am hoping to have the chance to speak when I serve that venerable convent with a retreat. God be blessed. Amen.

I recommend myself with all my spirit to your holy prayers, and with profound reverence I confirm myself as,

Your Reverence's humble, obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

305

Signora Frances Zelli (1)¹⁹⁴

Vetralla

April 15, 1742

J.M.J.

Esteemed Lady,

The pure love of Jesus and the effects of his divine grace be always in our hearts. Amen.

I give earnest thanks in Jesus Christ for the charity of the remembrance you keep of unworthy me, and I ask the merciful God to console you in the midst of so much pain. Do not cease to place everything in the Wounds of Jesus, and these pains will become sweet. Also place your sons beneath the mantle of Mary of Sorrows, and pray Mary Most Holy to soften their hearts and bathe them with her tears.

I assure you that I will not fail to hold you recommended to God, as I acknowledge myself very indebted to your house. I am sending you the pamphlets on Holy Conception. Take care that when you take it in your mouth with a little sip of water that you first recite the prayer with three Hail Mary's. Great miracles have been seen to occur from this. I am writing in haste, for I am smothered with fatiguing work and, believe me, do not have time even to write to the Retreat. Pardon my delay. Meanwhile, I leave you in the Side of Jesus and with great esteem and veneration declare myself constantly as,

Your humble, unworthy, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

306

Agnes Grazi (117)

Oriolo

April 23, 1742

While giving a mission.

J.M.J.

May the love that burns in the sweet Heart of Jesus set our hearts on fire. Amen. Do not be surprised that I have not replied before now to your letters because I am in the midst of so many occupations that I have not been able to write even to the Retreat. Now I tell you that I thank the mercy of God for the favors he continues for your soul, especially the lights he gives you to detect the tricks of the devil. Take account of this because it is a very great grace, and

194. Zelli is of a noble and distinguished family of Viterbo. There are ten letters written by Paul to Frances Zelli, 1742–1757. There are letters to her about her son Leopold and to Leopold himself in the 1750s. This family was very loyal to Paul and the Passionists at Vetralla, and Paul remained very close to them.

humble yourself always more before God so that he may continue in this way. I have high expectation, Agnes, that God will complete the work begun. Allow the poor butterfly to be all aflame and reduced to ashes in that loving light of the sweetest furnace of the loving heart of Jesus. And once reduced to ashes, let this bit of ashes of our nothingness plunge itself and be lost and consume itself, I will say even that, in that infinite abyss of the goodness of our God and, there, melting away in love, make a continual feast with love songs in a holy delight, with sleeps of love in a holy silence, all absorbed in that immense sea of love. In that sea swim right to the bottom and find there another sea of the pains of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. This sea flows from that immense sea that is God's Love. Oh, what a great thing this always is! I do not have the time to say more. In due time we will have our holy conference.

I am passably well. I take care of myself, I believe, a bit too much. The mission at Vetralla was so fruitful that there was nothing more to be desired, whether for the clergy or the lay folk. Continue to pray as usual, and pray that God sends us workers.

We have been asked to go to other places. I think I will go to Sutri, but I am not certain just now.

Remain as hidden as you can, but when God draws your soul, let it fly where God wills with a modest ease. Remember the instructions given you and be very faithful. Jesus inflame you completely with holy love and bless you. Pray much for me, for I am as always and fear the judgments of God. I end in a hurry.

I will add that I often place Agnes in the Heart of Jesus, and I have the determination to help her to love God with holy direction. I do not forget that. Thanks be to God.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

307

The Archpriest at Monterosi

Oriolo

April 23, 1742

While giving a mission.

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father,

Blessed be God! On Wednesday, May 2, the holy mission will begin in Monterosi, as ordered by the vicar apostolic and more so by the Supreme Pastor of Souls, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I am asking Your Reverence to take care to make the announcements to the people so that they will be disposed to receive this great treasure.

The solemn entrance will take place as follows. Called together by the ringing of all the bells, clergy and people will walk to welcome the mission in the square closest to the church. The clergy will sing the psalm *Benedixisti Domine terram tuam*, using the sixth tone, and the people will respond *Lodato*

sempre sia, etc. Your Reverence will be at the head of the clergy and will be carrying the crucifix; the men will follow the clergy; then the women. There will be an address by the missionary, who will then take the cross and intone the canticle *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*, and in the same order they will proceed to the church.

I ask Your Reverence to see to a platform at least seven palms high and broad enough for the sacred ceremonies. Would you also arrange for the housing of the missionaries nearby the church. Nothing further occurs to me, so I end, kissing your sacred hands and recommending myself to yours prayers.

I would add that the vicar apostolic told me that he has already written you. Nevertheless, I will be expecting an answer from Your Reverence for my direction. As for faculties, I already have them, etc.

Your humble servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular, Missionary

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A Gentleman (1)

Oriolo

April 23, 1742

Giving a holy mission.

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

I am happy to use the present occasion to ratify my humble service to you. At the same time, I am taking courage to ask, because of the great proof I have of your charity toward me, that you intervene with your authoritative protection in favor of Francis Palazzi, who has waited on me with great attention since I have been here in Oriolo. He acted as ordered for the shipping of the baggage of the Spaniards. Now all the others have been paid off, and only this good young man has been deprived of his wages, earned with so many obstacles, hard work, inconveniences, and ill treatment by the soldiers. I ask you to have the charity to look at my humble request and humbly ask the other deputies, to whom I wish to pay my respects.

In the meanwhile, I ask you to convey my respect to the governor, and with profound esteem and respect, leaving you, along with your whole household, in the sweet Side of Jesus, I sign myself in haste,

Your humble servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular, Missionary.

I am recommending the business of Signore Francesconi to the legate, who promised me to convey it to Signore Canco Taddeucci.

Agnes Grazi (118)

Barbarano
May 16, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

I received your letter, sent to Mount Rosi, and the short note. I rejoice that God is proving you and purifying you like gold in the furnace. Now is the time to show your fidelity to Jesus Christ by not being upset by anything, for this is a riot the devil raises outside the castle. Make yourself smaller more and more, and stay hidden in your constant, impregnable fortress, and have no fear because after this storm, I hope, you will experience great things and a greater union with God.

I am in Barbarano, and from here we could go to Bieda. Since my strength is waning, I think that about June 6 I will be there. But if my strength holds out, we will go to Sutri, if God disposes thus, and we will remain there until June 17. I am always worse in every way, yet I keep myself at peace. Already I see the work totally destroyed and am deciding to live a life much hidden. Pray for me, etc. Jesus bless you. In haste, I sign myself.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the †, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (8)

Barbarano¹⁹⁵
May 17, 1742

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

Blessed be God. The day before yesterday, to my great edification, I received your esteemed letter just as I finished the introductory sermon for the mission in Barbarano. I see in your letter that your heart is always more afire with holy zeal to promote the greater glory of God.

At this moment I cannot send the rescript that Your Reverence mentioned to me, for I do not have it with me. It is at the Retreat; whence your request was forwarded to me since from Easter Tuesday I have been continually on this mission, blessed by God with a generous hand.

When I shall have returned to the Retreat, and that will not be before June 20, I will send it to you promptly. I can well assure you that since the Rules have been approved as they stand, signed on every page by Monsignor Millo, and at the end a rescript of approval of His Holiness and another of his Eminence the Cardinal and by you — all chosen by His Holiness for that purpose — and seeing that in one of the first chapters there is the right to found one Retreat in any diocese, there is no need of an approval to do that, as

195. Paul has been giving missions at Viterbo, Vetralla, Oriolo, and now at Barbarano, and will not be back until June 30. The people of Vetralla want to offer him a Retreat nearby on Mount Fogliano, but Paul needs vocations.

you will see when I have the chance to bring the copy of the rescript and the chapter for you to read.

But my sins are a barrier, keeping candidates from joining. Notwithstanding, there are many who are motivated but not decided. I, however, bow my head to the designs of this sweet Will that can will only what is best. Souls very united to God give me courage, and God is communicating lights on this, especially to that great soul Sister Colomba, with whom I have spoken in conferences several times on the occasion when I conducted a retreat at that venerable convent after finishing the mission at Vetralla. She has been sick in bed for twenty-seven years. She had me in her room for reconciliation and other holy conferences. She has given me heart and has no doubts that God intends to favor this holy work.

In Vetralla much fruit was gathered from the numbers of people who attended the mission with great fervor. They showed us a Retreat on Mount Fogliano; the people wish to build at their expense since the community is very rich. The bishop, without any move on my part, has given me complete rights, as the vicar general writes me. And news of this spread all over. But, I have not accepted, although I said that, if God sends us men, it will be accepted.

So you can see how things are going. All are moving to offer us Retreats, yet workers are not to be seen. I do not understand this secret; all the more because my heart feels more and more detached from these things. So I pray you to keep the way open for this Retreat, and, if the merciful God will provide for us, I will put my hand to the work. I continue to pray for you and have others pray for you and our other illustrious Cardinal Protectors, principally at the General Communion when our people are more united to God. The Lord knows how much I have prayers offered for our Holy Father and Supreme Pontiff, especially in the present dangers. Ah! the world stands in extreme need! I do not have time to say more. I simply ask you to pardon my mistakes, for I am writing in haste amid many occupations. I end by asking your prayers and holy blessing, and pay you a profound reverence.

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Agnes Grazi (119)¹⁹⁶

Bieda

May 26, 1742

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

The other day I received your letter in Barbarano, in which I see that you want to know if I received the letter sent to Mount Rosi. I tell you that I

196. Now on another mission at Bieda (today named Blera), Paul takes time to write a beautiful letter to Agnes. It is a profound treatment of the hidden ways God deals with his beloved ones. This is not something Paul simply read about in a spiritual book, but rather something which he was experiencing in a special way this year! It is amazing that even when on missions he could keep in contact with others, whether for business or spiritual direction.

received it; none of the letters or notes sent me were lost. I rejoice to read of the battles you are having with the infernal enemies, and I experience the graces that God is giving you. I have all the more reason to rejoice, for I see that the Sovereign Good is disposing your soul in this way for a more intimate union with His Divine Majesty. You already know what the Holy Spirit says to us through the mouth of Saint James, that is, to rejoice when we are tempted in various ways. For these are so many spiritual riches that the soul acquires when, with aid of divine grace, it fights faithfully, riches we do not have the mind to conceive nor tongue to express. When you find yourself in such battles, and to arm yourself the more with courage in God, prepare yourself for battle with the armor of God. There is no way more efficacious than to annihilate yourself and reduce yourself to nothing before God, firmly believing that you are not able to come out victorious if God does not fight for you. So you must cast your nothingness into the true All that is God and with high trust fight as a valiant warrior, knowing most certainly that you will come out victorious.

Oh! if you only knew what God intends to draw out from these combats! Oh, how much you would delight in joy! Enough now! Above all, I pray you not to get scrupulous, for I, although at a distance, know that, thanks to God, you have not lost anything, but have gained much. Now tell me for charity's sake, is it not true that the great God of Majesty has placed you in an unconquerable fortress, the gentle Heart of Jesus? Do not leave there, and have no doubt that Jesus fights in you and for you. Believe me, these combats make me ever surer that the plan is God's, and it is his care to make you perfect. Be faithful in the practices you have embraced and never omit Holy Communion. Stay in your solitude, despoiled of all created things, loving your own disgrace and not having the compassion of any creatures, with a holy hatred of yourself, dead to everything. Let the poor moth spiral with great freedom around that Light Divine, even allow it to immerse itself in that abyss of Light, a fire of Love, and be reduced to ashes. Then desire with an ardent desire that these few ashes, which is your very nothingness, be lost by the loving breath of the Holy Spirit in the immense sea of the most holy Life, Passion, and Death of our Jesus.

All this is to be done with a single glance in pure faith and takes place in the Heart of Jesus. For when you are united to that most holy Humanity of Jesus Christ, True God, your soul can only lose itself in the infinite ocean of the Divinity.

I know well that this is a high science, but I also know that God teaches it to one who remains in his nothing. If God does not teach this to us, we cannot master it. I repeat what I have said so often: allow yourself to be guided by God, and give your soul freedom to run after the sweet odor of that divine balsam that inebriates the heart. Let all your endeavor be the knowledge of your nothing and of the true All that is God. All your task is to be faithful in virtue, in remaining secret and hidden, always even tempered, without lamenting either with God or with humankind, and to remain content to be despised, silent as a lamb when they clip its wool, always gentle, always meek,

always with the same face, always secret. Accept the divine impressions at whatever place or time God grants them to you.

I have extended myself a bit, for the other night I began my mission here in Bieda and have not as yet begun to hear confessions. I end here on June 3, then go to Sutri, and will remain there until June 17. Then we will leave for now. I am still doubtful whether I will be able to go to Sutri, for I lack strength to go to any more places. I am staying home then, for I cannot go further here. Pray for me. I have written in the most recent post to Signore Athanasius and to you with an inclusion for Father Fulgentius. You can tell him that I will write him from Sutri. Jesus bless you. Amen

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

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Representatives of Vetralla¹⁹⁷

Presentation
June 10, 1742

J.M.J.

Illustrious Gentlemen,

I placed the happiness my poor heart felt in the sacred Side of our loving Jesus when I received your venerated letter here in Bieda. I see once more the zeal your piety preserves in promoting, for the greater glory of God and spiritual profit of all the beloved and much esteemed people, your noble resolution, taken in your General Council, to erect a new Retreat of our least Congregation in the hermitage of San Angelo. We will hasten there as soon as there is sufficient number of members, if the merciful Lord will provide them, as I hope. I assure you illustrious gentlemen that I will not be wanting to render complete your holy desires as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, with profound reverence from my poor spirit, along with all we least ones congregated here, I offer my strongest thanks for the charity you deign to continue toward me, and assure you that we will not fail to pray warmly to the Sovereign Giver of every good to grant your illustrious community, as the reward for such a great charity, a complete fullness of all goods, spiritual as well as temporal, in accord with your holy desires. Meanwhile, asking your pardon for my delay in replying, occasioned by the many duties surrounding me on the holy mission, I end with a profound reverence and every esteem and veneration, and assure you that I am and will always be,

Your devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

197. The people of Vetralla have voted in council to build a Retreat at the hermitage of San Angelo on Mount Fogliano. Paul is willing to accept it as soon as he has some religious to reside there. This will become the second Retreat and Paul's residence for many years.

Agnes Grazi (120)

Presentation
June 11, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Next week I hope to make a visit to your spirit since I did not leave here yesterday, for I was in the company of three people who came to the Retreat. Two are cleric novices and the other a canon who came with them. Candidates are increasing, and I expect great good from them, but in a short time we will be without cells. There is need to pray much to His Divine Majesty that he visit and guard his poor vine and grant me his Holy Spirit that I may faithfully serve his servants.

Continue your conduct as usual and immerse yourself more in God and allow your nothingness to disappear in the Divine All so that Agnes can no longer be found. I end by placing you in the sweet Heart of Jesus and am always,

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Francis Sancez (3)

Orbetello
Presentation
June 16, 1742

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

Since I did not have the chance to offer my respects on my return from the holy missions, I am not missing the chance now to extend to you my humble and dedicated service and, at the same time, to send cordial greetings to Signore Blaise Pieri, who served me with his special skill. Assure him that in our devout conference we brought his name up in an honorable memory of his esteemed person. I love both of you very much in our true Good.

Signore Blaise wanted to send you a small box, but because we were thinking of going to Sutri to conduct a mission, which had already been announced and then it did not come off because of my failing strength, there was no time to send it to you in Bieda, where I was for the Pontifical Blessing. From there we left at once. But he will send it on another occasion. I end, embracing you in the Side of Jesus and paying my respects to your father and all your revered household, and with devout and profound respect I reconfirm myself in haste,

I did not write sooner because I had taken some rhubarb, which upset my stomach.

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

From Barbarano and another place where I was on mission, but I do not remember, I wrote Your Reverence and did not send you the rescript, which was sent to me by Father Fulgentius. Because I did not have the Rules and Constitutions with me, I could not send with the rescript a copy of the chapter which treats of the foundation of Retreats, as I am doing now. I am including the rescript with this letter. I have been at the Retreat for some days since I was not able to go on to Sutri, where the mission was already announced, because my strength gave out. A bit of fever came over my companion the very day of the blessing in Bieda. From there it was necessary to return to the Retreat after seventy days of hard work. I was not sorry about that. The heat was extreme, and without a miracle I could not have ended that mission, for there was so much to be done and the air was bad. There was very likely danger of loss of life since we found ourselves very badly run down because of the hard work we had done.

Oh, if the fruit of these missions would only last. Blessed people! In all truth they came out totally purified, at peace, and without scandals. But, the deplorable shame is that in a few places there are so few who make themselves as a wall for the House of Israel. Ah, sad world! in what evils you stand! How many sins flood over you! Faith is tepid; piety is chilled almost to the ground.

I am including with the rescript a copy of the chapter where Your Reverence will see one Retreat may be established in each diocese. In regard to that, consider that in the diocese of Frascati, where the Trinitarians were staying, it would be an excellent idea to keep the way open in order to move there when it will please God. Meanwhile, it could be guarded by some hermit. I would like to believe that is already the case, since it is not good for such a holy place to be abandoned. I am hoping our Lord Jesus Christ and his Holy Mother will be greatly served and praised there.

The people of Vetralla have asked me to bring this about, and they have ceded through their council without our asking. O great God! O great God! "How incomprehensible are your judgments, unsearchable your ways." But the truth of the matter is that things have always gone this way, that is, by very secret and hidden ways which were never thought of. And just when we thought everything was on the ground, His Divine Majesty has brought it about that everything is seen. So it is now. It seems there are not enough workers to give a hand to this great work of God. Besides, what the devil is doing with great rage, people with good will persecute it. God knows how things are for Paul, but God maintains his confidence that he should see to

198. Paul has returned to the Presentation "after seventy days of hard work." He is now sending the papal rescript, together with the Rules, which Garagni wanted to study (see letter of May 17, 1742).

completion what His Majesty deigned to start, and I am not alone in this trust. I find comfort in the fact that God keeps me in a great internal detachment that has me desiring only the fulfillment of the Divine Good Pleasure. So my heart is at peace.

I ask from your great piety to enter negotiations with Cardinal Corradini, to whom I wrote in the last post and gave him an account of the missions, as was my duty. But, I did not go into anything else in order not to tire him out. On the other hand, I did say I would have sent the copy of the rescript by the next post to you in hopes that the cardinal would be slow to make provision for that holy place until Divine Providence sees to give us members, etc., as I firmly hope. He who has begun this work will complete it.

I end, prostrate at your feet, begging for your holy prayers and blessings, and with profound reverence sign myself,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Agnes Grazi (121)¹⁹⁹

Presentation
June 21, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

Last evening I received your letter, in which I can find no reason for you to complain about me. I no longer know how to behave myself in this miserable world. If I told you I was looking for a place to stay, it seems to me I did nothing wrong because in your home there is no longer room, and I do not wish to believe that justice demands that poor religious go vagabonding here and there. If there were a separate apartment in your home, you would be right. But since there is not, and all the more so because of the coming wedding, where was there a place to stay? Perhaps with the men and women; and who could justify such an impropriety?

I did you no wrong at all in renting two rooms to live in when by accident I found myself down there, and when there was no benefactor who would provide that for us. It is not our practice to go to private homes, but to rent a place to stay. You had already asked me not to rent until the weather cools; see I obeyed you. I had to find a place in order not to find myself in the way so that when this lady from Viterbo came there, it was no longer right to stay there as at first, but simply to visit their husbands for a short time out of propriety and gratitude. Regarding the donkeys, it was Father Fulgentius who told me they were needed to carry the lime, and I asked for them. But when Father John Baptist went to the hole, he saw that was not necessary; therefore,

199. Notice how Paul seeks privacy when he must stay overnight in Orbetello. He realizes how weak he is, for he cannot climb the mountain as earlier. At the same time he assures Agnes of his commitment to her direction. In his letter to Agnes at the end of the 1742 section, there is similar reference to the Grazi home being overcrowded.

I no longer sent the servant. As a matter of fact, I think that they have stopped bringing the lime today.

So why are they complaining about me? Is there displeasure that I have acted so openly? It seems to me that to treat with seculars in this way is to lose one's liberty and become a slave. But I will take it in good part and attribute it to their charity.†

With regard to my coming down to hear you, I would do that willingly if I had my former strength. But my two deadly sicknesses prevent me doing so, as they left me with so much weakness, pain, and feebleness that they impede my coming. Know that only with difficulty am I able to stand for office in choir, and often I am forced to be seated, which is something I never did. It is a heavy fatigue to climb the stairs and how, during these excessively hot days, am I to come down the mountain and climb back by evening, losing the night without any rest during the day? That is one way to see me dead very soon. I know you wish me well and not harm; therefore, I will know the Will of God if he wills to give me strength and health to come there to serve you. That is something I would do willingly for the love of God, if I were not as I am. In addition to my horrible miseries of soul and the terrible scourges with which God chastises me more and more, God knows in what abandonment and desolation I find myself. How then can you want this poor, unhappy priest to give help to his neighbors when he lacks the strength to do so?

Besides, you explain yourself so well in writing, and you understand so well, that, as long as you go on writing me of your needs, I will willingly, as before, give you holy direction, and you will walk well. If we did not have this great heat, and, if it was up to me, I would come. But I do not have the strength or heart to try it.

If God wishes, I will gladly do it. I have wanted to come before now, but I am overburdened to the limit. So accept my good will and continue ahead with your exercises as before. I do ask you not to be so quick to give credence to the visions you mention in your last letter, but examine well the effects as usual. It is best to cut short such visions, for then you walk more securely and please God.

Humility and self-contempt! Make these deceits vanish. Holiness consists in being totally united to the Will of God. If God should wish that I come there soon, as you think, he would give me the strength and health of body and vigor of mind. If you comprehended well this secret Providence, you would tremble with joy that God wishes you dead to everything and deprived of all consolation in treating so often with me in the affairs of your soul. You can supply for conferences by writing and, believe me, if you are quiet, tranquil, resigned, and detached in this, you will take a great flight to holy perfection, and God will grant you great graces.

Believe me and do not trust so much in your impressions. Receive them as they come to you, but with great attention against being deceived from the effects they produce.

I have always said you are not deceived, and I say it again. Live in God, abandon yourself to God, and be happy in him alone. Continue your

withdrawal, Communions, practices of virtue. Write me when you have need, for when God gives me strength, I will come. If after the Feast of Saint John I am a bit better, I will force myself to come to you one of these days, etc.

I ask you to read this letter to Don Athanasius, from the first page to the cross, so he may see how I have acted. I have said something to him, but read it all up to the †.

In my last letter I sent you some good advice for prayer, etc. Use it as God leads you. Last Friday I offered Mass, thinking it would be the last time. I believe this will prove to be true, but I may also celebrate tomorrow. I tell you to read the first page of the letter to him as far as the †, but do not give the letter to anyone.

My affairs go from bad to worse. God be blessed.

P. of the †

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (26)²⁰⁰

Presentation
June 26, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On my return from the holy missions, I received your letter, which gives me reason to praise and bless the Highest Good for the mercies he continues toward your soul. I beg you to pay no attention to the scruples the devil is causing nor to these scarecrows with which he assails you at night. On the contrary, fire yourself up more bravely in making a fool of him, arm yourself with the sign of the cross, and take your crucifix in hand and command him imperiously to depart from you in the Name of Jesus Christ. Have no doubts that you will come out victorious, and the devil will depart beaten and not come back again. Make nothing out of the fears that come from nature, but arm yourself with holy faith in Jesus Christ and with profound annihilation of yourself.

Oh, how much I rejoice that you devote yourself in holy charity toward the sick poor! Oh! what spiritual riches God will bestow on you! I take great heart because God wishes to bring to perfection the work begun and wishes to teach you great things. Be faithful in the exercise of the holy virtues, principally in a holy hatred of yourself, in your own disparagement, and in being in a continual annihilation before God. "You are she who is not," God said to a great soul, "and I am He who is." Oh! what a noble exercise it is to annihilate oneself before God in pure faith and without images and then to cast this nothingness of ours into the true All, who is God, and to lose oneself in that immense sea of infinite love, in which the loving soul swims, penetrated within and without by that Infinite Love, and is all transformed into Jesus

200. Paul refers again to the "mighty science" God wills to teach Sister Maria Cherubina, which he calls "these beautiful things!" Compare this with the earlier letter to Agnes Grazi on May 26, 1742. This time four verses "escape from" his pen.

Christ in love and makes the pains and the sufferings of the Beloved Good her own.

This is a mighty science, but God wills to teach it to you and wills it in this exercise. Love says little. One who loves more speaks less — I am speaking of holy prayer. The tongue of love is the heart that is on fire, that melts, that consumes itself, that reduces itself to ashes in a holocaust to the Sovereign Good. Then the loving breath of the Holy Spirit raises our vile ashes and loses them completely in the abyss of the Divinity. Oh, happy loss! Oh, fortunate that soul who so loses herself in Infinite Love!

Oh, how much such a soul is wonderfully found! All this is to be done in pure faith, and God teaches this to the humble soul. I sing this verse for you:

In the night of faith,
The soul who believes rejoices in God
Always, completely in every pore
Consumes itself in that great fire.

Nella notte della fede
Gode l'alma quel Dio che crede
Sempre tutto in ogni luogo
Si consuma in quel gran fuoco

There she sweetly burns,
The mind standing on high,
And in heart all humbled
She reposes on her Beloved.

Ivi brucia dolcemente
Stando in alto con la mente
E col cuor tutt'umiliato
Si riposa nel suo Amato.

Then she awakes little by little
And greets her sweet Spouse
And joyously goes singing
Alleluia, Holy, Holy.

Poi si sveglia poco a poco
E saluta il dolce Sposo
Et allegra va cantando
Alleluia, Santo, Santo.

If you would know how to sing
Remain in your cell to pray
If you wish a glorious voice
Remain content on the Cross.

Se tu vuoi saper cantare
Stanne in cella ad orare
E se vuoi far buona voce
Sta contenta su la Croce

This *Alleluia, Holy, Holy* is the song of paradise. I thought I would sing a single verse for your instruction, but three others flowed from my pen. Pity my madness.

I wish that God would teach you this great science of the saints, which I have never taught you, for I am so covered with my vices. I beg you to make nothing out of what the confessor is saying to you because, if you are pained over it and upset over it, you will lose true peace. Believe me, God is taking great care to bring you to perfection and to make you holy. You must correspond as best you can. I beg you to lock the door in the face of all creatures, keeping yourself well closed in the inner room of your heart to treat there one-on-one with your beloved Good. It is necessary to treat with others only as much as charity and obedience dictate and not more.†

Pray much for me because I am overwhelmed with miseries and storms. I tell you this in confidence that I see this work as scattered on the ground, and there remains for me only a tiny spark of confidence that God wants it to come back up. They are offering us foundations for Retreats and, most recently, in

a fine place in Viterbo, where I gave the first mission. The General Council has ceded us an old monastery on a beautiful mountain, and they wish to restore it at their expense, as it is a very rich community. The community has written to me and asked for the foundation.

All this has come about without our asking, so it is necessary that God will provide workers. But there is so much persecution on the part of devils and men that I do not know what to say. It seems to me I have never been in so much tribulation of spirit, storms, etc. It seems that heaven is brass and the earth iron. Pray much for poor me, who cannot tell you as much as would be sufficient. If I write these beautiful things, believe me, I am writing at the peak of the spirit and with lights received at other times. Do not afflict yourself at seeing me disparaged and do not make over me since this happens with the permission of God to humble me. I rejoice in that.

I do not know what I did to that bishop. I know well that I worked in his diocese years ago, and I came close to losing my life there. But the poor bishop deserves compassion, for there are not wanting persecutors and calumniators, especially with regard to what they are saying about the foundation of a Retreat on the island. God be blessed. This does not pain me an iota. I wanted to write him a letter, but then I felt I should not. It is better to allow myself to be justified by God. All the more since I do not know his attitude and, most of all because in the past he wrote me in very cordial terms. I am much obliged to him.

I have received the flower seeds but do not know when they should be planted. Who knows how often I was asked that they send the box in which the statue of Saint Anthony was, but since they do not know when the boat sails, sometimes unforeseen, it will be necessary to send it to San Stefano.

Jesus bless you. Amen. If you write, address the letter: Viterbo for Orbetell, Retreat, etc. I end by enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I say I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Marianna Elenora Del Pozzo (2)

Presentation

July 5, 1742

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

Most Reverend Mother,

May the pure love of Jesus and the effects of his divine grace comfort, purify, and fortify our hearts and give you the grace and virtue to walk with great strides in that holy perfection to which the loving Redeemer has called you so highly. If my prayers will have been heard, you will be a great saint, for I desire that and pray for that to the Most High. But you must cooperate with the divine calls by working for the acquiring of the holy virtues, especially true humility of heart, whence is born a true hatred and disdain for ourselves. This

great science is learned at the foot of the Crucified in holy prayer, where the loving soul loses itself entirely in that immense sea of infinite love, which renews the spirit and makes it a true delight for the Heavenly Spouse. One who is not detached from all created things and dead to all that is not God never reaches this stage.

Silence, internal and external mortification, true annihilation of self, working, suffering, and being silent make one learn the true science of the saints. I am writing in great haste, for I have much to write for the glory of God and the profit of souls, while being confounded much to see that a poor, blind, ignorant one who is inexperienced in the ways of the spirit and, above all, the worst among sinners should, by exercising his ministry, dare to give such instructions to others when I do not practice them myself, or at least very imperfectly.

My cordial and reverent greetings to Sister Tullia Maria, and I ask the help of her devout prayers as well as those of all the other sisters and the priest you told me about. I end by saying to you: charity with everyone, close particular sharing with no one. Choir and cell, cell and choir. Die to all to live in God and for God.

I end by asking you for your devout prayers. Make yourself holy. I do not know if God wishes me in your region, for His Divine Majesty has given me so much to do here, both for the laity as well as for the ecclesiastics and the nuns. It is often necessary that I assist in conducting the retreats for them, all of which is contrary to my will, for I am incapable. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Greet your illustrious marchioness, your mother, for me, and, if you write to Milan, tell your sister that I have written by today's post. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and declare myself,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

319

Reverend Mother Del Pozzo²⁰¹

Presentation
July 5, 1742

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Very Reverend Mother in Christ,

May the grace of the Holy Spirit be always with you.

I am answering your esteemed letter, given to me by Father Anthony. I rejoice over your devout sentiments and the desire you preserve to become holy. I desire that exceedingly, and pray for that to the Most High and that the training given you by your pious mother and your dedicated deceased father, whose memory is blessed, be not rendered fruitless.

I am writing in great haste, for at this point my poor head can do no more because of the many letters found here on my return from the holy missions.

201. This is a sister of Marianna Elenora Del Pozzo. Both are living in the same convent.

Courage! I beg you, and beg you again, to employ all your strength with complete confidence in God to make yourself holy. The way to arrive at holy perfection is the exact observance of the holy Rules and Constitutions, detachment from everything created, contempt of self, maintaining a loving attention to the Presence of God, and taking in the sweet honey of holy love from the Wounds of Jesus. Cell and choir, choir and cell. Flee the grating²⁰² as if it were hell; I mean, when it is not a necessity. Visit your sacramental Jesus frequently; drink at his divine heart; become inebriated with holy love. Silence, humility, obedience, solitude, internal and external mortification, Presence of God — all these with others should adorn the garden of your heart so that the Divine Spouse can find his delights there.

I have written to your sister in Milan; let them inform them by mail.

My greetings in Christ to the marchioness, your mother, to Sister Tullia and all the others. Let them pray much for me, who am extremely needy. I leave you in the Side of Jesus and say that I am in haste. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

320

Very Reverend Burgonzio²⁰³

Presentation

July 5, 1742

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

I have placed in the Side of Jesus the consolation my poor spirit experienced in reading the letter from you, given me by Father Anthony on his return to this Retreat. I thank you much in the Lord for the charitable memory you are pleased to keep of this miserable sinner and most unworthy servant. If my poor prayers were heard, you would already be a great saint, for the obligations I am aware of force me to do always more. I well recall the holy sentiments you expressed to the Most High when I had the good fortune to hold some conferences with you. I hope you will have cultivated these sentiments, even in the midst of your tiring career, given you by the loving Providence of the Most High, in which it is always necessary to strengthen and fortify one's spirit at the feet of Crucified Love with holy meditation on his holy suffering, where the soul, like a prudent bee, takes in the sweetness of holy love.

I kneel at your feet, begging for and thanking you for your devout prayers and holy sacrifices, and assuring you that I have not taken one step toward perfection. Rather, I have grown old in imperfection and vices, whence you can see my extreme need. Employ yourself to obtain for me the grace to pour out my tears incessantly and to correspond from now on to the innumerable

202. Parlor screen through which conversation is conducted.

203. Burgonzio was the vicar general of Alessandria.

graces and mercies of the Sovereign Good. And asking your holy blessing, with profound reverence I reaffirm that I am,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

If my insistence is not overdone, I would ask Your Reverence to recommend me to the prayers of Canon Cerruti.

321

Sister Angela Margherita Bosca²⁰⁴

Presentation
July 5, 1742

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

May Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, be ever the unique object of our love and of our consolation, and give you an eternal reward for the charitable memory you have of my unworthy person.

I will not fail to obey you by praying for your pious intentions, but I assure you that I am not the person that many, out of their charity, believe me to be. I fear to have deceived the world since my vicious and imperfect life makes me useless to everyone and unworthy to be heard by the Most High, when I make supplication in the name of my poor neighbors who recommend themselves. Help me, Reverend Mother, with your devout prayers, for I have extreme need. And make yourself more disposed to be heard because of the holy life that your state demands, in which the Infinite Good has placed you.

Silence, mortification, custody of the senses, detachment from everything created, whence comes a hatred and holy contempt of ourselves, are all efficacious means so that the heart fashions wings of flame to fly to God in a pure and holy prayer, which is always based on the Holy Passion of Jesus, where the loving soul imbibes the honey and sweet milk of holy love.

I am writing with great haste, as the Del Pozzo people will tell you. Let them recommend me to God, and let them be assured that I will do that for them at the holy altar and for everyone at your venerable convent. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

204. Letter sent to Alessandria.

*J.M.J.**May Jesus be always with us. Amen.*

My Dear Son in Christ,

When I returned from the missions, there were so many letters, I had to write in several letters that I was unable to satisfy all of them. Now I have a moment to breathe. I am not neglecting to reply to your welcome letter, along with that of your cousin. These were given me in Orbetello as I was coming back from the missions, and I would have written through Father Anthony, but he left while I was in Orbetello. I met him as he was going to the boat to sail to your area since his sickness forced him to be in lighter air, even for this short hot spell. He made up his mind not to go again, but to bear his cross at the Retreat.

I have every reason to declare that I live always more obligated to the charity you continue toward me and assure you that I will always live in gratitude to you in my poor prayers, always desiring more that you be a great saint, and I pray for that to the Highest. With regard to your coming or not coming into our Congregation, although I desire that you come, my desire is deep in the Divine Will and does not cause me any anxiety. I do not know the motives the bishop²⁰⁶ has to have prohibited the business you mentioned to me. If I knew in what area he could be displeased with me, God knows how I would rouse myself to satisfy him, etc., for I esteem him much as a good prelate.

The letters he wrote to me in the past, and even before my illness, were very friendly and showed that he had appreciated my hard work. But now I do not know. If you have anything new, do me the charity to tell me whether it was an encounter with the archpriest since I will do all that is possible to give satisfaction to the prelate.

And as regard the project you so laudably thought to accomplish there, it seems that without the favor of the prelate, it is useless to attempt it. When cooler weather comes, while going to end the mission in the diocese of Viterbo, we will take possession of a Retreat, situated on a beautiful mountain near Vetralla,²⁰⁷ which is fifty miles from here and can be seen from here with a telescope. The site has already been ceded to us by the public council of the community and with the consent of the bishop, who favors establishing it.

In this situation, when I will be a bit closer to Rome, I will see things there in good shape, both on the part of the bishop as well as the public, and I will not lack means as regard the princess, etc. However, I should have no worries

205. Paul has been busy answering the letters he found waiting for him when he returned from the missions. Now he is concerned about a coolness on the part of the bishop of Rio, who seems to be holding Francis back from joining Paul.

206. Eusebio Ciani was bishop of Massa Marittima.

207. The Retreat of San Angelo at Vetralla.

about that, for in this post I have news that a cardinal wishes to give us a fine monastery on a choice hill near Rome.²⁰⁸ Members alone are lacking, but I have lively faith that they will soon be provided by the Merciful Lord. The devil, who made a great uproar, especially at the time of my deadly sickness, and made use of certain people to cool things down, will end up beaten.

You should be living abandoned in the loving embrace of Jesus and Mary, and not be growing tepid in your exercises. Greet your mother and your cousin for me. I am not writing to them, for God does not inspire me to do so. But I fear some obstacle for many reasons, especially the excessive harshness in such a young person and the complete freedom in embracing penances. That is a very dangerous thing. Enough! She has two directors and can take advice from them. I do not wish to ever get mixed up here, for God does not inspire that for me. Do not say anything in order not to upset her since she is walking in good faith, as I hope. Simply tell her that she do everything under obedience and ask her to obtain such liberty from her confessor, that is, from your parish priest; I mean the liberty to undertake as much penance as she wishes. This does not please me, for it could work out as a great gain for the devil, etc.

I include this letter for Father Anthony²⁰⁹ because I do not know where he is staying. I believe, from what he told me, he would stay with Signore Timagni, but I do not know that. If you have knowledge, I would write him as soon as I will have been informed. I will be waiting the answer by post. Let them pray to Jesus for me. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and affirm myself,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

My greetings to your parish priest.

323

Bishop Alexander Abbati (2)

Presentation
July 11, 1742

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Prostrate at the feet of Your Excellency, I thank you much in Jesus Christ for the charity you deign to continue to show me in giving me occasion to cooperate with the pastoral zeal, which your fatherly heart holds for the benefit of your beloved sheep, by organizing holy missions in your diocese. I will begin these, God willing, as soon as the air cools down. I hope in the divine mercy to be in Toscanella in the coming month of October and will continue, step by step, according to the arrangements you will send me. It remains for the divine goodness to bless the work. "If the Lord will give his blessing, the

208. The foundation was on Mount Cavo, above Rocca di Papa, offered by Cardinal Annibale Albani because the Passionists had evangelized the diocese of Ostia, which was almost all abandoned swampland. The foundation was made in 1758.

209. Anthony Danei.

earth will give its fruit." For that reason, I am asking from the kindness of Your Excellency your efficacious and devout prayers and holy sacrifices.

I do not know how to express the gratitude that my poor heart holds for the kindness of Your Excellency in the way you have given your consent and faculty for the erection of a new Retreat of San Angelo on Mount Fogliano in Vetralla. I assure Your Excellency that as I expect the Most High will be greatly glorified in this undertaking for the great spiritual advantage to our neighbors, so it behooves me to supplicate the Ineffable, Uncreated Kindliness to grant you an eternal reward and to complete your holy desires in time and in eternity. If the merciful Lord opens the way a bit for us, as I hope, we are thinking of taking possession of this Retreat at the first break in the weather, but we will not move a foot without the permission and blessing of Your Excellency.

Meanwhile, with profound reverence I constantly affirm myself,
Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

324

The Valerani Sisters

Presentation
July 12, 1742

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Esteemed Sisters in Jesus Christ,

The peace, the grace, virtue, and ineffable sweetness of the purest love of Jesus Christ be always in your hearts. Amen.

I have been enlightened to my great satisfaction in the Lord — I am not saying how — about the charity you have used in putting into practice that small reminder that I gave all before leaving, namely, to bring everyone together to make mental prayer. Oh, how much I rejoice at this! Live Jesus! in whom I trust the little mustard seed, sown by the loving Providence of God in this tiny garden, will grow by divine favor into a great tree, laden with mature fruits, which will be the holy virtues, and with a sweet balsam, which is the sweet odor of Christ in every place, as the apostle says. Be of good heart, my esteemed sisters in Christ, be of good heart! Enter a competition to see who can love and please our sweet Spouse Jesus the more, without emulation, which disturbs, and without contention, but with a true charity, unfeigned, that unites you in one heart in that great King of Hearts, that is, the Holy Heart of Jesus.

Oh, how fortunate they are who persevere in this holy exercise! Oh! what great spiritual riches His Divine Majesty holds prepared for them in time and eternity. Oh, how much my poor heart wants to say to you! But the reverence I owe to the Divine Spouse, who wishes to speak to his beloved spouses, forces me to silence. I will only recall to you, and I would rather write it to you in tears of blood than with ink, that this poor world is drowned everywhere with iniquity, and God is offended beyond all telling. So what are we to do, my

sisters in Christ, what are we to do? Is it not our duty that we use all our strength to oppose all these evils, at least by crying day and night and preparing our hearts, strengthened with virtues, above all, with true humility, which begets in us a true love for self-contempt and forces us to be hidden from all and open to God alone? This, my sisters, is a chain of gold that links together the other virtues, which are guarded and locked with the key of silence, which has us be open only with our spiritual director. Whence am I so prolific? Let us turn to ourselves. Now it is a duty, I repeat, that we adorn our hearts with divine grace so that our good God can be consoled in them and take his delight in them, seeing how he is so despised and outraged by the greater number of Christians? Yes, certainly, Holy Church, beloved spouse of the Sovereign King Jesus Christ, chants in the Easter Office for Holy Martyrs: "In his servants God will be consoled." Oh, sweet words! Oh, my dear God! how delicate the reality that you, who are consolation itself, wish to be consoled in your beloved men and women servants! Oh, excess of love! Oh, delicacy of affection! Yes, my sisters in Jesus Christ, the sweet Jesus is consoled in his servants, whether men or women, and he sighs, I will say that, because of the pain that sinners cause him with so many offenses. It is true, most true, that the immortal God is impassible and not able to feel sorrow; but Sacred Scripture, in order to give expression to the gravity of the offense to the good God, even before the deluge, expresses itself in these terms: *Tactus dolore corde instrinsecus*, which translated means that the Divine Heart was wounded with sorrow for the offenses that were committed against His Divine Majesty.

Therefore, let us love the dear God, who loves us so much; let us console him for the offenses against him; let us placate him with our prayers and discrete penance, placing everything in the Wounds of Jesus and offering them to the Divine Father, begging him through the grace of his most holy Son that he give a remedy to all the evils and send his faithful servants so that, made brave by the power of the Divine Spirit, they cry in his name to poor sinners to repent so that everywhere the power of the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ will triumph since that is the most efficacious way to make us holy.

I need not recall for you, my sisters, how necessary it is to join to holy perfection internal and external mortification, to remain always in our nothingness, whence is born true, blind obedience and total yielding, one to another, which makes us pleasing as soft wax and makes us gentle with one another, meek and all perfumed with the balsam of Holy Love. I wish to tell you of that total detachment from all creatures, that dying devoutly to oneself and to all that is not God, in order to live solely in God and for God, being always abandoned as simple infants in the loving bosom of his love, taking in continually, like earnest bees, the sweet honey of Holy Love and remaining for that end in a sweet and loving attention to the Divine Presence in all your works, losing this horrible nothing of ours in that Immense All, who is our God. Oh, what a high science, and always that, and only the humble of heart learn it! Be greatly confident in God that he will certainly teach it to you if you are, as I hope, very humble and obedient.

I repeat, I am not telling you anything, and what more could I tell you because there you have the archpriest, a servant of the Most High, to whom Divine Providence has confided this little garden. Listen to him. Open your hearts to your dear pastor and receive from him his holy instructions with wide-open hearts, imitating the mother of pearl that rises to the surface of the sea at dawn, and there opens to receive the dew from heaven, and then closes so that the salt water cannot enter, and immediately dives to the bottom of the sea to fashion its noble pearl. That is what a loving soul must do: receive in the shell of her heart the sweet, pure dew of the Divine Word announced by the minister of God, and then close herself well within with holy and profound recollection so that the bitter water of vices, miseries, distractions, and worldly vanities may not enter, casting oneself into the depths of the sea of our nothingness to fashion the pearl of Holy Love, and hiding oneself completely in the Life of Jesus Christ so there will appear in her only the virtue of this most lovable Redeemer.

I had thought to write to you before now, but my duties impeded me. Today, I have had few letters to answer by post, so I gave permission to my poor spirit to pay you this visit in Jesus Christ. You will pardon, out of love for God, my boldness and pray much for this poor one. I confess to you that I am very far from the perfection that I preach to others. Oh, poor me! I am already old and have not taken one step toward true perfection! Pray, and pray again, to His Divine Majesty to give me tears of true contrition, to weep day and night over my shortcomings, assuring him that with the grace of Jesus Christ I am resolved to begin from today on a life of true penance, and say with holy David: "I have said: 'Today, I begin this change; it is the right hand of the Most High.'"

So let it be. Help me much with your holy prayers, and, if it seems good to you, you can share my unworthy letter with the companions of your devotion so that all together may cry out to God for me. On the Feast of Mary Magdalene go to Communion for me, praying that great, holy penitent to ask from our loving Redeemer to grant me true compunction of heart so that I may melt, turn to water, liquify all in tears of love and sorrow for the grave offenses committed against my good God. Do me this great charity if your spiritual director, our dear archpriest, will allow you, as I hope.

Ah, may God will that the prayers that men and women servants offer for me be heard so that my heart may one day be so assailed and overcome by love and sorrow over the bitter pains of Jesus, caused by my sins, that they will find me dead of pure sorrow! For such charity I will remain obligated until I am ashes, and I will not cease to pray the Divine Goodness to inflame all in the holy fire of his Holiest Love.

I greet all in Jesus and, in particular, the Mother Prioress, who is the older sister and who must be the humblest of all and the servant of all; but all are held to obey her with love, with reverence that is blind, and in true and holy charity. And the Mother must guard the garden of Jesus and console all in their afflictions, which will not be wanting to the followers of the Crucified, and show them a heart entirely affable and gentle, being very compassionate with

them and giving them great encouragement to walk in the way of virtue by your holy example.

Be at peace, my esteemed sisters, and the God of peace be always with you. Amen.

I have in order what I promised you, and as soon as opportunity offers, I will send it.

Your useless servant, unworthy of your charity,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

325

Agnes Grazi (122)

Presentation

July 13, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ Jesus,

I have received your letter and do not know what to reply because it seems to me that I do not know what more I can do than I am doing for your spiritual profit. I know very well that it would be a greater spiritual banquet for you if you were able to speak with me more often, but this cannot be because God has so disposed. Neither is my spirit disposed to speak of the areas of prayer and other interior affairs, nor am I disposed to listen to you. If God wanted that from me, he would give me calm in my troubles and light to speak and listen. Go ahead with your usual conduct, for it is good. Be always more humbled and abandon yourself to God, who will teach you great things. I do not understand what you are talking about at the end of your letter. You would do well to explain it better, and you will be free to speak about this to me with living voice, as they say.

I am prepared for everything, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen. Continue to pray for me, for my needs are extreme.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

326

Agnes Grazi (123)

Presentation

July 29, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

I am writing in haste, for the servant is leaving to bring the myrtle to the nuns.

I received your letter. I wish that your heart be consumed ever more as a holocaust to the Sovereign Good in that Holy of Holies of the Heart of Jesus. Allow the ashes of the holocaust be drowned in the infinite sea of divine love. Now is the time to die more than ever to all that is not God and to treat with greater love alone, alone with the Sovereign Good. What would you have to

do with creatures? Stay alone as much as possible, hidden, locked in, buried in that wonderful secret room of the Divine Heart, where the Divine Spouse allows you to drink that wine which inebriates, perfumes, comforts, vivifies, warms, raises up, and makes one fly on high in contemplation of the Sovereign Monarch, where the science of the saints is taught to the truly humble. I pray for your true despoilment, hidden to all, annihilated, etc. In the Heart of Jesus have compassion for his sufferings, and let your soul be bathed in the divine bath of his Blood, which has the power to set you on fire with love. Be humbled with knowledge of yourself, hatred of self, love of God, love of your neighbor, the simplicity of a child, etc. These are the heavenly cards that win the game, etc. Pray for me. I am in a hurry.

On Wednesday Father Fulgentius will come. I am pleased that you will speak with him prudently and briefly. I am in my usual, miserable, lamentable state.

Paul, Your Servant in Christ

327

Francis Appiani (25)

Presentation
August 19, 1742

J.M.J.

Dear Reverend Father in Christ,

I am writing in haste, for there is an opportunity to reach you over there, and I am waiting to depart. Yesterday, I received your esteemed letter with Father Anthony's. You are quite right, and it is a genuine insight from God that, with so much light and inspiration to come into this solitude, you need nothing more. God does nothing superfluous, but all in weight and measure. There is no shorter way to fall over a precipice than to abandon prayer. Therefore, I say to you once more, never leave prayer, be constant in the acquiring of virtue, internal and external recollection, and keep your peace of heart so it may be a worthy dwelling place for God. You ought not be frightened at any difficulty, temptation, aridity, etc., by growing in greater confidence in God and fidelity in serving him, for you will see how great his mercies will be for you.

I rejoice that His Divine Majesty gives you the chance to enrich yourself with great treasures by allowing calumnies. Oh! if you only knew what joys these are! Take care not to arouse suspicions in any one by your conduct, and then let them talk. Pray for those who calumniate you. "Now you begin to be a disciple of Christ."

As regard the Retreat over there, I have a total desire for it and as soon as God opens the way I will do what I can. We do expect that the Retreat in Vetralla will be established, for that has already been granted by that populace, and they are awaiting the final resolution from Rome. Consequently, the foundation will take place before Christmas, or a little after, as long as nothing intervenes.

I would gladly write to Signora Domenica, but I cannot since there is no time and I must send this letter. Tell her, therefore, that she should avoid, like the plague, the fears that have frozen her, that is, these fears that she is in disgrace with God. These fears come from the devil. Filial fear is good and brings with it humility of heart, confidence in God, peace, serenity, great courage to serve the Lord, etc.

If these are not the effects, then the fear is caused by the enemy and is to be cast off. If her penances are not harming her health so that she is in passably good health, and, if she performs them with joy in God, that is a sign that God wills this for her, even though there may be a repugnance on the part of nature, disgust, discouragement, etc. But I say she should pluck up her strength and courage. She should do everything under obedience and not hesitate, for I know that God is having her walk along a path that leads to great perfection.

Tell her again to give place to the Holy Spirit and to make her prayer not in her way, but in the way God wants. Let her soul fly to where the Holy Spirit takes it and hold suspect as deceits all these lights and not abandon great humility, knowledge of self, peace, and a great desire to please God. The lover speaks little, but one word of love is enough to hold the soul in great recollection for a long while. The tongue of love is the heart on fire, and it reduces itself to ashes as holocaust to the Supreme Good.

Tell her in my name that when her heart awakens to love, she express her love in a silence of love on the bosom of her Beloved Good with the understanding that she place a bouquet of the myrrh of the pains of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary on the bosom of her soul. I rejoice much that God tests her by allowing calumnies. Oh ... God wishes to draw great good from this! Let her suffer with joy, praying to God for those who spread lies, showing herself always serene, etc.

I would be there if God were willing, and I would willingly give my strength to assist her, and I would hope for great good to come of that, etc.

Ask her to pray much for me and for our Congregation. You do the same and be constant in putting your divine call into effect.

Greet in the Lord your mother and Signora Domenica. I will not forget them and all their concerns at the holy altar. Stay close to Father Anthony and keep him happy in the Lord. Remember what I am saying to Signora Domenica when internal attractions come to her; you should take the same advice.

I end by embracing you in Jesus Christ. If I can serve you or your cousin, just command me. In haste,

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul of the Holy †

Bishop Alexander Abbati (3)

Presentation
September 6, 1742

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Whereas it has not been possible to conduct the mission in Toscanella and other places located in your diocese because of the condition of the air, seeing they are located in the salt marshes, I have thought of going for a few days to Capranica and other places where the air is good.²¹⁰ When the season turns cooler, please God, we will end with the favor of God in your diocese. People who know have assured me that since there has been no rain for seven months in the salt marshes, the air will be foul until well into November. That leads me to believe they would receive the mission with greater fruit after Christmas rather than in November. I submit to your prudent judgment. I recall that Father Leonard was in Toscanella when I was in Montalto and that was the month of February. Between January and February we have enough time to satisfy everyone. If the air were healthy, I would certainly not go to other places without finishing the work in your diocese, but it is necessary to adore the designs of Divine Providence that disposes things so.

I have been informed that the Congregation of Good Government has rejected the request of the Public Council of Vetralla concerning the erection of the Retreat in the hermitage of San Angelo. It has been said to me that the devil has been at work to block this great good under the pretext that it endangers the alms for the Capuchins, etc. With much peace my poor heart adores the divine dispositions. I have written about this to Cardinal Riviera, the Prefect, and testified that I did not ask for this hermitage, but the fervor of the people offered it to us for their spiritual good. I set out for them reasons so that they could personally know that alms would not be wanting to the monasteries, etc., and additional information would enable them to see the great good that would come, but with great indifference, etc.

I gave this information to Cardinal Rezzonico and to another person with total indifference, for I want to leave everything to the care of God, to whom souls belong. If God wills to open the way, "I do not refuse the labor." There is pressure on me to save this poor soul of mine and do penance for my grave faults. The world is cold and buried with evil, and it is a tearful thing to see so few placing themselves on the side of God "as a wall for the House of Israel." Whatever Divine Providence disposes — whether we go to San Angelo or we do not go — when I journey to Vetralla, I would like, if it suits Your Excellency, to preach to the people and to see whether, with the favor of God, they could establish peace with those who are in strife over the uproar that followed the collection basket, as was written me by zealous persons who

210. Paul is preparing for a very busy season of missions. He must consider several factors in deciding what is the best time for a particular town or parish. He conducted two large missions in the fall of 1742, one at Civitavecchia (October 22 to November 1) and the other at Sutri, where he also gave retreats to the nuns (November 3 to early December). The other letters written this fall are concerned mainly with the missions and the Vetralla foundation.

asked me to put souls at peace. So if Your Excellency will grant me permission, I will see to doing that. I would also ask the permission, as also for my companion, that when we are passing through some location where we have given a mission, and someone wishes to go to confession, we are able to hear them with the usual faculties and to rouse them to repentance with a discourse in church, etc.

I place everything under obedience to Your Excellency, and I ask you to excuse any mistakes since I am writing in great haste with a lot to write, as I mentioned above. If I am not too bold, I would ask Your Excellency to favor me with your venerated commands by next Wednesday's post; otherwise, there will not be time to receive them. Meanwhile, on my knees I beg your blessing and holy prayers, and with profound reverence sign myself,

Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

329

Cardinal Dominic Rivera²¹¹

Presentation
September 6, 1742

J.C.P.

Your Eminence,

The God, who as Sovereign Provider for his creatures wills to choose whomsoever he pleases, has decided in his Divine Providence to make use of miserable me to cooperate in the erection of the newly born Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics Regular, under the invocation of the Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, very recently approved by His Holiness, now happily reigning. So with great submission and reverence to the dignity of Your Eminence, I come in virtue of my office to inform you that I am assigned, although I am the least among the workers in the vineyard of the Lord, and called upon by the bishop of Viterbo to work in his diocese by conducting missions. From April of the present year, I was occupied principally with a mission in Vetralla, an area belonging to that diocese. That mission was blessed by God with abundant graces. One sign is that the populace, moved by their fervor, offered our poor Congregation the small monastery, or hermitage, of San Angelo, situated on Mount Fogliano, so that our religious who would live there would attend to the exercises proper to our Institute in order to preserve and increase the fruit of the mission not only in this area, but also in the whole diocese.

Even though I had seen the emotion and unanimous desire on the part of the clergy and laity, I kept myself indifferent and did not wish to accept their offer. But this did not quiet the desire of these fervent people for the banquet

211. This letter was sent to Rome and shows how Paul writes to an "unfriendly" cardinal who was the Prefect of the Congregation of Good Government. At first Cardinal Rivera did not approve the Vetralla Retreat, but later granted approval in December 1743. A year later Bishop Abbati favorably presented Paul's case to the pope. On Friday, March 6, 1744, Paul took possession of the new Retreat in Vetralla.

of the divine word; but when the General Council of the place met, by a unanimous vote, no one opposing, it was resolved with due approval to turn over to us the hermitage. The bishop gave not merely his assent, but gave expression to special pleasure as he signified to me in his letter.

When the Council action was taken, and I had no previous knowledge of this, the Commune sent me a letter at Bieda, where I was conducting a mission. I am enclosing that letter so that Your Eminence may know that I did not seek the transfer of that hermitage nor have I accepted it even after all this was done. Then, when I had returned to this Retreat, after repeated representations from zealous persons from that Commune, I gave consent that the acts of the Council be forwarded for approval, as has been done.

But since the decision has been rejected by Your Eminence and your committee, according to what has been communicated to me, and because of the representations of the Capuchin Fathers and others, I have considered it to be my duty to lay out before you this explanation.

Furthermore, I can assure you that, if this hermitage were established as a Retreat of our Congregation, there could not result any damage to the Capuchin Fathers nor to any other religious in the area. Our Constitutions not only prohibit possession of anything private or in common, but also do not even allow us to go on quest, even for food, as the Mendicant orders are accustomed to do. We ask the Ordinary of the diocese where a Retreat is established to appoint in each place a benefactor who at the time of harvest should receive whatever the benefactors wish to give out of spontaneous charity and turn it over to the syndic²¹² of the area where the Retreat is situated. The manager, likewise, receives the alms from Masses, and, if at the end of the year there is a surplus that is not necessary for the community or for the sacristy or for the clothing of the religious, it is to be given to the poor.

Your Eminence should ask whether it is really possible that the Retreats of this poor Congregation could be a threat to other religious monasteries, when the single and principal end of our Congregation, after one's perfection, is to be zealous in procuring the salvation of souls with holy missions, instructions, catechisms, and spiritual exercises for laity, clerics, and nuns, and principally to promote among the faithful the devotion to the Holy Passion of Jesus, our true Good. We take a fourth vow to that purpose. We also have the specific obligation to provide all these services in the most needful places where the climate is less healthy. Certainly, the areas of Viterbo, situated in the salt marshes, are such, and you find few evangelical workers there.

If Your Eminence would like clear and precise information, he could consult the Eminent Cardinals Corradini and Rezzonico as well as Count Garagni, who were delegated by the pope to examine and approve our Constitutions. I adore the divine decisions and submit all to God, whose creature I am. What I efficaciously desire is the salvation of this poor soul of

212. A syndic was a lay person, known as a friend of the community, and was chosen to represent the Congregation to the authorities and especially to administer the little money that may have been available. For several reasons, this institution was eliminated several years later (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 351-352).

mine and to do penance for my grave faults. To this end I ask Your Eminence to help me with your prayers and holy sacrifices. Meanwhile, on my knees I ask your blessing, and with great reverence I kiss the hem of your sacred purple and profess myself without fail,

Your Eminence's humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Bishop Alexander Abbati (4)

Presentation
September 13, 1742

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

The reluctance I have manifested regarding coming to Viterbo to conduct a mission proceeds from the reverence I have for the zealous workers in that city. Since among the ministers of the sanctuary I am the poorest and least, I would never have the boldness to show myself willing to work in the presence of such great servants of the All-Highest, whom I regard as my fathers, my masters, and my mentors. But since I am informed of the holy and adorable Will of the Sovereign Good through the order of Your Excellency, I have neither repugnance nor difficulty in coming to conduct the holy mission at the call of Your Excellency.

I am awaiting that sign so that I may fulfill it with greater reverence and submission of my poor spirit, abandoning myself totally to the sweet and prudent determination of Your Excellency with the lively hope that the great Father of Lights, who inspired you to have me work in the territory of your diocese, will impart his merciful blessings to this pious city in which — when His Divine Majesty arranges that I come, as I am most indifferent — I hope with the grace of God to work with the same liberty of spirit as in other places, and to look upon the souls of the citizens of Viterbo with the same eye which the merciful Lord has given me to see wherever I have been, that is, in the sacred Wounds of our amiable Redeemer, pierced open more by his infinite love than by hard nails in order that we may drink in joy the saving waters of grace from these fountains of eternal life.

The gratitude which is so much according to the Heart of God obliges me to attribute to the piety of Your Excellency my most affectionate and devout thanks for the charity you continue to show me, and for the fervent zeal with which you desire to work for the erection of the Retreat of San Angelo, which I have totally abandoned, as with all my undertakings, into the loving arms of the Infinite, Uncreated Love. When I meet Cardinal Rezzonico, I will not fail to bring Your Excellency into the conversation and see to it, if the way is open, to give you an occasion of greater merit, also on the part of the superiors in Rome.

I am delaying my departure for Capranica and Sutri for a few more days since I have not received in the ordinary post any information from the bishop. With regard to my passing through different places where I have conducted

missions, I am asking Your Excellency for faculties because I have been asked by some eager souls in Vetralla to try to restore peace to those who were universally set at peace during the mission, but then disturbed by that blessed collection basket. For the rest then, we are not accustomed to come by there on set purpose.

I pray more and more that Your Excellency assist me with your holy prayers and holy sacrifices. Meanwhile, prostrate at your feet, I implore your holy pastoral blessing. With profound reverence I affirm myself,

Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

331

Agnes Grazi (124)

Presentation
September 20, 1742

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter from Father Fulgentius, and I thank the mercy of God for the favors he continues for your soul. I will not be able to come until after the Feast of Saint Michael because I wish to make the novena. It will be a charity if you would also make it for me since I am always in greater need. I understand what you are telling me about getting along with others, etc. Do as you are doing, for it is going well and is pleasing to God, that is, stay recollected in God, but with a peaceful and natural countenance and with strong detachment from creatures, losing yourself and entering much into God. A sign of that is that you do not enter into their conversations: to see as not seeing, to hear as not hearing, etc. Then excuse yourself after taking a bit of food, leaving simply and naturally in order to be more hidden from their eyes and to keep your secret so that thieves do not rob you.

When I come, you will give me an oral account of what is happening, and I will act in accord with the Will of God. I would be pleased if you were able to succeed in eating alone, especially when the bride will be there. Enough! God will give us light, and I will negotiate with all the prudence I can with Signora Johanna and Signore Fabio in order to make them satisfied, and I will ask it as a favor from Signora Maria Johanna. Meanwhile, let us recommend the business to God so we may better know what is his pleasure. So pray to God that he give you light to know if it would please him to have you eat by yourself, and pray with humility and indifference, simply laying the business out.

Continue with your present conduct in this way. Trust in God and let your soul make its flights as His Divine Majesty wills, both at Communion and everywhere, and take no account of the temptations and distractions, nor of other flies, but stay entirely absorbed in God and drink much of that wine which the Sovereign Good affords you, and never cease to drink; beg for it as a poor, needy little one. Beg that he allow you to drink deeply, that he grant this as an alms. To give poor thirsty ones to drink is a work of mercy; so say

to the Lord that since he is pleased that we perform this work of mercy, how much more willingly will he, who is an abyss of love and mercy, do so? Remain at his feet like a poor woman and ask to drink much, and allow the wine to overflow. If you become inebriated, that is not important, for this holy inebriation makes one wise, humble, and entirely of God. You can ask for this even at Communion and in that divine wine cellar of his most holy Heart, where one drinks the sweetest wine, the strongest, which inebriates so thoroughly that the one who drinks sleeps with love. But when the wine brings on sleep, one must not awaken without permission of the Spouse. Let us remain in our nothingness in a great hatred of self, hidden to the world, cast into nothing, and so fashion wings of fire to fly back to the nest, whence one came, that is, in God, and so the soul sees herself always poorer and more needy in its horrible nothingness. I remain in great misery and great need. Jesus bless you.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

332

Bishop Alexander Abbati (5)

Presentation
September 27, 1742

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

While I prepared this week to leave for Capranica and Sutri in order to be ready at the end of October to continue the work in your diocese, I received a letter from the bishop of Sutri, in which he tells me it would be better to delay the missions until the end of October because the people are busy with the grape harvest.

I am replying to the bishop that at the end of October I ought to be in your diocese, as I am currently obliged, and that I had taken this way because in the places situated in this diocese the air is not good.

Accordingly, I am sending Your Excellency this information and asking you to let me know where I should go to begin the missions. There is a general desire for the mission in Civitavecchia, and they have already offered me a house in which to reside. If it pleases you, I could begin there in the middle of October because, I think, the grape harvest would be over since there are few vineyards in the area; in that case I would be able to leave quickly for other places.

Regarding the mission in Viterbo, I believe you have received my letter two deliveries ago. In that letter I said that I am open to the Divine Will and indifferent about coming as promptly and willingly to Viterbo or any other locations, "and, if God gives a blessing, our land will yield its fruit."

Therefore, I am awaiting your venerated commands to guide my work, and, if you order me to go to Civitavecchia in the middle of October, I respectfully request the usual faculties and a pastoral letter be issued to that town so that your beloved sheep will receive with more devotion the inestimable treasure

of the mission. And now, with profound reverence I kiss the hem of your pastoral vestment and ask for your holy blessing and the continued assistance of your prayers and holy sacrifices, and with profound respect I sign myself,
Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Bishop Alexander Abbati (6)

Orbetello

October 4, 1742

Here on the service of God.

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I have placed in the Side of Jesus the consolation that my poor spirit felt when I heard that the pastoral zeal of Your Excellency had chosen another worthy missionary for the holy mission at Viterbo. I am hoping in the Merciful Lord that the fruits will be eight or even a hundred times more copious than they would have been from the useless labors of this ignorant sinner.

I do not want to fail to let you know that I may not have explained myself properly in my first letter. Our holy Rules do not prohibit us to go to cities but only state in a chapter, which I desire to explain to you, that we should go more willingly to work in places having greater needs than the large cities in which workers are not wanting. Furthermore, I can inform you that I have an apostolic indult, granting me the permission from Pope Clement XII before the approval of the Rule, to give missions throughout Italy with the consent of the Ordinary. This indult is perpetual and not determined by any particular locality, but for all of Italy, as I said. I have thought it my precise duty to inform you quite clearly so that you may take advantage of us unworthy servants whenever you deign to command us.

The mission in Civitavecchia will necessarily begin on October 22 so that the clergy will be free to attend the holy synod. Believe me, Your Excellency, in this way, with the favor of God, all will go well, for the people at that time will not be otherwise employed. I will inform the vicar forane so that he may advertise the mission and prepare everything necessary for the sacred ceremonies. After Civitavecchia I think we will go to Sutri in order not to be in the diocese at the time of the synod. On returning from Sutri we will stay a week in Civitella because the populace, and even more Prince Rospigliosi, much desire a mission and had me write to the pastor, in which I included the prince's letter. Toscanella, and the other places which remain, will be taken care of after Christmas, so as not to be out during the time of Advent. In that way all will have been taken care of by planting time.

With regard to the faculties, I believe it is necessary to repeat the detailing of them since in your last letter you reserved cases to the missionaries. The faculties you granted at the beginning of the missions for the diocese and received by us were the following: that all approved confessors, even from outside the diocese, as long as they are known to have faculties, can absolve

during the mission from reserved cases. Only the missionaries could commute simple vows and dispense from the impediment of "seeking the conjugal debt because of incest with relatives." But to me only, all the faculties that you may grant according to the directives of the Council of Trent, and only very rarely is there occasion to use such faculties.

I am writing this for greater safety and to help poor souls. For the rest, you already know which missionaries have these faculties.

Would you confirm these faculties for all the missions, so there will not be need to burden you with repeated letters. With regard to Vetralla, at this time I cannot travel there, for it is far off the road. I would hope, when returning to the Retreat, I will have time to go that way.

If the mercy of God allows me to pass close to Viterbo, I would like a short meeting with you. I would hope that would be profitable for all the diocese because of your pastoral zeal. "May what is good in the eyes of the Lord always be done."

I beg Your Excellency to pardon me if I have been too wordy, but where there is question of faculties, I wish to proceed with all possible caution and security. I ask your holy blessing and your holy prayer, and with profound reverence I declare myself,

Your Excellency's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Canon Michelini²¹³

Civitavecchia
October 23, 1742
On mission.

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

With my two letters I have notified your bishop that we should arrive in Sutri when the mission in Civitavecchia is over since your venerated prelate told me in his letter that when the time came, I should let you know so you might advertise the mission. I am now coming with my humble, reverent request to let the people know that on November 3 we will infallibly begin the holy mission in Sutri, as long as neither the bishop nor you have any objections. When the mission is over in this town on All Saints Day, we will leave from here and arrive just in time on Saturday, November 3.

At your feet I ask your holy prayers, and on my knees ask your blessing, and in haste sign myself,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

213. Vicar general of Sutri.

Canon Blaise Pieri (2)

Sutri

November 16, 1742

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father,

I am sending these few notes for Sister Colomba, and I recommend myself to her prayers as well as to yours, for my needs are always greater. I can only say I am overwhelmed with my duties. Pray for the perseverance of this contrite city and for one particular sinner who has not yet yielded to God. But I hope and trust that he will yield, since there is no other way, to my knowledge, rather than to be a slave of the vile conditions of the world, which is hard and does not bring peace, etc.

I break off in haste, and I ask you to bless me. Greet Sister Colomba in the Lord for me and all the convent. Your Reverence's unworthy, useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

Father Anthony Danei of the Passion (2)²¹⁴

Presentation

November 30, 1742

In the Name of God. Amen.

Since it is clear to us from several years experience that the priest, Father Anthony Danei, is not fitted to observe the Rules of this Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics; and since very exact observance of our Constitutions is close to our hearts; and lest this lead to the harm of others and draw others into tepidity; by the faculty granted our Congregation by His Holiness Pope Benedict XIV, as in Chapter XI, "Probation," of our Constitutions on dismissing those we find incapable — after trying all care and diligence — of such observance, we priests, here undersigned and legitimately brought together in the Lord in virtue of the faculty cited above and depending upon the reasons and causes listed, dismiss from this Congregation the above named and declare him to be considered as dismissed and separated in the future by us, by others of this Congregation, and by all outside.

Given at the Retreat of the Presentation, this November 30, 1742.

Paul of the Cross, Rector

John Baptist of Saint Michael the Archangel

Fulgentius of Jesus

214. Paul, on his return to the Presentation Retreat, and his brother John Baptist and Father Fulgentius sign a letter of dismissal from the Congregation for his younger brother Anthony. This must have been a heart-break for Paul. There are now only three priests and two brothers in the Retreat.

Thomas Fossi (9)

Presentation
December 3, 1742

J.M.J.

Dear Thomas,

The day before yesterday, I arrived at the Retreat on returning from the holy mission and found your esteemed letter here. I rejoice to read in it that your heart is firm in its resolution to serve the Highest Good. Take care to lay a deep foundation of humility with perfect self-knowledge and abandonment to the divine dispositions. Be careful of the obligations of your state in life, including good control of your household and fidelity to your spiritual exercises on a level befitting your state in life, without worrying about the future. Step by step follow the Will of God, submitting yourself constantly to his adorable dispositions. Never abandon prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments, and keep your heart recollected in God, without showing any strangeness in your exterior, holding your treasure secret.

You tell me that you sent seventeen coins to this Retreat, but we have no knowledge of this, not even a shadow. Try to find out what happened and examine to whom they were given, etc., and who was responsible. I rejoice much at your charity, but I ask you not to do that, so as to avoid whispering in your household and raising trouble.

It is true that we are poor and have in hand the building of a novitiate, but God will provide. If you did not have so many losses, your support would be very welcome. But you need to think first of your household. I ask you then to take trouble to find out about the seventeen coins, and, I repeat, we have no knowledge whatever.

The storms roused against this tiny boat are great and fearful, but the Divine Pilot is steering, so there will be no shipwreck. And while my sins may be great, nevertheless, the mercy of God is not wanting to me.

Dear Thomas, recommend me to God and work at doing good and do not embroil yourself with devout women, whether they be relatives or others. Follow my example, preach by good example, and live a devout life as a good husband. Trust in God, who will bring to perfection the good begun. Let's leave direction to holy priests, and, believe me, it is a work so exalted and difficult that, if I could, I would withdraw from it because I am not up to such a ministry. I end, embracing you in Jesus Christ, and from the heart reconfirm myself in haste. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your true, useless servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Bishop Alexander Abbati (7)

Presentation
December 4, 1742

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I did not wish to bother you with my letters, giving you information of the mission in Civitavecchia, not merely because this is not proper for me, but much more so because I could not doubt that you would have been informed by the vicar forane. I can, however, inform you that His Divine Majesty blessed that mission with a large hand; we could not have desired more. We left very edified by the good people. I did not undertake the missions at Toscanella and other places since, once I ended the mission at Sutri, we were too close to Advent. As soon as the Solemnity of the Epiphany is over, we will begin in the order and with the faculties that I have from you. All that remains is for your zeal to send your pastoral letter to that city so that they are ready to receive such an inestimable treasure, as in Montalto, etc.

I, myself, either a bit before or after Christmas, will give notice to the archpriest or the vicar general, as suits you best. Your venerated commands will be my rule of operation. I would like to do something at Civitella, but I am afraid it will be difficult, the more so because Civitavecchia has made a weighty request, even in writing, at the time of our departure, in which they ask that I conduct a public retreat in order to solidify them in their resolutions and to have a Holy Carnival so that they do not ruin their spiritual edifice that was raised with such fervor at the time of the mission.

We have not given them any assurance, but we have hopes that it will be possible to serve them. In case we are free from the work of the missions, with your permission we would go and separate the men and women in two different churches, and one of us would conduct the retreat for the men and at the same time the other one for the women. If the Merciful Lord disposes to allow this to happen, believe me, Your Excellency, Civitavecchia would remain in an excellent state for a long time since it is very fervent and disposed to compunction from the mission. "May that which is good in the eyes of the Lord always be done." I await your commands and, even more, your holy pastoral blessing and the assistance of your holy prayers and holy sacrifices. Meantime, with profound reverence I affirm that I am constantly and always will be,

Your Excellency's humble, unworthy, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

The highest perfection consists in being perfectly united to the Holy Will of God. And the one who is the more united and transformed into the Divine Good Pleasure, the one who is most humble and poorest in spirit, is the most perfect, the holiest. This is the noble and perfect science of the saints that the poor priest Paul has always preached to Agnes, and I wish she had already learned it, but I do not know.

God's Will of Good Pleasure, according to the Holy Fathers, is known by the way things turn out; therefore, the loving soul is quiet in all that happens except for sin, taking everything as the Will of God. Consequently it is pleased that in everything the Divine Good Pleasure is fulfilled and feeds itself in this way on the Divine Will, as Jesus said that his food was to do the Will of the Father, not merely in things that satisfied, but much more in suffering.

All that happens is for the best except sin, whence the loving soul is pleased with everything that comes from the Divine Will because that Will can will only what is best.

If you had any degree whatever of perfection, you would not have erupted in that outburst. But since you are a puny baby in virtue, I decided to give you this catechism on the doctrine of faith so you would for once settle down because up until now I have not succeeded in making you quiet in the area of direction so that you accept it when God gives it without seeking anything more. If you do not act in this way, you will never arrive at perfection, and God will deprive you of your graces.

Remember, I am writing to you on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and I am telling you what I have always told you. The poor who are humble accept alms, when and in whatever manner they are offered, in silence and without becoming querulous. Understand me well! And do what I say, for that is the Will of God. Otherwise, I say it again: God will deprive you of your graces. God leads souls the way he wishes; he is the Sovereign Ruler. At times we seem to understand that God wills something, but he does not will as we think. When what we think does not come to pass, this is not because the light we received was deceitful; the graces of God have deep significations.

I cannot come down there until the last day of the Octave of Christmas, for I am ill, and God knows my condition. You should stop your complaining, for neither God nor angels nor human beings command what is harmful.

Oh! if you were only the kind of stuff I desire, I would not be speaking in this way. I would like to say frankly that I am deliberately not coming in order to mortify you, but it is right for me to bow my head and accommodate myself to babies. The truth is that, if I were well, I would come; but I am very sick with pain since I have taken the baths, and at times had bad spells, and even worse off in spirit.

Observe with humility of heart and a true childlike spirit the holy rules which God has given you through the mouth of this pestilential creature, and be certain that you will arrive at holy perfection and union with God. Keep silence within and without, night and day. Be recollected at home, in church, in your room, at table, and everywhere. Do not bother about the foolish preparations they are making there. My exhortations have not been profitable; but you give them good example by spurning worldly vanity.

Oh, you ought not approve the vanity of your family! Stay withdrawn and quiet, and do not embarrass yourself. Pray to God for them since I see they have done, and are doing, too much. I am well informed. God give them the grace not to crash to the earth, as has happened in other cases of stronger families. Do not communicate any of what I have written, but pray for them for there is other remedy about which I have spoken often. Listen well, my daughter in Jesus Christ. Keep guard over your heart so that no poison comes in, and prepare a flowered crib for your dear Jesus in your heart, and pray for me for I am in no small need. If I am living, I will come on the last day; do not expect any sooner. I will write you as to what church I will be able to come to. Jesus bless you. Amen. Tell Magdalene not to come up here, for it is not the right time.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

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Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (10)

Presentation
December 10, 1742

Reverend Father,

While we always, and at all times, remember Your Reverence in our poor prayers and sacrifices in order to partially fulfill, to the extent we can, the great obligation we have toward such a great benefactor, who worked so hard for the glory of God and the establishment of our vocation, but with the coming of the great feast of reconciliation, of peace, and of self-effacement of the Word Incarnate it seems right to me, and my absolute duty, to express once more with this respectful acknowledgment our humble respects to Your Reverence, with the desire that the Sovereign Good grant you the fullness of graces and heavenly consolations that the Divine Infant gives to his more faithful and loving servants during these holy days. And from the sacred altar we will redouble our united prayers, especially on that blessed night, praying the Sovereign Goodness to bring to fruition your holy desires.

Last Saturday at evening we returned to this Retreat from the holy missions given in Civitavecchia and in the city of Sutri, where we also conducted retreats for the clergy and the nuns. Great, very great, were the mercies granted by the merciful God to souls during the missions. I personally know that the most efficacious means to convert even the most obstinate souls is the Holy Sufferings of Jesus Christ, preached according to the method that the Ineffable,

Uncreated, Divine Mercy has had approved by his Vicar on earth, for whom all people should be praying with the greatest fervor to the Sovereign Good.

We are being summoned by many who are offering us foundations for Retreats without any seeking on our part. But now we cannot accept because we lack members. When I see the people so devoted to this least Institute, it seems there is no place for doubt that His Divine Majesty wishes to be glorified in it. Right now we are in the midst of stormy waves, troubled, but full of lively hope that the Supreme Pilot, who guides this little bark, will bring it safely to port when it shall please him.

Our poor Lombardy, so badly beaten down, ought to be giving us good candidates. I have not received them because they dare not come because of the tumult at present. This spring, I believe, I shall go to conduct missions in Genoa since I have been asked to do that by a large community that has petitioned the archbishop and received his permission. As a consequence of this, it seems most probable that I will bring back to the Retreat a good number of soldiers of Jesus Christ. In good time I will give you a complete report.

I am not requesting any further faculties. For the present, I am well supplied. I am waiting for the time when we establish, God willing, another Retreat because I hope our Holy Father will grant ample privileges for the whole Congregation, so we can give greater spiritual help to souls.

In this post I am writing to Cardinals Corradini and Rezzonico, and I am giving them brief accounts, but not of the mission I mentioned. I will do that before I leave.

I end at the feet of Your Reverence and recommend myself to your holy prayers and offer you my profound reverence. After Epiphany we will continue our missions in the diocese of Viterbo. There are still places to be covered in the salt marshes.

Your humble, unworthy, devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

341

Agnes Grazi (126)²¹⁵

—
1742

... You stupefy me that in so many years you have made so little progress in virtue. Was it not possible for you to wait two more days before sending, with so much insistence, that poor girl? Ah! it is clear you are seeking your own happiness and not the happiness of God. You have never been so contrary to what was taught you. I have not been able to read your long pages for I have too much to write. I only read where you say it is a diabolical invention that I did not come to Orbetello. Oh! trick of Satan! Can you say more than that? And that I am lying? When I was in the street, I was told that your house was

215. Only a fragment of this letter remains. See letter of June 21, 1742, to Agnes in which the content is very similar.

full and that your father was staying in the room above the stairs, where we usually stay. Agnes, go easy, be humble, don't trust your feelings for they show great self-love.

On Our Lady's Feast I came down, and I came to go to your house. I did not intend to go elsewhere, for I am aware of your great charity. In all truth I did not come to your house so as not to inconvenience anyone and it came to us to stay in another place. See, your mistaken insights are all knocked down. Slow down, Agnes, and let us remain humble; otherwise, we go astray. Is it possible you wish not to believe me? Enough! I will take this up face-to-face, but do not come with prepared speeches, but with humility. I am sorry about your sick people. They will be recommended to God.

“WHAT JOKES GOD PLAYS ON US” (1743)

The new year finds Paul anxious for candidates and hoping for a new foundation, especially the one at Vetralla. He also has some missions to conduct, if his health holds out. For a while he hoped to go north to give missions at Genoa and then at Alessandria. This fails to take place. But toward the end of the year matters will look better and several very good men will join him.

342

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (27)

Presentation
January 2, 1743

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I owe you two letters in response to your two letters. One came by post, the other came by sea. But God has not allowed me to reply before now because of too much business, etc. And now I am about to leave for missions, which will begin, God willing, on January 8 at Toscanella and other places.

Your two letters caused me much rejoicing in God and give me reason to bless that Sovereign Goodness, who deals with such mercy with a daughter that his high Providence has confided to me. I desire a special faithfulness to the Sovereign Good in corresponding to such exalted benefits, which prepare the soul for even greater graces of high and sublime lights, through which the soul will love God more and acquire more virtue and exercise them in a more heroic way. For when the soul is more enlightened in holy faith and in holy prayer, it remains intimately united with God and, by means of this union with the Sovereign Good, all good things come to the soul that operates in a magnificent fashion with true humility and annihilation of self. This annihilation disposes the soul to be all absorbed in God in holy contemplation since the Divine Lover draws it to himself, and it becomes all divinized, I will say that, by means of a holy union with His Divine Majesty.

For now I would like you to exercise yourself much in perfect knowledge of your nothingness, and then I would have you lose this nothing in that Immense All that is our good God. Oh! happy loss! in which the soul, losing itself completely in God, is so perfectly found! Ah! our true Sovereign Good is in love with the truth because God is the God of truth. One who knows and remains in one's nothing knows the truth. For by means of holy contemplation, in which one knows the great truth of one's own nothingness and also the truth of the Divine All, who is God, the soul is left all immersed in the infinite love of the Highest Good.

In my other letters I have given you rules for holy prayer and how you are to conduct yourself in it, for God has given me that light. Listen, my daughter,

your present stage of prayer, in which God has placed you, has no need of many words. Love speaks little; the tongue of Holy Love is the heart on fire, which flames, consumes itself, melts entirely in God, and cannot express in concepts the ardor which compels it to make a continuous sacrifice of love of its loving soul. And this sacrifice is a holocaust, that is, it is entirely consumed, it reduces itself to ashes in that divine fire of infinite love and, in a word, one glance of love in pure faith understands great things, etc.

Oh, how much I would like to say, but I do not have the time. My mind is lost in this immense sea of the infinite grandeur of God.

Be of good heart. Let us serve God in magnificent fashion. Let us exercise virtue magnificently so that God will be our fortress and give us victory. I ask you not to lose sight of the holy Life, Sufferings, and Death of Jesus, our Life. Take note, daughter, that you are not to meditate as at first, but in accord with the rules I have given you.

Love is a unitive virtue and makes the pains of the Beloved its own. Do not work with your imagination; now is not the time for that. But in pure and holy faith make a bouquet of the pains of Jesus and carry it on the bosom of your soul so that you may remain completely immersed in God in pure faith, and with a loving word call to mind how much he has suffered for us, and allow yourself to be entirely penetrated with this pain and this love, etc. As you repose in this sacred silence, this sacred stupor, which makes you love God the more, mingle the pains of Jesus with the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy, and with your soul immersed in these pains and sorrows make a loving-sorrowing mixture or a sorrowing-loving mixture for yourself.

Love will teach you everything, if you remain concentrated on your nothingness, etc.

Cultivate the love you have for holy poverty. As for what you tell me about the permission you have from the Mother Abbess, you have done well. Have no scruple in giving, as an alms, what you did to that religious, for she favored you with that precious cross, the insult, etc. You did well to make her that gift, etc. Thank God for that.

What you gave her was given to you as an alms, and to deprive yourself of it in order to give it to one who did you some injury, you could do that because of the permission obtained by that religious as well as from your brother. It is truly a miraculous grace, but it was not obtained by means of me, although I did ask, but I am the worst of men and capable of enraging His Divine Majesty to punish rather than to impart graces. I do not want you to speak about such things to me any more. Give the glory to Jesus and Mary, from whom the grace came.

I received the figs and the sacks of legumes, and I pray His Divine Majesty to give an eternal reward to those who have done us this charity. I have told the one who has charge of the material affairs of the Retreat to return the sacks, etc. But these good sons are so much caught up in God that they forget, I believe, even themselves.

I leave you free to ask the bishop for the permission you mentioned to me, with the understanding that you have in your cell a small straw mattress, for that amounts almost to sleeping on boards.

I give you the merit of obedience on all that you will undertake, not only for mortifications and virtue, but also for your manual work. Serve your sisters willingly and exercise charity toward all, and God will hold great treasures ready for you.

Do not write me before the end of carnival since I am leaving for missions. Come in spirit to help. Do you know how? With prayer, praying day and night for the conversion of souls, especially for those most depraved, and in that way you will be my companion in the work for our dear Jesus and have your share, etc. May Jesus live! in whose Holy Heart I place you, that you may burn day and night and be consumed as a victim in holocaust.

Greet all the religious for me and the Mother Abbess. Let them pray for me. Of myself I will only say that I am in great need, in great storms, etc. Pray much for this poor one and for the holy work so persecuted, and that God will provide holy workers. If I am the impediment, let him take me by death, but contrite and truly repentant. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Happy Feast and Happy New Year from the holy altar.

I beg you to reject, like the plague, your fear of not being in the grace of God, for the devil is using that to cool your fervor.

Your useless, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

343

Canon Blaise Pieri (3)

Presentation

February 7, 1743

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Canon,

Before Christmas I wrote you and wished you, along with Sister Colomba,²¹⁶ Christmas greetings. I was waiting for a word of consolation in Toscanella since I was departing from there and asked you not to write me here, etc. But because my sins cry out aloud, and so I fear that after so much patience they will close the ears of the mercy of the Lord, I will say even that, I am concerned whether the servants of God have forgotten me. That would be the greatest scourge for me. Enough now! "I have hope against hope." I ask you not to forget my poor self, and I ask the same of Sister Colomba.

On Wednesday, February 13, I will be in Montalto, God willing, to open the mission since I could not continue after Toscanella because of the sickness of Father John Baptist, who is better by the grace of God. I end at your feet

216. Paul has given the mission at Toscanella. There at the retreat to the Franciscan sisters he met Sister Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi, whom he began directing for many years. See the letter of March 28, 1743, to the abbess of the convent when he mentioned Sister Colomba Gertrude. The reader needs to distinguish her from Sister Colomba of the Carmelite convent in Vetralla.

and ask you to bless me, and with full esteem and veneration of a true heart I sign myself,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

344

Agnes Grazi (127)

Presentation
February 11, [1743]

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am sending you the powder. Crush it in a mortar and then take it with a little wine with the same dose as before. If your illness does not end, repeat the dose.

I rejoice in God that you are sick, for that is pleasing to the Highest Good. Be indifferent to good health or bad. Take advantage of your illness to despise yourself, knowing yourself to be so vile and abominable.

Continue your usual method of prayer and be a companion to the gentle Jesus in the desert, making a bouquet of all his sufferings and in spirit putting them on the bosom of your soul. These are the flowers that please the Divine Spouse, who rejoices that your soul, his spouse, carries that bouquet and presents it to him with a loving, sorrowful remembrance. God will teach you all, but make yourself smaller and smaller, always more a child and, to put it in one word, always more nothing. Cast that nothing into the Infinite All, who is God.

In a short time I will be leaving for the mission. You should be calling out to God that it will bear fruit. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am writing to Father Alonso.

Your servant in God,
Paul of the Cross

345

Agnes Grazi (128)

Presentation
February 20, [1743]

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter, and I see you are telling me that it is the Will of God that I come to Orbetello. But you are mistaken to believe that is a secret revelation. For now, you must stay united to the Divine Will and desire only what pleases God. When God wills that I come there, I will come, and you will know. Now, if you have need of something, write me. It would be better not to write so often. Enough! I leave you free.

Pray His Divine Majesty that you do his Holy Will, and do me the favor of being silent and keeping busy with your own tasks. Pray much for your

family, especially for your uncle, that God may give him the grace to live in accord with his state. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your servant,
Paul of the †

346

Agnes Grazi (129)

March 20, [1743]
Aboard ship.

Jesus

Yesterday, I received your letter, in which I see that His Divine Majesty continues his mercies toward your soul. So be always more grateful. I will not fail to do what you ask, but the question is whether I will be heard, for I am always further from God because of my evil life and, therefore, under a fearful scourge. But I already see that I must let go of everything and take my place in a corner with rosary in hand. Pray for me and Jesus bless you.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

347

Agnes Grazi (130)

Portercole
March 23, [1743])
Three hours after evening bell.

Live the holy †

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I read your letter while on the lagoon, and I thank you for the charity you continue toward me. I am too ungrateful, but I assure you that my heart holds a burning desire that you love God always more, and to that end I willingly serve your soul. Understand my daughter, when you are able to confer less with me, you have more time to confer with God. The more you are deprived of the consolation of dealing with your spiritual director, there will be the more abundant consolation of the Holy Spirit. Continue then as usual and do not hesitate, my daughter. You are not deceived. Stay humble, secret, despised and subject to all, and despoiled of all that is not God. Pray for a poor fellow who is in an abyss of miseries and in great danger.

I will stop by there on Easter Tuesday and will continue my journey to the missions. We will have a chance to speak together for a half-hour in a holy conference. Be quiet and take pains to force yourself to wait until then. Take food as best you can. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your poor servant,
Paul

Presentation
March 28, 1743

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Mother in Christ,

I am happy that Your Reverence is once more serene. I would not want you to be upset by these temptations because temptations against which we fight purify the soul like gold in a furnace.

I will not fail to recommend Sister Gianotti to God, and woe to her soul if she does not correspond to the loving delicacies that God is giving her.

Tell Sister Colomba Gertrude that her letters have been given prompt replies, except for one in which she spoke to me about keeping her fast until the evening on the day of Holy Communion. I replied to that one in the last post. I sent the letter to Orbetello by boat when I had a mission for the shepherds and country people, etc. The letter was addressed to Your Reverence.

I am unhappy that she has not received it, and I will not write further, for I do not wish my letters to be criticized by the curious and the things of God to be held in derision.

Also tell her to let the confessor and Canon Rosati know they should not come to make a retreat at our Retreat since there will be no one there to give the retreat, for at Easter time we will leave for the diocese of Genoa, where we will be until the middle of June.²¹⁸ Ask Sister Colomba Gertrude and Sister Angela to support me with their prayers, Communions and other exercises of piety in the great labors I will have in this large population. I take delight in God over the virtues they will exercise. But, seeing that my letters can be lost, I do not intend to write further. Although my letters can be read in public, it is not fitting that the things of God should be exposed to the curious. God bless you, and let them pray for me and not write further, for I am leaving at Easter. In haste I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

The confessor and Canon Rosati can delay their coming to the Retreat for the spiritual exercises until the House is finished since we are building for that purpose now, and at this time we do not have a decent place for the retreatants. Let them know all this.

217. Maria De Angelis is the abbess of the Poor Clares in Toscanella.

218. Paul had given a retreat to the Poor Clares at Toscanella in January. He writes now that he will be away after Easter until June, giving a mission at Chiavari in the diocese of Genoa, where Paul had friends and supporters. Paul and his brother John Baptist did go there and began the mission. The cardinal archbishop of Genoa gave the necessary faculties but evidently failed to request the approval of the Senate of the Republic of Genoa. Complaints were made by some missionaries that "foreigners" were coming into their area! The Senate ordered them to leave at once. Perhaps this was the reason that he did not exercise his role as a missionary preacher throughout all of Italy.

Agnes Grazi (131)

[Presentation]

April 9, [1743]

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am sending you your pen and three new ones which I have prepared; I hope they write well. Pray Jesus that he be pleased with me and imprint his Sufferings in my heart. Remember to live always more annihilated in the immense Good, all penetrated with love of your divine Beloved Spouse. Jesus fill you up with his blessings more and more. Amen.

When you write, never omit telling me what happens in prayer and your temptations — all that seems necessary — and leave out the superfluous.

Above all, believe what I write you in order to have it be fruitful. The devil will work with diabolical astuteness, pretending something good in order to make you disbelieve and not follow what I say. Embrace obedience and fear not.

Paul, Your Servant in Christ

Agnes Grazi (132)

Presentation

April 15, [1743]

J.M.J.

I received your letter with the note, but I do not know how to answer. A dry well has no water. The lights you tell me about with regard to the work make no sense at all. My status is always more miserable. I am going to conduct this mission, and when I am there, if God wishes that I return, the work will make my resolutions clearer. Pray for me and God bless you. Strive to be faithful to God and observe what I told you.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (133)

Portercole

May 28, [1743]

While giving a mission.

*Live Jesus.**The love of Jesus be always in your heart.*

I received your letter. I do not have time to reply to all you wish because of the business of the mission. I tell you, however, make nothing out of what you have seen. To know if the work is of God or a trick of the devil, you need to know the effects it causes. The secure way is to make nothing out of it and humble yourself. There is no sin here in any way. Embrace the cross of suffering for the love of God, etc.

Signore James sends his respects and has told me that they may come, and since they are patrons, the whole household is at your disposal.

I end by leaving you in the Side of Jesus. If you ever go to the convent, I ask you to quietly tell Sister M. Magdalene, whom I am assisting in Jesus Christ for her soul's sake, that I am not able to answer because of the preoccupations of the holy mission. But in time I will reply. Let her go ahead as best she can. God bless you.

Your servant in Jesus,

Paul Danei of the Holy †

352

Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (2)

Presentation
June 12, 1743

J. C. P.

Reverend Canon,

I am responding in haste to your welcome letter that I received this evening, and I find in it the good dispositions of the devout clerics and the priest Calpiani. These are dear to me. As soon as I got to the Retreat, I wrote to you, and although I believe you will have received it, I will repeat what I said there. In case the letter has gone astray, I reverently tell you that I gave instructions that they send these novices soon. Since I have not had further word regarding Father Calpiani, I was doubtful about his coming, but now I am happy about his firmness in coming. I would, however, hope that they shall have left and will not prolong the delay. In any case, they are asked to arrive at least by the first of July.

The Retreat is almost full of servants of God who have come a short time back, and we have one great prospect of perfection, known by me previously. Oh, see how God acts and the jokes he plays on us poor ones! On returning from the convent I told you about, I passed by Toscanella, where I had a mission this spring, to look for a good site to build a Retreat. There is a devout sanctuary located in fine solitude. The whole city enthusiastically desires to see this done quickly and entirely from the charity of that town. They are only waiting for my consent to give it to us. On that journey I was also encouraged by the lights of a great servant of God, foundress of that convent, whom I have known for many years.

I am writing in great haste and have no time to say more because the community is waiting for me. I will not fail to pray and have prayers offered for the youngster whom you called to my attention. But my prayers can do more evil than good.

I ask for your blessing and prayers, and end.

Your unworthy servant and son in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

In the Retreat we are twelve and there are only four open cells, possibly only two. Another building is called for. I rejoice much over the coming of our good Lombards.

Canon Blaise Pieri (4)

Presentation
June 12, 1743

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

Behold poor Paul, after a long silence, come to your feet to tell you of the necessity we have to establish another Retreat in the near future since we have room for only three, while we expect five candidates. So you can see our need.

So, beloved canon, work for the glory of God so that the difficulties be removed. Speak to Sister Colomba so that she may pray for us. You are aware of the secrecy with which this matter must be treated in order to block the path of the devil, etc.

The prayers and lights of souls very united with God have prompted me to go to Toscanella to visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Oak,²¹⁹ where there is a site in good air to found a Retreat. And although I went about this business with great secrecy, news spread quickly through the city about my reason for coming to the sanctuary. I believe the whole city is wild with a desire to see the foundation made quickly. This simply amazes me.

A Retreat there would not prevent the establishment of the one of Saint Michael since Toscanella is in another diocese. We have the right in our Rules to establish one Retreat in a diocese, especially in the salt marshes, etc.

I strongly recommend Sister Colomba and beg her to continue her devout prayers for poor me and all the Retreat so that His Divine Majesty will bring to perfection the work begun.

Here, we have Father Pastorelli, a great servant of God, who is quite happy and with great ease is following our penitential life, which, as you know, is quite discreet. Oh, the great Providence of God! Believe me, if His Divine Majesty keeps this man for us, it will be a great mercy for us and neighbor. He needs only the permission of his superiors and then he will be vested, etc. If they raise any obstacles, and I do not expect that, there are other convenient ways which would obviate all difficulties, as I hope. If God sends us two more candidates, as I expect, it will be a great provision for the Retreat we are planning to establish since, in addition to preaching, in which the one is well placed, the other is a professor in philosophy and theology, which will be beneficial to our young men and be a great source of piety for them. Enough! Let us pray and leave the accomplishment to God. Have the goodness to communicate all this to Sister Colomba, a true servant of the Most High, so that she can take it up with God and tell me her opinion. I ask you to continue your holy prayers and holy sacrifices for us, and with full esteem and reverence from a true heart I reaffirm myself,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

219. Our Lady of the Oak, often referred to as "The Oak."

Presentation
June 19, 1743

Live our sweetest sacramental Love!

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am answering your letter today, for we have celebrated First Vespers of the Octave of our Infinite Sacramental Love. I would say great things to you, but he who does not love does not know how to speak of love, for this language is taught only by love.

I read your letter yesterday when I was in Orbetello on my way back to the Retreat toward evening. My poor spirit spoke great things to your heart. Enough ... "Let the earth be silent before the great God."

I repeat, I would say great things to you, but I am dumb. Listen, my daughter, to the Divine Lover and let him teach you. I wish to be burnt to ashes by love. Ah, I do not know what to say! I want more than I know how to say. Ah! my great God, teach me how to speak. I would be all aflame with love, even more I would know how to sing in the fire of love and magnify the great mercies that Uncreated Love imparts to my soul.

But tell me, my daughter, should not a poor, villainous father be thankful to God for the immensely great graces that God is giving to his daughter? That is so, but I do not know how to do that; I want to, but cannot. I tremble with the desire to love this great God more. That is little. To be reduced to ashes for him is little. What shall we do? Ah! let us live a life in continual agony of dying for love of our Divine Lover. But can you believe that I have spoken well? No, for I would say more, but I know not how to do so. Do you know how I can console myself somewhat? By being pleased that our great God is that Infinite Good that he is, and that no one can praise him and love him as much as he merits.

I rejoice that he infinitely loves himself. I rejoice in this essential beatitude that he has in himself without any need of anyone. But I am a fool, and would it not be better if I, as a moth, cast myself entirely into that loving flame and there in the silence of love were burnt up, caused to vanish, lost in the Divine All? But this is a work of love, and I make myself always unprepared for this happy loss in love because of my evil life.

And you are an ingrate, to say the least, for you do not encourage me with a word, for you know our contract that we wish to be equal in love and we wish to love more than all else. You sit at the banquet, and your poor father dies of hunger. Such a beautiful sight! The daughter at a banquet and her poor father has a hard, black scrap and nothing to drink?

Be aware that my being is so dried up that rivers are not enough to quench me. If I drink whole seas, I will not relieve my thirst. But, be aware that I wish

220. Once again Paul shares his peace and joy with Agnes. We can compare this letter with Paul's letter of August 29, 1737, to Agnes. Note also the mention of the "agreement" or "contract" Paul and Agnes have made with one another. Paul also speaks of Father Pastorelli, who becomes Father Mark Aurelius and one of Paul's closest followers. He will become a professor for many years at the Vetralla Retreat of San Angelo.

to drink seas of fire, of love. Say to your Divine Spouse that you will not leave, you will not cease to make supplication day and night until you obtain a favorable rescript for both of us. But you drink, and not I. How does that stand? This is our contract? Ah, you are reduced to silence! Enough! For now I pardon you.

Do not be surprised at my complaint. Have compassion on my hunger and thirst, and ask for relief. For tomorrow I wish to give you a beautiful gift: the day of solemnization of Love. You cannot believe what great things I have said to your spirit, and how many times I have told you to be clothed in grand style for a feast.

I recommend that you be thankful to God and stay in the knowledge of your nothingness, knowing you are capable of every evil. But allow this nothing to disappear in the Infinite All as usual. Take those flights that your Spouse encourages. Let yourself be guided by him. Keep your soul in a holy, filial liberty, and receive minute by minute the impressions with which the Divine Lover favors you.

Recommend more and more to God this work which is common to us.

We need to establish at least one more House. Pray God to give me light to know if I should accept the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak, which they wish to build up again. They claim the air is good and light. I am fearful. Pray that God give me light, for there is need of it, and also light for the Retreat in Vetralla, etc.

Oh, if you only knew what sanctity I desire for you! And how much I fear that you may not be faithful to God. But then I become confident because love will make you faithful. Write me a bit with each post, if you can, for in this way you will make up for the time in which I have no account of you, that is, the times when I am away. And you know well it is important to keep the accounts correctly so as not to err on the way, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

I wish that you give me a further account of the way you understand what you told me about our Congregation. Was it a light in pure faith? Was your soul uplifted in God in a special way, etc.? Did you hear clear words or an understanding in the essence of your soul, etc.?

This morning Father Pastorelli, a true servant of God, was vested with rare devotion. He has been a priest of Christian Doctrine and now has the name of Father Marcus Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament. Pray much for him and tell Sister Angela Rose to pray. Pray that God give him strength to persevere. Believe me, he is a great worker, capable of giving missions and all else. Oh, what a great Providence! In a short time we will vest the others. Pray God I am not making mistakes in accepting candidates, etc.

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (11)

Presentation
June 19, 1743

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

On my return to the Retreat I received with great edification your welcome letter with the printed announcement calling for a meeting of the clergy for mental prayer. I rejoice that the merciful Lord has blessed your holy intentions. I and my companions will use all diligence to promote and spread this great good. Experience has made me personally know how difficult it is to instill among the clergy this holy exercise, so necessary for their own perfection and for the profit of their neighbor. Believe me, it took me years before I succeeded in persuading the clergy on missions and in retreats to come together once a week. This lasted for a short time and then was discontinued. We are in calamitous times and piety is very cold and vice is so rampant. If God does not provide a remedy, I do not know what will happen. To me it seems that His Divine Majesty intends to undertake a campaign with scourge in hand, and I think I see the coming of that scourge.

Enough! Be sure that we will spare no labor to spread this holy practice, on which depends the reform of the poor laity, who, when they see the clergy reforming themselves, will then attend to their own duties — and on the contrary ...

Our Retreat is almost full, so much so that all our lay brothers are in one room. Only three cells are empty, and we are expecting other candidates.

I have good reason to believe that God wishes great things for his greater glory. Oh, if I had the time, or better, the chance to speak face-to-face, you would hear of the great mercies that God is granting. We have need that His Holiness grant the ordination of our clerics; otherwise, we will not be able to expand this holy work. I have no doubt we will be given that grace because our Holy Father has at heart the growth of this least Congregation, which is his creation. The Congregation of Christian Doctrine, made up of secular priests, has the right to have their clerics ordained under title of the Congregation, and we are Least Clerics Regular. I hope we will not be any less favored than they are. At this time I am not asking you to take any steps since, first of all, everything needs to be taken into consideration and a formal request submitted.

I have not been bold enough to write Monsignor Millo. If you think it well that I do so, I will gladly do it. And I, too, have hopes that he will cooperate in obtaining this grace, and I want to believe that he will engage the Cardinal Camerlengo,²²¹ to whom he should speak about a great soul,²²² of whom he has great esteem.

Here we are at work on establishing another House since we cannot continue as we are. The city of Toscanella is wildly eager to give us a

221. This refers to a position, not a person's name.

222. Probably referring to the very holy Carmelite nun, Sister Colomba.

sanctuary in solitude etc., but I have some fears about the air. Now I am recommending the affair to God, that he dispose according to his glory. I will give you a report of everything as things go along.

I think Cardinal Rezzonico will have departed. For that reason and not to be in error, I am not writing to Rome since I am not sure if he has left.

I prostrate at you feet, asking for your prayers and holy blessing, and for all the Retreat, and with profound reverence and from a true heart reaffirm myself,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Bishop Alexander Abbati (8)

Presentation
June 19, 1743

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Shortly after my return to this Retreat, I received a request from Sister Gertrude Salandri to come to conduct a retreat at the convent of Valentano, as I have done. On my way back I decided to indulge my devotion by visiting Our Lady of the Oak. At that time I observed that the place was fit for the foundation of a Retreat. And now, since our present Retreat is filled with servants of God, we have the need to establish another House. I am being brief not to weary Your Excellency. The authorities of Toscanella have offered to give us this place outright with the universal approval of all in Toscanella. We are holding off from taking that step because of fear about the air, etc. However, people have shown me that it is a suitable site and that the air is healthy. There are rooms at Our Lady of the Oak that would serve for retreats to the clergy and also for the laity — to their great spiritual advantage.

So for now, would you recommend the business to God, and, if His Divine Majesty give us light that such a Retreat would be for the glory of God, I doubt not for a minute that the matchless zeal of Your Excellency would involve himself in the affair, all the more so since it is a question of a work that would be, as God wills it, very helpful to your beloved flock. I have also written to Canon Blaise Pieri of Vetralla that he would cooperate for the fulfillment of what has already been ceded to us, as you know, at Mount Fogliano. In accord with my poor light, I would hope that the Retreat of Saint Michael in Fogliano be established before the other one contemplated in Toscanella, for we feel safer about the air in Fogliano.

I will not take a step without the consent of Your Excellency. However, concerning the Retreat at Vetralla, that has already, to our edification, been designated as turned over to us.

I hope in the merciful Lord, who strongly and sweetly disposes everything, that there will be an abundant rain of graces over all your beloved diocese, and in that way your holy desires will be fulfilled. I pray that you continue your

prayers and holy sacrifices. At the same time I ask you to forgive my mistakes because I am writing with dizziness, caused by the sun on my journey.

I end with my profound reverence and ask your holy pastoral blessing. I kiss the hem of your pastoral robes.

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

357

Canon Blaise Pieri (5)

June 19, 1743²²³

Most Reverend Canon,

I am sending a second letter. Prostrate at your feet, I lay out the urgent necessity we have for the foundation of the Retreat of Saint Michael on Mount Fogliano. You should be the promoter of this for the greater glory of God and the spiritual profit of your native place and other places nearby. Dear Canon, now is the time to show to God a heart that is loving, strong, and generous in order to overcome all the assaults of the enemy armed against this holy work. Oh, if you could only speak out! you will experience the great mercies that God will grant here, the great deeds that God wishes done for his greater glory. And what is that lover of the cross, Sister Colomba, doing? This is not the time for long sleeps, but to be awake in God's work. Let her write to Rome. They have a Cardinal Protector for Vetralla, whose name I cannot recall, and there are others. God uses such means. Spreading devotion to the Holy Cross among the faithful is important to her; she will see to it, I do not doubt. We are left without protectors by the loss of those who were taken by death, and Cardinal Rezzonico is now bishop of Padua. But God is for us and for all. I am writing in a hurry.

This morning Father Pastorelli was vested with rare devotion because of the fervor of his good heart. He cannot wait until the other novices are vested shortly. Recommend him to the prayers of Sister Colomba, but let them be from the heart, for God has visited us with a great Providence.

He has retained his baptismal name, as we are accustomed to do, but changed his family name, and is Father Mark Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament. Let them pray much that God will sustain him. His superiors wrote that they could not deny him permission and had closely examined his vocation.

I am more needy now and recommend myself much, along with all our poor community. I pay you my humble respects, and in the holy Side of Jesus I am with true heart,

Your Reverence's, humble, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

223. Amedeo assigns this date because Mark Aurelius was vested on June 19, 1743.

358
Agnes Grazi (135)

Presentation
June 29, 1743

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I did not reply to your letter because there was no opportunity. Now I can tell you that one day this week, perhaps Wednesday, I will be in Orbetello and will hear you as best I can. When the cross is more painful and penetrating, things are going better; when creatures are more contrary, we advance more to union with the Creator. Conduct yourself like a good infant, be above yourself, do not lose sight of your own nothingness, and let us disappear in the Divine All. Do not be afraid of the attacks of the devils; mock them. Rejoice that God tries you in this way. When devils make a greater uproar, it is a sign the soul is closer to God.

On the Feast of the Visitation we will vest our novices. Offer your Holy Communion for them and for me, praying God that he will give them perseverance in perfection, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

359
Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (1)²²⁴

Peschiera
July 10, 1743

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I did reply promptly to your letter in which you gave me an account of the great mercies imparted to you by the Divine Compassion in your prayer, especially on the great Solemnity of our Infinite Sacramental Love, but I do not know whether you have received my letter. I know I have no letters besides that first one. Now, after my leaving there, I have received no letter except the one I referred to above, along with one enclosed from Sister Angela Rose. Take the trouble to find out how things stand. I enclosed one for Signore Matthew Ceturini. Or do what seems best to you. Let us do the Will of God.

Things are well with you, my daughter? Is it not true that your heart would fly on high? But you must be patient and wait until the Divine Spouse gives you permission. I hear from Sister Angela Rose that you are sick with a fever. I would hope that you will be obedient until death, and even after death. You know that you do not have permission to go out of prison and go to your homeland, for the poor father whom His Divine Majesty has given you to guide your soul wishes — if that be pleasing to the great God — to come back

224. This is Paul's first letter to Sister Gandolfi. There are fifty-five letters to her, the last being dated 1766. In this very first letter to Toscanella, Paul writes that already he is the director God has given her and that she must not go to heaven too soon, for he needs her! He hopes she will laugh at his "insanity," *pazzia* in Italian.

there to wish you a good journey to paradise. And now you want to leave me so soon, when my need is now the greater?

As soon as the work of our Congregation is solidly established, you may depart in peace. That is the permission I give you. Are you laughing a bit at my insanity? I hope His Divine Majesty will pardon my playful speech. I believe that the Cross of your gentle Jesus will have taken deep roots in your heart, and that you will sing: "Suffer and not to die," or better, "Either to suffer or to die," or even better, "Neither to suffer nor to die, but only to be completely transformed into the Divine Good Pleasure."

Love is a unitive virtue and causes a person to take on the pains of the well-Beloved. If you feel yourself penetrated within and without by the sufferings of your Spouse, celebrate a feast. But let that feast take place in the furnace of Divine Love, for the fire that will penetrate to the marrow of your bones will transform the lover into the Beloved, combining in a wonderful way love and sorrow, but so much so that you cannot distinguish love from sorrow or sorrow from love so that the loving soul rejoices in its sorrow and celebrates a feast over its sorrowful love.

I think you understand my insanity. Remain in your nothingness and in the exercise of virtue, especially the imitation of our gentle Jesus in his suffering, for this is the great achievement of pure love.

I told you in my letter that the Retreat is full of servants of God, but I always fear. Oh, what a rage the devil is having over this work! I already asked you to pray that, if it be the Will of God, we have a Retreat there, but you have not replied. So I think you did not receive my letter. Now it has been decided, and I am petitioning the city that desires to have the Retreat. Pray His Divine Majesty that, if this is not pleasing to him, he block it. I hope to do the Will of God, but I always fear. Pray strongly.

I desire that in your sickness you take a strengthening soup, well strained, or with bread crumbs, rice, barley, wheat, or whatever the Mother Abbess will provide for you. If you are unable to take meat, patience, at least take fresh eggs. Take care of yourself, but if you see that you cannot, go ahead as God wills. But you do your part. After trying once or twice, if your stomach accepts the food, continue; if not ...

I am writing from the fish market, where I have come to bless it. Pray for our good novices and for me, more novice than any, for I am in my usual great need.

Be of good heart. The walls are crumbling and soon we will come out of our prison. But I expect that you will emerge with the merit of holy obedience, so I am hoping that God will give me reasons to have you die joyfully. If you continue to be humble, as I expect, your death will not be death, but life. Continue to love our Uncreated Love so that Infinite Love will send into your heart one of his fiery darts and set your heart afire, and your soul, with the power of love, will break out of the prison of the body and fly to take its repose in eternal Infinite Love. Oh death, sweeter than life itself! Oh death, that breaks the bond and chains of this body to have the soul fly to the freedom

of the children of God! I end quickly and pray the fullness of God's blessing
for you, and I am,
Your servant,
Paul of the †

360

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (12)

Presentation
July 16, 1743

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father,

My many occupations have kept me from sending the letter for Monsignor Millo, which I wrote yesterday, for I had a few minutes to spare. From that letter which I am enclosing, you will see where things are. I would only notify you that two more clerics have arrived. And from Lombardy, the Canon Penitentiary²²⁵ of the cathedral in Alessandria, who is my old confessor and directed me when I was a layman, is sending me four more whom he has approved. I can trust this learned servant of the Most High. So it seems that God wishes to bless this work with a generous hand. You can be sure that the workers of this least Congregation will not spare themselves in promoting the holy gatherings of clerics in accord with your plans.

I end at your feet and recommend myself always more to your prayers, and with humble reverence proclaim myself in a hurry,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

361

Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (3)

Presentation
July 18, 1743

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Canon,

May the most Holy Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts, and may the sweet balsam which flows from that holy tree perfume our spirit so that, sacrificed as holocausts to the High Good, His Divine Majesty may accept us as victims of love in an odor of sweetness. Amen.

I did not reply immediately to your welcome letter for my poor donkey is loaded down with not a few burdens, etc. Now I am replying to the second-to-the-last of those I received yesterday. I tell you reverently that I have decided to have these good young men come when it cools down, but not in September, for at that time the air is bad here. It would be well if they could come in the middle of October. They should not come accompanied with their relatives, for, as it seems sensible to me, that achieves greater detachment.

225. The Canon Penitentiary is the primary confessor for a diocese and governs the practice of the sacrament of Penance in the diocese.

Father Pulziani will be director of novices for their journey, and along with the holy instructions they will receive from you, they can use the time well while they are coming to the Mount of Myrrh in order to better dispose themselves to taste that divine wine, honey, milk, and fire that flow from the sacred Wounds of our Crucified Love. I am writing to a friend who is providing a benefactor in Genoa to help the young men find shipping. He will give them precautionary advice for their conduct, etc.

Now, the Retreat is full and there is no more room. All the cells are occupied. So it is necessary that the four lay brothers be housed in one room to make room for the priests and clerics. It is true that I hope to take possession of a Retreat in Toscanella when the weather cools and, perhaps, even the one in Vetralla, for things are progressing well there. But we have the opposition of these blessed servants of God, the Frati, even though we have promised not to quest. Enough! "If God is for us, who can be against?"

These good sons, along with the unworthy one who is writing, number fourteen in all and compete to see who can do the more, be the humblest, the most mortified, first in choir, etc. I have never yet seen such fervor. Oh, great God! how rich you are in your mercies, which shine above all your works! The devil makes a great uproar, and we are in need of prayer from everyone. The plague has reached this land, but only in one village in Calabria. God deliver us, but I fear that God wishes to make a great punishment of sinners.

A great soul in such familiar communication with God — I know of none like her — writes me in almost every letter that God is angry with Christendom, especially with the clergy, etc. This makes me fear the more that His Divine Majesty does not wish to listen to these dear ones of his when they pray that he be appeased. I am not writing of the feelings I experience, for they are too strong. Ah poor world! God has had patience for a short while, but now he has begun to wield the sword.

Now look at what God has had me do on missions. For about ten years I have been doing them, but I do not know how. But God has had me say, and I have announced, to the people that, if they do not profit from our missions, His Divine Majesty will make one of his own missions, but a fearful one. I said this in stronger terms and more expressive than I am writing here.

I beg your pardon for the length and superfluous things here, but my pride is too much. Pray His Divine Majesty for me that he have mercy on me, for, if the scourge comes, I will be among the first to sacrifice my poor life. Therefore, I have need of prayer so that His Divine Majesty will grant me the grace of true contrition in order to die penitent, for I am a great sinner. Bless me, and be assured that we do not neglect to pray for you in accord with the holy intentions you expressed to me. I break off in haste and am from a true heart,

Your unworthy servant and son in Christ,

Paul of the Cross

Greet our vicar general for me and all your household.

Agnes Grazi (136)

Presentation
August 24, 1743

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I have just received your note, and in reply I tell you that I will make every effort to be there Wednesday morning. Do take care to show yourself more faithful than ever to His Divine Majesty by remaining on the holy cross with great indifference of spirit, showing yourself to be able to be quiet, serene, and tranquil without complaining, but sweetly drink from the chalice that Jesus Christ is giving you, which seems bitter to our senses, but sweet to the spirit because it enriches beyond all measure.

The walls of the prison are crumbling more and more, and we may believe that the poor prisoner will be taking her flight to the holy freedom of the children of God. Aspire after that dear homeland, give your spirit its freedom to make holy flights of love, etc., but, above all, drink with great love at the chalice of the Savior and become totally intoxicated. How? With complete suffering and complete love, mix one with the other; rather, cast this drop of suffering that is yours into the sea of sufferings of your Divine Spouse. Behold, your soul becomes all love and is immersed totally in pure love and pure suffering, and is penetrated within and without. Do not lose sight of your unworthiness, vileness, etc, standing alone in your annihilation in order to be raised the more in God. I end in haste. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am, as God knows,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

Canon Blaise Pieri (6)

Presentation
August 26, 1743

Most Reverend Father,

I have been deprived of your letters for a long time and am writing this letter, although I no longer know how to direct them since the passes are closed.²²⁶ I hear from the governor that things are going well for the establishment of our Retreat, and there is great need for that. He did not write to me, but to Sister Gertrude Salandri, who gave me the information and told me to petition the Sacred Congregation of Good Government. In order to be obedient, I am sending a qualified man in Rome the minutes of the petition so that it will be presented in good form to the Sacred Congregation. I am sending the minutes by ordinary post to the governor there so it will serve as a norm to clear away the old difficulties with regard to the known reasons of the Capuchin Fathers. I am asking the governor to see that the people, or

226. The passes are closed due to the War of the Austrian Succession.

community of Vetralla, petition the Congregation enthusiastically. It would be better that they petition Our Lord by laying out the necessity they are under to have workers to cooperate in their eternal salvation. I am recommending all this to your charity, and you can try to have an interview with the governor to decide on a plan of proceeding so that, insofar as the passes are closed, we can readjust our plans so that when the roads are open we can immediately move to the establishment of the Retreat.

I recommend myself to the holy prayers of Sister Colomba, whom I greet devoutly in the Side of Jesus, and I rejoice that she is intoxicated on that divine wine that emerges from the Wounds of Crucified Love. Tell her that things go very well, and that the good servants of God are in competition to serve His Divine Majesty faithfully. Oh, the great mercy God has wrought! I end in haste, and I am from a true heart,

Your Reverence's unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

364

Agnes Grazi (137)²²⁷

Presentation
August 31, 1743

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am coming to visit your spirit with this unworthy little note. As the Divine Spouse holds you in his infinite mercy with him on the cross, even though this be little, for you are a tiny one, now you must stay more than ever on the cross of your dear Savior. I behold you with a clearer eye, more than usual, since that divine liquor that flows from this tree of life has purified my darkness and blindness.

Courage! Read these verses sent to you by poor, unworthy Paul, given to you by God as director of your soul. Pray God that you may well understand the treasure there is in holy suffering. I have no more time. Continue to recommend me to God, for I am in my usual storms. That is what is pleasing to God; that is what I merit. Thanks be to God. Jesus inflame you with love and bless you. I beg you to remain above yourself so as to always know how vile you are, unworthy of any good, and deserving of every punishment. This is an incontestable truth. I end in haste for it is dark.

Live the Holy Cross

Only, only on the Cross
Comes the soul to ripe perfection
Fervent, constant counting loss
Every non-divine dilection.

Nella Croce il Sant'Amore
Perfeziona l'alma amante
Quando fervida e costante
Gli consacra tutt'il cuore

227. This letter has another beautiful poem from Paul's pen and heart. Earlier in the letter of August 24, 1743, Paul had written to Agnes about death. She died on June 1, 1744, and was buried in the church at the Presentation Retreat on Mount Argentario.

Oh, if I the news might bring
How the One-in-Trinity
Hides in bitter suffering
Treasure of Divinity.

Since it is a secret thing
Only to the loving known
I, in darkness, wandering
Hail afar the fair unknown.

Yet I know that heart is blessed,
Abandoned on the Cross of shame,
In a high embrace unguessed,
Burned in Love's consuming flame.

Yea! And double blessed is he,
By this flame no longer warmed,
Who in purest agony
Into Christ is thus transformed

Happy he who suffers pain
Yet this treasure would forego
Counting self and all things vain
Save His love Who wounds him so!

Take this lesson that I send
From the Cross that Jesus bore.
But in prayer your perfect Friend
Will instruct you more and more.
Amen!

O! se lo sapessi dire
Quel tesoro alto e divono
Che il gran Dio Uno e Trino
Ha riposto nel patire!

Ma perchè è un grand'arcano
All'amante sol scoperto
Io che non sono esperto
Sol l'ammiro da lontano.

Fortunato è quel cuore
Che sta in croce abbandonato
Nelle braccia dell'amato
Brucia sui di Sant'Amore

Ancor più è avventurato
Che nel suo nudo patire
Senza ombra di gioire
Sta in Cristo trasformato

Oh, felice chi patisce
Senza attacco al suo patire
Ma sol vuol a sè morire
Per più amar chi lo ferisce

Io ti do questa lezione
Dalla Croce di Gesù
Ma l'imparerai tu più
Nella santa orazione.
Amen!

Do not write me for you are not able. Let me know by word how you are
and stay hidden to all.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Saint Anthony

May 21²²⁹

Leaving for a mission.

*The Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary
be always in your heart. Amen.*

I thank the infinite goodness of God, who enriches your soul by purifying it with the fire of temptation and suffering. Live Jesus.

Do not be pained at the temptation that came to you at the time of prayer, the temptation to despise the Lord and take no part in his sufferings. This is a test from God to prove your fidelity and to bring great good from it. Be assured on my conscience that you committed no sin; actually, you have much merit. The sure sign is the grief you are experiencing. Oh, how precious is this pain, this affliction! These are the joys with which the Heavenly Spouse adorns the faithful soul and has her share in the treasures of his Passion. Quiet yourself down then and be at peace.

Above all, take care never to get upset at any temptation, no matter how grievous it may be. When the worst thoughts come to you, get rid of them promptly. If they persist, make your affirmation that you would rather die than sin and have no doubt that the devil will leave beaten. Now is the time of fighting; let us struggle with great courage, for our God has prepared an eternal crown. O dear sufferings! O dear tribulations! which prepare such a great good. Be joyful, therefore. May Jesus live!

If such a temptation comes again, of the kind you wrote about to me, kiss the cross you carry with you, or your rosary, and then say, but with fervor: "Ah, Jesus my dear Redeemer! My Eternal God, I adore you! I love you! Ah, my dear God, would that I could die of sorrow! O Eternal God! may all creatures adore you for me. I tremble, O my Highest Good, with reverence for your Name! O Most Holy Name! O Sweetest Name! O Sweet Name of my Jesus! O Name that makes heaven, earth, and hell tremble!" Use such ejaculatory prayers anytime you like, especially at time of temptation, mentally, one at a time, with a dart of your heart toward God, but without forcing head or breast. Do it gently, etc.

I am not sending the book, for it is too full of mistakes, and I think you have a good book on the Passion. When I come I will provide you with whatever is necessary for the time being. Step by step I will take care of things, and I hope there will not be wanting to me books and concepts to give you for your perfection. I much desire that you would come to the General Communion and the Papal Blessing, but I cannot write to your uncle. It would

228. The previous letter of August 31, 1743, is the final letter to Agnes with a complete date. At this point in the Italian edition, Amedeo inserted the remaining twenty-eight undated or partially dated letters to Agnes. We also include the remaining undated letters at this point.

229. Internal evidence shows this letter was written in 1736 or before. Note that Paul is writing from Saint Anthony which he left the summer of 1737. Paul also signed this letter with his surname, which he seldom does after late 1737.

be well for you to suggest it to them, and I would hope that they will allow you to do that.

I greet in Jesus Christ your sisters, and I pray that they will love our sweet Jesus much, also your sister-in-law and all. I am not saying you should not speak with her. I leave you free. God bless you. Make holy prayer in the midst of all pain, remain in the Presence of God, and exercise the holy virtues. Silence is the key that locks in the treasure. Speak at the proper time with all sweetness and modesty.

If you wish to read this to Signora Magdalene, I leave you free, for I do not have time to write her. Let them pray for me, and I leave you in the Heart of Jesus. Amen.

Your true servant in Jesus,

Paul Francis Danei of the Holy †

366

Agnes Grazi (139)

[Mount Argentario]

—²³⁰

Arrived at Mount Tabor.²³¹

Live the Holy Cross.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

Oh, how much I rejoice that our good God is depriving you of all happiness from creatures! This evening on the street I was marveling at the way I had treated my daughter in the confessional. Since I see that it is God who had me administer that blow, I am happy over it and thank God for it. Now, my daughter, how has it affected your heart? Tell me frankly, has a spike gone through it? O my dear Jesus, heal that wound with your ineffable sweetness!

I am completely dedicated to the spiritual service of your soul and, I believe, seek only that you love God. I have always had it as a principle not to be a thief of that holy love, which should go to the Highest Good. On your way, oh my daughter, now that I see that the grace of God has made you willingly receive this wound from your spiritual father, and that you are satisfied to be deprived of your conference in which your soul finds so much comfort. Some other time I will accommodate your desire for the glory of God. Now write me everything and recommend me to the Lord as usual and to Saint Augustine. Goodbye, my daughter. It is now three hours since the evening bell, I believe.

Paul, Your True Servant in God

230. Amedeo suggested this letter was written between 1730 and 1734.

231. Paul uses Mount Tabor as a reference to Mount Argentario.

Agnes Grazi (140)*J.M.J.*

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am sending you the betony.²³² You can ask the doctor about the quantity to boil each time. Spread it out in the shade so it does not turn bad.

You may begin again the Fridays to Saint Francis of Paola. Since he was so humble and wished to be called least, so you should pray that he requests this for me, that we may be truly annihilated before God with true contempt of ourselves and a total union and transformation into the Divine Good Pleasure. Principally, ask this great saint to intercede with His Divine Majesty to send holy servants to this Retreat so that we may promote the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, etc. I desire more and more that you cast yourself as a pure nothing into the abyss of the infinite love of God and follow the loving breath of the Holy Spirit and make your prayer as His Divine Majesty wills.

God is pleased with those who make themselves small and become like little children. These he holds in his divine bosom and nurses them with the divine milk and the divine wine of holy love that intoxicates the one who drinks. But this is a holy inebriation that makes one the wiser.

On your way then, my daughter in Jesus Christ, swim in this sea of infinite love. And to swim with greater agility, let yourself be reduced to ashes as a sacrifice in holocaust, as we said in our conference. These are the ashes that retain the fire of holy love and make it grow all the more. When the poor moth spirals around that divine light, all intent on being inflamed and reduced within to ashes, do not forget to speak to him with great reverence and gratitude and an outburst of love of the wonders he did for us in becoming man, suffering, dying, etc. One or two words can hold your soul in suspense, totally in rapture, totally enamored, and totally melted away and trembling with love and sorrow.

God will teach and reveal his marvels to little ones and hide them from the wise of this world. That is what the Gospel tells us, so listen. Jesus bless you.

Your servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (141)*J.M.J.*

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am replying to your letter in haste, and I tell you that to let me know about that person who pointed me out is a work of charity. For the truth is that she is a good daughter, and, if she said something a bit harsh, that was born

232. A plant used for medicine and dyeing.

from a spirit afflicted and beaten down, whence it is right to put a good appearance on everything. And God gives me the grace to do that, for I interpret everything for the best. Sometimes what seems to be hardheadedness is the effect of strong attacks by the devil. So now I want Agnes to be simple as a child and judge everything for the best, always excusing this party as having good intent, attributing the happening to temptations, however it may appear differently. So you must believe well of everyone, looking on them with great charity in God, and seeing only yourself as evil, hard, and imperfect, humbling and annihilating yourself before God and crying out for mercy. Take courage! The work of charity has been done, and I believe you acted with good intentions. I will do what His Divine Majesty wishes. You are not to speak about it further and not to involve yourself in directing anyone. Be dead and show charity, the same to everyone.

Be careful not to be scrupulous about what I have written, for it was done with good intentions. But you must be careful to bury all this in the fire of divine love so that all will be reduced to cinders, and allow it to disappear entirely from your memory and not think of it further. If some thought should come, throw it into the fire immediately. Pay attention to what I have said and allow your spirit to be entirely absorbed in the Infinite God with strong annihilation. Pray for me.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

369

Agnes Grazi (142)

August 20

May the pure Love of Jesus be always in our hearts.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ,

I received your letter, and I thank Jesus for the charity you continue toward me. I know I told you that God does not wish that I find satisfaction in letters or in anything else. May he be blessed forever. Be careful to reject these visions which divert you from God. The devil makes a great gain when he succeeds in diverting a soul, even a little, from the Sovereign Good. Even if he does not succeed in making you sin, he seeks to impede greater love for God in purity of faith, trying to change himself into an angel of light and bringing various images into your imagination so that the soul is deluded and attaches itself to follies and slips away to amuse itself with visions. It thus abandons that pure loving attention to God, an attention that would inflame the soul with every virtue. Do not give your attention to the furnishing of the royal chamber or the attendants, and certainly not to the jesters, but attach yourself to the King, who has espoused your soul in faith. Be there in rest, abandoned and melting away in love with the highest annihilation and great respect for his Sovereign Majesty.

In this sleep of love there can be no deceit when the soul stays attentive to the Beloved Good. I will give you a nice comparison. A baby keeps itself at

the breast of its mother, taking in its milk with abundance. The milk warms the brain and the sweet little one falls asleep but continues with its small mouth on the nipple of its mother. It sleeps but sucks in the milk. So the soul stays close to the sweet breast of the infinite love of God and takes in the milk of holy love, even if it falls asleep in God, since the powers, overcome by the divine sweetness, cannot remain alert. When we speak together, I will explain this better; however, I am not accustomed to speak of such things.

I see, it seems to me, my work in ruins. I do not know where to throw myself. On every side I encounter terror, horror, fright, and desolation. Believe me, I am wishing for a holy death. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your servant in God,

Paul of the Holy †

370

Agnes Grazi (143)

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter in which I read your groundless worry for fear of losing me. I have no knowledge that I must leave here for good. If you have such knowledge, do me the favor of telling me so I can prepare myself. But I do not believe you have such knowledge. You are to live very detached, even from such a devout affection. You have your spiritual father in God, for our heart is so easily given over to natural affections toward creatures, more than to anything else. Therefore, it is necessary to be very guarded so as not to rob God of what belongs to him and not to bestow it on a sordid creature, even if it is involved in a good end. I confess before God that with all that I am, I love in God the souls I direct, along with others, but I find myself so detached that, if I were not to speak to them or listen to them ever again, and not even see them or even have word of them, I would not be pained over that in the least. Rather, I would love the Will of God in such an event. Thanks to God, I have experienced this, for when I am separated from a soul whom I have directed, I have not felt a moment of pain. If I had been pained, I would have been afraid of attachment, even for a good end, and this would have been reason enough for me to resolve to direct no one any more. Thanks to God, I know for certain that for us there is no affection, except that which is born from the Sovereign Good; this will never change. I ask you to be on your guard so you do not take sick. But if God sends sickness, accept it with joy.

I do not want you to take wormwood²³³ except on Friday at 21 hours, and then only a little. Follow your usual rules and instructions, and continue to

233. An absinthe that was used as a penance.

pray for me that His Divine Majesty give me strength and patience. God bless you. Amen.

Your true servant in God,
Paul of the Holy †

371

Agnes Grazi (144)

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your two letters, and tomorrow, God willing, I will respond in person. But now follow the advice given you and stand on guard over your fortress. The devil knows how to use cleverness. Union of spirit based on God produces great virtue and is good. When these unions are material and seem to be not so much unions of spirit, but of flesh, they are very dangerous, even though they seem to have good effects. The devil is in no hurry to obtain his ends. Therefore, be on guard and cut them off as you normally do with great constancy and humility, for what comes from God will be permanent, and the devil will be beaten.

Your way of life is not a deception, but founded on God. The devil, however, is enraged and is mixing in; he will be shamed, please God. Humble yourself in these skirmishes, take refuge in the fortress of God with a complete annihilation, and command the infernal beast to depart and go to hell. Do this with the loving verse that you know.

I will come tomorrow at an early hour so as to have time to listen to you, but I will have offered Mass so you will be able to go to Communion, etc. Tell Signora Maria Johanna that I would much desire to serve her, but Signora Suplizia has her own confessor. Let her go to him, for I do not know her soul nor am I inspired with regard to any other. In case she persists, let her come tomorrow morning at Saint Joseph's, where I will hear her confession with the others. But I will not enter into direction with her, for who knows how I would understand her, etc. I say no more. If she does not come, that would please me more. But if she comes, I will hear her. I can manage your letters, but I am opposed to frequent correspondence. Jesus bless you.

Your servant in God,
Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (145)

Presentation

July 22

*Jesus, who is the one sweetness of our hearts,
in flame you with the fire that burns in the Divine Heart
unto the marrow of your bones. Amen.*

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I cannot explain how willingly I read your notes, which give me reason to magnify the mercies of our good God. What can we do, my daughter, to be grateful to our sweet Jesus? Oh! how I wish that such a great fire of love would come to us, even as a sign to burn those who pass close to us. And not only those who pass close, but also distant peoples, tongues, nations, tribes, in a word, all creatures, so that all might know and love the Supreme Good. I thank you in the pure Heart of Jesus for the charity you continued toward me with the memory you made of me before our infinite sacramental Love at the time of the procession. You did well to pray God to give me a fair voyage for my needs because I believe that soon I must make a trip of infinite peril. Live Jesus! With his grace I am ready for anything. It is sufficient that I do not lose God through my fault. God prevent me from doing that. For the rest, I am continually buried in the sea of my miseries and horrible storms.

Ah, may God keep me from shipwreck! I do not seek consolations, but I seek only to do the Holy Will of my God. This I seek, this I desire, and nothing more. Courage, my beloved in Jesus, and follow your usual rules and, above all, do not trust in yourself. Remain in a holy, filial fear. Take account of the gifts of God for you will have to give an account of them. Be humble, annihilate yourself, despise yourself, desire to be abhorred by all as a useless servant, make yourself very tiny, get rid of everything that is not God and seek him alone. Above all, recognize that everything is a loving gift from God and you are nothing but pus, stench, and every evil. Goodbye, my daughter.

Your servant in God,

Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (146)

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Read this letter with attention, and it will prove very useful to you. Bend your head to the Divine Will and be quiet. Do not quarrel with God, but say humbly: "My God, may your Holy Will be done." And then go ahead with your prayer as usual.

Do me the favor of telling James, your uncle, that he make my excuses with the commissioner that I am extremely ill and cannot get ready for the sermon for the Feast of Saint James. All the more because time is so short and I am getting up in years, and to do such things takes time. God knows I am

unhappy about not being able to do him this service, especially since I am aware of how obligated I am toward him, but no one is held to the impossible, and my present state makes fulfillment of this request impossible. Read this part of the letter to your uncle. I am pressed. God bless you.

Again I tell you, have no scruples about what we talked about, for you acted in ignorance and simplicity. But, I was obliged in conscience to instruct you for the future. When you prepare yourself for prayer, ask Jesus, ask him to teach you how to pray. Thanks be to God.

I am in Jesus Christ, Your Servant,
Paul

374

Agnes Grazi (147)

Saint Anthony

November 25, [1735 or 1736]

*May the sweet love of Jesus, our Good,
always be in our hearts.*

My Dear Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter and the two descriptive pages in the ordinary post. You ought have no doubts that what I commanded you was the Will of God. From this you ought to learn to abandon yourself completely to the Divine Good Pleasure and the care of your spiritual father. Think no more about your writings, just as if they had never existed.

I read something last night. I tell you that God treats you like a baby, but the time will come when you will eat hard bread. Continue your usual rules given you and do not worry; things are going well.

I have no time to write, for I am leaving this morning, as soon as it is light, for a mission about twenty miles away. Oh, how great are the needs of the world! There are no workers! Many places are asking for missions, and I cannot do so many. I have been almost six months at this work. God be blessed. I had believed I would rest my needy spirit for a short while at the feet of Jesus; I do not merit that. God knows how willingly I would come to Viterbo, but how can I do that? If God opens the way after Christmas, I will come gladly. May the Will of God be done.

My daughter in the Lord, poor Paul is in extreme need. Take his necessities to prayer for he needs help. Tell this to Sister Lilia and the others, that they pray for my intentions, for two very weighty causes. Let them pray much for me. I seek nothing else except the pure Will of my God. Amen. And a time for penance.

I have no more time. I say only go ahead as usual. Jesus is the one who steers the boat; he is its pilot. We have no qualms.

Do not write, except by post. I will be here when God wills.

Greet those servants of God for me and recommend to them a very needy soul who is going astray, I fear. Ask them to offer fervent prayers that God

will inspire him as to what is for the greater glory of God. I am always, and
will be always, in the Side of Jesus,
Your servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Holy †

375

Agnes Grazi (148)

Presentation
November 14

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ Jesus,

I received your letter, and I see that our enemies are enraged. You need to mock them, and with great confidence and humility cast everything into the arms of Jesus Christ. No matter what phantoms occur, do not abandon prayer at all, for that is the strongest weapon to beat back the rabble of hell. They are chained dogs; they can howl, but not bite, unless we allow ourselves to be bitten. Follow the precepts I have given you. God wills these trials for his greater glory and your greater good.

As for what happened Wednesday evening, make a joke of it. The devil took on a likeness made for him, and he could not find a better one. Do not be astonished that he took on my appearance when that beast dares to transform himself into an angel of light. Make nothing of it. Remain strong in faith and great trust in God, and with great courage fight this battle, for God has prepared a great victory for you if you are humble, mortified, and detached from all creatures and faithfully persevering in prayer and other holy practices.

If the devil has not obeyed the command I issued in the Name of Jesus Christ, that was for his greater torment. For God permits it thus, that you will be enriched with greater graces, and the devil will be humiliated and beaten. In your elevation of spirit, do not lose sight of your nothingness, but walk in pure faith and distrust yourself in everything, as I told you. When these material unions come in prayer, break off from them and annihilate yourself with a quiet and peaceful spirit. Then lose yourself in God, adoring that Sovereign Majesty in spirit and in truth. God will teach even more if you are humble. Jesus bless you. Amen. Continue to pray for me.

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (149)

Presentation
August 31

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Jesus,

I received your note and now things are going well. Unite yourself with pure intentions of that dear Infant and sacrifice yourself to God in a odor of sweetness in the pure Heart of Mary Most Holy.

That great heart, which after the Heart of Jesus is the Queen of Hearts, has loved and loves God more than all of paradise together. I mean more than all the angels and saints who have been, are, and will be. So you must desire to love the Sovereign Good with that most pure heart, with the intention of exercising all the virtues that she exercised.

But in order to do this and have entrance as into the most holy Heart of our wonderful Queen and Mother, who was an infant, you must make yourself an infant by a childlike simplicity, a true humility, and an annihilation of heart, etc.

My daughter, perform your exercises in pure faith, simplicity with few words, but allow your soul freedom to break out in those affections and loving expressions which the Holy Spirit will suggest. Do not be attached to your reflections, but allow your soul to make those flights of love that God will have you make. The wings for such flights of love are annihilation, contempt of self, and exercising all the virtues. God will teach you everything. Ask with filial confidence that he teach you how to honor this dear Infant and to honor His Divine Majesty in this sweet Infant. I end by leaving you in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Amen.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Agnes Grazi (150)

Presentation
July 8

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ Jesus,

I received your note. I do not know what to say about it because I understand but little. But I know that very recently you were assaulted by the devil. I am planning to speak to you Friday morning when, God willing, I will be there quite early. Tell Maria Johanna to arrange for you to have the key to Saint Joseph's until night so that I can say Mass early. Then I will leave that same morning, as agreed, since I wish no one to know I am coming. Therefore, I will not have much time to confer with you because I am going right back.

Continue to live abandoned in God and annihilated to the Divine Pleasure in accord with the directions given and lights received. God in his infinite care will bring to perfection the work begun. Never doubt that.

Let us continue to correspond by thrusting ourselves into nothingness, which God will transform into himself, for he is true Being, the true All. Jesus bless you. Amen.

You should have told me what herb the doctor has prescribed; it will be good for you to do this in the future. Now I am sending you the packet since I told Brother Philip a short time ago that he tell the servant on Sunday. If I had known this earlier, I would have sent it sooner. Break it up in a mortar and take the usual dose, that is, as much as you can put on a *grosso* or on a *grazia*²³⁴ of some size.

Your servant in God,
Paul of the Holy †

378

Agnes Grazi (151)

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August 28

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ,

This morning I received your letter which gave me reason to bless the Highest Good for the graces and mercies he grants to one so unworthy as my least daughter in Jesus Christ. But I wish that you be faithful and continue more and more to practice total annihilation and self-contempt. You need to stay on guard, my daughter, well on guard, especially regarding those visions, as I told you. Even more, watch out when you seem to see certain darts at your neck, etc.; there is nothing to fear if you are firm, but if they cause even a spark of anything not upright, know for sure they come from the devil. Right now there is nothing to be said, thanks be to God, but make nothing out of it. One who looks at the gift and not at the giver insults the one who gave. Forget everything and lose sight of everything to keep God alone in mind. Let us love the saints in God, love our neighbor in God, and love God in our neighbor. I rejoice that God opens his Heart to you. I rejoice that he urges you to love that Heart. But, right now, I tell you it is a cross of roses.

Courage, daughter! I make a continual sacrifice of your heart to the Highest Good, at least I have the intention of doing that. Of myself I wish to say nothing, for I do not want to cry on your shoulder. If I remain buried in an abyss of mire because of my many short comings, I desire nothing more, for it is the fire to purify this infection. God be blessed. Before the Birthday of Mary I will write you a note since on that day I will have little time to hear you. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul, Your Servant

234. Referring to the size of a coins.

J.M.J.

My Beloved Daughter in Christ,

At this moment I received your letter, and I thank God for the charity you continue toward me, but you are too worried about my health. I am very well, so do not be concerned over my illness, rather weep over my grave sins.

With regard to that vision of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, I tell you that when such things occur, both for now and for the future, cut them off, reject them, and humble yourself much so that the devil will not play his tricks. Raise yourself to God in pure faith, for if such visions are from God, even if you reject them, they will have their effect. The devil is a great deceiver and is always watching to drag us into his net. Seek God in pure faith and upright intention, and, if visions of saints come to your imagination, reject them and say: "I seek only my God and his greater glory. I love the saints in God, and I hope to see them in paradise, but down here I have too cloudy a sight to see the great friends of my God, etc."

Humble yourself more and more, annihilate yourself, considering yourself unworthy of any good and worthy of a thousand hells. The things of God bring on more love, great virtue, detachment and death to all that is not God.

The union you experience with your neighbor, if based on the love of God, is excellent. But that union of spirit you experience with my soul, cut it off as much as you can. Spiritualize it completely. I mean, purify it of all that is dross and immerse it completely in the abyss of the love of God. Then do not think of it any further. Fulfill the duty of praying for me, and despoiled and purified of this dross, lose yourself completely in that abyss of goodness that alone merits to be loved. Let me be despised, abhorred, and abandoned by all.

God is giving you certain words that come with a dart of love. But do not tell me that God is passionately in love with me because I am far from that. I speak the truth. You do not know me; my life is always worse. I adore the Will of God, who arranges in this way. The signs I have from God are not such that would show that I am especially loved by God, but quite the contrary. Continue to pray for me, and then forget this mire and lose yourself in God, losing all sight of creatures.

Do as I say and obey. It is necessary always, always and as long as life lasts to go in search of the purest love of God. Oh, how difficult that is! We are of earth, and earth always tends toward earth.

The prayer in faith you write about is going well. Guide yourself as I have said and written to you so often. When a soul remains totally lost in God, loving and rejoicing, and comes to prayer full of ardent desires for the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and doing great things for the Beloved Good, here there can never be deceit. Trust in God, distrust yourself, and always be fearful of yourself. Be simpler than a baby in diapers, subject to all, and do not worry about being deceived.

I hope in God that your uncle will not be carried away into imprudent actions, as he would be in giving himself to excess with Father Charles. Tell him to be clear of everything when he sees it is doing no good, and tell him now is the time to let his prudence be known to God, to angels, and to the world.

I end by praying the Lord to give you all fullness of blessings. Amen.

Your true servant in Christ,

Paul of the Holy †

380

Agnes Grazi (153)

—
October 12

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Last evening I received your letter, and I thank His Divine Majesty, who disposes everything for your great profit. You must regard that person as a precious treasure and see her in the Divine Will with a loving eye as someone the Sovereign Good is using to fashion for Agnes a garment covered with flowers of gold and gleaming with jewels which are the holy virtues, particularly patience, silence, and the meekness of Jesus Christ. Oh, how much I rejoice over this beautiful event! Enough! Never defend yourself, do not answer, but if you say anything, let it be to excuse her and honor her. When she passes you, bow your head to honor her as though an instrument from the loving hand of God were passing by.

The best plan is to be silent in everything after the example of Christ, who, when he was maltreated, reviled, cursed, and calumniated, kept silence. The Gospel tells us: "Jesus kept silent." If they are not giving you what you need, rejoice and say: "Oh! how well this good friend and sponsor treats me," and say it from your heart. Jesus will feed you with an invisible food that will strengthen you more than corruptible food. When I am down there, I hope I will open for you a way to remain before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; in the meantime, continue as at present. If your superiors, such as your uncle and father, forbid that, obey them in silence and stay in spirit in your cell. This is the way to practice the virtues of Jesus, who was obedient unto death, death on the cross. Lose yourself more and more in your nothingness, in your vileness, etc, and lose yourself entirely in God, continuing to take your repose in that grand room. Allow yourself to be taken where God pleases, but you cooperate by running after the odor of his perfumes.

I implore you in the Heart of Christ not to write me any more about our commonality, such as union in spirit, etc. Do not talk to me about such things, for the effects are all contrary to what you say to me about good news and that my affairs are going well. This is absolutely false, for I am in an abyss of evils, and I fear abandonment more than my tongue can express. Never speak to me of such things, for pain grows upon pain. I do not believe any part of what you

say, absolutely nothing. I am sick to my stomach to hear it and in affliction, etc. Pray for me that God may have mercy.

Paul of the †, Your Servant

381

Agnes Grazi (154)

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Do not send me letters in the evening, for they arrive at night. The knocking interrupts our sleep, and everyone is in danger of falling sick and not assisting well at Matins. Do me this favor and send your letters at another time.

I have received your letters; one the other night, one tonight. Continue with the instructions I have given you and take care to avoid all visions, etc. I do not have time and am half senseless. I arrived here last night from Portercole, and now I am writing and it is almost midnight. I understand what you are telling me about your uncle. I thank you for your charity. I am not pained over this, but I am leaving the care of it to God. It is my plain duty to write him on this occasion, as I am doing, and I am telling him that I am leaving the care of everything in his hands. I am doing this with great prudence so that he will notice nothing. However, he is mistaken because I have always spoken in this way, and for my part I have never invited a living person. Enough! God will provide and I hope some day to be free of all these worldly courtesies, which I hate like the plague. I am telling him that it would be well for you to come up with Marianna, but I am saying it with politeness. If they ask you whether you have written anything, answer them frankly. I think by my soul ... I am writing and am not embarrassed. I do not believe they will ask you.

I will write in good time. Jesus bless you. Continue to recommend one who is in his accustomed sea. Have a good feast; here, we have had a good vigil.

Your servant in God,

Paul of the Holy †

382

Agnes Grazi (155)

July 29

Jesus and Mary be praised.

Beloved Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last evening, one hour after the evening bell, I received your letter to which I was not able to respond, for we were all in our cells. Now I tell you there is nothing more to do than to humble yourself the more, ask for grace to know the Divine Will, and do not be deceived by the enemy, and I hope for certain that will not be. This morning, when it is light, I will ask Father John Baptist to go to Orbetello, and, if he agrees, tomorrow, Wednesday, there will

be an opening in Saint Francis. If not, you will need to be patient. Do you seek to meet us there?

Do not be pained over what your uncle says nor about what Signora Marianna says. Make nothing out of it. I hope in God to remedy the whole matter.

Go ahead in loving God and do not fear. Abandon yourself completely to God and to the one who guides you.

I greet you in the Side of Jesus. I wish to go and rest my head, for this night I have slept little. Good morning, my daughter. God bless you. Amen.

It is not true that Father John Baptist is scandalized because you take so long for conferences nor about anything else. Whoever said that did so without thinking.

Paul, Your True Servant in God

383

Agnes Grazi (156)

Presentation

August 13

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter and rejoice that His Divine Majesty is trying you in pain, etc. The Holy Gospel says that, if the grain of wheat does not die, it remains alone and does not bear fruit. But by dying, the poor grain, if it be sown, bears fruit. How much it suffers! There is rain, snow, wind, sun, etc. So the soul is a grain of wheat. God sows it in the field of the Church, and to bear fruit it must die in a fury of pain and contradictions, sorrows, persecutions, etc. When it is dead to all in the midst of pains, it bears fruit abundantly, and then is ready to be milled and reduced to a good flour in order to make a very good bread, soaked with the sweet Blood of the Divine Lamb so that it may be placed on the Royal Table of the great King of Glory. Study this point for a while at the feet of the Crucified, for it contains a high science. I rejoice that you are able to offer this drop of suffering to our loving Jesus because I wish that Agnes go clothed for a feast in the midst of pains, sufferings, contradictions, etc.

Do not be pained at the assaults of the enemy and the impure suggestions. All these are excellent signs that God is making your soul run to the triumph of Holy Love. If these assaults of the rabble of devils were absent, it would not be a good sign.

I am reserving Wednesday morning to speak with you since it pleases God that I be there. And I think it will be good to go to the nuns as that is more convenient, etc. Continue to remain detached from everything and lose yourself in pure faith in God, reduced to ashes in the Heart of Jesus, where the flame of Holy Love burns. On the Feast of the Assumption cry out for me and for the poor Retreat, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Holy †

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I am answering your letter which I received this morning from Magdalene. In it I find the priceless benefits that God is giving to a poor, vile creature. These are effects of that Infinite Magnificence, who communicates himself with so much mercy to the most miserable and vile. So it is necessary for you to be always grateful to God by humbling yourself, annihilating yourself more and more before that Sovereign Majesty, reducing yourself to ashes in the fire of his infinite love.

I am talking to the air, and I experience my horrible miseries and the scourge of the merciful justice of God, and I experience contrary effects to everything you say. God makes himself understood in a variety of ways, and, when it seems to you that he is working through me or in my person, it is the work of your guardian angel who shows himself from God in my guise to you intellectually. I say this because the effects produced in you are not evil, but good, as established for a long time, for if it were my evil person, it would produce horrible effects as from a devil in the flesh, in whom one could never trust.

I have not received the letters from Rome, which I was expecting, and I had believed I had much to do. This makes me think they have encountered serious obstacles and are in a bad light because of scourging tongues. I adore the Divine Will and am happy to keep myself totally abandoned to the possibility that the work begun will totally fall apart — as long as I obtain the mercy of God to do penance for my sins. Follow your conduct as God guides you in true annihilation. I hope to be there on Friday, but God knows how much I have to do. In the morning you will be able to speak with me a little. I will be at the nuns without coming to the house. I will say Mass at once to take care of what is necessary. If you can be there, it will be well. Take care of the note you know about; however, that is not all important, rather as convenient. I will give the money. Tell Don Fabio that I gave it to you ... You can pass it on as opportunity offers, whether it succeeds or fails. It is not necessary to make preparation of such a thing. I do recommend rigorous secrecy, never to speak about it, etc.

So at my coming you will give it to me, for men are men, and it is not necessary to take account of their words.

I am sending you a *spongia* of roses. Break it up in a mortar, give it to Maria Johanna, and take the usual dose. You can take it in wine or in broth. If wine strengthens you more, take wine. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your servant,

Paul of the †

Agnes Grazi (158)

Presentation
August 28

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

I received your note and tell you that it never passes my thought to come there, for I do not have the strength to come to Orbetello every week. Brother Joseph is very mistaken. You follow your conduct with fidelity and pray for me as my needs are greater all the time. When I will come, God knows. Now I need to prepare myself for imminent missions. If you follow the holy directions given you, you will be happy, etc. Jesus bless you. I walk through a fearsome path and pass my poor life drowned in deep, bitter, stormy waters. God be blessed. I am not coming any more.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

Agnes Grazi (159)*Jesus and Mary be praised.*

In the pure Side of Jesus, poor Paul greets Agnes Grazi and tells her that he has great need for her to pray for him, as he finds himself in great needs. I also tell you not to forget your own soul and, if you have need, write. For when God wills, you will find a way to speak to him. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Paul, Your Unworthy Servant

Agnes Grazi (160)

Presentation
July 5

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Last evening I received your letter and rejoiced much. I see that all hell is armed against us, but God will fight in us and for us. Therefore, let your heart be firm in loving that Infinite Good. One of the best signs of the good progress of your spirit is to be peaceful in the assaults and contradictions from creatures, and be strong and mock the assaults of all of hell. Whatever happens to the just one, as Scriptures says, he will not be disturbed, he will not be harmed. You are not just, but God has justified you in his Precious Blood.

A statue must be well chiseled and polished with sharp chisels in order to be placed in a great museum. Allow your soul to make its flights to God with great freedom and profound humility. Feed yourself on the Will of God, drink from the chalice of Jesus with eyes closed and without wishing to know what it contains. It is enough for you to know that the one who offers you the

chalice is Jesus. It is necessary to go against the stream; it is necessary to take rest in the infinite perfections of God and the diverse ways in which he guides his servants. What does it mean to be a servant of God? It means to be crucified with Christ. Oh! what an honorable name that is — servant of God! I will have more to say in person on Tuesday when I come to bless the fish market of Fibia. I do not want to linger during the meal so as not to be out in the evening. So we will talk in the Lord. Oh! if you knew how it is with me, you would be in horror! Jesus bless you and pray for me.

On the cross forever fastened
The loving soul beholds the Crucified
And the power of love
Cleanses her heart of every horror.

Nella croce sempre fisso
Mira l'anima il Crocefisso
E la forza dell'amore
Sgombra il cuor da ogni orrore.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

388

Agnes Grazi (161)

Orbetello

May the sweet Jesus live always in our hearts.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In reply to your letter, which I received yesterday, I have only a little time, so I cannot say what I would like.

Your obligations to God keep growing, but how mightily ... Who can express this? Ah! my daughter, you need to be very faithful. Our soul is the living temple of God, and you need to keep the fire always lit in our hearts, which is the true altar of this temple, where the loving soul sacrifices its entire self to the Highest Good as the victim of holocaust, all burnt up and consumed in the holy fire of Divine Love.

There is no doubt that these illuminations of your mind, which you have, are very material, although for the greater part they are full of a lively imagination, so for now you must be as incredulous regarding these visions, locutions, and so on, as you should be. Get rid of them with great courage, annihilate yourself before God: "Lord, I do not merit to hear your voice; I do not merit your embrace; I merit the embrace of demons. O my God! free my soul from the deceits of the devil."

By their fruits you know the good and the evil. When the soul remains very humble and with great confidence in God, with peace and heavenly understanding, with a great love for virtue, with a lively knowledge of itself and the Divine Majesty, with great love for the neighbor, and, above all, true distrust of self and total abandonment in God — when these are the effects left in the soul, there is no danger of deception. To sum up, it does not seem to me that you are walking badly. Reject with great constancy these imaginative visions, etc. Oh! how I rejoice when I see what you did when it seemed to you

that Jesus wished to force you to receive Communion. Oh! how well you behaved to do what you did. Do the same in all such instances.

Make nothing out of what Rose told you about me; it is most probably a locution from her own spirit. There is much to say to you, but I do not have time. I am certain that I am dear to God, and I am certain about how much, precisely because I am the criminal that I am, since Jesus came not for the just, but for sinners. Oh, how dear we are to him, we poor sinners, and I, more than others, for I have made Jesus weep more than all. Tell this to Rose and tell her that Paul says this with all truth, as he feels it before God.

I see that God is closing the way to Viterbo for me. May the Will of God be done. God knows how much I desire that.

You may wear the chain above your knee an hour, or a little more, on Monday, two hours on Tuesday, three hours on Friday, an hour on Saturday. Take the discipline four times a week until Lent.

I have no more time. I must help a sick woman while I am here, so I am writing in a hurry from your house. The infirm person is not your sister, but another. However, she, too, is doing poorly, but I trust in God that she will be cured. I had hoped the same for you.

Pray for me, for I am in extreme need and always worse. I am constantly in storms and in the night of many miseries, etc. Live Jesus! Pray for me and do not talk about me except with God. God bless you.

Your true servant,
Paul of the †

389

Agnes Grazi (162)

Presentation
July 21

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Would you have the charity to tell Signora Maria Johanna that, despite the fact there is not enough time to come to Orbetello, I will certainly be there on Wednesday morning to help her. So let arrangements be made to have the key to Saint Joseph's the night before, that is, have them give it that night, and both of you be at Saint Joseph's about sunrise, for I do not wish to be seen so as not to have other encounters, which I am unable to take care of.

Father John Baptist or I had decided to come down to pick up the weights for the clock, for it was a piece that had been sent. But we are not to be seen. It must be that Master Giulio either did not order the parts or he forgot. You can relate all this to your uncle, but on Wednesday I will come myself, and I will take care of things if they have not been done.

Do me the favor of sending this note to the convent. If letters come to me by the post, if you can get them to me by tomorrow evening, that would be good. If not, hold on to them until Wednesday when I will be there. Let your uncle and Don Vincent know. I do not desire that others know I am coming.

I did not send the sign of the Passion by the post, but by accident I saw this scrap of paper and there was this heart I drew when my head was exhausted. Jesus bless you. I am

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the †

390

Agnes Grazi (163)

Presentation
December 11

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Christ,

I see from your note that you are complaining in secret, but I am not so sick that I have to come there. My sickness is not the province of doctors. For Signora Marianna, I cannot come, for she has no need of me and is not in so much trouble that I should come down the mountain.

And you should cast off these imaginations that come to you and live dead to all, quiet and resigned in God. If I have the strength, light, and energy of spirit and virtue, I will not fail to serve everyone. God knows my extreme needs that grow worse all the time. God be blessed. Pray for me, and Jesus bless you. Amen.

If I am somewhat less ill on Sunday morning than I am now, it is possible that I would come to confer with Father Anthony. But it is difficult.

Paul of the Holy †, Your Unworthy Servant

391

Agnes Grazi (164)

Presentation
September 6

Jesus

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Yesterday, I received your letter, and I rejoice in the mercies God continues and over the greater light given to understand the cleverness of the enemy. Thanks be to God!

Wednesday morning, but not so early, I will be there. I will visit Vincent, although I have no inspiration, as I find myself always further away from God, that is, from his lights and graces, etc. We will have time for our necessary conference because I will be in Orbetello the whole day and leave early Thursday morning. Do not speak about this so as not to increase my tasks, etc. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Holy †

J.M.J.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Yesterday, I received your letter, in which I see what you tell me about Don Fabio, and I will not fail to recommend him to God. I hope the situation is not serious, and, if it is, it is sufficient that he knows it. The great triumph of Mary Most Holy is with us, but I do not have the spirit to speak of it. The riches of this Sovereign Lady are so great, a profound sea of perfections, that only the great God, who enriched her with her treasure, can fathom.

That wound of love, which so gently pierced her pure heart from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, grew so much throughout her holy life that, penetrated from within, it was shared by her entire body and soul. So that death of love, more precious than life, put an end to that great sea of suffering, which the great Mother endured throughout the whole course of her life not only in the Passion of Jesus, but also in seeing all the offenses committed by ungrateful men against the Divine Majesty. So we now hold a feast and rejoice in God our Good over the triumph of Mary Most Holy, our great Queen and Mother. We exult that she is raised above all choirs of angels, seated at the right hand of her Divine Son. In the great Heart of Jesus you can rejoice over the glories of Mary Most Holy, loving her with the Heart of her Divine Son. If Jesus allows you, you can take flight into the pure Heart of Mary and rejoice with her, expressing your happiness that she is finished with all the pains, all the sorrows, and ask for the grace to remain always immersed in the immense sea of divine love, whence issues that other sea of the pains of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary. Allow yourself to be penetrated with these pains, these sorrows, and allow yourself to feel the sword or lance or dart so that the wound of love may penetrate deep within you. For the more deeply you are pierced with the wound of love, the sooner you will come out of your prison cell.

I am in an abyss of darkness, and I do not know how to speak of such marvels, etc. Anyone who wishes to be more pleasing to Mary Most Holy must humble themselves the more, annihilate themselves the more, for Mary was the humblest of all creatures; therefore, she pleased God more than all by her humility. Pray to Mary Most Holy that it may not be too late to ask for the grace to be truly humble and completely virtuous, all aflame with love. Ask her to do you the favor of wounding your heart with a sharp dart of love so that, deeply wounded by sword or lance, you remain in her hands.

During this Octave do what the Holy Spirit moves you to do. Do not be held down by what I say, but give your soul the freedom to fly where the Highest Good attracts you. Pray for me there and the present needs of Holy Church and all the world, for the souls in purgatory, especially for those for whom we are more obliged to pray, and for this least Congregation that Mary Most Holy will protect it and provide it with holy workers. For she is the

Treasurer of grace, and His Divine Majesty wishes that they pass through her hands. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Greet Don Fabio for me in Jesus Christ.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

393

Agnes Grazi (166)

Presentation

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Now that I have reread your letter, I recognize more and more the work of God. Have fear of nothing; things are going well. I, on my part, am obliged in conscience to avoid any deceptions.

So I tell you that the vision of Mary Most Holy on Monday was not deception. When your mind wishes to soar on high, all absorbed in God, let it do so. Make your prayer in God's way. In these loving courtesy visits, which make the soul more in love with God and humble you, there is no deception. You should frequently affirm that you are seeking God alone. Do not ask for aridity, but ask for the pleasure of God. Live in peace and continue with your prayer as before, also for Communion. Allow yourself to be guided by God.

Do not leave prayer when these images and lights occur since that might make the devil laugh. Make nothing out of them and affirm you do not want such things, but only the pleasure of God. Continue to hold your eyes as you normally do in prayer and keep your head still and without turning here and there, as you tell me. Jesus bless you. Amen.

"THROUGH THUNDER, STORMS, CLOUDS" (Late-1743)

Paul is awaiting permission to open two Retreats, one at Vetralla and the other at Toscanella. He is at peace, even though he is "walking through thunder, storms, clouds..." There are fourteen religious, but only four are priests. He needs members, but also there is need of three Houses to enable the pope to establish his community as a religious institute.

Paul celebrates the Feast of the Presentation at the Retreat, vesting three candidates, including his brother Father Anthony, who earlier had been dismissed.

394

Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (4)²³⁵

Presentation
September 5, 1743

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Canon,

I believe that you will have received my letter through the Genoa post. I sent it to Chiavari by sea because the passes were closed here, and we did not have any mail going by ordinary post. Now, thanks to God, the passes are open. In that letter I asked you to have the candidates leave in October. Now I reverently repeat that. If they wish to come by way of Genoa, they can take a boat from there, for they leave every day and sail to Chiavari; the trip takes four hours. In Chiavari they could take advantage of Signore James Mary Ferrari, a merchant, and they will be received with charity and sheltered. In Chiavari they should try to reach the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary since the boats leave from there. I will say no more, for I hope you received my earlier letter in which I explained all that is necessary.

The priest, Father Anthony, my brother, was dismissed from the Congregation for good reasons, although everyone thinks it was because of sickness. He is now in Chiavari, where he remained all summer because of the air, etc. He has asked very humbly with repeated letters to be readmitted, but he has received repeated refusals, not because of grave evils, but his progress was cooling down. Time does not permit me to say more. I will only say the process was according to the Rules and Constitutions.

Now, however, after I recommend myself to God, as I have always done, I have thought about asking him to come to the Retreat without anyone

235. Paul is at the Presentation Retreat and is awaiting several young candidates the canon will be sending from Alessandria. Notice how familiar Paul is with the several ways one can journey down to Orbetello. He is aware of the schedule for the boats, benefactors who can assist travelers, and the weather conditions in the mountains. He also shares with the canon the difficulties he is having with his brother Anthony and his willingness to give him another chance. Anthony did return, was vested on November 20, 1743, and professed on March 1, 1744.

knowing that I even had agreed to it. Humbly, he asked to be admitted and asked if I could not convoke the Chapter and do my part. I hoped that he would be admitted and that he would do good. For as I said, he pleaded considerably with me and asked me with much humility and repentance to be received. The mercy of God forced me to look at not flesh and blood, but to the salvation of souls. I was moved by what Jesus said: "Not seven times, but seventy times seven times." That made me write him a letter affirming his apostolic zeal, which cheered him up a lot.

He allowed himself to be overcome with his melancholic humor, and this chilled his fervor and made him claim he was sick, which is the temptation and the word used by the tepid and which could upset the novices from the path they had undertaken, as did happen. This was the main point.

If you come on the journey with the new soldiers, prescribe a time of prayer for them, a time for lessons, etc., "that they may be the good odor of Christ in every place." I am writing in haste, for at this mailing the passes are open, and I have many important letters to write. I can easily see that my tasks are heavier than my natural abilities, and unless God gives me strength, I will last only a short while. This blessed little table has done me in. God be blessed.

The arrangements for the new Retreats to be established soon are going well. We need only the consent of the Congregation of Good Government. Without that the Commune cannot cede anything.

But we have no further needs since we already have the faculties. I have time only to ask you for your holy prayers and holy blessing. Here, things go from good to better.

Your unworthy servant and son in Christ,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

395

Thomas Fossi (10)²³⁶

Presentation
September 5, 1743

J.M.J.

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

My Dearest in Jesus Christ,

I do not know how to express how dear your letter was to me. I will rather place the charity you do to me by remembering me, your poor, unworthy servant, in the sacred Side of Jesus. Nevertheless, I have never doubted that the basis of your spirit, that is, the foundation of your conduct, is in accord with God. However, our common enemy has not neglected to get mixed in with his tricks but without any profit to him. And now I am sure, more than ever, that our good God has placed you in the number of his dear servants. I have hopes of this because he is permitting insults, afflictions, abandonment

236. This letter gives Paul's opinion on the call of lay Christians to holiness in the married state. He is anticipating by two and a half centuries the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the apostolate of laity (*The Church*, Chapter 4, #31; and *Apostolate of the Laity*).

by creatures, and other storms — these are all precious signs. If you will be faithful in persevering in the exercises you have begun in accord with your state in life, I have reason to believe that His Divine Majesty will bring you to holy perfection and enrich you with the fullness of his graces and blessings.

Courage then, my dear one! Thank the Highest Good that he gives you occasions to serve him with the exercise of holy virtues. Try to show yourself pleasant and meek with those who despise you and without giving the least sign of displeasure; even show yourself happy to be shunned and abandoned by all. At least try to do them good by praying for them.

Above all, master yourself with those in your household, for that is where you will find more danger than elsewhere of making some sharp remarks by way of answering back. Believe me for certain that never have affairs gone so well as now. “Now you begin to be a disciple of Christ.”

Hold on to your inner solitude by treating one-on-one with the Sovereign Good in your heart. Keep your interior quiet, serene, peaceful, and recollected; and drive off any upsets, fears, or scruples as the plague.

I have no worries about your abandoning prayer or frequentation of the sacraments according to your state in life, nor that you might not attend to your duties. I know you will accept the burden of being father to your family, preserving peace with the one God has given you as a companion, and being careful in bringing up your children in a holy fear of God. I entertain no doubts about this since it is your principal obligation. But if you wish your prayer to be continuous, remain in the cell of your interior alone with God, and you will have a way of burning with divine love even in the midst of your domestic duties, etc.

I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity of the fish eggs. I add this to the infinite obligations I owe you.

With regard to the holy mission, I admit the truth that I did not find myself at all inspired to come to the island. However, if I will be free in springtime, and I doubt that, I will not refuse the task.

With regard to the Retreat, I have put the outcome back in Divine Providence. Now there is question of two Retreats, one in Toscanella, that is, at a shrine in a solitary place, and the other in Vetralla on Mount Fogliano. Both were granted to us by the community. We await only the assent of the Sacred Congregation of Good Government since the community cannot cede any property without such an assent.

The Retreat is full of fervent servants of the Lord, and they are in competition to see who can do the more. “I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever.” Now we are fourteen, and four more are expected. God be blessed. And there are more asking to be admitted.

I am making bold to ask you to buy for this Retreat at the next grape harvest a cask of good wine, well matured. Keep it in your wine cellar, or the cellar of the vendor, so that in the month of July, or the beginning of August, of the coming year you can send it to me when there will be other boats to carry wine. We will pay the cost.

Please let me know the price of such a cask of wine, and I will quickly reimburse you. I am asking you to purchase the wine before the grape harvest since there is better quality then and a better price in keeping with the poverty of the Retreat. When there is a large cask that holds fifteen to sixteen measures, I would prefer that, for it should last until November. For the present, we are moderately provided for and are only a little short, that is, two or three barrels which I bought at Marianesi.

Pardon my boldness. Recommend me to God and stay happy. Meanwhile, I embrace you in the Side of Jesus, and from a true heart say that I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least, Discalced Cleric Regular

You can fulfill my requests at your discretion. Write me when you wish, but secure the letters. When you write, tell me how your spiritual life is going.

396

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (2)

Presentation

September 18, 1743

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter in this post with an enclosure from Sister Angela Rose. Since I have little time and many occupations heaped upon me, I will tell you briefly what His Divine Majesty wishes me to say. Know then that I have not been able to suspect deceptions in what is happening to you, although a few times some fear came to me, but it soon dissipated. Now the mercy of God gives me more assurance, for in your present state of naked suffering you are finding a great treasure, and I see that the Sovereign King is accomplishing a noble work in your soul, all the more because it is secret and with deep detachment, and thus the more noble and perfect. But what am I to say? I speak as a mad man. For the works of God are all most perfect. Enough! I have nothing more to say to you, only that I rejoice in God — for myself, too, but without sensible satisfaction — that the Sovereign, Infinite Good has drawn you to the state in which you find yourself, that is, to a naked suffering and a satisfaction in being deprived of joy, to a love stripped of happiness, so that your soul, utterly deprived of satisfaction, places its satisfaction in uniting itself to the Good Pleasure of the great Heavenly Father, who is the satisfaction of our satisfactions. Take note that I mean this with the higher part of the soul. Courage, my daughter, and with the grace of Jesus keep your natural and lively spontaneity in check, and do this not only in your interior, but also your exterior. Let all of paradise see that you bear the image of Jesus Crucified, who was gentle, meek, patient, etc. I am speaking of the image of Jesus because one who inwardly is united with the living Son of God bears his likeness even outwardly by the continual exercise of heroic virtues, especially of virtuous suffering without lamenting within or without.

Now, go on your way, totally hidden in Jesus Crucified and without desiring anything except to be totally transformed by love into the Divine Good Pleasure in everything, in everything. You will see that at the right time a great scene will open and a great star will be the herald of a clearest day in which will shine a sun without shadow, and its life-giving heat will melt the mountains of snow. I am writing in figures; you will understand at the right time.

The affairs of the Retreat here have had an excellent beginning, and one could say that all the difficulties have been cleared away, or so it seems to me. And although we have not as yet received the consent of the Sacred Congregation, that is expected. So I have hopes for Vetralla, although there are still not a few difficulties. Vetralla is more necessary than Toscanella for many reasons; but would you believe me that my heart is happy over this? Not really, for His Divine Majesty has me walking through thunder, storms, clouds, etc. I have no further desire than to fulfill the Holy Will of God with perfection in life, in death, in time, and in eternity, etc.

But tell me just a little, how are we to have good order in these Retreats? It is true that these servants of God are very good and fervent, but as yet they are only novices. I have only four priests that I can send out since we need to provide for this place. I told you briefly of my plans, etc. But you should remember that our concerns are shared in God; so take our necessities to our great Heavenly Father and tell him, for love of his dear Son, to provide for us, etc. Jesus bless you.

I recommend you to continue your practices with fidelity, as at first. And I ask you to keep knowledge of your treasure as secret as possible. You know the treasure I am speaking about, your precious suffering. Oh, how much occurs to me that I want to say to you! But I have no time. Suffer and be silent.

Pearls are formed in the seashell, but the seashell, once it has received the drop from heaven, closes itself tightly and seeks the depth of the sea and, there, produces the noble pearl. Understand me well. The pearl of true virtue is formed in the sea of suffering, in the sea of knowledge of one's nothingness. And from this sea it moves on to swim, or better, to submerge itself in the immense sea of the uncreated, immense love.

My pen is slipping and wants to go its own way. I am out of time. Patience. Live the Holy Cross. Amen.

Do not forget to ask God to help poor Paul, who is in extreme need, and for the grace you know about.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (13)

Presentation
October 17, 1743

Very Reverend Bishop,

May the great Father of Mercies be forever praised, for he increases more and more the charity of your caring heart for us poor ones as well as great zeal for the greater glory of God! Oh, how good is our God! How sweet is his spirit! I do not know what to say; I am always more immersed in the immense sea of the divine mercies.

I received your precious letter of September 28, and I am replying promptly to all your concerns. I now see in your letter that you had not received my reply. Perhaps it has been delivered by now, as I would like to hope. May the God of all be blessed. Amen.

I let you know that the Sacred Congregation of Good Government had written for information to the bishop of Viterbo regarding the Retreat at Toscanella. And the zeal of that fervent prelate gave the best possible account and sent me a copy. I think that this report may be received by the Sacred Congregation after their refusal and, consequently, after the second petition. So I have lively hopes of a favorable outcome, also for the Retreat at Vetralla. The governor is much in favor of it, and the people by corporate action have sent a strong petition. I can assure you that I am at peace over these happenings and have abandoned the care of the affair into the loving hands of our Heavenly Father.

I am submitting another piece of business to your clear vision. Serious thought needs to be given with regard to a contemplated establishment of a Retreat in the vicinity of Nettuno. Since I have passed through that shoreline a number of times, I have had opportunity to know about its air. I have said that in that area there is no fitting place, for it would be the tomb of the poor workers because of its very bad air. Although our Retreats are founded in the salt marshes, it is still necessary that they be established on a height where the air is healthy so that the poor workmen can come back when their apostolic labors are over to continue their exercises in prayer and fasting. This could not be done if the air is unhealthy because they would be continually sick. I have had much experience of this.

Where we are here in the salt marshes and the country, the air is bad enough, beginning from here as far as Livorno and further, and from the east as far as Terracina. But the Retreat, where we are, is in very good air. A mile below the Retreat it is bad.

So I say that, if I were able to found a Retreat in the dioceses near to Rome, God knows how much my heart would rejoice. So, you, whom the Lord uses for his greater glory, should use your charity to find out if there are fitting sites, and, if they are in places that could maintain the Retreat in accord with the holy poverty that is explained in the Rules, which are well known to you.

If Divine Providence grants the establishment of the two Retreats of Toscanella and Vetralla, I will not fail to come to Rome to confer with you as

well as about the other Retreats and other affairs of great importance for the firmer establishment of the Congregation.

But if the zealous pastors who desire this good for their dioceses have us come to conduct missions in their territory for their people, I will have a chance to visit places more suitable to establish a Retreat. That would depend, too, on whether the people would help us out, as happened elsewhere. Jesus, who is the one object of our life and work, is disposing things for his greater glory. Meanwhile, while assuring you of our always increasing gratitude in our poor prayers, and with full esteem and veneration I declare myself to be now and always,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy, and devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

398

Aurelius Fracassini (1)²³⁷

Presentation
November 2, 1743

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

The charity and kindness with which you have always treated me encourages me to come to your feet to beg a favor for Virginia Scaccabarozzi Fracassini, your worthy daughter-in-law, who wishes with great anxiety to come and be of service to you and all your house as well as to personally bring up the beloved son of her womb, in whom she preserves the highest esteem and heartfelt affection toward her deceased husband, your beloved son and the kindly father of this child. She expressed this in a letter sent to me some days ago, full of such devout, humble and affectionate sentiments toward you and your son, that one could not read it without being touched with strong tenderness and compassion toward such a good young woman, who desires only to serve you with true humility and reverence as a worthy father and to be close to her son. I am not enclosing her letter because it, along with all those in that post, were so water-soaked as to be scarcely legible, and so I disposed of it since I had no thought of sending it on.

If I were not so overwhelmed with business, I would come in person to have double the consolation of seeing you once more and seeing the desires of this devoted young woman realized. You can see in her a genuine, solid piety and detachment from the things of the world, seeing that she wishes to remain in her status as a widow. That is something rare in these present calamitous times. Courage then, Aurelius! Now is the time to show your charity before God, angels, and men. You have a wonderful opportunity to make yourself rich before God, putting in oblivion and burying in the Wounds of Jesus all that the devil may have sown to break down true peace in the household, in which the Lord takes such pleasure. Dear Sir, I beg you by the Heart of the

237. This letter and the one of November 23 concern the widowed daughter-in-law of this gentleman of Monteverano. Paul uses every argument available to persuade Aurelius to allow the mother of his deceased son's child to live once again in his household.

mercy of God to receive your daughter-in-law into your home. I assure you that you will find happiness in this, along with great spiritual and temporal advantages.

I am writing on the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed; therefore, I ask you to imagine that the good soul of your dear son is asking this charity as suffrage for his pains, in case he is still suffering in purgatory. The confessor of Sister Colomba, who is a great servant of God, as you know and in the esteem of the Holy Father, has written me. I met her when I was extraordinary confessor at that convent. And as she is aware that I have served you, she had her confessor write to me since she cannot do that herself. She has been sick in bed for thirty years, and she asks me to ask that Signora Virginia be received by your fatherly charity. That alone should move you to do this, for this soul is a great friend of God and very enlightened. It would be a notable mistake not to take her holy counsel. I know what I am saying, for I know her, and I know she does not speak without light from God. So His Divine Majesty is letting you know his Holy Will by means of this great servant of his. Accept the directive then and you will thank God that you did so and will be happy over it.

I am a miserable sinner, as all the world knows. But even from the mouth of poor sinners, God can notify us of his Divine Good Pleasure. So prostrate in spirit at your feet, I ask you, supplicate you, and ask you again, for love of Jesus Christ, to undertake the charity of receiving your daughter-in-law into you home with all cordiality.

But I am going too far in view of the experience I have of your goodness, and I know well that it was not necessary to be so strongly persuasive to move your good heart. So I beg your pardon for my boldness, for I am sure of obtaining what I ask. I have written you as well as to Signora Virginia and the confessor of Sister Colomba, that I have the firmest hope of the happy outcome for the greater glory of God. I will be obliged to you until my death in my poor prayers, and I will request those of the servants of God who are here and with whom the Retreat is full through the favor of God.

Jesus enrich you with all fullness of grace and blessings. Meanwhile, with a humble reverence, with full esteem and respect, and with all my soul I sign myself,

Your humble, unworthy servant

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Presentation
November 14, 1743

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Bishop,

May the ineffable, infinite, always adorable Goodness of our great God be ever blessed, for he has deigned to continue to move your caring heart more and more to spread this least Congregation, which is entirely dedicated and consecrated to the Holy Passion of our amiable Redeemer. I would be departing immediately at this time, except that the necessary assistance that I must give to the Retreat holds me back. For in addition to my duty of vesting three clerics, who are now in retreat with much fervor, I expect another three, for whose arrival I need to be here in the Retreat, at least for the beginning of things. Nevertheless, I am recommending the business strongly to God, and after the Feast of the Presentation things will have been all finished in good order, and I will leave and inform you by post.

It is certainly true that two of our most mature religious have asked me to delay until Christmas in order to celebrate it here in this Retreat for the consolation of all, and to maintain it, they say, in greater fervor of spirit during these holy days. However, they have no need of me, for their fervor and devotion and piety rebukes my tepidity as I see them so devoted in their holy exercises, practiced with such promptness, modesty, silence, etc. It is truly a reason to praise God.

Then, if the merciful God opens the way for me a bit, I will try to leave after the Feast of the Presentation. Otherwise, you must deign to dispense me and excuse me to the cardinals until after Christmas, and then I will have a better chance to visit the place for the contemplated foundation. But, I much desire to take care of the foundations of the Retreats at Toscanella and Vetralla before any others for many good and holy ends. You will have found that out in my last letter in which I asked you to make a new petition to the Sacred Congregation for a happy outcome; all the more so since in these places things are arranged and well disposed.

I end at your feet and ask your holy prayers and blessing, assuring you that prayers are made continually for your preservation and increase in graces and heavenly gifts, and with profound reverence I end as,

Your humble, unworthy, devoted servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

238. Notice how Paul finds peace of soul by entrusting the establishment of the two proposed Retreats of Vetralla and Toscanella to Divine Providence. At the same time he furthers this project by seeking the help of Garagni. He is also looking forward to a foundation closer to Rome. Frequently Paul is concerned about the air, no matter where the Retreat might be.

J.M.J.

My Beloved Thomas,

I place the charity you continue toward this poor Retreat in the holy Wounds of Jesus, and I pray that Crucified Love will enrich you with every blessing — also for the marinade delivered to me by the known father.

With regard to what you tell me about ... it is not the time to decide anything whatever, nor is there any sign that God wishes it for now. Continue according to your status. If God wishes that, there would be extraordinary changes in both of you, and His Divine Majesty would make that understood. For now, go ahead as usual.

Do not be at pain because I had no credibility with the ministers, for I not only felt no pain, but I also rejoiced over that. My conscience does not rebuke me. I gave them no reason for a poor impression of me. It could be that God gave them lights to know how evil I am, whence they have reason to employ their charity in praying for me.

The abandonment to the Divine Will that you are doing in everything is a good sign and the short way to obtain great graces. Continue to humble yourself before God and to exercise the virtues corresponding to your state, and have no fears.

At the Retreat we number seventeen, that is, thirteen for choir and four lay brothers. And we are awaiting others. God be blessed.

I think you have made provision for the wine of good quality that I ordered to be sent next summer. I am waiting to hear the price so I can reimburse you.

If you go to Rome, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you ought to say and do regarding the head of this state.

With regard to coming here, on my part I would like that much, but it is not at all convenient because we have no room in the House. If His Divine Majesty opens the way when you go to Rome, I would be happy to welcome you here on your way. I am writing in haste. Continue your prayer and hold on to interior recollection. Have no scruples about what you are eating, for your state in life and your business require that you keep up your strength.

Jesus enrich you with graces and blessing. Meanwhile, I embrace you in Heart of Jesus and wish you every good. I am from the heart,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Aurelius Fracassini (2)

Presentation
November 23, 1743

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

I have placed in the holy Side of Jesus the consolation my poor spirit experienced with the news from you about the return of Virginia²³⁹ to your home. Since I have reason to be assured of the excellent conduct of Virginia, I have no doubt that you will continue your paternal affection, which will preserve peace in the family and will bring the house the fullness of God's blessings.

So now I thank you much in Jesus Christ for the reception you gave my poor petitions, assuring you that you will be always in my poor prayers.

In case your new daughter-in-law comes, use your authority to keep the peace between them, and I hope that by means of your prudence and charity that will happen. I end in haste, and with all esteem and reverence declare myself,

Your humble, obliged servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

I have the confidence to include this note to Virginia.

Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (5)

Presentation
November 23, 1743

J.M.J.

Reverend Canon,

The two candidates, sent through your zeal, have arrived at this Retreat and were accompanied by Father Anthony. A short time after their arrival, I conducted a retreat for all three, and at First Vespers of the Presentation they were vested with the habit of the Congregation with full solemnity. They seem to be filled with piety, etc. I want to hope for a good outcome, for they are prompt to everything. The young man from Solerio is very behind in his studies, and I have little expectation that he will ever succeed as an evangelical worker, given his lack of natural ability. Now that he is here, he will be given every help; otherwise, if he does not succeed in his vocation, he will attend to his own perfection.

I am writing in haste, for I am leaving for Rome. I was called by a qualified person on the part of some cardinals who are enthusiastic about our Congregation and wish to establish a Retreat in the vicinity of the city. I am going, therefore, to join with them and visit the locations, etc. "Let that happen which is good in the eyes of the Lord." I am working with a prompt spirit, but also with a huge repugnance on the part of nature against making such trips, especially because I am not in complete health, etc. May the Name of the Lord

239. Virginia Scaccabarozzi Fracassini is Aurelius' daughter-in-law.

be blessed. I will stay in Rome a few days, and once things are started, I will return speedily to the Retreat. Out of charity continue your good prayers for me, and I assure you of my poor prayers. Bless me, and with profound reverence I declare myself,

Your Reverence's unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross, Poor Discalced Cleric Regular

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Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (28)

Presentation
December 18, 1743

*May the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

I received your letter, and before my departure from this Retreat for Vetralla and Soriano, I am answering by telling you that the true love of God is exercised on the Cross of the Beloved Good Christ Jesus, and the correct way to enrich oneself with grace in the midst of internal and external pain is to feed on the Divine Will. This is a great point. It is a great perfection to resign oneself in everything to the Divine Will; a greater perfection is to live abandoned with great indifference in the Divine Good Pleasure. This is a maxim of high perfection, and the highest perfection is to feed in a pure spirit of faith and love on the Divine Will. Oh! sweet Jesus! what a great thing you taught with words and deeds of eternal life! Recall what the lovable Savior said to his beloved disciples: it was his food to do the Will of his Eternal Father. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, that I may perfect his work."

Recall that this food of eternal life is the Sovereign Food of doing the Will of the Most High. His Divine Majesty is accustomed to season with various kinds of tastes — sweet to the spirit, although bitter to the natural taste and to self-love. Now these flavors are pains of all kinds, with which the Heavenly Father is accustomed to endow his most loved souls. In that way the Father brings them to the highest perfection, if they are faithful to fulfill with perfection the Will of God, because they feed the spirit with ineffable sweetness. You must aspire to this and be faithful in continuing your exercise and practice of solid virtue. And with regard to penances, now that your body is exhausted with sickness, it is necessary not to aggravate it any more, but simply accept with joy the penance that God gives you in your sickness, etc.

I do not feel myself inspired to speak to Doctor Fazzi for his daughters, whom he has in the convent. Besides, I cannot because I am departing. You are to recommend both me and the whole Congregation to God, especially now that I am going to take up an important business for the glory of God, etc. Pray and have others pray a lot.

With regard to writing Thomas, let it be seldom and with prudence, caution, simplicity, and detachment. I will not fail to recommend to God the

religious you referred to and all the convent. I end in haste and pray all fullness of blessing for you from the Lord. I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

I thank you for the holy signs; they are well made. If you would please make some more for me. Do not make that line with thread in the middle of the cross, but around the cross, and let it be smooth.

“I WILL ALLOW DIVINE PROVIDENCE

TO GUIDE ME” (1744)

Paul and John Baptist journeyed to Rome to finalize the establishment of the two Retreats at Vetralla and Toscanella. But the two Albani brothers, both cardinals, have offered them a new foundation at the shrine of San Eutizio near Soriano. The older was Annibale, also called “of San Clemente” and also “Treasurer,” for he was the “Camerlengo” in charge of papal finances. The younger brother, Alexander, became a cardinal in 1721 and at this time was a member of the Congregation of Good Government, which was the papal agency for governing the Papal States. Annibale believed his health had been renewed by his prayers to San Eutizio, a martyr. As a result he restored the shrine to the saint on the ancestral estate near Soriano. A small community of priests were given this shrine by the Albani cardinals. When the priests abandoned the shrine, Garagni suggested to the younger Cardinal Alexander to offer it to Paul. Both Albani brothers saw in this suggestion a solution to their embarrassment with the empty shrine. The two cardinals asked Paul to come to Rome, which he did. Paul was glad to accept this shrine with its small “convento,” a home for the priest usually attached to a church. Benedict XIV approved and Paul decided to take “private” possession until the “Retreat” could be properly restored.

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Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (15)²⁴⁰

Viterbo

January 22, 1744

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father,

I presented the letter to the monsignor, the governor, who put it into execution with pleasure. The bishop, too, gave full approval to these two foundations, which were received with great joy in God by the whole population.

Today, I am leaving for Vetralla to achieve something else and to arrange affairs. And since I find myself near, I see it is necessary that I come there to

240. In this letter of the new year Paul outlines for Garagni all that must be done to achieve his desired goal of founding two new Retreats. He writes to the civil and spiritual authorities in Viterbo. He plans to go to Rome. He has written to the pope for permission to ordain several religious and to shorten the novitiate of several. Everything is carefully planned! But notice that he leaves everything to the guidance of Divine Providence!

obtain a favor from His Holiness, a favor that is necessary for a successful outcome and furthering of these foundations. And once you will have listened to me, you will know that for now it is better to delay the mission in Nettuno. I am writing Cardinal Albani and Cardinals Rivara and Colonna and conveying my thanks to them, and much more to God, for you who cooperated so much for this work of God. Around January 26 I hope to be there; however, I am not sure. I will allow Divine Providence to guide me.

I end by prostrating myself at your feet. I am leaving now for Vetralla. Excuse me, for I am writing in haste as I had much to take care of for convents in Viterbo, etc. Bless me, and with profound reverence I am,

Your Reverence's humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Canon Blaise Pieri (7)

Rome

January 27, 1744

Very Reverend Canon,

I am busy with Cardinal Albani, who is leaving soon for Soriano, and for that reason has taken on himself the task of obtaining everything from His Holiness. The mission at Nettuno is being delayed until May. Cardinal Alexander will be there for that. The cardinals have much at heart the foundation of San Eutizio. We need to adore the divine dispositions. I have the letter from the pope. Do me the favor of telling Sister Colomba that now is the time to assist our work, and that I am recommending to her prayer, again and again, a great worker who is starting to have a liking for our Congregation and would be one of its most qualified workers.²⁴¹ Oh, how much this weighs on me! Let her pray strongly, and I hope she will be heard without fail, and recommend to her my soul and those of my companions, especially those at Mount Argentario, etc. Ah, for charity's sake! we do not lose sight of them day or night, and much more for Your Reverence, in our holy sacrifices.

I end in a hurry and leave you in the holy Side of Jesus. I am from my heart ... I will have more to say to Canon Pietro and will write from Soriano.

Your unworthy servant,

P.D. †

241. Paul once again requests the prayers of Sister Colomba, but this time she is to pray for Father Thomas Struzziere of the Side of Jesus (1706-1780). Paul had met him while in Rome the previous fall. Struzziere was thirty-eight years old and an excellent preacher. Struzziere professed vows April 16, 1745. He became apostolic visitor in Corsica and was the first Passionist to become a bishop (of Amelia and Todi). Six of Paul's letters to him have been preserved (Ladislao Ravasi, *Il Servo d Dio Mons. Tommaso Struzziere*).

Most Holy Father,

Kneeling at the holy feet of Your Holiness with my face in the dust, my poor heart bows in completely true tribute of humblest gratitude for the favors which you deigned with total kindness and charity to visit and strengthen this small but most faithful flock with your letter. That letter will be read with profound reverence and veneration at the Provincial Chapter, which, due to the illness of the provincial, is being delayed until after this coming Easter.

Meanwhile, I will not fail to inform all the Retreats of the fervent, apostolic charity with which Your Holiness deigned with so much fatherly affection to encourage and animate all to fervor of spirit and to perseverance in the path undertaken.

I cannot pass over assuring Your Holiness that despite the events that are occurring, however disheartening they may be, the entire Congregation remains faithful both in the observance of the holy Rules and in keeping up all the spiritual exercises, which they follow day and night, to the greater glory of God and the spiritual benefit of our neighbors, as occasion offers.

And although the devil has used all his strength to attack us, a lively hope grows in my heart that when the time determined by the always adorable Providence of God arrives, His Divine Majesty will pour out his Holy Spirit into these poor ones, so they will stand as a wall for the House of Israel and be instruments for his glory by fighting bravely, even to shedding their blood for the life of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church.

Meanwhile, I assure Your Holiness that they are holding their arms outstretched to heaven and calling out to the Lord to long preserve Your Holiness in health and to give you more and more light and strength to humble and bring back to the sheepfold of Jesus Christ all those who stand in pride and abuse. Kneeling to kiss your most holy feet, with profound reverence I implore your holy apostolic blessing for my unworthy self and all these poor ones.

Your humble, unworthy, obligated servant in the Lord, and obedient son,
Paul of the Cross

Pope Benedict XIV (2)January 30, 1744²⁴²

Holy Father,

Paul of the Cross, Rector of the Congregation of Least Discalced of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ in the Retreat on Mount Argentario, as humble petitioner of Your Holiness, prostrate at your holy feet, humbly explains that since it has become necessary to establish three Retreats in a few days, that is, one at the Church of San Eutizio in the territory of Soriano, the second at the Church of Saint Michael the Archangel on Mount Fogliano in the territory of Vetralla, and the third in the Shrine of the Our Lady of the Oak in the territory of the city of Toscanella, in view of the fact that this Least Congregation of the Holy Passion, recently approved by Your Holiness, as yet does not have a title for the ordination of its clerics, and that at the time Divine Providence has increased the number of religious and the number of Houses, the petitioner, above mentioned, asks from the great care of Your Holiness the granting of the grace that the religious of this Congregation can be ordained under the title of the poverty they profess, or the title of common table, as best pleases Your Holiness, so that the Houses may be sufficiently provided with workers for the greater profit of souls.

In addition, the aforesaid petitioner asks that Your Holiness grant the faculty for one time only to admit to profession those candidates whom he considers in his conscience most fit by dispensing some months of their novitiate so that they can provide for the Retreats ...

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (16)

Vetralla
February 16, 1744
Leaving.

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Bishop,

The insistence that His Eminence Cardinal Albani of San Clemente had that I come immediately to take possession of the Sanctuary of San Eutizio in the territory of Soriano was such that I was not allowed to spend even two whole days in Rome. And since, once arrived in Soriano, I began the holy mission, which ended with much fruit, and was unable, because of many occupations, to give you an account of ourselves.

Now that I find myself, along with my companion, here in Vetralla, where we arrived late last evening, I am not failing to inform you that by the instrumentality of the our Eminent Cardinal we obtained the favor from His Holiness not only to admit twelve religious to profession with the dispensation

242. This is the date on which the request was granted. Paul's letter to the Pope is not dated and was written earlier.

of some months of their novitiate on my judgment, but also he granted us the power to have a number of religious ordained under the title of poverty, and, when the Houses will have been founded, he will grant such a favor perpetually and universally for all our least Congregation.

Therefore, today, God willing, we are leaving for Toscanella to arrange things there, and then I will take myself to the Retreat on the mountain to take the religious and bring them to the openings of the Retreats — with the hope of accomplishing that around the middle of Lent or even sooner.

I recommend this work of God always more to your piety and protection; even more I recommend my poor soul and those of my companions to your holy prayers and sacrifices. Meanwhile, paying my profound reverence, I close, asking for your holy pastoral blessing, and claim I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Bishop Alexander Abbati (9)

Vetralla

February 16, 1744

About to leave Vetralla.

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

The solicitude of Cardinal Albani forced me to quickly take possession of the Sanctuary of San Eutizio in Soriano and did not allow me to remain in Rome even for two whole days. Once I arrived in Soriano, I opened the mission. The mission ended with much fruit. I was not able, because of my many occupations, to give you an account of ourselves. Now, along with my companion, I am here in Vetralla, where we arrived late yesterday evening, and I do not want to neglect notifying you as to how, because of the cardinal, we obtained the permission from His Holiness not only to admit our twelve religious to their profession by dispensing some months from their novitiate as judged proper by me, but also we can have a number of religious ordained under the title of poverty, and, when the Houses are founded, the perpetual and universal permission will be granted to the whole of our small Congregation.

So today, God willing, we are leaving for Toscanella to arrange things, and then I will take myself to the Retreat on the mountain to take the religious and conduct them to the openings of the Retreats. I hope to complete this around the middle of Lent, or before.

I recommend to your kindness and protection this work of God, and much more I recommend my poor soul and those of my companions to your prayers and holy sacrifices. Meanwhile, with profound reverence I close, asking for your holy pastoral blessing, and declare myself,

Your Excellency's, humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

A Benefactress in Vetralla

Presentation
February 26, 1744

Dear Signora,

After the midday meal on Monday, we will leave, God willing, hoping to be there with our religious, ten in all, by Wednesday afternoon, or more likely Thursday. Since I was otherwise occupied and a bit sick, I had one of our religious write the governor and standard bearer to inform them that for just and true motives our Congregation is not able at this time to take solemn possession of the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak. We will take possession in autumn. This is because nothing is ready there, and to take solemn possession without assigning religious there would not be good and not redound to the greater glory of God and the edification of our neighbors, etc. God knows the pain I experience in not complying with the desires I had to console this beloved city. But the delay will redound to their greater spiritual advantage; I am sure of that. I have advanced my departure in order to return the sooner to recuperate a bit from my illness, which has been not a little dangerous.

I break off in haste, leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, and ask you to greet Signore James and all his religious daughters in my name. I will do the same myself for the Reverend Mother who is in the convent of Saint Rose for the charity shared with me. I pay you my humble reverence and am from the heart,

Your obliged, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (29)

Presentation
February 26, 1744

The Holy Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts.

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

May God be forever blessed, who once more has given me news of the conduct of your soul. I have not received any letters since a long time back when you wrote you had no flowers for the garden, etc. Only the one written on January 19 was received yesterday. I can say that I had the passing thought you were ordered not to write to me any more. I thought I had some reason to think that way, while reflecting that I was not receiving your letters. However, that was not the case, but I continued in peace, adoring the divine dispositions without neglecting to remember you in my poor prayers. I would have been pleased to read the letter from the bishop, but it seems it was lost. Do not be pained at all over that, but unite yourself to the Divine Will that has permitted it. I thank our lovable Good that he keeps you always balanced and persevering in the path you have undertaken. Have no doubt, my daughter, that in a short time the good God will free you from temptations, etc. Your heart

will be renewed completely, and you will burn with holy love in the sweet Heart of Jesus. Be courageous in fighting, but keep a peaceful spirit. The humble heart will always be victorious. You see well that His Divine Majesty teaches you by means of the combat to distrust yourself and trust only in God, etc. Continue to show the most refined charity to the sick sisters and with the poor, etc. Pay no attention to that religious who claims you sin in being charitable to that poor woman. I desire that before you repeat your act of external charity, you show her a spiritual favor by a kindly way of reasoning to bring her around and gain her for God. I trust you will succeed.

In prayer, follow your usual way and be obedient to the internal direction of the Holy Spirit, allowing your spirit to be free to fly where that sweet and loving breath of that Divine Spirit guides you. Keep a quiet, peaceful, recollected interior, remaining solitary in your interior cell, treating one-on-one with your Beloved Good, reposing in him, losing yourself completely in that immense sea of love. God will teach you these things.

Now, I want briefly to give you a small account of myself. Thanks to my God, I am on the cross within and without, for I have no want of interior and external pains as well as the continual business of traveling. I was in Rome in December, and then I had two missions near Rome. The affairs of our least Congregation are going well, always thanks to God, and these good sons are very fervent. Often I am moved to tenderness to see them so humble, mortified, and devout. I am giving their retreat now and preparing them for their holy profession, which many will make this coming Sunday. Monday, after the midday meal, we will leave, please God, for the foundation of two Retreats, one on Mount Fogliano near Vetralla, the other in the shrine of the glorious martyr, San Eutizio, near Soriano, the capital of the Albani House, which was ceded to us by Cardinal Albani. This is the sanctuary where the body of San Eutizio is kept, and there are catacombs like in Rome. Outside of Rome I have not seen a sanctuary as devout and beautiful as this.

However, I am not finding satisfaction in anything. I am on the cross without comfort; besides, I now have a palpitation of the heart, and, if it continues, I will soon end my poor life. I ought to take care of myself, but I cannot. If I am still alive in May, I will undergo purging with a sweetening decoction, blood letting, etc. Pray much for me that our Lord give me the grace to die penitent and fortified with the sacraments, for this is an evil that is coming on fast.

I am sending the cotton soaked with oil from the sanctuary lamp, as you wish. When I have led the religious to the two new Retreats, I will return here about the middle of March. Write to me so that when I return, I can read your letter, and I will rejoice to know the thoughts of the bishop.

To make sure your letters get to me safely, give them to your brother, who will send them by post. I will send this to him. Let us pray God to provide workers for this Congregation, for the need is great, seeing we are establishing more Retreats. We must take possession of the Retreat in Toscanella in November, for all the difficulties have been cleared away. But I have not accepted it yet because there are not sufficient religious. Let us pray

vigorously. You can imagine what fears I have in my poor mind, but I am at peace. These are projects that exceed my powers and abilities, so fears are not wanting to me, etc. I put all my hopes in God. Jesus enrich you with all fullness of graces and blessings. Amen

God reward you for your charity for everything, and I thank you in God.
Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Bishop Alexander Abbati (10)²⁴³

Vetralla
San Angelo
March 7, 1744

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Thanks forever to our great God, nine religious arrived with me on Thursday evening in Vetralla, where we were received by the clergy and the town leaders with a demonstration of singular piety and devotion, and conducted to College Church. After adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the archpriest gave a fervent sermon, fitting to our Institute. After Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, we were housed in the home of our benefactor and syndic, Signore Peter Brugiotti, who treated us with refined charity and great liberality.

It was a cause of great edification to see the canons and town leaders serve the religious at table after washing the feet of all. This could have brought tears to the eyes of the hardest of hearts. On Friday morning we went out in procession from Vetralla to take possession of the new Retreat, which was done by the magistrate, as is the practice, along with the deed.

The *Te Deum Laudamus* was intoned, then a short and very devout sermon was preached by Prior Mancini. I then sang the High Mass, after which there was the procession with the Blessed Sacrament in the ciborium around the courtyard of the church. When the blessing was given, we reposed the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. So ended the solemn ceremony of the solemn taking possession with tender devotion for all who were there.

I thought it was my strict obligation to give Your Excellency this report as you are our zealous pastor and father, and so I know your devout heart will be moved the more to magnify our great God for the majesty with which he has shown forth his mercies to us.

The rector of this Retreat is Father John Baptist of Saint Michael the Archangel, elected by the full votes of our Chapter at the Presentation in accord with our Rules. With him are Father John Thomas of Saint Francis Xavier, Father Joseph Mary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary Most Holy, and

243. In two letters to the bishop of Viterbo, dated March 7 and April 10, 1744, Paul describes the opening of the Retreat at Vetralla and explains why he cannot be at Vetralla for the bishop's visit.

two devout clerics, numbering five in all. When the building is finished, there will be a larger number of religious, twelve at least, in addition to lay brothers.

I ask the care of Your Excellency to grant faculties for confessions to Father Joseph, who took care of confessions for fourteen years in Chiavari in the diocese of Genoa and is well versed in moral theology, even more in piety, so that we may have two confessors. For now that will be sufficient. After two or three hours I am leaving with the religious, destined to take possession of San Eutizio in Soriano, and asking Your Excellency to accompany me with your holy blessing. Excuse my mistakes, for I have written in great haste because of my occupations. And with profound reverence, I affirm that I am,

Your unworthy, humble, dedicated servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular
I will await your desires in Soriano.

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Bishop Alexander Abbati (11)

San Angelo
April 10, 1744

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Tuesday evening I arrived at this Retreat of San Angelo, and I found the religious, thanks always to our great God, in fervent and exact regular observance, all of them eagerly awaiting the arrival of Your Excellency so that this poor community may have the consolation of receiving your pastoral blessing. Father John Baptist and I feel keenly that we will miss that. Since the mission in Civita Castellana has been announced for the Monday after the Second Sunday of Easter, we cannot delay until the time of your visit. We need to leave here today so as to have time to rest on Saturday and Sunday at the Retreat of San Eutizio and for the spiritual consolation of our brother religious who desire this. If the great care of Your Excellency allows us to share from a distance, we would receive that blessing with all the submission and reverence of our hearts. When this campaign of missions is over, I will make every effort to come to Viterbo to receive it kneeling. In that event I will have the chance to confer with Your Excellency on the business of the Retreat at Toscanella and the reasons for the delay in taking possession there. I end, kissing the hem of your holy pastoral vestments, and with profound reverence reaffirm that I am,

Your Excellency's humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

San Angelo
Vetralla
June 23, 1744

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

Yesterday, about midday, I arrived at Vetralla to continue on to the Retreat of San Angelo, where, on the advice of the doctors in Orbetello, I should pass the summer since the air is lighter and take a tincture of steel in whey in order to regain perfect health because I was sick for forty days, and, if my sickness had not changed, I would be in eternity.

All this time, and even before, I was anxious, but peaceful, because I had not received a letter from you, despite the fact that I and Father Fulgentius had written. Now you have deigned to console me, for last evening a letter was forwarded to me from the Retreat of San Eutizio. Oh, how good is our great God! With my face at your feet, I offer you lively thanks for the charity you continue and the charitable part you took with His Holiness for our poor Congregation. While we continually pray our Lord for all the Holy Church, now in our Retreats all our prayers and penances are applied primarily for His Holiness so that His Divine Majesty may give great light and strength in the present needs, and for all the Holy Church.

In our poor Retreats the Most High is served with great fervor, according to the reports I have from those in charge. It is wonderful to see the fervent spirit with which they strive to acquire the holy virtues, especially the young ones. If they were not reined in, they would overdo it. Poor as I am, I have lost a great good since I cannot follow the common life. May the Name of the Lord be praised. I cannot do more for my head is bad.

I am writing a couple of lines to Father Struzzieri. I pay him my profound respects and ask for his holy prayers and blessing. I greet with all courtesy your nephew, the canon, and all in the Lord.

In November I hope to pay a visit, if I am alive and well, as I hope to be.

Your humble and complete servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

244. Paul informs Garagni of his long sickness of forty days, and that he will spend the summer at Vetralla, where the air is better. "The present needs" of the Church," which he mentions here and has mentioned in an earlier letter, probably refers to damage done during the War of the Austrian Succession.

Thomas Fossi (12)

San Angelo
August 11, 1744

*May the Sufferings of Jesus
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

My Dear Thomas, Beloved in Jesus Christ,

Do not be surprised that you have not seen a letter from me until now. You should know that since May I have been sick or recovering. Now I am nailed down with the pains they call sciatica, but I do not think so. They are like the ones I had at Longone.

Therefore, first of all I offer you lively thanks in Jesus that you continue your charity to me and to all of our least Congregation. I have complete faith in God that you will be abundantly rewarded by the Infinite, Highest Giver of all goods, as I and all pray for you.

I rejoice to read of the mercies God is doing you with these precious troubles, the abandonment on the part of all and the lack of all comfort. O my dear one, my dear one! Oh, how well things are going now. Believe that in this way a great sea of treasures of graces is prepared for you for everything. Be of good heart! Never neglect a bit of prayer and keep your heart recollected at all times, remaining in a sweet repose in the arms of the Infinite Good, staying in his divine presence without, however, neglecting diligent, loving care of your family and their interests because that is how you fulfill your state and that is what God wills. Once you have used prudent diligence, do not be anxious about anything, for then His Divine Majesty will have you experience his mercies, even in temporal things. The state of trouble in which you find yourself is precious, and God wishes to ground you well in humility of heart, whence comes every good.

With regard to ... I do not have time to resolve, nor can I give you advice, for I am not able ...

I hope that God will send me to the island, but I do not know when. I hope it will be in a few months, and then we will talk. I am writing with difficulty, and in order not to use more pages, I have written very simply. Jesus bless you. Amen. I embrace you in Jesus, and I am from a true heart,

Your true, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (6)²⁴⁵

San Angelo
August 21, 1744

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Very Reverend Canon,

After such a long silence, caused by my sickness in May of this year, I found myself not only obliged to go to the baths in Viterbo, which managed to cure me except for pains continuing at my waist, which are still with me — I am hopeful they will disappear shortly — but also I was forced by advice of my doctors to move to the air of our Retreat of San Angelo on Mount Fogliano, where I find myself presently and where, please God, I will end the summer.

Now, I will give you a brief account of the status of the Congregation, which, thanks to God, goes on increasing. God is blessing it, for we now have three more foundations to be made in a short time, as I confidently hope. And our good God is raising up strong and fervent workers to embrace our Institute.

What consoles me the more in God, and for which I am obliged to thank His Sovereign Majesty, is that in all three Houses the Most High is served with great fervor of spirit and exact observance of the holy Rules. It is enough to bring tears of devotion to see these youthful ones, who never have enough of penance, and, if they were not held back, who knows what they might do.

Oh, great God! May you be praised by all peoples, tribes, and nations, and let all chant your mercies forever. Amen.

Now, since you had such a large part in this work and since our Lord made great use of you, I summon up my courage to come as a suppliant at your feet and ask that you would arrange for dimissorial letters for first tonsure and for minor and sacred orders for Confrater Joseph of Saint Mary Magdalene, also known as, Villavecchia Di Soleri, who has a cell in this Retreat of San Angelo and has succeeded well and is moderately qualified and equipped with the knowledge sufficient to be a good priest.

Dimissorial letters from the bishop of origin are necessary since we do not have solemn approval with the privilege that other orders enjoy — a privilege that will come soon when more Houses are established, as can be gathered from the opinion of the cardinals at the time of the examination of our Rules, where they state that when we are more numerous in members and Houses, solemn approbation can be granted. They are consulting the pope to bring this about. See, the way is now open; but, meanwhile, we have need of priests, and our present Holy Father has granted me an apostolic indult to have a certain number ordained with the title of poverty. You can see what a wide path God has opened!

245. Again Paul mentions his illness and that he took the "baths" at Viterbo. He is still at Vetralla. He asks Cerruti's help in getting all the necessary papers for two candidates for ordination. They are Joseph of Saint Mary Magdalene (Villavecchia) and Dominic Bartolotti. Both were ordained and persevered. Joseph died in 1751; Dominic lived until 1792.

So now, Reverend Father, would you be pleased to arrange for the dimissorials with a dispensation from the interstices on account of the necessity to serve our Church for the greater glory of God, etc. Joseph Villavecchia completed his twenty-fourth year on March 4, as appears on his baptismal certificate. And since I cannot send you the indult conceding us the title of poverty, I do formally attest we have it.

If the bishop were to have any difficulty, persuade him to send the dimissorials with the wording, "along with any just title." That is what Bishop Gattinara did for us when he sent dimissorials to Rome for our ordination. Please do everything possible to let me have them as soon as possible.

I have a further inconvenience for you. But everything done for our Infinite Good amounts to little or nothing. We have here in our Congregation a fine cleric from Carpineto, diocese of Acqui, and I have no knowledge whatever of that place. So I would ask you to request the bishop there to send a letter to the bishop of Acqui and have him send the dimissorials for sacred orders, seeing that he already has all the minor orders. This cleric has with him all the testimonials of his ordinations under the signature of the Ordinary. He is an excellent religious, very observant, etc. He is about thirty years old or more. His name is Dominic Bartolotti Di Carpineto, son of Constance and Anna Maria, married. At this time he lives in the Retreat of San Eutizio, Martyr, at Soriano. If his Ordinary wants to see his baptismal record, he will be able to do so in Carpineto. For either two or three years, I do not remember rightly, he attended the College of the Somaschi in Naples, and before his entry into our Congregation, he submitted a well-authenticated testimonial of good behavior at the college.

Oh, how great a favor you would do me in sending me the dimissorials for these two clerics. I have no misgivings about the one for Solerio. But if you can also arrange for the one from Carpineto, it would be very helpful, for at this coming Easter we will have three more priests, in addition to other clerics who are subdeacons. All are close to their Ordinaries, and there is no further need.

Please, out of your love for God, forgive my boldness. Attribute it to the fact that I have had such great experience of your charity toward me.

In case you do send me the two dimissorials, have them sealed with the bishop's seal for greater security and have them addressed: Viterbo for Vetralla.

I recommend myself to your prayers because my needs are extreme. Please convey my reverent and dear greetings to Very Reverend Borgonzio. I greet in the Lord all your blessed house and ask for your holy blessing.

I would have written to the bishop, but I have no acquaintance with him. I offer him my profound reverence and sign myself,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

San Angelo
August 29, 1744

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

Do not be surprised that I am so slow in writing to you because from May in this year I have been sick and still experience the inconvenience of a type of sciatica. By the grace of God I am getting better. In order to use the baths nearby in Viterbo, I am here in the Retreat of San Angelo on Mount Fogliano to secure a change of air. I will end the summer here, and, when I have finished certain missions and a trip to Rome, I will return to the Retreat of the Presentation. I hope to be there by the middle of November.

Now, I tell you that the affairs of your spirit are going well and that you walk with too much timidity and fear. I would have you humble, condemned, distrustful of self, but even more that you walk in the divine service with great joy, great confidence in God, all abandoned and rested in the divine fatherly bosom. Your coldness and miseries ought to humble you all the more, but then throw everything into the fire of the love of God, which will consume everything and cause it to vanish like a mote of straw cast into a great furnace, which is consumed and lost in such a way that you cannot find even a shadow of it.

Your temptations are not coming from the cause you assumed in your letter. They are caused entirely by the devil, who is greatly enraged to see you serving God and that you wish to be entirely sacrificed to his Holy Love. So make nothing out of this. Scorn the devil and do not think about the temptations at all; do not call them up for examination. Your body is not disposed to such fantasies; God is permitting them to make you humble and purify you the more. You can experience the great assistance of God, who stands in the midst of your heart, fighting in you and for you.

Whence comes this great aversion for such temptations, the sleepless vigilance, the promptness in casting them off, in abhorring them? Do not all these come from the great assistance of God and from the strength that God gives you? Courage then, for the victory is ours, but it is ours in Christ Jesus who is our victory.

So continue your present way, both in regard to prayer and Communion. Stay recollected in yourself with the continuous Presence of God, frequently arousing your spirit with darts of love and holy colloquies, brief but penetrating, and repose in God with a loving peace and gentle attention, frequently reviving your faith in this sweet Presence of God.†

Now, I am speaking secretly to your heart that in a short time the Retreat on the island of Elba will be established, and in a short time the affair will be taken care of, either when I will be in Rome or from here, seeing we have good

246. Notice Paul's advice in regard to temptations and how God is assisting one in the midst of temptations.

opportunity. There should be two more Retreats established, but we must wait for candidates. By late fall I have great confidence that we shall have some, in particular one of great spirit, active on missions, etc., and he is bringing others with him.

Let us recommend the affair to God, especially that concerning the solemn approbation of our Congregation. I am going to Rome over this solemn approval that our religious desire so much, and on this depends the recruitment of candidates and the expansion of the Congregation with more Retreats, etc.

So there is need to pray more and with great fervor and spirit, with tears, and, above all, with a lively faith.

I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity you continue toward me, both for the pasta and other things; but I wish you would not inconvenience yourself. May Jesus give you an eternal reward.

Father Anthony is staying at the Retreat of San Eutizio, Martyr, where his sacred body is buried. He is giving himself much to our spirit and is doing well. I recommend him to you for holy perseverance.

I will say no more, for I can work only a little while. If I improve, as I expect, at the end of September I will leave for the mission and then for Rome. Jesus bless you and inflame you with his holy love. Amen.

You are using my family name Danei, but after the Congregation was approved, all the religious took on saints' names. I am Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular, for that is the title of the Congregation.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

September 15, 1744

*May the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ
be in your heart.*

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am answering your letter with brevity, and I tell you that the storms and temptations that God is permitting you are to make you know well who you are of yourself and to root you in humility and a great hatred of yourself. Neither these temptations nor the arousal of your passions take you away from God, that is, from your first practices. Rather, you should stay the longer in acts of adoration, rejoicing to be on the naked cross in the midst of whirlwinds, darkness, and storms.

Be careful not to refrain from Holy Communion and continue to go under obedience to your confessor. The great endeavor of the devil is to deprive you of the Table of Angels and from receiving this Food of Eternal Life from which the soul becomes terrible to the demons. So do as I say and do not fear, for God has not abandoned you; he has merely hidden to test your fidelity. Believe me, your former serenity will come back. Trust in God, approach God with the humility and confidence of a daughter, and be of good heart because

these temptations, no matter how horrible, are not overcoming you since God holds you in the loving bosom of his love.

I am going out on missions, so do not write me until October 7 or 8, and then I am going to Rome ... continue your communal life; do not think about afflictive penances for this is not the time for that; take what God sends you. Pray for me and the needs of the Congregation. Trust much in God and be certain that a great peace will come. Jesus bless you. Amen.

I am not writing now to Sister Angela Rose. Greet her for me and tell her to continue her path. When you are able, do me the charity of making me some signs.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

419

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (18)

Soriano

October 6, 1744

J.M.J.

Most Reverend,

Thanks to our great God, the holy mission ended happily, and since our good God blessed it with a generous hand, the fruit was copious and universal. It is possible that a second mission will begin this week in a locality nearby here. There is need. Since it is not said to be a place of more than eight hundred souls, we will end it in eight or ten days. Then I will get ready for my departure for Rome with great confidence in God that he will bless the work I am undertaking. It will offer you a great opportunity to enrich yourself with merits since you will never cease partaking in the prayers of the entire Congregation in accord with the obligation of our hearts. I am writing in haste and am loaded down with tasks for the service of God. My weakness of spirit and body crush me somewhat. I recommend myself always more to your holy sacrifices and prayers. And with profound reverence I affirm to you that I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

420

Thomas Fossi (13)

Soriano

October 23, 1744

Leaving.

J.M.J.

My Dear Thomas,

By chance I came upon your letter that I had not answered since I put it in a book with the intention to answer it. Then I forgot about it because it was not under my eyes.

471

The lights you mention to me about being holy and founding a religious institute and that on the island there are only three or four soul in the state of grace, I tell you frankly are certainly not lights from God, but illusions of the devil, hidden deceits. You must cast them off like the plague and flee from them with all your strength, humbling yourself much and continuing your exercises in accord with your secular status, as I have always told you. And with regard to ... continue in peace ... for that is the Will of God, and there is no need of further light on that.

I am writing in haste and am very busy and am about to leave on an affair of great glory to God. Take Jesus with you in all your undertakings. Imitate his hidden life and contemplate his Passion, where you will learn his holy virtues and true annihilation. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

421

A Monsignor (1)

From the House
[December 1744]

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Very Reverend Monsignor,

I feel keenly the inability to send the daily schedule to the cardinal immediately, as you had requested, for I do not have them, as I did not think to bring them with me. But just as soon as I am back at the Retreat of the Presentation, I will send them to you promptly with other information, etc., carefully registered and safely put in a special packet, with the hope it will reach you by the middle of next week

I ask your pardon, for the love of God, and place myself at the feet of His Eminence, whose prayerful assistance and strong protection I ask. To you I offer my humble reverence, leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus and asking you to remember this miserable sinner in your holy sacrifices, and in haste I confirm myself as,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

"BED OF SICKNESS" (1745)

Paul finds himself with renewed bodily pains to the extent that he is confined to bed. In a letter dated July 8, 1745, Paul mentions to Sister Cherubina that his sickness has been of a year's duration. He has been to the baths, unable to celebrate Mass in the previous December, and, when he could get up, he had to use crutches.

422

A Monsignor (2)²⁴⁷

Presentation
[Early in 1745]

Very Reverend Monsignor,

Since my pains have increased somewhat and have obliged me to stay in bed, I have been deprived of the consolation of writing you with my own hand. But I will not miss the chance with this present letter to reaffirm my weak submission to you and, at the same time, send you the daily schedule that you have asked for, as you will see. I would deem it an insult to your zeal, which is so intent on promoting the glory of God, were I to recommend to you the weighty business of our solemn approval. I will ask you, however, to meet with Very Reverend Polidori, Auditor of the Cardinal Camerlengo, with whom I have already met and know he understands the situation very well so that together they may plan to clear away the difficulties that could arise with Cardinal Gentili. I will not say more at this time. I simply assure you that the whole Congregation will not fail to be grateful and pray continually to the All-Highest God to prosper you always and give you superabundant rewards in this life and the next for all that you have done for this poor Congregation. With humble reverence, I affirm I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

423

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (19)

Presentation
January 15, 1745

Very Reverend Father,

Despite my pains, which have increased a bit since I returned here to the Retreat of the Presentation and have confined me to bed and have deprived me of the consolation of writing you with my own hand, I will not be wanting, out

247. Two letters to a "monsignor" close the year 1744 and begin the year 1745. The "monsignor" is probably a bishop. A commission is being formed to study the Rules in view of granting formal approval to the Congregation.

of the gratitude and obligations I owe you, in sending this letter not only to reaffirm my weak devotedness, but also to let you know that we have written to the cardinals about the weighty business you are acquainted with. When, please God, I am somewhat better, I will give you any further news; I know nothing at this time. It all depends on the Cardinal Camerlengo. Father Thomas, thanks be to God, is well and very satisfied to have made his holy decision and will write in good time.²⁴⁸ The mail is leaving; there is no time to write more. We do not neglect to pray for you, and I recommend myself to your prayers, and with profound reverence sign myself,

Your humble, obligated servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Vetralla

Poor Paul lives always with the memory of the greater charity done by you, and, when I am a bit better, I will not fail to give you full details of what shall occur. Pray it be blessed. I send greetings to the bishop and our beloved Canon Randone. Thanks be to God.

424

Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni (20)

Civita Castellana

April 19

Very Reverend,

To fulfill the requests made in your esteemed letter which I received in the last mail, I reverently say that I replied from here to the letter received before Easter. I have not received the letter sent on Holy Saturday because I left on Easter Monday.

With regard to the lay brother you refer to me, I am unhappy that I cannot receive him since I was not aware of this before I had accepted two others, who were accepted to be stationed in another Retreat which is in Toscanella, which, however, has not been established since the air is very bad and it would become a burial ground. If I had known this at first, I would not have entered into the business, but the citizens were asserting that the air was good, for that was the way it seemed to them.

So we are laden with more lay brothers than we need. We have two or three too many. So you can see that lay brothers would be idle if we were to accept more of them. Nor would I know where to use them. Besides, we do not have rooms.

In the Retreat of San Angelo, when I come there, to give me a room they have to take one from another religious. In San Eutizio I must stay with Father John Baptist, and in the Presentation there are enough lay brothers for two Retreats.

God knows how much I am pained by not being able to serve you and console the young man. Forgive me, for the love of God, and please continue the favor of your devout prayers. I am writing in a great hurry, for just now I

²⁴⁸. Father Thomas Struzzieri has arrived at Presentation and will be vested on February 2, 1745.

have returned from confessions and the mail is leaving shortly. I am leaving from here to go to the Retreat to be healed of a kind of palpitation of the heart that I have been suffering for some months. I will be on business a few days at San Eutizio and San Angelo. I ask you holy blessing, and with Father John Baptist I say I am,

Your humble servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

425

The Rector of Rupinaro (1)

Orbetello

May 20, 1745

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Very Reverend Father,

Gratitude, which is so much in accord with the Heart of God, obliges me to extend to you my humble thanks without limit for the charitable memory you maintain of your most unworthy servant. I heard with great satisfaction to my poor spirit of the fervent mission of the servant of God, Father Leonard.²⁴⁹ With my face on the ground I thank the great goodness of our great God that he had excluded me in order to enrich with his mercies and more abundant graces this people by means of the holy, apostolic work of that fervent worker in comparison with whom I confess myself to be before God and men like a coal in the face of the sun. For all of this then, glory, honor, and praise be to the Great Giver of all good. Amen.

I believe that by this time Father Joseph and his companion will have arrived there, and he will have told you of the devotion which I profess for you.²⁵⁰ We have done everything possible to dissuade him from making this trip. But he alleged such reasons that we were obligated to give him the obedience for two months in order to quiet his spirit. He has done very well and is much inclined to virtue, but since he came to the Congregation at an advanced age and had not mortified his too natural tendencies — I would say he is too cordial and free — whence it would be a great charity if you would work for his spiritual advantage and for his quick departure.

I greet your whole house in Jesus Christ, especially your cousin, and Sebastian, your worthy nephew, and all. I remain under obedience to you, and with great respect I kiss your sacred hands and recommend myself, including my sickness, to your prayers and those of all your loving people. I am somewhat better and with effort can sit at my desk for some work. May the

249. Paul mentions that he is now well enough to work a bit at his desk. Because of Paul's condition, Father Leonard was asked to give the mission. Father Leonard is the great Franciscan missionary, Saint Leonard of Port Maurice.

250. Father Joseph joined the Congregation as a priest from Chiavari, Genoa, in 1743. He was in the first community at San Angelo and had confessional faculties.

Will of God be done forever. I end, leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus,
where I declare myself to be and will be always,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

426

Vicar General of Orbetello (1)

From the House
June 6, 1745

Very Reverend Father,

Father Thomas Mary is ready to come to conduct the retreat as soon as you give a sign.²⁵¹ However, it is necessary that the retreat be over by the Vigil of Corpus Christi because of the increase of the hot season and to assist at the sacred ceremonies in choir, etc.

Besides, Father Thomas is desirous of training our young men to give catechetical instructions in Porto San Stefano, a work that would be fruitful for that populace. A cleric would go with him every Sunday, and in the morning, in addition to sermons by Father Thomas, the cleric would give an instruction. During the day there would be a lesson on Christian Doctrine and a short, brief meditation on the Passion of Jesus to arouse the fervor of all to devotion. All this depends on your commands and permission. I am waiting to notify Father Thomas about what you desire regarding the retreat, and with profound reverence I end, kissing your sacred hands, and with haste declare myself,

Your humble, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

427

Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani (31)

Presentation
July 8, 1745

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

On my return from the baths at Vigone, I found your letter in which I see that you did not know about my long sickness of more than a year's duration. The sickness increased in December, when for five and a half months I was nailed down and unable to say Mass. And during the short time I was able to get up, I had to go on crutches. From this you can see my inability to answer your letters, which I always received with pleasure. I believe that Father Fulgentius, to whom I gave the task, answered them several times.

251. Before joining the Passionists, Struzziere had been a missionary and retreat master. Notice Paul's willingness to send a cleric with Struzziere to Porto San Stefano on weekends to teach catechism, etc.

You already know how many times I have affirmed to you that I would never cease to serve your soul as long as I live, and I reaffirm this. But when I cannot, what can be done except to bow one's head to the Holy Will of God, who disposes all for our great good? So you should see clearly that it has been the work of the devil to have put into your mind the thought that I had abandoned you. The evil one has done this to disturb you.

Be glad that our good God tests you in so many ways by permitting all these assaults of the devil and such strong temptations. Oh, these are excellent signs! Believe me, my daughter, that God wishes to make you holy, and for this reason he grounds you in humility and permits the temptations.

So be of good heart and conduct yourself as usual, for all is going well. Your good confessor has not understood this well and that has caused much perturbation. But the truth is certain: our gentle Jesus holds you in his loving embrace, and so you do not fall; rather, he enriches you with great merit.

Go ahead then with fidelity in your exercises, especially in prayer and interior recollection, remaining always in the sweet presence of God in all your work.

I am a little better and celebrate Mass. Here, the servants of God increase in number and are very fervent. Recommend them to the Lord for their perseverance and that this holy work be stabilized. It is so attacked by the devil. Above all, there is need to pray for me as most needy of all.

I am always more obligated to you for the charity you continue. Greet the Mother Abbess for me and all the religious. Recommend me to their prayers. Jesus bless you and inflame you with holy love. Amen.

In haste, I declare myself,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Follow the rules which I have given you, and be very discreet about your penances, especially in this heat, etc.

The Rector of Rupinaro (2)

Presentation
September 9, 1744

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Most Reverend Father,

I was forced to write you some months ago to recommend to you Father Joseph, who came there, as he alleged, to pay his debts.²⁵² To that end, after we had argued for about a year, always refusing him permission, he finally was allowed to go, but for only two months. Five months have passed now.

252. Father Joseph of the Seven Dolores Ferrari left the community and returned to Rupinaro, where his brother lived. Paul finally dismissed him from the Congregation. The letters of September 9 and September 13 deal with a difficult situation created by Father Joseph. In the letter of September 9 to Father Joseph, Paul mentions "the unexpected death" of the recently professed Confrater Turenio "a few days ago." Paul hoped this news would lead Joseph to change his mind.

Besides, with all that the Congregation has put up with; and seeing that the repeated, loving letters have not shaken him in his resolution to go to litigation, an action most contrary to our Institute, which professes a rigorous poverty joined to an apostolic life, a stringent detachment from everything; and we have come to know, in addition, from a person worthy of belief, about his scandalous use of his freedom, as if he were not a religious, not counting his breaking down the door at the home of his nephew, etc.; because of all this, our Congregation assembled in its Chapters, that is, the Chapters of the Retreat of San Angelo in Vetralla, that of San Eutizio in Soriano, and the Chapter of this Retreat of Presentation, and after everything was recommended to God and after examining the past and present situations, all with full vote have decided that the aforesaid Father Joseph is dismissed absolutely from our Congregation in accord with the procedures established in our holy Rules.

At the same time care has been taken to temper everything with charity, and as the aforesaid Father Joseph asked for permission to hire a lawyer and enter suit against his nephew, our Congregation has granted him that permission. Now, to gain him for God a last effort was made by granting him permission from the Chapter to select a procurator who would receive his annuity of six hundred lire, which Father Joseph never renounced. Since this is a Congregation of simple vows, he could rightfully retain it as his patrimony. And with the six hundred lire the procurator will pay his debts, if they have not been taken care of by now. Then Father Joseph will be given the rest of the money since that is what must be done.

Nevertheless, he has been sent the enclosed obedience under precept that he leave within fifteen days. If he does not leave by that time, he is to be considered dismissed, as you will see amply in the enclosed document, in which you can see is attached the permission he has during these days to choose a procurator, which may take him one day, but to be more merciful he is granted fifteen days.

I am being so bold, confiding in your charity, to give you this account so that you might deign to place the documents in his hands in the presence of two friendly witnesses. One might be Simone Rivarola, the other Bernardo, a very worthy gentleman, who could also act as a procurator.

Charity has led me to inconvenience you rather than proceed with clamor in the Ecclesiastical Court in Genoa. I would have means in Rome as well, but it is better to go ahead as we have for "in the mouth of two or three every word ..." If the aforesaid Father does not leave at the end of the term prescribed, he must immediately take off the habit of the Congregation, etc.

Let me know if you have received this summary and also have the kindness to let me know that Father Joseph has received it. If you can send that to me, in that way we will avoid all outcries and recourse against the Congregation. I am proceeding more like a lawyer than as the unworthy superior of this Congregation. Forgive my boldness out of love for God and be sure that for this charitable work you will be doing for us, all our Congregation will show its gratitude for you in its prayers. I recommend the good lay brother, whom I sent as companion for Father Joseph, asking you to assist him in his needs

and have him embark as soon as possible, as he has been recommended by Thomas, his employer.

I forgot to notify you that our Father Joseph believes that I was informed of his goings on by his brother Angelo. That is entirely false, and I can testify fully to that. Have the kindness to have him undeceive himself regarding that. You know that I have full knowledge of his nature, and other religious have it as well. For this reason his complete dissipation was a foregone conclusion — not only by me, but also by others — when he went away. I quickly offer you my humble reverence with salutations for all your reverent household, and from a true heart sign myself,

Your Reverence's unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

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Joseph Mary Ferrari of the Seven Dolors (1)

Presentation
September 9, 1745

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of Least Discalced Clerics Regular,
To Our Beloved Brother in Jesus Christ, Joseph of Holy Mary of the Seven Dolors:

As we know from your letters, Angelo Tassara, your nephew, is refusing to hand over to you six hundred lire, your annuity. We have assembled the canonical Chapter in the accustomed manner and place according to law, so that the religious of the Congregation came together with the purpose to discern what would be just and equitable. Having weighed and considered everything maturely, lest any solution be overlooked for the satisfaction of my conscience, they determined that you should be granted permission in the Lord to bring your case before any legitimate and competent judge.

Therefore, we grant you with the unanimous consent of all the capitulars all and every faculty needed by these present letters, and empower you to choose any qualified person of upright morals and necessary ability as your procurator, who can undertake your case, defend your rights and function as your attorney. This delegation is limited to recouping your six hundred lire annuity and nothing further. So that you may come back to us the sooner, once your secular business has been transacted, we give you the power to choose the same person, or any other as you wish, as your procurator, who will obtain your annuity from Angelo Tassara and then will satisfy your creditors. So that all this may have its effect and so that these letters cannot be called into question, we sign this document with our own hand and attach the seal of our Congregation.

Given at the Retreat of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Mount Argentario, this ninth day of September 1745.

Paul of the Cross, Superior
Luke Anthony of Saint Joseph, Secretary <seal>

Joseph Mary Ferrari of the Seven Dolors (2)

Presentation
September 9, 1745

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics
Regular,
To Our Beloved Brother in Christ Jesus, Joseph of the Seven Sorrows of
Mary:

Whereas care for the Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics Regular is required of us by the Omnipotent God, we are bound to be zealous for its continuous conservation and increase, so that in all who are called to this holy Institute by the Divine Mercy may grow, day by day, in a good and upright spirit. Although not with an easy and comfortable mind, we granted you, Joseph of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, on May 4 permission to face some necessary business which you claimed bound you in conscience. We granted you that permission in the Lord to pursue your business, but not beyond two months, and that within that time limit you would return to the holy Retreat of Mount Argentario, no matter what serious business remained to be done.

Holy warnings of importance were given you carefully and strongly that you conduct your life with right reason and keep in mind your priestly dignity, to which you have been called by the mercy of God, as well as your status as a perfect religious, which you once embraced with a happy heart, as well as danger to yourself that you would incur in the comforts and ease of you paternal home. Just what we feared has happened. Whereas a permission to remain outside the cloister for two months was granted, we were expecting to receive you kindly and were eagerly hoping to warm you with complete love. But with contempt for our commands, and now the space of five month slips by with great grief of soul, and after so long a time, you do not give a thought to leaving your native place, but in truth, as is clear to us, you constantly resist coming to the holy Retreat of Mount Argentario.

By what is known by all your fellow citizens, to us as well, by truthful reports from outstanding men, which cannot be called in doubt, what you are doing in your native city, how you conduct yourself, the things you are saying, all actions absolutely contrary to our Congregation, which upholds the banner of mortification, penance, and poverty, shows you are living a totally improper and contrary existence.

We are not ignorant of all this, and it certainly does not escape you. But we willingly refrain from going into all the particulars, for it is beyond telling what a wound to my heart and how deadly that would be. I was forced to lay out all these indecencies and absurdities to all the religious, not only in this venerable House on Mount Argentario, but also in San Angelo at Vetralla and San Eutizio at Soriano, so that they might employ great zeal for the honor of the Omnipotent God and for the good of our newly born Congregation and for the salvation of my soul.

Therefore, all the rectors of each House, having first of all asked divine help, assembled the Chapter of religious in the usual place and with the unfortunate report concerning you, which was sincerely given to them, they carefully and diligently considered everything, some additional items included, which will occur to you if you think about it, in the light of Chapter XI of our Constitutions. They decided to issue the sentence of your expulsion.

All the religious of the Congregation of the Least Discalced Clerics Regular, lawfully and canonically assembled, expel you, Father Joseph of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, as though you were here present, so that they will not hesitate to remove your name from the list on which the names of all the religious are inscribed.

But since justice without mercy is cruelty, and since the Chapter fathers, following the footprints of divine charity of the Merciful Lord Jesus Christ, are mindful of his infinite kindness, lest any desperation seize your soul out of shame, grant you the space of five days in which to return to us.

They decree as law that you have fifteen days: five for the first termination, five for the second, and the rest are for the third. We make all this known to you that you undertake your return to the House of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Mount Argentario within the time set down, quickly and without delay, or you are not to presume to wear the religious habit or sign of our Congregation.

Wherefore, we desire that you agree with our counsel, and, above all, exhorting you and pleading with all our strength, that with the consent of all the capitulars you use the permission given you and choose a faithful, upstanding man as your procurator, who will be able to claim your rights before a legitimate judge for the six-hundred-lire annuity, which it is said is unjustly denied you. And then anyone, chosen by you, will have the ability to demand the annuity money from your debtor so that he can then satisfy your creditors and ease your conscience.

So you have life and death in your hands. We remain disposed with good will toward you, so here you may be obedient, observe the Rules of our Congregation. With your affairs taken care of, do not delay to fly to the holy Retreat of Mount Argentario. With the eyes of your mind we pray you take a look at the falls, hardships, calamities, and failures which almost all those who failed to remain in their vocation were unable to escape.

We pray for you with the greatest energy possible and plead with you that you would allow the unexpected death a few days ago of our beloved Confrater Turenio of the Most Holy Trinity, and the maxims that made him strong, to impel you to a contempt of this world and its illicit pleasures.

You should not hesitate to call to mind those texts in Holy Scripture which are to be read with great fear: "No one putting his hand to the plow and looking back is worthy of the Kingdom of God." Remember Lot's wife. It is impossible for those, once enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have fallen away to be renewed in penance. There are many more of great weight which seem to declare an incredible danger for body and soul. For the rest, you can choose what pleases you. But if you decide to leave your native

ways and embrace Christ Crucified in our Congregation, know for certain that all the religious will receive you with joyful heart and pleasant face and shower you with greater good will than before.

Given at the Retreat of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Mount Argentario, this ninth day of September 1745.

Paul of the Cross, General

Luke Anthony of Saint Joseph, Secretary

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Angelo M. Tessara²⁵³

Presentation

September 13, 1745

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

Your letter was given me by Brother Bartholemew yesterday. I read it with much edification, and I see that Father Joseph has wished to accept your wise persuasion by having presented you with the note of his debts, leaving to you the charge of taking care of them. He could have taken care of that in two days and have been in this Retreat since last June. But you say well that one does not know what is in the head of that man. I agree with you, knowing well how difficult it is to know the heart of a man. That blessed priest had me fighting for almost a year, during which, under precept of obedience, I refused to allow him to go there. But in the end, seeing that he was still upset and claiming a point of conscience to pay his debts, I gave him permission for just two months, and five have passed, while obedience obliged him to come back when the term was up. For good reasons we were patient so as not to see him in ruins and to guard his soul. But when we had certain information of his conduct there, and having examined other antecedent events, the whole Congregation, united in their Chapters of all three of our Houses, decided to dismiss him, as has been done. The minutes were sent to Father Rector of Rupinaro on the ninth of this month.

We proceeded with much mercy for he has fifteen days to take his departure; otherwise, he must take off the habit of the Congregation since we have that authority from Chapter XI of our Rules and because our Congregation is bound in conscience to remove those who, after counsel and correction, will to be released. And for that reason it was our obligation to dismiss Father Joseph, for he would not make use of salutary warnings given him orally and in writing before his departure. Nor was he stopped by charitable letters written by me and by another very pious priest of ours. And all this was done so that everyone would know that our Congregation intends its sons to be exemplary, observant, fervent, and with all zeal aiming at perfection, otherwise ...

With regard to your inquiry about the profession of Father Joseph, he made his profession into my hands, and although our vows are simple, they oblige

253. This letter was sent to the town of Rupinaro to Joseph Mary Ferrari's nephew.

in conscience as though they were solemn. He could not take off his habit on his own authority without violating his profession. Only the Congregation has that authority, as stated in Chapter XI of the Rules, to expel those who with their bad example and vices are a scandal to others, if after correction, etc., they remain as they were. The Congregation, I say, must open the door and send them out so that, like an infected sheep, their bad example does not work to the ruin of the others. They are a scandal even to poor seculars, a horrible pernicious thing.

Furthermore, since in his letters Father Joseph asserted he was denied his annuity of six hundred lire, our Chapter authorized him to engage a procurator so that in court he could lay out his case and obtain his annuity and pay his debts.

It is good to know that this permission does not go beyond recouping the six hundred lire for the reasons given and cannot be used for anything else. All this was done so that he would have no excuse when the fifteen days prescribed were up. He will leave and return here or will have no place in the Congregation. Would you have the goodness to greet in my name Angelo, his uncle, and his wife. Tell them to use much patience with him. God knows how much he tried me and caused me not any small affliction. God be blessed! I console myself on seeing these servants of God who live with so much perfection of spirit that rebukes my tepidity.

I end by greeting you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I confirm that I am,
Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Have the goodness to consign the enclosed note to Simone Rivarola. If you wish to have information on the expulsion, the time limit, and so on, go see Father Rector of Rupinaro.

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Thomas Fossi (14)

Presentation
September 15, 1745

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

My Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

Dear Thomas, you know how difficult it is for me to use the title of "son." I cringe except for our religious. I have not given it to anyone in writing since I am a humble servant of all and not a father. But since you wish it, I will do so willingly, but I do not wish you to become like the unworthy one who gives you that designation, but to continue to exercise in a large way the beautiful virtues of Jesus Christ in accord with your state in life, in the midst of which I am aware that you have good occasions.

I have not written more to you because of the long illness I suffered. I am being bothered by it right now. I have not failed to share with you my poor prayers in witness of the gratitude I owe you, and the whole Congregation owes you. We admit to you the great charity that your care continues toward

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us poor ones, servants of the Most High, and we hope that in his infinite mercy he will grant you exceedingly large rewards, both in time and in eternity. I beg you to remain faithful to that good God, who continues to grant you so many graces, and practice the holy virtues in accord with your state without deserting holy prayer, which is the precious balsam that perfumes all our works so that they may be pleasing to the Highest Good. We have our treasure within us. Take account of it by being careful that the flame of holy love is always burning on the altar of our hearts.

It is necessary to take care of external works in accord with our state, but it is right to often visit our interior so that in the midst of our duties we observe with the pure and simple eye of faith whether our heart is active in loving that Highest Good, by which it was created; and in case it is seen to be somewhat chilled in the practice of holy love, revive it immediately, taking care to rekindle those sweet flames by gently reviving our faith and holy love with gentle and sweet ejaculatory prayers and loving darts. How much that expression, "Father! Oh, great Father!" delights me, etc. Oh, how much it revives love and confidence! You have already been instructed in all this. If God wishes, I have hopes we will speak together one of these days. Take care of the duties of your state in the upbringing of your family and in keeping your household in unbreakable peace. This is the great work that God asks of you at this time.

I asked you to purchase for us ten or twelve barrels of wine at harvest and have them stored in two containers. Next May, please God, have them sent here. I say this because it is a better buy in the fermentation vat. Let me know the cost right away so that the money can be sent promptly to Signore Ribera at Longone or to anyone you choose. Do us this favor, for there is little wine here on account of the poor harvest, and for us the wine from over there is more healthy.

At this moment we are fifteen religious in this Retreat, but I expect that around the end of November we will be more than twenty or twenty-five, so there is need to lay in provisions. For this reason I am asking the favor.

I end by embracing you in the Side of Jesus, asking you to remember me in your prayers, seeing that my needs are extreme. I end, asking the Lord to grant you all fullness of heavenly blessings, and I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross, Least Discalced Cleric Regular

Felix Anthony Sbarra (1)²⁵⁴

Soriano

House of Signore Lippici²⁵⁵

November 7, 1745

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Paul of the Cross acknowledges with all esteem and honor Reverend Felix and confesses he is much bound to him. Because business has kept me from coming in person to fulfill my debt partially, I dare, before my departure, with this humble note to embrace you in spirit in the holy Side of Jesus. I will remember you at the sacred altar and in my poor prayers, acknowledging myself once more as your true, obliged servant.

254. Sbarra was a priest and benefactor at Soriano and at this time was living in Rome. Paul wrote him nine letters which have been preserved.

255. Lippici was a prominent man in Soriano. There is one letter to Adeodato Lippici, dated February 18, 1747.



Cardinal Lawrence Altieri

PAPAL APPROVAL:

“IT PLEASES PROSPERO”

(1746 –1747)

The Pope raises Paul's community to the rank of Congregation. In 1747 Paul holds the first General Chapter at which the religious elect him as their superior. Paul's small community is now truly a canonically approved Congregation. At the same time, Paul becomes confined to bed by sickness. Paul sees all this as a "miracle" of the mercy of God.

"IT IS A MIRACLE OF GOD" (1746)

The first letter of 1746 is dated March 31. It was written from Rome, where Paul spent about two months. A commission had been formed in Rome to study the Rule and to decide on the approval of the Congregation. One of the members was Cardinal Annibale Albani, who had just given the shrine of San Eutizio to Paul. On September 8, 1745, Paul had met him at Soriano, where they discussed the workings of the commission. Later, on January 12, Albani wrote to Paul and suggested that he come to Rome. Before leaving Paul vested several novices, including John Mary Cioni, who would become Paul's confessor, a General Superior, and the first historian of the Congregation. Paul spent the two months in Rome talking to the cardinals and seeking the advice of others. This is why there is only one letter written from Rome!

Finally, Pope Benedict XIV signed a draft of the Brief Ad Pastoralis Dignitatem on March 27, 1746. From now on Paul will know that the Congregation is officially established with the blessing of the pope. He is under the special protection of Benedict XIV, even though the pope held back on the granting of dimissorials because of the opposition of a cardinal.

Paul returns to Vetralla and also pays a visit at Soriano. He keeps in close contact with Father Fulgentius from each Retreat during the following weeks. He is securing breviaries from Rome with the help of Father Felix Sbarra. He also buys habit-cloth. He worries about receiving the brief and how he will pay for it. He does not want to be called "General Superior," even though he will have the duties of such until the Chapter is held in 1747. He realizes the sacrifices Father Fulgentius is making as novice director and reminds him of the great service he is giving to the Congregation and to the Church by forming future missionaries. He also realizes that some of the novices will not make it and should be sent home in due time. Finally, he attempts to provide sufficient religious for each Retreat and also to have religious for one or two new ones. He intends to return to Rome to secure an indult for the ordination of his clerics. Amid all this he is ill at times and must take the baths at Vetralla. The letters to Father Fulgentius reveal many important insights into Paul's character and holiness as well as details of the Congregation's history and difficulties.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (2)²⁵⁶

Rome

March 31, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dear and Beloved Father,

I was deprived of your letters in this post, and that makes me have doubts about your health. All the more because I knew you had returned to Orbetello to hear the confessions of the nuns while your illness was still on you. I made a sweet complaint with you to end with the nuns, for your presence at the Retreat is important to me.²⁵⁷ I know your great charity and gentleness will have had compassion on my fault, while I am so imperfect, and your charity will make you have compassion on a soul so poor and imperfect as mine. And now with all my heart I beg your pardon.

Thanks to God, on Monday of Passion Week, March 28, when the Gospel reads: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink," the Vicar of Jesus Christ issued a rescript under his own signature in the form of a brief to confirm our holy Rules with his *Placet Prospero*.²⁵⁸ That is the baptismal name of our pope. Now they are preparing the brief, which is rather long and will cost about one hundred and forty *scudi*. Yesterday, I was again at the feet of His Holiness to thank him, and I asked him for some favors. He told me he had spoken to Cardinal Passionei,²⁵⁹ the secretary for briefs.

I am saying nothing about my small pains, set backs, and contradictions; I am saying nothing about the mighty Providence of God, which arranged that the brief would not be issued before the first days of the Passion, which has so many mysteries. You will recall that despite all the efforts we used, we could not enter into our Retreat²⁶⁰ nor celebrate the Divine Sacrifice until the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The first song we sang in our church was, *May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

These are wonderful happenings, along with others, that we must keep in memory. You will hear the rest from my voice when God wishes.

256. Paul writes to announce the good news that Pope Benedict XIV has signed the papal brief. The Passionists are now an official Congregation in the Church with simple vows. When there are more members and more houses, it can be approved as a religious order with solemn vows and exempt from the local bishops, etc.

257. "I made a sweet complaint with you." We don't know if this was communicated by voice or by a letter which we do not have. Paul reiterates that it is important for the local rector not to leave the Retreat in order to better guide the community and provide for the needs of the religious (Circular Letter of October 14, 1755).

258. When it was decided to approve a matter, the pope affixed his signature on the draft of the document, and then it was put into an official form. The document, called a rescript, was a form less solemn and enduring, while a brief was given greater solemnity.

259. Cardinal Dominic Passionei (1682-1761).

260. This is the Retreat of the Presentation on Mount Argentario.

The brief will not be drawn up until the Sunday after Easter, and the cardinal²⁶¹ will send it to me. Everything went well for the ordinations²⁶² and indulgences.

As I busy myself negotiating everything for the good of the Congregation, I am surer all the time it is God's work. And all of Rome, I will say that, religious and prelates, see it the same way. The Constitutions are in good shape and nothing essential has been touched. God knows how I experienced that! The commission was moved by God to have me here. Otherwise, who knows how long — not for months, but for years — nothing would have been done and perhaps all would have passed into a long silence.

I have spent not a little time at the writing desk to send out information and pay courtesy calls in writing, personally taking care of everything, after which the cardinals²⁶³ looked over everything. It would be too long a process to give you even a short, precise report. God helped me, and it is, I can say, a miracle of the mercy of God that this business was dispatched in this form and so speedily. I will let you know when we should have the solemn thanksgiving to God. Meanwhile, let all not fail to praise and thank God.

Here I have purchased another eighteen measures of good cloth to make twelve habits, and, as I informed you, I had bought twelve measures previously. These habits should remain in good shape, at least for five years. They cost eighteen *zecchini*, and it will be necessary to send them to Viterbo. I will advise you in good time. I expected to leave tomorrow, but I am not able. I do expect to leave Saturday without fail.²⁶⁴ So do not write me any more in Rome, but at the Retreat of San Angelo in Vetralla, where I will be engaged until after Easter. Then I will go to Soriano for the building,²⁶⁵ and then return to San Angelo. If the weather is good, you can send the religious on Easter Monday, along with the servants, but I am thinking it may be better that I should first go to San Angelo to see how ready it is.

It is necessary to send six or seven: Confrater Rosato Maria, Confrater Joseph, and four others whom you judge well. You can send that twenty-two-year old from Lucca, if you know he has turned out well, since he is closest to

261. This was Cardinal Annibale Albani, a member of the commission that had examined the Rule of the Passionists.

262. Paul refers to the permission to ordain clerical Passionists to the priesthood, despite the fact that the Congregation was not recognized as a religious order and did not have solemn vows (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 178-180).

263. "Cardinals" refers to the cardinals of the commission that was formed to examine the Rules and Constitutions presented by Paul during November 1744. The pope nominated the commission in December 1744, but during 1745 they accomplished nothing. In January 1746, Paul went to Rome and stayed there until the final approval of the Rule.

264. March 31 was Thursday; therefore, Saturday was April 2.

265. At San Eutizio the Passionists found a church and rooms for the chaplain, but it was not sufficient for the community. In 1746 construction was begun for a wing of cells with the help of Cardinal Albani (Cioni, *Annali*, n. 279).

ordination.²⁶⁶ I leave everything in your hands and your choice. It would be good to send the habits for summer with them, at least for those who have them. You will take care of everything so that it comes out well. At that time, do me the favor of sending four bathing gowns, two sheets, napkins, towels, six pounds of *andaccini*,²⁶⁷ and four of rice because at the baths²⁶⁸ they do not have these things.

If you wish to have the religious leave on Easter, you may do that. If you think that eight days later is better, do that and send the strongest donkeys.

My head is full of many plans and tasks. You will remember at least the bull which I forgot, and they will forgive me. It is the bull on usury,²⁶⁹ but it is not important. I will get myself better informed. Tell Father Thomas about this. From the Retreat of San Angelo I will write to you again. I break off in haste and embrace you in the sweet Heart of Jesus, along with all the religious. Let us have a good Holy Week and Easter. Goodbye and let them pray for me.

I greet the Grazi and Caseglias families²⁷⁰ and all. In haste,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

This is the seal of the Congregation with palm and olive branches.²⁷¹

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (3)

San Angelo

April 14, 1746

Dear Father Fulgentius,

Your know how much I love you in God; I always see verified that you are "the companion of my pilgrimage." For more than I, you carry the weight, and I am no little cross for you. But if I did not have you, what would I do? God knows all. I read that you are moderately well, and I am aware of that. For the

266. We have no information concerning Confrater Rosato. Confrater Joseph must be Villavecchia, professed in 1744, died in 1751. The man from Lucca that was twenty-two years of age was John Iacomini of Saint Raphael, born in 1724, professed on February 1, 1746, ordained in 1753, and died in 1786 (Bartoli, p. 21).

267. Probably a folk word, *andaccini* is some type of food used for medicinal purposes.

268. For cures of sciatica, arthritis, and other ailments, Paul went many times for treatment at the hot mineral baths.

269. The Bull *Vix pervenit* of Pope Benedict XIV, November 1, 1745, can be found in the *Bullarium Romanum*, Rome, 1746, pp. 578-581.

270. These were two families of Orbetello who were very devoted to Paul and desired to be of service to the community.

271. Every institute has its "coat of arms" or particular "symbol." Paul chose as "arms" for his Congregation the "sign" that the religious wear on their habits. This is composed of a heart outlined in white, with a cross above. Inside the heart is written *Jesu Christi Passio*. Around the "sign" there are branches of palm and of olive beneath. The olive signifies the sweetness of the Name of Jesus and his saving virtue, according to the scripture text about the olive and its fruit. The palm is a reminder of the martyrdom of Christ in his Passion and his victory over sin and death in his resurrection.

love of God, take care of yourself and do not spare any expense in getting better in the month of May.

I am writing in haste a couple lines to Father Francis Anthony.²⁷² I would not know how to resolve the issue. His trip to the island is necessary and to wait until my return would find the season too far advanced. The best compromise is to send him now with a companion, and you could assign Confrater Francis or Brother James.²⁷³ But who knows whether it would be good to send Brother James here. Enough! You may act as you see fit. I am unhappy that the choir is still unprovided for. If you can make it secure from the wind and other things that Father Francis told me about, then you can take your time. Examine everything. Neither here nor at San Eutizio is there any room to stay, unless they are packed like sardines and without any observance. Once the missionaries have finished their campaigns, they need to return there. Tell them that I had forgotten that. I hope that soon there will be room.

In case you need to leave, I am sending you the document with the seal so that you can issue the permission.²⁷⁴ I do not know what more to say. It seems to me there is more, but I do not think of it now. I leave you fullest liberty and authority to do everything as I would. I embrace you in the Lord. Greet all the religious. I am with all my heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

The religious are all down sick, especially Confrater Joseph.²⁷⁵

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Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (4)

Soriano

April 23, 1746

J.M.J.

Dear and Beloved Father,

I wrote to Father Thomas²⁷⁶ in reply to his letter, and I am trying to console him and tell him the purpose for which I wrote, etc. I do not know whether he received it, but I hope so. I rejoice over the nails which fasten me to the cross, even though they are tiny ones, for I am not only a midget but also a putrid, nauseous insect. I rejoiced to learn of the candidates you mention. I have not

272. Francis Anthony Appiani of the Crucified (1719-1759) was the only son of Prince Appiani of the island of Elba. His trip was to resolve several family problems.

273. Brother James Gianiel of Saint Aloysius (1714-1750) was from Coira, Switzerland. His cause for canonization has been introduced (B.N. Bordo, C.P., *Giagen Gianiel, biografia critica del servo di Dio Fratel Giacomo Gianiel Passionista*). There is no record of Confrater Francis.

274. A religious had to travel with a document signed by his rector, authenticating his identity and that he traveled with legitimate permission. This document constituted a letter of recommendation to those ecclesiastical authorities to whom it was presented.

275. We do not know to which Confrater Joseph this refers.

276. Father Thomas Struzzieri.

seen the letter of Canon Randone.²⁷⁷ I believe you answered him; I wrote to Count Garagni to thank him, etc. I will write to the candidates from Orvieto at this post. You can accept not only these, but also those from Lucca and Piedmont, if they come, and all who are called by God. It is a clear sign of the divine call when they write from so far away and with such urgency.

Make sure that they have all the necessary requirements and studies, etc, as I believe the postulants have. I refer you to my earlier letter sent in care of Bartholemew.²⁷⁸ I am writing a note to Father Anthony.²⁷⁹ I adore the Will of God, which holds me in this way. Therefore, dear Father Fulgentius, accept the postulants with all the usual caution and requirements. Arm yourself with confidence in God and you will see wonderful things, wonderful things. I say no more. Retreats will be established for them, you will see. Receive them, therefore, in the Name of God. Oh, what a great mission the Good God is having you perform! Oh, how much I would like to say to you! In paradise we will see everything in God. I have much to do and will say no more. In the conferences try to have our best religious forewarned so that they will suffer and compassionate the weakness of the man.²⁸⁰ You know what I mean. And God knows my pain, but "My bitterest bitterness is in peace." Tell them to see him with a simple, charitable eye and to maintain true peace. I forgot to tell Father Thomas that Father Mark Aurelius will not be able to go to Vetralla. There is need of him here for the building.

If you do your best, all will go well. I leave all to your charity. Be most certain that God guides and manages your heart, and doubt nothing. You are preparing great servants of God for the vineyard of Jesus. Oh, what a great mission! Goodbye. I embrace you in the Lord with all my heart. My greetings to all from here. With all affection I embrace them in the gentle Heart of Jesus.

The cardinal²⁸¹ is expected any moment, and I hope he will have our brief. The expense is not small. I greet you on the part of everyone here.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
P. of the †

277. When Paul wrote this letter, Randone must have been in Turin, where Randone was the rector of the seminary.

278. Possibly a domestic employed in the Retreat.

279. Father Anthony Danci could not live in solitude and was better disposed by a good and genuine character to be a missionary. Paul suffered on his account and later dismissed him from the Congregation.

280. Probably a reference to Father Charles Salemmi, who displeased Paul more than once and was dismissed in 1750.

281. This was Cardinal Annibale Albani.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (5)

Soriano
May 7, 1746

*We ought to glory in the Cross
of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Dear and Beloved Father Fulgentius,

In this post I am still deprived of your dear letters. Then today, beside the ordinary post I received one dated April 22. I sense the troubles there, and I see the devil is aroused, but the good God will draw good from everything. I am sure of that. The best plan for Brother Anthony is to have him go quickly since the disturbance will not be a small one. It would be good to have him accompanied by Confrater John Baptist,²⁸² who cannot persevere. The doctors are saying that his gall stone condition is incompatible with our life. God will give you light for everything. With regard to the missionaries, I hope to speak with you. These elaborate ceremonies²⁸³ are not in accord with the spirit of this Congregation.

I am in narrow straits within and without. I have had the purge, but I do not know if it will do any good. I hope and am confident, for already it seems I am passing the serum better. My usual trouble is better due to the benefit of the baths. There is a possibility it will disappear.

I adore the divine judgments in that the Divine Majesty has not disposed that I have the brief the cardinal spoke of in his letters to me. However, at the time of my leaving he said he would bring it to me. But since the cost is great, I do not know how to manage that. This and other things help me to remain more crucified. I do not know when he will come, for he is a bit sickly. I am on the holy cross waiting for him.

I have not as yet accepted the office of General, even though all the Chapters have been held as prescribed in the publication of the brief.²⁸⁴ So I do not regard myself in that role. As soon as the brief has been received, I will let you know everything. So treat me as usual — without any title whatever. I think the religious I told you about in my earlier letter will have arrived. In all things it is necessary to bow one's head to the Divine Good Pleasure. They tell me that Confrater Rosato Maria has found out he is asthmatic and will return to Viterbo soon. I believe you will have sent his clothes, etc.

Although such events seem to be somewhat bitter, they are profitable, for to hold on to sickly people would end the regular discipline. I am happy that

282. We have no information about Confrater John Baptist or Brother Anthony, neither of whom were professed.

283. "Elaborate ceremonies" refer to the dramatic presentations that were performed by some missionaries. Paul prefers to insist upon meditating on the Passion of Jesus and does not want processions during the presentation in church.

284. After the approbation of the Rule, the first official election was of Paul as General Superior. The Chapter had to take place with the three communities in existence. On May 21, 1746, when the brief was read and the result of the Chapters of the three communities announced, Paul officially accepted the office of General Superior until the next General Chapter (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 131-132).

you have replied to Count Garagni regarding the candidates, etc. My condition is as God wishes, and I do not know what more to say about myself except to recommend myself much to your holy prayers and those of all the beloved religious. As I said, when the brief is published, I will accept to serve until the new Chapter, and I will advise you. But for now they are not to consider me as such.

The Father Rector and Father John Baptist²⁸⁵ are going to Civitavecchia, and they will leave Sunday during the day. Father Rector left here yesterday for San Angelo. I think the mission²⁸⁶ has already started in Vetralla, but as of now I have no news. I would like to leave here and go there to find out, but it is necessary for me to await the cardinal. Please God I will not have to fight for the brief in order to get possession of it. May the Will of God be done. I embrace you in the Lord, and I pray you, for the love of Jesus, to have care in order to carry his holy cross. I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

I add that I suppose the two religious and Confrater Joseph will have arrived. If you see that he cannot last, take consultation with someone in the Retreat, and, then when you send the layman Anthony, send him as well. I do not know what to say about Confrater John Baptist.²⁸⁷ Examine how he stands, and, if he seems to be persevering, it would be good to test him a bit more, etc. I am not there. You have full authority; take action and be sure your decisions are blessed by God.

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Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (6)

Soriano

May 13, 1746

J.M.J.

Dear Father Fulgentius,

I am enclosing the booklet sent to me of the regulation for novices who are dismissed or leave on their own volition. On Sunday morning, May 15, I will leave for Vetralla to meet with the bishop.²⁸⁸ Since the cardinal is slow in coming, due to his sickness, it will be better to return here when he comes. I am happy to hear of the arrival of three fine youths; greet them in Jesus for me. I rejoice much in their good fortune since they are being called by the great God to become holy.

Since I was not there, I cannot form a judgment on the departure of two novices, Confrater John Baptist and Confrater Joseph. You have full authority.

285. The rector of Soriano was Father Mark Aurelius. Father John Baptist was the brother of Paul.

286. Mark Aurelius and John Baptist gave first the mission in Vetralla and later in Civitavecchia (Cioni, *Annali*, p. 138, n. 19).

287. For the three named, we cannot find any documentation.

288. Bishop Amati, who died April 30, 1748, was bishop of Viterbo and Toscanella.

Make your decisions with your Chapter as to what is most fitting in the Name of God.

I will have the breviaries sent; at least I will do what is possible. I have nothing more to say of the lay brother Anthony. I adore the divine dispositions, but I feel keenly your inconvenience.

I wish Father Luke Anthony²⁸⁹ to work with discretion and gentleness in everything and for everything, in order to keep himself for more important work. He should not expose himself to the hot sun and should take care of himself by forcing himself to take the necessary food and rest to overcome his fatigue.

When the cardinal arrives, I hope to have the brief, which has been finished since the Monday after the Second Sunday of Easter, and I have adjusted the cost as three *scudi* and two *paoli*. The cardinal is not speaking to me about bringing it, but I wrote him a good letter, that he may bring it and take a reduction on the money from the construction²⁹⁰ that continues well here.

My swellings have returned; I applied hot cloths this morning. We are waiting to see what will happen. God be blessed. There are signs that God wishes to perform a great work. Our well-known servant of God²⁹¹ continues to inform me that we are being guided in a high, secure way. These are great things, great lights, etc.

I am weighed down and do not know what more to say. Who knows how many things I have forgotten. I greet everyone in the Lord. Prayers, prayers, dear Father, and take care. Know that God loves you much and will make you a saint. Goodbye. My greetings to the young novices.

I have a letter from the ordinary mail today from Joseph Anthony Fresia,²⁹² who tells me that he sent a letter to your Retreat with an enclosure from Canon Randone. He also tells me that the canon sent you a sum of money to be given to me, and that I should let him know where payment is to be made. I think this money could be for the vestition of postulants from Piedmont. But I have not received it. You will let me know about any content.

Your Reverence's unworthy, affectionate servant,
P.D. †

289. Father Luke Anthony Bianchini of Saint Joseph, professed June 4, 1744, left in 1764. He was a very good missionary.

290. Paul suggested to Cardinal Albani to pay for the brief from the amount the cardinal had given for the construction of the wing of cells in Soriano.

291. The Carmelite Sister Maria Angela Colomba (1685-1751) (S. Possanzini, E. Boaga, *L'ambiente del Monastero Monte Carmelo di Vetralla al tempo di S. Paolo della Croce*, pp. 21-22).

292. Father Joseph must be a priest of Piedmont.

Felix Anthony Sbarra (2)

Soriano
May 13, 1746

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Very Reverend Father,

With great pleasure I take advantage of the present circumstances to reaffirm my devoted, respectful service to Your Reverence, and at the same time I summon the confidence to petition the charity, so often experienced by me, so that you would deign to provide me with five breviaries for some novices soon to be vested, as Father Fulgentius, rector of the Retreat of the Presentation, informs me with great urgency.

The breviaries are sold near the Pasquino monument. I bought four there and they cost twelve *paoli* each. The breviaries are for the whole year, bound in one small volume, able to be taken on journeys. I ask you to make sure they have clear type, are well bound, and see whether they have a sufficiently wide margin. Let me know the amount you will expend and to whom I should consign it in Soriano, for I have it ready. May you be able to send them to me as soon as possible at Soriano, as opportunity offers, so that I can send them quickly to Orbetello, for they have great need.

Out of love for God, pardon my boldness and be sure that you will always be gratefully present in my poor prayers. I break off in haste, recommending myself from the heart to your devout prayers and sacrifices. I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus, and with full esteem, veneration, and respect declare myself from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

If you need to reply to me, use the address: Viterbo for Vetralla in the Retreat of San Angelo, where I am going this coming Sunday, but will return in a few days to Soriano.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (7)

San Angelo
May 25, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dear and Beloved Father Rector,

To my consolation I am reading of the vestition of the novices on the Vigil of Pentecost. Thanks be to God. I think you will have received the news of the reception of the brief and on the same day our good God rewarded me with a good cross. I will have a copy made of the brief, and Father Mark Aurelius will bring it with him when he leaves with Father Joseph²⁹³ on Monday after

293. Father Joseph Villavecchia of Saint Mary Magdalene (1720-1751) was professed in 1744.

Trinity Sunday,²⁹⁴ and then he will take over the office of director of novices. The assistant director will be Father Francis,²⁹⁵ but he will only instruct the novices in fulfilling the holy Rule, modesty of the eyes, and in exterior deportment, and also instruction in the Divine Office, etc. Direction of the interior will be all under Father Mark Aurelius. The professed will never speak with the novices, with the exception of Your Reverence, as rector, their director, and assistant director. Give Father Mark Aurelius the best room in the novitiate. It seems to me that would be the one closest to the windows. The novices should have a separate room for recreation and for the conferences and for the usual studies, etc. I recommend to them a spirit of openness, even in the smallest things. Father will be there in the evening, please God, on the Vigil of Corpus Christi.

I would like Don Athanasius²⁹⁶ to arrange to take him to Montalto on Tuesday, June 7, or at least to Chiarone²⁹⁷ on Wednesday. But if he were to be at Montalto, it would be a great charity, for he is carrying with him some books, and in that way they could send the servant back here to the Retreat of San Angelo. I will write Don Athanasius. I have forwarded the letter of the good priest from Genoa, and I have recommended him highly.

The five breviaries have been bought, but they have not arrived. I am writing in this post that they should be sent to Soriano so that the rector of Soriano can bring them. I think you will have received the Subiaco cloth, 16 x 2, to make habits for the novices since the cloth you have is too rough, as you have informed me. It cost fourteen *paoli* a measure. When I receive the money from Rome, I will arrange payment; I will send the remainder to you there. I have already written Canon Randone to have the payment taken care of.

I am leaving today for Viterbo, and, if I find the opportunity, on Friday I will go to the baths. I anticipate my departure back to Soriano will be June 16 or 17 to meet with the cardinal before I go to Rome. And God knows how much I have to contend for the ordination,²⁹⁸ etc. I have great need of God's help.

Father Thomas and Father Anthony remain in the Retreat of Soriano at least for the summer. I will stay in that Retreat for many of the necessities of the Congregation. God wants it this way. Patience! I will endeavor to come to your Retreat when the weather cools.

294. The feast was June 6, 1746.

295. Possibly Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary (1724-1781), who was professed in 1744.

296. In the Italian, he is referred to as Don Athanasius Grazi. He is the brother of Agnes Grazi and a benefactor of the Passionists. The title "Don," according to the Spanish style, is used for men in a slightly higher social status.

297. Montalto di Castro was the furthest town of the Papal States. It is a day and a half walk from the Retreat of San Angelo in Vetralla. The river Chiarone, a little distance from Montalto di Castro, divides the Papal States from the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. From this spot to Argentario is a day's walk.

298. Permission from the pope to ordain clerical Passionists as deacons and priests.

In Viterbo I will get information about the blankets. As soon as the eighteen measures of cloth come from Rome, have them sent to this Retreat. As things go along I will write you; and, if I can, I will do so also from the baths. I will write Dr. Gherardini²⁹⁹ from there. I am happy the missions in Tuscany have opened. In the midst of so much woe, God opens great avenues, but I do not know what will become of me.

I do not have a minute of rest. I am speaking of the rest in God of the true followers of the Crucified.

I wish that you take good care of yourself. You know personally our necessities. In the morning take chocolate, and do it with the merit of holy obedience. If you foresee that you are causing a bit of expense to the Retreat, it matters not. It will strengthen your stomach by taking it in place of the wine, although only a little seems necessary to me. Act in accord with your needs. When the Feast of Saint Peter has passed, it is necessary that Father Luke Anthony³⁰⁰ stops his retreat because of the air and because of his illness. He can inform the people so that they will be satisfied that he will resume the talks when the weather cools. I am writing in haste, for I will leave soon. Greet everyone for me, especially the candidates who have recently arrived from the outside, those from Piedmont as well as Genoa and Orvieto, etc. If I can, I will write all of them a common letter. Tell them they should thank God that he has called them to make them holy in this Congregation, and that they correspond, etc

I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus from a true heart. Let them not cease to pray for me and for the Congregation so that God will provide for its needs and defend it from the enemies of hell, etc. I am always,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

When you go to Orbetello, give my greetings to our benefactors and to the vicar general. Have a general faculty for confessions for Father Mark Aurelius, who was hearing confessions previously. That faculty is given to hear all confessions without mentioning the private hearing of our own. This is the end.

299. Doctor Onorato Gherardini was the prime minister of the Prince of Piombino and was very close to Paul since the mission he preached on the island of Elba in 1735.

300. Father Luke Anthony Bianchini of Saint Joseph had minor ministries in Orbetello and was finished by the end of June (after Saint Peter's Feast). This letter suggests the danger of malaria, which was more easily acquired during the summer.

Felix Anthony Sbarra (3)

San Angelo
May 25, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Most Reverend Father,

Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, grant an eternal reward to you for the great charity you continue toward me and for the trouble in providing so quickly the five breviaries. The delay in receiving your letter — it came in today's ordinary post when I am in the act of leaving for the baths — did not give me time to pay the six *scudi* to your sister. The money is a gift from the Retreat in Orbetello and is in my possession. As soon as I am back from the baths, which will be around June 15 or 16, I will have payment made promptly. I am planning on leaving then in order to be in Soriano before the cardinal leaves, with whom I am to meet before leaving for Rome.

Among the novices who have come to our Retreat of the Presentation, our novitiate house, there is a worthy Genoese priest, on whose behalf I was asked to take care of the safe delivery of these letters enclosed. And since the Father, to whom it is addressed, is to forward a breviary and a small packet, and since I did not know of whom I could ask such a charity, I am summoning my trust to ask you to employ some knowledgeable person to deliver the letter to the priest at Saint Francis of Ripa and in time to receive from that Father the breviary and packet. Then do me the favor of sending that breviary, along with the five breviaries, to Soriano in care of our Father Rector there. He will be leaving early on Trinity Sunday to go to the Retreat of the novitiate as director of novices and at that time will take everything with him.

For the love of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, pardon my excessive boldness, and be sure I will be always grateful, along with our religious, in my poor prayers. I break off in a hurry, for I am leaving for Viterbo and then for the baths. I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus and recommend myself to your devout prayers and holy sacrifices, and with full esteem and profound respect, from a true heart, I am,

Your Reverence's unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Felix Anthony Sbarra (4)

Soriano
June 16, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Most Reverend Father,

On my arrival from the baths, I found your esteemed letter with word on the five breviaries and the bundle. Everything arrived here at the Retreat, but

everything was soaked in water. Thanks be to God. But everything has turned out for the best.

I cannot, nor do I know how to, express my great obligation I owe to you, and I assure you of the lively gratitude of my poor prayers forever. I am requesting your charity to add greater merit to your patience by troubling yourself to go to Francis Anthony Benincasa, who will give you ten *scudi* and thirty *baiocchi*; and so there will remain with him four *scudi* and thirty *baiocchi*.

He should hold on to this money, and, when other better breviaries arrive, he will have the goodness to provide another four, but of better quality and well bound. I will reimburse him for them. I am writing in haste, for I am battered with traveling, etc. I am writing Francis Benincasa at the Most Holy Conception at Monti so he will pay the sum that he has at hand. I embrace you in the sacred Side of Jesus and am with all my heart,

You Reverence's unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I am leaving for Vetralla and will stay in that Retreat until around July 16.

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Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (8)

Soriano

June 18, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dear and Beloved Father Rector,

From Viterbo, on my arrival from the baths, I wrote two lines to you. Now I am in this Retreat for a few days, for on June 22 I will go to the Retreat of San Angelo. I do not want to miss thanking you for the charity you continue toward me, along with the good news of the progress in your Retreat. But you attribute a share to me that is not right. To beg my pardon for the great good that God is doing by means of you in that Retreat is to belittle yourself too much. I thank the Highest for the lights he is giving his faithful servants, for the lights which shine in their spirit make them see what they are doing as evil or at least imperfect, when, in fact, it is virtuous. "You holy ones and humble of heart, bless the Lord." For the rest, I assert "in the Lord" that you have not given me the least reason to hold me in these Retreats.³⁰¹ On the contrary, events argue to the greater stability of the Congregation. Otherwise, I would have returned there, where I stay most willingly as God knows.

I think that at this time you will have received the eighteen measures of cloth sent from Rome. I left the task of transporting them from Viterbo. I read in one of your letters that you received the other cloth that was ordered, and that you would send the money in the next post, but I have not received it. I think it was not sent. Meanwhile, I said in one of my letters that I would take care of the payment as soon as I received the money for the vestition of the

301. Father Fulgentius had thought that Paul had gone to either the Retreat of Soriano or of San Angelo because of conditions he disliked at the Presentation Retreat.

Piedmontese. I have not the slightest knowledge of that and no longer recall the name of the Piedmontese priest corresponding with the Canon Randone, who is in the Piceno College in Rome. Perhaps you remember, or the candidates there. If so, please let me know, and I will write to him to find out if he received the money from Turin.

I recommend myself much to your prayers and those of the entire community, for my needs are great. I am going to work for the foundation of some Retreats, and I hope that I will succeed in a few months. It is possible that things will succeed in Toscanella³⁰² since it seems as though that is pleasing to the Most High. I had thought to begin working toward the island of Byzantine,³⁰³ but as of now God does not wish that, nor in the future, in my opinion, if I am not mistaken, and that for many reasons, especially the air. But in Toscanella I believe Mary Most Holy wants to give her holy blessing. I do not believe this on my own, but hope in God that I will not be mistaken.

I know by experience how much our good God has enriched your spirit with zeal, charity, vigilance etc., but I cannot pass over recommending to your charity, and that of the rector of Soriano, director of novices,³⁰⁴ that you give full attention to maintain the novices in their fervor and see that they eat what is necessary and, this is very important, that they get rest because this summer, in my opinion, looks as though it will be a bad one because of the sirocco, which is prevailing. I beg you that after Matins they have three hours of rest before Prime, or at least that they accustom themselves to three hours, a quarter of an hour, more or less, is beside the point. I say this so that you help them keep a clear mind, and the Rules say that.

See to it that they protect their cells from the sun, and that they maintain clean shirts, habits, and underwear, and frequently clean the cells and the corridor under your direction.

I received a letter from Magdalene³⁰⁵ and I feel for her. That boarding school is not yet on a firm basis. She tells me she would like to go to the home of Signore Caseglias, for they would welcome her. I ask you to advise her on this and other things, for I cannot examine the situation since I am too far away. So please do her that charity. I would prefer that she be more detached from her own ease and satisfaction, etc.

Sister Maria Celeste writes that she has need of some direction from you, but you have shown some resistance to her. I leave you free, but if you could give her some spiritual assistance, you will do a great charity and cooperate to her profit so that she would love God the more.

302. Toscanella is today called Tuscania. Paul had obtained the Retreat by private means, together with his brother John Baptist, on June 26, 1746. The community entered on March 24, 1748 (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 136-137).

303. The island of Byzantine is in Bolsena Lake. It is said that it was not possible to do much there because of the air, that is, because of malaria and the humidity.

304. Father Mark Aurelius was sent to Argentario as the director of novices, maintaining also the office of rector of Soriano.

305. This is a friend of Agnes Grazi, who received direction from Paul.

I am of the opinion that during this summer it is necessary to be more careful than usual. When you need to go to Orbetello, stay out of the sun. Likewise, Father Luke Anthony should be able to stop his work at Saints Peter and Paul and take it up again when the weather cools down.

I do not know what more there is to say. Let them pray much to God that he provide some Retreats for us, and that I will be able to dispatch the other things in Rome. God knows with what care it is needful to proceed with the one we know. Thanks be to God.

Please convey my cordial greeting to Father Mark Aurelius. Blessed is he who sleeps on the Cross with his dear novices. While he takes this loving sleep, without him being aware of it, God enriches him. Now he no longer laments, even though his lamentations come from holy love. Now may everyone repose on the bosom of the great Father, and may they drink at the font of eternal life in order to become strong and perform great works for the glory of God. Oh, how great is my hope! But as for you, I do not know how to express myself. I know that God looks upon you with an eye of special love. I know that our sister³⁰⁶ tells me wonderful things about you. Oh, dear Father! I tell you now in secret that I know this great soul; however, I cannot know her enough.

During the Octave of Corpus Christi,³⁰⁷ I conducted the services in the church and carried our poor Congregation in the gentle heart of our sacramental Jesus during the procession. Our sister³⁰⁸ was there as well.

I am sending you an enclosed note. Have the charity to send, if you can, the articles listed, especially the tobacco,³⁰⁹ and entrust them to the postilion who is Lepri. I hope he will do it willingly. I left it in the post for Orbetello here in Viterbo, directing it be forwarded to Signore Breviotti. All is well sealed.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

My greetings to all, especially to the novices, and in particular to Confrater Aloysius.³¹⁰ I ask him to take courage. If he perseveres with fidelity, God will make him a great saint, as he will the others. I have the letters from his mother, who is entirely God's and has sacrificed him to the Highest Good. Let them not look at their trials, distastes, and difficulties in the face; these are the means to fly into the embraces of the gentle Jesus.

306. This is probably a reference to Lucy Burlini of Pianzano (*Positio super virtutibus Servae Dei Luciae Burlini*, pp. 103-105).

307. It was June 16, 1746.

308. This seems to be the "sister" mentioned above; thus Lucy Burlini must have sent the package to Father Fulgentius (*Positio*, p. 105).

309. Paul is speaking of snuff.

310. This Aloysius must not have persevered because the first Confrater Aloysius was professed in 1757.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (9)³¹¹

San Angelo
June 23, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our heart. Amen.*

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I received with consolation your beloved letter, and I rejoice much in God over the good he continues to do this beloved community. I am sorry to learn of your sickness. It seems to me to be necessary to take care that you are soon healthy. So you are not to spare any expense. The expense is so small as not to cause concern, and since the expense can be borne, it must be undertaken. If Doctor Pippi, having examined the case, judges it well that you take jenny's milk, you must do that. And with regard to soup, have the servant pick up, either in Pereta or elsewhere, seven or eight chickens and some meat, if it is fresh, being carefully preserved in the wine cellar for a day for another serving, I think it will be kept fresh. But there should be chicken soup as well. And as for the donkey, have them inquire in San Stefano. Rather than having them buy the milk, have them trade a donkey³¹² from the Retreat so that it may be at hand and you can take care of the business there. Take care that you take the milk plain or with a little tea, as I did. To avoid nausea, get some water from flowers from the convent,³¹³ putting a few drops of that in goes well. I am upset on hearing that you paid for the poor cloth from Viterbo, which I did not see but ordered. I spoke with Signore Orioli, who told me he did not receive the money, but he will be satisfied by Signore Fratiacci from Vetralla, to whom I gave the commission, since I made the contract with this merchant Fratiacci to have him make the payment on my return from the baths. I know for certain that he paid Orioli; so it is necessary for you to let me know personally to whom you disbursed the money so that it is not lost and for my guidance.

I think you will have received the eighteen measures of cloth from Rome. That will take care of the undershirts. I have five breviaries in my possession. I will have them sent to Viterbo to send them to you. I have ordered four more. There are none in Rome now, but they expect them soon from Venice.

As for Confrater Bonaventure, I do not know how I could allow him to go to his own region in search of better air. I would think it were good to have him take a purge and with the consent of the doctor to have a blood-letting, as was done last year at Soriano, which did him much good. It will be done carefully and better since it can be done at the Retreat. He can be exempted

311. This is a long letter on various matters. We see Paul as a very paternal superior, trying to take care of perhaps too many details. Knowing the illness of Father Fulgentius, he attempts to lessen the burden of Father Fulgentius while still allowing him to make decisions. We also note his growing concern for the health of the novices and his willingness to adapt the fasting to the needs of the young and the sick.

312. The community had to obtain a mare which was giving milk.

313. A monastery of nuns which could be either in Orbetello or in Piombino, where Father Fulgentius had performed some apostolic service.

from all duties, that is, study and lessons, and simply occupy himself with manual tasks to avoid laziness. Afterwards, God will provide and allow us to place him in a healthier climate that would be more beneficial.

I forgot to tell you that I am happy over the good sentiments of that fine novice from Lucca. I did not write to him, for I have much to do. Tell him to continue his novitiate, which has begun, and then he will see what is more profitable for him. Meanwhile, he should continue to remain abandoned in the loving hands and gentle bosom of our great Father, and not to think about the future, but serve God courageously.

In order to maintain the essentials of our holy Rules, founded on prayer and fasting, I have obtained, and not without contradictions, along with Father Rector of Soriano,³¹⁴ an adjustment in the things noted by the cardinals,³¹⁵ so that on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday there will be a hot dish. So I have managed to introduce that in this Retreat in the best way possible, and to have on the evening of these days cooked vegetables, either beans or peas; and when pumpkin is available, have cooked pumpkin as they do in Soriano, as Father Rector is aware and can advise you. It is done in a sauce pan with cooked onions or cooked beans, and there is a small fish or a little amount of a small fish in sauce.

This should be served not in a soup bowl, but on a plate used for a small serving. But it can be a bit more abundant than is customary at the time of strict collations. There should be about six ounces of bread on such days; a bit more can be given to the lay brothers because of their heavy work and to the tender youths who have more need of nourishment. In this matter the charity and prudence of the one in charge of the refectory should shine forth. It is not necessary to be weighing everything; once experience is obtained, things can be regulated by sight.

On Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday the fast should be exactly as in Lent, but there should be six ounces of bread for the young people and for the lay brothers. Whatever is served with the bread should not exceed two ounces. However, the sardines or small fish ordinarily are not more than two ounces. In this way the observance will be kept with prudence, and you can let them know with your customary gentleness that once the holy abstinence of our holy Rule falls to the ground, there disappears all fervor and spirit of prayer, and the Congregation falls apart — may God avert that! In this way you will maintain poverty, silence, and recollection of heart, from which everything good proceeds. For such recollection unites the soul to God from whom it comes. You already know that according to the holy Fathers one of the fundamental stones of the spiritual edifice is a holy, discreet abstinence. Ah, if they will be exact, they will taste, one of these days, how sweet the Lord is.

In the morning you want to be especially careful that there is a good soup, well made and clean, along with the usual main course; and, if you have fruit,

314. This was Father Mark Aurelius, who kept such responsibilities when he was assigned to Argentario as director of novices.

315. Refers to the commission of cardinals who were appointed by the pope in order to examine the Rules before their approval in 1746.

give them a bit. It is sufficient that abstinence from fruit begin on the first of August for those who wish it. But all will do so, for they are very devoted to our Mother Mary Most Holy.³¹⁶

The Rule is clear on the examen,³¹⁷ and the professed who are not employed at the command of the rector must be there every day. Tell them in my name that they can go to examen with a simple spirit, humble as infants on milk, and I assert in the Lord that they will always find great good in it to their spiritual profit, etc.

With regard to the confessions of Father Mark Aurelius, you have done well to act as you informed me. In regard to that, I shared my reflections with you. In this post I will take care to place the petition and include it with this letter, at least the minutes. I am also writing in this post to Peter Carascon,³¹⁸ and I will tell him that you will send him the petition on that item.

It seems necessary to obtain grain for our threshing, in addition to that provided by benefactors nearby. It would be well to write to the neighboring places, as seems good to you, but have the letters written by others. For the love of God, do not write them yourself. Get help for yourself. It is good that Confrater Francis assists in the novitiate in the things ordered by you and the director of novices. I have much to say that escapes me. It seems I have put down the most essential.

On the Feast of the Commemoration of Saint Paul, June 30, have the charity to begin a solemn triduum of thanksgiving with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and end on the Feast of the Visitation of Mary Most Holy with a General Communion, all three days praying, etc. Let them recite five Our Father's and Hail Mary's to the Passion of Jesus, our Life, Way, and Truth, and to our every true Good with the prayer: "God, who for the redemption of the world, willed to be born," etc. You do understand that first comes the hymn *Pange Lingua* for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, then the five Our Father's and Hail Mary's, as above, the solemn *Te Deum Laudamus* with ringing of the bells, then the prayer "For Thanksgiving," then the *Tantum Ergo* and the blessing. After the prayer "For Thanksgiving" for the Congregation, use the prayer, "Defend, we beseech You, O Lord ..." Let all pray with great warmth and fervor for the spread of the apostolic spirit, a spirit of great holiness, and, in one word, pray that Jesus grant them all his Holy Spirit. I have said everything in few words.

But as for me, poor wretch who has spoiled this work of God with my evil life, what will I say? Prostrate at the feet of all, after having asked pardon of all for my evil, relaxed, tepid, and scandalous life — because I am not

316. Refers to the abstinence from fruit in preparation for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, August 15. Paul abstained from fruit for forty days prior to the feast, but suggested to the religious that they do it from August 1 (*Consuetudines Congr. SS. Crucis et Passionis DNJC*, pp. 10, 34, 205).

317. The "examen" was an instruction on the spiritual journey to advance in virtue at the direction of the rector or of one religious assigned by him. In 1746 the Regulations prescribed this everyday for the novices and twice during the week for all religious. Paul is referring to this norm (*Regulae et const.*, p. 160, n. 45-46).

318. A family of Orbetello who were always well disposed toward the Congregation.

observant, even very unobservant — I beg you to supplicate His Divine Majesty to pardon all my grave and very serious sins. If by my fault I am not to give a good example by great holiness of life, let them pray our good God to take me from this world and grant me a holy death. Out of love for God, do not let them deny me this.

I tell them that I have the liveliest faith and that, if they correspond, God will make them all saints. I know what I am saying.

Dear Father Rector, let us be more and more of one spirit. I assure you that I am always with you, and that I see you in the gentle Heart of Jesus. I have no more time, but I cannot neglect telling you that God loves you much and wishes to give you great graces, but he continues this all the time.

I greet with all my heart our beloved community, the professed as well as the novices. I am writing to Father Mark Aurelius in this post. I do not know whether I will be able to write Father Francis Anthony,³¹⁹ for I have a lot of writing. I will do that another time.

I think I will go as far as Toscanella for the Retreat. It seems that God is strongly moving me and is giving me great confidence. If I go, it will be on Sunday during the day. I will write you a couple of lines from Toscanella as to the results. There is also need to pray for this. I finish in haste and embrace you in the sacred Side of Jesus, where I am with true heart.

I forgot that during the Triduum it will be best to apply the Mass on the Feast of the Visitation for the end mentioned above. They are doing that in the other Retreats. Let it be sung, as long as you are moderately well. But if you cannot sing it, have someone else sing it.

I am writing in this post to Signore Carascon, and I am writing him a good letter.

I am writing to Father Mark Aurelius and Father Francis Anthony in reply to their letters.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

319. Father Francis Anthony Appiani of the Crucified.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (10)³²⁰

Toscanella

June 26, 1746

Feast of Saints John & Paul.

Leaving for Vetralla tomorrow.

J.M.J.

Dear and Beloved Father Rector,

I am writing this note from Toscanella, where I find myself with Father John Baptist to take possession of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Oak. We will take possession today at 20 hours. You know what I always say. I beg from my heart for prayers, and prayers sought, and suddenly the resolution occurs, but not without maturity. God has given me such sweet urging and so many things came together that I had to believe it was the Divine Good Pleasure. Yesterday, we celebrated in the shrine, and I have strong faith that Mary Most Holy has granted her blessing, and that the religious will do well here, to the great profit of this poor, abandoned people. Let them pray much. Goodbye. In haste I embrace you in the Lord. I am with Father John Baptist, who greets you and all.

The breviaries which I am sending came from Rome soaked with water. The religious will come to this Retreat around December or January and will be seven for this one and five for Soriano — twelve in all.³²¹

Your affectionate servant,

P. of the †

Felix Anthony Sbarra (5)

Soriano

July 5, 1746

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father,

On my return from the baths, I immediately wrote you and asked you to trouble yourself to go to the Conception at Monti, where Francis Anthony Benincasa was empowered to give you ten *scudi* and three *paoli*; six of which were to pay for the five breviaries. With the rest I asked you to buy another four breviaries, for which I would have paid. Since I have not had a reply, I am now asking you to bring me up-to-date for my guidance.

Dear Felix, pardon the trouble I am bringing on you, and be certain your merit will be great before the Highest. All of us will be ever grateful in our poor prayers and holy sacrifices. I am writing again to Signore Benincasa, for

320. Paul and John Baptist visit the Church of Our Lady of the Oak in Toscanella. It was also the Feast of Saints John and Paul, the name of the Roman church Paul would receive for the Generalate. This visit seems to have settled Paul's willingness to accept this Retreat of Our Lady, even though it was so close to the salt marshes. However, he will not take possession of this church and Retreat until March 1748.

321. The twelve religious were of the community of Mount Argentario, where Father Fulgentius was rector.

I have not yet had an answer from him. I rather think that he was prevented by his preoccupation with the canonizations. I am breaking off in haste, and I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus, where with a true heart I affirm again that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

447

Felix Anthony Sbarra (6)

Soriano
July 19, 1746

J.M.J.

Very Reverend Father,

From the rector of the Retreat of San Angelo at Vetralla, I have received your kindly letter directed to me with information on the four breviaries. I received them the day before yesterday. They are far better than the first ones, well bound, etc. So I am more indebted to your great charity, and I pray the High Giver of all good gifts to grant you an eternal reward. Now you need only inform me what is the cost of these breviaries, and I will make payment to the one you designate.

Meanwhile, I thank you again for the charity and attention you continue toward me, and I will be grateful until my death. With full esteem and devout respect I end by recommending myself to your good prayers, and reverently kissing your hands, I am,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

448

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (32)

Soriano
July 26, 1746

Most Reverend Mother,

I adore Divine Providence in your election as abbess of the convent, and I pray the Lord to give you the spirit to reform it. Since that is an extremely difficult business, you need to be armed with faith and confidence in God and profound humility. "If you will separate the precious from the vile, you will be as my mouth" (Jeremiah). Have your confessor explain that sentence to you. You need to conduct yourself completely under the directions of your bishop, which I consider most necessary, and give him a continual account of your soul and your lights, etc., and under his direction undertake your work for the convent. If my old advice has encouraged you, thank God for that. If my letters can afford you some guidance, read them; otherwise ... I am writing in haste and am occupied.^{†322}

322. A † usually indicates a more personal section of the letter.

I thank you for your efforts toward the Retreat on the island, but I must tell you I give it little thought, almost none. To obey, I have written the prince, and I will hear, etc. The work is God's and he knows how to provide for Houses for this poor Congregation.

† I beg you not to lose yourself in your office. I would not want you to lose your head now that you have moved a bit higher. Stay within yourself, remain humble, rely on God, never neglect prayer, and do all your work in the presence of God. Remember me in your deepest prayer. Jesus bless you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

449

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (11)³²³

Soriano
July 29, 1746

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

You know how I am named, and I know your name. But your title is supremely sweet, for it is *of Jesus*, and I am *of the Cross*, on which Jesus was fastened. It is no wonder then that I, who claim that title so falsely and unworthily, should be a cross for him whose title comes from him whose whole life was a cross. I confess in truth that as soon as I wrote, I recognized my error and that I had been giving you pain, but I trusted your virtue. Thanks be to God, I was not mistaken.

Oh, my poor life! "Who will free me from this body of death?" I see everywhere I exude corruption. I recommend myself but never improve, so it seems right for me if I say: "Who will free me from this body of death?" I rejoice at the good outcome of the affairs at this holy Retreat, and I hope that the good God will prosper it always more. I do not fail to pray and have prayers said continually for our poor sick ones, trusting the protection of Mary Most Holy that they will get well and be healthy. It is necessary to take precaution; I have not a moment's doubt about your charitable assistance, etc.

I think the decoction will have helped you but little. Therefore, it is necessary to look to your diet so that you take broth and eat meat, at least a small amount, without getting up at night. Be sure that will please God and console and edify the religious, who have need of your help in God. Take care of the most necessary things and get help for everything from whomever seems most able. It seems to me fitting to send Brother John Baptist³²⁴ back to his country since all tests have been made.

323. Apparently Fulgentius took Paul's long letter of June 23 as corrective of his guidance of the community under his care. Paul recognizes that unfortunately he had become "a cross for him," and adds that it was a mistake for him to write such a letter. No longer will Paul insist on the goat milk, etc.

324. We have no information concerning this religious, who must have been dismissed prior to profession.

With regard to the painting, they are working on it and the outline is done.³²⁵ It would be finished if they had the measurements. If I had thought of it at first, I would have been pleased to have had Signore Nasini do the work. I can make some effort to change, but it is difficult. To be safe, send me the measurements of the painting of Saint Michael.

Next week I will write with most submissive terms to the vicar general³²⁶ so that the holy Rules may be kept, etc.

I have written about the cloth to the merchant in Rome as well as about the blankets. All that remains is for you to let me know how many measures are necessary and how many blankets I ought to purchase. The blankets will be good, as we will buy the ones like those in Soriano, which cost twenty-five *paoli* each. The Retreat at Toscanella is now ours. Today I am writing once more, and I am using Monsignor Lacatelli to obtain the consent of the Frati. If he obtains it, good! Otherwise, I do not wish to be pained over the matter. God knows our needs, and I think he will certainly provide us with Houses, etc.

I have written to the Prince of Piombino³²⁷ and have included the petition for his approval. I did this on the information given me by Father Francis Anthony; we will see. I have written two lines to Sister Cherubina, and I treated her as an abbess and assured her she needs to be directed by her bishop, especially in present circumstances, etc.

You are being treated in grand style, while you dine royally with your food seasoned and prepared by the King himself. Take your ease, seated at this royal table, and eat with a good appetite, given you by faith and love. The other day I was thinking to myself while at the feet of Jesus Crucified that the food we take at the royal table of the cross is hard on the animal stomach and digestion. So it is necessary to go to sleep, for one digests better in sleeping than in walking. But this is not an ordinary sleep, for there is need of much warmth to digest well. Therefore, by sleeping outside one runs the risk of not digesting well. It is better to sleep above an oven, and I do not know a better place to go to sleep after one has been well fed from the cross than on the holy breast of the Savior, the furnace of holy love. I, however, do not do that; I do not know how to, for I take my food without appetite and nausea; therefore, I do not sleep since my stomach is very sick.

Our affairs are dormant, both in regard to the ordinations and the building. I have borrowed fifty *scudi* and I do not know how I am to pay it back. I have written and written again. Now I am quiet and simply waiting. Pray Jesus to give me strength and patience. Right now I do not know how to partake with zest of that noble food I mentioned above.

325. A reference to the painting of Saint Mary Magdalene sent in 1746 and placed above the third altar built in the small chapel of the Presentation Retreat (Cioni, "Storia," *Bollettino*, 1923, p. 244).

326. Paul is referring to the vicar general of Orbetello.

327. Prince Boncompagni was the Prince of Piombino. The letter was written to obtain permission to found a community on the island of Elba, promised by Father Francis Appiani of the Crucified and Thomas Fossi.

The articles you sent from over there have been received. In haste I am ending with greetings to all. Be courageous! Now is the time to show yourself faithful to God, for when the tree sinks its roots deep against the fury of rain storms, snow, and wind, "it will produce fruit in its time." And oh! what sweet, mature fruit, flavored with all blessings, even for our neighbors!

The Congregation of the Passion must walk in this way, and its sons must be the strongest of men, proved in various temptations, within and without, in order to accomplish great things, especially in these very perilous times, which require men who are armed with faith and well accustomed to great suffering, which produces the marvelous fruit of eternal life and makes one taste of that tree "which is in the paradise of my God." But it is already tasted here in that deepest prayer and communication with God, afterwards, as above ...

Goodbye, dear Father Rector and pardon me, for the love of God, and repose in the sweet Heart of Jesus, where I embrace you with all my heart and am always,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

I am writing Signore Petri³²⁸ in reply, etc.

450

Felix Anthony Sbarra (7)

Soriano

August 2, 1746

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father,

I confess myself always more obligated to the great concern of Your Reverence. As soon as I received your letter, I instructed the syndic of this Retreat to pay your sister the five *paoli* agreed on. And I believe it will have been done punctually. However, my busyness made me forget to ask him if he made the payment. I do believe he has made the payment. I beg the Great Giver of every good to enrich your spirit with all fullness of graces, and I recommend myself to your prayers and your sacrifices, and with complete esteem, veneration, and respect I reverently leave you in the gentle Heart of Jesus and declare I am always,

Your Reverence's unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the †

Father Thomas M. and Father Anthony and all greet you.

328. Petri was a benefactor of Orbetello.

Thomas Fossi (15)

Soriano

August 11, 1746

Jesus

Dear Thomas and Beloved Son in Jesus Crucified,

You are aware that with regard to conjugal continence I have always remained strong. For proof of that refer to what I have said person to person and in writing. That is, each one must be in a holy conjugal freedom, always free to seek or render. In this way holy charity is preserved and a path for the devil is closed to his many temptations, especially for the jealousy that you mention. Can't you see and personally know that it is a mistake to take such a resolution? On the part of the wife, does it come more from modesty or a resolution of will? I press this point on you again and again. I know that I said that by common consent you can take such a resolution at the time of a great solemnity for a short time in order to give yourself to prayer, as Saint Paul counsels, etc.

Embrace the pains you are suffering and see yourself as unworthy of them. Take your pleasure in doing the Will of God in such sufferings. The cross is always good, even holy and most holy. If you knew the great treasure you have in suffering, you would desire only pain.

I live more and more grateful for the charity which you continue toward me, and I pray Jesus to grant you an eternal reward. I am writing briefly, as I am here taking the waters at Nocera, and it is necessary to avoid harmful exertion. Be strong and constant, faithful to God, humble and simple as a baby, but prudent in attending to your household in accord with your state. Be alone in the cell of your interior and take your repose in God, always loving greatly and bearing the impress of the Holy Sufferings of Jesus in your soul. From Him I ask every fullness of blessing for you. Pray much for me. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and am always,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Holy †

Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (7)

Soriano

August 13, 1746

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Very Reverend Canon,

Since you are aware of my sickness, continuing over two years, during which my ordinary duties, even though they were so light, caused me not a little pain, I believe that your great charity will have been able to take in good part the silence which lasted until now. Besides, the good God has had me cultivate a keen desire to remain forgotten in the memory of everyone³²⁹

329. Paul wants to be dead to the world and forgotten by all.

because you have taught me that quagmires are not to be disturbed too much, rather not at all, so that they may not spread a plague with their deadly breath to the country around.

It is true that, thanks to God, after many struggles the apostolic brief was obtained in which the entire Rule, consisting of forty chapters, has been inserted and translated into Latin. The said brief has been very expensive, but the work is not finished, although well begun. At this time we await a great work that God wishes to accomplish for us poor sinners by means of the Congregation by raising it to a true religious order. The Holy See has not done that up until now for good reasons, mainly because of the fewness of the Houses, seeing we have only four, including one that is scheduled to be founded in November — please God. Remember that right now we struggle for the ordination with a title, etc., and we have only the number granted for the present.

Despite the fact that the superior of the Congregation has true jurisdiction, independently of the bishops, over all the Houses, at this time dimissorials from the bishops are required for ordinations. Right now I do not know how to get beyond the “until such a time ...”³³⁰

God desires that such things be swallowed with well-seasoned mouthfuls, hard on the animal digestion. And since one digests better sleeping than stirring about, so it is necessary for good digestion to take long sleeps near the warm, loving furnace of the sweet Heart of Jesus. But I do not know how to do that. Pray Jesus to have me work at that and to have me come to learn how.

In this work many circumstances conspire to the great glory of God. For brevity’s sake I am omitting these. I recommend myself much to your holy prayers and to those of your vicar general. I am writing in haste. I am taking the waters of ... serious work is discouraged; however, that is not absent. Bless me. I am from a true heart,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

453

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (12)

Soriano
August 25, 1746

Jesus

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Just as I read with consolation and edification the fervor and perfection with which these good religious are living, so on the contrary was my heart pained to see that Father Joseph³³¹ is so lazy, carefree, and so little observant.

330. Paul is referring to the brief of 1741, which stated that until such a time as there were more Retreats and members, the Congregation would not be solemnly approved.

331. Father Joseph Villavecchia of Saint Mary Magdalene from Alessandria took the correction well and was a faithful priest, dying September 6, 1751, at Toscanella.

I have read a letter from him, and from the reply enclosed here you can see how he expressed himself to me. I would wish we could take care of him and quiet him down so that he be saved. But since we have done, again and again, everything possible, it will be necessary to bring closure. For now, from what I am telling him, you can once more proceed with a charitable reprimand, hoping that he accepts that. But you will have to keep a close eye on him. In case he does not put into practice the salutary correction, we will come with the knife. I have already given thought as to how that is to be done.

I am aware that Father Novice Director has made a just complaint about Father Joseph that he speaks to the novices when they meet. This distresses me deeply — you know that I wrote that the professed are forbidden to speak with the novices and the novices with the professed — so in the enclosed letter I have commanded Father Joseph that he avoid speaking with the novices, in whatever circumstance, without your express consent and that of the novice director. If he asks to do that, permission should never be given him, unless you are aware of an absolute necessity, whether spiritual, which will never be the case with him, or physical, and that will never occur. For this purpose you can renew the precept in a Chapter that the professed and novices observe the ordinance, as above, and the novice director can order the novices.

The twenty measures of cloth have already been ordered from the merchant-tailor, but it is not important, for they will have no need there and God will provide. In Rome you have sixty-three *scudi* and *baiocchi*, and I think they will cost twenty-three *scudi*. Please let me know about the blankets, whether it is necessary to buy some and how many, at least to take care of what is most necessary, etc. The caviar in oil has been received in the small packet with the discipline, and I am pleased with all that you have done for me in your great charity.

I regard that purge, which you speak of, with milk and vipers as most necessary, and I would wish you undertake it soon. But take care that, when you do, you pass at least a spring in another Retreat to better your cure. But if it is necessary to do it in autumn, give the task of vice rector to Father Luke Anthony so that you need only attend to your getting better.

I would like to know whether the novice mentioned by Father Director as having a humor flowing in his privates is Confrater Aloysius or his companion. Encourage him and tell him to touch the affected part with due modesty and make the sign of the cross with the cotton ball that I am enclosing. It has been dipped into the miraculous manna of Soriano³³² and oil from the sanctuary lamp.

For now I have no more to say, only I beg you to fish in the great immense sea of divine love, which is the sea of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, where one find pearls of priceless value, and invite your fellow religious to fish along with you.

332. The Retreat of which Paul writes is where the relics of San Eutizio, a martyr under Diocletian, were venerated. From the stone, upon which it was thought the martyr had celebrated the Eucharist, a type of "manna" was emanated, by which many faithful, taking it with faith, had obtained graces (Zoffoli, Vol. I, p. 629).

Believe, dear Father, that God loves you much and wishes to make you a great saint. Continue your solitude in the Divine Heart of Jesus and stay there like an infant taking its milk.

I do not know what they are saying in Rome, but I am preparing myself to receive whatever comes, and I will be satisfied, hoping to bless the Divine Will and love it in silence with great satisfaction, all the more so because I am certain that the good God wishes to bless the work in a grand way. I do not want to be an impediment to such a great good with my evil life. Implore the divine help for me, who am so needy.

The sister³³³ has by Divine Providence held more frequent interviews with me, and in this way God has done great mercies. She also experiences a high union with you. She is a very great soul, but not conscious of that, and so sick with love that she falls into transports even during the conferences. It is with loving empathy one hears her loving lamentations coming from her seraphic desire to embrace her Spouse.

God is still making her understand the great things and gifts he wishes for the Congregation of the Holy Passion. I am confiding this in your secret heart, for I do not and cannot speak of it with others. I embrace you in Jesus Christ with greetings for our dear brothers. I am from my heart with all ...

The vicar general has written me a very cordial letter in which he tells me that he highly esteems the work you have been doing in Orbetello, and he will endeavor to see you before Vespers and speak to you.

Just now I have been reading the letter from Father Joseph in which he humbles himself much. Believe me, it moves me to compassion. If he is speaking truly, he is showing a will to change. Ah, the Good Shepherd seeks and finds the poor sheep! Let us seek to console him by curing him so that he will mend and not separate himself from the sheepfold of the Congregation. Then if he cannot do otherwise, patience. Let him blame himself.

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

P.D. †

454

Felix Anthony Sbarra (8)

Soriano

August 26, 1746

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

Very Reverend Father,

In this post I received your welcome and esteemed letter, and in reply I tell you with all reverence I would very willingly receive the good young man you refer to. But for two reasons I cannot do so on several counts: first, it is necessary to be sure that his vocation is well established, that he is naturally peaceable and moderately robust, and that he does have a good appearance, indicating a good nature, and whether he be melancholic, for with that kind of

333. The servant of God is Lucy Burlini (*Positio*, p. 105).

a natural temperament it takes a miracle to succeed in religious life. Besides, according to our Rules, we need certificates for Baptism and Confirmation, testimony of good morals, and assurance he is not wanted by any court. Without these documents we cannot receive anyone, for that is what is laid down in our holy Rules. We need proof that he is not married.

You should also know that the novitiate is full, and there will be no room until Christmas or Lent. At that time we will profess some. Even if there were room, and there is not, now would not be a good time for the young man to leave Rome. It would put him in clear danger of his life if he were to sleep in the bad and nasty air of the salt marshes. For to reach the novitiate, he would have to pass by way of Montalto and spend two nights in the salt marshes, a very dangerous undertaking, as you know. For now, let the young man persevere in his vocation. If he has the qualities mentioned above, I will be happy to receive him next Lent.

As regard clothing, we receive nothing, for the novices need only a tunic, mantle, underclothes and a breviary, and that once only. Since the Congregation professes great poverty, beyond the expenses for the building at these beginnings, all that is needed is cloth, and this year at the factory of Saint Michael of Ripa we purchased about one hundred measures of cloth at the cost of more than two hundred *scudi*. So the novices can undertake to provide ten *scudi* for their clothing and breviary, just this one time. If we had a tailor, they would not need to do even that.

So if this good young man is called to our Congregation and cannot provide the ten *scudi*, God will provide, and I will do what I can to provide for his clothing in order to cooperate with his perfection. If there were a benefactor to provide it, that would be well, otherwise ... This is as much as I can say regarding the fulfillment of your requests.

There was the embarrassment over the five *paoli* that should have been paid by our syndic Signore Gianotti into the hand of your sister, and it was forgotten. Father Dominic went to Soriano and brought back the information and had no memory of the payment. I did not pursue the matter because my duties are many and I often forget many things. I will take my first opportunity to inquire if this obligation has been met.

I am nailed down to this Retreat, awaiting Divine Providence for the building, etc. I do not know when the cardinal will come out. Meanwhile, I will always adore the most Holy Will of God in all things and through all things.

Please do me the favor, out of love for the Passion of Jesus Christ, and go to the lawyer Mattei, the agent for Cardinal Rezzonico, and receive from him ten *scudi*, given to me as an alms from Cardinal Rezzonico, and collect them in my name. For the love of God, pardon my boldness; your merit will be great and gratitude toward you will increase in my poor prayers. Would you then take that money and give it to Francis Benincasa. However, you need not do this since there are other bills, along with this one, that I will take care of. I will incur other expenses for cloth and other things which I will order from the

merchant. I end in haste, and as I recommend myself much to your holy prayers, I am with all my heart and will be always,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

455

Cardinal Anthony Gentili³³⁴

September 1746

Your Eminence,

Paul of the Cross, President of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, your humble servant and petitioner, having had notification that His Holiness has issued an apostolic rescript in response to a petition presented to His Holiness in the name of our poor Congregation and in which His Holiness was asked for the favor of the necessary ordination of our clerics, with profound reverence states that without this the Congregation cannot spread itself nor provide members for foundations soon to be established. While this rescript of His Holiness is prepared, and you spoke of it with him, nevertheless, the securing of such a satisfactory favor depends on a positive and strong report from Your Eminence. So I ask from you, in your always great goodness and charity, to take care of this as quickly as possible for the greater glory of God and the advantage of this poor Congregation, which finds itself in so much need, so that it may be provided with worthy priests able to work in the vineyard of Jesus Christ and to promote the devotion and memory of the Passion of the Lord, so much forgotten in the greater part of the world ...

456

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (13)

Soriano

September 3, 1746

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

The circumstances of present business, mixed with plenty of good crosses, do not allow me to write at length. The business at Rome is not merely dormant, both regarding the building and other essential concerns of the Congregation, but in line with the information I have, the cardinal³³⁵ who at first was working on these issues, even though with much difficulty and complaints, is now bored and withdrawn from everything. I do not know what

334. Gentili had been appointed to the commission which reported on the Rule. Now Paul is seeking his help in obtaining from the pope the permission to ordain the clerics. In a later letter to Fulgentius, Paul writes that he believes it is not the pope, but another who is holding back the permissions Paul is seeking.

335. The cardinal was Annibale Albani.

I am to do. However, my lively faith and hope that God will bring this work about in a magnificent fashion has not been extinguished.

With regard to Father Joseph and all else relating to the good order of the Retreat, I grant you the fullest authority to act as I would myself; for all the more reason because you will do everything with maturity, charity, and prudence according to God. I would hope that Father Joseph will settle down, but if not, he will have already read the note written to him.

The Retreat at Toscanella is entirely at a standstill, for despite many efforts we have not obtained the consent of the Frati, and it is necessary to litigate in the Sacred Congregation. The Discalced Trinitarians who were to establish their monastery went to court with the Frati and lost. Yesterday I read the decree: "In the case of the Discalced Trinitarian Fathers at Toscanella: denial of establishing a monastery, and further." This "further" means the case is not to be further discussed. This is a high Providence, and I am the first to let it go.³³⁶ Thanks be to God.

In the dioceses of Agnagni and Ferentino, there are requests to establish two Retreats.³³⁷ In this post I am writing the bishop, etc. In November we will reduce the community at your place, if God has eight cells built by then.

I see always more clearly the great and secret Providence of God in having me remain here, even for the good of the Retreat of the Presentation, for I think that in the present circumstances they are giving me occasions to cooperate the more, etc., "lest offense be given in any way," etc. You understand my meaning, but do not explain it to others. I have much to do and have not as yet written much for the mail, and we are at an end. Let them be content and pray much that God will let you see his highest mercies. Continue to take care of yourself and greet the novice director for me and the households of Signori Grazi, Caseglias, etc. I embrace you in the Lord, and in haste I am with all my heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

P. D. †

457

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (14)

Soriano

September 10, 1746

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I read to my edification and consolation your welcome letter, and I rejoice much in the mercies the good God continues for your soul. You should remain attentive, and have some religious remain attentive, to the conduct of Father Joseph in order to take precautions. It is true that he is making great efforts to

336. Literally "loose skin," probably a reference to a snake losing its skin. Paul is saying he is willing to be the first to move away from a losing cause.

337. This refers to the Retreat in Ceccano, founded in 1748, while the foundation in Anagni comes to nothing.

do the right thing, in view of his ways rooted in the world. This is reason to be more compassionate with him, and to assure his eternal salvation by having him keep the holy Rules, at least in the essentials. When you see him fail, look on him with compassion and correct him with loving charity, administering fitting correction, both in Chapter and at culpae, and elsewhere. If you succeed in guiding him to heaven, what a great gain! what a great glory to God!

It is the best arrangement to have Confrater Bonaventure³³⁸ remain apart and not handle anything that the others use, not even hand towels. Keep his napkin and tableware separate, cup, etc., and, above all, habit and underclothing. And at table station him close to someone advanced in age, and in choir apart from the young men because of his bad breath. To sum up, we must use all diligence and leave the cure to God. You need not be scrupulous over this, for you have already done enough. If he is alive in spring, let him have milk. For now you need to be cautious so as not to lose the young men; see to it that he is separated as much as possible from the common acts.

You may give him the farina of Saint Aloysius or water blessed with the relics of the True Cross and Mary Most Holy, blessed with the ordinary rites. It would be well to give it to the others, that is, to any sick who wish for it out of devotion.

With regard to a general review,³³⁹ from the time you became a cleric, although such a review is in no way necessary, it is praiseworthy and of great profit because of the virtue exercised in going through it. So you can do that with God's blessing, for you are not to be scrupulous about anything, not with regard to poverty, in fulfilling your duties, nor in any other way, for I know all was done with exactness by means of the grace His Divine Majesty has given you. So you are to have no scruples, not about the stones brought forward nor about anything else. Be quiet on my conscience. In regard to directing spiritual affairs, all the good comes from God since the examples have never been bad, but very good, for they came forth from good works you performed in Jesus Christ and in no other way. I will do the parts for you, etc., but it will be for your advantage, and that of others, that you should write about it, as you say, etc.

I know nothing about the tuna. It may have come spoiled to Viterbo last week, or they may have sent it to San Angelo. I do not know that. You are not to be concerned, and I thank you for the charity.

Our sister³⁴⁰ continues to caress her Spouse and her Spouse deals with her in an exalted way and gives her the greatest certitude of the happy outcome of this holy work, even in the midst of the greatest tempests and contradictions possible. That is why you see that she is sure and would rather, in a way of speaking, believe that there is no earth or sky than doubt the establishment of

338. At this time Bonaventure Magnasco of the Assumption (1723-1779) was very much weakened by tuberculosis and was close to death. He had many remissions, but was always in a weakened state.

339. A "general review" refers to a general confession of sins.

340. This is the servant of God, Lucy Burlini. Paul speaks of her visions (*Positio*, pp. 109-113).

this great work, and often, contrary to doubting, the thought of success cannot leave her mind.

It seems to me that about two years ago God had her see a very high mountain on whose summit was a furnace with a fire so huge that it enlightened and scorched the whole world. She understood this was the Congregation of the Passion, etc. So that before she knew me, even years before, she had lights that I consider prophetic. You can somewhat verify this personally, and the rest will be verified because "the word of God remains forever."

With regard to going down to Orbetello, if you can do it easily, fine; otherwise, go for some feasts, etc., alleging the great trouble and the bad weather of the lagoon, etc. In this post I am writing to a gentleman of Montalto. We need to use great diligence without worry to gather in a little wine. You may use Father Luke Anthony to speak to the owners, etc., or Signore Caseglias or others, etc., or send to Torri, etc. I will get the blankets as well as the cloth. Signore Benincasa is away from Rome, and I do not know where he is. He has not answered my letters and has the money in hand. But you can be reassured. Here, for the present, the possibility of missions in Civita and Orte is closed, for the bishop, with good intentions, is not favorable to us, although he does not manifest this. But he will not grant the missions his people are requesting. May God's will be done.

Yesterday, the cardinal was expected, and I expect a good cross in many respects. God be blessed. I am in many struggles, but God does not allow them to appear outside. Often, except when sleeping — I tell you this in secret to your heart — until I fall asleep, I suffer and tremble all the time I am awake, and for some years I have often been in this miserable state. Yet, this seems to me to be little in comparison with a great cross I am bearing for so many years without comfort. I see it as a hailstorm at harvest time. I am like one plunged into the depth of the sea during a fierce storm and without anyone to lend me a board to avoid drowning. What do you think of this miserable sinner in this fearful abandonment? Yes, there is a glimmer of faith and hope, but so feeble that I can scarcely perceive it. Oh God! what will become of me?

I do not know how to obtain copies of the Rule since you do not have any trustworthy and intelligent people around. In time it will be printed. Meanwhile, the director of novices could assign this as lessons when he explains the Rules to them, and that would be profitable. He could dictate them first in Latin and then in Italian. There is no one better than he.

In any event, send my greetings to the king's representative at Portercole, paying my compliments and assurance of prayers, etc. When I can, I will send a letter to the commandant at Trapani,³⁴¹ etc. I am ending a letter written by bits.

341. This refers to the lieutenant general who was the commander of Trapani and who was known to Paul on Argentario. We do not know by the rank what the name of the individual was.

Yesterday, the cardinal³⁴² arrived from Rome, and although nothing has been decided so far, all is in good order. The Rites of Vestition and Profession will be approved. There has already been a vote by the cardinals, and ordinations for now will be ten. With the two others who are in process, there will be twelve. The pope does not wish to do more at this time. As the Congregation grows, all will be granted.

I imagine, rather I know, that the difficulties raised do not come from the pope.³⁴³ Thanks be to God.

I continually have more hope that God will do great things. The contradictions are not few and the devils are not on a stroll. D. Benincasa has sent me the sixty-three *scudi* and *baiocchi*, and he will send the twenty measures of cloth and purchase about eight blankets. I think they will reach you soon.

Goletti is waiting for his money. I will see that he gets it from what comes here, but I think it will not be enough since the cloth comes to twenty *zecchini*, in addition to transport, and that is forty-two *scudi*. I do not know what the blankets will cost. I do not know what these things cost; let me know.

I was thinking of leaving next Sunday for San Angelo, but I cannot, for we have the two lay brothers sick with tertian fever. They are now over the fever, and yesterday the fever came over Father Dominic.

Greet everyone for me, and "let us glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" with an Alleluia. A heavenly messenger gave this advice while someone was speaking of the Kingdom of God and the angels' song "Holy." The heavenly spirit said: "Sing the 'Holy, Holy, Holy' when you have crosses."

The affairs of this Retreat will go well for the construction and all, while I, in a sacred silence of love, will glory in the Cross and will have digested great mouthfuls, hot from the divine furnace. I have much to do. Goodbye. Greet the novice director for me and everyone else. Let them pray much, much, for God wishes to be petitioned with faith and great confidence, etc.

I add that, if you think it good that Confrater Bonaventure takes the air at the seaside, I leave you free to do that. But who knows, especially since you cannot give him a companion.

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

342. Cardinal Annibale Albani.

343. Difficulties came from cardinals on the commission.

Pope Benedict XIV (3)September 16, 1746³⁴⁴

The Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and through it Paul of the Cross, the General Superior, prostrate at the feet of Your Beatitude, humbly attest that to secure an enduring establishment of that Congregation, there seems to be one course to take, that of granting to the General Superior for a given time the faculty to issue dimissorial letters for both minor orders and holy orders for those members who first of all made profession of their vows and an oath of perpetual perseverance so that with the letters mentioned they can be promoted under the title of poverty or common table by the Ordinary of the diocese where they are living in the Retreats of the Congregation, and in cases where the Bishop is not present, by any bishop whomsoever. Therefore, Your Holiness is asked to grant this grace.

The Congregation further asks Your Beatitude to allow the General Superior for a specified time the faculty to allow its priests whom he judges capable to hear confessions of the religious, both within the Retreat and on journeys. The Father General hopes to be heard in these requests since they are designed to help the Gospel ministries flourish and to continue in the vineyard of the Lord, and they fit in with the merciful regard that Your Holiness has always maintained for this Congregation, through which beyond your eternal rewards you will make your holy and glorious reign always, always more immortal.

Pope Benedict XIV (4)September 16, 1746³⁴⁵

Your Holiness,

Father Paul of the Cross, President of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics, under title of the Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus, and approved by Your Holiness with a brief of April 18 of this year, as a humble petitioner of Your Holiness, having petitioned Your Holiness to approve the Rite of Vestition for Novices and the Rite for Admitting to Profession, in accord with the text, Your Holiness then sent a request to the commission, previously deputed for the approval of the Rule; that commission in revising the Rites

344. This is the date on which the request was granted. Paul's letter to the pope is not dated and was written earlier.

345. In the next two letters Paul requests permission for the approval of the Rite for Vestition and Profession, and also for the ordination of clerics to the priesthood. The first was approved, the second request was limited to ten or twelve clerics. Paul has mentioned these petitions in his letters at this time, especially to Fulgentius and to Cardinal Gentili. September 16 is the date on which the requests were granted.

made different corrections, indicated in the sheet attached, signed by the cardinals of the commission; and since the reformed Rites are in the same status, as registered in the included materials, Paul humbly asks Your Holiness to approve them.

460

Pope Benedict XIV (5)

September 16, 1746

Your Holiness,

Paul of the Cross, Rector of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of Passion of Jesus Christ, humble servant and petitioner of Your Holiness, prostrate at your holy feet, humbly recalls that Your Holiness granted us through your great charity the favor of confirming the Rules and Constitutions of the Congregation by means of a brief; and now, for the confirmation, progress, and spread of that Congregation it is highly necessary that its members be ordained, so I am asking the kindness of Your Holiness to grant the favor that in these early beginnings we be able to ordain fifty members under title of common table, and that those to be ordained may be promoted to sacred orders by the neighboring bishop who is closest to the Retreat where they are stationed, with the testimony of the President of the Congregation. At the same time, I beseech the great piety of Your Holiness to concede the favor that the President have the right to give faculties to the priests of the Congregation whom he knows to be able to hear the confessions of his members, both when abroad and when in the Retreats, and this for the greater advantage and spiritual profit of the Congregation.

461

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (15)

Soriano

September 18, 1746

J.M.J.

Dear Father Rector,

The last post had no letters from me. It is certain they were lost since the one who ought to have taken them to Soriano posted them for Bassanello.³⁴⁶ Patience! I have had an encounter with high fevers close to being dangerous. For two days I have been free. I am not mentioning other important things. I have need of great prayers. Things are going well, please God, but in the midst of whirlwinds and storms. Greet everyone for me; let them be happy; let them embrace the cross, where alone there are true treasures. Without that, nothing. I cannot write more, for I am very weak. Thanks be to God. As soon as I am

346. Bassanello (today called Vasanello) is a small town near Soriano.

better, I will leave for San Angelo, but this letter I am writing here. Goodbye.
My cordial greetings to the household of Signore Grazi.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

462

John Francis Sancez (4)

San Angelo
September 30, 1746

Jesus

Dear Sir,

While leaving from Soriano, I received your welcome letter in which I read with high edification and satisfaction the happy passage to a better life of your esteemed and devoted father. Since I have toward him and all his pious household so many obligations that, in testimony of true gratitude, I necessarily felt the blow. However, along with you, I have kissed the loving hand that struck the blow with so much mercy.

We have reason to rejoice and thank the All-Highest, who has given us such clear and evident signs that the blessed soul of your father has been received into the bosom of God's infinite mercies. I know how much your heart has been wounded by this blow, but I am certain you will treat that deep, tragic wound to your tender filial love for so good a father with the precious balm of resignation to the Divine Will. Courage, dear John Francis, my beloved, let us clothe ourselves with a holy life to join our good parents with a holy death. I have lost my parents as well. We have the consolation of their exemplary and devout lives, followed by a holy death.

I assure you that not only I, but also all our religious will continue suffrages for the good soul of our deceased. I have already done so in the celebration of the Divine Mysteries; but that is not all, for I will continue as I declare myself much indebted to both the good father and his devoted son.

Our Retreat here has been richly visited by the mercy of God with sickness, etc. I was not spared. Good news, for God keeps us crucified with himself. I am recovering, and I am writing with a pen as best I can so that I may write a few lines to our benefactor and syndic Signore Caseglias, and, if I am not too bold, I would ask you to greet him for me from the heart. I recommend our poor Retreat to both of you. However, I know I abuse your holy charity. I knew you went to great expense in buying the wine. God be blessed.

I know they will bring in more, for the present harvest will be helpful. Meanwhile, the number of the servants of God increases. And for that reason we must shift some from that Retreat; however, this Retreat is under construction, but God will provide. If I can, I will return there. That is what I wish, but present business and circumstances held me nailed down in these

Retreats since Christmas. I break off in a hurry and embrace you in the Side of Jesus, where I declare myself ever,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

463

Joseph Danei (1)³⁴⁷

San Angelo

September 30, 1746

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dearest in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter in which I learn of the happy and holy death of our good mother. Nature desired to pay its tribute by allowing us to feel a touch of sorrow, which is sweetened by seeing here a blow of the Divine Will that can will only what is best. In all three of our Retreats a High Mass was celebrated, along with the Office of the Dead, and we three continue to celebrate Mass for the soul of our good mother. However, we have a lively faith that she has no further need of such suffrages, for we cannot doubt that the good God has already received her into the bosom of his mercies in paradise. So we need to rejoice that, after so many pains suffered by her with such constancy, patience, and resignation, she now is enjoying for all eternity the fruits of so much virtue through the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and now we have an advocate in the heavenly Kingdom. Even here in this valley of tears, with her example and fervent admonitions she always tried to urge all of us to run in the way of perfection and holiness.

Now we must not forget her holy instructions and example, and by imitating always her constant devotion, patience, and resignation we must be able to sing with her the mercies of God in that grand Kingdom of Glory. Do not be pained over the fact she could not take Holy Communion. This has happened even to great saints who adorn our altars, some of whom died a sudden death, but not unprovided because they always looked forward to it with continual preparations. Even though they died suddenly, they did not cease being great saints. So it is with our mother, for the signs at her death are unique and most clear that her death was precious in the sight of the Most High. So console yourselves in God and be grateful to him for such a great benefit.

My dear brother Joseph, I recommend to you great care and vigilance for your good sisters. Assist them, console them, help them, and use great cordiality and charity with them. Tell your sisters that they must remember they are more obliged than others to give a good example and to make themselves holy, conformable to the instructions I have given them by voice and in writing. Let them be withdrawn, let them work, let them make their

347. Paul's mother had died and he writes to his brother and sisters in Castellazzo. His reflections on his mother, the family, and being poor afford insights on Paul's values. He also mentions his mother's brother who is a priest named Father John Baptist.

prayer and frequent the Blessed Sacrament. Above all, let them not be open to having people in the home. Even if they be ecclesiastics, even if they have the appearance of being devout and holy, let them not be confidential with anyone. Oh! how much experience I have on this in my many years on the missions! Oh! how much I insist on this with people. It is necessary to guard oneself and have filial confidence with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Virgin, with the angels and saints, but to flee from men, as the angel told Saint Arsenius. I have every confidence that our sisters will make themselves holy and will be examples to others. Believe me, dear ones, you are the most fortunate people in the world: poor in this life, you will be rich in eternity. Do you know why God holds you in such misery and pain? Because he wishes to make you rich in heaven, and by these means he secures your eternal salvation. Brief and momentary is this suffering; the enjoyment is eternal. Tell me, what would you have wished to do if now you were breathing forth your soul? Would you wish to have had the riches which ordinarily are not without the gravest sins and which cast you into hell, or would you wish to have lived a poor life which has you fly off to heaven? Much courage then, and believe for certain that God will never abandon you. He will assist you and provide what is necessary for you.

We are not without many pains, thanks be to God, and we thank the Most High for that. Our life is very poor. We even have a vow of poverty, as you know. Alms go into the care of the syndic, as the holy Rule ordains. As the number of religious increases, so we can scarcely go on living, yet we are very satisfied.

If God opens the way, I will not fail to do something to help you out. But these present times of so much calamity and so much coldness in charity give little room to operate. Besides this, if the one giving the missions asked for alms, the fruit of the missions would entirely vanish and the very concept would be lost. But do not doubt Divine Providence; always believe in the help from God. Jesus bless you and enrich you with the fullness of grace and heavenly gifts so that you be always united in true peace, charity, justice, and holiness. Amen.

We never cease to recommend you to God. If you see Father John Baptist, our uncle, salute him in my name and the name of all of us, and thank him for the work of charity he performed for our good mother and his worthy sister.

I leave you in the Side of Jesus, where with a true heart I greet you in the name of Father John Baptist and Father Anthony. They are passably well, but I am doing poorly. Thanks be to God.

Your affectionate, unworthy, humble servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (16)

San Angelo

November 18, 1746

We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

After so many apprehension, fears, worries, etc., I received you dear handwriting, and I rejoice in your improvement to the greater glory of the Most High. It is necessary, however, to limit yourself and allow others to assist you. Even Saint Gertrude,³⁴⁸ your holy patron and mine, wished to be a saint. But since God nailed her to the cross of many sicknesses, she was constrained to stay in bed when the others were in choir at night to praise God. And she stayed calm as midday without allowing herself to be preoccupied with any shadow of affliction over not being able to follow the community, rejoicing in doing in this way the sweet Will of her Divine Spouse, and so for the rest, food and other things. I know you are devoted to this saint, so imitate her and be still and quiet, and allow yourself to be governed by Father Director and the other elder who was given that commission, especially to the first as being the elder with prudence and experience.

In springtime God will provide; meanwhile, let us remain believing and being consumed as victims of holocaust for the honor and glory of the Sovereign Monarch.

I have written two or three times there to know if they received the cloth confided to Signore Vincent Grazi,³⁴⁹ who promised to bring it. I have had no response at all; I am waiting for confirmation. The cloth cost forty-five *scudi*. I have had to give six *scudi* and six *paoli* to Goletti; the remainder is here with me. I desire to be a sharer in their holy crosses, but I have no news except the death of the priest novice.³⁵⁰ I hear that the novitiate is back on observance since health has returned. Thanks be to God.

For a long time I have had no word about Confrater Bonaventure. I know what you wrote before his leaving from Pereta. In addition, there was the news of my relapses and other dangers. As a result I have a desire to share in these things for the glory of God and my own benefit. I have suffered more over the expectation than in the trial itself.

I see it is necessary to make a change of syndics. We will reflect on that a bit, and shortly it will be taken care of. I am waiting to know whether the

348. Saint Gertrude (1256-1301), a Cistercian nun of Hefta, Germany, possessed a great literary and philosophical awareness. She is especially known for her mystical experiences, her devotion to the humanity of Jesus, and her attitude of abandonment to the Will of God.

349. This is the brother of Agnes Grazi and the husband of Maria Johanna Venturi.

350. Passionist tradition recognizes this "novice-priest" as Father Anthony Schiaffino. He was a friend of Paul's in Castellazzo and followed him to Gaeta, where he was ordained a priest. He thought to found a new community as well. He also went to Argentario, where he remained at the hermitage of the Annunciation. He did not want to join with Paul when Paul returned to Argentario in 1728 (Bartoli, p. 23).

canon from Orvieto³⁵¹ has arrived. Our people began there Wednesday night, November 15. The mission in Orvieto is well received, thanks be to God.

Thanks be to God, I am worrying little, almost nothing, about the needs of the Congregation. It seems to me I would wrong God if I were to be worrying about you, etc., or worrying about how I can write to Sister Cherubina, etc.

If God allows me to stay well, as I am now, I will need to take a trip to Sabina to look at a Retreat, etc. That is a necessity. Then, as soon as possible, I will stay at this Retreat. But that will not happen, I believe, until the end of January.

If chocolate strengthens your stomach, as I believe it does, take it often and please do not be stingy, for you are not doing your will, but the Will of God through holy obedience.

I do not know what more to say. I recommend myself to your devout prayers and those of all our beloved brothers, professed and novices, especially to the dear Father who directs them. I am not writing to anyone but you in order not to impose. I embrace all in the Lord. Let us have great courage; God will help us. Let them know that the Congregation has deep roots in the midst of storms and whirlwinds, etc.

I end, giving you a close embrace in the holy Side of Jesus, and I am with all my heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

465

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (17)

San Angelo
November 26, 1746

Jesus

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I trust you have received my reply to your welcome letter. I am here, once more convalescing in Vetralla. On the Feast of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy, while I was in the refectory, my fever came back a bit, so much so that I was not able to take a few tablespoons of soup. On the following Tuesday I was somewhat better and without fever. On Wednesday there was a fiery storm, for I was attacked with the symptoms of my autumn illness, that is, vomiting all day long. The outcome was so dangerous that I thought that in a few hours I would be going to my grave. I went to Vetralla and a good medicine put a stop to everything. Now I am better, and today I celebrated Mass.

It is a common opinion, including that of the best doctor here, that the air here is harmful to me, although it is healthful for others. But to my sorrow, within and without, it is very dangerous. So this week I will leave for Soriano, which is healthier for me and, please God, I will then come there. In the next

351. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin was professed in 1748 and dismissed in 1764.

post write to me at Soriano, for unless something intervenes by Saturday, December 3, I will be at Soriano. O dear Father Fulgentius, I am experiencing great things, "even if he slay me, I will hope in him."

I am waiting for notification that the cloth has been received; those ecstatic servants of God have forgotten to let me know. I would like to think that you continue in passably good health, or to put it better, slightly good health. I think that in the spring we will change places, if I am alive. That is, you will be at Soriano and I will be there, for the reason that while the air at San Angelo is perfect, it attacks my blood and causes horrible symptoms of sickness with pains following. All this stops when I am away from here. So the signs are clear.

I ask you to pay my cordial respects to Father Director, and I thank him as well as you, for your pious wishes. But what can a poor, shipwrecked fellow do or say in the midst of stormy waves, where he expects to drink in death at each moment without seeing anyone to throw him a rope and to bring him to the beach? "I have only this recourse, that I turn my eyes to the Lord."

Greet everyone for me and tell them to remain strong, constant, and faithful, for the good God will make them his sanctified and strong ones "that they might announce the glory of the Lord to the nations, who have not known the Lord." Among these are sinful Christians who through their own fault do not wish to know. So the deeper we find ourselves in pain, the better. For then we are putting down deep roots. How is our reverend theologian doing, the one who took his degree beneath the chestnuts?³⁵² Greet him strongly for me. In Orvieto great good is being done. A worthy person wrote that to me for the glory of God.

For the present, you need not receive more lay brothers; there are enough. If God has us make a foundation soon, then you can receive more. I am saying this with regard to a lay person from Orvieto of whom they wrote to me in the last letter.

Receive the good cleric, otherwise ... I end in haste and I embrace you tightly in the holy Heart of Jesus. I recommend you to continue your good regimen for your health in order to be of assistance to the Retreat, etc. Jesus bless all of us. I am with all my heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

Departing, God willing, on Saturday, December 3, for Soriano, San Eutizio.

352. Father Luke Anthony Bianchini of Saint Joseph.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (18)

San Angelo
December 2, 1746
On departing.

Jesus

Dear Beloved Father Rector,

I am leaving today for the Retreat of Soriano. Tonight I will sleep at San Angelo and tomorrow, at an early hour, I will go to Soriano. I already told you in the last mailing that you should write me at San Eutizio, Soriano, where I will be, please God, tomorrow night. Thanks be to God, I am much better, but the air of Mount Fogliano, wonderful for others, is very harmful to me.

I did very well in making provision for the farina, but I have no news, etc. I will take care to obtain it, etc. I trust in God that in the springtime you will be much better. But meanwhile, take care of yourself. Seeing that you cannot eat fish at all, you must not hesitate to take a meat broth, which is most necessary.

It is a good plan to send Confrater Bonaventure to Rio, where I hope he will regain his health, and in that case it will not be necessary to send him to his home. It is necessary to give him regulations for his interior life, and he should never go out alone, but only when accompanied by one or more clerics. I recommend the local pastor. He should also have rules for his living from the doctor who has his case, along with consultation of others, if you think that good.

We have no need of lay brothers now. There are enough of them, and also since we cannot take advantage of the building at Soriano because it is too new, and San Angelo is merely roofed over and will not be finished until May.

You did not send me the paper you mentioned; you need to have it done by someone who is capable. It is very necessary to follow the words of Saint Bernard: "The rector should see everything, pass over much, and correct few things." One who tries too much wears himself out, all the more so because all have good will. But to see them fly to perfection, God must first give them wings — Saint Teresa in *The Life*.

You depend on Father Director and Father Luke Anthony, one or the other, only insofar as they support you in curing your illness. In everything else you are rector for everyone in the Retreat.

I am glad you received the cloth. I am not sure that the stuff from Montalto has even been made; I have little trust. Could you please write to Signore Brancacci about this so that he may smooth over this business a bit?

Please give my most cordial greetings to our beloved Father Director. I greatly rejoice in what the good God is doing through him. Greet all for me in the Lord. Pray for us. I embrace you and all your holy community in the holy Side of Jesus, and am always,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

With regard to changing the syndic, it would be good to begin by arranging things with your usual charity and prudence. The best would be Signore Petri and then Signore Sancez, but Signore Caseglias needs to continue as deputed. Have a meeting with the two mentioned and decide things. Have them in place before my return, all the more since I may be late in returning because of some foundations and perhaps a trip to Rome for the reasons I spoke about and confided to you in secret, that is, to treat of the foundation of a Retreat in Rome, a most necessary thing, but it will be done secretly. The place is the church of the saint whose feast we celebrate today, Saint Bibiana.³⁵³ It is a solitary place in good air. In his own time we will see the path that God opens. You can share this with Father Director, but not with the others. I embrace you in the Lord.

467

Thomas Fossi (16)

San Angelo
December 3, 1746

Jesus

My Beloved Thomas,

My long and dangerous illness has kept me from writing you, as I wished. I hope that you will continue to make good progress in your state by keeping your heart turned toward heaven and, above all, by satisfying the obligations of a family man with attention to the care of your family, at peace with your wife, and by overcoming any temptation to the contrary which the devil puts into your head under the appearance of perfection. Understand me and pay attention to that.

I read to my great distress that you are engaging in the spiritual direction of women. Oh, my dear Thomas! Could there be a greater diabolical temptation than this? Direction, which is so difficult for holy men and priests of God, should seem such an easy thing to a secular like yourself? Take care, take care for you will put your head on the reefs. For love of God, do not pry into these matters. You know what I have said to you at other times, but fruitlessly. Now, for the love of God, get yourself out of such things. Take care of yourself, give a good example, and leave the rest to God and to one who is obligated to that by his ministry.

I am writing in haste, for I am able to work only a little. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and admit the many obligations I owe you and make you a sharer in my prayer. Jesus bless you.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

Dearest Thomas, accept in good part what I am saying. I have had this news for some months. I did not want to believe it, but for the love I have for you in God, I have given you this warning. Dear Thomas, my son in Jesus Christ, give your attention to making yourself holy in your state. Attach

353. Saint Bibiana Church was on the site of the modern railway station in Rome.

yourself to the cross of Jesus and suffer your pain willingly, etc. I hope we will see each other in good time.

468

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (19)

Soriano

December 9, 1746

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I rejoice that your sickness has remitted a bit, but continue, for the love of God, to allow yourself to be governed by our Rules so that you may be able to bear the burden His Divine Majesty has imposed on you. You do well to take care of the provisions, but I cannot, despite all diligence, discover anything to give us apprehension. I will not omit trying to foresee and provide with the help of God.

It is right to put up with the sick novice and see whether he will improve. It would be good to find out if a bit of rhubarb would help him. I was happy to read that Confrater Bonaventure has gone to the island to recover. I am happy that our Father Theologian³⁵⁴ is fulfilling his apostolic office well.

Our Father Director is rich and knows it not. I have received his letters that he has been worse and in no small danger. In this post I have written him a few lines. You cannot believe how much I have written in every post.

The mission in Orvieto was exceedingly blessed by God, and there are some candidates endowed with talent and desirous to enter. Father Casista³⁵⁵ has written me a very edifying letter with regard to the mission and the candidates. I have answered him with a letter of some length since he desired a short account of the Institute. And I told him that I hope that within two months to receive the candidates. Since he is a holy, learned, and prudent man, I entrusted the examination of their vocations to him, as did Father Thomas Mary.

I believe that at this time two young men from Piedmont will have arrived, sent by Canon Randone and without having given me the least notice. This came to me as news. I am including his letter for your guidance. If they come with required conditions, you need to receive them, and then let them prove themselves. You will listen to their expectations. I have written him not to send more without my advice since there is no room. But since they have come so far, we must have patience. God will help us and provide. I hope in a short time to relieve that Retreat.

354. This reference is probably regarding Father Luke Anthony (see letter of January 26, 1746).

355. This is perhaps the canon who had presented the cases of conscience to the clergy for a study meeting on morality.

With regard to the letter from Signora Clarice,³⁵⁶ all I can do is answer it, for I have not had any idea of going to the island. I do not have that kind of strength, and there is no necessity whatever.

I have written Sister Cherubina by the post, etc. I end, recommending myself to your holy prayers, and I ask you to convey my cordial greetings to all, professed and novices. Let them become holy and let them study in the book of their nothingness to root themselves in self-knowledge, and in that way they will become holy. "If you will separate the precious from the vile, you will be as my mouth."

I embrace you tightly in the sacred Side of Jesus, for I know that there, and nowhere else, is your home. Remember poor me, and I am with all my heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

I wish you feast-day greetings, fresh and mature, and also to the Grazi household, so deserving of merit from the Congregation, etc. Goodbye.

469

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (33)³⁵⁷

Soriano

December 14, 1746

Jesus

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

In the ordinary mail I received your letter, which I read to my consolation and with a rendering of thanks to the All-High. I assert in God that His Divine Majesty has in hand great graces, especially to keep you strong in promoting and procuring his greater glory and the beauty of things destined for his worship. Know that you acted very well and in a way very pleasing to God by refusing to allow the silver saucer destined for the service of God to be used for the decoration of the table of that Signore N. Let them say what they will. Stay strong and protect the cause of God without human respect, and be sure that God will protect your heart and sanctify your soul by enriching it with great gifts, etc.

However, it would be best to do away with the abuse of sending gifts to each priest coming for the vestition of nuns.³⁵⁸ Instead, it would be a great sacrifice to God to give a special alms to some poor person, especially to some poor, shamefaced family. This would be a great preparation so that the novice nun who is receiving her habit would receive from the Lord some special grace to make her flight to holy perfection. And tell me this: Is it good for religious

356. Clarice Claris Appiani was the mother of Father Francis Anthony Appiani of the Crucified.

357. Paul writes to Sister Cherubina amid his concerns about the novices and candidates held down by continued illness and his awareness of the abuses in Sister Cherubina's convent. Under all these pressures, in this long letter he is able to soar to the heights of mystical love and prayer as he teaches her "this sacred knowledge."

358. Paul is against the custom of sending gifts to priests in order to motivate them to attend a particular ceremony.

to make use of worldly practices at their nuptials? What does the Divine Spouse have to say? I am not saying that you cannot have some necessary care for the relatives, etc. But always religious modesty and poverty should shine forth so that all leave edified and not scandalized, as does happen when people see nuns doing silly things, worldly things, etc.

Regarding the further question of confessors, I tell you there is no way we can accept being ordinary confessors because that is forbidden. We can certainly be extraordinary confessors, and you would often have the sacred Feast of the Divine Word, conformable to your state and institute.

I thank you for the petition in favor of the foundation of the Retreat we know about; I hope it will have great influence. I am indifferent and without any solicitude about that foundation, for I have already done what I could for so many years. Now I do not feel I want to take another step, but I leave the care entirely to God.

Let us come to ourselves. With regard to your penances, now is not the time to weigh down your body with penances, for you are loaded with the weight of the whole convent. What I wish is that you attend with profound recollection to all your duties. Remember, my daughter, that our soul is the temple of the Living God. Hence, I wish that you maintain internal or mental solitude, seeing you cannot observe external solitude due to your duties as abbess. So keep within your interior, repose on the divine bosom of the Highest Good, stir your heart up frequently to holy love, burn with love, preserve internal peace, flee from perturbation as though it were a plague, be vigilant never to allow yourself to be upset by your faults, but humble yourself gently before God with a sweet, loving, sorrowful contrition and make a resolution to do better, and then go ahead with your conduct in peace without losing interior solitude, reposing on the loving bosom of our great Father God. Invoke him often with his sweet name: "Oh great Father! O dear Father! Oh sweet Father!" Allow your soul to be filled with the divine knowledge of this great Father. Allow your soul to make great flights to the bosom of this dear Heavenly Father. When you use these ejaculations, be in no hurry; but in a sacred silence allow your soul to take its rest, as you are soaked entirely in Holy Love. Oh, what great riches is this! ...

Do not neglect to swim in pure faith and love in the holy sea of the holy pains of Jesus. Fish there for the precious pearls of the holy virtues to adorn your spirit in order to be beautiful, attractive, and rich in the eyes of the Divine Spouse. All this sacred knowledge is learned in the school of holy humility, in recognition of one's nothingness, in true nakedness of spirit, in remaining hidden from the eyes of people, etc., and doing well your position as abbess, where God has placed you to be all charity with your daughters, treating them with meekness, compassionating their defects, but correcting them with charity, and at times with severity. But your heart must remain at peace and your countenance serene. If you reprimand with severity and discipline where necessary, this should be done with the charity of a mother. Be all eyes for observance of the Rules, especially poverty, etc. Be careful that the parlors and doors are well guarded. Allow no conversations without a witness; do not

allow friendships or frequent visits in the parlor, even if you have to give up your life, in order to avoid offending God. Listen, my daughter in Jesus Christ, be all things to all, and with great charity make yourself more loved than feared, and so you will be obeyed, etc. Above all, be a mirror of virtue to all your religious and do all you can to abolish abuses and reform things.

Oh, how much I would like to say to you! Be humble, love Jesus much, and he will teach you everything. Pray much for me and for our poor Congregation, for it seems God wishes to bless it mightily. There is question of the foundation of more Retreats. I send you the greetings for the feast, and from the sacred altar on that happy night I will place your heart in the swaddling clothes of the Infant Jesus so that he will comfort you and make you alive to do great things for the glory of God.

Some mailings ago I sent you a letter with an enclosure for Thomas Fossi of Poggio.

If you want to let the nuns know my opinion regarding the saucer and other abuses, do so. Read that section to them with my permission, leaving out what concerns your spirit, so that they may be persuaded to cooperate in removing these abuses. I pray Jesus to make all of you saints. For a long time I have been, for the most part, sickly. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

470

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (20)³⁵⁹

Soriano

December 15, 1746

Jesus

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I see in your dear letter that you are sending some fish. Next Monday, arrangements will be made to pick them up. I rejoice that Confrater Bonaventure has gone to Elba and that it was decided that he be accompanied, etc. You speak about sending clerics at Lent, but I have no recollection of that; nor do I know which clerics you are speaking about. Do me the favor of recalling it to me, all the more so since some here have a great desire to know, but it is not settled, especially by those in Vetralla.

With regard to the election of the syndic, you may do what you think best with your prudence and charity for the advantage of the Retreat. I do not know how to provide for the relics. If I do not go to Rome, I have no way to provide for them. If God will send me there, I will have a chance to serve the benefactor. I have foreseen and provided for our needs ... but when necessity is present, otherwise ...

359. This letter contains the long exhortation Paul wrote for the community to dispose them better for the celebration of Christmas. Again, Paul rises above the problems of daily life to the peace and joy of the Divine Birth. This exhortation also appears in a letter to the community of the Presentation (Chiari, Volume V, pp. 221-223).

I have written D. Athanasius for the feast day, etc., and I will see to it that Magdalene³⁶⁰ is taken care of.

I rejoice that you die often, even every day, in order to live in God and for God, and to be entirely buried in Jesus Christ. I cannot express how much I rejoice and am obliged to Father Director for having introduced the holy practice of a day of preparation for death, and I hope to introduce it in all the Retreats.³⁶¹ So in good time let them send me the method, etc. I am sending you the copy of the Rite approved for vestitions and professions. In the last post I informed you of the postulants from Orvieto as well as the two candidates who are coming from Piedmont. I sent along the letter from Canon Randone. I trust you received everything.

Sister Cherubina wrote a strong petition for the foundation on Elba. She sent it to the princess and a copy to me. Now I am invoking the Holy Spirit to give me abundant light to announce to this holy community the true joy of the coming holy feast.

"I announce to you great joy because soon our salvation will come."³⁶² Behold, the poor sinner Paul at the feet of the community of the holy Retreat of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy, with his face in the dust, humbly asks pardon of all his dear brothers for evil example given, and which he does not stop giving, with his tepid life, full of vices. He asks that out of their pure charity they beg the infinite mercy of God to pardon his grave sins, evil example, lack of observance, and tepidity, as he takes confidence in Jesus Christ as their poor and useless servant to announce the true happiness and joy and peace for the coming Solemn Birth.

Do I not have reasons, dear ones, to announce this true joy and peace since even I, in unfeigned truth, am such a great sinner and have a greater reason to be joyous in this great solemnity, for the sweet Infant Savior has invited me with so much heartfelt love to his forgiveness?

Rejoice then, O dearest and most beloved brothers in Jesus Christ, "and putting off the old man with his acts, be clothed with our Lord Jesus Christ." And since the gentle Jesus is born at our commemoration of this sweet solemnity, let us become children with him, hiding ourselves more and more in nothingness, humble, simple as babes, with exact obedience, openness, clarity of conscience, love for holy poverty, a great love of suffering, and, above everything, a childlike simplicity in the exact observance of the holy Rules and Constitutions and without daring to interpret them with a gloss or in any other way since "narrow is the way that leads to life." Allowing ourselves to be governed and controlled by our superiors, whom the good God has placed to govern and direct this poor Congregation, we will be true

360. The maid of Maria Johanna Venturi Grazi.

361. This was a day of retreat dedicated to a particular examination of conscience, meditating on death and the justice that follows it. Paul had prescribed for the Passionist nuns that "at the end of every month all make a retreat in order to think about and receive a truly good and holy death, making a particular scrutiny of their consciences, and have a conference with the confessor (*Regole Costituzioni*, Prima Parte, n. 218).

362. From the Christmas liturgy.

imitators of the gentle Infant Jesus, who allowed himself to be abandoned to the care of his Divine, Purest, Holiest, and Immaculate Mother Mary.

With these beautiful and holy virtues you will dispose yourselves to be admitted into that sacred stable, and there with holy and inflamed affections warm the Divine Infant, who trembles in the cold in order to light the flame of holy love in our breasts. Ah, dearest ones! meditate with attention on this great mystery, reflecting on the lack of comfort, the cold, the poverty of the place, the lack of all things needful in which Jesus, Mary, and Saint Joseph find themselves. And I hope in God that you will be inflamed with strong resolutions to reach greater sanctity by being true imitators of Jesus, of Mary Most Holy, and of Joseph.

But remember that true sanctity does not come without pains and tribulations, within and without, battles with visible and invisible enemies, pain in body and spirit, desolations, and long aridities. For "all who wish to live piously in Christ will suffer persecution." By the words "will suffer persecution" is meant every sort of trial by devils and by men and from our own rebellious flesh.

Courage, dearest ones! Remember that "as he walked, so we must walk." It is necessary to serve God not because of consolations, but because he deserves to be served. And His Divine Majesty is accustomed to deprive his servants of consolations for a time so that they will learn to serve him out of pure love and in order to make his great servants most faithful.

At the greater solemnities His Divine Majesty deprives even his great servants of spiritual consolation in order to make a great proof of their faith and their fidelity. Therefore, "lift up your hearts" to serve "with a great heart and willing soul" our great God and Savior Jesus Christ in purest faith and love. Amen.

Now I come to embrace in spirit all of you in Jesus Christ. First, I embrace and wish feast greetings with the peace of Jesus Christ to the Very Reverend Father Rector and all the reverend priests, clerics, and lay brothers in vows, his dear children. Peace be with them and let them pray for me, so unworthy.

I embrace and wish feast-day greetings with the holy peace of Jesus Christ to the Very Reverend Father Director, along with his dear novice sons. May a holy peace be with them, and I ask them to recommend me much to God for the need is great.

On this holy Christmas night I will celebrate the Divine Mysteries for all our poor Congregation, and I will place the hearts of the professed and novices in the sacred hands of the gentle Infant so that he may enliven them, strengthen them, inflame them, and sanctify them to do great things for the glory of God. I will pray Mary Most Holy to nourish them with the precious liqueur of her pure milk. Amen.

I wish that, in the procession on this holy night with the Infant and the devout pastoral songs, all the religious have a candle in hand, for last year it was dark in the monastery and it made a poor appearance. So let all, all have at least a candle stub so that the ceremony may be more devout. And take care that the singing be practiced well for greater devotion.

I end, embracing you in the Heart of Jesus. I ask you to take care and to greet all the missionaries for me. I expect them today or tomorrow. I am doing better. Thanks be to God

You will be able to have the charity to have the paragraph on feast greetings read at the end of the Chapter on the Friday before the vigil.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

471

Felix Anthony Sbarra (9)

December 19, 1746

J.M.J.

On the part of all the religious, Paul of the Cross thanks you with feelings of sincere gratitude for the courteous and devoted charity you deign to continue to them and longs for the moment to embrace you tomorrow at this holy Retreat in devout conversation — with all of us sharing in your charitable alms. With full esteem and profound respect I reaffirm myself your true servant.

472

Thomas Fossi (17)

J.C.P.

My Dearly Beloved Thomas,

In the ordinary post, last night I received your welcome letter containing a letter from your daughter. I do not know what to say to you in reply, except that you be more faithful to God and exact in satisfying the duties of your state by being careful and vigilant over the household concerns.

Certainly one encounters great rocks in the world, but it is most certain that no one crashes on them who fears God, who with profound humility of heart and diffidence about self, who with great confidence in God, flees the occasions of offending the Divine Goodness and always fears self and never trusts self.

To remain fixed in prayer with a devout posture is an act of religion very pleasing to God, especially when the faithful soul perseveres in prayer in the midst of aridity. That is profitable. It is true one must guard against spiritual idleness, and there is need to strive to remain in prayer with a lively faith in a loving attention to God, sweetly repeating acts, especially of resignation, accompanied by holy affections toward the sufferings of Jesus Christ. "My just one will remain in his justice like the sun." A saying close to holy Scripture which escapes me.

I am overburdened with letters and concerned with not a few duties. For the present, I do not recall that I need to say more to you beyond asking you

to be prudent in speaking to any women at all, and not at all with fanatics
Leave the bother of them to their directors. Believe me, this is a weighty bit of
advice.

I do not use the title of "son," not even with my religious. For what am I?
The useless servant of all. The title of "father" belongs to the elders, the true
servants of the Most High. I am not such, quite the contrary. From those elders
I referred to, you can receive the title of "son," not from me, a miserable
product of hell.

I greet all your holy household in Jesus Christ, whom I remember, and will
remember, in my frozen prayers in testimony of my great obligations, which
I acknowledge to you in the Lord. I am from my heart,

Your obligated, affectionate servant,

P. of the †

MISSIONS AND FIRST GENERAL CHAPTER (1747)

According to Zoffoli, Paul had not given a mission since October 1744, due to his prolonged illnesses and his work to seek approval of the Rule. Now in mid-January 1747, he conducts a mission at Orte and preaches to the nuns there. From Orte he writes the first letter of this new year and mentions that he will be going to Gallese on the sixteenth. Later in May he gives a mission at Vignanello.

This year will see the holding of the first General Chapter in April, and the beginnings of a foundation south of Rome, near Ceccano. There are new vocations and professions of vows. 1747 is a good year for Paul and the Congregation.

Paul closed the year at Soriano. Perhaps the letter written from the Presentation on November 21 (Feast of the Presentation) should not be assigned to 1747, for on November 25 he was at Saint Eutizio. There are several letters to Father Fulgentius in which Paul wrote of professions and of new candidates vested in the habit. Note the figures of "fire" and "flame" used in the December letters. He writes: "Jesus wishes to light a great fire in Rome so that it may spread and be clear to everyone" (December 1, 9, 16). On December 19 he prays that we take our hearts and "thrust them in the furnace of the sweet Heart of Jesus... Oh, what a fire burns in the stable of Bethlehem!"

He wrote to Bishop Borgia and to Father Thomas Mary and others. Paul made a fast trip to Rome to see the Church of Saint Thomas in Formis. He celebrated Christmas at Soriano and then prepared for the journey to Ceccano and the foundation at the Abbey of Corniano.

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Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (21)

Orte

January 13, 1747

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Fulgentius,

I am writing you in great haste because of the business in this convent. In brief I tell you to rejoice in the cross of Jesus, and, as I hold for certain with liveliest faith in God that your sickness will not bring any damage to anyone, so you also hold that for certain. Nonetheless, even for the peace of the others, you should continue your position as rector and guide yourself as I wrote before coming to Orte, but have the heavier and more demanding business taken care of by Father Luke Anthony.

Hold the necessary conferences quickly in the large room with the fire, and for the rest, follow my instructions. When this cold weather is over, at least in March, you will go to Soriano, where there is a supply of milk and all else for

your care. I have great confidence in God that you will come back to a condition which will allow you to serve our poor Congregation for a long time. Continue with the advice in my last letter; take broth as I instructed you.

Fear nothing. Your sickness has brought no harm, and it will not do so. I have been sick for three of four years, and, if the doctor speaks of consumption, I cannot believe it. In any case, as an example and for the consolation of the others, continue as rector with caution.

I cannot write more. It is with fatigue that I have robbed this little bit of time. Read this letter to Father Luke Anthony and Father Director, but you, too, follow the rules of holy prudence and the cautions written for you.

Monday I am going to Gallese; write me there by post and address it: Rome Utricoli for Gallese. I embrace you in Jesus and I greet everyone. Goodbye. Alleluia! Stay happy and fear not ... pray for us. Father John Baptist greets you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Adeodato Lippici³⁶³

San Angelo
February 18, 1747

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dear Sir,

The charitable affection of piety, with which you accepted me when I had the honor to be in your home and ask your cooperation in obtaining an orchard for the Retreat at Soriano, gives me the courage to bother you with my humble requests for the above purpose, assuring you that, in addition to the great merit you will have with the Most High, all your poor, newly born Congregation will be forever thankful with prayers to His Divine Majesty and with holy sacrifices. Undertake this holy work with your caring zeal and give it all your enthusiasm so that, as far as Rome is concerned, there also will be a prompt agreement in this matter.

All this promotes the Passion of Jesus Christ and makes sure that your merits will be superabundant, and all your household will draw down the fullness of divine blessings.

I am writing in haste for the bearer wishes to leave. I am aware how much your good heart is attached to the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, which has benefitted from your good heart. I also know how much you exert yourself to obtain this small garden so necessary for this poor Retreat. I end, offering you my humble reverence and placing you in the holy Side of Jesus. With all esteem I proclaim that I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

363. Lippici is a dedicated benefactor of the community of Soriano.

Presentation
March 7, 1747

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of Discalced Clerics of the Passion of
Jesus Christ:

Whereas, very soon the three-year period³⁶⁵ will have passed, after which, according to our Constitutions, it will be useful neither for us nor for the Congregation to defer the General Chapter, so that we can satisfy the obligation of our office as quickly as possible, it has pleased us to inform you that we desire to hold the Chapter from April 10 in this year 1747 at our principal Retreat at Orbetello, and to give you notice, as is necessary, and all your religious family, as a matter of fact. We are doing that by means of these letters.

Therefore, it will be your duty to be present on the day assigned and bring with you the status of your Retreat, that is, an inventory not only of the utensils used for divine worship, but also of all the materials in the Retreat for the use and sustenance of the religious, and, further more, an account of the alms received, the expenses incurred and what remains of the alms in the care of the syndic.

Furthermore, from the seventh of that month until the tenth, there will be exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and five Our Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's in honor of the Five Wounds of the Lord, in accord with the accustomed rite. In the morning after Tierce, before leaving the choir, recite three Our Father's, Hail Mary's, and Glory Be's to honor the Holy Trinity. After None recite three Our Father's, Hail Mary's, Glory Be's in honor of the three hours our Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross. After Vespers they will recite the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After Compline recite three Our Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's to honor the abundant tears shed by the Virgin while she stood before the cross.

All these prayers are to be recited until the sixteenth of the month. During this time we recommend warmly to all our brothers to pour forth special prayers to our Lord and the Blessed Virgin so that by an abundance of the grace of the Holy Spirit we may obtain the necessary light for a work so important for the well-being of all the Congregation.

[The Latin text of the above letter can be found in Volume V, pp. 251-251.]

364. Paul announces the first General Chapter to be held at Orbetello on April 10, 1747.

365. The election held by the three communities in existence in 1744.

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (1)³⁶⁶

Presentation
March 15, 1747

For whatever time God wills I bow my head in obedience to you with regard to the direction of Sister Colomba Gertrude. I have answered her in the last post with a willing heart and gave her many salutary warnings. I do not know whether she received it. As I wrote her, I advised her that I am conferring with you, as I am sure that will be very helpful.

I spoke to Canon Citurini and the curate of Saint James, the one with gout, a true servant of God, on the approach to be taken for the secure foundation of this Retreat. They said we should go through Rome with a petition to His Holiness on the part of the whole city so that he supply with his apostolic authority for the want of consent from the Mendicants. This should be done with warmth and zeal, explaining the spiritual needs of this city and countryside, the missions we had here, the good results, and the fact that this foundation does no harm to the Mendicants, etc., If this, I say, is done with zeal and fervor, I would expect a good outcome, etc. I ask you then to join with them to see it to a conclusion.

I am writing in great haste, for I am loaded down with many letters as usual and many other affairs. I recommend myself to you prayers, and with profound respect I proclaim I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Canon John Baptist Randone (2)

Presentation
March 16, 1747

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

I hope in God that you and the count, our beloved benefactor, will have received my letters. In my last letters to you, I was apologizing to you regarding the disposition of some good young men, for in my judgment, since the novitiate was overcrowded, there was no place for them. Now I would reverently inform you that on my arrival in the holy Retreat, that is, a few days later, we had the profession of some novices, among whom was Father Stephen Di Bra, Confrater Joseph of Pacapaglia, and others, for three of these four months of novitiate were dispensed by an apostolic bull; and all had a good outcome. So, too, for the recent arrivals from there, whom I vested some days ago, and I expect much good from them.

So if you wish to send the three young men you mentioned to me, along with the one recommended by the marchioness, you may send them as soon as possible, and the more quickly they come, the better. I would like this to

366. Pagliaricci is the vicar general of Toscanella.

happen around April 15 or a little later. In that way they will find the air better and fresher.

Now that Savona is free, they will be able to embark at that port and disembark either at the port of San Stefano or Portercole, nearby this Retreat, except Talamone, which is ten miles distant. I leave you the freedom to decide. I mention this for their less inconvenience so that they may easily have a safe trip. Above all, I recommend to your zeal that they be well mannered, pleasant appearance, modest, calm and not melancholic; the last, I maintain, never work out well.

They should have necessary papers, that is, baptism and confirmation records, testimony of an upright life, of single estate, and not wanted by any law court. Concerning studies, they should have progressed at least in rhetoric and handle the Latin language well. More importantly, they should have good manners, be naturally docile, and have a good appearance, modest, and calm — all things which indicate a good natural disposition. I tell you that those who are by nature gloomy, secretive, or hypochondriac never work out in religious life; experience is the best teacher. I have read what the spiritual masters have to say in this regard.

So if we have the combination of these good qualities, you may send them as soon as possible so that they may be vested with the others we are waiting for in a few days from Lucca, Rome, and a priest from Milan.

One of our priests wrote me that a young man from Garessio would work out well, as I wrote you from our Retreats. Yes, regarding his conduct, he is a good servant of God. But since he is stiff by nature, withdrawn, hypochondriac, and weak in intelligence, he proved hard in obeying with regard to eating what was necessary and in other respects. God knows what diligence Father Director uses with his novices, for he is a great servant of God, wise and experienced, but he had no success. He would put on an appearance of obedience, but then allow himself to be drawn into indiscretions and eat so little that I had to break the silence of the refectory to have him eat.

He remained so withdrawn and immovable that there was no way to move him, and God knows we tried. A few days ago we had no small scare, for he gave signs of mental upset. Immediately we worked at remedying the situation with bloodletting and medicine, which he accepted only with great difficulty. And now, thanks be to God, he is better and comes to choir. But we are of the strongest conviction that he cannot last, given his rigidity and weakness of mind. I am sure he suffered from this even in the world.

I assure you that we will do all we can to help him persevere; neither I nor the director will spare ourselves any effort, care, and all charity possible. But I say once again, if things keeping going as they are, it will be necessary to dismiss him forcibly.

In the event that it does happen — and I prefer it does not — I beg you to have the goodness to let me know a home to which I could send him in Genoa or Savona, taking the stagecoach in Turin, so that I might recommend him to some merchant or other correspondent so that he could accompany him to Piedmont.

But in case that God does not will this, it will be necessary to let him go. It will be our care to send him on a good boat, well entrusted and assisted. For the love of God, give me full information so that I may take provision. For the safest path is to let him go; that is what Father Director says as well as the others. I am taking this opportunity to write you so that you may tell me to whose home I should send him in Savona or Genoa.

I repeat, I will do all that is possible to save him, assist him, etc., so that he perseveres. God knows how much I desire that, for he is a very good son, but too full of imaginations. The priest who informed me about him thinks he has a high degree of prayer. But when I questioned him a few days back on my coming here, I am convinced that it is a lively imagination. Father Director says as much.

I have spoken to Father Stephen, also known as Barberi; he has promptly taken care of everything. I am writing in a hurry after Matins. I place myself at the feet of the count and recommend myself much to your holy prayers. I embrace you in Jesus and am from my heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant

Paul of the Cross

Once more I recommend that you reply to the young man from Garessio with an enthusiastic answer, though I do not want to provoke any problems with a disturbance of the Retreat, etc. If he goes there he will be better off because of the air.

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Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (4)

Presentation
March 29, 1747

*May the Passion of Jesus
be always in our hearts.*

In this post I received your letter, but I understand only a little of it; it gave me more trouble than reading ten other letters. I say this because there are syllables missing and I do not catch the meaning. So I am asking you to take care to write clearly so that I may well understand. However, I have understood this time by careful study.

I tell you, as before, that you should be grateful to God, who has so soon introduced you to prayer. Gratitude consists in observing that letter of the alphabet of perfection³⁶⁷ that I gave you. Observe that rule well, for the lights and elevations, however high they may be, if they do not produce profound humility and deep knowledge of one's nothingness, a complete hatred of self, self-contempt, a love of suffering, of obedience, and of internal and external mortification — if they do not produce these effects, either in whole or in part, they are illusions.

367. There was a popular tradition to list rules and suggestions for spiritual formation alphabetically.

Be always on your guard with the simplicity of a child; on your part you must remain buried in your own nothingness, in true nakedness of spirit, and raise yourself only when and to the extent that God wills. In this nothingness of yours, you need pay attention to the touches of love from God, and, when your soul feels drawn, you must run after the divine perfumes. Then, as soon as you can, return to bury yourself in your true nothingness, in true nakedness of spirit. You already know what I am saying. To explain myself the more, you must, with the grace of God, distance your spirit from all created things by holding your will dead in the loving arms of God so that there lives in us only the Holy Will of the Highest Good.

As regard penances, I assign you these: on Monday you will go to the kitchen to wash the plates, but, first, on your knees ask the blessing of the cook. On Tuesday place yourself at the door of the refectory when the nuns enter and ask each one as she enters to pray for this poor, proud sinner, and do this with a rope around your neck. On Wednesday beg culpa in the refectory and kiss the feet of the nuns. Do the same on Friday; and on Saturday go to the kitchen to wash the plates, as I said above.

Regarding the penances with hair shirts, disciplines, and fasts; ask the Mother Abbess and do no more nor no less than she allows. If she denies you, be careful not to answer, but offer it up in silence to God. Guard your feelings, your eyes, your tongue, and your heart. Speak little and carefully with meekness, and be hidden from all. Do not speak of yourself without necessity and be charitable with all.

If you wish to speak with Father Vicar, you may do so, but be quicker to speak to him of your defects than of other things. If you reveal something of your spirit, speak with shame and contempt of yourself, as if one speaks of a jewel sunk in a stinking sewer. Observe this small rule.

I will be leaving after Easter, and, if I will have the time, I will pass by there, but I am not sure. You will not be able to write me until June, for I am occupied with missions. If you wish to write to me after Easter, you can do so. I beg you to pray much for me, as I am in great need, and pray much for our Congregation.

Pluck up your courage and go ahead with your prayer as God leads you. Be faithful in losing yourself often in the great sea of the holy Sufferings of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy. For if you are humble, you will have good fishing. Repose in God with the simplicity of a child and remember to make prayer not in our way, but in the way of the Holy Spirit.

I believe you are sacristan. I very much recommend to you Jesus in Blessed Sacrament. Oh! love that Infinite Good, adore him often, embrace him frequently in spirit and in truth, and give him many caresses. I am in a hurry for it is Wednesday of Holy Week. Jesus bless you. Amen. I would wish that you say nothing about my direction, but walk secretly ahead in God alone.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Passionist Religious (2)

Presentation
April 14, 1747

Paul of the Cross,
General of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of
Jesus Christ.

Greetings to his Brothers and Sons in Christ:

Since it has pleased the Holy Spirit by means of the capitular fathers to elect me, the least and most useless member of the whole Congregation, to the office of General, I write you this present letter, not so much to have you share with me my sorrow over my election, but to implore from your charity a continual and copious support of fervent prayers, for which I have greater need than anyone. By means of such prayers I dare to hope to obtain from the Divine Goodness that superabundant supply of light and grace without which every superior and guard watches in vain.

Whereas, in the recent Chapter the following decrees were enacted, I am confident that each of us will receive them and accept them as the means proposed by God for the happy acquisition of our perfection and our end. Accept them then with exact observance for the regulation of the time for the exercises, a time that is the most precious in the world, passed over by so many as if in every instant we could not acquire treasures of spiritual wealth and new degrees of glory. Each should hold for certain that, if they accept with holy simplicity and embrace with a good heart the observance of these regulations and decrees, which are only a mere explanation or support for the holy Rules, then he will walk faithfully in his way and his foot will not slip on the way to highest perfection in which everyone walks who, clothed in this habit, fights under the sorrowful sign of the Passion and Cross of the Lord, which I am bound to procure as far as possible and desire with highest affection for all. Let it be. Let it be. Especially in virtue of that blessing which is rich with bountiful helps, I pray for them with keenest feeling from the Crucified Lord in the power and name of whom I impart this blessing to all. Amen. Amen.

Paul of the Cross, General

Francis Anthony of the Crucified, Secretary

May 8, 1747

J.C.P.

Esteemed Signora,

In reply to your letter, received last evening, I am telling you in the name of the Lord that the whole heap of evil thoughts which are coming into your head, even by work of the devil, are not doing you any harm whatever because you do not want them and are not consenting to them. So just protest often to God that you would rather die than offend him and continue to despise these fantasies and continue to confess yourself as I advised you: "Father, I have had a lot of evil thoughts of all kinds. Thanks to the Lord, I do not know that I have given consent. If I have been negligent in driving them away immediately, I accuse myself of that." Do not pursue the matter further. You are not even obliged to make your confession in the manner I have set out, for you neither wish nor commit the least sin. You even acquire merit through the pain you suffer and the victory you win. Be very quiet, Lady Girolama, be at peace on my account and do not be scrupulous.

The principal point is what you tell me you have been told about a practice of a certain spinster in the house. Oh! here for sure, Lady Girolama, you need be all eyes to observe and inform yourself so that things come to clear light. And once they are clear, if the person can be sent away, send her to her home. I am in a hurry. Greet your brother Dominic, and I ask that he keep recollected, modest, and withdrawn in God. Greet the canon and all the household. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, whence I pray every copious blessing for you.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

368. Girolama Ercolani was the wife of Doctor Dominic Anthony Ercolani of Civita Castellana. The couple had a daughter who became a Carmelite in Vetralla. They were great benefactors of the Congregation. There are fifty-one letters written to Girolama up to February 11, 1774, one year before Paul's death. Unfortunately she was very scrupulous, as this first letter indicates. Paul never succeeded in helping her completely free herself from this struggle.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (1)³⁶⁹

San Angelo
June 20, 1747

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Your Excellency,

From both the clergy and the public of Ceccano, I have received the news to my great edification of the fervent pastoral zeal with which Your Excellency has seen fit to grant your consent for the Abbey of Corniano so that a Retreat of the Congregation of Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ be founded there. Since this is work worthy of your caring heart, I have the liveliest faith in God that time will show us how profitable it will be for all the people. There is no doubt whatever that Your Excellency will pursue this project with your best efforts for the greater glory of God and the spiritual profit of your beloved flock, for people nearby and far off.

I ought not omit giving Your Excellency a brief account of our newly born Institute, which has for its primary end the promotion in the hearts of the faithful the devout memory of the Passion of Jesus, both on missions as well as in other exercises, in accord with the Rules. We take a fourth vow in that regard.

We can establish only one Retreat in a diocese, and it must be in a solitary place, as best that can be managed, so that the workers, exhausted by their apostolic labors, will have opportunity to rest their spirit at the feet of the Crucified, away from the noise of the world.

We are obliged, even by vow, to obey the bishop of the diocese when he requests missions, retreats for his clergy, seculars, nuns, etc. We have no property, personal or communitarian, but live in strict poverty on the alms of the faithful. Our life is penitential, but prudent, as I hope to inform you personally when I will have the happiness to be at your feet.

When the weather cools, if that suits Your Excellency, Father Thomas, a most zealous, well-known missionary, will come with a companion to conduct, if Your Excellency so desires, a holy mission in Ceccano. Afterwards, I will come with the religious for the solemn establishment, granted that, God willing, all the difficulties will be eliminated.

The deputies of the people of Ceccano, namely, the archpriest and Very Reverend Pompey Angeletti, will give you a full account of my humble feelings toward Your Excellency with regard to the foundation. Right now, because of the many duties pressing on me, I cannot prolong this letter as well as add to your suffering. I end up at your feet and ask your holy prayers and

369. The correspondence with the bishop of Ferentino was preserved in the library of Velletri and found in 1937. There are sixty letters written to the bishop from 1747 to 1753. The "Badia" or "Abbey" had centuries earlier been occupied by the Benedictines from nearby Mount Cassino. This letters and many of the others following are concerned with problems connected with the acceptance of the foundation at the "Abbey of Corniano."

blessing, and I assure you I will be grateful until death. With profound reverence I kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral gown and declare myself,
Your devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross, Discalced Cleric of the Passion of Jesus Christ

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Girolama Ercolani (2)

San Angelo
July 1, 1747

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in your heart.*

Dear Signora,

I received your esteemed letter in which I note your agitation over scruples. If you had constantly accepted my advice, you would be free by now. I extended myself to tell you to confess this whole heap of thoughts, suspicions, etc., by saying: "Father, I accuse myself of many thoughts that came to me, suspicions, etc., regarding different persons, but by the grace of God it seems to me that I did not consent. But if I was negligent in banishing them, I accuse myself of that." And nothing more.

I told you this to satisfy you a bit, at least at the outset. But now I am telling you not to confess these things at all, for, thanks be to God, you are not consenting; so you are not to be confessing them anymore, unless you can swear you have consented, and with God's help that will never be. You are losing time, you are losing peace. While you pay attention to these miserable scruples, you do not have time to be thinking holy thoughts about God and the mysteries of our redemption. Share my letter with Father Angelo; I am very happy that you are being directed by him. If he does not approve, do not follow my advice, but conduct yourself as he tells you. I am writing in haste. Greet the doctor and the canon for me and all the household, whom I regard with admiration in the holy Wounds of Jesus, where I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

483

Thomas Fossi (18)

San Angelo
July 12, 1747

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dearly Beloved Thomas, My Son in Jesus Crucified,

I received your desired letter, dated June 10. I rejoice over the honorable sentiments our good God is giving you. You did very well in not venturing into the direction of souls; be careful to stay that way. Direction is not for you. Help souls with your good example, your prayers; with holy advice and correction, help those who stray when you see there is need of that and you

can plainly see the evil. Above all, provide a holy milk of education for your good daughters. At this age you cannot obtain much, especially with regard to holy prayer.

Have no doubt that the holy seed of education, of the divine word, will bring great fruit since His Divine Majesty has given great strength and efficacy to the holy words spoken by parents to their children. Continue then and act in such a way that you win them over with kindness; speak to them of the Sufferings of Jesus, of the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy, of the lives of the saints, of death, of hell, of the nastiness of sin. But do this with simple, children's words, I will put it that way, and briefly. Teach them to make acts of love for God, have them often kiss the crucifix, and urge them to great devotion to Mary Most Holy, to their guardian angels, etc.

Teach them how to place themselves in bed, that is, with their arms crossed over their breasts. Provide them with a crucifix so that they can hold it night and day, and do not allow them to be with other young boys and girls of the neighborhood, for the world is so heaped up with evil and malice. Be very jealous about this and recommend it to your wife, whom you should encourage and animate to serve God and carry her cross. You know by experience that she is an excellent woman and God-fearing.

My dear Thomas, believe me that God loves you much. Be faithful to that good God and live abandoned as a child in his loving arms. Be alone in the interior of your spirit. Often remember that our soul is the temple of the Living God. Keep that noble temple well decorated with virtue, as the occasion offers; keep the lamps of faith, hope, and charity lit in this temple. Carry on your heart a corsage of the pains of Jesus, and love this great God in grand style and with true humility of heart. "He who has begun this work will complete it." Do not be concerned about the future; attend to the duties of your state.

The affairs of the Congregation are going well, but the devil does not sleep. Two Retreats should be established, but the enemy is doing his work. Recommend them to God. I do not advise you to make the trip you mention to me, for that is not for you for reasons I pass over for the sake of brevity. I thank you for the charity you continue towards me; may God reward you. I embrace you in Jesus and am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Julian Sparziani (1)³⁷⁰

San Angelo
July 14, 1747

J.C.P.

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

Dear Sir,

I cannot express with my pen the great consolation and edification given me by your esteemed letter. Thanks be to God.

I am reading of the fine beginning made for the foundation of the new Retreat, and I have no doubt that the devil must make every effort to block it since he is aware of the great damage that will come to him because of it. But we will sing together: thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (2)

San Angelo
July 22, 1747

Your Excellency,

Thanks to the Supreme Giver of every good, I received this morning your esteemed letter, while I am still apprehensive about the loss of my letters sent a few mailings ago. God be blessed.

From Signore Cajetan Giannini I have heard more than once, both in writing and in person, of the fervent zeal that is yours in all that concerns the greater glory of God and the advantage of souls in the pastoral care entrusted to you. And most recently, that is, a few mailings ago, when I wrote to you, I was assured of this by the gentlemen of Ceccano, who informed me of the piety and zeal with which you have given your permission for the foundation of our Retreat at the Abbey of Corniano, a work worthy of your pious heart, and for which I, and all our poor Congregation, will remain always grateful before the Highest Good in our poor prayers and holy sacrifices.

I am obliged, however, to inform you that we cannot accept the garden and fountain near the Retreat of the Abbey, including the other property connected therewith, because a permanent source of income is forbidden us, as is clearly expressed by our vow of rigorous poverty, with which we are more and more happy. Hence, it will be sufficient for the gentlemen of Ceccano to give the proper compensation for the exchange to the episcopal treasury for the garden, etc.

With regard to the servants of the abbey, I should let you know that we cannot allow any houses of seculars in the vicinity of the Retreat, much less

370. This letter was sent to Ceccano.

on the same property. If this cannot be done, patience will be needed and thought taken for another likely spot in another section of the diocese, as that may please you.

You may take this up in a meeting with Father Thomas when, please God, he arrives there. I would gladly send the Rules and Constitutions, if it were a question of a few pages. But since it consists of forty chapters inserted in the apostolic brief, granted April 28, 1746, it cannot be done. But when Father Thomas comes, unless something contrary occurs, around the middle of November or November 20 at the latest, he will bring with him the Rules and Constitutions and present them to you so that you will be informed to your complete satisfaction.

Meantime, I am not failing to inform you, as I already did in my other letter, that the primary end of our poor Congregation is to promote in the hearts of the faithful the devotion to the Holy Sufferings of Jesus Christ; and we take a fourth vow to that effect. This is accomplished on missions, catechetical instructions, retreats, and other preaching. All this is expressed in the Rules. We live without income in true poverty. Within the Retreat we have lenten food; those that are far from the sea serve eggs and milk products on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. We rise in the night to recite the divine praises, then there is mental prayer, and again at Prime and Compline. All the hours of the day are well distributed. There is a fitting time for recreation, study, etc. On journeys as well as on missions we eat what is placed before us. We sleep on straw ticks, with exception for the sick. Everything is done with prudence, as was looked into by the committee of cardinals chosen by His Holiness for that purpose. His Holiness read our Rules. The Retreats are established in solitude so that the workers, exhausted from the apostolic labors, can give themselves to holy prayer and recollection, apart from the noise of the world, in order to render themselves more fit to help souls. It is true that when the Retreats are solidly established, it is the task of the rector to send a member on a feast day to the nearby places to conduct catechisms, preaching, or other services, according to our Institute, always, however, promoting the devotion to the Passion of Jesus in accord with the Rules.

So now I once more bring my petitions to your feet, that you would deign for the pure love of God to set your hand to our foundation, when it can be done, as stated above, that is, with garden and spring, and perhaps a small field in the garden for a donkey to take care of the needs of the Retreat. Above all, there cannot be any farm hands living there; that would make it unacceptable. If then it is necessary that there be farm workers at the abbey, I ask you in your great goodness to write the gentlemen of Ceccano so that they do not take further steps at Rome without profit.

Pardon me, for the love of God, for I have written this in great haste because of the many letters I have to write and for the necessary speeding up of the work of the foundation of a Retreat at Toscanella, which will take place in November, thanks be to God, seeing that all the difficulties, enumerated by the bishop of Viterbo a short while ago, have been overcome.

So who knows how many things I will have written beyond my ordinary quota of mistakes because of my great ignorance. For that I beg your pardon. Father Thomas will take up the business of the foundation around the middle of November. Otherwise, we would have to start again from the beginning since I must assist in another affair for the glory of God. I rest at your feet and ask your holy prayers and your pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I declare myself,

Your humble, devoted, dutiful servant,

Paul of the Cross, Discalced Cleric of the Passion

486

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (2)

San Angelo
August 1, 1747

J.M.J.

Most Reverend Father,

Thanks to the great Father of Mercies, I received your esteemed letter last night. Would that I could have taken you with further steps in my last letter for the happy outcome of the work, and that I would not have to add to you another burden now. Since I have observed things from afar by writing to Canon Citurini, who has answered me with very prudent words, which must come from his good will, but in substance they are but paper, and in these things, for the great service of God, we have no need of fine words of good desires on paper, but efficacious action, fervor, and great courage.

I have written Signore Tozzi, but he has not honored me with a reply. I am not surprised, for the same thing happened once before. I believe he is taken up with his own business. I do not want to think he no longer wishes to interest himself in our affairs, although I have reason to think so. Accordingly, I will wait for cool weather to remedy matters. We have need of a person of great zeal, maturity, charity, and prudence; and that would mean someone of mature age. I say this in secret to your heart since now it is necessary to keep a profound and prudent silence.

I believe beyond doubt that our good God wishes to make use of Your Reverence for this holy work, at least to take up the beginnings and to bring it to perfection with the grace of Jesus Christ. With regard to finding a secular who will act as syndic for us, we will talk together. For now there is need to go ahead in silence and suffering. Right now, when we are on the verge of bringing the work to perfection, I know clearly that these gentlemen are very indifferent. How do I know that? From seeing that they do not write me a line to let me know how to conduct myself. Do I dare write them, since I see they are not pleased because they do not condescend to write me when I write them as to where the business stands. So what am I to do? That they do not reply is of little concern to me personally. I am even glad over that, for I know I do not merit that. But how am I to act if I have no one there who says a word to me?

These gentlemen think they have done everything with the procuring of the *motu proprio*, but this is only a start. For even with the *motu proprio*, if they do not fulfill what they promised me several times in person, the foundation comes to nothing.³⁷¹

In the agreement for taking possession, there are items contrary to our Rules, which I have understood to be not in the contract. And what would be more contrary to our Rule than to lack the place to observe it? I will explain. There it will be necessary for our religious to all sleep in the same room, while the Rule prescribes that each religious shall have his own cell to attend to his exercises, to silence, and to recollection. These are essential points of the Rule. The holy Rules state that there will be a room for study; there is none there. The holy Rules demand offices well set up, such as kitchen, dispensary, refectory and others; there are none of these. There is not even a place for the least necessities. So what is to be done? These gentlemen have promised several times in person that they would erect the building. I thought they should have begun to make preparations; but nothing whatever is being done. So what shall we do? Words alone do not accomplish holy deeds. Here the building is finished; at Soriano it is almost complete. At Ceccano all the people obligated themselves under contract to quickly put up the building. They have not even seen me. Do they think to get by with only words and desires over there?

I am prepared in every way to found the Retreat and provide those religious who are able to put up with sleeping all in one room. Patience! They will put up with great inconveniences. Patience! All will be borne out of love of Jesus Christ. That can be endured for a few months, that is, until the middle of June. And already I hear the protests saying they want to observe the holy Rules and have a cell to oneself, etc., for the sake of silence and recollection. I am telling the religious they can be sure that the building will be erected, and that they will be in such a Retreat only until the middle of June, so as not to smother and poison one's blood by all remaining in one room where the wind comes in from every direction. And once the Retreat is built, you will remain there forever without ever leaving the Retreat, having a lively faith in the protection of Mary Most Holy. In this all concur, for they are building the Retreat with as small an outlay as possible.

With regard to the coming foundation, they should bring eight or ten ticks of good hempen cloth, quilts with mattresses — all out of good cloth, close woven, so that the straw will not stick through when we sleep in our habits. The ticks should be eight palms long, four wide; sixteen pillows of the same cloth, three palms long; ten sheets of good linen, eleven palms long, eight wide or a little more. Since the religious do not use two sheets, they can buy only twenty and provide two for each religious. These can be bought at the fair of Saint Matthew. Utensils for the kitchen are needed. I am giving them reasons so it may be known what is needed from the outset. I sent the note to Signore

371. *Motu proprio* means that the pope does something on his own initiative rather than through a sacred congregation or commission.

Tozzi this year so that he could show it to the deputies. I wrote that body, but they have not answered me a line.

If you think it better to remain silent until the cool weather, do that. But the foundation will be delayed that much more. If they had done what I wrote to Canon Citurini, believe me, they would have been working according to God, and that is what they ought to have done. If you think it well, share my thoughts so that they will see that they are not deceiving me.

This is the last letter that I am writing this summer about this affair, for I do not want to forge ahead with force of arms, as they say. I have done my part; I want to leave the care to God.

I put that clause into the contract for holy reasons that God is aware of. I do it for every foundation, but there it should serve them as a stimulus to put up the building and to think seriously that to put the religious in such narrow straits, the foul air alone could do great damage. As for those who say they could stay in the cottage, we could not do that and leave the Blessed Sacrament without religious in the body of the church. That could not be done, as you well know. I see two secular arms painted on each side of the altar. That cannot be allowed to continue, for it is forbidden. I inform you of this so that you may take care of it.

Dearest Father Vicar, out of love for God pardon me and pray much for me so that God may give me perfect resignation to his Holy Will and bless me.

I add, it is necessary that they convene their general council, as I wrote to Canon Citurini, and, if they do not do that, they will find out they have made a mistake. Time will make them know that.

Your obliged, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

487

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (3)

San Angelo
August 10, 1747

Your Excellency,

I would have provided you with the copy of our holy Rules if they had been printed or if we had someone who could copy them in a good hand. We have at present only one copy for each Retreat. I have written to the Retreat of the Presentation on Mount Argentario and asked the novice director to have it copied since they have the apostolic brief in their archive. At the first opportunity they will send it to me. But since they are surrounded by the salt marshes, although the Retreat itself is located in fine air, there will not be many occasions to send it, for right now very few people come this way. Accordingly, would you have the kindness to be patient with us, as we assure you that as soon as possible I will send it by whatever channel you indicate to me. I am waiting for news of the happy outcome, as I hope, for the new

foundation of our Retreat for the greater glory of God and the spiritual advantage of our poor neighbors.

Meanwhile, I ask for the every greater efficacy of your holy prayers and blessing, and with profound reverence I conclude by kissing the hem of your holy pastoral vestments and sign myself,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

488

John Francis Sancez (5)³⁷²

San Angelo
August 19, 1747

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

Although I am overwhelmed by a stack of letters, I am replying with care to your question about the foundation. The truth is that because of many consequences of great importance, before taking such a step it will be necessary to employ much prayer to obtain clearer light. Now that the step has been taken, what do I have to say? The opinion of Signore Lombardozzi deserves serious consideration and weight because it comes from a priest of such great piety, experience, and more than ordinary knowledge of such things, as he has been in Rome, where he knows how these things are done.

So think hard upon this: to wait for more light is a great gain. It happens many times that we do not fulfill the Will of God, but our own, because we did not begin with much prayer. That is a solid maxim and a weighty one, especially in things like this. I have written all this to meet your request. For the rest, I will not fail to pray His Divine Majesty to reveal what is to his greater glory. I am writing with haste for I have a lot to do. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all your gracious house, and greet them in the Lord. I am with all my heart,

Father John Baptist greets you as well, and I embrace you in Jesus Christ and reverently declare I am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

I would add that as I know there are many Masses waiting to be celebrated at the collegiate church, and as I know they have not been celebrated elsewhere, if there could be an agreeable division, these two Retreats would celebrate them, for they have need of them. Prior Bausani has been informed of this and could cooperate. I ask you to give him my cordial greetings and excuse my reply.

372. It is not certain which foundation Paul is writing about. Nor is it clear to which "two Retreats" he refers in this letter.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (4)

San Angelo
September 2, 1747

Your Excellency,

While fulfilling your venerable commands, I received your letter last night. I would dispatch our missionaries immediately at this time if there were not such an evident danger to their lives. They would be exposed to such a danger by having to sleep in poisonous air. If His Divine Majesty will grant the grace of a good rain, then by the middle of October, Father Thomas and his companion will be at your feet to open the holy missions wherever you will ordain and, likewise, take care of the affairs for the foundation. which are so much desired.

But what can I do to show my gratitude for the great charity done our poor Congregation to the great glory of God and the profit of the people near and far? I could wish to melt away and be consumed in gratitude to the Most High God for such great graces. Since I am the miserable sinner that I am, and my thanks cannot rise to the Divine Presence as an odor of incense, I will offer to the Eternal Father the infinite merits of his Divine Son Jesus Christ, who is our certain Way, Truth, and Life, and I will not cease to exclaim to His Divine Majesty to continually enrich your pious spirit with the fullness of his grace and heavenly gifts by making you a great saint, as I hope, in testimony of the true gratitude which I will always profess.

I have a strong confidence in God that the holy foundation will take place on the Feast of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy, and I will endeavor to obey you by doing it before that of Toscanella, and I hope I will succeed. For this reason I will arrange to leave with the religious in the middle of November so as to be there on time.

I still do not have the copy of the holy Rules, but at the first opportunity they will send them to me, as Father Director tells me. I ask the goodness of Your Excellency to continue your prayers for me, for my need is extreme. I end, telling you that I expect the quartan fever since I have had the symptoms which I have suffered since Saint Bartholemew's Day until now. Thanks be to God. I pay my profound reverence and ask your pastoral blessing and declare myself,

Your humble, respectful, obliged, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

Girolama Ercolani (3)

San Angelo
September 3, 1747

Jesus and Mary be praised.

My Esteemed Signora Girolama,

You are losing great spiritual treasure by never quieting yourself. I accept what you have told me in good part. You wrote to me for advice, and you did well and this is meritorious. Now what scruple do you have over that? For the love of God, get rid of these scruples! You are not obliged to confess anything whatever. You have not committed even a venial sin. The thoughts that come in your head are contrary to your will. The words you spoke were spoken for a good purpose and had a good result, for the advice is holy and worthwhile to guide your action according to God. So now, let go of this scruple on my conscience and do not confess anything because there is no sin whatever. Try to put in practice the advice which has been given you. Get down to your devotion with peace.

I have had a touch of quartan fever and have a headache. I say no more. Be peaceful. God loves you. Continue your good behavior and let go of these scruples as I have told you by voice and in writing. God bless you and make you holy.

Your unworthy servant
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (5)³⁷³

San Angelo
September 16, 1747

Your Excellency,

Father Thomas of the Side of Jesus, alias Struzzieri, is not in Rome. He has not been in that blessed city since he came to the Congregation. Nor are any of our people there. He and his companions would already be with you if they had not been dissuaded by more than one of our Congregation who as seculars lived in these parts, as they insisted on the gravest danger from the evil air. I wish we had previously known of the safe road that you tell me about, for that would have already been taken. On reflecting on the danger from the air that some claim to have experienced, Father Thomas went ahead and has gone to higher territory, not far from this Retreat, to conduct a holy mission. He will close it on the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, and then at the latest,

373. Paul assures the bishop that Father Thomas Struzzieri is not in Rome but giving a mission in a place with good air! Paul shows his great concern about the air, a very serious problem in the salt marshes. He writes several times that he has had a spell of fever. Also in this letter he indicates the first problems the foundation at the "Abbey" will endure from the Mendicants. This will be a problem for several years.

October 1, he will leave immediately and take the road you pointed out. We can hope he will certainly arrive there by October 7 or 8.

For the love of Jesus Christ, may it please you to pardon the delay occasioned by the gentlemen.³⁷⁴ From all this I have no doubt only good will come for the glory of God.

In my first letters written to the gentlemen of Ceccano, I strongly recommended secrecy, for experience has taught me. I have not repeated myself on this regard so as not to offend their prudence and wisdom. It is enough to adore the Divine Will in the outcome. It is certain that the devil will make a great uproar, but all will result in his disgrace and confusion. From the beginning I warned the gentlemen about the permission from the neighboring Mendicants, and it seems to me that I in no way neglected to inform them about everything. But I am very peaceful and am sure that the more a work is meant to result in the greater glory of the Lord and the profit of souls, that much more will it be assaulted.

When Father Thomas will arrive there, I hope that you will lend your hand to the business so that there can be a peaceful possession of the Retreat, and that it will be established in November, as I notified you in my other letter. Otherwise, it will be necessary to wait patiently until the dispute is over.

When I turned over the page, I noticed it was not complete. That happened without my noticing it, and for that reason I beg your goodness to pardon my involuntary error, born of my great stupidity, that cannot be remedied by copying the letter, and because of the weakness of my brain, as I have been writing so much. I ask the mercy of Your Excellency to have a notification of the arrival of our missionaries as soon as possible, and that the delay will not block the copious fruit of the missions.

I end at your feet and ask your pastoral blessing and your holy prayers, and with profound reverence I am,

Your humble, respectful, devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

492

Thomas Fossi (19)³⁷⁵

San Angelo

September 23, 1747

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dearest Thomas, Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

I received your dear letter. I rejoice in the noble sentiments that the good God communicates to you. Remain in the interior kingdom of your spirit. "The Kingdom of God is within you." There adore God in spirit and truth, but

374. The phrase "by the gentleman" is illegible in the Italian original; these are the most probable words used by Paul.

375. Paul offers Thomas advice on abstaining from intercourse for spiritual reasons in accord with the teaching of the Apostle Paul. He firmly clarifies his advice in a later letter on November 25, 1747.

remain in your true nothing, and so you will receive every good from the Lord. "If you separate the precious from the vile, you will be as my mouth." (Jeremiah). That means to separate what is from God and is precious, from what is vile and is us. Everything consists in this, to know how to give to God what is his, and to hold on to our part, which is truly nothing. Here is where the science of the saints is learned: in the Passion of Jesus there is everything.

Endeavor to remain hidden in the holy Wounds of Jesus, for you will be enriched with every good and every true light in order to fly to perfection according to your state. With regard to continence, take advantage of the advice of Saint Paul, who counseled continence for a time in order to be free for prayer, etc. Whence it is within your freedom to exercise such a holy virtue as long as you do not undertake a vow; but maintain your freedom. I do not recall in any way what you claim I said to you in Longone, etc. Sometime you take a contrary understanding, or who said what, or you do not explain yourself well.

Regarding the Retreat, for now we need pass over that in silence, as is proper. The prince, when petitioned by the nuns from Piombino, who presented a petition so that the necessary consent would be given, replied with a rescript in the negative. No one knows the reason. Hence, prudence dictates that silence prevail. If God wills it, he will know how to bring it about. I rejoice in the good convictions of your wife and over the grace of a happy birth. Jesus enrich you with every grace and blessing.

I sign myself to everyone as I do to you. Even with our lay brothers I sign myself as I do to you, for I speak the truth. Recommend me to God, attend to the duties of your state in life with promptness, be recollected, and help your neighbor where you can and as you can, but with rules of discretion and prudence. His Divine Majesty will give you light. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus, where I declare myself to be with a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

493

Girolama Ercolani (4)

San Angelo
September 26, 1747

J.M.J.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering your esteemed letter and am doing it on a small sheet of paper in order not to have to fold. Please do not attribute this to a lack of respect.

As regard to changing your confessor, I do not know what to say to you, except that you are free to make your confession where you please. If God is inspiring you to change for yourself and your children, and on reflection you think that profitable, go ahead and do it. Be careful to approach a wise spiritual

doctor who will give you and your daughters salutary advice in walking in the way of perfection in accord with your state in life.

Let him know that you desire the good upbringing of your daughters and that you are well informed on that. Your young ladies are like precious jewels and need to be seen rarely, as is done with the relics of saints. Prayer, reading of holy books, frequenting the sacraments, along with devout preparation, especially fleeing from idleness, and keeping them always busy at work. Believe me, Girolama, that here is a regimen to make you holy, and your daughters as well.

I ask you to continue the rule to throw off your scruples. I leave you and your good daughters in the gentle Heart of Jesus, whence I ask for you every fullness of blessings, and I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant

Paul of the Cross

494

Dominic Ciaralli (1)³⁷⁶

Soriano

October 3, 1747

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dear Reverend Father,

I received to my spiritual consolation your welcome letter, and I rejoice to learn the effort you are making to cooperate for the greater glory of God by forming soldiers for Jesus Christ. It will be possible to send the designated young men to the Retreat at Mount Argentario, the novitiate house, at the beginning of November. I would prefer that they leave at least by the second so as to be at the novitiate by the sixth or seventh of November, along with the others who should be coming. It seems to me that the young men recommended by our dear Father Cajetan number four and the young Santini would be the fifth.

I would like you to have the charity to meet with Father Anthony Francese, a Pious Worker, who lives at Our Lady of the Mountains, so that he could have a good, learned cleric accompany them. He has already agreed to make the trip with them. As regard to the money for the vestition, you will give it to Father Anthony Benincasa, who lives at Most Holy Conception at Monti as chaplain for that convent. Right now he is in Soriano and will be there in November. Meanwhile, keep the vestition money with you.

Regarding the journey, it would be well for them to go by way of Viterbo, and from Viterbo to Toscanella. I am holding off for another letter to advise them where they should join up in Toscanella and other places so that they can find help, and, if necessary, be accompanied. Meantime, I will write to

376. Paul writes several letters to Father Ciaralli in Rome, who serves as Paul's agent there. He is sending candidates to the Presentation. In the following letter Paul will ask him to report on the condition of the Church of Saint Thomas in Formis, which Cardinal Albani wants to give to the Congregation.

benefactors, etc., so that these good sons may make their holy journey with full assistance. It will be well for them to provide themselves with a complete breviary, small size. These can be obtained at Pasquino for twelve *paoli*.

Let me know as soon as possible if they will be leaving at the beginning of November. And for charity's sake do not fail to speak to Father Anthony Francese, the aforementioned Pious Worker, regarding the designated cleric. For all this you will have great merit before God, and our entire Congregation will be grateful in prayer, etc. I am writing in great haste, for I am just coming from the Retreat of San Angelo and just a few hours ago Father Thomas arrived from his missions — he sends you greetings — and in two days he leaves for Ferentino for the foundation of the Retreat at Ceccano.

Dear Father Dominic, I love you much in God and am much obligated to you. Recommend me to God. I close by embracing you in the holy Side of Jesus and am with all my heart,

Give Father Cajetan my greetings. Address me at: "Viterbo for Vetralla, the Retreat of San Angelo." I will be there shortly. Once more, I say I am,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

495

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (6)

Soriano

October 3, 1747

Your Excellency,

A little while ago, Father Thomas Mary of the Side of Jesus arrived from his holy mission, and after two days of rest he will leave with a companion to open, at this time, the holy mission, in accord with your commands, at the designated places. In the event that he does not have the chance to encounter you there, it will be sufficient, as you deigned to inform me, to obtain the faculties from your vicar general.

I am hoping in the mercy of God for copious fruit and, in addition, am confident that our good God will cause the difficulties with regard to the planned foundation to disappear and be overcome. That should result in great glory for God and benefit to our neighbor, and so it is not to be wondered that the devil arms himself so thoroughly to block it. This would have come sooner, but the rainy season intervened. You will much appreciate the lively desire we have to serve you, all the more since we see your great piety dedicated to this work of God, which you seek with so much zeal to promote, by which God will be greatly glorified and you will be enriched with merits for the great spiritual gain that your beloved sheep will find. I am writing in haste, for I am worn out by my journey. I kneel at your feet, begging your holy

prayers and blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss the hem of your pastoral vestments, and I am always more,

Your humble, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

496

Dominic Ciaralli (2)

San Angelo
October 12, 1747

J.M.J.

Reverend and Dear Father,

In this letter I am not giving you any norms beyond the route for the journey of the designated young novices since I do not know how many they are in all and since I have no account of those Father Cajetan is sending. And since there is no longer reason to risk sleeping in the marshes, we have time to write our benefactors. Meanwhile, there are only two places, that is, Toscanella and Montalto, and the next day a necessary journey to Orbetello, for there is no town in between. So as soon as you let me know that the young men are ready to leave Rome around November 4, or November 5 at the latest, I will then write to the benefactors and advise them as to how to proceed. Meanwhile, let them get together all the requirements as I directed. The complete breviary in the small size costs twelve *paoli*, and there is a contribution of ten *scudi* for vestition, seeing we have incurred a large expense at this time for cloth, etc. Father Thomas Mary and Father Anthony are in Ferentino at this moment.

Dear Father Dominic, you have already shown such charity toward our Congregation and with so much merit. More than any, God knows how much I am obligated to you. I must confide to you a great secret. It is that Cardinal Annibale Albani wishes to give us Saint Thomas in Formis, which is close to the Navicella and Saints John and Paul, as a hospice or a Retreat in Rome for our Congregation. This is an affair that gives me much to think about. Right now we are not doing anything about this, but he wants this, and he can do it since he is archpriest of Saint Peter's, and that church belongs to the Chapter of Saint Peter.³⁷⁷

I do not have a more confidential and secret-keeping friend than you in Rome; so I ask you, out of love for the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, to go as soon as you can to visit that church and look around so as to inform yourself as to the status of the rooms, the garden, the water, good air, and whether it is very solitary. Let me know so that I can guide myself. Ah! do me this charity, for God knows how much pressure I am under. I am writing in haste and with little stationery. I have very little of that. And I am sickly; I had a recurrence

377. The Chapter of Saint Peter was formed by the canons of Saint Peter in Rome. They had extensive powers and privileges.

of quartan fever as soon as I returned from Soriano. Pray for me. I embrace you tightly in the sweet Heart of Jesus and am with all my spirit,

Your affectionate, obligated servant
Paul of the Cross

497

A Religious Sister (2)³⁷⁸

Bieda

November 6, 1747

Where I am for a change of air
for a few day convalescence.

Reverend Mother,

At the height of my sickness I received your letter to which I am replying now that I am taking a breather for my convalescence. I recognize your complaints, and I tell you that you are very wrong to complain, for the office you have was given you by God. So why so many tears? You are rich without knowing it. Jesus loves you much; what are you afraid of? Oh! if you only knew how to put into practice the great secret that I gave you when I was there! How happy you would be! But the fault is entirely yours. I am not now speaking of sin, but I do tell you that you greatly lack true resignation to the Divine Will. Our food ought to be to do the Will of God, for that was the food of Jesus Christ. Now enough! From here on I want you to be quiet and to make complaints neither to God nor to any creature. The reign of God is within you is a truth of faith. Therefore, why not remain in that great kingdom of your soul, which is within you? Whoever does this always is at prayer. Stay at the depth of your spirit in pure faith and holy love; there like a simple infant take in the holy milk of holy love at the divine bosom of the holy love of the Highest Good. To love and suffer in silence, without and within, in pure and holy faith and holy love is to fish for the precious pearl of virtues in the great sea of the holy Life, Passion, and Death of Jesus, our true Life.

In a few months, if I am better, I will come by there on my way for the foundation of our Retreat; then, God willing, I will bring the writing you speak about. Meanwhile, pray much for me, for my needs are great. Pray also for our Congregation, and may Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

Your unworthy, useless servant
Paul of the Cross

378. Paul is resting at Bieda. He had been there earlier for a mission. From there he wrote to Agnes Grazi on May 26, 1742 and to the Valeriani sisters and the prayer group on July 12, 1742. Now he is there convalescing from the illness that apparently was more serious than his earlier letters would suggest.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (7)

San Angelo
November 8, 1747

Your Excellency,

I have thought that at this time you would have already read the Rules and Constitutions, taken faithfully to the letter from the apostolic brief and consigned by me to Father Thomas Mary on his departure recently. But since you were away, he will have kept it with him so as to present it to you after his holy missions. To be safe I have written him in this post that he should meet with you at his first opportunity, and he will do that without fail.

I rejoice that our workers continue their apostolic labors in your beloved diocese. You will be very rich in merits before the Most High for having promoted with so much zeal our foundation. I hope it will be blessed by God. As soon as I have news that things are ready and that the consent of the Frati has been obtained, I will leave for there with the religious for the foundation. Meanwhile, I am recovering a bit with my convalescence in hopes of regaining my strength from the lengthy sickness from a double quartan fever, along with very dangerous complications. Now, thanks be to God, I am continually on the mend. I pray our dear Jesus to make you holier all the time and grant you the copious reward with an abundant rain of heavenly treasure of grace for the great zeal and charity that you continue toward our poor Congregation. I recommend myself to your holy prayers and end by begging your blessing. With profound reverence I sign myself,

Your humble, respectful, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (3)

Presentation
November 21, 1747
Feast of the Presentation

J.M.J.

Reverend Canon,

I am desirous to know if you have received my reply on the business we know about. I sent it by post, but our benefactor in Orbetello, believing he would please me better, put the others in the packet, while the one directed to you he consigned by hand so that the poststillion would take care of it sooner. And God knows how much that disturbed me. It was sealed with Spanish wax, and I gave him the money to deliver it, for that seemed to me more profitable before God.

Out of charity, let me know if you have received it. I ask you to tell the two servants of God that I am not replying at this moment because I cannot. I am writing this note in the hours of sacred silence, after solemn Matins for our feast. I will write later. Let them be quiet because all goes well. I ought to say

something fundamental to Sister Angela R. I wish her to be more quiet and abandoned in God and obedient to the sweet attractions. Tell her that in your charity. And tell Sister Colomba G. to be very quiet and continue her conduct. Pray for me and bless me.

Your unworthy servant
Paul of the Cross

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Thomas Fossi (20)

Soriano
November 25, 1747

J.M.J.

My Dear Beloved Thomas,

I am writing in great haste, for I am convalescing and loaded down with letters and business.

I rejoice over the good news you give me of the lady and of your wife, and I pray the sweet Jesus to give both perseverance. I have not given you the permission you asked. Take a better look at my letter. I told you that Saint Paul counseled the married to be continent for a time by common consent in order to occupy themselves with holy prayer. I also said that with that kind of consent, it is possible to exercise this virtuous practice during Advent, for then there would not be as much danger of incontinence. I said this to go along with your pious desires. But it will never be true that I counseled you to make a decision for perpetual continence. God keep me from that, for the dangers are great. Without the highest light from God and great experience of virtue, it should not be done. I am not referring to any solemnities, but I will never counsel a continuous continence for you. There is youth and prudence to be considered. So guide yourself with holy love as well as discretion and prudence.

You are to continue to do good for the glory of God and pray for me. Believe me, I am robbing this bit of time. Attend to virtue, to prayer, to charity toward your neighbor, and to being recollected and you will live holy lives in accord with your status in life. Jesus enrich you with all blessings and reward the charity which you continue toward our poor Congregation. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (22)

Soriano

November 25, 1747

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

How are you doing? On the cross, for sure? But the cross is covered with immense joys of peace and serenity in the Holy Spirit. But you have not given me any news about your dear self, and I desire that. I have received a letter from Father Vice Rector, which refers to the case we know of. You have all the power, so examine the facts closely, and, if you think it well to take possession of the hospice for our Retreat,³⁷⁹ do so. But send Father Vice Rector and do not exert yourself more than is absolutely necessary. Have him write the letters, and out of love for God, take care of yourself. Take your usual restoratives in the morning and follow your regimen. Do not grieve over the decision regarding your person.³⁸⁰ The Congregation is facing a heavy necessity; what else could have been done? At times my burden seems unbearable and at other times it seems lighter than a feather. God will help us. We wish you a brave spirit.

The concern that God gives me that you stay strong in order to bear the weight imposed by God obliges me to ask you to put into practice the following suggestions.

I understand that in the conferences for the religious and in the exams in the Chapter you are crying out with a loud voice, as if you were on a mission to gentry with mustaches. Father Rector, why do this? I praise your zeal. I know it is born of a lively desire for the observance, but the truth is that our religious are very good. It seems there is no room for such shouting.

I hear from them that you are injuring your chest, and this distracts them so that you do not gain the profit you desire. Others say you make them anxious and make the burden which is so sweet become heavy. They see exhausted faces. Much more is being said by the elders at San Angelo than by me, for I was not there very long.

Believe me, dear Father, that you will do better by not using so much force, but by speaking the word of God sweetly in the exams and Chapters. Otherwise, your chest will burst, and you are already too sick. So proceed with

379. The Retreat of the Presentation was a two-hour walk from Orbetello. There was also a boat to make the passage across the lagoon, which at that time had no actual road. The religious, returning home at night after a mission, did not have the possibility of taking the boat. For this reason they had to end their journey in Orbetello. The Grazi family had set aside rooms to provide hospitality to Passionists caught in this situation. Paul no longer wished to continue this practice of staying with the family and intended to purchase a house to be used for this purpose.

380. In order to organize the student house according to the Regulations approved in 1746, Paul gave the responsibility to Father Mark Aurelius, who had the competence and experience to teach, gained from the Congregation of Doctrine, of which he had been a member. Father Fulgentius was called again to assume the office of director of novices, which office was combined with that of rector of the community.

gentleness, speak with a calm spirit, do not force your chest and I believe you will derive more benefit and profit, and the religious will be happier.

In the conferences with the novices, it is a good idea to use the warm room, so as not to be exposed to the cold in the cell. The vice rector will help with confessions, as I wrote. We had a meeting with Father Mark Aurelius and John Baptist at San Angelo regarding our young men. It was judged necessary to provide them with the food needed for their age and work. The Rules already prescribe complete discretion. So, as is practiced already at San Angelo, it has been decided that on Wednesday and Saturday at noon there will be a small plate of greens as well as a good soup, in addition to fruit, if it is available. You already know, as is practiced by all, that everyone mortifies himself by leaving something.³⁸¹ If the main portion is small and the novices sacrifice part of it, they will end up with practically nothing to eat. Too much ought not be given, for that is detestable; but the right amount is discreet. I saw when I was at the Chapter there that they are doing well, and I hope it continues. Let the legumes be well cooked, never by themselves but with vegetables or something else and not so dry as usual. At night let the collation be provided as, it seems to me, was discussed between Brother Joseph³⁸² and the former director with regard to bread and other things.

Oh, how necessary vigilance is that the young men maintain their strength; otherwise, we are running a hospital and few will persevere. I know you have at heart the prohibition of chains and other penances outside the Rule. I am aware by experience of your charity, prudence, and discretion.

So let things be done as described above: on Wednesday and Saturday, vegetables; on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, a hot plate at night; but in Advent, when there is a daily fast, the hot plate is not served; however, if possible, it may be served at noon. Since this is small, the addition of greens is not important. For the rest, there should be soup and the main course, etc. Do not be surprised that I am extending myself in this way. God urges me, and I say this to maintain the strength of the young men especially, as greater observance and fervor result.

You know the wretch who is carrying the weight, and with conferences with the religious, which it seems I cannot omit, so I am most certain that when the religious, if not all, at least most of them, do not have food in accord with the Rules, with discretion, or in accordance with their needs, great temptations come to them with disgust for the life, sadness, depression, etc., etc. It is true they bear it with silence for they love virtue. It is true they say nothing to the superior in order not to offend him. But the disgust is great, whence comes tepidity of spirit. My silly old age has taught me this from my own experience.

When things are done with holy discretion and a charity that distinguishes between feasts, especially solemn ones, the spirit is relieved, for not all of us

381. All were expected to leave part of the main course for the poor.

382. Brother Joseph Pitruzzello of Saint Mary was born in 1722 and died in 1768; the "former director" is Father Mark Aurelius.

are called to the very peak of perfection. It is necessary to meet the misery of humanity in the best way we can, for our holy Rules do not give the body more than is needful.

The last three or four days I have daily been called in for long meetings with His Eminence.³⁸³ To my joy I am sending you the Italian text of the brief, which His Eminence sent me the day before yesterday. In here you will see what needs to be done for the transfer of the Church of Saint Thomas in Formis, which had been already granted to us.³⁸⁴ I think that when my recovery is over, it will be necessary to escape to Rome to visit, etc. But I will stay only seven or eight days, and I will inform you.

There is need to recommend the affairs to God, have it done with warmth, while the beginnings are so good. I had a letter from Father Thomas³⁸⁵ yesterday. Things could not be going better. A good curate wrote about the great fruit, etc. The Retreat at Ceccano is not yet clear of difficulties, but it will be soon.

I am enclosing the letter from Canon Randone. The candidates are coming. Console the canon with regard to what he asks regarding Filippino.³⁸⁶ I will receive the vestition expenses in Rome from Very Reverend Fresia and will send them there. With regard to the building, you know the straightened circumstances of the Retreat.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, there needs be preparation for the repair of the chapter room and of stones to stabilize the chapel. Do what you can, but measure your strength, etc. You ought to write a letter to Signora Catherine at Ischia,³⁸⁸ asking for the painting, or have her write and state our need. I am waiting for the painter, etc. I am smothered with letters, and God knows I should not be working so hard. However, God helps me. But you should have another write and merely sign the letters.

Greet everyone for me, Father Vice Rector, and all. Let them pray much for me. I embrace you in Jesus. Stay in the inner kingdom in peace and drink the living water, etc. I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

When you wish to vest the novice, I grant you all the faculties.

[On a separate page, the following postscript was found:]

383. Cardinal Annibale Albani.

384. Cardinal Albani was favorable to granting the concession and hoped that Paul, with his religious, would work in the swamps of Ostia, which had been pastorally abandoned. The Chapter of Saint Peter opposed this and wanted to give him the Villa Celimontana.

385. Father Thomas Struzzieri of the Side of Jesus, who was preaching with great fruit in the province of Frosinone to the south of Rome.

386. We do not know who or what this was, but perhaps it refers to someone who was a member of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri.

387. Straightened circumstances are caused by the lack of funds.

388. Ischia of Castro. We do not know who Catherine was. Maybe this is a reference to the painting of Saint Mary Magdalene that she wanted to give for the chapel erected in her honor at the Presentation Retreat, written about in the letter of July 29, 1746.

I discovered the poor novice, Brother Dominic, with a torn mantle and at present I do not know how to remedy that for there is no cloth, for they have sent the cloth to your place by your command. I will try my best. It seems to me that I wrote that they should take care of everyone. There must have been a slipup because it was still warm. I will see to it that some cloth is sent for his mantle, for until now there has been no chance to send it, although the clothing supply remains here.

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Dominic Ciaralli (3)

Soriano

November 28, 1747

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.*

Reverend Father,

The day before yesterday, the two good young men you sent arrived at the holy Retreat. One of them, however, is so little skilled in the Latin language and understands so little. You are aware that our Congregation has need of capable people; for in the Congregation we teach only philosophy and theology. Hence, it is necessary that the candidates be well founded in the Latin language. One of the three took sick on the way and returned directly to Rome. I am aware he did not write to me. Father Thomas wrote me. Accordingly, I am asking you not to send him again, but have him return to his home so that he can study, and then God will provide. If God wishes the deacon to come, he will overcome all the difficulties.

I have sent the two young men with recommendations to the novitiate. They left yesterday. I will reserve the rest to communicate personally on my arrival in Rome, where I will remain three or four days to look over Saint Thomas in Formis and arrange the business. I want everything to be kept secret. We will speak about the other young men you tell me about. Meantime, I thank you for your charity and I pray Jesus to make you a great saint. Recommend me much to God. I end in haste and am always,

Your unworthy, respectful servant,

Paul of the Cross

I hope my arrival in Rome will be around December 12 or 13. I will be staying only three or four days since I must return to our Retreat for Christmas and for the business of the glory of God.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (23)

Soriano

December 2, 1747

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I cannot tell you with my pen how much consolation your dear letter afforded me. I rejoice in the Lord that over there things are going well and in good order. This is a great blessing from God, which, thanks to God, is spread over these two Retreats and which will spread from sea to sea. Oh, what great things God plans! Jesus wishes to light a great fire in Rome so that it may spread and be clear to everyone. I have fresh news regarding the Retreat of Saint Thomas in Formis, and you must believe that the way is prepared for the Lord for those who love him.

The place is fitting and the monastery quite ready. The garden is large and solitary, loaded with fruit and well watered. I hope to go there and see it within in few days. Be advised that I will stay in Rome only five or six days in order to come back to the Retreat for Christmas and in order to have the religious from there go to the foundation at Ceccano, for the settling of difficulties is complete. I will inform you of everything.

Almost every day since I arrived here, I have been called to Soriano for devout conversations with His Eminence.³⁸⁹ Pray and have prayers offered for His Eminence. Our obligations to him are very great.

As for building, the end of this year will not permit that, especially since our resources are limited these days. If Master Angelo³⁹⁰ sees his way to do a bit of work, he could come in February or March; that would be well. Even I see the needs in the chapter room and the common rooms,³⁹¹ these more than the rest. See what can be done. Take a look at our donations and give thought to the cloth we need to clothe the professed and the novices, and the other expenses. Once accounting is taken of a goodly sum, set it aside as reserve for clothing. Do what you can for the work. However, do it in the Lord.

I rejoice in the Lord and bless the great Father of Mercies for the great grace he grants the Congregation by giving you strength and fairly good health to carry your burden. Blessed be God. With the merit of obedience continue your pattern of life and build yourself up. With regard to the conferences in the room, balance, etc. You are doing very well. Thanks be to God and Mary Ever a Virgin. You have Father Maioli³⁹² as assistant director. I regard him highly and have hopes for him. Greet him warmly in the Lord for me.

If you knew how things are, as I write to you, you would be astounded. Yesterday in Soriano, today in the confessional and at the desk with a heap of letters. Patience! Ah, dear Father Rector! I do not know how to express how much I love you in the Lord. Stay in your inner kingdom, drink at the font of

389. Cardinal Annibale Albani.

390. A trusted bricklayer to whom Paul made the expenditure.

391. These were the bathrooms.

392. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin.

life, and become well inebriated. Then your heart will break forth with the good word to set all on fire. As for the vice rector, how is that midget doing? Greet him fondly for me and let him bear his burden gladly and remain in holy inner solitude. Let him step back sometimes when he leaves the refectory to notice that all take their necessary food so that they do not enter in such a dangerous temptation.

I have good news from the Retreat of San Angelo that our young men have begun their studies, that they are brighter in face and are gaining strength. God has me insist on this because if health goes, so does the observance. For that reason I am taking care that sufficient food be provided, in accord with the Rules. If the young men are deprived of that, ruin follows.

Signore Athanasius was here, and we handled affairs as best we could. He was asking a difficult thing, and for me it was impossible and against my position. He left persuaded and happy.³⁹³

I know that over there they made a loan sometime back, and I was aware of that when I was at the Chapter. They were not able to do that, especially without my permission. I believe it will not happen again, and in good time they will recoup it either in wine or grain, etc., and this should be demanded in conscience when that family is not in its present financial need.

With regard to the house left by that lady, let them proceed cautiously, so as not to involve themselves with the vicar general. The will of the donor must be complied with, but, for the love of God, let none of ours put in an appearance in court. The site is excellent for us, in good air and solitary. We need to see that everything proceeds peacefully. I well know your charity, prudence, etc.

Greet everyone in the Lord for me. Pray, pray. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Regarding the building, wait until January is over. It would be better, it seems to me, and, I believe, he would agree that Master Anthony find work in Orbetello or San Stefano in warmer air. Where you are, there is ice, and work cannot be done in ice. I allow you to do what you think best for the glory of God and the good of the Congregation.

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

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Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (8)

Soriano

December 7, 1747

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I am always edified and consoled in seeing the holy zeal that burns in your pious heart for the promotion of the greater glory of God by the spiritual profit

393. Paul seems to be speaking about a loan from the little alms in cash that the Congregation had. Paul prudently does not allow these loans, and also delicately reminds Father Fulgentius because of the need to repay the sum borrowed.

of your beloved sheep with the foundation of the Retreat in the Abbey of Corniano. And I am sighing for the moment to leave with our religious to make that foundation for the glory of Jesus Christ.

If it were possible, I would do so after the Epiphany of the Lord, but I already have another project in hand of not less service to the Highest. This is the foundation of a house in Rome. This comes to us from the kindness of His Holiness: the church, house and garden of Saint Thomas in Formis on Mount Celio. This is promised us by the cardinal of San Clemente in order to establish in due time a perpetual mission in the diocese of Porto, which is a salt marsh almost abandoned. Oh, what a great boon this is, Your Excellency! Moreover, I am hoping that in this way the infinite goodness of God will light a great fire in hearts. Oh, how much I would like to say, but silence is imposed on me so as not to add further suffering to your duties.

I think that in a short time I will leave to look over the church and house. But I will stay in Rome only three or four days. In this I am in agreement with His Eminence. Whence you could let me know your commands by addressing: Viterbo for Vetralla, Retreat of San Angelo. God knows with what great a desire I am waiting. Thanks be to God, it is peaceful. In the event that the business here is settled, regarding the exchange and consent, I ask of you the charity to let me know immediately so that I can have the religious come from Mount Argentario and have them ready for the journey. I am writing to the Retreat of San Angelo. I believe I will be at that Retreat in time to receive your reply.

I add that the foundation of the Retreat in Rome is not to be taken as an example for founding in other cities. We will continue in accord with the Rule to make our foundations in solitude. His Holiness has solemnly derogated this part of the Rule in order to found this mission and, in addition, since it is necessary for our House to be under the eye of the Holy See to meet the needs that might occur for our newly born Congregation.

I know my zeal is excessive, but the trust I have in your kindness allows me to enclose this letter for Father Thomas. I have not heard from him for several posts and do not know how to guide myself. So I am giving you the occasion of merit before the Lord. Pardon me out of love for God. I end at your feet and ask you to continue your prayers and grant me your holy pastoral blessing. With profound reverence I am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I cannot express with my pen the edification and consolation in the Lord that your dear letter brought to me since it was written with a special light of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, I will not finish so soon in rereading it so that I may be able to make use of its pious convictions and efficacious motives therein in order to fulfill the great task that His Divine Majesty has imposed on me to maintain, and have maintained, the holy observance. I tell your gentle heart that I often find myself in some agony of spirit to see myself so far from the regular observance since from August on I have not followed the common life because of my repeated relapses. But who knows how much self-love is at work in me! "Who knows sin?"

I find myself in anguish at times when I need to hide my feelings and agree to something. I do not say against the holy Rule — as for that I had rather die. But you know what I mean. I do this in order not to cause any disturbance going on day after day which make it appear they are dragging the sweet cross of Jesus Christ.³⁹⁴ Oh God, what agony it is. But that's the way it is! You know what I am talking about. Now I know that P.F.³⁹⁵ is getting fatter and fatter. He wrote me himself, as if a joke. These are jokes that cause me deep sighs. I would like to call them to the Retreat, for it is time for that. But I cannot because of the distance and the foundation at Ceccano that has seen me use a thousand years to provide for it, and so much mission time and now I wish the Retreat to be according to the Rules. But what am I to do now, my dear friend?

Now I am telling you that in the midst of my storms and derelictions, justly merited by my great sins and tepidity, I find some echo of consolation, at least in the higher part on seeing the fervor, observance, and good order, both spiritual and temporal, in which they live over there. Thanks be to God. Likewise at San Angelo as well as in this Retreat, at which it is well to marvel. But what good sons! What holy youth! Oh God! in unfeigned truth it is a great shame to be with them in public conversation and acts of the community. I could wish they were soon ready and of an age and all to take over the government of the Retreats, which would then be more quiet. However, we poor oldsters will have to endure a bit more.

Go ahead then with the blessing of God, for all is well. Tomorrow, about 20 hours, I will leave for Rome to look over Saint Thomas in Formis. To that end I am waiting on the rector of San Angelo³⁹⁶ that he may accompany me and make the decisions to order the Retreat. For I do not plan the distribution of the rooms, etc., except in general. He is more practical. In five or six days,

394. Paul implies that in place of gladly embracing the cross, some religious are carrying it reluctantly.

395. We do not know of which religious he is speaking of.

396. Father John Baptist Danei of Saint Michael the Archangel, brother of Paul.

about December 19, I hope to find myself back at San Angelo. You can write me there in the post after next, for then I will leave the burden to the vice rector to advise me if there is anything I need to know.

I am sending this letter now so I may go to confession to my great advantage.

I add that at Christmas you conduct the profession of the two novices to whom I granted a dispensation of two months from their novitiate, and more if need be. One is Confrater Joseph of Saint Bernadine,³⁹⁷ the other Confrater Joachim. Father Mark Aurelius suggested these two to me, for I had not thought about it. He told me I could dispense them so that they could come to study at San Angelo with the others since there are few students here.

This should take place as soon as we have the last meetings with the bishop of Ferentino about the foundation. I am in hopes it will happen after Epiphany. Since the clerics should have been professed, they can leave with Father Stephen³⁹⁸ and Father Charles and the lay brothers I wrote about. That departure could happen on the Feast of Christmas, or a bit later. So they should have all in order as soon as I let them know.

I rejoice that you are passably well and, above all, I rejoice in the Lord for the peace and tranquillity of your spirit. This is the great joy that makes us sons of God and the efficacious means to remain in the inner kingdom at the depth of the spirit to drink at the font of eternal life the living water of Love. I cannot write more, for God knows how much I have to do. Shortly, I am going to Soriano for His Eminence and other business. Tomorrow I must leave. His Eminence is also leaving.

Greet everyone for me; I embrace them in Jesus. Let them make the holy novena with great fervor and discretion and pray much so that they, too, burn with the great flame God wishes to ignite in Rome. But it is necessary to pray. Goodbye. In haste I embrace all and am ...

At the coming time Father Francis will be a priest according to the brief, Eutizio will be a subdeacon, and Confrater John a subdeacon.³⁹⁹ With this note, or that of Father Vice Rector, pay my excuses to Signore Aiala, for I have not answered his letter, given me by D. Athanasius, because of my many duties. D. Athanasius will have told him that.

I wish a blessed feast to all and will send it from the holy altar. Let them do their part.

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

397. Confrater Joseph Turletti of the Trinity, professed in 1748 and died in 1766; Confrater Joachim Reviglio of Saint Stephen, professed in 1748 and dismissed in 1752.

398. Father Stephen Barberi of Saint Joachim (1711-1781); Father Charles Salemmi of the Mother of God, dismissed in 1750.

399. Father Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary, professed in 1744, ordained December 23, 1747, died in 1781; Eutizio Lippi of the Holy Spirit, professed in 1745, dismissed in 1756; John Iacomini of Saint Raphael, professed in 1746, ordained in 1753 and died in 1786.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (25)

From the great Postal Inn of Baccano,
where the birds of summer die.

December 16, 1747

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I am writing in haste from the post at Baccano⁴⁰⁰ because I left Rome at daybreak this morning.

In three days, like the gypsies, I took care of the business for which I came to Rome. I visited the church, house, and garden of Saint Thomas in Formis. The church is a pretty little one with three marble altars. It is one of the most solitary places in Rome, a place of great silence and recollection, almost a mountain, with good air, garden with water, larger than that of Soriano. There are cabbages, enough fruit for summer and winter, at least partially, figs, grapes, artichokes, beans, broccoli, enough even to give to your novices. What do you say to that? But I have not told you everything. There is a building like a good barn; air comes in everywhere except by the door. Oh! it would be a fine affair to see poor Paul and his companions washed by the air from Mount Celio. How does that appeal to you? Let us leave off the jokes. I tell you the truth, notwithstanding that it is a fine location, not a better one is to be found in Rome and with delightful air — a place prepared by our Great Father for his servants. The building will be done soon, please God, the ways are open. The fire will burst forth from the Heart of Jesus, and what a great fire of love will remain there always, my dear Father. Who knows how to describe it? My pen cannot, nor does it know how.

On the part of the pope, everything has been taken care of. All we lack is the consent of the Chapter of Saint Peter. I believe the day after Christmas that will be given. I am now awaiting the conclusion for Ceccano, and I will let you know immediately so that you can send the men to me. On my return I will go by way of Rome to take possession.

You gentlemen will be in those fine rooms while I am enjoying the air of Mount Celio and will be cured of my sciatica. Oh, what a beautiful bath! But I prefer to be bathed in the bath of fire that the Great God is preparing for our poor neighbors with this foundation.

I have received the vestition expenses from Bordese for Filippino, the lay brother, and the other cleric. It amounts to thirty-four *scudi* in all. That of the other cleric Santini from Garfagnana will be covered by our usual friend, and I will send you two good sons, one a subdeacon named John Peter Poli of Castelnuovo from Garfagnana, the other Fabrizio Stocchi a Roman, a true servant of God and very capable. They will bring the required documents and our usual friend will take care of the expenses of vestition. Send them to me, and I will forward over there. The subdeacon had sent his testimonials to

400. The post office of Baccano, on the Cassian Way in the north of Campagnano, was a place to rest and also to change horses. Paul, because it was a long journey or because of sickness, had used a carriage.

Lucca, but will be here soon. I have had fine reports concerning him.⁴⁰¹ You will see that Filippino writes a note to Father Charles Sandigliani, who is a great candidate and has excellent testimonials, and encourages him so that he too will come and serve the Most High. I have great reports. Let them pray.

I extend feast greetings to all from the altar.

I ask you to hold off the retreat and the vestition of the candidate from Amelia until the novices have arrived from Rome. The ones from Rome will leave on the fourth day after Christmas, coming by way of Soriano. On the fourth day of Christmas I hope to be at Soriano. However, write me at San Angelo on the current post. I will be there until the fourth day.

An embrace of the Infant Jesus from me. Tell him that I will offer Mass for everyone. I need to leave. Goodbye. Jesus bless everyone. Amen. I leave you in the Lord. Father John Baptist greets you and all.

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

507

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (26)

San Angelo

December 19, 1747

The Holy Passion of Jesus be in our hearts. Amen.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I received in this post your esteemed letter, and I believe that you will have received mine written from Baccano. We should have returned Sunday morning. I am saying no more about this, referring you to what I wrote from Baccano. I am hoping good things from Confrater Joseph. In whatever happens I will love the Will of God in the outcome, etc. I am aware of the departure of the lay brother, Filippino, which can be for the good. Such are not candidates for us. Thanks be to God.

I received the vestition expenses in Rome for Filippino, and I am writing to Father Sandigliani so he may tell me to whom I should return the money, for I believe the money is his. I have the expenses for the one from Bordese and the other cleric with me in a check for twenty-two *scudi*. We will have the rest soon from the usual source. You did well to write to Viterbo for the shirts, and I hope they will have been sent. I have informed Signore C. Brusotti concerning the painting, and all will come about as it should. In the last letter I said two clerics were coming from Rome, one a subdeacon and the other not, but good, fervent, etc. I ask you to take care of the retreat and vestition of those who are there so as to await those coming. They will be there around the first of the year. They will leave Rome on the last day of Christmas. I hear that the vice rector is in Orbetello to give a retreat to the people. I am happy about that. As for Piombino, there seems to be no way that you can be of service to

401. Sylvester Bordese of Saint Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, born in 1721, died in 1795; Mariano Santini of Saint Lawrence and John Peter Poli of Saint Charles were dismissed in 1754; Stocchi and Sandigliani were not professed. Identity of "Filippino" is not known.

that convent.⁴⁰² God will provide. I do not feel myself inspired to give Father Vice Rector permission to go there, actually quite the contrary. It is very necessary for him to help you there, both as things are now, and shortly it will be necessary to take two more priests away. If there were more members, I would have no difficulty in sending him, but for now it cannot be done. It is not convenient to speak about this any more because, etc., as above.

As regard the gentleman you mentioned to me, you are free and have full power to vest him as a tertiary.⁴⁰³ But take care as to whether you can trust him in sending him outside for the business of the Retreat, etc. From what you tell me, he appears to be capable, the right age, modest, and God-fearing. Go ahead.

You know that you have full faculties to vest and accept the profession of the novices. I believe Brother Philip is about to make his profession. Would that Confrater Joseph⁴⁰⁴ gets well and makes his profession with his companion so that they can come here.

We began to wish feast-day greetings to all, to all, to all the world yesterday with the Feast of The Expectation of Birth.⁴⁰⁵ I extend it to all this devout, numerous community, and arrange a General Communion, etc. But what shall we do, my beloved Father, on that happiest night when we will be at the altar together? Ah, in spirit let us take our hearts, and those of all gathered there, and thrust them into the swaddling clothes. What am I saying? That is too little! Let us thrust them into the furnace of the sweet Heart of Jesus so that they may melt like wax, "that they may be made one" and become one single heart in the Holy Heart of the Savior. But will that great King of the Just reject my heart? What do you say about that? Let them cry out mercy for me, etc.

But who ought not, or could not, pour out his heart in tears of tenderness in seeing a God become an Infant in swaddling clothes for us, laid on straw in a feed box for us, and so needy even as to need the breath of the two beasts! Oh, what great light, oh, what a flame burns in the stable of Bethlehem! Woe to me, if in the presence of so much light and the heat of such a fire, I am not consumed with holy love and rather remain tepid and frozen as before! Ask the beloved brethren, and before all I beg you and all that my scandals, lack of observance, evil example, the cause of affliction to so many, be pardoned me by the Divine Infant. Meanwhile, prostrate at the feet of all I beg their pardon, and let them ask for me the grace to either die or become holy.

402. The monastery of Sister Cherubina Bresciani.

403. The "tertiaries" were those who shared the Passionist life, but for reasons of age, studies, or other reasons, were not able to be admitted as professed religious. The tertians were also called "Oblates." These were under the authority of the local rector. They paid the bills, cultivated the garden, accepted the gifts of the people, accompanied the religious when they went out because at that time the religious were obliged to go out two at a time. Paul abolished the institution of the tertians in the Congregation in 1775 (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 266-268).

404. Brother Philip Venanzi of the Incarnation, dismissed in 1758; Confrater Joseph Turletti of the Trinity.

405. "Feast of the Expectation of Birth" was a feast day of the Blessed Mother, celebrated December 18.

I am writing in haste and embrace all in the Lord. For love of Jesus and out of love for holy obedience to the Savior, I ask you to take care of yourself, to get well, to divide up your work, and take on yourself the less burdensome tasks. In this way you will do the Will of God.

Beloved Father, I embrace you in Jesus. Everyone sends you greetings. What I am saying will be borne out by the two clerics and all, for everyone looks upon you as Father.

I rejoice over the great good fortune of Father Vice Rector and the other priests, especially the priests-novices, and in particular Father Maioli from Orvieto.⁴⁰⁶ Oh, how blessed they are! Let them pray for me, and I greet you warmly.

Your true, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

508

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (9)

San Angelo

December 23, 1747

I am writing from San Angelo,
where I will be until the second or third
day after Christmas.

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I have a solid basis to fear that I am not grateful to the Sovereign Good for the innumerable benefits that his great Mercy deigns to grant to the ungrateful, sinful creature that I am; especially for the exalted grace to have cleared away with so much gentleness the difficulties that had arisen against the foundation of the Retreat of Ceccano. Oh, how good is our great God! Oh, how gentle is his Holy Spirit! I rejoice much with my face in the dust for your great devotion in announcing to us the loving news of the reception of the apostolic approval, etc., and may the Highest be always blessed that he has used your venerated and pious person as the instrument for his glory in this affair, from which will result the greater glory of His Divine Majesty and the profit of our poor neighbors, as I firmly expect.

Within five or six days I will be ready to get on the road, but Father Thomas Mary has not done me the favor to inform me if he has arranged housing for the religious going to the new Retreat. It now consists of ten or eleven poor straw ticks, according to the Rule, and blankets, pillows of the same cloth to block the straw, and a few other small items in accord with the holy poverty that I put in a note for him before his departure. I share the suffering of his task and the loneliness he experiences there.

Although I am setting out willingly, our more senior Fathers are counseling me to wait since they know about the poor preparations; and all the more so since seven religious, priests, clerics and lay brothers will be going, and I,

406. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin, vested on November 30, 1747, professed on December 3, 1748, and dismissed in 1764.

along with my companion, will make nine. Whence, some preparation seems necessary. That should be done in a few days, and that is the reason I wrote a letter to Father Thomas, which I am including and trusting in your charity. I am making bold to include it so he may quickly go to Ceccano with a companion and take care of things as indicated above and then wait for me for the foundation. I have great confidence to receive before the Epiphany your venerable commands, so I can set out on the trip. I will do all possible to be in Ceccano around January 10 or 12, and for that reason I will go to the Retreat of Soriano on the second or third day after Christmas so as to be closer to the road to Civita Castellana.

The gratitude and humble service which I profess to you has obliged me since the day of the Expectation of Birth of Mary Most Holy to extend best wishes from the sacred altar and in my prayers for every fullness of grace and heavenly gifts during the approaching Solemnity of the Holy Nativity. And with strong supplications I have had our numerous religious doing the same thing. But in the coming Holy Night we will increase with greater stress our devout and humble petitions to the Most High, offering him the infinite merits of the Divine Infant so that His Divine Majesty may render you more holy, as I strongly expect.

May you deign in your great kindness not to lose sight of this poor, newly born Congregation and, above all, my most needy soul, especially on the day of his Holy Birth, in the solemn celebration of the Holy Mysteries. Oh, how great a charity that would be!

In this mail I am sending your venerable letter to the good novice. There is much in it to take to heart, much to admire, much to edify and imitate in the holy virtues that the good God has impressed on the spirit of his zealous and pious pastor. In addition, it will be a great lesson for the rest of the religious. Thanks be to God. I end with profound reverence at your feet, and implore for myself and the whole Congregation your holy pastoral blessing, and devoutly I kiss the hem of your sacred vestments.

I pray the good Jesus that he lets me have your venerated commands quickly, for I am leaving soon.

The letter included here shows the anxiety I have regarding Father Thomas. Excuse me out love for God and send it on.

Your humble, respectful, devoted, obedient servant,
Paul of the Cross

509

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (10)

Soriano

December 28, 1747

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I arrived here at this holy Retreat the day before yesterday to set out on my journey, please God. At this time I am awaiting the religious from Mount

Argentario, whom I hope will be here by Saturday or next Sunday, so we can leave on January 4 or 5, as I had the chance to let you know in my letter of December 23.

Meanwhile, I beg the good Jesus to fill your heart always more with his graces and heavenly gifts for the care of your great piety, which you have used to exalt his glory and sanctify the souls of our poor neighbor. In your last venerated letter, I learned to my great edification that you are informing me of the agreement to the exchange with the Commune of Ceccano and possession for our poor Congregation. Thanks be to God and to Mary Ever a Virgin.

Most Reverend Bishop, our good God holds ready for you a great treasury of graces. This hope is stored up in my heart. Meanwhile, I long for the consolation to be close to your feet to repeat personally my humble servitude and obedience, and to receive your holy blessing and the help of your prayers.

I ask these especially for the long journey that I will undertake with our religious so that it may succeed in being recollected, devout, and edifying to the greater glory of the Most High — without declining any inconvenience or suffering. Regarding these, the others are much more concerned than I, who am the weakest and most sickly in spirit as well as indisposed in body. Nevertheless, I have complete confidence in God, through the intercession of your prayers, that we will finish the journey on foot in accord with the Rules. However, the Rules do not forbid help to one who is indisposed. But I judge myself to be of moderate strength, as I confide in your prayers. Bless me, and with profound reverence I affirm I am,

Your humble, devoted servant
Paul of the Cross

510

Julian Spartziani (2)

Soriano

December 28, 1747

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

I received in today's ordinary post your esteemed letter in which I read to my edification of the great charity you are willing to share with our missionaries. "May the Lord reward you in time and in eternity. Amen."

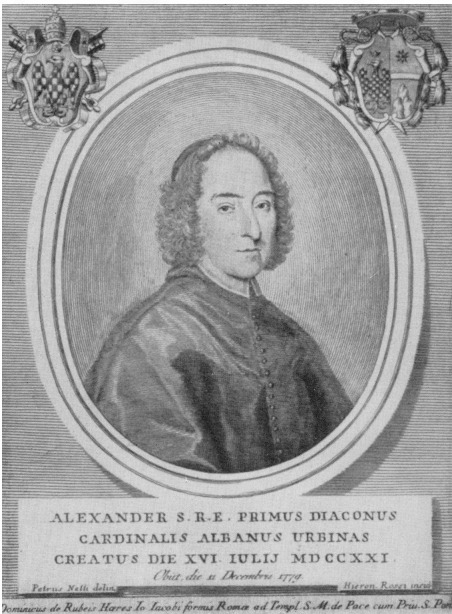
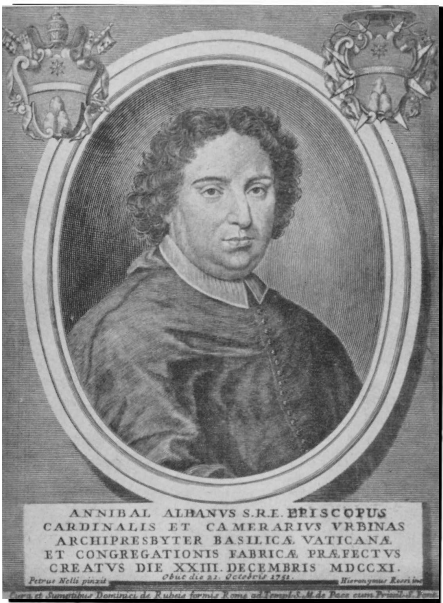
I find myself here since the day before yesterday, and I am awaiting four religious from the Retreat of Mount Argentario. I hope they will be at this holy Retreat around next Sunday. After three days rest I will set out on the journey, God willing. I hear to my consolation and thanks that things are in good order. And that being so, I will have double consolation of dedicating in person my service. I hope to be there around January 12, perhaps earlier. I have written Father Thomas Mary through channels he suggested to me and have reminded him to provide for the ciborium, tabernacle, etc., for the ceremony of the foundation, which consists in placing the Sovereign Master in his House; or that he at least borrow them until they can be otherwise provided. He should

also have provided about twelve straw ticks and blankets in accord with the Rules. I am aware of the great attention and vigilance of this loving and zealous Father, but his occupations may have caused some things to pass out of his mind. So I am reminding him through you, as you are our loving benefactor, so that you can advise him out of charity.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Cardinal Annibale Albani



Cardinal Alexander Albani

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 Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus, *see Pastorelli, Fulgentius*
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CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

1720 – 1747

In the following chart, listed across the page under the date of the proper year, are the successive number of letters as they appear in this edition, the date written, the place of writing, the person to whom addressed, the number of the letter in series sent to an individual (if there are no parentheses and a number following a person or group's name it means that this is the only extant letter to them), and finally its location in the present Italian five-volume collection Lettere di San Paolo Della Croce.

B=Bishop M=Maria/Mary S=San/Santa/Saint

1720

1	—	Castellazzo	B Arborio Di Gattinara (1)	IV	217
2	—	Castellazzo	B Arborio Di Gattinara (2)	I	1

1721

3	January 27	Castellazzo	B Arborio Di Gattinara (3)	I	18
4	February 6	Castellazzo	Sister Teresa Costanza Pontas (1)	I	24
5	—	Castellazzo	Sister Teresa Costanza Pontas (2)	I	25
6	March 11	Castellazzo	B Arborio Di Gattinara (4)	I	21
7	April 12	Castellazzo	Marchioness Del Pozzo (1)	I	26
8	September 9	Civitavecchia	John Baptist Danei (1)	I	51
9	December 29	Castellazzo	Marchioness Del Pozzo (2)	I	28

1722

10	January 1	Castellazzo	Marchioness Del Pozzo (3)	I	30
11	January 13	Castellazzo	Marchioness Del Pozzo (4)	I	32
12	February 21	Castellazzo	Sisters and Brothers	I	53

1723

13	October 24	Castellazzo	Marchioness Del Pozzo (5)	I	33
14	October 24	Castellazzo	Sister M Elena Zerboni (1)	I	58
15	November 26	Castellazzo	B Arborio Di Gattinara (5)	I	23
16	December 21	Castellazzo	Marchioness Del Pozzo (6)	I	35

1724

17	February 3	Castellazzo	Sister M Elena Zerboni (2)	I	59
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1725

No existing letters for this year.

1726

18	February 7	Lady of the Chain	Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (1)	I	60
19	February 16	Lady of the Chain	Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (2)	I	61
20	April 21	Lady of the Chain	Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (3)	I	63
21	May 26	Lady of the City	Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (4)	I	64
22	June 3	Lady of the City	Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (5)	I	65
23	June 21	Lady of the City	Nicolina Pecorini Martinez (6)	I	66
24	August 29	Lady of the City	Erasmus Tuccinardi (1)	I	67
25	September 21	Rome	Erasmus Tuccinardi (2)	I	69
26	November 20	Rome - Hospital	Erasmus Tuccinardi (3)	I	70

1727

27	January 4	Rome - Hospital	Erasmus Tuccinardi (4)	I	71
28	March 15	Rome - Hospital	Erasmus Tuccinardi (5)	I	73
29	April 15	Rome	Marchioness Del Pozzo (7)	I	36
30	June 11	Rome	Erasmus Tuccinardi (6)	I	75
31	August 18	Rome	Anna Massari Danei (1)	I	90
32	October 31	Rome	Marchioness Del Pozzo (8)	I	39
33	December 20	Rome	Erasmus Tuccinardi (7)	I	76

1728

34	February 4	Rome	Pope Benedict XIII (1)	V	225
35	March 11	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (8)	I	78
36	October 19	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (9)	I	80
37	November 11	Saint Anthony	Marchioness Del Pozzo (9)	I	40
38	December 9	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (10)	I	80

1729

39	January 3	Saint Anthony	Marchioness Del Pozzo (10)	I	42
40	August 11	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (11)	V	19
41	September 7	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (12)	V	20
42	December 12	Saint Anthony	Pope Benedict XIII (2)	IV	191

1730

43	May 22	Saint Anthony	Marchioness Del Pozzo (11)	I	45
44	June 14	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (13)	I	82
45	July 25	Saint Anthony	Marquis Claudio Del Pozzo	I	354
46	September 20	Portercole	Erasmus Tuccinardi (14)	I	84
47	November 29	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (15)	I	85
48	December 16	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (16)	I	87
49	December 30	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (1)	I	96

1731

50	February 23	Saint Anthony	Pope Clement XII (1)	IV	193
51	February 28	Saint Anthony	Pope Clement XII (2)	IV	192
52	July 19	Saint Anthony	Cardinal Altieri (1)	I	356
53	—	—	Councillors of Orbetello	I	355

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54	February 25	Saint Anthony	Matthew Sancez	I	376
55	March 31	Saint Anthony	Bishop of Alessandria	I	377
56	April 9	Porto San Stefano	Cardinal Altieri (2)	I	358
57	December 16	Saint Anthony	Frances Lucci (1)	I	379
58	December 26	Saint Anthony	Frances Lucci (2)	I	381

1733

59	March 19	Piombino	Rose of Gaeta	I	391
60	June 3	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (2)	I	98
61	August 2	—	Agnes Grazi (3)	I	98
62	August 10	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (4)	I	100
63	August 13	Saint Anthony	Erasmus Tuccinardi (17)	I	89
64	August 27	Saint Anthony	Frances Lucci (3)	I	382
65	September 6	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (5)	I	101
66	September 15	Portercole	Agnes Grazi (6)	I	102
67	December 14	Saint Anthony	M Cherubina Bresciani (1)	I	436
68	December 16	—	Agnes Grazi (7)	I	103

1734

69	February 25	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (8)	I	106
70	March 17	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (9)	I	107
71	March 19	Saint Anthony	Laura Giannotti	I	527
72	April 17	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (10)	I	110
73	August 4	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (11)	I	112
74	August 10	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (12)	I	113
75	September 10	Pitigliano	Agnes Grazi (13)	I	115
76	October 4	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (14)	I	116
77	October 4	Orbetello	Marchioness Del Pozzo (12)	I	48
78	October 28	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (15)	I	118
79	December 15	Saint Anthony	Anna Massari Danei (2)	I	94
80	December 23	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (16)	I	120

1735

81	January 15	Magliano	Marianna Alvarez (1)	I	530
82	July 12	Mt Marciana	M Cherubina Bresciani (2)	I	439
83	July 26	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (17)	I	123
84	August 12	Capoliveri	M Cherubina Bresciani (3)	I	440
85	August 24	Longone	Thomas Fossi (1)	I	533
86	September 3	Saint Anthony	M Cherubina Bresciani (4)	I	442
87	October	Saint Anthony	Gregory Gualas y Puego	II	3
88	November 18	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (18)	I	125
89	November 22	Saint Anthony	Francis Anthony Appiani (1)	I	395
90	December	Saint Anthony	John Moretti (1)	II	8
91	December 12	Saint Anthony	John Moretti (2)	V	22
92	December 12	Saint Anthony	Marianna Elenora Del Pozzo (1)	II	4

1736

93	January 6	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (19)	I	126
94	February 2	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (20)	I	128
95	February 8	Saint Anthony	Frances Lucci (4)	I	383
96	February 18	Porto San Stefano	Agnes Grazi (21)	I	129
97	March 8	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (22)	I	132
98	March 15	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (23)	I	133
99	March 23	Portercole	Francis Anthony Appiani (2)	I	396
100	March 29	Portercole	Thomas Fossi (2)	I	535
101	April 13	Piombino	M Cherubina Bresciani (5)	I	444
102	April 19	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (24)	I	135
103	April 26	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (25)	I	136
104	June 21	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (26)	I	138
105	June 26	Saint Anthony	Francis Anthony Appiani (3)	I	399
106	June 29	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (27)	I	139
107	August 1	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (28)	I	143
108	August 2	Saint Anthony	M Cherubina Bresciani (6)	I	446
109	August 9	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (29)	I	144
110	August 14	Saint Anthony	Ottavio Barbari (1)	II	13
111	August 14	Saint Anthony	Francis Anthony Appiani (4)	V	23
112	August 22	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (30)	I	146
113	August 26	Orbetello	Thomas Fossi (3)	I	536
114	August 30	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (31)	I	148
115	September 27	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (32)	I	152
116	October 3	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (33)	I	153
117	October 10	Saint Anthony	M Cherubina Bresciani (7)	I	447
118	October 10	Saint Anthony	Thomas Fossi (4)	I	537
119	October 11	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (34)	I	157

120	October 24	Porto San Stefano	Agnes Grazi (35)	I	322
121	October 26	Longone	M Cherubina Bresciani (8)	I	450
122	November 20	Saint Anthony	Ottavio Barbari (2)	II	14
123	November 25	Porto San Stefano	Francis Anthony Appiani (5)	I	403
124	November 29	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (36)	I	158
125	December 10	Saint Anthony	Francis Anthony Appiani (6)	I	405
126	December 11	Saint Anthony	Frances Lucci (5)	I	385
127	December 13	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (37)	I	161
128	December 28	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (38)	I	162

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129	January 3	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (39)	I	164
130	January 5	Saint Anthony	Bartholomew Cianchini (1)	II	15
131	January 9	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (40)	I	166
132	January 24	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (41)	I	169
133	February 9	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (42)	I	171
134	February 19	Orbetello	Francis Anthony Appiani (7)	I	407
135	February 19	Orbetello	M Cherubina Bresciani (9)	I	451
136	February 28	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (43)	I	174
137	March 7	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (44)	I	177
138	March 21	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (45)	I	179
139	March 24	Saint Anthony	M Johanna Venturi Grazi (1)	II	18
140	March 28	Saint Anthony	Francis Anthony Appiani (8)	I	410
141	April 14	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (46)	I	182
142	April 9	Talamone	Francis Anthony Appiani (9)	I	412
143	April 12	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (47)	I	183
144	April 17	Orbetello	Francis Anthony Appiani (10)	I	413
145	April 25	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (48)	I	184
146	May 9	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (49)	I	186
147	May 13	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (50)	I	187
148	[May]	—	Marianna Alvarez (2)	I	531
149	May 16	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (51)	I	190
150	May 22	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (52)	I	191
151	[June 20]	Saint Anthony	Cardinal Altieri (3)	I	359
152	July 3	Saint Anthony	Salvatore	II	49
153	July 5	Orbetello	Cardinal Altieri (4)	I	362
154	July 12	Orbetello	Cardinal Altieri (5)	I	364
155	July 15	Orbetello	M Cherubina Bresciani (10)	I	452
156	July 16	—	Agnes Grazi (53)	I	192
157	July 25	Saint Anthony	Cardinal Altieri (6)	I	365
158	July 31	Mt Argentario	Cardinal Altieri (7)	I	368
159	August 15	Mt Argentario	Cardinal Altieri (8)	I	370
160	August 26	Mt Argentario	Thomas Fossi (5)	I	541
161	August 29	Mt Argentario	Cardinal Altieri (9)	I	373
162	August 29	[Mt Argentario]	Agnes Grazi (54)	I	194
163	October 29	Presentation	Cardinal Altieri (10)	V	33
164	November 6	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (55)	I	196
165	November 15	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (56)	I	198
166	November 20	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (11)	I	454
167	December 20	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (57)	I	200
168	—	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (58)	I	202
169	—	—	Agnes Grazi (59)	I	203
170	—	—	M Prudentia Angelini	II	51
171	—	—	John Francis Sancez (1)	II	53

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172	January 17	Rome	Agnes Grazi (60)	I	204
173	January 22	—	Pope Clement XII (3)	IV	194
174	February 10	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (12)	I	456
175	February 11	Presentation	Marchioness Del Pozzo (13)	I	50
176	February 22	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (61)	I	205
177	February 28	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (62)	I	206
178	March 3	Presentation	Frances Lucci (6)	I	386
179	March 3	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (11)	I	415
180	March 18	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (63)	I	207
181	[April 3]	—	Agnes Grazi (64)	I	350
182	April 11	Città delle Pieve	Ottavio Spezi	II	59
183	May 27	Acquapendente	Stephen Lavitelli (1)	II	54
184	June 13	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (65)	I	209
185	June 14	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (12)	I	416
186	July 11	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (66)	I	211
187	July 16	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (67)	I	213
188	July 16	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (13)	I	417
189	July 23	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (68)	I	214
190	August 4	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (69)	I	215
191	August 8	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (70)	I	218
192	August 9	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (6)	I	545
193	August 26	Orbetello	Bartholomew Cianchini (2)	II	17
194	September 9	Soriano	Agnes Grazi (71)	I	219
195	September 15	Città delle Pieve	Stephen Lavitelli (2)	II	55
196	September 25	Città delle Pieve	Agnes Grazi (72)	I	220
197	September 26	Città delle Pieve	Stephen Lavitelli (3)	II	56
198	November 5	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (73)	I	221
199	November 29	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (74)	I	223
200	November 30	Presentation	John Moretti (3)	II	9
201	December 10	Presentation	Frances Lucci (7)	I	387
202	December 12	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (7)	I	547
203	December 18	Presentation	Stephen Lavitelli (4)	II	57
204	—	—	Agnes Grazi (75)	I	224
205	—	—	Agnes Grazi (76)	I	225

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206	February 7	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (77)	I	225
207	March 3	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (8)	I	548
208	March 7	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (78)	I	227
209	April 29	Diruta	Agnes Grazi (79)	I	229
210	June 11	Presentation	Victoria Fossi	II	62
211	June 13	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (80)	I	230
212	June 25	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (13)	I	458
213	June 28	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (81)	I	325
214	July 9	—	Agnes Grazi (82)	I	231
215	July 18	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (83)	I	233
216	July 23	Portercole	Agnes Grazi (84)	I	234
217	July 29	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (85)	I	235
218	July 30	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (14)	I	459
219	August 13	Presentation	Jerome Berardi	II	63
220	August 17	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (86)	I	237
221	August 20	Presentation	Stephen Lavitelli (5)	II	58
222	August	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (87)	I	236
223	September 7	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (15)	I	463
224	September 14	Farnese	Agnes Grazi (88)	I	240
225	October 3	Corneto	Agnes Grazi (89)	I	241

226	October 6	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (90)	I	336
227	October 15	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (91)	I	242
228	October 16	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (92)	I	243
229	October 22	Farnese	Agnes Grazi (93)	I	303
230	November 16	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (94)	I	245
231	November 19	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (16)	I	464
232	November 30	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (95)	I	247
233	—	—	Agnes Grazi (96)	I	302
234	—	—	Agnes Grazi (97)	I	324
235	—	—	Stephen Lavitelli (6)	II	58

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236	January 20	Presentation	Frances Lucci (8)	I	388
237	January 30	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (98)	I	250
238	February 17	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (17)	I	465
239	March 7	Orbetello	Anthony Danei of the Passion (1)	II	64
240	May 31	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (18)	I	467
241	June 5	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (19)	I	469
242	June 15	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (99)	I	251
243	July 7	Porto San Stefano	Agnes Grazi (100)	I	252
244	July 10	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (101)	I	333
245	July 29	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (14)	V	28
246	August 1	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (102)	I	255
247	August 4	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (103)	I	256
248	August 9	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (20)	I	471
249	August 16	—	James Grazi (1)	II	210
250	August 23	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (104)	I	310
251	September 5	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (105)	I	259
252	September 5	Presentation	James Grazi (2)	II	209
253	September 19	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (106)	I	262
254	September 26	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (107)	I	263
255	October 1	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (15)	V	30
256	October 19	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (21)	I	476
257	October 22	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (108)	I	264
258	November 19	Rome	James Grazi (3)	II	206
259	November 19	Rome	Fulgentius Pastorelli (1)	II	68
260	November 25	Rome	James Grazi (4)	II	208
261	November 25	Rome	Agnes Grazi (109)	I	266
262	December 7	Rome	John Francis Sancez (2)	V	36
263	December 28	Presentation	B Count Garagni (1)	II	211
264	December 28	Presentation	Representatives of Cellere	II	247

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265	January 7	Orbetello	M Cherubina Bresciani (22)	I	478
266	January 10	Farnese	B Count Garagni (2)	II	213
267	March 10	Viterbo	B Count Garagni (3)	II	215
268	April 3	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (110)	I	267
269	April 6	Orbetello	Dominic Giovagnoli	II	249
270	April 12	Presentation	Francis Dottarelli	II	250
271	April 28	Presentation	John Moretti (4)	II	11
272	May 2	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (111)	I	268
273	May 15	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (16)	I	419
274	May 18	Orbetello	B Count Garagni (4)	II	217
275	May 20	Presentation	John Baptist Randone (1)	II	251
276	June 1	Presentation	B Count Garagni (5)	II	219
277	June 2	Orbetello	Francis Anthony Appiani (17)	I	421
278	June 8	Presentation	Canon Blaise Pieri (1)	V	37

279	June 16	Rio	M Cherubina Bresciani (23)	I	479
280	June 23	Orbetello	Francis Anthony Appiani (18)	I	422
281	June 24	Vetralla	A Religious Sister (1)	II	259
282	July 6	Viterbo	Anna Massari Danei (3)	I	91
283	July 6	Presentation	A Bishop (1)	II	269
284	July 7	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (19)	I	423
285	July 22	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (112)	I	271
286	July	—	Agnes Grazi (113)	I	270
287	July 31	—	Francis Anthony Appiani (20)	V	31
288	August 2	Presentation	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (1)	II	271
289	August 10	Presentation	Mother M. Crucified Costantini (1)	II	288
290	August 22	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (24)	I	481
291	August 26	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (114)	I	274
292	September 1	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (21)	I	425
293	September 15	Viterbo	Bishop of Sovana	II	331
294	October 13	Porto San Stefano	Agnes Grazi (115)	I	275
295	October 18	Piombino	Francis Anthony Appiani (22)	I	393
296	October 26	Piombino	Francis Anthony Appiani (23)	I	428
297	—	—	Anthony Pius Eleuteri	II	60

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298	January 17	Presentation	B Count Garagni (6)	II	221
299	January 24	Presentation	Frances Lucci (9)	I	389
300	January 25	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (116)	I	277
301	February 7	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (1)	II	333
302	February 19	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (25)	I	482
303	March 8	Presentation	John Moretti (5)	II	12
304	March 21	Presentation	B Count Garagni (7)	II	223
305	April 15	Vetralla	Frances Zelli (1)	II	352
306	April 23	Oriolo	Agnes Grazi (117)	I	279
307	April 23	Oriolo	Archpriest of Monterosi	II	361
308	April 23	Oriolo	A Gentleman (1)	II	363
309	May 16	Barbarano	Agnes Grazi (118)	I	281
310	May 17	Barbarano	B Count Garagni (8)	II	226
311	May 26	Bieda	Agnes Grazi (119)	I	282
312	June 10	Presentation	Representatives of Vetralla	V	41
313	June 11	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (120)	I	284
314	June 16	Presentation	John Francis Sancez (3)	II	371
315	June 20	Presentation	B Count Garagni (9)	II	228
316	June 21	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (121)	I	285
317	June 26	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (26)	I	484
318	July 5	Presentation	Marianna Elenora Del Pozzo (2)	II	6
319	July 5	Presentation	Rev. Mother Del Pozzo	V	42
320	July 5	Presentation	Very Reverend Burgonzio	II	364
321	July 5	Presentation	Angela Margherita Bosca	II	365
322	July 11	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (24)	I	429
323	July 11	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (2)	II	335
324	July 12	Presentation	Valerani Sisters	II	366
325	July 13	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (122)	I	288
326	July 29	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (123)	I	289
327	August 19	Presentation	Francis Anthony Appiani (25)	I	431
328	September 6	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (3)	II	336
329	September 6	Presentation	Cardinal Dominic Rivera	V	43
330	September 13	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (4)	II	338
331	September 20	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (124)	I	290
332	September 27	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (5)	II	340
333	October 4	Orbetello	B Alexander Abbati (6)	II	342

334	October 23	Civitavecchia	Canon Michelini	II	428
335	November 16	Sutri	Canon Blaise Pieri (2)	V	40
336	November 30	Presentation	Anthony Danei of the Passion (2)	IV	300
337	December 3	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (9)	I	550
338	December 4	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (7)	II	344
339	December 8	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (125)	I	292
340	December 10	Presentation	B Count Garagni (10)	II	233
341	—	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (126)	I	294

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342	January 2	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (27)	I	487
343	February 7	Presentation	Canon Blaise Pieri (3)	II	429
344	February 11	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (127)	I	351
345	February 20	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (128)	I	317
346	March 20	Aboard Ship	Agnes Grazi (129)	I	346
347	March 23	Portercole	Agnes Grazi (130)	I	342
348	March 28	Presentation	M De Angelis	II	437
349	April 9	[Presentation]	Agnes Grazi (131)	I	334
350	April 15	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (132)	I	346
351	May 28	Portercole	Agnes Grazi (133)	I	353
352	June 12	Presentation	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (2)	II	278
353	June 12	Presentation	Canon Blaise Pieri (4)	II	430
354	June 19	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (134)	I	295
355	June 19	Presentation	B Count Garagni (11)	II	230
356	June 19	Presentation	B Alexander Abbati (8)	II	346
357	June 19	—	Canon Blaise Pieri (5)	II	432
358	June 29	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (135)	I	298
359	July 10	Peschiera	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (1)	II	439
360	July 16	Presentation	B Count Garagni (12)	II	235
361	July 18	Presentation	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (3)	II	279
362	August 24	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (136)	I	299
363	August 26	Presentation	Canon Blaise Pieri (6)	II	434
364	August 31	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (137)	I	300
365	May 21	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (138) ⁴⁰⁷	I	304
366	—	Mt Argentario	Agnes Grazi (139)	I	306
367	—	—	Agnes Grazi (140)	I	307
368	—	—	Agnes Grazi (141)	I	308
369	August 20	—	Agnes Grazi (142)	I	311
370	—	—	Agnes Grazi (143)	I	312
371	—	—	Agnes Grazi (144)	I	313
372	July 22	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (145)	I	314
373	—	—	Agnes Grazi (146)	I	316
374	November 25	Saint Anthony	Agnes Grazi (147)	I	318
375	November 14	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (148)	I	319
376	August 31	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (149)	I	320
377	July 8	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (150)	I	323
378	August 28	—	Agnes Grazi (151)	I	326
379	June 25	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (152)	I	328
380	October 12	—	Agnes Grazi (153)	I	330
381	—	—	Agnes Grazi (154)	I	331
382	July 29	—	Agnes Grazi (155)	I	332
383	August 13	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (156)	I	335

407. The following letters addressed to Agnes Grazi lack sufficient information to place them in their proper chronological order. They are here in the order as they appear in the Italian edition. Other letters that were in the Italian edition in this part have been put into their proper chronological order, based upon internal or external evidence to the letters.

384	September 14	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (157)	I	338
385	August 28	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (158)	I	339
386	—	—	Agnes Grazi (159)	I	340
387	July 5	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (160)	I	340
388	—	Orbetello	Agnes Grazi (161)	I	343
389	July 21	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (162)	I	345
390	December 11	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (163)	I	347
391	September 6	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (164)	I	348
392	August 21	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (165)	I	348
393	—	Presentation	Agnes Grazi (166)	I	352
394	September 5	Presentation	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (4)	II	282
395	September 5	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (10)	I	552
396	September 18	Presentation	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (2)	II	441
397	October 17	Presentation	B Count Garagni (13)	II	236
398	November 2	Presentation	Aurelius Fracassini (1)	II	524
399	November 14	Presentation	B Count Garagni (14)	II	238
400	November 22	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (11)	V	46
401	November 23	Presentation	Aurelius Fracassini (2)	II	527
402	November 23	Presentation	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (5)	IV	333
403	December 18	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (28)	I	491

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404	January 22	Viterbo	B Count Garagni (15)	II	240
405	January 23	Rome	Canon Blaise Pieri (7)	II	435
406	—	—	Pope Benedict XIV (1)	IV	195
407	January 30	—	Pope Benedict XIV (2)	IV	196
408	February 16	Vetralla	B Count Garagni (16)	II	241
409	February 16	Vetralla	B Alexander Abbati (9)	II	347
410	February 26	Presentation	Benefactress of Vetralla	II	528
411	February 26	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (29)	I	492
412	March 7	San Angelo	B Alexander Abbati (10)	II	349
413	April 10	San Angelo	B Alexander Abbati (11)	II	351
414	June 23	San Angelo	B Count Garagni (17)	II	242
415	August 11	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (12)	V	48
416	August 21	San Angelo	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (6)	II	284
417	August 29	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (30)	I	495
418	September 15	—	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (3)	II	444
419	October 6	Soriano	B Count Garagni (18)	II	244
420	October 23	Soriano	Thomas Fossi (13)	V	49
421	[December]	Presentation	A Monsignor (1)	IV	324

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422	—	Presentation	A Monsignor (2)	IV	325
423	January 15	Presentation	B Count Garagni (19)	II	245
424	April 19	Civita Castellana	B Count Garagni (20)	II	246
425	May 20	Orbetello	Rector of Rupinaro (1)	II	529
426	June 6	Presentation	Vicar General of Orbetello	II	536
427	July 8	Presentation	M Cherubina Bresciani (31)	I	497
428	September 9	Presentation	Rector of Rupinaro (2)	II	531
429	September 9	Presentation	Joseph M Ferrari (1)	IV	295
430	September 9	Presentation	Joseph M Ferrari (2)	IV	297
431	September 13	Presentation	Angelo Tassara	II	533
432	September 15	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (14)	V	50
433	November 7	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (1)	II	537

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434	March 31	Rome	Fulgentius Pastorelli (2)	II	70
435	April 14	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (3)	II	73
436	April 23	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (4)	II	74
437	May 7	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (5)	II	76
438	May 13	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (6)	II	78
439	May 13	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (2)	II	538
440	May 25	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (7)	II	80
441	May 25	San Angelo	Felix Sbarra (3)	II	539
442	June 16	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (4)	II	541
443	June 18	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (8)	II	83
444	June 23	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (9)	II	86
445	June 26	Toscanelia	Fulgentius Pastorelli (10)	II	91
446	July 5	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (5)	II	542
447	July 19	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (6)	II	543
448	July 26	Soriano	M Cherubina Bresciani (32)	I	499
449	July 29	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (11)	II	92
450	August 2	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (7)	II	544
451	August 11	Soriano	Thomas Fossi (15)	I	554
452	August 13	Soriano	Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti (7)	II	287
453	August 25	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (12)	II	95
454	August 26	Soriano	Felix Sbarra (8)	IV	545
455	September	—	Cardinal A Gentili	IV	328
456	September 3	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (13)	II	98
457	September 10	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (14)	II	100
458	September 16	—	Pope Benedict XIV (3)	IV	197
459	September 16	—	Pope Benedict XIV (4)	V	226
460	September 16	—	Pope Benedict XIV (5)	V	227
461	September 18	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (15)	II	104
462	September 30	San Angelo	John Francis Sancez (4)	II	372
463	September 30	San Angelo	Joseph Danei (1)	II	549
464	November 18	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (16)	II	105
465	November 26	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (17)	II	107
466	December 2	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (18)	II	109
467	December 3	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (16)	V	52
468	December 9	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (19)	II	111
469	December 14	Soriano	M Cherubina Bresciani (33)	I	500
470	December 15	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (20)	II	113
471	December 19	—	Felix Sbarra (9)	II	547
472	—	—	Thomas Fossi (17)	V	53

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473	January 13	Orte	Fulgentius Pastorelli (21)	II	116
474	February 18	San Angelo	Adeodato Lippici	II	558
475	March 7	Presentation	Passionist Religious (1)	IV	222
476	March 15	Presentation	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (1)	II	559
477	March 16	Presentation	John Baptist Randone (2)	II	252
478	March 29	Presentation	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (4)	II	445
479	April 14	Presentation	Passionist Religious (2)	IV	224
480	May 8	—	Girolama Ercolani (1)	II	572
481	June 20	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (1)	V	56
482	July 1	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (2)	II	573
483	July 12	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (18)	I	556
484	July 14	San Angelo	Julian Sparziani (1)	II	632
485	July 22	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (2)	V	58
486	August 1	San Angelo	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (2)	II	560
487	August 10	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (3)	V	61

488	August 19	San Angelo	John Francis Sancez (5)	II	374
489	September 2	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (4)	V	62
490	September 3	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (3)	II	574
491	September 16	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (5)	V	63
492	September 23	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (19)	I	557
493	September 26	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (4)	II	575
494	October 3	Soriano	Dominic Ciaralli (1)	II	636
495	October 3	Soriano	B Fabrizio Borgia (6)	V	65
496	October 12	San Angelo	Dominic Ciaralli (2)	II	638
497	November 6	Bieda	A Religious Sister (2)	II	643
498	November 8	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (7)	V	66
499	November 21	Presentation	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (3)	II	563
500	November 25	Soriano	Thomas Fossi (20)	I	559
501	November 25	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (22)	II	118
502	November 28	Soriano	Dominic Ciaralli (3)	II	639
503	December 2	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (23)	II	122
504	December 7	Soriano	B Fabrizio Borgia (8)	V	67
505	December 9	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (24)	II	124
506	December 16	Baccano	Fulgentius Pastorelli (25)	II	127
507	December 19	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli (26)	II	129
508	December 23	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (9)	V	69
509	December 28	Soriano	B Fabrizio Borgia (10)	V	71
510	December 28	Soriano	Julian Sparziani (2)	V	142

SIGNIFICANT DATES

Born at Ovada	January 3, 1694
Baptized at Ovada	January 6, 1694
Conversion Experience	1713 or 1714
Volunteered for Crusade	1716
Confirmed at Castellazzo	April 23, 1719
Determining Inspirations	Summer 1720
Received Habit as Hermit	November 22, 1720
40-day Retreat, Castellazzo	November 23, 1720-January 1, 1721
First Writing of the Rule	December 2-7, 1720
Rome and First Passion Vow	September 1721
John Baptist Received the Habit	November 28, 1721
Mount Argentario	Lent 1722
Gaeta	August 1723
Castellazzo	Fall 1723
Gaeta	Early 1724
Troia	August 1724
Permission to Gather Companions (Benedict XIII)	May 21, 1725
Itri	May-September 1726
Hospital of San Gallicano, Rome	September 1726
Ordination to Priesthood	June 7, 1727
Father's Death	July 27, 1727
Definitive Residence on Mount Argentario	February or March 1728
First Formal Mission (Talamone)	Fall 1730
Approval of the Rule by Rescript (Benedict XIV)	May 15, 1741
Public Vows of Religious Life	June 11, 1741
Approval of the Rule by Brief (Benedict XIV)	April 1746
Mother's Death	December 10, 1746
First General Chapter (Presentation Retreat)	April 10-13, 1747
Paul Elected First General Superior	April 1747
Resolution of Legal Problems	April 22, 1750
Second General Chapter (San Angelo Retreat)	1753
Third General Chapter (San Angelo Retreat)	February 22-25, 1758
Possible Foreign Missions	1758-1759
Failure to Obtain Solemn Vows	November 23, 1760
Revised Rule Approved (Clement XIII)	November 25, 1760
Fourth General Chapter (San Angelo Retreat)	February 22-24, 1764
Father John Baptist's Death	August 30, 1765
Fifth General Chapter (San Angelo Retreat)	May 9-10, 1769
<i>Supremi Apostolatus</i> approves Rule (Clement XIV)	November 23, 1769
Passionist Nuns Established (Corneto)	May 3, 1771
Sixth General Chapter (Saints John & Paul)	May 15-20, 1775
<i>Praeclara Virtutum Exempla</i> (Pius VI)	September 15, 1775
Last Illness and Death	June 15-October 18, 1775
Process for Beatification Begun	January 7, 1777
Beatification (Pius IX)	May 1, 1853
Canonization (Pius IX)	June 29, 1867

POPES DURING PAUL'S LIFETIME

Innocent XII	1691-1700
Clement XI	1700-1721
Innocent XIII	1721-1724
Benedict XIII	1724-1730
Clement XII	1730-1740
Benedict XIV	1740-1758
Clement XIII.....	1758-1769
Clement XIV	1769-1774
Pius VI.....	1775-1799



Innocent XIII



Benedict XIII



Clement XII



Benedict XIV

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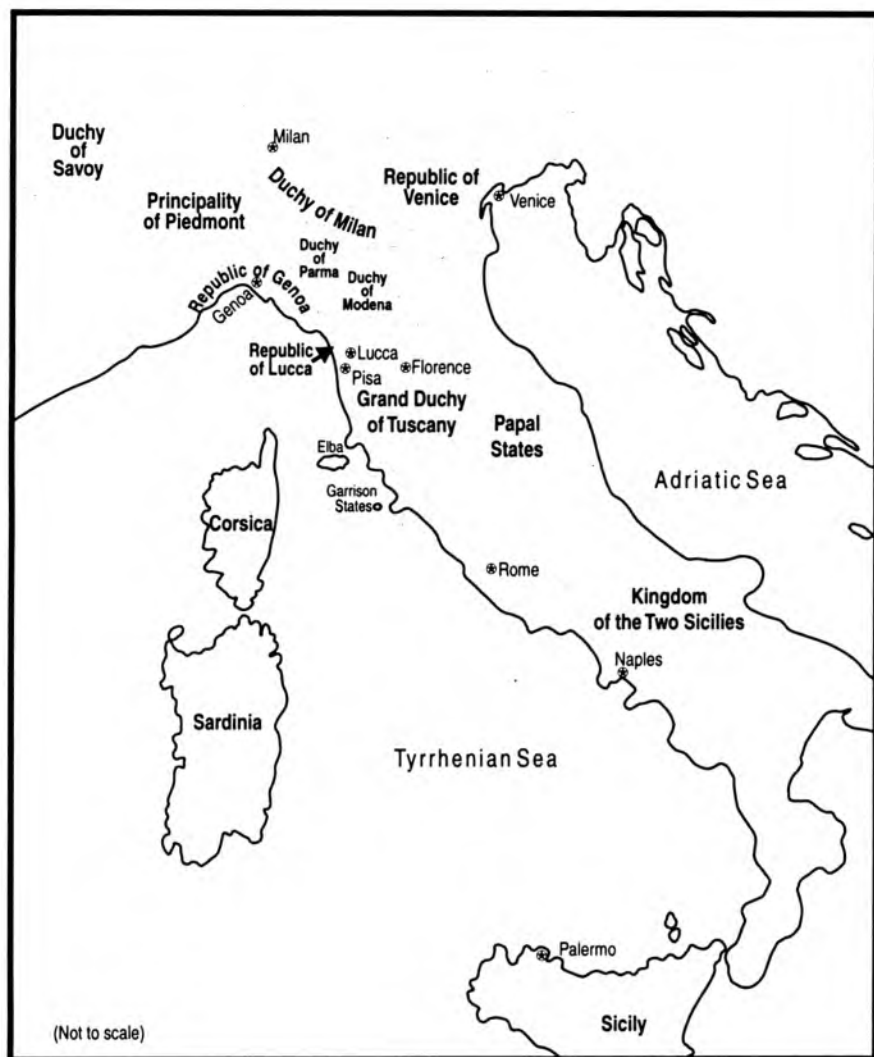
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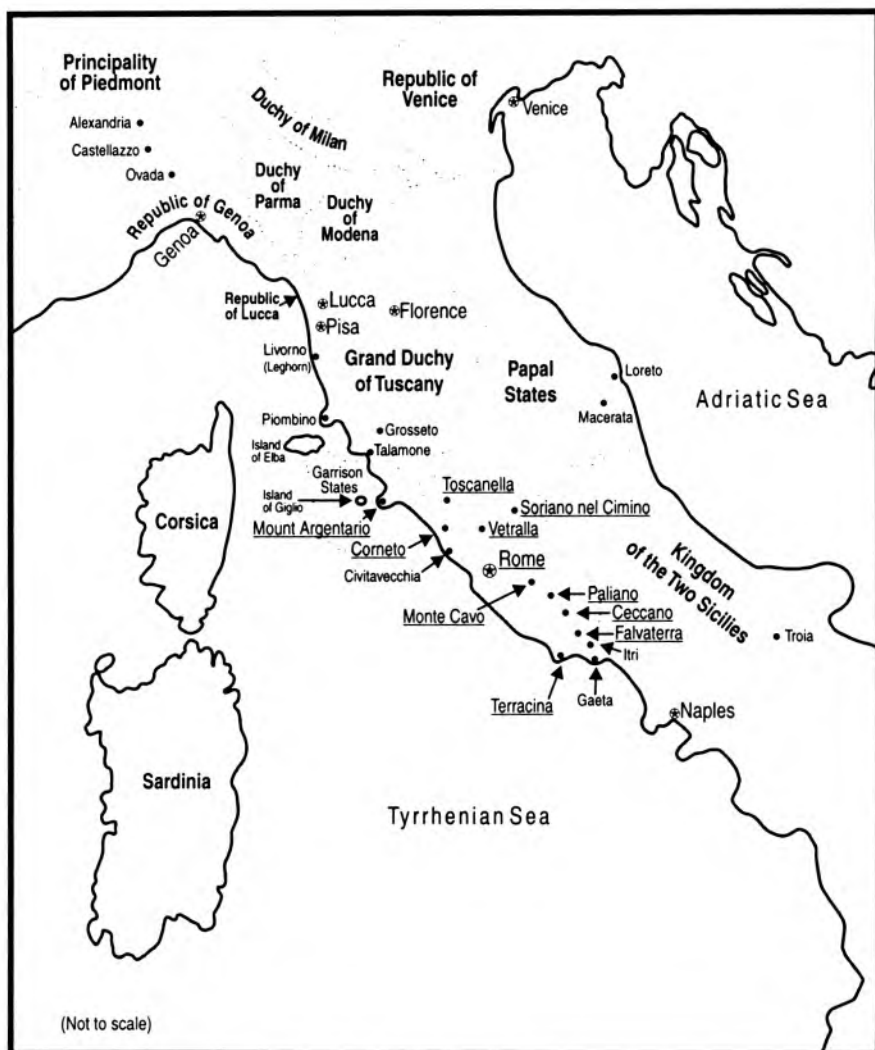
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Political Divisions Circa 1750

Papal States (from north to south): Romagna, Marches, Umbria, St. Peter's Patrimony.

For two centuries Spain ruled Naples and Sicily through viceroys—one at Palermo, one at Naples. In the War of the Spanish Succession, the kingdom was occupied (1707) by Austria, which kept it by the terms of the Peace of Utrecht (1713). During the War of the Polish Succession, Don Carlos of Bourbon (later Charles III of Spain) conquered Naples and Sicily. The Treaty of Vienna (1738) confirmed the conquest, and the two kingdoms came under the protection of the Spanish crown. The country that controlled Naples usually controlled the Garrison States.



Retreats Founded by Saint Paul of the Cross (Locations Underlined)

Retreat of the Presentation	Mount Argentario	September 14, 1737
Retreat of San Angelo	Vetralia	March 6, 1744
Retreat of San Eutizio	Soriano nel Cimino	March 8, 1744
Retreat of Saint Mary of Corniano	Ceccano	January 14, 1748
Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak	Toscanella	March 27, 1748
Retreat of San Soso	Falvaterra	April 2, 1751
Retreat of the Sorrowful Virgin	Terracina	February 6, 1752
Retreat of Saint Mary of Pugliano	Paliano	November 23, 1755
Retreat of the Holy Trinity	Mount Cavo	March 19, 1758
Retreat of Saint Joseph	Mount Argentario	July 16, 1761
Hospice of the Crucified	Rome	January 9, 1767
Retreat of Our Lady of Sorrows	Corneto	March 17, 1769
Retreat of Saints John and Paul	Rome	December 9, 1773



The area of southern Tuscany and St. Peter's Patrimony where St. Paul of the Cross preached missions and retreats. For a description of many of these locations, refer to Jude Mead's book *St. Paul of the Cross: A Source/Workbook for Paulacrucian Studies*, pp. 99-107.

