

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

Table of Contents



Volume II
1748-1758

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

VOLUME TWO

(1748–1758)



New City Press

The LETTERS of
SAINT PAUL of the CROSS

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(1748–1758)

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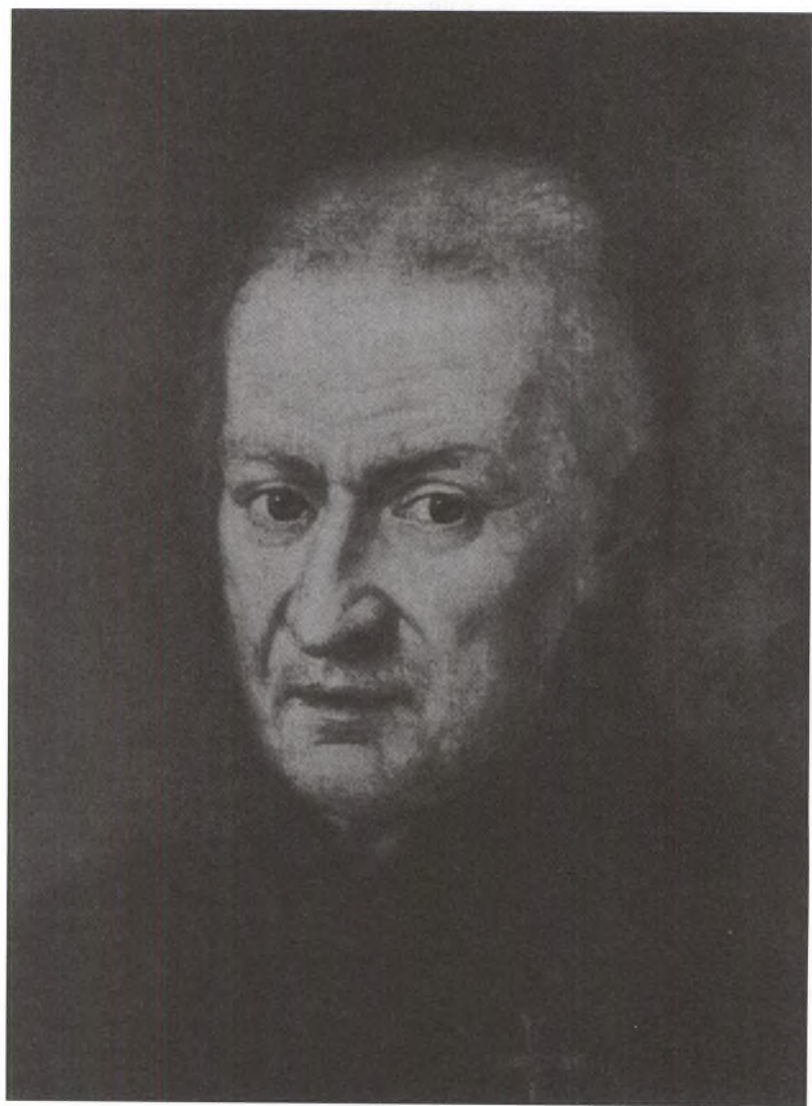
DEDICATION

*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 help 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.

Contents

Introduction to Volume Two	ix
Preaching, Directing, Founding Amid Sickness (1748–1758)	1
Ceccano, Toscanella, Frati (1748)	3
“A Miraculous Grace” (1749)	103
“Our Affairs Are Asleep in Rome!” (1750)	198
Missions (1751)	240
Great Tribulations (1752)	295
The Second General Chapter (1753)	335
Missions and Convalescence (1754)	382
“In the Midst of My Storms” (Late-1754)	414
“All My Tasks and Journeys” (1755)	427
Scarcely Afloat amid Tempests on the Violent Sea (1756)	492
“I Have Abandoned Everything” (1757)	532
Death of Paul’s Greatest Benefactor (1758)	594
“The Pope Will Be Favorable to Us” (1758)	624
Indexes	653
Names of Correspondents	655
Chronological Chart	663
Significant Dates	676
Popes	677
Bibliography	678
Maps	683



Paolo Della Croce

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME TWO

Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.¹

This second volume of the letters of Saint Paul of the Cross covers the period from 1748 to 1758. During these years we see Paul continuing his missionary activity and consolidating the work of establishing a religious community. He begins to experience the onset of old age, as he is now in his mid-fifties to mid-sixties, an old man in eighteenth century estimation. This is a time of struggles and opposition, of desolation in his personal religious experience, and, at the same time, of hope for the future, expressed by a constant willingness to embark on new ventures with very slender resources.

Throughout the letters we read of Paul's ministry as a preacher of missions and retreats. At times he will protest that he is too old or infirm to continue this demanding work,² but in fact his last mission will not be until 1769, when he is 75 years old. Reading his letters, we can see that the ministry of preaching is his first love, and, although he complains a little, he is quite proud of still being able to do the work.³ He takes great care in seeing that everything is prepared by the local clergy and people before he arrives for the mission, giving directions for the kind of accommodation the missionaries will need,⁴ the way the platform for preaching is to be constructed,⁵ and the proper ceremonial for opening the mission.⁶

Another ministry in which we see him engaged is that of spiritual direction. Although he protests at times that he is not capable of directing others, and at other times insists that he is not a regular or "ordinary" spiritual director, as this is forbidden by the Constitutions, still we see him giving spiritual direction to a number of long-term directees, some of whom we met already in Volume One. People such as Thomas Fossi, Colomba Gandolfi, Maria Cherubina Bresciani, and the scrupulous Girolama Ercolani, with whom Paul seems to have infinite patience, appear again and again in the course of this volume. We

1. A member of the Passionist Province of St. Patrick, which covers Ireland and Scotland, Father Paul Francis Spencer has been involved in pastoral ministry and has lectured around the world on the subject of Passionist spirituality. He is currently superior of the Passionist community in Glasgow, Scotland.

2. "Dear Thomas, do not engage me for missions, since it is impossible for me to come over there. I am an old man of sixty-one years..." (Thomas Fossi, August 31, 1754).

3. In this mood, he writes to John Sanchez: "Tomorrow at an early hour I leave for the convent at Valantano. What do you have to say? Is this not the life of a gypsy, packing one's bundle every few days and then go here or there?" (March 4, 1757).

4. Paul writes, for example, to Reverend George Melata: "Although there will be four missionaries, the house in question will be sufficient. What is important is that there be space for receiving the confessions of the men at night and early in the morning" (March 11, 1755).

5. In a letter to Reverend John Fedeles, Paul writes: "I also ask that you have a good platform built at least eight palms in length and width proportionate, solid and strong, so that we can have the sacred ceremony in good order" (October 15, 1751).

6. A very full description of this is given in his letter to Bishop Anthony Leli (December 30, 1758).

meet for the first time Lucy Burlini and her priest friend and adviser John Lucattini. There are also others who write to him, hoping to establish regular correspondence, but who are disappointed.⁷

Paul's role as a teacher of prayer can be seen throughout the volume. We see him giving instruction on how to meditate on the Passion, listing the dispositions needed for contemplative prayer, and counseling patience when what he tries to explain is beyond the experience of the person to whom he is writing.⁸ He also deals with problems in prayer, giving rules for coping with scruples, advice on how to evaluate visions or locutions, and ways of dealing with temptations and even diabolical interventions. In a number of letters we see how Paul's reading of the German Dominican, Johannes Tauler, influences his language and also his spiritual teaching. The theme of Divine Rebirth is evident in the letters of this period, giving rise to the notion that it was in these years that Paul began to read the works of Tauler. We see how his assimilation of Tauler's thought is interwoven with his own teaching on the interior desert, the temple, and the sea of the Passion.

For Paul, as founder and now General Superior of the Congregation of the Passion, these are years of development, characterized by new foundations and a dramatic increase in vocations. These are in part the natural consequences of the approval of the Constitutions by Pope Benedict XIV, referred to in letters in Volume One, but flow also from the increased missionary activity of the Community. The years covered by this volume see five new foundations being made, all of them south of Rome. Hopes for foundations outside of the Papal States are also expressed, in Sicily, Tuscany, and Piedmont. But this is difficult in the climate of the eighteenth century, and all of these come to nothing. Paul often refers to his desire for a foundation in Rome and to conversations he has had to that effect. We know that in a letter which is now lost, he petitioned his friend Cardinal Rezzonico, shortly after his election as Pope Clement XIII, to grant the Congregation solemn vows and a house in Rome.⁹ However, the negotiations about the house in Rome were always considered by Paul to be "top secret," to such an extent that he could even deny in a letter that such an idea existed.¹⁰

The Retreat at Ceccano, founded in January 1748, was the first house to be opened south of Rome. A neighboring community of Mendicant Friars protested against the Passionists settling there, saying that their own monastery would suffer financially as a result. This was the beginning of a campaign of opposition from various Mendicant Orders, which at one point threatened to

7. In a letter to a religious sister, he writes: "I ask you not to write me any more, for I have too much to do, and I cannot take up correspondence with nuns. Believe me, if you do write, you will not get an answer..." (June 19, 1756).

8. Father John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (July 14, 1756).

9. See letter to Paul from Cardinal Crescenzi, August 5, 1758, quoted in Zoffoli, *S. Paolo della Croce*, Vol. I, p. 1082.

10. Sister Anna Maria of Saint Joseph, possibly 1758 (L. IV, 322).

close most of the houses of Paul's Community. From 1748 until the spring of 1750 we see Paul preoccupied with this problem, trying to influence opinion in Rome, asking for prayers from religious and laity for a successful outcome, and counteracting accusations made against the Passionists by their opponents. When the commission of cardinals, set up to examine the question, finds in favor of the Passionists, Paul writes on May 2, 1750, the finest of his circular letters to his religious, which is an invitation to prayer and confidence in the Holy Spirit and at the same time a summary of what Paul understands as the ecclesial mission of his Community.¹¹

Twice during this eleven-year period the Congregation of the Passion celebrates a General Chapter, in 1753 and 1758. At both of these Chapters, Paul is reelected General Superior in spite of his protests, but shows no signs of incapacity either in his preparation of the Chapter or his governing after reelection. Throughout the period he is concerned with seeing his Community firmly established. For although the Constitutions had been approved by the pope, the Congregation, as such, had received no official approval. Consequences of this were the difficulties at times encountered in making new foundations, in having candidates admitted to ordination, and in pursuing his plan for establishing a Passionist community for women. For Paul, the solution to all of these lay in the Passionists becoming an exempt order rather than a congregation, but this would only happen if the vows they took were solemn vows rather than simple. Already we can see the beginnings of his move toward this solution to the limitations imposed on his vision of the Community's future. In Volume Three, we will see how, in fact, a "third way" is offered by a later pope, Clement XIV.

An invitation from the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to name a team of Passionists for a mission to the Caucasus is seen by Paul as a mark of esteem for his Community on the part of the pope. However, neither this mission nor the proposed alternative in Moldavia comes to fruition, and it will be only after Paul's death that the first Passionist mission *ad infideles* is established in Wallachia, in present-day Bulgaria and Romania.

Paul's interest in a community of women Passionists develops during the years covered by this volume, from initial hesitancy to tentative raising of the possibility of such a community, to the point, near the end of the volume, of secret negotiations with a financial backer and an architect. In earlier letters we have seen him discuss this idea with Agnes Grazi and Sister Maria Cherubina Bresciani. By this stage, he is selecting the women he would like to see in the community when it is established. We see him writing of the women's community to Lucy Burlini, who, while encouraging Paul in this project, will not in fact be a member of the community, and to Teresa Palozzi, who will be one of the first members of the women's community and to whom Paul gives explicit instructions on the need to hold herself in readiness for its

11. May 2, 1750.

establishment.¹² He also continues writing during these years to Mary Crucified Costantini, who will later be superior of the community of Passionist nuns.

One of Paul's recurring preoccupations during these years is the formation of new members of the Congregation. Some of those joining the Community were already clerics, but these varied in caliber from a priest who was already a doctor in theology and in canon and civil law to a young man whose ability was so poor that Paul decided not to admit him to study for ordination as a priest. For candidates of proven ability, and occasionally for those recommended by people whose judgment Paul could trust, rooms could always be found in the novitiate, but for the majority of applicants, a problem of the years covered in this volume, not encountered in earlier years, was the insufficiency of rooms in the novitiate. Paul tries to deal with this by negotiating a site for a new novitiate on Mount Argentario,¹³ but the new novitiate will not be opened until 1761. In the meantime, he has to limit the number of novices accepted each year.

Against this background, we can see why Paul is so exacting in his choice of candidates. Young men wishing to join should have "a good character and appearance, good health, docile, not hypochondriac, of a gentle nature; otherwise," Paul says, "there will not be a successful outcome."¹⁴ In a circular letter he gives detailed guidelines for examining candidates, who are to be assessed with regard to education, physical and psychological health, family background, and ability to live in a Passionist apostolic community.¹⁵ We can contrast this with the readiness with which young men were admitted to the clerical state and the minimal requirements for priestly ordination in many dioceses in eighteenth-century Italy.

As we read through the letters, we gain insight into Paul's own condition during these years. We see the onset of sciatica and arthritis, bouts of malaria, and, in general, the weakening of his resistance as old age begins to take hold of him. These are also years of desolation, when in his personal prayer he is experiencing great dryness and discouragement, heightened by the difficulties he is going through in his work of guiding the Congregation. There are also family concerns. He receives requests for financial help from his sister Teresa

12. Paul writes to her on December 7, 1755: "With regard to a convent, that is something far off, but God is omnipotent and can do it quicker than we think. It is needful to pray God night and day and never to speak to anyone about it." Later, on August 22, 1756, he will say: "With regard to becoming a Pious Teacher, I leave you free, and, if the canon, your confessor, approves, go ahead, for that will help to take you away from the noise of the world at this time. But stay resolute in your heart, that, if the work I have shared with you comes into being, you will already be on the way with a fine preparation, so then you will retreat to a more perfect life, etc. Keep this completely sealed tight in your heart."

13. See Paul's letters to the King of the Two Sicilies at the end of 1753 and to Cardinal Colonna in 1753.

14. Reverend Thomas Anthony Panizza (June 10, 1756).

15. August 20, 1752.

and his brother Joseph, to which he replies that, as a religious, he has no funds with which to come to their aid. Behind this, we get the impression that he thinks that, if his brother Joseph were to work a bit harder and complain a bit less, the family's problems might be resolved. The death of his sister Catherine, the youngest of his surviving siblings, brings Paul his first experience of the loss of a brother or sister since childhood.

The person we meet in this volume is still living out the “inspirations” and the “compelling desire to found a Congregation” given to him as a young man.¹⁶ But, situated as it is within the mature years of the author, Volume Two of the *Letters of Saint Paul of the Cross* now shows us a man who is experienced enough to deal wisely with challenging situations, energetic enough to persevere in the face of opposition, and open enough to let his vision continue to be shaped by the events and the people through whom God speaks to him. We see Paul as a person who is both imaginative and realistic, detached and yet engaged, a contemplative who is also an apostle.

Note to Reader:
The “General Introduction” for all three volumes
is not reproduced in Volume Two.
Please refer to the beginning of Volume One.

16. See “Preface to the Original Rule” in Volume One.

PREACHING, DIRECTING, FOUNDING

AMID SICKNESS

(1748–1758)

Ceccano, Toscanella, Frati (1748)

The new year finds Paul hastening to Ceccano with the priests, brothers, and students who will form the first community at the Abbey ("Badia") of Corniano. The first several letters give us Paul's own reflections on this experience.

There are several letters in February which tell of his journey from Ceccano to Rome, his audience with the pope and his return to Vetralla and Toscanella, and with plans to arrive at the Presentation Retreat early in March.

Interestingly, it is in this year that Paul begins using John Tauler, the fourteenth-century German Dominican mystic. In future letters Paul will make use of Tauler's writings to explain elements of mystical prayer.

Paul remains at the Presentation through March, but then plans to go to Toscanella for the foundation there. In the meantime he has learned that people in Terracina want a Retreat and he writes to the Council and to the 78-year-old Carmelite, Bishop Joachim Oldo, bishop of Terracina. There are twenty-seven letters to Bishop Oldo from March 20, 1748, until August 27, 1749. Oldo died in November 1749.

The rest of this year Paul spends on the road or in the chambers of cardinals. He walks with his companions from Viterbo to Ceccano, then to Ferentino and Rome, and back to Viterbo, only to leave again for a mission in Porto. During this time he writes letters to Father Fulgentius, Bishop Oldo, Bishop Borgia, and others, describing the situation of the battle with the Mendicants. The final letter, undated but perhaps written earlier, to Father Thomas Mary Struzzieri tells us of the terrible sufferings he endured, even in the earliest years, as he traveled for the Congregation. Paul knows the baptism he must endure to inflame the world with the fire of love.

511

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (4)

[Before foundation of Ceccano]
1748

Because of the eagerness I have for this work, it makes me go with strong fervor to Viterbo to solicit for it. So here I am eager to persuade you to petition the general council to provide for the building in the manner that I wrote to Canon Citurini, from whom details can be gotten.

Let them not go by human and political prudence, as I said to the canon, but in accord with the light of God, who gives to whom he chooses. If they act as I say, they will do well; otherwise, they will lose the treasure. "For the grace of the Holy Spirit knows no late undertakings." I have written more for this Retreat than for ten others, but patience! Where fervor is lacking, one must act this way to give a push. If this will make them happy in that city, I do not know. I would like to hope so. I have begun the letter, for my eagerness is great that this work be established for the salvation of so many...

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

512

Father Cajetan Giannini¹

Ceccano
January 25, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

With much edification and consolation I have read the esteemed letter that you wrote to our Father Thomas Mary, in which I see your fervent zeal is more and more inflamed to promote the glory of God and the salvation of your neighbor, as well as to secure the spread of this poor, newly born Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, a means very efficacious to establish souls in a holy love and fear of God. You are making the offer of two retreats on the part of the bishop of Aquino, one near Pontecorvo by half a mile, the other in Regno, with no further indication of where it is. Respectfully, I tell you that the one at Pontecorvo is not suited to our Congregation, while that in Regno is acceptable since it is in Papal Territory, San Pietro in Campea, and since I have been informed and realized it is a solitary place with a fine church, with some rooms, with a walled garden, water, good air, and, best of all, in a site able to afford great good for souls.

Accordingly, if you, in your great concern, would wish with your apostolic zeal to begin to take up the affair with the Duke of Sora in order to obtain the kind assent of His Majesty the King of Naples, you may do so openly so that a happy result will emerge. You might write an informative letter to the Duke of Sora, giving him a brief understanding of the profit that our Institute does for souls, the rigorous poverty we profess, without fixed income for particular or general support, not even under the title of sacristy, pious legacy, or any other title. We do not seek alms door to door, but live on alms from benefactors in the diocese in which the Retreat is established, and we may establish only one Retreat in a diocese. You could also point out the Retreats

1. This is the only letter we have to Giannini. He is a friend of Father Thomas Sturzzieri and helped in the foundation at Ceccano. Paul hopes he will help in making another foundation south of Rome, probably in the diocese of Aquino, the town of Regno. Paul is sick and dictates the first part of this letter and then adds some lines in his own hand.

already established, the first one on Mount Argentario, in the territory of the King of Naples, which was founded with the approval of His Majesty and the help of many contributions for the building and followed up every year with contributions of grain, when there is need; the second was founded in the territory of Vetralla; the third at San Eutizio² near Soriano; the fourth here in Ceccano.

As far as negotiating for the foundation of other Retreats, as you have in mind, I would hope for a quick solution if the bishop of Aquino were to write to the duke with the same recommendations and the most powerful reasons to move him to consent to the foundation and obtain the royal consent, as above. I reserve the right to have one of our Fathers visit the place as soon as you would let me know.

I put this entire affair in your hands, as well as in the Providence of God, who used you to cooperate in the foundation of the Retreat at Ceccano, from which there will come more and more glory to His Divine Majesty and salvation for souls. So, I hope that His Divine Majesty will use you for the establishment of another Retreat to your great merit.³

My dear Father Cajetan, I have had this letter written by a person not used to writing, for I am bedridden. I ask for your prayers. I love you much in Jesus Christ and would have you live to the Day of Judgment, but you wear yourself out too much. You have not a moment's respite. How can you endure? For the love of Jesus Christ, if you will not have compassion on yourself, have compassion on poor souls, especially in these deadly times when there is such a scarcity of workers.

Do well what you can for the foundations. "Your reward will be exceedingly great." I will remember you in my poor prayers. In this Retreat I have not heard anything of Father Philip, whom I had remain to help with confessions, and he will tell you about the great things of this good people who make the air resound with the praises of Jesus and Mary. Father Thomas and his companion are on the mission in Vico. I end at your feet and ask your holy blessing, and I am from my heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

2. In reference to the Retreat and church we keep with the Italian. In reference to persons we use the English form *Eustace*.

3. Only from this point on is the letter written in the hand of Paul.

Reverend Dominic Girolami⁴

Ceccano

January 26, 1748

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

Very Reverend Father,

If I had not been assaulted with a fiery attack of quartan fever, which I endured since October 28, but from which I was perfectly cured, as is clear from the fact I made the trip on foot, and that now I have a relapse, I would have long fulfilled my duty and given you news of the new foundation of this holy Retreat, in which you had so great a share, seeing that the always adorable Providence used your dear and esteemed person to promote it. In short, I tell you that I came here on January 13 with seven religious. These good religious went through the countryside four by four, and they made the air resound with praises to Jesus and Mary, which brought tears of devotion. Then we were received by the clergy and the people in procession, singing the praises of the Most High in the church where, after a devout discourse on our Institute, delivered by a devout priest, there was Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

On the following Sunday, that is, January 14, we had the solemn foundation with a great concourse of people and the presence of the bishop, who with a rare example of piety assisted at the sacred ceremony, which he had me conduct. "Blessed be the Lord, who works his mercies for us." I hope that His Divine Majesty will do great things through his servants to his greater glory and the salvation of our neighbors. You should help me give thanks to the gentle Jesus for the great mercies he continues to grant to this poor Congregation, and pray much for me, who am in so much need.

God knows how I desire to embrace you in person in the holy Side of Jesus Christ. But it is necessary to sacrifice this desire to God; for besides being sickly, I am called to Rome with haste to attend to the foundation of the Retreat of Saint Thomas in Formis. I will proceed there as soon as my fever is better.

As for the mission, it is impossible at this time for me to help in it, seeing that I was forced to interrupt the preaching I was doing as a mini-mission to the good people because of the illness I mentioned. In spite of all that, there was such compunction, even after only three days, that I was told there was no one who had not gone to confession. So you can see the impossibility. Father Thomas and Father Anthony are now in Vico and will end there February 4, and then they need to go to Ferentino to conduct a retreat for the clergy until Lent. Then there is repose in solitude and prayer and fasting according our Rules. But be sure that "what is deferred is not taken away."

4. Girolami is archpriest of Anticoli (present Fiuggi). Paul mentions his illness but says it is not the continuation of the illness he had earlier in October. Of that fever he had been cured, for he journeyed to Ceccano "on foot." Girolami also had been part of the foundation at the "Abbey."

Brother Dominic wants to be a saint. He has great ambitions and walks faithfully in the path of virtue to everyone's edification and is loved in the Lord by all, and I love him in the Lord with distinction. He recommends himself to your prayers and is constantly thankful for the great assistance given him. He asks you to do the same for his relatives, especially his sisters and brothers. He says that to have seen the dead bodies has helped him the most. He asks you to do the same for his brothers and other young people, and he asks you to guide his sister to be a saint and give herself to the divine service in some convent, etc. I know it was not necessary to write this in view of your zeal. I have done so for the consolation of our good brother.

I cannot answer the letter of the carpenter, for I am writing this from my bed. I do not feel inspired to decide anything about the case. It is a cause of great relief. He should rather recommend himself to God and see whether he is called to another religious congregation. I can say no more about that. But you should examine the case closely, seeing that questions regarding marriage need strong certainty.

With regard to your own conduct, I do not know what I am to say, only that I have great hopes for it, for I have every expectation that you will persevere in prayer, be recollected within yourself, keeping jealous guard in dealing with persons of the opposite sex, no matter how spiritual they may be, so as to avoid many stumbling stones, above all, in the new convent school where heavenly prudence is needed.

My dear archpriest, the great love I have for you in Christ allows me to take this liberty. Be prudent about overworking yourself; give first place to your soul. Well-ordered charity requires that. Retire early at night so as to be able to take necessary sleep and to be more prepared for holy prayer. Stay within yourself: "The Kingdom of God is within you."

I can do no more; I am writing from bed with a weak head. I do not lose sight of you in my poor prayers. I greet you on my behalf and for your religious brothers who love you much. God knows how much they want for you for the glory of God. Here, there are two from the Retreat of Soriano, Father Eustace, a subdeacon, and Confrater John. Goodbye, dear friend. I leave you in the Heart of Jesus and always more from a true heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

514

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (11)

Ceccano

January 27, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

May Jesus, who is the Sovereign Giver of every good, reward with copious graces and heavenly gifts the charity which you continue toward this poor Retreat. I assure you that I, and all the religious, live in gratitude to you with our poor prayers.

I am writing this from bed because I have a fierce quartan fever, which forced me to interrupt my preaching since Tuesday. Nevertheless, the people were rendered so penitent and reacted so well that it was much better than if I had been able to continue. Blessed be God.

The good cleric of San Lorenzo has finished his retreat with devotion and is filled with good desires and has made some fine resolutions, especially not to ever leave mental prayer, which is the foundation to remain fervent and persevere in virtue. If he perseveres, as I expect, he will be a good ecclesiastic and do good for himself and others. I end at the feet of Your Excellency, asking that you continue the charity of your prayers for me and your strong protection. With profound reverence and asking your holy blessing, I am always more,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

515

Father Matthew Nardecchia (1)

Ceccano

January 31, 1748

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

Dear Reverend Father,

The regard I have for your piety had me not doubt one bit that you have devoutly and with deep resignation kissed the loving hand that delivered the merciful stroke in the temporal life of your good mother. All the more so since you have every reason to believe with firm confidence that our good God has received her into the bosom of his mercies. It is no wonder that you gave way to some tears in tribute of love to such a good mother. It would have been wrong not to have met the needs of nature when the privilege of not weeping at a mother's death was not granted to Saint Augustine and other great saints.

So dry your tears and rejoice in the good fortune of your good mother. This miserable sinner will not fail to contribute his poor prayers and holy sacrifices for her, my tiny offering.

My fever has dropped for the moment; I have a day of grace. I hope it will not return. But if His Divine Majesty wills it to continue, I will not fail to say: "Yes, Father, because it was pleasing in your sight." I have not replied sooner because I was with fever, and I ask your pardon. I leave you in the sweet Heart of Jesus, asking for your devout prayers, and with fullest esteem, veneration, and respect I reverently claim that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (12)⁵

Ceccano

February 1, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I would have gone gladly to receive the command of Signore Marini Di Torrice if I had not been impeded by my illness, from which I have recovered slightly today. If the Mercy of God continues to preserve me from the fever, I will be at your feet on Saturday for some hours to receive your venerable commands. Then I will continue my journey to Rome because I am much in demand for the business with the Retreat of Saint Thomas in Formis. The cardinal of San Clemente has been writing to me.⁶ Since the carnival time is approaching, I need to be in Rome at least by February 12, or February 13 at the latest, so that I may be able to clear up the affair and return quickly to regain my health so that the disease does not come back with increased force.

In these circumstances, I will accept from your kindness a comfortable means of travel to Rome because I find myself, recovering from my sickness, very weakened and unable to make the journey on foot. So in this case you will increase your great merits before the Most High by this great charity.

I await Father Thomas and Father Anthony around February 5 or 6 of this month. After they have rested a few days, they will be there to serve Your Excellency by giving the retreat to the ordinands. Abbe Angeletti, who pays his respects to you, has received from your charity for the Retreat the wax candles, paper, books, and one hundred Mass intentions, along with the chocolate. May the Lord repay you with his copious graces and heavenly gifts in time and in a blessed eternity, which I confidently expect. We all continue in gratitude with our poor prayers and holy sacrifices for you.

On the occasion when I will be at your feet, I will have the consolation of offering in person my devout and respectful offer of service to Bishop Bacheltoni if he is there as you informed me. Humbly at your feet I end by praying for your holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

5. Again, Paul speaks of his illness. Notice that he accepts the bishop's offer of "a comfortable means of travel to Rome," where he must go to settle matters on the new Retreat of Saint Thomas in Formis.

6. Cardinal Annibale Albani.

Thomas Fossi (21)

Ceccano

February 8, 1748

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

Dear Thomas and Beloved Son in Christ,

Right now I find myself in this holy Retreat of Our Lady of Corniano in the territory of Ceccano, Campagna-Marittima, and more than two hundred miles away from you. It was established on January 14, the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, when the people made the air resound with praises to Jesus and Mary. It was a thing to bring tears of devotion to my eyes. Your letter was forwarded to me in this Retreat. Since I am very busy, I am answering in haste with these few lines.

You already know, as I have always said and written, that with regard to the debt, you are in a holy, conjugal freedom, and you see and touch with your hand that God does not want your resolution in this regard. So, continue in accord with the laws of holy matrimony. Simply make use of the counsel of the Apostle and practice continence at certain more devotional and solemn times to free yourselves the more for prayer. Otherwise, these resolves of yours will never give you peace.

With regard to penances, you know what the obligations of a married couple are. So I would wish that your penances were a continual exercise of virtue, conformable to your state: humility of heart, mortification of the passions, suffering of adversity, gentleness and charity with your neighbor, especially with servants, resignation to the Will of God, recollection of heart, the remembrance of the Passion of Christ Jesus, the devout frequentation of the holy sacraments and, above all, the upbringing of your children. Such are your penances. These will make you holy in your state of life. Disciplines and hair shirts are not for you, nor for you wife, who has little health, and you, too, are delicate. Observe these practices faithfully.

I will celebrate the three Masses you sent me and God will reward your charity. Father Fulgentius will tell you how to send the alms. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and give you a share in my poor prayers. I end by leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with your wife and children. God bless you. Amen.

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (27)

Ceccano

February 8, 1748

Leaving February 10, 1748.

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

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I cannot express the great consolation I had in reading your dear letter, dated January 25. I am learning of the very great mercies our good God continues to impart to our blessed religious, especially the good novices, and of the tender devotion to Mary Most Holy and of the true and intimate charity among them. This is the clearest sign that they are true disciples of our Crucified Love. Thanks be to God.

Here, marvelous things have happened at the opening of the Retreat, and, God willing, I will give you an oral report.

It is a cause to praise much our good God when seeing these blessed sons with exact observance in the midst of so many pinches and burdens of holy poverty. However, necessities are not lacking in food. We are provided for well enough.

I am glad Father Francis undertakes the examens. He will come out well, for I know who he is.

I am feeling well, and that is a great grace, for I had a ferocious fever. Now I am better, almost as good as new, and I leave Saturday, February 10, for Rome. Then I will go to San Angelo, where I will stay a few days and then move on to Toscanella and bring to a close the business of the Retreat. The bishop of Viterbo has asked this.

The Retreat of Saint Thomas in Formis is gone, for the Chapter of Saint Peter was unwilling on all counts to give consent on the basis that they depended entirely on that place for their fixed income, and on a false rumor that in time... Believe me, a great weight has been taken from my shoulders, and God knows the uneasiness I felt about that business. God be blessed.

In his time God will give us a house and church in Rome in a better way. I hope that Saint Bibiana will accept us in her house. But there is need of much prayer to that saint. Have everyone there undertake that so this great saint will implore His Divine Majesty. You understand my feelings about this, as I do not trust in myself. I am waiting to see.

You see how Toscanella is going? Nevertheless, there is need to be established there.

Today, I am awaiting our missionaries from Vico. They should have arrived the day before yesterday, but the rains are very heavy.

Thomas Fossi has three *ruspi* to hand over for three Masses which I will celebrate. I include a letter directed to him so that you can forward it. I am including it with yours, and I am telling him to consign the money to be transmitted to that Retreat. Use it according to your needs there, as seems best to you.

I close by embracing you in the holy Side of Jesus, and I ask you to pardon the great afflictions that come with my letters, etc., and my poor behavior as usual. Greet all for me. I have hopes of being there before the middle of Lent. Let them pray that God give me strength.

Above all, my cordial greetings to Father Vice Rector, whom I love much in God, and the Lord knows how much I admit I am indebted to him. I am evil enough, but I am not a sham, and I speak from my heart. I think he will go as companion with Father Thomas for the mission at Viterbo. We will speak personally. Jesus bless all of you. I am always more yours.

I ask you to have great care for charity, for the love of God, etc.

If I have time, I will write from Rome.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

519

Prince Grand Constable Colonna (1)

Ceccano

[February 1748]

Your Excellency,

Paul of the Cross, President of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, your humble servant and petitioner, declares that whereas the holy Retreat at the Abbey of Our Holy Lady of Corniano has been established in the territory of Ceccano, in the happy territory of Your Excellency, and whereas all things necessary for the progress of the building are at hand, with the exception of a small amount of lumber, asks of the great piety of Your Excellency to make a donation of ten wild chestnut trees in the grove of Ceccano or in that of Pratica by ordering the minister general of that section to consign them to Abbe Angeletti of Ceccano, since he is the deputed manager of the building. Since Your Excellency has already labored with so much zeal for our holy foundation so that the author of this petition, assured of your innate goodness, has no doubts about receiving this request, and assures you of the always more intense gratitude of the Congregation in its prayers and holy sacrifices.

520

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (13)

Rome

February 17, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I did not write to you through the carriage driver because, in addition to my exhaustion and dizziness from the trip, I was unable to give you any information on our case. Now I thank you for your great kindness to me, the great charity done me, especially with your carriage, which was a great help

against a relapse of the fever I suffered in Ceccano. May Jesus reward your charity.

The Mercy of God is always blessing the affairs of our poor Congregation. I received written word from here that the business of Saint Thomas in Formis was over, but that is not true. The day before yesterday, I was with the architect of the Chapter of Saint Peter to look over the place for the building, etc., and he will give a favorable report to the Chapter, whence we may hope for a favorable assent, and it seems there is no reason for doubt.

Yesterday morning, I was at the feet of His Holiness, and he showed me singular demonstrations of charity, and he was very pleased with expression of thanks to the Highest with the reports I gave him of the progress of our poor Congregation, especially regarding the foundation of the Retreat at Ceccano. In addition, he granted me a favor very necessary for the Congregation. In the interests of brevity I will not go into that, but wait until the apostolic brief will be issued, as I confidently expect will happen.

Yesterday toward nightfall, I went to see Abbe Nardini, secretary to Cardinal Colonna, who showed me a petition made out by the Guardian and Definitors of Saint Bonaventure to block the foundation we have already made at Ceccano.⁷ This petition is to be presented to the Holy Father by Cardinal Colonna, the Protector.

This business will cause some disturbance, but I hope it will not succeed. I would hope that the people of Ceccano do not find out about it, for that would cause a great upset there. I will do all I can to see they do not know about it, at least not the people at large.

I am writing to Father Thomas — I think he is there — so that he be careful to accept from the merciful hands of God whatever comes. Here, I am leaving someone who is taking due steps to block, etc. I will leave, please God, for the Retreat of San Angelo at Vetralla either tomorrow or Monday. I will stay there at least ten or twelve days. I end at the feet of Your Excellency and implore the charity of your prayers and strong protection, and with profound reverence I kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am always more,

Your humble, respectful, devoted, obliged servant,

Paul of the Cross

7. A Guardian is a Franciscan superior. Definitors are consultants.

Marquis Francis Tani (1)⁸

San Angelo
February 21, 1748

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

Your Excellency,

I placed the consolation and edification I received in Rome from your esteemed letter in the Wounds of Jesus. I returned late at night from my business, and I feel keenly that I was unable to meet your sons, all the more so since the one who handed me your esteemed letter did not know where they were staying. I will not fail to keep them in my poor prayers and sacrifices, and, more so, you, their worthy father. Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, give you both a temporal and eternal reward for the charity you continue toward me and toward all our poor Congregation, which will not fail to give you occasions of merit before the Most High over these situations. Meanwhile, I assure you that never will there be forgetfulness of you as our loving benefactor on the part of all in our prayers, as we pray the Sovereign Giver of every good to enrich all of your holy household with the fullness of his graces and blessings, and to impress on their hearts a tender devotion to the holy Passion of Jesus Christ, the most efficacious means to make them holy in their state of life. With fullest esteem and profound respect, I close, leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I reverently declare that I am,

Your humble, devoted, obliged servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (28)

San Angelo
February 22, 1748
Leaving for Toscanella
and over there by February 29.

The Passion of Jesus Christ.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

On Wednesday, February 20, I arrived at this holy Retreat on my return from the foundation at Ceccano. I stayed a few days in Rome, where I had an audience with His Holiness, who received me with great charity. I had a good beginning for our business, both for the ordinations, for which a brief will be issued, and for the Retreat of Saint Thomas in Formis, where I went with the architect of Saint Peter to take measurements, etc. I am in hope that we will soon have the consent of the Chapter. I am not giving you more news, since on the second day of Lent I am leaving for Toscanella. I will wait there two days to treat of the business of the Retreat, which must be founded beyond

8. Tani is a life-time benefactor, whom Paul will enroll as an outstanding benefactor (letters of October 19 and December 17, 1762).

question, and then I will bring myself to your sacred Retreat, where I hope to find myself by March 5. However, I ask you to take care to obtain a carriage to come as far as Montalto by Sunday night, March 3, where, if the weather is good, I should certainly be situated. Or at least have it come Monday morning as far as Chiarone. But it would be better if it came to Montalto, for I had a ferocious fever in Ceccano. However, right now I am well and moderately strong. I would hope that Signore Sancez will do that favor or, if not, Signore Binetti. There is the house of Signore Grazi, whom I will greet, along with our other benefactors, as well as all our brothers and sons in Christ over there, whom I hope to embrace soon in the Lord. Let them pray much and intercede with Mary Most Holy, for the devil is not sleeping and is making an uproar against a Retreat already established because the Frati have made more accusations than at first. But “Who can be against us if God is for us?” But there is need to pray. There are opportunities for the great glory of God, if my sins do not block them. We will speak personally. Take good care of yourself for the love of God. Greet the beloved Father Vice Rector for me, and everyone in the Lord. Send your response to this letter by hand to Toscanella, where I will be on Friday and Saturday, March 1 and 2. Instruct the one to whom you entrust it to deliver it to the innkeeper so he can send it to the home of Tozzi for my planning. Let me know whether the carriage will come to Montalto or to Chiarone.

I am writing in haste, and I embrace you in the Lord with greetings from this Retreat. Jesus bless everyone. Amen. I am always with a true heart.

I hope to be at Montalto without fail Saturday night, March 2, for in two days I can free myself from Toscanella. Therefore, on the first Sunday of Lent I can leave in good time for Montalto on my way to Orbetello. So it will be good for the carriage to leave Orbetello at an early hour to pick me up at Chiarone, or a bit further along toward the grove. In case it happens otherwise, I ought to be in Montalto that night, but I do not think so. The carriage could come to Montalto. I ask you further that on the night of March 3 arrange that I find one of our religious in Orbetello so that he can accompany me through the city, for I am coming alone.⁹

I will be at Toscanella Thursday and Friday, March 1, and on Saturday, March 2, I will leave for Montalto.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

9. It was a norm of Canon Law that religious had to leave the religious house always with a companion. Paul wanted to avoid criticism if he went alone to visit.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (14)

San Angelo
February 28, 1748
Leaving tomorrow.

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I have heard of the grave illness of Signore Camillo, your worthy brother, and you may believe with how much earnestness I will have our religious recommend him to God. I will add my unworthy prayers to their prayers, hoping for the Mercy of God that you may be consoled and for the spiritual good of our sick one.

I am on the verge of departing for the Retreat of the Presentation at Orbetello and have already written to Father Thomas and to Abbe Angeletti that they be in prudent readiness over the business of the Retreat just founded. I have strong confidence in God that the plans of those we know about will vanish like smoke.

Meanwhile, take consolation in God over this loving visitation which His Divine Majesty pays your soul because this is a great source for immense merit that the sweet Jesus has bestowed on this great work to which you have lent a hand with such great zeal. I break off in haste, begging the continuation of the charity of your holy prayers and imploring your holy blessing, as with profound reverence I kiss your holy pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (15)

Presentation
March 14, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

How much I rejoice over your happiness because I owe so much to you for the favor our merciful God has granted to your brother with the recovery of his health. I do not know how to express this. I assure you that I will not fail to offer devout thanksgivings to the Sovereign Giver of every good, along with all these good religious.

The religious at Pofi, according to what Signore Captain Angeletti writes me, are doing nothing new. We will wait and see. God will help us.

I arrived ten days ago at the holy Retreat of the Presentation on Mount Argentario, and I found a house filled with angels in the flesh. I cannot observe them without frequent tears of devotion, and I blush over my complete tepidity. The Lord be blessed.

At this time I was informed by our novice director, who is one of the first Fathers of the Congregation and a great servant of God, of the departure of the cleric novice, Bernola of Supino, despite all the care taken to hold on to him,

especially the great charity with which he was treated by everyone, especially by the director. But I was not deceived, for when he passed through the Retreat of Soriano, as soon as I saw him, I said openly that he did not please me and that only his companion would succeed. His companion testified to this in my presence and that of all the novices. The novices were offended with his bad example, that is, his breaking silence, his unseemly conduct and lack of observance. At the end he absolutely wanted to leave, and so it was right to allow him to go and not hold on to him by force. I am silent regarding the prayers often offered for this poor, unfortunate young man; I am silent about the tears shed at the feet of the Crucified for him; I am silent regarding the great lights that one of these servants of God had, for in praying the Lord to show mercy to this novice Bernola, he had the mercy of a reply from God that he should not afflict himself, but let him go, for otherwise there would be damage to the others. I relate all this to your gentle heart and assure you that his leaving has not cooled the fervor of the fifteen novices in the novitiate, although they are in a holy fear and profound humility, taking care not to lose the great treasure of their vocations, as this unhappy young man has sadly lost his. Oh, how tremendous are the judgments of God! We had not had such cases in this Retreat, for it seems to everyone to be a paradise on earth. I understand that he has become a soldier in the artillery but have had no further confirmation. I pray Jesus to keep him from any horrible punishment which hangs over him, and I am having the religious pray for him.

In today's ordinary mail I heard from Father Thomas Mary that the deacon from Ferentino of the Pompili family has a true vocation to enter our Congregation. So I am asking you to cooperate with his coming, for I have great expectations for him. He will have the opportunity to come, accompanied by another cleric from Ceccano whom I have interviewed, a good young man, and they can come together. Since Father Thomas wrote to ask me when he should send them, I am replying, therefore, that he send them soon so that they will be here around Holy Week to be vested with the others who are expected.

On the Feast of the Annunciation I will be in Toscanella to establish the Retreat in the Shrine of Our Lady of the Oak. I have already arranged everything for my journey to that city. I end at the feet of Your Excellency, begging you to continue your holy prayers for me and your strong protection, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

If you would like more detailed information regarding the cleric Bernola, ask that the letter written to Bernola's uncle, a secular priest in Supino, by the one who came with him to the novitiate be sent to you. That companion is doing very well.

Thomas Fossi (22)

Presentation
March 16, 1748

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in our hearts.*

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

After almost a year's absence from the holy Retreat, I have been here for twelve days and have found a group of angels in the flesh. They often make me cry out of devotion in watching them, and they make me blush over my great tepidity. In these circumstances I received your esteemed letter, in which I read to my edification and consolation your holy sentiments, and those of your wife. I hope the merciful God will bless you always more. Now it is needful, and I repeat what I have written many times. With the grace of God you are to endeavor to be holy in your proper state, which demands the great interior virtues of humility, patience, and great charity, accompanied with great resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure in all happenings because this is the great virtue, and whoever has it in a higher degree is the holier. Penitential practices do not befit you and your wife. They do not fit in with your state of marriage nor with your weak and delicate makeup. I am not referring to some discrete bodily mortification, such as refraining from something that you like a lot, leaving fruit on Friday, etc. But, above all, pay attention to interior virtues, to mortification of your passions, to charity toward your neighbor, putting up with the defects of others, looking at all with charity and compassion, forming a good opinion of everyone and a bad opinion only of yourself. A simple eye makes you see your neighbor as full of virtues and to see oneself full of vices without discouraging self, but humbling self in a true interior peace, etc.

With regard to continence, I return to state what I have said so often: Follow the counsel of Saint Paul and practice continence for short spaces of time, with mutual consent, in order to give yourselves to prayer. That would be for certain great solemnities, like Holy Week and others as you decide. But as for your desire to take firm resolutions of perpetual continence, while that might be best in itself, that is not appropriate for you two. You are still young, and there is past experience, etc. So remain in holy liberty without denying one another. You know what I mean.

When the marriage debt is asked and given correctly with a right intention, it in no way impedes the holiness of this state in life. Look at so many men and women saints who were situated just as you are. Be recollected in heart, stay gently in the divine presence, never abandon holy prayer, and continue with a devout frequentation of the sacraments.

Never omit carrying a corsage of the holy sufferings of Christ on the altar of your heart, gathering the flowers in the morning in the flowering meadow of the divine mysteries undergone for our salvation by the Son of God. In that way you will always keep burning the fire of holy love.

I celebrated the three Masses. For the rest, such as the alms of the tuna fish, I will write to Father Rector or Vice Rector. Meanwhile, I am about to leave

once more, which will be next Wednesday, March 20, since I am not worthy to stay in this Retreat with these servants of God. Therefore, His Divine Majesty wills, for that reason, that I be more on the road, either for Rome or for foundations.

I am writing in haste and embrace you in Jesus and pray for your health, and that of your wife, in the Lord. I rejoice much in God over your holy practices of devotion and the desires both of you have to love the Highest Good. Cultivate that always more and stay in the cabinet of your interior, hidden from men and open to God with your heart always turned toward heaven. Jesus bless you and make you holy. I offer you most special thanks in Jesus Christ for the charity you continue toward our poor Congregation. "Your reward is exceedingly great."

This Retreat is filled with servants of the Lord and there is need of great support. If at the time of harvest you can see to providing a bit of wine by choosing someone, whether in Marciano or Poggio or Campo, oh, how pleasing that would be to God! How rich you will make yourself in merit, along with those involved in this charity, which belongs to you. I will explain myself. The wine that you obtain in Marciano, Poggio, and Campo should be stored in one wine cellar. Then you can send it by boat to the Retreat that pays the freight. Believe me, His Divine Majesty will bless the vines, the houses, the fields, and even in spiritual ways those who will do this charity. The prayers of these servants of God will ascend in the divine sight to beg copious blessings from the Supreme Giver of every good.

Believe me, Thomas, I have stolen time to write this letter. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and I leave you in the holy Wounds, along with all your house, and am always more.

Greet everyone for me, especially Signore Maggiore and his house, to whom I owe so much. In haste I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Regarding the wine, etc, you will talk over these things with Father Rector.

526

Members of the General Council of Terracina

Presentation
March 20, 1748

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

Illustrious Gentlemen,

I have placed in the holy Side of Jesus the consolation and great edification that the esteemed letter from all of you illustrious gentlemen gave me. In that letter I read the great zeal you are using to found in the neighborhood of your illustrious city a holy Retreat of our poor Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ. This is a work worthy of your great piety and very pleasing to the Lord. From it will come copious spiritual fruits not only for your city, but also for the people near and far. Thanks then to the

Sovereign Giver of every gift, who with so much kindness disposes the forwarding of a work so much for his glory.

I assure you I would very willingly come there now to cooperate in person, even though I am so weak and incapable, and much more to pay you my tribute of gratitude, without limit or measure, with my living voice, along with my respectful service, which from this moment I dedicate to all with profound respect and promise it forever, if I were not impeded by many grave duties in the service of God, which I cannot in any way interrupt. But as soon as I can, I will not fail to fulfill this small part of my clear obligation.

I cannot doubt that His Divine Majesty will bless this holy work with a bountiful hand, the more so because your bishop and holy pastor is cooperating with an incomparable zeal by adding his abundant alms. Oh, how good is our God! Oh, how faithfully we are obliged to serve him! Oh, how many souls will escape the hands of the cursed demon by means of this holy work! For this reason you illustrious gentlemen can consider how much you merit in the sight of God for having lent such strong support. I declare that I will live always grateful to you in my poor prayers and those of the whole Congregation.

I am writing in great haste, as I am already leaving for the foundation of the Retreat at Toscanella and have no more time, so please pardon my errors. Meanwhile, I end by leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, where with fullness of esteem and profound respect I declare myself to be always,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross, Discalced Cleric of the Passion of Jesus Christ

527

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (1)¹⁰

Presentation
March 20, 1748

To my great edification and consolation, last night I read your venerated letter, in which I learn of the blessing with which the Mercy of God assists our holy work. I rejoice much in Jesus Christ that His Divine Majesty has chosen you as his great instrument for his glory in order to enrich you with always more merits and make you a saint. "Blessed be God, who works his mercy for us."

In addition, the General Council of this illustrious community has informed me that it favors this holy work. Although I am leaving in a few hours for the founding of the Retreat at Toscanella, I am replying to them after the midnight office of Matins.¹¹

10. Bishop of Terracina

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

At this time I do not have nearby a religious skilled in church buildings. The priest whom I would choose must now assist at Toscanella. The scarcity of members in this newly born Congregation keeps me from doing more. Otherwise, I would send him at your command. If I could, I would come myself. But presently I am overloaded with very necessary business.

Your Excellency should know that a building for us needs little. The cells should be ten or eleven palms, according to the Rules, and there must be the necessary offices: refectory, kitchen, dispensary, etc., which are beneath the cells, and above, the corridors about six palms or a bit more, but small. One window in the cell is sufficient; if there is, in addition, a small corridor, it would service retreatants, especially clerics when they come for a retreat. Above all, a good choir is necessary for night and day, and it should not be humid; but a single choir is sufficient.

Last night I looked and looked again to see if I could find a plan for a Retreat, but it was not possible. But I know they exist. I will ask Father Rector to look further and send one to me in case he finds it, as I expect he will. The one at hand is not serviceable for this Retreat. We did not use it ourselves.

I am writing with great haste and assure you that our entire Congregation holds hands raised to the Most High, praying His Sovereign Divine Majesty to make you always more holy. In a few hours I will be at the holy altar and will not forget to place your pious heart in the holy Side of Jesus Christ, along with the holy alms that you have given with such liberality for this holy work. Believe me, that even if I am unworthy to be heard, I still cannot ever omit to do that in testimony of the outstanding obligations I have toward you. So I beg your goodness to place my poor soul, which is so needy, among the number of your servants and spiritual sons so I may have some part in your holy personal prayers. I seek, moreover, your holy pastoral blessing. With profound reverence I affirm I am and will be always,

Your humble, obligated servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross, Discalced Cleric of the Passion

528

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (29)

Toscanella,
March 28, 1748
Leaving tomorrow.

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

We arrived Friday, March 22. I will not tell you of the difficulties of the journey, except to say that it was the grace of God that we are not dead because of the fierce north wind. Confrater Joseph contracted a strong fever as soon as we arrived, along with pain from a bleeding wound. He was cured with a drawing of blood. In addition to the pains of body, I was assaulted while on the journey with horrible suffering in spirit, very bad signs for me, in addition to the contradiction at this foundation which took place yesterday. For our part it was celebrated with all solemnity, but almost no one came from

Toscanello. I pity the poor marsh dwellers. I am silent about us being almost in the open without blankets, for none were provided as were required in the note given. Yesterday, after a mouthful of a poor collation after the solemn ceremony, we had a poor supper in the evening, without neglecting holy Matins and the rest.

There never has been a Retreat founded in such poverty, and I have never experienced such interior agony. Such things were not absent in the others, but here, God knows! I want to hope for good things from this. The religious are satisfied, happy, etc. I hope there will be great good for our neighbors. Now I am busy with regulations¹² to leave here, well set out, to maintain the observance and good example, caution in all and throughout all. Tomorrow I leave for San Angelo to prepare myself a little for the mission in Viterbo, which I cannot avoid.¹³

Yesterday I celebrated the Solemn Mass for the five Retreats, etc., and placed them in the hands of Mary Most Holy so that she may offer them to her Divine Son, etc. "God knows." Dear Father, do not let me out of your attention. I ask this as a gift. Have your pious community do the same. My needs are growing almost to infinity. I am in great danger! I fear with reason that I will be lost eternally.

Father John Baptist came here for the opening with great distress. He had to sleep in a poor cabin in the woods and was soaked through with rain. I reverence him much, along with all the religious. That is the way this poor religious family conducts itself.

I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and am always more,
Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

The vice rector will be Father Dominic,¹⁴ a priest very respected, etc., as it is not expedient to name a rector at this time.

529

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (16)

San Angelo
April 9, 1748

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

Your Excellency,

Last night I received to my great edification your esteemed letter dated March 24, and I am always more grateful for the charity you deign to continue to our poor Congregation, so assaulted by hell and by men of good will, as I

12. In every new foundation Paul left certain decrees in order to prevent abuses and difficulties, according to the situation.

13. The mission took place from April 22 until May 5, 1748. With Paul were Father John Baptist and Father Mark Aurelius.

14. Father Dominic Bartolotti of the Conception (1709-1792).

want to believe. Blessed be the great Father of Mercies, who enriches your pious spirit with so many merits. I have a strong hope, even though I am so evil, that we will sing forever of the divine mercies.

I have information from Father Thomas and Signore Augustine Masi that things in Rome have taken a good turn. "The Lord brings down to death and raises to life... If God is for us who can be against?" Many prayers are being offered, and God and Mary Most Holy will help us. I have great trust that she is very favorable to us.

Monday, April 22, toward evening, I, along with my companions, will open the mission in Viterbo, for I received the final directions from the bishop. I did all I could to exempt myself, and God knows that, but in vain. The bishop wants it, the city wants it, and I, poor little man, must bow my head. This is a mission beyond my strength and ability, but obedience can work miracles. Help me, Your Excellency, with your devout prayers, for my needs are greater than I can express.

I am writing with great haste, for it is half a miracle, I will put it that way, that I can write so many letters every week. God be blessed. I end at your feet, asking your pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence claim to be,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

530

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (30)¹⁵

San Angelo
April 12, 1748

J.M.J.

Dear Beloved Father Rector,

I am writing on Good Friday, and with trust in the holy death of Christ Jesus, I ask you to return one or two habits of those you will mail, for here there are none. For two or three years I have not had a habit for summer, and I am going to Viterbo to give a mission the Monday of the Second Sunday of Easter with this heavy habit. Since I do not have the other one, which they gave me as an alms in the Retreat of Soriano, I will be wearing the heavy one all summer, if I live — and concerning that: "Augustine has doubts." I will be sending two undershirts back.

I do not believe that it would enter the head of anyone of our Congregation to think that the Retreat of the Presentation is rich, as you tell me. All were founded in holy poverty. It may be so, but to my knowledge it has never come up in all the conferences I have held. It will be some lay person into whose head the devil has placed such a lie. I am writing to the world that this Retreat

15. This letter is informative on various matters, such as wearing a winter and summer habit, questing, having a priest capable of hearing confessions, petitions being sent to the pope by the Mendicants against the Congregation, three missionaries beginning a two-week mission at Viterbo on the Sunday after Easter, taking the baths in the summer, etc.

is lacking grain, and I am not lying. In this situation I say it is necessary to take advantage of the privilege in the holy Rules¹⁶ which allow a quest when there is need.

Over there grain is short, and, if I were there, I would make requests for bread once a week in San Stefano and Orbetello by having announced ahead of time by the parish priest of Orbetello and the curate of San Stefano the need of the Retreat, full of religious, etc, along with a note on the way of approaching the pastors to announce and recommend this charity to the people, and that it is a severe necessity that prompts taking this step. In Orbetello have a devout cleric accompany once or twice our lay brother, or brothers, so that they learn the houses which can afford such an alms. In this way I would hope that you can hold out until the harvest with the cereal you have or the little more that you can provide. Examine the situation with the syndic and with Sancez, and, if they think it well to make this request for bread once each week by pious persons, let them do it, for we are short of brothers.

Do this with the advice of the vicar general — advice, not permission — so as not to damage our situation, as we already have permission from the brief.¹⁷

At San Stefano it can be done by a lay brother. In Orbetello I think there would be too much distraction. Before I forget it, I tell you that in the summer wear a light habit, and, I believe, you will do that for sure because so...

I do not judge it well for the priest-novice to hear confessions before he is professed.¹⁸ This is a situation that has heavy consequences, and needs the permission of the General Superior. If penitents come and there is someone to hear the confessions, but not you, let someone else go to hear the confessions; otherwise, tell them kindly that the confessors are away or otherwise occupied and confessions are not able to be heard.

But as for Father Francis,¹⁹ what is he doing and why is he not hearing confessions? Oh, what a dried up man! I do not know what to say. Have him take care of confessions and rouse him from his great dryness and asperity. I know your prudence and charity in which I am confiding; for if you know him to be a danger, I defer to you. But it seems to me he could act as a confessor. Make your judgment and rouse him; have some conferences with him so that

16. *Regulae et const.*, p. 161, n. 67.

17. In the brief of approval of 1746, the pope conceded such faculties; thus it was not necessary to ask permission of the Ordinary. Paul wanted to inform the vicar in order to show his reverence and maintain mutual trust. He also wanted to hear from the syndic, who had a responsibility given by the Passionist rector to take care of the material affairs of the community in a given town. This was to include Sancez, who was very helpful to Paul from the beginning in taking care of the foundation of the Retreat of the Presentation.

18. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin.

19. Possibly concerning Father Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary.

he prepares himself and makes the exercise easy. Father Luke Anthony can do this for him with dry confessions, as is done.²⁰

With regard to going to Piombino, I leave all that up to you. Examine the situation closely: the infested sea,²¹ the great caution, experience and great prudence that one wants in that convent. God will give you light.

If Father Francis Anthony will send me the mandate for power of attorney, I will return it immediately.

The novices from Ferentino and Ceccano will not come until November, or perhaps later. I already wrote about that. From here two fine candidates will come, as I see it, and a lay brother with his vestition money and required documents.²² The last post brought me the final directives for the mission in Viterbo, which begins April 22 and ends on May 5. God knows the need of prayer, of assistance from above, in the miserable state I am in. The students will be free of study at this time, for Father Master²³ will be doing the catechisms and Father John Baptist will be giving the retreat for the priests. I have the rest.

The affairs of the Congregation are going well for the religious, for they are great servants of God, but the uproar over the Retreats at Ceccano, Terracina, and Vico is great. There are petitions in Rome to the pope, the Sacred Congregation, etc., pains, etc.²⁴ Nevertheless, God will have us win out. On ordination we have nothing.²⁵ I hope to go to Rome in May, and I trust in God to work his Will, but not through the ordinary channel.

No further novices are coming from here, except the one I mentioned; those from Piedmont and Lucca will be coming.

Take good care of yourself. Speaking so long in the Chapter with your usual fervor does you much harm. Let the vice director give the examens. Give him the points in some book and tell him how to go about the delivery so as

20. "Dry confession" means to make a confession as a scholastic exercise.

21. The sea was infested with Algerian pirates; thus Paul hesitated to go by sea. The monastery was that of Sister Cherubina Bresciani.

22. "Vestition money" signifies a certain some of money that the postulant had to bring to contribute towards the expense of the habit and breviary. It was a norm common in all institutes at that time. "Required documents" meant that the postulant had the moral and intellectual qualities necessary and the documents demanded by Canon Law.

23. This is in reference to Father Mark Aurelius, who, as director and professor for the students, received this title.

24. The Retreat of Ceccano was founded on January 14, 1748; Terracina was under construction by the bishop; Vico was another proposal. The Mendicant Friars, opposing the expansion of the Passionists, had recourse to the norms of Clement VII and Gregory XV. According to these norms, in order for one foundation of Mendicants to be begun, a distance of over four miles must be maintained from the nearest monastery of another order of Mendicants and with the certainty that the population was able to support another new community composed of at least twelve religious (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 135-141).

25. This was the permission of the Holy See that empowered the Congregation to ordain clerical candidates to the priesthood. Paul says that he wants to try again when he goes to Rome "but not through the ordinary channels," which is perhaps a reference to Cardinal Albani.

not to bore the poor novices, and to use gentleness without his great dryness. So take care of yourself, especially in the summer when you should be at the baths. I will be speaking about the best time for you to go with the doctors. But you must prepare yourself so that the waters purify. Do not damage your chest with so much speaking and shouting. There are good beginnings there.

I am not saying anything about myself, for I do not want to frighten anyone. Let them pray for me and for the exceedingly great needs of the Congregation. Greet everyone for me in the Lord. I embrace all in Jesus Christ, and I beg him to bless you all with a large hand. I passed Holy Week in spirit with the entire Congregation and I have offered Mass, and will offer Mass, for all of you. I have celebrated the sacred ceremony, but how? God knows I rightfully suffer this, but I am not despairing. May God have mercy on me.

Your true, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

I will not send Confrater Thomas²⁶ at this time. There are too many uproars by land and sea.²⁷ Meanwhile, I will have him write his homeland. He will stay at the Retreat of San Eutizio until, etc., and we will see to it.

531

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (31)

San Angelo

April 17, 1748

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Last night the two clerics arrived at this Retreat with Brother Francis,²⁸ etc. I am very satisfied with him, for he seems to be a good son. The fugitive lay brother arouses my great compassion. He seems very penitent; he asserts he would be damned if he returned to the world; he weeps, cries out, etc. I had wished to be rid of him, but in the end he won me over. With the advice of Father Master, I am sending him to Soriano as a tertiary so that we can try him for that state with all diligence and rigor.

I threatened him that wherever he might go, if he decided to flee, I would have the law brought on him and have him put in prison.²⁹ He seemed very resolute, and it seems to me we have freed a little lamb from the jaws of the infernal dragon.

26. Confrater Thomas Bianchi of Saint John Baptist was ill with tuberculosis. Paul thought to send him to Montaldo Bormida with the hope of improving his health. Bianchi died on July 28, 1748.

27. The dangers of war were concerning the war of the Austrian Succession which ended with the peace of Aquisgrana in that year.

28. Possibly a reference to Brother Francis Mary Lelli of the Heart of Jesus, born in Vignanello, was vested June 1, 1748, and dismissed in 1755.

29. At that time the ecclesiastical authority could ask the civil authority to imprison a fugitive religious.

Three good young men will be there, from what Father Thomas³⁰ writes me. But if they do not have their vestition money and the requisite documentation, do not vest them on any account. Since we ought to wait for vestition until the arrival of the Piedmontese, there will be time to prove them with all the rigor of the Rule. They must comply with everything, and, if they seem to hold back, send them home. Signore Joseph Cerrini from Ronciglione has come with Brother Francis,³¹ who is a young man of fine appearance and talent. He has his vestition money with him as well as eight *scudi* from a lay person in Vignanello, who is an angel. He will give them the other two *scudi* at that time, and they will be sent.

Father Vice Rector has not sent me the documents of the lay brothers, I believe, through forgetfulness. But he will send them. It is true he is known in Vignanello, but they should be obtained according to the Rules. The retreat for those to be vested should be conducted when all the ones from Piedmont arrive. No more are coming from here. Have the retreat conducted by Father Luke Anthony or by the vice director. It would be better by the first.

I am very displeased that he left without waiting for confirmation from here and further instructions. He is going to make a useless trip and accomplish nothing. Are we not required to wait for due delegation and for my orders? That rush to give a retreat at Piombino,³² I am well aware of that... Enough! Write him that he disengage himself and come back as quickly as possible to help in our retreats for those to be vested. I am not sure, but my heart strongly rejects his going to Piombino for the business we know of, and I see he would stay there until June. I do not wish that sort of thing. Be sure that he moves quickly and returns immediately.

I would have been pleased if the third one professed had come here. But since he did not, let him stay there, though he will lose study time. They have more light than I, so let them delay until November. It is not wise to have them come in this light air of June and July.

I know that they are thinking of taking a loan to pay for grain. Do not at this time make use of the advice I gave. Remember you will need to pay for the cloth to make habits for winter and mantles for the novices. It is true that for the five who are coming there are fifty *scudi*, but that should not be used for grain.

I submit all this to your prudence and charity, and you know you have full faculties. However, do not go beyond them. If then His Divine Majesty provides without making the quest in Orbetello, that will be better.

30. Father Thomas Struzzieri. Two of the three young men were vested June 1, 1748. They were Confrater Joseph Anthony Tiberia of the Name of Mary, born in Ceccano and died as a Passionist on May 28, 1755; and Confrater Thomas Renzi of the Agony of Jesus, born in Roccasecca and left the Community in 1762.

31. Confrater Joseph Mary of Jesus of Ronciglione died as a Passionist in 1753.

32. This is a reference to Father Luke Anthony, vice rector. Paul was opposed to his going to Piombino in the letter of December 19, 1747.

I recommend Signore Joseph³³ very highly. That young man will make a grand success, as I hope.

You have sent me a pile of letters filled with scruples, fears, obligations, etc. The yoke of the Lord is sweet; do gently what you can. The vice director should do his part, seeing it is the role that God has given him. Let him instruct, give the conferences, at least in the minor matters. If you give the examens, do not get so worked up, for in that way you make a greater impression and guard your health. Everything there is in good order so... What I want is that the vice rector gets back in time to conduct the retreats, which you cannot do. It is not a task for you because of the danger of ruining your health completely.

I am enclosing a letter from Father Thomas, which contains reports on the young men he is sending. I am including the letter from Father Francis Anthony with the mandate.³⁴

You tell me that you have sent Father John Baptist a copy of the brief. That is a big mistake, for I wrote that you should send a copy of the *Motu proprio* of the Holy Father for the Retreat of Toscanella³⁵ to enter into the records, and the original should remain in the archives, as I believe has been done.

Have much prayer offered and pray for the good success of the mission in Viterbo, which begins April 22, and take good care of yourself for the love of the holy Passion of Jesus Christ. I thank you in the Lord for the biscuits. I will have a feast from them. As soon as there is a chance to sail for Genoa or Chiavari let me know so I can send Confrater Thomas.

I recommend the good lay brother from Vignanello,³⁶ for he is a good man and will do well.

Regarding the other lay brother, who you tell me is twenty-seven years old, do what you think best, but be sure he will be a good vocation. Examine him well.

I greet all in the Lord and embrace you in the Lord. Send the crucifix, etc.

The mandate for character recognition in Rio needs two knowledgeable witnesses, so a notary wrote to me.

I am from a good heart always more,

Your true, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

33. Joseph Cerrini.

34. The mandate of which he speaks was in a letter of April 12, 1748, which allowed Father Francis Anthony Appiani to go to the island of Elba in order to straighten out the affairs of his family.

35. The decree of the pope which authorized the Passionist foundation in Toscanella without the consent of the Mendicants. *Motu proprio* means that the pope does something on his own initiative rather than through a congregation or commission.

36. Brother Francis Mary Lelli of the Heart of Mary.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (32)

Soriano
May 18, 1748

J.M.J.

I am writing in haste because right now I am recovering from a quartan fever relapse the very night I closed the mission in Viterbo, which was greatly blessed by God. I am happy that the good Piedmontese have arrived. Abbe Fresia tells me he has twenty-five *scudi* for their vestition. I have no news of the vestition payment for the subdeacon from Graffagnano. I wrote about this in today's post to Signore Fresia so that... You need to let me know about the cloth which is needed for the winter so that I may write in time. For an entire year I have written to everyone that we could not receive postulants. The Congregation is swamped in the midst of great persecutions. A petition containing infinite calumnies has been presented to the pope. In substance we are treated worse than Luther, Mohammed, and Calvin. The pope has consulted a bishop benevolent to us for information and opinion. He is arming himself to respond to this horrible petition, compiled by a well-reformed Congregation, and for this the pope is asking assistance — it is the Capuchins, that is, one of their monasteries. I say this to your heart and not to others. I have no merit in this, for my vile nature does not fight back. I even feel a tender love toward them.³⁷

I want to know when I can send Confrater Thomas,³⁸ and to that end I am presently sending him to Montalto, his country, by way of that Father in Genoa...

The lay brother from Fabbrica is already dismissed and cut off and left today. Regarding the young man from Montieri, if he were already a cleric, he could be accepted. But as a lay brother, how can we do that since there are too many?

The bishop of Terracina, a great servant of God,³⁹ has already built a Retreat that will be better than this one and has cleared away all difficulties and spent two hundred fifty *scudi*.

You will be advised regarding the bath by the count,⁴⁰ who knows that you will not be the companion of Father Francis Anthony, who was suffering from melancholy and was sick in Vignanello, but is better now.

How is the vice rector doing?⁴¹ Oh, how much that convent at Piombino weighs on him! May God grant that they be good for one another. I have never

37. There was a large opposition organized by the Mendicant Orders against the Congregation, which affected the foundations to the south of Rome. Paul speaks to Fulgentius about this in the letter of April 12, 1748.

38. Confrater Thomas Bianchi of Saint John Baptist, already mentioned in other letters to Fulgentius, died in San Eutizio on July 20, 1748.

39. Bishop Joachim Mary Oldo, Carmelite.

40. Count Brusciotti, in whose home he received hospitality.

41. Father Luke Anthony Bianchini of Saint Joseph.

thought so, as is clear from my letters. Who knows what he thought of them? Who knows how much trouble this will cause? Oh, if he only knew what God gives me to understand; then he would want to work at bearing the weight of that Retreat and remain recollected! He should consider us and have done for us what is necessary for the Retreat, for that is the Will of God. I have had great uneasiness for that convent, and yet it is necessary to go along with what has been done in order not to give offense.

I rejoice over the vestitions. Make sure you go soon to the baths, which will happen, I think, at the end of May, from what I understand, when the season turns warm.

Greet everyone for me, and I embrace you in the Lord and am,

Your true servant

Paul of the †

533

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (2)⁴²

Soriano

May 18, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

The same night that I ended the holy mission in Viterbo I was taken by a strong fever. Now that I am somewhat better, I do not want to pass over assuring you how I lack the words to express my highest gratitude, which I owe you in Jesus Christ, for the work you have undertaken in your pastoral zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. So, I am not found wanting to meet in some small measure the great obligation that I have to pray, and have prayers offered, to His Divine Majesty that he make you holier and consume you entirely in the flames of his gentle divine love.

I feel very satisfied in my poor spirit with the site provided for the building of the new Retreat, and I have the highest hope that there our Lord will be much praised and holy souls will be brought forth. I have no doubt that your great piety will build it with the holy poverty that our holy Rules require. Since Father Thomas Mary was there to see the place, I am sure he informed you of everything.

If I can, I will make every effort to be at your feet, when the weather cools, to ratify in person my poor, useless service and to receive your instructions for my spirit, which is so needful. I am writing to the Franciscan and Dominican Fathers at this post. Because of the inclemency of the weather, I will not be able to come there in September, but certainly in November.

With regard to the priest who assists at the Retreat of Toscanella, one should not accept the design for the little church, as you explained it to me. We

42. Paul writes of the Viterbo mission and of the sudden and unexpected death of Bishop Abbati of Viterbo in the middle of the mission. Bishop Abbati had welcomed the second Retreat of Saint Michael the Holy Angel at Vetralla.

could tell the master builder or Signore Vico, as best pleases you, that it would be enough if the little church had three small, poor chapels. Great care should be taken for the choir that it be large enough, dry, and well sealed, especially for the winter. In the summer good windows can bring in the healthy air.

I think that you must have heard of the death of the bishop of Viterbo. It happened about the middle of the mission and while he was healthy and strong. He was in bed where he had been put that very morning because of a small bleeding from a toe.

Before going to preach to the large crowd that waited for me, I paid him a visit. He was stronger than I. After a short interchange about things concerning the fruits of the mission, he embraced me with tears and let me go. I preached on death, the topic for this day, and it caused great emotion in the people. Before I had ended the sermon, he was dead. It was truly a sudden death, but I trust not unprovided. On that very day there occurred many things arguing in his favor. This happening caused great emotion in the people and Jesus blessed the mission with a generous hand. May he be praised forever.

I end at the feet of Your Excellency and implore always more the favor of your holy prayers and holy blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

534

Dominic Ciaralli (4)

San Angelo

June 1, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

I received to my consolation your charitable writings; God knows how much I am obliged to you. It is true that once the mission in Viterbo was over, and it was blessed much by the Lord, I was to journey elsewhere. But I was suddenly taken by a fever that has kept me indisposed until now. Blessed be God. I thank you for the greetings of Signore Pennacchia, who was my great benefactor on my journey to Valmontone. I have written him. If you write him, give him my warm greetings. You know my ignorance and insufficiency, but, if you are pleased to use me for an affair for the glory of God, you need only signify that in your letter. I will not fail to obey you in giving you my poor opinions.

If you write me in the next post of Wednesday, June 5, you may address the letter: "Viterbo for Vetralla, Retreat of San Angelo." Otherwise, send it to: "Soriano, Retreat of San Eutizio," where I will be around June 10, but will stay only briefly. I recommend myself much to your prayers and end by embracing you in the sweet Heart of Jesus. I am always more,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

John B. Forlani (1)

San Angelo
June 7, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

Since Fathers John Baptist and Mark Aurelius are in Civitella for the good of that populace, I am replying to your esteemed letter. I am very unhappy with the misfortune caused by the imprisonment of your brother. You should, however, have great trust in God that in this unfortunate happening God will draw good, principally spiritual, and it is for that we should aspire. Disgraces in the world, when they are taken from the loving hand of God with resignation to his most Holy Will, serve to have us run in the way of the divine precepts. Besides, resignation in such happenings serve as the most efficacious means to obtain even temporal favors.

I assure you that all the religious will offer fervent prayers that His Divine Majesty will quickly deliver you from the pain, as I want to hope. So, I do not doubt at all that your heart will not stand in revolt against heaven for a moment so that the winds of this misfortune will not cause you to be shaken. Be of good heart then, for our good God will draw good from everything. I end with my humble reverence, and I kiss your sacred hand reverently, and affirm that I am from a true heart,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

I ought to return to Soriano and then come back here again to this Retreat to stay the entire summer, please God.

Thomas Fossi (23)

San Angelo
June 8, 1748

J.M.J.

My Beloved Thomas and Son in Christ,

I read to my edification your esteemed letter, dated April 28, overdue and sent to me by Father Luke Anthony. I rejoice in the Lord over the charitable treatment that you gave him and his companion, and that you deign to continue for all our poor Congregation. "May the Lord reward you always," as I confidently hope.

I read your pious feelings toward your sons and daughters, and I have confidence in God that he will make your desires effective. Meanwhile, take care to bring them up with all attention, giving them the holy milk of piety, having them walk in the measure of their ability in the way of perfection, instilling in them a tender devotion to the holy Passion of Jesus Christ and to Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, by having them do the little they can, especially the young girls, for I expect great things from them. Teach them to meditate on the Passion of Jesus in an easy, simple way. Begin with a quarter of an hour

in the morning and another at night so that they do not become tired. Little by little they will learn this divine exercise and become enamored of Jesus Christ, and from that learn modesty, obedience, humility, and mortification. Offer them a number of ejaculatory prayers and how to make them without forcing one's head, but gently. Then let the Holy Spirit do his work.

With regard to the way of life for you and your wife, my opinion in regard to continence is that you stay with your conjugal liberty. But if you both have the experience and if you feel a strong desire to make such a noble sacrifice not only of your spirit, but also of your bodies, at least in times of greater devotion or novenas for solemnities, you can do so. But you are not to bind yourselves with reciprocal obligations since, as I have said, you are in holy liberty, both to seek and grant the holy conjugal debt. This is my constant opinion, and in this way you will find out if such continence is constant and free from all danger. Here it is necessary to be very cautious.

Your half-hour of prayer in the morning and evening is enough so that you can attend to the duties of your state in life. It is true that you should make your prayer continuous with holy interior recollection. So I beg you to remain in pure faith and holy love in the interior closet of your spirit, in your inner depth, reposing sweetly on the loving bosom of your Beloved Good in a sacred silence, inner nakedness, and interior solitude. When your occupations seem to cause you to lose sight for a time of this sweet vision of the Highest Good, arouse yourself with a brief aspiration, but intense, keeping the fire of divine love always lit on the altar of your heart, placing there a holy bundle of sweet-smelling wood, consisting of the mysteries of the holy life, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ. All this work is done in a moment in faith and holy love, and without deep reflections or long discourses.

Jesus will teach you this. However, you need to keep yourself from a frozen mind set and proceed with a simple spirit, quiet and without curiosity of mind, that is, not seeking to measure this noble work that His Divine Majesty is doing in your soul by means of interior recollection and prayer, but rather walk in simplicity and goodness. I rejoice that you are afflicted and persecuted. "Because you were acceptable to God, it is necessary that God prove you." So take heart and feed yourself on the Divine Will.

Our Congregation is going well, for the religious are very good and aspire to great perfection. Troubles and persecutions are not lacking, and more that I do not mention. There is need for much prayer to our good God so that he may help us and provide great workers. For with the Retreats increasing we have great need of them. It is true that I am now in the process of founding three more that are now in the building stage. Oh, how great are our needs! So pray much and have others pray.

With regard to foundations for women, right now there is no way at all open for that. I do not think such a work will take place in my time because I do not merit that consolation. However, thanks to God, I do not place my happiness even in the foundation of our Retreats, for I have great reason to believe that I am doing damage to them with my evil life rather than anything good. May God be blessed.

This summer I will stay in this Retreat and then go to Ceccano about one hundred miles away, then to Terracina, where our Retreat is in process of being built. It will be very beautiful and devout, for the holy bishop of that city is undertaking the construction. Then I will do battle in Rome to obtain very important concessions for our Congregation. I will have great tribulation so pray much.

I ask you to convey my greetings to your pious wife and children in the loving Heart of Jesus, where I affirm that I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

537

A Religious Sister at Civita Castellana (1)

Soriano
June 12, 1748

Reverend Mother in Christ,

I am replying to your letter, received at this Retreat near Soriano. I received the other one in Viterbo, while I was conducting a holy mission, and could not reply because of my duties. Now I tell you in haste that I rejoice in the Lord that you are relieved of the temptations you explained to me. For this reason I have not failed to give you a share in my poor prayers.

I recall that when I was there, I spoke much with you about prayer. Make use of those rules and take all care to be aware of your true nothingness. Stay solitary in the inner kingdom of your soul, treating one-on-one with His Divine Majesty, and you will learn great things, for the Heavenly Father reveals himself to the humble of heart. Jesus bless you. Pray much for me, and I am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

538

Signore Joseph Zazzera

Soriano
June 12, 1748

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

When I returned to the Retreat of San Angelo, I found your esteemed letter, dated June 2. In reply to it, I have the honor to tell you that, if the apostolic brief in which our Rule was sent, consisting of forty chapters, were printed, I would gladly send you a copy. But I have had a hard time having copies made. The copies here are for the Retreats.

With regard to that gentleman you wrote about, the one who wants to establish a Retreat in the kingdom, I believe he is not acquainted with the difficulties to be encountered in that kingdom for new foundations. It is very difficult to obtain the royal consent. But if it had been possible to obtain the

royal consent, there would already be a foundation in process, for it was offered with great zeal.

When I go to Rome, that will be in this coming December, if it please the Most High, this gentleman can confer with me. We now have five Retreats and two are in process of construction. We have not quite seventy religious. So I have satisfied your request and my desire to fulfill it. I will not fail to recommend you to the Lord, including the prayers of our religious. With full esteem and profound respect I am in haste,

Your obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

539

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (3)

Soriano
June 14, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

To my great consolation, I received your esteemed letter in the regular post this week. It made me recognize more the admirable work of Divine Providence in the building of this Retreat, from which there is no room for doubting that the great Father of Mercies will derive great good to his greater glory and the spiritual profit of our poor neighbors. Only I feel keenly that I am not grateful to God and to his servants who are the noble instruments His Divine Majesty is using for his glory.

With regard to the fifty *scudi* that the people of Terracina wish to give as a help to the poor religious who live in that Retreat, if it please you, I would wait to resolve this question when I am there. I hope in God that will be when the weather cools down. Our Congregation is founded in rigorous poverty, without the right to any fixed income whatever, whether particular or general, not even under title of sacristy. Consequently, it will take much prayer before deciding. While it can be believed that we could accept the donation on the basis of a simple alms, it seems to me that as far as any obligation on the part of that city to give that alms, there must be a contract on our side that the people retain the freedom to give or not give so that neither the local rector of the Retreat nor the superior of the Congregation can ever demand it. In this way, if I am not mistaken, the strength of holy poverty that we profess would remain. Meanwhile, let us pray and resolve the case with your wise counsel. I do not cease to cry out to the Most High, along with our good religious, to set you all afire with the flames of his divine love and make you holier all the time, as I confidently expect.

I pray your goodness to continue the charity of your holy prayers, for my needs are extreme on all counts, and asking for your holy blessing, with profound reverence I claim to be,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

The day after the Feast of Saint John the Baptist, I will go, God willing, to the Retreat of San Angelo, where I will pass the summer.

540

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (33)

Soriano

June 15, 1748

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I am replying quickly to your esteemed letter, although I have written a pack of letters and am not finished, and God knows my condition. Thanks be to God. You are to continue your charge in peace, for I hope God will cause you to rejoice much. I have written Father Vice Rector, etc. Today I will write for cloth.

When you are about to leave, let Father Charles⁴³ know with a note a few days ahead of time so that he will be ready to come with you to the Presentation, and on that we will write later.

I am waiting for Father Anthony⁴⁴ on June 21 or 22 so that he may take over this Retreat, for I know he will do well. Since Father Francis Anthony⁴⁵ has had a long illness, but not a dangerous one, I am thinking of having him pass the summer at San Angelo. Since he has always been used to fine air, it is not good for him to stay here.

I embrace you in the Lord. I cannot write more, for I feel I lack the strength and need to take a bit of air. Let me know whether Confrater Joseph⁴⁶ is better and whether he has gone to San Angelo. Let me know who is with you, for they have told me nothing. It would be very difficult for me to come there, for I have little strength and the journey would be harmful to me, all the more so since I am going to San Angelo for the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. Jesus make you holy. Pray for me and greet those gentlemen, the count, Doctor Mariani, and Signore Mosi.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

43. Father Charles Salemmi of the Mother of God, who was dismissed in 1750.

44. Father Anthony Danci of the Passion.

45. Francis Anthony Appiani of the Crucified.

46. This must be a reference to Confrater Joseph Turletti of the Trinity, who finished the novitiate after great tribulation and pain and headaches. He was professed on March 19, 1748.

A Religious Sister at Civita Castellana (2)

Soriano
June 23, 1748

Reverend Mother,

I am answering your letter in haste because I am in the process of leaving. You are much obliged to God; therefore, you must serve him with great fidelity. Stay in your house. You know what house? Your soul! Stay within yourself in true solitude and interior nakedness, dead to all that is not God. Fish in the sea of the holy sufferings of Christ for the jewels of the holy virtues. With regard to penances, I cannot prescribe for you. Ask your ordinary confessor, for he has the faculties and can cancel what the extraordinary confessor has done, who can not prescribe such a thing for a year. But he did so for a holy end. For all that, as well as for Communions, have recourse to your ordinary confessor. God will enlighten him.

I would wish that you never leave off some penances, but everything with discretion. I would wish that you go frequently to Communion. I would have you go to Communion every morning, if there is no danger of singularity, so that you would become holy more quickly. Tell this to your confessor. If he wishes, he will find a way to do it.

I am leaving for the Retreat of San Angelo at Vetralla, where I will stay all summer, and, if I can be of service, call on me. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Pray much for me and for our Congregation, but do it from the heart.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (34)

San Angelo
June 26, 1748

J.M.J.

So that Father Charles⁴⁷ may act under true obedience and denial of his own will and flee singularity in the schedule of special prayers he has fashioned out of his own head, according to the note sent me, the following is now ordained. That is:

With regard to the prayers he makes many times during the day to our Holy Lady, greeting her with the angels, saints, etc., he will say together an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be for the intention stated above. He will say this in the morning when the bell for Prime stops ringing.

Another Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be before laying down at the silence before Vespers and with the same intentions as above. A further Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be at night to complete all the greetings he has

47. Father Charles Salemmi of the Mother of God.

been accustomed to make. He will do all this on his knees without rising and making the genuflections. He is to take note of what further I have to say.

All the other vocal prayers contained in the note are forbidden. Let him recite a third part of the rosary with the novices⁴⁸ and another third with the community at night. This will be more pleasing to Mary Most Holy than the other prayers and duties that he makes up out of his own head. This prohibition extends to the other long prayers, except he can make the customary greeting to Mary when the clock strikes.⁴⁹ The prayer to Saint Joseph is to be an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, thanking God for the privileges granted him.

He is to make no more and no less mental prayer than what is prescribed in the holy Rules for night and day. If he does more on his own, we are declaring that he is guilty of disobedience. As regards his long preparation for Mass, which he says an hour is not enough, we recommend to him that he use the hour of prayer at Prime, using a half-hour for meditation on the Passion and a half-hour in offering the Divine Sacrifice, applying it, etc., and to pray for the needs of our neighbor with more brevity, acting under the direction of the local Father Rector or of any other to whom he is assigned. Let him do everything he does by day or night as preparation for Mass, as other holy priests do, etc. When he is assigned for set times or called by the sacristan, let him be prompt to celebrate with devout reverence, attention, and observance of the holy rites, but without stretching things out, as he is accustomed to do, to the dissatisfaction of those who attend. He should have a high regard for the holy priests with whom he is living in the Congregation. He is scarcely worthy to kiss the ground they walk on, and they celebrate Mass with great devotion in half an hour. That is what we want him to do. He is not to go beyond a half-hour. If it is question of only a few minutes, that does not matter. Then let him make his thanksgiving as usual.

We ordain that Father Charles, even though we have totally excluded him from hearing confessions, shall, nevertheless, every day, both in the morning and afternoon, study moral theology, using the time prescribed in the holy Rules, along with the others, and we are instructing Father Rector to see that he obeys the holy Rules. If, however, Father Rector has occasion to employ him with work in some manual labor, either in the garden or in the house, then he is dispensed from study. But at other times when he is not working, he will apply to study like the rest. He will do everything like everybody else in everything, recreation and all else. If he does that, he will be happy, as I expect.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

48. The novices, in the afternoon during a procession in the corridor, recited one third of the rosary (*Regulae et const.*, p. 160, n. 47).

49. The Regulations, in order to eliminate doubt on the part of the religious who were not preaching, and in order for them to fulfill the obligation to promote the memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ by their vow, prescribed a daily recitation of five Our Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's, praying that the Mother of God create in all the hearts of the people of the world this holy devotion and to grant a great zeal to those who promote it (*Regulae et const.*, p. 163, n. 95).

Yesterday afternoon, in the pack of letters from the mail, I had a letter from our Father Thomas M., a true Israelite.⁵⁰ Enclosed I received a copy of the formal citation to the Sacred Congregation, formulated against us by all the Frati of this vast province, bringing together all the monasteries of the cities and regions, Franciscans, Capuchins, Discalced Augustinians, a whole army against a poor little flock of those at Ceccano, Terracina, Vico, and elsewhere, that is, all the dioceses that are asking for our Congregation.

Let them take the rightful defense.⁵¹

Today I have already written to the convents of Saint Fiora, Farnese, Valentano and will write to others so that they may all pray. God knows how I was yesterday in body and spirit, but on receiving such a visitation, oh, how much my heart rejoiced. I told one and all that they had given me a feast.

But it is necessary to make incessant prayer, so Your Reverence should bring everyone together in the Chapter, professed and novices, and let all know the need of the alms of prayers, Communions, and all other exercises. Let them implore Mary, Mother of Sorrows, showing to the Eternal Father His Divine Son Crucified, the forgetfulness in the world of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the reason so many souls are going to hell, the lack of workers, and so many other things that holy zeal will bring to you.

Oh, what fierce persecution! Good, good. I would not have God offended. His Divine Majesty wants to perform a greater work than we could imagine. Prayers, prayers, prayers, out of charity, so that His Divine Majesty may give the victory to us. I have much to do.

Goodbye. Alleluia, amen.

Pray for Father Thomas, who stands in the fight with great fidelity. Oh! what a great servant of God, recollected, etc.

543

John B. Forlani (2)

San Angelo
June 30, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

In reply to your esteemed letter, I begin with a message from the Holy Spirit, promulgated by the Apostle James: "Count it all joy, my dear brothers, when you fall into various temptations." He understands by "various temptations" every sort of trial and affliction, whether they come from men or

50. Father Thomas Struzzi, in the face of this opposition, was the principal help to Paul. He was named Procurator with all of the ecclesiastical authority that office entails. Thus he could act in the name of the Congregation. The words of Jesus to Nathanael, "Behold a true Israelite in whom there is no guile" (John 1:47), applied for Paul to Struzzi and gives the measure of his great esteem for him.

51. For Paul, the principal defense is prayer, which he taught in the monasteries and convents where he preached. To Fulgentius he asks that the spirit of the community be one of intercession before the Heavenly Father.

from the devils. So you have reason to bless and thank the Most High for the infinite mercy to have you walk in the royal road of the holy cross. Oh, how great an honor God is paying you by making you walk in the path of His Divine Son! Embrace your sufferings, of whatever sort they be, and see them in the Will of God, rejoicing with faith and holy love that in you, and in all, his Holy Will is being accomplished.

With regard to your cousin and nephews, when you have done what you can, giving them frequent warnings of salvation, and you see no fruit, leave the care of them to God and be at peace, trying to preserve that peace in the midst of the fiercest storms, keeping your heart always turned toward heaven. All these troubles cannot keep you from exercising well your office as archpriest because you are doing your duty by word and example, and attending to your own sanctification and that of your sheep.

As to my coming there, at present I cannot leave, nor do I know when I will be able, for there is no day without letters to write, and my duties are more than can be believed. But should God open the way, I will not fail to serve you; but now I cannot. My health is poor and journeying is harmful to me, especially in this heat. It is necessary for me to go to Viterbo to meet with the cardinal bishop, who is waiting for me one day to the next.

Meanwhile, I will not fail to recommend your person and all your house to the Lord with a strong hope that His Divine Majesty will remedy these things. Be of good heart. Our religious send their greetings, and with them I place you in the holy Side of Jesus, where with full esteem I kiss your sacred hands and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant
Paul of the Cross

544

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (5)

San Angelo
July 2, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Mother in Christ,

I am informed by the interim vicar general that you had written me after the mission in Viterbo, but I have not received that letter. If I had received it, I would have replied. Now, I am moved by your charity to write, as I hear you are afflicted in such a way that it appears that you are on the edge of the foulest despair. Why all that? Why do you lack faith in divine help the way you do? Perhaps you do not have experience of how much God loves you? Simply because you find yourself assaulted by temptation, are you to think all is lost? I marvel at you. Now is the time to trust more in God and to draw closer to him in prayer and the sacraments, even though it seems to you that in everything you find pain, disgust, and at times greater assaults.

You need to know that to come to a great union with God by means of love demands you pass through great trials. The souls most dear to God are the ones most tried, afflicted, and tempted. You are to make nothing out of any of the

assaults of temptation, no matter how filthy and disgusting they may be. Fight faithfully and affirm you would rather die than consent. Then fear nothing.

"But, Father," I hear you say, "I find myself so immersed in temptation that I seem to be all besmirched with abominations, and it seems to me that I am shipwrecked." What does that mean? That such temptations please you? "Oh, Father, I would rather be thrown in a furnace of fire!" What is this a sign of? Is it not, perhaps, a sign that the grace of God is in your soul? That God is with you — hidden, yes, but he holds you tightly so you will not fall by giving consent to evil? So take great courage and allow yourself to be ground up and chewed by these fierce beasts of temptation and other sufferings, for you are not consenting to evil and need fear nothing.

I beg you to be well resigned to the Will of God and keep yourself in the deepest part of your interior. Totally lost there in divine love, suffer in profound silence and with strong hope in the trials that God wishes to make of you. If you act this way, in a short while you will see light. It will be so grand and will disperse all these clouds.

Pray to Jesus for me and be faithful to God; confide in him much and be peaceful, for although it seems to you that you are lost, it is not so. For now your soul is being prepared for the highest treasures, since, as I said, you are fighting courageously and hoping in God. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

545

Abbess Maria Elizabeth (1)⁵²

San Angelo
July 3, 1748

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

Very Reverend Mother,

My great esteem for your venerable convent has never left my poor heart since I had the good fortune to conduct a retreat for your religious about twelve or more years ago. I do not remember rightly. I have always retained great gratitude to you for the charity with which you treated me, especially in putting up with my shortcomings with such patience. May God be blessed in his men and women servants! Amen. So now, relying on your holy charity, I come, prostrate in spirit to your feet, to reverently ask the help of your holy prayers for a very weighty affair. I will give you a short account of that.

You may know that the mercy of our God, after having me drink some drops of suffering, has done me the grace of seeing the Congregation of the

52. Maria Elizabeth is abbess of the Capuchines of Santa Fiora, Grosseto. Paul writes a long letter asking for prayers in his struggle with the Frati. This letter is an example of letters that he sent to many communities of nuns.

Discalced Clerics of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ approved. An apostolic brief was issued last year in the month of April, during Passion Week.

Now we have established five Retreats, and others are in process of founding because there are requests for our Congregation in not a few dioceses. The bishop of Terracina, a great servant of God, is having a Retreat built there at his own expense. This is the sixth Retreat. In these Retreats there is great perfection of life. Believe me, I cannot hold back my tears on seeing so many servants of Jesus Christ so fervent, penitential, and always happy. They all rebuke my great tepidity with their holy life. Oh, how much I would weep!

We are a little less than seventy religious, and the novitiate is filled with true servants of God. Numbers increase continually, for there are not a few who are applying to be admitted into our poor Congregation. At the end of January a Retreat was established about one hundred miles from here, and elsewhere others are in process of being founded, in addition to Terracina. Now all the monasteries of Frati in the large Province of Campagna-Marittima have cited us at the Sacred Congregation in order to block these foundations. I have no doubt whatever that they are well intentioned. I know my poor heart loves them even more than previously, but the suffering is not small. The devil is making a great uproar to block, even to destroy, this work of God, which is doing so much for souls with missions and retreats and other exercises of piety, especially by promoting in all hearts a true devotion to the suffering of Jesus, our true Life. For this we have a fourth vow and to that end His Holiness has allowed us to wear on our habit and mantle the sweet Name of Jesus with the title of the Passion written in white letters, with a cross also white. It arouses great devotion.

Accordingly, I am begging the great charity of your religious to make continual prayers, communions, and penances in accord with your holy Rules, applying all, as God inspires them, to move the Mercy of God and assist in the work and grant the grace, in accord with the Holy Will of God, to expand this holy work. Let them have Mary Most Holy intervene; let them hold up to the Eternal Father His Divine Crucified Son; let them appeal to the forgetfulness there is of his holy Passion.

Because this poor little flock, gathered on hills and in solitude, wants to make war on hell and promote the memory of the pains of Jesus, so many storms are rising up against us. I know this is a good sign. I know that now His Divine Majesty wishes to do great things. But I also know that this work was born in prayer; therefore, I have recourse to the spouses of our Crucified Love to help me placate our God, who is angered at my ingratitude, for I have never done the least good well, but imperfectly and filled with vices. Help then, O Most Reverend Mothers, help! The need is great. Prayers, prayers, prayers.

I am out of time for there is a pile of letters to be written. May Jesus enrich you with every blessing and make you all holy. I have never ceased to make you part of my poor prayers, although I have not written much, nor to other convents, for I do not want to inconvenience the spouses of Christ with my

letters except in case of great necessity. I am writing in haste and leave all in the holy Side of Jesus, and I am always,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

546

Lucy Burlini (1)⁵³

San Angelo
July 4, 1748

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

My Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

After the silence of so many years, I have thought it to be my obligation in gratitude to visit your spirit, thanking you first of all in Jesus Christ for the great charity with which you have assisted our poor religious who live in the holy Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak, Toscanella, recently founded by Divine Providence.

May Jesus, who is the Sovereign Giver of every good, enrich your spirit always more with the fullness of his graces and heavenly blessings for the fatigue, trips, and other works of charity which you have taken on yourself for my brothers in Jesus Christ. I will be thankful for your kindness, and I will not fail, nor have I ever failed, to make you a sharer in my poor prayers and holy sacrifices in testimony of the true gratitude which I profess to you in Jesus Christ, and will always profess.

I have had notice that your good mother has passed to a better life. I have great confidence that our good God has received her into the bosom of his divine mercies. I have no doubt that you have kissed the divine hand that delivered this loving blow to the temporal life of your pious mother so that now you will be more free and unfettered to make higher flights of spirit to the bosom of the Heavenly Father. In this the Sovereign Queen, Mary Most Holy, will assist you, for she has taken you as her dear daughter. Oh Lucy! how much you are indebted to God! How faithful you need to be to this dear Father! With how much diligence and fidelity you need to practice the holy virtues, especially a profound humility, to be always more pleasing to the Sovereign Good!

53. Burlini was born on May 24, 1710, at Piansano, north of Viterbo. She attended the mission of Paul at Cellere in 1734. Paul heard her confession and advised her. Later in 1748, when the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak was opened, she provided food for the poor community. Shortly afterwards, her mother died, and she came under the spiritual direction of Curate John Anthony Lucattini. Paul recalls these past events as he begins this letter. He then gets carried away and continues writing beautiful paragraphs of high mystical teaching. Finally, he catches himself: "I have written more than I wanted to!" There are six letters to Lucy and nineteen to Lucattini, her director. Paul wrote to him at times with advice for Lucy, who could not write. Both testified at the beatification Processes. Lucy was interested in the founding of a convent for Passionist nuns and had a vision of them as doves.

I hope in the Mercy of God that in the coming winter I will have time to hold a conference with you and that His Divine Majesty will give me light to speak of the ineffable sweetness of his holy love. I have not forgotten the sacred conferences we have had together in Jesus Christ, and I know by the grace of God that the way in which His Divine Majesty wishes you to walk will make you a saint.

For now I have no time, and I tell you that I am not a little preoccupied. It is sufficient that you keep in mind the instructions that our good God had me give in years past. In that way you will know the path and the perfection to which God has called you and wishes for you.

Meanwhile, I beg you, to the extent I know how and am able, to obey the interior invitations of the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants from you a very high detachment from all created things, a true mystical death to all that is not of God, a great nakedness and poverty of spirit so that you may be entirely clothed in purest faith and holy love of Jesus Christ. Oh, Lucy, listen to the sweet voice of your Heavenly Spouse!

Be alone in the depth of your spirit, in the most intimate closet within. Live by faith and holy love. Stay entirely immersed in the love of God in your deepest interior. When our good God wishes you to speak, praying for the Church and for the other needs of your neighbor and for yourself. Do this, however, with your interior tongue in a pure spirit of love. But when your soul wishes to remain all alone with your Sovereign Good, adoring him in spirit and in truth, in a profound silence of faith and holy love, stay that way and feed yourself in a holy interior silence with that sweetest food of holy love.

I recommend that you go in spirit to fish in that holy sea of the pains of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. In this great sea you will fish for the jewels of the holy virtues of the gentle Jesus, and your soul will come away always more beautiful and adorned with these precious pearls. This divine fishing in the sea of divine love, from which issues the sea of the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ — these two seas are one — is done in the interior kingdom of your spirit in purest faith and burning love.

Listen, my blessed sister, if you will come to know with the grace of Jesus Christ how to humble yourself much, be hidden from all creatures in your own nothingness, to be in the midst of people as though dead, without eyes, ears, tongue, etc., you will learn the great science of the saints.

I have written more than I wanted. Recommend me to God and to Mary Most Holy, for my needs are so great, more than you could possibly imagine.

Pray much for our Congregation. Now we are on the point of establishing two Retreats at a distance from here. Pray God that his Holy Will be done, and that he provide great servants for this Congregation of the his holy Passion.

I forgot to tell you that Father Vice Rector of The Oak has told me that Don Philip of Cellere wishes to come to our Congregation. I would favor that very much. He knows and is informed as to our Rules. If he is called by the good God, as I hope, I am ready to receive him, for I love him much in God and would receive him in November. But he needs to be prepared to be in the novitiate in November; otherwise, there will no longer be room, for the

novitiate is full. Have him write me his thinking and send the letter by post to Vetralla for the Retreat of San Angelo.

Jesus enrich you with his divine blessings. Amen.

Have patience, for I am writing in haste and who knows how much trouble you will have in reading this letter, written so badly. Do what you can. God will help you understand it. Read this letter with great attention, for God wishes you to draw profit from it. Reread it in order to better understand it.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

547

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (4)

San Angelo

July 9, 1748

*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts*

Your Excellency,

Last night I read to my edification and devotion your esteemed letter dated June 29, and I blessed the Mercy of God for the great piety with which His Divine Majesty visits my poor and most needy spirit by means of your great charity. I will attribute to the great glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ my having so often the good fortune to receive your holy writings, which are of no little profit to me. The merit to you will always be greater — all the more so for it is a question of visiting one of the most needy sinners, such as I am, and “God knows that I do not lie.”

I rejoice in Christ Jesus that the building of the new, holy Retreat is going well. God knows how much I desire that everything conforms to holy poverty, according to the Rules. I trust in the Mercy of God that before they do the cells and corridor, I will be able, with your permission, to state my position. It is certain that to the extent that the Retreat is built in poverty that it will fit in with the holy recollection of the religious and, much more, to the edification and compunction of seculars. So, I have no doubt that your zeal will give strong and timely directives that the architect will not make the cells larger than ten palms, or at most twelve, and, if possible, even less. As for the corridor, I would have them not surpass six palms, or only a little larger. For the love of Jesus Christ and Mary Most Holy, do me the favor of issuing these directives.

With regard to the retreat house, the best plan is to have it the same as the housing for the religious, that is, the corridors should be joined except for a door that is closed when there are retreatants so that no one can go in there except the director who takes care of them. It might be well, when it is convenient, to have three or four rooms of greater size for any prelates or other personages who wish to come to make a retreat. I leave all this to whatever you will decide. Prostrate in the dust, I say with all the reverence I can: “Do what is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

I already know that by the Mercy of God there will be a large accommodation to give holy retreats to priests and clerics. If my boldness is not excessive, and much more my self-love, I ask you to instruct the architect that he first think of cells for about twenty religious, and that these be built first so that they may dry out quickly and the foundation can be established soon.

The sweat, labor, diligence, and other holy endeavors of your pastoral zeal toward the sanctification of your diocese have arisen in the Divine Presence as pleasing incense, and the work your great piety is accomplishing now crowns all your holy labors. I have a strong hope that, if "the Lord will give his blessing, our earth will produce its fruit." For in addition to missions, there will be retreats, public and private, every year at the Retreat, and in the city frequent preaching of the divine word at feasts during the year, along with holy preaching and instructions. In that way Terracina will be "the good odor of Christ in every place." This hope is implanted within my heart. Father Anthony utters the truth when he says this Retreat will be the delight of Jesus Christ, as the sweet Divine Shepherd will raise up on this blessed mountain holy sheep. In paradise your blessed soul will have an added accidental glory because "from day to day" you have been the instrument chosen by the adorable Divine Providence to sanctify these souls until the end of ages. So I hope, and I hope strongly, in the loving Wounds of Jesus, our true Life.

It has been years since I read about the foundations established by Mother Teresa of Jesus. However, I did not read them in order and not all of them. I want to reread them and make use of her holy counsel.

In order to obey Your Excellency, I say reverently that the sudden death of Bishop Abbati frightened me not a little. Even now I cannot forget it. I want to hope for the best. For us it holds beyond doubt a tremendous, hidden judgment. It seems certain that on that occasion there is great probability that he had not the slightest thought of death, with which he was suddenly assaulted. While I was preaching on the moment on which eternity depends, he was speaking with two priests, one a canon and the other a director of a religious congregation that I cannot remember. He was speaking about a litigation he won some years ago in Rome. He had one of his servants go to his library to get the printed account of the litigation and was continuing his conversation, when suddenly, seeing that he was well enough, flourishing, and in bed only because of a small pain in his big toe, diagnosed by the doctor as the beginning of gout, he stopped speaking. Since there was no change in his face, the two priests noticed nothing. After a few moments the canon spoke to him in order to continue the conversation. Since he did not answer, he called out more loudly, but to no avail. They shook him, but it was no use. Then overcome by fear, they called for others, but the bishop was already dead. Oh, God! what displeases me is that neither of the priests thought to give him sacramental absolution. My hand trembles as I write this. I hope he was not in need of absolution. But in that tremendous moment, O holy God! it is a serious thing to come before the Divine Tribunal immediately to give an account of the diocese. "The judgments of God are a deep abyss."

Before the sermon I had the large crowd pray for him, and he was in the moment of his greatest need. He had, in my opinion, another half-hour to live. For he died while I was fervently preaching on death, which the Mercy of God made me do with trembling and compunction. After the meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ, in which the people were in tears, I was given the sad news on the platform. You can imagine how I felt. However, I made a strong effort, and God made me restrained, so as to quiet the people. I do not know what more to say about this. I want to hope for the best. He was a giver of alms and had cooperated much in the foundation of the Retreat at Toscanella, which took place the fourth Sunday of Lent.

You have reason to rejoice much in the Lord. I cannot doubt that your death will be very peaceful and precious in the sight of the Lord.

I stand in fear and trembling, but I am not disturbed. I do not know that I have ever performed an act of virtue with due perfection, and everywhere I look, I find only defects. But I trust in the Mercy of God.

I am called by the Supreme Good to great perfection, but I have not corresponded, and so I find myself in a great quagmire of vices. Bishop, be moved with pity for this poor fellow. I would wish that for once I could put an end to my ingratitude. In your charity ask this grace for me from Jesus and Mary Most Holy.

I am loaded, and overloaded, with good occupations, and I have need of deep recollection. I would like to remain in the interior kingdom at the depth of my spirit, adoring the All-High in spirit and in truth, in order to make my prayer continuous, to mix, even unite, activity with contemplation — but, in my opinion, I am far from that.

I know the saying of a great Father: “The divine status comes to the soul from a continual remembrance of God and earnest beseeching him.” However, since this demands great interior purity, which I am far from, I remain buried in my miseries. Oh, how much I would like to say! But silence is imposed on me so as not to add greater sufferings.

Be moved with pity for me and help me with your holy prayers and sacred sacrifices so that His Divine Majesty will give me the grace to fish well for the true pearls of holy virtues in the sea of the sufferings of Jesus Christ and sorrows of Mary Most Holy. I end at the feet of Your Excellency, asking your holy blessing, and with profound reverence I once more affirm that I am and will be ever,

Your humble, obligated servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (5)

San Angelo
July 13, 1748

J.M.J.

My Dear Canon,

As soon as the cardinal begins to hold audiences, I will go to Viterbo to speak to him. Since I must principally give him information of this newly founded Retreat, I would wish that you would send me by the earliest post the notes, or minutes, of the agreement which Bishop Abbati made out when you came to Toscanella to give me possession of the garden, cloister, field, etc. The agreements, it seems to me, were to give a mission next November, to conduct a retreat once a year, and to conduct a mission every three or four years. So it will be enough if you have the charity to take from the archives or ask the episcopal chancery to execute the instrument. I am writing a note to Brother Joachim, etc., as well as to Sister Colomba Gertrude.

Out of love for God, pardon this inconvenience. You will have great merit in the Lord. I am sorry to hear you are sick, and I hope you will soon be free of that. Out of charity send me by the first post the agreements I mentioned. They will be very useful and necessary for the Retreat and the city. In haste I kiss your sacred hands, and with profound respect say I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Augustine Masi (1)

San Angelo
July 13, 1748

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

Most Reverend Father,

Your dear letter was received with another big bundle in this mail. Blessed be God, who has you taste some drops from the chalice of his Passion. I have always believed that God wishes to do a great work; but now with the fiery persecution started up, oh, how much more I hope! I do not doubt one bit that our good God wishes to do a work worthy of him, much greater than we can imagine. I rejoice that you are a noble instrument, chosen by our good God, to cooperate with your holy labors for its growth and in the victory amid so many battles.

Much courage! "Your reward is very great."

May the steps you have taken for the greater glory of the Lord be blessed. Oh, how much I would like to say, but I cannot because I have too much to do.

I will not fail to look after the business of your nephew, if God opens the way. I will gladly recommend to God the persons you mention, nuns, etc., especially your friend from Genazzano. Send him the salve I am including

with the manna of San Eutizio. He should apply it to himself and his wife with faith and expect good things.

I am writing to Father Thomas Mary, “a true Israelite,” and I rejoice over our good religious.

Let us all sing: “Thanks be to God, who gave us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.” I have replied immediately to Signore Sparziani at Rome, and please greet him much for me, as well as Abbe Angeletti, and all in the Lord. I embrace you in Christ and in haste I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

550

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (6)

Viterbo
July 20, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

I am writing from Viterbo,⁵⁴ where I have arrived early this morning to meet with the cardinal, whom I found full of charity and pastoral zeal for all the souls committed to his pastoral care. I have the greatest hopes in God that His Divine Majesty has made a wonderful provision for this city and diocese.⁵⁵ He is much pleased with the foundation of this holy Retreat and will strongly cooperate, for he looks on this city with a true paternal eye. It is agreed that a holy mission will be held next winter at the most opportune time, and he will help the city, with the grace of God, in the best way possible. They will all come to know the very great visit of mercy given by the Sovereign Good in the foundation of this sacred Retreat.

Here, my beloved and Reverend pro-Vicar, there is no one but you to help us, and believe that “your reward is exceedingly great.” Brother Joachim writes that he is thinking of questing for grain and paying by the day for help. I beg you, out of love for Jesus Christ, to let that brother know this is not right and has never been done. He is to let the care of that to you and to the deputies and the syndic. There is little or nothing to expect from this. Out of charity, let him be advised since I cannot write. Signora Girolama is following another plan, for the brother tells me the idea was hers.

Take charge of everything and let that brother take care of the church according to the Rules. Let the rest be taken care of by whomever it pertains to perform this charity. For all depends upon your charity and piety. The lay brother has need of a sacred sign, so ask Sister Colomba to give him one soon, for I am unable to send one now and she knows how to make one. I rest at the

54. Paul went to Viterbo to greet the new bishop, Cardinal Raniero Felix Simonetti. He has great hopes that all will go well in Toscanella, which is under the cardinal's authority. Paul mentions in the letter of July 30 the rebuke Pagliaricci received from the new cardinal.

55. The city and diocese is Toscanella.

feet of Your Reverence. Pardon me, for the love of God, and believe that God wills to send you great graces for the charity you show this Retreat. I offer you profound reverence, and in haste I am from my heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

551

Thomas Fossi (24)

San Angelo
July 24, 1748

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

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

In this ordinary post I received your letter, dated June 24. I thank the Great Father of Mercies for your holy sentiments. May they be imprinted more and more in your heart, and that of your spouse and children. Oh, how good God is! Let them cultivate these sentiments, my dear Thomas, and they will be saints. But do this with a spirit of discretion and accommodate them to their young ages. The affair of the convent is still hidden in the Divine Will, so we will wait and see if His Divine Majesty will send foundation stones for such an edifice. I believe with the greatest probability that I will not be alive much more in this valley of tears.

With regard to a vow, it is necessary to proceed slowly and not do it without counsel. Now enough. The vow you speak of is conditional and easy to observe. With regard to separating from the bed of your pious companion, on that I say nothing further more than if there is solid experience of a strong, stable, and true continence, you can do that, but without a vow and without any obligation. Your holy, conjugal freedom is still there. There must be an understanding, however, that this holy continence with your wife is secret, most secret, to all and known only to God and if you have lasting interior urgings for this holy resolve and light to know the Divine Will that this fervor exists also in your wife. Otherwise, you are not to do it. If you do it, there should be frequent communion, at least three times a week, if you can do that conveniently. I would wish your morning prayer to be in common, even with your blessed girls and boys — night prayer as well. Have them assume a devout position, but a restful one, so that it does not become burdensome, and they will follow this exercise more willingly.

“Because you were acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation try you.” So I rejoice in your persecutions, humiliations, and insults, especially those which come from your doing good.

My dear Thomas, embrace these occasions as precious joys, suffer them in silence and spiritually. Be alone in your inner kingdom. In pure faith and holy love, repose in the sacred silence of love on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, and from time to time give voice to a loving sigh, not to pity yourself, but to express your acceptance of your troubles and set out your needs and those of your neighbor. Let your cry be: “My Father, my Father,” and no more than

that. Oh, how much this says. Oh, what a great expression which contains every good! In this way you will digest the bitter mouthfuls in the heat of the flame of holy love. All this divine work is to be done in the interior of your spirit. Be prudent and cautious in treating with your neighbors. Leave to God the care of your present needs in these deadly times, and cry out in prayer.

The poor Congregation is in great trouble. All the monasteries of the Frati of the city and the vast seacoast province, where we established our Retreat in the past winter, and others in the process of founding, are, I say, all united against us. They have cited us to the Sacred Congregation to smash to the earth these Retreats, especially Ceccano and Terracina. They have mounted a very bitter litigation. We, poor ones, how are we to fight and resist such vast religious communities? Our arms are prayer and God will help us, but I believe that we have passed, and will pass, through not a few tribulations. I know these are good signs, but you see that all hell is in arms against us. Let us pray much, my dear Thomas. Pray and do it from the heart, especially with your blessed family. I am always more grateful for the great charity you manifest toward me "and the Lord rewards." I pray the good Jesus for that. I will celebrate the Mass on the Feast of Saint Anne.

Greet your good wife much for me in Jesus Christ, and your blessed daughters and sons as well. If you have any sons, I do not know the sons you have. I wish that your sons were also my sons in Jesus Christ, and I hope and trust much. Enough! Let us hope in God.

I am writing Sister Cherubina hardly at all, and you can believe that it makes no difference. I work more cordially with her than with others because so...

Jesus enrich you with every copious blessing. Leaving all of you in the Side of Jesus, I am from a true heart always more,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

552

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (7)

San Angelo
July, 30, 1748

J.M.J.

My Dear Reverend Canon,

I would prefer that there had not been that quest for grain by our vine dresser, nor by anyone else, as I wrote from Viterbo. If it can be stopped, that would be best, for that is not done in any of our Retreats. While the syndics can request and receive alms from persons in good standing, or others, in the form of grain, wine, oil, etc., as the holy Rule states, over there they are beginning to abuse the holy observance with the present coolness of this region. That was foreseen by me and predicted by me to you and to others. So I recommend to your charity that the observance be maintained, and, if they give us nothing at Toscanella, God will come to our help elsewhere, for they will be much blessed by God.

Up until now Piansano has supported us, and Brother Joachim writes me that our beloved syndic from Piansano has sent us bread. I have a strong belief that God will bless that house and that entire region. I pray the same thing will happen at Toscanella. God will bring it about. Enough. I recommend myself to you. Out of love for God let us not bring the observance down to the ground. I am not saying this because of Your Reverence, but because of the surprising coldness of this poor city. God will help us, I can say, without Toscanella. We want to help them spiritually more than that they furnish great donations, for they do not have the mind to do that. I foresaw this with complete certainty and manifested that to you and others in the Lord. But I am not saying anything outside, and even with those here I am speaking with all edification. However, you know how it is, and I excuse it all.

I was surprised by the notification you gave me about the mild rebuke given you. If I had only known it was my duty to inform the pastor. But the time will come; meanwhile, offer it to God. His Eminence wishes me well and will believe me, for I will tell him the truth. He already knows that Toscanella is in extreme need and made mention of that to me. Zeal and the common good demands that everyone cooperate, including ourselves, while hoping in God that in time the city will change.

I have written an instructive letter to Sister Colomba to be faithful in fighting temptations; she had given me a brief account of them. I have never encountered more. It makes me fear that she may have given in to lack of trust. I fear that not a little, for I would wish she be faithful to God.

There we need to think of appointing a syndic, for the one chosen is of no use. The poor lay brother writes me that in going there, no one would listen to him. I believe he will not be going there again. Do me the charity to tell him not to go again. All the more reason because it is filled with people and women, so he should not go there any more.

I am writing in haste and ask your devout prayers, and that you give my cordial greetings to the headman, to whom I am so obligated. I kiss your sacred hands and with devout respect and from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

The syndic will be taken care of when I come. Meanwhile, keep it quiet.

San Angelo
July 31, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Your letters are always dearer to me. I rejoice in the humble condescension of Father Vice Rector, which disposes him to be more and more a true servant of God and a worker in the vineyard of Christ. He will have received my letter and enclosed in it the letter of Father Pasquale Sancez.⁵⁷

I do not believe everything, but there is something there. I have firm hope in God that through your charity and prudence everything will be settled peacefully. But, my beloved Father, in that blessed region it is necessary to proceed with more circumspection than elsewhere. You know that, due to complete caution, I have gone through not a few troubles, especially regarding that region, etc. Would that God would provide a member as vice rector for that Retreat, for I would gladly have Father Luke Anthony come here as rector of the other Retreat and use him on missions, as I hope to do.

I would much like to know that you had to dismiss that Roman novice for good reasons. Let us expect good, for it will be expedient and necessary to do it and keep your patience.

Regarding the novices doing preaching at walk time or at other times, I am happy about that. You have full power in all; but I would want that preaching done with a moderate voice and gently, for in this way they will gain skill in affections. It would be best if they also got accustomed to giving catechisms. Here on feasts an instruction is given by the professor to all the clerics and lay brothers, and sometimes one of the clerics does the teaching. I think that over there this should not be neglected, at least for the lay brothers, for that is in the Rule.⁵⁸ They should know that the instructions given here are given with a politeness that instructs and raises spirits, and sometimes they get us laughing, and everyone is highly pleased with this holy exercise.

Anyone who wishes to be a missionary must first be a good catechist. So, if they give any talks, let them do it with a moderate voice, without trying to have a mighty voice. For it will be enough if they practice moderately. Their voices can then grow stronger with the passing of the years; whereas one who

56. Paul mentions a young Roman novice who will finally be dismissed as we will read in later letters. Notice his caution in regard to external penances and his insistence that the novices be trained for living a solid interior life. Confrater Thomas, who died July 20, 1748, at the Retreat of Soriano, was professed February 13, 1747. He was probably the second religious to die in the Congregation. The first to die was Confrater Turrenio Romagnoli, who professed vows on June 7, 1745, and died at Mount Argentario in September 1745 (see letter of September 9, 1745, to Father Joseph).

57. A member of the Sancez family of Orbetello who had left much in the way of a legacy to the Congregation, which caused a great deal of gossiping about the amount among certain religious of the community of the Presentation.

58. *Regulae et const.*, 124/I-III/ 61-63.

thinks to force his voice will ruin it, especially in young men who then assume a bitter spirit, ferocious, dry, and without affections. So let them use their voices gently.

I need a copy of the apostolic brief⁵⁹ for missions. Please send it to me by the earliest post so that I can make out the letters for the missionaries who are to go out in September. Send it with the date of issue very clear, etc.

With regard to austerities for the novices, you are conducting yourself in accord with the spirit of Jesus Christ. Know, my dear Father, that our life is penitential, however, very discreet. What the holy Rules prescribe is sufficient. Let them acquire a solid interior life with a great foundation of humility, simplicity, purity of intention, and openness of conscience, with an interior well controlled, with a genuine basis of recollection, and then, if someone has a spirit of deeper penance, after examination and trial you can allow it.

Oh, how much I desire that our men become accustomed to be interior men who know how to be constant in suffering and enduring the weight, proofs, and interior trials that are so necessary to purify the spirit so that at every moment they may renew that divine rebirth in Christ Jesus in purest faith and holy love! But the point is to know how to suffer such pressures in silence and hope.

You are the most fortunate man in the world on several accounts. I admit I am much obligated to God in all things, but in particular for the mercy that God gives me in giving you so much strength in being of assistance. If your stomach sickness does not disappear, I hope you will still have enough strength to raise up great corps of sons of the Cross of our Savior. Enough, now. I rejoice much in your good, for you remain in your sweet interior solitude, and in the intimate depth of your spirit you cling always more to the Highest Good. I, poor man, am in an always more horrible, fearful state; I fear and I tremble. May God in his mercy save my poor soul.

Confrater Thomas⁶⁰ had a holy death, and I believe he flew directly to paradise, and that we need no longer pray for him because of the certainty we have of that. But it is necessary for us to recommend ourselves to his prayers. Oh, how fortunate he is!

I am including a letter to Confrater Vincent.⁶¹

Our affairs go as usual. The storms have not subsided, but we have victory in Christ after we have suffered great apprehensions of seeing with our eyes our entire work smashed to the ground. Let them continue to pray, etc. I beg you to give my cordial greetings to all the professed and novices, whom I always look on in Christ Jesus, and God knows how much I love them. Let

59. Benedict XIV on July 19, 1746, granted Paul the faculty to nominate one religious as an "Apostolic Missionary" with the faculty to impart the blessing which had a plenary indulgence. An example of this type of declaration can be seen in the letter directed to Father Mark Aurelius Pastorelli, March 8, 1750.

60. Confrater Thomas Bianchi.

61. Confrater Vincent Bertolotti of Saint Augustine, professed on April 12, 1748.

them recommend me much to God, for my needs are extreme. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and am from the heart, while greeting you on the part of all,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

Regarding that problem of the Holy Office, I have not had time to read the authors. You will find it in Father Potestà,⁶² who, I believe, treats it clearly.

Two small chapels have been built in the church, for there was only one altar. If Father Clement⁶³ were to make two altar antependiums from ordinary cloth, with a white backing of plaster and some flowery designs of different colors, that would be a great act of charity. It will be soon enough if they are done by the middle of September. Because of our heavy expenses, we cannot provide fine altar coverings. The coverings should be nine palms long and four wide.

There are over there, I believe, two relics of our Holy Madonna, one carried by Father Thomas, who has two of them, one on his person, the other is there. Could you send that one to Father Anthony for the mission, keeping there the one I gave you, where there are the relics of Saints Peter and Paul.

The relics should be sent in a well-sealed package to Signore Brusciotti for Father Anthony, for he will send them to Soriano.

554

Julian Sparziani (3)⁶⁴

San Angelo
August 1, 1748

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Is it possible that my revered and beloved auditor has forgotten poor Paul, his true servant? I do not think so. I wrote you a long letter in reply from Rome. It was filled with spiritual convictions, which were not mine, but those of the Lord. I wrote you again from Ceccano, and now I am back again in order that you will not take me off the list of your servants.

Enough! If you are not rooted in your interior closet, adoring the Highest Good in spirit and truth, clothed entirely with the holy pains of Jesus Christ, allowing all your troubles, scruples, and pains of whatever kind to be consumed in the flame of divine love, then, when I come there, we will

62. Felix Potestà, O.F.M., *Examen ecclesiasticum in quo universae materiae morales omnesque casus conscientiae [...] resolvuntur*. He was an author who was well known in that period.

63. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin.

64. There are only two other letters to Sparziani, auditor of Ceccano (July 14, 1747 and December 3, 1765). There is also a letter to Sparziani's son Camillo, who was considering entering the novitiate (April 25, 1770). In this present letter Paul reveals his whimsical spirit, calling it "mie pazzie!"

balance accounts and you can prepare yourself to receive a severe reprimand. For this is our agreement of old. You understand me?

You are one of the most fortunate men alive on this earth in the rank of those who exercise your profession. Oh, if only you do not lose sight of your inner depth! Oh, if only you would allow yourself to welcome these fearsome thoughts and other pains which God is permitting in order to make you his true servant. Oh, then how high your spirit would soar in order to take its repose on the bosom of the Heavenly Father in that secret closet that I mentioned above! Do this, my dear auditor, for God wills it.

How are things going over there? For now they are sleeping, but I fear they will all erupt together. I say that I fear, for that escaped my pen, but really I fear nothing. My poor heart is insensible to such a happening, and that is not from virtue, for I am a dry tree, rotten and without leaves, without fruit. But despite all this we will have the victory securely. For when all things seem collapsed to the ground, then quickly we will have the victory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I do not doubt for a moment that you are to perform a great work in this business. Perform your duty, for even if you do not wear the habit of the Congregation of the holy Passion of Jesus Christ, you wear it inside and are our brother in Jesus Christ. So do not fail in your duties, for God wills it. Otherwise, we will have our inspection.

Now have a good laugh at my silliness; that would please me. Pardon my boldness. I love you much in God and am always from a true heart and in haste,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

555

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (5)

San Angelo
August 3, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I believe Your Excellency will have had information on the persecution raised with holy intentions against us by the good religious of Campagna-Marittima Province. I have no doubts that your fatherly zeal is at work with your holy prayers to His Divine Majesty so that the Mercy of God will give us victory — of that I can not doubt. Our poor religious are all armed and every religious is careful to defend his position with fervent prayer, mortifications, and, above all, an exact regular observance. These are the weapons with which each of us tries to fight in order to gain the victory with the Most High.

A few mailings ago, I wrote you in Sezze, trusting the Lord that you will have received my letter. Divine Pity has not failed to communicate its holy light to more than one soul regarding this affair. There is no room to doubt that after some storms a great calm must ensue, and we will sing of victories in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I peacefully await the coming of cool weather to bring myself to Ceccano and, even more, to the feet of Your Excellency. I would prefer to go first to Ceccano, if there were not the danger from the air, as has been told me. Therefore, I ought to leave here in the middle of October. Meantime, I ask your charity not to lose sight of my miserable soul in your holy prayers, for I find myself always more needy in the extreme. I implore your holy pastoral blessing for myself and all our poor religious, and with profound reverence I end by kissing your holy pastoral vestments and am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

556

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (36)

San Angelo
August 7, 1748

J.C.P.

Dear Beloved Father Rector,

With consolation and edification I read what your charity effected in the affair of Don Paschal and the true submissiveness and obedience of Father Luke Anthony, which makes me think that Divine Providence has chosen him to be a fervent worker in his vineyard, while permitting him not a little suffering so that he may be instructed: "Blessed is the man you instruct, O Lord." Enough! Use this case as a norm to govern other like occurrences, especially with nuns and silly modern women.⁶⁵ I do not prohibit that one of our workers who is learned assist truly devout souls once in while, but holy souls are very rare, which is to our disgrace.

So use the rule that never, never again is he to deal with that woman from Livorno, in whom to my sorrow a deceit has shown up. So let him be on guard. I repeat, no matter how often she asks, he is never, never to listen to her or speak to her. Let him look to his interior and free himself from her noose. He is not to continue going to the nuns for a while, that is, as long as our known subject is there. She has not written me, but, if she writes, she will hear a strong and sweet antiphon, accompanied by a gilded pill. It will be for her good, spiritual and temporal good, if she swallows it willingly. But he is not to write further, nor will I speak to her by pen. He will not conduct retreats, except as you prudently direct, as long as the person in question is around. That is the best plan, and I will be more inflexible than you or Father Luke Anthony.

I retain always more satisfaction with the work of Father Luke Anthony, and, when the occasion offers for him to give retreats to nuns or other works for the neighbor, I will never block that. Would that we had someone for vice

65. This is in reference to the cases of idle chatter, particularly in the 18th century, and mainly relates to "silly women" and their revelations of the bizarre. Paul never tired of repeating to his religious that they keep a distance from them.

rector so I could put him in the vineyard of the Lord on the missions. I am hoping for that.

Regarding the Roman novice, although much charity has been expended to have him get well in Portercole, I am not sure it is right that he stays there so long. It rather seems to me we could take the advice given by the Swiss doctor at the Retreat. If you see that he cannot make it, as I believe, have the charity as novice director to write to Father Durante⁶⁶ of Saint Andrew of the Valley and give him a description of his sickness, with mange and the rest, and that he is almost never healthy, so that he is warned and his relatives can be warned. Then with the cool weather you can have him embark for Civitavecchia and from there he can go to Rome. If it then happens that he is assured of his cure by a doctor, you can place him under exact observance. Use your usual discretion and charity and have him prolong his novitiate. Do not count the months he was sick, but consider the time of his sickness as time absent from the novitiate.

I rejoice greatly over our good novices. It would take a thousand years to see the like. Greet them strongly for me, and let them hasten in the holy love and sweetness of the Heavenly Father to make themselves holy, and let them pray for me and the urgent needs which are felt here to the core.

Don Philip Falandi⁶⁷ of Cellere has persevered in his vocation to come to our Congregation. He has already written me twice. I am minded to accept him, and that great servant of God, Lucy of Piansano, is asking that. She is well known but hidden from the eyes of men, for she holds a hidden treasure. Oh, what a great soul! So I am hoping you will not refuse Don Philip, to whom I will write to come in the middle of November. He is healthy and strong and forty-three or forty-four years old.

Now we come to ourselves. I cannot conceive that God does not want our Congregation in the Church, at least not in my interior depth. His Divine Majesty must wish to work a great effect and to cause it to rise up and expand from sea to sea, for in my thinking I do not know that there could be found in the stories of other congregations similar persecutions and troubles occasioned by the noblest parts of the flock of Christ.

You should know, beloved Father, that condemnations have been issued against us at the community of Ceccano, and another fastened, that is, like a shroud, on the church doors on the part of religious orders, that is, of all the monasteries, joined now with those from Sermoneta and two other places, with orders to knock down to the earth the buildings of the Retreat at Ceccano and a total prohibition against further Retreats in this territory. All this has been granted by the Sacred Congregation.

66. He was a Barnabite of the community attached to the Church of Saint Andrew of the Valley in Rome.

67. There is no trace of the documents of his eventual entrance.

Now our procurator⁶⁸ is responding in Rome, and the struggle is bitter. How shall we win out? How resist religious institutes so large and powerful? What do you have to say? Yours is the motto: "Who is like to God?"

Tell me how it looks to you. I wrote in two mails to procure a house in good air to house some religious so that we could have a place when the weather cools. I now expect the decree to vacate this Retreat. But, believe me, we will be the winners; but first we must suffer great hardships. I am in a sea of great storms — I say this in secret to your heart — desolated within and without, beaten down by the devil in a horrible manner, for it seems I have no faith, no hope, no love. Oh, how I stand! But no one knows that, nor suspects it. Otherwise, they would tremble. Oh, what will become of me? What will become of poor me?

I have told you briefly. There is need to stay at prayer as usual. Father Thomas is a pillar, ready to give his life for the Congregation. Here people are sickly and have been that way since the humid weather. Father Bernardine, Brother Paul, Brother Frederick, and Father Thomas.⁶⁹ They are somewhat better now, but only a little. Do you see how things are?

You have all the authority, and would that you had allowed communions every day. I hope you have done so. If the Retreat at Ceccano does not continue in existence, we cannot clothe even a handful of candidates. But believe me, God will provide. What do you say to that? Tell me something. Oh! how the devil hates to have souls escape his clutches, while these holy novices do such great good. I rejoice at the good outcome, which I never doubted, of the novice Confrater Joseph,⁷⁰ sent from here. Greet him in the Lord for me, along with the others and all the professed.

I am waiting for the copy of the brief for missions, as I wrote you in the last post.

I rejoice greatly that you are in moderately good health, and I thank His Divine Majesty. You have recovered enough to carry the weight for the glory of God, especially in these emergencies. I embrace you in Jesus Christ, along with all that pious community, and pray His Divine Majesty that he enrich you with more copious blessings, and in the Side of Jesus declare myself,

Regarding the Piedmontese tertiary, if his required papers do not arrive, dismiss him, as you prudently let me know. It is also a good idea not to accept the cleric from Sarzana until he has the requisite documentation, etc. Meanwhile, it cannot be done in accordance with the Rules. When he has the

68. Father Thomas Struzziери.

69. Bernardine Rutilio of Saint Ann (1723-1776); Paul Rossi of Saint Louis (1724-1761); Frederick Otitalia of Saint Joachim (1729-1801); Thomas Mary Struzziери of the Side of Jesus (1706-1780).

70. Joseph Anthony Tiberia of the Name of Mary (1727-1777) was one of the three young men invited by Father Struzziери and of whom Paul speaks in the letter of April 17, 1748.

required documentation, then you can receive him, as long as there is room. I think the Retreat will be unburdened in November.⁷¹

You are aware of the emergencies we are in. Let us pray much so that we may accept more good sons and make them saints.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

557

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (8)

San Angelo
August 13, 1748

Your esteemed letter was a great consolation for me, and I am very happy and pleased with what was accomplished by your fervent zeal. Oh, how much we are obligated to you! Jesus will reward with an abundance of his graces and generous blessings what you have done for our poor Congregation. Signore Tozzi cheered me up with his answer and he tells me of the difficulties they are running into in raising money for necessary building. He has even written a letter to obtain a donation of grain. I asked him to give some consideration to obtaining blankets, for in November there will be at least eight religious there. In addition, I and Father John Baptist will spend some time in that Retreat. As you well know, the blankets will be very necessary. I am hoping that the concern of these gentlemen will do something. With the help of your charity they may have a meeting with the headman present. In that way God will be glorified and the people of the vicinity edified at not seeing so much coolness. I am anxious to know something about Sister Colomba, as I have a keen desire for that soul who a time back had made such a fine beginning.

I am writing in haste and loaded down with important letters. I offer you my profound reverence,

Your true, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

558

Girolama Ercolani (5)

San Angelo
August 17, 1748

Jesus and Mary be Praised.

My Dear Girolama,

When are you going to leave off these scruples? God has permitted that you are always doing better. You have not committed the least sin when a good feeling came to you because you were shopping in the store of relatives

71. That "the Retreat will be unburdened in November" indicates that several religious were to be transferred from Argentario in order to make room for others.

of your confessor, and not even when the thought came to you that you would mention that to your confessor, if you chanced to see him in passing. There is no sin here whatever. Be at peace on my conscience and continue to make your confessions as you do. This thing and others like it are not to be confessed. Get rid of them and, when these outlandish thoughts come to your mind and you notice them, say: "My Jesus, mercy. My Jesus, I am all yours. Place me in your heart."

You write well and clearly and tell everything, even too much in detail; but I rejoice over the delicacy of your conscience. So, out of holy obedience be at peace and think no more of it. Jesus Christ will teach you to pray. Put yourself at his feet as a poor, wounded beggar woman and speak to him with reverence and humility: "Dear Jesus, teach me to pray." Take yourself with faith and holy love to his holy Wounds, and with simplicity dwell on his sufferings without forcing your head, but gently. Jesus will teach you. Never leave holy prayer. I have too much to do, for I have just written a pile of letters.

I am sorry to hear of the sickness of the prelate. May Jesus console him and dispose what is best for his soul.

I never lose sight of your family in my poor prayers, and Jesus will always bless you. Give hearty greetings to the doctor, and may God assist him much in his work, for he sees Jesus in his poor sick patients. I am pleased he has such a good practice. In haste I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and am from a true heart,

Your true, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

559

John Anthony Mattoli⁷²

San Angelo
August 19, 1748

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Father,

I do not see how I can express my pleasure to you, the more so for the special kindness of yours with regard to the missions you ask for. I find myself with a heavy load of swellings, which oblige me to stay on my back for more than a day.

If Divine Providence arranges the desired completion of the building of our Retreat at Todi, in such an event, I agree to visit you. Then we could discuss the desired missions and the preparation for the foundation in which you have been pleased to single me out. In any case I see that here and now I am precluded from coming, all the more so if I take into consideration the

72. Mattoli was curate of Gaglioli and requested missions in his area in the Marches, province of Macerata, the area from which the Passionist saints, Vincent Strambi and Gabriel Possenti, came.

pressures, neither few nor small, aroused against our Congregation and, principally, for the glory of God.

May your kindness be pleased with my sincere thoughts. Place me at the feet of your bishop and ask his pastoral blessing for me. Meanwhile, I kiss your sacred hands and am without fail,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the †

I beg you to extend my affectionate greetings to Bishop Ortolani.

560

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (6)

San Angelo
August, 20, 1748

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

The great and powerful heavenly beings besought by your faith and piety will infallibly bring about the victory in the present battle. Incessant prayers are being offered in this poor Congregation, and I am having other holy souls whom I know pray, both in the world and in convents. I assure you that His Divine Majesty has me conceive in prayer a lively confidence for a happy outcome, even though I feel keenly the fact that you have received a prohibition against the construction. But God is permitting this so that the merit and consolation will be the greater.

You are engaged in a work in which God will be much glorified and the souls in the diocese will be helped, especially in Terracina, to the end of time. So it is not to be marveled at if the devil makes such an uproar. You should believe that after this storm your pious heart will exult in God, who is our salvation. I must confess that I am unmoved in these occurrences. I know this comes from my dullness and lack of caring... I have no particular news from Rome, only that Signore Palleschi, the procurator for Ceccano, tells me that yesterday a decree from the Segnatura was to be issued, but, because of the Feast of San Rocco, there was no audience, that is, last Friday, and that on next Friday I will have an account of what will follow.

I could never have believed that such a bitter struggle could happen because peaceful possession of the Retreat at Ceccano was granted to me. Before going about this foundation, God knows how many repeated letters I had to write to the bishop of Ferentino and to the deputies of Ceccano so as to adjust everything, especially for the consent of the Frati, before the foundation. In fact, I went assured that all were accommodated and there was no need for anything else. The truth of the matter is that even the Frati of Pofi, that is, some of their number who came to see me when I was sick in Ceccano, showed great pleasure in the work, assuring me that it bore them no disadvantage whatever, as would have happened with the Capuchins, to whom they were opposed for that reason.

So you may see how things are going, but, I will say, God is permitting this for his greater glory and for our greater profit and that of our neighbor. Blessed be God.

Sister Margherita Gigliotti, living at the boarding school in Sezze, has asked me to include her letter with my response to you. Hence I am adding the inconvenience, while I know your charity has never pulled away from doing good to the poor.

I implore always more the favor of your prayers and holy blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments and am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

561

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (37)⁷³

San Angelo

August 22, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector

I read with deep edification the mercies that our good God is imparting to our novices, and I rejoice especially in the happy success of Father Guastellese.⁷⁴ Blessed be God, who knows our needs are extreme. I wrote you about the Roman novice in my last letter. Such natures ruin community observance and, without a miracle from God, they are not cured nor do they ever change. Whence, my opinion is that unless there be a miraculous change, and notice the word "miraculous," he is to be let go as soon as the weather cools. Now I am adding to your holy occupations another inconvenience, that is, to give an account to Father Durante, as you did to me, and even more detailed. Let him warn the relatives by letting them know of his sicknesses and the serious attempts at treatment and the expenses, etc., and then send him on in peace by way of Civitavecchia. That is best, seeing he is so unsteady and could not make the trip overland, or as you think best. You may well believe that out of fear of being sent away, he will say and do anything. But once he is professed there will be troubles. I am sorry about this, for he is a good young man, but the good estate of the Congregation must be placed before any private consideration.

The signs are that he will never be cured of his hypochondria. I did not wish to accept him, as he himself can testify, and I spoke to him about his

73. Another long letter covering several important matters, e.g., dealing with doubtful candidates and especially the problems with the Frati. The Communes, the civil authorities in the Papal States, are defending Paul and their own contributions to support new Retreats. Paul declares that he does not "want to have Retreats by way of litigation, but in peace." He will fight with prayers.

74. "Guastellese" is probably Father Anthony Thomas of Calvary (1703-1777), a priest from 1726 onwards, professed December 3, 1748. He was from Mirandola in the civil province of Reggio Emilia.

hypochondria. But then the pleas, the repeated pleas of Father Durante and others wore me down with good reports.

I leave to you the care of observing the situation and making the best decision, and I will agree to your pious and prudent decision. Since you are in place and have the burden imposed by God, you will know better than I. Certainly, if he achieves a true and permanent change on which we could prudently act, I would be happy to hold on to him, for other good ends as well. But if he shows the slightest waywardness and does not settle down to an exact obedience, observance, and change of life from his hypochondria, or fails to give true inner and outer signs that would indicate he is victorious in his struggle, then it would be necessary to dismiss him quickly and without looking further. Even as I write I am not free to tell you to keep him for the Congregation, but my spirit tends to dismissal. But I do not want to trust in myself, for I am not on the spot and you are. Do what is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.

I thank you much in Christ for the charity of the beautiful painting of the Passion, and please thank Father Clement for me. I am holding on to it to make a gift to the bishop of Terracina. It may turn out that way; at least I am thinking about doing it.

Our affairs are always in storms and bitter court fights. We have been cited, but we have not begun a litigation, for the poor do not go to court. The Communes⁷⁵ have gone to court against the Frati. The Communes have been forbidden under pain of excommunication to do any building, that includes the bishop of Terracina, but he laughs over that and will soon prevail. So I hope for the others, but I do not know.

I believe Father Anthony⁷⁶ rules well, and the one who wrote that he is cowardly has retracted. I have need of great patience and leave here soon in order not to hurt...

The fish eggs⁷⁷ have been received and the Lord will reward you.

I have nothing to say regarding Master Angelo. As for the Retreat at Toscanella, which was thought to be built this winter, who knows? Meanwhile, the tax of six hundred *scudi* for Our Lady of the Oak is not at hand; that is for the apostolic indulgent. So here we cannot be sure there will be any work done.

I think that by this time the bishop of Civita Castellana will have died, for it was on August 10 or 12 that he was anointed.⁷⁸

In September, twenty-seven measures of cloth will come for habits. I will write Father Philip⁷⁹ to be there at the beginning of November. Father Thomas

75. The successful outcome for the Passionists came about through the enthusiastic defense on the part of the bishops and the representatives of the Communes.

76. Father Anthony Danei of the Passion was in Soriano, and it is he of whom Paul speaks in the letter of June 15, 1748.

77. *Bottarghe* are fish eggs, salted and dried by smoke or by the sun.

78. Bishop Bernardine Vari died on October 12, 1748.

79. Father Philip Falandi is mentioned in the letter of August 7, 1748.

Mary was gravely ill, but, thanks be to God, he is better. He is a true Israelite and would give his life for the Congregation. Thanks be to God. God is trying him well with struggles, within and without, on the right and on the left. There is need to pray much.

In my last letter you will have noticed that I wrote you on behalf of the royal representative at Portercote,⁸⁰ that is, for direction for two ladies to be given by Father Luke Anthony. I recommend that always be done rarely, briefly, and with great caution.

The devil is always alert to find some mouth with which to ruin the work.

I recommend the whole Congregation to God for the needs are extreme, for me most of all. I have this security that when I am under the ground, the Congregation will go forward with full sails. I pray you to have great regard for the glory of God and the good of this poor Congregation.

Please do not break your head over that Roman novice.⁸¹ If you do that, it is good only for him. You know the situation; he has the example of perfection all around him. With brevity explain the situation to him and do not take advice from anyone else, for it is necessary to allow him to depart. The departure of the tertiary was for the best.

I embrace you in Jesus Christ with all your pious community, and may Jesus bless all of you.

The altars are the one of holy Mary and the other of Saint Michael the Archangel.⁸²

Father Eustace⁸³ wishes to do great good and has begun in fine style. He had given me something to worry about, but I know that was a plan of the devil to afflict me and try him. Now all goes well, marvelously so, thanks be to God.

Our affairs are always in turmoil.

All the Communes have united to fight the Frati. Oh, how much that displeases me! I wrote again and again to stop the court fight. The servant of the Lord ought not enter litigation. It seems to me that the devil wants to make a great gain in this way to our hurt. I have protested that I do not want to have Retreats by way of litigation, but in peace. It is necessary to continue with much prayer.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

80. In the letter of August 7, 1748, Paul does not speak of the royal representatives.

81. This is a novice of whom Paul speaks in the preceding letter to Fulgentius, sent to the Barnabite Father Durante.

82. Paul refers to the church of the Retreat of San Angelo.

83. Father Eustace Lippici of the Holy Spirit was dismissed in 1756.

Canon John Baptist Randone (3)

San Angelo
August 22, 1748

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Your esteemed letter, dated July 29, makes me always more edified and happier with your prudent work. I assure you that I am aware that you have worked in God's way, both with regard to the men you have sent and in your method of sending them. So I went out of my way to present my opinion with regard to our members' writing, for they do not do that on their own judgment. However, we may gladly permit them to do that, as we did in the case of preparations for the men suggested by Confrater Dominic. I will go so far as to give my opinion regarding that thirty-four-year-old priest and the young man of nineteen years since I have been presented with all the good requirements prescribed by the Rules, along with their good qualities. So seeing this, I said they should be accepted. But if you know they have little ability, let them be put off. In truth I would feel myself prepared to accept them because that blessed region is a field that has given fruit for the heaven of religious life.

I have not received any news that the persecution has ended over there, and the fiercest is that waged by the very large Congregation with best of intentions, in my view. Blessed be God. I have nothing new from Rome except delays and mysteries. God will take care of things. It is certain that His Divine Majesty has greatly protected this little flock, despite my ingratitude.

On September 5, I am going to give a mission at Caprarola, an extensive territory. I will be there until the end of that month, since I am to give retreats to the priests and nuns. Then I will leave for Ferentino, where I will have a mission, and then I go to Ceccano, Terracina, etc. I place myself at the feet of Signore Count and always remember him in my prayers. Give him my cordial best wishes.

Remain alone in the inner temple in the Lord our God. I embrace you in Christ. Pray for me. I am in a hurry.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (38)

San Angelo
August 30, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Blessed be God, who is teaching you and inspiring you with such beautiful practices of piety, especially for the ceremonies on the Vigil of the Assumption, a devout and appropriate practice.

Our person N.⁸⁴ should have in mind the time when he will be on the mission in Toscanella around Christmas, that is, if His Eminence, hopefully, does not change his mind. He should have this in mind, I said. So have him come with the intent to help on that mission and as rector of the Retreat of The Oak, where he will have to function without losing his recollection. During the whole of the summer he should be here where he can be very recollected for his gain.

Father Dominic,⁸⁵ in the opinion of Father Mark Aurelius, should be over there to take care of things that need doing, for he is capable and knows how to act as provider. Here, we do not have need of him just now. With a few rules, along with the order from you, little by little he will improve.

With regard to the retreats for the nuns and seculars, in February I hope that I could take care of them. In case of necessity, however, if they should wish the retreats sooner, the aforementioned Father could fill in. In the years to come, God will provide. If there is no one over there who can take the assignment, we will send them a subject from another Retreat. If the Brothers of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament ask for some conferences or the populace ask for instructions from time to time, I think Father Francis⁸⁶ could take care of that, and so he would get used to preaching little by little.

Father Anthony Mirando⁸⁷ will be coming over. I would like to have him stay in this Retreat to have time to prepare himself. But if the affairs in Ceccano result in our victory, it will be necessary to send another priest to that Retreat, along with a cleric, so that provision is made for continuing the choir observance and that missions can be conducted in that region — that seems necessary. So, it would be good to have Father Anthony come to Soriano to be confessor and the director of clerics who are stationed there, that is, for those more advanced in age for the study of moral theology and preparing themselves for holy ordination.

I ask you to give me your opinion with your accustomed sincerity and charity.

If things change here,⁸⁸ as I am hoping, in the middle of October I will be on my way for a time.

84. This was Father Luke Anthony, vice rector of Presentation, who became the object of some idle chatter because of something questionable.

85. Father Dominic of the Conception was vice rector of Our Lady of the Oak, where Paul had not yet nominated the superior.

86. Father Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary (1724-1781), ordained a priest December 23, 1747, helped Father Fulgentius in the novitiate.

87. Father Anthony Tomassini of Calvary (1703-1777), born in Mirandola, was already a priest.

88. In the area where there was opposition to the Congregation.

God will provide for the Masses we lack. We have not had the chance to send Brother John Baptist⁸⁹ to Viterbo. But if I knew to whom you sent the yellow or dark earth,⁹⁰ I would write him from here, and would send it to him, that is, I would have it taken by the postilion. So let me know who has the task.

I am writing a letter enclosed for the Roman novice, replying to his, in which you can once more read my opinion and guide yourself. I am sorry to have to dismiss him, but, if he cannot live the common life perfectly, we cannot in conscience keep him. He will always be sickly, for his hypochondria always makes him think he is sicker than he is in truth. Once he made his profession there would be troubles. So it is necessary to come to a decision when the weather cools, granted that he does not make a perfect cure and an enduring conquest of his hypochondria.

Father Anthony and Father Francis Anthony⁹¹ are on their way to a mission. I recommend them to God and hope they will do well. When the cloth has come, I will let you know.

The priest of Sambucettola,⁹² the curate whom you know, has written he is still certain of his vocation and would like to come soon with a lay person as companion. I am answering him as to what he needs to do, or to put it better, I am repeating this for him. I will let you know the results. I wrote some time back to Father Philip that he get in touch with you. I do not know whether he has done that.

The troubles for the Retreats here continue, and I do not know how they will come out. All the others believe that they have gained the victory. Even I have had such a belief, or to put it better, I fear a winter of continuous storms, in which I will not see the sun, not even a piece of clear sky. Thanks be to God.

I will write to Signore Degola as soon as possible; I hope in the next post. I do not remember anything further. My greetings to all, and I ask the suffrage of their prayers. I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all the pious community. I pray from the Lord copious blessing for them, and with sincere affection I affirm that I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant

Paul of the Cross

Our affairs are always more in flames. According to letters that came yesterday, the fight from all the Communes⁹³ against the Frati has increased. Oh, God! what will happen? Prayers, prayers.

89. John Baptist Berti of Saint Mary Magdalene was a tertian, vested in 1745 and died in 1777 (M. Bartoli, *Catalogo dei religiosi passionisti*, p. 282).

90. This probably refers to a type of poultice.

91. Father Anthony Danei and Father Francis Anthony Appiani. It was not possible to determine where they went to preach the mission.

92. No documents were found; therefore, they did not enter.

93. These are the Communes that had provided the defense for the Passionists against the Mendicants who had provoked the litigation.

Dominic Ciaralli (5)

San Angelo
September 3, 1748

J.C.P.

Reverend and Dear Father,

The information in your letter was dear to me in the Lord, and you may well believe with what earnestness I will do justice to your merits in case His Eminence asks me for information, which, as yet, he has not. You do well to abandon everything to the Holy Will of God, for that is the most perfect way you can act. If you see Father Cajetan, greet him much in the Lord for me and ask him to continue the charity of his holy prayers. I request that of you as well, for my needs are great, especially in the present contingency, for storms and great persecutions have arisen against our poor Congregation. I believe, however, that all this happens with good will on the part of those whom His Divine Majesty allows to afflict us.

If Father Matthias is there, place me at his feet. I ask the charity of his prayers so very much.

Troubles have been aroused against the Retreats of Ceccano and Terracina, and the others are in process. Blessed be God. God will draw good from all this. I really believe that. I am writing in haste, for I have much to do. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, where with a true heart I affirm once more that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (7)

San Angelo
September 3, 1748

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Your esteemed letters are constantly of greater comfort and light to me, etc., and I pray the good Jesus to reward the great charity you continue toward me. It is certainly necessary to use great caution in receiving candidates, and God knows how much I recommend that. Until now God has always blessed us. God has sent away the one who limped, for he has great concern for the state of affairs down to the least detail, especially in the novitiate. The few religious presently in the Congregation are all from distant places, such as Piedmont, and they are doing well, those from Tuscany, from the States of the Church, and even more distant parts... But God is to be praised for the fervor and exact observance in which these blessed servants of the Lord conduct themselves. With their perfect lives they rebuke my tepidity, and often on seeing them my eyes flow with tears. I seem to see angels in the flesh. For the greater part, after having some sweet visits from God at the outset, they walk at the fine point of their spirit without any interior comfort, at most only rarely.

Oh, what a beautiful proof of faith God works in these blessed sons! I rejoice over that because these are deadly times, and it is necessary to raise up men strong in faith in order to be at war, etc.

Oh how well does Your Excellency put in the principle: "The less that is done, the more gets done." That is the plainest truth. However, I am so blind that in the process of founding the Retreat at Vico, I wrote that nothing should be done, but the letter did not arrive on time, for I was sick in Ceccano, and the stone was already in the well.

My only idea was the foundation at Ceccano and Terracina. But then bishops wrote and rewrote to Father Thomas asking for our Retreats, as did the Communes. With a holy intention he accepted the charge, with all the more reason since I had the experience of his prudence and had given him the authority to do what he judged best for the glory of God and the good of the Congregation, and because I was at a distance and could not conduct everything by letter.

The Retreat at Vico is the one used by the Providence of God so that we might swallow some drops from the chalice of Christ. For the Capuchins are the ones, according to information given us, who have moved the others. Because we hope they are doing this with good intentions, I see them with special affection as instruments of the Divine Will, in which I see all these happenings. That God allowed my letter to arrive late is a clear sign that His Majesty willed to bring forth his greater glory from this pain. I also have a lively hope that he will draw a great advantage for the Congregation itself. For that reason I encourage Father Thomas as much as I can, for I know he is a true Israelite, and that he endeavors to work for the right end. I have said nothing more except for caution in the future.

Do not be surprised that the more painful blow comes from a friend and without reason and without judgment. Oh, what beautiful works these are! The work is entirely God's, from whom will come great profit for souls and, consequently, inestimable merits for you.

Hence it was necessary that the chisel for the work be handled by a friend, by a friend much favored, so that you might become like unto Jesus Christ. God will draw good out of all this. I have strong faith in that.

I heard with pleasure in the Lord about the Decree of Beatification of the great servant of God, Father Joseph of the Scolopi Congregation. Blessed be God.

Last night there was notification that our cause for all the Retreats in this area was taken up in the Sacred Congregation. The head thereof is Cardinal Tanara. But His Divine Majesty did not dispose that a *Motu proprio* be issued by His Holiness, as I wrote in my last letter. The affair will go on much longer.

I have written more than I wished, so forgive me and bless me and help me always with your holy prayers for "the waters have penetrated even to my soul," not simply from the present emergency, but the scourge of the Lord has been striking me for a long time. It seems God is happy with others: "The judgments of God are a deep abyss." But I wish others to know me so that all

would pray for me. We may hope to soon sing of victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

566

John B. Forlani (3)

San Angelo
September 4, 1748

J.C.P.

Reverend and Dear Father,

In reply to your esteemed letter, received just this moment, I would reverently say, please God, that I will be in Capranica to receive your commands on September 12, as long as nothing to the contrary ensues, as I am hoping. I have also heard from the archpriest of your coming installation as archpriest, which is to take place on Sunday. I am hoping that His Divine Majesty will give all the necessary help to undertake such an office, and I will be praying to the Lord, along with these good religious.

For the rest, we will take such matters up in conversation. I desire your further commands and end with humble reverence, offering you my most reverent greetings, also to your brother and all your reverent house. With fullest esteem I kiss your sacred hands, and I am always,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

567

Canon John Baptist Randone (4)

San Angelo
September 7, 1748

J.C.P.

Dear and Reverend Canon,

In the mail last night I received your esteemed letter, dated August 28. Blessed be God. Yesterday, I received the letter from Father Sandigliani, which was delivered to me, enclosed in one from a mutual friend who is in Rome and with whom I correspond. So as not to make this a great burden, if you would undertake the charitable inconvenience of giving it to him, for the same Father has advised me to include it with your letter.

We can see that, thanks to God, he has decided, and I pray the great Father of Lights to confirm his holy resolution so that you can leave in November with some candidates from there. If the two young men you bring up to me have the necessary papers and if you know them well in accord with the Rules, they could come along. But as for the one who has not completed rhetoric, who knows whether he can understand Latin well? He must be able to translate the Council of Trent, that is, some rather abstruse text, and explain it well. The

other companion, along with Father Sandigliani, can come, unless that priest does not wish to come in a calash.⁹⁴ I submit to your charity and prudence.

Be so kind as to advise Father Fulgentius, the rector of the Retreat at Mount Argentario, before you leave so that he may be warned and prepare everything necessary, etc. I must leave here in the middle of October for Ceccano, and I will not return until around Christmas. In the month of February I hope to be in the Retreat of the novitiate to embrace in person Father Sandigliani and the rest.

Do not be pained in any way over the tertiary who returned. I never thought he was for us; either he was not called or by his own fault he lost his treasure. He can do good where he is. I will notify Father Fulgentius, as you asked.

Either this last week or the week before, I do not rightly recall, I wrote Signore Count and gave him a brief account of the storms that have arisen, which he will be aware of. But all will come out to the greater glory of God, and we will sing of victory in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I told Signore Count that in the middle of October he should let me know how many candidates he could send. But now, upon more reflection, I see I can receive the three mentioned above, that is, Father Sandigliani and the two young men, but no more. We are pressed to receive these, for as I said, the young man who has not finished rhetoric must handle Latin well; otherwise let him continue his studies. Since here we have one from Gareggio who fishes a bit in Latin, whence it is necessary to make sure... So take it into account that this is the final decision for these candidates and arrange to have them come safely. If they come by sea, I think they should embark from Savona under the flag of our king to be safer.

Be sure, dear canon, that you always have a part in my poor prayers and those of the Congregation; the obligation to do so is great. I would wish that after you have recruited so many soldiers for Christ, you too would come to refresh yourself from so many occupations and make yourself a holy and fervent worker in the vineyard of the Lord. Courage, dear canon, stay within, be solitary in your interior closet in the midst of the city, and rouse your spirit with holy love. Carry a bouquet of the sufferings of Jesus on the altar of your heart, and let the fire of love be always burning there: "The fire on my altar will burn forever."

Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, grant you an eternal reward for the great charity you continue and make you a saint. Amen. Father Thomas Mary, who fights in Ceccano as a good soldier, has been sickly, even seriously, but now is better. Thanks be to God.

Place me at the feet of Signore Count and tell him we are grateful for his prayers.

94. A "calash" is a light carriage with a cover and drawn by a horse.

I am writing in haste, for I have a pile of letters to write. I salute everyone, Father John Baptist especially. I kiss your sacred hands and am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

568

Marianna of Jesus (1)⁹⁵

San Angelo
September 7, 1748

*May the Host holy Passion of Jesus
be in our hearts.*

Sister Marianna,

Your letter was very dear to me, for I see in it the mercy that God continues in your soul, and I wish that you be very grateful to this good God.

When I wrote that you are to be obedient to the Holy Spirit, I did not mean to say that you make great outbursts of fervor. Internal obedience to the Holy Spirit consists in following the loving urgings in holy prayer, especially in never losing sight of our own nothingness and going wherever the Divine Spouse takes you with his sweet attractions, especially remaining alone in your interior, all lost in the immense love of God in a sacred silence of faith and love. For God lets me know that this is the interior life he wishes for you, with the understanding that all your life is hid in Christ Jesus and all clothed with his sufferings. If in this sacred interior solitude your Spouse is pleased to have you take a sweet sleep of faith and love on his bosom, you ought to do so without awakening yourself without his permission. If you are awakened, your spirit should exult in God and pray for the needs of the world, especially for the holy Church and for our poor Congregation. Let yourself be free to pray and cry out until His Divine Majesty returns you to that sacred divine silence, which is born from the stupor that comes from the vision of faith the soul has of the divine greatness, perfections, and blessings, etc.

You did not do the right thing in wounding your knees. You could have put yourself in bed for months with the resulting inflammation. Never do that again. You did not sin, for your intent was to imitate Jesus when you saw in that painting his knees so wounded. But I repeat, never do anything like that again nor any other penance without permission, and be indifferent whether the permission is granted or not.

Take great account of obedience, without which nothing of good is done. Let all your study be to remain well hidden in your interior in humbling

95. Marianna is a sister in the Poor Clares' convent in Civita Castellana. There are seven letters written to her. However, another series of nine letters are written to a sister at Civita Castellana without giving a personal name. In this letter Paul reproves Sister Marianna for wounding her knees in memory of Jesus' wounds. On September 24, 1748, he writes again about this, but this time he is writing to a sister at Civita Castellana, without naming the nun. Both letters must be to Sister Marianna of Jesus.

yourself much, in despising yourself, and in a deep resignation to the Holy Will of God.

I am in a hurry, and I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus. Pray much for me and for our Congregation because our needs are great. Remain in your true nothingness and allow that nothingness to disappear into that true All that is God. Do not rely on your gifts, but on the Sovereign Giver. Do not look at the beauty and sweetness of the gifts, but with gratitude lose yourself entirely in the deepest secret of your spirit. Jesus bless you. Amen.

When you write me, explain more clearly what you mean by pleasant fruit and bitter fruit. It is necessary to understand these, even though one ought not make much of them. May Jesus make you a great saint. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

569

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (39)

San Angelo
September 10, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father,

I am deprived of your letters, at least in this ordinary post, for I received the others and answered them, as always, twice a week. Last night I received a letter from the bishop of Terracina in which he tells me that he has sent the minutes of the petitions to the Representatives for Terracina, along with his letter which confirms the petition, in order to obtain the favor from His Holiness. For there are only six months of the year in which one can build on this Mount San Angelo, where the Retreat has been founded. I hope that we obtain this favor, and the bishop also wants it. Otherwise, we will delay until December, for the leader, Cardinal Lante,⁹⁶ is sick and away from Rome. Let us pray to the Lord that he open the fountain of living water of his mercies. From Rome I have nothing new, neither good nor bad. You know that I wrote that to you.

For the rest, be of good cheer. Enter into your spiritual chamber and pray day and night. Drink, eat, and ruminate and digest in the fire of the love of God in silence, in faith, in fortitude, in hope, in charity, in the power of God. Go fishing for the jewels and pearls of all the virtues in the depth of the sea of the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of the Virgin Undefined.⁹⁷

96. Cardinal Frederick Marcello Lante, who died on March 3, 1773.

97. This last paragraph was written in Latin, composed by Paul with various references to passages from Scripture and the Liturgy.

Oh, how many stupid things I have written. I am ignorant of Latin. It all just flowed into my pen as I presently left the dining room. I wrote the other letter this morning. I embrace you and all in the Lord, and I am always more,
Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the †

570

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (1)⁹⁸

San Angelo
September 11, 1748

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Since there has been no earlier opportunity, I am replying to your welcome letter by post. I am happy to have done moderately well during the summer season, despite the heavy tasks that my position brings with it. I sympathize much with your asthmatic condition, which troubles you. Dear doctor, you are to believe that Jesus Christ loves you much for he does not wish you to be without a cross. But have no doubt that he will never take away his omnipotent helping hand from your pious household. I tell you that I never neglect to make supplications to the Most High for that end, and I will have that done by all our good religious with all the fervor possible. I am sending you this small piece of cotton, mixed with the manna of San Eutizio, which accomplishes great cures in some circumstances, such as I cannot and ought not describe, when someone mingles it with the so-called manna of San Eutizio as one prays before the tomb of the sacred body of the glorious martyr. I simply tell you that I have seen such favors. So first, pressing the manna from the cotton, take the manna in a bit of water, then call on the August Name of Jesus and the powerful protection of the saint, and especially of Mary Most Holy and the Holy Angels, and drink the water, and expect sure help.

I am moderately well, despite my constant work at my desk, for that is almost continual, especially in the present situation. I hope that by the middle of October I will be on my way over to you when I go to Ceccano and Terracina, as long as nothing occurs to the contrary.

The Masses have been celebrated. Tomorrow, that is, Thursday — my mistake — I am going to Capranica because Signore Forlani has invited me for a long time. It seems to me that I ought not delay meeting his persistence. I think Canon Pieri will also be there if his foot that pains him is a bit better, as he informed me last night.

I will let the Retreat of Soriano know about your donation of grain, provided by your always greater charity, and your reward will be exceedingly great. My greetings to your wife Signora Girolama and all your esteemed

98. Dominic is the husband of Girolama. There are nine letters of Paul to Dominic preserved. He is sick and Paul sends him the "manna of San Eutizio." He suggests he strive for "patience and fortitude in assisting N," his wife, with her scruples.

household, and I pray the Highest Good will grant them all the fullness of blessings in the spiritual and temporal order. With my accustomed esteem and cordial affection, I declare myself from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Arm yourself always more with patience and fortitude in assisting N. I am of your opinion. I would want you to know the truth for your greater good. Meanwhile, increase your merits and place all the pains, disgust, fatigue, etc. in the holy Side of Jesus, where everything suffered is counted up for you for the reward of eternal life.

571

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (40)

San Angelo

September 19, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father,

First of all, I tell you that twenty-seven canes⁹⁹ of cloth arrived in a bale and is at Signore Orioli's in Viterbo. I am writing to him to send it at his first opportunity. The merchant wrote me that the bill is fifty-five *scudi* and eighty-five *baiocchi*, including the covering and the freight as far as Viterbo. So they will be asking twenty-seven *zecchini* and fifty *baiocchi* from you, which amounts to twenty and a half each and comes to a total of fifty-five *scudi* and eighty-five *baiocchi*. I am writing to Signore Orioli that they will pay him as soon as possible from your Retreat through the usual channel of Signore Bartolini, or as seems best to you. But it needs to be done punctually. I will quickly pay for twenty-six and a half canes of that cloth for these two Retreats. Signore Orioli writes me that he can have the cloth sent to whomever I indicate. To me it seems a bit light. I will write to find out if they can provide us with something heavier and at what price, and I will make the best choice.

Enclosed with your letter I found that of Father Durante with the note about candidates. I will make a final decision on them before October, for I will be leaving about the middle, please God. I agree with you on the expulsion of the Roman student, for he is incurable. I had written you that his novitiate needed to be prolonged, moved by the letter from Father Durante. But now I am minded differently. Seeing he's worsening, definitely let him go, for all the more reason since in my last letter I let everything up to your judgment. This is the Will of God. Out of love for Jesus, do not kill yourself with this emotion, but let him go, for you have already done too much, I will say that.

99. A cane was a way of measuring, like using a yardstick.

You did well to write Father Durante. I will write him again in this post and will answer the bishop of Camerino.¹⁰⁰ I hope the one we are concerned about will soon be cured. At another time I will decide about the lay brothers, for along with Confrater Vincenzo¹⁰¹ they should be sent first.

If God will grant us victory, in place of the three Communions, let them have thirteen for the privileges of Mary Most Holy, along with the *Te Deum laudamus*, but there is time. Cardinal Cavalchini¹⁰² favors me, even though I have not spoken to him, for he is my fellow-countryman.

I have great need to have a complete copy of the brief done by the one who copied the brief for missions. It needs to be done with clear writing, without abbreviations, or if there are any, they must be very understandable, for I will need them to serve me in Rome and, perhaps, with the pope. I think Father Anthony did the work. Whence, out of charity and for the love of Jesus, have him copy it on good paper, quarto size, and have it sent to me by October 6, sending it on October 4 so it gets here on time. Let him copy page by page as in the original without folding it, but leave it in quarto size as in the original so that it is not damaged. Then give the document to Signore Count Brusciotti, securely packaged. This affair is very important to me, and I have great need of the document, for my copy is badly written and full of mistakes and blackened. In Rome you know how that would go!

So as soon as you receive this have him set to work so that he will finish in good time and excuse him from some of the observance. Ask him to be diligent so that it is well written, correct, legible, and with a bit of margin.

Here they would like some tuna, as I wrote in the last letter.¹⁰³ Otherwise we do not know how we shall celebrate the Feast of Saint Michael. Or perhaps some other fish, if that can be done. The Saturday previous they will go to Viterbo to see whether it is there. Otherwise, patience. It will be necessary to remain with dry teeth.¹⁰⁴ I am saying that for the benefactors who will be coming.

I always hold you close to myself, but who knows how much hurt I do you. Enough! In Christ Jesus everything goes well.

It is a wretch who writes. I embrace you in the Lord, along with all your pious community whom I greet in the Lord and from whom I ask copious blessing for you. Greetings to the vice rector, Father Charles, and all.

100. Bishop Francis Vivani (1695-1767), bishop of Sutri and Nepi from 1740 to 1746, was acquainted with Paul and his work. When he transferred to Camerino he wished to have Paul preach in his new diocese.

101. This must be Vincent Bertolotti of Saint Augustine.

102. Cardinal Albert Guidoboni Calvachini (+1774) was Prefect of VV. RR.

103. In the preceding letter in our possession there is no mention of tuna. Probably this refers to a letter that had not been saved.

104. "With dry teeth" probably means to go hungry.

If you want word on Father Anthony, I am enclosing the included letter.¹⁰⁵ He is entirely changed. I was at Soriano this past Sunday and found everything well and excellent reports on the good behavior of that Father. Goodbye.

Have the copy made on large sheets so it is not damaged, and make sure that they protect it safely and securely against rain and any damage. This is very important to me. My continuous business has made me forget to pray for the first grace: patience!

In the next post I will send you instructions as to how to handle the newly professed religious and the time to send them.

I have good news about the tailor at Toscanella. So if you wish to receive him, I hope he will make good. I have not thought further about the two lay brothers from Ronciglione, and I believe they are waiting or doing something else, etc.

In that instance you could receive that good young man who stays with the vicar of Viterbo and is now in Rome. He pleases me a lot. I have spoken to him several times on the mission and how much he recommends himself! He has fine features, is intelligent, and is capable of all ministries.

I have written to the bishop of Orvieto through Father Clement; let him tell him.¹⁰⁶

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

572

John B. Forlani (4)

San Angelo
September 20, 1748

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I received your esteemed letter at this moment, and I would gladly go to confess the sick man you mention to me if I had the faculties for confessions in that diocese, which none of us have. Nor do we expect to ever be permitted to request faculties for ourselves from the worthy pastor of that diocese. Since we are lacking in too much, that worthy prelate is not pleased with us and does not wish to use us for any function whatever and because he is served well by the Jesuit Fathers.

I am sorry not to be able to serve you and the sick man, whom I would willingly console if this were not the case. I will not fail to recommend him to the Lord from my heart so that His Divine Majesty will dispose what will be most useful to his soul. Meantime, I assure you of our gratitude and devout

105. Father Anthony Danei at this time was rector of the community of Soriano.

106. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin was professed in December and needed to settle the arrangements with his canonry in the cathedral of Orvieto (see letter of September 26, 1748).

service, and with full esteem I kiss your sacred hands and greet your brother and sister-in-law, praying for all the copious blessing of our Lord.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

573

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (8)

San Angelo
September 22, 1748

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Blessed be God. Last night I received your esteemed letter dated September 11. I must write hurriedly for the post will leave shortly, and I have already posted yesterday's letters. The Capuchins may run around as much as they like, for God will give us the victory. I cannot have any doubts of that, for the work is all his. The construction at Ceccano, I hope, will go ahead soon, for Cardinal Cavalchini has been chosen chairman, and he is well disposed toward me, although I have never seen him. But I know him and the work of his charity, for we are almost fellow citizens. He comes from only ten miles away from my home.

I am including the petition for Ceccano in the event your prudence and piety would lead you to go that way, or a similar way, seeing it is easier to accomplish your purpose for Terracina rather than Ceccano because you have obtained the consent of the two monasteries of that city — I am speaking of an overall view.

I will leave for Ceccano around October 15, for the rain has passed and the air is good. Toward the end of November, I hope by the Mercy of God to place myself at your feet and then to Rome. Please give me your blessing and continue your holy prayers for me, and I pay you my profound reverence,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

574

A Religious Sister at Civita Castellana (3)¹⁰⁷

San Angelo
September 24, 1748

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in our hearts.*

Reverend Mother,

I received your letter and it was dear to me in Jesus Christ. I will answer in person the questions you raised for me when I come by there on October 15,

107. The content of this letter leads us to identify this unnamed sister as Sister Marianna of Jesus at Civita Castellana (see letter of September 7, 1748).

if that will please God, and I will arrive early so as to be able to speak for a bit of time.

Meanwhile, remain hidden. Do you know what remaining hidden means? It means that you are to be alone in the desert of your interior in order to treat all alone with your Divine Spouse. You know through faith that God is entirely within you, and you are entirely in God. You are in God more than you are in yourself. In this secret place, in this solitude, keep yourself like a child on the bosom of your Heavenly Father without imaginings or pictures, but in purest faith and holy love. Take your food in a sacred silence of love from the holy milk of divine love, and drink at the streams or seas of fire that sweet drink of holy love. It matters not if you are drunk and out of your senses. You should know that those who are drunk go easily to sleep in order to digest the wine; so you, while on that loving bosom, will sleep from love and do not wake up without the permission of your Spouse. You will see that when you awaken you will find yourself rich in humility, contempt of self, love of suffering and of every virtue. Be faithful to God, hidden to men, except to God's minister, whom you should obey as one blind.

I want you to treat the wounds on your knees with medicine and never undertake that again. Moderate your indiscreet fervor. Be on your knees little, or not at all, until they are healed, so they may not become inflamed.

You want to know my condition? I am well because God so wills it. But I am in the middle of great storms with the water up to my neck. The affairs of the Congregation, from top to bottom, are going badly and our adversaries, with the best of intentions, trouble us. They have obtained a decree in their favor, and, if God does not provide a miraculous favor, we will suffer great tribulations and our affairs will be on the ground. But all this is happening in my way, for all happens as God wills.

We will speak together in person, if God wishes. Pray much for me, for I have never been in such a sad situation, and pray more for the Congregation. Jesus set you on fire to the marrow of your bones with his holy love. I pray that you not be attached to spiritual delights. Lose sight of such; do not rest in them. Be thankful to God and do not repose in gifts, but in the Great Giver, God Himself. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

575

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (17)

San Angelo
September 24, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

With entire submission of soul and joy of heart, I received in the mail your welcome letter forwarded to me from our Retreat at Soriano. I thank the Sovereign Giver of every good that he has brought you back home in good health. God knows how concerned I have been about that, and I wrote to

Father Thomas to give me news. May Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever praised for the mercies he continues for us.

With regard to the mission to be held in Ferentino in November, as you were pleased to inform me, I do not know how to manage that, and I have good reason to think it cannot be done, at least not by me. From around October 20 or 22, I will have the happy lot of being at your feet on my way to Ceccano in order to give myself at least some twenty days with these poor religious, who are all sick because of the great sufferings they have undergone in the excessive dampness of that Retreat. Father Thomas M. is worse off than the others, as you know. Besides it is necessary for me to be in Rome at least on November 15 or 20, so as to take some small part in the work of establishing the Retreat at Corniano.

May God grant that with all our diligence and labor, we may succeed in obtaining our desires. This is the more necessary seeing that the Frati have already obtained this year a favorable rescript, forbidding us to continue the building from roof to foundation. From that you may gather that without a miraculous grace, they will gain everything else.

Thanks to the grace of our great God, I find myself at peace in the Holy Will of God and my heart does not accuse me as though I had not gone about everything with great care for the foundation. God knows how many letters I wrote to Ceccano and elsewhere. Always I received the recommendation that this foundation should not be made without the consent of the Frati, even though it might not be necessary since it is more than four miles away, in accord with the Apostolic Constitution.

The point in their favor is the victory they had in 1737 against the Capuchins. This was a great stroke for them... We are conducting our fight with only the arms of the prayer, offered in the Congregation and elsewhere, and we are at peace. Nevertheless, I wish with the grace of Jesus Christ to do what I can because that is what God wills. From these considerations, I hope that your charity will understand the impediment that prevents me from serving you in November. Should you wish to make use of my humble person, you will dispense me until a better time, or make use of Father Thomas M., who will do a hundred times better than I.

I place myself at your feet with the consolation that soon I will speak with you there. Meanwhile, I ask your devout prayers and beg also your pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence sign myself,

Your humble, unworthy, devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
September 24, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I am replying in haste to your letter, which I received in the last post at the time of night silence. I reread your letter after I had sent my letters off. I was unable to read it carefully before that, and I saw to my pain that you are confined to bed with a fever. I immediately requested private and public prayers on the part of the religious community, especially in this Novena for Saint Michael the Archangel, and I trust that the Mercy of God will restore you to your former health to his great glory. The petition included here has had no effect, rather the contrary. The rescript reads as follows: "The consideration of the principal matters will be considered in the second week after the *post aquas* vacations."¹⁰⁹ But in the meantime, the prohibition on building remains in place." The Mendicants have turned in all directions in seeking help for their side.

God is making use of these instruments. May God be blessed eternally. I am doing as much as I can, with the grace of Jesus Christ, to celebrate over every happening, admiring it and allowing it to disappear and be absorbed in the Divine Will, which I pray night and day will be my one food. Oh, what a delicate and sweet food, however bitter to the palate and the rebellious senses because of the contradictions and adversities that must be swallowed and devoured!

I will leave for Ceccano, please God, around October 15. Believe me, bishop, that it is a miraculous grace that I am alive, seeing my weakness of spirit more than that of body. I am assaulted right and left, within and without, from heaven and earth. I say even from heaven because by the just judgments of God all sensible comfort has been taken away for many years. Blessed be God. These are drops coming from the bitter chalice of Christ and his saints. I ask for your pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence affirm that I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

108. This letter informs us how Paul reacted to the charges being made against the Congregation.

109. *Post aquas* refers to vacation time in the fall, so the meeting would be delayed until the end of November.

Reverend Nicholas Scagliosi (1)¹¹⁰

San Angelo
September 25, 1748

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I have the consolation to reenforce my devoted, respectful servitude to you from the time in which I experienced your charity, when it was my good fortune to serve you with our holy missions. I am taking the confidence to recommend to you the bearer of this note. He is Signore Francis Fabrizio Stocchi from Rome, a young man of good morals, who because of his poor health is not suited to the penitential life of our Congregation. After eight-and-a-half months in the novitiate he has been let go and now is returning home. Since he is poor and not accustomed to traveling, I am recommending him to you so that you may give him a bit more ease as far as Storta, either with a donkey or in another way you deem best. For that charity I will give you an eternal remembrance in my poor prayers because we know for certain that you will receive a rich reward from the Sovereign Good. With profound respect I kiss your sacred hands, and in haste declare myself again and forever,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (41)

San Angelo
September 26, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I received your dear letter and that of Father Anthony Clement¹¹¹ concerning the expulsion of the young Roman man who embarked for Civitavecchia. He came to me here on Wednesday night and roused in my heart an emotional storm of great confusion. If I had simply looked toward my own person, I would certainly have changed the decision even though I made the decision to examine him regarding his health and the rest, and consulted the director and Father John Baptist, the prudence and expediency of the decision to let him go, therefore, was confirmed, etc. So yesterday morning I set him on his way to Ronciglione and Monterosi with my letter to Father Durante. I hope he is in Rome. Believe me, this touched my heart, for he has good intentions, etc. Thanks be to God.

110. Scagliosi is archpriest at Monterosi, where Paul gave a mission in May 1742. The Roman novice, Francis Fabrizio Stocchi, has been dismissed. Paul asks Scagliosi to arrange for his travel to at least Storta. In the following letter to Father Fulgentius, Paul writes of this dismissal and his reactions.

111. This must be Father Clement Maioli, who at the time is referred to as Clement Anthony.

Now I am in the water up to my neck. The procurator of Ceccano¹¹² has presented a printed petition, strong and well reasoned, to all the cardinals of the Congregation to obtain the favor of continuing the building of that Retreat. There was the sworn testimony of the ecclesiastics, the doctor, and the representatives of Ceccano in which they testify that all the religious had taken sick because of the suffering undergone in this dampness, the great good they do, and that the expense in the construction will go up many hundreds if it is not completed at this time. The Frati have made a great round among all the tribunals of the cardinals and have gotten a rescript favorable to them, which means a permanent prohibition for this construction, but at the second meeting *post aquas* the principal matters are to be brought up — it will be at the end of November — which means that without a miraculous grace our cause is lost, and it will be necessary to leave this Retreat. If we leave, it is “Goodbye foundations.” I remain with great hope in the depth of my heart, but humanly speaking our case is lost. It’s necessary to prepare oneself, especially in delaying the reception of candidates until the end of the contention because, if we leave that Retreat, there will scarcely be room for us to stay between there and Soriano, for only a few could stay at Toscanella. You can receive Father Philip, for they will remain there until the sixteenth or seventeenth.

I turn the tailor of Toscanella and the one from Montieri over to your judgment. “Do what is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

From Lucca there is a letter in this post to Confrater Joseph of Mary Most Holy¹¹³ that a priest and a lay person are asking to be received. Have him reply and get information on their age and other requisites, and then a decision will be made. If it seems good to you, write, or have someone write, to Canon Randone, who has been treating with the young men since spring, that is, after Easter, and let him briefly know of the present emergency, and that they will be received at Easter, granting, as I hope, that we will not leave the Retreat at Ceccano. Tell him that for me. But here, too, I leave you in holy freedom. If God inspires you to let things run, and that they come in November to be received, you can do that. I am satisfied. I am between the hammer and the anvil, loaded with all that God knows about. Nine religious are leaving there, and the one dismissed makes ten, and sixteen remain. See what God inspires you to do since you are in charge.

Even the cardinal-bishop¹¹⁴ who showed himself so favorable to me has now changed. He is making use of Father Ruschi, S.J., who is a good worker and is coming to Vetralla and all the diocese, even Toscanella. I rejoice in the

112. The lawyer Palleschi was the civil procurator for the Passionists.

113. Confrater Joseph Del Re of the Sorrowful Virgin (1727-1781) of Mount San Quirico.

114. Cardinal Felix Rainero Simonetti, made Bishop of Viterbo and Toscanella on May 6, 1748, died on August 20, 1749. He knew Father Ottavio Ruschi, S.J. (16794-1761) and entrusted him with the task of examining the case of Domenica Bravi Di Biera, who was accused of faking a complete fast except for the Eucharist. She was eventually cleared. She was directed by Paul (Zoffoli, Vol. III, p. 291; Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jesus*, Brussels, 1896, Vol. VII, p. 333).

good God, who uses all the noble instruments and my nothingness to crush me. But I rejoice that good is done by whomsoever.

I leave here around October 10 and going to Soriano. On October 15 I leave for Ceccano and then for Rome, etc. From there I will write from time to time.

Around Saint Martin's send the two lay brother novices¹¹⁵ with Confrater Vincent¹¹⁶ and have the tertiary go with them. It is soon enough if they are here by Saint Martin's, or a day or two earlier. Confrater Vincent, as well as the other two, will go to Soriano and for two years he will not undertake the study of philosophy. They will study morals and the Council there with the others and prepare themselves for ordination.

Send them to this Retreat. The lay brothers will stay here and Confrater Vincent will go with companions to Soriano, for the clerics do not reside in this Retreat. Therefore, he will leave, that is, two with one priest will go with me to Ceccano, where they are needed, and the others at Toscanella.

Send Confraters Silvester of Saint Mary and Cosimo to San Angelo to study theology, which will begin at the end of January. If Confrater Ignatius has studied logic well, he could come with the other two; otherwise, he must go to Soriano.¹¹⁷ Send these in December, that is, at the beginning or a bit toward the middle of December.

Along with the two mentioned who are coming in December, you can send Confrater Marian of Saint Lawrence.¹¹⁸

In January, as they are professed, you will send Father Peter, subdeacon, Confrater John Peter and Confrater Ignatius.¹¹⁹ Since they are not ready for theology, they, therefore, will study morals there. How will they be able to study? Yesterday in a conference with Father Master¹²⁰ we were saying that the teacher could possibly be Father Luke Anthony.¹²¹ That would mean that it would be necessary to have him come in December with the others mentioned. He could have the assistance of the donkey from the Retreat. But he should come by way of Toscanella, for there he could meet with Father Master, etc. In Soriano he will be well, and he will acquire more than if he converted the Indies.

He is young, and as he has worked with the young men some years, he will have opportunity to do all the good he wants for his neighbor. Urgency

115. There were four lay brother novices this time. We cannot identify the ones Paul refers to.

116. Vincent Bertolotti of Saint Augustine (1729-1780).

117. Sylvester Bordesì of Saint Mary Magdalene (1721-1795); Cosmos Monti of the Crown of Thorns (1729-1782); Ignatius Coccumelli of the Holy Name of Jesus was dismissed in 1754.

118. Marian Santini of Saint Lawrence was dismissed in 1754.

119. Peter Vico of Saint John (1726-1773); John Peter Poli of Saint Charles, dismissed in 1754; Ignatius previously mentioned.

120. Father Mark Aurelius Pastorelli.

121. Father Luke Anthony Bianchini of Saint Joseph, assistant rector at the Presentation and who, therefore, already knew the young men professed

demands this. He needs to serve God and the Congregation as God wishes. See, Father, if this goes well and give me your opinion. If it seems good, begin to bring this up to Father Luke Anthony, and then I will write him also. But take a good look how it will go with appointing another vice rector, which must necessarily be done, for all the more reason that I am appointing Father Dominic, along with Father Francis Anthony, to Toscanella, and because of his age Father Eustace is still a long way from ordination.

Father Master tells me that in two years Confrater Joseph of Saint Catherine¹²² will certainly be a good professor in philosophy. Then with the three from Garessio and the other young men he can conduct that class. Confrater Silvester will turn out to be a good professor in theology, if he improves his speech. Therefore, we are thinking of having him study theology.

I have written you the information on the twenty-seven canes of cloth and the money to be given Signore Orioli, which he has already received for these two Retreats. The cloth was better than the last time, unless I am mistaken. I hope that at this time you have given the order that payment be made, etc.

I am much concerned in the Lord over the sickness of Father Anthony. I hope good from it and am waiting to hear how he is.

In order not to tire you too much, I am including a note on the good order of your members. While prostrating¹²³ and other observances, which the novices practice laudably, take notice a bit for someone may laugh or give another a slight kick, etc. That is not good and is a loss if they are not kept from doing the like. I do not think it is done with malice, but out of lightheartedness; but it is necessary to be on guard.

I have told you several times, and I repeat myself, that your words do more and penetrate more without so much effort on your chest, but gently and without force. Acting in this way, you maintain your strength and all the rest.

Father Bernadine¹²⁴ is needed at Ceccano as a companion for the missions. He will do well.

There is always greater need to cry out to God for, believe me, from roof to basement, I tell you in secret, they are trying to send the whole edifice to the ground,¹²⁵ and this is not just my idea. But in this I am quiet. Let the Will of God be done.

I embrace you in Jesus. Let them pray much for me, for I have never been in such necessities. Greet everyone for me. Let them be happy and let them

122. Joseph Hyacinth of Saint Catherine (1729-1802) was an excellent professor and an edifying religious.

123. Prostration was a penitential practice followed by the religious at least once a week, especially on Fridays. They prostrated, with face to the floor in the corridor outside the refectory, as a sign of regarding themselves as worthy to be walked over by others since they had not loved God as they should have.

124. Father Bernadine Rotillio of Saint Ann (1723-1776).

125. Paul means the whole Congregation, not simply the building at Ceccano.

become holy, for they have such an opportunity. I have reports that Father Anthony did a fine job on his mission to the glory of God and for peace.

I am not writing Father Clement, for I have much at hand. Greet him, and as I replied in my letter to Orvieto, I will let him know through the canon.¹²⁶

I am including the reply for the archpriest of Giglio. You may read it and send it on.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the †

579

Girolama Ercolani (6)

San Angelo
September 28, 1748

J.M.J.

My Dear Girolama,

I am writing in haste, for I am not very well. I tell you that not only have you not committed any sin in telling the doctor and the curate that you do not have the ability to elaborate much when you made your confession, but also you did well to say that. You ought to behave that way. So why should you wish to confess a good thing which has been well done? Don't you see this is the work of the devil to upset you so that you will not have peace of heart in your exercises? So do not be confessing these crazy things that the enemy puts into your head.

I say the same regarding the other point in your letter. Under holy obedience do not confess such things, for there is no sin there. It is really a virtue of great importance to say what is necessary in confession and leave off long and useless discourses. That is what every good Christian does.

I hope to be there around October 15 on my way to Ceccano and will bring three religious with me, for I will be assigning them as members of that Retreat. I will offer you an occasion for your charity. Greet the doctor for me, and be happy for God loves you and will do you great good if you obey. Jesus bless you and make you holy, along with all your house. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

126. Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin entered the Congregation as a priest and canon of the cathedral of Orvieto. At this time he was a novice and will make his profession on December 3, 1748. He left the Congregation in 1764.

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (10)

San Angelo
October 1, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I have been in Vetralla since Sunday night to take care of this convent of Carmelites for their retreat and to act as extraordinary confessor. I will be here for eight days to prepare myself for my next journey to Ceccano.

Here I have received by the Mercy of God the desired news of your improvement from your illness. For that I have made and requested incessant prayers. "Blessed be God who has not removed our prayer and his mercy from us." I trust in God that you are now perfectly recovered, as before, and that you will complete the work which the always adorable Divine Providence has confided to you for his greater glory and the spiritual profit of so many souls. I thank the Sovereign Giver of all good things for the great beginning of the business in Rome, due to the charitable work of Cardinal Tanara. "Thanks be to God and to Mary ever a Virgin."

I am having all our affairs recommended to God by these holy religious. I assure you that they are great souls, confirming for me the high esteem I had for them for about six years, during which I have been the extraordinary confessor for their retreats. More than any is a blessed religious who for about thirty-three years has been nailed to her bed by some unknown disease and without being able to move. She is a genuine miracle of patience. I pass over the rest in silence. Every time I am called into the cloister, as I was yesterday, I made a devout remembrance of you with her and she prayed much.

Oh, how good God is! I do not know how to express the shame I experience in being among these blessed souls, truly observant of perfect common life. There are some, two people, to whom His Divine Majesty has given great lights for the work of our Congregation and Retreats. But I experience little or no comfort. I thank God that he permits me to suffer within and without so that I keep my head bowed. Otherwise, what would become of poor me? With my face on the ground I ask for your holy blessing and the continuation of your holy prayers, and with profound reverence I sign myself,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord

Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (42)

San Angelo
October 5, 1748

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father,

I am at the end of the retreat at this holy convent.¹²⁷ I have given Viaticum and anointed Sister Colomba, but she will not die at this time. Oh, what a convent this is! Let them pray much and hope for much. There are two souls who have great lights in our favor. But I am drinking bitterness and am happy with that.

Now listen, dear Father. Tell me what I ought to do with our Father Vice Master. Where should I send him for a change of air? Father Luke Anthony is coming to Soriano to teach morals and for a rest. I would like Father Francis to come as well. Enough! I will wait until next Saturday's post when I will be at Soriano, and there God will provide a worker.

For now let us do what is possible. We will help each other when it becomes necessary to come together for the purpose of workers. I would think of giving a public retreat to the people of Orbetello, and I will take care of the nuns as well, for I hope to be there in February. From my letter you will have known the decision regarding the men to be sent.

I trust they have sent the cloth. The tailor can enter immediately. I believe I have written the *primicerio* of Toscanella. I have too much to do; in six days I am doing the work of fifteen. I am going to Viterbo, then to Soriano, then to Ceccano. Soon I will write more in detail. Jesus bless you for the charity of the good fish.

The candidate from Rome has been well received.¹²⁸

I beg you to take care of yourself. I am in the middle of many thorns which pierce my heart. But I am at peace and I have great confidence in God and am refusing all the protection which has been offered me from the powerful ones of this world. I felt at the altar that I am to rely on God alone. Know, dear Father, that the Cross will triumph. Goodbye. Pardon my mistakes, for I am writing rapidly and I am keeping my mouth open for Jesus Christ¹²⁹ until now, and I am robbing this little time to write you. Goodbye. My greetings to all.

127. Convent of the Carmelites in Vetralla, where Paul preached various times. It was to the Carmelite Sister Maria Angela Magdalene Cencelli that he sent the treatise *Mystical Death*. Sister Maria Angela Colomba Leonardi (1685-1751), for whom Paul had great regard, is mentioned in other letters (S. Possanzini, E. Boaga, *L'ambiente del Monastero Monte Carmelo di Vetralla al tempo di San Paolo della Croce*; Emanuele Boaga, *Paolo della Croce predicatore di esercizi spirituali alle religiose*).

128. This is the novice from Rome who was dismissed and who is referred to in other letters to Fulgentius.

129. "Keeping my mouth open for Jesus Christ" means, perhaps, that despite many tribulations, Paul continues to work for the glory of God through his ministry of the Word.

The bishop¹³⁰ will confer the canonry on Father John Baptist. He wrote me in words of great cordiality, but he will make his profession at Prime on December 2. That is the bishop's statement.

Your poor servant,
Paul of the †

582

Father Ricci (1)¹³¹

San Angelo
October 9, 1748

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

Last Sunday, after I ended the retreat at the convent in Vetralla, I paid my courtesy visit to the cardinal in Viterbo,¹³² that is, at Parnzana. He received me with his usual charity. I spoke to him about the Retreat there, and he seemed touched. It seems necessary to me that the city ask him for a mission, which is the thought of the vicar general and the Archpriest Renzoli. Accordingly, I am giving you this news so that with your holy zeal you may cooperate to the profit of the city and for the progress of the new Retreat, to which ten religious will come around November 10. The mission could be given after Christmas, when the work in the countryside will be completed, especially the planting. Let them prepare the petition with force and let them cite the obligation that our Congregation has to give a mission every four years, according to the judgment of the Ordinary, and conduct a public retreat for the people every year in order to cultivate the spirituality of the city. They should help him understand the great good that this Retreat has brought and will bring to the city and all of the marsh country. I would like to write to the interim vicar, but I cannot because I am leaving for Ceccano. Let him know my thinking. Excuse my boldness for love of God, and be certain that you and all your reverent house are in the number of our great benefactors; therefore, you share in all our prayers. With profound reverence I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

130. This is the bishop of Orvieto, to whom Paul had written (see letters of September 19 and 26, 1748) to settle the canonry of Father Clement Maioli of Orvieto, whom he was to profess on December 3, 1748.

131. Father Ricci was *primicerio* of Toscanella, literally "first candle holder," an ecclesiastical position of honor.

132. Cardinal Simonetti.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (43)

Ferentino
October 20, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Last night I arrived here in Ferentino safe and sound, along with my three companions, Father John, Father Eustace, and Confrater Sebastian. We came all the way on foot. Thanks be to God. I am doing well and feel strong. The bishop¹³³ here holds that victory is certain, and I agree — I am speaking for this Retreat — for I have great hopes for the Congregation. The people are very fervent, more than can be expressed, and they want the Retreat. “The finger of God is here.” I am writing in haste to give you the news about myself so that they would recommend me much to God, for the needs are extreme. I will write more from time to time. Tonight, God willing, I will be in Ceccano. I believe you will have received my letter in which I asked that you see to it that Father Luke Anthony, Father Francis, Confrater Vincenzo, and the two lay brothers will be at San Angelo around November 9 or 10, as long as there is no danger from the air. I do not think there should be. In exchange I have ordered that Father Joseph,¹³⁴ since he is not able to hear confessions or do anything else except to improve himself, come to your Retreat. You may use him in any office, whether as sacristan or anything else.

I gave you news about that man from San Enanzio, etc. It would be well if he could be vested with Father Philip, from whom I have had no reply. I believe that Father Sandigliani¹³⁵ will come soon with strong resolves, as Canon Randone has informed me. I believed that he had already sent the money from Rome for the cloth because that was expected by you. It is up to your judgment.

I am writing in haste and want to get away. Let them pray much. May Jesus enrich them with every good. I greet everyone, and I am from a true heart asking you to take good care of yourself, especially in speaking in Chapter, and not to be forcing yourself. I am most edified with Father Luke Anthony, and on my return I will embrace him in the Lord, and I hope he will be happy. Jesus bless everyone. Amen.

Address: Rome, Frosinone for Ceccano, Retreat of Mary Most Holy of Corniano.

133. Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (1689-1754).

134. This is probably Joseph Villavecchia of Saint Mary Magdalene, who was not assigned to the preaching ministry, but gave himself willingly to other ministries.

135. There is no notice of any of these three in the registries. Therefore, they must not have entered novitiate.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (44)

Ceccano

Retreat of Saint Mary of Corniano

October 26, 1748

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

When I arrived in Ferentino, I wrote you to give you the news of my good journey and of my companions. On Monday, October 21, we arrived at this Retreat, and I have had the consolation to find these blessed sons in observance and fervor and of one heart in unfeigned charity, notwithstanding the present straits and emergencies.

Now that I am having a better look at this Retreat, I see it is very good, in solitude, and in fine air. A fine and beautiful edifice is already underway with twenty or more cells, in addition to the offices. There is an old building that would make ten cells for a novitiate, etc. This would all be complete if the present uproar had not ensued. This continues and is being sustained more and more by the revilings and calumnies of the devil. The bishop of Terracina wrote me a letter yesterday morning in which he told me of the great beginning of that Retreat, but the evil part of that letter, which he calls my Calvary, tells me that he has seen a letter of the Frati that prophesies a bad outcome for us. But I put my hopes in God, for that would be a great loss for our Congregation and for that populace, who are crying out in our favor.

Enough! "May God's will be done." I have written to Cardinals Crescenzi and Rezzonico. Cardinal Simonetti of Viterbo has written me and offered to help much. The chairman, Cardinal Cavalchini, wishes me well, but I tell you in all truth that I have never felt so despoiled of all reliance on men as now.

I want them to pray much with humility, charity, and resignation "in unfeigned faith" during the Novena of the Holy Presentation, and you can have the blessed novices and professed clerics receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day of the novena. If you write to me, do not write here, but address your letter to Rome, for Ferentino, where I will be on November 4, since the bishop wants me to give a retreat to a convent of nuns. At this time I cannot give a mission. I will be there until November 12, then I will leave immediately for Rome, where I hope to be by November 15 or 16. So do not write me at this place any more. From Rome I will let you know what to do. I have no more to say. I greet you on the part of everyone here and embrace you in the Lord, along with all your devout community. I am always more,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

Send the letter to the palace of the bishop of Ferentino.

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (11)

Ceccano
October 31, 1748

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I trust in God that you will have received my letters.

I am leaving here November 4 for Ferentino, where I will remain until November 11 to give a retreat to a convent of nuns. On November 12 I will leave, God willing, for Rome. Everyone is prophesying good news, from top to bottom, for the great reason that they are helping. There should be a victory. From top to bottom we should hope for great help and blessings from the prayers poured out by so many men and women servants of God.

If you would think it good in the Lord to recommend me to Cardinal Tanara so that he would receive me sometime when I am in Rome, I would consider such a charitable recommendation a great favor. When I arrived at this Retreat, in seeing once more the mountains of Terracina and the vicinity, I felt myself filled with peace and joy in the Lord.

God will draw much good from everything. I hope in the Mercy of God and with the help of the your prayers that my grave faults will not block such a great good. With my face in the dust, I ask again and again your prayers as well as your holy pastoral blessing. With profound reverence I end by kissing your sacred pastoral vestments, and am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

Father Thomas M. and all the blessed religious pay you their profound reverence and ask for your blessing.

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (45)

Rome
November 9, 1748

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I arrived in Rome about 15 hours, well soaked with water and having made practically the whole trip on foot. I did not conduct the retreat for the nuns because the Mother Abbess is too sick. I do not know how long I will stay here. I think it will be almost all of November. I do not know when I had so many tasks at hand; I do not know what to do first. The Frati of Soriano have forbidden us the begging of grain and wine, which is done by our syndics everywhere, that is, in dioceses. There is the litigation for Ceccano and Terracina, so I do not know where to turn. I will do what I can. I have put things into the hands of God. I began my walks through Rome this morning and continued until afternoon. Believe me, "I feel another law contradicting..." and I have had temptations not to do another thing, but I must bow my head.

If the House of Albani does not stand strong, the Retreat of Soriano is gone. So how do we survive? In the rest there are contradictions and storms on every side. This does not frighten me. Let God's will be done.

The cardinal¹³⁶ wants me to give a mission in some places in the diocese of Porto. It will be necessary to accept the burden. That mission will not be given unless the business of our litigation is not underway, and I think that will be December. For now my head can give no further answer. Let them pray and remain happy and rejoice in the Lord in their earthly paradise, of which I am deprived because of my sins. Greet everyone for me. I embrace you in Jesus and am from a true heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Do not send me long letters now; one letter as usual. After the name of the addressee, write: "In the house of Signore Captain Angeletti."¹³⁷

587

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (18)

Rome

November 16, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I much regret that I could not obey your request through Marquis Belloni that I come to Prase de since I had nothing more to do in Ferentino — due to the sickness of the Mother Abbess. Since there were no clerics in the seminary, I thought I should leave as soon as possible for this capitol. That decision was directed by the always adorable Divine Providence, since I immediately had the chance to speak with Cardinal Calvachini, the chairman of the case, to whom I revealed only a prudent indifference to the case. I did speak with the cardinal of San Clemente and Cardinals Gentili and Tanara, to whom I recommended our case.

Now there remains going to the feet of His Holiness, which I hope to do next Friday with advice of the two cardinals, one of San Clemente and the other Cardinal Gentili. I will present them with a petition in order to obtain the favor of opening Retreats without the consent of the Mendicants and with only the consent of the Ordinaries of the dioceses. I know I am asking a difficult thing. But I find myself in a complicated emergency and am taking the shortest cut. This step is very quiet so that adversaries, etc. Then I will go to the other cardinals. When this is done, nothing more remains for me. I will go to three

136. Cardinal Annibale Albani donated the church and land at Soriano. He was bishop of Porto and Santa Rufina.

137. The Angeletti family was from Ceccano but had houses in Ceccano and Piperno, Terracina and Rome. They always had strong affection for Paul and his religious and wanted his homes to be always open to them (Cioni, *Annali*, n. 331).

locations for missions, having been requested by the cardinal of San Clemente. I could not decline because he wishes that I, personally, do the work.

It seems to me this is the hardest I have ever worked, but with more strength of spirit and body. Now my ingratitude has grown, for I am wanting in those exceedingly high graces, which are not granted to ingrates like me.

I have written this letter by bits because of pressing affairs. Consequently, after rewriting, I was once more with Cardinals Tanara and Gentili to consult on the petition, which they were thinking of presenting to His Holiness. After mature reflection they counseled me to wait. Meanwhile, Cardinal Gentili is working close to His Holiness and has all eagerness to found the Retreat of Pagliano, which is in the same situation as Ceccano and Terracina. So Cardinal S. thinks to do all in one act. We will wait and see.

Meanwhile, continue to recommend the affair to God and to Mary Most Holy. I am not neglecting to take every step I can without holding back, hoping that it can end here, as I expect, within three or four days. Then, I will embark on apostolic works with the idea of returning to Rome after the Feast of Christmas. After that, I will turn my feet toward you, since I have not been able to do that until now because of what I wrote above

I was eager to obey your venerated command, communicated by Marquis Belloni, to whom I spoke with the greatest earnestness possible that he intervene with the priests at Pofi. He said he would do so, but in my opinion he was neither hot nor cold.

I also brought up the extreme anger of the populace of Ceccano and other regions of the diocese if the Retreat were to be torn down, as well as the damage that would happen to the donations to the Frati as a result. I am waiting for an answer.

I rest at your feet and implore the charity of your prayers and your holy blessing, and with profound reverence, kissing your sacred pastoral vestments, I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

588

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (12)

Rome
November 16, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Cardinal Tanara treated me twice with great charity in brief conferences when I had audiences with him. He sent me to Cardinal Gentili for the Terracina case. God knows how much I had to say, and I see he is much inclined. But since the Providence of God has put it in his heart to found a Retreat in Paliano, a place in his diocese, so he has taken pains to make it succeed. Yesterday morning, I was at his feet to petition for the Retreat at Terracina. He told me he had spoken to the pope, although he sees things a bit differently. I say this because of the great efforts pressed by the Capuchins.

But he comes out inclined to favor these foundations, having revealed that at the second audience almost all might be done. With great sincerity he also told me that since Terracina is in the same situation, he thought to resolve that at the same time and manner for his diocese.

I wished to present myself at the feet of His Holiness with a petition to see if we could stop the litigation. I consulted about this with Cardinal Tanara and Cardinal Gentili. After mature deliberation they counseled me to wait. On recommending myself to God, this seemed to me to have been inspired. So you can see that the business is going to go ahead for a while yet, but with lively faith for a good outcome. I have never been so crushed in strength of spirit and body; nevertheless, I am not neglecting to take every step I can. I have gone to cardinals to recommend our case, especially to the cardinal chairman. I hope he is favorable.

The truth is that I see them all filled with good feelings, but their answers are prudent and noncommittal. God will help us, and you can greatly contribute to a successful outcome for the glory of God. Meanwhile, we are in battle and I am so weak. Sometimes I am forced to sigh, especially when I see myself forced in long delays here in waiting rooms and amid so many contradictions. Blessed be God.

I will not fail to do as you wished me to in making my way around the holy places. Meanwhile, I do it every day at the altar.

For the love of the Passion of Jesus, assist me with your holy prayers because I am in extreme need. God knows. An uproar by the Frati has been raised even with regard to the Retreat at Soriano. That after peaceful possession for five years. And Cardinal Albani does nothing; it is as though he were dead. After darkness and storms, I hope for light and serenity.

I am in Rome for five or six days more to speak to the cardinals, and then there is more for me to do. I will go to give a mission in the diocese of Porto. This was requested by the cardinal of San Clemente, so I am going there. Patience! When the mission is over, I will return to Rome and, please God, will be at the feet of His Holiness to ask for these necessary favors in case things are not settled. You have the writings. I ask your holy blessing, and in haste I offer you my profound reverence, and I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

Last night Signore Cas...i was here, whom I reverence most humbly.

589

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (13)

San Angelo
November 22, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency

After having done all that I could at Rome, I recommended the business to God and to many cardinals, especially Cardinal Ruffo, who is the protector of the Capuchins and the most opposed because of the opposition of those

Fathers. But after I had informed him and after he wanted to know from me the status of our Congregation, he not only showed himself favorable and prepared to help us, but with great cordiality he also assured me that he would abandon his protective role in order to serve justice. This is a great point, granted by the Mercy of God. I assure you that he is undeceived regarding what was conveyed to him by the Capuchins.

Since there was nothing more for me to do in Rome, all the more so since Cardinal Gentili advised me not to go to His Holiness at this time for many good reasons, but to wait until the case has been disposed of, I decided to leave and arrived here yesterday at this Retreat of San Angelo. On next Sunday, November 24, I will leave for the mission in the diocese of Porto. I will be in three places because there are few people out there, except at Cerveteri. I hope to be back in Rome on December 22 or 23. I have taken this decision under the pressure of the cardinal of San Clemente, bishop of Porto, who wishes me to conduct this mission. I was not able to excuse myself and give it to other Passionists, as I offered to do.

Nonetheless, I took my departure without repugnance since it seemed to me that my remaining in Rome presently would be frustrating. I assure you, however, that things have made a good beginning. There is no want of the assistance of some friendly advocates, who are all fired up. We have reason to expect the best, thanks to the triumphant grace of the Most High and the strong protection of Mary Most Holy and of blessed Saint Joseph and all the saints.

After writing this I will add something I forgot. The case is being stretched out at least to the end *ante Reges*,¹³⁸ and that will be December 20. The agreed text under doubt is to be submitted as: "Whether the foundation is to be sustained..." and it is already signed by the chairman.

Let us now come to Cardinal Tanara. He is a true servant of God, but he has little liberty of spirit in dealing with us, all the more so since he gave me only a very short audience. It seems to me it is not easy for him to get involved. On the other hand, I had much liberty of spirit and openness in speaking with Cardinal Ruffo and Cardinal Mesmer, who had been against us and now, I hope, are more favorable. Cardinal Gentili has undertaken everything for the Retreat at Terracina, and with him I had liberty and frankness of spirit. He recognizes the work of God and protects it and wants it for his diocese. He has spoken about us to the pope, whom he has found rather displeased, I will say that, with the efforts of these blessed Frati. He enlightened him and told me that he is already inclined to favor us. For these reasons he counseled me to hold off in going for an audience for a while, and, meanwhile, let him act, for he hopes strongly that he will take care of everything in one sweep.

I am sorry to the utmost over the affliction you endure. But what can be done? The Lord puts to death and raises to life. You will complete the work with great contentment in God. Since this work scalds the cursed devil badly,

138. Feast of the Three Kings.

therefore, he has raised such a great storm. Let us be confident in God that all will go well. Meanwhile, let us arm ourselves for other wars.

The Frati at Soriano are raising complaints against the Retreat of Soriano, while those from the Retreat of Valentano are aroused against ours in Toscanella, but they are not being given a hearing. God will help us by means of your holy prayers and those of all your beloved flock. My heart is without feeling in all these happenings. But in Rome I had great oppression and tribulation in spirit without knowing why. God knows. I beg your holy blessing and pardon my expansiveness. With profound reverence I kiss your holy pastoral vestments and am always more,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,

Paul of the Cross

590

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (19)

San Angelo

November 22, 1748

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

After having done all that I could in Rome, I recommended the work of God to many cardinals, especially to Cardinal Ruffo. Since he is the protector of the Capuchins, he was opposed to us because of the strong opposition of those Fathers, but after I had informed him, and after he inquired into the actual status of our Congregation in detail, he not only showed himself favorable and inclined to help me, but with great cordiality he also assured me he would set aside his role as protector in order to work for justice. As he reads the Scriptures: "He will do what is just, etc.," he appears to be undeceived with regard to what he had been told by the Capuchins, etc.

Since there was no more for me to do in Rome, and all the more so because Cardinal Gentili thought it well that I do not approach His Holiness for many good reasons, but to wait until the case is finished, I decided to leave. I arrived here at this Retreat of San Angelo just yesterday, and next Sunday, November 24, I will leave for the mission in the diocese of Porto. I will take care of three places and hope to be in Rome around December 23. I took this decision under the influence of the cardinal of San Clemente, and with the feeling that a delay in Rome would be frustrating.

I assure you that our affairs have a good beginning and the assistance of some friendly advocates, who are not a little warm in their support, especially the lawyer Gagliardi. The papers that came from Ceccano are excellent, especially your account, which is the strongest. So we have reason to expect good things through the triumphant favor of the Most High, the protection of Mary Most Holy and of all the saints. The case is delayed until that last meeting of the committee before Epiphany, that is, December 20. That will be the last meeting of the year. The question to be decided has been agreed on and signed by the chairman, that is, "Whether the foundation is to be approved." In the opinion of Signore Gagliardi, it is favorable to us.

I trust in the Mercy of God that you will have received my letters, especially the last one. I have no doubts whatever of your great charity in protecting this work of God or of the continuance of your holy prayers and those of all your loving flock. I am always more aware that I am more and more obligated to you, and God knows I do not fail to make you a sharer in my poor prayers and holy sacrifices, along with the entire poor Congregation, which will always be most grateful. I end at your feet, asking your holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and am always,

Your humble, obligated, devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

The missions will take place in areas beyond the mail service. Father Thomas, who is in the vicinity, will be able to write to you if something turns up with our case, or anything else.

591

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (46)

Cerveteri

December 1, 1748

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father,

At the moment I came off the platform, all exhausted, seeing my numerous miseries and calamities, I am greeted with a pack of letters from young candidates. I have been sighing, for it does not seem to be that it was necessary to send them, although I was pleased to have seen them for a few moments. Since you know how much I rely on you, I am giving you full authority to vest them. However, with one letter you could have avoided this trip.

I told you my mind to a great extent, for it seems to me that others from that region would have succeeded, except the one of whom I did not have the slightest knowledge that he was in the Retreat. Now, since you are there, and the information you give me assures me of the goodness of the young man, I do not refuse my consent, and I grant you authority to vest him, with the understanding that you have the necessary documents and experience of the good qualities of that candidate.

I am writing with a mouthful in my throat, for I have no other time.

I rejoice over the profession of five novices, and may God bless the coming of the others you mentioned, if they come.

With regard to Pereta, there is no way to send a worker because we are all busy. So please make our excuses to the parish priest. When God wills it, we will help him. Now, it is not possible. Father Anthony is busy, as are the others. It is necessary to do only what we can.

When I am through with Cerveteri, I am going to Ceri. If you need to write, address the letter: "Rome for Cerveteri," for there is a post office there now. From there they can be sent safely.

I want you to take care of yourself. God knows how the affairs of the Congregation will turn out. In my opinion they will go well, unless some disaster happens. Up until now it was a time to prepare oneself for death.

I embrace you in the Lord, along with all the religious. Father John Baptist greets you. I am from a true heart and in no little hurry,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the †

592

Father Ricci (2)

San Angelo
December 31, 1748

Reverend Father,

Because of the sickness I contracted on the mission in the diocese of Porto, I arrived here yesterday in this Retreat more sick than recovering. So you will forgive me if I am a mail behind in answering your esteemed letter. I am unable to do that with my own hand, for I cannot hold a pen.

As a consequence of the orders of His Eminence, conveyed to me in your letter, I will write in this post to Father Anthony, rector of that Retreat, to reach an agreement with you in order to give as prompt a fulfillment as may be possible to the triduum commanded by His Eminence. I well understand that this field should have had further preparation. But since interpretation does not pertain to us, but only the execution of the orders of the rector, it is enough that the Father does not exceed the limits prescribed, for that is what obedience and due veneration to the express commands of this eminent prelate means, before whom every lower judgment must yield. With humble reverence I kiss your sacred hands.

Your humble, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

593

Thomas Mary Struzziери of the Side of Jesus (1)

—
[1748]

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

My Dearly Beloved Father,

With the highest edification and consolation I read your letter, written from Ceccano on the eleventh of this month, along with the one included for Signora Tozzi, concerning the petition of the Frati of Pofi. I bless God, who wishes this new plant to produce copious, mature fruits for the greater glory of God and the advantage of our neighbor in the midst of the thorns of so many difficulties.

Above all, I am consoled by the always greater blessings that our good God imparts to your spirit by making you suffer much for his glory to make you a great saint. But, my dear Father, although I rejoice in the great merit given you by our good God in so much suffering, especially in the comfortless journey to Terracina, made partly barefoot, I had to feel pain at such great suffering, all the more since you well know I have granted you all the faculties I have. So without any violation of the holy Rules, you can make use of a horse, etc.

Enough! "Your reward will be very great," and our great God is preparing your soul by means of these sufferings for greater works and, above all, to obtaining the gift of highest interior recollection so that, in always engaging in a true apostolic life, consisting in action for souls and in continuous prayer and contemplation, which does not mean prayer continually on one's knees, but in a high recollection within and a remaining in one's interior depth, all lost in love of God, you are drawing day and night on the holy milk of holy love.

What do you think of the hard interior battles, these fierce repugnances and abandonments, that strong agitation that you experience in suffering, especially in the severe suffering in body from the cold, tiredness, pains, etc., accompanied by strong temptation in every way? I am certain that this is simply a great preparation for virtues to flower in your interior temple so that you will arrive at that high recollection I mentioned, which is the beloved Benjamin¹³⁹ of holy contemplation. This does not mean that the soul is freed of all imperfections, since to the end these come from a nature battered with great desolation. Since they are involuntary, they do nothing harmful to holy perfection, while they serve to humble us more and leave well hidden the sovereign work that God is doing by means of a very secret working of the virtues practiced in the stormiest of times. Believe me, without a great light that God gives me regarding your soul, I could not tell you the most truthful things.

But you are not as much a well-wisher of mine as you once were, for you tell me that you believe that God has cut you off from the Congregation for your infidelities. That afflicts my soul more than I can express. It is absolutely certain this is a pestilential temptation of the accursed devil. Oh, my dear Father! what would you say if poor Paul told you that our dear God will use you to take the Congregation forward and see it raised to the dignity of a true order¹⁴⁰ with highest jubilation? Yet this is true. Even though I am along in years and, above all, most ungrateful to God, God will give me the consolation to see this.

I neglected to tell you of my long journeys on foot for so many years through snow and other discomfort, especially at the outset. I say to your heart

139. Benjamin was the most beloved of Jacob's sons (Gen. 35: 18). Paul is referring to Benjamin as the deep internal recollection, a common image in mystical writing at that time.

140. Father Struzzieri, as procurator, is striving to obtain from the Holy See solemn vows which will make the Congregation an "Order."

that many times I suffered such fierce pain in my feet and the rest of my body because of my thin habit, along with a horrible interior abandonment, that I experienced a kind of pain of the damned lost from God, that it seemed to me I was the greatest enemy of God. I experienced temptations against the theological virtues, urgings to blasphemy, surgings of despair, and, above all, a horrible pain of spirit that I cannot explain. All this went along with the pains and hardships of travel. So think, dear Father, of the condition I was in. Do you think I do not experience the like now? On going to Toscanella from Montalto, there was a north wind blowing down the road, and one of the group was taken sick with a blood blister and was healed by puncturing it.¹⁴¹

Oh, dear Father, how could I tell you the least of the beatings of the devil on my person? How can I tell you of the interior desolation suffered on that journey?

Enough! I am sharing this confidence with you only. You can gather how much your spirit is one with mine. Courage, beloved Father! God wishes to make you a saint.

I have already received letters from the bishop of Terracina and from the body of that city. The bishop tells me to put 1,500 *scudi* in deposit. I have answered them all. God will help us and all will go well.

With regard to the business at Piperno,¹⁴² I know nothing. It means nothing for us. If God gives more light, we will see.

I rejoice over the Retreat at Vico,¹⁴³ and I hear of the great fervor, etc., and that the good people will draw down copious blessing from heaven...

141. Paul, with some religious designated for the foundation at Toscanella, left Argentario on March 19, 1748, and reached there the afternoon of March 21 (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 133-134).

142. It is question of a foundation.

143. Another request for a foundation.

“A Miraculous Grace” (1749)

In the early letters of the new year of 1749, Paul tells the story of his illness and his slow recovery. He had spent Christmas in bed at Oriolo. He returned to Viterbo and finally got to Rome by January 18, when he writes from there to Bishop Borgia of the “miraculous grace,” for a brief will be presented by a select committee of four, newly assigned bishops. However, there would be no final decision until the beginning of Lent. So Paul returned to San Angelo and then goes to the Presentation, where he makes the Visitation. Rome moves slowly as Paul will soon learn!

Paul returned to Rome by April 19 to be at hand as the cardinals met to decide the problem of Paul’s making foundations without the consent of the Mendicants. He had hoped a brief would be issued, but the cardinals decided simply to allow Ceccano, Terracina, and Paliano to be established at the request of the local bishops and Communes. However, other places were not decided at this time. Paul sees this as good news, a “miracle,” and writes several letters to Bishops Oldo and Borgia and Father Fulgentius and others. Paul has the problem of finding sufficient rooms for the religious, and there are difficulties in getting the religious ordained. For these reasons he decided to limit the number of novices he would accept. During this year Paul writes several letters of spiritual direction, in which he speaks of interior prayer and contemplation.

594

John Francis Sancez (6)

San Angelo
January 4, 1749

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

The serious illness I picked up in the unhealthy air of the diocese of Porto, where I gave the holy mission, increased not a little on my return to this Retreat. I was forced to stop at Oriolo¹⁴⁴ and spend Christmas there and more days in bed with the threat of increasing illness. Your esteemed letter was forwarded to me there with its charitable thoughts of piety, such as I have always had from you at other times; they are worthy of your pious heart. I confess I do not know how to express the gratitude that I profess to you, and will always profess, assuring you that I will never omit to remember you and

¹⁴⁴ Oriolo was a town on the way to San Angelo. Paul fell sick as soon as he finished the mission at Cerveteri.

your pious house in my poor prayers with complete trust that the good God remembers to enrich you more and more with his abundant blessings.

This is the only letter I have written at this time as I have been so sick, but I am much improved. I did not write even to Father Fulgentius, the rector of the Retreat, since I could not apply myself, but I had someone else write to him. But I could not pass over my beloved and revered John Francis, since I was hoping on my return from Rome to get together for a holy conversation on the Kingdom of God.

My cordial greetings to Signore Curzio. I leave you in the Side of Jesus, and with profound respect say I am from all my heart,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

595

Thomas Fossi (25)

San Angelo
January 10, 1749

J.M.J.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I am answering your letter of December 10 after the sickness I contracted in the unhealthful air of Porto. With regard to putting your oldest daughter in the convent in Piombino, I am not inspired to second that idea. While I have a high opinion of that venerable convent, I say again, I do not feel inspired to counsel that. So make up your own mind as His Divine Majesty inspires you.

If I were to give my poor opinion, I would say you should cultivate that daughter in spirit with a holy education by having her progress in the exercise of holy meditation, especially on the holy Passion of Jesus Christ, in reading holy books, remaining always under the eyes of her mother, and not to have converse with anyone, or only rarely with some pious female, and always under obedience and in the presence of her mother. In this regard you cannot be too cautious. That is enough.

Going to communion every week with a good preparation and thanksgiving is excellent. Instruct her in this practice in a simple way. Teach her also how to make a good confession, and instruct her to confess her faults and not to treat of other things in the confessional, except what concerns her spiritual life. Teach her ejaculatory prayers, and in this way the young girl will receive light from God as to what she ought to do, which will be better than the advice of men of the world. Such, for now, is my opinion, and I hope I am not mistaken.

As for you, suffer your pains in silence, remain in your interior, rouse yourself with sweet affections as you do. I do not know what devotion Mother de Chantal practiced, but, if it is short and if you can practice it without hindrance to your duties, you can use it. Regarding the confessor, you should not choose an ignorant one, but, if possible, one more learned.

I am much obligated to you for the charity you continue to me and the entire Congregation. I have great confidence that His Divine Majesty will give you a copious reward in all things.

It is not true that I have a penitent near Toscanella who lives on daily Communion. That is false. I no longer direct anyone except our own religious and on missions. Beyond that, absolutely nothing. So you should give this no credence.

Do not be pained with what was written to you regarding retreats. His Divine Majesty is letting you know that he does not wish you to engage in such things; that vineyard is not for us. Leave the outcome to God. You should pray and remain in peaceful silence within, and without complaining about anything. You have the merit. Do not look any further. Do what you can, confident in God, and avoid every sin, but don't be so meticulous, for that will cause upset and weakness in mind. Trust in God, distrust yourself, and that will gain you much more.

Only Mary Most Holy remained exempt from all fault, even the least imperfection, much more so from every venial sin. No one else has that privilege. This is the teaching of the Council of Trent. So you are walking well. Keep guard so as not to give in to any real sin. If you fall into some venial fault, humble yourself before God and continue on your way in peace.

God knows how much I expect good things for you and your whole household. I pray Jesus to enrich you more and more with his copious blessings, as I hope, and with all my affection I say I am,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

596

Girolama Ercolani (7)

San Angelo

January 10, 1749

J.M.J.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering your letter since I am now a bit better. I received your letter at Oriolo, where I was taken ill. On my trip back to the Retreat from the mission I had to stop there because my sickness took a bad turn, and I was in bed for all of Christmas and more days beside. So excuse me if I did not answer you. However, I should not be writing you now, for you are not minded to ever be rid of your scruples. Oh, Signora Girolama! how much you lose by listening to these cursed scruples! So out with them. Let us work at curing these wounds. You are not obliged on any account to confess this sluggishness you mention in your letter, for in that you have not committed any sin whatever.

What does it mean that such thoughts pass through your mind? You do not want to offend God; you want to love him. So why afflict yourself? Signora Girolama, do things my way. When such scruples come, get rid of them and make an act of love of God with peace and without stress. In that way the scruples will be dissipated. So, I am telling you under holy obedience that you are not to confess these things, for there is no sin. You are to continue to put in practice the advice that God has had his poor minister give you. If you do

that, you will profit and draw greater fruit from the sacraments and prayer, and you will be at peace.

I am sorry about the accident that happened to your daughter. I will not fail to recommend her to God, as I have already done. If she is not better, have her make the sign of the cross on the affected knee with oil from the tabernacle lamp. You can make that sign of the cross, or her aunt, with lively faith in Jesus Christ that he will grant the desired grace.

At this time I cannot come to Civita because I am weak. On my return from Rome I will come that way. The bishop has gone back to Rome, and I am in hopes that he is favorable to us. My heartfelt greetings to the doctor and all your household. You are to obey blindly and not anger me. I will say no more than that.

You have proofs clearer than the sun that when you have been obedient with regard to your scruples, you have had peace of heart, etc. What more do you want? Be at peace in God, for His Divine Majesty loves you. Continue your exercises of piety and spurn these imaginings that the cursed devil puts into your head. Jesus bless you and all your house, and make you holy. Amen. I am always more,

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

597

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (47)

San Angelo
January 11, 1749

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

My long silence was caused by my almost continual sickness, especially the most recent and dangerous inflammation in my chest, from which I have been delivered by the Mercy of God. I was forced to pass the whole Feast of Christmas at Oriolo. During my journey to this Retreat, which was made in order to get better, I became increasingly ill.

After the long silence, therefore, I am writing to my beloved Father Rector that I am better. I am worried that you may be ill, for I have not found your letters in this post. God knows how much I suffer to see you without help in your burdens, but, if you see the need is urgent, let me know so that I may send you Father Francis or Father Luke Anthony. I am waiting for word from Rome, but to date there is none. There is probability that we can entertain great expectations in all respects. Cardinal Gentili has undertaken the task of removing the case from the Congregation of Bishops and sending it elsewhere, to the three cardinals who examined the Rules, and that so as to silence the Frati and to have the brief issued, calling for only the consent of the bishop to make a foundation and excluding the Mendicants. The task is a hard one but

the *Barboni*¹⁴⁵ are stronger. That is a mighty undertaking and the opposition to it is very strong, for no such rescript has so far been issued for a new congregation. That in my opinion is a sign that nothing will be done for the present. On Monday, January 13, I hope to have certain news. If it is favorable with the selection of this new committee, I will immediately leave for Rome and will let you know.

I have no doubts of your vigilance regarding the young Piedmontese men. Examine them well regarding their conduct and knowledge and their health, especially for scabies. The decision to vest them rests with you and the Chapter. I say the same thing when it is a question of profession. I have already given you ample authority.

I am including a letter for Signore Thomas Fossi, and I ask you to send it with one of yours. Let Father Thomas Raffo¹⁴⁶ know that I will do everything possible to obtain a relic of Saint Aloysius. That is difficult, but I have hope.

Pray for us — our needs are extreme — especially for me as I am in water up to my neck.

My greetings to everyone in the Lord. Let them become holy, for they have much better opportunity than I, but in that I am not justified. I replied to Signore Sancez since I could not act because of my sickness. My cordial and reverent greetings to Signore Pietri. I have not forgotten his situation in my poor prayers. Likewise for the Grazi family, whom I embrace in the Lord. Out of charity take care of yourself, also out of concern for the Congregation and that poor Retreat. From the heart I say I am in haste,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

598

Marianna of Jesus (2)

San Angelo
January 14, 1749
On leaving.

Jesus

It is a high Providence of God that you find yourself in darkness and struggles, for in this way you will make greater profit in humility and in self-knowledge. So do not ever neglect your exercises, your interior solitude, union with the Holy Will of God, and all the other virtues.

In this darkness revive your faith, and with pure love, detached from the sensible, hold on to God in a true love, in silence and internal solitude. Seek for God with a sweet, peaceful loving care. But what am I saying? God is always with us. In naked faith lose yourself in the interior depth of your spirit at the peak of your soul, and there you will find the Highest Good; there you

145. A reference to the Capuchins who wore beards.

146. We do not know who this religious was.

will take your rest; there you will find all riches. Remember the instructions already given and make use of them.

I am leaving for Rome today so do not write me, for on my return I hope to pass that way.

Things go well and God has given us a miraculous grace. Help us to give thanks to God and continue your prayers, for the difficulties have not yet been overcome. Let us pray much. I am writing in haste. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the †

599

Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary (1)¹⁴⁷

San Angelo

January 14, 1749

Leaving.

Jesus

My Beloved Father Francis,

Now that I am a bit better, I am writing you a couple of lines in haste in order to visit your spirit on the Cross of Jesus. May the benefit of your native air revive you, but more profitable will be resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure, staying alone in your interior temple, adoring God in spirit and in truth, clothing yourself always more in the virtues of Christ. Do all that you can to celebrate every day to strengthen your spirit and unite yourself more with the sweet Savior.

I am leaving today for Rome because I received news yesterday that God has granted us a miraculous grace; things are going marvelously well.¹⁴⁸ It can be seen that God wishes to bless his work in a grand fashion and expand it more. The signs are clear. Help us to give thanks to the Lord, as a son of the Congregation should, and continue to pray.

I have sent a good letter to Sister Teresa Maria¹⁴⁹ and hope she is consoled, especially now when God touches her in the depth of her spirit. I hope she will be a saint. I have always entertained such hopes.

Greet in the Lord your father and mother and all for me, including D. Lorenzo.

147. Born at Ischia di Castro in 1724, Father Francis joined the Passionists in July 1743 and took vows on March 1, 1744. He was ordained December 23, 1747. He received this letter when he had returned to his native air in order to improve his health. There are two other letters written to him in this same year of 1749. Around 1753 he was struck with a mysterious illness that afflicted him until his death at Soriano in 1781.

148. In January 1749, through the interest of Cardinal Gentili, the case presented by the Mendicants was tried by a special commission of cardinals. Paul, in order to achieve victory, left for Rome (Cioni, *Annali*, n. 330).

149. As it appears in the letter of March 12, 1749, it was the sister of Father Francis, probably in the monastery of Ischia.

I am writing in great haste, and I embrace you in Jesus in the name of all.
Jesus bless you. Amen.

I have never received your letters, at least not now.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the †

600

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (14)

Rome

January 18, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

I went to give the missions in the diocese of Porto, as I wrote you before my departure for this capitol. After I had finished two places, I was overcome by a serious illness contracted in that unhealthful air. To the extent that I was compelled to remain away from the Retreat in order to recover, I am not yet clear of it. While I was coming back, I was confined to bed in Oriolo not only over Christmas, but also for some additional days. This is the reason I was unable to write to you.

Meanwhile, we have been working with Cardinal Gentili to obtain permission to continue the construction of the Retreat at Terracina. God knows how much I have pressed that, but to no avail, for the cardinal who is working hard for the foundation of a Retreat in his own diocese wishes to take care of both at once. He has succeeded after much work and quiet talks with His Holiness. He has obtained a rescript, recalling the case from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops to another committee chosen by His Holiness. The committee consists of four cardinals: the cardinal of San Clemente, Cardinals Gentili, Besozzi and Calvachini, who have full authority. The cardinal tells me that he wants to obtain a brief so that we can establish Retreats without depending in any way on the consent of the Mendicants. This is the primary reason why the cardinal has had the case taken from the Congregation of Bishops and turned over to this special committee. Since I was of the opinion that this matter would be quickly taken care of, I went to Rome, although somewhat tired, in order to be of assistance. But this morning I have found out for the first time that the cardinal will not be able to finish the business until the beginning of Lent, due to the absence of Cardinal Besozzi and, perhaps, the cardinal of San Clemente, who has probably gone to Porto.

It is true that the victory is certain with the favor of God. The cardinal has told me that I can return to my Retreat, where I have not a little to take care of. All this is understood by Signore Palleschi, who has the responsibility to draw up text to be presented to the committee. He has done his part wonderfully well. His Eminence praised him to me. All that remains for me to do is to leave some notes, and then I can promptly go away. I will arrange that Father Thomas will be here at the beginning of Lent in order to assist in the process and the production of the brief. There is more reason for this in the fact that I

ought to be in the Retreat on Mount Argentario because it is now a year since I was there.

Let us thank His Divine Majesty that things are going very well, and you will have consolation to see the fulfillment of the work your great piety initiated. Since it is a work that is so much to the glory of God and such great profit to our neighbor, it has been necessary to pass through so many contradictions. I will instruct Signore Palleschi to give you day-by-day accounts of the affair. I arrived here on the night of Wednesday, January 15. In five or six days I am thinking of leaving because my presence is useless, as I would have to remain a whole month without doing anything. I ask of your charity a gentle pardon, and that you would continue your fatherly affection with the power of your holy prayers. With profound reverence I ask your holy pastoral blessing.

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

601

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (20)

Rome
January 20, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

When I had recovered somewhat from the sickness I contracted in the unhealthy air of the diocese of Porto, I went to Rome to assist in our case. I arrived here Wednesday night of the present week, and tomorrow, God willing, I will return. You will be astounded that I am leaving so soon, having been here only five days. But I have done everything that was asked from me. Besides, the case will not be decided until the beginning of Lent.

Do not doubt that you will be informed by me immediately of the miraculous grace that the Mercy of God has provided. I will put it briefly without prolonging myself further and adding to your suffering.

Cardinal Gentili has thrown himself into obtaining a successful outcome of this business which God has imprinted on his heart. Certainly there will be a brief to found in any diocese without the consent of the Mendicants, but with the simple *Placet* of the Ordinary. We will be helped with ordinations, at least with a sufficient number; later, more can be asked.

Oh, how benevolent is the good God: "The Lord has heard the prayers of his servants. Blessed be God."

So there is nothing more for me to do at this moment. Cardinal Gentili has told me I may depart and leave the affair to him. Besides, I ought to go to the Retreat of the Presentation because it is a year since I have been there. Father Thomas will probably have to come to Rome toward the middle of Lent at Luogo Pio de Pellegrini,¹⁵⁰ and at that time, if there is need, he can help the

150. Shelter for pilgrims.

processing of the brief. Then he has a mission to give in Civita Castellana, etc. I am writing in haste because of my preoccupations, and, prostrate in spirit at your feet, I ask your holy pastoral blessing and that you continue your strong paternal protection. With profound respect I declare myself,

Your humble, unworthy, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

I would add that Signore Palleschi has produced a learned document that highly pleases Cardinal Gentili, for it is written in such a way as to obtain our desired goals for all our Retreats. There will be some expenses, but God will provide for every contingency. I have no doubts that the bishop of Terracina will go along in meeting these expenses.

602

Father George Ranieri

San Angelo
January 28, 1749
About to leave.

Most Reverend Father,

I have not written to you earlier because as soon as I recovered a bit from my sick spell, I had to leave for Rome due to important letters I received. I have just arrived at this Retreat yesterday, and on next Saturday I must leave again for Orbetello, where I do not know how long I will stay.

I spoke about the well-known business, but without gaining my desired end, for the issues are large and the preaching work at Cerveteri is already agreed on. So it is necessary to bow one's head to the Divine Will.

I have not forgotten in my poor prayers and sacrifices the great obligation I owe you, praying the Giver of every good to render you an eternal reward. I beg you extend my cordial greetings to all of your family, for whom I wish the copious blessings of heaven. With fullest esteem and profound respect, I end, kissing your sacred hands, and I am from my heart,

Your unworthy obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

It is not necessary that you answer this letter, all the less because in the marshes letters can get lost.

603

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (15)

Presentation
February 6, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I arrived at this Retreat on Wednesday morning of February 4, where I found a religious community of angels in the flesh, who give me a mighty motive to weep over my tepidity. Blessed be God, who works his mercy for us.

Yesterday morning, with great devotion I received your esteemed letter with a letter from Signore Palleschi. Thanks be to God, the affairs of the Congregation are going marvelously well, and the special committee is destined in our favor. That is a miraculous grace that the Sovereign Good has given us. It seems I know more and more that the fierce storm, raised against this poor Congregation and against you, has served as those lightning bolts that are unleashed with loud noise and then, striking a great mountain, uncover a rich vein of finest gold. Thanks always to the Highest Giver of every gift, in whom we have placed all our hopes. We are sure that very soon we will sing: "Thanks be to God, who has given us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The primary aim in transferring the case from the Bishops and Regulars to the special committee is the issuance of a brief, in which full power is given for the foundation of our Retreats, in accord with our Rules, with the consent of the Ordinaries only. In all cases the consent of the Mendicants is excluded. We have an example of that with the Scolopian Fathers, who obtained that right. I left an account of this with Signore Palleschi. Besides, Cardinal Gentili wants to go this way, and I am certain he has it in hand.

This is the work that the always adorable Providence has managed and brought about until now with secret paths, whence all the work is his, so that the Retreat at Paliano will also be taken care of by putting the undertaking into the heart of the cardinal mentioned above. But I know that the great God has worked exceedingly with his Vicar on earth. Oh, how much I would have to say! But in order not to go on at length, I will pass over them. If permission to build is given, you can go ahead gladly. Otherwise, at Lent the brief will be issued, and with that all the court cases will be finished. God wishes to perform a great work more than human ability can picture. We are simply crying out day and night to the Most High with incessant prayers and burying ourselves in our horrible nothingness, and I have more need of this than any.

I would be going too far were I to wish you courage, for you have made yourself a sharer with us. However, our good God, to make you richer with naked suffering, holds you hidden in the most secret closet of your spirit.

In Rome there will be not a few expenses for publishing and producing the brief. Ceccano has sent some money to Signore Palleschi and, I believe, it has already been spent. Paliano will also help him out. I have no doubt that your great concern will not fail to come to the aid with a donation so that Signore Palleschi can expedite everything. I am writing in haste and am late, for the community is waiting for me. In turning over this page, I found it torn. I apologize for that, for I do not have time to recopy the letter.

Out of charity, bless me and continue your holy prayers, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments and am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

I have used, and am having others use, all diligence to obtain a small Retreat in Rome. When I least expect it, God will provide. That is the way things happened for me at other times.

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (16)

Presentation
February 12, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

With great submission of spirit and joy in heart, I read your esteemed letter, dated January 31. Blessed be God, who alone does marvelous things, especially in this great work that our good God has confided to you, which provides housing for true servants of the Most High and fervent workers in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts. You can be sure that our great Heavenly Father will grant you powerful help to bring to a close this work for the greater glory of God. Oh, how happy I am that the construction goes ahead, and that the nobleman Gattinara is cooperating in the building with his assistance. The Divine Majesty will enrich him with copious spiritual and temporal blessings, as I strongly expect, and as I will pray the Lord in my poor prayers as well as those of the religious.

I am sad to hear of the illness of our canon. He is a true, devout ecclesiastic, and I will not fail to do my part, etc. I am writing in today's mail to Father Thomas that, if he is able, he is to send Father Stephen over there. But since it is necessary for that Father to go to Rome to be of assistance in our affairs, and at the same time to conduct a Retreat at Trinita de Pellegrini, so I do not know whether he can send him. God knows how willingly I would send another skilled worker, but it is necessary that he assist in the Retreat at Toscanella, which cannot do without him. It is a miracle from God that we are able to do as much as we are doing, seeing that the Congregation is newly born.

Our good God wants to give all the merit to you. He will give you health and life and great protection so that you will be able to complete this great work.

It is enough if Signore Gattinara knows that our cells should be only ten palms wide and not more than twelve; but there where the air is heavy and hot, he may make them twelve palms, but no more than that, rather a bit less so that poverty will shine forth. The corridors should be about seven palms or a little bit more, as in the other Retreats, etc. That is what the Rules prescribe. I was displeased to hear that a cardinal had the words "after the manner of the Capuchins," but that matters little.

Blessed be the Lord, who has provided you with so many relics to enrich the church of the new Retreat. I would be happy if there was a small altar for Saint Joseph, since I am much obligated to that great saint, who has sought a great grace for me in our present circumstances. I am amazed and praise the Divine Providence over the fact that workrooms were discovered below the ground level.

Oh, how good God is! I am answering what you put to me regarding P.M. D'Orgio and also regarding the cure of the daughter of the nobleman Gattinara. Prostrate in spirit at your feet, I confess that "in unfeigned truth," I

had no part in these happenings, and “God knows I do not lie.” I fear much, much for myself. My life is a sea of sins and nasty imperfections. I have always defiled the works that God confided to me with my many defects. I have never performed a genuine good deed, and I have never exercised any virtue as it ought to be done. I see only evil in myself. I say this as if I were on the point of death and with all truth. Miserable me, I much fear for my salvation from hell, but I hope in the Mercy of God. With Father Master Second¹⁵¹ I conferred very secretly on my knees concerning the Congregation. I do not know if he knows anything further. I made him understand that I am a great sinner so that he could praise the Mercy of God, who has put up with me, and still does.

I did this because of the high opinion I have for his learning as well as his holiness. For the rest, Your Excellency, I do not know what to say. Many people say many things about me, but they are mistaken. They have many times proclaimed prodigies that happened. I know nothing, nor can I give them credence. Oh, Your Excellency, whom I admire, venerate, and love in the Lord as my father, help me with your holy prayers and instructions so that I do not lose my poor soul that cost so much.

In the last post I wrote of the affairs in Rome. All is going well. Give me your blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your holy pastoral vestments and am always more,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

605

Thomas Fossi (26)¹⁵²

Presentation
February 20, 1749

J.M.J.

My Beloved Thomas and Dear Son in Christ,

I arrived at this holy Retreat for the Visitation on February 4, and I will return to San Angelo the beginning of next week. I will remain there until Easter and then go on missions in the diocese of Camerino, not very far from here. Courage! How is your spirit? I am hoping it is progressing always better since you are resigned to the Holy Will of God. Believe, my dear son in Jesus Christ, that the one who feeds himself on this Holy Will of God accepts every hardship without the medium of creatures, but as a gift from the Creator, and will make a grand opening and you will fly to holy perfection on a short path. The one who is more resigned to the good pleasure of God is the holier, for

151. This person seems to have been a religious known to the bishop and to Paul. Paul says he has spoken to him only on spiritual matters.

152. Among other things Paul mentions that he has heard that Fossi is trying to get a buyer for the Appiani family house, which Father Francis has inherited. This will be mentioned again in future letters.

perfect resignation to the Will of God includes in itself the perfect love of holy charity. In the love of God is found every virtue. Jesus our Life said his food was to do the Will of his Eternal Father, and by feeding himself on this highest and perfect Will, Jesus fed always on internal and external suffering, and all his holy life was the Cross.

Gratitude, which is so much according to God's heart, obliges me to give my humble, affectionate thanks in Christ for the great charity you show to this Retreat and to our Congregation. "Your reward will be exceedingly great in spiritual and temporal things for the glory of God." I do not lose sight of you in my poor prayers, and in those of the whole Congregation, in witness of the great gratitude we hold toward you and will hold forever. Since I know that your good heart will never lose sight of the Retreat, so filled with religious, and as I desire that we have more — never enough — since I desire to have sons in great sanctity for Christ, so I have every confidence that at the time of the wine harvest, you will continue your loving care.

I heard from Father Rector that you are undertaking the sale of the home of Father Francis Appiani in Rio. Since the sovereign and always adorable Will of His Divine Majesty has not disposed for a Retreat over there, the sale of that house would be very profitable for our Congregation to use the proceeds for construction in our Retreats, which are so needy. I, in the name of the whole Congregation, would make a contract with the Appiani family to preach missions forever in the island of Elba every time they request them. In this way they would bring about, at least partially, the holy desires they have. I will give the title to Father Francis Anthony, for I do not have the power from an apostolic indult to make such an alienation since it is part of his patrimony.

My beloved Thomas, if this sale seems good to you, go ahead with it for the love of God, for our need is great. I hope that you will be able to do that, for the capital is good and the interest is secure.

In that event, begin to deal with Clarice Appiani, mother of Father Francis Appiani, who much wishes this sale in order to satisfy his pious desires, especially to finish the twelve cells of the Retreat of Soriano where he is rector and where there is a religious community of fifteen religious that has great need of these cells. I am recommending this to you with the understanding that this will not greatly inconvenience you. If you have the money to purchase the property, that would be good; if not, God will provide, or you can undertake the task of finding a buyer. For that purchase will be profitable for anyone who makes it, since it is the capital that is very productive.

I ask you to greet in Jesus Christ your wife, your sons, and your daughters, whom I see in the holy Heart of Jesus and for whom I entertain high hopes. Accustom them, little by little, to holy prayer. Accommodate yourself to their tender age. Let them speak to God with gentleness and sweetness in a pleasing manner, and you will have done a good job, and they will become holy. Allow them to mingle only with those you know to be good, for the world is very evil.

Address me: Viterbo for Vetralla, Retreat of San Angelo. I have a lot to take care of. I leave you with all your holy house in the holy Side of Jesus, and send greetings from our Father Rector and all the religious.

I tell you once more that by the grace of God our affairs are going well. The storms are not yet over, but the way is opening for the many foundations to the greater glory of God. I embrace you in the Lord and am from a true heart,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

You can write the outcome of the sale of that house to Father Rector, Father Fulgentius.

606

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (21)

Presentation

February 20, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Your venerated letter was forwarded to me from the Retreat of San Angelo a little after I arrived at this Retreat of the Presentation. I reread that always growing charity of yours and your pastoral zeal in favor of this poor Congregation, which continually remains with hands uplifted to implore always a more copious treasure of graces and heavenly gifts in testimony of the great gratitude we will always profess toward you.

You will have heard from our Father Thomas about any special news from Rome where our affairs have been so blessed by God. The committee is opening the road to expand this work of God. Any charity that you can do us regarding the expenses will be repaid, as before, with the great treasures of God.

Regarding the mission at Ferentino, I have a strong desire to cooperate with you and your holy desires at the right time. I will obey promptly in this coming autumn, since I cannot in this coming spring because of pressing and heavy burdens which the Mercy of God has placed on the weak shoulders of this miserable sinner who writes. I hope that your piety will not have rejected me.

I found a community of angels in the flesh here. Just now one of them took ill and reached the last stages, even the commendation of the soul. But I heard him speak as though he were a seraph. He spoke thoughts of an admirable high perfection with profound humility. He longed for paradise with seraphic ardor and without the least fear of death. Oh, God! Oh, God! how crushed is my coldness! The goodness of God has given him back as a great grace, and he is out of danger without fever. Thanks be to God.

I am writing in haste, for I am laden down with tasks and letters and am about to leave for the Retreat of San Angelo at Vetralla. In turning the page I found it torn, and I cannot recopy the letter. Out of love for God, excuse me.

Bless me and continue your holy prayers, and with profound reverence I kiss
your sacred pastoral vestments, and am always more,

Your humble, unworthy, devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

607

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (48)

San Angelo

March 8, 1749

J.M.J.

My Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I am writing in haste since I am loaded with important letters. I arrived at the holy Retreat on March 4 and thought I was going to die on the road. After having arrived at Corneto¹⁵³ Sunday night, weary and half-falling because of the suffering endured from Montalto to that city because of the heavy mud clinging to my feet, I was overcome by a fiery diarrhea, which seemed to be unlike any before. Nevertheless, I wanted to leave on Monday and, when I arrived at Mount Romano, I was taken again by vomiting and saw it as the end. Blessed be God, who warned me and revived me. I am now better, and tomorrow I will be in Bieda to visit Canon Valerani, who is staying there for a short time. Let us pray for this good benefactor. I have hope for his health.

Here things are going well and with great fervor. They send you many greetings in the Lord. Father Rector left here the day before yesterday for the convent in Farnese.¹⁵⁴ At Soriano there are four or five sick with the epidemic of catarrh,¹⁵⁵ which is visiting this area. There are few it spares. It is very dangerous for the one who contracts it.

Father Thomas is in Rome. He is a true instrument for the glory of God. Things have had a good start. He will have the negotiations for the Retreat of Saint Bibiana¹⁵⁶ and we may expect good results. But let them pray much, for this is the time for that, and our needs are great.

Bit by bit I will give you an account of everything. Father Eustace¹⁵⁷ is a deacon. I think that at Easter there will be not a few novices to be accepted.

The Retreat at Tivoli¹⁵⁸ is in process, and I make it my concern.

I ask you, for the love of God, to have concern for yourself and take care. Do that out of pure charity and with the merit of holy obedience.

Help me, my Father Rector, "for more and more the waters have invaded my very soul." I find myself overloaded with business on every side, without

153. Today the town is named Tarquinia.

154. Farnese, diocese of Viterbo.

155. Catarrh refers to a heavy cold.

156. A foundation in Rome, mentioned earlier; which was not made because of opposition.

157. Father Eustace Lippici of the Holy Spirit.

158. This was not realized.

light and without spirit, and with little bodily strength besides. Oh, God! How angry God is with me! However, I do hope in his holy Passion and Mercy. More and more I am living full of fear within and without. The more I try to make it disappear, the less success I have. I am under a heavy scourge. Pray and have prayers offered to His Divine Majesty that he save this poor soul of mine. Greet all the professed and novices for me. Happy are they who have so much time to make themselves holy! Woe to me, that when I could, I did not do so, and now I find myself as I am. May Jesus bless all. Let them recommend the affair to Saint Joseph. I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus. If you write to Orbetello, give my greetings to the Grazi household, to Signore Petri, Sancez, Bausani, etc.

They will send assurance that the Masses were offered.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

608

Stephen Barberi of Saint Joachim¹⁵⁹

San Angelo

March 8, 1749

J.M.J.

My Dearly Beloved Father Stephen,

I hope you will have received my letter included with that to Father Thomas.¹⁶⁰ You are afflicting yourself mistakenly when you ought to be magnifying the divine mercies for the treasures with which the divine care is enriching your spirit in giving you so many opportunities to take care of souls for the Lord. You are aware how much interior recollection, in which the soul unites action for our neighbor with a loving exchange with God, is recommended to all. Obedience has made your soul fly with the chorus of the most sublime spirits of heaven, and with obedience you will never go to hell, as you are saying, but to the blessed kingdom of glory.

I have absolutely good reports of your work on the missions, and I bless God for that, since we have only our horrible nothing, into which we have fallen deeper by sin. I am writing with great haste and am loaded down with letters. I returned here only on Tuesday from the Retreat of the Presentation much worn out in strength.

Things are going well in Rome, and you are helping with all your spirit in that holy Retreat so that the religious are always in more fervent observance,

159. Born in 1711 and ordained in Turin in 1737, Stephen Barberi joined the Passionists and took vows in 1747 (see letter of March 16, 1747, to Father John Randone). He spent most of his life in Lazio, south of Rome. When he received this letter, he was the rector of the Retreat at Ceccano and also engaged in mission preaching. Paul's advice to him on combining apostolic work with prayer and recollection flows from Paul's own experience. Unfortunately, this is the only letter to Father Stephen that we have. He died May 29, 1781, at the Retreat of Paliano. Father Stephen will be mentioned in future letters.

160. Father Thomas Mary Struzzi.

being very happy in God with all their being. Take care that they keep peace of heart, without scruples, in true modesty, holy joy, peace, and genuine fraternal charity with all being of one heart. If we will act in this way, we will sing of victory, we will be holy, and God will open great avenues for the spread of the Congregation, as it seems he is doing out of his mercy.

In order not to forget, I am asking you to tell our dear lay brothers not to get their feet and legs wet in that cold water when they irrigate the orchard. Otherwise, they will always be sick. I urge this on you strongly. They can irrigate the garden with its furrows without getting their feet in the water, just as others do. See to it that they obey not only the Rules, but also orders that are given concerning such practices. "Let the rector see to everything, etc." But be gentle and prudent in correcting and giving penances with much charity and prudence. I know you have all this at heart.

I am hoping that Father Thomas Mary will return at the end of May. You will not need to go to Terracina, for that excellent bishop informs me that there is no further need of construction and that all goes well in accord with our Rules.

I have much to do. I am enclosing these notes to be given to whom they are addressed. They are busy studying for ordination; let them study with diligence, for I hope to have that favor soon.¹⁶¹ I embrace all in Christ Jesus. Let them pray much so that all goes well, and to that end let them have a seven-day preparation for the Feast of Saint Joseph. Jesus bless you and may you be content because God loves you so much. In haste,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

I hear that Father John¹⁶² is sick. Let him have all the care he needs; he is not to be at work until he recovers. Greet him for me.

609

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (17)

San Angelo
March 11, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Shortly after arriving at this Retreat, I had the consolation in the Lord to read your esteemed letter, which gave me reason to magnify the divine mercies for the urgency His Divine Majesty presses upon your pious heart toward this Congregation so that it may be better established by means of the apostolic brief.

I have already written our Father Thomas that he work prudently with Signore Palleschi so that you will not incur the expenses of the court case,

161. As stated in other letters, until 1769 the Congregation could not ordain clerics without special permission of the Holy See because it was not recognized as a moral person.

162. Father John Gelli of Saint Aloysius was dismissed in 1754.

seeing that your great piety and charity accepted so much of the expenses for the construction in which the Most High will be glorified.

I am letting our Father know that you have prevailed at the present time with an alms of ten *scudi*, “and may the Lord reward you in time and in eternity.” I have no doubts about that. I rejoice in the Lord over the continuation of the construction, and I pray the gentle Jesus to rain upon you the fullness of his graces and heavenly gifts so that you may become perfect to the greater glory of God, as I strongly hope. I am writing with a weak head because of a serious illness contracted on the painful trip from Orbetello to here. I attribute it to the great Mercy of God that I was able to make it here. Blessed be God. I end at your feet and ask your holy prayers and pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I affirm once more that I am,

Your devoted, obligated, humble servant,
Paul of the Cross

610

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (22)

San Angelo
March 11, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Shortly after my arrival at this Retreat, I received your esteemed letter, which gave me more reason to bless and magnify the Mercy of God, who has put into your heart such a concern for our poor Congregation so that it may be established strongly and sweetly by means of a brief from His Holiness. Such a brief, as I see it, and in line with the instructions given to Signore Palleschi before my departure from Rome and in repeated letters written to Father Thomas, will be issued in accord with your wise and prudent ideas, which — I say this with my face in the dust — are completely at one with those of this most unworthy one who is writing.

Enough! “If God is for us, who can be against?” God will help us and you will have the great merit to have been a cooperator, and now with your donations. Not even Father Thomas will have thought of that. It takes care of our present needs. May the Lord reward you.

When the weather cools and if I am alive and well, you will be served with the holy mission in your beloved city. Meanwhile, I ask you to continue your holy prayers and strong protection. I have nothing new from Rome, except that twice the procurators were called to the commission, already referred to. Let us pray and hope for the best. With profound reverence I ask your pastoral blessing and am always,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (18)

San Angelo
March 12, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Since the post did not arrive in Vetralla the day before yesterday, it is necessary for me to send this note to you after sending the other one to the post yesterday, for last night I received the letters and it is best for me to write this note to be on time for the post. Father Thomas writes of his needs, which are large for him there, and asks me to beseech you, as I am doing, to have consigned to him the donation of ten *scudi*, offered by your great care. He is staying in the house of Signore Angeletti and is conducting a public retreat at Trinita de Pellegrini. He tells me that our case will go to trial before Holy Week. We will not want for crosses. Thanks be to God. God will help us. The cardinals are much inclined to favor us. But our adversaries, especially the blessed Capuchins, are raising a great uproar. Blessed be God. I ask for your holy blessing and that you would aid us with your prayers. With profound reverence I call myself,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant
Paul of the Cross

Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary (2)

San Angelo
March 12, 1749

J.M.J.

My Dear Father,

After I wrote my letter yesterday,¹⁶³ it is better for me to write again. Since the post did not come on time, I have had to write not a few letters this night after having sent a sizable stack yesterday afternoon. If Signore Narciso wishes to make a retreat, let him come. He should be here on next Saturday, or at the latest on Sunday, March 16, for I cannot serve him at any other time because I am beginning the retreat for the students.¹⁶⁴ There is no other priest to help him except me. Father John Baptist is in Farnese and then will stop for a while in Toscanella. Father Mark Aurelius is holding class and then goes to Corneto to conduct a retreat for the nuns.¹⁶⁵ So I am the only one able to help him. I will do that willingly, not withstanding my poor health and my many, many occupations. He will be accommodated the best we can. What will be hard is

163. We do not have this letter.

164. These were the Passionist students present in San Angelo. In order to help maintain the students in their fervor of spirit, they had three retreats during the year, that is, during vacation, Advent, and Lent (*Decreti e raccomandazioni*, n. 12.2).

165. The Benedictine monastery of Saint Lucy.

sleeping, but he will suffer that willingly for love of God and to become holy. Let him come then, for I am waiting for him. But let him come with a great heart and willing spirit.

Father John Baptist did not stop by there, as he told me, so that the retreat could start the sooner, but he will stop off on his return. Your sister, Sister Teresa Maria, answered with a letter, and I do not know what to say to her, since great caution is required in directing them so that they may not be lost, she says. But you know that it is a miracle that I can continue, and I have no extra time.

Do me the charity then to write that I received both of her letters, and she should pay attention to what I wrote in the last one, for that should be enough for a short while. Let her feed herself on the Will of God, remain in a peaceful silence in her suffering, and cut off those old wishes or bury them in the secret of her heart, but make herself holy where she is. For the work that she thinks is near at hand is far, far off. I cannot believe it will come in my time.¹⁶⁶ God is omnipotent, and he disposes strongly, yes, but sweetly. Other souls have had lights and desires as great as hers, and more than hers, but I have buried them in the Will of God, await them in peace without solicitude, and no longer speak of them.

Let her see the account of this letter and add to it whatever God inspires you to say. At Easter I need to make a long trip.¹⁶⁷ Our affairs are going well, but there are many adversaries. You can read the rest in my first letter, which you will receive in the ordinary post. In haste I embrace you in the Lord. Pray much, etc.

Your affectionate servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

613

Dominic Costantini (1)¹⁶⁸

San Angelo
March 12, 1749

J.M.J.

Dearly Beloved Dominic,

When I thought to have you with us, I received your cordial letter filled with your accustomed charity and addressed to Father Rector, who is in Farnese to be of service to the nuns. Thanks be to God I am better and am keeping Lent. At Mount Romano I experienced severe diarrhea, along with vomiting. Blessed be God who visits me. After two days I regained my

166. This refers to the monastery of the Passionist nuns, inaugurated on May 3, 1771.

167. After Easter, April 14, Paul went to Rome to assist at the end of the trial of the Mendicants.

168. This is the first of eighteen letters to Costantini, the brother of Mother Mary Crucified, the first Passionist nun. Dominic and the entire Costantini family were very instrumental in the building of the first convent at Corneto.

strength. I thank you more and more for your great charity and care, and I am asking the gentle Jesus to enrich you with every blessing, as I hope he will. From what I can see, I will be deprived of the consolation of having you here. But you know that this Retreat is at your disposal. The patron can always come at his pleasure, and for us it would be a great charity and a consolation in the Lord. Father Mark Aurelius will be back the Saturday of Passion Week. Since we will be at rest, if they were to send to pick him up, that would be a double charity. I am writing this in a hurry, for I am weighed down with letters and am writing after midnight. I embrace you in the Side of Jesus and greet all your pious household, and with full esteem affirm that in haste I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I have answered D. Crucified.

614

Girolama Ercolani (8)

San Angelo

March 15, 1749

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

My Dear Girolama,

Last night I received your cordial letter, and God knows how dear it was to me, for I see that you are obeying and doing the Will of God. Continue that, Girolama, and persevere in that, and I assert in Jesus Christ that you will be happy in time and in a blessed eternity. Make nothing out of these sufferings or fantasies. Do not confess them. Obey. If not, I will be very angry because you would not be obedient and would not be doing the Will of God.

With regard to your sick relative, I say frankly that you have reason, and a thousand reasons, to not approve that her director comes twice a day to hear her confession and spends so much time with her. I sympathize with his simplicity and good faith, but you are the Mother Abbess in your own home. Act as I would. When this confessor comes, with wise prudence see to it that either the old, lame servant or my little nun, that is, your youngest daughter, be in a room nearby working and that the door to the sick woman's room be well open. Stick to this rule always, even in the event of sickness to your daughters.

Signora Girolama, God wants to make you holy. Do you believe me or not? Obey me. Stay in the Presence of God, help yourself with ejaculatory prayers, keep your heart at peace, maintain purity of intention, and act kindly with everyone. Be quiet, without scruples, and act in the way I have prescribed at all times, for then you will do the Will of God. Greet the doctor warmly for me.

I hope to pay you a visit after Easter. But when I come, do not make me angry because you have not obeyed. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus. I am

from a true heart asking for your ever copious blessing from our sweet Jesus,
and in haste I sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

615

Benigno Silvestroni

San Angelo
March 16, 1749

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

Reverend Father,

Since I have been unable to see you on my return from Bieda because an important affair forced me to return quickly to the Retreat, I am making up for that with this letter, reaffirming my devout and respectful servitude and gratitude. I know I would be wronging your charity, which has been experienced by me so often, if I were to recommend to you that you speak to the one we know in Viterbo so that he give the donation offered by your care for the needs of the church and also of this Retreat. I readily believe that this holy donation has already ascended to the Divine Presence as a pleasing fragrance, in accord with your pious intentions. So I do not have a moment of doubt that you will use all diligence so that your debtor fulfills his obligation by giving that donation for the relief of our poverty, both for the church and for the construction of the Retreat. I assure you that you will always draw upon your spirit copious spiritual and temporal blessings as we pray and will always pray to the Most High. I am writing in haste and, while kissing your sacred hands, say that I am,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

616

Thomas Fossi (27)

San Angelo
March 20, 1749

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

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

Last night I received your welcome letter, dated March 1. I rejoice to learn that your sons and daughters are walking so well, and I hope in God for always more. Jesus bless your holy intentions in everything, as I hope.

With regard to the house, if the good God will provide, what a great service you would do to God if you could find a buyer. God will give you light and strength. With regard to going to Loreto, it is not possible for me to approve that for you. From what I know that is not the Will of God for you to make that kind of a decision.

God has given you the sweet yoke of marriage and, as a consequence, has given you children, for that is his mercy. You must take care of, assist, and watch over these children. That is your pilgrimage, your mission, your apostolate — oh, what great merit!

Neither can I approve the vow of continence that you mention again. No, God has not given me that light up until now. You should make use of the counsel I gave you at other times; otherwise, you are going to make a mistake. Encourage your good wife so that she remains with a peaceful spirit on her cross that God has sent for her great good. You stay happy, recollected, a lover of the Cross of Christ, blind, and deaf and dumb to all that is being said. Continue your exercises of piety in conformity with your state in life and without losing sight of your business for the greater glory of God and the good of your family.

I am not going on missions at this time. I am going to Rome to bring myself to embrace the cross more tightly in the present difficulties of the Congregation, which is under no small attacks. I will leave after Easter, and who knows when I shall return.

Meanwhile, do not fail to make an effort to find a buyer for the house in Rio, etc., for that will do a lot of good. You may visit the House of Loreto in spirit, but for now it is not right for you to leave your family for that pilgrimage. I am writing in haste, for I am loaded down with letters and business. I embrace you in the sacred Side of Jesus, from whom I ask every copious blessing on you and all your house. Do not cease praying for me and the Congregation, and flee occasions ... in order to avoid the temptation mentioned. May Jesus make you holy. Amen. I am from the heart,

Your true, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

617

John B. Forlani (5)

San Angelo
March 21, 1749

J.M.J.

Reverend Father,

With submission of spirit and joy of heart, I received your welcome letter, and I extend special thanks for the charity you deign to continue to me and this poor Retreat, assuring you that we do not, and will not, omit praying to His Divine Majesty to console you in accord with your pious intentions as well as for your relative, with whom I have no doubt that you employ the gentlest and strongest persuasions so that she give herself entirely to the Spirit, etc.

With regard to wine, right now we have a small amount. After Easter, that is, around the middle of April, we will send our tertiary, Brother John Baptist, to pick some up. Your reward for the holy donations will be very great, and care taken for us poor ones will not go unrewarded. I am writing in haste since I am very busy. With profound respect I kiss your sacred hands and ask you

to convey my greetings to Father Blaise, the zealous preacher over there. I am from my heart always more,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

I would willingly pay you a devout visit, but I am overly busy with the affairs of the Congregation and the concerns of the Retreat.

618

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (19)

San Angelo
March 25, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

May Jesus, who is the Highest Giver of every good, reward you, as I confidently expect, for the charity done us with the ten *scudi* given for our present needs. This charity, united with others, ascends to the Divine Presence as a fragrant incense. Oh, how much I live in gratitude, along with all this Congregation! I pray our gentle Savior to inflame you entirely with holy love. Amen. I rejoice in the Lord over the cistern that has been discovered in the garden. Oh, what a great Providence! Blessed be God. All this makes me know how great and satisfying this work is to the All-High, since His Divine Majesty blesses it so richly. The question of that priest from Sardinia, chief curate at Porto, who wishes to be the canon penitentiary of Piperno, merits serious consideration.

I have never been to Porto to give a mission. Therefore, I do not have any information. The experience I have had in so many years of missions in the marshes of Tuscany, and some few in the Papal States, has allowed me to know first hand that the extreme needs of the poor ecclesiastics not rarely exceed those of the laity when everything is weighed. O God, how often I wanted to cry!

So, Your Excellency, go slow with your consent. I would want to think that this man is a good ecclesiastic. But to proceed with caution in an affair of such great importance is the best plan. After a rigorous examination for the penitentiary of the cathedral, he should provide authentic testimonials of an upright life and good morals. Since the cardinal of San Clemente is doing nothing because of his sickness, you could write to the vicar general of Porto, who stays around Santa Maria in Via Lata, and obtain good information. I do not recall his name, but he is a worthy ecclesiastic.

Our case will not be over until the end of April. So, instead of going to the mission in Camerino where I was destined to be, I must now be in Rome after the Second Sunday of Easter to be of assistance, etc. Father Thomas is destined for the missions in Rome where there will be eight or ten days of teams helping one another. It may happen that I will help out if I am well.

The Frati are arming themselves, but things have begun well for us. May Jesus reward you for the charity of the salt pork given to our religious at Ceccano. I end at your feet and ask ever more for your prayers, as my needs

are extreme. I implore your holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence affirm that I am always more,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

619

Thomas Mary Struzziere of the Side of Jesus (2)

San Angelo

March 25, 1749

J.C.P.

My Dearest Father Thomas,

I cannot express with a pen the consolation your dear letter gave me, since I was missing your letters for two posts. First point: "By the heart of the mercy of our God," do not impose on me missions in Rome,¹⁶⁹ for I cannot, and ought not, accept them, primarily because I am a donkey, and the little I have written I have drawn from books here and there, especially from *The Awakening*, etc. But that is of little importance. The chief reason is that I do not have the health; I do not have the strength of chest. If I force myself when there is a great crowd, as there would be there, besides a very dangerous palpitation, a burning fever assaults me with very dangerous and deadly symptoms beyond the other circumstances. So, for the love of Jesus, do not accept anything for me, but accept only for yourself, as it is the Will of God that you give them. Oh, see how openly I am talking to you. Since I do not know now whom I could send you for the catechism, it would be best to follow the example of Father Leonard,¹⁷⁰ who gave the catechism in the morning and preached in the evening. That is very fatiguing, but the omnipotent God will help you. What I might be able to do would be to relieve you of the meditation and get upon the platform after the sermon. I would trust in God to be effective, while my voice would still be fresh, less strained, better heard, etc. I leave everything I have said here to your judgment so that, if God inspires you to do this, I wish to be completely obedient to him, despoiled of everything, at least in the giving of holy missions. So you are the one who has first place, and God wills that. You must bow your head and mortify yourself, and you must designate me as your companion. That is what I must do, and I trust in God I will do so to the letter.

It may be suggested that Father Mark Aurelius,¹⁷¹ who conducts catechisms superbly and with profound doctrine, be used. But how can he do that when

169. Benedict XIV, in preparation for the Jubilee of 1750, wanted various missions in Rome. One was confided to the Passionists. Paul was to preach at San Carlo dei Fiorentini (Cioni, *Annali*, n. 335).

170. This is Saint Leonard of Port Maurice, a contemporary of Paul.

171. Father Mark Aurelius Pastorelli is at this time director and professor of the students at San Angelo near Vetralla.

at the same time he has begun to teach theology with great profit for the students?

The point that presses most on me is the mission at Soriano, which has been so much desired, and God knows how many needs will be remedied, including those for the Retreat. That mission ought to open after the Second Sunday of Easter, that is, after an eight-day retreat for the clergy. I bring this point up for your consideration so that you may resolve it for the greater glory of God and to resolve my thoughts on this question. If the missions in Rome were to begin in May, as I am supposing, and if you could leave there the business under way, as I think will be the case if the documents have been produced and the rest, and everything is done with the advice of our noted cardinal, and that cannot change, at least from what appears to me, in that case you could go to Soriano. When you will have finished that mission, return to Rome where I will await you and assist the cause until the end. With regard to the brief, I would like to conduct myself in accord with your instructions, which I would receive at Soriano where I will be on the second day after Easter in order to leave around the Second Sunday of Easter for Rome.

If then you think it expedient to remain in Rome for the great service of God and the greater good of the Congregation, in such a case it would not be good to leave and cause yourself too much work, but to stay put, while I would be there a little after the Second Sunday of Easter. I would try, meanwhile, to persuade Soriano to be patient until the beginning of June or September, while you could spend the summer at Soriano, or here in San Angelo, to enjoy a bit of holy solitude, as well as for your health. Give thought to all of this and then write me with holy liberty. All the more so since I think it is necessary for you to be in Rome for the important business. As I reflect upon this, the mission could be done one way or the other, that is, if our case is ended, it could be done at the beginning of June or at the time of cooler weather.

I do not know how to better put what I have said, and God knows how much I have recommended myself to God and to Mary Most Holy. I have written in this conditional way so that you, who are on the spot and see things, can see and reflect on what would be most useful and then decide in the name of the Lord, while I will embrace your decision and work as though it came from heaven. With regard to Saint Bibiana, let us put it in the hands of God and let him act, for all will come out well.

I am writing with the first post to Father Egidio, the archpriest at Muscella on the island, that he send the young Father Pasquale, along with his documentation, vestition offering, and breviary, and have him be at Mount Argentario by April 15, or a little later, so there may be time to vest him with the others, who will be at least ten, some clerics and some priests. Oh, what good candidates are being vested now! Thanks be to God. Signore Viti is already in the novitiate. Oh, what a triumph! He finds everything easy.

I do not know how Father John is getting along in Ceccano. Right now I'm not able, but it will be necessary to take him from that climate; let us not be pained at this.

The priest from Sora has not spoken to me of the Retreat for the island at this time. We will do that together if God so wishes, but we must pray over that.

If you stay in Rome, I will come with Father Eustace and others, also accompanied with Confrater John, to Soriano, so as not to give too much inconvenience, etc. We will stay only two days.

Yesterday, along with your letter, I received one from the bishop of Terracina, in which he tells me that he has written to the rector of Santa Trinità de' Pellegrini to give you the ten *scudi* in Roman coin to take care of your needs; keep them with you. So take care to pick up that letter. He also says that while excavating in the garden they discovered a large cistern! Thanks be to God. I do not remember anything else. I rejoice in the Lord that you went to preach the word of God in the house of Father Sebono. You did very well.

The Frati at Soriano have sent another petition to the Congregation against us by saying they cannot continue in existence because we go questing and take donations from them. That petition was given to the bishop for information. All the curates and the vicar forane all attested in our favor, so it will end there.

Soriano is already organizing itself; the priests and others are manifesting great affection, and all await you for the business mentioned above. Oh, how necessary it is to satisfy them, and what a service to God that will be!

Let us do it, dear Father Thomas. So, make your decisions on the above and advise me as to how I can help you. On this point send an open letter, or write to the vicar forane ... assure them for June, if you can, that is, at the beginning, or at least with the coming of cooler weather.

Your servant in Christ,
P. of the †

620

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (23)

San Angelo
March 27, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

In your venerated letter I see again your great charity toward us poor ones, and I hope that the Sovereign Giver of every good will give you a generous reward in time and in eternity, as I and all these good religious are praying continually to His Sovereign Divine Majesty. I am hoping in the Mercy of God that the favor of our brief will be obtained without any expenses. But if that does not happen, I will not neglect to provide an opportunity for your incomparable zeal to cooperate in accord with your piety and generous heart.

I assure you that in this coming autumn, if I am alive and well, that without any doubt I will put aside any other business to be at your service in your beloved city, in order to give holy missions with a strong hope that they will be greatly blessed by God.

Father Thomas is scheduled for missions in Rome where I hope to be on April 15 to assist in our case. For that reason I am delaying the missions I was to undertake in the vast diocese of Camerino. I end at your feet, asking you to continue praying for me, and with profound reverence I ask for your holy pastoral blessing, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

621

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (49)

March 1749

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I think you will have received in the ordinary post my letter, in which I took joy in yours over the fervor of the religious and the great beginning of things, as well as the securing of the roof of the novitiate, etc., and that Brother Joseph's health has returned. I wish you would not neglect your health.

In the recent letters from Rome I read that the cardinals are inclined to favor the work of God, but the Frati are continuing to make an uproar. There are many who are helping them. Our case could easily go to the committee¹⁷² after the Second Sunday of Easter, so it is necessary for me to leave for Rome the second day after Easter, and God knows how I will come through. I fervently believe it will go well, for everything will come out as God wills. So I am at peace and have no anxiety about our case, not even if everything crashes to the ground.

The truth is that our affairs are uncertain. The document, Father Thomas writes, which has not been assembled to all precision, is rather against us, and there is no cure for that, for the general procurators have been cited twice. It is true that our procurator¹⁷³ acted entirely with the advice of Cardinal Gentili, who examined, agreed with, and corrected that document because he had complete charge of it. May the Will of God be done. I have said all this so that they will offer fervent prayers, especially to Mary Most Holy and Saint Joseph.

Father Thomas Mary must of necessity come to Soriano for Holy Week so as to take on the missions. I will leave at Easter, please God.

The Mercy of God had me write a letter to the bishop of Camerino,¹⁷⁴ in which I gave him an account of things with strong reasons to excuse me from the missions and offered myself at a more opportune time. I hope in God that he will be satisfied. I believed I was going there, but the letters in this post made me change my plans, along with wise counsel of our senior members.

172. The case will be discussed in the commission of cardinals.

173. Palleschi.

174. Bishop Francis Vivani was mentioned in the letter of September 19, 1748.

Let's come to ourselves. If I had gone to Camerino, I would have taken Father Anthony¹⁷⁵ with me. But now that I am no longer going there, I would like to use him, for I know he does great work. At Mount Romano he sanctified that people, and the fatigue he underwent cannot be told. I passed by there and they told me great and true things. So there should be at least three places to work in Tuscany, including Pereta, and I would gladly work there, but not Magliano for my own good reasons. You already have the papers for the indulgence and papal blessing. The question concerns the companion. He will do morning and evening for he is strong, but we need a companion. There you have only Father Anthony from Mirandola.¹⁷⁶ For confessions he is good, provided he would have a few good instructions from you regarding general confessions. I remain doubtful about that and do not know how to resolve the issue.

Give this some thought and recommend it to God. Afterwards, if you think it profitable, write to the parish priest of Pereta so that he will obtain the faculties, and two other locations, like Scanzano, Mount Merano, etc. I do not wish to go to Magliano at this time, but I will put it off prudently until another time. I will hear the decision as soon as possible in order to plan before leaving. Otherwise, I will send it with Father Thomas. But if things go as I described above, I would be happy. As for Father Anthony from Mirandola, with written instructions he could, in my opinion, be entrusted with the charge, and, if he is, he could give the mission with much fruit for those souls. During the summer he can remain there, and with due cautions we can send Father Charles to Toscanella with Father Dominic. Give this some consideration and write your opinion in the current post.

If you send to pick up the fine cloth, have them make two additional habits, for I have my winter one and nothing else. The second is for Father Rector; he will adjust everything. Have them fashion them there in due time. I will advise you on that. For Father Rector, the length is the same as on the one left there by me, or a finger less, but however it is best; for mine, four or five fingers longer than the one I had, etc. I will take the little clock there for sure.

If you think it better to send Father Anthony with Father Thomas, on the supposition that it is too soon to have the one from Mirandola go out, let me know. But if you believe you can have confidence in him, let us do it as above.

I add that last night in the post I received a letter from the Mother Abbess of Toscanella, in which she tells me of the marvelous fruit worked by the Mercy of God through Father Anthony and of the high esteem all have of him. See how God works. Examine the situation and work as God inspires you for the good of the Congregation. If you think it profitable, write to Pereta, etc., and also to the bishop, if it is necessary to reply. But, due to your occupations

175. Father Anthony Danei.

176. Father Anthony Thomas of Calvary from Mirandola entered as a priest and was professed December 12, 1748.

and poor health, have Father Anthony do the writing and you can sign the letters.

Yesterday, I received letters from Rome; today, I have spent writing a lot. I offered Mass at ten o'clock so that they could get away. I have sent the plan of the Retreats to be founded, and those already founded, to Cardinal Gentili, for he asked for them for the good of the Congregation. God is helping me much and all is going well. A.M.D.G.

Recommend me much to God and greet everyone in the Lord. Let them become holy and pray much for our urgent needs. I embrace you in the Lord and am from a true heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

622

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (20)

Soriano
April 11, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

With the greatest edification and consolation of my poor spirit, I have just read your respected letter, forwarded from the holy Retreat of San Angelo. In your letter I discover ever more the admirable dispositions of the always adorable Divine Providence in the erection of this new Retreat. For that His Divine Majesty chose you as his noble instrument of his glory for this great work, so blessed by our God with cistern, garden, water and more. But I thank God principally for the great spiritual gain that will result for your loving lambs and even for people at a distance. Blessed be God.

I am much disturbed that your Father Vicar General was kept by his duties, I am sure, from the possibility of making a serious study while reading our holy Rules. If he had been able to do so, he would have come to a different conclusion. He would have found that our Retreats are completely destined for the spiritual assistance of the dioceses in which they are established and able to furnish the bishops with men to be employed at their pleasure for missions and spiritual exercises for clergy, seculars, nuns, and others — as can be seen in Chapter II of the Rules and in Chapter XIV "On Obedience," in which a vow is taken even to the reverend bishops in regard to the spiritual welfare of the dioceses regarding missions, spiritual exercises, and so on, as above, in which the Retreats are established.

But the internal government of the Congregation is to be taken care of by the local rectors and the General Superior. This presumes that these rectors have the spirit to maintain the Rules and the regular observance. Without that, little or nothing will be accomplished for the profit of our neighbor, for reasons better known to you than to me. I rejoice in the Lord over the ordination of the canon, for I have hopes he will turn out to be a holy ecclesiastic. The Sunday after White Sunday, I will be leaving for Rome, unless the arrival of the cardinal of San Clemente delays me. He is expected in Soriano today.

While he is the chairman of the new special committee appointed by His Holiness for the resolution of our case, that should not hold it back. I hope that will not happen because the cardinal is very sickly, especially in his head, as a result of the nervous tension he endures. Whatever happens, I will adore the Holy Will of God. I celebrated Easter with you in spirit and offered Mass for you during these days. Our entire poor Congregation professes it is completely obligated to you, and, believe me, day and night makes you a sharer in its prayer and more. So I request always more of your great care which you continue for us by your fervent prayers, your fatherly protection, and cordial affection, as I confidently expect.

I will remain in Rome for nearly the whole month of May, and, if I have the good fortune and the time to kiss your pastoral robe, oh, how I would thank God for that. I end by asking your blessing and with profound reverence, I am,

Your most humble, unworthy and devoted servant,

Paul of the Cross

Father Thomas M. comes to your feet. He is in the Retreat somewhat ill because of the hard work undergone. Around April 22 he will undertake a mission in Soriano and Orte and then return to his Retreat. At this hour I believe he will have joined there with Father Stephen, to whom I have written.

623

Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary (3)

Soriano

April 14, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Father Francis Mary,

I hope you will have received my letter written before my departure from San Angelo. Now I am replying to your last dear letter to tell you that, if the Omnipotent God wishes to give to our poor Congregation that servant of God, he will have him regain his health in a wonderful manner. Meanwhile, let us pray for that to God. I want that to be done by our religious and by others because my prayers are not worth a dry fig.

I tell you many things are boiling in the pot, as they say, and I hope there will be a great opportunity for a foundation in Rome, and the rest. But there is an open door and many adversaries.

I recommend the purge with milk, prepared according to the prescription of the doctors. Have the goodness to take care of that there, as I directed you in my last letter. I am already in narrow straits because of the large family to serve and the many sick last Lent because of the flu, which prevailed in these regions, etc. Most dear one, take this remedy and expect good results from it, etc.

Monday, I leave for Rome if I do not confer with the cardinal¹⁷⁷ who is expected today. Oh, how much there is to contend with! Pray God to help me,

177. Cardinal Annibale Albani donated the Retreat of Soriano.

to give me strength and patience in Rome, and light, etc. I am writing in haste and embrace you in the Lord, and am from the heart,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

My warm greetings to Signore D. Vanuzzi, etc. In the novitiate ten fine candidates are being vested.

624

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (50)

Rome

April 19, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I consigned my previous letter to Signore Del Bono,¹⁷⁸ a nobleman from Scalea and endowed with excellent behavior, with science and skilled speech, etc., as you will learn from him. He has all the required documents well certified, etc. Here things are in the hand of God. The documentation was handed out in printed form yesterday, and the case will go forward on April 28. I have worked incessantly, and the devil is not sleeping.

The cardinal of San Clemente, who came to Rome to sustain our cause, is now much to the contrary. The others show good will. There is need of prayers. Do that and have it done by all our pious community. Our adversaries have not distributed their brief. They should have done that by yesterday. I do not know what subterfuge may be operative here. I am at peace and hope to rejoice over whatever outcome since it comes from the Will of God. There is reason for optimism.

I have replied to the Commune¹⁷⁹ you know of with a letter of excuse for this year and also for the Holy Year, for there is a moral impossibility to serve them. But I ask them to avail themselves of other helpers and not to hold off such a necessary mission. For in truth it is impossible to send now, or for some time, missionaries to those areas. God knows I have thought this over. If I could, God knows how willingly I would do so.

I have ordered the bread to be sent to Viterbo through the ordinary channel. I do not know how the crucifixes will be fashioned, but, if you are quite careful and think that God is not going to help you, I do not know how to object, etc.

If there is no urgent need, do not write me so as not to increase your burden. Pray, especially to holy Mary, etc.

178. Del Bono did not enter the Congregation.

179. Castellazzo Bormida.

The cardinal¹⁸⁰ I mentioned is also against the ordinations, but I think his serious illness causes this. I adore the Divine Will and hope much, for God is the Sovereign Giver.

In haste I say that I am praying that you take care of yourself. Greet everyone for me.

After reading the letter to Signore Fossi, I ask you to make him understand it is not necessary, nor expedient, to seek permission from the P. of Piombino to sell the house. Otherwise, he would hurt himself by offering such a sale to his minister. So if he wants to buy it, let him go along with the prelate, as is proper. Otherwise, let him sell it to whomever he chooses.

As far as I and Father Francis Anthony going there, you well see the impossibility. Who would be there to welcome us when he sells the house? Whence, he should be careful about such a sale, etc.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

625

The Representatives of the Castellazzo Commune

Rome
April 19, 1749

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

Illustrious Gentlemen,

With all submission of spirit and gratitude of heart I read your precious letter, dated March 20 and forwarded to me from the holy Retreat of the Presentation to this city where I am with serious business for the service of God and for our poor Congregation. Along with your letter, I found that of your council. I am truly edified by your pious zeal, and I am most grateful for the charitable memory you entertain of this miserable sinner and unworthy servant.

God knows how willingly I would cooperate with your good intentions by coming there on missions in person, or by sending my zealous religious workers into the vineyard of Jesus Christ. But, in addition to the fact that all are engaged for the good of their neighbor in projects previously accepted, our Congregation is now in narrow straits because of opposition aroused against our foundations. I find myself working incessantly here against this opposition with a lively trust in God to come forth with a victory to the greater glory of God. From all that I have referred to here briefly, you can see the moral impossibility of being of service to you not only in this present year, but even less in the Jubilee Year, in which all indulgences cease, even for missionaries. Beyond that I am engaged in serving the Congregation in the founding of some

180. Cardinal Annibale Albani was no longer in favor of this permission, which was being requested from the pope, so that Passionist clerics could be ordained under the title of "common table" (Cioni, *Annali*, n. 332-333).

Retreats, which are already in process. So, I reverently beg you to pardon this moral impossibility to serve you, brought about by such important affairs as mentioned. At the same time I beg you to have recourse to your bishop and zealous pastor, pointing out your spiritual needs, for it will be his duty to provide zealous apostolic workers to assist you.

I then assure you that, if God gives me life and opens the way for me to come to that region for some foundations, which could happen in time, I will not fail to use my weak efforts for your spiritual good. Meanwhile, do not put off having those missions by other means. I am writing in haste, for I am burdened with occupations. I assure you I will not fail to give you a share in my poor prayers, and in testimony of the gratitude and servitude I profess, I leave you in the loving Side of Jesus with fullest esteem and respect, and from my heart declare that I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

626

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (2)

Viterbo¹⁸¹
April 23, 1749

Dear Doctor,

I received your esteemed letter in Viterbo where I opened the mission last night, so do not wonder that I am not writing with my own hand. I am happy for you and thank the Lord much over the good health you are beginning to enjoy. I hope you soon regain your health perfectly when that is so useful and advantageous for your soul, which is so dear to our Divine Redeemer and Crucified Love.

With regard to the advice you ask from me, I say that in my opinion it would be better to hold off for a while from such a resolution, seeing that, if the Lord gives you perfect health, it would be for the glory of God for you to continue your charitable service. If ever the Lord makes a different disposition for your good, then you can put your idea into execution. Meanwhile, take heart and have recourse to the Lord with confidence and hope for the best. I will not fail to keep you recommended to the Lord, and I will make that recommendation with all the fervor of my poor spirit. Humbled at the feet of the throne of the great God, I will implore that abundance of blessings for you and for all your esteemed family, whom I reverence in the Lord. The Lord make you holy. Recommend this poor sinner, who trusts much in your prayers and who affirms he is always more,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

181. This letter has same date as the next letter which was sent from Rome. Letter to Ercolani was probably written in 1748.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (24)

Rome

April 23, 1749

From the home of Signore Angeletti,
where I arrived eight days ago.

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

As soon as I arrived in Rome, I spared no effort or diligence in cooperating at the execution of our cause, so I thought it good to not inconvenience you with my letters, since until now I could not give you a fair account. This is all the more true since it is my impression that Signore Palleschi has sent you an outline of the documentation given to the cardinals who will meet on Monday, April 28, to issue a judgment on the case, for which I have been walking through Rome every day in order to lend every help to the case that I can with God's help.

This very morning I have walked a lot to gather certain necessary documents requested by Cardinal Gentili, who is much inclined to favor our side and, thanks to God, I succeeded in finding the documents, which consist of examples of concessions made to other religious of the power to make foundations without the consent of the Mendicants, but with the simple consent of the Ordinaries. I succeeded in finding bulls, etc. Today I hope to bring them to him. Surely the devil is making a great uproar, but he will go away beaten.

The opposition has not written, but I know through a very secret, confidential source, that they are recommending themselves and working closely with certain powerful personages. "But if God is for us, who can be against?" Let incessant prayers arise so that God will grant what is to his greater glory. If the consistent care of Your Excellency would be willing to undertake the expenses incurred and for those expenses of the whole year, such a charity would ascend to the Divine Presence as a perfumed incense, and our entire Congregation will be always more grateful in all its prayers, etc., and more than all I, the poor one, for more than all I am the most benefitted by your kindness.

For the present, I have no further news to give you. But as soon as I do, I will inform you about everything. With profound reverence, I conclude, kissing your sacred pastoral vestments and asking your pastoral blessing and the charity of your holy prayers, and humbly sign myself,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (51)

Rome

House of Signore Angeletti

April 26, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Although the devil has used all his strength to prolong the case, the Mercy of God has given me the grace to have the Sacred Congregation set the date for Monday, April 28, at 14 hours.

Our opposition has not written because at their meeting they were not in agreement, etc. I see that what is happening has something of the miraculous. I hope, even hold for certain, that you in your sacred Retreat will never cease to pray. One cardinal¹⁸² came to Rome rather in favor of us; now he is the most opposed. But the three others are for us.

In the next post I hope to give you news of our victory. Have prayers offered, and you pray also for the favor of ordinations, as I hope.

Thanks to God I feel in my soul a great indifference to whatever happens. If it is not my usual dullness and stupidity, it seems to me I have never experienced the like. The Retreat in Terracina is completed and in the month of May will be absolutely finished. What do you say about that? Oh, what wonder it causes me!

On Sunday, that is, tomorrow, they are sending ten canes of very good cloth to Viterbo. Signore Fresia has paid ten *zecchini*; three and a half *scudi* are still at hand to take care of the crucifixes, etc.

Give me some information whether all is well and if the candidates have come, etc. Take care of yourself for love of God.

I am writing in haste, for I have much to do. I have need of prayers and of great assistance from God. God knows how things are with me.

My greetings to all in the Lord. Pray, pray, dear brothers.

This is the letter from Stocchi, and I have good hopes for him. Father Durante gave me great news about him. He is totally changed and healthy. Who knows?¹⁸³

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

182. Cardinal Annibale Albani (see letter of April 4, 1749).

183. There is no record since Stocchi did not enter. The phrase "totally changed and well" could refer to the nameless Roman novice sent by Father Durante. The novice was dismissed; he is mentioned in various earlier letters.

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (21)

Rome
Home of Signore Angeletti
April 26, 1749
Tenth day here.

J.C.P.

Your Excellency

The Mercy of God, which has chosen the ignorant and the weak so that his glory may shine forth the more, has had me, the most contemptible of all, come to Rome where I am seeking the finalizing of our cause. That has come to pass since the very night I arrived. The parties were cited and the following morning the documents were printed and immediately sent to the cardinals selected. Although the devil is scheming to prolong the case, the divine pity has given me the grace to have the meeting on April 28 at 14 hours, as it will happen as the cardinals have assured me.

The opposition has not written since their meeting was not of one accord. I share this much with you. Now, and also in the past, I put the cause in the hands of God and of Mary Most Holy. It seems to me that His Divine Majesty has impressed on my soul in his infinite mercy a great indifference to whatever happens. I believe I have never felt the like. Blessed be God. Your pious alms of ten *scudi* has been received. You provided for our greatest need in good time, and may the Lord reward you with his copious treasure in time and in a blessed eternity, as I strongly hope. With the generous support that I see in the cardinals selected, especially in three of them, there is reason to hope that even in the ordinary course of events all should succeed happily, even for the issuance of the brief.

Consequently, if you would have the chance to help me with letters of reference to Cardinal Passionei so that he would give us the brief in pure charity, your merit would grow before His Divine Majesty. If you do that, would you do me the favor of sending me a copy, which I will not use before the favor is granted by His Holiness.

I hear that the great work of the Retreat has been completed, and I confess at your feet that, except for the lights that the Mercy of God gave me for the foundation of the Congregation in regard to the habit and sign we wear and for the Rules, nothing has brought such astonishment to my poor spirit as the foundation of this Retreat. If I were a true lover of God, my heart would melt like wax in the fire of gratitude.

In the next post I will give you information on the result of the meeting of our special commission. Meanwhile, I implore always more the charity of your holy prayers and your pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Address to: "In the House of Signore Captain Angeletti," and the letters will arrive safely, as have others.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (25)

Rome

April 30, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

On Monday the delegates met and decided on a postponement and to take up the question of the foundations at that time, that is, the discussion of the Retreats of Ceccano, Terracina, and Paliano. In connection with this, Monsignor Ferroni will write you on behalf of the commission for information and your vote. With this he is asking for an authentic petition from the Ceccano Commune to the special commission about the necessity it has for workers, the great fruit it has received from them, the ability of the region to support us, etc., so that the commission will resolve in favor of the establishment of these Retreats, the continuation of the construction, and total peaceful possession, as you will hear better from Signore Palleschi. The same process will take place for Terracina and Pagliano.

I confess to you that I have had the most blessed occasions to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ very tightly — would that I had done so to perfection. The persecutions are secret, but bitter. I believe they come from good intentions. Calumnies and other hardships are not wanting. Blessed be God.

Cardinal Gentili has shown himself a true father, but he is alone, as he assured me this morning. The others are contrary, especially one whom I believed was the most favorable. Cardinal Gentili wanted to issue a brief to end all the litigation that could ever arise in the future. God is omnipotent and now, when human supports are entirely gone, my most lively hope grows in the great Father of Mercies and has the liveliest confidence that “he who has begun the work will bring it to perfection.” Meanwhile, I rejoice in the Lord that soon your pious intentions for the establishment of the Retreat at Ceccano will be fulfilled. The Most High will be greatly glorified there and your loving sheep helped in accord with your incomparable pastoral zeal.

I acknowledge the receipt of the bill of exchange for ten *scudi*. I have given it to Signore Palleschi with my receipt. Since I find myself not a little exhausted and loaded with tasks, I could not go to cash it myself. This support came at the time it was most needed, for our expenses have not been few. So this donation, given from the always great charity of Your Excellency, will ascend to the Divine Presence as a perfumed incense. May the Lord reward you, as I will always pray His Divine Majesty.

When the weather cools, if I am living and well, I will be in Ferentino to serve you with holy missions. I need to withdraw now and take care of my sickness a bit, which has increased here because of the work and other reasons. Whence, I stand in need of purging and blood-letting. For that reason I hope to leave here next Sunday, or maybe on Saturday, May 3. I end at your feet and

ask as ever for your holy prayers and strong protection, and with profound
reverence I implore your pastoral blessing, and I am,
Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

631

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (52)

Rome
May 3, 1749
Leaving tomorrow.

J.C.P.

My Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

The special commission, at the request of the opposition, has decided on a delay for the issuance of the brief for generally allowing foundations with the simple consent of the Ordinaries. With regard to the Retreats at Ceccano and Terracina, where the construction of twelve cells with a church with three beautiful chapels has been completed, as well as for the Retreat at Paliano, they decreed to put it on the agenda. That means with the consent and reports of the three bishops, we will have peaceful possession, etc.

Great things were happening at these meetings. The one who was believed to be most in our favor turns out to be most contrary. Otherwise, the brief would have been issued. There are great persecutions; the secret ones are the most bitter. But I believe all is done with good intent. I have had occasion to swallow some drops from the chalice of my Savior, and, if I did not see everything in the Divine Good Pleasure, my fragile nature would shatter like glass, for I have the same fragility and weakness.

Tomorrow, I am leaving Rome as happy as if I were taking with me a bull of privileges for all the foundations in the world. For I have a strong belief that "he who has begun this work will complete it." Even our opposition admits that the Congregation will soon be a genuine religious order,¹⁸⁴ and only a little is needed for that. They are right, I hope so, and this scorches the devil.

I have replied to Signore Petri with regard to the young man from Ischia, who cannot be received just now, nor can he make his novitiate at San Angelo, etc. When the weather cools, I hope to assist him. Around May 10, I hope to be at San Angelo. It is needful that you let me know what cloth you need for the coming winter so as to buy it in time.

I think you will have received the ten canes for mantles. The crucifixes and rosaries were sent to Signore Lombardozzi. I am in a hurry and embrace you

184. "A genuine religious order" is one with solemn vows. In the legal practice of that time only solemn vows gave an institute a moral personality and legal stability. The Passionists were not as yet considered to be true religious in the canonical sense.

all in the Lord. I have need of prayers as I am in fierce storms. God will help me. I greet everyone and am from the heart,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

632

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (22)

Rome

May 3, 1749

As I am leaving.

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

The special commission, by request of our opponents, has decreed a prorogation with regard to the issuance of a brief for the universal founding of Retreats with the simple consent of the Ordinaries. In regard to your Retreat and those of Ceccano and Paliano, the commission has put it on the agenda, that is, provided that the city of Terracina, and the other locations mentioned, present authentic petitions to this special commission in which they will set out the need they have of our workers to help in spiritual affairs, the ability to maintain them because of the fertility of the region, etc. With this let them make a strong presentation to the special commission as it seeks information and votes. Cardinal Gentili thinks the same request has been made to the bishop of Ferentino and for Paliano. In this way all the litigation will have ceased, and we will have peaceful possession. In this same post you will hear from Signore Palleschi, who will give you with great clarity good advice and methods for the ending of the affair. So in this way we will be able to sing of our victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the course of these events, some things happened that showed me that one who showed himself most favorable was really the strongest opposed. The persecutions are strong, although I believe they are motivated with good intentions. The secret persecutions are the most bitter. Thanks to my God, I have had occasion to swallow some drops from the chalice of my Savior Jesus Christ, and it is not to be wondered at if my small suffering from the Will of God, seeing my great weakness, would have shattered my being like a glass. Oh, God is good! Tomorrow, I am leaving Rome as satisfied as if I were carrying a bull for all the foundations in the world, for I leave with the lively belief that "he who began this work will complete it."

Around May 10 or 11, please God, I will be at the Retreat of San Angelo at Viterbo, and there I will write to the Nobleman Gattinara. I am not doing so now because I am loaded with work. I end at the your feet, asking you always for the charity of your holy prayers and your holy pastoral benediction, and with profound reverence kiss your holy pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (26)

San Angelo
May 12, 1749

J.X.P.

On my departure from Soriano, where I rested for three days on my return from Rome, I received to my great consolation your esteemed letter, forwarded to Signore Angeletti. The latter writes me that Signore Palleschi has already received the documentation from Ceccano, and he believes that very soon the end of the case of the Retreat of Ceccano will be determined.

I will always adore, as I fervently hope, the Holy Will of God in every event. I know bitter contradictions. I know persecutions of the angry devil and that of men out of good will, as I want to hope. But all this makes me take greater confidence in God without any human support. I firmly believe that "he who began the work will bring it to perfection" to his great glory and the great profit of our poor neighbors.

I feel keenly that Father Thomas Mary was not able to be in Ferentino, as you desired, since he found himself giving the mission in Soriano, and then in Orte, which had already been announced by the bishop. It will end around June 11, and then, God helping out, he will come to the Retreat at Ceccano and have the opportunity to confer with you on his way. It is possible, if it suits you, to make use of Father Stephen, who, I hope in God, would succeed, and in that way your charity and piety could satisfy these good seminarians. If it were not for the burden of the mission in Orte, without doubt, Father Thomas would have obeyed your commands. But when the mission was already announced by the bishop, what was he to do? I am certain that your goodness will accept the lively desire that we have to write you in any event, and with profound reverence I end by asking the charity of your holy prayers and your blessing, and I am always more,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

You can be absolutely sure of the mission in Ferentino.

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (23)

San Angelo
May 13, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

May Jesus Christ, who is the Sovereign Giver of every good, reward with his copious treasure of grace the care you have and the great comfort you afford my poor spirit with your pious and venerated letters. I thank the Mercy of God that has assisted you to bring to a happy ending the building of the Retreat to his greater glory. It seems to me I realize more and more the great good that will result from this great work, confided by the divine goodness to your holy pastoral zeal. I have lively hope that our good God will allow you

to see part of it so that your pious heart may exult in God our Savior in time and in eternity.

It is very true that the cardinal of San Clemente turned out to be quite opposed, and with good intent has made me swallow some mouthfuls. God wills that I behave well, but in truth it seems to me that I am soiled with every kind of foul corruption of my imperfections. If His Eminence had been favorable, we would have obtained our favor completely, even ordinations, which are so necessary. Enough! "In hope against hope," I hope and believe that "he who began the work will bring it to perfection." This stroke has burnt even Cardinal Gentili, who never imagined such an outcome. In this happening, His Divine Majesty has given me the grace to see in it a great work of his always adorable Providence in order to bring forth his greater glory through ways that are hidden to men, etc.

I trust in God that this illustrious city will have sent at this time their petition to the special commission so that with greater care the case can be resolved. I know that Ceccano has already dispatched its petition to Signore Palleschi. I hope Paliano has done likewise.

Father Thomas had a fruitful mission in Soriano where I functioned six years ago. Then he went on to Orto and about June 11 will leave for Ceccano. Consequently, he will not be able to come there because of exhaustion, etc. Father Stephen will return.

I beg Your Goodness to remember me always in your prayers and holy sacrifices as the most needy one so that I may attain to perfect resignation to the most Holy Will, for which I sighed and asked for so many years. I do not know what to ask or desire more. Oh! when will it be my food to always do the Holy Will of my good God!

Ah, bishop, out of charity cry out for poor me and bless me, while with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments. I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

635

Thomas Fossi (28)

San Angelo
May 14, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your letter in Rome in the midst of my occupations and in the midst of the winds and cyclones which were blowing strongly around me, who am weaker than straw. It was a miracle that the furious winds did not take me to perdition. Now that I am back, I am answering with this note in order not to add to the burden of Father Rector, to whom I am including it. I thank you in Christ for the charity you continue toward me and for the offer of one hundred, etc., but I do not want you to do that at this time. Leave the care to God, for one of these days the house will be sold. Who knows whether God is waiting

for our old plan? For now let us not talk about it any more, for the ways are closed, and let us get to our business.

My beloved Thomas, I have always said God wishes you to be holy in your state of life, and for that reason you should swallow all these bitter mouthfuls that the Heavenly Father permits and suffer in silence and in hope, within and without. It has been my business this year to practice the virtue of silence, within and without. Believe me, the need is great but the practice small. Mercy, my Lord, mercy!

I am happy to learn that your daughters are walking so well, and I approve them going to the sacraments every week, but I do not approve these loving internal repose you are urging on them. They would need to fly without wings or build with sand. Lead them through ordinary prayer, through solid virtue. God will teach them internal, infused prayer to which loving repose belongs.¹⁸⁵

Let them read the conferences given by Father Fulgentius, or another whom you think well of, and, if that Father judges they should practice that kind of prayer of repose, then they will do well. Oh, how greatly you are indebted to God! Oh, what mercies he imparts to you, especially in your children. Sacrifice yourself as a holocaust in the interior depth of your spirit without losing sight of your horrible nothingness.

The foundation stone you speak of, I have no knowledge of. These are thoughts I prefer to pass by. I am resolved to do the Will of God by the moment in naked suffering, staying despoiled in my horrible nothingness, with a lively hope that my God will absorb me in His Immense All.

Pray much for me, and from the heart I call myself,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

636

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (53)

San Angelo
May 14, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I arrived at the holy Retreat on Friday, May 9, after passing through Soriano. I received your letter, forwarded to me from Rome, along with the second, in this post. May God reward your charity for the good news you have to give me. I am happy that the two young men have come from Garesio.¹⁸⁶ I was worried about them because of the corsairs.¹⁸⁷ Thanks be to God. I am still hoping that our Confrater Dominic will arrive safely. Before I forget, I am

185. Note that the prayer of loving repose belongs to infused prayer and it is for God to give it as God sees fit.

186. They are John Baptist of Saint Anthony, dismissed in 1761, and Philip Hyacinth Ponta of the Holy Savior (1733-1771). Both were professed on May 18, 1749.

187. Corsairs, fast ships, are probably pirate ships.

telling you that you well know you have been given every authority both to receive and clothe as well as to profess. I am now confirming that for you once more. God knows how much I sleep, I will say that, depending upon you, and how much I rely on your charity, attention, and prudence. "All these things are not yours, but God's." So when that cleric from Rio comes and is of devout quality with all the requisites, receive him. I say the same for the young man from Perugia, the nephew of Canon Raymond,¹⁸⁸ and of the rest.

Take care to cut back the self-will of Del Bono¹⁸⁹ and do not allow him to go beyond what is prescribed by the Rules. Then it will be seen whether these are true impulses from the Holy Spirit that draw him to greater acts of penance. Then you can grant them as His Divine Majesty will inspire you. But for the present, no — for it may be a sign of a deceit by the devil so that some secret self-esteem may enter by being special or to deprive him of health and have him return to the infected air of the world.

Insist much on this and have him understand the truth of what is said here. Let him make much of virtue, of self-knowledge, of blind obedience, openness of conscience, and in that way he will become holy. But cut off all extra penances except what the Rule asks. He is to do as all the novices, and so they will walk safely. When they are made stable with profession, then examine their interior urges and make a devout balance. I wish that one from Piombino would come, but I doubt it. You have not given me any notice about that Genovese, a sign that he has not come. At least I've heard nothing yet. "I know whom I have chosen."

With regard to sending the novices who are close to profession, I would like to know from you the total number of novices who are there; therefore, the size of the entire family. I will take steps, hoping that I can move four or five. Meanwhile, I will send Father Anthony¹⁹⁰ for the mission at Pereta where he can have as his companion the other Father Anthony.¹⁹¹ When the mission is over, he will remain there in his room for a while so that he will be able to continue on the missions in autumn.

Enough! I will hold off the rest until my next letter, which I will consign to him. I hope that he will be able to be there around Wednesday, May 20, to begin the mission in Pereta on May 21 and end it on Trinity Sunday.

I am doing this because until Friday, May 16, I cannot be at Toscanella, and it is useful that I speak to him and learn from him all the news of the

188. Raymond Viti of the Sorrowful Heart of Mary, from San Vito, Perugia, was dismissed in 1760. His nephew must not have entered or was never professed.

189. Perhaps this is Confrater Ferdinand Ignatius of the Holy Spirit, also known as Don Alexander Abate Del Buona Di Scala of the diocese of Cassano. He was vested in the habit on May 18, 1749, and was dismissed under command of the superior, as noted in the *Registro del noviziato*, p. 12.

190. Father Anthony Danei of the Passion.

191. Father Anthony Tomasini of Calvary.

Retreat. At that time I am thinking of going over to the Byzantine Island¹⁹² to see whether a Retreat could be established there this coming autumn. The difficulties are great, especially from the Frati of Valentano. However, I think it is outside the four mile taxative limit. We will see. I am fearful about the air, so I want to see it for myself and be personally informed, etc.

I have, humanly speaking, the powerful influence of Cardinal Aldrobrandi,¹⁹³ for he has the Princess Di San Bono very much in his favor. She denies nothing to this cardinal, so let us recommend the affair to our Blessed God.

I would be happy to have information soon on our cloth so as to write in time. That is what the merchant wants in order to have time to do a good job. I am including the IOU of John Passaiolo, which I was unable to cash, despite all the diligence of Signore Clarioni. So I am sending it back securely.

I am including this note for Signore Del Bono. I am happy with the progress on the construction.

The coverings¹⁹⁴ are here and I believe the rest as well, supposing that Father Rector will have written. "May the Lord reward you in everything."

Right now I cannot recall anything else that I have in mind; I am including this letter for Signore Fossi.

There is need to pray much, especially for the favor of ordinations. There are not a few oppositions to that, but I hope and believe. Let us pray His Divine Majesty that, out of love for the holy Passion and of Mary the sorrowing one, he will not allow my sins to hurl this ship upon the rocks, but bring it safely into port "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I hope to embrace you in this Retreat on your way to the baths, and I will rejoice to hear your news, etc., and in the holy Side of Jesus I sign myself once more,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

You can be most assured, and I assert this in the Lord, that your letters console me, at least my higher soul in faith, although I do not seek any consolation whatever except doing the Will of God. God knows how much I am edified in everything.

Read the letter to Signore Thomas, then seal it and include with one of yours, and send it to him. He offered me one hundred *zecchini*, which I was to accept secretly, but I did not accept the offer. Let us wait and see what God will do. Pray for me.

192. This foundation was never made and was mentioned earlier (letter of June 18, 1746).

193. Cardinal Pompeo Aldrobrandi (+April 12, 1763).

194. These are antependiums requested by Paul in an earlier letter. They were for the altars of the church of San Angelo.

Reverend Prior: Syndic for Our Lady of the Oak

Toscanello

May 19, 1749

Leaving early tomorrow
for San Angelo.*May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

Reverend Prior,

I am answering in the holy Side of Jesus and the purest Heart of Mary Most Holy to the great charity you have deigned to do this poor Retreat of Mary Most Holy by accepting the sweet burden of worthy syndic of this Retreat. How satisfying this is to His Divine Majesty and to that sovereign Lady and Mother, Mary Most Holy, cannot be easily put in our words nor comprehended by our minds.

I know this office will bring beautiful occasions, which you are eager for, to exercise the noblest virtues, especially that of charity, the queen of all. I also know there will not be lacking difficulties and tasks, however, not too often, "but your reward is very great." Mary Most Holy will protect you in life and in death, and will obtain from her blessed Divine Son that you will sing after death the divine mercies in a blessed eternity.

I pass over mentioning the gratitude that this entire, poor Congregation of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ will preserve in all its prayers, Masses, and other exercises of piety, which are practiced in it for the spiritual needs of our poor neighbors. So, my beloved Reverend Prior, begin your holy work by making out the declaration needed with Signore Consalvi Santese. Receive the money in deposit, and sacrifice to the Blessed God and Mary Most Holy the contradictions of spirit that can occur. I have done that with God's help.

Signore Consalvi has fallen into scruples, I will say, that in order to hand over the money, it is necessary to detail the expenses and receipts from the person in charge, and that in order to obey the decree of the Sacred Congregation. I know this is not necessary, but what does it matter? It is necessary to be patient. The necessity is great; that list is to be made in truth, etc. You will hear more from Signore Ranucci. These are important doings and, if His Divine Majesty enriches you with many tasks, inconveniences, and sufferings, it is so that you may be richer in merit. I beg your kindly pardon if I am being too wordy, and I ask the charity of your devout prayers and holy sacrifices. With full esteem, veneration, and respect I kiss your sacred hands, and with profound respect affirm I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (54)

San Angelo
May 23, 1749

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I learn from your letter of May 14 that Signore Porrini has arrived without the money for his vestition because of an accident he ran into. This will have to be made up. But Signore Del Bono believed that he had certainly brought it; that is what was told me in Rome. But if he does not have it, have it brought; otherwise, etc.

You know how we are. It belongs to you, and you have all the authority, etc. That they are spending a great deal of money there, as you say, I believe it. We agreed to do little and to let Master Angelo go. Then you wrote me that Signore Viti¹⁹⁵ was raising money for the agreed construction, and I replied to you that they could go ahead with the proposed construction,¹⁹⁶ if they could, with the provision being made. But if not, then it is not right to tempt God, and it would be necessary to let everything go.

Now I can do nothing; I am not there. It is up to you to make your own decisions. So call off the work if resources are lacking and let Signore Del Bono know the need and the great expenses, and that two have need of their vestition expenses, otherwise, etc. If you had the ability, you would do it in charity, but let them know that you cannot purchase the cloth at such great expense, etc.

For the vestition of the Piedmontese, I do not have the smallest bit of money. I bought ten canes of cloth, which cost twenty and a half *scudi*, the crucifixes, and the rosaries, and little is left in Signore Fresia's possession, as you will be able to learn from him.

I see that your community numbers twenty-five, but that includes the tertiary, who is a useless expense. Here, there is nothing more to be done. I am arranging for five ticks and blankets. It is taking a great effort, for the lay brothers are not very well. So I am assigning five here under obedience: Confraters Charles, Joseph of Ronciglione, Thomas, Joseph Vigna, and another professed who, I think, is from Ceccano.¹⁹⁷ But if it is a different cleric in this profession, send him and leave the cleric from Ceccano in with the professed. Otherwise, patience! Here there will be a community of more than twenty, there scarcely twenty-one or twenty-two, for according to my

195. Viti must be Father Raymond Viti of the Sorrowful Heart of Mary, vested March 27, 1749. In 1760 he transferred to the Cistercians. He made a large donation when he entered (Bartoli, p. 50).

196. The construction refers to the toilets.

197. The professed named by Paul are: Charles Joseph Marchiandi of San Gertrude, Joseph Cerrini of the Infant Jesus (1723-1753), Thomas Renzi of the Agony of Jesus, dismissed 1762, Joseph Vigna of Saint Mary (1727-1803); the cleric from Ceccano is Joseph Anthony Tiberia of the Holy Name of Mary (1727-1755).

information none are coming except one from Piombino, and he may not come. I have left the one from Rio up to your judgment, and so for all the rest.

What bothers me is that they are engaged in the expenses of building without a cent.¹⁹⁸ I was satisfied after you wrote that Signore Viti was taking care of the expenses. But when you saw the contrary, you should have stopped. You can get on with it now and repair the communal sites, so you can accommodate the elders a bit as we wait, and I know that I laid out the area and ordered that the drains should be cleaned at the rainy season. I thought this would be done by Signore Sancez and Signore Petri, who could provide the water by themselves, and we would not have to expend so much money, as you tell me. What is to be done for cloth? Loans are not to be sought. But you will have acted with lights from God and with great trust, something that I do not have, so I cannot disapprove what you have done.

Here they will do some small construction at the beginning of June. If the masons do not come, I will send Caesar¹⁹⁹ with the donkeys. But if they come, they cannot be sent. You will have to arrange as best you can. So, if the masons do not get here, you will see Caesar there with the donkeys on Trinity Sunday²⁰⁰ in the evening, and they will be able to leave Tuesday morning early.

At this juncture, Father Rector came in after I had written the above paragraph and tells me that the masons will certainly be here on Wednesday after the feast. So Caesar will not be able to come there because they need him to carry the lime, water, etc. So do your best. If you want to wait and have them come with you, do so. Otherwise, have them taken as far as Chiarone with two calashes, and have Brother Francis, with their habits and provisions on the donkeys, sleep at Baccano.²⁰¹

For the baths you could take Confrater Bonaventure²⁰² as your companion. Because of his acidic condition, perhaps he would benefit with the baths and blood-letting. If you find yourself in Viterbo, we will send a horse with Caesar. I am speaking to you and leave the decision to you. I think the baths will be late this year because of the wet and the cold.

So far we cannot go ahead with ordinations, but I always hope. I have eight titles at hand.²⁰³ Since it is not easy to obtain dimissorials from Lucca, I am

198. Literally "without a crust" or lacking the necessary means.

199. Caesar was a house servant at the Retreat of San Angelo.

200. In 1749, the Feast of the Holy Trinity fell on June 1.

201. Chiarone is the river that divides the Papal States from the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, whence the religious would proceed to Mount Argentario. "Baccano" is the name of an inn. Brother Francis is Brother Francis of Saint Ann (1722-1777).

202. Bonaventure Magnasco of the Assumption was professed in 1744. Sickness forced him to interrupt his studies. He was ordained a priest in 1766.

203. "Title" refers to the power to have eight clerics ordained to priesthood under the title of common table. A further requirement was the testimonial letters from the bishop of the birthplace of the cleric. The bishops raised difficulties about giving the testimonials, since, if the ordinand left the Congregation, the bishop was obliged to accept him in his diocese.

thinking of beginning with the ordination of the following, since soon I will have the dimissorials in order to provide for the Retreats, at least the greater needs.

Confrater Silvester, diocese of Asti; Confrater Constance, Acqui; Confrater John Pietri; and one whose name I lack, diocese of Asti;²⁰⁴ I call him “the Apostle.” Send me notice of him when I let you know.

Confrater John²⁰⁵ at your Retreat has his dimissorials, and they should succeed in having him ordained; on the other hand, this situation makes me a bit fearful. I would not want him ordained unless you can give me moral certainty of his stability, observance, and piety. So send me by the first post the names, family names, country, and dioceses of the above named, along with their religious names, their age and so forth, and let me know if they have all their testimonials, etc., complete. Above all, give me the age of each one of the above.

With regard to having these ordained, I believe they are of proper age, more or less, since God will provide for the rest. I think that Father Anthony will have finished his mission by now, and I recommend him more and more to your charity so that he may walk strongly and gently.

Right now is not the time to proceed with the Byzantine Island, for it is necessary first to light a fire. I hope that when the weather cools, we will proceed. I have confidence that God will grant it for certain.

I do not recall anything else. Here, everything is ready for the five clerics. Send them when you wish. Let them travel by way of Corneto. They can go to the home of Signore Dominic Costantini — send a note with them. That is the best way and the shortest way. They will be accompanied with donkeys and a guide. Your donkeys can be sent back with Brother Francis. Remind him to bring refreshments of bread and wine for the road from Corneto.

Pray much for me, for my needs are many, and Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen. Take care of yourself. I embrace you in the Lord and am,

Have prayers offered for Father Master, who for more than a month has not held classes because of a minor illness, but he considers it serious. He has little courage, but he is a true servant of God. There is need to pray! Now he is better and will hold classes.

Here, the clerics will be located in the new dormitory, which is just enough. It will leave one room free for you on your journey. The lay brothers are moderately well taken care of. In the sleeping quarters there are twelve clerics and two priests.

204. Constance Bartolotti of Saint Gabriel Archangel, dismissed in 1754; Ignatius Coccumelli of the Holy Name of Jesus, dismissed in 1759; Joseph Maria Cerrini of the Infant Jesus (1723-1753); Joseph Vigna of Saint Mary (1727-1803); John Peter Vico of Saint John (1726-1773).

205. Probably John Gelli of Saint Aloysius, dismissed in 1754.

Send me the names, family names, religious names, country, diocese, and age of the candidates. I and Father Rector are still in our poor prison cells.²⁰⁶
Your...

639

Joseph Lippici

San Angelo
May 23, 1749

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

On my return from the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak, I found your welcome letter, and I rejoice much in the Lord for the great news you give me of the holy mission. I willingly agree that Father Thomas should rest this summer, if there is no necessity for him in Ceccano, as I have written to him in the enclosed letter, which you can have sent to him in Orte after you seal it. I am sending it open so that you may see the promptness and the debt of gratitude I owe you and all in Soriano, whom I have loved much, and will love much, in Christ Jesus. I am writing in haste and offering my greetings to all your pious household, and am always from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

640

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (24)

San Angelo
May 27, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Your esteemed letter gave me more than ordinary reason to bless and magnify the divine mercies, especially because of the holy abandonment that the Divine Majesty grants you in your present suffering, keeping your pious spirit like a child in the bosom of divine love and feeding in a high secret way on the milk of holy love. This is the treasure of treasures. You should teach me that, and I wish I would once learn to stay in the secret interior in a sacred silence of faith and love, accepting from God without fear whatever the pain, sorrow, etc., always feeding in Christ and through Christ on the holy Divine Will.

I have strong hopes in the blessed God that you will draw great good from the persecutions aroused against the pious vicar general. This blow, I confess to my great weakness, pained me greatly. Last night, after I had read the

206. There were two small cells in the ancient hermitage. Paul and his brother, John Baptist, rector of the community, always lived there. The "poor prison cells" can be seen today.

following, with the grace of God I became resigned. At least it gave me a chance to make a good vigil during the night. Blessed be God.

At this time I have in mind no good candidate, not in Rome where I know that Abbe Ardizzoni, who is in the household of Cardinal Cavalchini, a learned and pious priest, who was to go as vicar general for the deceased bishop of Novara. But who knows whether he would consent, and he is a Piedmontese. Abbe Micconi, with whom I have had some dealings, seems to me pious and quiet, but I have no knowledge of his learning nor his style. I think he is very good. He was vicar general at Farfa, if I am not mistaken. You can be sure that God will provide and will provide well. I wish I could help out with the blood in my veins, but will do it with the prayers of these servants of God.

I thank His Divine Majesty that the work of the Retreat goes ahead so happily, for that greatly scorches the accursed devil, who is scheming to disturb it with persecutions that are aroused. However, to his chagrin these are being turned into precious joys to enrich your spirit the more. All this week, even up until Corpus Christi, I will offer all my prayers, etc., to implore from His Divine Majesty help in this trial. I rest at your feet and ask for your holy blessing and prayers, and with profound reverence I say I am,

Your humble, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

641

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (27)

San Angelo

May 27, 1749

J.X.P.

Your Excellency,

Last night I received your letter. I am writing with the reasons advanced by Signore Palleschi, who is so solicitous for our case. Since you are about to leave for Lucca, such care is necessary so that the affair can come to a conclusion by means of information to be given you.

I confess I am in water up to my neck when I see our poor religious in such narrow straits. If the case drags on, as it is now, it will certainly be necessary to take measures so as not to be guilty in conscience in seeing them die or rendered helplessly sick, as has already happened to Father John of Saint Aloysius, a priest in that Retreat. I live abandoned in the arms of the Heavenly Father, like a poor child, and desire to feed myself constantly on his Will in Christ and for Christ Jesus. But I must not omit trying, as I am obliged to do in virtue of the office I hold, to make due repairs and not let these religious perish, even by taking them from the Retreat in Ceccano and waiting to return them only when the construction is finished.

I am writing in great haste for the post is leaving. With profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments and ask for your blessing. I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
May 30, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

Your letter was forwarded to me, and I rejoice in the Lord that things are going well.

As for the house, I do not think I want to get involved, for it does not befit me. I have written to Father Francis Anthony that he do as God inspires him. The need would be great, especially for the Retreat of Soriano where Father Francis Anthony is rector. They are in need of twelve cells there, that is, with those transferred or already there, and it would take two hundred *scudi* to build them. The community is numerous and that wing of twelve cells is unhealthy. So if God wills to provide for the sale, it would take care of the needs of three Retreats which are being built and which are coming to completion. Otherwise, God will provide in another way.

Regarding your desire to see the foundation for women, I do not see any way open, rather closed, since our poor Congregation continues to be shaken by contrary winds of contradictions and persecutions. Although things are adjusting in Rome, the affairs of the three Retreats of Ceccano, Terracina, and Paliano are not yet completed. Terracina has completed construction due to the incomparable zeal of that holy bishop, who spent not a little money for that construction. The church and monastery are large, all finished according to the plans, and on a mountain. So your desires, which are common to other pious souls in these parts, must be placed in a corner of your heart and you must wait on God.

I am thankful to God that your wife, and my daughter in Jesus Christ, is constant in suffering as you tell me. If she will be within herself in pure faith, in internal nakedness and true resignation, observing a peaceful silence in her sufferings, she will make a great journey of perfection. To speak with her on interior pains and other spiritual things will be useful and will give her a taste for God. But take care not to complain with others and quiet the grumblings of nature, which always seems to suffer too much, for it does not realize the great honor and grace that God is giving. Let her follow her practices with fidelity and cherish time for her soul. Regarding your daughters and sons, I come back to the advice I have given you in my other letters.

With regard to conversations, be very cautious, even with relatives, no matter how spiritual they are. Even here great caution is needed, great modesty in everything, and brevity in speech. Otherwise, one is caught in a net without knowing it. I have seen bad things happen to spiritual persons who trusted too much in themselves — great falls because they did not put into practice this advice, etc. Beloved Thomas, God wishes to make you holy, but pay attention to what this miserable sinner is saying to you.

Keep your interior totally abstracted from all images of creatures, seek a greater inner nakedness and poverty of spirit. Remain in a true interior solitude

in the depth or essence of your soul, that is to say, stay in the temple of your soul.

In the higher reaches of your soul, be attentive to your true nothingness, that you have nothing, can do nothing, etc. "But all sufficiency is from God." Then in this peaceful interior solitude, stay there in pure faith and holy love, reposing on the bosom of the Heavenly Father where all good is to be found. This solitude can be practiced in everything and in all activities without taxing the head and the mind, but with a sweet, loving attention, awakening and revivifying faith in a delicate, peaceful, quiet way with the higher part, which is the noblest part, the sanctuary of the soul.

It is needful to stay in this sanctuary with a profound humility, knowledge of one's own nothingness, without desiring to be curious to know the high divine work that the Sovereign Good works in the soul. In this sanctuary the soul sacrifices itself as a holocaust to the Highest Good in the fire of divine charity, burning in the holy corsage of the holy pains of Christ, etc. All this is done in a way hidden from the senses, and it is done in peace, without tiring the head and without discourses. Faith and love will teach you.

God will make you understand what I am saying, if you will be secret and hidden from all creatures, buried in your nothingness, etc. Jesus bless you and bless your companion and bless your little sons and daughters. Let them all pray for me and cry out for me, for my needs are great. "Waters have penetrated to my soul, but I deserved to suffer these things." Out of charity do not forget to pray for me and for the Congregation, and I am with all my heart,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

The Retreat in Rome, who knows? There are very great difficulties. I am back from Rome since May 9.

The advice given for your interior should not be used as a rule for the path of others; for one goes this way and another goes that way.

In my opinion God has inspired me to give you such direction, etc., because it is so, etc., but others I have advised in another way, for they should not abandon meditating on the Passion of Christ, using books, etc. You are occupied in business. God will draw you from within by his mercy, and you ought to carry the Passion of Christ in your heart always, as I said above, but by conserving internal solitude and loving silence.

I am writing in this post Father Francis Anthony, the rector of Soriano, that he try to obtain a loan of three hundred *scudi* on that house in order to take care of present and urgent needs. Let the interest be at a fair percent and the contract legal, not too high, etc. I know he will try to have you cooperate in finding someone who may make such a loan, and I would hope at five percent. In that way we leave the way open for the Retreat or for something else. I will also write Signora Clare about this, etc.

Girolama Ercolani (9)

San Angelo
May 31, 1749

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your letter and am replying briefly because of my duties. Father Thomas will pass by there and stay for supper and the rest of the day. The following morning he will leave for Rome since he is not able to linger longer because of a business in the service of God. In this event the doctor will have the chance to be of service to Father Thomas, as he wishes, since he will have seven or eight hours. At eleven or twelve he will be in Civita.

The heat is coming on and the trip is long. Father Thomas will spend some days on important affairs; hence he will not be able to linger there beyond the day he arrives, and that is sufficient enough. If you wish to make your confession to him, you can do so. But if you go repeating confessions and scruples, I do not know how many months or years will go by until you are peaceful. If you persevere as you have started, you will have great peace.

I say again what I have said and written many times. Your vow has been fulfilled with all fidelity, and on my conscience you are to have no more scruples. You are not to think about it again. Your vow was for a year, and you have worn the habit for thirteen months. What more do you want? I rejoice that all are in good health, and I pray God to continue that for you.

I ask you to give my cordial greetings to the doctor and all your household, whom I look at in the Wounds of Jesus. I pray for you ever more copious blessings and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Joachim M. Oldo (25)

San Angelo
June 7, 1749

J.C.P.

I thank God that the city of Terracina has sent its petition to the commission of four cardinals. Signore Palleschi writes me from Rome that despite all the efforts he has made, he has not succeeded in investigating it. I hope in the Mercy of God that he will have received notice that he can go to work, while for the Retreat at Ceccano, the same one tells me that a letter has been sent to the bishop for information.

With my highest edification I see that you are expanding your heart of charity ever more with additional donations for the new Retreat so that it may be completed to the greater glory of God. May the good Jesus repay you with the treasure of heaven and the crown of eternal glory. Oh, the great strength of holy charity. Blessed be God.

With regard to what you wanted to know about ordinations, I can tell you that for three years, that is, a short time after issuance of the brief for the approval of the Rules, I obtained the favor to have sixteen candidates ordained under the title of common table. I had asked for "poverty," but because our vows are simple, it was conceded as above, citing the fact that the Congregation was too recently born, etc. Then I asked for the favor of a goodly number because the Congregation was growing in members so that we did not know where to put them. Also, there were many fine ones vested, and in addition more than a few seeking entrance from different areas. That favor was not granted, for everything was referred to that special commission. I hope in God to obtain it, and I have confidence in God that we will obtain more than the outlook of the prudent of this world can believe.

I have had many prayers offered that His Divine Majesty would comfort you in the affair of your vicar. I hope that His Divine Majesty will provide. "Because you were accepted by God, it is necessary that temptation prove you."

Father Thomas will leave for Orte around June 11, and I expect he will be in Ceccano around June 20 or 24, seeing he must spend six or seven days in Rome. The devil is seeking to discredit the work of God as much as he can with persecutions, whisperings, and chilling reports. He spreads the report around that Father Thomas and seventeen additional religious have left the Congregation. I do not know where such nightmares come from. I replied to a friend who notified me of these weeds that in place of religious leaving, we have a new increase of ten and more, in addition to those who are asking in. In order to make room in the novitiate, I have been forced to increase the number in this Retreat to twenty, despite the fact it is still under construction. But there is one good wing. I end at your feet and ask you to continue your prayers for me, and with profound reverence I implore your holy pastoral blessing and am,

Your humble, unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

645

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (3)

San Angelo
June 7, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

On my return here from the Retreat of Soriano, I found your letter, and in it I learn to my pain the agony of your heart. This is a clear sign that God loves you and has placed you in the number of his servants.

In such occurrences it is necessary to take refuge in the unconquerable fortress of confidence in God and resignation to his Holy Will without looking into the face of the future. "Throw all your care upon him because he has care of us, and be not solicitous for tomorrow."

Place all your trust in God and be at peace, for the whole world would crumble before God would be wanting for one who trusts him. I will not fail to cry out to the Most High, and I will have others do it. I have great, great hopes.

Father Thomas will be there on his journey to Rome and will linger the whole day of his arrival, which, I trust, will be around June 13 or 14. Our business is in the same stage that I shared with you, especially due to the May holidays during which little is done. I am writing in great haste, for I am loaded down with letters, and with profound esteem and respect I say I am from a true heart,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

646

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (28)

San Angelo
June 10, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

"Your judgments are just and true, O Lord," and I adore them with all my heart and all my spirit, and I want all adverse things to die in the always adorable Divine Will.

Last night I received your esteemed letter, in which I learned that once more the case is in the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. So the assignment to the special commission has had no result. I understand that it is necessary to give the opposition a hearing, that is, the Reverend Guardians of Pofi and Vallecorsa. God be praised. All goes well, and all goes in my way, for it goes as God wills.

I wish you a pleasant trip to Lucca, and I hope in God that the waters will refresh you. In Ceccano two of our religious have lost their health, especially the priest Father John. Father Stephen writes me that he, too, is ill. Last year they were all sick, no exceptions. I foresaw these happenings, for as soon as I saw the Retreat, a mountain fell on my heart. Blessed be God. Now we must think of a remedy in line with the Will of God, to whom be honor and glory for infinite ages. Amen.

I end at your feet with my heart always more filled with thanks for your great care, and I have lively hope in that he will give you the reward for so much good done to us. With profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, imploring, along with your holy prayers, your holy pastoral blessing as well, and I am

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (55)

San Angelo
June 17, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I am glad to learn that you are taking the baths and would that they return you to your health, as I hope. I wish that Father Clement²⁰⁷ will dismiss the candidate we know about. If not, you will do it if you judge it expedient, as I think. Until the Feast of Mary Magdalene²⁰⁸ he could go to Rome, Father Mark Aurelius tells me. I have doubts; I have grave doubts about such a candidate. I see there are strong outside pressures to keep him, but God is doing us good, for such individuals are not for us.

Yesterday, I was at Ronciglione and the cloth is better at the same price. It will last longer and much, much better dyed. For the mantles, there will be seven palms, but they make them without any profit. Let me know how many are needed for habits and mantles, etc., so I can give the order in due time.

I will have the dimissorials, which I will send them, when I send to take Confrater Thomas.²⁰⁹

I have need of the clock, which is in the sacristy. It was given to me more than twenty years ago by Knight Specchio²¹⁰ to put in the study, since they do not know how to regulate it and dust ruins it quickly. I am writing to the Mount that they carry it to Montalto. If the thinking of Father Charles,²¹¹ who is staying there, has changed, and for good reasons he has decided to go ahead to The Oak for a while, give him fitting instructions. Father Anthony²¹² is to come here as directed by the doctor, and I will write him to be at Montalto on Saturday, June 28, so that you can go to Orbetello in a calash. Here we will be twenty-two in the family. God will help you. I rejoice over the arrival of the candidate from Piombino.²¹³ Oh, if the brother of Brother Paul²¹⁴ would be able to come to Soriano! what a great charity that would be, for that poor Retreat has no one. The lay brothers cannot be sent to every need pointed out to me. See how you can manage; otherwise, patience. If you can provide for another

207. Father Clement Maioli of the Sorrowful Virgin must be the assistant rector.

208. The Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene is celebrated on July 22. The climate at this time would not be too dangerous in traversing the salt marshes of Tuscany and Lazio.

209. Thomas Renzi of the Agony of Jesus was dismissed in 1762.

210. Specchio must be Don Bartholomew Espejol, commandant at Orbetello, whom Paul met at the beginning of his stay on Argentario.

211. Father Charles Augustine Salemmi of the Mother of God was dismissed in 1750.

212. Father Anthony Tomasini of Calvary (1703-1777) in the novitiate registry is named Father Joseph Anthony of Calvary (Bartoli, p. 39).

213. Don Anthony Forti Di Piombino, a priest vested in the habit July 25, 1749, left because of poor health (*Novitiate Register*, f. 14, in AGCP).

214. Father Paul Rossi of Saint Aloysius (1724-1761) from Boveglio; the name of the brother that Paul is requesting is unknown.

Retreat, then have him come back to Mount Argentario. I am minded to say that Del Bono must be sent on his way, but in a charitable way, in order that, etc. ...

Things in Rome were in turmoil, but now they take a better turn, and soon the three Retreats will be safe. All the world is against us, writes Father Thomas, who works like a good son of the Congregation. I rejoice over him in that God is favoring us the more. Let me know when I should send to take Confrater Thomas, etc.

Everyone greets you in the Lord, and, because I have much to do, I embrace you in Christ and continue at my blessed little table. Last night I had a large pile of letters. Greet Signore C. Peter²¹⁵ and all his house and Father Compagnino. In haste I am from a true heart,

Your humble servant,

Paul of the Cross

Write to Father Clement that he should not give these letters to the candidate,²¹⁶ nor others that come in, but keep them locked up.

648

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (34)²¹⁷

San Angelo
June 18, 1749

*May the holy Passion of Jesus Christ
be in our hearts.*

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

In this ordinary post I received your letter, in which I see the mercies that our good God imparts to your spirit. I bless and thank His Divine Majesty in seeing that you have ended your term as abbess happily. Now is the time to remain hidden and alone, sitting at the holy feet of your Divine Spouse. The charge of the sacristy will not hinder but rather inflame you in the love of God. Only see to it that you handle with great attention and devotion the sacred utensils for Holy Mass and other ceremonies. That will cause great affections of love. Read about the mystical signification of the sacred utensils and you will see.

I hope you already know, but I will explain briefly. The amice is that heavy rag with which the holy face of Jesus Christ was covered — that beautiful, divine face on which the angels desire to gaze, for it is the joy and the happiness of that beautiful city of God; the alb signifies the heavy, filthy white sack with which he was clothed in the house of Herod; the cincture signifies the ropes and chains with which the gentle Jesus was bound; the maniple

215. Peter of the Brusciotti family, where Fulgentius was staying; the name of Fulgentius' companion priest is unknown.

216. This refers to Del Bono, whom Paul had to dismiss.

217. In this beautiful letter of direction, Tauler's influence is noticeable. Note the references to the foundation of a convent of Passionist nuns.

signifies the fetters of irons and other bindings on the divine hands; the stole signifies the cross and also the ropes and chain around his purest neck; the chasuble signifies the purple garment that they put on him after the scourging, and also signifies the great weight of the cross he carried to Calvary.

You can make beautiful reflections when you handle the corporal and purificator on the swaddling clothes with which Mary wrapped the purest Body of the Infant Jesus.

Love will teach you much. But I would have you put into practice what I have told you so many times, although I write but rarely. That is, I would have you accustom yourself to that holy internal solitude, rich with every good.

So, once you have aroused your devotion with some holy reflections and sweet colloquies and especially a true annihilation, that is, profound humility of heart, try to keep yourself alone in a pure spirit of faith and love in the interior temple of your soul. Rest like a child there on the bosom of the heavenly Father, adoring in spirit and truth. If love makes you remain in this sacred silence, all immersed and lost in God in the depth of your soul, stay that way. Believe me, God wants you holy. I know that, but — and take note of the “but” — but, I say, it is necessary to be faithful, a friend of solitude, internal and external, distrustful of self, poor in spirit, a lover of self-abasement, of mortification, of internal and external silence, remaining as much as you can all immersed in God in a holy interior solitude. God will teach you what I am saying.

Although that “locution” you had from Signore Thomas Fossi, my son in Christ, is good, nonetheless, keep yourself from searching into such things, for thus one exposes oneself to being deceived. It is true that it has brought wonderful effects and is a clear sign that it is of God, but that is not important. I do not wish you to seek after such things, for there is great danger. In this way you will be more pleasing to God. Now enough! At this time it is not important.

The affairs of our Congregation are always ravaged by the persecutions of the devil and the world, for it seems as though all the world is against us. We expect a decision soon for three of our Retreats: Ceccano, Terracina, and Pagliano. But other parts are in storms. God will help us. Let us pray much about this to the Blessed God. Who knows when God will want the foundation for holy virgins? I consider that with peace, but I do not think it will come in my time. However, I do not know that. This is a work that needs to be part of our prayer.

I do not remember receiving the signs, but that is not important, and I thank you in Christ.

I rejoice that you had part in the veneration of that cross. God be blessed. Oh, how good God is.

Raise the three disciples you have in the convent with you in true sanctity, but take them along little by little. Accustom them to mental prayer, for that obtains everything. I will not forget to pray for the religious, and tell them I greet them in Jesus Christ.

Pray much for me, for I am in great need. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

That good priest has come to the novitiate on the Mount, and I expect great good for him.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

649

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (4)

San Angelo
June 28, 1749

J.M.J.

Dear Doctor,

I have wanted to write to you two mailings ago, but because of the multitude of letters of importance, I did not have the chance to do everything.

I am now acknowledging your esteemed letter, received last night, and I reverently tell you that I believed that our Father Thomas Mary has stopped by there. Now I have his letter from Rome in which he tells me that he found it better to travel by river at night on the eleventh. He left then and had a bad night on the voyage, that is, with inconvenience and pain. On the following morning he arrived early in Rome. In truth it pained me that you could not have been comforted. On the other hand, we need to be compassionate with your poor Father. He was much pained from the fatigues he suffered, and for that reason he took the trip by water since he had that chance.

I already had news of the happening at Civitavecchia. On one of our missions in Umbria many years ago, a not inferior prodigy took place, namely, a crucifix sweated abundantly. An examination was undertaken by Rome, and now it is held in great veneration since God worked a miracle, etc. — so I have been told.

It is certain that there are so many evils abroad in the world that one fears some notable punishment. Let us try to placate the divine anger with penitence, etc. I, thanks be to God, am moderately well, even better than usual. However, I have not had the chance to accomplish my purging because of my many duties. Thanks be to God.

My beloved Dominic, "Trust in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Hope in God and he will give you the desires of your heart." I beg you convey my devout greetings to your wife and to all your pious household, whom I see in the loving Heart of Jesus with my poor prayers, and I ask for you the most copious blessings of heaven. With profound respect I affirm that I am from a true heart,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Canon Cerrini (1)²¹⁸

San Angelo
June 28, 1749

J.M.J.

Reverend Canon,

This past Sunday I sent our man there so that he might receive the dimissorial notes. A man of your house told him you had gone to Sutri and had not returned. He did well.

I do not know the cause of the delay, but I adore the Divine Will, and I do not have any concern about the affair, for, thanks be to God, there are other candidates. I did it simply for the benefit of your brother.²¹⁹

I recommend myself to your devout prayers and holy sacrifices, and with profound respect I kiss your sacred hand and am from my heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (56)

San Angelo
July 4, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I hope you have arrived safely,²²⁰ as well as Father Anthony and the lay brother. Blessed be God.

You take care of yourself and do not overdo. When retreats are needed for those to be vested, have Father Anthony of Calvary conduct them or whomsoever you think well of. You cannot do them without ruining yourself since you have just returned from the baths.

I trust everyone has all their requisites for vestition. If the young man from Pereta has not handed his over, he cannot be vested according to the Rules. Likewise for the others. I say this because I think that parish priest is reluctant, and I do not wish that once vested his relatives start disturbing him every little while or bother him with letters. That needs to be forbidden during the time of novitiate. You will take good care of that, I have no doubt.

I trust in God that the building that was done will not go against just and rightful care of our religious. For the Rules²²¹ tell us that, if alms exceed proper

218. A priest in Ronciglione.

219. Canon Cerrini is the brother of Joseph Mary Cerrini of the Infant Jesus, born in 1725, professed as a Passionist in 1748, and died after only five years of religious life in 1753.

220. Fulgentius arrived safely and in good health from Viterbo, where he went for the baths (see the preceding letter to Fulgentius).

221. *Regulae et const.*, p. 162, n. 77: "if there is a surplus, the rector will have it distributed among the poor when there is no need for the church or for the brethren of the Congregation."

provision, they should be expended on the poor or on the maintenance of the building, if that is needed. So it is not right to borrow money to build, etc. Accordingly, I will not consent that they go ahead and finish the chapter room unless there is a surplus of donations; charity demands that the religious be taken care of first. Just so that I do not forget, I want the chapter room to remain below, otherwise two stairways would be required. I will not permit that and I wish that the chapter room be on the same level as the choir; otherwise, there is disorder.

Master Angelo is a good man, but not a top master, and what he does costs more because of the length of time he takes. Besides, it is necessary to make out time sheets and not trust those of the workers, since I know from Signore Petri²²² that I paid forty days, according to their books, without seeing a single signature. I am backing off and leave it to you to take care of, but give an order to a lay person that they sign the slips and not simply take them from the workers, and that they keep the books properly.

Everything is going well for me. I am not saying this to burden you, but in order to fulfill my obligation. Whence, I say do not go into debt in order to build.

I know by experience your charity and vigilance in maintaining fervor and the health of the religious. In order that I might cooperate with you a bit, I would ask that you recommend to Brother Joseph²²³ to attend to cleanliness in cooking, arranging things so that everything is salted properly and cooked well, and not to try to do everything himself.

I would wish him to provide greens at noon, when they are available, that is, on Wednesday and Saturday, for on the other days there is a warm plate in the evening.

At your place there is no fruit, not even peas, so I wish that at least three times a week they be given, in addition to the main course, a bit of lettuce or cabbage salad, not a plateful, but discreet, as they do here, taking the inside leaves for cooking and keeping the whiter ones to use as salad. Keep them fresh, pay close attention to the vinegar, and look carefully if there are worms, etc. But on Wednesday and Saturday give a plate of good cooked vegetables, well seasoned in the morning, when you have them.

So the religious will hold on to their health more, and there is need to observe whether the *pietanza* is sufficient, on Thursday they are to be given two *pietanze*²²⁴ according to the Rules. While resources are scarce around here,

222. Petri was a benefactor from Orbetello who functioned as syndic, handling the money and paying the workers.

223. This was Joseph Pitruzzello of Mary (1722-1768). The rules that Paul prescribes for the kitchen and cleanliness were better adapted for all the religious in the *Common Regulations* (Paolo della Croce, *Guida per l'animazione spirituale della vita passionista, Regolamento commune del 1755*, n. 241-256, 264-267).

224. Two main dishes, probably servings of two different fish.

we take care that this is not wanting. It seems to me that you who are in charge are obliged to oversee this at least sometimes.

Confrater Raymond is not to make use of a pickaxe. Furthermore, I do not wish that novices wash their feet in the garden when they do some work in the new garden. Although this seems little, since they are not accustomed to this, they will all be taking sick. They will learn that. I think these things were done in your absence, but are not now being done any more.

Brother Joseph continues to eat leftovers of three or four days. I do not want this done in any way. I know I have given him orders, but nothing. I have no use for that kind of wrongheaded devotion. I want him to take the soup and hot *pietanza* like the rest. I will this "in the Name of the Lord." Otherwise, he will be in his grave without merit.

Father Anthony tells me he has a scruple about having lied; I think it concerns a mission. Have him explain himself to you, and let him tell me and tell me the truth.

Our storms increase, and yesterday I was given a mandate, sent from Soriano, for the business of the Frati. Oh, what a uproar they make! All are against us. Now is the time, more than ever, to defend ourselves with prayer, and I hope for good things. Have this done, dear Father Rector!

I have been writing all morning and have yet more to write. God help me for the devil is not sleeping, and there are other fatigues. God knows.

Here, all are well. They are fervent and happy and happily joke with me, for they do not know my sorrows, and, I will say, they believe that for me they are pastimes.

I embrace you in the Lord. Greet all for me. Pray, brothers, pray.

I am including the bottle of a precious elixir which is excellent for wounds, for bad air, and other things. I have tried it myself. Take a double dose of it, for now is the time it helps most, especially me. This bottle was given me as a treasure with the agreement that I would not give it to anyone. So do not give it out.

Tell Father Clement that I greet him in the Lord, and that he acted very well in dismissing Del Bono. It was a great mercy of God, etc. I am not writing him, for I am loaded with letters.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

652

Thomas Fossi (30)

Viterbo
July, 5, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I am answering your letter, received in the ordinary post for this week. To tell the truth I have understood little of it because there was too much in it, etc. I hope I have understood the essentials. With regard to the scruples you mention, I wish it had caused you even more pain so that the necessity of flight

from such objects, as from the face of a cobra, would have been impressed on your heart. If your conscience does not rebuke you with a grave fault, it is a sign you acted without advertence, for that would have been such an evil. Nevertheless, I believe you will have confessed it, for that was proper. If you have not done so, do it, explaining yourself clearly but briefly and modestly. Then do not think about it further, but be careful about another time.

I am glad you understood me regarding prayer. But remember I wrote you that instruction for your soul and not for others, for their path is not known. If you have some understanding of the conduct of your wife, and you offer her food for her soul, you can do that. So when you speak of prayer, do not lead anyone into profound recollections, but let God bring them there. Simply teach them meditation on the sufferings of Jesus and the imitation of his holy virtues. It is true that such a remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus, along with the imitation of his virtues, is never to be abandoned, even if there is a deepest recollection and high gift of prayer, even if it brings the soul to intimate union with God, to interior recollection, and to the most sublime contemplation.

I am always more grateful for the charity and zeal that you show to our poor Congregation. If in October you can once more contribute three hundred *scudi*, it would be better. But do not be anxious about that.

I was horrified with what you told me you have noticed in persons consecrated to God who take such scandalous liberties. Here, there is no excuse for good faith, for they are bound to know from their official position that kisses are licit between the married, with due caution, but in others they are prompted by libido and open the way to a downfall, especially in Italy, where such freedom is not taken, not even between relatives of different sex. If you, however, have done so with some relative, without adverting that it might be sinful, do not be disturbed in conscience, but confess it for safety's sake, for the reason that it might have been the cause of sin for the other person and to guard yourself from such intimacies as from a diabolical plague.

I am satisfied that you write to Mother Cherubina once in a while, especially when she writes to you. She is my daughter in Christ, and for many years I have known her deeply. She is a true servant of God and very much so. Besides, she is of a mature age and has even been the abbess. Oh, how jealous and fearful I am in these things! The older I get, the more I fear, but never enough. He who does not fear has already fallen in order not to say he will fall.

Beloved Thomas, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his strength." Be humble, rob nothing from God, that is, stay in your nothing and believe that God will make you holy. I see a great work that God is beginning to undertake. With regard to continence, I say again that for now I do not feel inspired to give you permission to remain continent perpetually, but only for short times, in novenas and the like, and always with mutual consent. Share this with your wife. Such is my opinion. I do not want you to bind yourself with a vow, but stick with holy conjugal freedom. If in some novena you both are of one mind, strong and without any danger, and wish to continue for a while, do so with the blessing of God, and go slowly in proving for yourselves what is the Will of God in this regard. Meanwhile, it is not enough that you feel strong impulses,

for these can come from the fervor of devotion that God gives you, but it is necessary to see whether perseverance and alienation and high mortification are also present in the drive, etc. These are good signs that God wills to make both of you holy. But be faithful, humble, and most secret with all creatures. I recommend that you bring up your children so that they taste how sweet Jesus is in meditating on his pains, etc., accommodating yourself with great gentleness to their age. Oh, my dear son, how obligated you are to God!

Try to do what you can with regard to the loan on the house.

The storms against our poor Congregation continue, so it is necessary to pray much. Candidates increase, and we do not know where to station more candidates. For that reason we are building another wing of fifteen cells, and, if God will provide the three hundred *scudi*, then this wing will be finished, and that of Soriano, in order to house the soldiers of Christ.

Oh, what good sons! Believe me, I seem to see angels in the flesh. I ask you to greet in Jesus Christ your wife and your sons and daughters. May they all be saints. Goodbye. Pray, pray, pray for us, for the winds of persecution and other sufferings come hard. If I were to tell you in what suffering I am in, and no one knows, you would cry hot tears over my miseries. Pray much for me because my need is extreme.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

653

Canon Cerrini (2)

San Angelo
July 12, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Canon,

Last night I had the consolation to read your esteemed communication in which the dimissorial letter was enclosed. I give you thanks in Jesus Christ, and in this post I have sent it to Father Rector of the Retreat of the Presentation, recommending that the cleric Joseph, for whom you wrote, be ordained.

Until September he will not be able to be sent for ordination, for the season is too far advanced. I recommend myself to your holy sacrifices and prayers, and with full esteem and respect I kiss your sacred hands and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
July 15, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Two or three mailings ago I wrote to you in Terracina. Now I find myself consoled, as I desired one of your venerated letters. I thank His Divine Majesty that he preserves your good health, and I always will pray so very much to the Lord, along with all this religious community and the whole Congregation. Oh! how much I rejoice that your vicar is having a good beginning in his work, and I hope in God that he will have a good ending to God's greater glory, and for that also I am making incessant prayers. I felt some relief in my small afflictions because of the news you gave me of the Retreat there, in which I am always more aware how much God will be glorified and souls sanctified through the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

The Mercy of God permits me a great and continual exercise of resignation to his most Holy Will — however, I do it so badly — in the prolongation of the decisions for the three Retreats, especially the one there. The absence of the cardinal of San Clemente, who is now in Soriano, will prolong the affair a lot, so Signore Palleschi writes me. Cardinal Gentili has acted like a father, but what can he do in the present circumstances? This morning I wrote to the cardinal in Soriano, and God knows how much I asked him to write a note to Cardinal Gentili that he would have another cardinal elected in his place so that this business can be ended, citing the great loss that comes from the delay, especially for the poor religious in Ceccano.

Now, I am writing to Cardinal Alexander Albani so that he will write to the cardinal of San Clemente to get the favor of the note to Cardinal Gentili, etc. We will see what the outcome will be. When the present storms have subsided, I will try, when I have a little respite, to get together a petition of the foundations of our Retreats. If one wished to relate all the major happenings that have taken place up until now, most of which are very secret, it would take a large book. When that account is finished, I will take care that one of our religious, a true servant of God and very learned, put it in good order. But to do this many months of holy leisure are needed, and for me this seems very difficult.

I had more than twenty letters last night. Every week it is the same, even twice a week. By a special grace I am able to take care of everything, for all the writing is mine.

If it is not too bold of me, I would ask you to have more concern for yourself and to recoup your strength a bit more than you are doing. I believe that it would be pleasing to God for you to conserve your precious health. I

225. By July matters are slowing down. Paul mentions in this letter that he wants to collect all the documents concerning the foundations of all the Retreats. Notice how many letters he is writing each week. Later, Paul will mention that he is writing thirty letters a week.

hope that in the mercy of God, he will preserve you for us some years more. I ask your holy blessing and holy prayers, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments and am,

Your humble, obligated servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

655

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (57)²²⁶

San Angelo
July 17, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Monday night of this week, along with twenty and more letters that came to me from the post — and most of the time it is that way, even twice a week — I had the consolation to receive your welcome letter. I rejoiced over it on several points. I confess that as soon as I had written my last letter, in which the dimissorial papers were included, I felt badly. I know that I am always more blind and do not have the ability to act as rector. I know who is in charge over there, so why do I want to give unnecessary advice? This is my highly polished pride. May God have mercy.

Everyone wants to stay in his own corner. I advised another rector of certain small details that seemed necessary to me. He replied with a very humble letter, so I judged it, but gave me his resignation from office since he was no good, etc. Oh, great God! even though when I write, I try to be careful, and always in truth I have put everything with prudence, charity, etc., but I give them my advice, etc., as is my duty, and they immediately come at my face in their humble ways, etc., that I change them, etc. What would ever happen if I acted with authority?

God will provide another rector in his time. Meanwhile, in another three years, if I finish them, and I doubt that, I will have myself cut up into pieces rather than accept any office in the Congregation. I want to remain a subject, for I do not know how to govern the members we have. Thanks be to God. Then the rectors of the Retreats would not have to be fighting with me, where there is nothing but imprudence and harsh manners. Oh, how happy I am when the rectors tell me they no longer want that office, that I take them out of it, that I put them in another Retreat, etc. I console myself with their spirit of perfection and say within myself: “God has no need of us, but God permits this to beat down my pride.”

For the rest then, dear Father Rector, I esteem you to the soles of your sandals and have a growing regard for you. God knows I do not lie. Whence, it never happened that you were wanting in satisfying me in your person, or

226. In the earlier letter of July 4, Paul had gone into small details. In this letter he is writing in reaction to Fulgentius' reply of “hurt.” Paul also felt the hurt, as he mentions that he himself wrote out of his “highly polished pride.”

otherwise, or with your letters or notes. A single syllable from you means more to me than a public proclamation. I say this before God and do not lie. I am in always greater admiration of your charity, cordiality and patience in putting up with my shortcomings. Everything is going well. I have never disapproved of your way of operating, and I approve them more and more. So go ahead and have the lime made, the walls, etc., and everything whatsoever, whether concerned with the construction or whatever.

I am giving you all my authority so that you never have to ask for more. I am confirming that authority without ever recalling it. Meanwhile, experience has made me feel most secure.

I rejoice that all are fervent and happy, and, if at times they remember to mention me before God in their holy prayers, since I find myself in extreme need, I will be grateful for that charity in life and in death if I save my soul.

You need not reply to this letter since writing so long tires you. I rejoice that you are in the interior desert, even in the midst of so many tasks, which do not impede interior solitude, but even help it.

It will be enough if you let me know that you have received the dimissorials. With regard to governing the Retreat, you would disappoint me if you did not give me an account.

Regarding Toscanella, I also know ... nor will I consent that ours go, etc., if God does not give, etc., while God knows I am most peaceful and will await the time of Visitation to obey the Rules.²²⁷ It is enough that you give me at times an account of the health and observance of your pious community, simply that I may have reason to thank God and humble my proud head. Mainly, I will rejoice to know how your health is going, for that weighs on me.

Signore Bausani²²⁸ has given me a commission for three hundred Masses. Since I had written him that I did not want to hurt your Retreat, he told me that there was no need over there at present, so the syndic told him. Every week I receive twenty, twenty-four, even thirty letters, which I answer myself. So Signore Traversi²²⁹ will understand if I do not reply. It seems enough that you take care of that so as not to multiply my work.

Then have the goodness to tell Signore Joseph that his letter was welcomed, and that I rejoice that he is in the Retreat, and that he should not go back. He should forget his father's house and his family and stay in this holy land of true promise, where the Mercy of God has brought him, and let him persevere with fidelity. Otherwise, woe!

Moreover, there is no need to read his soul. It would be temerity to ask that I reveal the state of his conscience, seeing that I do not have such lights. It would be highest pride to seek for such. It is better that he simply reveal himself to you with all sincerity, fidelity, clarity, humility and simplicity of a child. You are his spiritual master and hold the place of Christ. You are the one

227. It is not known what this refers to.

228. The prior of the cathedral of Orbetello.

229. Joseph Traversi of the Heart of Jesus, from Pereta, was dismissed in 1756.

to whom the goodness of God has confided him so that you may guide him on the way to sanctity, for if he obeys he will become holy.

The writing he wants from me are the holy Rules. These are his mirror. Let him look at the virtues of the fervent novices, his companions. Let him humble himself and consider himself a crow among so many angels in the flesh, but with a peaceful spirit. Above all, I recommend to him openness in his conferences; otherwise, he will not persevere. I embrace him in Christ and will pray always. Read this paragraph to him.

Tell Father Anthony²³⁰ that I am most grateful to him for the charity to me, and that, for the glory of God, he will benefit from the person he refers to. I greet him and desire he be holy, as I hope he is. Let this be my reply, for I have so many letters. Let them have mercy on me and attribute it not to laziness but to works.

Pardon me if I am too lengthy. Next time I will be brief. What I had to say to Brother Joseph, I said for his benefit so that he maintains his health.

For the rest, take your own action since you know his conduct and I do not. If God wishes, I will find out how the others are doing when I come there. Let them pray much for the needs of my poor soul and the Congregation in the midst of storms and cyclones, which still do not cease. God be blessed.

The students are asking for the recipe for making ink.²³¹

I greet everyone. Let them become saints for God wills that, and they have the opportunity and the grace of the Highest Good. The two priests from Cellere say they have not found horses. I have not answered them. Go ahead with the vestition. Greet the new soldiers of Christ for me, especially the priest from Piombino, Canon Viti, and Giannotti.²³² Oh, how much I rejoice in such a holy decision! Let my dear Raymond stay within as a child on the bosom of Jesus, and the others as well. To Father Clement my cordial greetings. You take care of yourself out of love for Mary Most Holy. I embrace you always more in Christ,

Your true servant,
Paul of the †

230. This must be Father Anthony Tomasini of Calvary because the *Novitiate Registry*, 1, f. 22, 23, 25, for 1749 has one such name; he also called himself Joseph Anthony of Calvary.

231. The students in the Retreat of San Angelo.

232. The priest from Piombino is Father Alfonso Forti, vested the July 25, 1749, but left because of poor health during his novitiate; Raymond Viti of the Sorrowful Heart of Mary, dismissed in 1760; Pasquale Giannotti of the Sorrowful Heart of Mary, dismissed in 1753. The novitiate registry states Vito is not a priest, even though here Paul refers to him as "Canon."

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (29)

San Angelo
July 26, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I received news from Father Rector of the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak that the always grand goodness of Your Excellency has honored that shrine with your venerable presence. I do not know how to express the gratitude I feel toward you. If I felt a bit stronger, I would come at once to Viterbo to speak with you and to strengthen my respectful servitude. But if God permits you to remain in Viterbo, once the great heat has lessened a bit, I will not omit paying my debt. Meanwhile, I rejoice in your return from the baths of Lucca, which I trust have been helpful to your precious health.

The business of Ceccano is just where it was from the first, especially due to the absence of the cardinal of San Clemente, to whom I have written to ask that he have another cardinal chosen in his place so that the case can be decided sooner. He deigned to reply to my letter very cordially, saying he did not think it necessary to select someone else, for he was certain that the three cardinals could handle the case by themselves, etc. Since he would be satisfied with that, how much more so would I. As that letter was public, I thought it well to send it to Signore Palleschi so that he could share it with Cardinal Gentili and the other cardinal. Let us take hope and, meanwhile, wait with patience and resignation. May God be blessed forever. Amen.

Around next October 25, if I am healthy, as I hope to be, I will be at your feet to open the mission in Ferentino. I cannot defer it any longer since I have other obligations for the service of God to clear up after the mission. With profound reverence, I end by kissing your holy pastoral vestments, and I ask you more and more to continue the charity of your holy prayers for me as well as your strong protection, and, asking your blessing, I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Ildephonse of Saint Charles²³³

San Angelo
July 29, 1749

Your Reverence,

I am obliged to offer special thanks to you in Christ for the charitable services given in favor of the holy Retreat of Soriano. "Your reward will be very great" and will always enrich your pious spirit with merits.

Now, Reverend Father, prostrate at your feet, I ask you not to lose sight of the very important affair of the ordination of those I was asking for. Since Providence has so disposed that His Holiness has issued the rescript directed to Cardinal Gentili in answer to his petition, in order to speak about it, it would be convenient to ask once more of that prelate, whose name I do not remember, to take up his task with the cardinal, since he must soon meet with the other two cardinals to dispatch the business of the three Retreats of Ceccano, Terracina, and Paliano so that they may also issue the favor of granting necessary ordinations. All the more so since, when I was at the feet of His Holiness, he told me with great kindness that he had put the whole affair into the hands of this special commission, seeing that he was in complete agreement with that commission in everything. I assure you that His Holiness is much inclined toward us. If Cardinal Gentili says the word, the favor will be granted immediately.

So, beloved Father, out of love for Jesus, do what you can with this prelate, so respected by Cardinal Gentili, and I will expect a happy result. It may happen that I will also write His Eminence, but I am waiting until I receive your venerated commands and counsel.

I left the petition²³⁴ with Your Paternity, and in it there is the rescript for Cardinal Gentili. I think the rescript is in your possession or that of the cardinal. In any case, another one may be issued, and I will wait to receive your charitable information.

I am writing to Abbe Fresia, a worthy priest and true servant of God, who has done much for us, so that he may find out from you the day the three cardinals will come together. Then Cardinal Gentili may be informed by the noted prelate some days in advance so that there may be a happy outcome.

Out of love for God, pardon this trouble. God has always used his dear friends to cooperate in great works for the Congregation. For the three Retreats soon to be founded, where the Lord will be glorified and souls helped, how can this be done if I do not have a sufficiency of priests? Thanks to God, I have excellent candidates, faithful, able in learning and piety, and I would be able to have them ordained quickly.

233. Ildephonse belonged to the Pious Schools Society in Rome and was the director of the Propagation of the Faith

234. The petition is for ordinations.

Dear Father, help me and may Jesus be propitious to you in life and in death, and crown you with glory in eternity. Bless me and continue your fervent prayers and strong protection, and from a true heart I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

658

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (58)

San Angelo
July 30, 1749

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I am answering your welcome letter on the problem of the novice. I have only this to say: If there is any beginning of infections, the Retreat is gone, for they will all be poisoned. All diligence is always too little, I will say that, for such a sickness. It is necessary at the end of the summer, if it can be done, to scrape that cell where he lived. It is not enough to whitewash it, but scrape it and plaster it over and turn the bricks so what was underneath is now on top. When he is dead, burn his habit and bed. As for the room in which he is living, let those who serve use great precautions and not go in there in the morning except with burning incense and a candle in hand, vinegar, etc. Open the doors and windows. The great danger is for the one who serves him and visits him to be cautious in not breathing in the evil and salty exhalations, a difficult thing, which come from all the pores of the patient. But when a tightness of the chest is discovered, it is necessary to keep it quiet. The scabies show that he is not meant for us, nor, it seems to me, for the diocese. But now it is done, and may the Will of God be done.

I rejoice in the vestitions of the candidates and greet them, along with the others. May they become holy.

The tuna has not shown up, nor will it do so, for Signore Petri has only been able to send it to Soriano. I am happy over that, for they are fifteen over there. Here we can hardly make soup, and everything is dry. But God is providing and helping. I am writing to Signore Petri that he send it to your Retreat so it may benefit the religious of your Retreat. At least the fish will not go bad. Signore Petri has found a way to send things to Soriano, but finds only difficulty in sending tuna here. If they had sent it at the right time, it would have been free of the port tax. Now we are out of time for it to be sent. He is not going to send any more because to send it wastes the port tax and before the fish gets here it becomes warm and spoiled. So, you may rejoice.

Will you perform the charity to send what is preserved at the right time, that is, the salted fish and the fish eggs, which Signore Thomas has given me as a present. I celebrated the Masses for him. We will be grateful for them, but now is not the time. Let them keep them in the Retreat in order to preserve them in brine.

I think the cardinals will come together in a short while to decide about our three Retreats. Yesterday, I wrote at length for the ordinations. There is need

to pray much, especially to Mary Most Holy, Saint Michael the Archangel, etc., that they intercede, for our adversaries are many. Otherwise, woes. Thanks be to God.

I rejoice that you have water and vegetables. Blessed be God. Greet the professed and novices for me; from here everyone greets them. They are true servants of God, etc. Take care of yourself and get well. I am happy with Confrater Peter, etc. I do not doubt that you have made the ordinary preparations for the ordination of the two clerics. Therefore, I am not repeating the directive that Confrater Peter and the other assist them to observe their abilities. I expect much of Confrater John, but you must examine him. I want to hope that he will do well, but you are on the spot and you can judge better than I. I defer to you. I embrace you in the pure Heart of Jesus and am always more,

I add that last night's letters were not few. I have answered them for the persecutions are increasing. Even the Frati of Soriano have come into the contest in due form in order to tear the Retreat down to the ground. I have written the cardinal with good ink that I accepted the Retreat in order to obey him, and much more. I suggested that it is necessary for the establishment, but I doubt whether I accomplished anything. I am, I want to hope, in the hands of the Divine Mercy, but am being scourged fiercely by the ministers of his justice and much more because of my sins. I have hope in God that it will soon be over, and I will stop causing others to suffer.

N.B. Let them have the charity to pray, and let the Retreats that are founded through the fatigues of others rejoice in the Lord. I don't take joy that others have suffered in founding Retreats, but I do not ask that for myself. I ask prayers and suffrages for my poor soul and for the Congregation.

In your letters do not make long introductions, for I have not a little to write nor little to read. I take care of a little less than thirty letters a week.

Do not be concerned about the tuna nor be pained over that. I am glad the way things are going. Do not send it to me, for it will be warm. Let others enjoy it before it turns bad.

Father Philip and his companion are stable, and in November they will be there.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

659

Girolama Ercolani (10)

San Angelo
August 2, 1749

J.C.P.

My Dear Girolama,

I am answering your letter, which I received last night. I thank our sweet Jesus, who gives you the grace to obey faithfully. Otherwise, little would result if I alone would be very angry. The important point is that God would punish

you severely, and you would lose your precious peace of heart, which is one of your great treasures.

So I come back to tell you to obey and drive out the plague of these scruples. I do not wish you to confess them nor to write me about them. I am not saying what I want, but what God wants.

Oh, how good it is to act in this way and not be confessing these crazy ideas of yours which the devil puts into your head. I know that you do not will these things nor consent to them. By the mercy of God I know you and your conduct. Recall that when you wished to confess all these ideas which the devil put into your head, contrary to your will, you had not gotten them off your mind for two days. Then they were again in your head. Woe to you if you had not obeyed. You would have wrecked your brain and there was real danger; you know you were even ill. After you obeyed, you were in peace and health. Have you ever known such peace? What kind of sign is that? It is a sign that God is pleased with your holy obedience.

Signora Girolama, be at peace. God loves you. Follow your practices in accord with your state, use ejaculatory prayers frequently, devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, vigilance over your daughters so that they become holy, stay with your peace, and be obedient in the name of the Lord.

I am sorry that our doctor is in poor health. I trust in God he will be better and able to continue his practice. Greet him much for me and tell him to make the sign of the cross on his forehead and chest with oil from the tabernacle lamp with lively faith. It may be that in September I will come to your region to give a mission, that is, in Caprarola, but I am not yet sure. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

660

A Religious Sister (3)

San Angelo
August 2, 1749

Reverend Mother,

I am answering your letter, which I received last night. I rejoice in the Lord in your resignation to the Holy Will of God, and I pray that you continue that and so feed yourself on that heavenly food of eternal life, from which the loving soul feeds itself more in suffering than in rejoicing. So you must now feed your soul on the Divine Will, when in high abstraction from all created things and from all satisfaction, you suffer in peaceful silence of faith and love, taking adverse things with the same peacefulness as you take pleasant things. Oh! if you are within yourself in a true internal solitude, reposing in your most intimate spirit on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, adoring in spirit and in truth, oh! how happy you would be!

I beg you to stay there with the simplicity of a child, letting yourself be despoiled of all that is yours, even all penances, with true peace and

resignation. If you do that, the Divine Spirit will clothe you with your virtues and have you live a godlike life, all united in love with His Divine Majesty. When you are well resigned, God will inspire his ministers to once more allow you your penances, as before, for His Divine Majesty will pour his light into them to know his will. So be at peace, be mortified in everything, and be within yourself in an exercise of continuous love, for God is already drawing you that way. Stay in the inner desert in a loving repose in God, in true humility and annihilation of self, in a faith free of all imaginings, in a true poverty of spirit, despoiled of your own way of thinking or feeling, rejoicing in a sacred silence of faith and love. Oh! how rich a silence this is! Learn to suffer, work and be silent.

Recommend me to God, for I have extreme need, and pray for our poor Congregation so assaulted and persecuted. I tell you that I now entertain higher hopes than before as to your good conduct. Be faithful, be entirely resigned, and be humble, for God will make you holy. Amen. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

661

Thomas Fossi (31)

San Angelo
August 6, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

Included in the letter of Signora Clarice, I found yours. First of all, I say regarding that business ... think no more about it. The more I read your thinking, the more I am conscious that your soul was not poisoned by sin. So be at peace, but on guard for the future. I told you to accuse yourself only as a precaution and to humiliate you the more and to flee such an occasion in the future.

I do not want you to take any kind of a vow whatever. Do you understand me? No, I do not want that. Remain in a holy freedom with regard to asking and as well as rendering. When God wills you to desire a total and perpetual abstinence, etc., he will give you great light, and also to me. So remain in holy liberty and only with mutual consent remain continent for the time of greater devotion, etc., and that is at the judgment of both of you. Believe me, that is the way to do God's will.

I know how great your charity is, for I have experienced that continually. Father Fulgentius has informed me about the provisions in olive oil. They will be sent, but there has not been opportunity to have them brought here. I think they will do so as soon as they can "and may the Lord reward you for everything." I have a lively expectation of that.

I cannot express the consolation in the Lord over the good news of the fervor of your pious companion and the children. Oh, how good God is! Take care of them, dear Thomas, and I hope it will be a household of saints. I am not giving any other instructions in that regard, for I have done so at other times.

I know that God is giving you great lights, for you are the father. You can be sure of that. I say the same thing for your wife, who is their pious mother.

Signora Clarice tells me you are using your well-known diligence, but I already knew that. So if you find, as I hope you will, and raise the three hundred *scudi*, you can send that amount to the Presentation. But use every precaution that they get there safely, or you could entrust them to Signore Rivera or another cautious person, as you judge best. God will give you light.

Father Gregolini wanted to come to bring it, but I do not want him, for when he was at the Presentation, he frightened all the young men with strange happenings caused by the devil. God knows how long it took to calm them down. They are youngsters, angels in the flesh, and fear can produce a horrible situation. One who stands strong in the faith, unfeigned, fears not all of hell. But this is not given to all, especially to tender plants which have come freshly from the world.

The difficulties, persecution, and other troubles against the poor Congregation continue all the time, and poor Paul is in bitter waters up to his neck. But I am not troubled. I am like a poor shipwrecked person, who in the dark night, holding on to a small plank in the midst of stormy waves, expects momentarily to taste death. Ah, how great a need I have of prayer!

Some time ago I answered Sister Cherubina, but I have not heard whether she received my letter. Patience.

In September, I think for certain that I will go for a mission in a large area of more than 4,000 souls about ten miles from here. After that I go for a mission in the city of Ferentino, then Visitation of the Retreats. Until Christmas I will not be here. But when the missions are over, I will return here and then leave about October 10, so you can address me here at this Retreat until that time, and I will receive the letters.

That person remains nailed to a cot without being able to move and in great pain, but calm from the Ascension until now. That other great soul is nailed to a bed, all wounded from head to foot, for almost two months. This second one, although I do not wish it, and even the first, want to be my daughters in Christ. But they are not a joy for me to direct. The second has a high degree of well-tested prayer, a high degree of virtue, and a great interior gift. I am surer of her than of the first. While there appears nothing to cause hesitation in her case, yet one can never be cautious enough or test enough. I must be silent, for they are a bit distant from here.

You should remain solitary in your interior desert, in the interior depth, in a pure spirit of faith and love, in true detachment and internal nakedness, despoiled of all happiness in poverty of spirit. Oh, how secure that way is! How rich! In this paragraph I am talking to you. Be rooted in the pains of Jesus. When in the interior desert God wishes you to be silent, be there and adore him in spirit and truth.

Be hidden to all in your nothingness. I have no more time. Goodbye. Greet your devout wife for me in the Lord as well as your sons and daughters, and pray, pray. Oh, how much I need that! Jesus bless them and all your house. Amen. I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Today the Church sings: "Jesus, to you, who reveal yourself to little ones, be glory." It is the Feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Reflect on these words which our holy Mother chants, for they can teach you much. Goodbye.

I am writing to Father Francis Anthony to send to his mother the list of things needed, etc.

662

Lucy Burlini (2)

San Angelo
August 9, 1749

Jesus

My Sister in Christ,

We ought not glory in anything except the Cross of our Savior Jesus Christ. You are happy and do not know it. Jesus is holding you crucified with himself. Now the work begun in you is being brought to perfection. Oh, what a noble work God is doing in your soul! By means of your suffering you are purified of imperfections you are unaware of, and your soul is becoming like a crystal, in which the light of the Divine Sun shines. You will come out all transformed into God out of charity and love. So, my daughter and sister in Christ, rest in peace on that cross, take your sleep there in a sleep of faith and love in the Heart of Jesus Crucified. suffer, be silent, and sing in spirit: "I will glory in nothing but in the cross of my dear Savior."

I recommend that you stay always more in the sacred, interior desert in a true solitude of faith and love in sacred silence. Feed yourself on Jesus, drink his Precious Blood, relieve your thirst from the chalice of Jesus. But the more you drink, the more you will thirst. If you become inebriated, and I would really wish that much, then, indeed, sleep, for this divine inebriation makes one sleep. When you are sleeping this divine sleep in Jesus Christ, you will learn more than all the wise men of the world when awake and studying their sciences. Pray for me and for the Congregation, for there are great tribulations, especially for me. Jesus bless you and make you a great saint, but do not forget poor Paul. Goodbye,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
August 12, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Blessed be God, who does not take away our prayers and his mercy from us. Oh, how much I rejoice at the happy results of the case of the vicar general. The Lord puts to death and raises up. I see always more the great protection that the blessed God and Mary Most Holy have for your venerated person, and you will experience that always more. This I trust through the merits of the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy, our Sovereign Lady and Mother. I am offering devout thanks for this to His Divine Majesty and for the grace received from Jesus Christ for this help in your old age for the greater glory of God. I confess before God, I do not lie, that although I prayed from my heart as much as I was able, I had nothing to do with the outcome. The prayers of our blessed sons, who are in truth angels in the flesh, ascended to God as an incense.

Your ingenious charity keeps you solicitous to think of everything with great pleasure to God and for your merit. With great edification I am hearing of the outstanding work on the church and sacristy, etc. The difficulties they ran into with the scarcity of water and other things made the work of God shine more gloriously. The fierce persecutions, which continue and rise up even more, are making, and will make, the work shine forth even more.

Oh, how much! Even the Frati of Soriano are moving into the contest against the Retreat of Soriano. We have been in peaceful possession there for about six years. The cardinal has not entered into the affair, for he has lost his courage and is too sick. There are other new aspects. With regard to the special commission, he wrote me that it can get along without him, and he will be happy to be out of it. I sent the letter to Rome and Cardinal Gentili has seen it. He says he has spoken to the pope to have the three cardinals come together and render judgment. But so far I see no outcome. It seems to me to be mysterious.

The bitterest persecutions are the most secret ones, but here they keep producing statements. On this God does not grant much light as to whom he is pleased with. After fierce persecution, especially from one very large order that is acting with good intentions, our Congregation will make progress to the glory of God. Now is the time for patience, for peaceful silence, and to stay withdrawn like the apostles in prayer and fasting for fear of the Jews. We do this out of fear of those who are servants of God, for we are very small.

It has rained a bit here, but has not cooled down. Around the middle of October, I will, God willing, give a mission in Ferentino. For a little less than

235. This is the last letter we have of those Paul wrote to Bishop Oldo, who died November 3, 1749.

two months the bishop has been pressuring me, and he wants it from me personally. I beg the dear Jesus to continue your health, as I hope.

I, although laden down with a bit of work and continuous attention to business which exceeds my strength, am holding up. This is a great grace.

I ask for your holy blessing and prayers, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments.

Your humble, obligated servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

664

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (30)

[San Angelo]
August 12, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

May Jesus Christ, the Giver of every good, reward the refined charity you continue toward this poor Congregation, so persecuted and oppressed, with an abundant treasure of his graces.

Regarding the cardinal, about whom you had the great kindness to notify me, I can only say that in all things I adore the most Holy Will of God: "If our heart does not reprehend us, we have hope in God." From Rome I have news that things are always dragging on. A mystery. I have word from one source, or a channel more secure than the one who writes from Rome — for the light comes from above, which the goodness of God has given to whom he pleases — that the persecution against us is more fierce than we could imagine for now and for the future. It is hidden, but once the persecution stops, His Divine Majesty will make his mercies shine forth for his poor ones.

With regard to the mission, I will send you news a short time before leaving, and I ask the charity of the help of your fervent prayers and strong protection. With profound reverence I ask your holy blessing, and I am,

Your humble, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

665

John Anthony Lucattini (1)²³⁶

San Angelo
August 13, 1749

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I read to my edification your letter. In reply I say that in order to give spiritual direction, knowledge of the interior of the soul to be directed is

236. This young cleric, not yet ordained, seeks Paul's direction in preparing for ordination. The letter shows us the spiritual exercises one should practice in preparing for ordination. Paul later puts Lucy Burlini under Lucattini's direction (see letter of July 4, 1748, to Lucy).

needed, and leisure to undertake such direction is also required. That is not given me, for I am loaded down with business, and every week I ordinarily write thirty letters. Nevertheless, to obey you I will tell you briefly my poor opinion and a short method that you may use as follows:

1. Pray Matins with great devotion the night before at a time you can decide, and make a devout preparation for that by reciting it in a solitary spot, that is, in your room or in church, with head uncovered, having a profound respect for this sacrifice of praise you are offering to God with your mouth and the solemn ambassadorship you have before the Holy Trinity on the part of all the Church.

2. In the morning at an early hour, if possible, make an hour of mental prayer, or at least a half-hour, with great recollection and ordinarily on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

3. Hear Mass with great devotion and then recite the Short Hours.

4. Give some time to study in accord with your state; then take some legitimate relief for your mind.

5. Before lunch make an examen of conscience as to how you passed the morning.

6. Take lunch with great modesty and mortification. Then take some rest. Afterwards, recite Vespers and Compline.

7. Before 22 hours recite Matins for the coming day and make at least a half-hour of meditation.

Never leave a day go by without taking time for study and a walk. If this is solitary, it is better.

In this way you will use the day well. Above all, go to confession frequently, at least three times a week, or at least twice, along with Holy Communion. Make frequent ejaculatory prayers with great peace and sweetness of spirit, and remain in the presence of God in all your works.

Do not let a day pass without spiritual reading, which should be twice a day, along with an examination of conscience in the evening.

Flee as the plague close association with persons of the opposite sex, no matter how spiritual they may be. Take note, flee them for they are great reefs, and with spiritual persons of the opposite sex you need to be on guard and fearful, lest the devil starts a great attack. Accept this counsel as the most important.

Oh, if you knew the dangers there are. You are not a priest, and, if you were, I would say the same thing and would tell you to be very cautious and to hear such people briefly in the confessional, and outside to never speak with them except out of necessity.

Guard your eyes, give them to Mary Most Holy, fear for yourself, do not trust yourself. One who trusts oneself has already fallen, I will say that. The humble man does not trust himself, but fears himself much and entrusts himself to God.

Look at your nothingness, the evil root that is within you, as in all the sons of Adam. Look, I say, at that evil root capable of producing the poisonous tree of sin. Therefore, take care, fear for yourself, do not trust yourself, but confide

in God, guard your exterior senses, shun idleness, for idleness teaches every sort of malice.

This is as much as I can say in a short time, and, if you put this into practice, you will be happy in this life, in death, and after death, and you will acquire humility, purity, and every good. Visit the Blessed Sacrament often; there is your true life. Have a great devotion to Mary Most Holy, to the angels, the saints, etc.

Tell Lucy and her companions that their prayers for me will be most welcome. I greet them and thank them in Jesus Christ. Jesus enrich you with every good and make you holy. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

666

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (31)²³⁷

San Angelo
August 26, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Much more than what you mentioned to me in your letter of August 20 has taken place for the establishment of the Retreat at Ceccano, against which so many contests and troubles have arisen, that they have not given me, I will say, a moment to breathe, what with journeys and continuous letters.

You should know then that twice I was at the feet of His Holiness for that Retreat. The last time was in May when His Holiness told me that everything was put in charge of the special commission. He showed himself very affectionate towards us, etc. All this summer I have done nothing but write for this business. I wrote to Cardinal Gentili, on whom everything depends, several times, even often. I wrote twice a week to Signore Palleschi. I wrote three times to the cardinal of San Clemente and twice to Cardinal Alexander. Last Saturday I was at Soriano to meet with His Eminence. He persists in saying his presence is not necessary for the special commission. He wrote me that, and I sent the letter to Rome for Cardinal Gentili to read. Cardinal Gentili promised Signore Palleschi to have the rescript quickly issued so that the case could be settled without the cardinal of San Clemente. But that rescript has not appeared up until now. Signore Palleschi has done all he can and has repeated his efforts. Oh, how much I could say about this! But I cannot, nor ought I, so as not to wear you out. I have more scruples about trying to do too much over the Retreat for Ceccano than for not doing enough. I wish I were not so distracted in this business, since I foresaw all of this. Before the foundation I said so in letters written to Ceccano, etc.

237. Paul summarizes with some detail all that he has done for the Retreat at Ceccano. We not only can clarify recent events, but we also notice the toll it takes on Paul's health and spirit.

Things go excellently well for the Retreat of Soriano, for His Holiness took care of that. It is six years that we have had peaceful possession. The Retreat at Ceccano will continue to be trouble, as you personally know, but I am not paining myself about that in the least. I have done more than my duty in this affair. If you know something that would help, I will do it gladly. God knows.

The trip on foot that I took to Soriano for this business did little good for my health, and, if I go to Rome in October, unless there is a miracle, I will lose my life there. I speak from experience on other occasions, for I recovered by a miracle of God, etc. Then what is there to do? I know that it would be frustrated in advance. As I said, I had done what I could, etc. Now with this succinct report, which I am writing to satisfy you, otherwise I would not have written to justify myself, you can see once more there is no reason to take further steps, for I do not know where to go.

With regard to the mission, I hope to begin it on October 19 and end on November 2. This is all the strength I can use by deferring it more. On September 6 I begin the mission in Caprarola, a region of more than 4,000 souls, since I could not be excused.

I understand that you wish Father Thomas to come after September 8 to conduct the retreat for the ordinands. If the life of the worker is dear to you, out of love for Jesus Christ, dispense him from that. If he comes at that time, he will certainly get sick. To satisfy my conscience I am writing him not to take on any work for all of October. I have experienced all this, and I was frequently taken ill and had a long convalescence, only after having predicted it, etc. This is not a thing to be tried again. It is a question of unhealthy air. I wrote him not to go until September, but he received my letters when he was already on his way. Take his getting sick for certain. I hope he will believe me in the future. Meanwhile, he will learn at his expense.

I think you will know of the death of Cardinal Simonetti, who was buried last Saturday. I want to hope that His Divine Majesty will have received him into the bosom of his mercies. Amen. I add that, if you need to leave, give thought to delaying the mission to another time. I would be satisfied with that, with a firm belief that the mission would be more fruitful with other workers, such as our Father Thomas. If you wish that even in your absence I should do the mission, I will gladly serve you, and the blessed God will draw his glory from it in accord with his Will.

When the mission at Caprarola is over, I will be once more in this Retreat, so you can send me your further desires. I will be able to pursue them when I return on September 27. If you write on September 24, I will have the letter in good time. If I am not being too bold, I ask you to set aside two rooms near the cathedral so that penitents can come to us freely. While being in the bishop's palace, they would be noticed coming to confession. I have done this on other occasions. You may have other ways in mind, suggested by your prudence. I have stayed with this longer than I believed I would, so pardon me and bless

me, while with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

667

John Francis Sancez (7)

San Angelo
September 28, 1749

Dear Sir,

Your esteemed letter, received last night on my return to this Retreat from Caprarola, confirms even more the high conception I have had for a long time of your great piety and charity, with which the Mercy of God enriches your spirit for his greater glory. Do not be pained that you did not find a beast for this poor donkey who is writing, for when His Divine Majesty wills it, he will provide it. You are aware that I am among the number of the sick. I am an old man, grown old in vices, weak in body and mind. Even while in Caprarola I was seized by "Lady Fever" as soon as I had given the papal blessing to a large crowd, who were blessed with fruit beyond all telling. Now I am leaving for another mission since the business in Rome is dormant because of vacations.

Beloved Signore Sancez, believe that I do not know how to express how I love you in God and always make you a part in my poor prayers. I see your pious household, especially in the Wounds of our Crucified Love. Do not neglect to speak to your sons in your house of the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy, and have them meditate as you do. I assert that your blessed family will be enriched by God with inestimable graces from generation to generation. I am writing in great haste for the post is leaving, and I am stretched out and not very well. I embrace you devoutly in Jesus and am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the †

668

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (32)

San Angelo
September 28, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I arrived at this Retreat late yesterday on my return from Caprarola, where I had a large mission very blessed by God. But I paid the price with a strong fever that came over me shortly after I gave the papal blessing to the large crowd. That was a sign that I was not able to give the retreat at the convent. I am answering your letter that confirms the high opinion I have had for a long time of your great piety and charity. I assure you that I will not fail to carry out

your prudent counsels by recommending our business to Cardinal Albani. Because of the vacations, nothing more can be done right now. I hope in God that in November or December everything will be decided. A.M.D.G.

I believed that the mission in Caprarola should have prepared me for the mission in Ferentino, but the truth is that it has blocked me. I am stricken with diarrhea, palpitation, and weakness of head so that without grave danger I cannot expose myself to a long journey, especially to give a mission this November, for the air will be already nasty. It will be necessary to delay my coming until spring. God knows the lively desire I have had to serve you there, but I cannot come contrary to the Will of God. I adore the divine dispositions, and I hold for certain that this situation must result in the greater service of God and the profit of those souls because, if Father Thomas does the mission, I hold as infallible that he will succeed with greater fruit.

In regard to the round of missions that you are asking our men to do in your diocese, as was stated from the outset, I do not think that can be done before the missions in Anagni and in the diocese of Veroli, which were already promised for some months. I rely on your charity to reflect on the smallness of the place²³⁸ which prevents us from assigning more members, and then the starting up of this Congregation so that we need take from one and give to another. There they have continued to serve souls and they will not spare themselves. Furthermore, I think we will have to give missions in Rome, from what has been written to me; however, I am not now certain. I cannot because of my poor health.

So I have confidence that your piety will cooperate for the greater service of God and the advantage of the Congregation, and once the mission in Ferentino is over, our poor workers will fulfill their promises. If then you will wait until spring for the mission at Ferentino, I will not fail to be of service there, if I will be healthier than now, as I hope. I end at the your feet, and with profound reverence kiss the hem of your sacred pastoral vestments, and am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

669

Dominic Costantini (2)

San Angelo
September 30, 1749
On leaving.

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

Along with your esteemed letter, which I received last night, was the letter of the vicar general, to which I am replying with the enclosure, stating that I will serve this illustrious city with a holy mission. I am coming there very willingly because I hope for unspeakable fruits through the merits of the holy

238. Paul refers to the Retreat at Ceccano, which was a small building.

Passion of Jesus Christ. O my dear Dominic, how much God is pleased with your cooperation for this mission! I believe that this is one of the greatest works accepted by His Divine Majesty. When you offer hospitality to the missionaries, you do a service to the whole population, and you can believe that this ascends in the sight of God more than ordinarily. I am writing in haste for I have much to do before leaving for Fabbrika with the companions assigned to the mission. When that is over, I will give you final news. Father John Baptist, Father Anthony, and all greet you. The missionaries will be four, as you asked.

I embrace you in Christ Jesus and am from a true heart,
Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the †

670

Doctor Frederick Del Bene (1)²³⁹

San Angelo
September 30, 1749
Leaving tomorrow.

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor, Beloved in Christ,

On my return from missions and about to start out again tomorrow, I found your precious letter, which gives me reason to magnify the divine mercies to the poor Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Oh, how blessed you are! I cannot, nor do I know how to, express the feelings of my heart with regard to such holy inspirations. Beloved doctor, I embrace you with all the affections of my spirit and am grateful to the Highest Giver of every good. If you, as I hope, will conquer the difficulties which surround your holy resolutions, God will make you a great saint and a true apostolic worker in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts. Much courage! God is calling, so it is necessary to obey under pain of being rejected for not listening. "Do not fear, do not be frightened, the Lord will fight for you." So spoke a most fortunate soldier of the Lord. I am leaving for this mission. Write to Father Fulgentius of Jesus, rector and director of novices, a great servant of God, at Orbetello in the Retreat of the Presentation. Write him, I was saying, and tell him your thinking. I, for my part, embrace you and accept you from the heart. Although the novitiate is full, there will be a place for you. I am leaving a letter for Father in Saturday's post, in which I am giving an account of your holy vocation, for which I cannot express the gratitude my heart feels toward His Divine Majesty, that with so

239. Del Bene was a doctor who met Paul at Toscanella and from this letter it is clear he was thinking about entering the Congregation. However, he remained in the medical profession, kept contact with Paul at Viterbo, Corneto, and Rome. He testified at the beatification Processes. He also took medical care of Paul as Brother Bartholomew of Saint Aloysius testified. Six letters have been preserved.

much love he calls you and chooses you from thousands. In haste I embrace you in Christ and am from the heart,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross, President

671

John B. Forlani (6)

San Angelo
October 1, 1749
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I find myself here on my return from Caprarola but on my way to the mission at Fabbica. I leave tomorrow. In order not to be wanting in gratitude, I ratify my sincerest servitude because I was deprived of doing so in person on the occasion of the holy mission, but "what is delayed is not taken away."

They did not send to pick up the donation of a *rubbio*²⁴⁰ of grain that you are giving out of your charity. It was to have been taken care of by the one who gave me advance notice, since our workman had other duties that made it necessary for him to go to Orbetello.

Now, Brother John Baptist, who will be bringing this letter, will be there to inquire as to what day he can come to pick up the grain. Dear archpriest, I do not know how to express the gratitude which I and our Congregation have for you in Jesus Christ, and I assert that His Divine Majesty has prepared treasures of merit for the great charity that you show for us, who are so needy, by providing donations of wine and grain. Oh, how pleasing to God is such a charity.

Father Mark Aurelius, Father John Baptist, and the other religious greet you warmly in the Lord. They would have come there, but they have an assignment to preach in Vetralla and need to prepare. God wills it so. Patience.

A few days ago when I was in Caprarola, I had letters from the vicar general, your worthy brother. I was much edified with him; he has great zeal for the reform of his people and ecclesiastics. Thanks be to God.

I end at your feet and ask for your devout prayers, and with profound respect I kiss your sacred hands and am from my heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

240. *Rubbio* is a measure of weight, about 440 pounds.

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (5)

Corchiano
October 28, 1749

J.M.J.

Dear Signore,

I am answering in great haste, for I am about to give the blessing and am loaded with a forest of tasks. When the mission is over here, I am going to San Angelo, then to Corneto, being asked by Cardinal Aldrobrandi to give a mission there. It begins November 8 and ends on November 23. Then I leave for Rome, where two churches have been assigned to us for missions. I already have the commands of the Cardinal Vicar on behalf of His Holiness. He wants us once we leave Corneto, that is, the mission in that city, which I will do willingly. It will be necessary to defer it or provide for other days. If it is after Rome, it will be after Christmas. If they want to be served, I will meet their request. In haste, I embrace you in the Lord, for I have no more time, and with profound respect I am,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
P. of the †

Dominic Costantini (3)

Corchiano
October 28, 1749

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Beloved Signore Dominic, I am writing in haste for I am about to give the papal benediction here in Corchiano. Saturday, November 8, we will be at the monastery of the Servants of Mary outside the walls in the early afternoon, and there await the time for the sacred ceremony. I am writing the vicar general that he announce the mission for November 8. We will leave for Rome immediately after the mission there is over, since we are doing the mission under command of the pope. I offer greetings in Jesus Christ to all your holy household, and in haste I embrace you in Jesus, along with Father John Baptist, Father Anthony, etc., and am from the heart,

In this mission territory we have with us a fine confessor, a servant of God. I want to take him to your place for he is a great help. So I would ask you to find him a place to stay nearby — that might be with Signore Chiari or Signore Curcen, your cousin. He cannot stay with us since we stay by ourselves. Let me know by the first post.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (33)

San Angelo
 October 30, 1749
 Leaving November 9.

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

On my return to this Retreat the day before yesterday, I found your esteemed letter. Would that Father Thomas had been able to give the mission in Ferentino. I much wanted that. But his sickness advanced so far that his life was in danger and impeded his coming. I adore the divine dispositions.

In the Retreat at Ceccano the religious are in bad conditions. One has lost his health and another is in danger of losing his. I have word from a prelate that Fathers of the Reform do not care to take further steps against us because they believe, as is said, the medicine takes care of itself. The unhealthful air will oblige us to abandon that house. I hold that as infallible. God knows that would greatly displease me. You know that as soon as I saw the site, a mountain fell on my heart, and I knew the place was unsuitable. I even judged it to be a tomb. Much more so now since I saw it for myself. Enough. We will do all we can, but God does not wish that we expose these workers to so great a risk with such a loss to the Congregation and our poor neighbors.

Meanwhile, you are telling me how much you want to employ a worker. I would wish at the cost of my life to be able to establish that Retreat, but, in fact, the religious, at least most of them, are sickly, and it is necessary to take care of them. I have no doubt that you, in your great charity, must be of the same opinion. In any case, we will go ahead, at least until my return, and I do not know when that will be since, despite the fact I did everything possible to exclude myself from the missions in Rome, citing my insufficiency and poor health, I was ordered to be in Rome with my companions a few days before Advent. So in order to obey promptly I will be in that capitol on November 26. Meanwhile, I am busy in Corneto at the insistence of Cardinal Aldrobrandi, who I was unable to refuse on many accounts. I will end on November 23, hoping I can hold out since the air is sweet and temperate in this coastal city.

I ask you to continue your prayers and strong protection, and with profound reverence I end, asking your holy pastoral blessing. I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

John Francis Sancez (8)

San Angelo

November 1, 1749

Leaving November 7.

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

On my return from the missions, I had the good fortune and consolation to read your precious letter, filled with such great piety and charity which our good God has impressed so deeply in your heart and which will always produce fruit of eternal life in addition to copious temporal blessings which His Divine Majesty will heap upon your dear and esteemed person and your illustrious household. It is most certain that the great Father of Mercies will look upon his loving benefactors, such as your beloved children, and enrich them more and more with his temporal gifts, even more with spiritual gifts, and with blessings descending from generation to generation, as I strongly expect this for all your household, for I know that the fruit is like the blessed tree. Oh, how much I would like to say! But time and my tasks and, much more, my coming departure for the missions in Corneto and Rome will not permit me. Meanwhile, I say I do not know how to express the gratitude in Jesus Christ that I entertain.

It is true that I would like to contribute to the expense of the donkey out of my poor poverty, at least with the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice. I extend my cordial greetings to Signore Petri, whom I love so much in God, since I have not been able to write him because, in addition to being battered by all my present labors, which I ended on October 28, I am loaded with letters and cannot leave this table, even on this Solemnity of All Saints. Patience! Have the goodness to tell Signore Petri that the attacks against the Congregation have not ceased, and no Retreat will be able to be established, as he has been thinking. Therefore, we cannot burden the novitiate Retreat, and so we are forced to suspend vestitions until the end of the Holy Year except for some priests and other candidates, five in all, I believe. All who are needed have already been accepted, especially a great priestly candidate. God knows the pain I had in refusing the lay candidates from Orbetello and San Stefano, besides other candidates who had already been accepted. It is necessary to bow one's head to the divine dispositions and await the end of the Holy Year, as I ordered the rector and director.

The Retreats over here, especially that of Soriano, find themselves in great need, for here there is not a drop of wine or oil. What made three hundred bottles of wine now makes thirty. I had depended on there being large amounts of barns and wine cellars, for I know the barns and cellars of the Divine Monarch are never empty. Notwithstanding that, it is ordered that we do with water, especially here with a family of twenty, and at the end of dinner a little cup of wine is offered. I say this to show that we cannot increase the number of religious or overburden the novitiate by receiving the lay candidate from San Stefano and those from Orbetello.

If we can do it in the spring, they will be vested. Let Signore Petri, to whom I am so indebted, know about all this. I am sure he will not disapprove. Meanwhile, he, too, has the weight of the large Retreat.

I embrace you in Jesus Christ, and with profound respect affirm I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

676

Cardinal Guadagni²⁴¹

Corneto

November, 15, 1749

Where I will be until

November 23 inclusive.

J.M.J.

Your Eminence,

The style of our missions, conformable to our Institute, is as follows. In the morning, if the weather is good, with reference especially to people in the countryside, there is a solid catechetical instruction for the space of about an hour. In the evening the mission is conducted in the following way. As soon as the congregation has gathered, one of the companions gives a short catechetical instruction so that the people will be enlightened as to make fruitful confessions. This instruction is to last less than a half-hour, and immediately thereafter the mission sermon is preached and ends with a quarter- or half-hour meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ. We can never omit this because we have a fourth vow to promote devotion to the Passion among the people in accord with our Rules. This is our mission procedure, which the Mercy of God has blessed with extraordinary conversions, all the effect of the holy Passion of our Crucified Love.

I should inform Your Eminence that Father Thomas told of the time he did the mission in San Lorenzo in Damaso. He gave a short catechism the day before the preaching, and in the morning he simply reserved time for confessions, etc., and that he believes he would have to do that for the present instance. When our poor workers come to the feet of Your Eminence, they will do neither more nor less than your incomparable zeal will ordain. It is true that the Passion of Christ, the principal fruit of the mission, cannot be passed over because of the vow we all make.

With my face in the dust, I adore the divine dispositions that appoint only one church for us, for in that way the missions will bear more fruit for those who make it than otherwise. So Father Thomas will be at your feet with his good companion, whom I will send from here. Father Thomas has written me that he has his strength and should be in Rome on November 26, as I believe he will, since I do not know if my letter will reach him in time. If it reaches

241. Vicar of Rome

him, as I want to hope, he will be in Rome toward the end of this month with the companion mentioned above. I will keep myself at the feet of the Crucified, for I feel myself reduced in strength, and it is a great Providence of God that I not be part of the mission there since I am most certain that I would be able to do very little. Father Thomas, that great servant of God, oh, what great fruit he will produce!

I was at the prison yesterday hearing the penitents, by whom I was edified. I prepared them with a visit and spiritual conferences two days beforehand.

Pardon my mistakes, Your Eminence, for I am writing with great haste and burdened with heavy duties for these poor, contrite souls. I ask the assistance of your prayers and holy blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred purple and am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,

Paul of the Cross

Pardon this restatement: I reread this section of the letter of Father Thomas, which I received last night and in which he tells me that he will leave November 21 and be in Rome around November 26 or 27. He is taking this departure because I sent him your directives and also told him that I and two companions should arrive in the capitol on November 26, as you commanded me. But now things have changed — I attribute that to the great grace of God — for now there will be only the companion I will send so that he will be there at the same time as Father Thomas, which will be November 26. Meanwhile, they will rest in the house of a benefactor, not being able to receive the notification that Your Eminence gave me since he left November 20. Once more, I ask for your blessing.

677

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (34)

Rome

December 3, 1749

J.M.J.

Your Excellency,

Since only one church is involved, that of Saint John of the Florentines, Father Thomas and Father Mark Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament were assigned there. I have come to Rome simply to speak with Bishop Palombella, the new bishop of Terracina, who assures me of his protection for our new Retreat.

When we got here, I found Father Thomas down with his usual tertian fever. However, he has had only two small attacks of fever. Nevertheless, not to expose him to greater danger, I must pull myself together to undertake the work of the mission in case he is unable to do so. I have found myself a bit sickly and have stayed in bed for two days.

I have thought it necessary to give you an account of my coming to Rome, and at the same time to assure you that, if I were not sickly and loaded with business, I would not have omitted to be at your feet to receive your commands. But the necessity to return quickly to the Retreat to recover, and

other necessary pressing business, deprives me of that consolation. Meanwhile, I ask the charity of your holy prayers and your strong protection, and with profound reverence I implore, along with Father Thomas, your holy pastoral blessing, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

678

Thomas Fossi (32)

Rome

December 5, 1749

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I received your welcome letter, forwarded by Father Fulgentius. I do not know how to express how grateful I am in God for the charity and donations that you give to our poor Congregation.

I rejoice to hear of the fervor of your wife and your sons and daughters. A great work! There is need to allow these holy seeds of heavenly and divine inspiration to grow. In due time they will give copious fruits. Now is the time for prayer, secrecy, and silence.

Our affairs are being set back not a little. I no longer depend on anyone. I am not relying on anything except the Divine Protection, whence I am hoping for great things, especially because of the lack of all protection on the part of human beings.

I am glad you did not share our secret with Father Charles from Controne for many holy reasons. God knows.

With regard to your coming to the Mount, I would like that. But until Lent I cannot be at that Retreat since, once the mission in Rome is over, I will leave for Terracina because, following on the death of that great servant of God, the bishop, the Retreat founded by him is in suspense. So it is necessary for me to go there and put things on a firm basis. From Terracina I will go to Ceccano. So I will not be at the Retreat at Vetralla until February. If in Lent you wish to give me the consolation of embracing you in the Lord, I will bless God for that. For that reason, get in contact with Father Fulgentius so that he may let you know about my arrival a little beforehand.

Here we will begin the mission on Sunday, December 7, and tomorrow we will go to see the pope. Saint John of the Florentines, a very large church, has been assigned to us.

I am writing in great haste. I beg you be grateful to God, remain in your interior solitude, and raise your family in holiness, for from what I can see, God wants to make them all holy: father, mother, sons and daughters. Goodbye.

My greetings to your wife, my daughter in Christ, and to your sons and daughters. Jesus make you a great saint. Amen. May the Lord reward you for everything. This is my thanks.

Your obligated, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

679

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (35)

Rome
December 17, 1749

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

My pen cannot express the regret my heart feels in seeing the road closed for now so that we are unable to serve you with holy missions in your city. It is true that here I am cooperating on the mission by giving the meditations, while Father Thomas is doing the preaching. But it is also very true that, despite the labor involved, my chest gives me warning, for this winter, after serious problems from pain in my legs, I am in no condition to give missions any longer. You know that in Ceccano I began the retreat and immediately took sick. If it had happened in October, I could have done the work. But sensing it was necessary to wait until November, and seeing that the fever I had in Caprarola could come back when I am exhausted and that the weather was already turning cold, I was advised by those with experience, as I wrote to you, not to place myself in such danger — much less now since the cold has increased.

With regard to Father Thomas, he has had a relapse here in Rome. With a special grace he works on the mission and will have need of recuperation and convalescence afterward. If he has a companion in Ceccano and if in February he has his strength, he could undertake the mission. In Ceccano there is only Father Stephen, and, if he leaves the Retreat, there will be no priests there. So I cannot, and ought not, do that, even though I am constrained to take all of them out of there so that they do not entirely lose their health and observance. I know they cannot live any longer in those rooms that are practically in ruins, both above and below, so that the rain comes in everywhere. This has been told me by the one who has responsibility for the structure. God knows in what troubles I am placed, all the more so since I see the extent to which things are going, and there is no way out. With the delay they are obliged to leave out of extreme necessity because it is not possible to continue living there. I want to confide in God always that he will provide for everything.

Father Thomas and I will go to Terracina; we at least need to take that step. However, that will be with great inconvenience due to my weakness; but absolute necessity demands it. Once I am in that city, I will journey to Ceccano to take those measures that will be best for those poor brothers of mine. I do not say to remove them from that Retreat, for I will not take that step without extreme necessity. In such a case I will have the opportunity on my way back to be at your feet to ask your blessing and put in words the pain I feel in not

having workers in that Retreat who could now serve you with holy missions. Our companion, who is here with us and is giving the catechisms, must return immediately to teach our students since that is a supreme necessity. If God will see to it that this Retreat has subsistence, there will be no lack of men who will serve souls, etc. But now, it is a miracle, I will say so, that so much is being done.

I extend the greetings for the feast from the holy altar and wish you every fullness of happiness, and with profound reverence I end, kissing your sacred pastoral vestments, and am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

680

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (6)

Rome

December 27, 1749

Leaving on December 31.

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

Your welcome letter was given me by Signore Ciotti. In it I see always more the heartfelt charity you have for me and for our poor Congregation. "The Lord will reward you for everything."

I offered you Christmas greetings from the altar on the Feast of the Expectation of Birth as well as on Christmas Day.

I do not know when we can have the mission in Civita, for I and Father Thomas are leaving the last Wednesday of this month for Terracina to try to gain the finalization of that Retreat because our holy bishop has gone, as I hope, to his eternal rest. Then I am going to Ceccano and on my return to San Angelo, which will be at the end of January, if the bishop will consent to give me instructions for the mission, which he has not done up until now, I will try to meet his needs and determine when we can take on the task.

Here the missions have been very blessed by God. Thanks be to God. With regard to your illness, I pray you with all my spirit to live quietly in the Will of God. "This sickness is not unto death," but to give you an occasion for merit. I want you to take care of yourself, but I want you to work with great courage and without depression of spirit, for I know that the Blessed God is giving you, and wishes to give you, his great help at all times.

Beloved doctor, look at the continuous mercies that His Divine Majesty is giving you. Remember that from head to foot you ought to have perished in that great sickness. So you have done well to embrace the counsel to continue your practice with strong confidence that God will help you always and will give you strength. Although you may scarcely feel this, that is not important. The greatness of the grace of God will be all the more resplendent.

I am writing in great haste. Greet your wife, Girolama, and all your pious household. Embracing you in the loving Heart of Jesus, with profound respect I say I am from a true heart,
Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

681

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (7)

Rome
December 31, 1749

Dear Doctor,

I am writing in haste since I must immediately leave Rome for Terracina. I have written the bishop of Civita so that he would give you certain testimonies which regard the merit of the case for the poor Retreat at Soriano. If you would please send them immediately to Father Francis Anthony of the Crucified, rector of the Retreat of Soriano, since he should with all care send them to Rome. Bear patiently out of love of God the great inconveniences we are imposing on you. Out of your great charity do not ever grow tired of doing us favors. I greet everyone in your pious house, in the name of Father Thomas as well, and I leave you in the loving Side of Jesus Christ,

Your humble, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

“Our Affairs Are Asleep In Rome!” (1750)

Paul begins the new year in Rome. Bishop Oldo had died on November 3, 1749. There had been problems at Ceccano and now at Terracina, where Bishop Callistus M. Palombella was installed. Paul, early in January, visited both cities and then decided there was little he could do in Rome to hasten a solution to these foundations. He returned to San Angelo.

While he was at the Presentation Retreat, the Provincial Chapter was held on February 10, 1750, to provide local rectors for the five retreats: Fulgentius of Jesus at Presentation; Francis Appiani of the Crucified at San Angelo; Stephen of Saint Joachim at Soriano; Anthony of the Passion at Saint Mary of Corniano in Ceccano; Luke Anthony of Saint Joseph at The Oak in Toscanella.

Mark Aurelius was elected general consultor in place of Fulgentius, who resigned.

682

Passionist Religious (3)²⁴²

[Rome]

January 7, 1750

Paul of the Cross, President

In line with the very great obligation to preserve the observance of our holy Rules inviolate, and especially for the good order of our holy missions, so that they may bring always greater spiritual profit to souls, and principally that our missionaries may maintain themselves in true recollection for the greater glory of God and the edification of our neighbor, in accord with Chapter XXVI, paragraph 3, in which the missionaries are required to take their meals privately; therefore, we ordain and command that no one of our missionaries, whether from this Retreat of Holy Mary of Corniano or any other Retreat, may bring secular priests to come as extraordinary confessors to hear confessions in the places where they give missions. Let them recommend to the deputies that these confessors are to be given housing in a different house, without ever admitting them as companions at table. For, in addition to other holy reasons we have in making this regulation, the principal reason is to maintain our

242. There is no indication of the place in which Paul wrote this letter. If the date is correct, it must have been while he was in Rome. Paul wants to avoid dangers to recollection by insisting that priests who are not Passionists and who may be assisting the missionaries in hearing confessions must not live with the religious and especially are not to dine with them. Some, especially the clergy, tended to linger long over the noonday meal, the main meal of the day, and thus, Paul believed, wasted time and neglected interior recollection.

missionaries in greater recollection and have them flee useless discourses where many defects can arise. Furthermore, the reports and experience we have received have taught us and instructed us to make this present regulation, which we command to be inviolably observed to the greater glory of God.

Paul of the Cross

Constance of Saint Gabriel, Secretary to the General

683

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (8)

Rome

January 14, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

On my return from Terracina and Ceccano, not a little worn out by the long and difficult journey, I found your welcome letter. So I suppose that you have received mine, which was written before my departure for Rome at the same time as that written to the bishop, in which I told him that it was not possible for me to serve him in this month of January, both because of the illness of Father Thomas and my heavy affairs. So I now repeat that I must remain at work in Rome all the month of January, or almost all, and for that reason the path is closed to my coming there, where I would come very willingly, but the designs of Divine Providence must be adored. I also told the bishop that, if I am finished by the twentieth of this month, I would give him notice for the mission. But now I know for sure that I will not be giving that notice. Meanwhile, I am up to my neck in business. If opportunity offers, it may be possible to give you a part of it.

I am writing in great haste, and I leave you in the loving Side of Jesus, where I say I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

684

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (36)

Rome

January 17, 1750

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I arrived here Monday at half past evening²⁴³ and did not hesitate to get to work immediately to expedite our case. I spoke of it to Cardinal Gentili, who is always more disposed to favor it. The sickness of the cardinal of San Clemente can prolong the disposition a bit. Despite this, there are things to do, and I am hoping for a good outcome. Meanwhile, I pray always more for your

243. 6:30 P.M.

great piety to continue your strong protection in my behalf and for your fervent prayers. I assure you always more of my lively gratitude in Jesus Christ for the charity you deign to show me. May the Lord reward you. I am staying here a few more days at the beginning of next week, and then I will leave, for there is nothing more for me to do. With profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

685

Girolama Ercolani (11)

Soriano

February 22, 1750

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

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering your letter, received on my return to this holy Retreat. I rejoice that you are well and in peace of heart. The thing weighing on you can bring you gain.

The great prescription you desire to celebrate the Paschal Feast well is this: resignation to the Will of God in all things, repeating such acts often and looking with the eye of faith on all your sufferings, internal and external, as being for the best. Do not be thinking about the future, that is, about woes, pains, and other events which your imagination puts before you, but have these die in the Will of God, leaving to His Divine Majesty the care of everything and remaining abandoned in the hands of the Heavenly Father like a child without anxiously thinking of tomorrow.

Follow this prescription which I am sending: All the trials, pains, etc., ought to be ground up with suffering and silence. Then make a pill out of them, mixing them with the Passion of Christ, and swallow it with faith and love, and digest it in the charity of Christ.

Now I have reread your letter and it makes me laugh, for you tell me to give you a recipe to adjust your conscience and put yourself in the grace of God. But how many times have I told you that you stand well in conscience, that you confess well, that you have the clearest signs that you are in the grace of God? So stay at peace and practice the prescription given above and you will celebrate the Paschal Feast devoutly and with perfection.

I am deeply pained that the doctor continues to be sick. I am hoping in the Mercy of God that he will regain his health, and I am praying, and having prayers offered, to His Divine Majesty. This weighs heavily on me. Be of good cheer, for God loves you much and loves your household much; therefore, he visits you, especially the doctor. I end by saying I have faith in God that he will be well. Greet him much for me in Jesus Christ. I am not writing him because I do not have the time. From September I have been constantly on the move with missions, journeys, etc. Now, I hope to retire for a retreat of at least

two weeks and to stop my busyness. For that reason I am going to San Angelo, and then I go to the Retreat at Orbetello.

If you take occasion to exercise your charity with our religious, the Blessed God will know how to give you plenteous rewards. In haste I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

686

John B. Forlani (7)

San Angelo
March 8, 1750

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Because of lack of opportunity over there, and much more because I was out of the Retreat, I am still behind in replying to even the second of your letters. With this one I make up both debts. I offer my special thanks in Jesus Christ to you and your esteemed brother for the great charity of the wine given us, which arrived precisely in our time of need. May Jesus, who is the Supreme Giver of every good, grant you an eternal reward for your holy donation to this poor Retreat. I assure you that the blessed servants of the Lord will not fail to beg His Divine Majesty in their fervent intercessions for the law case and for the vicar general as well. Since in all events we need to resign ourselves to the Holy Will of God with promptness of spirit, to accept both the favorable as well as the contrary from His Divine Majesty, so I have all confidence that such a resignation is deeply rooted in your heart so that you are better disposed to receive every fullness of grace, spiritual and temporal. Dear archpriest, I love you much in God, as does all our poor Congregation. God knows how thankful I am, and I assert that all of us share our prayers for you. I greet the captain, your revered brother, and with full esteem, reverence, and respect kiss your sacred hands and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Enclosed is the acknowledgment of the twenty Masses. Father Mark Aurelius and John Baptist greet you and the captain, and pray heaven to grant you every good and prosperity.

San Angelo
March 10, 1750

Dear Sir,

I received your welcome letter yesterday evening. In it I see to my edification your endeavors in favor of our case. Would that it proceed during Passion Week. Father Thomas is in Terracina and has found affairs in turmoil and cold; he has seen to it that the construction is going forward. Everyone complains that our affairs are asleep in Rome. I do not know what is to be done; I have done as much as I could. Now I remain quietly in the Will of God, and I am not feeling pained about anything, for I want the Holy Will of my God to be accomplished. Signore Dominic Giovanone, to whom I am writing in this post, told me that they have cooperated for the expenses and the rest.

I have news, through a channel known to God, that Monsignor Treasurer has already given an order to release five hundred *scudi*, but I have never seen the will of the deceased bishop, although it was in January that I heard from there from Signore Gabri and from you. Ah, dear Signore Palleschi, if you would have a word with Signore Gabri, however ... I will write despite all the letters I have on hand. I have no doubt that Cardinal Alexander should not undertake the expenses, etc. It is enough that he gets into the case, etc. I am writing in great haste, for I have much to do, and on Thursday I will be in retreat until Easter. Therefore, I am clearing away all my letters. I will not go to Camerino, but I am sending our missionaries, and I have already written the bishop about this. So I am settling in this Retreat as long as God does not arrange something else for me, such as coming there, not for our case, for there is no need for that, but for other business for the glory of God.

Father Thomas and the other religious are in no small suffering since they cannot go ahead with the building in the midst of so many pressing needs, etc. May the Will of God be done. I assert that I do not, and will not, fail to recommend you to God, along with all your household, as do our good religious. So do all you can so that the case soon moves forward. Otherwise, it is possible that the cardinal of San Clemente would go to Soriano after Easter and come back in November. God be blessed. I embrace you in Jesus Christ, and in haste I am,

Your unworthy, true servant,
Paul of the Cross

244. Palleschi is an attorney in Rome whom Paul depended on, especially for the foundation at Ceccano. This is the only letter written to him that has been preserved.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (37)

San Angelo
March 17, 1750

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Neither with tongue nor with pen do I know how, or have the ability, to express the gratitude I feel toward you for the great zeal and charity with which you see fit to favor the work of God for this newly born Congregation in Rome. I adore the Holy Will of God more and more in the dragging on of the case, for I know that the Divine Majesty will draw great good from that, since that Will can desire only what is best.

With regard to the retreatants you speak about, I assert in the Lord that I have not written a single syllable to the Retreat at Ceccano. When I was on my journey, I did say something about the difficult circumstances in which they are living. You assured me in Rome that, if the construction, accomplished by your great care, was not complete, retreatants could not be housed there, for you had great concern for the poor condition and misery of that ruin.

Last Thursday I was at my little desk for five hours to reply to a communication sent me by Father Thomas, in which with two long letters he pointed out to me with strong reasons, which he made me feel with my own hand, that in that Retreat we cannot station more than eight religious if I do not want to see them all sick by reason of head colds. There are also fleas and the floor is covered with goat dung, for previous to our coming goats were kept there. I pass over many other things he told me, which add not a few crosses to my poor little heart if it were not for the help I receive in uniting myself to the Will of God. All the more so because, as is known to all, I would never have accepted that Retreat if I had seen it beforehand. I would have at least expected the improvement of the building.

So you can see, Reverend Bishop, that he who details the sad condition of Ceccano merits compassion for the hurt this does to his own soul and for the blindness of his mind which makes allowances for what he sees with his own eyes and touches with his own hand.

So I unite myself with your pious intentions, and, when you wish to send the retreatants, send them. But please have the kindness to let me know a month ahead of time so that these poor ones can find housing in Ceccano, taking their ticks with them so as to make room for the retreatants and leaving just one priest there to serve them. From this you can see that with all our hearts we wish to cooperate with your zeal.

I end by offering you my profound reverence and asking your prayers and holy blessing, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Signore Generoso Petrarca (1)²⁴⁵

San Angelo
March 21, 1750

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

Dear Sir,

I have placed in the holy Side of Jesus the consolation that your esteemed letter brought me, in which I find to my great satisfaction the zeal you are using to bring the case to a close, especially in favor of the Retreat of Terracina. Oh, how thankful I am to you in Jesus Christ! Father Thomas is also crying out with holy zeal, for he sees the great necessity there is to go ahead with the building of that Retreat, of which we have so great a need, in order to have it established in this coming November and to make room in the other Retreats so we can receive the many candidates who are asking with insistence to be admitted. That will not happen unless the five hundred *scudi* and the materials given by the deceased servant of God are turned over to us. Ah, Signore Petrarca! use all your efforts, for the love of Jesus, so that the release of the money and materials may take place. Put pressure on Signore Gabri and tell him that God will rain upon him and his household copious blessings.

In this post I am writing to Monsignor Ferroni, and I am asking for the hearing of the case as soon as possible, as I hope. I am also writing to the cardinal of San Clemente so that he will favor this work of God. I rejoice in the Lord that Divine Providence has blessed his zealous words as Defender for the Pious Teachers.²⁴⁶ Thanks be to God. If you see him, greet him in the Lord for me, and tell him that, if the place referred to is fitting, I would very willingly go along with the foundation. But it is necessary, first of all, to clear up the present case. On that issue we will speak person to person when I will be in Rome, and I hope that will be in the month of April.

Dear Signore Petrarca, I recommend the cause of God to you and your solicitous care, etc. "Your reward is very great," and we will be always grateful in our poor prayers. I am writing in haste. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, and with full esteem and profound reverence constantly name myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

245. The five hundred *scudi* Paul speaks of was money that the deceased Bishop Oldo planned to give for the Retreat at Terracina. It is being held up, even though the treasurer ordered it to be released. The Monsignor Treasurer is the aging Cardinal Annibale Albani, who was cardinal of San Clemente in Rome. Paul writes of this matter in the letter of March 21. Generoso Patrarca is a Roman attorney.

246. The Pious Teachers were a group of dedicated women establishing schools for the daughters of the poor.

Signora Frances Zelli (2)

San Angelo
March 23, 1750

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be in your heart.*

Dear Signora,

Pardon me for not replying to you yesterday, for I was occupied in sacred functions. I thank you in Jesus Christ on the part of these good religious for the donation you have given with such great charity, and I pray Jesus to grant you an eternal reward, as I expect. Signore Leopold is well, fervent, recollected, and gives edification to everyone. You can be assured since all care is being used to see that he does nothing harmful to his health.

We are waiting with devout eagerness our illustrious captain, and, believe me, all desire to have the honor of serving him in this Retreat. We are awaiting him with all our heart; therefore, you can be assured that all are praying to God in accord with your pious intentions, and I hope that His Divine Majesty will bless in a special way Signore Leopold. With humble reverence, offering my respectful greeting to the captain, and with profound respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Girolama Ercolani (12)

San Angelo
March 28, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

You are always confused. The complacency you speak about is not voluntary. It is in you without you, that is, contrary to your willing, and is occasioned by the devil. If you continue to confess all these fantasies that come into your head, you will always be more scrupulous and never have peace. You have already experienced that when you have obeyed, then you have had peace. I have nothing more to say, for I am loaded down with business and am leaving for Rome. With regard to putting your daughter in a convent, I do not know what to advise you. This is a question for the confessor and the girl herself. With regard to the Holy Year, those who cannot travel there can make it where they are; so you can take that as your rule. I certainly am of the mind that you should stay in your home rather than take to the road. The doctor will decide with great prudence what is best. Greet him for me, and I am happy he is well. Jesus make you holy and bless all your house, as I pray. In haste I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Mark Aurelius Pastorelli of the Blessed Sacrament (1)

San Angelo
March 28, 1750

Paul of the Cross,
Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of our
Lord Jesus Christ,
To Mark Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament, Professed Priest,
Greetings in the Lord:

Because of your daily work in the vineyard of the Lord, we know that you are suitable to undertake missions. So that you may be able to undertake such work with greater zeal, by the authority granted us by His Holiness, Benedict XIV, Sovereign Pontiff, now ruling, in virtue of the letters granted us in the form of a brief, dated July 19, 1746, we appoint you and declare you chosen as a missionary so that you may employ yourself within Italy, with the permission of the Ordinaries and in accord with the norms of our Rules, in the work of promoting the devotion to and grateful memory of the life-giving Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also remind you to show yourself not only in teaching, but also in integrity and seriousness and in all things an irrefutable worker so that he who is opposed may be fearful, not having anything evil to say of us.

Given from the Retreat of San Angelo in the region of Vetralla this day, March 28, in the year of the Lord, 1750.

Paul of the Cross,
Joseph of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, Interim Secretary to the
General Superior
<seal>

Passionist Missionaries

San Angelo
March 29, 1750

1. The best route is by way of Orvieto. From Orvieto to Todi and from Todi to Foligno, etc., without need of a horse, but only a guide and a donkey to carry the baskets, etc.

2. Choose good ushers who can take care of the people with order, without the missionaries going about the church or the circle of people. That is not fitting.

3. Do not sing hymns from the platform except for the psalm *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*. That is not fitting for an apostolic minister and has no good effect, especially when there are persons of different sexes.

4. Use complete prudence on the platform and in the confessional, and take great care to accept confessions of men rather than women in every circumstance that you can. Mind your own business without noticing whether

your companions are hearing many or few, whether they are long or short in preaching. That causes internal turmoil. Mind your own business.

5. Let there be great caution at table in speaking, observing silence as much as possible, and afterwards take a short recreation among yourselves.

6. Willingly accept correction and faithfully be on time where you belong. That is very important. Above all, conduct yourselves with great charity. You are not to go to the Holy House,²⁴⁷ for you cannot. But place the mission under the protection of Mary Most Holy.

7. On your journey keep to the hours of silence and prayer according to the Rules.

Do not ask for chocolate. But if it is offered, accept it. You can ask for a cup of soup to keep your strength, etc.

Make proper preparation for the General Communion.

Father Mark Aurelius, as superior of the mission, can take care of the women; Father Anthony, the men. I leave that up to the decision of Father rector. Always pray for the Congregation, especially for the poor needy one who writes.

Remember you are preaching this mission in the presence of Rome, noblest province of the state, and much more in the presence of God. For this reason you are to be “a good odor of Christ in every place.” Otherwise, our missionaries will not be called for other occasions.

If postulants seek to enter the Congregation, examine them and encourage them. Have this done by the cleric companion if the missionaries cannot take care of it. They should obtain the name and family name in writing in order to bring it to me, along with the proper address for my letters of acceptance of the postulants. Get the age, studies, etc. Jesus bless your work and make you holy. Amen.

I strongly urge you not to complain of your audience — that they are not producing the fruit — for that angers people. Do not complain about small assemblies and do not praise one country more than another, but speak of all with edification. Show yourselves happy with all. Otherwise, you cause rivalry and envy. Be careful of that even in private conversations.

Paul of the Cross, General

247. Shrine at Loreto.

Live the holy Cross rich in every good.

Dear Signore Dominic,

Here is poor Paul in Rome for two hours, and I am coming to visit you in spirit on the holy Cross of Jesus, on which you are tasting the fruits of the holy tree of life. If these fruits have no attraction for sensibility, nevertheless, for you they are, for that very reason, the more blessed and beneficial, since in that way you are more like our Divine Savior, who called out from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" In that way he expressed his naked suffering without any comfort. Oh, blessed is that soul that remains crucified with Jesus Christ without knowing him and without seeing him because he is deprived of all sensible consolation! Oh, fortunate that soul who in such a loss of comfort within and without feeds itself on the Divine Will, bows its head and says with Jesus: "Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit." That soul dies mystically to all that is not God in order to live in God that divine life in the bosom of the Heavenly Father, entirely clothed with Jesus Christ Crucified, that is, entirely united to his pains, which the loving soul makes its own through its union in love with the Highest Good. So, dear Dominic, celebrate in your rich suffering. Rejoice in doing the Will of God in your sickness, with which the blessed God has visited you, and, above all, do not give way to scruples; rather, exterminate them and consume them in the fire of divine love.

God loves you; oh, how much he loves you! Be of brave heart and have great resignation. The one who is most resigned is the most holy, for true resignation contains in itself perfect love.

Take your rest then, like a child on the bosom of Jesus Christ, and partake of the food he ate: "My food is to do the Will of the Father who sent me," etc. I do not have more time, and I promise that I will make you part of my poor prayers. You do that as well. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and am in haste,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

248. This is an excellent explanation of the "mystical death" that was such an important part of Paul's spirituality. Unfortunately, we do not know more about Dominic Panizza, except that he was living at Valmontone, south of Rome. Paul gave a mission there in November 1751. This letter was written a year and half earlier.

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (38)

Rome

April 11, 1750

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Thanks be to God the case has been decided in our favor, as you will have been informed by Signore Palleschi.

In regard to the ideas they have in Ceccano for the construction of the Retreat, after recommending myself to God and after taking counsel from the wise, I do not feel that I want to change the Retreat of Saint Mary in Corniano for any other location in the territory of Ceccano. That Sovereign Lady called us here. She protected us here, and she will assist us always. So if you do not have a contrary opinion, and I would immediately accept your opinion, I have already written that they go ahead at Badia with the construction. Otherwise, they would not be able to live there for years while they were building elsewhere. Signore Captain Angeletti is of the same opinion.

I am leaving Rome for the Retreat of San Angelo on next Wednesday. There I will await your orders and also will be making special thanksgivings for the great grace given to our ordinands. I end by asking for your blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Signore Generoso Petrarca (2)

Angeletti Home

April 13, 1750

Paul of the Cross reverently notifies Signore Petrarca that he was in the secretariat of Monsignor Ferroni, where he saw and read the decree in favor of the three Retreats, and these officials are waiting for us to come to receive them. Therefore, would you please send the one for Paliano, but keep the original. Send a certified copy to Paliano or to Father Thomas, while I should take the original for our archives. So would you please consign it to Signore Angeletti to hold for me. He will send it securely — not by post for sake of greater security. He who writes offers his humblest obedience and embraces you in Christ.

San Angelo
April 21, 1750

J.C.P.

Dearest Thomas and Beloved Son in Christ,

On my arrival in Rome, I read your two letters. I rejoice that the Blessed God is letting you know how pleasing it is to His Divine Majesty to suffer out of love for him. But suffering is such a precious and volatile perfume that, if the vessel of the heart is not well closed and protected with the seal of true humility and silence of faith and love, that perfume will escape into the air through the leak of vainglory.

One who suffers much is very silent, since he does not want consolation from any creature and simply renews himself and consoles himself in the Will of God, where he takes his food.

Our affairs in Rome are going well, and the Sacred Congregation has judged favorably for the three Retreats in question: Terracina, Ceccano, and Paliano, etc. So, thanks to God, we are in possession. As for the Retreat in Rome, there is nothing. It may be that His Divine Majesty will prolong that, and it will come to success when it pleases God. As for convents, I have no thought at all; I know it is a distant affair. I am also aware it will take miracles.

I would prefer to establish a beautiful convent in my interior, well adorned with the virtues of Jesus Christ, and remain in that convent adoring God in spirit and in truth, etc.

As for you coming to Rome with your daughters, that should not happen without light from God. To tell you how I feel, I do not think that women, especially spinsters, should go about on pilgrimages. So I am hoping that you will think long on this, all the more so since they can take advantage of the Holy Year where they are. His Holiness is dispensing those who live at a distance and cannot come without serious inconvenience, etc. These arrangements cannot be long delayed in reaching there for everyone, since they have already been published for the nuns.

Regarding continence, I come back to what I have said and written. You need to be very cautious to avoid spiritual hurt.

I am always thankful for your great charity. May the Lord reward you. I share my prayer equally with Signora Victoria, and I pray that both of you be more abandoned to the Divine Will and continue the holy life you have undertaken, allowing even your holy desires to die in the Divine Good Pleasure, since in that way they will rise more perfect at the right time. Now, however, is the time to practice virtues needed for your present state and to watch out always more for the uprightness of your children, etc.

I cannot make a decision for the two lay brothers at this time because there is no room. But as soon as a Retreat is opened, I will inform you. I think I will be doing some missions in the near future, unless I need to go back to Rome. I have sent Father Anthony to the diocese of Camerino, along with Father Mark Aurelius and the others.

In the house I was handed a letter sent to Father Eustace. In truth I find little comfort there. Only God knows souls; we understand little or nothing. Father Fulgentius told you I have a soul in Rome and another in Soriano; but he does not know the secret, whether in Rome or elsewhere. Outside the Congregation I treat little with all. I assist those I can in order to serve God. I look at souls entirely in God and try to see them with a simple eye, that is, entirely images of God, rich in Christ, but I see myself as I am, that is, an abyss of evils, etc. If up to now I have been secret in speaking about devout souls, I will be much more so in the future, since I am aware that it is a principle of the saints to keep secrets and not to trust one's own lights which are often deceitful, since much comes from imagination or the inclinations of one's nature and often from demons, etc.

In order to distinguish clearly, there is need of humility of heart, a need to remain hidden from all, love of neighbor that is impartial and not inclined more toward one than to another, true patience and resignation in all happenings, recollection of heart, purity of intention, and more. Oh! these are genuine lights and beyond danger of deception! My dearest Thomas, make yourself holy and think of erecting a true convent, such as the one I wish to build within myself, and return to God the thoughts we have of things we consider to be nearby, but which may be far off. I embrace you in Jesus Christ, and I pray the gentle Savior to bless you and all your pious household. I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Leave off the word *Cane* in the address because it does not belong there. I believe you will have had the consolation of seeing Father Francis Anthony.

698

A Religious Sister (4)

San Angelo
April 21, 1750
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I received your letter in which I learn that you are suffering, and it seems to you that you suffer much. If you were on fire with the love of God, it would seem to you that you suffer little, and you would keep that little hidden so that it would not disappear. Jesus suffered and was silent. "Jesus, however, kept silent." So learn to imitate the virtues of Jesus Christ, especially his meekness, obedience, and humility of heart. Try to stay in interior solitude, adoring God in spirit and in truth.

Jesus make you holy, and pray for me. I am writing in haste and have much to do. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

Doctor Frederick Del Bene (2)

San Angelo
April 28, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

I did not reply to your letter in the last ordinary post, for I was being purged because of blood worn down by the traveling and the labors undergone. Since the purgation is not yet over, I am limited to a brief reply so as not to deprive myself of rest.

So you should examine at the feet of Jesus your interior impressions. You see well that God is calling you, and it is certain that he will give you the helps to carry the weight of any life of penance. I know those who, as seculars, could not stand cold on their feet, and then as religious it was easy.

On this I have no more to say. Do what seems best for the good of your soul, and I will not fail to pray His Divine Majesty to direct your life in accord with his Holy Will.

With regard to the other things you were pleased to inform me at length, since I do not have the time to go into each one in particular, as would be proper, seeing my indispositions and occupations, so I beg you to take these things up with your confessor, who in this way will know your soul thoroughly. It will be for him to prescribe the correct conduct for your greater profit.

I am happy about your improvement in health, and I pray Jesus to keep you that way for your greater spiritual advantage, etc. With full esteem I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus, and in haste say that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

A Gentleman (1)²⁴⁹

San Angelo
April 28, 1750

Dear Sir,

I suppose that Dr. Lacatelli will not have wanted to pay the expenses of Signore Gabri. He knows well that you wrote to him on the part of the Community Representatives, urging them that they do that for the sake of this Retreat as they had agreed to do. Whereas these expenses are a small sum of *scudi* — eight or a little more — so I did not doubt that these gentlemen would have wanted the merit before God, as they did elsewhere.

If they do not wish to do this charity, I am writing to Signore Lacatelli and will ask him for this small donation. The point is that this is a question of the

249. This letter was sent to Terracina.

spiritual welfare of the whole city. If it is delayed, how much harm might there be? I would wish to cooperate with my own life to bring the construction to completion so that the establishment of the Retreat can take place next November. But I doubt that can happen if these gentlemen do not cooperate with great zeal and fervor for the finishing of the building, at least of the church and the cells, within the month of June so that it can be a healthy place for the religious.

Let them take thought that this is an affair involving their souls, and they ought to set that above anything else. With regard to the mission, I have already written Rome to Father Thomas so that he would know about it. He has answered. If he is healthy, I believe he will come. I am writing in haste, for I am burdened with letters. I pay you my humble reverence and am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

701

Passionist Religious (4)²⁵⁰

San Angelo
May 2, 1750

Paul of the Cross, General Superior and Servant,
To Our Sons and Brothers in Jesus Christ, Priests, Clerics, Lay Brothers,
Who Form the Religious Family in the Sacred Retreat of N.,
Health, Peace and the Blessing of Our Savior Jesus Christ:

Since, dearest sons and brothers in Jesus Christ, the sweet and most joyful Solemnity of the Holy Spirit is close at hand, each one should be preparing himself to worthily receive that Sovereign Guest in the interior house of our soul as its Lord and God. We have not wished to fail to complete in some small way this obligation of love by visiting you with our poor letter so that you may be more and more aware of the living desire that this good Lord has impressed on my heart that you all be greater saints and so enrich this Institute to which the Mercy of God has called you.

So, dearest ones, to prepare yourselves well for this holy, divine solemnity, each one of you must examine himself well in order to know if there is in him anything not purely from God. You will come to know this by examining whether in all your works your pure intention is to see that every day you make your intention more godlike, that is, entirely divine, always working in all your actions in God and only out of love for him, uniting your works with those of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our Way, our Truth, our Life.

250. This is the great Pentecost letter of the founder to all the religious. Perhaps nowhere else has Paul risen to such spiritual heights. Paul expresses so clearly the spirituality of the Congregation in its following Crucified Christ and preaching the love of the Crucified to the poor.

Beloved sons! "You are dead and your life is hidden in Christ in God." Accordingly, as dead to all which is not God, keep yourselves entirely detached from all that is created, in true poverty and nakedness of spirit, with a high detachment from all sensible consolation, in which there is often mixed our natural desire, which becomes a thief of the gifts of God, something highly dangerous and harmful. May all your effort be, with the holy grace of Jesus Christ, to be continually within yourself, in a true interior solitude, and to become true adorers of the Highest Good in spirit and truth.

This will happen if you always make yourselves smaller, for God loves the childlike souls and teaches them that high wisdom that he hides from the wise and prudent of the world. Never depart from the holy Wounds of Jesus Christ. See that your spirit is entirely clothed and penetrated with the pains of our Divine Savior, and be sure that he who is the Divine Shepherd will lead you like lambs to his sheepfold. What is the sweet sheepfold of this sweet, sovereign Shepherd? Do you know what it is? It is the bosom of the Divine Father. Since Jesus is in the bosom of the Father: "Christ Jesus who is in the bosom of the Father," so in this holy, divine bosom he leads his dear lambs and has them repose. All this heavenly, divine labor takes place in the inner castle of your soul, in pure and naked faith and holy love, in a true abstraction from everything created, in poverty of spirit and perfect interior solitude. But this so exalted a grace is given only to those who strive every day to be more humble, simple and charitable.

So, dearest children, strive to see who can be the more humble, more exact, and more observant. Be eager for the better gifts and strive to be simple, humble as babies, and never lose sight of the horrible nothing that you are. Do not lose sight, I say, of the fact that you have nothing, know nothing, can do nothing. Dig as deeply as you will, you will not find in yourself anything but pure, horrible nothing. Oh! how much I recommend this humility of heart and childlike simplicity, which will make you respectful and charitable toward all, subject to all. As the Apostle Saint Peter says: "Be subject to every creature for the sake of God." Above all, have the highest reverence for the rector that His Divine Majesty has given you for father and guide of your soul. Have recourse to him, as holding the place of Jesus Christ, with the simplicity and openness of a child to discover faithfully your interior and to obey without the slightest reply. Acting in this way, what grand flights of perfection you will take! Oh, what peace you will perceive!

This peace which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit will make you grow in love with one another, having one single heart in Jesus Christ, a point of the highest importance, to the extent that no one will judge the actions of his brother, for in him he will see only the sanctity and in himself he will see only vices and defects, always with a peaceful endurance and hope of improving.

Believe me, the pest of religious communities is judging the actions of others and losing sight of one's own. Interpreting the actions of others in a bad light, whispering about the faults of others, murmuring, reporting what you think about one another, oh, what a pest this is! Oh, what ruin that causes in poor communities! True humility always finds vices in self and has no chance

to look at others' actions. It makes us solicitous to wipe out every vicious thing that is displeasing in the eyes of God. Moreover, since true humility of heart makes me know and believe that there is no one in the world worse than I, how could it ever allow me to judge another whom I hold to be better and more holy?

Let us allow watchful care to our rectors, whom God fills with light and grace to remedy every disorder. Let us obey when they command us to give our opinion or ask for information for the good government of the religious community or about anyone in particular. Then we may be sure we are doing the Will of God, and all that we say faithfully will bring out the greater glory of the Lord and our own advantage.

Behold, in a short space we have given all that our little capacity has given us to help you better prepare to receive into the house of your soul the Holy Spirit with all his highest gifts and superabundant graces. It remains, O dearest ones, that we pray to the utmost to celebrate this holy novena all together as one, that is, united in spirit with all our brothers who are in the other Retreats. This union must be one in true faith, hope, and charity. The holy apostles celebrated the novena congregated as one. Oh, holy union of love, which draws and unites hearts in the one Heart of Jesus Christ!

Oh, rich love, rich in obedience, humility, patience, silence, meekness, in every good! In this union of faith and charity, let us cry out, my dear ones, all together to the Holy Paraclete, the Consoling Spirit, who comes to fill the entire house of our soul and the whole Congregation. Let us call out to the Father of the Poor, the Giver of Grace, this Light of Hearts, that he give us the true spirit of our Institute, rich in every virtue. Let us pray that he open that vein of living water of his graces so that all of us may drink in abundance, and that all inflamed with love, set on fire with love, we may spread this divine fire in the hearts of our poor neighbors by means of our preaching the pains of our crucified Love.

Ah, my dear ones, pray, cry out to the Most High that he expand our poor Congregation, that he provide us with holy men so that like trumpets, animated by the Holy Spirit, they will go about preaching how much Jesus has suffered for love of men, since the greater number live in total forgetfulness, a thing worthy of inconsolable tears and the reason for so much iniquity that abounds in the world.

Finally, I ask and implore you by the heart of the Mercy of God to pray to His Divine Majesty for your poor servant and father, seeing him as the most needy of all, so that he be moved with greater compassion, and pray for me with more fervor. I assure you of our gratitude in all our poor prayers and holy sacrifices, in which we assure you that we make incessant memory of all of you so that His Divine Majesty, who has begun this good work in you, will bring it to perfection, as we hope. While imparting our blessing, we pray every good for you from the Lord.

Paul of the Cross, General

Matthias Nardini

San Angelo
May 11, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

As next Friday will be the Feast of Saint Eustace and there will be a large gathering of people at this Retreat, which I did not think about yesterday morning, so as not to find myself in the midst of so many people, where I would have to consent out of necessity to many conferences with the country people, I thought it better to leave for Calvi on Pentecost Monday. Therefore, in order to arrive there in good time that evening, I am asking your goodness to allow the servant to come here with the horses by the evening of Pentecost. Since a subdeacon, who cannot ride a horse, is coming with me as companion, if a donkey is available, he could use that. I will go along with your charity and prudence.

I am including a letter to Father John Baptist. It will be soon enough to send it on Wednesday at an early hour so that the good Father will have time to give opportune instructions for the building and for the religious family. If he can bring a donkey with him, it ought to be docile and gentle so that he is not in any danger, especially because our Father is not very strong. With boldness I ask out of charity that he would take Friday's letters to the postman in Vetralla as usual, for I am not going further to Soriano. Out of love for God, pardon my boldness and your inconvenience. I wish you once more a happy journey and return, and with all my respect and esteem I affirm I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (34)

San Angelo
May 16, 1750
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I am always more moved to thank the Lord in reading your welcome letters. But what are you saying? That your coming to our Retreats has given birth to evil? Be careful that you do not say such things, since your coming here has given birth to much good, even for our religious, nor ought you to wonder and afflict yourself if it appears that I have given out obediences in a mild way, for that is what I am accustomed to do, that is, to proceed with gentleness rather than rigor. One who wishes to be obeyed well must command only a little and gently.

So now go ahead with your practices with great fidelity in all your normal exercises, since they do not go beyond your proper state of life, that is, they do not interfere with the obligations of your status, for in that you are certain of

the Will of God. Above everything, I recommend to you humility of heart, awareness of your nothingness, and interior solitude, always remaining abandoned in God, adoring him in spirit and in truth, without forcing your head or anything else in such recollection, but remaining in a peaceful manner in the holy desert and inner temple, where you will find every good in God, etc. If you wish to wear one of our signs, you may do so, but wear it under your clothing so that no one will see it except the blessed God and his holy angels.

I already owe much to your charity, and, if our people come to the island, they will be there because of you. As to the person whom you mention to me and who might be the first stone, for my part, I speak in unfeigned truth, I am not sure that candidate who is in Rome has any further idea to make use of me. God knows that doubts come to me since I am not able to examine the background of this person. I am afraid of some deceit; however, I hope it is not so, for the base seems good.

With regard to going to Rome and Loreto, you want me to tell you whether it is God that gives you the desire to go there with your wife? I leave you free, but who will stay in your home with your children and your business? Examine the situation carefully and then decide what is for the greater glory of God. I see your pious household in the holy Side of Jesus. I believe that our good God wants to make it a house of saints, beginning with the parents. Oh, how much I thank the Lord ! How much consolation I take!

So arrange to make some prayer each day in common, prescribe acts of virtue in accord with their capacity as your older and younger children, give them ejaculatory prayers, etc.

I am leaving for a mission in the city of Camerino on Pentecost Monday in order to begin the mission on May 24. It is a large mission and there will be much to do. Pray much for me. On this occasion I am going to visit the Retreat at Sabina, where they want a foundation. Oh, how many houses are being discussed for foundations! I do not know how to manage this if God does not provide workers. Our missionaries are in areas larger than this big diocese of Camerino and God works his great mercies for the people, but this city has protested to its bishop that they do not want any missionaries except poor me. What do you say about that? Doesn't that protest make you laugh? Oh, they do not know me! If they knew me, they would not speak in that way.

I have the intention of always making you part of my poor prayers, and I see you, along with your wife and children, as one heart in Jesus Christ, as God knows. I hope one day, if I do not die soon, to see all of you and to come to the island to give a retreat in your house, and to do that for your family. I do not have more time. Goodbye, my dear son in Christ! For my sake stay happy, recollected, humble, and solitary within. Above all, let the Divine Will be your food. Even more, let the Divine Will be your Spouse and espouse yourself to that Will every moment with the wedding ring of faith, on which are inscribed the other jewels of hope and love. Jesus bless all of you. Greet your wife for me in Jesus; she, too, is my daughter in Christ. When I am back from

Camerino, I want to write her a good letter. Greet your children and mine in Christ. Goodbye. May the Lord bless us.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

704

Isidore Calzelli (1)²⁵¹

San Angelo
June 28, 1750

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I am indebted to your favors for the loving, charitable attention to the advantage of the sanctuary there, which at the same time contributes to our being able to live on a firm basis in our Retreat.

May it please heaven that, when the weather cools, another of my plans will succeed. It remains for you to continue to cooperate with all your soul, for, as I said in my last letter, which I hope you received, I find myself now with my hands tied since I cannot send one of my religious to you. The weather has set in with its heat, and I leave it to your prudent discretion to reflect whether I ought to take such risk with another's life. When the weather cools around the end of October and the heat cools down, we will send someone there.

At this time Father Thomas, who is nearby, will have the duty. Please, for the love of God, do not spare me the chance to bring about your holy plans. Especially in the present harvest, please have them contribute with the gift of grain so that there may be at the time when needed sufficient provision for our living. I am sure of your good heart, which is why I can be importuning. Recommend me to God, and I assure you I will do the same with a remembrance in my poor prayers. Meanwhile, I am with full esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

I renew our repeated pleadings for the construction. If the people want it there, they must provide for it promptly; it is their task. Other regions did this for other Retreats.

For love of God, pardon me for not writing this with my own hand because of important affairs. I am waiting the reports requested about everything, and embrace you in the Lord.

251. This is the first of ten letters written to this priest of Paliano, a friend of Father Thomas Struzzi. In 1748 Calzelli suggested that an old hermitage at Paliano be given to the Passionists. He himself raised money to adapt the building for their use. Paul thanks him for his assistance, while assuring him he would like to send a religious to work with him, but until the weather changes he cannot do this.

Girolama Ercolani (13)

San Angelo
June 30, 1750

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be in your heart.*

My Revered Girolama,

I am answering your letter, which gave me much pleasure in the Lord because I see you are obedient and for that reason you will speak of victories. Oh, how well you acted in not confessing those ideas and fantasies the devil put into your mind! Believe me, Signora Girolama, you have not committed the least sin, so you did well not to confess anything. Goodbye scruples! Let them be banished from your head for good. Continue in this way and take care to make your protests that you never wish to consent to anything offensive to God. Trust in him and fear nothing. Believe, signora, that I have looked over your letter carefully, and I assure you on my conscience that you have not committed any sin at all; you have even acquired merit. Quiet yourself down more and more, keep to your accustomed prayers and exercises of piety in accord with your state. Keep your heart turned toward God and be happy in the Lord. I rejoice that the doctor is well, and I pray God to keep him from all sickness. Greet him warmly for me in the Lord. I hope to pay you a visit on my journey in October. I am back from the mission in Camerino, which was much blessed by God. I made the journey on foot and God gave me the strength. Jesus bless you and your whole house as I am praying, and will always pray, His Divine Majesty. With full esteem I say I am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Signora Faustina Giannotti (1)

San Angelo
June 30 1750

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be in our hearts.*

My Sister in Jesus Christ,

I come to visit your spirit with this note. However, I make this visit in God where your spirit rests in that peace that exceeds all the senses. You already know our agreement that you are to be in true internal solitude in that sacred desert where the soul with true knowledge of its nothingness loses itself in the Highest Good, and there in a sweet sleep of love and faith reposes on the divine breast of the Heavenly Father.

I would like you to plunge yourself in that bath of the holy Blood of Jesus, which always boils, fired by the infinite warmth of his love. In this bath your soul will become whiter and rich with all virtues. I say no more, for God knows how I am. Pray much for me, for I am in great need. Pray for our poor Congregation that God will provide holy candidates, and that I obtain in Rome

what we have to keep waiting for. I have written to that great soul, your sister and my daughter in Jesus Christ, that you are also one. Greet Sister Teresa and the vicar. Jesus make you holy and bless you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

707

Thomas Fossi (35)

San Angelo
July 3, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I trust you have received my earlier letter in the mail in which I thanked you in Jesus Christ for the tuna we received shortly after my arrival from Camerino. Just now I received from Civitavecchia another large half of tuna, weighing thirty-six pounds. The benefactor from Vetralla tells me that they wrote from the city that because of want of opportunity they did not send the other half. It was necessary that they sell it. They say they sent it in two pieces, but Signore Zelli received only the thirty-six-pound half. He is making an effort to find the other half. I would have sent some to Signore Brugiotti in Viterbo, but it came in the afternoon in the great heat, so there was no chance. It would have begun to spoil if I sent it the next day, for lack of anyone to take it, seeing that our workman was at work as a mason, and we have sick here. I will write him and he will rejoice over your consideration. I will send him a portion in olive oil when that comes. I do not know what to say, seeing your great charity and liberality. I have complete trust that God will give you an eternal reward for everything.

I could not have better news than to hear that your pious household is persevering in the love of God and in the exercise of holy perfection in accord with your state.

Be of good heart, for after long testing His Divine Majesty is giving you so much light that you can know clearly the Holy Will of God, and that you see your beloved children walking in all sanctity, so I believe.

I say the same as to your devout companion, and I expect great good in her because she keeps her heart quiet, peaceful, recollected, and turned toward heaven with resignation in every happening. For the rest, my dear Thomas, be a strong man, constant and faithful, and remain in your interior desert, that is, in the most intimate depth of your soul, all recollected and abandoned on the bosom of your Heavenly Father, adoring him in spirit and in truth. Such recollection will not take away due attention to your domestic obligations, but will have you perform them with greater diligence and perfection so that all your work will be perfumed with the balsam of holy love.

Of myself I have nothing to say. But I can say: "Save me, God, for the waters have invaded my very soul." Therefore, pray much for me and for our poor Congregation. I am praying always more that God grant you a precious and copious blessing for the great charity you continue toward us. Everyone

greet you in the Lord, and I embrace you in Jesus Christ. Give my greetings in the Lord to your wife and to your daughters and sons. I see all of you in the loving Side of Jesus, along with their devout parents, and am from the heart,
Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross
I am writing for the post immediately on my return from Camerino, etc.

708

Signore Leopold Zelli (1)

San Angelo
July 3, 1750

J.C.P.

Paul of the Cross thanks with all respect Signore Leopold for his charitable care in sending us the tuna. I think that Brother Philip, theologian of the kitchen, will send you a taste of it. The benefactor asked me to send a portion of it to Count Brusciotti, but since there was no possibility, for unless it is cooked today, it will spoil. I did not know how to do that. The same benefactor says that in Civitavecchia, close to Signore Palomba, there are two large jars, one with fish in olive oil and the other with marinated fish. He says he is sending to have them delivered. If you cannot have your servant safely deliver them to you at the first opportunity, I do not know any other way to get them. God will reward you for everything. I greet your parents with profound respect, and the one who writes embraces you in Jesus Christ and affirms himself as your true servant. You will receive the water blessed according to the rite of the Holy Church and with the relic of Mary Most Holy. Before using it recite three Hail Mary's with faith.

709

Signore Leopold Zelli (2)

San Angelo
July 7, 1750

Paul of the Cross reverences with profound respect and honor Signore Leopold, and reverently tells him that he will be served on his return here with his aunt by Father Rector. If that information was not sent, it will certainly be sent early tomorrow.

The unworthy one who writes wishes you a pleasant voyage to Civitavecchia and hopes in God for your protection by Mary Most Holy and that you stay in good health despite the dangerous season of the sirocco and excessive heat. Go then in the Name of the Lord and fear nothing, but go with caution and as much coolness as possible. Take with you a bit of the holy water blessed with the relic of Mary Most Holy, and take a bit every day after reciting three Hail Mary's.

I am sure of your great charity regarding the large jars of fish in oil and marinated fish. I did not write yesterday, for I was drowned in a pile of letters,

so pardon me. On your return have the kindness to let Father Rector know so he can come at once to serve you, as noted above. To spare a lay brother a trip, I am making bold to send you a pack of letters for the post, and ask you to have the charity to put them in the usual spot tonight by a trusted hand. He who writes offers his humble reverence and affirms he is your true servant.

710

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (39)

San Angelo
July 9, 1750

Your Excellency,

Now that I have a moment of rest from the many labors and fatigues undergone since Easter, in addition to long journeys, I cannot pass over kneeling before Your Goodness with my small tribute of respect and reaffirming my service and gratitude, especially for the great charity with which you continue your fatherly affection for our poor religious in the holy Retreat of Ceccano. For this I do not fail in my poor and cold prayers to make mention to the Most High so that His Divine Majesty may enrich you with the fullness of grace in the measure of your holy desires and pious intentions.

I hope to be at your feet around the end of this coming October, when I will be on my way to Ceccano, where I will stay for a few days, indeed a very few, because of the weighty necessity of other affairs for the service of God.

I hear from Father Thomas, to my consolation, that at the beginning of September he should be serving you in Giuliano with a holy mission. Abbe Angeletti writes me that the people of Ceccano want a mission in the present month. I have weighed this at the foot of the Crucified and at the same time I consulted others. I replied that I thought I would sin if I agreed that Father Thomas and companion should give a mission in this excessive heat, considering that Ceccano is in a low basin, close to the river, and subject to great heat. Besides, no missionary is accustomed to give missions at this time except in the alpine mountains. I know that I gave a mission in September in one city and it was very hot. The mission was very fruitful, but I was overcome with a grave illness and came close to losing my life. Father Thomas is subject to great inflammation of blood. If he were to give a mission at this time, without a miracle a malign fever would deprive him of life; on the contrary, Giuliano has cool air, and I hope there he will come out well.

I pray your kindness to persuade the Abbe and the good populace that the said Father will serve them in October with more fruit than he would now. For now is not a good time for missionaries or for the people who attend the mission. Out of love for God, pardon my impetuosity. I ask your holy blessing, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (40)

San Angelo
July 21, 1750

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I hope you have received my earlier letter in which I notified you of my coming at the end of October to Ceccano but for only a few days, seeing the weighty affairs for the service of God, from which I cannot dispense myself in conscience.

Last night I received letters forcing me to make a journey to Marca to look at a Retreat that must be founded soon, since all is in order for good housing and all the rest. I need to do that or else I cannot receive fifteen or twenty postulants, good candidates, who should be vested in November. The novitiate is full, so another place is needed for the novices who will be professed. Otherwise, we will not be able to accept the others. A foundation is therefore necessary. All the more so since in Ceccano there is no talk of building, according to word I received last night, and I believe that. But I live content with the Will of God. God knows I do not lie about how willingly I would serve you with the mission in Ferentino. All the more so since I cannot work in winter, due to the fevers which attack me, the tightness in my chest, as everyone knows. Only in the spring will I be able to give missions. I confess that no Retreat is so well provided as that of Ceccano. It is enough that Father Thomas is there, a great worker. I do not know what I could do more to serve you. Our other missionaries are in Marca, another two or three are to give missions in that area. So, how could I function alone in Ferentino without a companion — all the more so since once Father Thomas and Father Stephen finish in Giuliano, they are to be at work in other dioceses where the missions have been announced already?

Nevertheless, around the end of October, if nothing happens to the contrary, I will be at your feet, and we will talk over the procedure for the mission since I have great eagerness to serve you well. If something intervenes that keeps me from coming at that time, I will try to do it as soon as possible. I will sacrifice myself in all this and extend my weak strength, since I am well persuaded that your kindness will not allow me to ruin my health. A good compensation will be that in next spring the first emergence of Father Thomas will be in Ferentino. Otherwise, we will arrange in the best way we can. With profound reverence, I implore your holy pastoral blessing, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,

Paul of the Cross

A Religious Sister (5)

San Angelo

July 24, 1750

Soon to leave on a mission.

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be in your heart.*

Reverend Mother,

I received your letter and I am happy that you are doing better with your pains. I believe that you have acquired more now when you have no sensible consolation than before when... So take care to be always more detached from all pleasure, internal and external, and rely entirely on the Will of God with a deep despoilment from all creatures in pure and naked faith.

You are to remain in your solitude. Use all diligence to remain in internal solitude in the inner temple of your soul, in a loving repose in God, in a sacred silence of faith and holy love, and with sweet attention in God without images. Strive to enter into this sacred interior solitude through the doors of the holy Wounds of Jesus without imaginings, but, as I said, in pure faith and holy affections, etc. Above all, never lose sight of your nothing and be subject to every creature for love of God in true obedience and abnegation of self. Do not be curious in wishing to understand the divine work that the goodness of the Lord does in your soul in the sacred interior solitude. But walk in simplicity and with high resignation to the holy Divine Will of God, and consider your pains to be the joy with which Jesus adorns your spirit. Do not complain, but feed yourself in a grand manner on the taste and good pleasure of God. Pray much for me and for our Congregation. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (36)

San Angelo

July 25, 1750

Leaving August 17--

J.C.P.

Beloved Thomas, My Dear Son in Christ,

As soon as I returned from the missions, I wrote you. Then I wrote you two further times, always by post. I have not written less than two letters. Now I received your letter by post.

First, I thank you always more for your heartfelt charity, but in no way do I want you to undertake more, that is, for the bell at Soriano or the ornamentation of the chasuble on the Mount. What you have done is enough. You should make your donations with prudence, in consideration of your children, etc. So I do not want the bell, and, if you have not ordered that ornamentation, or even if you have ordered it, cancel it if you can. Do this and you will have more merit through the virtue of holy obedience.

Second, to go to Rome in October is to place oneself in clear danger, for at that time in Rome, and on the way, there are the greatest setbacks in the weather. Until it has cooled down with abundant rains and strong northerly winds, you should not chance it. I am leaving on August 17 for holy missions, but I am going in good air. Then I am making a long journey, since I am going to Ceccano. I will be happy to be at the Retreat in Lent in order to rest until Easter for the mission at Fabriano, etc.

If your older girl wants to enter a convent, it is necessary to allow her to do so, for the work you have in mind is far off and who know whether I will be alive. Besides, God is not giving his light to know whether he wishes that work at this time. As for that soul I mentioned to you, she remains buried from the eyes of all and is in a sea of afflictions, abandoned by all, but faithful in everything. So do not be thinking about that. Recommend yourself to God to see whether he inspires you to put your daughter in some observant convent under the direction of some fervent nun. That could be in Piombino, but do not pass over Sister Cherubina. But I have no inspiration whatever. God will give that to you, her father.

It is true these are illusions, but no fault of yours when they occur and you notice them. It is necessary to humble yourself and cast them off like the plague.

You may make an offering of your daughters as spouses of the Crucified, an excellent offering and very pleasing to God, but you cannot promise because you need to allow them their freedom. It is true that such an offering made to God with a humble and devout heart is very pleasing to His Divine Majesty. He will accept them and give them such impulses that they will not resist the divine call, but you cannot make promises, for that would be like a vow.

Continue your exercises, your recollection, and care for your family and your household affairs. Continue to make mental prayer in your home, etc.

I greet your wife in the Lord, and you may act as her spiritual director by giving her advice, etc. I am writing in haste for I have a head that is worn out since I have been writing for hours. I embrace you in Christ and pray for the greatest amount of blessings on your whole house. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

714

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (41)

San Angelo
July 29, 1750

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

You can believe that I would wish to serve you with the holy mission in your beloved city with the greatest willingness and not spare myself any fatigue and overwork, if that were not morally impossible because of the urgent business of the great service to God, especially the long trip I need to

make to Marca for the foundation of a Retreat, and since I clearly foresee that it will be a long time, a very long time, in getting around to the construction in Ceccano. Those ruined, or almost ruined, rooms are becoming more and more uninhabitable. I am forced after so much suffering to take some of these poor religious away and leave only some of the strongest to keep guard over the place while it gets repaired little by little.

Nevertheless, if I can be there on August 9 and have one or two companions to help me, I will sacrifice all dangers to my health at that time and cooperate with your zeal. If it does not succeed, you should attribute it to nothing else than true impotence on my part, as "God knows that I do not lie." I profess myself so obligated to your charity, which I never forget in my poor prayers. With profound reverence I end by kissing your holy pastoral vestments and ask the charity of your holy prayers and your holy blessing. I constantly affirm that I am and will always be,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

715

Aloysius Mary of Saint Dominic²⁵²

San Angelo
July 30, 1950

J.C.P.

Reverend Father in Christ,

In the pure Heart of Jesus I give you lively thanks for the charity you continue towards me and for the good news you are pleased to give me of these devout young men, whom I see in my cold prayers, along with their blessed father, in the Wounds of Jesus Crucified. Do not spare any fatigue and diligence in encouraging in them a tender devotion to the holy Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy. Exhort them not only to meditate on the pain of the Redeemer, but also let them frequently read some devout book treating the Passion. Although it may seem to them they meditate and read in a cold manner, they still come away enriched and renewed in spirit, strong to resist the three potent enemies, constant in the exercise of virtue, courageous in good works, and what is more they will be acquiring the gift of prayer and interior recollection, etc., especially if they join frequent communion to this holy exercise. At the time of death they will be assisted in a high fashion by Jesus and Mary Most Holy, and will enjoy so much internal peace that it will be a certain sign of their eternal salvation.

Take courage for God loves you much, and be sure of divine assistance and abundant light to become holy yourself. Have your sons walk in Christ.

Recommend me much to the Lord and have these good young men do the same. Regarding the young man you mention to me, in November there will be the vestition of about sixteen postulants and the novitiate is full. However,

252. Aloysius Mary belonged to the Society of the Pious School.

if he has ability, good will, is healthy and strong, and feels himself so inspired, I am willing to receive him immediately, granting good reports. Since I will be leaving on August 17 for holy missions, it will be necessary to let me know before my departure as to his decision, as well as his age, what studies has he completed, his name, country. etc. I am writing in haste and with profound respect I kiss your sacred hands, and I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

716

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (42)

San Angelo
August 8, 1750

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

In your esteemed letter you repeatedly refer to me as your friend. I honor your singular prudence with regard to assigning the mission in spring. As for all the rest, accordingly, I offer you my humble act of thanks, in proof of which I will not miss praying the Divine Goodness, along with my poor religious, for your pious intentions, especially for the sickness you tell me of your worthy nephew. I assure you that for that reason I would gladly go by way of Velletri in order to pay my respects to Signore Cavaliere, your brother, if it did not lengthen my journey by at least two days, in addition to the bad air and the troublesome trip which I will be making to Ceccano in order to be in Rome at the beginning of November because business obliges me to be there soon.

Letters received last night are changing my trip to Marca, where I was going to conclude the business for the foundation of a Retreat, dedicated to the Sorrows of Mary and situated on a hill close to Fiuminata in the diocese of Camerino, about eight miles from the city. I see from these letters unexpected conditions which oblige me to hold off until spring in order to consider the affair more maturely on the spot in regard to the site and the rest, etc. I adore in this happening the Divine Providence that so disposes so that I can deal with greater diligence and attention other affairs for the glory of God.

In the report you can understand something of the Retreat, the site, and the diocese. I have no further information on this. Would that I had the good fortune to serve in some small way the archbishop of Fermo, your worthy brother, but there was no way open for such a good fortune and consolation. Since that zealous pastor is well provided with zealous evangelical workers, I am very happy over that. Meanwhile, I ask ever more the charity of your strong protection, and humbly prostrate at your feet I beg for your holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I end by kissing your sacred vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Caesar Macali (1)

San Angelo
 August 15, 1750
 Leaving for San Martino.

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I have placed in the purest Heart of Jesus the consolation that your welcome letter brought me, in which I touch with my hand the great and adorable Divine Providence in your call to this poor Congregation of the holy Passion of Jesus. There is no room to doubt, or to regard as a dream, that this is a true call from God, who wishes to make you holy and a great instrument for his glory. This can help you as a spur to know your true nothingness always more, that you can do nothing, have nothing, and know nothing. "Without me you can do nothing," said Christ the Lord, etc. The one who knows his nothing the better is more disposed to become a great saint the sooner.

Arrange your affairs with peace, since until November 8 or 10 you ought not travel in these salt marshes because of the air. It is true that the Retreat of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy is on Mount Argentario and the air is perfect, but you would have to travel through forty miles of the marshes, however, on a good road. You will receive notice from me. Now I am going for three missions and will end September 26, since the territory is very extended with three or four thousand souls. Each mission will be for fifteen days. I am starting the seventeenth of this month since the air is good.

Then I will remain here until October 10, when I leave for Ceccano. I will stay two days in Paliano and I would like to pass by your location. But without hearing from you, I will not do so. It is true that there are no reasons for me to be suspicious; but I remind you that the masters of the spiritual life and the saints counsel fleeing from everything that could hold back the following of a divine call and to be careful not to consult the wise and prudent of this world so that one does not grow tepid. This is pleasing to God, for it is the prudence of the saints.

It will be best for you to bring your books and writings with you. I will advise and let you know the easiest way to send them to Rome to one of our benefactors, who can send them where you wish without you having any worries about them on your journey.

I will leave for Civita Castellana on October 15, and I hope to be in Paliano on October 18, where I will be all of October 19. On October 21 I will be in Ceccano, where I will stay until All Saints. About November 5, with God's help, I will be in Rome and stay there all of November.

Meanwhile, if you have anything to communicate, you can send the letters: "Viterbo for San Martino," where I will be until August 30, and then I go to Canepina. If you write on Saturday, August 22, you can send the letter to San Martino. Otherwise, send it: "Viterbo for Canepina." I embrace you in the Side

of Jesus. While asking your prayers, I kiss your holy hands, and with a true heart say I am,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

718

Girolama Ercolani (14)

Canepina
August 31, 1750

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

Your letter was forwarded to me at a time I was very busy with the mission in San Martino. I am very unhappy that you have taken a vow not to confess thoughts without my permission. You should not, and ought not, have done that. This is a question of vows. I am of the opinion that such a vow does not hold, but for safety have the penitentiary dispense or commute that vow.

I do not have any time, for I have much to do. If you will put into practice the counsels I have given you in voice and writing, you will do well. There will be no lack of prayers that the doctor keeps his health. I ask you to greet him warmly in my name. Regarding the sickness of Signora Lucrezia, I do not know what to say. Take your guidance from the doctor with regard to your children, for I am sure he will use the required prudence. I am writing in a hurry and am very worn out and dealing with a large group. Jesus bless you and all your pious household, and I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

719

Thomas Fossi (37)

Canepina
September 4, 1750
While on mission.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I am replying in haste to your letter received here in Canepina, where I am in the middle of a holy mission. First, I beg you not to take the resolution you speak of because it is not the Will of God. In Vetralla there is no place for what you have in mind. To come there in September or October is to place your life in danger because of the change in weather. This project you want for women, I see always more distant in the future, and I am not mistaken. Once more, it is not the time for that. God has not shown his Will. I have renounced all direction for a soul who seemed to be the first stone because I do not wish to direct a soul who cannot write. I cannot take care of her face-to-face because of the distance, and I have had no counsel on this. Recommend yourself to God in order to choose the convent for the education of your daughter when

she seems ready for that. I am always more burdened with crosses and occupations, and it seems to me my strength to manage this load is fading away.

With regard to the pilgrimage to Loreto, believe me, it will be more pleasing to Mary Most Holy if you remain to direct your pious family than any pilgrimage would be able to do. I am writing in great haste, for I am carrying on my shoulders a populace of about 3,500 souls.

My greetings in the Lord to your wife and all the children. For charity's sake, recommend me to God, for the need is growing on several accounts.

I hope in God that your wife will learn peaceful meekness in the school of the Crucified, so comfort her and instruct her. Who knows when I will be able to write to Father Fulgentius. Meanwhile, "May God reward you for everything." I am leaving here for another place, and I will not be at the Retreat until Lent, and then only for a short time. Jesus make you holy with the sanctity of the Cross and bless you and all your house.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

720

Signora Frances Zelli (3)

Vallerano

September 16, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

You can be sure that I will take all care to recommend our Signore Leopold to the Lord according to your pious intentions. I am very sad that your other son in Rome is not obedient to your urging that he return to Vetralla. It seems to me that the money he is spending in Rome is being thrown away, as they say. Offer your pain to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and His Divine Majesty will draw good from it all. I am writing in haste due to my work, and I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and reverently pronounce myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

721

Girolama Ercolani (15)

Vallerano

September 16, 1750

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I already wrote you that the vow did not bind you.

I hope that this time you will believe me with more confidence, and that you will do what I wrote, and that you will believe that you do not have a conscience of straw, I will put it that way. So listen and obey.

On my conscience you are not to confess these thoughts that the devil puts into your head in order to upset you. Be sure that you have not sinned. I have known your soul for years. When you have obeyed me, you had the peace of paradise; when you did not obey, you have had a hell of disquiet. So, out of holy obedience get rid of these disturbances. Be at peace. You are not obliged to confess, for there is no sin.

Your thoughts and other ideas that the devil sets before you, I know for certain are contrary to your will. Obey and do not speak of them any further. Jesus make you holy. Amen.

Your true servant,
Paul of the Cross

722

Augustine Masi (2)

Vallerano
September 21, 1750
While giving a mission.

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I personally know of the charity you render to all our poor Congregation, especially the strong support you are giving to our Retreat, most especially to our Father Thomas. You were so good as to inform me that his fever is holding on, along with other symptoms. I learn this with pain. I assure you that I will pray incessantly for his health, and God knows the pain I experience. If I were not resigned to the Divine Will, I do not know how my poor heart could have sustained this onslaught of sorrow. I want to hope that "this sickness is not unto death," but for his spiritual gain, and that he regain great vigor for every task and labor. I hope to be there around October 23 if I am well. For the fatigues of incessant missions, begun August 17 and continuing until now, have worn me down not a little. Tell Father Thomas that I have always written and the letters have been answered. Now I am not writing since I wrote last Sunday, that is, yesterday, and we are beyond the postal service. On September 28 I will be at San Angelo and around October 10 I will be on my way after I have taken a few days at Soriano. I am including this note for Confrater John and ask you to give my greetings to Father Thomas, to the Abbe, etc. Asking the charity of your holy prayers and being most grateful for your charity, with confidence I embrace you tightly in the person of the Lord and end by kissing your sacred hands. In haste I am always with more esteem, reverence, and veneration,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Caesar Macali (2)

San Angelo

October 2, 1750

Returned September 28.

J.C.P.

Reverend Father, Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Do not attribute my failure to answer your letter to disinterest, for I have been so busy with recent missions that I scarcely had time to satisfy the duties of my office. Now I am breathing a little; however, I am loaded with letters. With all the sincerity of my poor heart, I tell you that the essential thing, the most important and best preparation to make yourself a son of the Congregation of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, is to arrive with a "great heart and willing spirit," all sacrificed as a true holocaust to the Highest Good in the sweet fire of divine charity, with a childlike will, united with a deep simplicity to the always adorable Holy Will of God. In a word, hide yourself as a poor child in naked faith and holy love in the loving Side of Jesus, and all that I have said will take place.

I am leaving here October 12 and am going to the Retreat of Soriano, where I will remain until October 15. Then I will set out for Ceccano, where I hope to be October 22 or 23. I am passing by Paliano. Although Canon Gigli is asking me to stop by Anagni, I do not know if I will succeed. Enough! I hope to do the Will of God. Do not hurry to leave for Mount Argentario for the weather has not yet cooled down, and you would be putting yourself at risk. If you depart November 20 or 25, it will be soon enough. Meanwhile, if you have reason to deal with me, write to Ceccano, addressing the letters: "Frosinone for Ceccano: Retreat of Saint Mary of Corniano," where I will be, please God, as above.

For over a year, maybe even two, the cleric Father Philip Ceccarelli of Paliano has been asking to be admitted into the Congregation. Now, I recall from his letter that I promised to receive him in the coming cooler period, as I will do. That young man, from reports I have, is very eager to come. I will let him know the secret of your decision so you can serve each other as faithful companions on the journey.

Oh, my dear archpriest, how extreme are the needs of this world! Oh, how offended God is! Oh, what insults to the Blessed Sacrament! Oh, God! I cannot do more. Believe me, in this last campaign I found myself in anguish. The fruits were great, conversions very great — all effects of the grace of Jesus Christ through the infinite merits of his Passion. I personally know that the Passion breaks the hearts of the most inveterate and hardened sinners, as I experience by the favor of God so often in these holy apostolic labors. Pray for us. I am writing in haste and am always more from a true heart,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (35)

San Angelo
October 2, 1750

J.C.P.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

At a time when I was buried under the work of the holy missions, I received your letter. I had little time, for I was much occupied, especially since I had no news of your soul for a long time. So now I say that you will be the more pleasing to God the more you are resigned to his Divine Will. When you become as a simple child, reposing on the loving breast of Jesus Christ, letting all your cares, desires, and even good inclinations die there mystically, remaining in a true interior solitude with true humility of heart and perfect abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure, then you will become holy more quickly.

So now take heart, continue your conduct, and I assert in God that you will arrive at holy perfection, if you never depart from the imitation of Jesus Christ, remaining crucified with him in every kind of suffering, internal and external, that the Lord permits.

There are many souls who are asking for the foundation of a convent for women. I counsel them to pray assiduously to the Lord for this intention. For now, I tell you that they are to allow their desires to perish in the fire of divine love, for in that way they will make themselves more perfect and despoiled of the seeking of self-love and natural happiness. You are to do that.

You do well to cultivate those good daughters in walking on the way to heaven. I adore the Divine Will in the leaving of a good priest from the Congregation. It displeased me much, but I am resigned.

I will not omit praying in accord with the pious intentions of Signore Cardini, whom I devoutly greet in the sacred Side of Jesus. I thank His Divine Majesty that he has him taste some drops from his chalice, and, if he resigns himself well, he will be very rich in Christ.

I recommend myself to your prayers and to those of the whole convent, for my needs are great. I am soon leaving for a distant place. I have need of much, much prayer. Let them do this out of pure charity. Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you. Amen

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (38)

San Angelo
October 6, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I immediately replied to your letter while I was on the missions and told you it was a great mistake for you to come here with your daughters. These are

temptations and illusions. Thanks be to God, you did not do that. For the love of God, get rid of these ideas and believe that in my time the work you are considering for women will not come about. If it were to come about, it would be a miracle. On my part I am telling you that you must drive these things away as temptations and not speak of them any more. The Will of God for you is to attend to the duties of your state in life and not to be taking unnecessary journeys. Trips to Rome and Loreto are not for you, at least not for a long time. You need to avoid all needless expense, give alms in accord with your state, and in conscience you are obliged to take every means to locate your sons and daughters in the vocations to which the blessed God will call them. Now I am answering the second letter received yesterday, dated September 3.

I am failing badly as your director since by now you do not understand what I have written to you, and spoken as well, for so many years with regard to marital continence. You are to live in the status in which God has placed you. Continue in holy matrimony as I have always instructed you with that holy freedom. When by mutual consent both of you are pleased to abstain for a period of time in order to give yourselves to holy prayer, you may do that, for that is what the Apostle Saint Paul counsels, as you know. But you are always to have mutual freedom whether in seeking or granting the debt.

Eat what is necessary to keep up your strength to run your domestic affairs, take the sleep you need, and so for the rest. Do this with a quiet spirit and without scruples. Do not think a married man is to lead the life of a Capuchin. That would be a mistake. Keep your heart recollected in God, in true interior humility, spur yourself often to think of God, to love him, and carry in your interior a corsage of the bitter pains of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. Make such affections with a quiet spirit, without the least effort of head and breast, nothing external that can be seen. Be secret with men and open to God, and you will live more securely. With regard to evil thoughts, scorn them and make nothing of them; humble yourself and guard your feelings. You may confess them in order to humble yourself, even when there is no consent and no sin. That is even meritorious. The servants of God gave such an account to their confessors, accusing themselves in case there were ever any negligence in getting rid of them.

With regard to what your wife reported from Father Charles, the Capuchin, she did better than most women; it was very prudent and wise. You would have committed a great imprudence if you had written to the prince. Let things go as they are and adore the Divine Will in everything, and do not enter into other troubles beyond attending to yourself and your good family.

With regard to the great charity that you continue, the blessed God will give you a great reward. Father Rector will write you regarding the salted meat you are speaking about. I have too many things to do to get into such details.

I am leaving this Retreat on Sunday, October 11, and going to Ceccano and then to other places. I have great need of prayers, for God knows the crosses that await me.

I am not sure of my return to this Retreat — perhaps at the middle of Lent, and then only for a few days. So it will be necessary to leave off writing for a

short while. But if you find it necessary to write, write to Father Rector or someone else.

I have ceased the direction of that soul I mentioned to you. I did so for a very short time, and I ceased for good reasons, and I am always more satisfied in the Lord.

I ask you to greet your wife for me, and all your house, whom I see in the Wounds of Jesus, where I place you. In haste, praying every copious blessing from the Lord, I declare myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

726

Canon Gigli

Rome

November 11, 1750

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

Through the implementing of your venerated arrangements, I received yesterday your esteemed letter. I will not fail to send forth to the Most High my cold prayers for the sick canon as well as for the other affairs you brought to my attention, especially for your pious person and illustrious house, to which I profess myself to be greatly obligated.

With regard to bringing the two spinsters into that venerable convent, I say that I join you with all my soul in your holy and prudent opinion. I am hoping that the second will try to remove from her mind that strong presentiment, coming from her lively imagination, that she is to die soon. If she is willing to understand that in a mystical sense, tell her she should die soon to render herself a spouse of her Crucified Lord. In this way she will turn to good purpose the temporal death that she believes to be near. She will die mystically to everything transitory and live a new life of love in Christ Jesus our Lord. I am writing with great haste because I am leaving this Retreat. I ask you to extend my reverent greetings in the Lord to all your household. I end by embracing you in the loving Side of Jesus, where with profound respect I say I am from a true heart,

Your humble and obligated servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

727

Dominic Anthony Ercolani (9)

Presentation

December 2, 1750

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

I received your welcome letter, forwarded to this Retreat and received this morning. I agree that no one could disprove the honest and prudent reasons

you have to resign, since no one is held to the impossible. If these gentlemen knew their needs, they would certainly give you a doctor to assist you. If this does not happen, it is not necessary for you to expose yourself to a clear danger of losing your health and even your life. I will offer fervent prayers so that the Lord will inspire these gentlemen to provide you with an assistant, which would contribute to the greater spiritual and temporal advantage of your household, especially of your beloved person.

Your decision is most justified, granting that they do not decide to give you a doctor to assist you. Entrust yourself to God, dear doctor, and be assured that His Divine Majesty will dispose what will be for your greater good. I am writing with pain, for I had a fall, almost mortal, and for three days I have not been able to celebrate Mass. That fall took place near Montalto, and I am suffering from it now. If there is nothing broken, as I hope, I will be nailed down here all winter, for my left side is bruised and hurts when I cough, etc. Now I am doing a bit better.

Greet Signora Girolama for me, the canon, and all in the Lord. Believe in the prayers they will be offering for you. I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

728

John Francis Sancez (9)²⁵³

Presentation
December 10, 1750

Dear Sir,

With my highest consolation I received your esteemed letter, and with all the eagerness of my poor spirit I will be at the service of this city to which I and all our poor Congregation profess our exceeding obligations. I hope for all the blessings from the goodness of our God, which a heart — that would need to be a thousand hearts to meet our obligations to you and this city — could desire.

Saturday at 22 hours, as I wrote to the vicar general, I will be there to begin. So Sunday, the most convenient, is for the people since they are not occupied in work.

Have the usual platform provided for me, as I have seen done at other times. Our good God knows how happy I am to serve you one more time. In view of my old age, I fear it will be my last time. I am hoping for great good to the advantage and profit of the souls of all in this city with the reform of ways for those who have need of that. Oh, how much I hope that the holy Passion of our Crucified Love will break its way into the hearts of all: for the

253. In spite of the fall at Montalto, Paul arranges to begin the mission at Orbetello on Sunday, December 12. The mission closed December 22. Paul was conscious of how much he and the Congregation owed to the people of this city, and so he wanted to respond with all his heart.

good, so that they will be confirmed in the good; for the evil, so that they be converted to our God. I do not know how to express my joy that I can once more apply my poor labors for the good of the souls of those who are assisting the poverty of this Retreat and are zealous for the honor of this poor Congregation, which recognizes that it is bound to favor them, and I more than any other in particular, for your charity, to whom I offer my weak service. With humble reverence and complete esteem and respect, I devoutly say I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I am not writing with my own hand because the post is leaving quickly, so pardon me. Give my greeting to Signore Curzio, etc.

729

Signore Generoso Petrarca (3)

Presentation

December 23, 1750

Leaving the day after Christmas.

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

On coming back from a large mission, much blessed by God, I had the honor to receive your esteemed letter, in which I see the difficulties arising against the poor Retreat at Terracina, which I hope will be overcome after Father Thomas gives his mission in that city after the feasts. Meanwhile, I rejoice that His Divine Majesty holds your pious heart so disposed for the works of his glory. That is an evident sign of the great blessings he has prepared for you in time and eternity. I hope to be there after Epiphany. I will wish you greetings of the feast from the holy altar. That good young man from Paliano has been vested already, along with seven others, on the Feast of Saint Thomas by Father Rector. I expect much good from this.

I am writing in haste, worn out and loaded with letters. I embrace you in Jesus Christ.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

730

John Baptist Pettirossi (1)

Montalto

December 26, 1750

On a journey.

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

That gratitude which is so proper to the Heart of Jesus obliges me to offer to your merit my humble thanks in Christ Jesus for the great charity done to our poor, sick religious by giving them housing in your home in Toscanella, as I was informed in a letter from that Retreat. Such a work of such great mercy will bring a rain of copious blessing from heaven upon your esteemed

and revered person, as our poor prayers will always ask of the Divine Mercy. I also say this for all your illustrious and pious household.

Now I find myself here in Montalto, returning from the Retreat on Mount Argentario. Since I did not have time to write for the post in Orbetello, I am fulfilling this part of my debt from here. At the same time I ask that you do me the charity to forward any letters sent to me to Toscanella in the Retreat of Toscanella, where I will be staying, please God, tomorrow. I will remain there about three days. So I will receive letters from the next post in that Retreat because of your charitable care. I prayed for Christmas blessings for you from the Lord at the holy altar so that His Divine Majesty may hear my unworthy prayers. I am writing in haste and offer you my humble reverence, and affirm that I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

731

Dominic Costantini (4)

San Angelo
1750²⁵⁴

J.M.J.

Dear Sir,

Dearest Signore Dominic, my obligations to you are always growing toward your dear person, and I pray the gentle Jesus to give you exceedingly copious rewards in time and in a blessed eternity. With regard to the business of Byzantine Island, I say it would be very profitable for our Congregation and of great advantage to our poor neighbors. If the cardinal were to allow such a work into his diocese, oh, how much good would result! Enough! Let us allow Divine Providence to work. Granted that the cardinal were willing to use his holy pastoral zeal for such a foundation, it would be necessary, first of all, to visit the spot, and I would have that done by Father John Baptist. It would be further necessary to find out if the air is moderately healthful and whether the hemp they soak in the lagoon near the island, which beyond doubt makes the air bad, could be moved further away so that it would do no harm. This could be done easily under the authority of the cardinal.

With regard to our maintenance, I have no doubts that this Retreat could be provided for as are all the others, even better. For you well know that in accord with our Rules, a syndic is appointed for a region of the diocese, at least the region nearby, who has the care of receiving at the time of the grain and wine harvest. This takes place without any inconvenience to the people and in good order.

Such a foundation could be made in the month of this coming October in case there were heavy rains. But in the interim it will be necessary to begin

254. The year is 1750 and the context of the letter puts it around Easter. Paul mentions the Byzantine Island and the Second Sunday of Easter, when he hopes to be in Rome.

negotiations as well as to visit the place and so forth. I am leaving the day after the feast for the Retreat of Soriano, and on the Second Sunday of Easter I will leave for Rome. If the cardinal is agreeable, we could begin the negotiations on my return from Rome, where I am going to conclude our business, etc., and to establish a date for the foundation.

Please have the kindness to review my thinking with regard to the air and the hemp so that I will be able to guide myself in talking with the cardinal.

I have no more time. I offer you greetings from the altar, and I leave you in the loving Side of Jesus with all your family, and from a true heart say I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Father Rector, Father Mark Aurelius, and all greet you in the Lord, etc.

Missions (1751)

There are several letters to Bishop Borgia during the first six months of this year. The letters are written while Paul is in Rome and at San Angelo. We read of Paul's plans for the missions the bishop wants and for the foundation of the Retreat of San Sosio in Falvaterra. Paul also seeks to ordain several more religious. He spends most of this time in the southern provinces of the Papal States. By May 19 Paul has returned to the Retreats of San Angelo and Soriano. He undergoes blood-letting and the baths as he regains his strength.

Paul becomes ill while giving a mission at Valmontone. He is unable to stop at Civita Castellana on his way back north to hear confessions of the nuns at San Oreste. He is back in San Angelo by December 9 "in very poor shape." At the end of the year he plans to return to Terracina for the foundation of that Retreat, at long last.

While Paul continues the struggle to found new Retreats and to give missions, he also continues the direction of earlier followers, such as Fossi, Gandolfi, Bresciani, and starts directing Lucy Burlini, Maria Johanna Ventura Grazi, and others.

732

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (43)

Rome

January 9, 1751

Your Excellency,

I arrived in Rome the night before last at a late hour and was given your venerated letter, which is filled with holy zeal for your beloved sheep, with whom I would be cooperating soon if I did not find myself in my present business of much service to God.

I am writing in the present post to Father Thomas Mary, who is giving a mission in Terracina. When that is over, he will have a mission in Genazzano, as already announced by Cardinal Gentili. He will do everything possible, after a few days rest, to open the missions in your diocese.

If the Retreat at Falvaterra is established this coming March, on that occasion I will come with the religious and will personally endeavor, if that is acceptable to you, to work myself in any place in your diocese so that your holy plans can be fulfilled. I think, however, in order to do everything, it will be proper to have the mission even in Lent.

I am hoping that you will accept the good will we all have to serve and obey you, seeing that our obligations are so great. Meanwhile, I beg you to

continue the charity of your holy prayers and strong protection, and with profound reverence I end by begging your holy pastoral blessing.

Your humble, obligated, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

733

Benedict XIV (6)

January 14, 1751²⁵⁵

Paul of the Cross, General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, humble servant and petitioner of Your Holiness, humbly states that now being in possession of seven Retreats by favor of Your Holiness and not being able to provide a sufficient number of priests to aid our neighbor in accord with our Institute, has recourse to the supreme charity and kindness of Your Holiness and asks for the favor, out of love for the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ, for a certain number of candidates to be ordained under title of common table by the Ordinary of the diocese in which the Retreat is situated with the testimonial of the General Superior of the Congregation.

734

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (44)

Rome
January 20, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I have full confidence in God that when Father Thomas has ended his mission in Genazzano and has taken a short rest, he will come to serve you. You can believe it takes strong effort to do so after so many labors. If the Retreat at Falvaterra is established, as I hope, I will also be there. I will do all I can to cooperate with your holy zeal. But it is not possible in February, for I am leaving Rome tomorrow. God knows that with my occupations I should not undertake missions as long as I am in this position except with great necessity. I am writing in great haste and on my way out. I beg for your blessing, and with profound reverence I affirm that I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Pardon me, for I have no more paper.

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

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (45)

San Angelo
February 6, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I had come to the end of titles of common table for ordinations, but the Mercy of God, notwithstanding contradictions and troubles of many kinds, provided me with a further number through Cardinal Gentili while I was in Rome these last days. Since I am now obliged to establish the Retreat of San Sosio in Falvaterra, in which I need to place twelve — an entire religious family of twelve religious — and to take a number of priests from other Retreats, for that reason I need to quickly ordain those candidates who are old enough and have more virtue.

I am returning now to your feet to ask you to expand your great charity and holy zeal by issuing the dimissorials *ad quemcumque*²⁵⁶ for all three of the sacred orders under the title of the common table by apostolic indult with dispensation from the interstices for the cleric listed here who was already tonsured and ordained to minor orders since the Saturday *Sitientes*²⁵⁷ in 1748. His name as a cleric is Joseph Anthony of the Holy Name of Jesus, his secular name is Joseph Anthony Tiberio, son of Dominic, born in Ceccano, January 16, 1727, baptized in the parish church of that city on the seventeenth of the same month and year. He has been confirmed and before being admitted into the Congregation presented all the documents according to the Rules. He has shown the highest success in piety and the exercise of virtue. Although he is a bit wanting in intelligence, he has studied philosophy with the other students in the Retreat at Soriano, and I have good hopes for him.

I would greatly wound your charity, so often experienced by me, if I were to repeat my pleas for the speeding of these dimissorials in favor of this candidate, so well known in your fortunate diocese. I assure you that this poor Congregation will always be grateful before the Most High for your great cooperation that you give for our spiritual advantage.

At this moment I am waiting for information to start my journey to Falvaterra. In that case it should work out that around March 10 or 12 I will have occasion for you to exercise your great mercy for us poor ones on the evening we arrive. If I encounter some impediment to the foundation, I will not omit on that account coming to your feet, but after Easter, to serve you in holy missions as well as retreats for the clergy, etc., for I am hoping that no notable contrary happenings will occur. With profound reverence I ask your holy pastoral blessing and kiss your sacred pastoral vestments.

I forgot to mention to you my poor thoughts, and that I have in mind that I would not be the preacher in Ceccano during Lent. It would be much better

256. To any bishop.

257. *Sitientes* is a Latin word beginning the Introit antiphon of Saturday, the Fourth Week of Lent: "Let those who thirst, come to the water."

if Father Thomas undertook the ten-day retreat to the people, or else the mission, and it would be well to begin it the First Sunday of Lent so that he would be ready to come with me to Falvaterra since that is necessary. In this way we can divide the diocese after Easter, and, when that is over, he needs to go to Frosinone for a mission. He could do that in May at the same time that I am in Ferentino, etc. For the love of God, forgive my boldness. I am writing Father Thomas about this, but I will not tell him I have written to you. In that way he will learn more clearly the Will of God coming from your venerated commands.

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

736

Thomas Palomba (1)

San Angelo
February 16, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Would you please favor me with your loving compassion if I dare to bring up a new inconvenience with this letter of mine. Anticipating your favorable reply, I asked Father Thomas to spend fifty *scudi* for paintings for the use of this Retreat.²⁵⁸ So with urgent pressure I recommend myself to your gentle competence, asking you to send to Rome the fifty *scudi* to be assigned to Captain Angeletti so that he can hand them over to the painter, who, they tell me, is anxious to receive them. Meanwhile, stating that I am waiting to carry out your commands, I am with all esteem and have the honor to sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

The fifty *scudi* will meet the bill, but you can send a little more. Father Thomas was very anxious about this. Pardon me, for the love of God, and I embrace you in the Side of Jesus.

737

Girolama Ercolani (16)

San Angelo
February 20, 1751

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your letter in the ordinary post, and I am saddened with the downward progress of the sickness of our doctor. I will not cease praying, and have prayers offered, to the Lord for him so that His Divine Majesty may

258. The early Rules state that a room can have "a few sacred pictures, remarkable neither for workmanship nor material."

dispose for his greater glory and the profit of the doctor. Here, there is need of great resignation to the Will of God, which arranges everything for our greater good and knows how to console us when we least think of it. Be of good cheer then and place all your trust in the blessed God.

With what you tell me of your scruples about faith, get rid of them and make nothing out of them whatever. For there is nothing evil there. I hope to be there with my religious for the new foundation at Falvaterra around March 10 or 12. For that reason I am enclosing this letter direct to Canon Valeri, whom I salute in the Lord. Enclose it with one of yours and send it to him. I am writing in great haste and loaded down with letters.

Greet the doctor for me. Trust much and do not fear so much. Take everything with resignation in Jesus Christ and in his holy Passion. I leave you in the loving Side of Jesus along with all your pious house, and affirm again that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

738

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (46)

San Angelo
February 20, 1751

Your Excellency,

Prostrate at your feet with my face in the dust, I offer infinite thanks to Jesus Christ for the charity which you are pleased to show me by sending the dimissorials in favor of the cleric Joseph of Ceccano. I hope he will succeed wonderfully for the glory of God.

Yesterday, I received a letter from the vicar general of Veroli, in which he gives me information that Falvaterra is already prepared for the new foundation. But there should be someone there so that everything can be arranged.

So I am not leaving here until around March 10 or 12, and I would hope to be at your feet around March 19 or 20, granted the weather is good, which would leave seven days until Ferentino, etc.

Now I am submitting to your clear eyes the following situation so that you may judge if I can do the mission this coming Lent. In my estimation the foundation will take place on the Feast of the Annunciation, and I will need to be in that Retreat for eight days to put the holy observance in place and other things. This is of the utmost importance. Then we have Holy Week, or at least very close to that. So it does not seem possible to have the mission in Lent. If you judge it expedient to begin the mission Wednesday or Thursday after Easter, that would end the mission on the first of May. Then there would be the retreat for the clergy, etc. I submit myself to your wise and prudent judgment and, much more, to your commands. I confess if it were not for the foundation, I would come immediately to take care of you in Lent. But I do not know how

I can do otherwise, unless I substitute someone in my place for reasons that God knows.

I have complete confidence in the charity I find in you, and my prompt obedience would rejoice you were I not impeded by the reasons mentioned above. I implore, meanwhile, your holy prayers and holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I end by kissing your sacred vestments.

Your humble, devoted, servant,
Paul of the Cross

739

Girolama Ercolani (17)

San Angelo
February 24, 1751

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I have already written by post, and I hope you will receive it quickly. Now I am replying to your second letter sent by post. God knows the pain I experience in hearing of the continuation of the sickness of our doctor. I can only continue to pray to the Lord, and have all these religious pray, for I assure you they will not fail to cry out to the blessed God and to Mary Most Holy. Meanwhile, you see how His Divine Majesty wishes to test the patience of the doctor and your resignation to the Holy Will of your great Heavenly Father.

I have nothing belonging to our deceased lay brother. His habit is in the Retreat of Toscanella since his cell was there. But for good reasons I have directed that nothing he wore should be dispersed.

Father Thomas will not fail to pray, nor will I. He says the same thing as do I, and all the other servants of God with him. Resignation to the Holy Will of God is the remedy for every evil. Therefore, encourage the doctor and animate all the household to trust in the Lord, and we may always hope for good. Jesus enrich you with every grace and blessing. In haste I say I am,

Your obligated servant,
Paul of the †

740

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (47)

San Angelo
February 27, 1751
Leaving for Ferentino.

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Since I see that the foundation of the Retreat of Falvaterra is put off until April 2, the Feast of our Lady of Sorrows, I give thanks to the Mercy of God, who has disposed things so that your desires with regard to the mission in this city can be realized. So I hope it can begin March 8 or 9, and for that reason I am setting out next Wednesday. You may have the announcement made to

your beloved people regarding the time, and order a solid platform, large, strong — at least eight palms square — and long enough for the sacred ceremonies. I will be bringing one companion with me, who will give the retreat to the clergy. For this reason I beg you to forgive my boldness with the letters I am enclosing. I ask your charity in sending them to the Retreat at Ceccano so that on the eighth of next month Father Stephen will be there. For I have had the experience that, if I send them by post, they arrive too late since they are slow to send them from Frosinone to the Retreat. Out of love for Jesus Christ, excuse my boldness and send them as quickly as possible so that in case Father Stephen is in Falvaterra, they can send to have him come immediately, as I am writing to Father Ignatius since I do not know if Father Thomas has arrived.

Accompany me with your holy prayers and your holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence I affirm again with great haste I am,

Your devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

741

Girolama Ercolani (18)

Ferentino
March 16, 1751
Leaving.

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your precious letter, and since yesterday evening I have had prayers offered frequently from a contrite Congregation for the doctor. I hope in God that after suffering so much, he will see as much consolation. I was not able to travel from here on any account, for the road is very bad and it would be a long day on the road. In addition, there were the demands made on me for this mission. Our religious will pass by on March 22 or 23. I am writing in great haste, for I am burdened with much business. I assure you that I am praying much for your household and for the doctor. Greet him for me, and believe. I am hoping for the best, etc. Jesus bless all of you, and I am from the heart with all esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

742

A Gentleman (2)

Ceccano
March 28, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

In this post I received your letter but have not received the other letter you mention. I would gladly look over the site you tell me about, for no other

reason than to have the chance to speak with you once more. But to treat about a new Retreat would be an affront to the cardinal, seeing we already have a Retreat in Paliano. I am in the midst of a sickness and am fighting for the Retreat of San Sosio, which is in the process of being founded. But if one condition is not fulfilled, I will do nothing. So if God wills that I come by there on my return, I will not fail to be pleased to see the place you mention. Meanwhile, I am always more grateful for the charity you continue toward me, and with profound respect I again affirm myself from a true heart as,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

743

Marianna of Jesus (3)

Ceccano

March 31, 1751

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Mother,

Your letter was forwarded from the Retreat of Soriano. I admit I am very displeased to read that idea that the cursed devil put into your head that you are damned. Oh, God, what are you saying! You have signs clear as the sun that the Lord wishes to make you holy, and you allow yourself to be upset by the devil with scarecrows of being damned? Never again tell me such things.

You will be holy if you persevere in the good begun. Everything that causes upset of heart is the work of the enemy. Take care to keep your heart serene, peaceful, and clear of all clouds of perturbation, and put in practice the advice which I gave you in the Name of the Lord, above all, how much I recommend holy, internal solitude! Oh, how much I desire that you repose on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, adoring him in spirit and in truth, losing yourself completely in the immense sea of his holy Love.

With regard to the two visions you had after your battle with temptation against chastity, although they were accompanied with good signs, I do not wish that you trust in them. Rather, make nothing out of them. Take the fruit and let the leaves go. If such visions cause profound humility, knowledge of your nothingness, a great love of suffering, a great charity toward your neighbor, and, above all, a love of being hidden and secret to all with a lively desire to be despised by all and to be submissive to exact obedience, if your visions have had such effects, it is well. But I say again, take the fruit and let the leaves go without making anything out of such things, for they are truly dangerous.

Make yourself a companion of Jesus suffering and of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, and pray for me for my needs are many. On the Friday of the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows we are establishing a new Retreat. Pray that all goes well to the glory of God. Jesus make you holy, and cast off these fears like the plague.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

Thomas Fossi (39)

Ceccano

April 12, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

On my return to this Retreat at Ceccano after the foundation of the Retreat of Falvaterra in the diocese of Veroli, on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, with a great concourse of people and universal edification, having left twelve religious there with a separate cell for each one and with construction up to the first floor of the new wing of the Retreat, I found your letter, written a month ago, awaiting me from San Angelo and received by me yesterday morning. Accordingly, I have very little time, for I am loaded with letters and tasks and have a mission ahead of me. So I am answering what is most necessary.

I am surprised that you allowed your daughter to be in Piombino without the watchful care of her mother, for while she is a good and innocent girl, you should never trust anyone, no matter how holy, beyond a mother's eye.

Oh, in what a world we are in! I rejoice that she is in a convent, and I pray Jesus that she will come out well. I am an old man and have experience of the present times. I recommend Sister Cherubina much to you. Do not allow her to deal with anyone without her being there, not even for studies. If she is not present, things will go badly. Let her flee the grating like the plague, otherwise she will lose everything she gained at home with her holy upbringing.

With regard to prayer, do it with your family in your home, but do not let outsiders come in, for some harm could come from that, as happens with the conventicles. The world is very evil. It would be better to advise the men and women who work on your fields to pray and live in the fear of God while they work. Be careful in speaking about God. Do not speak about what you do not know for certain or have not read, for you could make mistakes in matters of faith since you have not studied sacred theology.

You know that I have always been reluctant about granting you that which you know of in regard to your state in life, but have always said it is necessary to remain in holy conjugal liberty, both in seeking and granting the debt.

Walk in simplicity of heart and stay recollected in the Divine Presence, attend to your interests, to your family, in accord with the obligations of your state in life. What more I could say I pass over due to lack of time. I refer you to my other letters of instruction for your soul, for I have written many times.

Greet your wife for me in the Lord, and I am delighted that she is entirely in love with the Highest Good and uses Jesus Crucified for her mirror. You should have your children use that mirror as well. Jesus bless all of you, and let them pray for poor me, for I have not a few needs, and you will merit from the charity you continue. I leave you in the loving Side of Jesus, and in haste affirm once more that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Mary Struzzieri of the Side of Jesus (3)

Ceccano

April 13, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Father Rector,

I am leaving for the mission at Supino, and on the May 2 or 3 I will have finished at Pratica. Then I am going to Terracina, and from there I will give you an account of everything.

On May 3, God willing, Father Stephen, rector of this Retreat, will be returning here and will wait for you to go to Frosinone and begin the mission there on May 7 or 8, so as to end on May 23. It is very necessary that you be in the Retreat of Falvaterra for Pentecost, especially because of the great concourse of people on that feast, that is, on the Monday and Tuesday which concur with the solemnity of the holy martyr. Your presence at that solemnity is very much required, especially at the start of the foundation, so that you observe everything and correct disorders at the outset so that things will be done properly ever after.

So take on this mission and confirm it by having it announced in good time, and obtain your faculties as soon as possible. Regarding the mission at Pico, when Frosinone is over, the rector of this Retreat, who will be undergoing a slight purge until Pentecost, will be there on the third day of the feast, or the Wednesday after Pentecost, to help with the mission in that territory. That mission should end before the middle of June, and then everyone can leave because they will then be harvesting. In this way all will go well. If the mission begins on the seventh of May in Frosinone, it will last seventeen days when complete. If it begins on the eighth, it will last sixteen days. See Father, this is the way missions are handled. Do not leave the Retreat at time of such great need, as are these feasts.

Now I want to tell you how I always conducted myself in Retreats, especially when I was rector at Presentation. In order not to make a long speech, I will do it by way of an instruction for you. It will be what I did.

When you leave the Retreat, give your limited orders to the vice rector and give him opportune advice on acting with prudence and gentleness with the religious. For the exact observance, forbid him ceremonies and long talks with seculars, and he is not to invite people to dine.

On your return and after a rest of one or two days, have conferences with everyone, find out how Father Vice Rector acted, and find out how everyone conducted themselves, how they maintained the observance in everything, in choir, refectory, silence, etc. Then after three or four days have passed after the conferences, take remedies if there is anything to remedy. Take special note whether there is anything to correct in the vice rector in case there were things wanting, which I hope will not happen.

Guiding yourself in this way, believe me, you will always maintain your Retreat in fervor and observance, and nothing harmful will come in. These are the most essential points. Above all, when you leave, instruct Father

Bernadine, your vice rector, not to act with impetuosity, upsetting the religious. Since he is a hypochondriac, he tends to be suspicious without cause, and he could be much mistaken. I have made him vice rector because he is a good son and to encourage him in his work. I hope I am correct. The blessed God will give you the heavenly prudence necessary to guide everyone well so that your Retreat will be a mirror of perfection for all, near and far.

I am writing in a hurry for I am leaving soon. I embrace you with all my heart, along with Father John Baptist and all from here, and I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

The bishop of Veroli has replied to me with great charity and wants to bring the work to completion.

746

Augustine Bono and James Merli²⁵⁹

Ceccano

April 13, 1751

J.C.P.

I find myself back in the Province of Campagna-Marittima to conduct missions and especially for the foundation of one of our Retreats in the diocese of Veroli, which happened with universal edification on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. I left twelve religious there to form the community. On my return from the foundation to this Retreat of Corniano, late on Saturday night, I was given an important letter from your illustrious and magnificent lordships, in which was contained your official invitation for my poor person to come for missions there.

I cannot express with my pen the unhappiness I experience in not being able to come and serve this loving people with the missions they desire so much. Let them know that even with the insistence of two cardinals that I come to give missions this spring in the cities of Foligno and Fabriano, I am forced to refuse and delay them until 1752, presuming I have no impediment coming from the office I hold in this Congregation.

At this time there are two foundations pending, which require all my person, and they will take place, God willing, toward the end of this year.

With all this, along with the desire I have to serve you, if I could free myself from the two cities, and that seems not a little difficult, and if the foundations are stable, I will make every effort, despite my advanced age of fifty-seven years and the illnesses I suffer, to come and console and satisfy your holy desires. Granting that God will open the way for me to come, I will let you know ahead of time so that you may obtain the necessary faculties from the bishop.

As I was writing, I have reflected more maturely on your letter, and I see that with good reasons they wish to have the mission soon so they can profit

259. Syndics of the Commune of Castellazzo.

from the Jubilee. Therefore, I reverently ask them not to fail to have the mission preached by others so as not to deprive the people of such a great spiritual profit. Seeing the office I hold is all the more reason that my coming there seems very difficult, despite the fact that I keenly desire to make every effort to bring about your wishes. Meanwhile, I have never failed to make you part of my poor prayers, nor will I ever fail to do so in testimony of the gratitude that I profess. Leaving you in the loving Side of Jesus, with fullest esteem and profound respect I affirm once more that I am from a true heart,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

747

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (48)

Ceccano

April 22, 1751

Leaving for Supino next Wednesday.

Your Excellency,

I arrived late last night at this poor Retreat of Ceccano on my return from the foundation of the Retreat of Falvaterra. That turned out with great piety and universal edification. The religious are so observant there it might be a novitiate, for each has his own cell, along with the corridor, chapel, choir, and with all the offices necessary. For the construction is well along and well disposed for everything. One can see the great zeal with which they hurried to finish it, although they have not finished plastering. That will be done by Holy Week.

Oh, how much this makes me take thought about Ceccano, where our religious have almost lost their health since they all have, or almost all, a sour and offensive breath, the worst sign of poisonous air! So, although I have made a strong effort to keep them in these almost ruined rooms, a dwelling more fit for cattle than for humans, seeing that actually before we came goats were in the place, and seeing that it is more than four years that they have suffered this distress, I have changed my mind to the extent that, if I do not want to lose my soul with a grave sin of omission in regard to preserving the health of my religious, I say it will be proper to take out a loan so that this Retreat will be livable, at least within three years, although the construction is dragging along in the present summer. I am waiting to bring up the reasons and causes at another time when I am at your feet.

Wednesday evening, April 14, although I am bothered with a lot of congestion in my chest, contracted on this mission, will be the opening of the mission in Supino. Since I am not very strong, and Father John Baptist has been not very well in this air, so Father Stephen will come to help us as a catechist in the mornings, as he did there. Father Thomas Mary of the Side of Jesus has been made rector of the Retreat of Falvaterra, and his presence is necessary in the new Retreat for a good space of time to put things in the best order possible according to the Rules.

For that reason many conferences have been held to see if we could serve Your Excellency with missions in the designated locations. But we found no way out because we lack workers. Father Thomas is without a companion catechist, and until next autumn, that is, October, he will not be able to have one. Father Stephen will be able to help on the mission in Frosinone, promised for the middle of May.

So in autumn you will be the first to be served in the locations that remain to be covered in your diocese. I will do what I can then since I am eager to serve such a loving, benevolent benefactor as you.

From the donation given me there, I had two Retreats share it, that of Falvaterra and the one here, so that it will help at first to provide some books on moral theology. So you see that your great piety assists all of us. We will not be wanting in being grateful in our poor prayers and sacrifices. With profound reverence I end by asking your holy pastoral blessing. I kiss your sacred vestments, and with all esteem and veneration and respect say I am,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

748

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (49)

Patrica
April 29, 1751
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I have the happy lot of replying to your letter, directed to Father Stephen. It is true that two confessors would have contributed much to the fruit of this mission, especially in the territory that is much in need of help. But in everything the tremendous justice of God must be adored, and in regard to what is expected of us, to leave to the care to His Divine Majesty, to whom the souls belong.

I am leaving this Monday after the blessing at 14 hours and going to Terracina. On account of my chest pains, contracted in Ferentino and still present, I cannot continue working. I attribute it to a miraculous grace that I was able to have the fruitful mission in Supino and the one in Patrica. I am expecting good from there if those upon whom it depends to maintain the fruit will be faithful in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts and guard the sheep confided to them by the kindness of the Supreme Shepherd, Christ Jesus.

I beg you to pardon what was wanting in the work I did this time in your diocese, while your zeal already makes you know that from a rotten tree one cannot expect good fruit. I warmly thank you for all your charitable cooperation, which I will not forget in my poor prayers.

In Supino I came to know that good subdeacon, who is truly exemplary. If I am not being too bold, I would ask you to stand behind him, since I hope that the glory of the Lord would come from that. If he does not have the equivalent

title that you do, he supplies for it with great piety. You will find out on a visit to Supino.

With heroic virtue Captain Marchioni has sacrificed to the Most High every injury received. He simply desires that these diabolical lampoons, which are being prepared, be consigned to the flames. I promised him that I would ask you, which I dare do with profound respect and do not doubt for a moment your charity. Oh, what a great Christian! Oh, what a pious nobleman with a great depth of fear of God! Oh, how much I know!

I ask your holy blessing, and with full esteem, veneration, and respect I kiss your holy pastoral vestments. In the name of my companions, I ask your benevolent pardon, for I am writing with a mouthful in my throat after coming from eating, and in haste I pay you profound reverence,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

749

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (50)

Patrica
May 4, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

At this moment I received your esteemed letter, which fills my heart more than ever with edification and gratitude for your great kindness and charity.

I am leaving with dissatisfaction at not being able to continue the missions in accord with your holy desires. However, "what is delayed is not taken away." God has blessed the holy mission here in Patrica with marvelous fruit. However, His Divine Majesty had kept me hidden until the end. This morning we held a General Communion for men with outstanding devotion, and it brought tears to the eyes of the unworthy one who is writing. I am edified by everyone, clerics and people. I hope that His Divine Majesty will give you the lights necessary in your holy visitation here to provide for everything. I believe you will listen to that true servant of God, Abbe Di Supino.

I recommend my poor soul to your holy sacrifices and prayers. Here, in my judgment, there remain no scandals or dissension. Would that it lasts, as I hope.

I ask your piety to continue your charity and fatherly affection for this good archpriest, for I am hoping that he will fulfill his duties in favor of these souls, as he has begun.

If time permits, I will stop off at Terracina to give some good order to the Retreat. Otherwise, I will go to San Angelo of Vetralla, for I see that the weather is threatening rain. Although, when I go to Terracina, as I will do if the weather is good, I will not be able to accept the charity of your brother, Signore Cavaliere, for I am forced to go by way of Carpineto and Valmontone. At another time I will give them opportunity to exercise their charity to us poor ones.

Would that I could disengage myself from Foligno and Fabriano, where I ought to be now. I have held off until the coming year. If that were to happen, oh, how willingly I would serve you in these locations where I have left off, at least by next spring.

I end at your feet and implore for myself and my companions your holy pastoral blessing, and with profound reverence affirm again that I am always,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

750

Signora Frances Zelli (4)

San Angelo

May 19, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I am answering with this note, since I have no more time, and I thank you warmly for the kindness of your charitable remembrance which you are pleased to keep for poor me. You have reason to rejoice much in the Lord in seeing the holy conduct of your pious son and to thank God much for him.

I do not know at all what his intentions are. You can be sure that I will not fail to set before him his obligations, etc. I pray you not to afflict yourself, for Signore Leopold will be a great consolation for you and not a burden. I am writing in haste, for I am busy, and I thank you for your offer made to me for the purge. I think I will have it here in the Retreat, for it will consist in a few soups and a letting of blood, which is very necessary for me. Jesus reward you for your great charity and enrich you with every blessing, and with profound respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

751

John Augustine Rattazzi

San Angelo

May 19, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Your dear letter has given me reason to magnify the divine mercies in your call to this newly born Congregation of the Holy Passion of Jesus our Life. Oh, fortunate you!

Hold it in great esteem and be grateful for it to His Divine Majesty. Prepare yourself with great humility of heart and assiduous meditation on the holy pains of our lovable Savior, in order to receive that abundance of graces and heavenly gifts, which will render you disposed to fight in this poor Congregation under the banner of the Holy Cross and Passion of the Redeemer.

I am writing in great haste and am ill. Therefore, you should write to Father Fulgentius of Jesus: "Viterbo for Orbetello, Retreat of the Presentation." That Father is rector and director of novices, a great servant of God. He will tell you when you should leave, which cannot be until the weather cools. For now the season is too far advanced. I am writing you so that you know you have been accepted. I recommend myself to your prayers and holy sacrifices. Devoutly, I kiss your hands and am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

752

Lucy Burlini (3)²⁶⁰

San Angelo
May 25, 1751
Leaving for Soriano,
where I will be until June 12.

J.C.P.

My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

If my soul were purified of the dross of its vices in the fire of Divine Love, I am certain your letter would have caused great flights of love of God and would have made me take a long sleep of faith and love. I am as I am. To put it better, I am under the merciful scourge of the Lord. I fear much and do not express it because I do not have the words, and I ought not mention it in order to practice that holy silence that Jesus taught during his pains: "Jesus, however, kept silent." So I see that the light you have that I am loaded with a great cross is true, and you can be sure of that.

But I tell you that the great waters have entered into the depth of my soul. I see that I deserve a thousand hells, and I fear much that I have lost my Highest Good. Ah, pray much for the worst sinner in the world! Pray that God be placated. You rejoice over my crosses; I do not know what to say about that. All the pious souls united to God look on me with envy. I know that in this regard they are much deceived, and it seems to me I cannot doubt that, based on my own experience.

Now in the midst of these bitter waters which threaten to submerge me, I am replying to your question. Your prayer has never gone as well as now. I wish to say I have never doubted, and I could not doubt, your conduct as a whole. Now it goes much, much better.

My blessed daughter, know that prayer is more perfect when it is in the interior, in the essence of the soul, which prays in the spirit of God. "In the spirit of God." This is a high language, but God, when he wishes, can make

260. This letter, as well as the following one to Father John Anthony Lucattini, are among the most beautiful Paul wrote on the subject of mystical prayer, mystical death, and divine birth.

even stones speak. Let that Immense Good repose in your spirit. This is a mutual repose: God in you and you in God. Oh, sweet work! Oh, divine work.

God feeds himself, I will say that, for I do not have words. God feeds himself on your spirit and your spirit feeds itself on that Spirit of God. "My food is Christ and I am his." In this divine labor there is no deceit because it is a work of faith and love.

If I could speak with you person to person, I might explain myself better. However, it is best to remain silent before these mysteries. Listen, Lucy! Do the right things, take what is yours, that horrible nothingness capable of giving birth to all possible evil, and let God have what is his, since everything good is his.

I do not wish your examen of conscience to be anything else but your looking at the great mercies that God does you, at the gifts God imparts to you, which you know from your corner you have stained with the dross of your imperfections. So return to him all that he has given with a humble and contrite heart so that he may purify your heart with the fire of his love. God places his treasures in this pestilential mire. Return them whence they came so that they may be purified. All that I am saying is done in the flicker of an eye, and the soul disposes itself with this plain truth, which it knows, to receive greater graces.

Lucy, my daughter in Christ, God wishes to make you holy. Be humble of heart, continue your prayer in God, the prayer God gives you, as I said above, and do not leave off Holy Communion.

Now I want you to enter always more into the depth of the desert. There in that divine solitude, which is within you in your essence, in the intimacy of your soul, be reborn in the Divine Word to a new life of love. God reposes in you. God penetrates you completely and you are completely in God, all transformed in his love, etc. Ah, my mind is lost and I lack concepts.

But I rejoice that I do not know how to speak of these marvels of the Lord! What I have said is not mine. My reality is a horrible nothing that seems to me more horrible than hell, seeing the evil that can nurture an infinity of sins. Ah, my Lord Jesus, beware of me, for I will be worse than Calvin and Luther if you leave me for a moment. Oh, how much I fear for myself.

If your prayer is fruitful, especially as of now, it ought to bring you to mystical death, to all that is not God, with a high abstraction from everything created, which is yourself.

Lucy ought not to be living in herself, but in God. Jesus lives in Lucy and Lucy in Jesus. Tell me: Is this the way it is going? If it goes so, it goes well!

Pray much for me and for the Congregation, especially that His Divine Majesty gives me light for a certain affair which I will not mention. But pray that His Divine Majesty gives me light. It ought to help you as well. I will say no more. After Communion ask His Divine Majesty for the grace needed by the Congregation, whence all the rest will follow.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows another Retreat was established in the diocese of Veroli, where I left twelve religious and proceeded on missions. I am back a few days. The day before yesterday I had blood drawn on order

from the doctors, but it seems to me that it helped me but little. I beg you to answer my letter at your convenience and tell me everything. The one who writes for you explains himself wonderfully well and with light from the Lord.

On Monday, the second Feast of Pentecost, I am going to the Retreat of Soriano. If you write, address it: "Soriano, Retreat of Soriano," and I will receive it.

With regard to your former confessor, go to be reconciled with him with an understanding that you will not be conferring further about your soul, for your Divine Spouse does not wish that. So ask him permission in your interior before speaking. If you feel that your soul has a sweet and humble liberty to speak, then speak. Otherwise, be silent if you feel a withdrawal and hardness of spirit.

His Divine Majesty will make you understand his Divine Good Pleasure. I recommend the Retreat of Toscanella to you. The poor religious will have to stay there even in the summer in order not to desert the Shrine of Mary Most Holy. They hope that she will assist them. Prayers are needed. Tell me your thinking. I am hoping for good from it, even with the good housing they have now. On the coming Feast of the Holy Spirit I hope you will not forget me and our Congregation. I say "our" because you know we have a common life in God.

Jesus make you a great saint and bless you. Amen.

Perform this added act of obedience and pray continually for a member of the Congregation who concerns me much, for he is on a narrow and dangerous strait. Oh, God! now we have need of all our members. God knows how I stand. However, the affairs of the Congregation are going well, thanks be to God. The requests are many, even for foundations, but the workers are few. Pray, etc.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

753

John Anthony Lucattini (2)

San Angelo
May 25, 1751
Leaving for Soriano.

J.C.P.

Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

Look how your obedience makes me speak, and I wish to offer that obedience to everything you ask. Fidelity, my dear one, fidelity! Oh, what high divine work the Sovereign Lord has begun in your soul! Oh, what a great work! "Your works are marvelous," holy David will say, "and my soul knows it well." Your prayer is going very well and the effects it is producing make you know that it is in accord with the doctrine of the saints. The principal point consists in stealing nothing from the Lord. That is done by the knowledge we have from holy faith of our horrible nothingness: to have nothing, be able to do nothing, to know nothing. When the soul, illumined by faith, knows this

plain truth, it allows this horrible nothing to disappear in the Infinite All that is God. Now, dear one, continue your prayer in this manner. Prayer is to be made not in our mode, but in that of the Holy Spirit, who is the Sovereign Master.

The dispositions for this high celestial prayer are the following: genuine abstraction, perfect nudity, and recollection, that is, a high abstraction from everything that is not God, a perfect despoiling of everything sensible and without ever following one's own enjoyment, even spiritual — a thing dangerous to the highest degree — seeking only God, remaining in interior solitude and immersed in the Infinite Good, and keeping oneself from a subtle anxiousness of spirit that secretly wants to know what is happening in the interior realm. From that could come a dangerous situation, worse than I can express, that is, to admire one's inner beauty, etc. So when the soul senses this, it must plunge itself into its nothingness, and there let such gazing and secret curiosity perish.

If you wish to be safe, enter into the divine solitude through the gate that is Jesus Christ and his Passion, but without images, in pure faith. Having done that, allow your soul to repose in God with a sweet loving attention in the sacred silence of faith and love.

The Holy Spirit will teach you everything; for now I say no more. I repeat that things are going well, plunge ahead, be faithful, detached from everything, including spiritual conferences, which should be short in order to allow the spirit to reenter more profoundly into the interior kingdom to adore the Most High in spirit and truth.

In time you will know in God what His Majesty wants from you, for you will not go to paradise alone. Continue with discretion and prudence your holy conferences with Lucy, which have rejoiced you and greatly renewed you, but with a deep detachment. God and nothing else. Assist her by regulating her Communions with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I desire that she never omit that when possible.

Read very clearly to her what I have written in the enclosed letter to Lucy, but everything is to be a great secret between us in the Lord. If you write, address: "Soriano Retreat of San Eutizio." I will be there until June 12 or 14.

Jesus make you a great saint, as I desire and hope. Pray for me. Amen. May the Lord bless us.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

754

Signore Leopold Zelli (3)

San Angelo
May 30, 1751

J.C.P.

Paul of the Cross, with all respect in Jesus Christ, to Signore Leopold,

I say that on Tuesday evening we will open the holy mission and take our housing with Signore Matthias, for that is more convenient for hearing

confessions. I have no more time, for it is night. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and with all my spirit.

755

Signore Generoso Petrarca (4)

San Angelo
May 31, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I must believe that His Divine Majesty wishes to draw great good from the foundation in Terracina, but I have never doubted that because the vexations there are great. I received a letter in the ordinary post from the Knight Gattinara that the chapter needs forty *scudi*, and Signore Monti, the treasurer of that city, who at my request and caution undertook that obligation, is assailed with demands, etc., which need to be paid. I do not know how to meet this payment. I have written Signore Gattinara and to the knight of Trent that they find some pious person who can make such a loan in order to relieve the treasurer, lest he have to sell in December the tin and lead which serve as channels for the water that surrounds the foundation. That would cancel the promise made to sixteen candidates to be vested at that time, for the novitiate that is now full should be emptied. But I abandon myself completely to the Divine Good Pleasure.

If you would find a way to delay this expenditure, oh, how much that would rejoice us. If you can, help us, and your reward will be very great in the Lord.

Tomorrow, I begin the mission in Vetralla since I accepted the assignment from the cardinal bishop of Viterbo and have been requested with great insistence by the people. I am in a hurry and embrace you in the holy Heart of Jesus. I beg for you a copious rain of blessings on all your household, and I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

756

Thomas Palomba (2)

San Angelo
June 13, 1751
Leaving on June 14.

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I am answering in haste your esteemed letter, for I am preaching a mission and swamped with duties. I feel sensibly the news of Father Master, and I pray the Lord to strengthen him so that he may recover his health from his troubles.

Doctor Cavelli is a great friend and countryman of Father Thomas, rector of the Retreat at Falvaterra, so write to him about this and you will be taken

care of quickly. I have a little connection with him, but I know he is completely favorable to us. I would take care of this myself, but I am overwhelmed with business.

Regarding your conscience, I do not know what to say to you except: "The beginning of good works is the confession of evil ones." In haste I offer my humble reverence,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

757

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (51)

San Angelo
June 19, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I accept your expression of thanks as an excess of pure politeness in your esteemed letter, and I see myself as a debtor to your kindness, which I see reigns in your heart for the spiritual advantage of your diocese, and which gives me also an occasion to apply myself no less to the devoted service of your distinguished merit for the glory of God and the appreciated service of our neighbor.

May the Lord bless with full hands the work begun in our holy Retreats. The Divine Good Pleasure is always just and will abundantly repay the vigilance, charity, and diligence which you continually exercise for them, and your cordial, appealing attitude, with which you favor them without any merit on my part, as your respected letter demonstrates.

I ask you, finally, to grant me true compassion, if, being overwhelmed in new apostolic ministries here in Vetralla, I have not answered with my own hand. On my knees, asking for your strong protection, along with your pastoral blessing, I have the honor to sign myself,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

758

Isidore Calzelli (2)

San Angelo
June 19, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I am much obliged to the solicitous, charitable concern that you continue toward the desired completion of this Retreat. May it please the Lord that in a short time the work will be completed. I am hoping that way. Meanwhile, the Lord makes use of your praiseworthy diligence, which will be rewarded by him abundantly. It is in no way possible that this place could be served by men in charge of the shrine, unless the building was far advanced, since these men

are most necessary in our regions here and also in the Retreats already occupied by our men.

I hope there will be good and willing responses to the requests for support that your fervent heart will know how to trace down. Pardon my not writing with my own hand since I am much burdened with other business, all tending to the glory of God. Meantime, I assure you of a remembrance in my poor prayers. With all reverent respect, I say I truly am,

Your humble, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

759

Reverend Master General Mugnani (1)²⁶¹

Soriano
June 24, 1751
Leaving June 24.

J.C.P.

Very Reverend Father,

With complete submission of my poor spirit and joy of heart, I read your esteemed letter, which I received yesterday on my arrival at this holy Retreat. If Anthony comes, I will not fail to share with him the holy and prudent advice you offer regarding perseverance in his first vocation, which I, although blind, totally agree with such true and solid advice.

With regard to Sister Maria Agnes, since I have never agreed with her ideas regarding the union she wants with our poor Institute, I feel myself more and more opposed to that, for it seems to me, I am convinced, unless I am mistaken, that she wants to function with force of arms because of her strong but hidden imagination. So I pray "in the heart of Christ" that you let her know I do not feel, nor have I ever felt, such an inspiration. Therefore, she should not dare take up in Rome or elsewhere talking about such a project, for I am always opposed since His Divine Majesty does not allow me to understand her project.

In regard to reform of the priests that she speaks about, she knows well what I told her, and that I did not approve. The lights that she had did not seem to stand up under testing and seem to have come from her imagination. I told her that in Naples there was already a congregation of good priests under the title of Blessed Sacrament, approved with an apostolic brief, and other

261. We do not have any special information about Master Mugnani, General Superior of the Dominicans, but there is preserved a second letter to him, dated September 11 of this same year. Mugnani was at Nepi when he received this letter and going to Venice when Paul wrote the second letter. This correspondence is about a Sister Maria Agnes who wants to start a community or has started a community, which she now wishes to unite to Paul's Congregation. Paul's reactions are interesting and show his carefulness in not accepting the "messages" of every "mystic." He also mentions Sister Angela Maria Colomba Leonardi of the Carmel in Vetralla. Paul had known this holy religious for many years. He ministered to her before her death and insisted that she be buried in a double and sealed casket. He mentions her death in several other letters at this time.

congregations of priests doing this work of reform of the clergy. Oh, good God! Do we not have the Priests of the Missions, the Oratory of Saint Philip, the Pious Workers, and many others in many parts of Christendom? Sister Agnes is a good religious, but her lights need close examination.

I have not directed a soul like hers except for some counsel in passing, which I ought to deny no one. I hope I have put this into practice. Please, out of pure charity, rid her of what she expects from her idea. You know that I conferred with you about her in utmost secrecy. Next to the sacraments, I esteem the importance of observance; on that account, I have no doubts. The point is that I am absolutely opposed to her plans. I wish to do the Will of God in every event that His Divine Majesty will present to me. These are not affairs to be conducted with force of arms. Let us remain in our nothingness and await the breath of the Holy Spirit to carry us where he will, doing our part with devout preparation and with continual exercise of the holy virtues and prayer, etc. I believe that Sister Agnes would do well to function in this way.

I did assist, by the Mercy of God, Sister Colomba. I administered the holy sacraments to her and up until the last moment I announced the divine word to her. But in a way I cannot express, my poor spirit was united to hers when I spoke to her in spirit, praying on my knees at her sickbed. I fully believe she died in the act of praying, lost in her nothingness, but all immersed in God. The work has remained secret, but her death was precious, without any outward signs, for she asked that grace of her Divine Spouse, and had asked for a long time. Oh, what a great soul! I always regarded her so from the time I came to know her. She was a miracle of such patience, which has become a perfect work.

The servant of God was buried in a double casket and sealed by the Ordinary, who so ordered the archpriest of the cathedral and the chancellor. I had something to do with that.

Please pardon any mistakes. As I write I am not well and “without mentioning what is hidden within.” Live our gentle Jesus. I recommend myself much to your hidden prayers, and I ask you to bless me as I kiss your sacred hands.

If Sister Agnes has gone to Rome, I ask you to write her my opinions, and that I am in no way inspired by her ideas, and that she should not write me, but pray for me.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

760

Thomas Fossi (40)

San Angelo
June 25, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

After a long time in returning to this Retreat, I am replying to your letters, which I received. First, I am more and more grateful in the Lord for your

charity, which you continue toward these religious, with the tuna you sent, and the rest. May God reward you. In regard to the rest of your letters, I will say what I have said at other times: humility of heart, charity and meekness with all, vigilance over the affairs of your family, union with the Will of God in every event, suffering in silence of faith and holy love are the virtues that you should ordinarily be practicing in accord with your status in life. But in order to act well, it is necessary to never leave off prayer and to continue this in your work by keeping your heart turned toward heaven, keeping yourself in holy interior solitude and rousing yourself often with aspirations, without omitting devout frequentation of the sacraments. With regard to conjugal continence, you know my long-held opinion, that you are not to bind yourself with a vow, but to keep your liberty both in seeking and rendering the debt.

It is best, and in accord with the counsel of the Apostle, to observe continence in order to give yourself to prayer, but that temporarily, that is, for certain solemnities of penance, etc., and this is in accord with your judgment, with great merit. The Holy Spirit will give you light as to your mode of acting. I am writing, loaded with tasks and not a few tribulations. God knows my condition, and I have reason to fear the punishment of God, which is upon me.

Recommend me much to the Lord. Some days ago I bid bon voyage to paradise to that great servant of God, Sister Colomba, a nun of the Carmelite convent in Vetralla, who after being nailed to her bed for thirty-five years, a miracle of suffering, the Lord wished that I administer the Last Sacraments to her and assist her to her last breath. I had been an extraordinary confessor since the mission in Vetralla. She was buried in a sealed double casket. I assisted at everything.

I ask you not to forget me in your prayers, for I am in extreme need and God knows how it will end. I greet your wife and the companion of your spirit in Christ. Make yourselves holy, for God calls you to that. But be holy with the hidden holiness of the Cross, which is entirely humility, charity, patience, and the rest. Jesus bless you and all your pious family. I am in a hurry. I will tell Father Francis Anthony of the rest.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

761

Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla (1)

San Angelo
June 27, 1751

J.C.P.

Just as your venerable convent has such a great share in the establishment of this Retreat, so too you, who govern the convent, have always, along with your blessed daughters, caused to shine forth and make resplendent the furthest extent of their charity toward our poor religious who live here. I am the poor one, who in the name of all and from the dust, offer to you our liveliest thanks in Jesus Christ. I pray that sweet Savior to enrich you every moment with the

hidden treasures of the holy virtues and all those precious pearls which are to be found by humble souls in the sea of his holy sufferings.

I rejoice, Reverend Mother, that all your religious daughters have a great desire to practice that interior solitude that I taught during the retreat, which I began but did not finish due to the precious death of Sister Maria Angela Colomba, whose memory is a blessing, etc. Oh! Mother Prioress, often recall for all that solitude, for that is a joy of inestimable value, rich in every good. Oh, fortunate those souls that are hidden within themselves in the inner temple of their spirit, and there adore the Most High in pure faith, in spirit and in truth, and burn the more with holy love!

This secret teaches faith, humility of heart, confidence in God without any dependence on any creature, and an ardent charity that embraces all. Let them learn this secret at the feet of the Crucified, for this is revealed only to little ones and hidden from the wise and prudent of this world.

I am writing just after I have come from the refectory and once more reaffirm our thankfulness. But if ever I or another religious comes to serve you, we will make a firm contract. Your charity has continued for us, and I do not wish that it be increased on the occasion that we serve your convent, for we are obliged to do that. You have complete freedom to command us in all happenings without further consideration. Meanwhile, I leave you in the Side of Jesus, in which I never lose sight of you in my poor prayers and those of my religious. With profound respect and esteem I say I am,

Your humble, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

762

Thomas Fossi (41)

June 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

After I replied to your two welcome letters on my return to this holy Retreat, and having consigned my letter to Father Fulgentius, who passed through here the day before yesterday for the baths at Viterbo, so that he might send it to you, I received another of your letters, forwarded by Signore Palomba, with two large jars, one with fish in oil and another one with marinated fish. It is a great charity that this Retreat receives from you, and God will reward you in time and in eternity. I rejoice over the visits you made to the churches for the Jubilee and much more over the interior visits which our God is paying to you in his interior kingdom and living temple, that is to say, in your soul.

Oh, how sweet is the spirit of Jesus Christ, my dear Thomas! You need to be most faithful to this good Lord, and be sure he will bring to perfection the work he has begun in you.

Oh, how much I recommend holy interior solitude, remaining like an infant in that sacred interior desert! When your occupations distract you a bit from

this divine solitude, arouse your faith sweetly, and peacefully concentrate your attention on God in your interior kingdom. Oh, what riches this is! If you will do this, without losing sight of your horrible nothingness and without curiously spying on the divine work and your own feelings and gifts, but in a pure, simple glance of faith and love without images, you will be in a filial repose on the bosom of the Heavenly Father. Every time you do this, you will be reborn to a new life of love in the Divine Word, Jesus Christ. Oh, what a grand thing I have just said! Read this with attention and practice it with childlike simplicity.

With regard to you daughter who is in the convent, you are guiding yourself well and you have given her rightful directions, nor should you prevent her from speaking to her maternal uncle, for the conversations will be good. You do well to act with such jealousy, and in that way you preserve your joys, I mean your daughter's, for virginity is a great joy, and it must be guarded with great jealousy, fearing... A few words to the wise.

Help your wife, the companion of your spirit, with holy reading. I hope much, much from her. I greet her in Jesus Christ. I wish her to be holy on the Cross of the Savior. I say the same for all your house.

If you see Signore Paulinus, give him my greetings in the Lord and my affectionate feelings of gratitude for his charity. Tell him not to fail to make himself a good companion of Jesus' suffering.

I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. I fear the scourge of the Lord, for I fear that my sins are crying out. Who knows how he wishes to go. Let us hope in God that the scourge does not approach your tent if we will be faithful to the Lord.

Desire to be holy with the hidden holiness of the Cross, as that is more pleasing to the Lord, and be entirely concentrated in your nothingness. Remember to enter into that sacred interior desert by the gate, for there is no other, which is the holy Life, Passion and Death of the Redeemer. Oh, if you knew my condition, and the waters and stormy winds in which I flounder, you would weep out of compassion over such danger.

O my dear son in Jesus, what will become of poor Paul, who is in such fearful storms? It is necessary that I encounter the waters and show myself content so as not to pain and discourage these great servants of God. I truly wish to be satisfied with the Will of God, but who knows how to do that? I fear "the sorrows and terrors of hell overwhelm me, and many waters have come even into my soul." I have made this secret outburst with you; with others I am silent.

That great soul is sick. Otherwise, she would have come here with a devout companion for a conference. God makes her hear, but I do not know when the effect of the work will come forth. For my part, I think it is a long way off, nor do I expect to see it in my lifetime. She says yes, and her conduct seems to me to be according to God. But I do not trust myself, and I fear and often doubt, but later the doubt and fear pass. May God always work his Holy Will for us. I am too diffuse; keep what I say to yourself. Greet your uncle and your pious house for me. I leave you in the Side of Jesus and say I am from the heart.

Regarding the donation of ten *scudi*, we have only a few Masses here. If you wish to perform such a charity; as soon as you let us know we will celebrate the Masses according to your intentions. That would be the best way to go.

I had the good fortune to assist at the holy death of that great servant of God, Sister Colomba, in the convent at Vetralla, as I wrote in my other letter. Thirty-five years of grave sickness, always on her back in one bed. Thanks be to God.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

763

John Anthony Lucattini (3)

San Angelo
July 3, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I have received your letters, but I have not written for God knows my condition. Since this is the way I am, I am not in a condition to write anything that needs great light. I keep myself in peace and give thought no further than meeting death — it seems I can say that. “We have waited so that it burdens us even to live,” and so I am always swimming more in deep and stormy waters. It is best to keep silent and let speaking be done by someone who knows that heavenly language, such as are souls united with God.

If they were to recommend me to God, that will be a great charity. Tell Lucy that. If I continue to live, I who have endured so many years, I am thinking of passing my life in silence except for the obligations of my state. Pray for us and may the Lord bless us.

If you wish to communicate with me, write through the post because letters arrive safely. They are more easily lost when sent to Toscanella.

P. of the †

764

John Anthony Lucattini (4)

San Angelo
July 20, 1751

Jesus

Reverend Father,

Your letter was very dear to me. You explain yourself marvelously well in it, so do not fear that you have uttered nonsense. Even the infant, after having given many caresses and expressions of love on the neck of its mother, then goes to sleep and rests on her breast without taking its little lips from suckling its milk. So the soul, weary from making affections, is accustomed to take its repose on the bosom of the Heavenly Father and does not rouse itself from that sweet loving attention in faith without the permission of the Sovereign Good.

Prayer is not to be made according to our ideas, but under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

It is best to begin your prayer on the mysteries of the holy Passion, for that is the gateway. "I am the door, and no one comes to the Father except through me." But when the soul gets lost in the immensity of the Divinity, and caught in that vision of the Infinite Good in faith and love, and fed by the love of charity, it should remain that way. It would be a serious mistake to turn away to anything else. Will you believe that, although it may seem to you that you are losing sight of the holy Passion, you are united to it? "All you who have been baptized have put on Christ. Your life is hidden with Christ in God."

I am in a hurry. Your prayer is going very well. Do your part and make sure you do not rob what is God's. You understand me. Let nothing other than God into your interior, and stay in high forgetfulness of all that is not God. Do not gaze at the gifts you receive in prayer, but toward the Sovereign Giver. Jacob saw the ladder and the angels ascending and descending. That is a picture of the contemplative soul that ascends to God in contemplation and descends to the knowledge of its own horrible nothingness, and then ascends once more. "He disposes ascensions in your heart." These are all interior operations of faith, etc. Goodbye. Pray for me and may the Lord bless us.

I sympathize with Lucy. Here, there is need to practice a bit of prudence. Let her go to be reconciled or to receive his blessing, and be still about the rest. If N. questions her on prayer, let her respond briefly that she is in the presence of God like a poor woman and compassionates Jesus in his sufferings. Nothing more. Let her not speak of Communion, for she is under obedience, even from me, not to leave off Communion at any time.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

765

Father John B. Forlani (8)

San Angelo
July 24, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I offer you special thanks in Jesus Christ for the courtesy you are offering to our students. However, it will be very difficult for them to accept your favor during their coming vacations due to the distance, the difficulties of the road, and their absence from choir and other exercises.

I will not fail to recommend to the Lord the benefactress who gave the napkins, etc. May the Lord reward her; and I will do the same for your relative. Meanwhile, I recommend myself warmly to your sacrifices and prayers, and from my heart I greet the captain, your brother. With full esteem and profound respect I kiss your sacred hands and I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

I am not forgetting your devout deceased predecessor.

San Angelo
July 29, 1751

J.C.P.

Illustrious Lady,

I read with edification your letter concerning that poor creature Agnes, for whom I could only recommend her to the Lord in my poor prayers. You will do more than I could do. So I ask you to strongly exhort your sister, and tell her on my behalf, that, if, God forbid, she were the cause that this poor daughter should once more go bad, she would have to give an account of that at the Divine Judgment. So if she wishes to have the blessing of heaven on her family, let her take care of her sister, let her be compassionate towards her, accept her as among the good with meekness, for that is what Jesus Christ has taught. Jesus Christ will accept as done to him the care extended to her sister, so let her think herself fortunate and believe that the devil has raised such an uproar in order to gather in his net our poor Agnes. For that evil one knows that, if he can capture her once more, it will be a fine trophy for hell. Let her be careful what she does.

With regard to what you tell me of Don Athanasius, I had already foreseen that. You know all the exhortations I gave him, and they have had no result. Oh, God! Talk to Father Fulgentius, for I am too far away. I ask you to be sure you are alone — God and you. Detach yourself from everything and follow your exercises even more than at first. Keep your room free for yourself so you can be there at the right times to treat with God in holy prayer.

Do not mix in with others more than is necessary; let them raise their own children; show great charity to all with great meekness and much patience. But first of all, and above all else, concentrate on your perfection. Count every day as the last one of your life so that this thought will stimulate you to holy perfection. I recommend holy interior recollection to you as I have said so many times. You have wonderful opportunities to practice the holy virtues, especially humility, charity, patience, and love of self-contempt.

Signora Maria Johanna, God wants you to be holy. Do not lose time; embrace every occasion the Lord offers. If Don Athanasius brings his wife into the house or not, you are not to utter a single word on the issue, but abandon yourself entirely to the Will of God. Mind your own business and let the dead bury their dead. Willingly stay in your room, go to church on time, even ahead of time, and go alone with your maid or with Magdalene, and remain as long as you have need. I say this so that you may have your freedom and not return to the vanities and other distractions that your surroundings may occasion, etc. If occasion should arise, be not ashamed to be in their company, etc., in order to exercise holy humility of heart and self-contempt, which please God so much.

262. Johanna is the sister-in-law of Agnes Grazi. The Agnes mentioned here is not Agnes Grazi of earlier letters, who had died some years before.

Magdalene wrote me two lines, but in order not to multiply letters and because of my many occupations, have the goodness to tell her that, if I had found a door open in any holy place, I would have acted, but I have not. So she needs to unite herself to the Will of the Lord and continue her exercises so that when God wills, she will be consoled. One can become holy anywhere. It suffices to be faithful in the practice of virtue and never omit the means which are prayers, continual recollection, the sacraments, and all the rest that has been taught her.

Let them recommend me to the Lord, and I leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus. With profound respect and esteem I again claim to be,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

767

Girolama Ercolani (19)

San Angelo
July 31, 1751

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering your letter that I received last night in the post, and I tell you that you have reason to rejoice in the Lord. First, for the happy passage from this life to blessed eternity, as I strongly hope, of your deceased husband. Second, for the protection of the blessed God over your family. Third, for being left more burdened with crosses, since this is the great gift that God grants his servants. For the one who suffers with patience and resignation is made more like Jesus Christ.

Cast aside the temptation of displeasure at being left a widow and thank God, for now, as Saint Paul says, your heart is no longer divided, but your love is completely for our dear Jesus.

With regard to the other temptations, spurn them, make nothing of them, for you have not committed the least sin, but you have gained merit. So there is no need to confess anything in order not to foster scruples.

Jesus Christ thinks about your daughters. You must believe that they will be provided for. Put all your trust in that Divine Savior and do not fail to do your part, especially in the holy upbringing, as you have done until now. Have them make prayer and never leave off that work. Hold as very certain that they will be well provided for. I am not losing sight of, nor will I lose sight of, your house in my poor prayers, especially for your person. Be of good heart, for God loves you and will assist you always. Things will go as well as when the doctor was living. Now he lives a better life in God. I greet the canon and all his household, and I leave you in the loving heart of Jesus,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Father Nicholas Zaniel (1)²⁶³

San Angelo
July 31, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Rather than causing me to mourn, your requesting me in your honest letter for a precise account of the precious death of Brother James, your worthy brother, has rather given me reason to congratulate myself. His precious death took place last year on the Vigil of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin into heaven. He lived a holy religious life and closed his last days of exemplary living with as holy a death.

Both from this fact, as from various happenings, we have a sign that we must believe he is already in secure possession of paradise. But the best sign was his regular observance.

I would not know how at this time to fulfill your fervent desire to have some memory of him that we could send to you there. In addition to having nothing at hand at this moment, I have no way to proceed to discover any of his effects. All the more so since our dear brother had already dispersed everything. Let us for now leave the entire care to God, for he will know that in accord with the designs of his eternal and Divine Good Pleasure, he brings about his glory at the right time and in whatever happens. It remains for you to recommend me in your prayers to God, and for me to work with others to fulfill your honorable wishes. As I kiss your sacred hands, I declare I am, and will always be, with sincere veneration and invariable esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (42)

San Angelo
August 4, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

I received in the ordinary post your welcome letter. But you should not write addresses in Latin for you make mistakes in the meanings.

The death of Sister Colomba was very precious in the sight of the Lord, as I trust, but not outwardly. However, she was buried in a double casket as a servant of the Lord, but showed no sign, for she wished always to be hidden out of her great humility. So I fully believe she obtained that favor even in death.

263. Zaniel, curate of Stirvia, is the brother of Brother James of Saint Aloysius, who was born in Switzerland in 1714; he took vows in the Congregation in 1743. He died on August 14, 1750. Brother James' cause for beatification has been started.

I confess with all sincerity that you are predicting so many things as I read in your letter. You should know, my dear Signore Thomas, that you are exposing yourself to a thousand deceptions. I tell you in truth that these predictions have in them nothing of the spirit of Jesus Christ. In this particular case, I even see they belong to your own imagination, and the interior feelings are coming from that nature as pure illusions of the enemy. So in all occasions, when such false lights come, immediately banish them and keep yourself in your smallness at the feet of the Lord, like a beggar.

With regard to the convent, I believe you are thinking more about yourself than about me, for I am very distant from that. Right now, I feel far from that soul, and although I believe she is very good, I still feel compelled to keep my distance in order to know the Will of God better. These are completely works of God, and we ought not do more than humble ourselves and wait. Who could ever discover the secrets of the Most High. Where should such a work start and when will it be? I, for my part, do not wish to inquire, nor do I wish to know. I want to stay in my detachment and prepare myself for death.

You are wrong when you tell me that my religious are aware of my small troubles. That is not true. Externally, I show myself as happy with others and as secret as I can be. I am most jealous to keep them secret so that God alone knows them. Nor do I wish to be compassionated by anyone. My religious can be aware of my small external troubles, such as the adversities regarding the foundations, the fatigues of continual weariness from letters, the journeys, missions, and so on, but for the rest they know nothing at all. The sweet interior cries to the Divine Will, the counsel given to others on occasion of their internal suffering, etc.

I am sorry about the self-deception of your wife. Tell her to get rid of her scruples and believe that her confessions are well made. She should beware of repeating even one word; otherwise, she will not have peace. It is the damned devil who suggests her confessions were bad. I know what I am saying. She has confessed well and should be quiet and obey.

With regard to your daughter in the convent, I leave you free to take her out or not. You know her mind. I think she is a good young woman, but I do not think she is made for the convent. That daughter does not have a vocation to be a nun in Piombino or elsewhere. She has not written anything of this to me, but I know it is so, if I am not mistaken. You will be able to know her better since she will not hide anything from her father.

Oh, how much I rejoice in the goodness and devotion of your children! Take care of them, Thomas, for they will be saints.

I ask you again and again to keep yourself in humility of heart, in a deep detachment from all that is not God. What do you want with these thoughts about holy souls and about that of B., etc.? Let these disappear. Such things impede your pure recollection in God. Oh, how much our spirit needs to be purified and detached from everyone, no matter how holy they may be. I admit to you the truth, when I have communication in spirit with any soul, and in the Congregation, I am in communication with all, since all these are servants of the Lord who are tending toward high perfection. But in truth I lose sight of

all of them in God, and in God and for God I love them. But I sense a great distancing. I say the same thing to you for that soul. Oh, how detached I judge myself! Thanks to God I am thinking of letting her direction lapse if God wills that, for I know my inability, and such souls have need of an Alcantara or Bernard.

With regard to continence, I come back to what I have always written. I am of the same mind.

With regard to going to confession, make the confession of your shortcomings with humility, plainness, clarity, and brevity; but do not go into the past, for you have made good general confessions. Burn up your scruples in the fire of holy love.

I am not happy with what you said to Sister Cherubina, that she should be the first stone, etc. Do you not see that these are deceptions? From this you should learn to cut off such ideas and never make anything out of them. She has not written me anything about this, but on my part I am telling you to guard against all such predictions, which will land you in great deceit. Oh, how much I insist on that! Cut them off like the plague.

Your desires for great perfection, accompanied by great humility and confidence in God and distrust of self, are excellent.

The fifty Masses will be celebrated punctually in accord with your pious intentions. I do not know how to express my lively gratitude for the great charity you continue. May God reward you.

Jesus bless you and your wife and children, along with all your household, and make you all saints. Greet your uncle and all for me in the Lord, and I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

770

John Anthony Lucattini (5)

San Angelo
August 7, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Father,

Last night I received your welcome letter. God will untie the knot concerning Lucy, but we ought not neglect prudent means in accord with God. Saint Paul, in order to introduce his preaching in Rome, made friends for himself among the adherents of Nero. I feel for Lucy and see that the repugnance she has in returning to her old confessor comes from a good reason. But it is needful to make a virtue of necessity. So let her continue to recommend the affair to God. Meanwhile, ask Lucy for me if she thinks it is good for me to write a prudent, informative letter to Father Dominic so that he might act, etc. I would hope to have him personally know, without making him aware of his error, and have him approve her practice of communicating, etc., for the reason that I will set out for him. Enough! I will wait for her advice. If she thinks it well, I will do it. If not, then let her consult God, etc.

Tell Lucy that the invitation to Calvary indicates some small cross that has to grow. I forgot to tell her that.

Let her take care to be always more faithful, always more humble of heart, always hidden in the Spirit of God in the divine interior solitude. Let her remember that Jesus in his holy Passion remained silent. "Jesus, however, kept silent." Oh, divine silence! Oh, holy silence, rich in that patience that "has a perfect work!" Oh, holy silence, guard of the treasury of virtues.

In the last post I sent two letters to high personages treating of foundations for our Congregation in a great kingdom far from here, about which I had never given a thought. But Divine Providence has opened a great path, and, if it succeeds, oh, how much glory will come from it for the Lord! In a short time the sovereign will take up the affair. Tell Lucy to take this to prayer and to present it to God at Holy Communion and to offer this work to the Divine Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then inform me as to her thinking. Let her humble herself more than ever.

Yesterday was a horrible day for me, even though it was the Feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. Last night was even more horrible. I was battered not a little, and I believe that only the tomb awaits me. Let them pray strongly for the poorest man on earth. Read this letter to Lucy so she understands how things are. I embrace you in Christ and beg you to be faithful to God so that His Divine Majesty may enrich you with the highest perfections, but this demands a deep knowledge of your own horrible nothingness. Remain in the sacred desert and place on your inner altar a bouquet of myrrh of the holy pains of our Crucified Love. Goodbye. In haste, since I have robbed time to write you, and from the heart goodbye.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

771

Lucy Burlini (4)²⁶⁴

San Angelo

August 17, 1751

Jesus

My Daughter in Jesus Crucified,

How did you spend the Feast of the Assumption? If you celebrated a holy feast, you would know with greater knowledge your horrible nothingness by knowing that, if God let you go on your own for one moment, you would fall into an abyss of evil and make yourself worse than a Turk.

264. Paul begs Lucy to pray that the pope will establish the Institute as a religious order with solemn vows, the privilege of ordaining the religious with the title of poverty, extension of the Order throughout the world, the right to have a branch for nuns, etc. Paul does not want all this simply to have his Community fully established, but that as an order it would be able to work for the good of the Church everywhere and till the end of time. Paul's apostolic purpose in founding the Congregation is powerfully stated. In this letter Paul refers to the vision Lucy had of "the doves" who symbolize the Passionist nuns.

You are a miracle of Divine Mercy, and you need to thank the very earth that it supports you and does not swallow you up in its depths. Oh, Lucy, blessed daughter, if God had given just one of his little graces from the superabundant grace he has given to you to an assassin or a Jew or a Turk, would they not be a great saint by now? It is true. So abase yourself all the more in your nothingness, you ungrateful creature, and from now on be more faithful than in the past to your Divine Spouse! But Father, you say, how can I do this? Now I will tell you.

First, all humbled and concentrated in your nothingness, in your being able to do nothing, having nothing, knowing nothing, but with a high confidence in the Lord, you must lose yourself entirely in the abyss of the infinite love of God, which is entirely a flame of love. "Our God is a consuming fire." Father John Anthony will explain that for you. There in that immense fire let your imperfect self be consumed entirely to be reborn to a new godlike life, a life entirely of love, a life entirely holy. This Divine Birth takes place in the Divine Word, Christ Our Lord.

Note that this divine work takes place in the most intimate part of your spirit, in the deepest room, etc. So, dead mystically to all that is not God, and with highest abstraction from every created being, enter all alone into that sacred interior solitude of the sacred desert. This entry is made by an annihilation. It is made with faith and holy love, with a high detachment from all sensible pleasure, however holy it might be. One must never look at that or take repose in that. Every time this holy turning inward or interior withdrawal occurs, standing in sacred silence of faith and love, the soul is reborn every moment to a new life of love in the Divine Word, whom she always hears and loves, etc. Oh, how much I would like to say!

But I have gone too far, and who knows whether you have understood me. But what am I saying? His Divine Majesty would not have had me write in this way if he did not wish to have you understand; and I know your way of life. Oh Lucy! how obligated you are to God! Oh, how humble you ought to be, charitable with everyone, meek, patient, with a good opinion of all except of yourself. Oh! what a lover of silence you should be, of being withdrawn, fleeing ease, but working and being silent and staying close to God within, as I said above. All the work I have spoken about happens in the interior solitude, in the temple of the soul, in the kingdom of God, which is the soul itself. More is learned by being silent, in the holy silence of faith than by speaking, etc. In that solitude the new godlike life comes to birth, that is to say, a holy life. The Divine Spouse leads you to fish in the sea of the holy sufferings; so fish, my daughter, and allow yourself to be entirely penetrated with love and with sorrow, and make the pains of Jesus your own.

In this great sea of the holy Passion you may fish for the pearls of all the virtues of Jesus Christ. This divine fishing in the great sea of the pains of the Son of God takes place without leaving the solitude of internal silence. Jesus will teach you everything if you will be very humble and dead to everything. In this sea of the holy Passion cry to God for me and for the Congregation. After Holy Communion offer to the Eternal Father his gentle Son, praying that

he expand this work across the whole world and raise it to solemn vows, and do this every day. Oh, my blessed daughter, if you knew the straits in which I find myself, especially with ordinations of candidates. It is necessary to go begging under the title of common table. His Holiness has granted eight or twelve, and now we are at an end, and I know the pope is reluctant to concede more for the Congregation at its beginnings. Besides, there is need to fight in order to obtain dimissorials from bishops who are far away. Oh, how many difficulties! I do everything for love of God. But my lights are for solemn vows, and I have constantly asked for them. But for now all we are granted and approved for are simple vows.

Truly the Holy See acted this way with Saint Camillus de Lellis, the Scolopians, and others; and afterwards raised them to solemn vows. Cry out then, and let us grab the grace with our hand. Let Mary Most Holy, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Joseph, and all the angels and saints intercede for us. Take care not to be a coward, for now is the time, etc. With faith, humility, charity and assiduous prayer all will be won, for this is meant to be the prize of prayer. You poor little one, humble yourself much, seeing that His Divine Majesty does me the honor to grant you a share in the prayers for a work so exalted.

I tell you even further that, if we do not obtain this favor, that work which God made known to you under the symbol of the doves will never be achieved and cannot go ahead. Do you understand me?

Even more, there will never be the possibility of expansion and never will we have fine candidates of great ability. So you see it is necessary to cry out to obtain this favor. Offer the suffering Jesus to the Father. Tell him that, if the world does not deserve this visit of his mercy, Jesus does merit it. Tell him this and speak to him frankly, but with profound reverence, etc., for the world goes on forgetful of the pains of Jesus, which are the miracle of miracles of the love of God. Pray that God send his servants from this Congregation to sound the trumpet of holy preaching to awaken the world, so much asleep, and, above all, pray that God be appeased with me, for I know clearly that I am the reason that holds back the tremendous grace. The Holy Spirit will teach you. Keep all this quiet. Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

These things which I am confiding to your heart must remain secret, and treat of them only with God. Father John Anthony ought to support you from the holy altar, for that is more important than anything. If he does not do it, we will have an accounting.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Anthony Lucattini (6)

San Angelo
August 17, 1751

J.C.P.

My Dear and Beloved Friend in Jesus Christ,

About the reasons you give me regarding the withdrawal of Lucy from her former confessor, I see them coming from a good and holy intention; however, I also see that we need to go slowly in writing, as I said, to the aforementioned N., since it seems to me it would be a miracle, so to speak, to induce him to be persuaded. He is a good churchman, but that goal — high, pure, naked, abstracted from all things created — not everyone has their sight so pure as to reach there, except the soul of elevated prayer and mystically dead to what is not God. So we have the goal, but not the means.

God will let him know in time that the work in such a soul is all of God, and I desire more than ever that she continue to have Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament take up his abode in her virginal breast. So I ask you to speak to the curate, since I am happy that he goes along with his bishop and pastor. That conversation should be just between the two of you in great secrecy and with heavenly prudence.

Let him know briefly my own judgment of the holy way of life of Lucy, seeing it is sixteen years that I have served her soul and without any breaks. I have found her faithful in the virtue of purity of conscience and steadfastness with her Divine Spouse, etc. Give an understanding that the curate will never let on to Lucy that he has been given information from me. Nor should he show he has a high opinion of her, keeping her humble. For as long as we are in the prison of the body, it is necessary to fear and tremble.

Let her understand in charity that the Holy Communion is being accorded her because she is weak and imperfect, and that without Jesus she would fall into an abyss of evil — and this is the plain truth. Use holy prudence so that she remains at peace with the former confessor. If possible, take care that she go to Communion early in the morning when there are no people in church, as after the first Mass. It would be charitable of her not to inconvenience the curate.

Lucy could approach the confessor once or twice a week, but go to Communion every day on my conscience. They know the decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council that allows confessors the care with regard to daily Communion, since these have insight into the inner life for the advantage of souls, etc. He is a poor example who has not read that decree and is able to read it. I know, however, that such things happen. Oh! that God would renew the fervor of early Christianity when people communicated every morning, as ordered by Saint Anacletus! Oh, may it please the Lord that there be many souls, such as Lucy, so that they would be the delight of the Heart of Jesus! Enough now! Let them recommend me to God, for I have need of that. The lights I have regarding myself, oh, how I place myself beneath the feet of Lucifer! ..., and there I place myself, trusting, nonetheless, in the Lord. I am

enclosing this note for Lucy. You may continue your conduct for it goes well. With regard to school, make a bit more prayer on that, and then we will come to a decision, etc. I embrace you in the Lord.

If then His Divine Majesty inspires Lucy to have me write the confessor, let me know and I will do it, since she would be so inspired.

I add as a rule of holy prudence: the wisdom of the saints is prudence.

If Lucy is asked by the ordinary confessor about her manner of prayer, lights, and so on, she may respond that she places herself before God as a dirty old woman, unworthy of any concern, and she tries to unite herself with God by means of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and with regard to lights she is an ignorant woman and does not know how to explain herself. She is to say that it is a great mercy of God that poor Paul understands her because of his long experience with her, and he has told her not to speak of her foolishness. In that way she can satisfy the confessor and not stifle her spirit. Otherwise, if a conference were held without permission from on high, oh, how upset and disturbed would her spirit be for a while! Guide yourself in accord with your own inner lights.

Pray that the curate, her ordinary confessor, if the former confessor, Father Dominic, asks him about Lucy, which I do not want to believe, will tell him in brief and efficacious words that she is very grateful for his prayers, and the reason she left him was according to God. When the Lord shall will, he will make him understand. If he wants to know, etc., after Lucy will have prayed, after Holy Communion, outside of confession, and in the chapel with modest and serene countenance and subdued voice, let her tell him in the Lord that for holy ends she did what God wanted, etc. It seems to me I have said everything.

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

773

Passionist Religious (5)²⁶⁵

San Angelo

August 19, 1751

Paul of the Cross,

General Superior and Servant,

To Our Dear Brothers and Sons in Jesus Christ Who Make Up the Family of the Holy Retreat of N.,

Charity, Grace, Peace, and Blessings in the Lord Forever:

265. This is a circular letter requesting prayers that the Congregation receive all the privileges of a fully established institute in the Church, namely as an order. Again Paul stresses the apostolic goal of the Community. Perhaps he was reflecting on writing this letter to all the religious when he wrote the previous letter two days earlier to Lucy Berlini. Or perhaps his writing to Lucy clarified his thinking on the reasons the Congregation should become an order.

Having always known in the Lord that the great work of our poor Congregation of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, planted by the Mercy of the Most High in the vineyard of his Church and on the evangelical field in these very dangerous times in which vice triumphs with such great offense to the Sovereign Majesty, there ought to be born assiduous, fervent, and humble prayers, supported by a living faith, constant hope, and ardent charity, to move the Love of the great Heavenly Father to use this great mercy for the misery of the world by bringing to perfection the work his infinite goodness had begun by raising it to the solemn vows so that it might expand to all the earth with greater prosperity and blessing, and so that there might be everywhere holy workers, who, like sounding trumpets enlivened by the Holy Spirit, might arouse souls sleeping in sin through the preaching of the pains of the Son of God, Christ Jesus, so that with compunction they might weep salutary tears of penitence, and with the continual, devout meditation on these same pains they might rise to an ever greater, holy love of God, living devoutly in accord with their state; for that reason and moved by the holy light referred to above, which the Divine Goodness has given every time we had recourse in the years gone by to the Holy See for the approbation of our holy Rules, we always and constantly asked for the grace of solemn vows. However, in this regard it has pleased the Lord to inspire the Sovereign Pontiff to grant only the favor of simple vows, along with the approval of the holy Rules, which all of you know, because we are a newly born Congregation. But there are the examples of the Croziers,²⁶⁶ the Ministers for the Sick, the Fathers of the Society of the Pious Schools, and others, which at their beginning had only simple vows and in the passage of time were raised to solemn vows. Now that, thanks to the Lord, our Congregation is growing in both the number of its members and in the number of its Retreats, and, in addition, there are requests for new foundations in other regions, and since we have a serious necessity for priestly members in order to establish and provide for such foundations, hence you easily see how necessary is the favor of solemn vows so that our Congregation may have the privileges as other orders, especially to be able to ordain its members with the title of holy poverty, which we profess to the greater glory of the Lord.

Since such a treasure of graces must come immediately from the divine mine of the mercy of the Most High, therefore, you, dearest sons, all united in charity, must cry in prayer day and night so that His Divine Majesty may grant this grace. Ask for this grace with lively faith and do not hesitate. Hold for certain that you obtain it through Jesus Christ our Lord. Present to the great Father his suffering Son, and tell him the greater part of the world lives forgetful of his holy Passion, and therefore His Majesty is so offended. Tell him that, if the world does not merit the visit of such a sublime mercy, Jesus Christ does merit it. There ought not continue in the world, I will put it that way, such a diabolical ingratitude and forgetfulness. Offer Jesus in the Blessed

266. We do not know to which of the various cross-bearing orders this refers.

Sacrament to the Eternal Father, especially after Communion, and ask him for love of Jesus not to deny us this grace. Say what love prompts you to say, using Mary Most Holy, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Joseph, Saint Mary Magdalene, and all the angels and saints as intercessors, relying especially on the sorrows of Mary. Pray, pray, dearest brothers, but pray in faith and never doubt.

So that your prayers may be heard, be humble of heart, lovers of the denial of your own will, meek, patient, highly united in true charity, exact in obeying, clear in conscience in conferences and confession, simple as babes, interpreting in a good sense the action of your brothers, having a good opinion of everyone and a poor opinion of self. Above all, be most exact in observing the holy Rules, taking account of everything, even the least, and maintain silence, which is the golden key that protects the treasury of virtues.

In giving the customary blessing each evening, we ask Father Rector to recommend to all that they make their prayer with great fervor, and that priests beseech His Divine Majesty every morning in their Holy Masses, and in the usual discipline add the collect, "For Any Necessity," which begins, "God, our refuge, etc."

And, above all, let each one cry out to the Lord for your unworthy General Superior, who confesses that he is the guilty one. It is because of his sins and ingratitude that issuance of this exalted grace is blocked to the great hurt of the Congregation. So, dear ones, pray that God may be appeased and look on the General Superior with an eye of mercy so that he may weep day and night for his transgressions and in the future be a mirror of observance so as not to ruin the universal good of the Congregation. Let us pray, finally, from the sweet Jesus his most copious blessings. Amen.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

Given from the holy Retreat of San Angelo in Vetralla.

774

John Anthony Lucattini (7)

San Angelo

August 28, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear and Beloved in Jesus Crucified,

I am writing in haste, for I am loaded with letters and am writing not a few. I received your welcome letter last night. I intend the letters I write to Lucy for you as well, and for that reason I am not writing at length to you.

It is true that your prayer is not as intense, but, if you are faithful, you have started on that path. I hope that the letters will give you light, for the thoughts are not mine, but the word of the Lord, etc.

If Lucy wishes to be a servant of God, it is necessary for her to be mute, deaf, blind, that is, nothing. She must be dead to all that is not God, never justifying herself, never complaining, never resenting. But in imitation of Jesus Christ, she must remain in a patient, sweet, and peaceful silence within and without. Note all this carefully.

“Jesus was silent.” Oh, holy silence, rich in every good, for it is the faithful protector of virtue! I want to hope that in the encounter with her confessor she will conduct herself well, and that you have told her she is to be meek and sparing in words, without justifying herself, but treating the affair purely in God. However, in such an event, if it is to ever succeed, it will be best if, prostrate on her knees, she listens to the reprimand without opening her mouth, but like a lamb with serene countenance, modest and peaceful, she allows her wool to be sheared. Take note of this and meditate on it. If she will do that, she will be an imitator of Jesus Christ and come out in sanctity. The blessed God has not willed to reveal to anyone certainty of salvation, so we work in fear and trembling as Saint Peter tells us. She will save herself if she will be faithful to God, humble, and persevering in the way she has undertaken to the end.

Let them continue to pray for the known great affair, and let Lucy continue as she is doing. Allow others to say what they want. Let her be mute, blind, deaf; let her suffer and be silent, rejoicing to be despised and reduced to nothing. Oh, if some day, without offense to God, they were to hunt her down, stone her and all cry out: “Death, death to this traitor!” oh, how much I would rejoice for so great a good! But not because of an offense to God. Continue your prayer and the rest. Jesus make you holy and bless you. Amen.

Regarding school, pray about that and have Lucy pray about it. Goodbye in haste.

Ah! cry out especially for me and for the Retreat of Toscanella.

I have reread your letter, and I bless the Lord who has given Lucy the grace to conduct herself well, etc. If there is a next time, she should get on her knees, like a lamb, and in the silence of faith and charity, of peace and meekness, all concentrated on God, listen and be silent. Oh, what a treasure! Lucy, pray for the favor of our great business. If not, the doves will not come to the nest, and you will remain in your nest in Piansano.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

775

Girolama Ercolani (20)

San Angelo
August, 31, 1751

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

Last night I received your welcome letter, filled with holy thoughts such as you never shared with me previously. Oh, the good that trials bring! But you should not doubt about anything, for God is protecting you. If all of hell come against you, you are not to fear, for Jesus Christ is entirely for you and your pious house. I will pray, and have prayers said, and I will do it from a true heart. With regard to these lawsuits that have arisen, make use of holy people, especially Signore Petri, and let them arrange things peacefully and without litigation. Be of good heart, for the blessed God will always help you and make you triumph over all, even with the proper and fitting care of your

children. Let them continue their holy exercises of piety as usual, and let them trust in the Lord. They will see marvels if they are faithful to God.

Signore Morelli should not inconvenience himself to come here because I am too busy. But I will speak with him there. This is all the more reason that I do not get involved in secular affairs, and I am forbidden to do so by our Rules. If he wishes to speak with me, he can speak with me on my way through there, which will be in the first days of October, but I do not know the precise date, etc. I will be glad to have news about Rignano.

Jesus bless you and make you holy, and be at peace in God, who loves you much, etc. In haste I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

776

A Gentleman (3)

San Angelo
September 2, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

The great indebtedness that I profess to you in Jesus Christ turns your requests to me into important commands. Therefore, in the present post I am writing to Father Rector of the Retreat over there that he admit to the first vestition the young man that you recommend to me, regarding whom you write enthusiastically, for he has the qualities in accord with our Rules, as I hope. I would prefer that he be accepted as a cleric, so I will instruct Father Rector to hold an examination to find out if he understands Latin well. My tasks prevent me from replying to the young man. I will do it at a later post. Meanwhile, would you please notify him of my judgment, and that I willingly embrace him into this Congregation so that in it he becomes holy.

I am writing in haste and leave you in the holy Side of Jesus with all your pious household and promise that I will not omit making you always a part of my poor prayers in testimony of the gratitude I profess. With full esteem and profound respect I affirm I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

If my occupations and imminent departure keep me from writing to the young man, this letter will serve as my vote, etc. Meanwhile, let him present himself to Father Rector for the examination, etc. The latter will give me news of the outcome. Pardon my repetition.

John Baptist Pettrossi (2)

San Angelo
September 7, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will be in the protection of the God of heaven; and he who confides in the Lord will not be lost forever."

The prayers are being offered and will continue. Be sure of that. But you should be constant in trusting in God and abandoning yourself to his Holy Will, approving all that he disposes as best. "The hand of the Lord is not shortened." When things seem desperate, then His Divine Majesty makes you see what a wonderful Father he is, and in his decree all things are arranged. Be content in God and trust in him, for he is a Father, a most loving Father, who would let both heaven and earth perish before one who confides in him. Jesus enrich you with every grace, peace, and blessing. Amen. With profound esteem I say I am with all respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (52)

San Angelo
September 7, 1751²⁶⁷

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I cannot express with my pen the degree to which my heart feels itself ever more obligated to your piety in the always great charity that you continue toward me, especially in the charitable treatment given with so much beneficence to our poor religious on their journey to your place. I will not fail to cry out to the Most High in my cold prayers that His Divine Majesty render you an eternal reward.

The missions preached in Giuliano and Prossedi were blessed by the Lord with abundant fruit. In each place a retreat was conducted for the clergy. There remains only to pray the divine mercy that he level the power of our common enemy so that he does not sow weeds and ruin so much good.

It is probable that shortly after Christmas there will be an occasion for your brother Signore Cavaliere to exercise his charity for me and a companion on my journey, which I hope to make to Terracina. In that way there will be given him greater opportunities of merit in the exercise of mercy toward us poor

267. This letter is probably dated incorrectly. Paul continues on at San Angelo until at least October 1, when he writes Zelli. On October 13 Paul is at San Sosio, beginning a mission at Giuliano on October 20. In a letter to Fossi on December 6, Paul mentions that he finally returned to San Angelo on Thursday, December 2. Rather than September 7, this letter was probably written December 7.

ones. You will enrich yourself with greater graces and treasures of merits in the ordination to the diaconate of three of our good religious, who are truly servants of Jesus Christ. God knows with what reluctance I have seen them transferred from this Retreat where they were continuing their studies. But necessity forced me to do that.

I end with my face in the dust and at your feet, asking for your holy prayers and holy pastoral blessing. With profound reverence I affirm I am truly,

Your devoted, respectful, humble servant,

Paul of the Cross

779

John Anthony Lucattini (8)

San Angelo

September 9, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I am answering your letter and say that your prayer is going better than at first. The principal sign that your soul ought to stop interior discourses is when the soul finds pleasure in being one-on-one with its loving Lord with a loving attention, with a sweet vision of faith, with a sacred silence of love. Now it is happening in this way, and I perceive all the good signs come together according to the masters of the Spirit. Always go through the door which is the holy Life, Passion and Death of Jesus in the way the Holy Spirit will teach: "I am the door, etc." Prepare yourself always by humbling yourself and with knowledge of your nothingness.

Prayer is not to be made in our mode, but as the Holy Spirit wishes. So when His Divine Majesty allows your soul to hold colloquies or to make supplications for your neighbor, do so. You will know this through interior touches that can be explained only by those who experience them. This prayer is the door for everything. Remain always in a holy interior solitude, despoiled of images and detached from everything created.

Take account of this treasure from the Lord and guard it with fidelity. Do not rely on sensible satisfaction, but completely on God and in doing his Holy Will. As a reject in the house of God, be hidden from everyone, distrustful of self, and completely confiding in God. Let Lucy continue her way of life in true humility of heart, purity of intention, hidden from all creatures so as not to expose her treasure to being snatched away by pride. Both of you pray much for me, for now I am in greater need.

Do not write me again until July of 1752, if I am alive, for in a short time I will be out for a while on foundations, mission, etc. Oh, how many battles and dangers are ahead of me! Oh, in what waters I find myself! I have need of prayers. Those who are safely under roof without fights should cry out for him who is in the battle and ploughing the seas in storms, etc. Jesus make you holy. Do not write more because I have much to do and, as I said, I am leaving soon. Let Lucy be faithful to God, humble, submissive, charitable, with pure intention, patient and silent, recollected, etc. Otherwise, His Divine Majesty

will give the treasures to others and take them away from her if she is not faithful in hiding them under the ashes of holy humility, in a deep detachment, poverty of spirit, and high union with the Divine Will. I am in a hurry and leave you in the holy Wounds of Jesus Christ,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

780

Reverend Master General Mugnani (2)²⁶⁸

San Angelo
September 11, 1751
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Father,

I received your esteemed letter, and I am always more edified with your pious thoughts, like now in relation to your holy prudence in the case of Sister Agnes of Fabbrica. With regard to that person, about whom I spoke to you in Vetralla, you know that I said I wished to leave off her direction, and I have already done so. I am happy about that. The extraordinary and extravagant way she is walking demands close examination and the assistance of a director who is both holy and learned. That is far from me, who am ignorant and a great sinner. Granting that the great Lord, who chooses the weak and the ignorant of this world, wished to make use of me, I would have disposed that she go permanently to some place where we could confer often, at least once or twice a month, and I am sure of that. Now, I have taken a decision in the Lord, after having recommended myself much to God, which will help her as a great proof and for my greater assurance, in order to know whether we have gold or lead.

Details are always more startling. A pious and learned ecclesiastic writes me of stupendous things, but I have observed that in some instances the lights do not withstand testing. Am I to expose myself to the danger of seeing some trick explode? No way! These are souls who have need of a director nearby and with the qualities listed above, not a poor wretch like me, so burdened with tasks. Seeing that things are so secret and in her alone, etc., and they are sealed with a thousand seals, do not speak about me any more in this regard, etc. That is what fidelity asks.

I pray the gentle Jesus will accompany you on your way and in your works, especially in your preaching in Venice. I assure you I will share with you my poor prayers with the desire that your heart is turned more and more toward heaven, and that your prayer is continual by means of holy interior recollection, and that you be clothed in the holy pains of Jesus. I am writing in a hurry and leave you in the loving Heart of Jesus. While asking you not to

268. Paul wrote to Mugnani earlier about Sister Agnes and her intention to form a community of nuns who would be joined to the Passionists. Paul remarks on the need for a director who can work more closely with those who are visionaries.

forget me in your private prayers, I declare myself with all my soul from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

781

John Francis Sancez (10)

San Angelo
September 15, 1751
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Your letter, contained with another from Siena, was most gratifying to me. I am answering it, along with an enclosure, which would you forward securely, for it is an affair much to the glory and service of the Lord.

I, too, am anxious for solving the business with the Jesuits. I rejoice that the mercy of the Lord has blessed them so well, and that the Lord has made them well assured. I wish, however, that the stress would pass away as quickly as possible so that they can go ahead with peaceful minds in their exercises of piety.

To my great edification I hear that the building for the poor sick as a hospice for the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ is already completed. You, my dear John Francis, have taken the shortcut to bring upon yourself, and upon your whole house from generation to generation, the greatest blessings from heaven, as you will experience personally. Now enough! I hope to have the consolation of seeing the work the Mercy of God has done. But who knows when that will be? I leave the first of this coming October to assist at two foundations, that of Terracina and Paliano. They will give me much to fight about, and who knows how I shall come out amid the difficulties, contradictions, and battles that still continue with the infernal enemy. I hope that the divine goodness will overcome everything. Otherwise, "May the Will of God be done in all things."

So this time I do not know whether I will be in the Retreat of the Presentation until Lent, and I doubt that. There will be need to spend Easter there. I am in a hurry and enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I look upon you in my poor prayers, along with all your pious house, and from a true heart affirm once more I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Girolama Ercolani (21)

San Angelo
September 18, 1751

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I thank you much in Jesus Christ for the cooperation in finding housing in Rignano. Here we have excessive heat, and, if it does not rain a bit, I do not know how we can stand it. I am under pressure to get on my way. Since making it in one day to Civita is too much strain, we will stay the night at Caprarola, and on the following day we will reach there. We will rest a bit, and there will be three or four hours to talk. It will be soon enough to leave for Civita around 19 or 20 hours. I rejoice in the Lord that things are better and you are happy in the Lord. You will see always more assistance that His Divine Majesty will give to your house and children.

With regard to confessions, continue to put in practice the advice I have given you. Otherwise, you will not have peace.

Be sure always and forever that you have a share in our prayers. I hope that Jesus will rain his copious blessings on you and all your pious household. I am writing in a hurry, and I am waiting to speak to you. If it rains, we will be there in the morning of October 1. Jesus make you holy and bless you and all your devout family. Greet the canon for me. In the holy Side of Jesus I say I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (43)

San Angelo
September 21, 1751
Leaving.
Expected return in February 1752.

J.C.P.

My Beloved Thomas and Son in Christ,

I am replying in haste to your welcome letter and am already on my way out. I will not return here until the middle of next February. Not only have I never believed that the basis of your spirit was false, but I have always held that your conduct is in accord with the spirit of Jesus Christ since the signs and effects are clear. I certainly did say that your predictions or lights are to be avoided. You should be silent on these since they are subject to a thousand illusions, and here the good grain can be mixed with weeds. Continue to remain in your nothingness and carry on the altar of your heart the pains of Jesus Christ. Continue to be meek, patient, charitable with all, and, above all, to direct your family and bring up your children well. This is exactly what God wants of you now.

It is necessary for you to have a good confessor to guide your conscience since you are in business and negotiations. With your wife you should proceed

with the rules of holy matrimony and show her the charity of affections, which is proper, so that she does not become jealous. You ought not become scrupulous in the honorable and holy actions you may engage in. Regarding continence, I hold to my constant theme and tell you what I have always told you. So I am saying nothing more on that point.

To speak about prayer with others is dangerous; you should not do that. But taking counsel with learned and holy persons is a good thing. Finally, I come back to the instructions given, etc. I ask you to recommend me to the Lord, for I have not a few troubles with the foundations.

I stopped directing that soul because I am so distant and burdened with affairs. I should not involve myself in such an exalted business, especially when so many extraordinary things demand close examination. If God were to will that, he would make that clear. I am in great haste. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus with all your house, and I am from the heart,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

784

Canon Lawrence Notari²⁶⁹

San Angelo

September 25, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

With regard to the matter which you do me the favor of clarifying in your polite letter, I ought, first of all, let you know that it was stated to me by a person who was present with his eyes open on the exact sentence in the copy. I did not overlook the last part, as they suppose, the part beginning with “sin autem exulat”. However that may be, the opinion of our Father Master is correct. He would say that in this case there is no impediment with which you could be judged to be involved, whether you look at the make-up of the dowry, or proper recognition by the chancery, or finally the resignation from the canonry. For you certainly would need to resign it in order to enter religious life. With regard to that, I would not disapprove of you sending a petition to His Eminence and asking him to grant the transfer of the canonry to your nephew. At the same time you might ask him for his pastoral blessing so that you could quickly leave the secular world and take refuge in the happy port of our Institute. For the rest, I would say to leave everything for the more precise determination of lawyers, whose profession allows close study. There is only one more thing to underline here. It is that the more water is agitated, so much the more muddled it becomes. This is as much I can weakly suggest to you. I

269. Canon Notari lived in Viterbo.

recommend myself to your fervent prayers and, meanwhile, kiss your sacred hands and am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

Dear and Reverend Canon, clear yourself as quickly as you can. The whole Congregation is waiting to embrace you in the holy Wounds of Jesus. Here you will find true peace that the world can never give. I have no doubt that, if you will send your petition to the cardinal, who has such a pious heart and so inclined to cooperate with your spiritual profit, he will console you in everything. But if you stir up the waters with repeated conversations, who knows. I would dispatch the affair at all costs. Let us put your soul in safety. Be done with the matter and hasten here. Father Fulgentius, our novice director, is waiting for you with fondness and has written that to me in this post. Pardon me for love of God, and with all my heart I embrace you in Jesus Christ. My warmest greetings to Canon Corsini as well as his brother canon and all his house.

785

Signora Frances Zelli (5)

San Angelo
October 1, 1751
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I thank you in Jesus Christ for your kindness and charity that you have for me and our poor Congregation, and assure you that in testimony of our gratitude, we are not wanting, nor shall we be wanting, in praying His Divine Majesty for your pious intentions, especially for Signore Leopold. You can believe in the eagerness we have for his greater spiritual profit and that of all your illustrious household. We will not fail to have the people pray for you when I am giving the holy missions. Leaving you in the sacred Side of Jesus, with profound respect and esteem and deference I affirm once more I am, as I depart in haste,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Bishop Lawrence Tartagni

Falvaterra

October 13, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I adore with my face in the dust the dispositions of the Most High in the renunciation you have made of your diocese.²⁷⁰ I am trying, with the help of divine grace, to let die in the always adorable Will of God the pain my poor spirit experiences in the departure from here of such an outstanding benefactor, as well as the reflection of your great piety and example to so many other prelates, after having crowned your works with the founding of this holy Retreat, a work of such glory to the Lord and of so much profit for our neighbor. This assures you of an eternity of glory, as I hope. You now go to rest your soul at the foot of the Crucified to prepare yourself for the highest union with God in flying to heavenly beatitude, as I would desire for you and as it pleases the Lord, but not too quickly.

I assure you that in our poor Congregation there will be a perpetual memory of your venerated person. We will have a petition in this holy Retreat so that a grateful remembrance of such a great benefactor may be made in the presence of His Divine Majesty. I implore from your great charity a part in your holy prayers, for I have extreme need. Asking you to bless me and all our Congregation, I offer you my profound reverence,

Your humble, respectful, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

John Fedele

Ceccano

October 15, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Next Wednesday, October 20, around evening, I will begin the holy mission in Giuliano, mandated by the bishop of the diocese and, even more, by the Highest Pastor of souls, Jesus Christ. Would you please have the announcement made to the people so that they may be disposed to receive this great treasure? I also ask that you have a good platform built, at least eight palms in length and width proportionate, solid and strong, so that we can have the sacred ceremony in good order. The method of the sacred entrance to the mission will be explained orally to any cleric you send to meet me a mile from the place so that we can give him news of our arrival, etc.

270. Paul is at San Sosio, Falvaterra, east of Vetralla, and writes to the bishop who has just resigned from his See of Veroli.

I recommend myself to your good prayers. I hope in the Mercy of God that your heart will exult in the Lord in seeing a contrite people turned to the great Father of mercies with true conversion. I am writing in haste and kiss your sacred hands. With profound respect I say I am,

Your true, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

788

Abbot Pompey Angeletti²⁷¹

Giuliano
October 21, 1751

Dear Abbot,

I cannot express my lively gratitude for so much charity. With great satisfaction I hear of your continual improvement in health, and I hope in the Lord that you will soon be perfect. I will pray for that and have prayers offered to the good God. From the letter enclosed you will learn of the defects of the Retreat of Terracina. I am sending the letter of these gentlemen, along with my reply to them, so that you see how I am guiding myself for the love of God. When you read the letter, or if you do not read it, have someone read it to you so you do not weary yourself, have the kindness to seal it, for I am sending it unsealed. At your first opportunity have it sent back securely. I am writing in haste and greet you on behalf of our companion Fathers, and with all my heart affirm again that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

789

Mother M. Frances Forlani (1)

Valmontone
November 17, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

Your letter was forwarded to me while I am here in Valmontone, preaching a holy mission. My health is poor, and I believe I have been falling sick since yesterday; God knows how it will turn out, I will not be able to stop in Civita because of my grave illness and dizziness of head and other things. I will not be able to come to San Oreste now to give the retreat to the nuns; so you

271. This is the first letter to a member of the Angeletti family. There is one other written to Father Charles on February 26, 1760. This noble family supported Paul in many ways. Frequently Paul stayed at their home in Rome and elsewhere. The first contact with Paul seems to have been by Pompey, who died in 1760. His brother Captain Joseph also helped Paul in the Terracina foundation. Joseph died in 1765. His son was Don Charles, the canon. Another son was John Baptist, who with his wife, Anna Catherine Bischi, testified in the Processes.

cannot take much profit from me. Now for your business. In my opinion it should pass through the hands of the bishop. In regard to the petition as witness, they can do as they think best.

I am close to the grave, from what I can believe, for my sickness is increasing. So recommend yourself to God and take counsel from your pastor. If things work out and I live, I will not fail to come, if asked to help a bit to give some assistance to the regular observance, for I have had some experience in that. I recommend myself much to your prayers, and with all esteem I am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

790

Isidore Calzelli (3)

Valmontone
November 19, 1751

J.C.P.

Your Reverence,

I am weighed down with tasks, and I ask your goodness to come here to Valmontone to help us with confessions and the care of souls for the Lord. If it is possible, bring another good confessor with you. In my name ask the Reverend Provost to give you one of the best. I am waiting until tomorrow night, or at most until Sunday. I already have full faculties. Greet the canon for me and the provost and all in the Lord. As I kiss your hands, I say I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

791

Thomas Fossi (44)

San Angelo
December 6, 1751

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

Thursday, December 2, I returned to this Retreat in very poor shape. I am staying here like a bird on a branch, awaiting my flight, for in a short time a few further blows will take me to the grave. May God will that I save this poor soul of mine. While I hope, I fear very much. I am replying to your welcome letter of October 19.

To come there to give a mission is a very difficult matter. Because of the many duties imposed on me, I cannot be away from the Congregation, and in going to the island I would not be available for the needs of the Congregation. If they wish our missions, they can ask for me, but with the freedom that in case I cannot come, I can send other missionaries. This is as much as I can promise in witness of the keen desire I have to serve them.

I am in such a state that, if the blessed God does not work a miracle, I will soon be incapable of anything and perhaps in the grave in a short time since nature and even the body cannot endure so many storms and illnesses. So I pray you in the heart of Christ, and out of that love and zeal that I have always had for your perfection, that you recommend me more than ever to the Lord by offering some Communion for me so that His Divine Majesty will save this poor soul of mine and give me the grace, fortified by the holy sacraments, and assist me in my agony so that I do not yield to the assaults. Oh, in what trembling and straits my poor spirit finds itself! "But deservedly I suffer these things," for to the just, "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," and to the impious, "wrath and indignation." God deliver me that this is not so in me.

For the rest, it seems to me that the things of your soul go well, but I would wish that you did not philosophize so much about your soul. I would like you to remain more like a child, reposing on the breast of the Divine Father, all clothed with the pains of Jesus Christ and all concentrated in God in the interior temple of your soul in a true internal solitude, even in the midst of your business.

You are doing well in making your business prosper for the sake of your family, and you are obliged to do that. According to the account that you give me, it seems to me that you are acting with fairness and justice. I rejoice in the Lord that your income is growing, and I hope it will do so even more. May God bless you.

The designs of the Lord are very high and very deep, but hidden. Let us allow ourselves to be guided by him as babes. See to it that your family meditates every day in common on the holy Passion of Jesus so that they all become holy.

I greet in Jesus Christ your wife, your uncle, your mother, and the children, especially Signore Paulinus. Jesus make you as holy as I desire. I bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

792

The Abbess of Nepi Monastery

San Angelo
December 7, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I already answered your letter in part while I was on the mission. Now I am answering again. It is necessary to adore the divine dispositions and to unite oneself to the Holy Will of God in every event. Many times the Lord gives strong inspiration to his servants to accomplish great things in order to test their fidelity and obedience, and then does not will the effect, giving them the reward as if it had come about. I confess to you that I have found every road to cooperate with your plan closed. I am myself very sick, and for that reason I did not go to San Oreste to serve those nuns. After Christmas, if I am better,

I need to go to Terracina for the foundation of that Retreat. There is much for me to do and much to suffer. I will probably settle down there until Easter. Then there are other grave affairs for the glory of God and the obligations of my office. So it is necessary for you to seek other channels, and that of the bishop is most direct and secure. It seems to me that is the way to go. I am writing with great haste and am burdened with letters and in poor health.

Recommend me much to God, but do not give me the title of founder any more. I am not, but Jesus Christ is, from whom I ask copious blessing. I am in haste,

Your unworthy servant
Paul of the Cross

793

John Anthony Lucattini (9)

San Angelo
December 16, 1751

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I am writing on poor paper so as not to cost the rector, Father Dominic, a lot, to whom I am directing this note for readdressing. This will serve to let him know that for a few days I have been in this Retreat, but I expect there will be new difficulties.

If the weather is passably good, on the day after Christmas I will be in Toscanella in the evening on my way to Mount Argentario, and I will stay all of Monday, the third day after Christmas. So if Lucy wishes to come, she is free to do so, for I will gladly hear her in Jesus Christ. However, the conference needs to be short, but that is not important.

I offer all Christmas greetings, and I will extend them to one and all from the holy altar, especially on the Holy Night of Christmas. Dearest one, "Prepare your hearts for the Lord," so that there may be born spiritually in you the Divine Word-Made-Man. Oh, fortunate that soul who, well purged from vices, detached from everything created, and in a profound annihilation, remains in a holy, divine solitude with profound interior recollection, and then in that sacred desert reposes on the bosom of the Father and is reborn every moment in the Divine Word to a new life of holy love, a divine life.

Tell Lucy that on her Name's Day I wished her greetings from the altar. I wonder whether she forgot to do that for me, but I remembered her in God.

I have extreme need for prayers, etc. Let us become good companions of the sweet infant. But what astonishment to see a God become an infant! A God wrapped in poor bandages! A God on a little straw between two beasts! Who would not be humble! Who would not be subject to every creature for God's sake? Who would have the audacity to complain? Who would not remain in silence, within and without, in his suffering?

Tell Lucy to cry out much for me and for the Congregation, and have Mary Most Holy and Saint Joseph intercede.

On Christmas we will be together in spirit. Goodbye. Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Amen

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

794

Lucy Burlini (5)

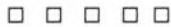
1751

My Sister in Jesus Crucified,

I hear from Father N. that you have become one open sore, and I rejoice in the Lord over that. In this way you will have more occasion to be a companion of your Divine Spouse. But this heavenly Spouse embraces you only in the interior desert, about which I have spoken to you many times. Remain in pure nothingness and allow that nothing to disappear in the Infinite All that is God.

My sister in Christ, I beg you to be faithful and to remain solitary in the inner temple of your soul, and there you will have time to cure your wounds with the precious balsam of the Blood that flows from the Wounds of the Immaculate Lamb. In this way you will find rest, for Jesus will lead you to his sheepfold where he remains, that is, the bosom of the Divine Father. You will become entirely divinized there, and you will be one spirit with Christ, as the Apostle tells us: "He who clings to God is one spirit with him."

In your solitude in that holy desert, if your Spouse has you take a sleep of love, sleep in peace and do not awaken without his permission. This is that sweet sleep that he gives to his beloved. Oh, what a sleep of love! Oh, how much the soul learns in that divine sleep! Oh, how rich you become! Make a remembrance of poor Paul, who is in great need, and pray for the entire Congregation. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.



Great Tribulations (1752)

Paul evidently spent Christmas at The Oak in Toscanella and then went on to Mount Argentario. On the way back he ran into rainy weather with flooding. Before the opening of Terracina Retreat, Paul took part in a "public retreat" there. After the dedication he gave a mission at Sonnino. After Easter in early April he gave a mission at Piperno. April 30 to May 14 he preached a mission in Sezze and a retreat at the convent. The fever returned during this mission.

In the letter dated July 1, 1752, Paul opens with a cry for prayers. He writes of "great tribulations" and "greater troubles and horrible woes" and that the Congregation is being held together "on a thin thread." He repeats the very same words in the letter of July 6 to Thomas Fossi. He is back at San Angelo, where he is involved in "very important affairs." At the end of July he sends a letter to all of his religious, recommending prayers, penances, and fastings in each community in behalf of "this newly born Congregation in great need of the help and graces of His Divine Majesty."

795

Maria Johanna Venturi Grazi (3)

San Angelo
January 15, 1752

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

Since the unusual rainy season forced me to come by way of Viterbo to avoid the many deep drains, I, consequently, had the good fortune to be of service to you by assigning the hundred *scudi*, which I never even saw, into the hands of the mother of Signora Maria Aurelia, along with a letter addressed to the canon, whom I did not see since he was in church. I handed over the money, sealed as it was given to me, without even seeing it. I think that the lady and the canon will have knowledge of this at this time, but I did not receive a receipt since that did not seem necessary to me.

I ask you to greet Signore Vincent, Signora Maria Aurelia, and the nephews. Wishing you to be a great saint, as I hope, but with the secret holiness of the cross and entirely hidden in Jesus Christ in the interior temple of your soul, with profound respect I once more sign myself as one always more obliged in Jesus to you and to your whole house, and in haste as I leave for Terracina tomorrow,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the †

Bishop Callistus M. PalombellaJanuary 1752²⁷²

Your Excellency,

Paul of the Cross, General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, humble servant and petitioner to Your Excellency, prostrate with profound humility and respect at your feet, reverently declares that as he desires to make the solemn entry on this coming Sunday into the holy Retreat of Mary Mother of Sorrows on Mount San Angelo in the territory of this city, that he asks of Your Goodness your kindly consent and to grace the occasion by granting them possession...

Paul of the Cross,

General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of Jesus Christ

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (53)

Terracina

February 8, 1752

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

After so many storms and contradictions from men and from hell, only last Sunday the foundation of this Retreat took place after having prepared the city and the clergy with a public retreat, which was much blessed by the Lord.

I had scarcely reached Terracina when I found myself overwhelmed with heavy business. So I have not had the chance to chat with you by letter and offer my humblest thanks in Jesus Christ for the charity you have been pleased to do me in your home on our journey to Velletri, in which I and my companion were met with the heartfelt charity and care of your brother. So the gratitude of my heart grows continually, along with my obligation in the Lord.

We rejoice in the holy poverty of Jesus Christ. In the inconveniences that come from it, these servants of God arouse my tepidity with their fervor and observance and happiness in the Lord. Thanks be to God, the city is entirely enamored with us, and it is a miracle, I will say that, a miracle of divine mercy, since the devil has sowed not a few tares and contradictions. The grace of God has worked in a way to overcome everything through the great piety and charity of the bishop, who has provided chalices, ciboria, sacred furnishings, and abundant donations, all that the poverty of this zealous bishop would allow

272. There is no date, but this letter must have been written at the end of January, for Paul had planned to leave Vetralla on January 6. He is writing the bishop of Terracina, Piperno, and Sezze about the opening of the Retreat at Terracina on Sunday, February 6.

him to do. He and the governing body and a large populace were present to put us in possession. "Blessed be God, who has wrought his mercy for us."

I find myself completely loaded down with business and letters, etc. Otherwise, I would have written to your vicar general, who cooperated much with the foundation. I will do so as soon as I can. Meanwhile, I ask from your charity and piety the assistance of your prayers and your strong protection for the poor Retreat at Ceccano and for the mistakes I am making while I write in haste.

I wrote Signore Camillo as soon as I got here. I end with profound reverence, together with Father John Baptist and Father Anthony, rector of this Retreat, who is leaving momentarily for the mission on the island of Ponza, where he will be until the First Sunday of Lent. I ask for you pastoral blessing.

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant

Paul of the Cross

798

Girolama Ercolani (22)

Terracina

February 8, 1752

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering your letter with great haste. I find myself loaded with heavy tasks and letters. Since the foundation of this holy Retreat, which took place last Sunday with great edification and glory to God, I have not had time to extend myself. I only say that your scruples are always the same. There is nothing blamable on any account in your soul, even in what you tell me. Believe me, there is no offense against God, for you never gave consent to these evils. Oh, how much you are indebted to the Lord! Be always more faithful and persevering, and continue to guide yourself as I have told you and you will have peace. I have not come that way because of the snows on the mountains; it would have lengthened my journey by a day. I am in a hurry and leave you in the Side of Jesus while greeting the canon. I pray you every good from the Lord.

I do not know how long I will be here, so do not write because the letters could be lost.

Your unworthy servant,

P. of the †

Terracina
February 8, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Your welcome letter was forwarded to me from the Retreat of San Angelo. I am answering it in the midst of my occupations in connection with the foundation of this holy Retreat, which took place last Sunday with great solemnity to the glory of the Lord. It did not escape me that the renunciation of the benefice in question did not take place immediately. But from certain information I have, I do not know about the one of Canon Philip. Now I think that it has already been taken care of legally, since I have met Father Rector of San Angelo, etc. I hope that the post has not been held up since there was no postman there, and that by this time they will have been received.

I feel keenly the fact that the construction is behind time. I have used every effort, but fruitlessly. We need to adore the divine judgments. When His Divine Majesty wills, all will come out happily. The point is that, if the Retreat is not in good shape, the foundation cannot be made in order not to ruin the observance. Let us trust in the Lord that, if he wills this foundation, he will provide. Please give my greetings to the provost and the canon, etc.

It would be well if there were a mission by Father Thomas after Easter. Believe me, Father Isidore, he is of the kind to stir up fervor for the Retreat and do infinite good for the people. It is necessary to enter negotiations with the vicar general so that he ask the Provost, etc. God will give you light to do everything well. But a mission is the best way to bring the work to perfection. As soon as they have decided, they should write to Father Thomas so that he does not take another assignment.

I am in a great hurry and crushed with tasks and other things, etc. I embrace you in Jesus Christ and am from a true heart,

Your true, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

I am sending the letter by way of Valmontone.

I forgot to tell you that I spoke with the good young lady. Mother Prioress told me what is required, but I do not remember —something like four hundred *scudi* as dowry and about two hundred for additional expenses. Now I am far away and cannot give you further news, etc. If there were a convent with healthier air, that would be better, for there would be common life.

273. Paul writes from the Retreat of Mary Mother of Sorrows. Calzelli is having money problems in his work on the Retreat of Falvaterra. Paul suggests that Father Thomas give a mission there after Easter for "he is of the kind to stir up fervor for the Retreat." Paul writes again to Calzelli in a letter of March 25.

Thomas Fossi (45)

Terracina
February 14, 1752

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

Your letter was forwarded to me from the Retreat of San Angelo. As I am loaded down with business, and God knows what else, I am answering in great haste.

I am happy with the good beginning of your children, especially the boy. "Blessed be God." All this is the fruit of meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ, which continues in your home. I hope that they will all be true servants of God.

Improve your good desires by reducing them to one, that is, to do the Holy Will of God in all things. Burn up the others in the fire of holy love and continue your exercises of piety, in accord with your state in which God has placed you, with true humility of heart, making your prayer continual. That means remaining in a holy internal recollection, entirely clothed with the pains of the Savior, without neglecting any aspect of the obligations of your state since this is the Will of God. You will be perfected in the state of holy matrimony.

With regard to a mission on the island by me, that is a thing morally impossible. I am in poor health, loaded with business, and after Easter I am doing missions in two or three cities, in addition to other things.

Last Sunday the holy Retreat of Mary Mother of Sorrows was founded with the presence of the bishop, the council, and the populace. All was done with solemnity to the glory of the Lord. I, however, experienced only bitterness. The troubles for this foundation were not few and they are not over for me.

The Retreat is beautiful and in solitude, but there are not a few hardships coming from poverty, and the religious are satisfied with that. I am in a hurry. Recommend me to God much. Jesus bless you and make you holy, along with your household.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (46)

Terracina
March 15, 1752
Leaving after Easter.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your welcome letter on my return from a large mission in this diocese on the occasion of the foundation of this holy Retreat in Terracina, which took place on Sexagesima Sunday, with much glory for the Lord as well

as many inconveniences that were hard to endure. I am burdened with many occupations and woes, so I am answering briefly.

In my opinion the affairs of your soul are going from well to better. If you continue to keep your heart humble and clear of all earthly desires, you will always grow in holy love. Regarding you and your wife retiring from the world, it is not yet time for that. Make yourself a good retreat in the interior of your soul, and in that desert treat with the Highest Good one-on-one, adoring him in spirit and truth. Since His Divine Majesty is pleased to speak to you of the mysteries of his holy Passion, so in your holy interior retreat treat with him in such colloquies, but do it as children do, who often take their repose on the bosom of their mother and express their innocent love with sweet glances to the face of their mother. So should you glance with faith and love.

Tell your wife, my daughter in Jesus Christ, that I wish that she listen to the counsels you give her and put them into practice. Tell her to drive off, like the plague, her scruples and temptations of diffidence. I know by the Mercy of God that her soul is well cleansed by the Precious Blood of the Immaculate Lamb. So what has she to fear? You have counseled her very well.

Be very cautious in treating with women. When you have to give holy instructions to those who are workers on your estate, do so with brevity and custody of the eyes. Enough!

Make your meditations with your family and the house servants; that is sufficient.

I have complete trust in the Lord that you have not given the least consent to the temptations, etc. Nevertheless, you did well to confess them for safety's sake. In that way you practice humility and make the enemy flee, etc. So cast off every servile fear and be in great peace and serenity of soul so that you are more disposed to treat lovingly with the Lord in the interior desert.

I do not recall that I ever directed your cousin. It may be that I gave her a warning for her salvation, as I do to everyone. You will do well to advise her to be very cautious with her confessor and treat only of the affairs of her soul in the confession, and that with brevity. But never, never give him gifts. She is to watch over herself with the greatest vigilance; otherwise, she will not take one step toward perfection.

I am an old man and God has given me experience. Woe to one who trusts himself. Woe to anyone who becomes attached, especially spinsters, to their spiritual father, and especially if the attachment is mutual. Goodbye. "Deliver us, O Lord."

With regard to coming to San Angelo, I am not in favor of that, for I do not think I can be there until around June. After Easter I must give missions in two cities and conduct retreats in several convents.

Oh, that God would help me! I have little strength of body or spirit and must work harder than a beast. Patience!

With regard to going to Rome, do as the Lord inspires you. But you will not find me there. Regarding the person of N., I have already let her go because, basically, I feared some deceit. Therefore, I did not deal further with her.

It may be that the rose will flower, but I must act as I do. Meanwhile, this will serve as a great proof, etc. I am not writing more, nor am I asking anything more. I leave all in the disposition of the Lord. We are in dangerous times, and it is necessary to be on guard and make use of the advice of Saint John: "Prove the spirits to see if they be of God." So I have decided not to treat any more with spiritual souls, even though I have done so rarely. But I want to be of service only to our own religious, for they are walking safely. I do not exclude you, however, my dear Thomas. For as long as I live, I want to serve you. But for these devout women, whom I can hear only rarely and who are more addicted to deceits, I do not wish to know anything. They have their confessors; let them take care of them.

In this post I am writing to Sister Cherubina, who I doubt wants to live much longer since she is spitting blood. I have written to your daughter. It seems to me she is a fine young woman but does not have a vocation to the convent and should leave in May. I have written her to get in touch with you, for you are her father, to whom God will give his light. The air does not suit her, so how shall she continue? If she loses her health when she is of such a young age, she will regain it only with great difficulty. I have given her salutary advice, etc. I am in a hurry. Jesus make you holy, and I bless you and all your pious family. Pray for me, for I am continually in water up to my neck, "and there is nothing further." It will be a great miracle if I live a short time longer, which is what I deserve, even less. Let them pray much, and may the Lord bless us.

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

802

Passionists at Terracina²⁷⁴

Terracina
March 23, 1752

To Our Beloved Brothers and Sons in Jesus Christ
Who Make Up or Will Make Up in the Future the Religious Family of the
Holy Retreat of Our Lady of Sorrows on the Mount San Angelo in
Terracina,
Greetings, Peace, Joy, and Blessings in Our Savior Jesus Christ Forever:

Paul of the Cross, General and your most unworthy servant, leaves you, in addition to the decrees and ordinances given at the foundation, the present holy exhortation for your greater spiritual advantage and the edification of your neighbor.

274. Before leaving this new Retreat and aware of the crowds that gather nearby in the fall for hunting, Paul writes this long letter to the religious of the community. It is a strong exhortation to avoid contact with seculars during this time and "to harvest the virtues of holy mortification."

Whereas, I have never spared myself any fatigue and effort, as you all well know, so that your souls be united always more with God in a true and high union of charity by means of the exercise of solid virtue, practiced and taught by our Divine Master, Christ Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth, and our Life, and more especially have we insisted on true humility of heart and interior and exterior mortification, which are the foundation stones for the spiritual building, and since, thanks all to the Sovereign Giver of every good, we see and experience to our great consolation and edification that the holy seed of the divine word, sown in the field of your hearts by means of holy exhortations, examens, and holy conferences, is producing for the glory of Jesus Christ copious fruits of virtuous deeds through the exact observance of our holy Rules, which shines forth in you; accordingly, we do not wish to omit before leaving to cooperate with this holy exhortation for your greater advancement in the way of perfection.

Therefore, knowing that in the months of September and October, especially the latter, there takes place by the citizens of Terracina the hunt of wood pigeons in the surroundings of this holy Retreat, in which people of every sort take part with nets, shotguns, and slings. All this can cause distraction and wandering of minds on the occasion of the noise, shouts, etc.

Therefore, we beg you "through the heart of the mercy of our God" to make every effort and vigilance to keep yourselves more recollected and exemplary than ever in that time; and, above all, to mortify curiosity of the eyes by not watching the hunt, following the example of so many saints who at such times, out of love for God, closed their eyes and made themselves blind to deprive themselves of the pleasure that sense would have experienced in seeing the prize taken by the hunters. There is the grand example left us by Saint Francis Borgia, Duke of Gandia, when he had to go on the hunt with other lords. He was so exact in mortifying his eyes and the pleasure of his senses that when the moment came to catch the birds in the nets, he closed his eyes to deprive them of that pleasing curiosity.

We would go on too long if we wished to cite further examples in this regard. The point is that we can never be men of great prayer and union with God if we do not have a great love of holy mortification, internal as well as external, practicing it as long as we live in every occasion that presents itself. In that way we can be totally concentrated in our interior, where we will taste from the springs "how sweet is the Lord."

O my dear ones! what a beautiful occasion, rich in merits, is offered you, especially at the time of the hunt! Oh, how many acts of virtue you can practice on this occasion! Oh, how the inner temple of your spirit will be adorned! Oh, how many graces and blessings you will receive from the Lord by such mortifications! Oh, how blessed you are! Oh, what a mine of treasures are opened for your good! So while the populace takes its pleasure in the hunt, you will remain in your cells and in the choir or on your solitary walks not distracted, but all concentrated on God the Highest Good in your internal kingdom, in that holy desert, in your divine solitude, resting on the bosom of

the Heavenly Father with holy colloquies and divine aspirations. There is taught the true science of the saints.

On the contrary, if you give way to curiosity, to talking with seculars who will come for the hunt, oh, how many distractions! oh, how many disturbances and internal upheavals, and how long the struggle to recollect yourself! Who knows how many months, perhaps years, you will have to fight to free yourself from the vain imaginations that will remain in your mind from the objects you have seen? How will your prayer go and the fervor of observance? Where will good example have fled? Ah, my dearest ones, this time is destined to be a time for you to harvest the virtues of holy mortification.

Who knows how many will be enamored to serve the Lord faithfully? How many inspirations will touch hearts, seeing in the holy Retreat such modesty, such silence, such recollection? While they seek their distractions, at the same time they will see with joy before their eyes mirrors of perfection and will see that while they are living only for worldly amusements, you in this Retreat are as dead and buried, glorying in nothing but the Cross of Jesus Christ! Oh, what a great mission this is! Oh, how much glory to God! Oh, how many blessings will rain over you! They who put our exhortations into practice will certainly experience this.

We ordain by the obligation of our office that no one of our religious will be allowed to be with seculars no matter how much they are invited and asked. Nor shall they be with them on walks, not even Father Rector. But if anyone is requested for a conference or confession in the Retreat, let them be heard freely, but with brevity; then you will retire. Furthermore, take care not to allow anyone to sleep in the Retreat, much less to invite anyone to dinner. We trust in the charity, prudence, and vigilance of Father Rector, who will have complete charge that his religious be mirrors of perfection "and the good odor of Christ," seeing he is placed at the head of this little flock as leader and servant in order to animate them to virtue in accord with holiness of their life. May Jesus enrich you with all fullness of his graces and blessings, and make you as holy as we desire. Asking once more for the suffrage of your fervent prayers so that His Divine Majesty may fulfill in us his Holy Will. Amen.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior and Servant

803

Isidore Calzelli (5)

Terracina

March 25, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

As soon as this Retreat was established, I wrote to you and said that the renunciation of the benefice in question had taken place as the rector of San Angelo informed me, and it was forwarded here. Since there is no post there where you are, I did not know how to address my letter, so I enclosed it with great urgency to the archpriest at Valmontone so that he could have it sent

back. Even after all this time, I have not been able to get my hands on it. Patience.

Now, while I am writing to Captain Cecconi, I am enclosing this note, and I ask you to overlook the shortness of the paper in order not to increase the cost of postage for the benefactor. God knows the steps taken to obtain some help for this construction, but in vain. We are in a world in which much is said, but little gets done. I was depending on help from Signore Altiani, but nothing came of that. Then I had no more courage. Consider this. I thought he was to give me the clock they have in the house for this Retreat as he promised me, but I did not get it. God has provided in other ways with alms for Masses for this Retreat.

To obey Canon Altiani, I stopped on my way for spiritual conferences with a certain young woman, staying at their house, and who afterwards came to Valmontone with the Marchioness Abbati for a conference with me. I took care of this as an act of gratitude to Canon Altiani. Now, although I consider her a good Christian, I feel myself inspired to withdraw from the matter entirely. God knows the good reasons, and I stated them in a letter that I do not want to be involved in the matter.

I believe that decision is not pleasing to him, but what is that to me? I did it on advice. I did it with lights the Lord granted me, and I thank God that I have so decided. I have that opinion of the matter and I hold to it as I stand before God. I have told you this in confidence, to let you know that from the channel of Altiani there is nothing to be expected. But God will provide; do not be downcast. If the Lord wishes to be served in this Retreat, he will provide what is needed. "My just man lives by faith." I wrote to Father Thomas about the mission for you, but I have not received an answer.

On Saturday of Easter Week, I open a mission in Piperno, then in Sezze. I am also to give retreats in the convents.

If you write, send your letter to Piperno, where I will be all of April. I embrace you in the Lord. Pray for us.

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

804

Thomas Fossi (47)

San Angelo
May 30, 1752

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, Beloved in Christ,

I am replying in haste to your dear letter, which I received a short while after my return from missions in two cities and another place, besides the convents. I am very broken down and ill. The doctors are prescribing cures for me, but perhaps I will do nothing about them. Tomorrow I am going to visit our Retreat that I have not seen as yet.

I thank the Lord for the good news you give me of you wife and children. I pray the Lord that he will grant constant perseverance.

You should not be philosophizing so much about yourself. Walk in good faith, follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ, continue your prayer, and always base yourself on the Divine Mysteries of the holy Life and Passion of Jesus, our Life. This is the secure way from which is born interior recollection, the gift of remaining in internal solitude in the Divine Presence, without danger of deceit. Never should you leave sight of your Divine Exemplar, Jesus, in his sufferings. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me," our Divine Master himself told us.

It would be a big mistake to teach your daughter to practice internal solitude. She would run the danger of being idle in prayer and deceived. Let her meditate on the Passion of the Lord and form habits of virtue. His Divine Majesty will teach her the rest. When the Lord wills to put her in that state, she will not be able to resist. There will be signs of that. At present I do not know that she has the dispositions, etc. I am writing in haste and can scarcely keep my head. I thank you in Christ for all the charity of the tuna and all else. Greet Signora Victoria and all. I am from the heart,

Your true servant,

Paul of the Cross

805

Mother M. Frances Forlani (2)

Soriano

June 4, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

It is true that I find myself here visiting this Retreat of Soriano because it is a year since I have been here, but it also true that I find myself very indisposed. So tomorrow I will start taking medicine and have a blood-letting and continue a regimen until the fifteenth of this month. Around June 17 or 18, I will return to the Retreat of San Angelo to be there until the weather changes. For eight entire months I had no rest, but was in continual activity on the road and on missions. In Sezze I had a fever and had one bad fall. I am telling you all this so that you may know the moral impossibility of my coming to your place. Nevertheless, if I knew my future to be propitious, I would force myself. But I see that it would not be beneficial.

It is necessary to first adjust things in Rome, especially to derogate from the first bequest, especially in what concerns the *Mount Di Pieta* and the abbey in question. For that purpose it is necessary that God open the way with a strong effort by your protector.²⁷⁵

When this difficulty is cleared away and the bishop approves the work, I, if I am living, am ready to cooperate with your holy intentions, as I have already told you. Meanwhile, arm yourself with patience, silence, and

275. Evidently Frances Forlani is planning to get some support for a community of Passionist nuns.

meekness and render yourself deaf, blind, and mute for the love of God, and continue your prayers and other exercises of piety and virtue. That is as much as I ought to say to you in answer to your letter given me by Canon Ercolani. Pray to the Lord for me and our Congregation. May Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

806

Mother M. Frances Forlani (3)

Soriano
June 12, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I have read with attention the letter I received from you a few moments ago. With all frankness I say that you are wrong to torture yourself and build up again the useless fear over the events that you related in regard to the actions of your mother.

Why not leave the care of everything to the blessed God. Why not allow these anxieties and these fears to disappear in the fire of divine charity where they will be quickly annihilated? Why not live abandoned and reposed as a baby on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, feeding yourself entirely on his Divine Will and leaving to him the care of everything? Do you believe that you have to make the foundation by your force of arms? Either God wills it or he does not will it. If he wills it, all the world and all of hell are unable to block it. If he does not will it, and all the world struggles to force it, nothing will happen. Or if something comes out of it, it will be building on sand and quickly be brought to earth. Who can resist the Will of God? I have experienced a great thing. Our Congregation has eight houses. God knows how much trouble and how much they were fought against. I myself was against some of them, but because God willed them, see, the Congregation is in possession of them, and the Lord is served and praised there.

Now there is question of a foundation in Sicily. The foundation is requested by the Senate and the bishop of that first city. I am completely indifferent, leaving the entire care of it to God.

If I were to come there, I would accomplish nothing — even if I were able to come. But that is impossible. Just now one of the most important Fathers of the Congregation has come in and handed me many letters. I do not have time except to say I must end. I only know that the bishop could do much more there, and I hope he will do so, for I have written him my poor opinions. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and with fullest esteem affirm that I am, and recommending myself to your prayers,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Anthony Lucattini (10)

San Angelo
July 1, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

"Have mercy on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me and many waters have invaded my soul." I myself am once more in great tribulation, such as has not been. I am having recourse to the charity of your prayers and holy sacrifices. Our Congregation now hangs on a thin thread. I am expecting greater troubles and horrible woes, for such is the prospect. I have lost food and sleep, which ought to strengthen me. I take my sleep trembling as one who must go to the gallows in the morning. I yield as much as possible to the Will of God, but I find pain everywhere. All this is beyond my strength, and I cannot explain it.

I am having recourse to the friends of God, especially to Lucy, asking her for the alms for the poor wretch who writes. Let her cry out to the Lord, both at prayer and in Holy Communion, for our great and overwhelming necessities. It will be a miracle if my weak humanity does not collapse. Therefore, let them pray the Lord to grant me a holy death. Explain our necessities to Lucy and let her do so to the Lord, for they are hidden from others and known to me, since I think it well not to reveal them in order not to cause pain to others. Ah, out of charity, out of charity, cry out to God for me that he support us in our tribulations.

If you will do me the charity that you and Lucy will say something to me for my consolation, after having made a fervent prayer and Communion, that would be the highest charity. I cannot write more, and from the heart I am,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (48)

San Angelo
July 6, 1752

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I had scarcely arrived in this Retreat after leaving Terracina and after about eight months of hardships and after settling down for two days when I went to visit the Retreat of Soriano, where I was absent for a year. Back here once more, I have had to deal with very important affairs, so do not wonder if I did not reply to you immediately. With regard to your plan of moving that altar from the neighboring church into your home, while it seems to me to be a bit difficult, if the bishop were to approve, it would be a good idea and of service to the Lord.

The desire to be holy is not to be depreciated since "this is the Will of God, your sanctification," as long as it is accompanied with virtues, which are the

foundation stones of the edifice of sanctity. To work toward sanctity and to see oneself certainly evil, imperfect, sinful, and far from every virtue is an indication that true humility is beginning to take possession of one's heart. One who wishes to be a saint loves to follow faithfully in the divine footsteps of Jesus Christ, to be made the opprobrium of men and the abjection of the people, for such a one knows himself to be guilty of treason against the Divine Majesty because of his sins. One who wishes to be holy loves to be hidden from the eyes of the world, taking the sweet for bitter and the bitter for sweet. His food is to do the Holy Will of God. Since this is better done in suffering than in rejoicing, since in rejoicing self will always shows up, so the true servant of God loves naked suffering, receiving it without secondary causes, but from the pure Will of the Lord. I am omitting much more that I would like to say. I do say, however, that these things stated above are the characteristics of someone who desires to be holy.

Continue your accustomed exercises without losing sight of the obligations of your state in life. Be a dweller in the inner temple of your soul. Take your repose on the bosom of the Heavenly Father. As Jesus Christ, true Son of the Living God, "who is in the bosom of the Father," leads his dear faithful sheep where he is, so you, distrustful of yourself and sunk in your nothingness, join yourself closely to this sweet Jesus with faith and love. He will make you at home where he is.

Oh, fortunate that soul that is totally clothed with Jesus Christ and all penetrated with his pains, if it is all immersed in the depths of that immense sea of divine love and there, cut off from everything created, takes its repose on the bosom of its Beloved Good! The Lord accomplishes this divine work in humble souls who remain in interior solitude even in the midst of the noise of worldly business.

In this work the less grasped by the senses the better it gets done. For the senses cannot enter in this far. One who is simple and deprives himself of his own understanding and his own pleasure and his own way of thinking grasps it best. "Blessed are they who have not seen and believe."

Dear Thomas, I have been telling you mighty things, and I summarize it by telling you again to be recollected in God. Often arouse your heart with sweet revivals of faith and holy love, humbling yourself always before the Majesty of God without any straining of head or anything else, remaining abandoned like a child in the divine arms of the Lord. There it is all summed up.

You say well that the world is in a very bad condition, but what are you to do? Cry out to God that he supply the remedy and provide his holy servants who will place themselves as a wall for the House of Israel.

You want to know more about our poor Congregation. I tell you that as for candidates things go as usual, for they are true servants of the Lord. Right now I am in great tribulation, hidden from the others, but known to me, and greater troubles are threatening me. I see this work upheld by a thin thread. Oh, God! I cannot be specific. Keep all this to yourself. I say that seriously, for if the blessed God were not helping me, I would be in the tomb at this moment. Cry

out to the Lord so that His Divine Majesty will not allow this small flock to be scattered and that he help us in so many necessities.

As for the business you have in mind, I tell you that I always see it further in the distance. As for that soul that I let go, it was time. I had well-founded suspicions of a deceit, and I am not dealing with it further.

Greet your uncle for me and also your wife and all the household. As I affirm once more my gratitude to you in Christ, I end by embracing you in the holy Side of Jesus, where from a true heart I affirm again that I am,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

809

Girolama Ercolani (23)

San Angelo
July 18, 1752

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama in the Lord,

I received your letter in which I read of your afflictions. These are evident signs that God loves you and regards all your house with a gaze of highest mercy. So you should do what is necessary regarding the law suit. For everything else arm yourself with great confidence in God, turning your cause over to the divine goodness so that he may provide in accord with the multitude of his mercies. When you have done this, be very peaceful, for all will turn out very good. Do your necessary part. Pay no attention to these dream phantoms which are illusions of the devil meant to disturb you. The clear sign that these dreams have been caused by the demon is the sadness that they bring. So you are not to think about them, and treat them as fantasies.

Continue your practices as formerly and govern yourself as usual. I will not fail to pray, and have prayer offered, that the Lord bless your pious house always and protect it, as I hope. Jesus comfort you and enliven you with his holy grace and blessing.

Greet the canon for me and all the household. With full esteem and respect, in haste I declare myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

810

Passionist Religious (6)

San Angelo
July 25, 1752

J.C.P.

Paul of the Cross,

General Superior of the Congregation of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ,
To the Religious Family of the Holy Retreat of N.,
Peace and Greetings in the Lord:

Since the most powerful means to obtain grace from the Lord is recourse to the patronage and intercession of holy Mary, the Mother of Mercy, and with the coming of the great solemnity of her Assumption into heaven, therefore, seeing that this poor, newly born Congregation is in great need²⁷⁶ of the help and graces of His Divine Majesty, we have felt ourselves inspired to issue this short letter to all the Retreats of the Congregation so that united in true, unfeigned charity, in very exact observance, and inspired with true humility and compunction we may unanimously be together in prayer before the throne of Mary Most Holy, and move her to obtain for us the necessary graces, especially the help and grace absolutely necessary, according to my intention. Therefore, in the Name of the Lord we ordain that the following be done, starting on August 2 until the Assumption, excluded.

1. Every night after Matins the discipline will be taken for the space of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, as recited by the rector, and the rest will answer, "Pray for us," etc. But on days prescribed by the Rule, use the ordinary prayers, that is, the *Miserere* and the prayer *Come help us in our weakness*,²⁷⁷ etc. The discipline will take place every day except Sunday and Doubles of the First Class until the Assumption.

2. There will be a prudent fast every day, and on the vigil of the solemnity the meal will be taken on the floor and consist of bread, wine, and soup; the rector has the freedom to sit at the table. There will be a fast every day except Sundays and Feasts.

3. Let them receive Communion for this intention and more frequently according to the judgment of the rector.

4. On the Feast of the Assumption let them celebrate Mass and apply all the Masses of our priests for the intention stated above.

Oh, dearest ones, let all cry out with lively faith to the blessed God through Mary so that he help us in so many necessities, for our prayers will be heard if we are "of one mind in prayer," in true charity, not feigned, with one heart and in exact observance. I ask, in addition, that in these days more silence be observed. We have a lively hope that the Congregation will be much blessed.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

276. The great needs were in relation to the complaints that were being spread against the rector of the community at Terracina, Father Anthony Danei (Zoffoli, Vol. I, pp. 944-947).

277. This is a prayer from the missal: "Come help us in our weakness, God of Mercy. As we celebrate the memory of the Mother of God, may we rise from our sins by the help of her prayers."

John Anthony Lucattini (11)

San Angelo
July 29, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

My many occupations and other things have kept me from replying to your welcome letter. In reading your letter, it seemed to me that the affairs of your spirit are going very well, for, as I hope, you are remaining with your nothing and not robbing from God. Therefore, you see that the mercies that God gives you are very great and beyond explanation. Ah, my dear John Anthony, be most faithful to God, be hidden to all men, buried in your nothing. Cultivate interior solitude and be always a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and in truth. With regard to the forgetfulness of shortcomings when you have to confess, do not marvel at that nor be pained in the least. They are burned up in the fire of holy love, and for that reason they disappear from your memory. All the more so since there was no advertence to their suppression, and so it was involuntary. "My soul is in your hands always."

How is Lucy doing? Let me have anything new about her. For while I have given up all direction of souls outside the Congregation, since I cannot attend to them and, what is more, I do not have the light, I have not abandoned Lucy. I am continuing my service to her in God so that she does not forget my great necessities. So tell her that more than ever she is to cry to the Lord and to Mary Most Holy for all our poor Congregation that His Divine Majesty assist it and protect it in its great needs. She is to continue her conduct and, although she is crucified with pain, she is not prevented from losing herself entirely in the Highest Good in the usual way — even more so. Pray for us and God bless us.

Pray to Mary Most Holy for our necessities, especially these days until the Feast of the Assumption.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Signore Leopold Zelli (4)

San Angelo
August 3, 1752

Dear Sir,

"The charity of Christ urges us" and has me coming as a suppliant of your always great care to favor our Father Mark Aurelius. He continues to be sick, is sleeping little, and is quiet exhausted. It is true that as much as possible is being done here without holding back, but we cannot make up for the poor cell that is like a furnace and the hard bed of a poor religious. Such things certainly do not help toward his recovery.

Reflecting on this, and after asking light from heaven and taking counsel with Father Rector, I have decided to have recourse to your warm and tireless

charity that you might be willing to cooperate with the recuperation of a person worthy of so much consideration as our Father by having him in your home for a few days, as seems best for his getting back to health.

I have great expectation in the Lord that with the benefit of the fine and airy rooms and good beds, he will recover to the glory of God and the spiritual benefit of many souls. I would be doing injury to your zeal and charity, and that of your father and mother, were I to give more reasons and motivation to dispose you to such a holy deed. But I will not pass over saying that by cooperating in the return to health of this great servant of God, you will be cooperating with the spiritual good of many souls. From all this good for our neighbor you and all your household will have special merit, and it will bring a rain of copious blessings of heaven upon you forever.

If you and the doctor favor this move, the sick man, accompanied by Father Joseph, would come tomorrow toward evening. I leave everything to your charity. Share my good wishes with your mother and father, all of whom I greet in the holy Side of Jesus. With fullest esteem and respect I sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

813

Signora Ippolita Piccarilli (Pettirossi)²⁷⁸

San Angelo
August 4, 1752

Dear Signora,

Last night I received your letter, forwarded to me from the convent at Vetralla. I feel for you in Jesus Christ over the state of your affliction, and I assure you that I will not fail to pray and have prayers made to the Lord so that he will comfort and relieve you. You, however, have reason to console yourself in the Will of God, who is disposing things for the advantage of your soul. If you arm yourself with great trust in God, you will see how much strength he will give you to manage the burden that his always adorable Divine Providence has placed on you, and how much support, even temporal, he will supply when you least expect it.

Therefore, be constant in being faithful to the Lord, praising him, blessing him, and thanking him in every happening that he arranges for you and for all your house. Continue your devout exercises and leave the care of everything to His Divine Majesty. Jesus enrich you with ever more copious blessings, spiritual and temporal. Leaving you in the sacred Side of Jesus, with fullest esteem and respect I sign myself once more,

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

278. The Pettirossi family were benefactors of the Passionist Retreat at Vetralla.

John Anthony Lucattini (12)

San Angelo
August 8, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I received your welcome letter, in which I find the mercies which the Lord is doing for Lucy and for you. I have nothing more to say except that by the fruits the work is known. If you are growing in knowledge of your nothingness, love of suffering, contempt of self, and the exercise of every virtue, especially charity toward your neighbor, and if those high elevations you report about Lucy, if they leave her with a true recollection in God, a profound interior solitude with detachment from everything created, and a deepening of faith and love in God, with a close union to the holy Life, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, while remaining hidden in that Divine Savior, then one can judge for certain that her prayer is truly good. You can make use of these rules for yourself as well.

In regard to what she says about me, I do not put any trust in that. It is a general statement and does not come from a higher light, but from her good will and the desire she has for my good. If she will do me the charity of presenting my extreme needs to the Lord and asking him for help, I will be forever grateful to her. I know with my own eyes, opened widely, everything is contrary to what Lucy says about me.

There is the question of a foundation in Sicily. It seems it is not possible to hold it back any longer. Out of charity tell Lucy that and have her place the business in the pure heart of Jesus. There is another affair weighing on me much and troubling me. Have her pray for my intention at her Communions and prayers, etc. I have done everything possible to hold back that business of Sicily, but in vain. It continues to go ahead.

Let Lucy give me her opinion after fervent prayer. Oh! if you knew my extreme needs! oh! how much you would pray! I am in a great hurry and am from the heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

I add, with the secrecy called for, that never in my life have I found myself in such tribulation and need, now especially because of a happening that makes me foresee great tribulation and a great oppression for the whole Congregation. I am telling you in great secrecy. Mention this only to Lucy and ask her in my name that she present my need with great faith, confidence, and love to His Divine Majesty — with the other I mentioned above. It is menacing, etc. If ever she has done me a kindness, this is the time, for I have more need of it. I pray and I beg. But let her cry out strongly to His Divine Majesty, to Mary Most Holy, and expose my extreme calamity again. I would have wished to pass this over in silence, but I felt myself forced to write, etc. If she will give me what light she has on this — I leave her in her freedom. It is enough that she pray and cry out strongly, etc. Burn this sheet because, etc.

Signore Generoso Petrarca (5)

San Angelo
August 19, 1752

Dear Sir,

The experience I have of your charity and patience, with which you are pleased to accommodate me without ever stopping to do me favors, gives me courage to bring up this further burden by asking you to let me have any news on the Retreat at Paliano and how the building is coming along, etc. Up until now I have not had any account from anyone since I left there. On my journey I left a letter in your house, entrusted to one of your good young men. The letter was directed to Father Isidore. In it I gave him full freedom with regard to two tertiaries for the quest as he desired. I did this since I was won over by his wise and prudent advice, for they were referred to me as young men of zeal, etc. All the more so since I could not doubt the accuracy of Signore Isidore in using all diligence to investigate the quality of these young men and to watch over them with his eyes open.

I will be waiting for your charitable response, and I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I look upon you with my poor prayers. With full esteem and respect I constantly affirm I am from a true heart,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Canon Paul Sardi (1)

San Angelo
August 19, 1752

Dear Canon,

As the beginning of your letter filled me with extreme horror, so as not to offend you, I am not responding to it ... however, I tell you willingly that out of the obligation of charity, I will recommend the sick person to the Lord and have our religious do the same.

No one has come to our Congregation from your region, least of all from the royal schools, as you were pleased to tell me. Nor am I accustomed to urge anyone to join the Congregation, but I receive those whom the blessed God sends. All the Retreats are full and we cannot admit all who are asking. Up there the majority know of the Institute that we profess so that, if His Divine Majesty inspires some one there, I would think that ... he could be accepted.

Only one candidate came from Castellazzo. He was accepted, and you know who he was. He stayed about six months in the novitiate and was let go. In Rome, to my great sorrow, he died suddenly. If anyone asks to be accepted, he needs to have many documents according to the Rules, etc. Enough! I thank and adore the Divine Providence that refuses to allow people to come from that

region. But one must believe that they would come and make a sincere attempt if anyone were to invite them.

Forget the idea of a foundation at San Stefano, for in addition to being contrary to our Rules, which require foundations in solitude, at this time I do not have the light to extend the Congregation in that area. All the more so because there are many requests in other places and in a far kingdom. I leave it all in the care of the Lord.

I pray His Divine Majesty to reward the charity to the poor that you mentioned. "Your reward is very great." We can only offer our prayers; "he has chosen the poor of this world." We profess a vow of rigorous poverty, and the donations are managed by the rectors of the religious houses. They are just sufficient for the numerous family. However, nothing is wanting to these servants of the Lord.

I am writing in haste. I recommend myself to your prayers and holy sacrifices, and with profound respect I kiss your sacred hands. I am leaving soon, so do not inconvenience yourself to write, for I will be away.

I no longer use the family name that you use in the address, as you will see from my signature below. If you use my family name, the letters will not get to me.

Your unworthy, useless servant,

Paul of the Cross, Unworthy Servant of the Discalced Clerics of the
Passion of Jesus Christ

817

Passionist Religious (7)²⁷⁹

San Angelo
August 20, 1752

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Holy
Passion of Jesus Christ:

The good of the Congregation depends upon the good selection made by a fitting, mature examination of the young men who ask to be admitted and accepted into our Congregation — an examination of their quality and ability, as well as of their health and vigor, and whatever defects of mind and body. Experience has made us clearly aware that because of the absence of such an examination, there has been born and come about no small damage to the Congregation. As a result, it is observed that some are let go to our sorrow since they are not fit, or after a short time a chronic illness is discovered or a

279. This is a long letter on the questionnaire that must be answered by all who seek admittance into the Congregation, with advice and encouraging words for those seriously considering joining the Congregation. Did Paul write this letter because of problems occurring with accepting candidates who did not measure up to the demands of Passionist life and so left or remained to become problems?

slowness of mind that makes them incapable not only for studies, but also, and what is more important, they become unable to keep the regular observance and, as a consequence, all the apostolic works and other exercises of the Institute. Therefore, after invoking the Holy Spirit and assisted with his holy lights and graces, we have decided to establish a method for the Reverend Father Rectors and Novice Directors of our Retreats on the way to conduct themselves when examining young postulants so that it may be a perpetual and inviolable law.

Since we know to our great consolation and edification that there are some holy ecclesiastics who have at heart the spread of this Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, and therefore they work to provide candidates for the greater glory of God and the profit of souls, so the rectors and directors of novices shall send them copies of this enactment so that it may serve as a light for them in making the best choice of postulants, and so that their holy labors be not frustrated "and their fruits may remain to the greater glory of God."

Examination to be made of each postulant:

1. Regarding the end he has in entering the Congregation, is it right and pure to save his soul and become holy, to crucify his flesh and its vices and desires by means of the holy regular observance, to be a true imitator and follower of Jesus Christ. If he has any perverted intention, on this he needs to be examined closely, he would not receive the grace of God to persevere and would be in great danger for his soul, in addition to the hurt he would bring to the Congregation.

2. If he feels he is ready and resolved to submit himself to all the regular observance,²⁸⁰ such as:

Lenten observance with sufficient and prudent diet; prudent fasting three times a week; on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday a single hot plate, which is not a true fast, but rather a holy abstinence, profitable even for bodily health;

In Retreats far from the sea, eggs and milk products four times a week, including Sunday; and on journeys eating what is provided by benefactors;

In case of sickness all the assistance and charity possible;

If he is willing to remain in solitude two or three miles from towns and not going out except to help the neighbor or for other motives of obedience;

Clothing: one woolen undershirt next to the skin; only underclothes for decency; a habit of rough cloth with a mantle; bare feet except for sandals;

To get up at midnight for Matins; psalms chanted standing; an hour of meditation in winter; a half-hour in summer; an hour of meditation at Prime; an hour of meditation at night after Compline;

280. The acts of observance are described by Paul in view of the text approved by the pope in 1746.

Discipline: three times a week, but not to blood; four times in Advent and Lent; to sleep clothed on straw with woolen blanket in a poor cell;

Silence except at common recreation;

To submit oneself like a simple and humble child to the obedience of the superior, which is the short way to become holy;

To accept willingly the charitable corrections and mortifications of one's own will, which will come from the rector, the spiritual director, or the novice director.

3. Ability to study: does he have a clear mind? If it is obtuse, uncultured, hard, he is not to be admitted; nor is he to be admitted without knowledge of our common language and if he cannot comprehend Latin.

4. Does he have a loose and ready tongue? If he stutters or has a thick tongue, he ought not be accepted, for he would be unfit for the secondary end which is to work for the salvation of our neighbors.

5. Does he have frequent headaches, chest or stomach pains? Then he would not be able to study nor persevere in exact, regular observance and would have need of frequent dispensations with hardship on the community. Consequently, no one should be admitted with the like indispositions. Likewise, if he suffers from some hidden or open sickness, can he eat all kinds of food? If any food makes him sick, does he suffer from frequent indigestion and sickness of the stomach?

6. Does he have good teeth? For if he has bad teeth, or if he has lost his front teeth, he should not be accepted, for then he would not be able to eat all the foods that the rest of us do. Are the teeth so deformed that he cannot speak clearly?

7. Does he have a light spirit? If he is melancholic, he is not made for this life.

8. Are his feet equal? Are his other members healthy? For if he limps or is lame, he should not be accepted. Take notice of the color of his face, whether it indicates health or not;

9. Does he have good breath? For if it is noticeably foul, he should not be admitted, since that would make him burdensome to the community.

10. Are his parents respected and honest? If his origin is too lowly and obscure, he ought to be excluded, unless he has such gifts of nature and grace that render him mannerly, modest, civil, and talented. Such people ordinarily never lose their natural uncouthness and always hold on to coarse ways of speaking. That is not good, especially in someone destined to help our neighbors.

11. Does he have father, mother, brothers, and sisters? If he does not have other brothers and there is no one left who could assist his parents in accord with their proper state, he should not be admitted.

12. If he has been vested in another institute, why did he leave?

Take care that the postulant responds frankly to all these questions, for if something were to be discovered, he would be sent away with damage to his health, the expenses of his journey, and the resentment of his relatives;

however, they should not be frightened off. Then you should think that everything will be made easy by the help of God, as they who have been vested have found out. They come from every condition, some were born into very cultivated families and brought up delicately.

This Congregation is frightening when looked at from a distance, but seen close it is a comfort and shows itself very sweet. It is clear that the rectors have to be more careful that our religious do not overdo rather than to be worried they do too little. This would not be so if our life were as austere as some say and falsely judge it. Let not the postulants be afraid. Let them be courageous, let them come with good will, with the good intent and the qualities listed above, and they will find by experience how sweet is the yoke of Christ and how light is his burden. They will experience true peace of heart, and on their coming will see this in the very faces of their brother religious. They will find out with what great charity they will be treated by the rectors, their gentleness in correcting, and the mutual holy love among all the religious, who are united with one single heart in Jesus Christ.

So then, after acceptance the postulant ought to be occupied for six months. During this time he will concentrate specifically on devotion, on prayer, frequenting the sacraments every week, and to study, concerning which he needs to bring proof from the head of the school. After this he should come forward in the Name of the Lord. If there are circumstances for the glory of God for which Father Rector of the Retreat and the director of novices judge the postulant should be received immediately, after acceptance by the General Superior, it will be their right to do so.

I ordain that everyone who is involved in accepting postulants keep a copy of this constitution, and this original will be kept by the director of novices in the archives of the novitiate in the Retreat of the Presentation since it is the first Retreat of the Congregation. A copy is to be sent to the ecclesiastics who with holy, apostolic zeal work to send candidates to the Congregation as we state our gratitude that is preserved in the Congregation for them forever, making them perpetually a part in our prayer and suffrages in life and after death, in addition to the merit they will have from the many souls who will be saved by means of the ministry of those they have sent.

So that this constitution will remain forever inviolable in its observance, we have written it with our own hand and marked it with our seal of office.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

<seal>

818

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (36)

San Angelo

September 1, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother, My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter, dated the nineteenth of last month, forwarded to me from the Retreat of Soriano. It was not my prayers that have obtained health

for you, but the Mercy of God, who is giving you more time in this life so that you might be entirely crucified with your Divine Spouse by means of a mystical death to all that is not God with a continual detachment from every thing created and a completely hidden life in the divine bosom of the Heavenly Father in a true interior solitude, living no longer in yourself but in Jesus Christ, even more Jesus Christ living in you. In that way the power of the Divine Savior will shine forth in all your works so that all will see in you a true reproduction of the Crucified and perceive the sweet fragrance of the holy virtues of the Lord in internal and external modesty, in patience, meekness, suffering, charity, humility and with everything else that follows. Be careful, however, to guard this treasure with great care and jealousy, keeping it locked with the golden key of holy, prudent silence that allows you to speak only when the glory of God requires it or charity to one's neighbor, etc. But this silence, rich in every virtue, is especially needed in suffering, in contradictions, in calumnies, in reproofs, etc., remembering that the gentle Jesus in the midst of his bitter sufferings kept silence. "Jesus, however, was silent." Oh, the sacred silence of the great Son of God, what great good it brings to the soul!

Continue with the style you are using with the girls they have put in your charge. Do as much as you can to make them holy. But work with peace and without anxiety, leaving the care to the blessed God in everything, if they are not walking as you would have them. It is true that when you see that after charitable correction, after instruction, etc., they do not want to do better, then it is fitting to go to the rector and withdraw yourself from the work as the plants are without fruit. But first you must use prolonged diligence.

You have done well to stop the plays. When such occasions come up, or when in any manner something dangerous to souls occurs, with great constancy and without any fear from tongues, act so that God be not offended. If persecutions and other troubles come, be silent and all recollected in God as dead to everything outside God.

Cast out all diffidence as the plague. Believe me, your soul is in an excellent state, and His Divine Majesty holds you in the divine bosom of his infinite love. I tell you that although your prayer is less sensible, it is more acceptable to the Lord. Believe me! What I want of you is that you make a strong habit of remaining entirely enclosed in the inner kingdom, in the inner temple of your soul, and there in a sacred silence of faith and holy love adore the Heavenly Father in spirit and in truth, taking your repose like an infant on the loving bosom of his infinite charity. There relate the benefits you have received. There treat of the mysteries of his holy Passion, etc. But when your soul feels itself caught with a sweet, loving attention to the Sovereign Good in silence and faith and holy love, stay that way, etc. Oh, what a grand prayer! You are drawn there, for it is time for that. Therefore, follow.

I am sorry that Signore Landini died without the sacraments. I will not neglect to offer suffrages for his soul according to the Will of the Lord.

With regard to what you desire to know, I tell you that our Congregation is in possession of eight Retreats in different locations, and we number about one hundred ten religious or a little fewer. Since the Retreats are full, we

cannot receive all who are asking to be admitted. We are dealing with persons of importance, that is, the two princes of Sicily, with regard to a foundation in that kingdom, but I fear the affair will not succeed soon for there are many difficulties, despite the fact that three dioceses are asking. Pray much to the Lord so that his Holy Will be done.

I am in moderately good health; however, I have been weighed down with various troubles. I tell you in secret that the Congregation is being strongly persecuted. Right now there is one great tribulation that strongly threatens to crush it, and this comes from persons who should have a strong zeal for the glory of God. But I take everything in good part and want to believe they are acting with good intentions.

I did not die this summer due to the miraculous grace of God. I am still in grave straits, for I see the approach of troubles which threaten this little flock. Believe me, these good sons live holy lives, ... but all this is aimed against me.

It is true that I am quiet and resigned to the Will of God, but my miserable humanity feels the blows, although I do my best not to take account of them nor recognize them. Now I believe you know more about this than others. Keep all this to yourself and cry out to God and expose our necessities to him, especially mine. Pray His Divine Majesty to protect this work so that he does not allow the evil one to destroy it.

Use Mary Most Holy as your intercessor, the angels and the saints, etc. Above all, offer Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to the Eternal Father so that he be appeased and help us.

See that you take care of yourself for the glory of the Savior. Take the food that is necessary and plenty of sleep. In regard to the office of chambermaid, you did well to accept it in order to do the Will of God. Be solitary within the sacred inner desert, work in accord with your assignment, but with your heart and spirit completely in God, etc. Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you. Amen.

I am here until the October 8. and then I leave to visit our Retreats, which are more than one hundred twenty to one hundred thirty miles distant.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

819

Thomas Fossi (49)

San Angelo
September 4, 1752

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I received your letter of the August 2, and I give thanks in Jesus Christ for the charitable comfort you offer me. But believe that a great storm has arisen which threatens to submerge this poor little ship, but I am holding this inside myself and simply crying out to the Lord that he help us. I am taking care not to inform anyone, not even the religious. I only have them pray so that they do not afflict themselves. I prepare myself to drink the chalice which His Divine

Majesty offers me. Recommend the affair to the Lord, especially after Communion.

Regarding the church you mention to me, I reply that you can do what the Lord inspires. But seeing that the harvest is so scanty, you ought not extend yourself and undertake a large expense.

With regard to continence, I repeat what I have always said: Remain in holy freedom, but follow the counsel of the holy Apostle to be abstinent for a time so as to give yourself to prayer, etc. When the Lord will want it, he will give you great light, great constancy, etc. Watch out for the defects you speak of, for that is a true lessening of fervor.

I am sorry about the hail that ravaged the harvest, but even here we need to be resigned and kiss the loving hand that strikes us. Believe that things will change face. You will be poor in spirit, but your house will be maintained by God with strength for his glory. "This hope is laid up in my bosom."

I told Father Rector about the barrels of tuna. "May the Lord reward you for everything in time and in eternity," as I strongly expect.

Continue your exercises of piety as usual and put into practice the salutary advice you have received.

I am leaving around October 8 or 10, and I hope to be at the Retreat of the Presentation next January, for I am going to the Retreats of the Province of Campagna-Marittima.

Guide your family, as you have been doing, with prayer and instruction and holy example.

I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with your wife and your children, and I am hoping for great things. Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you. Amen.

Make nothing out of the persecution you mention, but be cautious and negotiate a little.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

820

John Anthony Lucattini (13)²⁸¹

San Angelo

September 16, 1752

J.C.P.

Reverend Father John Anthony,

I was expecting some happy news of their arrival, as I wish to hope, but until now I am disappointed. Now I do not wish to wait longer to write and pay you a visit in the Lord. I have a strong faith that your spirit continues to remain

281. This letter, written at San Angelo, is quite different from those Paul had recently written to Lucattini and Lucy. There is no tremendous plea for prayers, no cry that the Congregation is falling apart. Rather he describes in telling language how the true lover of the Crucified celebrates the great Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

solitary in the inner sanctuary, reposing like a child on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, and making sure that you keep your interior temple well decorated with flowers of every virtue.

You, Lucy, what are you doing? Have you celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, which was the day before yesterday? The Feast of the Cross is celebrated well every moment in the inner temple of the true lovers of the Crucified. How is it celebrated? I will tell you as best I can. Do you know how? It is celebrated spiritually in silent suffering without support from any creature whatever. Because feasts are celebrated with joy, so the Feast of the Cross of Lovers of the Crucified takes place in suffering and silence with a happy and serene face so that the feast is hidden from all creatures and open only to the Highest Good. In the feast there is always a solemn banquet, feeding on the Divine Will after the example of our Crucified Love. Oh, what sweet food! This food is seasoned in a variety of ways, either with pains of body and spirit or with contradictions, calumnies, being despised by creatures, etc. Oh, how sweet a taste to the palate of the spirit that tastes in pure faith and holy love, in silence and in hope. Listen to another point.

For good digestion one must have rest and sleep. It is necessary to take this sleep of faith and love on the holy breast of the Divine Spouse, which is a furnace of charity. In this heat, even in this Divine Fire that consumes all imperfections, believe me, one sleeps well. It makes for excellent digestion so that the interior stomach is prepared to accept, even devour, more food of suffering.

Do not forget to recommend me to the Lord in your deepest prayers, and do it as customary for the whole Congregation. I will be leaving here around October 8. Pray His Divine Majesty and be joyfully at the banquet of the Cross. I digest badly because I do not sleep. Oh, when will this poor fellow sleep a little? Enough! I am happy with everything in the Will of God. Jesus make you both as holy as I desire but with the secret sanctity of the Cross of Jesus.

Tell Lucy and Maria Angela that they be faithful to God.

Dear Father John Anthony, do not forget in your holy sacrifices and prayers our affairs, etc., nor the poor one who is writing. I embrace you in Christ Jesus and am from a true heart,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Brother John²⁸²

San Angelo

September 16, 1752

J.C.P.

My Dear Brother John,

I received your letter and rejoice in the Lord that you are in good health. This is a great grace that Mary Most Holy has obtained for you so that you may serve your Retreat and the church with great fidelity, taking care to make your humility and modesty shine forth, especially as to your eyes; talking little with creatures; never neglecting your mental and vocal prayer; remaining hidden as much as you can; keeping guard over your heart; often arousing yourself with ejaculatory prayers; and striving to be always in the Divine Presence in all your works.

See to it that, when our religious come, nothing needful will be wanting to them. Do what you can that the garden has vegetables, especially cabbage and broccoli, and whatever more there is need of, as I believe you have done.

There, since the climate is cool, they can plant cabbages and broccoli even now. I recommend that to you, but take care to work in the cool hours. Take only a little sun, especially in these hot days. Jesus bless you and pray to him for me. Greet the benefactor you wrote about and tell him I am grateful in the Lord, but not to inconvenience himself by coming, for I am leaving here soon.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (54)

San Angelo

September 23, 1752

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I have the lot to reaffirm to your merit my true servitude and gratitude and at the same time, prostrate at your feet, I make bold to add to your burdens another weight by putting under your pure eyes a section from Chapter XXVI of our holy Rules, "On the Way of Announcing the Word of God." "They shall not undertake Lenten preaching, but leave this to others. At that time they shall be with God in our solitary houses." In the continuation of Chapter XXVI, it is added that "at that time the workers will be withdrawn to recollect themselves the more, so they may come out with greater fervor on sacred missions after Easter."

282. This is probably a novice or postulant at Paliano, as there is no mention of a "Brother John" professed before the date indicated on this letter. A clerical student would have been addressed as "confrater."

All this was carefully reviewed in Rome by a special commission established by His Holiness for the approval of the Rules. It was universally satisfying and approved. So I have complete faith in your charity and piety that you will dispense our men from preaching the Lenten sermons in Ceccano and Patrica, as the rector of Saint Mary of Corniano has notified me. This is not only opposed to our Institute, but also we do not have Lenten preachers, and the labor of compiling the sermons with long study would be frustrating, since we are not able to go out because of the Rule, which we cannot depart from in the smallest degree. I have no doubt at all that this is most satisfying to your piety and zeal, as well as to our profit and the regular observance.

I am hoping to be in Ceccano around October 14 or 15, and from Palestrina I will go through the mountains above there to avoid the harmful air of the Campagna. All the more so because I am coming out of a dangerous sickness due to the great dryness that continues in these parts. I will have the good fortune to speak with you on several occasions, which I hope will be afforded me. In the meanwhile, I ask the continuation of your holy prayers and strong support. With profound reverence I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and I am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

823

John Anthony Lucattini (14)

San Angelo
September 26, 1752
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

Dear Reverend Father in Christ,

I received your welcome letter, and because I am close to leaving and loaded with a large heap of letters, I am answering in great haste. I rejoice in the Lord over the news you give me of Lucy and yourself. Let us make sure we are not thieves. Let us remain with what is ours and leave God what is his, remembering always not to mix up the treasures of God with the dross of our hidden and manifest vices.

With regard to choosing a confessor for Lucy, I do not know what to say. I do not know anyone except the name of Father Angelo, with whom I have never spoken. Have her recommend herself to God and then act in accord with her inspiration from the Lord, etc. Do not write me further since I am leaving, and I do not know when I will be back here or elsewhere. If you recommend me to God, it would be a great charity. Take note of how many times you believe that lights come from on high which are the effects of your own spirit. Experience teaches. Also, in regard to Lucy, let her stay in her nothing and not

leave it unless by the breath of the Holy Spirit, who raises her. That is more secure. From my heart I say in haste,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

I received the letter from Signore M. De Angelis.

824

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (55)

Ceccano

October 13, 1752

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Since Father Rector is away and will not return until next Sunday, I have the happy lot to answer your esteemed letter directed to him. I feel keenly the fact that we cannot entertain Father Caesar Papi in this Retreat, for there is not one room, as he could testify with his own voice since I had him see the whole place. Half of where we live is in ruins, and the one miserable room there was occupied by me and my companion. God knows my condition. I find myself more sick than well.

The new wing is being lived in without windows, which I hope will be provided soon. Only God knows how badly I feel at not being able to be of service to you, to whom I owe so much. Father Caesar himself is witness, having seen both the new and the old. I know that your goodness will not attribute this impossibility to a lack on our part. With profound reverence I implore the charity of your holy prayers and blessing. Prostrate to kiss your sacred vestments, I affirm myself once more,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

825

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (56)

Ceccano

October 28, 1752

Returned here the night before last.

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

On my return here to this Retreat from that of Falvaterra, I found your esteemed letter. I have the honor to inform you that Canon Caesar Papi was taken care of when I was at Falvaterra. With regard to a priest Your Excellency would like to have stir up an ecclesiastical spirit in the students of your seminary, here there is no one so capable as Father Rector, who today is beginning a mission with Father Thomas in Castro and then in Bauco. That should be finished toward the end of November. He will then be able to force himself to come for some days and deliver some discourses to your seminarians. I already need to bring in other religious for this Retreat to

complete the religious community here. He will need to be here by the end of November.

I hope to be at your feet either before the Feast of All Saints or All Souls Day and have the consolation of conferring face-to-face with you with regard to the nuns and the rest. Meanwhile, I retain always my keen desire to serve in accord with my weak strength. Kneeling with profound respect, I ask your pastoral blessing and am,

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

826

Passionist Religious (8)

San Angelo
November 3, 1752

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the
Passion of Jesus Christ:

The approaching General Chapter has obliged us in virtue of our office, notwithstanding our sickness, to take ourselves on a holy Visitation of our Retreats, not only to see and examine whether the observance of the Rules and Constitutions is in vigor, but also to make all those provisions so that tepidity does not enter and, at the same time, to put in force those means best suited to guard and preserve the regular observance of the Rules so that the religious who live in the Retreats will be always more and more fervent and holy, and show in all their works the virtues of Jesus Christ. so that with the holiness of their lives they may be stimulants to the people to glorify the holy Name of the Lord by improving their lives by aiming at Christian perfection. This will happen with greater ease with the grace of God if they are strengthened and encouraged by the holy example of our religious, if they see in them great modesty in their deportment, great humility and charity in the actions, a high detachment from everything created and from all useless dealings with seculars, great withdrawal and silence, which as the guardian of religion, as Saint Bernard says, is the key of gold which guards and preserves all the treasure of virtue. So we not only confirm the decrees set down, but also we order and command the following be observed:

1. We order that none of our professed religious go out alone, but always with a companion, and when out they shall always be together. Nor is it licit under any pretext for one to be in one house and the other in an different one, but the companion will always be present. If they need to confess a sick woman or speak with any of them, we wish the companion be always in sight, according to the Rules, Chapter XVII. Permission will be asked of him, even if he is a lay brother, in order to fulfill this act of humility and obedience to the holy Rules.

2. None of our religious is to ask for anything from a benefactor without permission of the rector. If this is not done, it is a violation of the vow of poverty, for it makes him a proprietor.

3. No one shall give out or accept anything at the door except the porter or the rector or one so designated by the rector.

4. No one shall speak with seculars, especially not with women, or country people, or woodsmen, except someone who has been appointed for that by the rector. He shall do so with few words, with great modesty, especially of the eyes, and in conformity with what the Rules lay down.

5. No priest or cleric or lay brother shall give alms at the door or elsewhere, nor make any gift, even though small, out of devotion or otherwise, or concern himself with the training of the dogs and cats, unless designated by the rector.

6. We ordain there shall be an official who has charge of the room where clothes, undershirts, handkerchiefs, medicines, tobacco, etc., are kept. That room will have its key kept by that official, who will receive directions each week from the rector to give to the religious what they need. It is not lawful to provide anything without permission. He who has need of tobacco because of illness cannot keep it in his room, but let him go to the one appointed, who will do him the charity in place of the rector. This is ordered so that the rector will not have so much inconvenience. For this reason we ordain, as is the laudable custom in our Retreats, that the religious be given undershirts, drawers, handkerchiefs and tobacco at a specified time.

7. No one shall ask for anything from the lay brother who has charge of the cellar and dispensary. If anyone has need of something to eat or drink outside of meals, he will go ask permission from the rector.

8. Let no one be so bold as to say what is to be done in the kitchen concerning food or anything else, nor about what is given in the refectory. Getting together one-on-one, complaining about the food and drink, is indecent and very unbecoming in a mortified religious. Much less shall any one dare to speak of such things with seculars. If some curious person asks what we eat, respond with modesty that the religious of the Passion eat what is allowed by the poverty of their holy Rules — and no more.

9. We order and command expressly that in recreation nothing shall be said, and no one is excepted from this, about opportune commands for the governing of the house. The rector will give his directions for the running of the house at the appropriate time when the signal for silence is sounded. We also wish that in recreation there will be no discussion of the missions, spiritual exercises, conferences given in the house, nor of what is done in other Retreats. But recreation should be devoutly happy, always mixing in a holy discourse so that the heart will not be cooled in its love for God. At the same time, be careful that recreation is a time filled with charity so that the mind not only does not remain fixed and turned on distracting and disturbing things, but also remains calm, peaceful, and more disposed to find its peace in God.

10. It is not lawful for anyone except the rector or his substitute in his absence to enter the kitchen or refectory outside the time established without permission of the rector.

11. We also command that the lay brothers at noon and in the evening shall not go to recreation until they have first taken care of the kitchen and refectory by washing the plates, taking care of things to be prepared, cleaning up, and all the rest. At the time of washing the plates and other dishes, one who knows the *Miserere* will recite it, along with the others, as they continue their work and end with some holy discourse so that they can go to recreation. When their tasks are completed, let them go with the blessing of the Lord to the recreation.

12. We ordain that in the kitchen and garden there will be no speaking except with necessity and that with a subdued voice and only about what pertains to the office. If there is no such necessity, let them continue their work in silence not only in the corridor, but also in the other corridors.

13. We order and command expressly that no one of our religious will enter into baptismal ceremonies, no matter how much asked by benefactors. They cannot baptize, for that is prohibited by the Sacred Councils to all religious, since this causes them to be too close to women and can open the way to dissipation of spirit.

14. They are not to eat with elbows on the table or too bent over their food. When they are through eating, their elbows are not to be on the table. But with hands inside their sleeves and modestly composed they shall listen to the spiritual reading. We want this observed by all the religious, no one excepted, since this is the polite way. To fail would be being contrary to religious modesty.

15. We ordain that on the solitary walk²⁸³ the religious shall go out together in silence and alone in a place fit for walking with greater recollection, helping one another with a holy example, observing rigorous silence, relieving the mind while taking the air. Let them return to the Retreat with the same silence.

16. Finally, we oblige the rector to be vigilant that these decrees be observed and have them read once a week in the public refectory at the end of the meal when all the religious are present. In the rector's absence, his substitute, or who is in his place, cannot change the directives he leaves on pretext of being the rector. On the arrival of the rector, the one who took his place will be held to give a precise account of all that happened in the rector's absence.

Given at San Angelo Retreat of our Residence, Territory of Vetralla, November 3, 1752.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

Francis Anthony of the Crucified, Secretary

283. Paul, in order to have the religious well prepared for meditation, decreed that after the time for study in the morning and afternoon, and before going to the choir for prayer, the religious would go out into the air in the garden, but in silence. Hence the "solitary walk."

Lucy Costantini (1)

Presentation
November 15, 1752

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Lady in Christ,

Since I am not sure whether Signore Dominic is out of town on business, I am presuming to write to you; but this letter is also for Signore Dominic. I ask you, in the first place, to forward the letter enclosed to Sister Mary Crucified. It is a reply to one she wrote me in this post. Further, I ask you to use all diligence to put into practice the holy instructions that the Lord gave you by means of my holy conferences with you.

Saint Ignatius often said: "Ignatius, conquer yourself. Ignatius, conquer yourself."

Oh, what great advice this is, Signora Lucy! Oh, what a great point of perfection it is to know how to be silent and see to it that our words are gentle, charitable, prudent, and a cause of edification and peace for all! Oh, what a great pleasure it gives God and what great merit is acquired for self by watching out for careless words, stinging words, and mortifying words.

Signora Lucy, make frequent resolutions to mortify your self-will, and keep your heart and spirit at peace, trying to be always turned toward heaven. In meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy you will learn all that I have said to you. I do not fail to pray for you and all your holy household, for I admit I am infinitely indebted to you.

Be of good heart and do not allow yourself to be caught by the turmoil of melancholy. Trust in God and believe that His Divine Majesty loves your soul and loves all your household.

I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and ask you to give my greetings to all of the house.

Share this with Signore Dominic, and I extend my greetings to all the house.

For your information, I have had news from his brother that Francis Anthony has had a large harvest of grain, and I rejoiced over that in the Lord.

If in time he wishes to have Masses celebrated for his deceased brother, please do not forget the poor Retreat of San Angelo. Greet him for me in the Lord.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I was just leaving when I received your welcome letter in last night's post. Since I am in poor health, with many tribulations of spirit and many occupations, I am answering you briefly.

1. I rejoice in the Lord that you have succeeded with the business of the church near you. With regard to thanking the bishop with a letter, you are free to do so, and it will be well for it is brief. Proceed with great discretion and prudence in incurring expenses, and remember your first obligation in justice is to your family and children. It is necessary to discharge obligations of justice before those of charity in accord with your ability in your proper state

2. I thank the Lord that a mission has taken place there. With regard to my coming, you need to abandon all hope for that. Unless God works a great miracle, I will no longer be able to give missions, mainly because I have poor health. I am close to 60 years old, loaded with the work for the Congregation, deprived of comfort and strength of soul, and battered by everything within and without. Oh, how much I would have to tell you! But I cannot, nor ought I so as not to frighten you too much. Now my only expectation is death, and I believe it is closer than my friends think.

But first I expect to drink a great cup of bitterness, which is made sweet by resignation to the Divine Will. This will be to see the work begun crushed to the ground, for the appearances are such. I am waiting in peace and hope that after I am in the tomb, the Lord will raise up someone else.

I have made this outburst with you so that you will recommend me to the blessed God. Keep what I have told you under seal. All the more so since these can be my apprehensions caused by my horrible tribulations of soul, etc., and from some appearances of great woes. I have need of strong prayers, and I implore prayers from all your pious family.

3. With regard to your penances, I have no difficulty in granting you a half-hour with the chain on Wednesday, a half-hour on Friday, and no more. Put it on in the morning when you are at prayer in your home. A dry discipline on Saturday for the space of three Hail Mary's and that is all.

As to your children, I do not know what to say since I do not know them and do not know their fervor or whether they are strong or not. If they are strong, you can allow them an hour with the chain on Wednesday, but not too tightly, and another hour on Friday while they are home at prayer. They are not to wear it like a cincture, but above the knee and not too tight. In that way it

284. Paul sees himself as unable to give missions anymore because of his poor health, his age (near sixty), the work of the Congregation, no strength of soul, and that he is "battered within and without." He awaits death with the hope that "the Lord will raise up someone else." Perhaps he is hoping that the brethren will elect another to be the General Superior.

will not damage their health, as could happen if they wear it as a cincture on their thigh. I am speaking in modest terms. I said above the knee, not at the joint or in that area. They will understand.

If they are vigorous in strength, you can allow them a dry discipline for the space of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the day before going to Communion. The main point is mental prayer, the exercise of virtue, staying withdrawn, working without losing time, and being under the observation of their mother, without ever entrusting them to others. The world is at its worst and can go no further.

Regarding continence, I have told you before and written you many times to hold on to your liberty to abstain by common consent at times of greater devotion, as you judge well, or for as short or long a time as you will, but never to bind yourselves by vow. Remain in equal and holy conjugal freedom.

I hope for great good from your family. That, dear Thomas, is your mission.

I would rejoice, oh, how much! to embrace in the Lord one of yours in our Retreat where I am staying, but we have a General Chapter coming up. That will keep me busy and will occupy the Retreat. I hope to have that good fortune before I die. I have been here in this Retreat about twenty days and I have planned to stay here until January 20, but I need to leave tomorrow morning for business belonging to my office and to embrace the holy cross anew. After Christmas I will be at San Angelo near Vetralla.

Father Rector greets you in the Lord. He told me of your donation of five *scudi*, which will be sent to San Angelo. The Lord reward you for everything, as I pray to the Lord.

I am writing after Matins, for yesterday there was a large packet of letters. I am happy to discharge my letters in reply every day.

Dear Thomas, let all your attention be not to lose sight of your nothingness and to remain hidden in your interior in a true solitude of spirit, all hidden in God and clothed with Jesus Christ, always bearing on the altar of your heart the holy pains of your Savior so that the fire of holy love is always burning there.

Greetings to your wife, your sons and daughters, whom I enclose in the holy Side of Jesus, along with their pious parents. May God bless us.

Note well that you do not allow your daughters to wear those evil and diabolical corselets in use today. That cannot be done without sin through the gravest scandal and the ruin it causes to souls. Let them go well covered and take anything superfluous from them so that anyone who sees them will see a portrait of modesty and retirement, which will inspire purity and devotion; otherwise, etc.

I forgot. With regard to your scruples, destroy them in the fire of love of God. Make your confessions as you were taught by me and by others.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Passionist Religious (9)

San Angelo
December 10, 1752

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of Discalced Clerics of the Holy
Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
To Each and All of the Rectors and Superiors of Our Congregation of the
Discalced Clerics of the Passion of the Lord:

Let us rejoice in the Lord, Reverend Fathers. Again, I say let us all rejoice. Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of certain and expected salvation, in which not only our dear sons in Christ, for whom nature has given sense life and a generous nature has given a mind, but even the mute houses, the lifeless fields, the mountains and the valleys seem to me to be rejoicing because in a few days comes that day on which you, Reverend Fathers, filled with the Holy Spirit, are called to speak in the Lord. You stand in great need of that Spirit to rightly fulfill the great work on which all the good of regular discipline depends, that is, the election of good rectors. Therefore, that we may make use of your decisions and, at the same time, fulfill our ministry and take your advice about the many goods of the flock entrusted to us, we here decide and decree that the General Chapter will be held on March 9 of the coming year at our residence, the Retreat dedicated to God in honor of Saint Michael the Archangel.

We call each and all who possess the rank of rector in virtue of holy obedience and order them to be there. None of those who hold this office may absent themselves from this gathering, except impeded by a legitimate cause previously approved by us.

This time and place have seemed fitting to us: the time because of the healthfulness of the air for traveling, and also that then no one would be forced to be away from the Paschal Proclamation; the place because of the suitability of this Retreat. Here everything is ready, and all will find things fit and worthy for so many and supported by divine grace so that we trust completely that nothing will be wanting to you in spiritual or temporal things.

All who are coming to this meeting are to bring with them the books in which the amounts of income and expenses will be found, with the exact amounts noted, an inventory of the principal objects needed for the divine service, and finally dimissorial letters with signatures of your members and other reports of this kind if you have them available.

We know, beloved, that you are devoted to what pertains to the observance of religious life so that you need not be admonished that all those coming together, both on the journey as well as in the houses of benefactors, show forth modesty, piety, and religious behavior so that we will not fail to be an example of good works, no less by word and bearing as with life and morals, and inflame lay persons with the power of the devotion of the Passion of the Lord.

What is needed to be done by us in this meeting we can reduce to two items: one is the election of the general, provincial, and consultors, along with the rectors and novice directors; the other is whatever pertains to religious discipline. When asked about these things, let them state their opinion modestly, seriously. Let them do so freely if they judge there are things pertaining to the whole Congregation or in particular houses worthy of the decisions of our meeting.

Since in considering these things our reason often falls short, and that everything may turn out properly and happily, we ordain that from the day of the meeting there will be on the part of all living in the Retreats vigils, fasts and other pious works to seek divine help for so important an affair. Furthermore, we decree that the Blessed Sacrament be publicly venerated on March 9, 10, and 11. Above all, let pious prayers pour forth to the Mother of God that she will stand in the sight of God to pray for us. Let us go to her as poor ones to the rich, as sons who have secure access, that they may obtain favors bountifully. Let us embrace the footsteps of Mary with devout supplication... So as a rich and lasting foretaste, which we beseech from the heart, may you receive the blessing from the Giver of all good things.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

Francis Anthony of the Crucified, Secretary

Given in our solitary residence of Saint Michael the Archangel in the territory of San Angelo, December 10, 1752.

830

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (57)

Toscanello

December 16, 1752

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Kneeling at your feet, I come to give you my tribute of true servitude, while offering you my wishes for the fullness of grace and heavenly gifts for the coming Feast of Christmas, when the Sovereign Divine Infant is accustomed to enrich his faithful servants who with incessant work in the pastoral care of souls and with zeal promote his greater glory and the sanctification of his holy Name. Our poor Congregation professes its infinite indebtedness to you in Jesus Christ, especially the unworthy one who is writing and is most obligated, and so we will not fail in all our prayers, particularly in the coming solemnity, to cry out to the Lord so that he may give you long life and bless all your pious intentions.

As I had the honor to ask your piety to give a hand to the building of a new church at the Retreat of Toscanella, seeing that the present one is very unworthy of divine worship, so I have complete faith that from your pious heart you will continue your inclination for that work, so much the more so, seeing we are now in real possession of that Retreat through the exchange of notes which obliges the Congregation to improve the church there within a

determined time. Your pastoral zeal will not be cheated and the Lord will be the more glorified through the greater fittingness of the house.

In truth, we can look on that church only as a threatening ruin, for even the altar is caking with lime. So with the obligation that we have, would you please, for the love of God, not oppose such a work. Since I stand at the head of your charities, so I have faith you will put your hand to it. Prostrate, I kiss your sacred pastoral vestments, and with profound reverence I ask your holy blessing, and I am always more,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

831

Lucy Costantini (2)

285

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I learn from your courteous letter that the nuns there do not want the retreat until the first Saturday in Lent. They truly are not using good judgment. Seeing they are aware of the obligation we have to conduct the missions in the lower salt marshes at that time, they should have compassion on that poor and most needy people. Nonetheless, because of the heavy obligations that I and the whole Congregation owe in Jesus Christ to our beloved Signore Dominic, to you, and to your entire household, I will make every effort to have the Father who is to give service to the nuns be there on the first day of Lent so that he can end the retreat on March 12, and he will be able to be back with the others in time for the missions. This is the most that I can do out of concern for the gentlemen because of the great obligations we have in Jesus Christ.

I will do what is possible to be there for a single day, since I cannot do more because of my heavy assignments. It may be I who will have the retreat for the nuns. In case I leave early to be quickly at The Oak, I will have the good fortune to pay them my respects. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with the canon, and asking you to give my greetings in the Lord to Signore Dominic, I declare myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

285. Amedeo inserts this letter at the end of 1752. The perpetual calendar indicates that Friday, March 12, was in 1756.

The Second General Chapter (1753)

The year 1753 was for Paul the manifestation of God's Will that he guide the Congregation for another term of office. In the early months he prepares for the General Chapter. In spite of his efforts he cannot avoid re-election as General Superior. As he leaves the chapter room and writes to his brethren, he seems more and more committed to have the Institute established in the Church as a religious order with solemn vows.

There are several letters written to benefactors who are helping out in behalf of the Chapter. One priest has sent some "precious wine ... for the comfort of the capitulars." He asks Signore James Anguillara to have his father provide two horses in Corneto for Father Fulgentius as he travels to San Angelo for the Chapter. Father Thomas Struzzieri has begged the pope to allow him to refuse an election to any office. The capitulars were: the council, consisting of Paul, John Baptist, Mark Aurelius; the rectors are Fulgentius for Presentation, Francis Anthony for San Angelo, Luke Anthony for Soriano, Stephen for Ceccano, Dominic for Toscanella, Thomas for Falvaterra, and Bernardine for Terracina. There was the three-day Triduum with a conference on March 11. The Chapter opened on March 12 with the Solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit, procession into the chapter room, culpa by the General and the election of Paul as General. The consultors were re-elected. The new rectors elected were: Francis Anthony for Presentation, Luke Anthony for San Angelo, Stephen for San Eutizio, Joseph for Ceccano, Raymond for Toscanella, Dominic for Falvaterra, John Mary for Terracina, and Fulgentius as novice master. A southern province was established with Thomas of the Side of Jesus as the provincial, and Dominic of the Conception and Joseph of the Conception were his consultors. Thomas of the Side of Jesus would be in charge of the southern Retreats. Paul, as General Superior, acted as provincial for the northern Retreats. The discussions and voting on decrees continued on March 12 and 13. The Chapter closed on March 14, but on March 13 Paul sent out his circular letter to all the religious. In it he mentioned his intention to seek solemn vows. It would appear that this question had been discussed at the Chapter.

There are several letters written in 1753 without complete dates. One is written to Pope Benedict XIV, requesting permission to ordain several candidates. The others are written to the King of the Two Sicilies and Cardinal Colonna. Both concern the building of a new novitiate on Mount Argentario in proximity to the Presentation Retreat, but situated as to get the sea breezes, thus offering better air than the lagoon near Orbetello provided. Paul sees this novitiate building

consisting of bedrooms and a chapel for the novices, and as "forming one entity with this Retreat." This will become the Retreat of Saint Joseph on Mount Argentario, the novitiate house of the Presentation Province for more than two centuries.

832

John Anthony Lucattini (15)²⁸⁶

Toscanella
January 12, 1753
On leaving.

J.C.P.

Dear Father,

I received your welcome letter, in which I read of the mercies which our good God is giving to Lucy. "Blessed be the Lord in all his gifts and holy in all his works." I have read that letter in haste, for I had heard a confession and am already packed in order to leave very early tomorrow. I do not know whether we shall ever see each other again. I know well that I am looking at nothing but crosses. I did not say that correctly. I see nothing but new scourges from the lower hell, for many are the scourges of the sinner, many. Blessed be God.

I still have confidence that God will favor the young men, as Lucy remarks, with the light of his grace. But since she has nothing to say about an old man, that makes me all the surer that although God will pour out great light even to the old, however, not to a wicked old sinner grown old in evil days, such as I am.

Tell Lucy that such favors do not make one holy, but true humility, deeply based, and true charity, the queen of virtues. So let her remain in her nothingness and be hidden from all creatures. I am in a hurry. If you pray for me, you will be doing a great charity. Jesus bless you all. Amen.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

833

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (58)

San Angelo
January 15, 1753

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

I am sending five of our religious, along with the hired man, from this Retreat to the Retreat at Ceccano for the study of morals and in order not to burden these Retreats, overloaded with members. There will be opportunities for you to exercise your holy charity toward them on their journeys there and,

286. Paul is at Our Lady of the Oak and leaving. He jokes with Lucy about her praying for the young men but not for an old man like himself.

at the same time, will offer you an occasion to enrich your merits before the Lord with the great mercy shown them. While for me and the whole Congregation our pressure to show our gratitude in our prayers and holy sacrifices will increase.

I hope, if I am a bit better in health, to be with you for conversations after our small General Chapter. I have a strong belief that your paternal zeal will cooperate in the renovation of the church, which is much dilapidated and threatens to collapse.

I am writing in haste since I arrived here from the Retreat in Toscanella and from a mission the day before yesterday, and I am not a little worn out in strength. Prostrate to kiss your sacred vestments, I implore with profound reverence your holy pastoral blessing.

Your humble, devoted, respectful servant,

Paul of the Cross

834

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (37)²⁸⁷

San Angelo

January 18, 1753

J.C.P.

My Blessed Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter, dated December 3, and have not replied to it sooner because I returned to this Retreat only Saturday afternoon, being absent since October. I was on Visitations to our Retreat in Orbetello but did not have the opportunity to travel to the mission at Longone. When I did have that opportunity, I was unable to do so because of my heavy duties.

You come closer to God when you have less external consolation, and, if the Lord is pleased to have you walk with deep despoiling, even internal, and with complete abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure, oh, how rich you are in Jesus Christ. That is true poverty of spirit!

I already am acquainted with the ideas of Signore Thomas, but they will not be completed in my time. Many souls long for such a work, and I know of one pious family who are prepared to give all they have, which is considerable, to establish a Retreat as a nest for the doves of the Crucified. If our Congregation is raised to solemn vows, as I want to hope, then realization of this holy work becomes easy. But who knows whether that will be while I still live! All the more so since I do not wish for that because my soul can only desire the fulfillment of the always adorable Will of God. All my prayers go in this direction.

Sister Maria Cherubina, live entirely hidden in Jesus Christ and repose on his Divine Heart like a child and allow yourself to be completely penetrated

287. Paul mentioned that he had arrived in San Angelo the preceding Saturday and had been away "since October." Again he writes to Bresciani about the convent for Passionist nuns, but solemn vows are needed.

with his bitter sufferings, for in this and for this the love of God flames up in us. Let us rest absorbed in love in the depth of the Divinity.

It is written in Sacred Scripture that the Lord will do the will of one who fears him: "The Lord will do the will of those fearing him."

Take heart, cry out to the Lord for the work you mention, but take your repose in peace in the Will of God and without the least anxiety. Above all, pray for me, for I am in extreme need. Greet your Mother Abbess, the Mother Vicareess and all the others you mention. Let them recommend me to the blessed God.

Jesus reward the charity of all. I am writing in haste. I enclose you in the loving Side of Jesus, whence I pray for you every blessing. Amen.

Your unworthy, useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

835

Thomas Fossi (51)²⁸⁸

San Angelo
January 18, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I received your welcome letter, and I am answering it while overloaded with work since I have returned after a long absence and very worn out to this Retreat the afternoon of Saturday, January 13.

I rejoice in the Lord that in your house the vanity and pestilential customs of modern times of this world are held in horror. You need to be always more vigilant, for that is your duty. I assert from long experience that women, even though devout, need long testing and are not to be trusted too much in order not to be deceived. This sex is much inclined to vanity and easily gives into their affections. Oh, how needful it is to be on guard! I am an old man. However, just as I never trusted myself in my youth, so I do not do so in old age. Perhaps I tremble more than before. I hope I would sooner have my eyes gouged out by the executioner than ever look a woman in the face. I am not writing this because you need the motivation, since, thanks to God, I know your caution, even though you are married, but I say this so that you may be all eyes with your daughters since they are almost at marriageable age, therefore, a much more dangerous time. Your wife ought always have them with her when they go to church or take their walks when that is necessary. Have them always busy at work. Oh, in what dangers we are in these miserable times! I have great hopes for your family and even more for the parents. God permits that you are deserted by creatures so that your life may be hidden in

288. After writing about how a married man should conduct himself with women and how Thomas' wife is to look after the growing daughters, Paul writes a beautiful paragraph about how to suffer and be silent, especially in times of "storms and tribulations."

Jesus Christ in true poverty of spirit. So thank God for this and rejoice in God our Good.

Regarding the church you wish to set up, if your uncle wants to help you by contributing a part of the expenses, you should allow him to do so without any scruples. Since he is in favor of the church and is having you work at it, so you may accept in the spirit of a donation whatever your uncle will give you, even if he were to undertake the entire expense. All the more so since you should be his legitimate heir.

Of myself I am saying nothing, since in taking account I always know more that it is better to suffer and be silent. When storms and tribulations occur, it is better to hide oneself the more. The best plan is to flee and stay hidden in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't speak of tribulations without necessity, except with persons with whom one ought to speak, such as the spiritual director, for in such sharing virtue grows less and self-love grows more because self always wants sympathy. Oh, how much better it is to flee and hide oneself in the depth of the Divinity and lose all thought of self and disappear in the Divine Good Pleasure!

Greet Signora Victoria for me and all your pious house. Embracing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm once more that I am from a true heart. I am writing in a hurry. Pray much, etc.

Your affectionate, useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

836

Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (9)

San Angelo
January 23, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Canon,

I have placed in the holy Side of Jesus the consolation your letter afforded me, and I thank Divine Providence that you have been destined through the choice of the bishop to be confessor of that venerable convent. Oh, how much I praise and thank the blessed God! Oh, how much good I expect from this.

Beloved and reverend canon, be sure of the holy lights the Lord will give you in this office, which you should embrace with a good heart since it comes from the loving hand of God, and time will cause you personally to experience the happy outcome.

Since there are many letters and tasks, I have only the time to embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus and ask for your fervent prayers. Father Rector greets you from the heart and is sending certification of the Masses celebrated. With profound respect and in haste, I kiss your sacred hands.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Girolama Ercolani (24)

San Angelo
February 17, 1753

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your esteemed letter of February 5 last evening, brought here from Soriano. So I am replying by post. You are doing very well in regulating yourself as you tell me in your letter, and you ought to continue to keep yourself at peace and make nothing of the scruples and importunate thoughts that run through your mind. Continue not to confess them since you do not want them and do not consent to them — that I know. In place of thinking whether you dwelt on such thoughts or not, make acts of love of God, of contrition, of humility, and of great confidence in the blessed God. In that way the devil will leave beaten.

Your house is much blessed by the Lord and for that reason he visits it with tribulation, such as the sickness you write about. Believe me, the Mercy of God will preserve and prosper you spiritually and also temporally.

I will not neglect to pray, and have prayers offered, to His Divine Majesty to grant health to all, especially to Signora Antonia, who I hear is sick once more. The Lord loves that little girl, and by means of sickness strengthens her in his divine service. I am in a hurry as they are already reciting the canonical hours. Greet our canon warmly and all his house, whom I place in the holy Side of Jesus, especially you. I pray a copious blessing from the Lord for you.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

A Priest (1)²⁸⁹

San Angelo
February 19, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I have placed in the holy Side of Jesus the donation of precious wine that you had the kindness to send for the comfort of the capitulars in the coming Chapter. I pray the Great Giver of every good to grant you, as I expect, a copious spiritual and temporal reward, as we will all pray the Lord.

I am writing in haste, for I am much occupied. I ask you to greet in Jesus Christ your mother and all your pious household. Special greetings in the Lord to your sister Faustina, and tell her she should remain in her profound solitude in the sacred inner desert. Repose there on the loving breast of her Divine Spouse with abstraction from all created things, etc., and in that divine solitude cry out to the Lord for my intentions, etc.

289. Possibly to Reverent Giannotti.

Kissing your sacred hands, I say I am from the heart,
Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

839

James Anguillara

San Angelo
February 23, 1753

When Father Fulgentius, rector of the Retreat of the Presentation, comes to this Retreat of San Angelo for our Chapter, your good father will come with him, since he has a desire to visit you by coming by way of Bieda. So would you have the kindness ... on Saturday there will be two horses in Corneto, so that within that day ... in March the horses should be there, so that on Sunday your father will arrive at your home. I have written of this to the Retreat of the Presentation. Being certain of your kindness, I am not saying more, but simply say I am always indebted to your goodness. Reverencing all in your house, and with all respect I sign myself,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

840

Peter Falasca

San Angelo
February 27, 1753

Illustrious Sir,

The experience I have had of the happy outcome on the occasions of your kindness and goodness moves me now to seek the protection of your patronage. I am certain that I will experience it strongly in favor of these poor sons of Christ, who find themselves in situations in which they discover always more the effects of your loving benevolence, the proof of which is when you are pleased to keep in your noble heart this useless servant of Jesus Christ.

I do not wish now to recall how much was done for the foundation of this Retreat and how much your charity cooperated so that on this defenseless mountain there be unfurled the glorious standard of the Passion of Jesus Christ so that all this city might receive the holy influence of the workmen of our Congregation, who brought with them the sowing of the divine word and good example of life, since that would cause your humility to blush, for you have in view only the glory of God and the good of poor souls.

What I want to lay out for you is that just as you did so much to begin this work, so you would stir up your fervor to bring it to a happy conclusion. I know how well regarded are your speeches by all your fellow citizens. I know how great your zeal is and how cultivated your prudence in conducting affairs.

Whereas this Commune of Terracina has promised to grant a subsidy to this poor Retreat and in that way to bring it to perfection, or at least close thereto, so I am asking you to undertake our cause with these gentlemen. I have already recommended myself to you and have chosen you as our advocate. So speaking with confidence, I turn the whole matter over to your hands.

I am persuaded that these esteemed representatives of the commune will not make difficulties in conceding as much as your charity will suggest. I would be happy if you were to warm yourself for the presentation by keeping before your eyes the poor Retreat and the poor religious, who day and night raise their hands to the Most High so that he may enrich with heavenly goods all your holy desires.

Meanwhile, I will not fail to place you, with all your house, under the protection of the Passion of Jesus Christ, which you promote with so much zeal by your cooperation. So as not to wound your charity, I omit recommending the affair any further. Always remembering your favors in my prayers and holding you as one of our greatest benefactors, I am eager to hear your desires. I end with full esteem and declare myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

841

Passionist Religious (10)

San Angelo
March 12, 1753

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of Discalced Clerics,
Fighting under the Banner of the Passion of the Lord,
To our Brothers, Dear Sons in Christ, of the Retreat of N.,
Greetings in the Lord:

Whereas in the General Chapter, canonically gathered according the prescription of the Rule at the Retreat of Saint Michael the Archangel, by no merit of our own, but Divine Providence so disposing, we were elevated once more to the highest position of this Congregation which bears the title of the Passion of the Lord, we, fearful of our weakness and with entire hope based on the Lord and the strength of his power, submit our shoulder to the yoke of so great a burden and consecrate our weak strength freely to the heavy task for the greater glory of God and the advance of the Congregation.

Therefore, we announce our election to all you our members, our beloved brothers and sons in Christ: to you who are priests, to you enrolled as clerics, to you living in the lay state. Begging you from our soul by the charity of the Holy Spirit that there be petitions, prayers, demands made to God for us and that you faithfully help us in your prayers as we must make an account for our care of your souls to the supreme Pastor, Christ the Lord, who requires the blood of his sheep from the hands of the shepherd. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to fulfill our office with all the sanctity, prudence and vigilance we can,

lest any of this small flock be lost, or the initial strength of observance be weakened, or fervor be cooled in any of our religious. What is more important, lest by our fault, as we know to be enough merited, the work of the Congregation be totally destroyed.

Therefore, we need to pray without ceasing in one unanimous spirit, dearest ones, that God, the Best and All-Highest, will show to the coming ages the riches of his grace in his goodness to us by raising this too fragile Congregation in its swaddling clothes to solemn vows through the Apostolic See. Then it will be able to spread through all parts of the world and in the Catholic Church. Once it is solidly established in accord with our desire, it may stand unconquerably as a wall for God against the enemies contending against the Cross of Christ. All of us, as true unconquerable workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, will be able to eradicate the flood of vices of the people and, burning with divine love, imprint devotion to the Passion of the Lord on the hearts of the faithful who are too forgetful of it.

Since many evils disturb us in this corrupt age, attacks from without, fears within, and therefore that we may not have sorrow upon sorrow and be compelled to weep under the burden of this great office, we ask you again and again in the Lord, beloved ones, that you fall off neither to the right nor the left, but make your path straight and strive to lighten the weight of our burden, or as the Apostle says, we ought to bear one another's burden, so that you with equal zeal strive to bear our burden. You, however, along with us carry this weight. If we strive in the fashion of a vigilant Shepherd, wishing to satisfy our weighty obligations and work with solicitude, you must bring the due submission of prompt obedience and true humility. "The care belongs to us, to you the obedience." To use the words of Saint Augustine, "For us the vigilance of the pastor, to you the humility of the flock." You gave that generously while we were reaching our sixtieth year in this office, although poorly. You will certainly not fail to give such obedience to our old age. We know that from the virtue we have observed in you.

Since things are this way, beloved brothers in Christ, we wish now to open our inner feelings to you so that, although we are seen to be elevated once more to the position of General of the Congregation, we, nevertheless, do not think of our self as president or superior, but as your most devoted servant. We seek not to be served, but to serve. You are "our joy and our crown" and "we have you in our heart." We speak of you as our dearest and most beloved sons in Christ and claim to love you with a fatherly affection of sincerity, and "in the heart of Jesus Christ we long for you," that moved by our great love, "now absent in body, but present in spirit," we embrace one and all, priests as well as clerics and lay brothers, extending our arms in a close bond of charity and testifying sincerely from the fullness of our heart that we are always ready to spare not even the hardest labor for the benefit of your souls. Even more, since "the charity of Christ presses us." To the extent it were necessary and with the help of God's grace, as a good shepherd we are not afraid to lay down our life for you, our sheep.

Therefore, dearest sons in Christ, come to us as to a benevolent father in whatever you have need of, whether spiritual or bodily, with filial confidence. In this regard we strongly desire we may find the sons of the Congregation faithful and sincere, and that with due care and in the best way we will aid them in all things and take care to bring help with all our strength.

For the rest, “most beloved and desired sons, we beg all of you in the Lord that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you were called. Clothe yourselves as elect of God, holy and beloved, with a heart of mercy, with kindness, humility, modesty, patience; loving one another with fraternal love, yielding to one another with honor, supporting one another, unanimous in one spirit in a bond of peace, doing nothing through contention or out of vain glory, but in humility, considering others as superior; in such a way, however, that over all these you have charity, which is the bond of perfection.” For this each of you must strive that you may attain it in accord with promises vowed. “In simplicity of your heart and serving Christ and not serving the eye as though pleasing men, but as servants of Christ fulfilling the Will of God from your soul, obey your superiors and be subject to them. This is right, for they watch over you as having to give an account for your souls. So that they may do this gladly and not in tears, let no one presume to despise them, for he then despises God;” but rather, as is right, let him listen with due docility of mind, not as to a human being, but in the human being let him see God. Because of their faith in the Scriptures, each one can glory to hear. In the meanwhile, “Fathers,” do not by your imprudence “rouse your sons in Christ to indignation” so that they do not become weak in spirit and, lacking confidence in you and troubled by inner anxieties and by not opening the secrets of their hearts, fall into an irreparable series of evils.

Wherefore, most beloved and dearest sons, we ask you and beseech you in the Lord Jesus Christ that as you have received from us through the Constitutions and Rules the way you should walk and please God, that you do walk in that way.

Whereas you have been called apart by the special gift of God to the fortress of the Lord under the unconquered banner of the saving Passion, you are enrolled to fight and “to keep the faith and to finish your course.” With alacrity of strongest spirit, press on so that at some point, after having overcome many tribulations, you may be able to claim the incorruptible crown of justice, which is stored up for you by the Just Judge.

Dearest ones, this is what we make intercession for all of you in all our prayers, confident that he who has begun this work will bring it to perfection so that this little flock of our Congregation may grow, and you, rooted and founded in unfeigned charity, may be made the good odor of Christ and grasp the prize of your calling and be able to proclaim Jesus and Him Crucified most fervently to all peoples, Christian and infidel.

When finally on that fearful moment of the last day, when the Father will come to ask an accounting of our stewardship, that Father who placed this recently planted vine of our Congregation in the garden of his Church, surrounded by a variety, and gave it to us to guard, oh, would that we could

answer we have lost none of those plants which, like fruitful olives in the house of God, ought to be there and flourish like palm trees, that none have perished through our fault, except those who out of perverse will have refused our proper care and are unwilling to produce fruits worthy of penance.

Therefore, dearest ones, do not slacken in doing good, but with fear and trembling work out your salvation, striving rather that through your good works you make your call and election certain. Therefore, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave us the example that as he acted, so must we act.

Pray without ceasing for us and for the Congregation. Now, we place you to be guarded in the tabernacle of the Open Side of Christ and in the Sorrowful Heart of Mary, our most loving Mother, and with a chaste fatherly love we pray that the God of Peace will sanctify you in everything, and that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

So be it. So be it. We ask you to read our letter carefully, which we sign with our own hand as a testimony of our love and mark with our seal.

Given from the solitary Retreat of Saint Michael the Archangel, Territory of Vetralla, March 12, 1752.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

Peter M. of the Wounds of Jesus, Secretary

<seal>

842

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (6)²⁹⁰

Toscanello

March 26, 1753

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

I received your letter this morning, and it gives me all the more reason to magnify the divine mercies. Oh! how much you are obligated to God! Oh! how much you need to be faithful! That fidelity must be exercised by remaining in your horrible nothing, losing this nothing in the Infinite All that is God Himself, using all your effort with divine grace to continue in that inner solitude in which the soul, all lost in pure and naked spirit in the Infinite Good, becomes a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and in truth. In this divine school, in which the Sovereign Master is the Holy Spirit, by the light of faith the soul, without use of the senses, understands in God the high, stupendous, unutterable things. So it is no wonder that it remains in a holy ignorance, which makes it incapable of expressing such secrets. From this is born a love of complacency, since the soul comprehending that God is that Infinite Good and that he is an immense sea of perfections, relishes and is pleased to be ignorant, and to be that nothing that of itself is not able to grasp the divine

290. It has been five years since the last preserved letter to Gandolfi. Paul is at Our Lady of the Oak, writing during Holy Week.

marvels, but abases itself entirely in a deep loving stupor in that great sea, and there adores, is silent, loves, is stupefied, etc., and with expansion of love does all this in one step and in one moment. Continue to remain alone and live by faith, continue in that happy loss of love in God, for thus with high abstraction from all that is created, you will be outside of time and in the Eternal God.

I rejoice in Jesus Christ that your pains and other sufferings are continuing. Now listen. In heaven by the light of glory, the Highest Good is seen as he is (Saint John), and one rejoices and loves. On earth the loving souls see God in the light of faith, if they remain in the inner temple adoring and loving. So, allow yourself to rejoice and love. Down here one loves and suffers. So emulating the saints as they love and rejoice in heaven, you are to love and suffer. Oh, happy lot! Oh, stupendous grace! Take account of it and humble yourself always more.

I wish you to allow the fears you mention to disappear in the sea of love if they bother your lower soul. Lose sight of them by fleeing into solitude in the bosom of your adored Love. I am pushed for time. May God will it be true what you say about that person. But you are not to believe anything of that, for experience proves otherwise. Continue to celebrate the funeral rites of your Heavenly Spouse in these holy days with sentiments of a sorrowful love and a loving sorrow. The Passion is a work of love. I say no more. Do not forget the Sorrowful Mary Most Holy; celebrate the funeral of her Divine Son with her.

I will not neglect to place your heart in the sea of the holy Passion during the celebration of the holy mysteries. I am hurrying for the bearer wishes to leave. Jesus bless you. Amen. Do not give me the title of General when you write to me. My name is enough.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

843

Bishop Fabrizio Borgia (59)

Ceccano

April 22, 1753

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Since your have always been pleased to look with a kindly eye on this poor Congregation, which professes its innumerable obligations to you, you will certainly receive with joy the news that it has been decided to erect the new church for this Retreat. So this important business has been concluded. For none were there lacking dangers, and for that reason there were all the precautions and safety measures taken, which are customary in these affairs. This the more so since the Congregation, through the mediation of the General, namely myself, is obliged in the case of some unforeseen and harmful happening, which will not happen because of the great care used, to repair the damage.

Meanwhile, I ask your kindness to please grant permission to erect an altar on the first floor of the old Retreat for the celebration of Holy Mass, the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, and for our Offices.

This room is now in good order. It will be decorated for our purposes. The door opens on the street. I ask your goodness to grant this humble request to provide honor to God, the well-being of this poor Retreat, and not to lose the advantage of this occasion.

I am hastening this to the post in order to have a quick reply, since next Wednesday I am going to San Stefano for the holy mission to satisfy the desires of Your Excellency.

Finally, with profound reverence I ask your pastoral blessing.

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

844

John Francis Sancez (11)

Ceccano

April 24, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I am in debt in replying to your cordial letter, which I received in Terracina and strengthens the high regard I have always had for your kindness and which I see in the holy grace of Jesus Christ, without which we can do nothing. Blessed be forever that good Lord, who enriches us with such much mercy.

I am happy to learn that Signora Barbara, your pious wife, is getting better, and I offer thanks for that to the Highest Giver of every good. If my poor prayers will be heard, not only will your wife acquire perfect health, but also there will be a rain of divine blessings upon your house, which I see in the holy Side of our Crucified Lord.

Tomorrow, I am going to open the mission at San Stefano and San Lorenzo in order to satisfy the desires of the Grand Constable, Cardinal Colonna.

I wrote from the Retreat of the Presentation in the last mail. Now, because of my haste, I am not replying further since there is no need. If you have to write a note to Mount Argentario, do me the favor to instruct Father Rector or the novice master that if they have reason to write to me, which I do not expect, they should address the letters to the Retreat at Ceccano, where I will arrive soon. With due, profound respect and honor, I affirm I am from a true heart,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Girolama Ercolani (25)

Ceccano

April 24, 1753

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

Do not be surprised at the lateness of this reply, for the letter has gone the long way round.

Now listen, Girolama, I am unwilling that we should go back to the beginning with your scruples. The suffering you have is a certain sign that you have not given any consent whatever. Therefore, you did well not to confess such things, for they are only fantasies that the devil sets up to disturb you. I ask you to continue in the manner I have given you. Simply protest frequently that you do not want to consent to the least thing offensive to God and cast off these scruples like the plague. In place of letting your mind dwell on such things which the devil puts before it, make gentle and sweet acts of love of God, of resignation, and let these scruples be burnt up in the flames of divine love. In this way you will remain at peace and you will be doing well. The devil is setting up this disturbance to keep you from your devotions and exercise of spirit. So be very quiet and strive to have always a great loving zeal for the upbringing of your daughters. Serve them by being all eyes to see how they conduct themselves, etc.

I am in a hurry, for tomorrow I leave to start a mission. I cannot come there because of my duties. I will not fail to give you a share in my poor prayers.

Greet the canon for me and all his house. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus and affirm I am,

Your true, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Father Lawrence De Scalzi

Ceccano

April 24, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

With complete submission of spirit and rejoicing of my poor heart, I received the honor of your commands, in fulfillment of which I will celebrate the Holy Mass according to your pious intentions, asking you not to attribute my tardiness to a lack of respect, for I am now on my Visitation of the Province of Campagna-Marittima, not a little distant from Mount Argentario. Your letter was forwarded to me from there. Because of the long way around, it reached me late. I offer you special thanks in Jesus Christ for the charitable memory you hold of me, and I assure you that in my cold prayers I will not fail to be thankful in the Lord to you. I recommend you to the prayer of these good religious, as well as your nephew and all your house. I am writing in a hurry

and on my way out on a mission. With profound respect I kiss your sacred hands.

Your obligated, unworthy servant
Paul of the Cross

847
Cyprian Bella²⁹¹

San Lorenzo
May 12, 1753
On a mission.

Dear Sir,

To my great displeasure and not small upset to the people here already so contrite, an officer came with two policemen to collect payment right after the General Communion day. I have never seen anything like that done before. I asked the officer to hold off, but he was much opposed to doing that. So relying on your goodwill and charity, I made bold to assure him that I had no doubt about your agreeing with me; I have no doubts about that.

Meanwhile, accept in good part for the greater glory of God the representation that I am making to you to hold off such collections until after the mission terminates tomorrow. Otherwise, I will be forced on my way to Rome to speak to the Cardinal Grand Constable so that he may pass word on to the Sovereign Pontiff so that never again will such a disturbance take place at the time of holy missions. Jesus enrich you with every good. I am in a hurry,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

848
Caspar Primoticcì

San Lorenzo
May 13, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

At the same time that I have the honor of affirming once more my service to you, I would ask you to have the Brothers of the Oratory of Saint Hyacinth practice the devotion of the Way of the Cross,²⁹² as I recommended to them during the mission there, especially on Fridays. In that way they will maintain

291. Paul complains about the police officers who disturbed the mission by collecting payments. Note how he challenged the official not to do this again. Both Zoffoli and De Sanctis speak of this letter.

292. The Way of the Cross was a Franciscan devotion. Paul encouraged this practice on his missions and also promoted it as a means of fulfilling the Passion vow.

their holy fervor in the service of God. In recommending myself to your devout prayers, I kiss your sacred hands and am in a big hurry,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

849

Signore Joseph Chiatti (1)

Ceccano
May 15, 1753

Dear Sir,

I received your esteemed letter in which I see even more your charity and the good will that you hold for this poor Congregation of the Sons of the Passion of Jesus Christ. I acknowledge our great obligations toward you, not failing at times to take advantage of your courteous stance so that you would have occasion to build up merit in paradise. I sympathize with the affliction you have due to the lawsuit which you mention to me. But for now I counsel you to reflect on always doing the Will of God so that earthly affairs will not be an impediment to heavenly goods. I am very edified that you are having recourse in these circumstances to the help of prayer, for in this way is recognized the true follower of Christ. I trust that in whatever the outcome of the lawsuit, you will take everything from the paternal hand which scourges you without complaining against the highest dispositions of God. May Jesus live in your heart. Out of exhaustion I do not have the time to say more. I leave you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and all that remains is to recommend myself when you speak to the Lord. I profess myself with all respect and esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

850

Thomas Fossi (52)

San Angelo
June 2, 1753

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

In reply to your two long letters, received after my arrival at the Retreat, I, oppressed with sickness for which I am being treated now to see whether I can escape the sickness that is threatening me, say to you briefly that you did not act wisely in involving yourself by recommending that the bishop take his vicar general as his Coadjutor. This is an undertaking fearful even to angels. Who knows what the outcome might be? Twenty-five years ago I recommended to a bishop the ordination of a deacon to priesthood. Believe me, I was very sorry about that and have had a nagging conscience for years. How much worse to get mixed up in appointing a bishop?

If I were in your place, I would attend to the obligations of my state in life with all exactitude. Stay in profound annihilation within, make great account of true virtues, keep myself hidden and secret, as a great treasure, cautious in speaking, and do the work of a good secular and leave to churchmen the work of the Church.

Trust those lights that make us always more humble and filled with knowledge of our horrible nothingness, lovers of naked suffering, without knowing whether we suffer much or little. For he who thinks he suffers much or little is not very humble and not very patient. In truth, what are our sufferings if not small drops in comparison with the sea of the pains of Christ and his saints?

Dear Thomas, take greater courage in Jesus Christ. Keep to your prayer and, above all, to the duties of your state. Look after the upbringing of your family and instruct them well in the dogmas of the faith and in the method of meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ and how to receive the sacraments devoutly. But be wary about forcing them, as I wrote once before, into another way of praying, such as interior repose in God, etc., since you can commit a great mistake. High, infused prayer is what God gives to souls well purified and detached after long trials, and not to all, but to a few, as it pleases his Divine Providence. So teach them to meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Last Things. In that way they will make much profit.

Give your attention to recollection of their interior, as I have said many times, for in that way you will always be disposed to do your work well. I am writing with pain and am sickly. I thank you in Jesus Christ for the donation of the tuna, and “may the Lord reward you in time and in eternity.” If we could have some in olive oil, for the tunny nets are having good fishing, as I want to hope, that would be a great charity. If you could pass the word around to your colleagues that we will celebrate the Masses they requested and that we need many Masses during the hot months since the family here numbers twenty-two religious.

The pilgrims you mentioned did not come this way because we could not receive them as there is no room.

I ask you to recommend me to God in your prayers because my needs are extreme. Do the same for our poor Congregation. I am in a hurry. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus with your companion and family, and am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Joseph Chiatti (2)

San Angelo
June 9, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I was pleased with your esteemed words. Since I have rejoiced in offering you my service on my journey, my satisfaction increased with the progress of your affairs, as your last letter informed me. If I did not answer the first one, it was because I was quite sick and wished to reply at the feet of the Crucified with prayers rather than with writing. At present, although my sickness continues, in order not to be wanting in my duty, I am answering through my secretary, saying at the same time that I hope your affairs will go well.

It is not good to seek revelations in such areas. In addition to revelations being rare, they ordinarily do not happen in such situations. This sort of thing is to be recommended to God, and I assure you that I have done that always, and I will do it in the future, especially on those days you asked me to do so. I will have this entire religious family do so, that by increasing those praying, your prayers may be heard and your desires granted. However, no matter what the outcome, be resigned to the Divine Will. Every outcome will be favorable, as I believe, so show yourself grateful to the Lord in such an abundance of his mercies toward you. I will not prolong myself further. It is enough that you know of my good will and that I desire only to serve you in what I can. I do not know what more to say. I will undertake as much as you ask with enthusiasm. So, I end by leaving you in sacred Side of Jesus as the room of repose for a true Christian, and affirm that I am with all esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (1)²⁹³

San Angelo
June 12, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Beloved Father Rector,

For some time I have been awaiting your letters. Now I thank the Lord that last night I received one. I rejoice in the Lord over the good that the Mercy of God accomplished through you in Bassiano and Sermoneta, as well as the

293. Father John Mary was the third General of the Congregation and the spiritual director of Paul after the death of his brother John Baptist. He was born July 16, 1727, at Brandeglio near Lucca. He entered the Congregation in 1746, took his vows on March 4, 1747, and was ordained February 26, 1752. There are thirty-eight letters preserved which Paul wrote to him. Note how Paul, in dealing with the local superior, did not hesitate to challenge him to the heights of holy standards (Carmelo A. Naselli, *History of the Passionists*, Vol II, pp. 101-134).

good you accomplished in Terracina, since I have been hoping that little by little this territory would be cultivated. But you know that such a ground left to go wild needs long care to make it fruitful. "Neither he who waters nor he who plants, but God gives the increase." After the Feast of Saint Peter, it is necessary to stop the catechisms and take them up again when the weather cools down, as they do in Orbetello. Otherwise, there is serious danger to health and life, for in the marshes the sun is very dangerous. Inform the people of this with gentle and persuasive words, citing the practice in Orbetello. They will be convinced. Add that if the workers are not well, their spiritual help comes to an end.

As for the confessionals, do not be concerned. When God wants them, they will be provided. At that time take great care and caution that they have close gratings, with doors in front for recollection and caution for the confessor, and, above all, that the gratings be very close so that in no way can the face of the one confessing be seen. Otherwise, they will run into great stumbling blocks.

I rejoice most of all over the holy observance, the peace, and the charity of the religious family, who I strongly hope in God will always be more cultivated by your zeal, vigilance, charity, and prudence, manifested in word and example.

I thank His Divine Majesty that even in temporal affairs all goes well. If they are faithful to God, they will never want for anything.

With regard to the affidavit for salt,²⁹⁴ I do not know how to formulate that. The provincial himself has an authentic copy of the brief of the Rule, and the provincial himself can make out the affidavit, seeing that he also has the great seal. To my way of seeing things, when the approval of the Congregation as founded in true poverty is shown, as in the principal point of the chapter on poverty, the desired end will be gained.

I am trusting on the Mercy of God for good results from Father Sebastian.²⁹⁵ I wish he were not so anxious, but that he would work with peace and discretion in the fatigues caused on his journeys, and that he take care of what can occur. For the rest, he is a true Israelite, as I strongly hope.

For the rest, you will make yourself always more able for your apostolic ministry in your governing task if you will be faithful in preserving true humility of heart, in the knowledge of your true nothingness, in cultivating your interior without letting yourself be overwhelmed by your occupations. In the midst of these you must, as frequently as you can, a thousand times a day, make flights of love and faith in the Spirit of God. For when the soul is lost in the depths of the divinity, nothing can touch it or harm it. Make such flights by passing through the Door that is Christ Jesus, that is, through the Wounds

294. In the Papal States, Mendicant religious communities received a donation of salt. They were required to submit a report showing that by their constitutions they were living without a fixed income and on donations.

295. Father Sebastian Giampaoli, born in 1727, professed vows in 1747 with Father John Mary, was ordained in 1752. He was not a missionary but held the office of superior five terms and succeeded quite well. He died November 8, 1772 in the retreat at Toscanella.

of Christ, all in faith and love. In knowledge of nothingness shines forth the light and the wisdom to obtain every good.

I will celebrate the Mass very willingly, as I am able. Greet all our community for me, for I love them always more in God and cry out to heaven for all.

Let them take care to preserve cleanliness in their cells, their habits, and everything so there is no offensive odor in the cells, taking care to air them out when they go to choir at Prime, closing them in the usual way when there is sun. Getting rid of lice is necessary in order to be able to sleep; otherwise, health will disappear. Let food be sufficient as well as sleep — three full hours after Matins.

Greet the syndic and his house.²⁹⁶ Work to make yourself more skilled in preaching with discreet study in the cool hours. A little, but continued, effort brings one to the goal.

I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus with all the Retreat, and say I am from the heart, and give you greetings from Father John Baptist and the others.

It is sufficient if you wrote once a month as your letter of appointment indicates.²⁹⁷

Give the notes to the two they are consigned to.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

853

John Iacomini of Saint Raphael (1)²⁹⁸

San Angelo

June 12, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Father John,

So much the better that after such a long time, you have given me news that you have celebrated Mass, etc.

I did not get the day book nor the rosary since I stayed only one night in Rome with a fever. I could not even celebrate Mass. Now I am a bit better, but only a little. Father Rector can provide it for you.

I am greatly pleased with the testing His Divine Majesty makes of your faith by taking away all sensible devotion. For that is very necessary for you

296. The syndic of the Retreat in Terracina was Anthony Nardecchia, who with his wife was of great assistance to the Passionists.

297. The “patent” was an official letter from the General Superior in which he presented the rector to his community. In these years the local superiors were obliged to inform the General Superior in a monthly letter about the progress of their community.

298. Father John was born in Brandeglio near Lucca in 1724, professed in 1745, and ordained April 21, 1753. He lived almost all his life at the Retreat in Terracina as confessor and preacher for nearby parishes. He died at Terracina on February 8, 1786. He was recently ordained when he received this letter from Father Paul. The first of three letters to Father John has a date. Amedeo places the next two in 1754 and 1755.

so that you may touch your nothingness and arrive at an experiential knowledge of your nothing. So I would have you see with an eye of faith this despoilment in the Divine Good Pleasure and continue with greater fidelity interior recollection in all your work. Take care to celebrate with great reverence and exact observance of the rubrics, and be careful not to fall into scruples, especially in pronouncing the words of consecration. Say them plainly, distinctly, with great reverence and attention, renewing beforehand your intention, and then spurn temptation against faith which the devil suggests. "My just one lives by faith." Do everything with a pure intention. Be recollected in your inner temple, feed on the Divine Will in naked suffering, rich with every virtue. Before celebrating, clothe yourself in the pains of Christ with a sacred colloquy made peacefully in the midst of dryness and take to the altar with you the needs of all the world, as I said, especially those of the Congregation, etc. I am in a hurry, but, believe me, you are doing better than before. Be faithful to God and to your vocation. Study with discretion, etc. May Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the †

854

Thomas Fossi (53)

San Angelo
June 23, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I replied quickly to the letter you were pleased to send me by way of Civitavecchia, along with the tuna. I sent it by post as usual. Now I received the other letter with more tuna, and I must truly say that your donations ascend in the Divine Presence as perfumed incense to bring upon you and your house a rain of plenteous blessings from heaven. Read this next paragraph with attention for it contains a compendium for holy perfection.

Let us come to ourselves. Every happening that you cite in the anonymous letter sent to the bishop to block the accomplishment of your idea of a church, as well as the sufferings of spirit and body that you are undergoing, and another storm raised up by so many people and by demons, and also all these desolations, abandonments, pains of spirit, darkness, pains that come from horrible temptations are to be accepted directly from the sweet Heart of Jesus. Note well, I repeat, that with the eye of faith you must see all these pains and happenings in the eternal Good Pleasure of God and receive them with joy, caressing them in spirit, uniting yourself to the Divine Will, and even espousing yourself in faith and holy love to the sweet and adorable Will of the Most High.

You may make a loving complaint, like a child, in the deepest part of your soul, but this cry should not be heard outside, with these sacred words: "Yes, Father. Yes, because it was pleasing in your sight." Then continue to suffer and be silent. Take note! Fishes have no tongues and in the midst of stormy

seas they swim and tremble in silence. Ah, what a teaching this is! One who stands in the midst of storms of great suffering must guard his treasure with the golden key of silence and not have a tongue to complain with anyone.

My advice to you is not to speak anymore of erecting that church. His Divine Majesty has accepted your desire as an accomplished fact. An altar outside a chapel in the house is not granted to any but qualified nobility and requires testimony of noble birth. Otherwise, the brief is not granted.

Establish a good church in your interior and carry on the altar of your heart the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ. In the letter I received last night I see that you have fallen into a depression of spirits, but I do not want that. "Why are you hesitating, one of little faith?" God, who has begun the work in you, will bring it to perfection. Our miseries are the throne of Divine Mercy. His Divine Majesty knows you are evil, defective, but he also knows that with grace you would not commit a venial sin were it to cost your life. Ah, dear one, "Why do you doubt?" Let these defects be consumed in the fire of Divine Love and remain with high confidence in the Lord. Continue your exercises, attend faithfully to the obligations of your state and in recollection of heart, rich with every good.

With regard to matrimony, the right thing is to stay in holy liberty. When the Lord disposes by common consent, you may embrace perpetual continence, but keep yourself from the defects that you tell me about in code regarding the debt, for these things cool the spirit. A certain pious woman who writes me now and then has mentioned occasionally to me about her admiration for the honesty of her husband. Now she writes me from a great city where she is, having accompanied her daughter, who with my advice is entering as a Discalced Carmelite nun with a sister of hers. The piety and devotion to which His Divine Majesty has called her, even at her age, has already enriched her with many virtues, especially with honesty.

With regard to donations of wine, you speak well and prudently. So it will be best not to ask for more, but to receive what comes from the charity of benefactors, calling it to their minds at a better time.

I have no more time because I am loaded down with letters. With regard to observance, the Congregation is ever more blessed by the Lord but is bombarded by all of hell.

Foundations are being discussed. The Retreats are full, and, if one is not founded soon, we cannot vest many servants of God. Candidates who are requesting are waiting.

I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with all you household, and I ask you to continue to keep me in your prayers and those of your family. I affirm once more that I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, affectionate servant

Paul of the Cross

John B. Forlani (9)

San Angelo
July 8, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

In reply to your esteemed letter, I have the honor to tell you that this sacred Retreat is entirely at your disposal. At any time you are welcome to come because you are its patron. I am only sorry that we have no mattresses or sheets. We do not use them. As for mattresses, they are permitted by our Rule only for the sick. With the heavy expenses for the church we have not been able to provide them as yet. So, we would be pleased to provide for you as best we can. You will be given the best cell there is, etc. I am writing in haste and recommend myself to your devout prayers. With profound respect, I kiss your sacred hands and from my heart greet you on the part of all.

Your humble, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (54)

San Angelo
July 10, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son In Christ,

From your welcomed letter, forwarded to me from Civitavecchia, I find out that you have not received my letters which I addressed by post to the last address of Signore Consultor Gregolini so that they might reach you more securely. Those letters could have consoled you and given you light. Now, in the first place, I am saying that when I told you not to involve yourself, you did not correctly understand me, for I said that with regard to the interference you took with regard to proposing a successor to the bishop. For the rest, I leave you with your freedom to operate in accord with your state, doing everything with prudence and sanctifying your family with a holy upbringing and helping your neighbor by giving good advice and consoling the afflicted, etc. But in the matter of conferences, especially with women, except for your wife and your children, as for others — nothing at all! That is my poor advice.

With regard to the convent, you have done well to give the answer you mentioned to me. Without great lights from God and the counsel of some holy man of great experience, you should not act. So do everything possible not to get into a conversation with your relative or others. Tell her to take care of her house, where she has a good convent. Dear one, take the advice of Saint Paul: "Take care of yourself. Take care of yourself and your household." This I add in the Name of the Lord.

With regard to your conscience, you have full freedom to seek counsel, and you ought to do that as I have always told you, selecting for that reason the most holy and learned minister you can find over there.

Drive off that temptation to leave the island, for I assure you it is a temptation of the enemy.

When God wants it, he will give you such light and impulses that you will not be able to resist. It will be approved by the one who has care of your soul. For now God wants you where you are. Think only of hiding yourself in Jesus Christ, abandoning yourself entirely to his Holy Will, and take great care to sanctify yourself with spiritual exercises which enrich your state, and sanctify your family by word and example, taking care to have mental prayer in common, that is, with your family and not with outsiders, except for those who work in the house because these are always understood to be in the family. This way of acting will be most pleasing to the Lord.

My thinking is that, yes, your daughters should go dressed in the same fashion with great modesty and without using silk, knowing that even some nobility do not use silk. Let the color be modest and, above all, let them go out with scarfs fastened with pins. That is the fashion I have my penitents use.

For the rest, I am telling you my opinion, for you asked for it. Let them act as they think best.

It will be very difficult for you to obtain a brief for a private oratory. I would stay at home and go to the church to make myself a companion of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Greet Signora Victoria for me in Jesus Christ, and tell her to love God in a grand way with the exercise of solid virtues, especially of humility of heart, and to make her children holy with her example.

Signore Palomba says he has a small barrel of fish in olive oil in his possession. I hope he will send it soon. I am not happy that they had you pay for it. I approve what you tell me about not seeking anything from him for the Retreat. God has never deserted us, and I am not of the mind to send any religious over there for my own good reasons. The island is no longer for us; so be it. I recommend and will recommend it to the blessed God always.

The Masses will be celebrated by me on the days requested, according to your intentions and those of Signora Victoria.

I am in a hurry and leave you in the gentle Heart of Jesus to suffer and be silent. "Jesus, however, kept silent." Oh, what a great point this is! May Jesus bless you, along with all your family, and reward your great charity with temporal and spiritual blessings, as I hope. I am from the heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

Do not sign yourself as "abandoned." Such terms come from a depressed heart and do no good.

Paul of the Cross reveres with all respect Signora Frances Zelli and in reply to your esteemed note, I reverently say that I readily will pray, and have

prayers said, to the Lord in accord with your pious intentions. I tell you, furthermore, to see with the eyes of faith the happenings to your sons as coming from the loving Heart of the gentle Jesus, who permits them for their great spiritual advantage if they will endeavor to profit by a true submission to the divine Will. But you should rest quietly in the pleasure of God, who in this way disposes to make you rich in merit. Try to keep yourself in peace and leave the dead to bury their dead, as the Gospel instructs us.

The most painful thorn is the business with Signore Girolamo, which must be recommended strongly to God. You need to take prudent provision so that no dissension or discord results. The one who writes encloses you in the Side of Jesus and affirms he is your true servant.

858

Prince Grand Constable Colonna (2)²⁹⁹

San Angelo
July 10, 1753

Your Excellency,

The petition we know of was sent in this post by Father Rector of the Retreat of Ceccano. In that petition, in line with the fairness of your unsullied justice, you asked for true information from the religious of that Retreat. Therefore, I am not failing to include promptly with the petition the very letter in which that religious wrote me on this question. From it you will be able to understand how much was done by this religious, who did all that was possible to obey your venerated commands, although he was not able to certify everything in accord with your just desires.

As a result of all this, I have empowered the said Father Rector with a dispensation from a prohibition of our Constitutions so you can understand that I have a complete ambition to serve you in all that you will be pleased to command. For now nothing more remains than to place under your protection this poor, infant Congregation and to remain in expectation of your further commands. Meanwhile, with respect and offering my humble reverence, I have the honor to sign myself,

I beg you to pardon my illness in not writing this with my own hand. I wish to say that Father Rector is a true servant of God and very capable, pious, and prudent. With profound reverence I affirm again that with a true heart I sign myself,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

299. The rector mentioned in this letter is Joseph of the Sorrows of Mary (Del Re), born 1727 near Lucca, professed June 21, 1747, and ordained February 26, 1752. Elected local superior at Ceccano, he became second consultor at the same time. He held many offices and was a great missionary. He died June 1, 1781. The editor of Volume V does not know what the problem was that Paul writes about to the cardinal.

Girolama Ercolani (26)

San Angelo
July 13, 1753

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

In reply to your pious letter I say that if you wish to have peace of heart, obey! You are not consenting to the ideas that the devil puts in your head. Whatever suspicious thoughts or other kinds of evil thoughts the enemy brings up, since you neither cause them nor consent to them and make your affirmation to never consent to anything that would be an offense against God, you have not only not offended God, but also you have gained great merit, since you abhor and get rid of the temptations. So it would be a mistake to confess such things since there is no sin, but rather merit because of the victory you won. It seems to me that I already know the way your spirit operates, so once more I tell you to follow the obedience as before. Often protest to God that with his holy help you do not wish to consent to anything in which you believe would offend him.

Signora Girolama, be at peace and be careful not to upset your conscience with scruples, for you know how that works out. Now Jesus has freed you from that; thank him and remain peaceful in holy obedience. Continue to watch over the upbringing of your daughters. Thanks to the Lord, they are good, but take care to have your eye alert so that they be always better. Let them never abandon holy mental prayer and the other exercises, and have them flee idleness as the plague.

With the blessing of the Lord wear a pearl necklace when you dine, but, when you put it on, remember that Jesus wore ropes and chains around his neck. Wear that accessory purely to please God and be ashamed of yourself by saying: "Jesus was bound with ropes and chains at the time of his passion, and I am wearing pearls?" You see what feelings that thought will bring you. Teach this to your daughters as well and, above all, make sure they go covered to the neck, etc.

Signora Antoniuccia is of excellent character, as are the others. So she should be outstanding in modesty as an example to all the women in your part of the city so that they will love and exercise this holy virtue of modesty, which is so dear to God.

Greet the canon for me in the Lord and your blessed daughters, whom I gaze at in the holy Side of Jesus in my poor prayers. Jesus bless you and all your house. Amen. Let them pray much for poor me.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Maria Gertrude Teresa of the Infant Jesus³⁰⁰

San Angelo

July 14, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

You will be doing right to let your brother, the captain, know with all earnestness that you cannot take part in any way in the business you wrote about in your pious letter to me. I am writing Father Thomas to that end. He will get it there when he comes by sea so that he will act in my name. Be sure that he will do things rightly. I thought it best that I write this to him, all the more so seeing the concern the captain has for our good, especially for Father Thomas.

You should think no more about it and not worry about anything evil regarding your brother. Offer your prayers to the Lord for him, especially at the time of Mass and Communion.

I wish you to be always more dead to all that is not God and to maintain faithfully that divine solitude which I recommended in the Name of the Lord. One enters that holy desert through the divine doors of the Wounds of Jesus our Life. Do not complain if you feel coldness, desolation, aridity, temptations, etc. Be faithful to your exercises and believe that by means of such sufferings, accepted as coming immediately from the loving Heart of Jesus, you will pass to a deeper and more profound desert of your interior, which I pointed out to you above.

You did well to perform that charity for your brother. So now think no more about it.

I beg you to greet in Jesus Christ your Mother Abbess, Maria Magdalene. I ask you to tell her that I will send her the article I promised, but she needs to be patient since we do not change the sign on our mantle until after the Feast of the Assumption. Let them recommend me to God in their prayers. Leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, I end quickly,

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

300. Sister Maria Gertrude Teresa of the Infant Jesus was a member of the Carmelite convent in Vetralla. Paul preached the retreat there in mid-June 1753. Four or five nuns had gotten consumption and died recently. On the feast of the Visitation of Our Lady, July 2, Paul blessed water with the relic of the Blessed Mother and had each nun take a sip of it. Sister Gertrude Teresa testified to this at the Processes. The present letter shows us that she and her family were close to the Passionists, which was also true of many nuns in this convent.

Isidore Calzelli (6)

San Angelo
July 17, 1753

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Father,

Dearest Father Isidore, Most Loved in Jesus Christ and Mary Most Holy, I received your welcome letter, dated the fifth of this month, along with the letter enclosed from the archpriest at Anticoli, concerning the business with the young man from Filettino whom he is recommending to me. I will speak of this at the end of this letter.

"Blessed be God, who alone does marvelous things." Oh, how much I am obligated to magnify the divine mercies for the graces His Divine Majesty showers on us! Oh, how dear to Jesus and Mary Most Holy are the efforts you are making for the construction of that holy Retreat in which our Lord and our most clement Lady will be glorified till the end of time, as I confidently expect, to the highest spiritual advantage of our poor neighbors!

I remain overwhelmed, in complete amazement, when I see the work they are carrying on there, as the Divine Majesty uses you where I am aware there was no other help. "Blessed be God, who works his mercies for us." I see that now you are undertaking further labors for the work, and I take great consolation in that, for the holy angels are counting your steps and adding up your precious sweat and presenting all your holy exertions to the Most High as a sweet incense. "Your reward will be exceedingly great."

I read with sorrow what you tell me. It seems to you that you are damned and find yourself in astonishment at your sins. I know that our good God enriches his servants with strong lights, and the dearer they are to His Divine Majesty, so much more do they recognize their ingratitude. These lights make one humble, yes, but also at peace.

Dear Father Isidore, trust this poor fellow, listen to what the Apostle says: "Your life is hidden with Christ in God." I would add that your garment, that is, your soul, is "washed white in the Blood of the Lamb." So rejoice in the Lord Jesus and believe that you have signs brighter than the sun that you are one of those predestined for paradise

Your works are dear to the Lord and he is very pleased with them, since he does not wish you to know their worth here below. Whereas he wishes them to be richer in merits, he conceals the treasure. So then, remain crucified with Christ, take your repose on the holy cross. Feed yourself on the Divine Will in living faith and holy love. "My just man lives by faith." In your work preserve your interior recollection, allow your spirit to be all lost in God. Arouse yourself often with holy affections, and carry a bouquet of myrrh of the holy pains of Jesus on the altar of your heart. I am hurried for I am weighed down with letters, and I am enclosing one for Signore Lauro Guerinone in Palestrina. In order not to make the packet too bulky, I am not answering the archpriest of Anticoli. Please greet him for me and share with him what I add on here.

I would gladly receive the young man if there were room in the novitiate. If a Retreat is established in Tuscany, we are negotiating about that just now, then I will be able to accept him since he is not too old. I want assurances about that, and I want that understood. Otherwise ... just follow the rules, etc.

I tremble in thinking about that accident of the crossbeam, which ought to have killed you. Oh, what marvelous grace! Oh, how much I would like to have an account in order to thank the Lord and Mary Most Holy. I will do it with our entire religious family. Oh, how obligated we are to Jesus and Mary! Blessed be Mary Most Holy and her Son Jesus! I had the same thing happen to me in this building. The difference was that you had the space of a Credo while I had less than half a Hail Mary. Everyone was shaking on seeing a large stone come down to the spot where I had my head while overseeing the bricklayers. I had scarcely pulled back my head a palm's distance, when a large stone fell, which would have crushed me. However, I am always more ungrateful. Oh, how much I need to weep.

Goodbye, my beloved Isidore. Greet our provost for me and the canon and the household, along with our day-workers. May God make all of you saints.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

862

John B. Forlani (10)

San Angelo
August 2, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

In answer to your esteemed letter, I will reply with profound respect to the essentials, which consists in the questions of renouncing or not your parochial ministry for the care of souls. In truth it is an affair of serious consequences, and I do not dare give my opinion, for in this I am in the dark. God has given you great ability in holy preaching, great zeal, and an apostolic heart to mend strongly and gently all the evils that could arise in the parish. Seeing the great profit and gain for souls, especially provided by your assistance in the confessional, and to the great profit and advantage of the neighbor — granting all that — it seems to me that it would be a mistake for you to resign.

But I have not said this so that you should follow it. It would be a good plan to put it into the hands of your bishop. Open your heart to him about everything and take counsel with him whether to resign and accept the canonry. So make your decision with the counsel of the bishop and abandon yourself to whatever he says.

I will not fail to pray, and have prayers said, for this important affair for which members have gone to Rome; we are hoping for a good result. A novena is being made for your intentions. I would gladly enjoy a bit of air at your villa, but the heat is so great and we are all in retreat.

Thanking you for your charitable gift of wine and all the rest, and may the Lord reward you. My cordial greetings to the captain, your worthy brother, and

all his house, whom I see in the holy Side of Jesus. I say once more I am from all my heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

863

Thomas Fossi (55)

San Angelo
August 14, 1753

*The holy Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in your heart.*

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I am writing in great haste in the middle of my occupations and miseries, answering your letter, received last night and dated July 22. I am enclosing one to Father Gregolini in Rio so that he would receive it safely.

My dear Thomas, you know I have always spoken frankly to you; so it will be in what follows. I will say to you in the first place what Saint Paul said to Timothy: Keep to yourself, keep to yourself. What are you trying to do by carrying the world on your shoulder? You are not the pastor. So why do you want to interfere by writing to the vicar to remove some evils, seeing that is the office of the pastors? Better for you to speak to the curate so that he can do that. In that way it will have more weight and accomplish its effect.

Why do you want to give instructions to a missionary? Don't you see that is a hidden self-love and self-knowing? The Fathers of the Company of Jesus are masters in these kinds of missions and they bring the method to others. Is it right that a secular should give advice for missions to a worker who is able to teach others? Look, my dear Thomas, now I am speaking with my heart in my hand since I love you in God. With regard to writing to that priest about things of your soul, you will do very well. I approve that with all my heart.

You make me laugh by saying you want me to have the first place; you do not know, even now. I do not want the first place, nor have I ever thought of being the director of you or anyone else. If I were to think that I knew enough to direct, I would believe I were a true Lucifer in the flesh. God free me from that. I have the intention to serve everyone and to give some holy advice, based on holy truth and on what the masters teach, to one who asks me. So I have done with you, so I have done with others, and so I will continue to do. But only for a short time. I do not have the strength, nor the health, nor time because of my many occupations. But every time you write to me, I will always tell you whatever the Lord inspires in me.

Regarding prayer, let them make it in your house at the most convenient time as your wife wishes.

Being the poor man I am, I ought to use the word "Signora." For that is what the saints did and taught. Saint John, writing to Eletta, his spiritual daughter, called her "Domina," that is, "Signora." You should call her "My Consort" or "My Wife" and not "la mia Signora," for you are her husband.

See, Thomas, that I counsel you down to the least trifles. From that you can gather how true a friend and servant I am. For the rest, follow your conduct with fidelity, with a pure intention attend to yourself, and take great care of your family so that they reverence God. Oh, you are obliged to do that in justice! Flee the noise of the world, stay recollected in God, and greet all your household for me. Believe that the Lord will bless you always, even in temporal goods, for your donations ascend to the Lord, and the sons of Congregation of the Passion are grateful to you in their prayers, especially the unworthy one who is writing as the one most bound. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

I hope that the Lord will deliver you from your sickness, as well as your wife, or that at least the sickness will not be serious. Goodbye. I am in a hurry and am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

864

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (7)

San Angelo
August 19, 1753

J.C.P.

With Christ I am nailed to the Cross.

I do not have words to reply to your letter, received last night. I am not speaking about Communion, but with regard to the divine work the Mercy of God is doing in your soul. I will answer in the best way that the Divine Goodness will be pleased to grant me.

I told you in my other letter that your present status is the beginning of the martyrdom of purest love, and I say that once more. The effect it produces is a personal knowledge of one's nothing, a love of being despised, for staying hidden from creatures, to be crushed into nothingness, and a continual exercise of virtue and of suffering. These are the most certain signs of that martyrdom of love, so let us go to court.

Your practice should be a continual hiding in God and in Jesus Christ our Lord with the bitter and sorrowful impression of his pains in your spirit in pure faith. With such impressions you ought to immerse yourself more and more in pure love. In that divine fire you ought to be a true victim sacrificed in holocaust to the Supreme Good. Love, my daughter, love, suffer and be silent. Love will allow you to speak little, and, if you are much on fire, it will allow you to say nothing, for you seek pure love and allow yourself to be consumed in that divine fire in which one glance of love embraces the needs of all creatures and without words cries out for all.

These are paradoxes. But in speaking of holy love, I do not know how to express myself without paradoxes because of my ignorance.

Fidelity, Sister Colomba, fidelity. Stay in your nothing and let pure Love do its divine work.

I have no time to say more, nor do I know how I was able to say what I did in the state I am in. My needs are always greater, the storms increase beyond measure. Oh, if you knew how I passed the past night! I refrain from saying more, lest I put you into severe trembling. This is usual. O God, what will become of this poor sinner? Ah, pray that I do not lose my God! This is my great fear. Continue your prayer for the Congregation and, believe me, you will have a great part in it, and already do.

I am in a hurry. You can write me once more, then I leave for missions. I will answer you, etc. Jesus make you holy with the secret holiness of the cross and bless you.

I forgot to tell you that regarding the pains that come over your hands and feet, head and heart, especially on Friday, you are not to take any account of them whatever. Let them disappear in pure and holy love, and lose sight of them entirely, as if they were dreams. For if you were to concentrate on them, you would reflect on them more and embrace them as yours, which would do great harm and be a great impediment to purest, holy love, etc. Take account of this advice given by masters of the spirit. What I said about those pains should serve you for other things, such as gifts and graces, etc. You ought never rejoice in them, nor stop at the gifts, only at the purest Giver of Gifts, staying away from all reflections in order to lose everything in the depths of holy Love. Amen.

Your most unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

865

Anthony Bigatti³⁰¹

San Angelo
August 21, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Your esteemed letter, dated August 2, was forwarded to me from the Retreat of the Presentation of Mary Most Holy on Mount Argentario. In it I read of the precious death of our canon penitentiary. Blessed be God. I do not fail with profound annihilation of my soul to kiss the loving hand which administered this blow and caused such a fruitful tree, laden with mature fruits, to fall into the bosom of his divine mercies. I will not fail to offer devout suffrages for his blessed soul. However, I have a strong faith that this is not necessary, and there is only need to thank God that he has placed him in eternal rest, where he will sing forever the divine mercies. I continue to be most grateful for his courtesy shown me, and I pray the Lord to give him an eternal reward. I will not fail to give him a share in my cold prayers and those of our good religious in testimony of our gratitude in which we hold him. I will do the same for the Marquis Di Cassine so that the Divine Mercy, if it be for

301. Bigatti was archpriest of the cathedral of Alessandria.

his greater glory, will cure him. I am writing in haste and burdened with letters and tasks.

In a little while I will leave this Retreat for an affair for the glory of God. I do not know when I will be coming back, but it will be a long time. I tell you that so you do not trouble yourself to write for fear that the letters will be lost. With all my heart I ask for your prayers, and with profound respect I kiss your sacred hands.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

866

Canon Nicholas Zaniel (2)³⁰²

San Angelo
August 23, 1753

Very Reverend Canon,

The constant pressures weighing on me have not allowed me to reply to your humble letter. I am doing so now since I can tell you that Brother James did not leave anything particular behind that I could send you because we are not accustomed to save any special items which might be sent to others. We are not accustomed to be revered by a special memory. I can reaffirm that Brother James was a true servant of God and died in great admiration, as he was in the estimation of all who knew him a man of a truly holy life. Let that be your consolation. I recommend myself much to his prayers, and I have the good fortune to say once more I am with full esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

867

Andrew Cappelli

San Angelo
August 23, 1753

J.X.P.

Dear Sir,

See, now you have been served regarding the recommendation of the young men who, I trust, have come back consoled in Jesus Christ. I was happy to have the chance to obey you in testimony of the gratitude I profess toward

302. Nicholas Zaniel is the brother of deceased Brother James. He is seeking some special "memento" of his brother, but Paul answers that they did not preserve anything of the departed.

you. I ask you to greet all your house and enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus. In haste I affirm I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant
Paul of the Cross

868

Pope Benedict XIV (7)

August 24, 1753³⁰³

Holy Father,

Paul of the Cross, General of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, humble petitioner and servant of Your Holiness, prostrate at your holy feet, humbly explains that being in possession of eight Retreats by the special favor of Your Holiness, and with prospects of more, whose foundations are under discussion, and not being able to provide a sufficient number of priests for them to take care of our neighbor in accord with the Institute, has recourse to the great clemency and charity of Your Holiness to grant the favor of a certain number of candidates for ordination with the title of common table by the Ordinary of the diocese in which the Retreat is located.

869

The Trustees of Vetralla

San Angelo
September 13, 1753

Illustrious Gentlemen,

Paul of the Cross, respectful servant of the Trustees of Vetralla, having heard with great edification your pious resolution with regard to your penitential procession to be held this coming Sunday with the Exposition of the Crucifix of San Egidio, and wishing this unworthy one who is writing to preach a discourse to rouse the fervor of the people and dispose them to contrition so as to obtain the favor from the Lord that they desire; since I find myself not a little sickly and reduced in strength, and unable, therefore, to perform that assignment, in testimony of the true servitude and gratitude toward the Trustees and all the beloved people, I will send on that Sunday in good time Father Mark Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament, one of the best and most suitable members of the Congregation, so that he may satisfy your wishes with a sacred sermon in accord with your intentions. Awaiting any further commands from you, I once more declare I am always your true servant.

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

Thomas Fossi (56)

San Angelo
 September 17, 1753
 Leaving in October.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I am answering your letter in haste and am burdened with sickness. With the secretary of the Congregation also sick, I am forced to write all the letters myself, and they are so many that I need to write every day. So pardon my brevity. I was glad to read your welcome letter, in which I have seen more and more your purity of intention that the Mercy of God has granted you. Continue in that way and do not meddle in any affairs, even spiritual, for they do not pertain to you nor your family. Take care of yourself and take care of your family. See that your house is a sanctuary, be sweet and charitable in correcting your grown children. "Fathers," writes Saint Paul, "do not provoke your children to anger." Corrections ought to be at the right time and the right place, ought to be gentle and brief, and ought not be cutting. If you should see that they wander from the way of truth, there should be the threat of a father's punishment. Thanks to the Lord, in your home there is no need of that. The dresses you can allow your girls to wear must not lead them to evil. A young lady, provided she is modest, can dress herself in accord with her state. So in this regard you have no scruples; allow your daughters this. I recommend that they be well covered at the neck and very modest with their eyes and in their deportment.

Take care of yourself and take necessary food and sleep. You are obliged in conscience to maintain your health in order to govern your household. In regard to what you tell me about holy matrimony, act in accord with the directions of the Holy Spirit. When you are unable because of weakness, there is no obligation.

Continue your holy practices, etc. Stay happy in God, for your affairs are going very well, as well as those of your family. Write to that Jesuit when you want to, for I am sure his advice will be good for you. Greet Signora Victoria for me in Jesus Christ, and all your household, whom I look at in the holy Wounds of Jesus in my poor prayers. While asking from the Lord all fullness of blessings, I declare myself again from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
 Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
October 12, 1752

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

I have placed in the sacred Side of Jesus the consolation and edification that your esteemed letter, dated September 24 and received by me in the current ordinary post, gave me. In the meantime, I offer you great thanks in Jesus Christ for having accepted the charitable function of being syndic for our poor Congregation. I assure you, beyond the prayers and other exercises of piety of our whole Congregation in which you will share, that I will not be wanting in my cold prayers to beg the divine mercy to hear them in accord with your pious intentions and to impart plentiful blessings on your revered house, where I desire that a tender and solid devotion to the holy Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy flourish. I would wish that they would introduce a half-hour of meditation every day on these holy, divine mysteries. In that way they will all become holy in accord with their state in life. By means of such a holy meditation, all their works will be scented and perfumed with the incense of true and solid virtue, which will adorn the inner temple of their souls so that they will be the delight of Jesus Christ, whom they should embrace with the greatest preparation possible in the Blessed Sacrament. I am writing in haste, for I am about to leave. Enclosing you in the holy Wounds of Jesus, and with full esteem and profound respect I sign myself again from a true heart as,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Soriano
October 20, 1753
Leaving for the other Retreats.
I will not be back until June.

J.C.P.

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy
be always in our hearts.*

I read with edification your letter, dated September 18 and received in the post yesterday morning, as I find myself here on the holy Visitation of the Retreat of Soriano. Since I do not have time to go into depth, I am telling you briefly my thoughts regarding Catherine's business. To make sure I would give

304. This letter was written at Soriano in reply to Paul's sister's letter that their sister Catherine intended to marry a man of their area. The dowry contract should be clearly set up and their brother Joseph should be persuaded to agree to it. Paul doesn't seem sure of his brother's situation, but prays all will be for the best.

you good advice, at an early hour this morning I celebrated Holy Mass at the altar of Mary Most Holy, and I petitioned, especially for you, my two sisters, and for our brother Joseph, so that the Lord would enlighten him, and have him choose a path of salvation for her, and in that way he will be free of any fault. I hope good will come.

I tell you then that I would rejoice in Jesus Christ if that would happen, as you inform me with Catherine, seeing the excellent report you give me of her fiance, both in regard to his status, but what is more important, his kindness and habits. I wish I were able to cooperate with my very blood. But in truth there is no way at all that I could help as you request since we live in rigorous poverty, seeing that our Congregation has no fixed income whatever. Our Retreats receive only enough alms to maintain themselves religiously in accord with our holy Rules.

That person whom you suggested I could approach and recommend to him this great work of charity, the Lord has already taken him to his eternal repose, as I firmly hope, since he was endowed with great piety. So the only thing I can do is to recommend this affair to the Lord, day and night, so that he will make the affair come out to his greater glory.

Meanwhile, I give you this advice. Inform yourselves well, especially regarding the quality of the intended spouse, his honorable birth, his possessions, and especially regarding his piety. If the report you gave me stands up, you could persuade our brother Joseph to turn over to them all he owns in house and land, with the provision that you have the interest from it while you live. See whether with this offer the intended would be willing to be satisfied, pointing out to him the great dowry he would have if he performs this charity, in return for which His Divine Majesty will rain over him plenteous blessings, both spiritual and temporal. This arrangement should be drawn up by a learned and pious ecclesiastic.

Joseph should have no difficulty with what I propose, since he is no longer in a position to get married. If he were to do so, he would be very sorry in a short time and would realize that he harmed himself, seeing the poverty with which the Lord wishes to save his soul, if he is not wanting in this.

The person you recommend to my prayers because he is walking on the path to hell since he is visiting a house of ill fame and is obstinate in his sin, while wishing to enter marriage with such a person, I confess has caused me horror and pain at the same time as I reflect on the imminent ruin of such a soul. If he does not repent, I seem to see a quick and terrible chastisement hovering over that person. What is more important, he will take a leap from bed into hell. I do not know who that person is, for you did not tell me, However, I think I can hazard a guess. Since corrections have not turned him around, it is necessary to make use of a qualified ecclesiastic, especially a good pastor, to speak to the bishop or the vicar general and have him called in and administer a charitable but stern correction, accompanied by an absolute precept not ever to approach that house again. It is necessary to obtain a zealous confessor and have him make a general confession.

Oh God! if such a person does not repent, I fear with great reason that in a short time he will encounter a tremendous scourge and, what frightens me more, will have an evil death and fall into hell. So it is necessary to use every remedy to save such a soul. I will pray and have prayers offered by our good religious, especially by Father John Baptist, who is here and greets you in Jesus Christ. Father Anthony has gone back to the Retreat of the Presentation on Mount Argentario.

Courage, my blessed sister. Take heart, for I expect great good from you. Since your soul is very dear to God, God has always had you walk the way of the holy cross. O fortunate you! Be thankful to God for he has freed you from so many dangers. Do not ever abandon holy prayer and meditation on the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy, along with frequenting the sacraments and the reading of holy books. Let no one come into the house; stay alone as the companion of Jesus and Mary and your holy guardian angels. Oh, what sweet companions. Act as mother with your sister and brother. Since you are the eldest in years, they ought to obey you and accept your charitable and gentle corrections.

Greet in Jesus Christ our brother Joseph and beg him in my name to live with great fear of God and as a good example before all. Tell him to fear the divine judgments, and that he fear and prepare himself for death, which is closer to him than he is aware, and that he does what he would want to have done in that dreaded moment when there will be no more time; when he will see the sword of the angry God and the fatal thrust of his justice will come; when he will see at his sides the hellish furies ready to drag him to the depths of hell; when he will see hell open to devour him. Ah! let him do now in time what he will not have time to do then! The blessed God has inspired me to write in this way. I want to hope for good things since I am aware of his good character. But what is that worth. If he does not correspond to the mercies that God has done for him, he knows what will become of him. Let him think well on this and greet him on my behalf.

May Jesus make you all holy. Greet Catherine and tell her to fear God, to be withdrawn and modest, and, if the plan you laid out to me does not succeed, God will provide for her in another way. That will be a sign that the present plan was not fitting for her soul.

Remain in the pure Side of Jesus, where I pray all fullness of happiness for you and for your eternal salvation. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant in J. C.

Paul of the Cross

A Gentleman (4)³⁰⁵

Presentation
November 5, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

As I offer to your merits my heartfelt thanks in Jesus Christ for the charitable affection you continue toward me and the courteous showing of your care, I have the honor to tell you in reply to your esteemed letter, received last night, that in a few days I will be there to extend my poor service and gratitude. I am not sure of the day since I must first get free of my burdens, at least the most necessary ones. I am not sure how long I will stay, but I suppose it will be all of the current month.

I arrived here on Saturday evening, well soaked with rain. I would have come your way if I were not impeded by the time. Since it is a question of coming by the garrison territories around Orbetello, one must pay attention to prudential requirements not necessary elsewhere. So if I am not too demanding, I would ask you the charity, as our worthy syndic, to please convey my compliments to the general. Ask his pardon for not stopping to speak with him on my passing through since I was prevented by the rain. But I will fulfill my duty as soon as I can, and therefore he should not attribute it to my boorishness. I recommend myself to his charity to pardon my boldness and his inconvenience. Meanwhile, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus with all your illustrious household, I affirm from all my heart I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (57)

Orbetello
November 9, 1753

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas and Son in Christ,

I arrived at the holy Retreat last Saturday afternoon, well soaked with rain. I received your welcome letter, and I was notified by our religious of your boundless charitable assistance to them. Your reward will be great in the Lord. Now I find myself here in Orbetello, where I have not yet settled in, and here I found Father John Ribera, to whom I am consigning this letter. Before I forget, by the advice of Brother Bonaventure I should tell you to continue, with the blessing of the Lord, the construction of the room that has been started. I did not think of that when I last wrote.

Dear Thomas, always take more courage in carrying the cross in silence and hope, remaining hidden in God in your interior and reposing on the divine

305. Possibly to John Francis Sancez.

bosom of the Heavenly Father. Believe me, your conduct is according to God and your life is hidden with Christ in God as the Apostle writes. Deal with creatures in accord with your present needs and household interests, but without being overly cautious, since the less you treat with creatures, even though they are devout, especially with women — out of the question — the more occasions you will have for lovingly treating with God.

You have received and are receiving stupendous graces from His Divine Majesty, and for years in a special way you have been called by the Lord to a holy and divine solitude of heart and to a peaceful repose in a holy silence of faith and love in God, all clothed within with the holy pains of the gentle Jesus. Cultivate your interior by frequent recollection in God with a sweet arousing of faith and rejection of everything created, etc., practicing virtue in accord with your state in life, especially knowledge of your nothingness and love of being despised while suffering and being silent.

Greet your Signora Victoria in the Lord, along with all your family. Let them pray much for me since my needs are extreme. I know they are trying, especially a military personage, to have me come and give a mission on the island. But who knows whether I will be able, seeing the duties of my office. Only time will tell. Now enough! I wish to do the Will of God.

I am staying at this Retreat all of November. Then I will leave to embrace new crosses. However, I do this without any spirit and with small virtue. Jesus make you as holy as I desire and hope. Amen. I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity you never cease to use toward me, and may the Lord reward you. Brother Bonaventure tells me he will send the habits for your boys with the next boat. I am from all my heart,

Your affectionate, obliged servant,
Paul of the Cross

875

Raymond Viti of the Sorrowful Heart of Mary³⁰⁶

Toscanella

December 11, 1753

J.C.P.

Dear Father Raymond,

I read to my highest edification your welcome letter of November 30, forwarded from the Presentation. It makes me recognize more and more the truth of your vocation, founded on the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Look now, in order to cooperate for your greater perfection, for your greater recollection, and all your other pious intentions, I am accepting your resignation and in a short time there will be an election of another rector. Meanwhile, I beg

306. Rector of our Lady of the Oak at Toscanella, Father Raymond wishes to resign his office, and Paul is willing to agree. He was later elected rector of San Angelo, but at this time received permission to join the Trappists. He did not stay with them, withdrawing from the religious life in 1760. He had taken his vows in 1750 at the age of twenty-six.

you to live quietly, for all the more reason since I recall very well the pious sentiments and holy resolutions which you shared with me in our conference, which were the same as you expressed to me in your letter of November 30. Be very sure that I will never speak about this business, but I will work to cooperate toward your greater perfection. I am much pained that you continue with your persistent quartan fever. Because you were acceptable to God, it is necessary that temptation try you.

Among the young men there is one about seventeen years old. He has a delicate complexion and has had the quartan fever and was sick while at the Presentation. When I came here, I managed his cure with a prescription of some marvelous pills. He was quickly cured, and the illness has not returned. As soon as the sickness left him, he went about as before with no further complications. I am writing after Matins, but as soon as it is daylight, I will tell Brother Charles, the infirmarian, to give me that prescription so I can send it to you. I see it is necessary for you to get well, for you cannot set out on a journey now. So I leave it to your prudence and charity to stay where you are as long as you think necessary.

In the letter from Confrater Charles, I learn that he is back in health and wants to return soon. I would also be happy for his ordination. However, I do not know if it will be soon.

I am sorry that you would remain by yourself, not for any special reason, but simply for your greater support. If it does not concern you to be there without a companion, I could have him, accompanied by the servant of this house, come here if that is easier, or go directly by way of Viterbo and Vetralla. But if you do not wish to be deprived of your companion for support, I am very willing to send the dimissorials there so he could be ordained in Orvieto. I leave all to your prudence. Since you are retired and it is a small region, I would believe that you would not feel deserted to be there without a companion. Once again, I say, I leave it up to your prudence.

Strengthen yourself more and more in your holy resolutions, and place in the hand of Mary, Mother of Sorrows, the sacrifice you have made. Detest the temptations that may come to the contrary from the devil or the miserable world.

When you will be in shape to leave, if you wish to be once more under the holy direction of Father Fulgentius, I will be pleased to grant that. If you wish to stay in San Angelo or another Retreat, where you can remain more recollected, I will cooperate for your greater profit. Do not think you will be doing your own will in making a selection, for you will be doing the Will of God in accord with your interior inspirations with the merit of obedience. Often renew your holy vows, sacrificing yourself more and more to the service of God in the vocation you have undertaken, and be assured that His Divine Majesty will cure you and make you holy. All happenings and sufferings work for our good: "For those who love God all things work together unto good."

I extend feast day greetings from the holy altar, and we will do the same in spirit.

I will write the receipt for Masses for San Angelo, and they will send it and the oil you asked for. Father John Baptist and all greet you. I embrace you in the pure Heart of Jesus. In charity recommend me to God for my needs are not few. Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Amen

Confrater Charles tells me that he wishes the obedience to return, and I am including that in this note. I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

876

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (38)

Toscanello

December 16, 1753

J.C.P.

Jesus be in your heart. Amen.

This morning I received the letter which was forwarded from Mount Argentario. Since it was filled with ceremonies and things of no importance, I am replying briefly. The baseless rumor going around about the foundation of convents for women is not true, since I do not have a thought about that because there is no way open for that. I want to believe that you are continuing your exercises of perfection and that you are putting into practice the direction given you in voice and writing. I will not neglect to recommend you continuously to the blessed God, and you should do that for me, for I am in great calamities and needs. You ask me to pray for the Mother Vicarress, who was my first disciple. I am shocked as I am not aware that she has ever been my disciple, neither she nor anyone. Let us pause here. If I hear one person's confession, does that make her my disciple? I do not have such an idea in my head; and God prevent me from having such an idea. That I am, perhaps, a master? A poor and ignorant rag like me? Let her know that I do not have any idea of having disciples, but I must be the disciple of others. What I pray for is to be faithful to God and continue the life I have begun.

I thank the Mother Abbess and the others for the charity they have for me, and I enclose them in the holy Side of Jesus, where I see them in my cold prayers. I am writing in haste, loaded down with tasks. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant

Paul of the Cross

877

Thomas Fossi (58)

Toscanello

December 16, 1753

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas,

In great haste I am answering your letter, which was received this morning from Mount Argentario. Since it is filled with useless ceremonial language, I

can reply briefly. Besides, I am loaded with tasks. It is not possible for me to come to the island for missions. I have refused one in Longone for the military. I am besieged with various affairs and have strong winds blowing against me that I can scarcely carry the burden of governing the Congregation, and I doubt that I can. Let them set up obligations, for they are in vain. The missions I take are those which do not take me away from the Retreats, which require my presence because of the office I hold. I am not very well and am weighed down, and you want me to cross the sea and remain for months on the island, especially now when the Congregation stands in such great need? It would be better to pray for me, and have prayers offered, so that God will give me patience, strength, and deep resignation in my suffering. I hope that you will continue in your holy practices of perfection and virtue, in which the Lord has had you walking. They have thought about habits for your sons at the Presentation. I am here until leaving after Christmas, that is, the day after. I enclose you, your wife, and family in the holy Side of Jesus and pray plenteous blessings for you. I will be wishing you a blessed feast during the novena and on the solemnity at the holy altar. I am from my heart and in a hurry,

Your useless servant

Paul of the Cross

878

[Vicar General of Orbetello] (2)³⁰⁷

Toscanello

December 17, 1753

J.C.P.

Your Eminence,

That gratitude which is so much in accord with the Heart of God obliges me to offer you this act, which you truly deserve, of my genuine servitude at the approach of the Feast of Christmas as I extend best wishes for all spiritual and temporal felicity in the Lord. I will do that all the more willingly in the coming holy novena, along with our good religious, and especially on the holy, sweet solemnity, asking the Divine Infant through the Divine Mother, Mary Most Holy, to enrich your pious soul with graces and heavenly gifts, raining over your house the most copious blessings of heaven. May you rejoice out of pure charity over the act of my reverent affection, which I will continue for your as long as I live.

I suppose you have understood from the syndic the reply of His Eminence, which I sent on to Father Rector for lack of an address. In it I adore the Holy Will of the Most High, and, humbled in the depths of my horrible nothingness, I adore, while trembling, the holy, most just, and fearful judgments of His

307. There is no name on the letter. From the contents of the letter and from what was directed to the syndic, Signore Sancez, December 25, 1753, in which Paul speaks of the mission he was to give in Orbetello, but the Cardinal Commendatory Abbot (bishop of Orbetello) did not want the mission at that time, the letter is directed to the vicar general at Orbetello.

Divine Majesty since there are such great spiritual needs in that city, His Divine Majesty is holding back the remedy, making use of the delay imposed.

I hope that the Lord will draw great good by providing help at the right time, as Your Eminence has said. I am not making a further offering of myself, for those gentlemen know how much I love their city and how much I have admitted I am bound. I cannot doubt for a moment that they could believe that I would put anything else before serving their souls. Now, however, we must await the divine dispositions. The truth is that I have been requested by two cardinals for their dioceses for this spring. If I had been warned in time, I would have taken steps to suit everyone. Father Eustace continues with his sickness, and, if it follows its course, we shall lose him soon; therefore, we cannot use him. I end by enclosing you in the sacred Side of Jesus, where I affirm that I am with fullest esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

879

Philip Falandi (1)

Toscanelia
December 18, 1753

J.C.P.

Reverend and Dear Father,

The approach of the Feast of Christmas obliges me to render to your merit this act of my sincere servitude and true gratitude, while desiring for you an abundance of the plenteous blessings of heaven. I see you, and will always see you, not only as our greatly beloved benefactor, but, more than that, also as a genuine son of the Congregation. So I have you share in all the prayers, Masses, and other exercises of piety practiced in the Congregation. As a start I have wished a blessed Christmas in the ongoing novena we are celebrating together. I will do so much more on the holy Solemnity of Christmas and pray the Divine Infant through the intercession of his Divine Mother, Mary Most Holy, to grant you that fullness of gifts and graces which His Divine Majesty is accustomed to grant his dearest friends by making you holy, as I strongly hope.

I am leaving the day after Christmas to give two missions requested for the people by the cardinal of Viterbo. I hope to return here by the end of January, and then I will have the chance to embrace you in Jesus Christ.

I beg you to convey my cordial greetings in the Lord to your brothers and your sisters-in-law and all their homes, as well as to our beloved archpriest and other friends and benefactors. Meantime, I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus and from the heart recommend myself to your devout prayers. I end, kissing your sacred hands, and sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Last night I received your welcome letter in the ordinary post. I can assure you that I have the health of Signora Barbara, your pious wife, much at heart. I tell you that, although I am not that which your wife believes me to be, I will continue to cry out to the Lord and have others who are true servants of God do so. I beg her not to have the least apprehension, since that would harm her and bring on some upset. She knows that I have always told her to fear nothing. I am writing in haste after the sacred ceremony of the Holy Night, in which God knows I cried out for your esteemed person and all your household. I am sure that the divine blessing will shower upon you all.

Last night I received a letter from the official there. In it he tells me that there has been a favorable reply from the court for the site we requested for a novitiate. He tells me that His Majesty has directed him to personally make the solemn concession. I have answered him on this very Holy Night in the best way I could.

I ask you, as our syndic, to go in my name and to go along with him to assist at the concession. Oh, what a profitable favor for our whole Congregation!

Perhaps in February I could have the good fortune to come and serve this illustrious city. I may find myself there in January, for I have two small missions beginning tomorrow and ending on January 13. It is not prudent for me to do otherwise, for that would irritate the cardinal.

It is a good idea once more to send the requests to him, setting out the desires of the military officials, etc. Oh, in what a hurry I find myself and how many letters I have to write! Out of charity excuse my mistakes. I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with your wife, Barbara, and all your house, and from the heart I sign myself and thank you for the eels.

The official wrote that the dispatch has not been published, but he wanted to write to me beforehand to find out whether I could come and assist at the ceremony. I have replied that I will not be able to do so because of the missions, and that I will write to the superior of the Retreat to assist in my place. If then there is a chance for missions around January 20 or 25, I will be at the Mount, and at the beginning of February I would open the mission.

I recommend myself to your charity so that you be of assistance in everything that is necessary and in the negotiations for the Retreat with the official.

308. This is Paul's Christmas letter written at The Oak. He prays for John's wife in her illness and announces the gift he has received, namely, the royal approval of a "favorable reply" for the location of a building for the novices. Because of several missions he is giving, Paul cannot attend the ceremony of this concession. Accordingly, he asks Sancez to represent him.

If you have something to ask, write: "Vetralla, Retreat of San Angelo." I will safely receive such letters since I am nearby on the missions.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

881

A Religious Sister (6)

Civitella

December 28, 1753

May Jesus always be in your heart.

Reverend Mother,

In haste I am answering your letter, which I received here while giving a mission. I beg you to throw off like the plague the fears you relate to me and do not take any account whatever of the fantasies and dreams you mention. They are the work of that cursed devil. Be faithful to God and carry your cross with patience. God is trying you with suffering; he is treating you as daughter and spouse. I am sure your place is in paradise. Keep to the exercise of all virtues, and never abandon prayer and the holy sacraments. Your sickness does not allow for further penances. Take great care to stay recollected in the inner temple of your soul.

Pray much for me. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

882

The King of the Two Sicilies (1)

—
1753

Your Royal Majesty,

Paul of the Cross, General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ, humble servant and petitioner of Your Majesty, kneeling at your royal throne, humbly explains: since this Retreat of the Presentation is head and origin of all of the Congregation, and is as well the House of Novitiate, and since it is located in the territory of the city of Orbetello on Mount Argentario, where it experiences exhalations and fogs from the lagoon of Orbetello when that dries up during part of the summer and renders the air unhealthful for the Retreat, causing sickness among our novices who come from other areas of good air and who come in order to be clothed in the holy habit; for this reason, with the advice of doctors, it has been thought necessary, in order to remove this notable damage to the whole Congregation and to improve the health of the novices, that we need to build some rooms for a novitiate at a distance from the Retreat, protected from the sirocco and from the exhalations from the lagoon, and in this way provide for the health of the novices.

Therefore, we ask Your Royal Majesty that since with royal munificence you were pleased to assist the building of this Retreat with your alms, that you would continue your charitable aid by cooperating in the maintenance of these poor religious, and that you would be willing, in your great concern and out of love for the holy Passion of Jesus Christ, to grant us a piece of undeveloped ground near this Retreat so that cells could be built there for the novices...

883

Cardinal Prospero Sciarra Colonna

1753

Your Eminence,

The experience of some years has shown that the sickness in the hot months of July and August among the novices arise from the exhalations from the lagoon.

For many years the novices who come from healthful air are attacked by tertian and quartan fevers, which begin in the hottest months of July and August and continue all summer. Having consulted with the experts, it is judged that they come from exhalations from the lagoon, which dries up at this time. To meet this crisis I have sent a petition to His Majesty, the King of the Two Sicilies, to request the concession of a site close to this Retreat and more protected from the sirocco and the exhalations that arise from the lagoon, to build some cells with a small chapel to lodge the novices but forming a single entity with this Retreat. In this way I have been assured by the doctors that the novices will stay healthy, and there will remain in this Retreat a wing that can receive ten or twelve retreatants, both clerics and poor seculars who would desire that, since those who are accustomed to live here find the air healthful.

Just today, with the ample royal consent of His Majesty, we received solemn possession. So now I have thought it my strict obligation to inform Your Eminence with my face in the dust and humbly at your feet, and to ask your approval, along with your holy blessing, with this respectful letter and with full confidence in the charity previously experienced from the always generous piety of Your Eminence.

Even though the retreat at this venerable convent in Orbetello has ended, I am under assault with a fever, occasioned by the hardships of three months of incessant labor for our neighbor. Nevertheless, I hope with the Mercy of God to be able to cooperate after Easter with your zeal and give the holy mission in Orbetello in accord with your piety and much desired by the military.

Missions and Convalescence (1754)

Paul began the new year of 1754 by finishing the mission at Civitella Cesi in the diocese of Viterbo. Then he opened one at Bieda. After returning for several days to San Angelo, he opened another at Mount Romano. He returned to San Angelo only to leave again to give the nuns at Sutri a retreat early in February. He went to Corneto and then to Toscanella for a retreat to nuns. On March 21 he left for Mount Argentario and a retreat in Orbetello. During this time he wrote about various matters. He began a mission at Sabina, but his health gave way and he had to return to San Angelo to recuperate.

884

Joseph Boniface of Saint HyacinthSan Angelo
—³⁰⁹

Paul of the Cross approves and grants the favor that our suppliant brother requests, as a religious and worthy of a true son of the Passion.

Paul of the Cross, useless servant of the Congregation of the Holy Passion of Jesus Christ.

885

Joseph Bubalari³¹⁰San Angelo
January 15, 1754*J.C.P.*

Dear Sir,

As I once more affirm my servitude and gratitude in Jesus Christ, I am enclosing my letter in response to yours, which you were pleased to send me. I have stolen time from my tasks to meet your need. I did not reply before this because I was actually in the process of conducting a mission, which did not

309. No date is indicated in the original, but since Brother Joseph was professed on September 8, 1753, the letter was written later. The request reads: "Most Reverend Father General: This poorest little brother, the least of all the brothers of the Congregation, moved by the affection that you have always shown beyond my merits, I come to ask a favor of you. It is this, that no matter whatever deadly illness I may encounter, no doctor, rector, no provincial or superior of a Retreat may have me take off my habit; for it would be a heavy sorrow to see myself at the end of my life stripped of the Livery of Mourning that I am wearing out of love for my Crucified Lord Jesus. I trust that I will be granted this consolation from your innate charity, and kissing your sacred hands while I lie prostrate with my face in the dust, I ask your fatherly blessing."

310. Joseph Bubalari is a captain, who lives in Vetralla.

give me opportunity to do so. So I ask your kind forgiveness and enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus with all your pious household. I sign myself in haste and with profound respect ask for your venerated requests.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

886

John Francis Sancez (13)

San Angelo
January 19, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

The charitable assistance and the holy labors that your piety uses in favor of this holy Retreat and all the Congregation, especially your cooperation in the new building of the novitiate, which is so helpful, is ascending to the Divine Presence as a sweet-smelling incense, bringing on you and your household a rain of copious blessing from heaven. I am glad to hear that a clear decision of the Father Vice Rector has been taken to use the donation in question for the new building.

In the ordinary post for Monday, I found enclosed in the letter from Father Fulgentius the reply from the cardinal to the representatives. I have now sent it back to Father Fulgentius. I received other letters from the vicar general, in which he explains to me the prudent reasons to delay the mission for the coming Sunday after Easter. Since they seemed to me correct and well founded for the greater service of God and the spiritual advantage of souls, and would not run into a serious interference with the coming carnival for the military, so I am answering him in the current mail with a letter in the best way I can — for all the more reason that the vicar assures that such a delay meets with the approval of the cardinal — in which I state that with all my soul I agree with the wise and prudent reflections that I will put off some of my heavy obligations in order to come with a companion to conduct the holy mission there on the Sunday after Easter, etc. It truly seems to me that in this way it will go better in the Lord. I beg you to do me the favor of assuring these worthy representatives that I would come immediately to be of service to them, but the reasons listed above, which tend to the greater service of God and the profit of our neighbor, have prevailed over me, and I have no doubts that they, too, should agree and be assured of the truthful service and gratitude that I profess, and will always profess, to this illustrious and beloved city.

In regard to the lay carpenter, I approve with all my heart that he come to the novitiate; it would be well for you to have the goodness to let the Father Master know.

I ask your kindly pardon in not replying to your letter that I received around the end of the mission in Bieda, for I was loaded with work. I enclose you in the

sacred Side of Jesus, along with Barbara and all your pious household, and end
while affirming I am with all my soul,
Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

887

The Vicar General of Sutri (1)

San Angelo
January 20, 1754

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

With the greatest pleasure of my poor spirit, I take advantage of the present situation to pay my tribute of devoted, respectful service to your always great merit; and at the same time I have the honor to tell you with all my heart I would come to serve your bishop and you by giving the retreat to the convent of Sutri as was conveyed to me by our good Mattia, who informed me of your desires in this affair. For me that is a venerable command, seeing that the desire I have to obey and serve you and the bishop, but I find myself involved with a similar obligation in Sabina and for the convent in Orbetello at the beginning of this coming Lent. In addition, I find myself loaded with not a few obligations for our Congregation, which will not permit me to obey your desires at the time designated by Mattia, which would be in Lent. For once I have reached Orbetello and taken care of that convent, I will be obliged to go to our Retreat on Mount Argentario and there celebrate Easter. After that I have to conduct a mission in that city for the military. This has all been arranged for and agreed to.

If you still wish to be served by my weakness and ignorance for the retreat, I will be able to cooperate with your holy zeal after my mission at Mount Romano, which goes until February 5. On February 6 I would be able to obey you. Other than that, I have no opportunity. To do that I would have to put off my heavy obligation in testimony of the true servitude that I profess, and will profess always, to the bishop and to you.

If I do not hear your pious decision by Thursday, the twenty-fourth of this month, after the mission of Mount Romano, I will go to another retreat and go ahead with my other occupations. Imploring the charity of your holy prayers, I end by signing myself with all esteem, veneration, and respect. With profound respect I kiss your sacred hands,

Your devoted, humble, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

The Vicar General of Sutri (2)

Mount Romano
January 28, 1754

J.C.P.

Very Reverend Father,

From the enclosure of the bishop, as well as from my response to him, you can grasp my thinking. If it were possible, I would ask him to disengage me and procure another missionary. I will not do any good whatever, for I do not see the way open as I would desire in the Lord. I have been six hours in the confessional and I write with a mouthful, I will say that, in my mouth, and God knows my condition. Out of charity free me up. The nuns wish the retreat during Lent, and in my turn I say, as I feel, I will not do any good. With profound respect I kiss your sacred hands in haste.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Anna Cecilia Anguillara (1)³¹¹

Home of Signore Valerani
February 6, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I read to my edification your pious letter, and I rejoice in God over the mercies His Divine Majesty imparts to you. I am answering the first point of your letter. It is not yet the time to take the holy resolution that you bring up; it is necessary to continue to pray to the Lord that he make his Holy Will known and, in the meantime, to persevere in the fervor of prayer and meditation on the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. If the Divine goodness wishes to work this great miracle of his mercy in you so that you separate and both enter religious life, he will give strong impulses and detach you in a sublime way from every affection of flesh and blood. Strive to remain faithful to God, continue your mental prayer, the reading of holy books, and the devout frequentation of the sacraments, using all diligence. Let your husband do the same. Keep your mind on God, cultivate the use of ejaculatory prayer, etc. Go to Communion every week and, if a feast occurs, go then as

311. Anna Cecilia was married to James Anguillara, the son of Count Francis Mary Bernadine Anguillara. The count had wanted to become a priest, but his father insisted that he marry and pass on the family name and title. When his wife died early, having borne him two sons, one named James, the count decided to be ordained a priest. In 1751 he entered the Passionist novitiate and took his vows in 1752. He was known as Father Bernardine of Jesus. He died in 1767 at Toscanella, Our Lady of the Oak. Now his son James and daughter-in-law Anna Cecilia began to wonder whether they should both enter the religious life. As Paul wrote this letter and reflected on Saint Bernard's sister and her husband, he became quite enthusiastic. However, in the letter to Anna Cecilia of March 9 he has no doubts that the Will of God is that "they live as good married people." In this second letter Paul adds that Father Bernardine sends his greetings.

well. With regard to spiritual communions, continue the practice as in your letter, and practice it often during the day as well. A loving glance toward our sacramental Jesus, a lively desire to have him in your heart, is enough to make a spiritual communion during the day. In the morning at Mass continue as you mention in your letter.

Saint Obelina, the sister of Saint Bernard and a young woman of great wealth, beauty, riches, and nobility, newly married, heard what her holy brother said of the vanity of the world and the beauty of virtue, and was so fired up, along with her noble husband, that he became a monk with Saint Bernard and she became the foundress of the Cistercian nuns of the same order as Saint Bernard. Oh, what a magnificent stroke this was, my Lady! Oh, what glory to God to see two newlyweds spurn the pleasures of earth to follow Jesus Christ in holy religion, poor and abject in the House of the Lord, and then to be great saints! Now enough. Go ahead preparing for a holy life right now. If God wills, you will do as I said above. Greet Signore James for me. I will not fail to recommend you always to Jesus Christ, in whose holy Side I enclose both of you, and pray copious blessings for you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

890

A Rector of the Congregation (1)³¹²

San Angelo
February 8, 1754

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Your welcome letter gave me much comfort and edification. I received it on my arrival here on my return from the mission. It was a grace that I arrived alive and well; I wallowed on foot through heavy snow, rain, and mud with Father Anthony. If Father Anthony continues as he is doing now, it will be a great good for him and the Congregation. All the time available to him, he spends before the Blessed Sacrament. Thanks be to God. May he humble himself in everything and flee from conversations, etc. Let all pray that he continue, as I hope.

I rejoice in the Lord that everything is readjusted and your reward will be very great. The vice rector is a true Israelite. Let us bless the Lord. I believe that the Father Provincial will send at least three clerics, etc.

312. This seems to be Father John Mary Cioni, rector of Terracina. There had been a fire in the building on New Year's Eve. Things seem to be about normal once again. However, Paul is quite disturbed to learn that there are several religious living at the Retreat in Paliano, which he knows is not finished and has not been formally established.

Father Sebastian tells me that he sent Father Peter to Paliano to have six in that Retreat.³¹³ I do not understand him for I know that Retreat is not now established and will not be in good order until this coming October. I will not consent to such a foundation if I am not present there. I would hope he will have returned. I have written the provincial several posts ago and asked him to send a letter to this Retreat.

Share this letter with the provincial, and I am not consenting that any of our religious be at that Retreat until it is established, for that is not right. Even though Father Isidore says that is necessary, I will never consent until it is formally established. Let Father Provincial know all this, for I do not have the time to write him since I am leaving tomorrow to conduct a retreat at a convent. Have them write to me here at San Angelo. I am nearby here and will receive the letters safely.

I have an army of convents to take care of, but God will provide since I am dividing them up. I will take four and Father John Baptist will take three. Out of charity let them have Father Peter return for holy reasons; it is not good for him to be there alone.

Dear Father Rector, I will give you one line: "Walk before the Lord and be perfect." Love to stay alone within, reposing in the spirit of God, with your sight on your own nothing, and do all well, combining activity with prayer. Greet Father Sebastian especially; I am not writing to him for I do not have the time. Try to gain Francis. Ah, he is a thorn for me! I want to hope for good. I am writing in great haste. Pray for us and Jesus bless you all. Goodbye. Write me here at San Angelo. Greet the Father Procurator.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the †

891

Thomas Fossi (59)

Soriano
February 19, 1754
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

As I find myself here on my journey, the letters from Viterbo reached me by post. Among them I found your welcome one. I am answering it in a hurry since I am leaving on an affair for the glory of God. I rejoice that the habit arrived and that you have your good little son wearing it. I pray Jesus to make your son holy and a son of our Congregation. For now be satisfied with that; for good reasons it is best not to do more. You are such a great benefactor that it never

313. The vicar at Terracina at this time was Father Sebastian Giampaoli, professed in March 1747 and ordained in 1752. He was superior in several retreats. He died in 1772. Paul refers to him several times in future letters. The Father Peter mentioned in the letter is Peter Maria Ciampolini, professed in 1746, ordained in 1750, and dismissed in 1754.

occurred to us to ask for an alms for the habit, but you are being generous and God will grant you a greater reward. Even holy Daniel was called a man of desires; the Prophet David tells us that God hears the desires of the poor. You should remain in your nothingness, in silence and hope, abandoned in the bosom of God; in the inner temple of your spirit there will come a time when you will see, accomplished at least in part, the desires that God gives you.

With regard to tuna fishing nets, I have no advice to give you for I do not understand that area, so get your advice from God and from prudent men who are experts in those matters. Then make your decision in the Lord as the Lord inspires you.

I will not fail to give your greetings to all, and be assured of our prayers. Pray for me and for the Congregation. Greet your wife for me, and your children, whom I see in the Side of Jesus, where I enclose you, and from the heart I am always,

Your true servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

892

Girolama Ercolani (27)

Magliano

February 21, 1754

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am replying in haste to your pious letter. I tell you that all the thoughts and other fantasies which the devil sets before you are all involuntary and, therefore, are not sins. You have the merit of the suffering of spirit that they cause you. Make your protest to God that you never wish to consent to anything offensive to him, fear nothing, and make your confessions as usual, for you are doing well. Continue your usual devotions, keep your heart recollected toward heaven, do not lose sight of the Passion of Jesus, seeing to it that your daughters do the same, and be happy in God and be assured that I do not lose sight of you in my cold prayers, nor of your daughters, etc. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus and am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

893

Dominic Costantini (5)

San Angelo

February 24, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Last night on my return from Sabina, I found your welcome letter, in which I find there full faculties for my ministry for those religious women whom I am very willing to serve. Since I see there has been a change in time, I will make

sure I am there next Tuesday evening. On the first day of Lent, after they have received the ashes from their confessor — I will receive them from him as well — I will give the opening talk of the retreat. I was pressured to clear myself of the many tasks I have, having turned down going to Farnese, a convent where Cardinal Orsini was pushing me to go, so that I could punctually serve the good religious at your place as I promised.

I ask Signora Lucy not to be put off if Father John Baptist has not come there, since a short time after my letting you know, he had to leave to conduct retreats at three convents in Sabina. Today he will arrive, God willing, at Mount Rontondo, where he will take care of the first convent. Enclosing you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with all your holy household, I sign myself in haste,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I ask you to let the Mother Abbess know so that all will be prepared.

894

Anna Cecilia Anguillara (2)

Toscanella
March 9, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I am replying in haste to your letter, received in Corneto, for I was unable to write because of the tasks for the convent. Now I am beginning here in Toscanella. I tell you, however, that the Will of God makes itself known clearly, and what God wills is that you live as good married people; you should not desire another state. For if God should will that, he would give intense lights. So continue to be faithful to God and make your prayer and frequent the sacraments devoutly. Live submissively, humbly, obediently, and mortify your passions, subjecting your will in every adversity to that of the Most High.

I do not have time to give you direction for the novena; have your confessor give that to you. You know that I do not have the time to devote to directing anyone by letter, except for the advice I give in the confessional when I am doing missions. I am writing in haste for I am leaving. Father Bernadine is well and greets you in the Lord. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus and sign myself, while greeting Signore James, and am

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

895

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (8)

Toscanella
March 19, 1754

May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in your heart.

I have read your letter, which has given me reason to bless the Lord. I know a bit of your natural disposition so there was no necessity to explain that to me.

I also know that in the battle you underwent there was a flash not only of your temper, but also of your concupiscence. But the blessed God held you in the arms of his mercy and did not allow any shipwreck; he even freed you from all storms. This is said so that you will always be more humble and grateful to God and know, besides that, all the evil you would have committed if God had not freed you. So do not ever lose sight of that grace.

You did well to confess these faults of temper. It is true that there was nothing voluntary there, but it is an unchaining of the devil so that you might learn to distrust yourself ever more and remain in your horrible nothingness. You say that you know that the Lord has freed you from a darksome place. I say more. God has drawn you out from the darkest hell, and in thanksgiving you can sing to the Most High: "You have drawn my soul from the lower hell." But be humble, secret, etc. I am writing in great haste. You know I have told you that your present state is safer than before. Now I see the great work that the Most High is doing in your soul, and I would set myself on fire to thank so good a God.

Let all your effort be to stay in your horrible nothing, but be obedient to the invitations of the Holy Spirit by running after the odor of his divine perfumes, remain always in a deep solitude, flee always more with a detachment from all that is created, and in the deepest sacred desert leave outside all creatures and lose yourself and drown yourself entirely in God, follow the loving attractions of the Sovereign Good, do not look at his gifts, but at the Sovereign Giver, feed and nourish yourself on holy Love, accept the divine impressions and interior touches with which His Divine Majesty awakens you so that you may pray in a silence of love for your neighbor in the infallible way that he teaches without leaving that sacred desert and loving repose.

Oh, what am I, this poor one, saying! If I were to use all the ink in the world, I would never write the least — if it is right to say such a thing — of the divine operations which God does in the soul. Ah, Colomba! be always grateful to the Lord, stay in your nothing, stay in poverty and nakedness of spirit, and give His Divine Majesty the incense of his gifts. But remember that you have corrupted them with the dross of your vices, and he is the one who purifies them.

I have no more time except to say I thank you in Jesus Christ for the prayers you make for me, who am always more needy, and for the Congregation. Ah! I beg you to continue them. If you wish to write me, write to Orbetello, where I am going. I will leave on Thursday. Cry out for me and for the poor Congregation. Jesus bless you and make you holy with the secret holiness of the Cross. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (60)

Presentation
April 9, 1754

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your letter, consigned to me by Father Fulgentius and dated March 12. I rejoice to read of your resignation to the merciful visitation of the Lord in your financial losses. You say well that this is the fruit of my prayers. For in praying for our benefactors, I ask the Divine Mercy to give them a reward, even in temporal matters, so that they can more readily give alms to the poor, and in exchange they incur trouble and temporal losses, but not all. The majority of the benefactors, through the prayers of these servants of God, are prosperous. But some for whom I pray find troubles coming to them. Now enough. Let us adore the divine dispositions in everything. Arm yourself with patience and resignation. "I have never seen the just man deserted, nor his offspring begging bread," said the holy David.

Continue to live devoutly in your state in life and keep watch over your family so that all serve the Lord, and the divine mercies and blessings will never be wanting to you. So far I am not certain if there will be a holy mission here, but it is most probable! After that, I leave immediately for Sabina for the same apostolic work.

I would not know what to advise you about coming here or making the trip to Loreto, both because of increasing your expenses in the midst of your losses and leaving your home without your assistance and oversight. This is as much as I can say in the midst of my tasks. I recommend myself more to your devout prayers and those of your household, and in leaving I affirm in haste from a true heart that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla (2)

San Angelo
May 18, 1754

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I received your welcome letter in this Retreat, where I am recovering from a serious illness which overcame me in Sabina.

Now I am answering you as best I can, assuring you that I would willingly serve you by having one of our religious as your co-visitor if that were not against our Institute, which forbids us to undertake governing of nuns except to conduct their retreats. That we will always do whenever we are asked. I know you will take basically what I say to you with all reverence, since I know your zeal for the observance of your own Rule, and that you will be as zealous for the observance of ours. Since we cannot in any way undertake governing nuns

in the manner you set down in your letter, and, if we were able to do so, there is no one in this Retreat who could undertake such a task, I have complete trust in the Lord that he will provide for you over there. Meanwhile, I recommend myself to your holy prayers and with profound respect sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

898

Thomas Fossi (61)

San Angelo
May 21, 1754

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas and Son in Christ,

In last night's post I received your letter, dated April 7, because I continued my journey to Sabina after my mission in Orbetello, where I gave the holy missions, so much desired by the people. But I had scarcely arrived and, without even being able to open my mouth, I took sick with a fierce and dangerous fever. It was a special grace of God that I was able to return to this Retreat, and so I am briefly answering you. I thank the divine mercy that continues with so much love the riches of his graces toward your soul. So, dear Thomas, let all bitterness die in the Divine Good Pleasure and let your food be to do the Holy Will of the Heavenly Father, continuing your practices in accord with your state and taking care to watch over your family in both spiritual and temporal areas. This is your duty in justice. You are not to fear the devils who infest that island, as you tell me in your letter. "Nothing shall harm you." That is a truth of faith. Greet all your pious house and your uncle. I enclose all of you in the holy Side of Jesus and sign myself,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

899

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (9)

San Angelo
June 4, 1754

J.C.P.

I received your letter, but I confess I have no light. For that reason I wrote from Orbetello that you should not write me any more. Now I know that I wrote in accord with the Will of God, and in reading your last letter I am confirmed in that opinion. I have had a certain experience after I read your letter that had me personally understand that I ought not mingle in areas of direction of spirit, except for my brothers in the Congregation toward whom I am obliged in justice because of the office on my shoulders. God knows how willingly I would cooperate for the perfection of all souls, but I see that the Blessed God is not giving me light, nor does he want that from me, especially in directing women. If God wanted it, understanding would be there.

Now is the time for me to prepare for my ultimate journey to a merciful eternity. I see that I have lost my salvation, and I also see that the lights certain souls have about me — I am speaking of you as well — are false lights that do not come from above, but from nature and their own imaginations. But after I have written this last letter, I am repentant ... and I will not send any more. It is true that it was filled with holy matters, but that is not important. It seems to me the Lord wants no more of that from me, and this is absolutely clear to me.

But in order not to leave you so dry, I tell you for the last time, as a most unworthy minister of Jesus Christ, to examine yourself well if your high degree of prayer keeps your dominant passions in check, that is, both irascible and concupiscible; see whether in unforeseen encounters you exercise great patience, great meekness and true silence, within and without, with those who attack you; examine how you stand with knowledge of your own nothing and how you love being despised; see whether you are hidden as much as possible from creatures, without ever speaking about yourself except to accuse yourself of your imperfections and shortcomings; how you are with charity toward all your sisters, equal toward all, subject to all, peaceful with all. Examine all this, and other things besides, with the light the Lord will give you. If the prayer you speak about in your letter produces these effects, things are going well; if it is not bringing forth such fruits, it is an illusion and a deceit. Speak with your confessor and explain yourself with brevity of words, exactness, and openness in laying open your interior wounds as they occur. The just man, says Scripture, is the first to accuse himself. This should be the first point of your conference. Never pass over this, and pray for me, who am so needy, and for our Congregation. Be assured that I will pray for you. That will be our correspondence. Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire.

Your worthless servant,
Paul of the Cross

900

John Anthony Lucattini (16)

San Angelo
June 8, 1754

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Finding myself in convalescence from the sickness with which I was assaulted in Sabina, I am having recourse to your charity to ask for the help of your prayers and holy sacrifices. Although I have long been silent with you and Lucy, I have not lost my devout estimation of you. Your resignation and the abnegation practiced by her have made it grow.

Therefore, if I am not being too bold, I would like to have some detailed information with regard to her conduct, whether she is stable, persevering, and always more abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure with a deep detachment from everything created, and, if she is recollected in the interior of her spirit in a profound solitude and entirely clothed in the suffering Jesus Christ, for he is

the divine gateway for entry, etc. "I am the door, and no one comes to the Father except through me..."

Let me know whether she has forgotten this poor one who is writing and the Congregation of the sons of the holy Passion, against whom contrary winds are blowing. God knows the condition of the miserable one who is writing. For that reason I ask the support of your prayers, and in the holy Side of Jesus I once more affirm from the heart that I am, as I kiss your sacred hands,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

901

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (10)

San Angelo

June 13, 1754

Jesus

The effects which holy prayer produced and which the divine mercy imparted to you in the retreat make known clearly that your spirit is not walking in a deceitful path, but it is guided by His Sovereign Divine Majesty. I, however, have no light and always personally know that I ought not engage in this directing. I have the greatest need of prayers both for myself and for the Congregation. With regard to your saying to me that it is the Will of God that I offer you spiritual assistance with my letters, I reply that I will know that it is the Will of God that I give assistance to you and to other souls if His Divine Majesty will give me the grace for which I have been praying for a long time. Having offered prayers, I know otherwise because I, as a minister of Jesus Christ, ought to remain buried and take care to prepare myself for my imminent death. This is my final decision that I am giving you and the last writings of mine that you will see without such an understanding. Recommend me to God, and I am in haste,

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

902

Bernardine Ruspantini (1)³¹⁴

San Angelo

June 15, 1754

J.C.P.

Very Reverend Father,

The blessed God knows how willingly I would like to please the good young man recommended to me by your piety, for all the more reason that our poor Congregation owes you the special obligation to have in it your nephew, who has great hope of a successful outcome. However, since all our Retreats are

314. Ruspantini was vicar forane at the Grotto of Saint Lawrence.

overfilled and the man in question is too old to be received as a lay brother, I have no doubt that your good heart will share my compassion over this refusal — all the more so, since he will be able to gain acceptance into another observant religious institute. I am writing in a hurry, burdened with jobs and sickness. I implore the charity of your good prayers and enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus as I end and sign myself once more with respect and esteem as,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

903

Signora Frances Zelli (7)

San Angelo
June 18, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

The great charity which you continue toward our poor religious ascends ever in the Divine Presence to bring a rain of plenteous blessing, both spiritual and temporal, from the infinite goodness of the Most High over you and all your house, especially for the accomplishment of your desires in favor of our pious Leopold, as I and all our religious are praying His Divine Majesty according to your pious wishes. I am writing in haste and am busy. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, with profound respect I sign myself from a true heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

904

Joseph Sisti (1)³¹⁵

San Angelo
June 18, 1754

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Because of his sickness, Father Mark Aurelius is not in a condition to be of service to those religious. This morning he was in to see me and told me that the church here, which is cold, has caused him a continual running nose and coughing to clear his chest, has kept him sickly for almost a year to the heavy expense of this poor Retreat, has prevented him from having class with the students, and is a clear danger of losing his life. So I cannot think that either the cardinal or the nuns would wish to cause such a loss to our Congregation. I can

315. Reverend Joseph Sisti was the ordinary confessor to the convent in Vetralla. It was his task to arrange for the extraordinary confessor to come to the convent several times a year. Paul writes that Mark Aurelius is too sick to do this. Paul has known Sisti for some years and was frequently consulted by him on spiritual matters. He wrote to Father Sisti until 1770. Twenty-two letters with his name are preserved. Sisti testified at the beatification Processes.

suggest two other possibilities, Father John Baptist and the Father Rector. The first is more experienced, but the other would do very well. So let them choose whom they will, and let me know tomorrow morning, June 19, so that they can be there by evening and end before the Feast of Saint Peter, that is, on the vigil, because I do not want any of our religious to be away from the Retreat after the Feast of Saint Peter so as not to catch sick since the air is not healthful. So I will be waiting for your answer tomorrow morning. In the future would they have the kindness to let me know two or three months ahead of time so that I can decide who ought to serve them.

The ordinary confessor should not select someone arbitrarily whom he does not know, but he ought to appoint one he knows, etc., and then propose him to the head of the diocese for approval. What I am telling you can serve as a rule for the future. I recommend myself to your prayers and those of the convent, and I end by kissing your sacred hands, and with full esteem I sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Whichever of the two they choose will be able to serve them well with fruit. So let them choose with complete liberty the one they wish so that the work may end before the Feast of Saint Peter since we should not do otherwise since...

The Feast of Saint Aloysius will not keep the extraordinary from the confessional, and the nuns may take advantage of his presence.

905

Thomas Fossi (62)

San Angelo
June 22, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your welcome letter, which was dated June. Last night I already received the tuna in oil; the other fresh one has not been received since, I think, there was no opportunity, and Signore Palomba, in order not have it spoil, acted as he did at other times. I do not know how to express gratitude in my name and that of the Congregation in the Lord. "Your reward is great indeed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As usual the Masses will be celebrated by me as you directed. Let us get around to ourselves.

You can have the room built since it was no great expense.

When Father Francis gave you the advice, you mention in your letter he was not thinking of canon law. A married man cannot enter a religious order unless his wife has made her profession in an approved convent. It is not permitted that a married man enter religious life, leaving to his wife the care of his house and children. Believe me, Thomas, I am telling you the truth in the Lord. While your desires are holy, now is not the time to implement them. Allow yourself to be buried in the Divine Will, protesting that with his grace you will put it into effect when His Divine Majesty opens the way, and then you will see great

lights and strong urgings, for the Lord will give both. He will clear the way for you and take away the hindrances. But for now do not allow your heart to be filled with such thoughts, even though they are good, since they block what is better and in accord with your present status.

All your desire should be to please God and live abandoned as a child in the arms of the Divine Will; so let your monastery or retreat be your own interior, where your spirit should be solitary and hidden in the bosom of God, living a godlike life, a life of love, a holy life, being reborn every moment in the Divine Word, Christ our Lord. That will happen if you remain in your nothingness and solitary in the inner temple of your soul. This divine solitude will not keep you from your interests and the care of your house and children and all the rest that belongs to your status, to which you are bound in justice. The faithful fulfillment of that will always please the Lord all the more. Do as I am telling you in the Name of the Lord, and you will be doing the Will of God.

I do not want you to be making vows, for I do not want you filled with scruples.

Read these thoughts with attention because they will help you much if you put them into action, as I expect. I suppose that by now our people will have left there. I beg the Lord to reward the great charity you paid them.

I am loaded down with tasks, and fierce winds are constantly blowing against me and the poor Congregation. Oh, how great is the need to pray His Divine Majesty to give us aid and support in our great needs!

Greet Victoria, your wife, and all your sons and daughters, who I see in the pure Heart of Jesus, and have them pray. I embrace you in Christ and am from the heart and in haste,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

906

Girolama Ercolani (28)

San Angelo
June 26, 1754

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

Now I am a bit better, thanks to the Lord, and I have begun to follow the common life. I did not wish to delay keeping the promise made to you and giving you a rule for your spirit, as you desire, especially to free you from the disquiet of scruples, for that is what causes disgust.

First point: When you are assaulted by that host of thoughts, fantasies, judgments, suspicions, or anything else, in line with the conferences you have had several times with me, as soon as they occur turn your mind to God, humble yourself before His Divine Majesty, and affirm that you will never consent, with his grace, to anything, however small, that would be offensive to him.

Sometime it will happen that you will not be so much on guard because of distractions, the affairs of your house, weakness of mind, or something else, and the devil will suggest to you that you have consented. Do not believe this

diabolical suggestion, for it is never true that you have consented. You know well that I have had full knowledge of your soul for years; so believe me and drive that evil enemy away.

Second: Avoid confessing these fantasies and scruples since that disturbs even more. We are obliged to confess our sins, but where there is no sin, why confess and disturb yourself? You have experienced that after you obey, you have always been at peace. So be faithful and be entirely at peace.

Third: In place of thinking about scruples, make internal acts of love of God, affections on the holy Passion, acts of humility, and often revive your faith in the Presence of God. By doing that the devil will leave beaten. But make these acts sweetly without forcing your head or breast.

Do not ever leave off your accustomed exercises, especially holy mental prayer, with your good daughters. Stay happy in God and never doubt that the Lord holds you always in the arms of his divine mercy and gives you special help so that you do not consent to sin. Pray and have prayers offered by your pious family for poor me.

So be happy and do not give way to upset or disquiet caused by the devil to take away your peace of heart; strongly hope that you will sing forever of the divine mercies. Amen.

I greet our good canon and am answering him by post. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with your devoted daughters, I again affirm from the heart that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

907

Mother Ursula M. Guasta

San Angelo
July 5, 1754

J.C.P.

In reply to your letter of June 16, I tell you that I will most willingly offer my cold prayers for you, and those of my good religious, so that His Divine Majesty will dispose in you and in all what is for his greater glory and the advantage of our neighbor.

I ought not doubt for a moment that you are abandoning yourself in everything to the Divine Good Pleasure. It often happens that His Divine Majesty tests his faithful servants by firing their hearts with burning desires to do great things for his service, and then does not wish the fulfillment, but gives them, out of his mercy, the reward, as long as they are resigned in the outcome.

So see to it that among the few religious in that pious place that the observance of the Rule, true charity, assiduous prayer, and the exercise of all the virtues, with true detachment from all that is created and true interior recollection, flourish so that, being a good odor of Christ in every place, they will be in that way as pleasing to the Lord as if you founded a thousand convents.

Oh, fortunate that soul that remains always united to the adorable Divine Will in everything, whether adverse or prosperous, in want as well as in abundance, and takes directly every event, even bitter and afflictive, as a precious gift that comes from the loving Heart of the Heavenly Father! Oh, what a great point of perfection this is!

Pray His Divine Majesty for me, and have your good companions pray. Meanwhile, I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus. As I close, I sign myself with profound and devoted respect,

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

Leaving soon on business for the glory of God, so do not write.

908

Joseph Andrew Ruspantini of the Conception (1)³¹⁶

San Angelo

July 5, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Father,

I received your welcome letter, dated June 27. In it I see your request for the reception into the Congregation of the good young man you recommend. I would agree most willingly if there were room. All the Retreats are full; you can see that for yourself over there. If there were room, but there is at present a large number of lay brothers, in truth, too many.

I have seen the young man you recommend. He tells me he is twenty-four or twenty-five years old, which is outside the Rule. At that age lay brothers do not work out, as experience teaches us. So it will be well to inform him that there is no room in the novitiate and persuade him to seek admission in some other reformed institute.

I am happy that you are in good health, and I expect great things from you. I would wish that you burn up your scruples in the fire of holy love and allow yourself to be cured with the ointment of the balm of holy obedience; lacking that, you will never be cured of your sickness. If despite the fact that you obey your spiritual director blindly, it turns out that your scruples continue, then the best thing to do is a complete resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure, firmly believing that this weakness is permitted by God for your greater spiritual advantage and to purify your soul from hidden imperfections, as gold is purified in fire. In such a fire of suffering, as above, it is necessary to wait in silence and hope, always most faithful to obedience. Behaving in this way, when you least expect it, the work ends. There will come a hot and clear light sent by the Divine Sun, Christ Jesus, that will disperse this snow and fog and penetrate to the marrow of your bones. Peace. Recommend me to God and be always more

316. Joseph Andrew Ruspantini was born in 1731, vested in 1753, and professed December 15, 1754. He was ordained in 1756. There are twenty-four letters written to him. At the time of this first letter he was a novice at the Retreat of the Presentation.

faithful; meanwhile, I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus and say I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

909

Joseph Hyacinth Ruberi of Saint Catherine (1)³¹⁷

San Angelo

July 12, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Father Joseph, My Beloved Son in Christ Jesus,

I do not know how to express the consolation of my poor spirit in hearing of your arrival at that sacred Retreat. I have not failed to offer devout thanks to the Lord, "who delivered you from so many dangers." You want to have a conference with me. As for me, God knows how much I want to hear your voice and embrace you in the Lord. I would certainly have had you come here from your room, but the exhaustion suffered on your journey and the season being so far advanced would put you in clear danger of taking sick. What cannot be done now will take place as soon as the weather cools, and without fail you will come here, where I hope you will be very well. Meanwhile, take very good care of yourself. I have written there to the Father Master that he have you regain your health and give you an airy cell, one of the most healthful that looks down on Orbetello. As I know the charity of that Father, I have no doubts about his charitable punctuality.

I received the letters written to me from Piedmont and have always answered them. I did not answer the one from Chiavari for you were on the road; I did not receive the one from Livorno. I answered all the letters given me by the Father Rector, the one to Cardinal Delle Lanze, to Signore Toppi, Signore Bonino, Signore Carreto, and his devoted brother. I encouraged him to study and to serve the Lord, assuring him that he would be among the first to be received as soon as we can breathe by unburdening ourselves of the people in this novitiate Retreat. To sum up, I have managed to answer all sufficiently, etc. Let us come to our business.

While, thanks to the Lord, you have been faithful to God and to the Congregation, and this was done through divine care since we are not good of ourselves and we owe it to God if we do not do evil. Due to your long absence outside the Retreat, even though it was in charity to your neighbor, in view of our fragility and misery, dust of images that cause us to do battle always clings to you. Therefore, during this little bit of summer time, in which little or nothing needs doing, give yourself more than usual to holy recollection in celebrating

317. Joseph Hyacinth Ruberi was born in 1729, professed March 4, 1747, ordained March 18, 1752, and died May 16, 1802. He held many offices throughout his life, being provincial and general procurator. He was from north Italy and sent to the Congregation by Bishop Garagni. There are only four letters to him preserved.

with great fervor. If over there, there is a copy of Cardinal Bona's *de Sanctissimo Sacrificio Missae*, which is truly a treasure, you can use it both for your preparation and thanksgiving, and it will help you much. I have made use of it. I hope you will find it among the books there. As you have been blessed in advance by the Lord, now correspond and use all your zeal in making a habit of holy recollection in interior solitude in order to be a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and in truth.

With regard to your employment, you will have many reasons to humble yourself and, at the same time, to give the glory to His Divine Majesty, for your assignment will be more exalted than even that of missions since you will cooperate in preparing missionaries. For when you will be here, that will be your work. So, meanwhile, keep yourself more abandoned in the bosom of the Heavenly Father as a child of the Gospel.

Those who have left the Congregation, despite the fact that I did everything possible to hold on to them, were worm-eaten fruit through their own doing; His Divine Majesty did not want them on his chosen tree. We must adore the divine judgments for "the Lord knows who are his." It is a great boon that the Congregation is now pruned; he who did this knows what he is doing. I embrace you in Jesus Christ. Pray His Divine Majesty for me and more so the Congregation. I affirm I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

910

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (39)

San Angelo
July 13, 1754

J.C.P.

May the holy Passion of Jesus be always in your heart.

In the midst of my many tasks I received your letter with the letter enclosed from Sister Alma Candida Pauline. Since I have not a little to do, this will serve as a reply to both.

With regard to what you tell me of your spirit, it is certain that lights which bring with them love and contrition for your sins always come from God. You need to be very grateful to the Lord for the infinite mercies he imparts to you.

Your dryness of spirit, along with aridity, desolation, and other adversities, are gifts of the Divine Goodness to train you in perfect resignation to His Divine Will, to take from you all sensible pleasure, and to make you walk in pure faith and poverty of spirit on the way of holy perfection. That is the secure way. You must then practice the holy virtues faithfully, especially true humility of heart, because in that way you dispose yourself to receive the most precious gifts of heaven. You know how much I have always recommended to you interior recollection; you will be able to see that in the letters I have written to you in the past, in which I have given you instructions in the Name of the Lord to make you holy. I hope you are putting them into practice.

With regard to that young postulant who is a lay brother, I say once more what I wrote. That is, I cannot accept him since there is no room, nor is there the moral possibility of making room, etc. So let him try to find admittance in another religious institute as the Lord inspires him.

I am not replying to Sister Alma Candida Pauline since I am busy, and I ought not have the Father Secretary answer; so let this serve as a reply.

Tell that religious that since I do not have the least knowledge of her soul, I cannot and ought not give her advice with regard to her conscience. Consequently, she should listen to the advice of her confessor and obey him exactly. It is certain, however, that she has no obligation to repeat confessions previously made as long as she is morally certain that she explained herself as well as she could. The confessor who acts in place of Jesus Christ, and she should trust him, will give her peace.

I wish that she give everything to God in the small amount of time God is granting her to live by being assiduous in prayer, in retiring, in detachment from all that is created, as I hope she will do. There is my reply to Sister Pauline; you may read it to her. I recommend myself to the prayers of you two. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I say in haste I am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

911

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (11)

San Angelo
July 16, 1754

J.C.P.

Your letter of July 12, received last night, has given me reason to thank our good God for the mercies he continues to give your soul. I do not wish to resist the Will of the Most High and can tell you I have no other hunger, nor can I desire anything else, nor can I ask for a different grace than to be united entirely and transformed through love into the adorable Will of the Heavenly Father. I strongly desire that my food always be to do his Holy Will in the midst of whatever pain and suffering, etc.

Let us now come to ourselves. In your last letter, my poor spirit was much assured in God regarding your conduct and in the reflection made by me of the conferences of past years, in which you have sincerely revealed all your defects and temptations to the extent that His Divine Majesty allowed you. His Divine Majesty has made me know that the work is entirely his. So all that remains to be done is to magnify the Divine Goodness and be grateful to our good God by living sacrificed as a holocaust, a victim burnt up, consumed, reduced to ashes in the fire of Divine Love.

I wish now that you accept in a spirit of humility of heart and true annihilation in God the holy directions that the Lord sends you by means of me, a vile sinner. I do it to obey God, who inspires you sweetly and strongly to make use of this vile and useless instrument.

The communications received from the ineffable Divine Goodness in prayer would not be from God if you could explain or understand them. I will speak in paradoxes, for you also speak this way; you cannot do less. One knows without knowing; one understands without understanding; and the soul in these stupendous marvels that God brings about remains in a holy unknowing, since it is entirely absorbed in the divine darkness of purest faith and holy love.

The fear you have of having lost God, which is born of the knowledge that God gives you of your unworthiness, is excellent because it does not take away and disturb your peace. So listen to me and act in this way: Receive with thanks the knowledge that the Lord gives you of your nothingness, of your malice, but immediately, like a child who fears, flee and hide yourself in the depth of the Divinity, and rest there without a disturbing fear. The fear of God which is a gift of the Holy Spirit does not disturb; it even gives a greater peace and brings it about that the soul, seeing its own misery and the proclivity it has to commit every possible evil, hides itself the more in God and flees more speedily to the bosom of the Heavenly Father and takes its rest there. More and more make the pains of Jesus your own through faith and holy love, and always stay crucified with him, for he will show you how to flee and hide yourself in pure, naked faith and deepest poverty of spirit. Oh! how much I thank His Divine Majesty for keeping you crucified with this holy fear, which you write about in your letter, since it is of the kind I stated above.

So continue your prayer as God allows you; abandon yourself always more to the Divine Good Pleasure; leave the care of everything to him; be faithful by staying always more recollected in God in a true interior solitude, detached from everything created, dead to yourself and to all that is not God. Let your intention be always pure, godly in all your works, uniting the active life of your duties with internal contemplation, remaining always drowned and lost in your Immense God. Oh, happy loss! Oh, loss rich in every good! God will teach you everything if you will abandon thoughts of yourself and everything else to the Sovereign Good. Give your attention to holy love, and live the life of love in God without knowing and without sensing in your lower soul, living in the upper reaches of your spirit which is the sanctuary where the Lord is adored in spirit and in truth. Oh, how much I would like to say! But I lack the concepts, and I rejoice in that. My satisfaction is not being able to understand and explain the marvels His Divine Majesty works in the faithful soul. If I, in my vileness, knew how to explain them, they would not be the work of the Most High. O Great God! O Great Father! This is enough to keep us in prayer for eternity. What do you say to that?

I read that your health is always declining. But, believe me, I have never known a soul who deliberately tends toward perfection and to prayer who was in perfect health. Nevertheless, take care to maintain what poor health you have and take your necessary food and sleep as the Lord permits. Chains, hair shirts, disciplines to blood are not for you now. You will have the same merit as if you performed these penances, for there is the merit of obedience, which is a great sacrifice.

I beg you, and beg you much, not to leave off Holy Communion. Oh! my daughter, do not ever desert this food of life eternal; retain it with long thanksgiving in the way he will lead you and guide you. Offer this sweet Savior to the Eternal Father through Mary Most Holy to obtain the graces for poor me and for our Congregation to obtain the graces necessary for the establishment of this Congregation in solemn vows. Cry out loudly, as His Divine Majesty will have you cry. I would wish you make the Lent of Mary now going on, especially the day of her holy Assumption. Make it every day, especially during Holy Communion. Now I give you permission to write me when you wish, that is, when the Savior so inspires you. You may write me every week if you know that is the Good Pleasure of God. Do it simply because it pleases God, and I will answer. Let me know if this letter has lifted your spirits and if I have explained myself in accord with your present spiritual situation. Jesus make you holy and bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

912

John Iacomini of Saint Raphael (2)

San Angelo

July 16, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Father,

I am replying to your letter and do it by stealing time. Listen to me. The soul that is humble of heart, faithful in everything to God, does not have nor does it seek ways, or even know how to seek ways, to make its thanksgiving, whether after Mass or any other occasions whatever. For such a soul that lives by faith in a high separation from everything created, in true poverty of spirit, in perfect nakedness from that which is not God, completely clothed in pure faith with the holy pains of Jesus Christ, and hidden and withdrawn in interior solitude and immersed in God, burns with the fire of divine love in a silence of faith and love, a victim in holocaust to the Sovereign Good, and so is in continual thanksgiving whether in prayer or any external work. Read this paragraph with attention and humility.

When you have celebrated Mass, you have been fed with Jesus. Is that true? Now why do you not after Mass allow Jesus to feed on you, digest you, transform you into himself, and have you burn with that fire of love which burns in his Divine Heart? Why do you not allow yourself to be entirely burnt up? If you will be humble of heart, well annihilated, well unknown and hidden from creatures, you will be taught by the Divine Master in the interior school the true science of the saints.

Pray for me and for the Congregation, especially during the Lent of Mary Most Holy, and tell the Father Rector to have this done by everyone, begging Mary Most Holy to loosen from the hand of her Divine Son the grace so necessary for the establishment of the Congregation by solemn vows. But do this from your heart. Those who are leaving the Congregation, four or five up

to now, are worm-eaten fruit, which His Divine Majesty, because of their fault, did not want on the chosen tree. Let us fear for ourselves and preserve the grace of our vocation beneath the cinders of humility and gratitude. God bless you. I am in haste,

Your affectionate,
Paul of †

913

Girolama Ercolani (29)

San Angelo
July 20, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Girolama, Esteemed in Jesus Christ,

I hope you will have received my letter in which I gave you, even gave you again, the advice given at other times in writing and voice. I am confident that the letter will have served as light and peace in Jesus Christ. I am writing this note in order to complete my duty and have you understand that I have written and have kept my word.

I have written to Captain Silvester Petti and have thanked him for the calash. I greeted Signora Rose, who was the means of that charity. She has not answered. If you see her, tell her that I have completed to a small degree my obligation of gratitude.

Greet our canon for me and ask him to let me know in a short time whether the air at the convent of Saint Susan is good, really good.

I beg Jesus to enrich your entire household. I wish that they have impressed on their hearts the Passion of Jesus, that you especially be faithful in obeying, and that you never give way to scruples. I recommend myself much in all your devout prayers and enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus. In haste I affirm that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

914

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (12)

San Angelo
July 23, 1754

J.C.P. / Jesus

In reply to your letter, I tell you that the effects occasioned by reading my letter come from having read the Word of God, which the prophet says is as fire: "Is not my word as a fire." So do not wonder that they so inflamed your spirit of devotion and love of God. But the truth is that as soon as that letter was written, and even before, I repented doing it. For the Lord made me feel his scourge increase over me, making me personally realize that it is not his will that I enter into these areas.

It has happened to me now because “the hand of the Lord has grown heavy over me.” So I am able to state that it is most certain that His Divine Majesty is making me know that he does not wish this kind of direction to come from me since I can scarcely bear the great weight I have on my shoulders. God knows with what a willing heart I have always assisted souls, especially cooperating for the perfection of spiritual persons, but long experience and the discipline of the Lord is teaching me and making me personally know that I am not to enter here. While I would willingly serve your soul in a special way, it is necessary for me to obey the divine dispositions so that the Lord may be appeased and pardon me and save my soul. I fear and tremble over that so much.

If you have kept my last letter, you can see with what promptness of spirit I wished to serve your soul, to fulfill, as you said to me, the Will of the Lord, which I wish to fulfill in everything. But experience makes me know the contrary, and I am writing this letter right after my thanksgiving after Mass. If you will remember, you know that I wrote you that the Lord has not given a grace for which I have prayed and had others pray so much. I no longer have the strength and am not in a position to assist and serve souls. I cannot even carry the weight of governing the Congregation; I cannot get this weight off my back until the time my office is over. I never cease forcing myself as much as I can to work and watch in order to serve all, since I am obliged to that out of justice. But when that time will be terminated, if I live that long, I will bury myself from the eyes of all in a corner of our most remote Retreat, and I will be there as a dead man to prepare myself for my last, fearful journey. But as far as the direction of souls outside the Congregation, God does not want that of me and gives me the clearest of signs. For if His Divine Majesty wanted this, he would give me the necessary grace I mentioned.

You should know that, according to whatever weak lights God gives me and also from what I have read in the masters of the spiritual life, the affairs of your soul go very well to the glory of God. I am the surer of this from the account you give me in your letter, received last night. Continue then to be very faithful to God, never trust in yourself, distrust yourself and be fearful of yourself, and trust entirely in God.

I recommend always more holy interior solitude, remaining in it day and night, in every employment, in every place, with a profound detachment and mystical death to everything that is not God. Take great care to separate the precious from the vile. “If you will separate,” says the prophet, “if you will separate the precious from the vile, you will be as my mouth.” The way to make this separation is not to lose sight of our horrible nothing, our having nothing, being able to do nothing, knowing nothing, but with a high detachment from one’s own understanding, one’s own pleasure, and one’s own feeling. When such a separation is made between our nothingness and the holy gifts of the Most High, you can make of the latter an incense to His Divine Majesty in the very sacrifice of holocaust that the soul makes of itself to God in the fire of divine love, which should be always flaming over the bundle of myrrh, a sweet-smelling wood, of the pains of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. Do

this without any imaginings; it is done in a high abstraction and happens in a moment, for love will teach you all.

I recommend to you never to rest in the gifts nor in the joy of spirit such gifts of God produce, but with one sweet glance of faith and love take your flight always more into the interior in God in nakedness and poverty of spirit, losing everything in him, without looking back whether at your suffering or to any knowledge and understanding in spirit, but take your repose purely in naked faith and pure love on the bosom of God, completely clothed with Jesus Crucified.

You can be very assured that your present conduct is according to God and that he works his highest mercies for you. But you are to be very faithful and not steal anything, but be in what is yours, that is, the nothing and the sin which is a more horrible nothing than nothing.

Out of pure charity, take as your own all the needs of the poor world and in one glance of faith, of love, and of love of your neighbor present them to God. Do this without a word. If you are humble, holy Love will teach you everything. As soon as you have exposed the needs of the world to God, at that very moment cry out, pray, make supplications, but without explicit cries or explicit prayers, for pure love will teach you to make supplication, and the Lord will hear infallibly.

I ask you to pray for my miserable soul and, believe me, I am the most miserable in all the world. I often tell the Lord that I would not want any creature to find himself in so many needs. I recommend this poor Congregation to you. Never lose sight of it and place it in the holy Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day, and, once you have communicated, show this Divine Heart to the Eternal Father so that he may assist it as he pleases without looking at my malice and ingratitude.

I have written so much at length, even though I have much to do and to write, for I will not be writing any more. You are to read this letter with attention. You are not to write me any more, for it seems to me in that way God is pleased. Believe me, and I even make it a promise to you, that if His Divine Majesty will give me the grace mentioned above, I will be the first to write you; but, if I do not receive that grace, you will never again see my writing. Take this as beyond doubt and, therefore, spare me any writing.

Jesus make you as holy as I desire. The grace of the Holy Spirit strengthen you, the blessing of Jesus Christ guard you, and the protection of Mary Most Holy assist you in life and in death. Amen.

I will not fail to pray His Divine Majesty according to our holy intentions for your pious father confessor, and I hope the Lord will assist him always more in his position.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
July 25, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your two letters in one envelope, one of the eighteenth of June, the other of the seventh of this month. Both give me reason to bless the Lord for the mercies he continues toward your soul. At the same time I must offer you again my gratitude in Jesus Christ for the great charity you do us over there, as well as what you do with such care for this poor Retreat, both with fish under oil, which you sent, and the seven packages of fish eggs, received with your letters. May the Lord reward you for all this in time and in eternity, as I strongly hope.

This morning I offered the Sacred Mysteries of the Divine Sacrifice for you according to your intentions. Tomorrow, I will celebrate for Signora Victoria, your pious wife. God knows how much I cried out to His Divine Majesty to make you holy, along with all your family, and enrich you with graces and heavenly blessings, while blessing you even with temporal goods so that you may be able to continue your holy donations and give good order to your house in accord with your state. I have great hope that there will be a change of wind and that after the storms there will be calm, and after temporal adversity great prosperity will follow to the glory of the Most High.

Father Francis is truly a good servant of God, but he is too narrow and arid in doing good. But I hope that one of these days the anointing of the Spirit will make all him gentle and all filled with prudence and charitable consolation for his neighbors. Since he is most exact and exemplary in the observance, so I have hopes that the Lord will make him holy.

My dear Thomas, do not spin so fine a thread lest you tear the cloth. Be very exact in the observance of the Divine Law, in the obligations of your state in life, and in fleeing dangerous occasions. However, if the necessity arises by reason of your status where you find yourself in situations in which you need to negotiate, arm yourself with confidence in God, keep your heart recollected, and fear nothing.

Destroy your scruples with the fire of holy love, and not knowing what to say when you go to the confessional is a sign that the defects have been consumed and destroyed in the fire of Divine Love. Regarding temptation against the sixth commandment, since I am sure that you gave not even the slightest consent, they need to be caused by the devil. This is all the more certain because you are in the holy married state and faithful in conjugal chastity, never — thanks to God — never broken, so your soul is never soiled by such temptations, while your constant prayer and frequentation of the sacraments strengthen you in divine grace.

If you wish for safety's sake to say to your confessor: "Father, I have had temptations against the sixth commandment, but, thanks to God, I have not consented nor does it seem to me that I caused them, but perhaps I was

negligent in getting rid of them immediately, so I accuse myself of that.” This is the way you can act if you wish. Then do not think of it any more because scruples like these impede deeper interior recollection and the flights your spirit should be making into God.

In short, take great care to keep your interior peace; and believe that everything that disturbs it is the work of the devil. Be diligent in remaining solitary within and reposing on the bosom of God like a child, always clothed with the pains of Jesus Christ. All this is to be done with simplicity, in pure faith and holy love, with detachment from all images and from everything created. Cry out to God that he provide for the needs not only of the island, but also of all the poor world, since the needs are extreme. But do not meddle by writing to authorities nor be otherwise engaged. This is the responsibility of pastors, vicars forane, and others. If you can give a useful correction, do so; but, if you see it cannot be useful, leave the care of everything to God and continue to be submissive to the Holy Will of God — and take note of this point — and have great concern and peaceful attention so that your household, which depends on you, remains in justice and holiness before the Lord.

With regard to the prayer of your daughters and sons, you are free to have them make it by themselves; but oh, how much your presence would help them to do it faithfully! With such a charitable assistance His Divine Majesty will give you greater recollection and draw you into a more profound internal solitude.

I am answering here with the letter enclosed to your daughter Teresa. Read it, and then seal it and give it to her, but make use of it to further her education.

God knows how much I would like to embrace you in the Lord in one of our Retreats, but you see what great dangers there are on the sea. There happened in an instant what had not occurred in a year. You are loaded with obligations for your household. I hope that His Divine Majesty will open a way so that one day we may meet each other in a holy conference. Meanwhile, be patient.

The grace of the Holy Spirit strengthen you, the blessing of Jesus Christ guard you, and the protection of Mary Most Holy be with you in life and in death. Amen.

Toward September 15, please God, I will be in Sabina to conduct the mission which I abandoned because of my sickness last May. Pray for me and the Congregation.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

[San Angelo]
[July 25, 1754]³¹⁸

Paul of the Cross, your useless servant, tells you that he has received your letter, enclosed in a letter from your father. He asks you to continue your conduct of showing obedience to your parents. In regard to what you mention about dress, I have nothing further to say since I judge that you are acting with complete modesty and decorum. I desire that you constantly live up to my hopes.

The one who is writing thanks you for your kindly remembrance of this poor fellow, and likewise offers his thanks to you and your sisters, and recommends himself to your prayers. He prays that all become holy and listen respectfully to the holy admonitions of your father and mother and put the admonitions into practice.

Please return my greetings to your mother and sisters; I leave all of you as one in the Side of Jesus.

San Angelo
July 30, 1754

J.C.P. / Jesus

Although I read your letter to my edification, and thanks to the Highest Giver of every good for the mercies he continues toward your soul, and in seeing that in my opinion the interior work is that of the Sovereign Lord, nevertheless, I did not wish to answer. Finally, last night I tore up the letter. Now I am writing you for no other reason than to confide in you with great secrecy, a secret you are to tell no one, for yesterday among the many letters I received by the post, I found one in which I was informed of an imminent great suffering that is coming and that could bring down the whole Congregation. I have immediately abandoned myself in the arms of the Lord, adoring his divine judgments, resolved always more to fulfill his Holy Will in the midst of every storm. But believe that my body felt its part; proof of that is this night I did not get up for Matins because of exhaustion and headache.

So I, poor man, am having recourse to your charity so that totally distrusting yourself, sunk in your nothingness and all lost in the Highest Good, you will cry out with lively faith and fervent charity, praying the great Father of mercies to provide for this great need and assist this poor, small new member of his family, and offer to the Divine Father through the intercession of Mary Most Holy the precious Heart of the Divine Word-Made-Man with the treasure of the infinite

318. This letter, sent to Poggio on the island of Elba, is not dated. Since the previous letter to Thomas Fossi mentions sending a letter to "your daughter Teresa," the date of July 25 is suggested.

worth of his holy passion and the sorrows of the Divine Mother. Oh, God! will this ever be? For I see in my opinion that this work — as far as human means are concerned — appears to be attached by a single hair of one's head. I am aware that the depth and extension of your prayer should be part of a great prayer. God wishes that his beloved souls have the merits of such works ... by crying out to the Lord that he speedily send the grace so sighed for. Believe me, in the midst of my storms I see you on the shore, not losing hope of divine help at the peak and sublimity of your spirit.

Two learned and pious missionaries have decided to leave us; yesterday I had the letter. Pray much for this as well so that the Lord will dispose what is for his glory.

I beg you always more by the cross of our sweet Savior to be very faithful to the Sovereign Good and very obedient to the attractions of the Holy Spirit. Keep yourself from stealing anything, stay in what is yours, that is, nothing, even worse than nothing because of your vices. This is your entire clothing. Then with entire obedience to your Sovereign Internal Director, the Holy Spirit, let yourself be entirely lost and dissolved in the Immense God and accept the divine working in nakedness and poverty of spirit, detached from everything created. In that sacred darkness and naked faith and holy love, in which you ought to remain in peaceful silence and total abandonment to God in the deepest interior of the holy inner desert, accept passively the divine operations, always without your own understanding, your own feeling, and your own rejoicing, etc., especially when you have Him within sacramentally. But take care that, just as you have fed on him, so let him feed on you and transform you into himself by love. I have no more time. I need to repeat the requests made above for myself and all our affairs, etc., and I pray Jesus to bless you and make you holy with the secret holiness of the cross.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

918

Anna Cecilia Anguillara (3)

San Angelo
August 27, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I read with high edification your letter in which I see the signs that the Lord wants to make you his true servant. To reply to your request, I would be happy to be able to talk to you directly, the better to give you peace. Now listen to me with attention.

Do not take as a bad sign the forgetfulness that you experience after you have read the meditation; rather it is a sign that the Lord is giving you so that you humble yourself and abandon yourself into his divine arms.

Act as follows: When you have read the meditation and have forgotten it quickly, which has happened even to saintly souls, humble yourself as a poor woman before God and ask alms as if you were a poor beggar before a great

lord; do not dare to raise your eyes out of reverence for his Sovereign Majesty, but revive in yourself a lively faith in his great mercy. Do all this with a peaceful spirit and mind.

Then, for example, begin your prayer in this way: "O sweet Jesus, how was your Heart in that agony in the garden! My soul! a God sweats blood for you! A God is in agony for you! Oh, love! Oh, charity! Oh, great Father, how much you have loved me, how much you have loved my soul! I have offended you! Oh, what an ingrate! Ah, sweet Jesus, bathe me in your Precious Blood and set me on fire with your love!" Etc.

I give you this as an example with the understanding that you do not make these affections that I give you in haste, but go through them slowly in your inner spirit, resting in them in a silence of faith and love in the Divine Presence. If you pass a quarter of an hour with one affection, oh, how well you would have passed that time with fruit!

Rest sweetly in such affections and allow yourself to be entirely penetrated with the love of God. When one affection dies, turn to another as the Holy Spirit will lead you and will teach you interiorly. Govern yourself in this way with other mysteries of the Passion, and in that way you will dwell in the Divine Presence and will always carry on the altar of your heart the sufferings of Jesus.

The desires of love that you experience in reading the lives of the saints are good signs. Cultivate them but with a total abandon to the Divine Will; above all, practice the holy virtues, especially humility of heart, true patience, and silence. Show mercy to the poor, and, when you have the opportunity, visit poor sick women and comfort and console them. Signora Cecilia, the blessed God wants to make you holy but with the secret holiness of the cross; correspond with God. Be humble and very loving with your husband, obedient, agreeing with all that is just and holy. I am expecting great good from your husband; urge him on with your good example in virtue, in prayer, in frequenting the sacraments, and in being all for God. Both of you put all human respect beneath your feet, and let it be well known that you are not ashamed to be known as servants of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

I am in a hurry, for I am close to departing for the mission at Sabina. Jesus make you holy and bless you. Amen.

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

919

Thomas Fossi (64)

San Angelo
August 31, 1754
Leave today for the
missions at Sabina.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

In last night's post I received your pious letter, to which I reply in haste, for I am soon leaving for the holy missions; I will not be in this Retreat until around

the middle of next June. Now I am obeying you by sending Father Francis, whom you are asking for. I am having someone write Father Fulgentius about that, hoping we will be on time and that they have not already gone elsewhere. But I want to hope they have not.

The balsam to cure every pain is the Passion of Jesus Christ and union and total abandonment to his Holy Will. You should not be thinking of states of life incompatible with your present one nor cultivating desires for the future, for that displaces the affections of your heart toward God. Oh, fortunate is that soul which rests on the bosom of God without any thought of the future but strives to live for the moment in God with no other care beyond doing his Will in every event, faithfully fulfilling the obligations of one's own state!

Disciplines to blood, hair shirts, strict fasts on bread and water are not for you. Be mortified in food out of love for Jesus, taking a few mouthfuls less or leaving fruit, etc., but, above all, mortify your senses, your self-will, etc. These are more useful and in line with your spirit in your state in life in order to be holy with the secret holiness of the cross. So follow your conduct with your usual practices of piety, mental prayer, frequentation of the sacraments, and with interior recollection, especially taking care of the upbringing of your children and keeping your eyes especially on the activities of your daughters.

Do not get involved in things that do not belong to you; leave that to bishops, pastors, etc. You pray and cry out to God for the glorification of the holy Name of the Lord. As for the rest, flee, be quiet, be silent; otherwise, you will lose your peace.

I do not recall anything else, and I am always more grateful in Jesus Christ for your charities and for the fish eggs. May the Lord reward you for everything.

Greet Signora Victoria, your pious wife, for me, and all in the house, especially your uncle. I see all in the pure Heart of Jesus in my poor prayers. As for the miracle of the letter, there is no reason to make anything out of that. I know how heavy the weight is, and it is exorbitant. If the Mercy of God does not keep me strong, that weight will make me fall beneath Lucifer. I am telling you the way it is, and I sense it in the Lord, as if I held the death candle of the agony in my hand. Cry out to God that I save this poor soul of mine, for I fear and tremble much, but I hope in Jesus Christ. I am in a hurry, affirming always more,

Dear Thomas, do not engage me for missions since it is impossible for me to come over there. I am an old man of sixty-one years, and I have engagements in my office that I am happy to discharge at this time. But when that time is over, then I will say goodbye to the missions, goodbye to all, all dead and buried in a small cell without ever speaking to anyone but the confessor.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

“In the Midst of My Storms” (Late-1754)

During the following months, Paul writes several letters of spiritual direction to Sister Cherubina, Thomas Fossi, and especially Sister Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi. Paul was suffering from illness ever since he tried to start a mission in Sabina (letter to Thomas Fossi, May 21, 1754). But he is also suffering from the pain of learning that religious are seeking to be dismissed from the Congregation (letter to Sister Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi, July 30, 1754). In spite of this there are beautiful spiritual and mystical messages in these letters. Perhaps in writing these passages he finds the strength to carry the crosses he is experiencing.

Between December 15 and 24 Paul writes three times to Sister Colomba. Among other things he begged her to pray “in these calamitous times for holy workers.” As this year of 1754 ended, Paul looks back upon six religious who had left the Congregation: Fathers Peter Giampolini of the Holy Wounds, Mariano Santini of Saint Lawrence, John Gelli of Saint Aloysius, Constance Bartolotti of Saint Gabriel, John Peter Poli of Saint Charles, and Confrater Henry Milanesi of Saint Stanislaus (1754 or 1755). The Congregation “was being pruned” and Paul prays.

920

Mother Mary Crucified Costantini (2)³¹⁹

San Angelo

September 3, 1754

Leaving on the 14.

J.C.P.

May Jesus always be your Way, your Truth, your Life. Amen.

I am answering your letter, received last night, and I am sorry that the betony³²⁰ has not reached you, for I sent it to Signore Carboni in Vetralla, who promised to send it at his first opportunity since he has correspondence with Signore Dominic, to whom I had entrusted it with your address on the wrapper.

I thank the Father of Mercies that you are improved in health, and you say well that the Lord seems to be playing games. That is what Scripture says: “Playing on the orb of the earth,” and then adds, “and my delights were to be with the children of men.” Oh, fortunate is that soul that in silence and faith allows these games of love from the Sovereign Good, living abandoned in his

319. This is the second preserved letter of Paul’s correspondence with Mother Mary Crucified. The first letter was dated August 10, 1741, thirteen years earlier.

320. A medicinal plant.

good pleasure, whether in health or sickness, in life as in death! Oh, a thousand times fortunate is the soul espoused to the Divine Will, married to that Sovereign Spouse, in naked suffering within and without, reposing on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, feeding herself in spirit and in truth on that Divine Manna of the Divine Will, relishing and taking complacency that in every event, no matter how bitter, the Will of God is fulfilled, for by looking with the eye of faith the greatest bitterness, storms, afflictions of spirit and body — I say looking with the eye of faith — become joys that gush from the bosom of holy Love, no longer bitter, but gentle and sweet.

Ponder these truths with mature reflection and let go of all fears. You have signs clearer than day that God loves you and the work is entirely his. Humble yourself in your horrible nothingness, but allow your nothing to disappear in the Infinite All that is God. Then lose yourself and take your repose by being always a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and truth.

You ask me to give you directions to serve His Divine Majesty well. You know how much has been given you over the many years I have been serving your soul. I am already leaving for missions, but I wish to add these, which will be a summary.

Mary Crucified ought to be always clothed as for a feast. How? Here is how. She should always be clothed interiorly with the pains of Jesus, crucified and dead to everything created and alive only in God. She ought to lose every earthly thought, even those of the troubles of her family, as she mentions in her letter, but ought to recommend the affairs to the blessed God, and then lose sight of all and continue to be in her mystical death to all that is not God. Prayer should be continual, night and day, while walking or standing still, in working or resting, and that prayer should be made in the deepest interior desert, in the deepest solitude, in loving interior repose in God, all absorbed and lost in that sea of Infinite Love.

You should never cease making a total holocaust of your self to the Sovereign Infinite Good. That sacrifice should be consumed in the fire of Divine Love, burning in that sacred bundle of myrrh which is made up of the most holy sufferings of Jesus Christ. All this is to be done with the doors closed, that is, with distance from all that is sensible, in pure and naked faith. In this sacred fire Mary Crucified ought to allow all her fears to be consumed, whether of losing herself or anything else, except for the peaceful fear that makes her be careful not to displease her Beloved God and to flee every occasion offending him.

Everything else must die and be consumed in the fire of love. The sign of that would be that were someone to put Mary Crucified under a press, he would not see anything remain except peace and love to the marrow of her bones.

Live then in Love and from holy Love, and remain in your nothing. Rob God of nothing; all that is you is nothing. Pray for me and for the Congregation, but do it from the heart, for my needs are not few. Pray for the fruit of the missions so that all will be converted, abandon sin and discord, and that there will be true peace in all.

I am leaving Saturday, the fourteenth of this month, and am going to Sabina, which is beyond postal service, so do not write to me. I have also informed the Retreats not to write to me. If the way were open for me to come by your place, I would do it gladly, but I am going toward the east and you are to the west. So you can see why I cannot come. Afterward, I have another journey, but who knows if I will be able to make my way on the horrible road to Corneto because I am old, sick, and weak? I will recommend the affair to the Lord. For the rest, I would not know what to do. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

921

Joseph Sisti (2)

San Angelo
September 14, 1754
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

With deep feeling of my poor spirit, I thank you and all the holy religious for the charitable deeds done for me, both with regard to the mission and others as well, especially for the prayers they are offering to His Divine Majesty for the fruits of the mission. But with my face in the dust I especially ask them to cry to God for me since I am so needy.

With regard to an extraordinary confessor, I need to tell you that until November they will not be able to serve. At that time I will offer Father Francis Anthony of the Crucified, who was the rector of this Retreat some years back and now is the rector of Presentation, coming back here for a change of air and, much more, to take up the office of secretary of the Congregation. He is a true servant of God, learned and of great prudence, and I hope all will go well. So before the season of Advent they will be taken care of since he will be coming at the beginning of November, around the eighth of that month. I am writing in haste for I am in the process of leaving. Enclosing you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with all those good religious, I affirm in haste and kiss your holy hands.

If they wish to be taken care of sooner than the time mentioned, it will be necessary that they seek another confessor; at this time I would not know how to give you anyone else.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Girolama Ercolani (30)

San Angelo

November 7, 1754

Leaving for Mount Argentario.

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I ask you not to attribute to bad manners my failure to reply to your letter because my business was so great that I did not have time to take care of it, and I was under pressure to leave for this Retreat quickly. Once I gave the blessing, I left without being able to come your way.

I hope that I will have the consolation to extend my gratitude in Jesus Christ on my return to Sabina, God willing, since I must first give a mission as soon as I get to Collevocchio and will have to pass through Civita and stay there one night. So, for the love of God, forgive me that I have not done so as yet, and do not attribute it to any want of true gratitude in Jesus Christ on my part. Meanwhile, I assure you that I have never forgotten to make you a sharer in my cold prayers and those of the entire Congregation, which admits its great obligations to you. With regard to what you tell me of your spirit, I see that things are going well; continue in that way with true peace of heart. You did well in not confessing that disgust that came to you because of the lateness of the curate since it is not matter for confession. In such situations humble yourself before God, and, full of trust in his divine care, continue in internal peace without ever giving in to scruples and inner turmoil.

Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you and all your pious household. Greet the canon. Enclosing all in the holy Side of Jesus, I sign myself once more in haste,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

The Rector of Toscanella³²¹

San Angelo

November 15, 1754

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I am happy that you wrote to Chiavari to maintain peace among the brothers, and, if you answer the other letter, you will do a deed pleasing to the Lord.

321. This letter is written to the rector of Our Lady of the Oak, who at this time was John Thomas of Saint Francis Xavier. The Father Joseph mentioned in this letter is Joseph Del Re of the Sorrows of Mary who was professed in 1747 and ordained in 1752. He was the first rector at Paliano and held many other offices, dying in 1781. Father Mariano is Mariano Santini of Saint Lawrence, professed in 1748, ordained in 1752, and left the Congregation in 1754.

The young men coming there at this time are three, it seems to me, while Father Joseph³²² is coming here to help in the house of studies, as I wrote you in my other letter. Have him rest a few days and let him grow strong with your accustomed charity, for if God gives him health, he will help the students much with his teaching.

In December three or four more young men will come and stay until May; then they will return to Presentation since in the coming year they will begin their studies, giving room for the students who are finishing up their philosophy in Ceccano, who will then come here for theology, and the others will come here for the study of philosophy.

I am sorry there is nothing at all left of that good cloth, and for that reason it cannot be sent to make a habit for Father Bernadine.³²³ Do the best you can for this year. Next year, please God, all the Retreats will be taken care of. The signs sent from Caesar have been sent to the Father Master, to the Father Rector, and to the other rector of Presentation.

I thank you much, as does Father John Baptist, for the good rosolio.³²⁴ We would have been there if the mission in Sutri was not beginning tomorrow, and perhaps in Bassano as well. Father Anthony³²⁵ will come there when these missions are over, and we will be there the third or fourth day after Christmas.

I would like to have the mission in Toscanella after Christmas to the spiritual advantage of that city. A certain friar claimed in the waiting room of a cardinal that we are not helping out in places where we have Retreats, and that a petition was taken from Toscanella to the Sacred Congregation against us for that reason. I do not know whether this is true. But, good God! have we not served them every time they asked? Can we go into another house without being invited?

Take counsel about this secretly with Canon Pagliaricci³²⁶ so he can take up the matter with the vicar general and arrange for the mission and a retreat for the clergy. This could begin the day after Christmas. How much I would offer myself for their good! What more do we have to do? Work with prudence. It will be soon enough to reply to me by December 8, or a bit sooner, because now I am on a mission which I will open tomorrow evening.

† Father Mariano writes me that he would like to go to the Presentation to recollect himself. I do not have the time to answer him, for I am overburdened. Tell him I cannot grant him that since the Retreat is more than filled and where he is there is need of priests. The place does not change the spirit, even if it is fervent. If in the Retreat he is in, he gives himself completely to the observance,

322. It is probable that this concerns Father Joseph Hyacinth Ruberi, who was employed many years in this work. There are letters directed to him.

323. This should be Father Bernadine Aguiara of Jesus, born in 1711 and died April 6, 1767. He passed almost all his life in the Retreat at Toscanella.

324. An elixir or liqueur.

325. Father Anthony Danei.

326. Canon Andrew Pagliaricci is provisional general vicar of Toscanella.

to true virtue, to compunction and contrition of heart, reflecting on the evil and ingratitude he has done God by abandoning the Congregation, and the high grace given him by the Lord to prevent his horrible ruin, he will be able to become a great servant of God where he is — just as well as in the Presentation — because the rules and exercises are the same. For the walls and the site make no one holy if the person does not work at sanctity by imitating the example set by the Son of God.

I would be happy if he were to confer often with you and open his heart faithfully. I assure him in the Name of Jesus Christ that if he does that, he will grow in virtue and enjoy true peace. Greet him for me and read him the paragraph from the † until here.

I greet especially Father Bernadine, and you are to fear nothing, for the blessed God will give you superabundant light to guide your family well. Pray much for us and have others pray. Meanwhile, I greet them also on the part of Father John Baptist and the others. I sign myself from the heart and embrace you in the Side of Jesus and am,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

924

John Baptist Dorascenzi³²⁷

San Angelo
November 15, 1754

J.C.P.

V. Reverend Father,

I thought that I would have the good fortune to speak with you and your uncle, but my sickness, especially of my nerves, are blocking that pleasure. So I am sending in my place for the Visitation of our Retreats Father Mark Aurelius of the Blessed Sacrament, second consultor of the Congregation, with his companion who is secretary of the Congregation. Both are men of great piety, prudence, and zeal, especially the first, who is also very learned.

These two will fulfill my part with you and your uncle and will attest to the truth of my servitude and gratitude in Jesus Christ, and at the very same time they will offer you the opportunity to exercise your usual great charity toward them. I would ask, if I am not being too bold, that they quickly take advantage of your charitable offer of giving them a rest so that they can go to the Retreat with Father Isidore, to whom I have written for the business I have, besides a mission to be given soon in a city near here. Meanwhile, the two religious will undertake my duties, and once they have taken account of the status of the Retreats, they can proceed to Anagni and join us there before nightfall.

327. Dorascenzi was provost of Paliano.

Finally, I ask the charity of your holy prayers, united with those of your pious uncle. With profound respect I end, kissing your sacred hands, and am in haste,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

925

A Rector of the Congregation ³²⁸
John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (2)

San Angelo
November 1754
Leaving for Sutri.
Will end the mission
on the Feast of Saint Andrew.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Already for so long a time I have been deprived of your letters. I am writing shortly after my arrival from the holy missions and am including a letter for the Father Provincial. If he is still in Fondi, send it to him safely. But oh, what great damage you have done to this retreat by your frequent absences! Oh, how many upsets have occurred! Perhaps because of the excessive zeal and little prudence of Father Sebastian! I know his good intentions, but that is not enough. The Retreat is confided to you and not to him. I adore the divine disposition in all things, and I have great hopes that all will turn out well. I am happy that you prepare with zeal for your holy missions, for you are called to do that, and that you would exercise your zeal from time to time in the neighborhood, but do one thing and do not neglect the other. Your absence should always be short, and the majority of the time you should be in the Retreat.³²⁹ This is an obligation in conscience; otherwise, you will little by little lose all spirit. You are young and have need of much recollection, and you have need of profound humility and distrust of yourself; otherwise, in doing good for others you place yourself in danger of losing yourself. Let us prepare ourselves a bit since after he preached, Christ our Lord fled to the mountain to pray, so did the apostles. And we? And we? I am in a hurry since I am going to Sutri for a mission, from which I was unable to dispense myself because of the strong insistence of the bishop and of the whole city, etc.

Since I am not a little indisposed, my old pains in my nerves have come back and I find it difficult to genuflect, so I cannot take the chance of greater

328. In the original letter there is no precise indication of the person, but the contents would seem to suggest it was written to John Mary Cioni.

329. Paul is quite insistent on the need of the superior remaining with the community instead of going out on missions: "The retreat is confided to you and not to him" (the vicar, Father Sebastian Giampaoli, whom we met earlier in the letter of February 8, 1754). Because of problems in the southern province and at Terracina, Paul is sending the consultor, Father Mark Aurelius, to make the Visitation there.

ills by going on the road in this part of winter. Therefore, I have appointed the consultor, Father Mark Aurelius, with full powers as visitor. He will leave in a few days, and, when he gets to the first Retreat, he will send a circular letter for the Visitation. So you must not be absent from the Retreat, especially during Advent, for I do not want that. Wait for the visitor. I hope he will be there around the middle of December, etc. Let them open their hearts with him, etc. I am in a hurry. I am writing to the Father Provincial in the letter inclosed here, and I am asking him to adjust the differences, etc., with Fatigati. I am asking him, and you as well, to quickly adjust everything, and the Father Provincial is to wait there for the Father Visitor, etc. Greet everyone for me and pray for us. I embrace you in Christ and sign myself from the heart,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

926

Signore Nicholas Coppelli³³⁰

San Angelo
December 12, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Oh, how much I rejoice in the Lord over the improvement of our dear and esteemed Signore Andrew, your worthy brother! I confess that I had not a little apprehension, although I trusted in the divine mercy that he would be restored to health for the greater glory of the Lord. To that end our poor prayers were offered to His Divine Majesty, and will be continued, so that God may grant him complete health for his spiritual and temporal advantage and that of all your revered household.

I ask you to greet him warmly in Jesus Christ, and that he should be completely recollected on his sick bed as on the cross of the dear Savior, sighing often with sweet and peaceful affections to the sacred Wounds, protesting that he more and more wishes to use the rest of his life, which the Lord will grant him, in holiness and justice before him. I extend Christmas wishes every night of the novena, which we will celebrate solemnly, and I will place my dear Signore Nicholas and Signore Andrew at the feet of our sacramental Jesus, along with all their household, so that His Divine Majesty may enrich them with all happiness and spiritual and temporal riches, which they share in favor of the poor of Jesus Christ, and with so much love do so for us.

I do not know how to explain the gratitude which I and all of us profess to you. But the Lord will make up for what we poor ones lack. I am writing in haste, loaded down with tasks and letters. On the day after Christmas I am leaving for Mount Argentario. I may be passing through Toscanella to look at the Retreat and to establish the foundation, if God so wills. Please give my

330. Coppelli was from Bassano, where Paul has just concluded a mission.

cordial greetings to the archpriest, to your wife, and all in the house. Enclosing you all in the pure Heart of Jesus, I end and declare myself again with devout, profound respect and esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

927

Thomas Fossi (65)

San Angelo
December 15, 1754

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

After three months away from this Retreat, I arrived here the day before yesterday after having preached missions in various places. In the pack of letters I read three of yours, to which I am replying as best I can as I steal time from so many duties.

You give me news of a variety of things. But if I wished to reply to them one by one, I would go on too long. I will say in substance and summary what I could say in many pages. You are filled with holy desires and pious resolutions. Very good. But the point is that everything should make you dead in the Divine Will, eager to do what the Lord wants, when he wants, keeping plans for the future in a corner of your heart so they do not replace the desires and resolutions that are necessary for your present state of life. If God were to want anything else of you and your children, he would make that known with great lights, even with miracles if that would be necessary to know his Holy Will clearly.

So you should forget these ideas of convents and missions to be preached by me on the island, for these cannot be accomplished. I will not be able to come there. I am a sick old man, and I have all the missions I desire. Now I have two immense dioceses to take care of and that will be enough for years. I will not finish before I die, which, I believe, is not far off. So, my dear Thomas, let all your effort and all your desires be to please God and do his will in that state in which you are, and that is the right upbringing of your family, remaining humble, peaceable with all, especially with your domestic servants, being detached in spirit from everything while managing your business and domestic affairs, which you are bound to do for the good of your family, doing everything with a pure intention and in a recollected spirit but with attention to your business at the same time.

With regard to pilgrimage, I could never approve that, for your present status does not permit that. Visit the holy places in spirit and often, when you are able, the Holy of Holies, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

You will never be able to succeed in having a Retreat, not even a mission on the island, for God does not want that from me. May God will that I can bring the Retreats that I have in hand to be more secure and flourishing before I die.

In regard to penances, be discreet. You are married and have a family. The small amount I am allowing you seems enough to me. Accept day by day the penances that the blessed God sends you.

Do not desire suffering, but accept what God sends with holy indifference and abandonment in God.

Regarding conjugal continence, you know I have always wanted you to remain in mutual freedom. For certain solemnities, as you say, for Advent, etc., and by mutual consent, that is good and in accord with the counsel of the Apostle.

For three months I have been at work and I find myself loaded with letters. My head can stand it no more. It remains for me to say that you should not be quick to have conferences with silly women who are easily deceived. Nor should you pay attention to what your small son has to say. Have him make nothing of these fantastic things he seems to see or hear and have him drive them away. Watch him carefully.

Jesus will assist you and your house will never fail because it is under the protection of the Most High, especially of his holy Passion, and they should never neglect meditating on that. I will offer you Christmas wishes from the holy altar and place all your house in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Let all recommend me to the Lord in their good prayers, for I am in extreme need. God reward you more and more for the holy donations you send to the Congregation. You did well to send the wine to Presentation since here we have no need. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with your wife, your sons, and daughters. I am from a good heart in haste and praying every blessing from the Lord.

I will be at the Presentation on January 20 or 25, but only for a short time.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

928

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (14)

San Angelo

December 15, 1754

J.C.P.

May Jesus be always in your heart.

After about three months of absence from this Retreat for missions, I returned the day before yesterday and did not want to omit making a visit in Jesus Christ to your spirit with my poor letter. Since I want to hope that the affairs of your soul are always going better and that you continue to remain in true solitude and poverty of spirit, entirely hidden in Jesus Crucified, so I have full faith that your charity did not forget my needy soul and our Congregation, which I have asked for so repeatedly because my needs are always greater. I must also ask you to make fervent prayers for a woman who has been sick a long time and is in great danger of losing her life. The pious lady has offered to establish a Retreat for us, but, if she dies, her plans are gone. So you can see what glory to God there could be in such a project. So at this time let us all give

ourselves the task of imploring the Lord, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy and Saint Joseph, for the grace of health for this lady. So pray continually and cry out after Holy Communion. I am in a hurry. I will send you Christmas greetings from the holy altar. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

929

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (15)

San Angelo
December 21, 1754

J.C.P. Jesus

Although from the retreat that God had me conduct at your convent, the Divine Mercy had me understand that there has been a notable change in your spirit, and then from the holy conferences I had with you and from the information given me in your letters, I have known the flight that the Divine Goodness has accomplished in your soul; nevertheless, in your last letter received last night, I recognize that your interior operations are purer and more naked since they are free of what is sensible, and now you are a true adorer of the Most High in spirit and in truth. Oh, what a great grace this is! Oh, what an inestimable treasure! Continue to stay in deep poverty and nakedness of spirit, in a profound interior solitude, despoiled of all sensible enjoyment, even being in pain without looking at the pain because the pain is purely spiritual and produced from pure love in God. Oh, how much I want to say! but I do not know how nor can I explain myself. O divine solitude, rich in every good! O Sister Colomba, make much of always being in this holy remote desert in which the soul loses all in God, is forgetful of everything created, is raised up by love beyond the temporal into the Eternal Good, is pastured, without knowing how, with love, with the purest love for God, joined and united through love to the Divine Word, Christ Jesus, who leads the soul to where he is, that is, in the bosom of the Father, and there in that depth of love where nothing of time can come, but all consists of the Highest, Uncreated Love. Oh, what great truths I am uttering! But they are not mine. They belong to the Lord and they belong to the Divine Spirit, who has taught them to his servants.

I am sending Christmas blessings every night of the holy novena. Do you know where I place you? In the pure Heart of the Divine Word, Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, so that hidden in him, you may remain united with him where he himself is, as I stated above. This divine work takes place in the inner center in solitude, in that sacred desert that is so far away from me. Be humble, bury yourself in your nothingness, never lose sight of the knowledge of your horrible nothingness, but when His Divine Majesty makes it disappear in the Infinite All that he himself is, establish yourself there, lose yourself, and, if you no longer know who you are, that is not important.

Follow the divine inspirations. The less you understand and the more ignorant you are in this school, the more learned you become, since we know that neither you nor any creature can know even the slightest bit of the grandeur

of the Sovereign Good and the divine impression that he causes in humble hearts because they are his delight.

In the coming Holy Night I will give you a share in the Solemn Mass I will celebrate, and I will cry out to the Lord to make you a great saint but with the secret holiness of the Cross. I would want you to be more childlike; otherwise, you will not be pleasing to your Infant Spouse. Be a true victim, sacrificed forever in the fire of the divine love for the Sovereign Good, but be an infant victim so that the sacrifice be burnt up the quicker in that holy flame.

Pray much for me, for I am so needy; pray to the divine Infant, pray to the divine Mother and Saint Joseph, and cry out for the poor Congregation that His Divine Majesty provide holy workers in these very calamitous times.

I will pass through Toscanella after Christmas. I will leave on Sunday if the weather is good, so I will not be coming to see you. I will come when God wills. On Friday, the Feast of Saint John, arrange for me to receive a letter from you at Cerro, and I will read it with pleasure. Tell me the effects of this poor letter of mine. I need to go to Tuscany to visit a Retreat. I ask you to recommend this affair and give me your opinion with simplicity in the Lord. Jesus bless you. Amen. If you please, greet Mother Abbess and pray for me. I am in a hurry

Your useless, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

930

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (16)

San Angelo
December 24, 1754

J.C.P. / Jesus

The best and most perfect way to celebrate the holy Feast of Christmas is with despoilment of every sensible pleasure, so that all your contentment is in the fulfillment of the Divine Good Pleasure. All the life of Jesus was the cross. Jesus revealed to Saint Catherine of Bologna that even as an infant in the purest womb of his divine Mother, he assumed his position on the cross and especially on Friday suffered the pains of the cross. I do not know if I read that or heard it, etc. Now enough. It is a thing that can be piously believed.

So you have reason to be happier than before since you are more hidden in Jesus Christ on the cross of naked suffering, and, believe me, never have things gone so well for you. Feed yourself on the Divine Will in deep poverty of spirit and in naked solitude, and be assured that in this way you will be in your interior a living portrait of your Divine Spouse.

I am leaving the day after Christmas for Mount Argentario. I hope on my return to pay you a visit in Jesus Christ. On this coming Holy Night I will share with you the solemn celebration of the Divine Mysteries. You do the same by recommending me to the Lord and pray long for my urgent concerns and those

of the Congregation. I am in a hurry and enclose you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

931

Lucy Costantini (3)³³¹

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I learn from your courteous letter that the nuns there do not want the retreat until the first Saturday in Lent. They truly are not using good judgment. Seeing they are aware of the obligation we have to conduct the missions in the lower salt marshes at that time, they should have compassion on that poor and most needy people. Nonetheless, because of the heavy obligations that I and the whole Congregation owe in Jesus Christ to our beloved Signore Dominic, to you, and to your entire household, I will make every effort to have the Father who is to give service to the nuns be there on the first day of Lent so that he can end the retreat on March 12, and he will be able to be back with the others in time for the missions. This is the most that I can do out of concern for the gentlemen because of the great obligations we have in Jesus Christ.

I will do what is possible to be there for a single day, since I cannot do more because of my heavy assignments. It may be I who will have the retreat for the nuns. In case I leave early to be quickly at The Oak, I will have the good fortune to pay them my respects. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with the canon, and asking you to give my greetings in the Lord to Signore Dominic, I declare myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

331. This letter is duplicated by mistake. See letter #831.

“All My Tasks And Journeys” (1755)

Paul began the year 1755 at the Presentation on canonical Visitation. On his way to Tuscany and the Retreat of The Oak, he has a difficult journey in terribly cold weather. His first letter is to Father John Mary Cioni in Terracina on January 8. He is happy to hear the news from Lazio. Above all he is happy to learn that three clerics will be ordained during this coming Lent. He mentions that there is a great need for priests, especially to open the Retreat at Paliano. There is the possibility of receiving another Retreat near Grosseto in Tuscany and one is being negotiated in Florence. This would be a year of many tasks and journeys for Paul, ending with the Retreat at Paliano, formally opened on November 23.

With the above words Paul describes himself in a letter to Sister Cherubina, dated May 21, 1755. He was forced to interrupt the missions and to take the baths and rest up. Interestingly, while he was so weak he continued to write even though he said that writing had become painful for him (letter to Sister Cherubina above and to Fossi on May 24). He covers several important matters in his letters, also finding time to encourage Girolama Ercolani in her scruples. The death of Father Fulgentius on April 16 called for the assignment of a novice master and a rector at Mount Argentario. Paul needed time to mourn the loss of this holy religious and loyal friend.

Paul gave several missions during the fall, together with retreats to sisters in various convents. Writing to Sister Cherubina Bresciani on December 4, he remarks that he arrived “yesterday at 20 hours after about three months of labors.”

The year 1755 ended with Paul celebrating Christmas at San Angelo, then on his way, leaving probably on December 27 for the mission at Manziana, which closed on January 11, 1756.

932

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (3)

Presentation
January 8, 1755

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I rejoiced much in reading the consolation you had in celebrating Christmas with our good fathers-to-be and, in addition, over the news you gave me of the donations given to Terracina through the charitable intervention of the bishop. Blessed be God, who has not taken his mercies away from us.

I trust that the Father Consultor will have received the dimissorials for the three ordinands from here, namely, Confraters Dominic, Charles, and John

Baptist. I want them ordained during Lent since we have such a great need of priests, even for Paliano. I forgot to tell the Father Provincial to have the bishop ordain them to minor orders on a feast before Lent so that they could receive major orders on *Sitientes*.³³² I am asking you to see to it that they prepare themselves well by study and practicing the ceremonies with great exactness.

I was in Tuscany to visit a fine Retreat about forty miles from here. I found it in healthful air, able to house fourteen religious with a cell for each one, and in perfect solitude, better than this place from which I write. It was abandoned by certain religious about two years ago when the bishop sent them, etc., in order to... Now there are negotiations for Florence and we are hoping for a good outcome. Let us recommend the affairs to God. There is a great harvest for us in a place nearly abandoned, and they stand with hands raised high to God to see the foundation.

Prepare yourself more and more for the holy missions, especially with deep recollection and the exercise of every virtue because, I believe, the rich harvest depends on that.

Greet everyone for me. I am writing in haste, laden with letters and business. Write me in Toscanella, Retreat of The Oak, for I am leaving here on the sixteenth of this month. Pray for us. From the heart I embrace you in Christ, along with all the community. Goodbye.

Since the Father Visitor writes me that he is going with the Father Provincial to give the missions in Piperno, I have sent a letter to that city, addressed to the archpriest of the cathedral. In case things are otherwise, let them use care to recover it.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

933

Thomas Fossi (66)

Presentation
January 11, 1755
Leaving on the fourteenth.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

When I arrived at this Retreat to make the Visitation, I heard from our religious about the charitable treatment they received at your hands when they were over there. They also gave me the gift of tobacco. That will be for the Father Professor in philosophy. Since his sense of smell is poor, it will help him. That does not follow for me because of my illness, accompanied by a nosebleed. I must take it easy with tobacco. So I place everything in the fire of Divine Love so that your holy donations may ascend in the Divine Presence as a sweet-smelling incense and for your eternal and temporal reward.

332. Opening word of the Mass for Lenten Saturday.

Now, I will tell you a few things that will be of great spiritual advantage if you will practice them faithfully.

The spirit of the servants of the Most High has always been to be discreetly rigorous with themselves but completely charitable and gentle with their neighbors.

You know that I have always tried to give you principles of the spirit which are most conformable to your state in life, especially of being exact in fulfilling the obligations of a married man but giving attention to the successful outcome of your temporal interests with the pure intention of pleasing God and the honest upkeep of your family in accord with the state in which His Divine Majesty has placed you.

One of the principal obligations is to remain in complete peace with the companion God has given you. You can have no reason to doubt that. Second, in a special way you need be careful to provide a holy upbringing for your children, both boys and girls, by seeking to impress upon them a devotion that is solid, stable, persevering with the interior eye. Be careful to guide them in the path that the Lord wishes, and you can know that from the way of acting and external inclinations.

I will explain myself with an example. The father of a family is a spiritual man who gives himself to prayer, the practice of the holy virtues, and so on. This father would like all his children to be holy quickly; if they are male, he would like them to be monks; and if they are female, nuns; and he is saddened if he does not see in them inclinations toward such vocations. That father is not acting correctly and is imprudent. He saddens and angers his sons or daughters for they do not sense such a calling. He causes them to lose love for devotion. So what ought he do? He ought to guide them gently and be happy, even thank God much, if they go to confession and go to Communion every week, if they make a half-hour mental prayer in the morning, a quarter of an hour or a half-hour in the evening, if they employ themselves in the household tasks if they are female, and keep themselves in retirement, yes. But he should see to it that they have place and time for recreation, and he can give that care over to the mother. As for the boys, he should have them study or engage in other duties in accord with their state and not let them mix with a loose crowd; and be very careful about this. But he must take them with him, or assign them to some servant of God, so that they can enjoy some legitimate recreation.

But when it comes to a choice of a state of life, he must leave them in complete liberty, for vocations ought to come from God. If they are not called to religious life, the divine dispositions are to be adored. Who knows whether the young woman, if she were to become a nun, would not live in the convent like a criminal on a galley? Oh, how much experience I have had in this and the ruin it causes in convents when young women enter out of human respect to follow their parents' wishes. They live a desperate life with clear danger of eternal damnation! On the contrary, if such a one is not called to religious life and marries, granting a good upbringing at home, she will be a holy married woman and will raise a holy family. I say the same of the boys. Let us leave the

care of everything to God and attend to our duties, and we may be sure that all will turn out well.

My dear Thomas, I have put this example under your eyes, and, if you put it into practice, hold it as certain that all will turn out well. Take Saint Philip, for example, who wanted his followers to come with hunger to prayer, catechisms, and exhortations. People with the gift of prayer are rare. Too lengthy prayer bores them. On the contrary, by making a half-hour prayer or listening to a quarter-hour spiritual exhortation, they take in such an exercise with zest and have a strong desire to come back soon. They keep their hearts recollected; otherwise, they are angered, they distract themselves, become bored, lose their love for piety and devotion, and judge it to be too hard a thing. Take advantage of this example.

You must be more and more attentive to preserving holy recollection because God has given you that gift. See that the virtues of Jesus Christ shine forth in all your aspects, in your dress as well as in your actions with your neighbor. Be charitable with all, brief in speaking. Never get into discussions of moral or spiritual topics with ecclesiastics; but in their presence listen with respect, ask your questions with reverence, and never contradict them or enter into dispute with them, for this would not be the spirit of humility, but the contrary. "In the presence of the elders put your hand over your mouth." So says the Holy Spirit.

If you know that among your neighbors there are people who fail and there are sins, pray to God for them and leave the care to pastors, bishops, and superiors to remedy, as I told you in my other letters. Take care of yourself and your pious family. Be very distant with silly women; you know how much I have said about this. I know you put it into practice but continue to do so faithfully.

I have written at some length since I do not know when I will be able to write with all my tasks and the journeys for the service of God. I have done so because I desire you to be a great saint, as I hope. Greet your pious wife warmly for me, all your children, and especially your uncle. I enclose all of you in the pure Side of Jesus, where I look upon you in my cold prayers. Let them recommend me much to the Lord for my needs are extreme. Jesus bless all of you, and I am from a true heart,

I understand that your youngster, who is wearing our habit unwillingly, is very unhappy with it. So do not have him wear it, but let him dress like a cleric, as he wishes. Otherwise, it is a mistake if it does not suit him. From the heart I sign myself,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (17)

Toscanella
January 25, 1755

J.C.P.

I am using this note to answer your letter, which is all paradoxes as are the rest; but I sympathize since in some cases the only way to express oneself is in paradoxes.

My answer is that you need to keep yourself in silence and hope in this precious agony in which your spirit finds itself. Let no other lamentation come forth except the gentle cry of love and resignation: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." But you must utter it at the depth of your spirit in God. In this way, when it shall please the great Father, he will end your agony and you will die that mystical death more precious than life and rise again in Christ Jesus to a new godlike life of purest love. Do you understand me? Silence, resignation, abandonment with complete resignation on the bosom of the Heavenly Father. Let him do his work. Oh, how much I would like to say! But neither tongue nor pen knows how, nor is it capable of being expressed. You are in a better condition than before; be hidden from all creatures, secret, dead to all. Pray much for me, for my needs are great. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (59)

Toscanella
January 26, 1755

Dearly Beloved Father,

Last night I received your welcome letter and at the same time I received two other letters, one from Signora Maria Johanna, the other from Don Vincent, who write with great concern and insistence that you do not change your place of staying. The pious lady says that as long as she lives she wants the consolation to serve the Congregation.

The words were so pious and beseeching that they cannot be contradicted. Therefore, I wrote them a note of thanks in the Lord. In the next post I will write her, for there is no time now since the post is leaving. I am writing this in great haste. Brother Dominic is bringing a box in which he thinks there is the form or model of the *Ecce Homo*, since we found nothing else here. In Siena I had no knowledge of it at all. I hope you will be able to help yourself in some other way. I have no time to say more, except that only with a miraculous grace did I arrive here, and God knows my condition. Pray for us. You should take great care in this severe cold that is breaking all records. Tell Signora Maria Johanna in your note that I will write her in the next post since I do not have time now, for he is leaving. From the heart I am,

Your affectionate servant,

P. of the †

The elixir has been received and may the Lord reward you. In the next post I will give you news, etc., lay brothers, etc. I am enclosing the letters; take account that I will reply on Saturday. I will remember to do all on my part.

936

Maria Johanna Venturi Grazi (4)

Toscanello

January 28, 1755

J.C.P.

Illustrious Lady,

In your letter I read with complete edification the charitable thoughts of your pious heart. They make me understand better the mercies which the Highest Giver of every good imparts to your spirit with the gentle impression of charity toward the poor, especially toward our poor Congregation, and especially to the poor one who is writing since I am blessed more than all by your overflowing kindness. So I cannot, nor ought I, deny the fulfillment of your holy desires to continue on occasions to give lodging in the old hospice of your home to my ungrateful person and others of our good religious as you have done up until now.

With complete confidence that just as our good God does not let a cup of cold water given to a poor one out of love for him go without its reward, much more will he reward with his plenteous graces and blessings the heartfelt charity that your kindness has always given and will continue to give to our poor religious by making you a great saint, as I strongly hope and pray in the Lord.

Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life, will bring to completion the work of perfection he has begun, as I will ask for you in my cold prayers. Would you please continue to include me in your deepest prayers to the Most High? Meanwhile, I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus and end, affirming once more my profound respect.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I received in the ordinary post the pious letter you sent on the sixteenth of this month. I adore with my face in the dust the holy divine judgments in the deaths of your good religious, as you informed me in your letter.

Holy charity made me keenly feel your pain, and I will not fail to pray, and have our religious pray, to the Lord so that His Divine Majesty will comfort you by having this merciful punishment cease. I have strong faith in the great Father of Mercies that he will turn this event to your great spiritual advantage. So, I pray you and all your good religious to find consolation by union of their spirits with the always adorable Divine Will that can will only the greatest good.

Let them look with eyes of faith on this loss of their companions; let them see this in the Divine Good Pleasure; and let them kiss with holy love the merciful hand that has struck them for their great good. In this way they will give great glory to Gods and their hearts will be strengthened in Christ Jesus our lovable Savior.

You bring up a very important point to me in your letter when you say you want to hear from me if God, through this loving punishment of the deaths of so many religious, is asking for greater perfection from this convent.

I do not dare to enter that far into the holy, fearful divine judgments, nor do I deserve to have such light. I will give you my poor opinion, as His Divine Majesty inspires me. It is certain that when the Most High makes his Presence felt in a religious house with such a clear punishment, it is a sign that he is doing it as a loving father and wishes to revive us from tepidity so that with great fervor of spirit they work toward the high perfection to which his infinite goodness has called us.

Years ago, as you know, I was at your convent to conduct the retreat, and I served as extraordinary confessor. I left the convent in great fervor and left very edified. I want to hope that they persevered, but...

Now, listen, Reverend Mother, let us come to the point. Divine Providence, through the death of these religious, has disposed that they be reformed a bit. This is a stroke of love and in my opinion His Divine Majesty wishes that they undertake a perfectly common life. Even while I was there it seemed to me it could be improved somewhat. The common life is the foundation stone of religious perfection for reasons I will pass over for the sake of brevity. If there

333. Paul is at Toscanella, writing to the superior of the Poor Clares convent at Gallese where he had given a retreat in 1747. It is interesting to notice once again how, after a retreat or mission, there would be someone who would write to him for spiritual guidance. This time the superior has written about the six sisters who have died recently. Paul writes a long letter on the need to find the Will of God in such events. As he tries "to see this in the Divine Good Pleasure," he must have been thinking about his own Community, who had lost six religious the past year.

is common life, the observance of the holy vows and the rules will flourish, especially poverty, silence, prayer, and, in a word, this convent will become a great sanctuary, a garden of delights for the Heavenly Spouse, Jesus Christ. If they act thus, the blessed God will provide good, fervent young women, and they will have more than they want, for observance will shine forth and the fame of their holiness will have many pure, holy, virginal doves fly to this convent. You should be the promoter of this great work. Consult the bishop, your zealous pastor and father and true servant of God. He will lend his hand and not spare any effort so that this holy work may be accomplished. If you want to show the bishop my letter, please do so. I leave you free. That zealous prelate will correct its mistakes if there are any, for there will be many since from me can come only a rottenness of vices; if there be anything good, it comes from God.

It would be expedient that you engage with the assent of the bishop some learned and holy missionary to give a retreat, and he ought to be a man of prayer and great prudence. That would be a wonderful way to start the effort to a good end. Without departing in any way from their Rule, he could lead this convent to perfect observance of their Rules and then would be known the high ends for which our most lovable God permitted the deaths, and for this they could sing his mercies forever.

So take your consolation in Jesus Christ and summon the courage of your good daughters, and, if the sickness continues, bring the entire community together in choir and sing with great faith and devotion the *Pange lingua gloriosi* with the prayer to the Blessed Sacrament, and let them recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the prayer *Concede nos*, etc. Then dip a bit of cotton into the lamp before the Blessed Sacrament and make the sign of the cross on the forehead of each one, both the sick and the well, invoking the Names of Jesus and Mary Most Holy with great faith, and have great hope. Let them recommend me to the Lord in their prayers. Meanwhile, I enclose all of you in the holy Side of Jesus, and as I end I affirm I am with great respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Bartholomew Calderoni of Saint Aloysius (1)³³⁴

Toscanella

January 30, 1755

Dearly Beloved Brother Bartholomew,

I have received the precious elixir, very helpful for Father John Baptist as well. I pray Jesus to reward the charity with which you acted with the permission of the Father Superior. If at Easter, when Father Marcellino³³⁵ comes, you would send me another small amount so that I could take it with me on the mission, I would rejoice in Jesus Christ. I am happy that you have a strong desire to remain in your nothing, but you want to know how that is done? Now I will tell you.

One who remains in his nothingness in unfeigned truth is like a tree planted near the water which gives its fruit continually. I will explain myself. God is truth by essence, and, when he sees a soul in its proper nothingness, that gives the glory of everything to His Divine Majesty and never robs anything by attributing it to himself. Here is where you find a soul that always is in the truth and not in lies. That man takes the truth into himself and in that way, with the water of his triumphant grace, he waters himself always and becomes like a fruitful tree that even in winter, that is, the winter of desolation and interior and exterior pains, as well as in spring, summer, and autumn of consolations, always bears fruit, fruits of mortification and penance, fruits of every virtue. Such a soul, clothed with Jesus Christ and penetrated with his pains, which love impresses upon him, is always in the bosom of God in the inner kingdom. Have this truth taught you by the Father Master,³³⁶ for he will explain it with the holy light of the Holy Spirit. Pray for me, as I ask copious blessings upon you.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

334. Born in 1732 in Orbetello and professed on December 21, 1751, Bartholomew Calderoni lived at San Angelo and Rome with Father Paul and became his infirmarian. He was twenty-three when he received this first letter from Paul. Altogether, nine letters have been preserved. He testified at the Processes and died in Rome on February 11, 1796.

335. Father Marcelliano Marcelliani of Saint Lawrence was born in 1720 and died October 1764.

336. Father Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus.

Thomas Fossi (67)

Toscanello
 Retreat of the Oak
 February 2, 1755³³⁷
 Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your letter, forwarded to me from Mount Argentario. I rejoice in the Lord that you and all your family, as you tell me, continue in their spiritual journey.

With regard to my coming to the island, you are mistaken, for I cannot in conscience distance myself from the Congregation. It would need a miracle, I will say that, to have me come there. Keep to your freedom if you wish to enroll your sons in the companies or the congregations that you mention. It is up to you to do it or not if you know it will be of greater spiritual profit and concentration.

As for the rest, I repeat what I wrote another time. With regard to mental prayer for your sons and daughters, it is good to proceed with discretion so as not to cause them disgust. Half an hour is enough for the girls; for the boys a quarter of an hour. They are young. If they become fervent, they will prolong the prayer themselves.

You have not said anything about your boy who is wearing the habit of the Congregation so unwillingly. He is wearing it as a torture out of fear of you. You already know that I wrote you that you should have him clothed as a cleric, as he desires.

Continue to be recollected, abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure in all events, and do not lose sight of the affairs of your household and family. Be prudent, gentle, and do not use too great severity with your sons, but give grace a chance. I have already given you good advice in my other letter so as to maintaining peace, calm, and union among the servants, etc. I am in a hurry. Let them pray much for me, as I do for them. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all your household, and protest from the heart,

Your obligated servant,

I received in the ordinary post your second letter, and as I have not a little to take care of, I had begun to write after Matins, that is, after midnight. So I will tell you briefly that it does not seem good to me that the youngster sleeps with his aunt, although she is a maiden woman of forty years. Holy modesty demands that, so as to avoid every shadow of danger.

337. This letter is dated 1748, but internal evidence indicates 1755. In the early part of 1748 Paul was writing from Ceccano. The aunt mentioned in this letter is also referred to in other letters of 1755. The children, at least the only ones mentioned by Paul in other letters (Teresa, Michael and Paulinus), would have been much too young in 1748 to receive instructions on prayer. With reference to Fossi's son wearing the habit unwillingly, in a letter of November 9, 1953, Paul mentions that "Brother Bartholomew will send the habits for your sons."

If he is fearful, he can sleep on a cot in the same room, while the aunt should have great care in dressing and undressing, etc. With regard to scruples from your past life, get rid of them and spurn them constantly. With regard to doubts and scruples in current affairs, you should consult a learned confessor there so as not to act with fear of conscience. Reading what you tell me about the boat, I am no expert in the law of the land. Consult someone who is. In that way you will have peace. I am in a hurry, and God knows my condition. With regard to schools for your son, use your own judgment.

Soon I will be leaving for the retreat to the nuns, then the missions, and a return to the Retreat in July.

Pray for me, and I am always more,

Your servant,

P. D. †

940

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (18)

Toscanello

February 3, 1755

J.C.P. / Jesus

In reply to the letter which I just received from you, I say that if you were to speak in the terms you use in regard to your soul with some great doctor, I am sure you would give him reason to philosophize and hesitate. However, since I am the miserable one I am, and in view of the experience that God has given me, I proceed with care in order to catch your meaning, all the more so because you write badly and misspell by omitting letters. So please listen.

There is nothing false, nor could there be, in your present prayer. The effects it is producing are proofs of that. Your spirit has never been in a state so good and secure, walking the way you do now. Your present state calls for constant fidelity to the Highest Good; and although such fidelity is required always, now it must be more sublime than before. But how will you ever be faithful, you who have such experience of being vicious, full of passions, and a most miserable creature?

I will tell you how. You must flee from yourself as from the plague beyond time and hide yourself in the bosom of the great Heavenly Father outside of time in eternity. Since there is no time in God, all is eternal. Such a hiding must be done in Jesus Christ our Lord. For when hidden in Jesus Christ, you cannot be elsewhere than where he is, that is, in the bosom of the Father. "The Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father." I am speaking the language of holy faith. Such a divine hiding the Most High will have you perform, and he will teach you that in a way beyond words, provided you remain in your nothingness in a passive way. Oh, if you only could understand well what God has had me write!

The filial fear you mention to me is very good. If that were not present, things would not be going well. It is certain that divine operations take place in the essence of the soul, or to better explain myself, that super-heavenly work that the Father of Lights does in the center, the depth, or inner closet of the soul,

is experienced without any sensible experience, nor does it fall under sensibility, but is incapable of understanding or explanation; and it would not be an operation of God if it could be comprehended or explained. It is true that no good angel and no evil angel can penetrate there: God and the soul, the soul and God.

“O night, obscure night, night more lovable than day, night that can unite the Beloved and his beloved, where the one loved is transformed into the Lover.” So sang a great saint.³³⁸

Above all, I rejoice in Jesus Christ in reading of your total abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure, which spreads itself like a balm over your spirit. This is a great presage of the high riches being worked by the great Father of mercies in the prayer you describe. I end by asking you to be very faithful. How? See here: In all your operations, day and night, flee from yourself as from a horrible nothing, as from the plague, and lose yourself entirely in God. There take your repose, there love and obey the attractions and impressions of the Holy Spirit by hiding yourself more and more within the interior desert, there beyond time and in eternity, in God, in who there is no time, but all is eternal, as I said above. There, love, be silent, be silent, I say, and love. Love will teach you everything. Remain all penetrated in faith and love of the pains of Jesus, which are the work of love, and you will be taught the science of the saints in that holy ignorance in which the soul, because of the stupendous, admirable divine operations, finds itself without understanding in prayer.

I would like you to keep my letters, not the confessor. I am glad that he reads them, but I wish him to return them to you.

The instructions I am giving you for your conduct would be a mistake to use for one not walking in this way. It is necessary to give to each one the food their stomach will take. God is the Sovereign Lord and guides souls with an admirable Providence as it pleases him, and all serve to his glory. Sister Colomba, be faithful, remain in your nothing and let your horrible nothing disappear in the infinite all. Our center, our repose, is God; the place of our prayer is God. The psalms and all other prayers, especially the Lord's Prayer, should be recited in God, in the Spirit of God.

Oh, the wonderful things I have written you! They are not mine; they belong to the Great Father of Mercies.

In this sacred profound solitude, in that sacred interior desert, speak a few good words, but without speaking, to the Highest Good for poor me and for all the Congregation. Believe me, in this holy closet one cries out more with love, with a silence of faith and love, than with words. I cannot explain myself further. Jesus make you as humble and as holy as I desire and bless you.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

338. Saint John of the Cross.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Vincent,

Oh, if you only believed the instructions that I have given in the Name of the Lord with regard to your spirit in our holy conferences. Oh, what joy and profit you would gain!

I am telling you, and tell you again, that the evils that God permits, united with the sufferings and agonies of spirit, joined to the assaults of the infernal enemy, are proofs which the ever adorable Divine Providence uses to purify your soul as gold in the furnace. "God proves his elect as gold in the furnace." Take note of the word "proves." And then? Then, "as a holocaust he accepts them." Oh, treasure! Oh, grace! Ah, "Why do you doubt, you of little faith?" Your great pain is that you do not taste the divine operations, for they are all hidden in the deepest level of your spirit where the theological virtues function without our sensible parts taking account of them, not even a glimmer.

Dear Father Vincent, often say: "Even if he kills me, I will hope in him." Arm yourself with great hope, and let go of those wild ideas you have in your letter that God is not dealing with you as a Father, but as a Judge, and that you are, or fear to be, a victim because, etc. Oh, God! Enough! I sympathize with you, for I know by experience what it is when a soul finds itself in the furnace of trials and sufferings; such mistaken ideas come from the working of the lower part, which finds itself in terrible abandon and seems to be in the lowest hell. You could not be in a richer state; I tell you that in the Lord. This storm will pass away, and there will come a calm which will have you exulting in the Living God. Continue to celebrate Mass, win out through holy obedience, and, when you experience greater suffering, go to the Father Rector so that he may bless you and give you a command of holy obedience. Oh, how much I recommend to you deep resignation and total abandon into the hands of God by often making acts: "May your will be done." Etc.

Your pains are beyond the natural and enter into the trials from the Lord! In any case, at the proper time arrange to undergo the purges and take the baths. Now is not the time, but you will personally know that I have understood better than the doctor. I embrace you in Christ and am from all my heart,

Your affectionate servant,

P. of the †

339. Vincent Bertolotti was from Piedmont, born 1729, professed 1748, and ordained March 9, 1754. He was superior many times, provincial and general consultor, engaged in missions, especially in retreats to sisters. He died on Rome in February 4, 1780. Ten of Paul's letters to him have been preserved.

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Your most welcome letter, dated the seventh of this month, was forwarded to me by the Father Rector of San Angelo, in which I learn what was done by Bishop Franci. I continue to abandon this, as well as other affairs, more to the Divine Good Pleasure, and I continue to cry out to the Lord that he arrange things in accord with his Holy Will for the greater glory of his Name. I live always more thankful in the Lord for the great charity that your care continues toward me and toward all our poor Congregation. I have complete trust that in return there will rain more and more over your revered person and over all your house the most copious blessing from heaven.

There is no opening whatever to go to Rome at this time; but, if the blessed God will allow it, you can be very sure that I will go and visit Signore Dominic³⁴⁰ and deliver him a salutary warning in accord with his state. The character of that young man is very good, and he has had an excellent upbringing; but in Rome there are grave dangers and greater opportunities to do good. Nevertheless, I fear and fear greatly, especially for our poor youth. I would want him to make a retreat once a year, either at the Jesuit novitiate or on Mount Citorio with the Fathers of the Mission, or in some other house well known to Signore John Anthony and set aside for this purpose.

I know what great diligence you exercise, and that you will not be wanting in taking all efficacious remedies so that he may live devoutly in his state, etc. If there is any news from Bishop Franci, I will be happy to have it quickly, and please have the kindness to send it to: "Vetralla, Retreat of San Angelo," where I will be going around this coming Saturday if the weather is good.

I thank Signora Barbara, your worthy wife, along with all your pious family, for the charitable memory they keep of me, their poor servant. I assure you that I always remember them in the Wounds of Jesus in my cold prayers. With devoted, profound respect and honor I affirm again that I am and will always be,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

340. Dominic is the son of John Francis Sancez and is in Rome.

Charles Joseph Marchiandi of Saint Gertrude³⁴¹ (1)

San Angelo
February 20, 1755

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
To Our Charles Joseph of Saint Gertrude, a.k.a. Marchiandi, Professed Cleric
of this Congregation,
Greetings:

Since from the dimissorial letters of Joseph Philip Felissani, bishop of Asti, which is your diocese of origin, you have been granted the faculty of going to any Catholic bishop who is in communion with the Holy See so that you may be promoted by that same bishop to all the orders at the times allowed by the law, without observing the interstices, as long as you are found qualified to receive them; we, to whom your fittingness is clear, and since you already possess the other orders, so that you may be brought into the Order of Priesthood, testifying and asserting with the word of truth that you are not bound by any impediment, you have exercised your diaconate, you are competent in both knowledge and age, you are endowed with religious morals, and you have made your retreat, we most willingly grant our permission that you may proceed to holy ordination.

Therefore, with careful prayers we humbly ask the Most Reverend Philip Mornati, bishop of Nepi and Sutri, that out of his kindness and goodwill toward our Congregation he would receive you with respect and kindly fulfill your request. You will always be found to offer him continual thanks in the Lord for the great grace granted you.

In testimony of this we have signed this document with our hand and added the seal of our Congregation. Enacted at our solitary house of Saint Michael the Archangel in the territory of Vetralla on this twentieth day of February, 1755.

Paul of the Cross, General

Ignatius of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Interim Secretary

<seal>

341. This is the official Latin dimissorial letter for his ordination to the priesthood. Marchiandi was born in 1730/1731, professed 1749, ordained 1755. He is mentioned in several of Paul's letters. He was a great missionary, superior many times, including general consultor. In 1774 he left the Congregation, returning to his home diocese.

San Angelo
March 11, 1755
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Very Reverend Father,

In reply to your welcome letter received in the ordinary post last evening, I reverently say that with regard to the house for our lodging at the time of the mission, which you were pleased to tell me, I put myself entirely at the disposal of the people there. Although there will be four missionaries, the house in question will be sufficient. What is important is that there be space for receiving the confessions of the men at night and early in the morning.

Nonetheless, I hope that we will find such a possibility in the rooms connected with the cathedral. So they should not trouble themselves by making further investigations, the house in question is sufficient to house the missionaries, especially since it is close to the cathedral.

I am writing in a hurry and am leaving for the Retreat at Toscanella. I ask you to extend my cordial greetings to the vicar general and to the household of Signore Chiatti and especially to all your pious family. I recommend myself to your devout prayers, and as I end I affirm with all esteem and respect, kissing your sacred hands, that in haste I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Toscanella
March 18, 1755

J.C.P.

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

I have read your letter, received a few moments ago, and I am replying immediately in the midst of my occupations and pressures. It is certain that your present state makes one know better the mercies that God is imparting to your soul. The whole point is that with divine grace you be strong in maintaining total abandonment in the Divine Good Pleasure without reflecting on suffering or on rejoicing, but let your contentment be the contentment of the Most High as you feed yourself more and more on his Holy Will. Take care to be solitary within and without. Since you cannot be solitary in a bodily way, you should be more solitary in soul and in reviving your faith so as to lose yourself always more in God in the most intimate depth of your spirit. Your present state is bringing you in a short time to a treasure of graces which I cannot explain with

342. Melata was archpriest of Nepi, where Paul would be opening a mission shortly. There are twenty-one letters written to him. Melata testified at the beatification Processes.

my pen. Be faithful to the Lord, hidden from all creatures as much as you can, charitable with all, gentle, meek, and a great lover of silence.

With regard to what you write, I recall what you told me in the confessional. I am certain that this is a greater cross for your soul than it is for your body. The atrocious pains you suffer are instruments which purify your spirit, but it has not as yet purified your body. I have understood everything. Be very peaceful and do not give way to any scruples, for your will is entirely in God and beyond all danger. Therefore, all this consists in suffering everything, and everything helps you to stay crucified with Christ. In spirit lose sight even of this suffering. If you are aware of it, with your will remaining firm see it with a deep horror but without losing sight for a moment of your peace and union with the Divine Will. I pray the heavenly Spouse to deliver you from this weakness. But if this is pleasing to him and there are repetitions, I come back to tell you again, be very peaceful in God. I am in a hurry and recommend my poor soul to your prayers. God alone can understand how I am. Pray for the salvation of my soul and for our Congregation. Contrary winds are blowing against it. I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus Christ, from whom I pray copious blessing for you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

946

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (20)³⁴³

Toscanello
March 22, 1755

*May the sufferings of Jesus
and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy be in our hearts.*

I received your two letters. I have not a few occupations and cannot write even a little. However, I am answering, even though my departure for the mission is near and this evening I go on retreat. Do not write more at this time, not until I have returned and finished, which will be this coming August. Now I have nothing more to say to you beyond repeating that you should put in practice what I have said and written. Stay in your nothing, obey the attractions of the Holy Spirit, let those empty and useless fears you write about in your letters perish in the fire of holy love. Repose in God as a true Gospel child and take no account of sensible lights, but keep yourself in naked faith and stay hidden in the bosom of God, that is, in the bosom of the Heavenly Father in pure faith and holy love.

Every time your spirit centers once more in God, allowing your horrible nothing to be dissolved in that Infinite All that is God, it is certain that then your

343. Paul has written several beautiful letters to Sister Columba. In this letter note Paul's advice in the second paragraph: "Every time your spirit centers (*riconcentra*) once more in God" and compare this with "centering prayer" of today. Usually, Paul speaks of "entering" the sanctuary, the desert, or "resting" in the bosom of God, etc., but does not use the word *riconcentra* in his earlier letters.

soul is reborn in the Divine Word to a new life of love and grace. It is not necessary to be curious about such a divine birth since it is effected by the Highest God in the deepest essence of the soul. These are deepest secrets, and you need nothing beyond purity of heart, fidelity in virtue, remaining in one's own nothingness, and giving all the glory to God by becoming a victim of love, sacrificed as a holocaust in the flames of divine love in continual thanksgiving for the gifts of the Lord.

Recommend me much to Jesus during these holy days, for my needs are extreme, and recommend the Congregation; I will do the same for you. Be of good heart, trust yourself to God, and be secure that your conduct is not false, but true in Christ our Lord. Be most faithful and do not trust in yourself. Be always in the sacred interior desert, entirely clothed in the faith of Jesus and with his pains. I pray the copious blessing of the Lord for you.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

947

Girolama Ercolani (31)

Toscanella
March 22, 1755

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

In last night's post I received your letter and am replying immediately point by point. First, I tell you that the sum of thoughts, suspicions, and judgments that pass through your mind and cause you annoyance, weariness, and suffering are works of the devil, also your imagination, and frequently come from weakness of the head as well. Consequently, I have spoken and written to you that in these things you do not sin because they are contrary to your will and cause you not a small amount of suffering. For that reason you are not obliged to confess them. Confessing them would make the devil more determined to torment you with scruples, while you would be confessing things that are not sins for you because you do not will them.

You are meriting much by offering to the Lord the pain and weariness that you experience. You ask if it is a good sign or a bad sign to be troubled by such imaginings. I reply that it is a good sign, even a very good one. Many holy souls have suffered in this way. So be peaceful and continue your conduct as usual. Keep your heart recollected in God with frequent ejaculatory prayers and never abandon prayer as you are accustomed to, and, believe me, you have the clearest signs that your soul is much loved by the blessed God.

Second, as for the dream, I reply that it is a big mistake to put any faith in it; it is a fantasy. I see that you do not give it any credence whatever, but that it simply causes you to fear. Cast that off and do not doubt about anything for the Lord will give you as long a life as is needed to assist your good daughters. Be very peaceful about this.

Take a good look, Signora Girolama, at the truth of all that I have said and written to you. For in order to quiet your scruples, it is enough that you resolve

to write me as a minister of Jesus Christ and immediately you become peaceful. For the devil flees accused, flees confused, and holy obedience brings you peace of conscience. Continue in this way, for it does you good.

I rejoice in Jesus Christ that all of you continue in good health. Regarding your good daughters, leave the care of them to God and believe that His Divine Majesty has them in mind and will provide for them according to his good pleasure.

You should continue to be the faithful guardian of their virginal purity by having them continue their accustomed devout exercises of devotion, prayer, frequentation of the sacraments, and constant in their work. I assert that heaven and earth will sooner crash than the divine assistance over them and the provision of a status which will assure their eternal salvation be wanting.

Let them live abandoned to God, let them have no thought beyond pleasing him, and let them be peaceful and they will experience the effects of the divine mercies promised.

I will wish all of you a happy Easter from the altar in this Holy Week and on the Paschal Solemnity. Let them do the same for me in your prayers, especially the canon in his Holy Sacrifices.

I am leaving after Easter for missions and will go to Tolfa and Nepi, Ronciglione and Capranica — if nothing comes in the way. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with your blessed daughters, and especially the canon, whom I greet from the heart. I pray for all a copious blessing from our suffering Redeemer. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

948

Teresa Danei (2)³⁴⁴

Toscanello
March 25, 1755
Leaving.

J.C.P.

Father Paul has read your letter and had me read it as well. Since he is occupied with his duty of answering letters and since it is a postal day, he asked me to answer you. Therefore, I say to you with all surety that the way in which the Highest Good God continues to have you walk is the same way chosen by the uncreated wisdom and truth of Christ our Lord, and since he is infinitely rich and the giver of all the goods of nature, of grace and glory, he nonetheless made himself poor for us as Saint Paul tells us. He was born, lived, and died naked of all things and always poor. Therefore, blessed are you if you understand how to make a virtue of necessity and rejoice with your will and

344. This letter was written by Father John Baptist. Paul adds a short note at the end. Their sister Catherine did not get married, and their brother Joseph seems to be doing better. Later, he will testify at Paul's canonization Processes, speaking of his high regard for his saintly brother.

heart that necessity makes you conformed to that great Lord who says in the Gospel: "Blessed are the poor for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." Oh! from how many evils of sin and worms of conscience you are preserved by being burdened with the temporal necessities! These should stimulate you to aspire always more after the eternal happiness of heaven. I believe that the merciful eyes of God made use of that care with Catherine, whom you mention, in bringing it about that the attempt to have her marry did not succeed. So we did not see her move into a world where in these times so many abominations abound, and the situation preserved her in her state of virginity.

If our brother Joseph will follow his conscience and take care of the house, it is not possible that God, Infinite Kindness, could ever abandon us in our necessities or would leave you wanting what is necessary to live in your poor state of life and abjection, since God wishes you to die rich in grace.

Be sure of our prayers, and tomorrow, Holy Wednesday, I will offer Mass for all of you. We are well and after Easter we are going out on missions. Continue with your good resolutions that I see you express in your letter, and the Lord God bless you. I greet everyone in the Lord, and am,

Your affectionate servant,

John Baptist of Saint Michael Archangel

Read this letter with care because it was written with the light of God and written by one who is deeply and continuously assiduous in prayer, and there is not his like in the Congregation. Do not worry about anything. God wishes you to be rich in grace in this life and in glory in eternity.

I also will offer Mass for you tomorrow. Do not ever doubt the divine help for that would be to wrong the great Father of Mercies. Continue to live devoutly and to frequent the sacraments, make use of prayer and meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ, the reading of holy books, and flight from worldly creatures. If you do this, you will see miracles. The poverty we profess prevents us from offering help. You will have that, however, from the blessed God. I rejoice that our brother Joseph is doing well; happy will he be if he continues. He will sing the divine mercies forever in eternity. Amen.

We are leaving for the missions, where we will be employed for a long time.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

949

Anna M. Feliziani

Toscanello,
March 25, 1755

*May the holy Passion of Jesus Christ
be always in your heart.*

I received your devout letter in the ordinary post, and although I find myself engaged and loaded with letters to be answered, I will not neglect to reply also to you. I tell you succinctly that you have the best signs of your eternal

salvation. These fears you bring up to me are fantasies of the enemy. Cast them off, or better, you must let them be consumed in the fire of the love of God.

I would not be able to counsel you to repeat your general confession. For I am sure you did not fail to confess everything and did not leave out any past sin out of fear or shame. So why do you want to make a general confession? You will disturb yourself all the more. Put your trust in the Precious Blood of Jesus in which your soul was washed by means of the holy sacrament of Penance. So I cannot, and ought not, counsel you on this. Take it to your confessor, who you need to obey.

Be of good heart, and get rid of all these fears and lack of trust, which displeases the Lord. Remain with childlike confidence in the bosom of the Heavenly Father, carry on the heart the holy sufferings of Jesus, remain recollected, stay within yourself in holy solitude of faith and love. You know what I said when with you. Practice those things and you will be very peaceful. I say the same for your good companion. Why be so fearful of death? Out! Away with such fear; trust in God, for your death will be the beginning of eternal life that will never end and in paradise where the Divine Mercies are praised forever. I am in a hurry and leave you in the pure Heart of Jesus. Recommend me to God for I do that for you. I am leaving soon for the missions. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

950

Francis Anthony Appiani of the Crucified (27)³⁴⁵

Toscanello
March 29, 1755
Leaving for missions.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

When I thought you were close to San Angelo, I find myself favored with your welcome letter in which I learn you are still there with the Father Consultor.³⁴⁶ "May the Will of God be done." I am hoping for your quick return, all the more so since the weather is good and mild. I celebrated Holy Week in union with you in spirit and with all the rest. As I know you are back in the higher Alps and covered with snow and ice up to your necks, so I am envisioning the breaking through of a sun so hot that it will melt the mountains of snow and with its vital warmth make the flowers and fruits of all the virtues

345. Francis was with Father Mark Aurelius in the southern province on the General Visitation. Paul seems to be joking when he refers to Appiani's being in the higher Alps, covered with snow and ice! Of course he is suggesting that the sun will come forth and bring forth the flowers and fruits of all the virtues!

346. At the end of 1754, Paul sent Father Mark Aurelius Pastorelli, general consultor, accompanied by Father Francis, to visit the various communities south of Rome.

spring forth. You do not believe me, but the storms will disappear, and I wanted to challenge you for the glory of God.

I am writing during the night of Holy Saturday in order to answer all the letters — and they are not few — and then on to the holy ceremonies.

On the third of April two good lay brothers will be leaving here for your Retreat. I am writing Father Consultor that he give me news of San Sosio, etc.

Oh, what strong faith His Divine Majesty gives me that he wishes to prune the Congregation by taking out those who are upset.

Greet Father Rector and all. In haste I embrace you in Jesus Christ and affirm I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

951

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (21)³⁴⁷

Toscanello

March 30, 1755

J.C.P.

The Lord is Risen. Alleluia.

This morning, the solemn day of Easter, although I have been writing for hours, I will answer you as well. In view of my departure soon for the missions, I would not have more time. I am not answering with regard to the person you mention, for I do not know who that could be. But it could never be the one you referred in your previous letter. That is beyond belief. For he knows well that he is in a quagmire of vices and lives in a status that can be styled “the lower hell.” But you are to trust in the divine mercy, hoping one day that he will be able to sing: “You have delivered my soul from the lower hell.” You leave such visions where they are and make nothing out of them.

God is omnipotent and in a moment he can make a great saint out of a sinner. But I come back to say to you that the person you speak about cannot believe such things because he knows his miserable condition and is reduced to nothingness in it. He desires to place himself under the feet of all and keep his place lower than the devils and all of hell. If His Divine Majesty wishes to raise him from all that, let him do it in accord with his good pleasure. Amen.

Meanwhile, cry out from your heart to the Lord for such a poor soul in such great need, and make nothing of the understanding you mention above. I cannot come there because I am weighed down with business and the obligations of my office, unless I would be away on Easter. The others are chanting the praises of God in choir and I am at my desk writing. “May your will be done.” When the missions are over, I am thinking of returning to take a decoction and try to

347. Paul is at The Oak on this Easter morning and will be leaving the following Sunday for several missions. This is another important letter to Sister Colomba. She evidently refers to him as a holy person or that she had a vision of him, and he denies it for he sees himself as a “quagmire of vices.”

mend my indispositions a bit. In such an event, if it comes about, I will be certain to listen to you in a holy conference.

Regarding the temptation you mention, make nothing of it, despise it. It is frivolous. It is true it wears on you, but you conquer more by not taking account of it and spurning it than by allowing it to disturb you, and you should not do that.

When you feel the temptation of spiritual envy of anyone else, flee immediately to God without paying attention to the temptation. Such a flight of love, do you know how to do that? It is done with a gentle awakening of faith, which makes you more annihilated in your self and loses you in God, or it is made like the cry of a baby at the greatest depth of your spirit. That cry should be like this: "Oh, Father! O great Father!" But make it at the fine point of the spirit. He knows what you wish and immediately will absorb you in the depths of his divine charity, and you will remain hidden in God and no temptation will be able to approach you. If it approaches, it will be outside the temple.

Pray for the good religious against whom the devil suggested such a temptation; desire that she be a great saint and take pleasure in the graces God does her. You should see yourself as a dog who takes the leavings which fall from the table of the servants of God. While the servants of God are fed in grand style, you are fed like a dog with the leavings and with hard bones.

In that way you will give great glory to God and enrich yourself with great graces; the graces of all the most beloved souls will become your graces, if you take complacency in God. They are rich and you are poor. Oh, if you only knew what a great secret this is! As a reward for your conquest of this temptation, the Mercy of God will concede you an ardent charity toward all. Be very quiet, on my conscience, for you have committed no sin, but actually you have merited. The temptation touched only the inferior part of your being; make nothing of it and remain peaceful under holy obedience.

Be most faithful in remaining in interior solitude, always abandoned and drowned in God, entirely clothed in Jesus Crucified, allowing yourself to be penetrated with the sea of his pains. Jesus will teach you everything. Go ahead with your practices for they have never gone so well. Be very hidden from all creatures, stay in your nothingness, and let everything created be dissolved in an abstraction of faith.

Oh, sacred desert! oh, divine solitude! in which the soul, abstracted from everything temporal, loses itself in the Eternal Infinite Good and there in a silence of faith and love adores, loves, suffers, is in pain and loves with a detachment from all pleasure and is happy only with the happiness of faith and love, which means feeding oneself always on the Divine Will in a naked, secret, abstract suffering since all is absorbed by holy, pure Love!

Pray much for me, especially during the time of the sacred missions, which I will begin, God willing, on the Saturday after Easter at Tolfa. I go to Nepi, Ronciglione, Capranica, etc. Pray much for the conversion of souls. Jesus bless you. Amen. I am in great haste.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

Joseph Suscioli (1)³⁴⁸

Corneto

April 26, 1755

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

I find myself once more in Corneto and on Monday I expect Father John Baptist and his companions. On Tuesday, the thirtieth of this month, Father John Baptist will leave for Mount Argentario and I will leave for Cerro, where I will stay for a few days to get well, although I am, thanks be to the Lord, getting better. I will stay at that address and await your charity for the accounting of two hundred notes in order to send them to Bishop Vivani. I am writing from bed and I kiss your sacred hands with great respect, asking for the suffrage of your prayers. My humble greetings to all your household. I affirm I am with all esteem, veneration, and respect,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

George Melata (2)

San Angelo

May 5, 1755

Reverend Father,

My life-long, repeated problems of serious pains in my joints, which I have had all my life, have prevented my ability to go ahead with the holy mission at Tolfa. After I have found myself partially cured, I experience my pains once more. So for this summer the desire I had to serve them with my ministry of apostolic works and to enjoy as a consequence the loving expression that you wished to share with me in your letter of the twentieth of April is blocked. If it please the Lord, I hope to enjoy the same at an opportune time. In recalling the memory of the obligations that I owe you, I end with true esteem and sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

348. Joseph Suscioli was a canon of the cathedral of Sutri and Nepi. Members of his family are also known to Paul. Canon Suscioli was influential in securing an offer from the people of Sutri for a new Retreat at a vacated shrine near the mountains of Sutri. Several letters will refer to this possible foundation. There are three letters of Paul to the canon. Later he will testify in the beatification Processes.

Joseph Suscioli (2)

San Angelo
May 5, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Sir and Patron,

I have the honor of your letter and am letting you know, after I have spent some days in Corneto, I am back now at San Angelo, where I am feeling the weight of my illness more than ever. It is keeping me not a little beaten down, so that under advice of my doctors I am thinking of the possibility of going to the baths at Vicarello next Thursday. I would hope in the Lord that this will turn out only helpful for me.

As much as I am greatly pained to hear of the misfortune of your losses, so much do I find comfort with a lively hope that His Divine Majesty will continually enrich your pious house with his true blessings, whose guarantee is to be found only in afflictions and crosses.

May it please the Lord to open wider the way for the establishment of the Retreat which we know of and in which you have so kindly shared. In the meantime, we shall await the full outcome in conformity to his Divine Will. More and more acknowledging the sum of my obligations and proclaiming that I do not forget you before the Most High, while I beg you to extend my greetings in the Lord to your devout family, I end, kissing your sacred hands, and affirm I am,

The two consignments of one hundred for each have reached me, and I am sending them in the ordinary mail to Bishop Vivani. I will not neglect to pray for the marchioness.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (40)

San Angelo
May 21, 1755

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother and Daughter in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter, dated April 6, and since I find myself quite weak and just back from the bath at Vicarello, I am replying briefly. I do not remember that I received the letter you wrote to me last November. But I tell you now in reply to what you asked, that is, that you ought to remain indifferent and abandoned totally to the Divine Good Pleasure. In case you are elected superior, you ought not refuse that burden, for it will be lightened by the Divine Goodness. There will be great helps given you to rule, etc.

With regard to the death of our good Father Fulgentius, I have already kissed the loving hand that delivered that blow. As he was a ripe fruit for the Kingdom and the Table of Glory, as I strongly hope, I have, therefore, thanked the Lord that he has received him into the bosom of his divine mercies.

Concerning the memorials to be placed at the sepulcher of the deceased servant of God, I will do what I think is opportune in the Lord.

I am writing with pain and it is necessary that I stop. You should be very faithful to God and hope for good things; pray much for me since to my way of thinking in a short time I will be a companion in the grave with our deceased, and may God will that I obtain the reward he has. Greet the Mother Abbess for me, the vicar, and the others. Let them pray for me. I am always more,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

956

Thomas Fossi (68)

San Angelo
May 24, 1755

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas and Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

I had to interrupt the series of missions because I was attacked by my old pains in my joints. I have been to the baths for this but with small profit. Now I am responding with pain to your letter, for I am once more indisposed and, I hope, close to my grave. I have nothing more to say to you beyond what I have said and written for so many years, and I have strong hopes that you have profited by it. If you have profited by such advice, which governs a wide area, it is not mine, but is founded on the holy truth. You already know of the death of our Father Fulgentius, which I trust is precious in the Divine sight. I experience fatigue in writing. You should recommend me to God very much because bitter waters have entered my soul more and more. See that you correspond to the benefits of God and be diligent in fulfilling the obligations of your state in life.

Greet in Jesus Christ all your pious household. I pray the Lord to make you all saints. Amen.

The young man from the island cannot be received because we have too many, even overcrowded, as I have heard from Father Clement, the superior of the Retreat of the Presentation. With pain I am writing in haste and am from a true heart,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
May 24, 1755

Pardon me if I did not immediately answer your letter since I was sick and had interrupted a series of missions in order to recover my health. I thank the Mercy of God that has brought you to a convent, but I would rejoice much more in the Lord if it were one of perfect common life as, I said, in Torri.

But since your parents do not want you to leave Rome, it is necessary to adore the divine dispositions and recognize the Will of God in the decision of your parents. Nevertheless, you ought to look for a convent of common life in Rome, and, afterwards, if you cannot find that feasible, either because of the high dowry or some other reason, then you can adore Providence and recognize the Divine Good Pleasure in that reality with a lively trust that His Divine Majesty wishes to make you holy in the convent in which you find yourself. This is all the more true because all convents are based on holy rules, and, if you stay where you are, strive to put the following advice into practice:

1. Strive for a great purity of heart, keeping yourself very detached from everything created: from relatives, from yourself, from honors, etc.

2. Show great charity to all the religious, but all equally, and avoid like the plague having particular confidence with anyone.

3. Keep your heart peaceful and serene without scruples, and obey your confessor without talking back. Reveal your weaknesses to him faithfully and put into practice his counsels without contradicting him.

4. Be very much a friend of holy prayer and meditation on the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ; visit the Blessed Sacrament often; have a tender devotion to Mary Most Holy; do not be satisfied with the prescribed prayer but always put in an hour beyond the ordinary, using the most convenient time.

5. Flee idleness like the plague and flee from the parlors, unless there is a necessity, as though it were hell itself, since the loss of time in parlors with persons of the world is the ruin of nuns. So flee them, flee them, and be a friend of the silence and solitude of your cell. Be hidden from all creatures and be certain that your Divine Spouse, if he acts as usual, will make this business his own and will speak to your heart words of eternal life. Do not allow yourself to be overcome by human respect, by the babble and mockery of the nuns. Make yourself deaf, mute, and blind out of love for your Spouse Jesus Christ. Make frequent use of ejaculatory prayers, keeping your heart recollected. For that purpose go about well restrained, modest day and night, and guard your eyes

349. Born the daughter of Mario and Maria Dupont of Torri (Perugia), Mamelta Orsini attended the mission Paul preached there and made a general confession to him, evidently also discussing a religious vocation with her. She entered the Franciscan Convent of Saint Clare, where she had an aunt. Then she entered the Visitation Convent on the Via di Francesco de Sales in Rome and became a choral sister in 1755, making her profession in 1756. She died there on April 29, 1778. Paul wrote three letters to her which have been preserved. This first letter gives the norms Paul suggested for living the religious life in an Italian convent in the 1700s.

and all your senses, and in that way you will dispose yourself to obtain the grace of holy interior recollection, of staying continually in a sweet repose of faith and love in God, adoring him always in spirit and truth in the interior temple of your spirit. Oh, what a great treasure!

Jesus says that unless we become like children, we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. What does that mean? Here, that means that it is necessary to be simple, humble, meek, obedient, pleasing, always denying our own will, subjecting ourselves and humbling ourselves before all creatures, as Saint Peter tells us, out of love for God. Be courageous then, my blessed daughter, and do not turn back; despise the world. Jesus has prepared your crown in heaven and a treasure of graces on earth. Remember that religious life is a cross, and one who wishes to live in it with perfection must be crucified with Christ by exact observance of the vows and the Rules.

May Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Pray for me, but do not write to me any more, for I do not have time to correspond with nuns, nor with anyone else, except for what is necessary, because of my position. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I declare myself,

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

958

Thomas Fossi (69)

San Angelo
May 31, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I have replied to your letters, although briefly. I have received all of them, and I answered right after I had come back from the baths with one of mine, which served for all, even though it was short because of my sickness. Now I am answering the last one, dated May 21, which came along with your continuous charity of tuna, etc. May the Lord reward you for everything. Do not be pained that the nets have not been given back to you, but adore the Will of God in this happening with strong faith that all will go better for your soul and body, and that the Lord will rain plenteous blessings from the dew of heaven and fatness of the earth in a way you do not know.

The arousal of your passions and the necessity of temptation are good signs. That consolation and comfort that the Lord gave you during the past solemnities were signs of his new trials, but this is not a deceit. The Lord wished to strengthen you beforehand with his more sensible visitation.

Your other troubles, along with the giving up of created things, are most precious treasures with which His Divine Majesty treats his friends. Now you begin to be a disciple of Christ.

Take great courage, be silent, and endure, and you will see the marvels of God. Your serious temptation against faith is a clear sign that the Lord wills to give you the great gift of a living faith that will take you to a high union of charity with His Divine Majesty. Humble yourself and do not talk about it, no

way, but despise it and make renewed acts of that theological virtue, and so for the rest. "Be faithful until death and the crown of glory will be given to you."

I have no doubts at all that Father Fulgentius has been received into the bosom of the Divine Mercies since in his life he was holy. I hope we have an advocate in heaven, although we have lost a great servant of God here below.

I am in haste with many letters, and I am the only one writing. Continue your prayers for me. Greet all your pious household. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus and sign myself from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

959

Joseph Sisti (3)

San Angelo
June 3, 1755

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I learn from your welcome letter the charitable attention you used in order not to increase the labors of our religious. I am very grateful in the Lord to you for that.

Next autumn, beginning in September, we will have a series of missions, the ones interrupted by sickness in the spring, that will not be completed until Lent. So pray and have prayers offered for us by the good religious women. Meanwhile, reverently kissing your sacred hands, I affirm I am with all esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

960

John Baptist Costanzi

San Angelo
June 7, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I have just received your welcome letter, along with the donation of butter bread, and I pray the Highest Giver of every gift to give you an eternal reward. I am sorry to hear that you find yourself laid up with your old pains. I will not fail to pray and have prayers offered to the Lord by these good religious for your health. Meanwhile, suffer with patience and resignation, offering them to the holy Wounds of Jesus Christ.

In the last mailing I sent you by the ordinary post of Civitavecchia a diploma as a devoted benefactor, and I hope you will have received it by now.

I am not writing for the one who brought your letter since he will be a couple of days in reaching there. So for safety's sake I am sending this by the post, as above. I repeat in Jesus Christ my true servitude and gratitude, and with

sincere affection of heart I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with all your esteemed household, and ask from the Lord every fullness of blessings.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

961

Maria Suscioli (Dolcissima of Calvary)³⁵⁰ (1)

San Angelo
June 9, 1755

J.C.P.

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

I have received news to my great edification of the noble refusal you made about going to the fiesta. This is a grace that the Mercy of God has given, and you ought to be grateful to His Divine Majesty by humbling your heart and knowing that of yourself you produce nothing but horrible evil. Give all the glory to that Infinite Good who holds your soul in the loving arms of his divine charity. I cannot express the joy of my poor spirit in seeing the preparations that the sweet Jesus is making in your soul to take his delights therein. The Divine Spouse has already prepared for you the jewels of all the holy virtues and heavenly gifts to adorn your soul and to take you then as his beloved spouse and, at the same time, as the victim sacrificed in holocaust in the fire of holy love for His Divine Majesty. Oh, what a grace this is! How can you give thanks enough to the Sovereign Giver of every good?

So listen, Maria, you have clear signs that the blessed God wishes to make you holy if you correspond. What more can I say? So begin with great generosity of spirit to put human respect under foot and do not be ashamed to be a servant of Jesus Christ. Look at this evil world with the horror that a condemned criminal would have for the gallows. Consider and realize that there you breathe an air which is poisoned with so many sins that are committed, which ought to make us weep tears of blood.

From here on you need to govern your life in such a way that anyone who looks at Maria will see a living portrait of our Crucified Love.

Keep a high detachment from everything created and aspire only to celebrate your holy espousals with the Sovereign King of Kings, Christ Jesus, by means of a perfect union of love with that Infinite Good.

For this purpose, so as to be more disposed, be very faithful in never omitting your holy meditation on the Passion and on the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. Keep your heart recollected; arouse it often with acts of faith and sweet affections and acts of holy love. In the solitude of your room, take the crucifix in your arms and with great faith and love kiss his sacred Wounds and tell him of the benefits he has done you. If you are bothered with scruples or

350. Maria Suscioli will be known later as Sister Maria Dolcissima of Calvary, born of Casper Suscioli and Catherine Cappelli, one of the first families of Sutri. She attended Paul's mission there and wants to join the Carmel at Vetralla. Paul writes again to her on July 6, 1755.

temptations, tell him about them, as a daughter would to a good father. Ask him to teach you how to pray well, to love him, and to serve him. Ask him to preach you a sermon, and listen with reverence to the words of eternal life that he will speak to your heart. Listen to what the thorns say, the nails, the wounds, the divine blood. Oh, what a sermon! Oh, what a sermon!

Above all, do not leave off going to the sacraments at least once a week. Do not give way to scruples, but burn them up in the fire of holy love. Believe me, God loves you, and, oh, how much he loves you! He thinks thoughts of peace for you.

I am in a hurry, and I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I pray copious blessing for you. Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

962

Thomas Fossi (70)

San Angelo
June 10, 1755

*The Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary
be always in our hearts.*

Dearest,

Last night I received your welcome letter in the post, forwarded from the Retreat of San Eutizio in Soriano and dated May 25. The ideas you express and the lights that the Mercy of God grants you edify me always more and console me in the Lord. Oh, how grateful you ought to be to our good God, who holds you in his arms like a child and feeds you milk at the loving bosom of his infinite charity to have you grow in faith, hope, and holy love! I beg you, as strongly as I know how, to profit by this divine knowledge which the Sovereign Master, Christ Jesus, is teaching you in the school of his holy Passion while you meditate with faith and love. In this divine school you ought to learn to suffer in silence and in hope, and to be gentle and meek, pleasing and obedient. Strive then to honor the Divine Master by profiting by his holy teaching and practicing as opportunity offers. You will be a good student if you are clothed with the virtues of Jesus Christ, and he will be sure to clothe you if you are very humble and detached from all that is not God and very hidden with all creatures so they do not rob you of your treasure. I recommend interior recollection. Remember, dearest one, that your soul is the living temple of the Most High. Stay within yourself, close the door in the face of all creatures, remain in interior solitude, clothed with the sufferings of Jesus, and repose in the sacred Side which is the furnace of holy love. I have strong hope that your desires will be realized, and that the Lord will make you see one of the jewels that His Divine Majesty has confided to you placed in this edifice.

Pray much for me because I find myself in great need and calamities. Always pray for our poor Congregation that is not a little tried and persecuted. Cry out much to the Lord and Mary Most Holy. I end as I enclose you in the lovable Heart of Jesus, along with your holy companion and blessed children,

all of whom I see in my poor prayers and holy sacrifices in that same Heart of our Savior, from whom I ask and pray the most copious blessings. May Jesus make you as holy as I desire.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

963

Maria Magdalene Anselmi (1)

San Angelo
June 21, 1755

Reverend Mother,

The effect of devotion and peace that was produced from my poor letter came from the efficacy of the divine words contained in it since it was written by a sinner like me. As for the marvelous effects it produced, let there be honor and glory to God alone. Amen.

I want to hope that you, with the assistance of divine grace, will correspond to the mercies which our good God imparts to you, and that you dispose yourself to receive always more by keeping yourself in the bosom of God in a profound interior solitude, that is, in the living temple of the Most High that is your soul, adoring that Sovereign Lord in spirit and in truth. This is that sacred desert, that divine solitude, to which the divine spouse invites the souls of his choice to speak to their hearts words of eternal life. In this sacred interior desert more is done in a sacred silence of faith and love than with much speaking. Purest love allows us to speak little for the loving soul loses itself entirely in that immense sea of love. But take note that just as the holy Passion of Jesus Christ is a work entirely of the infinite love of God, so the soul, losing all in this sea of holy Love when it pleases God to grant such a grace, cannot do less — I say it again, cannot do less — than immerse itself entirely in the sea of the holy Passion, called by one of the prophets a sea. There one fishes mightily for the pearls and all the jewels that are the virtues of the Divine Suffering Spouse in order to adorn oneself well in order to be always a victim sacrificed as a holocaust in the fire of holy love.

I have been writing all morning, but I could not miss replying to you because in my poor estimation our good God wishes you to walk in the way I have described above. So be very faithful, stay in your horrible nothing, be hidden from all creatures, separated from everything created, poor in spirit. Seek God alone, that is, his honor and glory; and be dead to all, charitable, humble and meek with all but despoiled of everything. Do not look either suffering or joy in the face. Repose purely in God without being enamored of your happiness of spirit, but make a continual sacrifice of that to the one who gives it and place yourself always in your nothing. Thus you will dispose yourself for greater graces, etc.

Your prayer ought to be continual, that is, by staying in your interior solitude, clothed with Jesus Christ, with a loving attention to His Divine Majesty, despoiled of images, but in pure faith and holy love. When distractions

in work bother you, turn inward to God with a sweet reviving of faith, and without words lose yourself the more in God. In this way every time you make a true annihilation of yourself in God, you will be reborn to a new life of love in the Divine Word, Christ Jesus. I am in a hurry for it is late. The thirtieth of this month begins the Lent of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy. During these days do as the Lord inspires you, but pray much for me, for our poor Congregation, and for all the rest that you know. Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Amen. Write me around the Assumption.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

964

George Melata (3)

San Angelo
June 22, 1755

Reverend Father,

With you I am completing the list with a letter to Signore Chiatti of Campagnano, which you will do me the favor of addressing to him. I am asking whether in view of the next harvest you would be able to use your kindness and fervor for a small quest to the advantage of this burdened Retreat and religious community. You can be sure of our sense of obligation and, much more, of copious merit with the Lord. Leaving you in the Sacred Heart, I am with true esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

965

A Rector of the Congregation (2)

San Angelo
July 5, 1755

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

I rejoice in the Lord that the students are pursuing their studies and are healthy. I thank the Lord much more for the holy observance, and I have no doubt that, because of your charity and zeal, it will flourish always more for the glory of God. I hope in the Lord that you will grow more and more in holy love to be a mirror to all of the holy observance, and have always more a charitable and vigilant eye that no disorder creeps in, but that all are the good odor of Jesus Christ in every place. "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of glory. The best persevere, the worst fall away" (Saint Augustine).³⁵¹ Let us remain in our nothingness with a high godlike purity of intention, in everything seeking the Divine Good Pleasure, keeping ourselves always in true

351. Quotation unknown.

fidelity and high resignation to the Divine Will, seeing to it that our interior is well governed, quiet, serene, detached from all created goods, so that we may be the delight of Jesus Christ and render ourselves always more disposed to receive the grace of interior recollection in order to become continuous adorers of the Most High in spirit and in truth. To this end it is necessary to make oneself accustomed to the exercise of the theological virtues, to frequent acts of humility of heart, ejaculatory prayer, frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, holy spiritual communions, and in this way keep the fire of holy love always burning on the altar of our hearts.

Pray and have prayers offered for me and for the Congregation. I never forget you in my poor prayers. I pray more for them before I pray for myself.

In a short time another Retreat will be erected on Mount Sutri.³⁵² I have already visited there. Permission has come from the Sacred Congregation of Good Government. I hope it will be a fine Retreat in beautiful and profound solitude. Jesus bless all of you and make you saints. Amen. I embrace you in the holy Heart of Jesus and am with all affection,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

966

Maria Suscioli (Dolcissima of Calvary) (2)

San Angelo
July 6, 1755

J.C.P.

*May the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary
be always in your heart.*

I received your letter, which I read to my edification. I thank you in the Lord. I thank you for the information you gave me of the departure of your uncle for Rome in order to bring about an affair of much glory to God. I will not fail to pray His Divine Majesty to preserve him in health and free him from all evil by consoling him, along with ourselves, in the happy outcome of this holy endeavor, as I hope.

Regarding your aridity and dryness at prayer, believe me that you merit more in meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Christ in such a state than if you were caught up in tears since you are practicing the holy virtues more, that is, faith, hope and charity. Such a prayer is more pleasing to God because it is more free of self-satisfaction. Be faithful in persevering and never abandon holy prayer.

Saint Teresa was dry, arid, and desolate for eighteen years; Blessed Clara of Mount Falco was in that condition for fifteen years; and so many more holy souls. Resign yourself to the Will of God, quick to suffer everything, as much as will please the Lord. By doing this you will see and quickly experience the

352. The foundation desired by Bishop Philip Mornati and by the populace could not be realized because of opposition to it (Zoffoli, Vol. I, pp. 977-980).

internal visit of the Sovereign Good with his divine consolations. Be faithful in putting into practice the advice you have received by voice and from spiritual books. Get yourself accustomed to ejaculatory prayers, frequent spiritual communions, which you can make many times in the day, even at home. I recommend much that you be a lover of obedience, humility of heart, holy modesty; be careful about speaking; guard your eyes well; never give in to sadness, but stay joyous in God. For you have clear signs that you are much beloved by the gentle Jesus, the loving Spouse of our souls.

Father N. greets you in the Lord. Together we recommend you to God. May Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

I forgot myself. I am sending a Holy Child for Signora N., and it is somewhat small. The larger one is for you; it is a gift from your dear Spouse, who gifts her with the cross and thorns to make her holy. In haste I am,

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

967

Mother Maria Colomba of Jesus and Mary

San Angelo

July 14, 1755

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I read with edification the letter sent to me by the archpriest Melata. It arrived here this morning. With regard to the scruple you bring up to me, which you tell me was given you by your confessor, that is, that you have committed many sacrileges by your lack of poverty, etc., and you asked me to speak about it to the archpriest, which I did immediately. So I say that since your confessions and communions were made in good faith, you have not committed any sacrileges. So I claim it as certain that you will already have confessed exercising proprietorship, or to make myself better understood, failures committed against poverty, etc., and therefore, you are to remain peaceful and not be upset nor downcast anymore. The archpriest will have more to say when he speaks to you.

Take care to be exact in the future, being attentive to everything, and not to exercise independent ownership. Be detached from everything; otherwise, you will not have peace.

I rejoice in the Lord that you are making an hour of meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ every day. Continue that and be assured that God will make you holy. In regard to Holy Communion, when you have the opportunity to do so and your confessor agrees, go to Communion always. Oh, what a great treasure! This is a font of love and of holiness. He who is thirsty, says the gentle Jesus, let him come to me and drink. You are thirsty to become holy and to burn with holy love? What are you to do then if not fly and embrace your gentle Spouse in the Sacrament?

Take care to remain in the Presence of God within you; keep in mind that internal solitude is so much recommended by me, etc.

Stir yourself up often with ejaculatory prayers, with a sweet arousal of faith, speak little and well, be charitable and the same with everyone, gentle, meek, humble of heart, but detached from all creatures, from all pleasure. Never be idle. Join your work with internal prayer, that is, with a loving attention to the Highest Good, and carry on the altar of your heart the sufferings of Jesus.

I am in a hurry and am writing just a small bit with a trembling hand. Take courage, stay joyous in God, do not give way to upsets, get rid of scruples, and be at peace on my say so because you have clear signs that you are in the grace of God. If you are faithful, you will become holy.

Greet your Mother Abbess for me and assure her that in my poor prayers I do not lose sight of her convent, from which I left very edified. The haste she mentions to me when I arrived there came from my late arrival. I am certain that I was the same for all and according to the needs of each one.

Greet Sister Maria Hyacinth for me, and I thank her for the memory she has of this poor man who goes about with a stick. Tell her to continue for my needs increase. I rejoice over her tribulations, for they are purifying her as gold in the furnace. Tell her to stay home, that is, in her inner home, reposing on the bosom of the Heavenly Father and embracing her sufferings which are joys, and to repose on the cross and be holy. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, and am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Do not write me any more, for I am too busy.

968

Joseph M. Ferrari³⁵³

San Angelo
July 24, 1755

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I received your welcome letter, dated the twenty-second of this month, and I am very thankful in Jesus Christ for the always great charity that you are pleased to continue toward me. May the Lord reward you. With regard to the two postulants, one of whom I suppose has been recommended by our patron Thomas, I must reverently tell you that in November there will be fourteen vested as novices. Therefore, there is no room for them. If the novitiate will be able to continue in the coming year, and that is not certain unless another Retreat can be opened, in that case I can assert that they will be the first to be admitted. God knows how much I desire to satisfy everyone, seeing that many are asking, but no one is held to what is impossible.

With regard to your coming to Mount Argentario, you know how much that would please me, as I said in my other letter. But, believe me, in the present

353. Joseph Ferrari evidently is the former Father Joseph Mary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, who joined the Congregation in 1743 as a priest, ordained in 1728 or 1729. He left in September 1745. Ferrari testified at the canonical Processes.

circumstance I cannot fulfill your good desires for the reason that we have one of our religious priests on the first floor with a strange disease, which he endures with great resignation. We could not allow you to be in that same section. But what is deferred is not denied. I pray the gentle Jesus to make you holy in your state; and that will happen if you correspond, as I wish to hope, with the grace of staying withdrawn to prayer as determined, to keeping watch over yourself, and to flying from all occasions with strong abnegation and withdrawal from all that is not God. I recommend myself to your prayers and enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, and again affirm that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the †

My health hangs by a thread.

969

Thomas Fossi (71)

San Angelo
July 25, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ Jesus,

I received your letter, dated June 22.

1. I tell you in regard to the habit, let him be dressed in accord with his status but modestly and without ostentation.

2. I tell you not to be so overly anxious, but live more easily and keep your head free of things that do not concern your state in life. Take legitimate recreation so that your head is not overcome with some weakness. Do not fasten on anything, but stay happy and joyous in God.

3. I will celebrate the two Masses you request, one on the Vigil and the other on the Feast of Saint Anne, according to the intentions of your wife, but I do not want the donation. The obligations I owe you in the Lord are infinite.

You are not to give way to scruples; flee from them like the plague. Meanwhile, thanks to the Lord, the affairs of your soul are going well. Continue with care to govern the spiritual and temporal aspects of your household, which you must undertake with all exactness since this is a question of justice. Make nothing out of these lights you have on grand enterprises. Put them in a corner of your heart without any attention to them since often they come from your natural imagination. For the love God I ask you to listen to my advice. Take account of the virtues of Christ, practice them in accord with your work and your status.

Afflictive penances are not for you; accept the crosses that God permits day by day. Oh, what penance this is and with great merit! Never go to watch exorcisms of evil spirits; do not allow your wife or you sons and daughters to do so. Harmful imaginations, fears, apprehension, and other evil consequences can result from that. Let them pray for them and nothing more.

I cannot approve that growing boy sleeping with his aunt, even though she is pious. I am an old man and a missionary ... so direct yourself, but do it with prudence so that the aunt does not catch on.

I am in a hurry, and I leave you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with Signora Victoria and all your devoted family, for whom I pray plenteous blessings from the Lord.

I am saying nothing about myself. I have great need of prayers for "the waters have penetrated even to my soul." Pray His Divine Majesty that I save my soul. I am from the heart,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

970

Girolama Ercolani (32)

San Angelo
July 26, 1755

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your letter, dated the nineteenth of this month, in which I learn of the affliction you are experiencing from extreme sadness of your good daughter. I believe it arises from delicacy of conscience and keen apprehensions. She needs to take advantage of the confessor who assists her so that he may enlighten her, comfort her, and take away her apprehensions. His Divine Majesty is accustomed to make use of his ministers in this way; but your daughter must obey the confessor. Tell her, on my behalf, that she should be consoled, for she has very clear signs that she is in the grace of God, and to get rid of the scruples and this sadness which the devil is causing, and not to be rigid, but to take comfort. Let her sing some spiritual songs and make frequent acts of confidence in God and darts of love to the Wounds of Jesus, etc.

With regard to the fears caused you by the homicide in your neighborhood, even this can be used by the devil to trouble you. Make nothing out of it, despise it, raise your heart to the Lord and these fears will quickly vanish. But do not allow your mind to become fixed on anything, but distract it and place your thoughts on Jesus Crucified, in whom you should place all your hope.

You should be happy in Jesus Christ and, believe me, all these afflictions will not cause you any harm, but much good. The blessed God looks with an eye of mercy on your house. Fear nothing, despise such apprehensions, drive off the evil one, who brings these things up, with the sign of the cross, with holy water, and with acts of the love of God and filial confidence in the Lord.

With regard to the other point in your letter, I cannot give you any advice in writing. Meanwhile, many things need looking at. Take counsel with your confessor and, meanwhile, be very vigilant and all eyes to observe, etc. But, above all, do not get depressed over anything; put all your trust in God and be certain that His Divine Majesty will give you grace to do everything well. Jesus bless you and all your good family. I place them in the holy Side of Jesus, where I affirm again that with all my soul I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Mary Struzziere of the Side of Jesus (4)

San Angelo

July 28, 1755

Paul of the Cross,

General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ:

To the Most Reverend Thomas Mary of the Holy Side of Jesus, Provincial of our Congregation, is granted the faculty enabling him in our place and in our name to take actual, true, and legitimate possession of the Retreat of the Most Holy Madonna, situated in the territory of Paliano, the diocese of Palestrina, with the entry there of religious of our Community in accord with the usual solemn formalities as required by law and under the following conditions.

First, Father Provincial shall state in the official document that he is taking possession of the Retreat in our name and in our place with our special permission and direction. Therefore, this cannot become a precedent from which other provincials or lesser superiors or anyone other than the General Superior could take occasion and claim for himself the right to act in this way.

Second, he shall insert in the official document the affirmation, condition, and understanding that where, for reason of the bad and unhealthful air or because of disturbances and disorders or because of necessity, it should happen that our religious be in any way impeded from the full observance of our Rules, it will be the right of our Congregation to leave and abandon this Retreat. This is understood to be any reason whatever that makes it impossible for the religious community to continue.

Third, he shall finally insert in the document the statement that we are obliging ourselves to serve souls in Paliano and in the diocese only in accord with the precise prescriptions of our Constitutions.

In virtue of this permission and expressed conditions, we have executed this document and attached our usual seal of office and signed it with our own hand.

Paul of the Cross, General
Francis Anthony, Secretary
<seal>

Joseph Andrew Ruspantini of the Conception (2)

San Angelo

August 2, 1755

Dear Confrater in Jesus Christ,

I am sorry that I cannot at this time agree to your request for the young man you brought up to me since all the rooms for the coming novitiate are filled. Meanwhile, try to see to it that your candidate holds on to his vocation, for in next year's novitiate he will certainly be accepted. It will be necessary to remind me a few months in advance for my instruction.

For the rest, "Be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of his power." Fear nothing and place your courage in God that after the cold there will come a very warm season.

With regard to my saying that you would not have persevered, that was due to my observing at that time a bit more the stubbornness in your thinking and practicing austerities without the salt of discretion. That brings on consequences that ordinarily are not good. I have observed more than one who persisted in their own judgment, whom I afterwards saw take off the habit. You, however, thanks to the Lord, are not of that kind, so nothing disastrous took place. In view of ordination, let me know how old you are and be diligent in your studies. I enclose you in the holy Heart of Jesus.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

973

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (22)

San Angelo
August 12, 1755

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Sister in Christ,

I received your letter, along with many more that would make you wonder how my head can take it. Truly, it seems to me that there is no room to be concerned that the conduct of your spirit is not according to God. Take care not to put up any obstacles, but be always more faithful, more buried, more hidden in God with true interior and exterior recollection. There is much to be said of the lights you have concerning the Congregation and me, but we can speak face-to-face; at present I cannot do it in writing because of my many occupations.

The truth is that facts and experience show sensibly all to the contrary; but on this I do not know what to say. That the Congregation must be persecuted by the Heads of the Church does not seem possible, since the Heads of the Church are, first of all, the pope and then the bishops, and these have always favored the works of God. They have put objections to seek great proof, but they have protected it and favored it.

I will be on the missions and will visit two Retreats sometime, and who knows whether I will be able to pay a short visit over there. I want to hope for that. If God is willing, we will speak face-to-face for the glory of the Lord.

I ought to tell you to your heart that an avalanche of tasks and woes flood in increasingly, and without the strong grace of God my weak nature would not rise above it all. Enough! God is omnipotent and does not permit more than one can carry. You can write me once more so that I can answer; after that, no more until God wills it because after the Assumption I will visit a Retreat and then go on missions.

Cry out much for me and for the Congregation, especially on the Feast of the Assumption, so that His Divine Majesty will give us the light for the coming Provincial Chapter. We need to anticipate that because of the death of our

Father Fulgentius, and we need to provide rectors for two Retreats and elect a novice master. The office was exercised by Father Fulgentius, who was also rector of the Retreat on Mount Argentario, and we need to provide for everything. I have special need of light for the election of the Father Provincial for the distant Retreats.

O God! how necessary it is to cry out! The present provincial is good, but he can be at the observance very little because he is always out on missions, and I see that the Retreats are failing a bit. So, I have been looking for a worthy member who is a great example, prudent, and can be present more. But the present provincial is in the middle of working for a foundation, so I am perplexed.

Out of charity, my blessed Sister Colomba, pray much. You see how I open my heart to you in the Presence of God but in secret. I will be awaiting your reply in God. Give me an answer as soon as possible after the Feast of the Assumption. Obey the loving attractions of the Holy Spirit, lose yourself more and more in holy, pure love, and accept the divine work and precious pain, which is a martyrdom of love, or at least its beginning, with thanksgiving. O Sister Colomba, how grateful you must be to God! I am in a hurry; may Jesus make you as holy as I desire and have you die as a martyr of holy love. Amen. Embrace your martyrdom also for poor me.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

974

Bartholomew Pepino of Saint John (1)

San Angelo
August 12, 1755

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Bartholomew,

I read with edification your welcome letter, received yesterday afternoon, along with a bundle of many more, which I have not been able to handle until now. "Let your will be done."

The impure temptation you are experiencing is a counterweight to keep your head down and to be distrustful of yourself in the midst of so many graces and mercies that His Divine Majesty grants you. Make nothing out of it, despise it, mortify your eyes, keeping guard against that party, etc. Stay your distance from that person who, although very pious, would never have an idea that you would have such a temptation. Behaving yourself with great caution with him is very pleasing to God. So continue to conduct yourself as you tell me in your letter, but do not go to extremes. Act with prudence so there can be no wonderment and nothing singular.

With regard to prayer, the signs are good. But there is need for you to put into practice with great diligence the following suggestions.

First, keep your soul detached from sensible consolations, not looking for them nor going back over them with joy and satisfaction which redounds to your lower self, but keep your soul despoiled and naked, taking your repose and

losing yourself in God in pure faith and purest love. It is not lawful to rejoice over gifts and rest in them, but rather in the Highest Giver, since the gifts serve only the lower self in order to make it subject to the spirit. This needs a high detachment from the gifts and gratitude to the Sovereign Giver by despoiling oneself immediately and placing them in the fire of divine love, whence they came, to offer incense to the Most High. And, meanwhile, try with divine grace to live a dying life, abstracted from everything created, crushed in your horrible nothingness, with a true denial of what is not God, in true poverty of spirit. Reflect well on this point.

The effects that prayer is producing, from what you tell me, are good, but stay on top of yourself, that is, examine whether your prayer is producing a profound annihilation with a true knowledge in the intellect and affection in the will for contempt of self, for remaining hidden from creatures, a love of your own being despised, for suffering, etc. I am in a hurry. Dear Father Bartholomew, continue your conduct for it is going very well, be faithful to God, distrust yourself and hope much. Pray for my great and more-than-great needs and for the poor Congregation so our good God will bless it always more and watch over it in everything. I embrace you in Jesus Christ, and I desire that you be a great saint but with the secret sanctity of the cross. Amen.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

975

John Iacomini of Saint Raphael (3)

San Angelo

August 16, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Father John,

You have written me at my busiest time, and I am soon to depart for the mission in Bagnorea. Nevertheless, how could I skip responding to my dear Father John?

So, since I have little time, I will say little to you, but it will be substantial. Your conduct is in accord with God and pleasing to God. What more could you want? The blessed God is purifying you as gold in the fire. How? I will tell you how. With the fire of suffering, temptations, pains, anguish, and bitterness to make you live a dying life, rich in every good, without your understanding that work. Be grateful to God, give him alone the honor and glory, and remain in your horrible nothing, naked, poor in spirit, detached from all that is created, allowing your nothing to disappear into the All that is God. Lose sight, my dear one, of your pains, sufferings — I mean with your high part, for your lower part must feel the pain but your higher part must take pleasure in the pleasure and Will of God, accepting from him without intermediary the suffering which is outside the interior castle.

Take great account, dear one, of your interior divine solitude. Enter with faith and love into that deepest sacred desert, and there lose yourself completely in God. Love and be silent, repose on the bosom of God in a sacred silence of

faith and love. Be reborn there every moment to a new life that is godlike in the Divine Word, Christ Jesus. Love will make his sufferings yours by the impression of holy love in naked faith and without images. I speak in this way to you, for I know that your good God guides you in this royal way. Oh, how much you should humble yourself! At Mass do the same and follow the loving attractions of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of Holy Mass consists in being totally clothed with Christ Jesus. Learn to practice his ways. I am at the end of my paper. Write me at San Angelo in the middle of October; do not fail. Goodbye. Jesus bless you. Amen. Pray for me.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the †

976

Clement Orlandi (1)³⁵⁴

San Angelo
August 16, 1755

J.X.P.

Dear Sir,

I have placed in the sacred Side of Jesus the consolation and edification that your welcome letter brought to me. I received it yesterday evening. I will not fail to let this good community know so that in private and public prayer they can cry out to the Lord for the pious intention of the princess and all her household. It may happen that if I have a respite after I have written this letter, I will thank her for her efficacious help in obtaining the *Placet* of the Sacred Congregation of Good Government for the erection of the new Retreat on Mount Sutri. I have not done so up until now because I was blocked by many impediments for such a holy work, and I was expecting to give her a most favorable account to her great joy in Jesus Christ.

I thank the Divine Mercy for your excellent conduct in divine exercises; and I have strong hope that you will be faithful in continuing the exercises of piety you have taken up to your spiritual, as well as your temporal, advantage. Continue then your accustomed and devout frequentation of the sacraments, your meditation on the holy Passion of Jesus Christ, a bit of spiritual reading, and the examination of conscience, at least for a few minutes before dinner and more formally at night.

Never leave out Holy Mass since this is the treasure of treasures, and make a spiritual communion while there. Use frequent ejaculatory prayers in the midst of your work, in going about the city, on your journeys, always keeping your heart turned toward heaven. In this way you will easily succeed in ridding yourself of thoughts and dissipation, and all your works will be perfumed with the holy love of God. Raise you pious family with such principles.

354. Orlandi was a Roman architect and very helpful to Paul. Only two letters to him have been preserved. The other one is in 1757. Paul is grateful to Orlandi for securing the assistance of the Princess of the House of the Rispoli.

I will not be going to Paliano for I am in poor health and am engaged on missions. When I have the opportunity, I will not fail to visit you in the Lord.

I am writing in haste and am very busy. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm once more that with profound respect and esteem I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

977

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (23)

San Angelo
August 26, 1755
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

I read your letter last night and am answering it in haste because I am on the point of leaving — if I get over a swelling that I have in one foot and in my joints. Otherwise, the city of Ronciglione and others that are waiting with so much desire will be disappointed, and I will remain on my bed of straw. If God inspires you to pray for my health, do it; otherwise, nothing will cure me. For me it would be better to be nailed to my bed or even to die.

I do not know what to tell you regarding what you write about your conduct. Here, there is need of great fidelity to God, great annihilation of self, great secrecy with all creatures. You should be buried always in your nothingness in a continual exercise of virtues. For the rest that depends on me, I pass over in silence for I do not understand, so I will not fool myself.

Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen. For now, do not write more because I will be away from this Retreat until the end of June of next year — if I will be alive. So pray much for me that I save my soul, and pray for the fruit of the missions. I am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

978

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (24)

San Angelo
August 31, 1755
Leaving September 14.

J.C.P.

*Jesus who is our Way, our Truth and our Light
be always with you.*

I received your letter, dated the twenty-eighth of this month, in the ordinary post last evening. I have not received any other letter, except what you sent me some days before the Assumption, and that was not a reply to my letter.

I come back to say to you I must be the first to obey the decree of our General Chapter that prohibits everyone from undertaking the direction of nuns and others, except to help them at the time of retreats and missions when we hear them in the confessional, and no other way. If on some rare occasions there

is a request for some spiritual direction, it is not forbidden to provide it if that is possible.

You, thanks to God, have had extensive instructions and have a good confessor where you are.

I am leaving for the missions that begin September 24. After that I have other burdens in the business of my office; therefore, I will not be in this Retreat until the middle of next June. On my normal journeys by here I will spend only a night or two. Recommend me much to the Lord and believe my needs are not few. As for the graces you say I have received, I must tell you I have no light whatever about that. I must abandon myself to the divine dispositions and unite myself to the Will of God. I see myself like a criminal thrown from a prison full of serpents into one filled with dragons and monsters. I need to keep silent and approve as best what His Divine Majesty disposes for me, since this is less than the hell I merit. Jesus make you holy and bless you.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

979

A Benefactor (1)

San Angelo
September 21, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I find myself once more in the position of being the recipient of your most honorable display of charity with the small horse, so much needed to relieve my considerable problems on my journeys, and for your charitable thoughts that accompanied it. Someone will be sent to the Retreat of the Presentation and will bring it here to San Angelo. To come to you now with an abundance of thanks, I believe, would be to offend your sincere piety, which I hope will not be offended with at least the coldness of my poor prayers to the Most High, in which I will not fail to recommend you. Enclosing you in the lovable Heart of Jesus our Good, along with all your house, most respectfully I call myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Pardon me for not writing with my own hand. I am sick and busy. Your holy charity will cry out closer to the Most High than my cold prayers.

September 22, 1755³⁵⁵

Your Holiness,

Paul of the Cross, General Superior of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ, servant and humble petitioner of Your Holiness, prostrate at your feet with all respect and reverence, sets forth that in the year 1744, from the certain memory of Cardinal Albani of Saint Clement, who, in pursuit of a venerable letter of Your Holiness, freely offered us and assigned to us the sanctuary and church of San Eutizio, Martyr, in the territory of Soriano, and that same cardinal at his own expense reestablished and restored the church and had the Retreat constructed with the purpose that day and night praise would be offered to God by religious, so that the beauty of the holy martyr would shine forth the better, and in this way abuses of relaxation and profanation which occurred on principal feasts would be removed, and that our neighbors would be helped in accord with our Institute.

Solemn possession of that church and Retreat took place by your petitioner in the name of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion with the issuing of a public document in writing. The Confraternity of the Holy Martyr, located in Soriano, wished to reserve for themselves and maintain the single right for their processions, in which they were accustomed to assemble to visit the church of the saint. That was agreed to without encountering any difficulty.

But your petitioner did not agree in any way to an addition to the document, as he is able to testify in conscience, that they should insert the words "preserving their ancient rights and customs," in the light of which, beyond the processions which were never impeded after our peaceful possession for so many years, there appears from the outside a strong demand that the religious who live there be considered simply sacristans and caretakers of the church. Their petition claims absolutely their ancient rights to continue to take up in the church their collections, to seek *bussole* and *bandi*,³⁵⁶ as well as other supports, and finally to have rooms at the disposal of their chaplains, and other like rights. All this would result in the disturbance of this religious family, which would not be able to maintain its deep spirit of recollection and solitude in accord with its Constitutions, and would cause questions were we to have the duty of apostolic ministers for the administration of the sacraments.

For this reason, your petitioner has recourse to the supreme fatherly zeal and piety of Your Holiness, simply for the glory of God, to please cut off with a supreme authoritative decree both the disturbances and the pretensions of the Confraternity, and to maintain this religious family in peaceful possession.

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

356. These are words alluding to rights of income on the part of the Confraternity of San Eutizio.

Your petitioner, because of the special kindness he has enjoyed from Your Holiness until now, further requests, so that our possession may be the more stable, that Your Holiness decree that certain Masses which their chaplains are accustomed to celebrate every week in this church be transferred to their church of San Eutizio in Soriano. They once promised this but have not fulfilled the promise.

981

Isidore Calzelli (7)

San Angelo
September 27, 1755

Very Reverend Father,

When I returned here to Capranica to give a mission after ending the mission in Ronciglione, I received your welcome letter sent to me from San Angelo by Father Mark Aurelius. God knows how surprised and astonished I was to hear of the sudden and violent upheaval caused by Father Thomas in abandoning entirely the Retreat of the Saint Mary in Paliano.

I never, never in any way wrote that Father that he was to give up and abandon that Retreat, but I simply advised him in three or four letters that he should not in any way permit confessions for women since we had determined to make use of that location for the studies of our religious because it had better air when compared to that of San Angelo, where we are educating our young men in letters. Consequently, hearing confessions of women is not fitting there.

Our aforesaid Father Thomas did not reply in any way to my decision. If he had set out and refreshed my memory that for many years in the church of the Madonna there have been confessions of women, the affair would have been considered in an entirely different manner.

I am, therefore, answering you that it never entered my mind to abandon the Retreat of the Holy Madonna of Paliano, built with the loving donations of the people of Paliano, especially with your charitable endeavors. Therefore, I remain constant in my determination, and it is my will to hold fast to it and not to let go of it in any way whatsoever. This is also a determination of my consultors and with them of all the Congregation.

I beg you then "in the heart of Christ" and by all the love you have for the Holy Madonna to have the goodness to continue your steadfastness in gathering donations and to continue your continuous zeal and not be turned off in the midst of this storm. I assure you that in a short time a great calm will come as before, and your merit will succeed all the more because of the troubles, and there will come about a great fruit for souls.

Meanwhile, in this coming October I will personally seek an audience with Cardinal Spinelli, and I will lay out to him the just, holy and strong reasons why I will invariably insist on not allowing the confessions of women in that place. I hope in the Lord, who grants rightful judgment, I will not be disapproved in any way.

If, however, there is an absolute demand to allow a confessional for women, and, if this could not be in any way avoided since it is the one and only, that

could be allowed. Despite everything, we can and must send a family into this Retreat and recommend it to the disposition of the Divine Will, which knows well how to bring about his glory.

I, therefore, am hoping that your fervor will grow as a fire in this wind that the Lord has permitted for his holy and rightful ends. So take courage, be vigilant, go ahead with serenity and peace to conclude your great undertaking, for "your reward will be very great." In expectation of seeing you soon, I embrace you in Christ and kiss your sacred hands,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I beg you to continue to complete the cistern and to take care of everything. When that is done, only November remains to bring our family within the Retreat. So do not leave off the fervent way you began.

982

George Melata (4)³⁵⁷

Capranica

September 28, 1755

Most Reverend Father,

Here enclosed I am sending to you a letter, directed to the bishop of Civita Castellana, and since the post has departed several times, I would ask your kindness to have it readdressed and sent with all speed possible in the hand of a trustworthy person. This is very important to me; therefore, I recommend it to your charity. Recommending myself to your prayers and kissing your sacred hands, I remain,

Your obliged, affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

983

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (25)

San Angelo

October 7, 1755

J.C.P.

*May Jesus Christ be always in your heart
to make you holy with the secret sanctity of the Cross.*

I have ended, thanks to God, the two mission at Ronciglione and Capranica, both blessed much by the Lord, and arrived here the day before last in the evening. Now new labors and crosses loom up. I was waiting for notification from your confessor of your death and burial in order to celebrate Mass for the suffrage of your soul, but since I have not received that notice, due to my absence, I suppose you are still alive and returned to moderate health, although

357. The letter to the bishop of Civita Castellana is probably in reference to the favorable reply to Paul's request to the pope (September 22, 1755).

I would prefer to hear that you are dead mystically out of pure love. I will praise the divine mercy in hearing some news about your spirit and will rejoice were you to give me news of your precious mystical death, whether the pure love of your Heavenly Spouse has again crucified you and buried you in the depth of his divine charity.

I have extreme need of prayers; cry out to the Lord, but do it from the heart. I am much concerned that for the glory of God a great personage reacquire her health, for it seems as though God has destined and chosen her to promote the welfare of our Congregation and other benefits. Ah! from my heart I ask you to cry out to the Lord day and night so that His Divine Majesty grant this great grace and offer to the Eternal Father his gentle Son in the Sacrament, and cry out strongly. I am in a hurry. Jesus make you holy. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

984

John Francis Sancez (15)

San Angelo

October 8, 1755

Leaving on October 25 or 26.

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

On my return to this Retreat, after the mission at Ronciglione and Capranica, I found your welcome letter, along with the letter of Father Peter Carascon, who is already at our Retreat in Terracina. God knows how much I would gladly have him live there if it were not for the prohibition of the Sacred Congregation against seculars and religious living in the same house, as is also forbidden by our Rules, except for allowing them in for retreats. It was agreed that Vincent Grazi could stay a month, or little more, in one of our Retreats, but it could not be longer because of the prohibition cited above. We will do likewise for Peter.

Oh, how much I sympathize with him over his loss! which will add to his spiritual advantage even more than if he had acquired a principality. I am always more impressed and deeply grateful for his holy charity and his prudent assistance for our novitiate and all the rest of the help that his exceedingly great piety accomplished for our Retreat. All this is written in letters of gold for his blessed eternity and to bring a rain of greater blessings, even temporal, upon his pious household.

Brother Aloysius is a bit harsh and wedded to his own opinion. I am hoping that will be done away with little by little in the fire of holy love. You should do what you think best in the Lord, while I know certainly that you have it much at heart that all be done according to the Rules.

The death of our holy Father Fulgentius has forced me to anticipate the Provincial Chapter in order to provide a rector for this Retreat and one at Paliano, which will certainly be established in November, and, more importantly, to elect the master of novices, etc. I am waiting day by day for the capitulars, along with Father Provincial.

Around October 25 or 26 Father Mark Aurelius, our consultor, will be here to take my place in this Retreat and to put the new rector in possession. That will not be published until some days after the Feast of All Saints. He will remain there until June in order to effect an excellent beginning to the novitiate. Meanwhile, I think there will be a large vestition if all the postulants come; however, we have left behind not a few because there was no room. In a future mail you will be asked to arrange for a calash on a date to be named to bring that Father and his companion here so that they can be here by evening and not have to sleep in the countryside.

I am pained with the conduct of widow Tazzera, who is repaying so nastily all that the Grazi family did for her. But as your charity, along with that of Signori Petri, Bausani, and Guglielmini, remains entirely pleasing to the Lord, so His Divine Majesty will give them all their merit. I have no doubts that their goodness will be able to suffer the weaknesses of the widow, since she is good and pious and acted without thinking. The fire of holy love consumes all that is imperfect and makes everything work out well: "To those who love God all things work together unto good." I am in a hurry and enclose all your household in the holy Side of Jesus. All this year I have not had the good fortune to enjoy your holy conversation because of my sickness and the many missions I have, as well as the business of the Congregation. From all my heart, I am,

Your unworthy, obligated, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

985

Thomas Fossi (72)

San Angelo
October 14, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your welcome letter, forwarded to me by Father Raymond, who tells me of your heartfelt and ever increasing charity toward us and all the Congregation. In the name of the Congregation I will not fail to offer to the Lord your holy donations, which ascends into the Divine Presence as a sweet-smelling incense to bring down a rain of most plentiful blessings of heaven upon you and upon all your pious house.

I am stealing this time to write, for only a short while am I free of all the tasks I now have, in addition to all the other woes. I have here all the rectors and the provincial since we had the Provincial Chapter yesterday. Thanks to the Lord, I was able to hold up.

I had just finished two large missions in two cities. Now I am going to the city of Nepi and other large locations. I will be busy all winter. At Easter I am going to Sabina and will stay there until June. I am telling you all this so that you may see the grave hindrances I have to be in the Retreat at a time when you would like to retire to make a retreat. But if you desire to make your retreat, you can go to Mount Argentario at your good pleasure, where they will be able to help you as much as you wish. However, write to the Father Rector beforehand

so as to find out if the new cells are ready, for in November they should vest fourteen candidates. I assure you that once I have cleared away all these duties, I will let you know in good time so that you may come where I will be, as it would rejoice me much in the Lord to listen to you in conferences and to cooperate with your spiritual profit.

I am writing with a headache because I have lost sleep. As for your spirit, take advantage of the advice previously given, especially to keep yourself in deep humility of heart and to keep your interior serene and peaceful, losing all scruples in the fire of holy love. Stay away from fixation and from curiosity of spirit. Walk well in pure faith and high confidence in God. Attend carefully to the obligations of your state, both temporal and spiritual. Preserve your strength and your health, take the necessary food in accord with your state, keep your home in peace and holy contentment, seek only that Christian piety in accord with the divine law with holy prayer and meditation in line with the spirit and quality of your servants, leaving the care to His Divine Majesty to bring them to the perfection of their condition as that pleases him. With regard to speaking to your workers about God, use short and simple words adapted to their condition. Animate them to serve the Lord and to love him with all their hearts. Constantly avoid giving conferences to silly women or spiritual females; that is not for you.

I am in great haste, for I am leaving and am not yet done with the capitulars. Jesus make you holy but with the secret holiness of the Cross. Pray the same for me. In the Lord I greet Signora Victoria and all the household, and I leave you in the holy Heart of Jesus, from where I pray for you plenteous blessings.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

986

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (26)

San Angelo

October 14, 1755

*The Passion of Jesus
be always in our hearts.*

I am writing with little paper because I have little time and am loaded with tasks that have taken away my sleep. I have already performed at the holy altar what you asked for the person we know. Jesus bless the operation to his greater glory. There can be no doubt that it is always clearer that your conduct is in accord with God and that your continual sickness, along with the rest, are a precious work which dispose your soul to make higher flights of purest love. It is always necessary to sink ourselves in the keen knowledge of our nothing so that the gentle breath of the Holy Spirit will raise us up and have us disappear in the depth of pure and holy love. Let yourself be guided more and more in this hidden, exalted, refined way that leads to holy and pure love. Rid yourself always more of your own way of understanding, feeling, rejoicing, and walk in poverty of spirit in a vast and profound solitude under the guidance of faith and without further reliance, but in a pure, simple, and confident abandonment to

the divine goodness, feeding yourself on this in naked suffering and in the secret interior crucifixion, which is accomplished by the purest love of the gentle Jesus.

I have no more time except to ask your prayers as usual and to let you know I am in an extremely tearful state and in abandonment within and without. In this fearful state I am loaded with many affairs for the service of God for both the neighbor and the Congregation. Tomorrow, I am leaving for San Eutizio in Soriano, and then I will be going to Ronciglione to serve many sisters in a large convent. Then I will leave for the mission at Nepi. So if you write me, do so at the first post since I will not be here until December. Until next Monday I will be here to receive your letter. Jesus bless you. I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the †

Address the letter here.

987

Passionist Religious (11)³⁵⁸

San Angelo

October 14, 1755

Paul of the Cross,

General Superior of the Discalced Clerics of the Congregation of the Passion of the Lord,

To My Beloved Sons in Christ: Fathers, Provincial, Rectors and All the Religious of our Congregation,

Greetings in the Lord:

Since in the recent Provincial Chapter, to which we have judged it expedient to lend our personal assistance to give it weight and strength; since, as I said, in that Provincial Chapter by common consent of the Father Capitulars some new and opportune decrees were formulated in order to maintain in this Province forever more inviolable the holy observance of our Rules and Constitutions, and to maintain in vigor the fervor of spirit in our religious; therefore, for that end these decrees were approved and confirmed by us. Since without the right order of charity, our greatly desired and never sufficiently inculcated Observance cannot go ahead in good order, and in order to preserve the nascent purity of the spirit of this Congregation, the soul of which is stated in the first foundational chapter of our Rules, namely, to attend in the first place untiringly and of set purpose to the cultivation of our spirit, and then to the sanctification of our neighbor by means of the exercises proper to our state; so

358. This is a long letter after the Provincial Chapter, wherein Paul seeks to avoid a weakening of the home life due to prolonged ministries away from the Retreats. It is interesting that he does not mention the problem of holding missions during the times of "bad air" in the salt marshes nor during harvest time. "Lenten Courses" were forbidden without giving a reason. Such preaching was "bombastic" and "entertaining" and failed to call the faithful to a repentance leading to the renewal of the spiritual life. Paul preferred that his religious avoid such preaching.

the principal weight of the sworn obligation³⁵⁹ of our office is to maintain inviolable this good order. So after mature reflection, frequent consultation, and repeated prayers we have come in the fulfillment of our rigorous duty to the most opportune means for our intent and formed the following Ordinances and Decrees, to which we command with all the weight of our authority an exact and unbreakable observance. The Decrees are as follows:

1. Our workers are not to go out of the Retreat in spring to work for our neighbors, either on missions or other exercises, until after Easter. About the middle of June they will end their campaigns in such a way that all will be in the Retreat by the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. There, after a short rest, they will enter into a sacred and profound retreat of spiritual exercises to attend to themselves with the purpose of cleansing from their spirit the dust of those small imperfections which the Divine Master had to wash from the feet of the apostles and so make it possible for them to prepare the contemplative exercises proper to us and our Retreats.

They shall not go out in autumn for new apostolic works until the middle of September, and by the First Sunday of Advent they will be once more in the Retreat. During that sacred time they will attend to solitude and our usual exercises to prepare and dispose their souls for the solemn Feast of Christmas. After they have been renewed in spirit, they can take up again their spiritual exercises for the neighbor until Quinquagesima.³⁶⁰ By Monday of that week everyone will be in his Retreat. It is expressly forbidden to each and all to remain outside or to be abroad on the last day of the carnival, since that is most indecent for a person of our state.

2. Retreats, whether in convents or for clerics or the people, are to be given at the time set aside for helping our neighbor. They are forbidden during Advent. Within the Retreat, during the summer and during Lent, when a urgent necessity demands it, a retreatant can be received, and there shall be one retreat for each worker, and counting the time of coming and going, absence from the Retreat is not to be more than fifteen days so they should come back for their spiritual gain.

3. So that prolonged missions may not degenerate into Lenten Courses with weariness and much annoyance for the people, nor by their brevity not provide sufficiently for their spiritual needs, we ordain that the missions in cities and well-populated areas will last about fifteen days, in other places ten days and not more. This is the way and means most apt and opportune for desired ends and should be always adhered to if they wish to produce fruit and maintain the credibility of our missionaries.

359. By decree of the First General Chapter in 1747, the General Superior was obliged to take an oath in the chapter room to govern the Congregation carefully and maintain jurisdiction (*Decreti e raccomandazioni*, n. 24, 50).

360. Fifty days before Easter or the Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

As for retreats they should not be longer than ten days, except in rare cases where there is a large number of religious in the convents. Then it should be only a few days longer.

4. On missions let the third decree of the last General Chapter³⁶¹ be observed rigorously, both with regard to the hour of meals, which should always be at noon, and in regard to the short reading and the rigorous silence at table, and with regard to the common prayer in the morning to which, unless there be a grave inconvenience, we wish and command anew that all without exception will be present in order to share in this special blessing which the Divine Goodness will impart to them and without which they will be more likely to tear down than build up, to scatter rather than gather, and to infect the neighbor with the stench of their imperfections rather than perfume them with the good odor of Christian and religious virtues. Finally, we renew the ordinances already in place that without a religious or ecclesiastical companion, our missionaries will never go abroad, even if asked, for a spiritual necessity of any neighbor whomsoever.

5. The rectors, as destined for the special assistance of the Retreats, cannot at the times prescribed for missions and other exercises leave to give missions or other exercises in distant dioceses without special permission from us. At most, with the blessing of the provincial, they may go out for a short time in the neighboring and contiguous dioceses; the rector of Terracina can go to Fondi, the rector of San Sossio can go to Aquino, and the rector of Pugnano to Segni or Anagni.

6. In accord with the decrees coming with a penalty to be assessed by us, it is forbidden to all rectors to ever send out any of our religious alone. So that pretext of urgent necessity not be alleged for transgressions, let there be one or two oblates in each Retreat who can be used in such circumstances, which will not happen very often. Let them observe the decrees coming from this Provincial Chapter³⁶² to suspend, as we wish and command anew that they suspend, all improper begging as repugnant to our Institute, and let the common and general quests be done in accord with the Rules, upon the exact observance of which, more than any other consideration, depends our being provided for. We have good experience of this in our Retreats, in which more attention is given to providing for one's spirit than for one's body. Let us have that more at heart than any temporal advantage. So, we beg you in the heart of Christ for your prompt obedience.

7. Finally, we inculcate on all the religious the punctual and exact observance of the holy Rules and Decrees, as published, for their perfect collaboration and perfect stability. We ask as well for the continued observance of the Regulations,³⁶³ formed by us and published in all the Retreats for their

361. *Decreti e raccomandazioni*, n. 53.

362. The Decrees are edited in *Bollettino della Congregazione* 1923, p. 47.

363. Paolo della Croce, *Guida per l'animazione spirituale della vita passionista*. "Regolamento commune del 1755.

spiritual profit. For that, it is necessary for external observance of the Rules be always accompanied and animated by an interior spirit of the heart. Peace upon all who follow this rule. They will enjoy great peace and tranquility of spirit that lightens every burden and makes one taste even here the wise and unalterable and unexplainable peace that we pray for all our religious with all our heart and spirit, and beseech that God of peace and the great Father of Mercies will grant that peace in time and in eternity.

988

Signora Frances Zelli (8)

San Angelo
October 21, 1755

J.C.P.

My Dear Signora,

Your esteemed letter reached me at a time of a greater demand of business than I have had for years here, and then I left quickly for the Retreat of San Eutizio at Soriano. I gave your letters to Father Rector so that he might answer them in my name and pay some part of that thankfulness owed to your merits. I want to think that this has been done. Nevertheless, out of the obligation arising from my true servitude, I will not fail to assure you that prayers will continue so that His Divine Majesty may bless the pious intention you harbor for your son Leopold.

With regard to the young men suggested by the Marchioness Vitelleschi, there is no way that we can take them since the novitiate is overfull, and we would not be able to vest them for three years since there is no room in the Retreats. In this coming November we will vest fifteen novices. If I had been informed earlier, I would have tried to hold someone back in order to please her, to whom I admit I am so obligated in the Lord. I am writing in great haste, for I am close to leaving for a convent and a mission in Nepi, and I have just returned from our Retreat in Soriano. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm once more that with true esteem and respect I am,

Your obligated, unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

989

George Melata (5)

Ronciglione
October 23, 1755

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

In this ordinary post I wrote to the vicar general, letting him know that on the second of November the holy mission will open at about 22 hours in that city. I also wrote the bishop to that effect. Now for greater safety I am repeating that with this note and asking you to have the kindness to send two beasts of

burden to Ronciglione the evening of All Saints so that they may carry our bags, etc. We will be staying in a small house near the city until the time of our entry.

I ask you to have the platform eight palms high and with good steps because of my weakness of nerves. It should be as broad and long in proportion to the boards and very safe and sturdy, in a place convenient for the crowd, and able to provide for a perfect separation of men and women so that all will succeed with fruit and edification to the greater glory of the Lord.

Today, I began the retreat in the large convent and will end on the Feast of All Saints and will be leaving immediately with my companions on Sunday at an early hour. I recommend myself to your devout prayers and end, kissing your sacred hands, and with profound respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

If ever, Lord prevent it, any obstacle to the mission should come up that would make us defer the mission, let me know immediately for my guidance because I could go elsewhere.

990

Young Ladies

Nepi

November 4, 1755

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in your hearts.*

I am replying in haste to your letter for I find myself very busy with the mission I am conducting in this city.

I will not fail to pray, and have prayers offered, so that you may find admission in another convent since there is no way you can be admitted to the one in which you are now living. Meanwhile, it seems to me it would be good to stay in your house until His Divine Majesty opens the way to enter a convent. Strive for a devout and holy life under the direction of a good spiritual father and, above all, make yourselves very familiar with the exercise of holy prayer and meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ without ever giving way to laziness, but work and be very withdrawn without ever being confidential, even under the guise of spirituality, with anyone. Take good note of this point for it is very important. Do your work in the presence of God, be lovers of silence and the virtues, especially true humility of heart. Be sure that His Divine Majesty will provide for you. Pray for me, and in haste I say I am,

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

A Pastor, Paul's Benefactor

Bracciano

November 29, 1755

Leaving for San Angelo.

Dear Father,

I thank you with my face in the dust for the kindness of your charity that you are pleased to continue toward me, and so our whole Congregation sees your whole house in the Wounds of Jesus, especially the person of your illustrious brother Joseph, who has been chosen as our syndic and benefactor. Therefore, as a witness of our true gratitude, they will be made sharers in all our prayers, sacrifices, and other works of piety, including those in favor of the neighbors whom this Congregation serves. I, who am the least in this Congregation, acknowledge myself more than any as the least servant and the most indebted of all.

From Manziana I will not fail to send you notification of our arrival there for the holy mission so that you may have it announced.

I am writing with great haste, for the General Communion is about to take place. With great respect, kissing your sacred hands, I ask the charity of your holy prayers, and, if I am not too bold, I would ask you to give my respectful and reverent greetings to your father, to Signore Joseph, and to all the household, whom I place in the holy Wounds of Jesus, and again declare I am always,

Your humble, respectful, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (41)

San Angelo

December 4, 1755

Leaving a day or two
after Christmas.

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother, My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

On my return from the holy missions yesterday at 20 hours, and after about three months of labors, I found your letter among the packet of letters that arrived in my absence. I am answering it in haste because of the many letters and other occupations I have. I tell you that it is not possible for me to send you the workers you wish, whether for your convent or for the populace, since they are all employed and some are far away. In the Retreat of the Presentation, which is closer to your city, there are only those set aside for the novitiate, which they can in no way abandon. The faculties must come from the bishop only, not from a secular ruler. I am unwilling to use that channel and am unwilling to weaken ecclesiastical jurisdiction. But it would be moot to attempt it since the way to send workers there is blocked because they are few and all

are under the authority of the bishop in places where the Retreats are established. So you will need to try another plan, and God knows how willingly I would be to serve you if that were possible. In the neighboring cities you may be able to locate willing preachers both for the convent and for the city. Be of good heart, continue your exercises, suffer in silence, and trust in God, and the Lord will make you holy. Pray much for me and for our Congregation. Stay recollected in God in interior solitude, clothed with Jesus Crucified, and become holy with the secret holiness of the Cross. Jesus bless you and all your religious. I am in a great hurry.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

993

Alexis Coli

San Angelo
December 4, 1755

The Passion of Jesus Christ.

Dear Sir in Jesus Christ,

I arrived at the Retreat from the holy missions yesterday, so I was not able to answer your letter earlier. I tell you there is no way to meet your requests due to other worthy and devout needs, and since all the rooms are taken. Do not cease to recommend yourself to the Lord and to the Most Holy Virgin, frequent the sacraments so that His Divine Majesty may open the way to serve him in accord with his Divine Good Pleasure, and, most of all, carry impressed on your heart the suffering of Jesus Christ, in whose holy Wounds I leave you. I end with affection as,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

994

George Melata (6)

San Angelo
December 6, 1755

Paul of the Cross offers his reverence with all respect to you as archpriest, asks you to send on this note enclosed, and asks not to receive further letters from the nuns because my tasks are too many, and God knows how pressed I am to manage. You did well not to come here at this time since we are very busy. I ask your devout prayers and kiss your sacred hands.

San Angelo
December 7, 1755

J.C.P.

*May the Passion of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

Your devout letter was given me last night, and I am stealing this bit of time from my tasks to respond to you. I rejoice in the Lord that you are going to Canon Prenti because that will be a great spiritual benefit for you. With regard to your vocation, wait on the loving breath of the Holy Spirit and live entirely abandoned in the divine arms of Jesus Christ, who is mindful of the state in life you should embrace. Be sure that if you are faithful to God, he will open a wonderful path so that you may find a place apt to lead to the highest perfection. But for now take care of yourself as best you can in your home, where you have occasions to exercise great acts of virtue at every hour and every moment. I do not have instruments of penance in keeping with your state. If I had them, I would send them to you. I wish, however, that your instruments of penance be great humility of heart, a subjection in exact obedience to your elders, even to your inferiors, in the house, even to the servant. Oh, what a fine foundation this is to build a high edifice of sanctity! Above all, be mortified in your opinions, especially with your tongue and eyes, keeping them well guarded. A true servant of God, when walking, sees only as much earth as is needed to bury her and goes always recollected in God in the company of Jesus Christ.

Pay attention to mortification of your passions, especially when you feel resentment. Keep silent, never complain, do not justify yourself ever, and never harbor resentment. Put into practice these precious words: "To suffer and to be silent." This is a shortcut and rule to be quickly holy and perfect.

With regard to a convent, that is something far off, but God is omnipotent and can do it quicker than we think. It is needful to pray God night and day and never to speak to anyone about it.

I greatly recommend modesty by day and by night, whether with others or alone, for you are always in the Presence of God. Never be idle, work in silence, and always be mindful that Jesus is at your side. Saint Teresa did this, but do not strain your head nor have any fixed imagination. Work with a

364. This is Paul's first letter to Teresa, who will later be in the founding group of Passionist nuns and the second superior of the nuns' first convent at Corneto. For many years Paul had known her family at Ronciglione and frequently stayed at their home when passing through this city. Teresa was born May 6, 1737. She attended the mission Paul gave in the fall of 1755. She went to confession to Paul and wrote to him. He responded when he returned to San Angelo with this present letter. It is a gentle letter, for Paul finds in this young woman of eighteen an openness to God's call. Remember that Paul is the founder of the Passionist nuns, not only by striving to have a convent built in Corneto and by writing the Rules, but even more because he formed, directed, and guided several women who made up the first community. There are forty-four letters to Teresa preserved.

peaceful spirit without forcing things and make frequent affections and ejaculations. In mental prayer start with those mysteries where you sense devotion. Pray to the gentle Jesus to teach you how to pray, and hold it as certain that he will be your guide and master and your every good. Be detached from all creatures and hidden with all, open only to God and your spiritual director. Have a pure intention to do everything simply to please God.

If you will be humble and obedient, the Holy Spirit will teach you. Open your heart completely to the canon, your spiritual father, and confer with him on your state of prayer and everything else with the fidelity and openness of a child. I am writing in haste. Since you are a friend of Anna Cecilia, I am happy in the Lord over that, since with a high purity of intention you can help one another to love the Lord more and compete with each other to be holy. Regarding Christmas, I am saying nothing, for I do not have the time. Ask Cecilia to read to you the section of the letter in which I speak briefly of the solemnity and the preparation to be made with the simplicity of a child, which is more pleasing to the Divine Spouse. Let her give you that letter and be patient in reading it, taking your time in reading it with pauses, for it was written badly and in haste. But I hope you will understand it.

May Jesus make both of you holy, my blessed daughters, while I will not fail to pray for that. I place you in his Divine Heart so that you may burn with holy love.

Do not move from the divine feet of Jesus; stay there as did Magdalene, who listened to the sweet voice of this loveable Savior. Pray much for poor needy me. I will leave the day after Christmas for the missions, and I do not know when I will be back. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

996

Leopold Zelli (5)

San Angelo

December 8, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Paul of the Cross thanks you with the liveliest feelings of his heart, Signore Leopold, for the charity given in the letter transmitted, in which there is nothing prejudicial. It is indeed an advantage for the man to be held back. The writer is ever more grateful in Jesus Christ for the great charity you are pleased to continue to this poor Retreat and prays that God will grant you a temporal and eternal reward, as he confidently hopes, and affirms he is your servant.

997

Leopold Zelli (6)

San Angelo
December 16, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Sir

Paul of the Cross reverences with due respect Signore Leopold and asks him with all earnestness to entrust the enclosed letters in a safe hand for the post, either this evening or early tomorrow morning, for they are very pressing. The Father Rector is expected tonight or tomorrow and will quickly send the testimony that you ask for. The writer again affirms to be your humble servant and encloses you in the holy Side of Jesus.

998

Leopold Zelli (7)

San Angelo
December 19, 1755

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I join my letter with that of Father Mark Aurelius. With the Feast of Christmas coming soon, I will not fail to wish happiest blessings to you and your mother. These blessings are the divine favors which fall from heaven on the holiest night into those hearts which are most disposed to receive them. Among them I see yours, for your heart has been well prepared by the excellent means of the crosses and resignation to the Will of the Lord, in whose sacred Wounds I place you with respectful esteem. I claim I am without fail,

Your obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

999

Thomas Fossi (73)³⁶⁵

San Angelo
December 20, 1755

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas and Beloved Son in Christ,

Although I will be very happy in the Lord with your coming here, for that coming would be directed entirely to confer with me on the affairs of your soul, but since I see that my tasks are increasing a lot, and who knows when I will be here in the Retreat, if I were absent, your voyage would be in vain. So I feel myself moved and enlightened to write you before my leaving on missions in order to give you a compendium of all, or almost all, the instructions that I have given you for the advance of your spirit in the Name of the Lord. This summary

365. Paul calls this a "compendium of all or almost all the instructions that I have given you." It is a good example of what Paul expects of dedicated laymen in the eighteenth century.

can serve you as if you held a long conference with me, although you will not have had the advantage of speaking face-to-face.

I have recommended holy prayer to you much. It is very necessary for every Christian. But I have not prescribed any lengthy time but only that amount that fits in with your status as a married man.

I have recommended recollection and performing your work in the presence of God as well as making yourself familiar with ejaculatory prayer. But I have always said not in a fixed manner, not with strain of the head or chest so as not to ruin your health.

I do not know if you have put this into effect; I even have my doubts because of the report you give me: "I have been holding myself fixed and have experienced headaches and chest pains." But, my dear Thomas, why have you not done as I instructed you? Do that in the future; otherwise, by keeping yourself fixed, you will lose your health and your head will be useless for any work.

If you will recall, you would be able to realize once more that when you wrote me that you wanted to have recourse to the bishop or others to correct things, I answered this does not belong to you and leave the care to pastors, etc.

You want to do too much, you proceed too subtly, and you think too much. You seem to think you are obliged to correct everything and instruct everyone. This is a mistake. Take care of yourself and your household; that is enough. Otherwise, you will never have peace. This is indiscreet zeal and is not your affair.

You may recall that in almost all my letters I have much recommended the obligation you have to take care of your interests in the good order of your family but always with due discretion and prudence.

Think over the advice I have given you so that you do not force your children into a holiness, I will use the expression, on wings, but lead them gently with discretion to Christian perfection, to fear God, and to avoid sin. I have also said that a quarter of an hour of meditation or, at most, a half-hour is enough for your sons and daughters; otherwise, they will be wearied and will do nothing because they see themselves as forced.

How much I have recommend to you that you let your daughters choose that state of life to which they are called! You have a fine desire that they should be nuns, but, if God does not call them, what is to be done? If the Providence of the Lord wishes that they be married, why will you not agree to that? Perhaps they cannot be holy while married?

I have also told you not to hold them in a tight slavery, and that at times have them take honest recreation under the eye of their mother. Otherwise, they will be wearied and will be saddened in manner and lose devotion, courage, and even health. But you have put little, if any, of my advice into practice. I know that. Dear Thomas, you are not to go to extremes; that is dangerous. Holy discretion is the salt that leads all to virtue.

But since you have so many things on your mind, so many consultations taken from one missionary or another, or from a preacher, or somebody else, and while they are all good, you multiply these things and come out confused.

I want to hope that this letter of mine will enlighten you to work with gentleness in everything and with greater discretion, given the status of your daughters, with regard to seeking a state of life for your daughters.

Trust that God will provide for you by putting into practice other direction given you, and, above all, have concern for your household, take care of your interests, for that is demanded in conscience for the children God has given you. Make your prayer in a peaceful spirit and keep yourself from becoming fixed with strain on head and breast. If you find yourself dry, remain resigned in peace without forcing yourself to feel devotion or spiritual satisfaction, for that would be spiritual gluttony.

Accept sensible devotion when God grants it to you; otherwise, humble yourself and be quiet as if you had it, and be detached from sensible devotion. Aridity is more fruitful since in it resignation to the Will of God is better practiced. I hope my instructions will satisfy you and that they will be helpful. Take heart and trust in God. Have no doubts that you have good signs, for you do practice, etc. I am in a hurry. I wish you Christmas greetings from the holy altar and the fullness of all happiness, along with all your household.

I am leaving here three days after Christmas, and I do not know when I will return to this Retreat. Jesus bless you and make you holy in accord with your status, as I strongly hope. Recommend me to God and have all your pious house do the same. I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1000

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (27)

San Angelo
December 20, 1755

J.C.P.

Very Reverend Mother in Christ,

I received your letter and am replying in haste because I am much occupied and close to departing to take up once more the holy missions that were interrupted because of Advent. These will begin on the third day after Christmas. I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charitable good wishes for the coming holy feast, and I will not fail from the deep sea of my miseries to ask the Divine Infant, Christ Jesus, to have you reborn into a life of love and a holy life.

I do not know what to say to you about the new election; the Holy Spirit will give you his lights if you will be humble of heart. If the divine goodness disposes that I come to Cerro and if I have a little time, I will try to come and speak to you in a holy conference, but who know if that will happen, all the more so since I am always further from the rays of the divine sun of justice, and so how can I understand the things of the spirit? Pray much for me, much; that will be a great charity. Meanwhile, I will not say that the waters are up to my chin, for that is nothing. But I will say what I have never been able to say, although I did say I was in the deepest depth of a stormy sea. Even this is little since he who merits to be in the depth of hell ought to experience its anticipated

trials and down payments. I always hope in God and in his mercy, if I can say this is truly hope, for I hope without feeling or knowing what it is to hope. I tell you this in secret confidence to your heart so that you may be moved out of charity to pray much for me as the most needy among all creatures. Do not write me, for I will no longer be here since I am leaving on the third day after Christmas. Jesus bless you. Amen. Do not allow my letters to be read by anyone; otherwise, you will not receive more.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

1001

Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla (3)

San Angelo
December 21, 1755

Most Reverend Mother,

The charitable expressions from your pious heart and that of your good religious are effects of that piety and richness of grace that our good God has impressed on your hearts. I offer you special thanks in Jesus Christ for the beautiful donation sent to this Retreat, and all the religious are grateful in their prayers, especially Father Francis Anthony, who will make them effective with his Masses. I will offer you the good wishes of the feast from the holy altar on the Holy Night and every night during the novena, which we celebrate here.

I assure you that I look upon your convent as though it belonged to our Congregation, and I have total concern, and will have it as long as I live, that you be served with holy workers, true servants of the Lord, in the way Father Francis Anthony does so well. The poor desires of a heart so imperfect and corrupt as mine rejoice in testimony of the great esteem I profess. Enclosing you in the Side of Jesus and imploring your prayers for my extreme needs and for the good of the Congregation, I affirm I am forever,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1002

One of His Religious

1755³⁶⁶

After my thanksgiving for Holy Mass, in which I recommended the affair to the Lord, I felt myself strongly moved to add this note to tell you I remember having written to Father Provincial some time back that he should make sure

366. This letter with no date concerns the cistern found in the garden of the Retreat at Paliano (letters of March 25, 1749, to Bishop Oldo and to Father Thomas Struzziari)

that the cistern was completed. Four or five years have gone by in trying to found this Retreat, and the good priest has done all that could be done. I know when I was there, there was a deep hole, and it was by the door where you enter the hermitage. I know the horror I felt to see things so wrecked.

Father Provincial was there and knows how he left the hole or cistern. In conscience I cannot consent the we put a religious family in a situation where they need to wait years for a cistern to be completed, and the poor religious, in the meanwhile, would have to subsist on poor water, and that sufficient for only five months.

I am aware, once more, that the Father Provincial wrote a letter to the cardinal, and I told him that since he was nearby for a mission, he knew that the cistern was not finished, and there was only a small cistern holding five months of poor water, and that, if he desired the foundation, there was need of a benefactor to complete the cistern. Otherwise, it was necessary to delay, etc.

I come back to the letter I wrote, in which I explained myself, etc., but it is necessary to be firm and secure the water before the foundation, otherwise nothing. At San Sosio, too, they promised to bring in water, and it was in the contract, but they have done nothing; so it will be at Paliano. Once water is secured, the foundation will be made immediately; otherwise, hold off.

Scarcely Afloat Amid Tempests on the Violent Sea (1756)

Paul left before the new year began because he wanted to start another mission at Manziana. It seems, however, that the mission was delayed until the middle of January. This was to become for Paul a difficult, painful time. Father De Sanctis describes 1756 as "Worn-out but Fearless." Zoffoli speaks of this time as "Living Like Gypsies." Paul was busy giving missions and conducting retreats for religious sisters. He was able finally to establish a Retreat near Rome on Mount Cavo.

These were also the final years of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XIV. In April 1756 he signed a rescript enabling Paul to ordain his religious without requiring the dimissorial letters from the local bishops. For eighteen months the pope was ill, dying on May 3, 1757.

Finally, Paul's health continues to be a problem. He suffers again and again from fevers. Note how his own sufferings teach him how to direct those who have various forms of suffering — always to accept the loving Providence of God.

There are two letters dealing with the marriage of daughters, one to Girolama Ercolani (March 2, 1756) and the other to Thomas Fossi (March 25, 1756). Both give us an insight of the marriage arrangements of the eighteenth century.

1003

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (28)

San Angelo
January 31, 1756
Leaving.

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

In the mail last night I received your letter, but I did not recognize the handwriting. I could not believe it was written by Sister Colomba. It was a very heavy letter, laden with great passion. I am only passing through here and I am staying here only eight days. I am quite ill and weak, and in three or four days I will leave.

But good God! You well know that I have said and written many times that I cannot receive the direction of nuns and that it is forbidden to all. But where I can give advice, I do that willingly when I am situated in a Retreat, which will not happen until June to the middle of September. So why do you say that I am fickle? Why are you saying that I either let you go and take on another or let the other go and stay with you? What kind of talk is that for a servant of God? When have I ever done such a thing? Whom do I direct? Who is this other that I have taken on and so have deserted you?

For charity's sake, tell me this is an absolute absurdity. My conscience does not rebuke me. Perhaps you are saying this because I answered a humble and pious letter written by the good Sister Hyacinth Celeste? You ought to know that the pious religious wrote me last summer and then not again. I wrote her a short note, mortifying her and telling her not to write me any more. Then with true humility of heart she wrote me recently, and I replied with two lines, which I ought to have done because she truly edified me and asked spiritual advice of me.

O Sister Colomba! You make me sigh over your writing for I see great emotion dominating you. Oh! take humility of heart and purify yourself at the feet of the Crucified and follow your way with resignation and true internal mortification. You ask me to tell you in truth and simplicity what my mind is. I answer that, thanks to the Mercy of God, I have never lied or used double speech, but truth and simplicity. I see you have written with great internal emotion. Get a hold of yourself; humble yourself before God and continue your practices; weep over your defects and burn them up in the fire of divine charity; and be careful not to be disturbed and unquiet. The devil goes fishing in turbulent waters. No suffering and no defect should ever make you upset, but rather be humble and go ahead with more fervor than before. Until June I will not be at home in the Retreat, also in July. Write me and then I will not fail to tell you what I have learned from the saints and masters of the spirit. Pray for me and God bless you.

Your useless servant,
P. of the †

1004

Thomas Fossi (74)

San Angelo
February 3, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

In order not to deprive you of a reply to your letter, received last night and dated December 28, I have the consolation to tell you that your letter, that is, the truthful thoughts expressed in it are true signs, ever clearer and clearer, of the good progress of your spirit. I find myself in many calamities from many angles and the bitter waters are entering more and more into the core of my soul. I see myself surrounded on every side with woe, with trials, with dangers, with fears, with trembling, within and without, that is, outside battles but fears within. Cry out to the Lord much for miserable me because this poor little boat is scarcely floating in a storm of violent seas. Keep what I have said in confidence, but pray much and have your pious family pray. Now listen, Thomas, my dear one, you are to continue your conduct in simplicity of heart. Rejoice in being abandoned by everyone and in having the protection of the Most High, for truly you have it. Take care of your family in spiritual and temporal matters. Be recollected but not fixed because fixation is the ruin of minds. True recollection is quiet, peaceful, and without uproar of any forcefulness at all.

I rejoice in the Lord over the continence you mention on mutual consent. But keep your liberty always, as I have said at other times.

I am in a hurry and do not have time. The desires that God gives you ought to be guarded with indifference and profound humility to the extent that the effect can be contrary.

Greet all your pious household for me in the Lord. I see them in the sacred Side of Jesus. I am back a short time from the missions and very weak and ill. In a short time I must leave for other duties. Pray the Lord to assist me and allow me to do his Holy Will forever. Jesus bless you and all your house.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

1005

Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla (4)

San Angelo
February 9, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

Signora Maria Suscioli, daughter of Captain Casper Suscioli, one of the prominent households of Sutri, enlightened by divine grace during the mission we held in that city last year, in an extraordinary way spurned the pomp and vanity of the world and has given herself to prayer and the exercise of every virtue as a wonderful example to that city. For some time she has felt called to the religious life. Since she has consulted with us about her spiritual life, so we are persuaded to choose your holy convent of common life, so exemplary and observant. You are aware that there are three nuns there from my advice, etc., and I think there will be another.

This young lady is eighteen years of age, or a bit more, and is endowed with many natural talents and, much more, with the grace of Jesus Christ, which urges her to choose no other spouse but him. She knows well how to read and write.

The difficulty arises because her father had losses in the past year, both in his harvests and deaths in his herds, and he will not have the necessary dowry. Accordingly, he is investing an amount from which you will receive interest. I will explain this further. What he is investing will produce interest to be received as dowry. In this way he preserves his capital as he would have done with credit agencies. So look over everything and try to comfort this good young daughter because I expect an excellent result. If this is decided, let me know. This could be done by you or her father or her uncle, the canon, a man of great piety and learning, who was vicar general for Sutri.

I thank you in Jesus Christ, along with your good religious, for the charity you pay me and for your prayers in my extreme needs, especially during the Novena to Saint Raphael the Archangel. I have no desire other than doing the Will of God in life, in death, and in eternity; I cannot desire anything else. Jesus make you all as holy as I desire and enrich you with the most plenteous blessings. Amen.

Recommend me to Sister Magdalene that she give herself much to God for this holy work by obeying the attractions of the Holy Spirit.

If the weather lets us, I should leave soon, but you may answer to this address, for Father John Baptist will be here and will send the answer to Sutri. I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1006

Maria Johanna Venturi Grazi (5)³⁶⁷

Toscanello
February 14, 1756
Leaving.

Dear Signora,

I learn from a note, which I could scarcely read, from Magdalene that you are more and more crucified with all kinds of pains, but that these are your most precious joys with which the gentle Jesus adorns your soul. This is the last touch that the Sovereign Divine Artist is giving to the statue — thus will I describe your soul — to bring it to highest perfection and then place it in the royal gallery of heaven.

Take heart, Signora Maria Johanna. God wishes to make you holy and for that reason tries you with so much pain and agony. Live abandoned on the breast of the Heavenly Father in a sacred silence of faith, of hope and of love. Believe me, your affairs go marvelously well. Talk to Father Mark Aurelius at times. I am writing in haste at night after Matins since, after staying here three days like the gypsies, I must leave this morning for an affair in the service of God. I do not know when I will be at the Retreat of San Angelo. I hope to be there a short time before Lent. I thank Magdalene for the charity of the cord of Saint Blaise. When I shall have returned, I will be sure to write her. I am in haste and leave you in the holy Side of Jesus.

Your obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

367. Paul is at The Oak and plans to leave in the morning “for an affair for the service of God.” He went to Rome to receive the rescript to ordain eighteen clerics.

San Angelo
February 29, 1756

*May the Passion of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

I thank you for the charity you have for me in praying every day to Saint Silvia to obtain for me the grace I desire for the glory of the Lord. Continue to recite the Our Father and Hail Mary to obtain that grace. Do not be sorry that you do not have the gift of tears in mental prayer. Now is the time of trial; Jesus wishes to try your fidelity and perseverance. You will see that they will come altogether and in abundance, and they will be tears of holy love. But in praying to Jesus use these words: "O sweet Jesus, Spouse of my soul, give me your holy love! O dear Jesus, when will I love you as do the seraphim? When will you make me holy? Ah! my most holy Redeemer, imprint your sufferings on my heart! O Mary Most Holy, give me my Jesus, help me to embrace him close to my heart, imprint on my heart your great sorrows, and make me love Jesus with your holy and pure heart. O Mother Most Holy, when will I love my Jesus? When will I burn entirely with love? Ah! I can no longer live if I do not love Jesus!"

These affections should be made slowly with the inner heart, one at a time, and linger for a little while on each one. Be patient as I do not write as well as you do, nor do I have so large a vocabulary. Greet Signora Maria, your devoted sister. Jesus make you holy, and I hope that little Dorotea will be holy if she is humble, modest, obedient, and speaks little. Jesus bless you.

Your poor servant,
Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
March 1, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

When I returned from Rome, I found that here in the Retreat they were ready and prepared for the retreats for clerics before the beginning of Lent. That decision gave me the good fortune to rejoice to have you here in this Retreat. But now you cannot succeed in coming, so do not reject my poor opinion that now you should make your retreat in Rome at Mount Citorio, or wherever you judge opportune, while at another time you could make your retreat here with other retreatants. I have given the same advice in similar cases to many retreatants and it turned out to be fruitful for them. However, when you so

368. Dorothy Suscioli is the sister of Maria and daughter of Captain Casper Suscioli (see letter of February 9, 1756, to the prioress of the Vetralla Carmel). While in Rome Paul had visited the house of Saint Gregory and learned of the devotion of Saint Silvia, Saint Gregory's mother.

desire, since you are a patron of ours and wish to make your retreat alone, and, when our religious who conduct retreats — they are leaving shortly to help our neighbors — have returned from the missions, they could take care of you when they come back here.

Now, affirming my heartfelt obligations, I reverently kiss your sacred hands, and with reverence and respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Pardon me for not writing with my own hand because I am not a little busy and am about to leave to serve the nuns with spiritual exercises, etc. From my heart I kiss your sacred hands. The other workers here are engaged during Lent at convents.

1009

Girolama Ercolani (33)

San Angelo
March 2, 1756

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your letter, forwarded from the Retreat of San Eutizio, and you will receive this answer from Father John Baptist, who is coming there to give a retreat to the nuns. Regarding your scruples, I say again what I have constantly told you. Use the rule I have given you. The displeasure that you experience in such thoughts is a clear sign that you have not consented, so you need not confess them. Otherwise, you will give the devil a victory for he manages to disturb you with such fantasies. Despise them and make nothing out of them, and be sure you have merited much and not suffered any loss.

With regard to marriage of your daughter, it is certain that you should look at many things. First, look at the intentions of your daughter; second, is the man who is asking for her in good health so that once the marriage takes place he will not pass on to another world, leaving your daughter a widow at so young an age. These are top requirements, but the advanced age of the man, along with the youth of the maiden, needs close examination, and it is necessary that the girl be happy with the situation. You are the mother; look at things carefully in order to avoid all troubles. Modesty prevents me from saying more. You may also consult Father John Baptist.

I am in a hurry, for I am about to leave for Viterbo, where I am going to give a retreat to the nuns. I am glad that all are in good health, and I pray the Lord to preserve you in that way and fill you with copious blessings, as I strongly hope. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (75)

San Angelo
March 25, 1756

Dear Thomas, My Son in the Lord,

When I returned from taking care of a convent, I found among my letters your welcome one, and I am replying briefly since there is no reason for going on at length. You say very well that you should not give your daughter to an old man of sixty years. That would be no small disparity. You should not even ask your daughters whether they wish to marry or not; for out of reverential fear they would always say "No." But at most you should tell them to talk to their mother with complete freedom as to what state in life they want. She should be prompt to confirm their choice and do the Divine Will. This is the most prudent way of doing this.

With regard to dressing, since, I believe, they go about dressed honestly and modestly with such styles as show the good taste of your household and family, so you can allow them to continue as long as they are well covered. You understand me.

All your other desires, although they are good and holy, let them die in the Divine Will without any worries since that would be frustrating as they cannot be realized in your present state. The best desire of all is to love God, to serve him faithfully in accord with your state, to use all fidelity and diligence in governing your family, spiritually and temporally, conducting yourself with a repose of spirit in your exercises without straining your head or forcing your chest, but do everything gently, and sing this verse within:

That I be afflicted but quiet,
Sad but always happy,
Blind to my own views,
That is what God wishes for me.

Greet Signora Victoria for me and all your household, and pray for us. In haste I am,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (42)

San Angelo
April 1, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother, My Daughter in Christ Jesus,

I received your letter, which came to me by way of Orbetello. I am answering in haste.

God knows how willingly I would serve you by sending you one of our religious for the retreat, but that is morally impossible since all are occupied and the distance is too great. I would send that poor old man, Father Mark Aurelius,

there, but that would be a loss for him since he is ill. So you must make a virtue out of necessity and seek other preachers. If the convent were nearer so that he could be taken care of, but from here it is more than one hundred twenty miles! With regard to missions, you should remember I have more to do than give missions, for I am so burdened, it is impossible for me to accept them. I still have two dioceses to bring to completion, and these will be my last missions because, when this three-year term of my office is over, I will cease from missions so as to bury myself, granting that I am living, in a Retreat and there in profound silence and prayer prepare myself for death.

You should set up a good convent in your interior and keep the cloister with jealousy, remaining always in a loving repose in the arms of your divine Heavenly Spouse, burning constantly with love for him. Do not forget to pray much for me, for I am in extreme need, and pray for the Congregation in accord with my intentions.

I thank you for the charitable greetings from Mother Vicaress and the others. I ask you to return the same in the Wounds of Jesus and ask for their devout prayers. In the sacred Side of Jesus I ask for plenteous blessings as, in haste, I affirm I am,

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

1012

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (29)

San Angelo
April 1, 1756

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

I received your letter in which I read of your desires to have me write for your direction. I assure you in the Lord that I would wish to be able to cooperate for the spiritual welfare of all, but lights are lacking. I lack energy, my sickness gets worse, while my obligations and tasks grow heavier so that I can scarcely manage to fulfill the duties of my office. I arrived here yesterday not a little worn out, and I am writing this so you will not be deprived of an answer.

Your interior experiences, which you write to me about, need to be looked at by someone who has great light and profound learning, which are wanting to me since I am in ignorance and darkness. The effects they are producing, from what you have told me, are good. It is enough if they are such in practice and not merely in theory; so I wish that you pay attention to the fruit and not the leaves, as I hope you do.

After Easter I will go out immediately for missions and will not return until the middle of June. Then I will need to undergo treatment for my continuing sicknesses. I ask you to the utmost extent of my ability to keep me recommended to God in your deepest prayers because the waters have penetrated into my soul. God knows my needs, so cry out to the Lord that he

save this soul of mine. I say: "Save me, O God, for the waters have come even into my soul."

Jesus make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

1013

Thomas Fossi (76)

San Angelo
April 2, 1756
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas and Son in Christ,

In the present ordinary post I received two of your letters, one dated the sixth and the other the ninth of this past March. I have nothing to respond, except what I had in my last letter and all my letters.

Do not wall yourself in with too many practices, such as many novenas and so on. Live a life in accord with your state. Afflictive penances are not for you because your health is poor; you are weak in the head and stomach. A discreet life, mortified in your senses and passions, is better.

Take your food morning and night in accord with your state and maintain your bodily strength so you can take care of the interests of your family, which is an obligation of justice.

Keep away from straining and forcing your head or chest because that will ruin you if you do otherwise. Do everything with a peaceful spirit and do not take the world on your shoulders, as they say. You are obliged to give an account of yourself and your children; leave the care of others to whom it belongs. I do not say that at times, if there is need and hope of doing some good, you are not to offer a charitable correction, but never be solicitous about what does not concern you. Otherwise, you will never have peace.

With regard to continence, I refer to the advice I have always given you on that issue. It is necessary to maintain freedom in giving and receiving the debt at whatsoever time. Such freedom is explicit and belongs to both. In regard to the troubles you are undergoing, you have the remedy in holy matrimony. I cannot say any more than that you need to consult your confessor verbally. Meanwhile, I cannot take it up.

I am leaving after Easter for the missions and will return only for a short time. Then I will place myself under care, which will last until the sun is in Leo,³⁶⁹ because I am sickly and inclined to dropsy. So you can well see that I cannot have the consolation of having you here because of the bad air. For the rest, think about what has already been said. Since you are the head of the house, you cannot put yourself at risk on the sea or of grave sickness caused by unhealthful air, in which you necessarily sleep with danger to your life. I am

369. In the month of August.

writing in haste and recommend myself to your prayers and those of all your family. I am from the heart,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

1014

Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla (5)

San Angelo

April 2, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

The opinion that I mainly have expressed about your convent has moved more than one young woman to embrace your Institute. I hope I will not be deprived of their constant observance and good example.

Signore Bernardo, royal treasurer in Orbetello, writes me that he would like to place in your convent a daughter of his, who is now being educated in the convent of Saint Rose in Viterbo. She also has written me of her pious desire. I have reports that she is a good person and is given to the practice of prayer, etc. I do not have perfect knowledge, however, since I have not had the direction of her soul so as to be in touch with her. However, I would hope for a successful outcome, seeing that she has been brought up well.

Signore Bernardo would like to find out from me if you will accept her and what expenses you would want. Since I ought to reply to him tomorrow, I would ask you to let me know today what expenses you ask with regard to the dowry and everything else so that I can inform him. Once this is done, I will not be part of this. I cannot get engaged, but I will write him that he should take up everything with you. All the more so since I am leaving for the missions. I am waiting for your answer, and I recommend myself to your prayers and those of all your religious, and I am,

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

1015

Dominic Costantini (6)

San Angelo

April 5, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I am obliged to inform you that despite all care taken that one of ours could come there, according to your pious desire, it has not been possible since impediments constantly set in. Father John Baptist is so sick that he cannot go with me on missions after Easter, but he is in for a long cure at the Retreat of Toscanella, which is more convenient for the roots and herbs needed for the decoction. The others are heavily occupied. If we wished to send the vice rector, he is involved with the ordinands. Now we are in Holy Week when everyone

must be in the Retreat. You will have the consolation of Father Mark Aurelius, who, I hope, will leave from the Mount about May 10, or a bit later, since he needs to help out in Vetralla for the mission which begins around May 16 or 17. I, with Father Anthony and two other companions, will be in the diocese of Nepi but at a distance there toward Fiano.

Let us come to our business. After having recommend the affair to God, I need to tell you what news I have gathered concerning the affairs of our Congregation from letters received from Rome in which I gather that it will be close to impossible to bring about the foundation we know of.³⁷⁰ I understood as much in talking to a Roman bishop, for I had believed it fell under his ordinary faculties. The major difficulty is that our Congregation has not been raised to solemn vows, and it is more than probable that His Holiness will not want a convent of nuns established by our Institute until we have received solemn approval. These are the reasons that suggest themselves to my little understanding. Besides, there is a letter I received from Rome, not on this affair, but for something else looking toward the foundation of a Retreat of ours in that city, which I have kept most secret.

Nevertheless, a way may be tried. I would be of the opinion to have a petition presented to His Holiness for which I would include the draft, which you could agree on with your brother, the canon, and the bishop, asking the bishop that when it pleases him, he would present the petition to some prelate, his friend Cardinal Boschi, secretary of petitions, a very pious prelate, and have him strongly recommend that he present it to the pope to obtain an opinion and learn whether it is the Holy Will of God. If His Holiness issues a favorable rescript, the work is completed. Otherwise, you ought not to take chances in buying houses and other things in vain.

I would say, however, but it is simply my thinking, that such a foundation will not be made by our Institute. You could, if God so inspires you, found it under another, such as the Convent of the Divine Love of Montefiascone, which is truly a very holy Institute of perfect common life without parlors. They teach classes to young girls and have mental prayer every morning for the women. Father John Baptist is of a like opinion, all the more because he has conducted retreats for them and has a high opinion of them.

My dear Dominic, give these thoughts a close examination, and go over this letter in great secrecy with your good sisters and with the bishop. You will need to consult with them over the report attached to the petition and find out if they are in agreement. Let them put it in good form and have it presented, as above.

Prudence requires us to act in this way so that you may not involve yourself in expenses before we are certain of the will of His Holiness and whether a

370. This is an important letter on the problems Paul experiences in founding a convent for Passionist nuns. It is very clear that in seeking solemn vows, he was also seriously thinking of the convent for the nuns as being related to the Institute raised to the rank of a religious order. But in order for a community of women to be founded, he was willing to see it without this stipulation.

favorable answer might come. I ask you to greet our canon and Signora Lucy. I enclose all of you in the Side of Jesus and affirm I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1016

Sister Felicia Maria Candida De Angelis

San Angelo
April 6, 1756

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Mother,

I received your esteemed letter and in reply I say that Father Francis Anthony, a true servant of God, did well in not allowing you to make a general confession.

But, good God! do you not see that these are scruples caused by the demon? You have made many general confessions. Thanks be to God, you have not omitted anything out of shame or for any other reason. So why repeat sins already confessed? Quiet yourself in the Lord and consume these scruples and fears in the flame of the love of God, abandoning yourself in the holy Wounds of Jesus. Believe me, you have clear signs of being in the grace of God. Take courage then, along with filial confidence in the Lord. Do not leave off your meditation on the pains of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. Be recollected in your interior and your scruples will soon vanish and you will have great peace. Pray much for me. Protesting once more my servitude and gratitude in Jesus Christ, I end, leaving you in the pure heart of Jesus, in which I say I am with all respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1017

George Melata (7)³⁷¹

San Angelo
April 13, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Your letter was very welcome to me and your reward is very great in the Lord for the holy zeal with which you have worked for the establishment of the Retreat, in which the Lord will be praised day and night and souls will profit much. It seems that there is no room for doubt about the foundation of this Retreat. God knows how much I desire it.

371. Paul is arranging a meeting to decide on a Retreat close to Nepi and about three miles from Sutri. This Retreat was never founded. Canon Suscioli testified that several Mendicant communities complained of a Passionist Retreat in the diocese. To avoid further disputes, Paul canceled the plans to found a Retreat there (Zoffoli, Vol. I, pp. 977-980).

I reserve speaking personally with you on the Saturday after the First Sunday of Easter, since on that day, even before lunch, I hope to be there without fail on my journey to Fiano, and all will be concluded. Would that we have the bishop there. I am in a hurry and I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus. I ask you to convey my greetings to our canon and to the other brothers and all the pious household, as well as to Signore John Chiatti and his pious wife, and to the Reverend Vicar General. From the heart I kiss your sacred hands.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1018

Canon Joseph M. Rotondi

San Angelo
April 13, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

To my pleasure I learn from your polite invitation that you have celebrated your First Mass. I offer my congratulations and want to hope that your spirit will enrich itself ever more from the divine treasure in which those priests enjoy who approach the altar with right dispositions and fervor. Never neglect holy prayer and meditation, especially on the Passion of Jesus Christ, to which priests should be most devoted. In this way your interior will remain recollected and you will be better disposed to come to the Highest Good in his Sacrament. Pray for me. Reverently kissing your hands, I am with full esteem,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1019

Anna Cecilia Anguillara (4)

San Angelo
June 1, 1756

Dear Signora,

Not before now have I been able to reply to your polite letter. I arrived just yesterday from the missions, where I was busy until now. Be assured that I, even though I am weak, will not fail to keep you recommended in my poor, cold prayers to the Most High. You should pray to him to be pleased to render you to be heard to the extent of your holy desires and his Holy Will; that must always be our rule in all our actions. Enclosing you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I end and affirm I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Excuse me for not writing with my own hand since I am rather sick. Continue your prayers and meditation with your other pious exercises so that the blessings of the Lord may rain upon you and all your household.

1020

Reverend Nicholas Scagliosi (2)

San Angelo
June 2, 1756

Reverend Father,

Not until now have I been able to answer your polite letter because I was away on missions. I am answering now to let you know that there are no retreats given in this Retreat until Lent by which you will be able to assist with particular advantage to your soul. I ask you to recommend me much to God and, kissing reverently your sacred hands, I affirm I am with all respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1021

Dolcissima Palomba

San Angelo
June 10, 1756

May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in your heart.

In reply to your letter, I cannot say anything other than to repeat what I answered orally by Mattia.

I do not want to doubt that you have offered the pain you are suffering to the Wounds of Jesus, and, believe me, frequently acting in this way, you will do something pleasing to God and of great merit for your soul. All your pains will seem sweet to you if you offer them to the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ and to the sorrows of Mary Most Holy, taking counsel from them and often thinking of them with faith and love and gratitude.

In regard to your interests, I do not know what to say beyond arranging them with peace. You should try to put them in the hands of two commissioners, men of learning and God-fearing, who are not wanting in that city. When that is done, you will have done your part to obtain a good accounting of the estate of your sons. Then put everything in the hands of the Lord, who will assist you if you have been faithful in serving him with true patience and resignation to the Will of God. I leave you and you sons in the holy Side of Jesus and pray for you the most plenteous blessings of heaven.

Your obligated servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Anthony Panizza (1)

San Angelo
June 10, 1956

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I received your esteemed letter, dated May 12. I reply that I have the good fortune to tell you respectfully that I would gladly receive your nephews, but at this time the novitiate is completely taken up by others. Moreover, I need to be informed ahead of time if they have good character and appearance, good health, docile, not hypochondriac, of a gentle nature; otherwise, there will not be a successful outcome.

As for fear of God, which is the principal foundation, there should be no doubt. I believe and even regard it as necessary to test vocations. Our life is penitential, although prudently so, but it demands a strong constitution, especially for the missions, and, above all, it demands good will. So you can continue to have them study the fundamentals, especially the younger, for before being received he should have completed at least rhetoric, on which he ought have been examined formally before being received. Meanwhile, the older nephew can study philosophy, etc. From all this you can gather that I cannot give you a positive decision until they will have completed these studies and I am informed that all the requirements mentioned in this letter have been met. For that is what our holy Rules demand. I am writing in haste and occupied not a little. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I end by signing myself with profound respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (77)

San Angelo
June 12, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

Just today I received your welcome letter, sent April 21, because the one who had it forgot about it. Patience! Although I am sick and in the process of a cure, I am answering and giving the reply to your son Michael, who has much edified and consoled me. You may read it to him, well explained, so he may understand it. My dear Thomas, continue your conduct but do not exceed your limitations. God wishes that you serve him well as a married man. Look at the saints who flourished in that state, and you will see that their first attention was to satisfy the obligations of their state in life, for that is the way to please the Lord. Continue your prayer as your labors allow you. If you are able, in the morning give first place to a half-hour of prayer for the time being. As for the rest, follow the instructions I have given in voice and writing. Never get in fixity of mind; keep your head without forcing it; keep your heart quiet and

turned to heaven; and all the rest according to oral and written directives in the Name of the Lord.

I cannot send Father Clement over there because he is rector of the Retreat, and I cannot allow him to leave. Others will come and they are "a good odor of Christ in every place." I embrace you in Jesus Christ, greeting your pious wife and your sons and daughters, whom I see in the loving flame of the furnace of the divine Side of Jesus, whence I affirm that I am from a true heart in haste,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

1024

Thomas Fossi (78)³⁷²

San Angelo

June 16, 1756

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas and Beloved Son in Christ,

After I answered your last letter, as soon as I returned from the holy missions, I received another one, dated May 18 and forwarded from the Presentation. I see that you have decided to wear a habit of Mary Most Holy under a vow for one year. I will not interfere as long as it is a style in common use for your state in life, not adding or implying what color it might be, that in order to avoid singularity. I have several times written you that you are not to take vows, but that you should continue to live in accord with your state in life, paying attention to the perfection that state calls for.

With regard to business negotiations, I ought not interfere since it is forbidden by our Rules for us to get involved in secular interests. Recommend yourself to God and take advice from persons skilled in that area, especially with your relatives, such as your uncle, Signore Paulinus, and others. Be slow in deciding. You should attend to the interest belonging to your household investments with peaceful care.

With regard to continence, I always answer: Continue to stay with your freedom and do not get scrupulous and do not be talking about this. Since you do not find yourself constant, it is a sign that now is not the time, nor do you have knowledge of the Will of God. The conjugal debt, when performed for the holy purpose for which it is instituted, is always meritorious.

Your anxiety and your causing distress to your children and wife come from your not keeping your interior well protected, and since right now your soul is being tried by God with various pressures, abandonments, desolation, and more, so the lower part of your soul is filled with weariness and stress, and it seems

372. Fossi is undergoing interior trials which begin to affect the harmony in his family. Paul gives him guidance whereby he should look at these pains and abandonment with a revival of faith in the Divine Good Pleasure. Paul seems to suggest that Fossi do what he himself tries to do "in the midst of naked suffering."

to you that it cannot put up with more. Here is the remedy, my dear Thomas, and you will be happy if you put it into practice.

1. You are to look at your pains and abandonment with a revival of faith in the Divine Good Pleasure, believing firmly that God has been pleased from all eternity to have you walk this painful path to make you like Jesus. Arouse your heart with gentle affections, for example: "Yes, Father, since so it was pleasing in your sight." "So it is, loving Father, I accept my suffering since it has pleased Your Divine Majesty from eternity!" "O dear Will of my God! O sweet! O most Holy Will! Yes, my good God, I will what you will in life, in death, in time, and in eternity!"

With these and other sentiments you will pacify your heart, and there will be no more affliction. But afterwards, for the greater proving of faith, God permits that you do not remain soothed, but continue in tension. From the higher part of your soul throw yourself more into the Divine Will but without force, without exterior signs with your head, not with sighs, but peacefully, and then speak some happy words, uplifting, both to your wife and to your children to keep them quiet and happy. Believe me, you have never been in such a good way as now.

"Because you were acceptable to God, it is necessary that temptation should try you." For others business goes well, but not for you. In addition to the financial losses, it seems to you that God has turned away from you, as well as Mary Most Holy. Oh, what a rich work this is! It is a clear sign that God loves you! Try to keep yourself peaceful and make frequent acts of resignation. Do not see your suffering coming from creatures, but immediately from God, who is using creatures as his instruments. Love the Divine Will in the midst of naked suffering, keep a deep silence in your suffering and adversities, and do not allow complaints to escape your mouth, not to God and not with creatures. Let your only complaint be: "May the Name of the Lord be praised.

We are too burdened with lay brothers, and for some years I will not be able to accept more; otherwise, I would be creating a disorder. Believe me, I would willingly accept the young man you recommend to me, but I cannot in conscience.

It is necessary to pay friendly social visits and receive such visits; that is what your status and charity toward your neighbor call for. It is enough to be attentive and to excuse oneself quickly so as not to lose time and sin in speaking.

The Masses for the Feast of Saint Anne will be celebrated. But I do not wish to accept any donation because the obligations I have toward you are simply too great.

I think I have answered the most essential points of your letter. I enclose you, your wife, and your sons and daughters in the pure Heart of Jesus, whence I pray plenteous blessings for you, and I am from all my heart,

Remember and have great hope that when this trial is over, which seems like a storm to you, a great calm will come, and you will experience the fruit of your alms even in temporal things. Have great confidence in God.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1025

A Religious Sister at Civita Castellana (4)

San Angelo
June 19, 1756

Reverend Mother,

In response to your letter I tell you that doing penances on one's will can mislead you. To have a love for penance is a great grace from God, but it must be without self-will. You should practice penance discreetly and have them prescribed for a determined time by your confessor. Disciplines to blood should be taken rarely, such as on vigils of principal feasts of great solemnities, and for the space of the *Miserere* and not more. Let all your zeal be to practice solid virtues, the imitation of Jesus Christ, the observance of your rules, being hidden from all creatures, evenness of charity with all, being a friend to prayer, interior recollection, doing everything in the Presence of God, arousing yourself with holy affections, trying to be resigned to the Will of the Lord in everything, and taking all suffering as coming from his divine hands.

I ask you not to write me any more, for I have too much to do and cannot take up correspondence with nuns. Believe me, if you do write, you will not get an answer because I cannot get that involved and also because I am in poor health. Recommend me much to Mary Most Holy in your prayers. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

1026

Bishop Formaliari³⁷³

San Angelo
June 22, 1756

Most Reverend Bishop,

I have the honor to offer to your pious and zealous thoughtfulness the situation of our Father Thomas. Now, if he were to come to Todi to conduct his apostolic ministry and, consequently, expose himself to not inconsiderable inconveniences, coming to him just when he is recovering from many days of medication, in addition to having lost almost all his teeth — this brings me to

373. Bishop of Todi.

suggest, meanwhile, a compromise to the wise kindness of Your Excellency with regard to the mission scheduled for next November. Here I respectfully offer this plan for your clear consideration. Along with the difficulties of a journey of one hundred twenty to one hundred thirty miles, which can be disastrous at that time; and on the other hand, the weight increases in the business which he is engaged; and the catechist who is coming with him is advanced in age; so I am asking the benevolent condescension of Your Excellency to favor these assigned with advantage of some time to reach your feet toward the middle or around October 20. Or, if that is not feasible, it would be necessary for them to delay until Easter of next spring.

I am hoping that you will condescend graciously to such an unavoidable urgency. With confidence in your most honorable response, prostrate to kiss your sacred vestments and imploring your pastoral blessing, I offer you my profound reverence.

I ask your charity to pardon me if I have not written in my own hand due to the exhaustion of my strength from the labors of missions, from which I have just returned, and my other tasks. Father Thomas, provincial, writes that for forty days he has taken a decoction of vipers and has lost almost all his teeth. He has only three left.

He is one with me in wishing to serve you, no matter what hardship, and that he may overcome such difficulties it is most necessary that you be pleased to smooth the way with the plan offered above. Otherwise, the mission cannot take place in November as you told Father Thomas. I have full confidence in your fatherly goodness, and that you will not want to add further threats to his health, and that you will be willing to have the mission in October or after Easter since it does not seem expedient to your prudence and zeal in that month.

Imploring the assistance of your holy prayers, I declare myself with full respect,

Your devoted and respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross, General

1027

Thomas Fossi (79)

San Angelo
June 26, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I hope that you will have received my two letters, or three, in answer to yours; I addressed them as usual to Signore Paulinus, etc.

Now I received your letter, sent the tenth of this month, to which I am answering succinctly and in haste so as not to repeat what was said in my other letters.

1. I tell you that on no account are you to take that decision to leave your home. That would be a mighty mistake and against the Will of God, which is clear that you attend to governing your family and living as a married man. All

these desires and thoughts coming to the contrary under a guise of good are illusions and deceits; so get rid of them like the plague.

2. With regard to the marriage of your daughter, I cannot become part of such a question. It is forbidden by our Rule to be involved in marriages, wills, contracts, and business affairs. So do as God inspires you and with the advice of your uncle.

3. The illusion regarding chastity which occur against your will, have no scruples regarding them. However, you did well to mention them in confession with modesty in order to confound the devil and humble yourself. You need not use any strain on your head, as I told you so many times, for you do not resist with your head, but with your will, and get rid of them with divine grace, making your protest, etc.

4. In all the instances that you mention, I tell you the best way is to live abandoned to the Divine Will, both in prosperous events as well as adverse, taking everything from the hand of God with a humble and peaceful spirit. As for prayer, take the fruit and neglect the leaves; that is, take the virtues, humility, etc., and let the rest go without reflecting on them and make nothing out of them. In that way you will free yourself from all deception, desiring nothing other than the good pleasure of God and the imitation of Jesus Christ. I pray for you all the blessing of the Lord and am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1028

Anna M. dei Nobili Avvolta (1)³⁷⁴

San Angelo
June 26, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I read your letter with edification, and in reply I must tell you that my sickness and many occupations make it impossible for me to come there, as you request, to hear your confession.

God knows how willingly I would be to serve your soul in order to cooperate for your spiritual advantage, but it is not possible. I have been back only a short time from my missions and am more than a little indisposed.

I want to believe that you will have already made a general confession, especially before entering marriage, and that you have not concealed anything at all. On that basis you ought to remain peaceful. If later you wish to make a

374. Anna Avvolta is a devout married woman of Corneto, who wants Paul to go there to hear her confession. He answers by giving her simple but clear guides for her spiritual life. A few days later Paul writes that he cannot correspond with her (see letter of July 6, 1756). Zoffoli quotes from these letters several times as examples of Paul's teaching on the call of married persons to holiness of life. We do not have further information about Anna. After a mission Paul preached in Corneto in 1759, the townspeople wanted a Passionist Retreat in their city. One of them mentioned is Dominic Avvolta, who prepared a petition to the pope (Zoffoli, Vol. I, pp. 1224-1229).

general confession to me, you could come to Toscanella, where probably in the coming winter I will have a mission. In that way you would be well prepared. I make that proposal since I believe that in that city there is a house open through the care of Signore Bruschi, and that you have a married sister in one of the principal, pious households. If that does not happen, you could make use of one the best confessors there. I would advise you to use the Father Master of the Servants of Mary, who was provincial, but whose name I cannot recall. I do know that he is a servant of God, learned and pious.

Second, the Mercy of God causes me to know and see that the Lord wishes you to be a holy married woman, if you, as I hope you will, correspond. The Divine Goodness has sown you with bitterness where you hoped to find happiness. Oh, what a great mercy this is! The Lord has permitted this to other married women such as you, who by the royal way of the cross became holy; and I know some such. Oh, Signora! be grateful to the good God who loves you so much, serve him faithfully, and do not be ashamed to be a servant of the Sovereign King of glory. Shove all human respect beneath your feet.

Above all, give yourself to mental prayer, meditating on the holy sufferings of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy. I would prefer you did this in the morning in your room for at least a half-hour. Believe me, you find there the science of the saints and the exercise of every virtue, especially humility of heart, patience, and meekness. Every week go devoutly to the holy sacraments, give some time to spiritual reading in some devout book, do not omit examination of conscience every day and night, keep your heart recollected in God, arousing it often with holy love, and often kiss the Wounds of Jesus. Do as much as you can to hear Mass every day and embrace your sweet sacramental Jesus with a spiritual communion.

Never be idle because that is the root of every vice. Be modest and an example so that all who see you find in you a living portrait of Jesus Crucified for the modesty of your behavior. Above all, I recommend great love and union with your husband, always show him a pleasing face, and be obedient to him within the limits of the law of the Lord. Never make him sad, suffer in silence any harshness and never complain, run to Jesus and share with him your heart and your pain as a good daughter would with her father and you will soon be consoled. I have given you these few rules. If you practice them, as I hope, you will be happy in life, in death, and blessed in eternity. I have done so in order to obey you; you told me to write as God inspired me and, see, I have done so. Now, leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, whence I pray for you copious blessings, I end in haste,

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

Anna M. dei Nobili Avvolta (2)

San Angelo
July 6, 1756

Paul of the Cross has received the letter from Signora Anna Maria Avvolta and in reply tells her that she should take advantage of the holy direction previously given, but not to bother writing to me any further, for I will not reply because I am not accustomed to have correspondence with ladies without some specific necessity. I have acted in this way with other women. Jesus bless you and strengthen you to serve the Lord always with fidelity, without ever leaving off prayer, especially the meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, with exercise of virtues, etc.

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (30)³⁷⁵

San Angelo
July 13, 1756

May the Passion of Jesus be always in our hearts.

With great labor I read your letter with so many letters missing from the syllables that I could scarcely understand anything clearly. So if you find it necessary to write to me, write more clearly and as best you can so that I can read it.

It is certain that the present condition of your soul demands examination by someone with great light, and I do not have that. The effects produced by your prayer leave no room for doubt. You are not deceived. This state demands great fidelity toward God and a continual sacrifice of love to His Divine Majesty and a total abandonment to his Divine Good Pleasure. It is necessary, above all, not to lose sight of your own nothingness and to be careful to rob nothing from the Lord. You ought to be most obedient to the attractions of the Holy Spirit, being careful not to look at the gifts of God with complacency, but with a high detachment, a poverty and nakedness of spirit. Put them back whence they came, that is, let them be lost in the fire of love without further reflection so that you are more lost and drowned in God, and take your delight in him alone, going forth in purest love.

The pain you experience is no trick; be grateful for it to the one who sends it, but let this, too, be lost to sight, and try to remain in a deep recollection in which your soul is, I will put it this way, beyond time and lost in eternity. For in God there is no time, but everything is eternal. Remember, for this divine

375. This letter begins a series of nine letters that Paul wrote to Gandolfi until September 4, 1756. In the first letter he wrote: "If you wish to write to me once a week, notwithstanding my occupations, I will answer willingly if you do not feel a strong impulse from God, do not write." She felt the impulse and wrote regularly! This is a beautiful, informative series of spiritual teaching. Paul reveals the depth of his understanding of mystical theology and his ability to share these experiences with Sister Colomba.

work to be secure, you must pass through the gate that is Jesus Christ our Lord and his holy sufferings, which are completely a work of love, which you must never lose sight of in accord with the divine operations, which the soul must be most faithful in obeying interiorly, etc.

God will make you understand what I am saying. I will be here until the end of September and then, please God, I will go out once more on missions. If you wish to write to me once a week, not withstanding my occupations, I will answer willingly. But if you do not feel a strong impulse from God, do not write.

I find myself in a state I cannot explain; I fear the divine justice. I ask you to the utmost of my knowledge and strength that out of pure charity you pray for me that God have mercy and save my soul. Recommend much to God other affairs in line with my intentions, especially a business of service to God. For if it is not to be profitable, may His Divine Majesty block it. Meanwhile, I desire only to do the Will of God, and that is where all my prayers are aimed.

Believe me, Sister Colomba, that if God were to reveal to you my poor state, you would tremble. Out of charity pray much and know that your confessor is opening two letters of Father John Baptist.

Jesus make you as holy as I desire.

Your servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

1031

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (4)

San Angelo

July 14, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Beloved Father Master,

I read your letter and see that your present prayer is according to God. Continue that way and never stop staying in your nothingness, and pray His Divine Majesty to have you feel it to the depth. But when the Lord makes this nothing disappear in his Infinite All, it is necessary to be very obedient to the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit. The point Your Reverence does not understand about making the sufferings of Jesus your own through the work of love, His Divine Majesty will make you understand when it shall please him. This is completely a divine work. The soul, all immersed in pure love and without images, in pure and naked faith, when it pleases the Sovereign Good, in a moment finds itself immersed in the sea of the pains of the Savior and in the glance of faith understands without understanding, since the Passion of Jesus is totally a work of love. Since the soul is completely lost in God who is Love, who is entirely Love, there is a mixture of love and pain because the spirit remains penetrated completely and remains in a sorrowful love and a loving sorrow. A work of God. Here one does not fish unless the Sovereign Lord teaches, etc. I have explained myself stutteringly, but I have said nothing, nothing.

Let us remain in our nothingness, in our having nothing, able to do nothing, knowing nothing, etc., and God will draw from this nothing works to his greater glory.

With regard to a candidate for master, you speak wisely. I will take care at the right time to bring in Father Anthony Lucchese,³⁷⁶ etc., for he does seem to have some of the qualities, but is too timid. God will provide.

I am aware only of having to embrace you in Christ. Greet everyone for me and pray for us, for my needs are extreme.

Greet the Father Rector for me and all in the Lord.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

1032

Girolama Ercolani (34)

San Angelo

July 17, 1756

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

In the post last night among a great packet of letters I received yours, in which I see that the marriage of your daughter has taken place. You should not excite yourself any further. Recognize the Will of God in this marriage and be quiet about it, making frequent acts of resignation to the Divine Will. That will keep you in peace in all contrary happenings, which must be remedied with great charity, patience, and prudence. Two good daughters are still at home. They ought to be quiet and resigned over the marriage of their sister, rejoicing in Jesus Christ that the Will of God has been done and without being sad over the loss of her companionship.

Signora Girolama, do not leave off your practices of devotion that you have always followed, and do not be upset about your confessions for they were well made. Use the advice I have given you in my letters. I do not fail, nor shall I fail, to recommend your household to the Lord, including all your affairs. Stay happy and have no doubt that the Lord will always assist you and will give you copious blessings. It may happen that on my return from the mission I have toward the end of October, I may pass your way, but I am not certain. If God wills it, I will have the consolation in Jesus Christ to pay you a visit and acknowledge again the great obligations that I owe you. Enclosing you and all your household in the holy Side of Jesus, I am always,

Your obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

376. Father Anthony Pucci of Saint Augustine Di Controne, from Lucca ("Lucchese"), born in 1731 and died on July 26, 1791, was vice master for many years and master from 1773-1781.

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (31)

San Angelo
July 20, 1756

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

I have been a long time at this table with many letters to answer and little health to do it. Nevertheless, I am responding very willingly to your letter. I have need of dictation from the Sovereign Master and will speak stutteringly, being the miserable sinner I am. The first point of your letter, which is concerned with my being so filled with fear, does not ring true, for those grand thoughts with which you express yourself come, in my opinion, only from your imagination, which causes you to have such a conception of me. In truth it is not like that. So I beg you the more to cry out to the Lord.

Let us come to ourselves. I do not intend to contradict your confessor, although I speak with the doctrine of the masters of the spirit. You did well to obey, but now you have obeyed and you ought not force your spirit to restrain those flights that holy Love has you make. You ought to do your part by remaining in your nothing in pure faith, but when the Sovereign Giver of every gift wishes to dissolve this nothing in that Infinite All that is God Himself, why should you hold back? Who can resist this divine operation that is all from God; not the soul, for it does nothing but obey that loving attraction? If I were writing to another person who is not led in this way, I would not speak in this manner, but I come back to you that you promptly obey this flight of pure love.

I wish that your preparation for all these exercises be a remaining in your horrible nothing, knowing that you have nothing, can do nothing, and know nothing. As for those who wish to be something, God wishes to do nothing; but he who is aware of his nothingness in truth, this makes him disposed, etc. "If anyone thinks himself to be something, he deceives himself," said the Apostle, whose name I bear unworthily.

Now when love absorbs this horrible nothing to lead it to his sheepfold, which is the bosom of the Eternal Father, why do you not have to obey? The gentle Jesus, speaking of his elect, says: "Father, where I am I will my servant to be." That is man or woman. He remains in the bosom of the Father, and the soul that is united to him through pure and holy love stays there with him "in the bosom of the Father," and there feeds on love, etc., and love divinizes it, etc. It is true that these are sublime truths because they are the things of God. But who could ever grow proud over them? Who could ever attribute to self things so elevated? Would not such a one be worse than Lucifer? What we have is nothing, and we of ourselves have deepened that nothing with the horrible nothing that is sin. Oh, woe to the proud! I have little time, but I understand the vigilance you tell me about, and this is a major grace. Such vigilance makes you not look at the gifts, nor at your pleasure, nor at your pain, nor at yourself, but purely the soul wishes the purest love — plain, naked, and watchful that nothing of the smoke of earth is mingled in the divine flame. Such vigilance brings with it poverty of spirit, abstraction from all that is not love, and loves with the love of Uncreated Love and makes the holy sufferings of the Beloved

one's own. It allows love to be the executioner to crucify self from within and without with a loving suffering and suffering love — pure, clean, refined.

I have no more time. Stay in your nothing, stay in the interior solitude of the Divine Spouse, allow yourself to be crucified even with a holy and peaceful fear, for cedars of Lebanon have fallen, and your graces, great as they are, and even when they are greater, are the more to be feared, but with a fear of self, maintaining that holy vigilance mentioned above.

Oh! how great a need I have of prayers! Pray much, much, especially for the foundation of a Retreat and for another affair of glory to the Lord, that I may be sure to do the Will of God, but, above all, for me who am in extreme need. Jesus inflame you entirely with holy love, crucify you, and bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

1034

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (32)

San Angelo
July 27, 1756

Reverend Mother,

I am answering your letter, received last night, while I find myself in many occupations and a multitude of letters to answer and an abundance of crosses freshly added. Thanks be to God. It is true that Saint Catherine of Siena was forbidden to pray and to go to church, but since prayer does not totally consist in being on ones knees, the saint obeyed and made fools of everyone since, closed in her interior oratory, she treated in a grand manner with God and fed herself on holy love. You make good and just points, but you also make a great blunder. However, I have taken it in good part and in the sense in which you intend it. But if your letter were read by someone who knows nothing of your soul, he would condemn you as erring in faith. Now in these absorptions in God that you experience, you wish to say that God makes you understand that you are like a mere drop compared to the Sea of Beatitude. So far, this can pass. But the great blunder comes when you say: "God beatifies the soul and the soul beatifies God..." Oh, this is great blunder! If I had time I could explain what you are trying to say, but right now I cannot. You are to do that. Write clearly, and always humble yourself more and stay within your nothingness.

What you have to tell me about the Congregation are general truths, and I cannot make anything out of it. They are not infused lights. Continue to pray much, for the storms are continuing more horribly and sufferings increase from every side and in more ways. I will die under the load for nature cannot take on more without a miracle, but I am satisfied. "May the Will of God be done in me, within me, outside me, around me, in life, in death, and in eternity. Amen." I am in a hurry. Follow.

My business and my sickness increase; at most I will be able to answer two letters, since I have important affairs after I go on missions and come back here in June to reside in the Retreat. If I were your director — that will not be, nor

can it be, since it is forbidden in our Rules — I would order that the first point of your prayer would always be to take into consideration your sins and your great and super-great miseries, which you well know since you shared them with me. I would wish that you cast yourself into the depths. Afterwards, when God draws you out to himself in a special way, let yourself be guided, etc. In that way you would proceed securely. This is what I advise you since, not being your director, I cannot command you. Jesus bless you.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

1035

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (33)

San Angelo
August 1, 1756

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

I have already made two visits to Cardinal Valenti, secretary of state, who is in Viterbo to take the waters. My last visit was yesterday, and I came back much dazed by the sun.

I recommend that sick one to your charity. There is need of a miraculous grace, truly miraculous. God is omnipotent and can do all. It is certain that such a grace would contribute, in my opinion, to the great glory of God, and I desire it for this unique end, that is our good God be glorified and his mercies magnified. Enough. Take thought to cry out to the Lord and to Mary Most Holy but do it with perseverance, with faith, etc. My head is not working and the post is leaving. I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus and am,

I am in negotiations for two foundations, and, in my opinion, things have begun well, and it seems there are no longer any doubts. But in truth they have made me do a lot of thinking. Place them in the Wounds of Jesus, asking the Lord that if they are not from his good pleasure, may he place an impediment. Sister Colomba, take it to heart to cry out to the Lord for the grace mentioned above for the cardinal and the rest, etc.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1036

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (34)

San Angelo
August 3, 1756

*May Jesus who is the light of the world
illumine our minds and inflame our hearts
with the fire of his holy love.*

Last night I read your letter which enlightened me. You explained yourself very well; you could not have done it better. But if you made a more profound reflection on what I said in my other letter, you would not have been afflicted because you would have noticed that I took in a good sense the error you made

in writing, as I knew that it truly was not an error, but a lack of explanation. God, however, permitted that, so that I, together with the clearer explanation in your present letter, would know more clearly that the interior work in your soul is entirely of God. In my opinion I have never known the spiritual conduct of Sister Colomba as well, even though it has been many years during which you have given me an account.

May that Sovereign Lord be blessed for ever, who works his marvels for the poorest and most abject in the house of God. So continue your prayer in the manner in which God guides you and be obedient to the loving attractions of the Holy Spirit. Do not lose sight of your horrible nothing and do not steal anything from the blessed God.

Present yourself in prayer, sunk in your nothingness but clothed with Jesus Christ and with his sufferings in pure faith and nakedness of spirit, despoiled of imaginings, and let your soul make that flight of love which the Heavenly Spouse has you make. While he makes you make your flight, he gives you the wings for the flight. These are the wings of faith, the wings of hope, the wings of the fire of love.

Once you have taken that grand flight, let your soul lose itself in the abyss of love that is God. Once returned from that flight, your soul should not be diverted from that divine interior solitude and the perfect knowledge of your own nothingness.

As for what you have to say about me, I cannot put any reliance on that since I experience, know personally, and see very clearly the very opposite in a very clear light. Oh, if you knew in God my poor, miserable state! you would see me in the lowest hell. If the Divine Goodness were to work the prodigy of mercy by raising me out of it, I would be forced to sing, magnifying the mercy of the Lord: "You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Enough. If you will do me the charity of praying His Divine Majesty to save this poor soul of mine and grant me perfect contrition, you will have great merit. It is certain that you have need of a spiritual director, but, believe me, not in a thousand, not even in ten thousand, as Saint Francis de Sales claims, can you find even one. Since in addition to being very learned, he would also need to be a man of highest contemplation, for without experience these highest and stupendous marvels that God works in the soul are not understood. But what am I saying? I am speaking paradoxes because the most elevated souls, although they understand, cannot express what they understand. They would not be works of God if they could be understood. This is the great satisfaction that the soul experiences when it rejoices so greatly that God is that Immense Good that he is, and that no one, neither angels nor human beings, can understand his marvels. So they understand without understanding and remain in a holy unknowing, overshadowed by Divine Wisdom.

Oh, how greatly lost is my mind in writing what I have written! Therefore, I tell you to seek the favor from the Lord that he provide you with a spiritual director so that you may walk with greater freedom of spirit without fear. I assure you that when I am back in residence in the Retreat, I will always willingly receive your letters and will answer them. While I would wish to have

the learning and the gifts necessary to assist you well as spiritual Father, I am in the deepest hell.

When the Lord chose Father Alvarez as director for Saint Teresa, one night as he passed by her room, God gave him the gift of very high prayer so that he might understand the saint.

Continue to pray for the needs of the Congregation, for Cardinal Valenti, for the Marchioness Sacchetti to acquire health, etc. For all of August I will be here and you may write me.

Your unworthy, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

1037

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (35)

San Angelo
August 10, 1756

J.C.P.

For five days I have been nailed to this sack of straw with agonies and spasms in my joints and in the nerves of my knees and feet that go beyond all my human strength, along with other horrible scourges and most fearful abandonment, which are presages of a hell already begun, just as the high union and joy that just souls enjoy are presages of beatitude begun. The things you have to tell me are overly imaginative and come from the charity that allows you to have a good opinion. For the rest, what you are saying is false. So recommend me much, for the need is extreme, so that His Divine Majesty uses me with mercy and does not punish me with effects of his fearful justice, as I am experiencing and justly deserve. I have read your letter and it seems to me that your affairs are going well. Continue to put in practice what I told you. I am writing this from my straw mattress. Last night has truly been a hell. Jesus bless you.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1038

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (36)

San Angelo
August 21, 1756

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

Although the swelling continues from my waist to my feet, especially in the knees and other joints, I can celebrate. I am waiting for it to loosen a bit so that I may be able to leave for the missions in Sabina around September 4. I want to hope that Sister Colomba is a bit better from the trouble that came to her, so I am desirous for some news, as well as to know whether your prayer goes on as usual and whether knowledge of your horrible nothingness is increasing, along with a high trust in God, so that your nothing can disappear in the Infinite

All that is God the Best and Highest just as a small drop of water is dissolved and lost in the waters of the ocean or sea.

I would also like to know if your soul is making that flight to God with the wings of faith and the fire of love, and, if in making these flights, you pass through the gate that is Christ our Lord, losing yourself in the sea of his sufferings, which is the greatest and most stupendous work of divine love.

Do not fail to tell me whether you are continuing to pray for me, who am so needy and miserable, and other things already referred to. Since at the end of August I hope to go to Viterbo to see our known sick person, who is very desirous of this, so I would wish that you offer humble and fervent prayers for this, praying with faith that if it be the Will of God, I do this. You may write me once more. All this is to be kept very secret. I am saying no more and will wait for your reply. Leaving you in the holy Side of the Savior, I pray for his copious blessing for you and am,

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1039

Teresa Palozzi (2)

San Angelo
August 22, 1756

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in our hearts.*

Signora Teresa,

I am a debtor to a letter which I received while I was on my bed with pain in my joints. I had the Father Secretary reply to you. I believe you will have received it. I rejoice in Jesus Christ to read that you are always more desirous to love the gentle Jesus. Your desire will be fulfilled for the Lord will grant you the great gift of his holy love, which is the treasure of treasures. Therefore, you are to be faithful in persevering in the path begun, especially in the exercise of the holy virtues, in humility of heart, in love for self-contempt, in true obedience, modesty, mortification, internal and external, especially of the eyes, and of the tongue by speaking little but well, in a great charity with your neighbor, and staying away from all particular confidences with anyone whomsoever.

Above all, I recommend that you never leave holy mental prayer and that you frequent the sacraments at least three times a week; make frequent spiritual communions even at home while working, etc.; embrace your sweet sacramental Jesus in spirit and make your heart a living tabernacle of the lovable Savior; carry him with you always and offer him sweet affections of love. He himself will teach you, so be solitary within yourself in the inner temple of your soul and flee idleness.

Wear the small chain with discretion above your knees and not at the joint but higher, etc. You can understand. Put it on with modesty with the window closed so as not to see yourself, even to abhor yourself. Wear it an hour on Monday, an hour on Wednesday, an hour on Friday, and an hour on Saturday.

Wear it only at home, not outside. If on these days a holy day of obligation occurs, do not wear it and do not take the discipline. Make use of the discipline with discretion. Eat and drink what you need, being careful not to ruin your stomach or you will not be able to do anything. I say the same for sleep at night. Take as much as you need, for in youth, where you are, if you do not take the right amount of sleep, you will entirely lose strength of mind.

With regard to becoming a Pious Teacher, I leave you free, and, if the canon, your confessor, approves, go ahead, for that will help to take you away from the noise of the world at this time. But stay resolute in your heart so that, if the work I have shared with you comes into being, you will already be on the way with a fine preparation and then will retreat to a more perfect life, etc. Keep this completely sealed tight in your heart. So for now I do not disapprove your going to the school of the Pious Teachers, but only until the time that God wills. I will not fail to pray for the affair you mention to me. Jesus make you as holy as I desire, and I am always,

Your useless servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

If you go to the school as a Pious Teacher, take care not to leave your spiritual father, the canon, and, above all, take care not to indulge in private confidences with anyone. With modesty be submissive to all. I hope to say more to you face-to-face, if God so wills. Encourage Anna Cecilia since she is a good little girl, and I have great hopes for her.

1040

Thomas Fossi (80)

San Angelo

August 24, 1756

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, Beloved in Christ,

Since I am leaving in a few days for the holy missions and will not be in this Retreat until June of next year, as I usually am, and since I am now in the midst of my many tasks, I am replying briefly to your letter of July 31 — mainly because it contains nothing substantial. In the first place I wish that you were more restrained in writing, leaving out so many superfluous and useless affections. I already know the great charity you have for me, and there is no need to express it with so many repeated affections since our soul ought to be purified of all that is earthly, so as to be naked, strong, reserved, prudent, and careful to cut out all that is superfluous. I am glad that you have received my letters, and I hope you will have received the one responding to your son. I am referring to the one where you say you wish to have him vested again. I suppose you want him to be attired as a priest as you told me you desire; however, I cannot consent nor will I ever be able to consent that he wear our habit over there in the world, all the more reason since he is growing up.

For the rest, I beg you to let all your desires for penances die in the Divine Will, while in the Lord I tell you that they are not for you. The blessed God will accept your good will but does not wish the fulfillment. Take care to practice

the virtues consonant with your state in life, principally humility of heart, true resignation to the Divine Will in all that happens by embracing contradictions and adversities with peace and submission of spirit, staying in true union and charity with your family, keeping everyone happy in God, etc. In regard to your scruples, I want you to quiet down, for these illusions you experience are not voluntary nor are you the cause. If you mention them to your confessor, you do well to do that, and, if you are doing it, humble yourself before God and overcome the demon, but they are not a matter for confession since they are not sins, but temptations to which you do not consent.

Dear Thomas, continue bravely to carry the cross that God has placed on your back. Love your abjection, rejoice in God to be in the state where God has placed you, embrace all the sufferings that God permits you as precious joys. Keep your family happy and contented in the Lord, and thank God that he has given you such a good family. Try to have them continue the slight prayer that they can make, and, when God wills he will give them wings to fly, but without wings they cannot fly.

"Provided they do not sin," said Saint Philip, "I would be happy to have them cut wood on my shoulders." To the boys he said: "Be quiet, if you can." Oh, how gentle and discreet the saints! I know your great charity toward our Congregation and to our religious who come over there. God will give you an eternal reward and will bring about a change in your situation, even in temporal matters. Now God is testing your fidelity.

Greet your wife for me in Jesus Christ, along with your sons and daughters. I enclose them in the gentle Side of Jesus and recommend myself to their common prayers. I leave on September 4. In haste I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1041

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (37)

San Angelo
August 25, 1756

*May the holy Passion of Jesus Christ
be in your heart.*

In the ordinary post I received your letter which I could scarcely read. I understood little or nothing of it. But it is not to be wondered that I did not understand since a mole does not have eyes and does not see the light of the sun. You need a wise and holy director, so ask that of God in prayer. All your letters are full of paradoxes, and to understand them it is necessary to be on the same plane, or at least a light is needed coming down from the Great Father of Lights. In my judgment it seems that the prayer you describe for me is more in poverty of spirit than before. You should continue to remain in your nothing and live abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure. Please God, I will be leaving around the September 4. Do not bother writing any more, for I think I will be speaking to you in the Lord, and writing to me is a waste of time.

I cannot say anything more, except to ask you to remember me before God in your prayers so that His Divine Majesty will use mercy toward me and save my soul. Meanwhile, I experience the blows of a fearful chastisement and abandonment, which increase all the time. May the Will of God be always done. Do not write me further since until June I will not be in residence at the Retreat; and it is time wasted because I have no light for direction.

If God would so wish, seek it with others. Now you have understood me. Jesus bless you. Amen

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

1042

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (38)

San Angelo
September 4, 1756

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother in Christ,

I received your letter and rejoice that the Lord has made you know the truth, and I hope you will profit from it and be more on your guard. The truth is that I have always known that in your locutions there has been a mixture of your imagination and a thinness of understanding. The short way is to humble oneself always and remain in a filial fear without trusting in self. The locutions, as I said in my other letter, are always dangerous, and the masters of the spirit teach they are always to be rejected, whatever they may be, for if they are good and true, they will always bring about their effect; otherwise, drive them away, make them like hot coals that touch your skin, even though you throw them off they leave a burn. So learn this rule and stay well on guard. Oh! if you only knew the wonderful effects that true locutions make and what impressions they leave on the soul with infallible certainty! You can drive them away as much as you want, for the impression and the effects are infallible, as well as other stupendous effects. Continue your practices, especially remaining in your nothing, hidden to all creatures, with pure intention and high confidence in God, recollected within yourself in God, clothed with Jesus Christ and his holy sufferings. Oh! here there is nothing deceitful! The base of your conduct is sound, there is no question, so be content in God and do not give way to upsets. Entrust yourself to the Lord, distrusting yourself, and stay in peace.

Pray much for me, for I am leaving for missions and will not be back here, except for passing through, until the middle of next July — if I will be alive then. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

George Melata (8)

Cantalupo
September 20, 1956

Reverend Father,

I received your welcome letter, to which I have the honor to inform you that the important letter from the archpriest Mariani of Campagnano was sent to me from San Angiolo regarding the contemplated mission. I would ask your kindness, first of all, to humbly extend my respects to the vicar general and assure him in my name that I will not fail to be in Campagnano for the mission at the beginning of November and after the Feast of All Saints, provided that I am not still prevented by any more severe and serious health problems than those I am suffering at present.

Meanwhile, after I rest myself a few days at San Angiolo, I will begin a mission around October 25 at Scrofano or Formello. I would also ask you to favor me by conveying in my name these plans of mine to the Archpriest Mariani in Campagnano, specifying that I will be with him after All Saints in conformity with what I wrote above. Reverencing you, along with your pious household, I am with full esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

On October 12, I will be at San Angelo. So I ask you to inform me whether I can trust the air in Magliano, where I would be on October 24 or 25, if the air is not bad, and then continue to Campagnano, etc. Out of charity, may I have your reply on my arrival in order to direct myself. I offer my reverent greetings to the vicar general and all his reverent household, and kiss your sacred hands.

Joseph Danei (2)

San Angelo
November 2, 1756

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

I have adored the Divine Will in the account given me in your letter of last September about the death of our sister Catherine, who I hope has been received into the bosom of the Divine Mercies, and for all the more reason that the Savior presented her to himself well prepared and strengthened with the holy sacraments, especially with her making a general confession not only when she was well, but also in her last illness. These are the clearest signs of her eternal salvation. It is not necessary to have revelations to have such certainty since that is not pleasing to God. The truth is that the great poverty in which she lived, along with you two, and the sufferings, most extreme, she underwent in her last days are great signs of her eternal predestination to the glory of heaven. So you have reason to console yourselves much in the Lord and encourage yourselves always more in suffering your difficulties, for after this momentary suffering

there is prepared for you, out of the Mercy of God, an eternity of joy. I strongly put my hopes in the infinite merits of the sufferings of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy that together we will all sing forever the mercies of the Most High and will say with the holy Prophet: "We rejoiced for the days in which you humbled us, the years in which we saw evils." So rejoice in God and be faithful to him.

With regard to the desire you mention to me of retiring, at this time I ought not advise that for you. You should stay with your sister Teresa as long as she lives in a holy and perfect peace and charity, making mental prayer each morning and evening on the sufferings of Jesus, frequenting the holy sacraments every week, preparing at every moment for a holy death, keeping busy as best you can, and continuing to live in your poverty, in which you will receive from God in the depth of your soul inestimable gifts of grace, all the more precious since they are hidden.

Believe me, in resigning yourselves peacefully to the Will of God and voluntarily accepting to lead your painful and dying life out of love for the sufferings and death of that Sovereign Lord, who for love of us wished to make himself so poor and then die naked on a Cross, you will be very pleasing to God, even more than if you led a penitential life in the Thebiad Desert. You will die holy.

If our sister Teresa, being older than you, takes her flight to paradise when it shall please the Lord and if you outlive her, you could end your days in one of our Retreats. Right now it is morally impossible to find a place for our sister in any convent. It is true that in the poor house in which you live, you can live a life holier than in any of the more rigorous and penitential convents because you have the lot to be burdened with suffering and the great discomforts of poverty. If these are accepted willingly and with total resignation to the Good Pleasure of God, they will make you more pleasing to God than the sharpest penances you could perform. I suffer much not to be able to give help and relieve your suffering to some extent, but God so wills it because the rigorous poverty I profess keeps me from this. In this, too, I am pleased to do the Will of God.

I read your letter on the night of the Vigil of All Saints as soon as I returned from the missions in Sabina. Immediately, the very next day, all three of us began to celebrate Mass for the soul of our deceased sister, and we will continue to do so for some time for the two of you. Take courage, dear ones, for God loves you and will never abandon you, and your sister will be praying for you and for us. I see that now the memory of our poor house is totally extinct in that region, and I rejoice much over that in God. I do not know how to express this; therefore, I cannot, and ought not, put it in words.

Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you. Greet our sister for us and express our thanks to the good daughter, Longhi, and tell her that the Masses have been celebrated and the holy alms she offered have ascended to the Presence of the Most High as a sweet-smelling incense.

Remain in the Side of Jesus, from whom I ask the most copious blessings.
We leave once more on Saturday for missions.
Your unworthy, affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

1045
Joseph Danei (3)³⁷⁷

Toscanello
December 17, 1756

Jesus, with his grace, be always in our hearts.

Father Paul, because of his many occupations, has asked me to answer your letter of November 4. That was the second letter giving us news of the death of our poor sister. He answered immediately with his own hand, and I think you will have received his answer. I answer once more and tell you that as soon as we arrived at the Retreat of San Angelo from the missions in Sabina, which was one or two days before the Feast of All Saints, we were given the first letter about her death that took place at the end of August. The Sacrifice of the Mass was offered immediately by all three who had come back to the Retreat, and during all the Octave of the Dead, Masses were offered for the happiness of the soul of our deceased sister.

I have not forgotten to remember her in my Holy Mass and my poor prayers, as I believe our two brothers did also. Take your consolation in the Lord that the dead closest to us die in extreme poverty since God, our Father, has predestined them to be conformable to his Divine Son in glory and wished them to be predestined to be conformed first in poverty and in the cross; this is a stronger reason for us to have confidence in the eternal salvation of our poor parents and our poor sister, especially, as you say, she lived a devout life and was compassionate to her neighbor and received the holy sacraments. Take courage on the basis of the foundation given by Saint Paul that those predestined to glory are first predestined to be conformed to Christ on the cross, and rejoice in your distress and poverty, make a virtue out of necessity, act as though poverty were your choice, accepting it from the hands of the Highest Good, and that will cause you to know you have received a blessing. "Blessed are the poor for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs." Be sure of my poor prayers now and always. I am from a true heart,

Your affectionate servant,

John Baptist of Saint Michael, Archangel

Poor Paul of the Cross tells you that he immediately answered your letter and God knows how much he feels for you, nor does he fail to cry out to the Lord for you two. He conceives an ever more lively faith in your eternal salvation, and that the blessed God will open a way for your necessary support in your earthly life. Take heart in God and know that you are richer than you could possibly think, since that poverty which is abhorred by the world is a

377. This letter is written for Paul by his brother John Baptist.

great jewel, rich in every good before God. I am writing in haste and pray the copious blessing of the Lord for you.

1046

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (5)

December 17, 1756

Whereas, my beloved Father John Mary, master of novices, at the time he was rector very rarely supplied me with information on the Retreat he governed, so now when he takes care of the novices, he holds to that practice. In this way he shows the opinion he has of the General, which the General merits. On this I have no more to say. Father Paul of the Cross ought not to be of any esteem because that would be a sin against the truth, since he is, through his own fault and disgrace, so filled with vices. But as superior of the Congregation he should be held in reverence because he represents Jesus Christ, and people should give him necessary information. Now, let this be entirely forgotten, since God lets me know who I am and does not allow me to be resentful. I embrace my abjection in peace.³⁷⁸

1047

Maria Aldobrandini

San Angelo
December 23, 1756

*The Love of Jesus and Mary Most Holy
be always in your heart. Amen.*

To my edification I read your devout letter last evening. From that letter I see more than ever the truth of the thought the Lord gave me regarding your sickness, which has been a path of great profit for you. I can say: "This sickness is not unto death, but that God may be glorified." So let us bless the Most High for his infinite mercies and chant them forever in heaven, as I hope.

I have come back a short time ago from two neighboring cities where I gave retreats in the form of missions on the occasion of the Jubilee, and I find myself not a little reduced in strength and with poor health. I am answering briefly in order not to strain my head.

Signora Maria, you cannot believe how much consolation the holy thoughts you expressed afforded me, and I hope to cooperate with you for the glory of God. Now you have made a vow to enter religious life in some convent that I will pick out. So I will not fail to cry out to God to give me light. While I think I have it now, I do not trust myself to put it on paper and am waiting to do that when I am clearer. If the Mercy of God makes that come about, you will be a great instrument of his glory, and the Lord will make you holy.

378. Paul wrote an apology to John Mary Cioni on January 13, 1757.

Take to heart this expression that I am using, and pray meantime to His Divine Majesty that he open the way and make you disposed to receive such a singular grace. Now that you have made a vow to enter religious life, a vow cannot be dispensed except by the pope, you need to conduct yourself as a person entirely consecrated to God, and so you must leave all pomp, both in your attire and all your conduct of life. The King of Kings has already accepted you as his chosen spouse, so you need to outfit yourself with all the virtues which are the jewels that are pleasing to your Divine Spouse, especially humility of heart, knowledge of your own nothingness, modesty day and night, with great custody of your emotions, custody of your eyes and tongue, assiduity in prayer, fashioning an interior oratory for yourself, always having the gentle Jesus exposed on the altar of your heart so as to be always on fire with his holy love.

I have no more time. Abandon yourself on the holy bosom of Jesus like a child, and ask for the grace that he be your master on the way of perfection and teach you how to pray. Be certain he will teach you. I will wish you greetings for the feast from the holy altar on this coming Holy Night and place your heart in the hands of Mary Most Holy so that she may nurse you with her pure milk and keep you hidden in the swaddling bands of the Divine Infant Jesus. I will do the same for your mother, all the household, and also for those good religious. Enclosing all of you in the Heart of Jesus, especially your soul, I pray for you the copious blessings of Jesus. I forgot to tell you, so that your life and health may be secure, that His Divine Majesty will grant that perfectly, and on Christmas Day I will send a blessing from here. Now is the time of suffering and resignation, for now the Lord by means of this sickness purifies you, soul and body, so that you may be purified and be a living temple of the Holy Spirit. You understand me. Be happy in God, for you have clear signs of his holy love, and one day you will admit to me with great jubilation of heart your wonderful lot.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Your letter filled me with edification and satisfaction in the Lord, both because of your holy thoughts and of the news you gave me of the good order in the Retreat and the holy observance. I am very happy that Father Constantine³⁸⁰ is there, and I am hoping that Father Provincial will leave him there with you as I am asking him to do in the enclosed letter, which I ask you to have sent to him when you find a secure way to do so. I think he is giving a mission in Pontecorvo.

I was happy with the news that Father Provincial has taken Father James³⁸¹ from there, and I believe that the Lord will make him a worker of true prudence. "Blessed be God who works his mercy for us." With regard to these silly pious women, do all you can to keep them away and give the order that if anyone comes, they be handled as quickly as possible and that they shall not be dealt with at length in the confessional. Otherwise, great difficulties will arise. Take counsel with Father Provincial. You have done very well to put the Retreat in good order, especially with the steps.

Regarding your conduct, I tell you not to be upset with distractions and interior pains. These always come along with the weight of governing imposed on superiors. Keep your heart turned toward heaven, humble and plunged into your nothingness, with a pure intention, peaceful, and often rouse it with sweet affections with a revival of faith in the Presence of God, and you will see that your poor heart will dart into the arms of the Highest Good. You should do that at prayer and in all your functioning: "They have made you ruler, be among them as one of them." Be all charity and meekness with your members, and show them the heart of a mother, but always hold yourself in such a stance that your members will be in a holy reverence and attitude toward the superior.

Finally, I tell you that a superior who carries the cross of governing with perfection, suffering in peace the adversities, the contradictions, the ill manners, and all the afflictions he encounters, not seeking consolation from creatures, but purely seeking to please God, living abandoned as a child in the Divine Good Pleasure, will have in paradise the palm of martyrdom, for he will be a martyr of charity.

379. Peter Vico was born in 1726, entered the Congregation in 1749, and was ordained on March 28, 1750. He was elected rector of San Sosio at Falvaterra. There were problems there with pious women who were seeking counsel from the priests. Father Peter was accused of terrible behavior and resigned as rector. He bore this cross for many years, living at the Presentation and also fulfilling the office of novice master. He died in 1773, his accuser having confessed that her charge was groundless. There are sixteen letters written to him.

380. Father Constantine Maioli of the Resurrection left in 1757.

381. Father James Vanni of Saint Blaise was dismissed in 1760.

I am in a hurry, and today I leave to serve three convents where they have been expecting me for years. In any needs have recourse to Father Provincial. At the end of January, I will be here; however, I am not going to the Presentation. I wished everyone the festal greetings from the holy altar. Greet Father Constantine for me and all the community and pray for us. I embrace you closely in the Heart of Jesus, along with all the religious family, and I am from my heart,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

Add the region to the address of the letter to Father Provincial.

“I Have Abandoned Everything” (1757)

This becomes a difficult year for Paul. He is quite busy with missions and retreats but barely has the strength and health to begin or conclude these ministries. He is trying to make one or two new foundations, but again something seems to get in the way. At times it seems the convent for the nuns will be built, but again something blocks this effort. Perhaps he sums up this year in the words he wrote to a religious sister on August 9, 1757: “...I have abandoned everything, whether those looking toward the Congregation or those regarding the convent, to the Divine Good Pleasure...”

Paul writes letters on profound mystical prayer. He gives the novice master practical advice about the use of tobacco by one of the brothers in the novitiate. He insists that Dominic Costantini take safeguards to avoid any legal questions if the bishop should die before the convent for the Passionist nuns is built. There are also other important letters.

As the year ends Paul is looking forward to the early General Chapter in February when he will be free (letter of November 8, 1757, to Fossi). He is tired, sick, and too busy. The affairs of the Congregation way heavy upon him. He is constantly under pressure to give another mission here or there. Religious want him to give them their retreats and individuals are seeking his guidance and direction. Paul feels the need for solitude.

Above all, Paul wanted to see the Congregation more firmly established in the Church. It is more and more obvious to all that Pope Benedict XIV was in weak health and also under heavy pressures from the demands of Catholic rulers. Paul must have felt that it was more prudent to wait for a new pope to secure solemn vows. In Paul's mind a General Chapter with the election of a new General might possibly be God's way of establishing the Congregation.

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (1)³⁸²

At the Convent in Ischia

January 9, 1757

Leaving on Friday

or at the latest next Saturday.

*J.C.P.**Jesus, who is our Way, our Truth and our Life,
sanctify you and have you reborn to a new life of love. Amen.*

Yesterday, I received your letter, given me by the Mother Vicareess, and I have reason to magnify the divine goodness for the mercies he continues to impart to your soul. O my blessed daughter, how indebted you are to your Spouse, Christ Jesus! Ah! continue to remain in your horrible nothingness so that the Most High may make this nothingness disappear in the depth of his infinite love. I beg you to remain hidden more and more and concealed from all creatures. My daughter, keep your treasure well sealed so these will not rob you. Continue to keep yourself naked, poor in spirit, despoiled of all the gifts granted you by the Lord so he may purify them of the dross of imperfections with which you have corrupted them. In this way continue to offer an incense to the Lord in the way I told you when I was there. Oh! how pleasing to God is making this sacrifice which consists in perfect stripping and nakedness taught by me!

Then your Spouse clothes his beloved spouse in a new garment, and that garment is bejewelled in grand style, such as the mind cannot grasp nor the tongue relate. When the Divine Spouse shows you the bosom of his divine love, as mentioned in the conference with you, fall at his feet with love. Be silent and love, and so live a life entirely of love, a godlike life, a holy life. Oh, what sweet falls these are! The loving penitent Saint Mary Magdalene, in seeing the gentle Jesus, fell at his feet out of love. O sweet fall! There she loved and was silent, and listened to the holy words of Jesus, and burned with love. Love speaks more with silence than with the tongue. That is what the Spouse wants Sister Mary Clare to do. Oh! how much I recommend this divine solitude, this sacred desert, which I spoke about so much in our holy conferences. Oh! how much I beg you to stay locked in that desert, hidden from all! Do not forget to make the suffering of your Beloved your own. Love is an intimate life that makes one's own the sufferings of the Beloved, who is the lovable Savior.

I am out of time; continue to recommend me to God because my need is extreme. Every day I place your heart in the Precious Blood of Jesus, and I place it as well in the gentle Heart of Jesus so that he may set it on fire,

382. Mary Clare is a member of the Capuchine convent at Farnese. Paul went to this convent in 1737 and continued giving retreats over the years. Cardinal Rezzonico, later Pope Clement XIII, was their protector in 1739 and wrote to Paul of his great work at this convent. There are eleven letters to Sister Mary Clare; the final one is dated March 4, 1769. Paul wrote to her seven times in 1757!

consume it, reduce it to ashes in those sacred flames. Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant in J.C.

1050

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (6)

San Angelo

January 13, 1757³⁸³

Now that I have this time free, I need to ask your pardon if I have written some harsh, ill sounding, and sick words, for, believe me, I am in a most miserable condition. May God keep everyone from such a state, "but I deservedly suffer this," and it is a miracle that "I am not totally overcome." For the most part I am hard pressed to put up with myself, and there are days, almost always, when I do not know how I can stand myself. I try with great effort to put up with others, but I fail all the time. Pardon me, miserable man that I am, flowing with vices. Pray for me and bless me.

1051

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (2)

Toscanello

January 18, 1757

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

I am answering your letter, received last evening, and in the Name of Jesus Christ I tell you not to fear anything because, by the grace of Jesus Christ, the devil will not overcome you by robbing you of that holy peace which your Divine Spouse, with so much mercy, has granted you after a long storm.

You are to make nothing at all out of the pressure and fears caused by your confessor when he says you are deceived and, rather than purifying you, you are being defiled, and similar things, as you relate to me.

Believe me, my blessed daughter, that this is a counterweight for you that God is permitting, so that you may plunge yourself into your nothingness, always allowing your horrible nothingness to be lost more and more in the Infinite All who is God our Highest Good. The divine goodness is making use of the instrument of the confessor, whose good intentions you must credit, so that you may have some taste of the Cross of the Savior and feed yourself abundantly on the Divine Will. Let us come to the remedy.

When your confessor tells you these things, listen to him with profound annihilation, with simplicity and silence, humbling your spirit even beneath hell itself, if that is possible, but in a quiet, sweet, and peaceful manner. When the

383. In Volume V this letter is dated January 13, 1769, but it seems likely to be an apology for the letter sent to Father John Mary Cioni on December 17, 1756.

confessor will have dismissed you, leave in peace and immediately utter the loving cry of a child with the words I am setting down for you here.

“Ah, Father! O Great Father.” Let God see in this way the pain, agony, and fears caused by the voice of your confessor, and immediately you will feel a sweet attraction which will make your spirit fly into the most profound depths of the divine solitude, in which your soul will remain totally absorbed in God. Your agony, fear, and scruples will be burned up in the infinite flame of holy love. Take your rest there, and, if the Divine Spouse should cause you to sleep, sleep in peace and do not awaken without his permission.

This divine sleep is a gift that the Divine Father gives his beloved. In this sleep of faith and love, one learns the science of the saints, and all the bitter servings of adversity are immediately digested. Oh, silence! Oh, holy sleep! Oh, precious solitude! Humble yourself always more, remain in a true poverty of spirit, despoil yourself, as I have told you, of all the gifts so that you remain soiled with your dross and offer the gifts as a sacrifice of praise and honor and blessing to the Most High, remaining in your nakedness. That sacrifice must be made in the flame of love without ever leaving the sacred desert.

I thank the Divine Mercy that your soul never departs from the memory of the pains of your Heavenly Spouse. I would wish you to allow yourself to be penetrated with the love with which he suffered. The short way is to lose yourself entirely in the sea of those pains, for, as the Prophet says, the Passion of Jesus is a sea of love and sorrow. Ah, daughter! this is a great secret revealed only to those who are humble of heart. In this great sea the soul fishes for the pearls of virtue and makes her own the pains of the well Beloved. I have great hopes that your Spouse will teach you this divine fishing, and you will become learned, remaining in your interior solitude beyond all images, apart from every earthly affection, detached from everything created in pure faith and holy love. I have touched on these points since I see that the sweet Jesus has called you to this. You must leave your soul free to make those flights that the Holy Spirit will have you make by being obedient to his sweet attractions. I want to say this as well, for it will serve you as an example. When your soul is in this sweet solitude, in that holy silence of faith and love, and senses some internal touch or awakening of love to cry out for the needs of the Church and the world, whether particular or general, it is right to do so immediately. But when this interior outcry has ended, you must take up your holy repose in God. For if you would return to your sleep of love and faith, that will be better. I hope that His Divine Majesty will make you understand what I am saying if you are very humble and crushed in your nothingness.

Again, I recommend that you do not take the slightest pain over what your confessor is saying.

Put into practice what I am saying in this letter. Be entirely at peace on my conscience and be obedient and never repeat a general confession of the past, etc. Take as matter of absolution something from the past, some vanity as a secular, disobedience at home, or the like, but nothing more.

Consumed in the fire of divine love, all your imperfections will vanish in a moment, and so continue to remain at peace with God in the sacred interior desert, etc.

As for the uproar of the devil on the lower level, despise it and make nothing of it. Humble yourself before God. Make use of the cries of an infant: "Ah, Father. Ah, Divine Spouse." Etc. He will make the evil one depart without your wearing yourself out. I will not fail to command the evil one so that he leave you. But you, too, should command him, especially when he wants to trouble you most.

Speak to him in this manner: "Cursed devil, I, a poor creature, servant and spouse of the Sovereign King of Glory, command you in the Name of Jesus Christ, true God, to depart from me and have no audacity to molest me and disturb my holy prayer. Depart, damned one, with all your companions; depart in the Name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Make this command with faith and with authority in Jesus Christ.

I pray His Divine Majesty to reward you for the prayers that you make for me who am so needy. Oh, if you knew my condition! May the Will of God be always fulfilled.

Read this letter with attention and reread it to better understand what I am saying in the Name of the Lord. Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire and hope. Amen.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1052

Maria Cherubina Bresciani (43)

Toscanello

January 19, 1757

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother, My Daughter in Jesus Christ,

On my return from a long campaign of missions and from assisting at two convents, I found your letter, forwarded from the Retreat of the Presentation at Orbetello. I am answering immediately, although I am loaded with business.

It is true that the observance of a Rule approved by the pope takes precedence over Constitutions approved by the bishop, but since these are based upon the Rule and are wall or forewall to protect the Rule, so it is necessary to observe these Constitutions very exactly. So let anyone say what she wants; with strong constancy have them enforced; and especially never permit that a door be left open so that the nuns may speak with the women you mention because these women show up at times with men, and in this way it happens that there is always great danger for the souls of your religious, and you would have to render an account to God. Stay strong and do not allow anyone to overcome you. Oh, if you only knew what damage comes from this!

I am experienced in convents, and I tell you that in this region the abuse of allowing women to sit at the door is not permitted, that is to say, even outside

where they seem to be seated with the nuns. This is a dangerous abuse, it seems to me, that I have elaborated enough above.

You are conducting yourself well with the religious who quarrel among themselves, and it is evident that the Lord is helping you in a special way.

As for my coming there to give a retreat, that is morally impossible. I am too loaded down with business, missions, and the government of the Congregation, and am, moreover, full of ailments and have little health. Select someone or ask the head of the diocese. Meanwhile, I see the needs are not small. Act more and more with courage, carry the cross of Jesus, repose like a child on his divine bosom, sleep quiet in the shade of this Tree of Life, and there eat of the fruits which fall from that tree, which seem bitter to the palate of sense, but sweet to the palate of the soul. Whence, to digest them, take your interior sleep with a peaceful repose on the holy breast of the gentle Savior since he is entirely a flame of holy love. In the heat of this divine charity, you will digest all with ease.

Believe me, by carrying the heavy cross of your superiorship with peace, zeal, constancy, and courage you will go to heaven with the palm of a martyr. This is the great gift that God gives to those souls who carry that weight with patience.

I am in a hurry, and I enclose you in the gentle heart of Jesus. Greet your good religious in the Lord for me. I recommend myself to your and their prayers, and with profound respect I affirm I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I hope that before February is over I will visit the Retreat at Mount Argentario, but I will stay only a short time.

1053

Prioress of the Monastery of the Holy Rosary (1) ³⁸⁴

Toscanello

January 21, 1757

J.X.P.

Very Reverend Mother,

I hope you will have received my letter from Ischia, in which I told you that an impediment has come up regarding my being able to serve your venerable convent as I truly wanted to do. I also advised you that I would like to make up for the deferral in this coming Lent when I have returned from Mount Argentario, if you have not been taken care of by another fervent worker. Now I am saying once more that on Sunday, the twenty-first of this month, I am opening a mission in Canino. After that I will immediately leave for the Retreat, and I hope to be there the first week after Ash Wednesday. If you still wish your monastery to be served, I will gladly come. I would think that I could be there for the opening on March 7 or 8, perhaps earlier. I have not wished to be

384. At the convent in Valentano

wanting in completing this duty of mine in witness of the keen desire I have to be part of your prayers and fervor.

I am also writing to the bishop regarding the impediment in coming to you and of the delay for the convent. I am in a hurry and ask the charity of your prayers, along with those of you pious confessor, whom I greet from my heart in Jesus Christ, and I affirm my profound respect and am,

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1054

Thomas Fossi (81)

Presentation
February 15, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

On my arrival at this Retreat, after two years and more of absence, I received your welcome letter sent December 6. Since I am here to make the Visitation and cannot stay more than ten days from arrival to departure, which will be next Thursday, and as I do not have a minute to do anything but take care of letters and other business, so I am replying briefly and in a hurry.

1. Let all your reflections and desires disappear in the Divine Will and in the fire of holy love. Desires for perfection are excellent, but it is necessary that they be ones that belong to your state in life. A secular cannot live the life of a hermit or a Capuchin, for example, but he becomes holy by fulfilling his obligations, by taking a holy care of his family without demanding an extraordinary life from them, but securing for all a great foundation of fear of God, observance of the divine law, frequentation of the sacraments, and prayer in accord with the spirit of each one in his family. These are thoughts I have tried to instill in you constantly, as you know.

I rejoice to read in your letter that you are managing to keep all your family happy in the Lord.

2. I recommend that you stay away from fixation. Make your prayer with a peaceful spirit, but do not lose sight of your interests. When you have made your prayer, which you can do at the time of Mass, see to taking care of the affairs of your household and taking advantage of ejaculatory prayer in the midst of your occupations but always with peace and without strain or fixation of your head and chest. Eat and drink what you need. I say the same thing as to sleep; otherwise, you will be always sickly. Remember, you are father of a family. Conduct yourself as such. Take care of your health.

3. In regard to a boat, I have no knowledge and cannot advise you. It does not belong to my concerns. Consult the people you mentioned to me, your uncle, etc.

I am ending, for I have too much to do, and since September I have had no rest and am not about to have any. I am leaving from here for other affairs for the service of God. Pray much for me, and I assure you that I am always more

grateful to you in Jesus Christ. Stay happy in the Lord, in whose sacred Side I
enclose you, and I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1055

Peter Vico of Saint John (2)

Presentation
February 15, 1757
Leaving Thursday.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Along with a letter from Father Provincial, I received yours. I cannot express with my pen the consolation and edification I felt. Oh, how good is our God! Oh, how gentle! Even Father Provincial is satisfied with your community and with your conduct. Ah! I pray the sweet Jesus to increase this more and more so they be a sweet-smelling incense to fill the province with a pleasing fragrance so that the Sovereign Giver of all gifts be praised and blessed.

Your account of how you changed the main door, and your way of doing it, filled me with happiness. Oh, how much I rejoice over this in the Lord. I assure you that for a long time, even always, that entrance, which was for a college and not for a Retreat, was a thorn in my heart, and I was resolved that when I came before the Chapter to make the General Visitation, I was resolved most strongly to demand a change.

You can let me know when you wish to have such a direction and let it come from me, and I will do as it is being done. If there is any concern as to what Signore Amati will say, that nothing of that is in our Rules, then I, when God allows me to come there, will persuade him peacefully.

I will not fail to pray, and have prayers offered, for our generous benefactor Dr. Giorgi. If you write him, greet him very much and tell him that I am praying the dear Jesus to bless his holy intentions.

I am writing in great haste, for I am leaving for an affair of great glory to God. If you need to write me, send the letter: "Viterbo for Toscanella, Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak," where I will be staying until Easter. Goodbye. I embrace you in Jesus Christ with all the religious of your community. Greet all of them for me, and let them pray for us. Here we have a flourishing novitiate of priests and clerics, learned, pious, etc. Stay in your interior, in your nothing, and in the bosom of God.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (3)

Toscanella
March 3, 1757

*May the holy Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy
be always in your heart. Amen.*

On my return to the holy Retreat yesterday morning, I read your letter, sent February 14. I am answering it in haste, for I am loaded with tasks, and next Saturday I leave to give a retreat in the convent at Valentano.

I feel the storm of scruples roused by the devil in your soul. So put into practice this obedience which I gave you, and it cannot do you any harm whatever. God is permitting this suffering so that your soul may be purified. Believe me, the suffering you experience makes it the purer in the divine sight.

That apprehension that you sin in every action is a suggestion from the devil. It is not true, it is not true. Humble yourself before the Lord with a sweet revival of faith, hide yourself entirely in God, flee to the deepest depths of the holy desert that I described to you, and immerse yourself entirely in that Highest Good, allowing yourself to be entirely reduced to ashes in that sacred fire of love. Believe me, the divine flame will consume all the fog and dust of scruples, and your soul will become more and more pure and beautiful in the eyes of the Divine Spouse.

In this holy fire you are to remain in the silence of faith and love, like a victim sacrificed as a holocaust to the glory of the Highest Good God without making the least discourse or reflection over such scruples, but, despising them constantly, repose in peace on the divine bosom.

From the merciful visits that the gentle Jesus makes to your soul, in which no deceit can be suspected, you can clearly know how much this gentle Spouse loves your soul, and you also can know that these scruples are the work of the devil.

With regard to the novena or other exercises you want to make to Saint Joseph, I must tell you that your prayer ought to be continuous in that divine solitude of which I spoke in our holy conferences since it is clear that the blessed God is leading you along this path. Oh, my daughter, if you only knew the gift of God, oh, how you would humble yourself, oh, how grateful you would be to God! Remain solitary, all hidden in God, clothed with the sufferings of your Spouse Jesus since he will teach you this divine practice.

If you want to perform some devotion for Saint Joseph, some vocal prayer or other, do so. It will be more pleasing to Saint Joseph that you stay in the holy desert of God, that you praise and thank the Divine Goodness, who so exalted him. Love will teach you, and utter a word for the miserable one who is writing.

You are worn out in strength, and I cannot consent to bloody disciplines, but use it according to the rule. As for the hair shirt, good God, do you not have a continual hair shirt now? Are you not wearing wool next to yourself? Are you not sleeping on a sack of straw? Content yourself with this. Only on Friday would I say you can wear a hair shirt from two to three in the afternoon. For the rest, follow your regular penances and believe you will be doing the Will of God. If you will write me a note at Valentano, I would be happy over that in the

Lord. Stay happy in God because your affairs are going well, and God will bring to perfection the work he has begun. Constantly put into practice what I have said while there. Pray much for me and for the Congregation and for a great work I have in hand. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1057

Thomas Fossi (82)

Toscanello

March 4, 1757

Leaving. If you have to write,
send it to Lady of the Oak.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received your letter, sent January 30, and I do not know why it is so late. From the Retreat of the Presentation I replied to another of your letters. I hope you will have received it. It has been years since I have suffered from too much overwork and fatigue from the missions and retreats at convents. I have been working from September 6 until now, and I am not through. The day before yesterday, I came back from a convent, and early tomorrow I am going to another. Blessed be God.

Now I am answering your last letter briefly. I see that truly the blessed God is making a great test of my dear Thomas.

But "rejoice when you fall into various temptations." That is what the Holy Spirit says in Saint James the Apostle, and in this text "temptations" are to be understood as all sorts of sufferings. But let us come to a shortcut. Do not look fixedly at anything and do not be looking back over the various happenings in your life, but with the eye of faith look at the Will of God, who, by playing with strong trials with your soul, is enriching it with graces without you seeing it. Make a bouquet of all these sufferings afflicting you and place them in the Divine Good Pleasure and, as permitted by His Divine Majesty, accompany this offering with a sweet, peaceful, loving dart in this way: "Yes, Father, because it was thus pleasing before you. O sweet Father, how dear your Holy Will is to me! Father, not my will, but yours be done." This is a most efficacious and sweetest prayer of Jesus Christ. When you make this prayer, quiet yourself and fear nothing. "Nothing will harm you" is a truth of holy faith. Get rid of all fear and all apprehension that the devil brings up of evils in the future, of sickness, and of going mad. Cast them off constantly and abandon yourself to the Will and Good Pleasure of God.

With regard to your son and frequent Communion, take up the question with his confessor. Consult him and then leave the rest to him. As to going to Rio, recommend that to the Lord and do what you think best in the Lord. Make devout reflections and you will know in the Lord, and with counsel, that the trip could be a renewal even of your health. Do as you judge best.

I am in a great hurry. Stay happy and trust in the Lord and say with holy Job: "Even if he slay me, I will hope in him." Do not strain your head. In your sickness you have to raise yourself and take refreshment for you health. A half-hour prayer in the morning with Mass will keep you recollected all day, but never allow yourself to be fixated.

Greet Signora Victoria and all your household, whom I see and will always see in the Side of Jesus. With full affection I say I am, and I ask for your prayers,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1058

John Francis Sancez (16)

Toscanello
March 4, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Along with your esteemed letter, I received a packet of Salonika tobacco. Since I witness more and more your charitable attention and heartfelt affection for me and all our Congregation, so I find myself always further moved to cry out to the Lord that he will, as I hope, bring a rain of his heavenly blessings upon your beloved person and all your pious house in things both spiritual and temporal.

To fulfill your respected requests in favor of the candidate you recommended, I have immediately written to our Father Master that, as soon as the candidate arrives, he is to be admitted at once with the other novices. The report given me on him by his director is excellent and pointed to an extraordinary vocation. He is noble by birth, has come through his army experience remarkably well, and, what is more, is pious and all God's, young in age and has made all required studies. It is true I had decided not to receive him; but with this letter from his director, I am bound in conscience to receive him so as not to resist the Divine Will. The refusal would have been due to a packed novitiate. God will provide.

I adore the divine judgments in the departure of poor Brother Sylvester, and I want to hope for his welfare. But you are always increasing your merits. Oh, how much I rejoice over that in the Lord!

I am writing in haste. I got back the day before yesterday from Corneto, and I put myself at this blessed table to answer letters and am not yet finished. At an early hour tomorrow I leave for the convent at Valantano. What do you have to say? Is this not the life of a gypsy, packing one's bundle every few days and then go here or there? Patience!

My hearty greetings in Jesus Christ to Signora Barbara and all your household, whom I see, and will always see, with you the head, in the holy Side of Jesus. Again, my greetings to Signore Petri. With profound respect and esteem I affirm I am from a true heart,

Your...

On my return I will give you information about the good daughter of Signore Curzio, and I will write to both. I have answered the letter from Capua in the best way I could, and I hope the one who writes is content in the Lord.

1059

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (7)

Toscanello

March 4, 1757

Leaving. If you need to write
send it here to The Oak.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

The letter brought by Brother Dominic³⁸⁵ has been given to me. I rejoice in the good results of the Holy Triduum in Portercole. I adore the divine disposition in the departure of the two brothers. I was saddened by the failure of Brother Michael but not that of Brother Sylvester,³⁸⁶ who was hurt by his imagination. I did not expect anything good there. Blessed be God, who looks with a pitying eye on this Congregation.

I am not surprised at my own storms and assaults from the devils, since it is written: "Many are the scourges of the sinner, many." But I have great compassion over these good innocent sons. It is necessary to carry the fight to our enemy, to bare our teeth, as the saying goes, and to assault him with strong commands, heaping pain upon pain if he does not obey. So get that book with the title *Collection of Blessings*, which I believe is there; otherwise, have it brought from Orbetello from one of the pastors. You will find very efficacious precepts in it, and an especially terrible one from Saint Zaccaria, which I used when there was such an uproar in that Retreat, and they stopped. Make use of it with any necessary changes. Write it out, declare it with a stole around your neck, post it in the room with great faith, and issue a solemn command in the Name of Jesus Christ. Put up another copy at the door of the novitiate; but do it in such a way that it cannot be seen by the novices, nor by others, so as not to cause them apprehensions. Put it on the back of one of the figures of death. These are sure, excellent signs. Encourage those who are vested, and all, and strongly assert to them this truth of faith: "Nothing shall harm you, nothing, nothing." Oh, what an uproar the devil is mounting against us! Oh, how enraged he is against the Congregation! Not for a short time, but for a long time that poor old man of this Congregation, one grown old in vices, heard loud shrieks in his ears at night that awakened him and made him tremble. But it all passes and "nothing shall harm you." Do not fear, do not fear; the Lord will fight for

385. This is probably Brother Dominic Macciocchi of Saint John Baptist, born in 1722 and died on March 2, 1766.

386. Brother Michael of the Five Wounds was dismissed in 1756; Brother Sylvester Baffetti of Jesus left in 1756.

us. "Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia." The devil trembles at the Alleluia, a word come from paradise.

I have had no further word on the candidates from Lavagna. From that it seems that they are not coming. All the more so since I wrote them to be at the novitiate in January or at the beginning of February. So it would be a good idea to write to two or three of the good clerics from Alba so that they could be at the novitiate in April or even before. But let them be careful about the sea, for the weather is uncertain and there is danger from the Turks.³⁸⁷ So, let them come in a secure vessel.

Please read carefully the enclosed letter from the official director of a young man to whom you are replying on my behalf to Capua. There can be no doubting his vocation; he will be a fine candidate. Since he will be already on his way, you should receive him when he arrives and admit him with the other novices.³⁸⁸

I will say no more since the letter will give you full information. He is both noble and penitent, an extraordinary vocation. Submit him to the required testing as with the others³⁸⁹ with your usual charity, prudence, and discretion. I would like him to have an airy cell and a good blanket, not out of partiality or singularity, but to meet the quality of the young man and so that he may be happier in his vocation. When he arrives, let me know.

I have replied to Father Flavian, his director, and I have told him that I have already arranged for his reception, and I have sent word to the Father Rector for his prudent guidance.

I do not recall anything else. Pray, and have prayers offered, for me, for the Congregation, and for a sick person who concerns me much and merits much from the Congregation. I say again regaining her health is important to us. Have prayers offered for a business of great glory to God that I have at hand. I do not think of anything else. I came back here the day before yesterday, and tomorrow I leave for the convent in Valentano. What do you say about that? Am I not a true gypsy? Greet our good novices for me, especially Father N. Goodbye. I am from the heart,

Your affectionate servant,
P. of the †

387. These were Algerian pirates who threatened the Tyrrhenian Coast of Italy.

388. This is Don Joachim Housusan, "engineer in the troops of the king of Naples," vested May 18, 1757, with the name Confrater Joachim of Saint Michael. He left in October 1762 "because of his illness."

389. These are tests laid down in the Rule and Constitutions in Chapter VI — washing dishes, cleaning the house, accusing oneself of exterior faults in the refectory, eating at times on the floor — to know whether the candidate is truly in love with being despised and dead to self and the world in order to live only for God and through God, willingly hiding his life in Christ Jesus.

Girolama Ercolani (35)

Toscanella
March 9, 1757

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I received your letter just as I am starting out for a convent to conduct their retreat. As for your going to Rome with your daughters in order to free your third daughter from the depression she nurtures because of the departure of her married sister, it would be better if she could get over this little by little; otherwise, we will be always starting over. Take advice from a doctor on her sickness and listen to what he has to say as to whether it is best to take her to Rome or not. If he thinks she should go, certainly you ought to go with her.

With regard to your scruples, I say once more that you need to obey and to get rid of them like the plague and to make frequent acts of faith and confidence in the Lord and acts of love of God because these are efficacious in getting rid of scruples.

You tell me you sent a small gift to your confessor when he was ailing, and then you had a scruple and did not confess it. But, good God! what need is there to confess a virtuous act of gratitude? In any case, do you not see that the devil is taking your peace away? Never again are you to confess such scruples, for they are not sins, thanks be to God. Govern yourself as I have told you and stay in peace.

I rejoice that all are well. Greet the canon and all his household for me. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm I am with all respect and in haste as I leave,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Francis Sancez (17)

Toscanella
March 14, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

To the best of my ability, I tried to serve this pious convent at Valentano. Because of snowfall and the very severe weather to which this region is subject, and because my swellings and pains in my joints were stirred up, I could not complete the work perfectly. I hope that these good religious, saddened by my leaving with only seven days of retreat, will have profited and be enlightened in every way in order to grow toward high perfection, in which I found them very advanced. Signora Camilla is a soul given entirely to God, as I strongly hope. She is eager to soon be clothed in a religious habit, and for that reason she has already been trying one on. So it would be good to console her at least by next October, and I have written to Signore Curzio already. I hope that you will have received my answer which I confided to your brother Dominic. I am

writing with a dizzy head and am still putting up with swelling, so pardon my mistakes. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all your house, I end, affirming that I am with profound respect and reverence,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Until now I have not had a chance to go to Vetralla or to send the box of turnips to Canon Pieri. It will be sent soon.

1062

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (4)

Toscanella

March 21, 1757

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

I received your letter. The symbol of the statue, carved with chisel and hammer, pleased me much. I myself use it in instructions which the Lord has me give to souls in struggles. But you are corresponding to the great light which the Lord is giving you. In the battles that the enemy causes you, in whatever manner they come, hide yourself entirely in God in the way already given you, and be satisfied to suffer some small suffering for love of your Divine Spouse, suffering and being silent because Jesus suffered and was silent: "Jesus, however, kept silent." Oh, silence, rich in every virtue! A statue allows itself to be hammered by the sculptor and is silent, but the soul hammered by precious crosses should not merely be silent, but ought besides take its repose on the bosom of the heavenly Father, suffering in silence and loving. I hope the Lord will make you understand what I am saying.

In the temptations and imaginations of the enemy, you must immediately take a high flight in God so that the temptation remains outside. This flight of faith is made in less than a minute by allowing your horrible nothingness to disappear in the Infinite All that is God and making nothing of the darkness of the battle raised by your enemy. Entirely lost in the Sovereign Good, let your soul take its repose in a sleep of faith and love so that you will come out strengthened by the suffering undergone in the war.

I am not offering more explanation since I have no doubts that you will understand me with the grace of Jesus Christ, and since I know from our conferences and through the knowledge that God gives me of your soul that you do understand me since I am speaking of the way that God has led you with infinite love and mercy.

I thank His Divine Majesty that my letters are firing your soul with holy love and making you despise the insidious suggestions of the demon. These effects are not produced by my letters, but by the mercy of the Lord by means of his divine word, for he has me write in those words. So to him alone be honor and glory.

Oh, how much I bless the Lord for the sweet sleeps of faith and love that you take on the bosom of his divine love in the interior solitude of your soul! And, above all, that in taking these sleeps of faith and love in the holy Side of

Jesus, you contemplate his bitter pains, making them yours with a loving impression! Oh, how rich a labor the Heavenly Spouse is doing in your soul! Oh, here there is no danger of deception! Now pay attention, my blessed daughter. Remember the advice I gave you there, that is, that you need to despoil yourself often of all these gifts, humble yourself before God, be sorrowful that you have corrupted these gifts with your dross, and immediately cast this into the furnace of holy love. So that you may come out purified, stay in your nakedness and poverty of spirit. Acting in this way, you will see that God will reclothe you always anew with a new garment, bejewelled with the gifts of every virtue.

This stripping is done in a moment without leaving your divine solitude and by remaining in your nothingness. But when your soul is in this sweet sleep, you must not disturb it. This stripping can take place in your cell in the manner of a particular examen, being careful to be prompt in obeying the interior attractions of holy Love, allowing your vile dust to be lost in that immense sea of love. I have no concepts to explain myself, but God will teach you everything.

With regard to the sensible pain you feel in your heart over the sufferings of the gentle Jesus, as well as that tumult that you feel coming from your heart, and the sensible warmth that is almost unbearable, listen to me with care.

See whether these things are bringing a greater love of God, more knowledge of your nothingness and your own misery, and more love of suffering out of love for him who suffered so much for you. See whether your union with Jesus Christ and conformity to his divine life is growing through imitation of the virtues he practiced, especially humility of heart, meekness, patience, silence in suffering, etc.

If you feel these effects, as I trust you do, give the glory to God and place everything in the censer of gratitude and make it an incense to the Most High because they are all your goods. But you are not to be in love with the gifts nor reflect on yourself. Be very secret without letting anyone know except he who ought to know out of obedience and the Will of God. Make a great account of being hidden and concealed from the eyes of all in order to please only your Heavenly Spouse.

Continue to stay in your interior desert, and, if your soul is absorbed in God, contemplating in the holy Side of Jesus his sufferings and his sorrows, and if, at the same time, the Sovereign Divine Artist with chisel and hammer of love cuts into you by making you experience the impression of some drops of his sorrows and pains, do not be so bold as to complain, but love and suffer your pain in silence. Lose everything in the sea of love and sorrow so that, penetrated completely with love of your Spouse, you allow yourself to make a mixture of sorrowful love and loving sorrow. Oh, how much I would like to say! But I rejoice that I do not know how to explain this or understand these great secrets. These divine labors take place more in that sweet sleep of faith and love, which I have spoken about, than at any other time. Ah, Sister Mary Clare! you must be always more faithful to God and sunk in your horrible nothingness. I forgot to mention that in these operations it is not necessary to look at the instruments

which sweetly crucify you, but only at the Infinite Good who does this sweet work so as to love him always more, losing sight of everything, everything.

I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity that you have for me in your continuous prayers, and, believe me, my needs keep growing and God knows how I stand. "May your will be done." Concerning the work we know about, right now we are in the trial stage and soon they will make the preparations to set it to hand. But who knows whether my sins will block it. Continue to pray for me and for the Congregation, and I do for you. God knows how much I desire that he make you a saint, great and hidden, that is, with the hidden sanctity of the Cross of Jesus Christ for only the pure glory of God.

In regard to your desire concerning your person for that work, let it die in the holy love and the Divine Good Pleasure and let go of all solicitude. If God wants this, he will make it known with prodigies; otherwise, it cannot come to pass.

I do not know when I will go to Rome. If a foundation is realized that is talked about in that vicinity, I will not delay in going. Otherwise, who know when that will be. In such a circumstance I will have the good fortune of knowing your brother. Please greet him for me in Jesus Christ and thank him for his charity toward me.

I add that you observe all that I have written in this letter only as God guides you, since I ought to leave your soul in that liberty of spirit to make its flights and to guide yourself interiorly as the Holy Spirit guides you. That is what the masters of the spiritual life teach with regard to prayer. Your interior recollection, which consists in the solitude we insist on, should be continuous as far as possible. Jesus bless you and inflame you with holy love. Amen

I hope this letter will rejoice you. I am staying here until Easter.

Your useless, unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

1063

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (8)

Toscanello

March 25, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Father Master,

I received your letter this morning. I rejoice in reading the mercies the Lord is granting to his servants, especially to Father Frontiniano.³⁹⁰ For although he begins to have the gift of prayer, there is need to be on watch lest he fall asleep regarding the practice of virtue and the imitation of Jesus Christ. Let him always take to prayer some mystery of the Passion, not forcing him to meditate, but do it in the manner of gentle colloquies or soliloquies. Then, when God draws him in a silence of faith and love to the bosom of God, which is the prayer you

³⁹⁰. Father Frontiniano Porrini of Saint Aloysius was born in 1725 and died on February 15, 1773.

mention, it is not necessary to disturb the soul from such repose and quiet with explicit reflections. But, above all, let everything be founded on profound humility, hatred of self, for of this there is never enough.

Here I have much to do. When I am able, I will read the letter from Confrater Felix.³⁹¹ I am much pleased with his beginning, and I bless God for the lights he gives you and for the comfort His Divine Majesty gives to the troubled and tempted: "According to the multitude of your sorrows." Oh! how enraged against us is "Bergnif."³⁹² But we will sing: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

With Father Lawrence³⁹³ you need to be careful in treating his ailments in stomach and chest. I do not have great hopes for him; his face shows that. There is no need for us to delay over this. Assure yourself quickly, hold your conference with him, and then let him go.

It does not seem right to lose Brother Joseph³⁹⁴ over a little tobacco, so much the more so since it seems this is a necessity for his health. He will come in time to these Retreats where there is a strong variety in the garden. In regard to San Angelo, on most occasions when I returned, a large box of tobacco was waiting for me from Sabina. One of the laity undertook this service. If it has come, I will send it to you in good time. In the meantime, you could provide him a little leaf tobacco by picking it up secretly over there and taking advantage of it. This is a small evil, even a charity.

Speak to the Father Rector about this and persuade him this is not any cause for singularity and abuse. It is sufficient to do it quietly, and let him take it in his room and not give tobacco from his box to his companions with whom he works. Charity is ingenious and covers everything. Oh, how busy I always am! What do you have to say? You answer, "Patience." Is that not so? So it is. Pray the Lord to give me perfect patience. I embrace you in haste. Greet the novitiate, etc. Pray for us, and from the heart I am,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

391. Confrater Felix Cleri of Saint Andrew was dismissed in 1773.

392. Paul uses this name for the devil.

393. Father Lawrence Tiberi of Saint Andrew from Aquila was vested November 23, 1756, and let go "because of his illness" (*Novitiate Registry* 1, f. 8).

394. Brother Joseph Verdini of the Holy Trinity left in 1762.

Dominic Costantini (7)

Toscanello
March 26, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

My Dear and Beloved Signore Dominic,

I received from Brother Dominic your welcome letter as well as the plan for the contemplated work, which he also sent me. I wrote a good letter to the architect Orlandi, and it seems to me it might succeed with the Will of God. With great secrecy I confided to him the grand design. I explained to him how to proceed with the cells, the corridors, and so on. I told him that if he wanted I will send him from here a master contractor with the plan so that he could instruct him on the design. I will tell the architect that the master contractor, for just and holy ends, is not aware of the purpose, and to avoid wars and contradictions that the devil could incite, a pious prelate is lending his name under the title of a pious work, etc. I hope I have explained myself well and have kept the secret well concealed. I tell you that I would like the master contractor to go from your place at Easter. I will be waiting for a favorable reply. The letter is a bit less than a full sheet. Once I have received your reply, I will hasten there, and I will send it to you so that at Easter Master Luke can move.

Let us come to a point of great importance brought up by Father John Baptist, according to the holy lights that God gives him.

It is absolutely necessary that before buying the house in question and before spending a cent, you have a secret document drawn up, well witnessed and signed by the bishop, stating in a declaration, covering all particulars, that the work is being done at your expense, the purchase of the building and all furnishings, and that it is your pious will and intention to obey the inspiration of the Lord. The bishop will declare that he, for holy reasons, is simply lending his name, but the entire work is yours. The expenses are incurred by you, the legitimate possessor of the houses, the furnishings, and all the rest.

Take care not to be overcome by human respect; otherwise, much could go wrong.

The reasons are absolutely clear. We are mortal so the work will not be done in a day — we need years. There is no certainty of the life of the bishop, neither he nor any other one. If God were to call him before the work is finished, what would happen if there was no declaration that you must keep for yourself? The successor to the bishopric would enter into immediate possession, saying that the work was done by the bishop.

What would you do, having nothing to show? So the work done would be lost. Read these ideas carefully. They are according to God and this is what you ought to do. If you do not have the mind to speak to the bishop, that should not give you any fear, for you are spending your money. You could talk to his secretary openly and with freedom so that he would explain to the bishop your just reasons. But I come back to state again, if you do not have such a

declaration, it is necessary not to incur any expenses because of the dangers. I have explained myself sufficiently. You should not speak about me, for everything should come from you as the one God is using to bring about this work.

Take account of this letter, since it will serve as my defense in case it does not work out as I am saying. We need to pray for a long life for the zealous prelate, but prudence demands that we walk in this way. Anything else is a mistake.

I am out of paper — a sign of that is that I wrote on a half sheet to the bishop and I asked his pardon — and now I am waiting for paper, but who knows when it will come.

If you have a small amount of good quality, would you do me the favor of sending five or six packs of five sheets — one, not more, is all I have left — since after Easter I am going on mission and at San Angelo I have no supply. I am in a hurry. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus with all your esteemed household. Fathers John Baptist and Father Rector greet you, and I am from a true heart in a hurry,

I let Father Rector hear the main point of this letter. He immediately cried out that the blessed God himself has given this light, which is so necessary. In any other way one errs. Read and reread these thoughts and do not get involved without profound and solid caution.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1065

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (5)

Toscanello
March 26, 1756

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

I received your letter last night. I hope that you have received my last letter and have seen that the letter you sent me to Valentano was not lost, but received here. What you write me burns up the devil greatly, as you tell me in your last letter. You can know clearly why he is so enraged without my telling you.

Arm yourself more with faith, with confidence in God, and with profound humility of heart, and renew your commands to the devil. Command him in the Name of Jesus Christ to depart and go to the place destined for him by God because of his pride. Fear nothing. The horrible, diabolical apparitions with the horrible temptations which accompany them are excellent signs, and the suffering your soul undergoes disposes you more as a fire to purify you and render you always more disposed for the union of love with His Divine Majesty. God is still using the work of your confessor to annihilate you the more and to crucify you. Oh, what a beautiful work this is! I ask you to use the advice I gave you in my other letter, and I repeat the same thing now: profound humility, silence, reverential annihilation before him. This is one rule to make a high flight.

When the soul finds itself in more profound interior solitude and in a deeper repose of love on the bosom of the Heavenly Father, make some cries like a baby and reveal to him what the rage of the devil is doing to you. He already knows but wants you to tell him that with a childish complaint. Ask him with a profound annihilation not to allow the devil to molest you with this brutish apparitions, etc. But then abandon yourself to his Holy Will, which must be your continual food, for the gentle Jesus always fed himself on the Will of his Father in a sea of suffering. Give yourself a stout heart and take care never to allow yourself to be frightened by the demon. Remain hidden in God, nothing can harm you, and never leave prayer when you see these phantasms, but remain strong and constant and never leave your place of prayer. In this way the devil will leave beaten. Be of good heart, for God wishes to make you holy. Hence it is necessary that you fight for the glory of God.

Continue your recollection in your usual way ... for it is going very well. Believe me, now is the time to clothe yourself interiorly to celebrate the anniversary of the death of our dear Savior. Stay in your nothing. Pray more for me and for the other things. Jesus bless you. I can write from here once more at Easter; then I leave for a mission.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1066

Thomas Fossi (83)

Toscanello
April 2, 1757

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

My Dear Esteemed Thomas,

I confess to you that in the midst of my occupations and letters, I would not know how to answer adequately your letter, sent March 16. I have understood little because your letter is confused and obscure. With care I have understood the essentials. It seems to me much of the same, so I do not have anything else to tell you, except you should guide yourself as usual.

But, above all, keep yourself in profound humility of heart and a holy contempt of self with a deep internal detachment from everything, and take care to attend to the obligations of your state and your family. I will not fail to recommend to the Lord the sick people you mention, principally the one within your family, to whom I admit I am obliged in Jesus Christ. It seems to me you have made a good arrangement for your daughters according to the vocations they have — as you are bound to do. After Easter I will leave for the missions and who knows when I will be in residence at a Retreat. I recommend myself to your good prayers and those of your house. For you I pray for the most copious blessing of heaven, and I enclose all in the holy Side of Jesus. I am in a hurry, and I am writing at night before daybreak in order to have this arrive.

Regarding prayer, it seems to me it is going well, as you say, both in church and abroad, but never neglect the obligations of your state.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1067

John Francis Sancez (18)

Toscanella
April 2, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I rejoice much in the Lord that you are so desirous to cooperate for the spiritual advantage of Signora Camilla. In the letter I wrote you, I wrote in a like vein to Signore Curzio, If my letter should have been lost, I ask you to inform him personally. I told him in that letter that Signora Camilla wanted to take the name Mary Catherine of Divine Love, since that was the name suggested by her father to the prioress without letting her know it came from her. Since I have made myself the guarantor to obtain the favor of Signore Curzio in your name, so I am settling with him this debt contracted with her orally.

On the Sunday after Easter, I think I will begin a mission in Toscanella and then go further into that region. I will wish you a blessed Easter while celebrating the solemn anniversary in these days of the death of our loveable Savior. "If we suffer with him, we may be glorified with him." I am writing hurriedly and enclose you, along with Barbara and all your pious house, in the holy Side of Jesus. With all respect and esteem I offer my profound regard,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1068

Dominic Costantini (8)

Toscanella
April 4, 1757

J.C.P.

My Dear Signore Dominic,

I am not sharing the letter in answer to Signore Clement Orlandi because it contains some things concerning the direction of his devout soul. I am, however, enclosing that letter to him, and you can give it to Master Luke when you send him to Rome with the plan for our site and the instructions. We are not sharing the great secret with Master Luke. If you care to write to Signore Orlandi, you may do so at your pleasure. The letter is unsealed, and you will be able to read it. As to Master Luke, in giving your instructions, you could say it is a pious work being done in the name of the bishop and is to be built in this way, that is, corridors of seven palms, cells of twelve palms, and the rest.

Arm yourself with confidence in God and do not let the difficulties frighten you. God can make us see prodigies. So with a great heart and willing spirit give yourself to this great task with a humble heart and pure intention for the pure glory of God to build a nest for the doves of the Crucified so that they may make a perpetual sorrowing over the holy sufferings by anointing the Divine Wounds with the balsam of their tears, coming from hearts truly burning with love. Oh, what a great work! Oh, what a great work! Thank God that you were chosen for such a work, so much to his glory, and remain in his divine presence, all humbled and annihilated, crying out: "My substance is as nothing before you." I think that on the Sunday after Easter I will open the mission in Toscanella and then proceed elsewhere. Enclosing you and all your household in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm again that I am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1069

Clement Orlandi (2)³⁹⁵

Toscanella
April 4, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

I read to my high edification your esteemed letter, received in the ordinary post last evening, and I am most grateful in Jesus Christ for the charity you are pleased to continue toward me, especially regarding the business we know of such glory to the Lord. For this, the master builder from Corneto is bringing the plans and measurements for the site.

I am saying nothing more about this since I explained myself in my other letter and have complete trust that the Lord will give you great lights to instruct the general contractor who is the bearer of my respectful letter. Would to God that I had known earlier of your coming to Sutri, for then I would have asked you to go to look at the site since it was not more than eighteen miles distant.

Enough. What is delayed is not taken away. I hope that the Mercy of God will arrange an occasion for you to go there. I will put that into my prayers. With regard to the points you make to me in your letter, I have replied in the post, and I hope you will have received it. Now, enclosing you in the holy Side of Christ, along with all your pious household, whom I will always see in the holy Wounds of our Divine Savior in my cold prayers and sacrifices, I end, affirming my entire esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

395. Letter was addressed to Clement Orlandi in Rome.

Peter Vico of Saint John (3)

Toscanella

April 12, 1757

Leaving and will be at San Angelo
the last of May or first of June.*J.C.P.*

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

In yesterday's post I received a long letter from Brother Bernadine.³⁹⁶ Since I have a mission beginning, please God, next Sunday, the Sunday after Easter, I do not have the time to answer him, nor have I been able to talk to Father Provincial since he did not come this way on his trip to Todi in order not to prolong his journey by two days or more. I have examined the letter thoroughly, and I see it is not necessary that Brother Bernadine travel to his native place. This is even a stratagem of the devil to have him lose the good he has done up until now. I say once more that my conscience, as superior of the Congregation, will not allow me to permit him to go to his native place. All the more so since he himself says in his letter that his brother could take care of his concern with holy water. So can it not be seen clearly that this is self-love for his relatives, which the devil is using to draw him into his net and dissipate him and his companion who would go with him to his country, where there is so much liberty, and on a trip so long and in such dangerous circumstances? How then could I place two poor religious in such danger. All the more so since it would be necessary to give them another lay brother as a companion. I cannot agree with this in any way.

Jesus Christ tells us to let the dead bury their dead. The advice of Father Consultor,³⁹⁷ who was the Visitor there, is excellent, and I confirm it. That is, he should write a good letter to the pastor there or to other knowledgeable persons, to the Bertolotti's, that they help out his brother, and they will do so willingly, and that he has found his life in the Congregation, that he has abandoned himself into the loving arms of Jesus, and that he helps his relatives with his prayers, which are of more help to them than he would be in person.

Let him accept this advice as coming from the Lord, for the superior takes his place, and in the determination of the superior the Divine Will is known and should be the rule for our actions.

Try then, Father Rector, to quiet this good son. To me he seems to have made a good start in spirit in conformity with the sentiments he expressed to me in a sheet attached to the letter. I will answer him when my mission campaign is over. Meanwhile, I will recommend him to Father Provincial when he returns

396. Brother Bernardine Boggeri of the Conception, born in 1724 and died on October 20, 1768, was from Carpentio di Acqui. He was born in the diocese of Alessandria and entered the Congregation in 1748. The Bertolotti family mentioned by Paul is the family of Father Dominic of the Conception, the uncle of Brother Bernadine.

397. Father Mark Aurelius Pastorelli.

from Todi. He will be able to read him this letter as if he had written it himself. I am in a hurry, for my departure is close.

Regarding the Masses, there is nothing easier. To obtain the alms it is sufficient that some merchant in Acqui issues an exchange for Rome and includes a copy for you, addressing it: "Rome, Frosinone for Ceprano: Retreat of San Sosio," and then the exchange can be redeemed by Signore Angeletti in Rome. Jesus bless you and pray for us. Let them keep themselves in fervor and observance, especially in true humility of heart and fraternal charity. "In this shall all know that you are disciples of Christ if you have love for one another." In haste I am,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

I will be far from good roads; therefore, do not write. If there is need for something, you can write to Father Mark Aurelius, consultor, for he will be back from Todi to San Angelo in the middle of May.

1071

Pope Benedict XIV (9)³⁹⁸

May 21, 1757³⁹⁹

Holy Father,

Paul of the Cross, General of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, canonically established and approved by Your Holiness, with humble and profound respect reveals to Your Holiness that since it is some years that the Trinitarian Fathers of Riscatto have abandoned their convent in the locality known as Mount Cavo, in the region of Rocca di Papa, belonging to the excellent House of Colona, in addition to the loss of spiritual help to that populace, which they had received from that religious family, the church and the monastery annexed to it have become the lair of evil people. Since your petitioner has received many requests, not only from the excellent bishop, but also from the clergy and people of that territory, along with the consent of the constable, to locate in that place the religious family of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ since their work with the aid of God might be profitable to other feudal holdings of that excellent House, where there are similar Retreats of this Congregation, so it may be hoped that there would ensue advantages also for this foundation.

398. This letter is Paul's request to the pope for the Passionists to receive the monastery of the Trinitarian Fathers at Mount Cavo. Pope Benedict XIV granted this request in an audience with the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on May 21, 1757. The public celebration of this foundation took place on Palm Sunday, March 19, 1758.

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

However, since some Mendicant religious who reside in the vicinity are opposed to the wishes of the people, clergy, and patron of this place, and since this is not at the required canonical distance from their monasteries; your petitioner humbly asks the great clemency of Your Holiness to supply for the consent of the Mendicants with an opportune derogation, as you were pleased to do for the foundations of Retreats of these same Religious of the Passion established in Soriano, in the diocese of Orte, and in Vetralla, the diocese of Viterbo.

1072

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (6)

San Angelo
June 3, 1757⁴⁰⁰

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

I arrived here from my missions in very poor health the day before yesterday and found your letter. In answer I say and confirm for you what I have said so often. Let your fears and scruples disappear in the fire of holy love. You are not walking the path to damnation as you say in your letter. The pain you experience makes you say that, but you are walking on the way to heaven. You have the clearest signs that you are much loved by the Lord. Continue your recollection and interior solitude. Remember the parable I gave you of the baby. When to the exterior of your spirit these flies and wasps of temptation and fears arise, cry as a baby cries: "Oh, Father. Oh, great Father. Oh, Love!" You will see that your gentle Father will drive off the flies, etc.

Live abandoned in God. Feed yourself on his Holy Will and do not think about the approval of your confessor nor of anything else, but in every happening never lose the thought of God. All your thought should be to remain as a baby on the bosom of your Heavenly Father, entirely clothed in the sufferings of Jesus. I am in a hurry. Continue to pray for me because my needs always increase and the bitter waters penetrate me completely. "May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus bless you.

Your useless servant,

P. of †

400. Amedeo places this letter in 1757. The date on the original is unclear.

San Angelo
June 4, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I am answering your two letters, even though I am in poor health. It is two days since I came back from the mission, and tomorrow I begin my cure. Your letters are filled with so many things, so many reflections, so many good thoughts, that I do not know where to give thought to begin my reply.

I am invoking the Holy Spirit to obtain his light. First, I tell you that all these reflections, all these desires, and the anxieties they bring with them are useless. You need to allow them to disappear in the Divine Good Pleasure, and you ought to let them die in the flame of holy love. Hold on to one single desire, that of pleasing God and doing his Holy Will, being the same in suffering as in joy, and continuing to live in your state devoutly. With regard to conjugal continence, I confirm what I have always said. There must always be a holy and mutual consent.

I celebrated the Masses you requested; they were given me by Father Rector when I was at the Retreat in Toscanella. The other four will be celebrated, seeing they came with this morning's letter and also a thirty-pound tuna, which you had the great charity to send to this Retreat and for which we are all grateful in Jesus Christ. They will continue to pray for your intentions.

With regard to the marriage of your daughter, I have nothing to say. Our Rules forbid me to interfere in such affairs, beyond recommending it to God for a good outcome. She is not called to the religious state, so it is well that she marry. Give her advice for her salvation to live godly in her state as a married woman.

The letter from your daughter concerns the same subject, and she asks advice with regard to marrying. So these thoughts will serve as a reply to her. I leave it to you to give her holy, discrete, and prudent instruction as to what such a state requires. I am not answering her in order not to multiply letters. I am in poor health and have a heap of letters to answer that would break a stone or a mass of bronze. But I will finish soon because I am close to the end of my office, and soon I will retire to write no more and to speak no more to anyone except my confessor because I have a great necessity to prepare myself for my approaching death.

I see that you want to send your boys to the Mount. How can you do that, seeing that the Rules forbid it? God knows how willingly I would serve you and how much I admit I am obligated, but with regard to accepting your son to study in this Retreat, or any other, I cannot do that in conscience because that would violate the holy observance and absurdities would result. We cannot receive young men with the exception of those who come to take our habit. There is a benefactor who for some time has wanted to send his son, but I have not agreed to receive him since I cannot in conscience, even though he is a principal benefactor. I am sorry to give you this negative answer.

Have him study, and, when he is eighteen or twenty years old and will have finished his study of philosophy, or at least of rhetoric, if he has a vocation to become one of our religious, I will receive him and take him before anyone else. Dear Thomas, pardon me if I do not extend myself further because I cannot keep my head together. I have forced myself to write thus far. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all your house, and I ask for copious blessings of heaven, as I strongly hope. I will recommend at Holy Mass that pious woman and the consultor, whom I ask you to greet for me. I hope for much good from him.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1074

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (9)

San Angelo
June 15, 1757

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

I am answering your letter of the ninth of this month. With regard to the Retreat that you inquire about in the diocese of Alba,⁴⁰¹ in regard to cells, church, orchard, it would pass. But since there is no forest nearby, from the outset, not merely for necessary wood but for solitary walks, that does not seem suitable. When founding a Retreat in Piedmont, it must be in a solitary place in accord with the Rules. Consequently, there should be a good wing for the novitiate, since that Retreat would have to provide for all the other Retreats to be founded not only in Piedmont, but also in the neighboring provinces, Lombardy and others. So for this first one it is necessary to use all care that it be founded in a truly solitary place where there are woods, a large orchard, field, water, etc., for reasons cited. So you should make sure that the good ecclesiastic understands this and show him all gratitude, assuring him that if the Lord opens the way that His Majesty calls us to Piedmont and if the royal permission be granted for the foundation of our Retreats there, full attention will be given to bring about his wishes with acceptance of the house that he offers us, once it is clear that the place is suited to our Institute by the person God sends to make the foundation. It seems to me I have given you a categorical answer to your question.

I should inform you that the Retreat of the Holy Trinity on Mount Cavo, about fifteen miles from Rome, already belongs to the Congregation, and there will be a religious family there in autumn or certainly by March.

I should also let you know that in Todi another is being established about two miles from the city, and that zealous prelate has already written to His Holiness so that the Frati do not raise a war. He has received a reply that the

401. Because of government opposition, foundations did not succeed in any part of Piedmont during Paul's lifetime.

pope will reinforce our agreements with his supreme apostolic authority once everything is done for a stable foundation. I can tell you that the pope is well disposed toward us. So all is in order as I said in the ordinary mail, and there is money for the erection of a new wing that will accommodate ten or twelve religious. In September Father Mark Aurelius is to take private possession in my name and that of the Congregation, and at the beginning of April we will place a religious family there. So you see there are two Retreats ready for establishment soon; meanwhile, I sigh in thinking about whom I will put in as rectors, etc. For once it seems to me I have decided in my thoughts, but much prayer is needed so that God will open the way. There is question even of opening the Retreat of Saint Saba in Rome. It is being considered in great secrecy. Oh, how necessary that would be! In that monastery there were holy men, for example, the holy life of Saint Gregory the Great. Saint Silvia, mother of the saint, sent him every day a bowl of lentils for his sustenance. That holy place is called *Cella Nova* and is very ancient.⁴⁰²

Oh, let me stop here a moment. Saint Gregory the Great fed on a bowl of lentils, as we see in the ancient inscription where Saint Silvia, mother of the saint, is painted. In our times there is so much refinement and such poor embracing of a holy and discreet penance! Saint Gregory was of the noblest family, delicate, and in youth was in the care of holy monks, and he was happy with the alms of a bowl of lentils which his mother sent him every day. Dear Father Master, out of shame that makes me shrink to nothing. I beg you to cry out to these great saints, to Saint Gregory and Saint Saba and Saint Silvia, that they beseech God that we may obtain that Retreat if it be his Holy Will.

I am happy that the novitiate goes well. "To God alone be honor and glory." Recommend me to the charity of all. Let them pray for me, who am so needy, and for the Congregation, etc. You can give this information to Father Rector so that I will not have to repeat it in the letters I am writing in answer to his, etc. You may also give this news to the novices to encourage them, especially that concerning Saint Saba, as above.

I would wish that someone emerges for the novitiate, that is, to take over direction of it for reasons that God knows. Enough! God knows our needs, and I hope he will provide.

You should have no doubt that you are in the bosom of God within your nothing in a passive manner. The short way to lose oneself and be lost in the Infinite All is to pass through the godlike door that is Christ Crucified, making his sufferings one's own. Love teaches everything since the holy Passion is a work of infinite love. I am under medical care for another day with decoctions of herbs and radishes for my ailments. Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

402. Neither of these two foundations came to be realized.

If God provides good candidates from Piedmont or elsewhere, they can be received because of the foundations mentioned, which need about twenty-four religious.

1075

Elizabeth De Angelis⁴⁰³

San Angelo
June 18, 1757

*The holy Passion of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

Since I do not have the least knowledge of your soul and with labor could hardly read your letter, I tell you, regarding your conscience, to put yourself entirely under obedience to your confessor, who is, I suppose, Canon Floridi. Obey him and do not upset yourself with scruples over past confessions. Take care of your prayer and meditation of the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ, keep your heart recollected in God, and do not give way to scruples or any other uneasiness that the devil causes.

Abandon yourself into the hands of the Lord, both concerning the state of life you should choose and everything else. His Divine Majesty takes thought for you. Be faithful in serving him and fear nothing.

I am writing in haste since I have many duties. Do not write me, for you will not receive a reply. Jesus bless you. Pray to him for me. I am,

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

1076

Teresa Palozzi (3)⁴⁰⁴

San Angelo
June 19, 1757

J.C.P.

May Jesus be always in your heart.

I am answering your letter, which was received through the post, and I tell you that all the afflictions you experience in being deprived of the instructions of your confessor must be allowed to die in the Will of God, using these or similar affections: "Oh, my good God! how gentle you are, how sweet! how good! Ah, dear Jesus, I am glad to be afflicted out of love for you! Oh, dear Will of my God, be forever blessed! O dear Cross, I embrace you, I hold you to my heart! Oh, dear Jesus, I wish to be crucified with you!" Such affections will make every affliction peacefully disappear in your soul, but make them sweetly without strain of head or breast; make them with your spirit, letting

403. Letter sent to town of Nepi.

404. This is an important letter because it reveals how Paul directed one who has been practicing basic meditative prayer and offers his advice for beginning a simpler prayer of repose. Teresa is now twenty years old.

them sink into you, and do not be in a hurry to make them all at once, but one at a time, etc. Then remain in silence of faith and holy love, and let them penetrate your soul.

Teresa, believe me, you are walking well and God loves you much. Be faithful to him, be humble of heart, love self-contempt, and have a holy hatred of yourself in order to burn entirely with love for God. Oh, my blessed daughter! what do you fear? Jesus is the center of your heart and wants to make you holy, and for this reason permits these afflictions, sufferings, and pains. The greatest sufferings are those of the great friends of God. Oh, how sweet it is to be crucified with Jesus.

Never leave off meditating on the holy Passion of Jesus Christ and recalling the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy. In meditation do not be in a hurry to pass from one point to another, but stop where you find more devotion and recollection, and do this with a calm and peaceful spirit.

Accustom yourself to making your meditation in the interior church of your soul. It is of faith that our soul is the temple of the living God; it is of faith that God dwells within us. Therefore, enter within yourself, and there adore the Most High in spirit and in truth, there speak to him of his pains, of his love for us, having given you so many graces. That great God, who for love of us made himself human and wished to suffer so much for us, you have closer than the skin of your flesh, closer than you are to yourself. Therefore, my blessed daughter, speak to him heart to heart. I am giving you an example here. Enter into and see for yourself the scourging.

“Ah, my dear Jesus, you were condemned to be scourged, and so these wretches drag you to the place of scourgings, where before all the people you are stripped of your poor clothing, and for that reason your beautiful and precious flesh trembled and shivered from cold.” Here, stop and make affections. “Oh, my Jesus, oh, my Love, oh, my Life, how I see you so cruelly stripped before all the people! You, who clothe the naked, are vilely stripped of your own clothes! You, who warm your beloved with your sweet fire, now shiver and tremble from cold! Now the glory of heaven is so defiled? Ah my love! If you, who are King of Kings, the Glory of Heaven, have stripped yourself for me, it must be necessary that I strip myself of love for the world and all creatures. Ah, when, Life of my life, will I love only you? Ah! when will I give you all my heart? Ah! will I be united to you with nothing between us?”

So you can conduct yourself in a meditation on the scourging, the torments, etc., and in the same way for other mysteries. But it is necessary to pause on affections, as I said above, and stop with a visit of lively faith on the mystery, so that your soul may be inflamed with love. And, above all, it is necessary to secure the imitation of the virtues that Jesus practiced and has taught us. Jesus suffered and was silent, he never complained. Therefore, learn to suffer, to be silent, and to obey in silence. I say the same for other areas. This serves you as an example for the other mysteries, etc.

Stay recollected within yourself, love internal and external solitude, guard your feelings, especially your eyes and tongue, and be modest by day and by night.

I have no more time. In regard to your condition, abandon yourself into the loving arms of Jesus, and he will take thought for you. Think only of loving him in grand style. It is not important that your confessor deprives you of Holy Communion on the more solemn feasts. He knows what he is doing. It is up to you to obey and be silent. Whom do you hold who cannot be taken from you, whom do you carry with holy love in your heart all the time? Your heart should always be a living tabernacle of the sweet sacramental Jesus.

I am in a hurry. Teresa, read this letter with attention, for I hope it will help you much. Pray for me, for I will do so for you. Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

Your useless servant,
Paul of the Cross

1077

Sister Maria Innocenza of the Sorrowful Mother (1)⁴⁰⁵

San Angelo
June 21, 1757

*May the Passion of Jesus Christ
and the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy be in our hearts.*

Most Reverend Mother,

In the midst of my occupations, last night I received by the post your letter in a packet. Although it was very long, I read it. Last night I thought I would not read it again nor respond, seeing the many letters I need to write. But in the Divine Good Pleasure, you see I am answering you. I would wish that you believe what the Lord is having me say to you without philosophizing with your useless reflections, which are only a loss of time and an impediment to higher flights of holy love.

I read with attention all the first side of your letter, in which you speak of your conversion to God, of the mercies he has done you, and, indeed, as you say, the fears you have of being deceived. To all this I answer that your conduct is not deceived, but is in accord with God. So you need to have these vain fears and anxieties raised by the infernal enemy die in the fire of holy love. To do this does not take a long time, but with a high annihilation of yourself you need to make a peaceful dart, sweet and loving, into the bosom of the Highest Good in pure faith and filial confidence and without many words, but simply, for example: "Oh, Father! Oh, great Father! Oh, Goodness! Oh, Love! I am yours!" A single ejaculation is enough to take your refuge quickly with a high flight of faith, of hope, and of love into the depth of the Immense Divinity of the Highest Good, and there in a sacred silence of faith and holy love take your repose and

405. Maria Innocenza is a nun in the convent of the Holy Angels in Nepi. Paul had been there for a mission. This is another detailed letter of guidance for one who is entering upon a simpler form of prayer. Notice how Paul bases his direction on "the doctrine of the saints and masters of the spiritual life." We do not have more information about this nun, except what is obvious from the two preserved letters.

allow yourself to be penetrated completely by those sacred flames, barring all curiosity of spirit to wish to understand or comprehend this divine work, which your Beloved Good works in your beloved soul.

Do the same thing when suddenly a memory of past sins come to you, which destroy your confidence. Lose yourself completely in God in pure faith and love, etc., make a mixture of loving sorrow and sorrowing love, and then had you committed more sins than are drops of water in the ocean, they will be consumed faster in that furnace of love than a thread of linen disappears in a material fire which reaches from earth to heaven.

Oh, Love! Oh, Fire of charity! how powerful you are! On this I say no more, for love teaches everything when you steal nothing from love. Remain in your own nothing, and give the glory to the infinite love that is God the Best and Most.

With regard to the temptation to gluttony and the defects committed, hold to the rule given and try not to eat or drink outside meals, except for some particular necessity, even abstaining from some mouthfuls that you are accustomed to take in the act of giving restoratives to your pious mother, except where charity oblige you to have the sick woman eat more easily.

With regard to the tobacco you take for an affliction in your eyes, do not stop taking that, but take it with discretion and mortification. Never take it in church, unless you would have to wait for a long time. In such a case, if you feel your head getting bad, take it, but do so with respect and without allowing yourself to be seen.

With regard to all the other desires generated by holy love, both in regard to strict poverty and in regard to being despised, being deprived of the company of creatures as much as possible, and having yourself flogged, despised, slapped, and so on, although as I said these are sparks that leap from the sacred furnace of holy love, it is necessary to mortify them for now. You should have great esteem of them for they are gifts of the Heavenly Spouse, but you must put them in a corner of your heart as in a jewel case to guard them well and bring them out when it will please the Sovereign Good, for he will open all the ways to practice them.

Meanwhile, remain as a victim sacrificed as a holocaust to the glory of God, feeding on the Divine Will without thinking of the future. Let all your care and diligence be in burning with love and doing God's sweet will in all things.

The temptations of the crazy things that the devil puts in your head, both in regard to vainglory over the good you have done as well with regard to your position and what the nuns are saying, superiors or others, these are follies that make you waste time. Throw them into the furnace of love, as I said above, and think no more about them. If they come back, do the same thing and lose yourself totally in God. Oh, happy loss! Oh, loss, rich in every good! But enough. If you have not done so, oh, how much you have lost! I want to hope that you are obeying the divine call and following the sweet attractions of divine grace.

Let us come to prayer and let us end with the grace of Jesus Christ. All the signs which I find in your spirit, according to the faithful, sincere, and open

narrative you have given me, are in line with the doctrine of the saints and masters of the spiritual life, and are clear indications that the Lord wills that you behave in the following way in prayer.

When you see you cannot meditate and pass in a discursive way from one point to another, then fasten yourself in God, enter the inner temple of your spirit and remain with a loving attention to His Divine Majesty, looking at the Sovereign Good with the simple interior eye of faith, with a deep abstraction from all things, reposing in God in a sacred silence of love.

The Passion of Jesus Christ is a work of love. A simple glance of faith to a particular mystery, or all in general, can hold the soul in a high recollection with this vision of faith or loving attention to God, etc. You can arouse your heart at times, especially with distractions, with a sweet affection or soliloquy with His Divine Majesty, speaking to him of his sufferings, of his love, or of his benefits received, praying for the needs of the Church or for others as you feel yourself interiorly moved by the Holy Spirit.

This interior prayer ought always to go with you as much as possible. Be faithful to God, humble of heart, hidden with all creatures, abandoned to the Divine Will. Pray much for me and for our Congregation and for other things, according to my intentions.

Now there is question of two or three Retreats to be founded. Pray His Divine Majesty that everything be done in accord with his Holy Will, and pray especially that the Lord saves my soul and grants me a holy death.

I will be happy if you will let me know the fruit you have derived from this letter. But when you have read it five or six times, have the charity to burn it and get rid of it.

Do not tell anyone except Canon Gregorio that I have replied. I will do that this time only. Jesus bless you. Amen.

You can thank God that you have this answer since I waited to answer your long letter, which surprised anyone who saw it on my table unread. Patience. God be blessed. Amen.

I assure you that if you ever write me from there, you will have no further replies from me. Simply let me know whether you have well understood this letter and then write me no more.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the Cross

1078

Signora Frances Zelli (9)

San Angelo
June 25, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I rejoice much in the Lord over your solitude and peace, and I will not fail to pray for Signore Leopold so that His Divine Majesty may free him from all evil and close out the affairs in Rome for your consolation. With regard to sending Father Anthony there for two days as you desire in your piety and

charity, I must tell you that our holy Rules strictly prohibit missionaries on their return from missions to go into any towns. Those same Rules command that they remain in the Retreat at the feet of the Crucified to regain the spirit of recollection in order to better benefit souls. Since Father Anthony has just returned from missions, he ought to remain here and be withdrawn so as to be able to set out in autumn to work for souls.

I ask your kind understanding if I cannot render you this service since I cannot and do not have the faculty to dispense the Rules and Constitutions. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm I am with all respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1079

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (10)

San Angelo
June 30, 1757

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

I am replying to the principal points of your letter of the twenty-second of this month. First, the young man of sixteen years, nephew of that good priest from Alba, seems too young to me, considering our penitential life. It could be that his stomach would go bad, as happened with Father Thomas, who is there. So it is important to know whether he is strong, of a good character and appearance, and does he have a command of the Latin language; otherwise, wait. As for his uncle coming with him, that is not to be approved since he would find more pain in leaving him here than he would leaving him in his home town. That would not be good for the novice.

As for the Retreat, whether it comes about or not, I see that it does not suit us, except what I wrote in my other letter; otherwise, nothing. First must come a good Retreat for a novitiate in good solitude. There is need of a generous royal rescript in order to found in that country, wherever we will be requested by the ordinaries; otherwise, nothing happens. Therefore, it is not necessary to go there for a single Retreat. Such are my decided and constant opinions and decisions, based on holy prudence.

Regarding your proposal that I could appoint Father Frontiniano as novice master, this will not work! It is necessary for him to be years in the Congregation. The Rule prescribes ten, although the General can dispense in accord with the time and ability of the member. Would that Father Louis could succeed! I would be more in agreement with him since he is longer with us. Let us proceed, watching, taking care, etc.

Meanwhile, be patient until that time, for the work of the novitiate is in most need of care, the most important in the Congregation. I say that advisedly, for you give more glory to God and gain more souls than you would in going on any missions whatsoever while God is using you to form missionaries, and your fruit will remain.

I rejoice in the Lord over the fervor of the novitiate, and I bless the Mercy of God, especially for the graces that His Divine Majesty gives to all, especially to the ones you mentioned. I have no doubts that the one from Capua ought to reach a high degree of perfection. I would like you to inform me as to his country, relatives, their condition, etc., and what position he held in the military and what studies he has finished. Also, let me know when he comes and when he is vested with the habit.

What shall I say of you, my dearest son, except that I deeply know the fact that the Holy Spirit is working a mighty work of his eternal mercies in you? Continue what you are doing in regard to prayer and all the rest. I am speaking of the novitiate as well as pursuing your way of dealing with remedies for temptations and vexations of the devil by rebuking them with commands, etc. ... all is in accord with God. You can see that the Lord is blessing everything.

Take care to mortify their will in everything; insist much on this point. Without this you build on sand. Insist on a holy hatred of self, on not thinking about the conduct of others, but of one's own. "Take care of yourself," etc. Insist much on knowledge of one's own nothingness, on having a high opinion of others and an poor one of one's self, a strong habit of control and mortification of one's senses, especially the eyes and tongue, and a composed exterior to keep one's powers united and recollected in God. With this way prayer will come of itself.

As for yourself, so that His Divine Majesty may always work his marvels more in your spirit, keep yourself as much as possible in a high abstraction from all that is created, in a true nakedness and poverty of spirit, and in a true internal solitude, letting the sheep of your faculties and thoughts enter the interior desert, and there be lost in God. Let them be lost, for they lose themselves easily in their origin. O loss, which is infinitely rich! O sacred desert, in which the soul learns the science of the saints as Moses did in the profound solitude of Mount Horeb.

I have no more time. If the young man from Alba ever comes, with the conditions laid down above, it would be good to write immediately to Canon Randone to see whether he has a good candidate ready who could accompany him without his uncle coming. I believe that you will have written to Brandeglio for that young man, as I wrote in my letter. If God provides eight or ten candidates, they can be received. Pray and have prayers offered for my intentions. I greet those in novitiate in the Lord, and I pray the gentle Jesus to rain on you all his plenteous blessings, and I am from the heart,

Your affectionate,

Paul of the Cross

John Francis Sancez (19)

San Angelo
July 2, 1757

J.C.P.

My revered and beloved John Francis,

Are you making no complaints over my long silence? I hope not, since I would ask you in your charity to reflect that for only a short time have I put my feet down firmly in the holy Retreat since I gave the papal blessing on the last day of the octave of Pentecost. As soon as I got here I put myself under treatment by orders of the doctors. Then I was smothered by letters and not a few tasks. But what is the use of these explanations since I know from long experience your great charity? Enough.

Today I can breathe a bit after so many letters. Although I put in a good morning at this little table, I want to let you know, as I am doing with this note, that two Retreats will soon be established, one about fifteen miles from Rome on a beautiful mountain, from which you can see that metropolis of the world. This one will be established in autumn because the contract for possession and all other details have been taken care of. We can place twelve religious there. The other one will be established in spring near Todi; it is in a good location with solitude. Let us pray that the Lord will bless his works and provide holy workers. etc.

The bell is ringing for Sext and None. I end by embracing you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I envision all your blessed family in my cold prayers, etc., and with profound respect I sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Teresa Palozzi (4)

San Angelo
July 13, 1757

J.C.P.

May Jesus be always in your heart.

Since two of our religious are coming there on business for the Retreat, I am answering your letter in the Name of the Lord.

I read that you are being bothered with evil thoughts, but with the grace of God you get rid of them and fight them. Oh, this is a great victory that Jesus Christ grants you. I beg you not to make anything at all out of this; despise them and know that God permits this battle so that you may become humble of heart and never trust yourself. Guard all your senses, especially your eyes, with great care and never raise them in the presence of dangerous objects. A true servant of God ought to keep her eyes always lowered and see nothing but the heavens and so much of earth as will bury her. Doubt nothing, Teresa, and God will give you the victory. And, believe me, as a reward for this fight the Lord will give you great graces and give you the gift of holy prayer. Recall, in order to give

yourself more courage, that so many holy virgins have fought much harder than you and are now happy in heaven and sing forever the divine mercies and the triumph of the Immaculate Lamb, Christ Jesus, who gave them the victory. Speak to your confessor about these temptations with all modesty and brevity, not, indeed, as a scruple, but to gain merit, since there was no consent, and to humble yourself and to confound the devil. Then put into practice whatever the confessor advises you.

I read that you cannot meditate, and you find yourself very dry since you cannot apply yourself in meditation. Do the following. Always take some points with you to meditation, and, when you see your mind is dry and you are weary and feel disgust and pain, where formerly there were feelings of devotion, now your soul would prefer to remain in a peaceful rest of faith and love of God, then stay that way. Remain within yourself in pure faith and without images, with a sweet, peaceful attention to God, who you have entirely within you. You are more in God than you are in yourself. Remain then with this loving attention to God and rest on the divine bosom of that great Father in silence of faith and holy love. When your mind wanders and distractions come, gently revive your faith with a loving dart toward God and a sweet colloquy on the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ. Then continue your repose in God in faith and love.

Humble yourself in the divine presence, be aware of your true nothingness, your capacity, to the extent that it depends on you, of committing every evil if God did not hold you in his divine arms. In this way hide yourself always in the Sovereign Good. In this way, I say, you will become accustomed to a continual presence of God, which is rich in every good, and you will acquire internal solitude and a true recollection of heart.

Read and reread this letter with close attention, praying the Holy Spirit to give you light to practice all that I am teaching you.

The business of the convent that Sister Lilia speaks of, I can only say that I fear it is not going anywhere because the benefactor who had prepared just about everything has encountered notable temporal losses. Let us allow God to act. Let us abandon ourselves totally to his Holy Will, for he knows how to bring everything to a good end for his glory.

Thank your mother for the biscuits she sent us, and I pray that Jesus will give her an eternal reward. Greet her in the Lord for me. Pray for me and for the Congregation, and Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

When you can write me, tell me how you understood this letter and if your soul profited.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Joseph Sisti (4)

San Angelo
July 16, 1757

Paul of the Cross reverences with due respect His Reverence D. Joseph and tells him by the post that he will not be able to come to the meeting, as was agreed, since the swelling continues in his joints so that these days he is able to drag himself only to the choir and the altar. If God wills that he improve, he will let you know as to when he can come. In the meanwhile, he asks the charity of your holy prayers and that of the other souls we know of, and with profound respect he kisses your holy hands and affirms he is your true servant.

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (11)⁴⁰⁶

San Angelo
July 23, 1757

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

Blessed be God, who with such great mercy assists you and all the novitiate with so many graces. Take care that those of you who have had tertian fever do not have a relapse. Have them take preservatives, the bitter decoction, rhubarb, and a good convalescence to make sure, for if they have a recurrence now, it will be goodbye in the spring.

It is not necessary that souls that have high union with God in holy contemplation walk in the path of Brother Aloysius.⁴⁰⁷ I have read some things, especially in one who is the first of mystics, and it is true that ordinarily they pass through such trials, one in this way and another in that. God has ways beyond us and has files so fine that they penetrate and remove all rust; they are purely spiritual, and the experience is often more bitter than death, I will say that. This is because they are more pure, more penetrating, and free from all satisfaction, within and without, in a very exalted way, and they prepare the soul for a union with God since they give a personal knowledge of one's nothingness so much that it seems to be a pain of the damned, etc. Oh, how much there is to say on that...

God permits such a purgation in Brother Aloysius for his mighty ends, and he gives signs of making progress. However, watch to see if he has a secret understanding of this purgation, for that would be harmful. See if it leaves him with a profound knowledge of his nothingness and makes him exalt the divine mercy, etc. God is also permitting this so that you may learn the science of the

406. The letter of July 23, 1757 and the letter of August 25, 1757 are both directed to Father John Mary. These are important for showing us how Paul dealt with those who believe they are receiving extraordinary favors from God, including special locutions.

407. Brother Aloysius Basili of Saint Mary was born in 1731 and died on March 30, 1801.

saints and become a practitioner in holy direction, etc. For him there will be another file and it is already in place. Love will be the executioner, and let it be, for it is doing its work. When this makes a martyr of him, there is need of help, a super strength that God gives. Otherwise, he will not withstand the blow. When Brother Aloysius will be totally resigned to the Will of God and in a profound knowledge of his nothingness, he will be delivered from such vexations.

When the weather cools, two priests will be coming: one is Father Candido Donato Costa,⁴⁰⁸ a profound theologian able to teach, a man of great piety and prayer. He has dressed in wool all his life and never eats meat. It is two years since he has had his call. If he does not come in November, he may come in October, but I do not wish, etc. ... He is coming to the Congregation at the same age that Father Mark Aurelius joined, but he is healthier than Father Mark Aurelius. The other is Abbot Dottarelli of Toscanella,⁴⁰⁹ a capable priest of thirty-four years. Another is a cleric from Toscanella who has Father John Baptist for his advocate, but he will be received as a lay brother because he lacks knowledge. Two other clerics have applied strenuously and are able. The one has been of help to the provincial, the other to a priest in Rome. So let them be examined, etc. That is five in all. I would say that seven, eight, or more will be vested.

In my other letter I asked you to tell me how many young men there are capable for studies and when they will make their profession according to the Rule in order to have them leave and give room for others. I do not remember anything else. On September 4, I will, please God, be at Bagnorea for the missions.

Father Mark Aurelius and his companions will leave on August 22 for Todi, that is, for the missions there and to take private possession of the Retreat. Pray much for us. I am from the heart,

In the ordinary mail last night I received a letter from Canon Randone, who tells me that five of the six candidates who are waiting are all fit. I am answering him that if they are such and with all the requirements regarding health, learning, and the rest, they will be received and that this is understood by you. It is necessary that they be not received before the greater part there have made their profession and all the clerics give way to others. Let me know. From the heart I am,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

I think by my count there will be a large vestition of ten or twelve.

408. Father Candido Maria Costa of the Holy Wounds was born in 1707 and died on August 17, 1788.

409. Name does not appear in the Registry, a sign that Dottarelli did not enter or he left before vestition.

George Melata (9)

San Angelo
July 23, 1757

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

The onions that your charity sent to this Retreat were very useful. All will be ever grateful before God and acknowledge our infinite indebtedness with the hope that the charity and care you always show toward us poor ones will cause a copious rain of blessings upon your soul so that you will be holy and sanctify your loving sheep by word and example.

I am writing with great haste since it is the day for the post. Father John Baptist, Father Rector, and all greet you from the heart. I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus with all my soul. Please extend our cordial greetings to all your reverent household, especially to the canon. I am from the heart, and with full respect, pardon the haste,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (12)

San Angelo
July 25, 1757

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

There is no reason to question the sentiments, lights, and the rest that you have laid out for me with such clarity and exactness in your welcome letter, which I received in today's mail, as to whether they are graces, lights, and infused gifts in the deepest intimacy of your soul, coming from that Infinite Good, who is the source of lights and graces. It would be a serious mistake to worry about any deceit, since all the signs taken together are so strongly in favor and, above all, because they are in pure faith, etc., and are producing the effects listed by the saints and masters of spirit to know whether it is good grain or weeds, etc. Consequently, I cannot, and ought not, say anything different to you, except that you must continue this conduct with confidence and accept the divine impressions with profound obedience to the attractions of the Holy Spirit.

It is certain that when the Sovereign Lord and Giver of every good works these divine effects in the soul, it is a sign that he wants to enrich it always with his graces. So be acceptant with great fidelity. Such fidelity consists especially in not robbing God of anything, but returning all the graces, gifts, lights, etc., to the source from which they came, remaining in nakedness of spirit in one's own nothing in a passive way, not admiring and becoming enamored of the gifts, but losing everything more and more in the Highest Giver. If you look at the gifts, it is only in order to be grateful to the One who has given them, turning to admire them again only to humble yourself the more and annihilate

yourself, considering the gifts as spoiled by the dross of our own vices. Since His Divine Majesty has ordained such most beautiful jewels be besmirched by being in the filthiest vase, so with profound annihilation and with a sorrowful love and a loving sorrow, the soul ought to present these treasures and jewels with one's own baseness so that he may cleanse them in the fire of his divine love. In the meanwhile, remain in a complete annihilation and perfect nakedness.

All that I am saying takes place in an instant, and this is the short way to be always reclothed with new and admirable gifts and graces in order to love the Beloved Good the more. So I will give you a short way, and that is to look once more with the eye of faith at your own nothingness and, frightened by that sight, to flee instantly to the interior desert in the depth of the Divinity, and, there, let this horrible nothing be lost by receiving the divine impressions passively and with a total abandonment in God. Let His Divine Majesty do his work in the deepest recesses of your soul where there takes place the Divine Birth.

Here, there are spoken great paradoxes, but let us be silent. For he who is the more ignorant in this divine wisdom is the wiser. Here, one understands without understanding. I say that since it is not to be explained, etc. O holy ignorance that causes one to lose sight of all the wisdom and prudence of this world in order to learn in the school of the Holy Spirit the science and wisdom of the saints! Experience will teach you that these empty fears of sin, etc., are only follies that must be consumed and made to disappear in the fire of love, a great grace that will keep the heart contrite and humbled.

I rejoice much in the Lord that the novitiate continues in fervor. Blessed be God! In my other letter I told you that there is discussion of two foundations, etc., so a number of novices could be received. I have in mind only one, and although he will enter the Congregation at the same age at which Father Mark Aurelius came, he is stronger than he was, is accustomed to penance, wears a woolen undershirt, never eats meat, has great and high prayer, and, above all, practices great virtues. There is not a deeper theologian in the region, perhaps even over greater distances. He would be very good at teaching theology because he has the *Summa* of Saint Thomas branded in his head. I listened with my mouth open when he talked of mysticism. He already is involved for he is a priest and presently confessor at a well-reformed convent. For two or three years he should have come, but the tears of the nuns have held him back. He recognizes the mistake since Divine Providence has so arranged things that he will come when the weather cools; and so we will be satisfied.⁴¹⁰

I have no further candidates at this time. I am enclosing this letter so that you can respond to him if it seems good to you to accept this young man from his country. He was born in 1739. Enough! Find out if he is healthy, etc., and if there is anyone else there. I would think we could accept him. I leave the care of that to you. I am writing him as well, and I am telling him to write to you. The rector of Ceccano sent me this letter with the address needed to answer it.

410. This is Father Candido Costa.

I am including the reply for Father Louis,⁴¹¹ and I ask you to read it to him in a conference. I hope that he, too, will show some good will.

I find myself in the lower lake, in darkness and in the shadow of death. Have mercy on me, have mercy on me at least you, servants of God, so that God will give me mercy and save this poor soul of mine. I embrace you in Christ and greet all the novitiate in the Lord, and I am always,

I am writing to the rector of Brandeglio⁴¹² that, if the young man is good, etc., I am willing to accept him when the weather cools, but that I am turning the matter over to you. You should write him, and, if there is another candidate from there with good talents and morals, I would accept him gladly. I put everything in your hands, for who knows whether in September I may not have something new to supervise.

1086

Teresa Palozzi (5)

San Angelo
July 26, 1757

*May the Passion of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

I received your letter and am responding to it in haste. I understand what you say to me about your aridity. Believe me, this is an excellent sign, and by means of this suffering that you have in prayer, God is purifying you as gold in the fire and rendering your soul pure and beautiful in his divine eyes. Make frequent acts of resignation to the Will of God, embrace the cross of Jesus, and remain crucified with him, suffering in a silence of faith and holy love whatever His Divine Majesty disposes.

Stay solitary within yourself in the tabernacle of your heart, face-to-face with the sweet Jesus, and speak to him of his sufferings and the benefits he has done you. Listen to him and embrace his feet as did Magdalene, and you will hear him when he speaks words of eternal life to your heart. So be humble and remain in your nothingness, suffering and being silent in the occasions that present themselves, which you ought to embrace as precious jewels, humbling yourself toward all with true obedience. There is some hope for the convent, but who knows how much time it will take. Abandon yourself to the Will of God for he has thought of you. Jesus bless you and make you holy, and pray for me.

Your useles servant,

Paul of the Cross

411. Father Louis Borell of the Heart of Jesus was born in 1725 and died on January 7, 1789.

412. This priest was one of the Piedmontese friends of Paul who sent worthy youths to the Congregation.

A Religious Sister (7)

San Angelo
August 9, 1757

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

In reply to your letter I do not know what to say, since there is nothing specific to answer. For many years, in my poor and cold prayers, I have cried out to the Lord to have me fulfill with perfection his Holy Will, for I would want to feed myself always and in every happening on this Will because this was always the food of the gentle Jesus. I would wish to feed in the silence of faith and in the nakedness and poverty of spirit with the heat of pure and holy love, not desiring any other knowledge, etc.

For that reason I have abandoned everything, whether regarding the Congregation or regarding the convent to that Divine Good Pleasure. I take care not to do anything else than to feed at every moment on the sweet Will of my God on the naked table of the cross of my Savior Jesus Christ.

As to what will happen regarding the convent, with regard to the foundress or directress that you bring up, I let that disappear in the Divine Good Pleasure and think nothing about it.

I think I have responded sufficiently to your letter, and I pray that you continue the charity of your prayers for me, who am in extreme need. I rejoice much in the Lord that he has provided for your convent a man of holy life, to whose prayers I recommend myself. I end, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I sign myself with all veneration,

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

I am leaving soon on holy missions and for another affair for the glory of God, so do not write me further.

Thomas Fossi (85)

San Angelo
August 10 1757
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

Before my departure on the mission, I did not want to pass over making a visit in the Lord to my dear Thomas. To begin with, I want to make you laugh a bit. That good Father Rector of the Presentation, Father Clement, having written twice to you and not having had an answer, fears that he has offended you since he was not able to accept your son. That is completely forbidden by our holy Rule, and I know that its exact observance is important to you as well. I have pity on that poor servant of God, since he finds himself loaded with a large family, having to feed more than thirty people a day. Finding small help from Orbetello, due to the common misery, he fears losing such an outstanding

benefactor as you are, Thomas, who, in addition to the other help that you provide, cooperates so that they can receive abundant donations of wine from the island.

I come back to say that I have pity for the blessed rector, for he does not know as I do the charity of Thomas, who could not be cooled and never extinguished with the waters of the bitterest afflictions, even if he were assailed with the most monstrous ingratitude, God forbid, while he is doing what is for the pure glory of God and out of his purest love. I confess I am ashamed not a little to recommend to your fervent charity that poor religious community at Mount Argentario. It is the most needy, seeing the numbers of true servants of God in the novitiate. Your holy donations and the cooperation you obtain from other benefactors, I do not say these are ascending to, but that they have already ascended to the Divine Presence as a sweet-smelling incense to bring a rain of most copious blessings of heaven upon you and your house from generation to generation.

It is true that God tries you in various ways, even with your material welfare. It is very true that for a short time adverse winds are blowing, and it appears that God does not care about your donations and your other deeds. But is this not a great test of your faith? Is it not true that God tried holy Tobias infinitely more, and Saint Eustace, and so many more? But what followed? Holy Scripture says: He was enriched with more abundant substance, and, what is more important, he was raised to great sanctity. But what shall I say to my dear Thomas? Is it possible that I would ever doubt your charity toward the Congregation and your fidelity to God? Never. Never. Would that not be an enormous mistake I would be making from the proofs that I have of a son whom God has confided to me to cooperate for his perfection?

Do I not know that the house of Thomas is dedicated to God and under the protection of the holy Passion of Jesus Christ, and that for the Congregation of the Passion of the gentle Jesus he would give his life and his blood? I know all that, and so Father Rector is mistaken in his fear. But you and I may have a good laugh over the fear of this blessed servant of God, who merits sympathy. Now let us come to ourselves for a short time.

So, my dear Thomas, how are things going? "Oh, Father, it is easy for you to say, 'All is well,' for you live in the woods in peace and without having to fight with anyone. It's easy to ask me how I am doing. I am a poor man in the Babylon of the world, in the middle of business, with visits, marriage contracts, and interest of my household. I am in a sea of woes, afflicted, desolate, with contradictions at home and abroad, suffering within and without, and the devils are not sleeping."

Well, have you finished your weeping? Now, let me speak. It is true I have been here for three months, but have I had any rest? The letters alone are continuous. The cares for the Congregation are demanding. I do not wish, nor ought I, to tell how things are going on within me, nor do I wish to mention the continual war from the invisible enemies. I will be silent about the loving thrusts of the Lord, trying to convert me. I am silent about everything.

But you, my dear Thomas, do you not know clearly that God wishes to make you his true servant? Do you not see this in every happening? Do you not see that God seasons with gall all the comfort you might take in the world? What sort of signs are these? Is it in any way not true that these are signs of what His Divine Majesty wills to happen so that you may be a living portrait of Jesus Christ.

So then, you are to allow all your sufferings, bitter experiences, desolations, scruples, temptations, and everything else disappear into the furnace of holy love. Feed yourself on the Divine Will in naked suffering, in silence, and in hope. Let all your satisfaction be in doing the Will of God in silence and in hope, that is, through the various tribulations which are precious to the servants of God.

See the Will of God in your domestic duties and work at them with diligence because in that way you please God. Keep your family devout, happy, and completely in God. Keep your heart turned toward heaven, which no wind can shake. Goodbye, dear Thomas. I am going to Bagnorea, where I will have much to do since it is a city that has need like the rest of the world. Pray much for me. I enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with your wife and children, and affirm once more from a true heart and ask copious blessing from the Lord.

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1089

Thomas Fossi (86)

San Angelo
August 13, 1757

P.D.N.J.C.

Dear Friend,

I have written another letter directed to you, included with one to the Father Rector of the Presentation. Since I received another one of yours yesterday, so I am replying with this note, which you will receive with the other letter.

I tell you then that great are the tests that God gives his servants, and I see that you are being treated by the Lord in a grand fashion. Your various trials and pains that you endure in spirit and in body from men and from the devil are manifest signs that the blessed God wishes to make you a saint but with the secret sanctity of the Cross, which, since it is more precious, demands that you pass through many trials and many deaths. Your path at present consists in a dying life, but how pleasing to the Lord. In the midst of your suffering you are to say: "I will not die, but I will live and tell of the works of the Lord." Let all your pains die in the Divine Good Pleasure and embrace the Holy Will of God in naked suffering "to suffer and not to die" and then "to suffer and to die." These are words of two great saints. Try to be peaceful, not fixed; serene, not scrupulous; for you are obliged to keep up your strength. I have little time since I am about to leave for the missions of Bagnorea, and I will not be here until the middle of next June. I have missions all of November and part of December. If

your uncle wants to send your son to college, that will be a good idea, but it seems to me too little. It were better if it were more ambitious. Enough. Do what you think best. I have no more time, and I embrace you in the holy Heart of Jesus, where I see all your pious house. Jesus bless you. Amen.

I am always more and more grateful in Jesus Christ for the precious tuna that lasted for the poor old men. May the Lord reward you.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the †

1090

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (39)

San Angelo
August 13, 1757

J.C.P. Jesus

I am answering your letter, dated the ninth of this month and received last evening. I thank the Divine Goodness that is pouring his infinite mercies into your soul, not by rivers, but by seas. To him alone be honor and glory. You would be much mistaken to worry that you are being deceived, as I told you in our conferences. The battles raised by the devils make the triumphant grace that God has given to your soul shine forth all the more. You should not be pained that he who has the spiritual care of your soul does not understand. Leave the care of everything to the Lord and do not blame yourself nor trouble your soul if he does not understand. I say this again for your greater peace. Accuse yourself of your defects as you know them and with brevity of words. If you reflect, you will remember that I said this to you, and that this is the way you should act, allowing everything to disappear in the fire of holy love.

Continue your prayer in the way the Holy Spirit leads you. Your prayer should be continual. You understand me. The place of prayer, said a great servant of God who wrote wonderfully about mysticism, is in the Spirit of God. In God you should sing your psalms; in God you should perform everything. This is a secret language and is not understood by one who does not walk in this royal way. In substance, in regard to your interior conduct, you should remain lost in God and allow this drop of your poor soul to get lost in that immense sea of love. There take your repose and receive from God what he communicates without losing sight of your nothingness. In this divine interior solitude everything is learned.

One of the great graces that God is giving you is that frequent impression on your soul of his holy sufferings in naked faith. Be obedient to this Sovereign Divine Master and profit from his holy teachings.

In this holy interior school more is learned by silence than by speaking. Saint Mary Magdalene fell with love at the feet of Jesus; there she was silent, there she listened, loved, and melted away in love. Take this prayer and interior

recollection with you to the turn⁴¹³ of your office, and everywhere go out of yourself and lose yourself in God; escape time and lose yourself in eternity. In God there is no time, but all is eternal.

God will teach you everything if you are humble, hidden to all creatures, sunken in your nothingness, etc. I am rushed and I thank you in Jesus Christ for the prayers you offer for me, who am so needy. Know that bitter waters penetrate my soul, and a great storm submerges me. May the Will of God be always fulfilled; I attach myself to that alone, and my only desire is that it be my food. Continue your charity toward me, and you will have merit before God. I will leave on September 3 for the missions, and I do not know when I will be back here. Pray for the conversion of souls. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

1091

Passionist Religious (12)

San Angelo

August 16, 1757

Paul of the Cross,
General of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ,
To the Rectors of our Retreat in Marittima and Campagna,
and to Father Rector of the Retreat of San Eutizio,
Greetings and Blessings in the Lord:

As with the advance of time our duty as Superior of the Congregation comes to an end, and as we sigh for that moment to retire and free ourselves from everything and to weep in a deep solitude at the feet of Jesus Crucified for our omissions, so there is not left to us any time, or almost none, to put in place with timely provision those means which can lead to establishing in strength the holy observance and make for an increase in fervor and perfection of virtue in the spirit of every religious.

We have also taken account that by my mere inadvertence we have omitted one point of determination that we cannot pass over in silence, as our conscience demands. So here and now we wish to state the following:

1. We command that each and all the rectors of our Retreats, as well as each of their religious members, priests and clerics, whoever they are, no one excepted, make themselves a copy of the holy Rules so that each one has a copy for himself so as to read it often. The superiors are to be the first to do this as an example, not excluding a like obligation for the lay brothers who are able to

413. 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.

read. For them the Father Rector will provide a translation in the common language.⁴¹⁴

2. We further command that all our priests who are engaged in the great ministry of hearing confessions, in accord with the regulations given in our other Retreats, will have likewise a copy of the Common Regulations,⁴¹⁵ the fifth section added to our Constitutions, treating of the way they should observe with perfection in that duty. This regulation expresses well the prudent behavior of the confessor with the penitents. Let them read it often in order to exercise their office well in a manner that will result in the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

If, as zealous as they are for the Rule, they will be zealous for these similar wise counsels and if they keep them in mind, they can be sure they will be the more pleasing to the Lord.

We will and ordain finally that such copies be presented by all the religious when we make our Visitation to these Retreats, and we will make that Visitation in San Eutizio around the middle of October 1757.

Take care then, beloved Fathers and Brothers in Christ, to put into practice what we enjoin on you for your spiritual gain so as to enrich yourselves with plenteous merits before God and to gain by means of a holy religious observance your happy goal of the blessed fatherland, which we desire affectionately for you. We give you our blessing.

Given at the Retreat of San Angelo near Vetralla, August 16, 1757.

Paul of the Cross, General

Francis Anthony, Secretary

1092

A Newly Ordained Passionist⁴¹⁶

San Angelo

August 23, 1757

Dear Reverend Father in Christ,

Always, when I receive a letter from our religious, I am accustomed to answer immediately. Your not having my answers is a clear sign that I did not see your letters.

I am answering your letter with another's hand since I find myself these days on my straw mattress with gross swelling in my knees and feet.

I congratulate you, first of all, on the sublime priestly level to which His Divine Majesty has raised you. Since he wills to unite you and transform you

414. The Rules were printed for the first time in 1770, based on the text approved in 1769. In 1775 the text approved that year was printed and an edition in Italian provided for the lay brothers.

415. San Paolo della Croce, *Guida per l'animazione spirituale della vita passionista. Regolamento commune del 1755*, n. 208-240.

416. Between March 5 and April 9, 1765, six young Passionists were ordained; we are unable to determine to whom this letter refers.

with his love, therefore, he also permits these terrible battles and assaults. Dear one, be certain that one does not come to perfect acquisition of consummate virtue except by means of the contrary temptations. Does God wish to give you great patience? Then he permits temptations to impatience, resentment, opposition, contradictions. Does he will a great vividness of faith? Then he permits temptation against it. You can go further. Is he allowing you impure temptation, accompanied with the pain of aridity, especially at the time of holy prayer? What is this but a sign that he wishes to give you great purity of heart and an excellent disposition to come to know God and be united more intimately with him in prayer and sacrifice? "Blessed are the clean of heart..."

Take courage then, and do not lose confidence in the midst of these storms, "which have a great reward." You will conquer such temptations better by humbling yourself before God and despising yourself than by trying to fight the enemy face-to-face. Abandon yourself gently to the loving Will of the Lord: "Yes, Father ... I rejoice to be on the cross of suffering, for so it is pleasing to you. If it please you, O my Lord, free me; if not, I adore your Holy Will and give myself in life, in death, and in eternity to that Will." Recommend me much to the Lord, in whose holy Wounds I leave you, and I am,

Your always affectionate,

Paul of the †

1093

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (13)

San Angelo

August 25, 1757

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

You did well to hold off the two postulants until next year, the nephew of the curate and the other one you said was there, since we need to receive the young man from Canino, whom Signore Aloysius Micinelli,⁴¹⁷ our benefactor, has recommend to me. This year, unless I am mistaken, I believe there will be a full novitiate. I promised to accept the man from Canino when I was there on my mission. He has studied rhetoric, is of a refined and good character, of honorable and respectable parentage, and about seventeen or eighteen years old. Those coming from Piedmont are by my counting eleven. As for the candidate from Roccasecca, who asks to first be ordained a priest, if he perseveres in his vocation, he can be received. As for faculties to accept the novices to profession, as long as the prescriptions of the Rules have been observed, I give you permission. I concede fullest authority that you can receive the professions and have the novices make their professions when the time of their novitiate is complete. Enter their names in the proper book in the usual way. You need not think more about this or have further recourse.

417. There was a Micinelli vested December 4, 1757, with the name Aloysius of the Infant Jesus, who was "let go because of his illness" during the novitiate (*Novitiate Registry*, f. 9).

With regard to Confrater Aloysius,⁴¹⁸ I hope your procedure with him is according to God, but the devil plays the ape and under a great pretense of good works. In the very conflict there can be a hidden pride. So it is well to let him know that if a single venial sin merits the pain of loss and pain of sense in purgatory with horrible suffering, is it a great thing that the infinite goodness of God exchanges for such pain the small drops of his trials? So let him humble himself and resign himself and abandon himself to God with great confidence in him and always remain in his nothingness.

These locutions that you report are very dangerous, nor can I approve them. I say this from the experience that God has given me. What necessity is there for God to let a novice know that he desires more fervor from the novices in their Communions, etc? Does not the master know this himself with the light God gives him for his office. Besides, does he not know that God is greatly offended, especially by sacrileges? Does it not seem that such a locution is not necessary?

God gives revelations only "for the sake of his great glory" and for the needs of Holy Church. What one can gather from holy books and from experience is that God more often gives the light he infuses to those to whom he has given a task. It is not necessary to have locutions in the dark. Consider his other revelation: "Humility, humility, etc.," and what follows: "Internal humility, clinging, etc." Oh! this is frivolous, and, much more, suspect. If I were to say false, I would not lie, for I am not deceived.

When God speaks to souls, either with understanding or an impression in the angelic mode, without articulating words which are purely intellectual, these are not subject to deception, and God does it always with great majesty, and the effects produced are beyond explanation. When there are articulate locutions inwardly, within, they are from God or from an angel, as is true most often, who speaks in the Name of the Sovereign Patron. They come with a majesty and with pleasing words, magnificent, and they accomplish what they signify and always leave behind a marvelous impression of heavenly intelligence, elevation in God within, etc.

Therefore, out of one hundred or one thousand articulate locutions, scarcely one or two are genuine, and it is difficult for masters of the spirit to know and discern the true from the false, what comes from the human spirit, what comes from the enemy, who knows how to imitate effects which in appearance are such that they could come from God. So the best procedure for him who experiences these things is to cast them off always, to humble oneself before God, to protest that he takes his stand on holy faith and the Holy Books and the instructions of his spiritual father, who speaks in the Name of the Lord. Acting in this way he gives glory to the Lord by distrusting self, humbling self, and holding self unworthy of such graces. So he frees himself from all deception. For if they are from God, the good and holy effects will be infallible, and the

418. Father Aloysius Massimi of Saint Paul lived devoutly while dying of tuberculosis on January 31, 1765 (B. Silvestrelli, *Cenni*, p. 173-177).

soul will receive the effects for having rejected the locutions. The exercise of obedience will free him from all deception. etc.

So take heart and believe that your conduct is in accord with God. Always, the most fundamental virtue that you mention is humility of heart: N.N.N.⁴¹⁹

For a week I have had painful joints. I have celebrated three times, counting this morning, and I have been able to write. I am a bit better and will leave on Saturday for Bagnorea, the third of September, so do not write any more. I will write you when I return. But if something important comes up, but I do not expect that, write the secretary, who is remaining here. I have given him authority, etc. I embrace you from the heart in Jesus Christ.

Continue to pray for our sick benefactress, especially for me and for the Congregation, and for fruits in the missions.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the †

1094

Girolama Ercolani (36)

San Angelo

August 27, 1757

Leaving September 3.

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering the letter I received last night. First, with regard to your confessor, why do you get scrupulous over the thought that comes to you, and the worst is that you are disturbed even in confessing them? Do you not see that you are never at peace, even though many times in voice and in writing you have been told that such things are not to be confessed since they are not sins because you do not want them or consent to them? The next time, when such outlandish things run through your head or any other kinds of thoughts, invoke the Names of Jesus and Mary. Protest that you never wish to consent to them, and then when you go to confession say: "Father, various thoughts have come into my mind, and I did not accept them, but rejected them. I am not aware that I consented to them, but, if there was any negligence, I accuse myself of that." That is all. It is not even necessary to do that, for we are obliged to confess only grave sins. Since you are scrupulous and, thanks to the Lord, fear God, it would be better to despise such things and not speak of them. If you will do this, you will be in peace; otherwise, you will be always upset and not do anything worthwhile. Be quiet, and with the merit of holy obedience do not even think of it any more.

It was wrong to shout at that religious person you mention to me. That was a notable defect, even though you thought you were doing it for a good end. Besides losing your peace, your love was cooled and you saddened your neighbor. Don't ever do that in the future. Follow the good examples that he

419. "N.N.N." means to have nothing, to do nothing, to know nothing.

gave you. You see how patient and meek and humble he is? From that could you not conclude to his piety?

The holy Madonna, the Mother of God, knelt at the feet of the apostles since they were priests. Saint Catherine of Siena kissed the ground they walked on. So you should be humble with him and treat him with respect, great charity, and reverence, and have your daughters do the same. Do not give rein to gossip nor to the devil, who puts distorted ideas in your head to have you lose peace and charity. You, however, as head of the household, must be very watchful over the servants but do so with prudence and charity.

I rejoice in the Lord that you have your daughter and son-in-law in your home. I pray the Mercy of God to keep you in peace and true concord. With regard to having children, let them abandon themselves to the Divine Will. I am not failing, and will not fail, to recommend them to the Lord in my prayers and those of my religious. See to it that there is fear of God in your home and continue your holy meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ. I would wish for all of you to make it together. The canon could be in charge of the holy exercise by reading the meditation and giving devout instructions. If they do this, I believe they will receive copious blessings in both spiritual and temporal affairs.

I am soon leaving, and I do not know when I will return, but months will pass. Greet the canon for me and the household, along with your son-in-law and all your daughters. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus and affirm once more with all respect that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1095

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (7)

San Angelo
August 30, 1757

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

My sickness has had me on my straw bed for days and has held up my departure. I hope, however, my departure will take place Monday or Tuesday, the sixth of September. It would be very good to pray for the conversion of souls and offer the discipline of your rule and add another each week, but not unto blood, and for the space of the litany of the Our Lady. The affairs of your soul are going well, thanks to God. Continue to make use of the counsel given you in the Name of the Lord. Remain in your nothingness and allow that nothing to disappear in the Infinite All that is God. Remain in your interior solitude, cut off from everything created, see that your heart is always a living tabernacle of our gentle sacramental Jesus, and make your own all the bitter sufferings of that Divine Spouse.

With regard to your new confessor, guide yourself with prudence in the following way. First, cry out to God to let you know his Holy Will; then, little

by little, go about seeing where you stand on opening your heart and what peace you experience when you listen to the advice of the new confessor.

If it will be the Will of God that you share everything of the state of your interior life, you will feel a sweet, peaceful attraction of the Holy Spirit with a clarity of mind and freedom of spirit that will lead you gently to say everything. But it is not necessary to entrust yourself at all in the beginning, but continue to pray. But if the impulse continues, then you have no other recourse than to share. If you experience hardness and dryness of soul, obscurity of mind, inability to speak, etc., that is a sign you need to wait until God gives other lights. In that event confess your defects and take care not to repeat things from past confessions as I told you.

Listen to the confessor with reverence and leave in peace. If he questions you on your prayer, tell him that your prayer is entirely based on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Reply with prudence, with simplicity, and with openness, and say that other ways have not occurred to you, and recommend it to the Lord. If things work out the way I wrote above, then God will have you speak about them. I find myself in great anxiety, both for my office and the needs of the Congregation. Cry out much to the Lord. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant,

Paul of the †

1096

The Bishop of Corneto and Montefiascone

San Angelo

September 27, 1757

J.C.P.

Your Excellency,

Since I find myself in the midst of important business for the Congregation, and since I am bound to go to Rome toward the end of October to treat of these affairs for the glory of God and the greater firmness of our Congregation, therefore, I will not be able personally to conduct the mission in your diocese. Since I desire that the expectations of these good people may not be frustrated, and in order to cooperate as quickly as possible with your zeal, since I most probably will not be able to be of service, at least for this winter, for these missions, I have accordingly thought that it would be of much good, even more than if I were able to be there, to substitute in my place, granting you approve, Father John Baptist of Saint Michael the Archangel, who will preside over these missions and have two companions to help and able to take over in case of any problems. Father will also conduct the necessary retreat for the clergy and could begin at Celleno on October 24 since the harvests will be over then. From Celleno he could go to Marta, Capo di Monte, Tessennano and Arlena, keeping Grotte for after Christmas.

I will await your decisions, which will be the rule for my arrangements. Kneeling to reverently kiss your sacred vestments, I end, affirming once more

with profound respect and veneration, and asking for your holy pastoral blessing.
Your humble, devoted, and respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

1097

Frances Simonelli

Soriano

October 28, 1757

J.C.P.

Dear Signora,

I have received your letter, and so that you may not want for a reply, I am answering in the name of Father Rector of the Retreat at Toscanella, for he finds himself here for a change of air because of the weakness of his lungs. Neither I nor Father Rector are able to reply to the nun who wrote. Father Rector is passably well. Tomorrow I take up again my missions that I had interrupted because of the harvest. I am also weighed down with other responsibilities. In Siena there are not wanting learned and pious directors by whom this good religious could be directed and accomplish much good.

I hope she will have received my reply in Siena, where they told me she resides, and I trust she will put into practice the holy rules received in the Name of the Lord. Until next June I will be very busy. Normally I am not there in the Retreat of San Angelo until that time. Jesus bless you and all your house. I enclose you in the holy Wounds of Jesus, and in haste I am,

Your useless servant,
Paul of the †

1098

Sister Maria Innocenza of the Sorrowful Mother (2)

San Angelo

November 5, 1757

Leaving for Mount Argentario.

...which is the queen of virtues and holds her bound to serve her sick mother in the person of Jesus Christ. Justice obliges her to do that. So be peaceful and, meantime, stay with your sick mother but stay within yourself in a sacred solitude and in a loving repose in your Highest Good. Now, I will reply to the second point of your letter.

It is true you are ungrateful; it is true that you are not corresponding; it is true that you are full of defects; but are these reasons for losing confidence in God? Perhaps you are not aware that we are dross, dirt, and ashes, always inclined to evil? Oh, daughter of little faith! I will say to you as Jesus said to Saint Peter: "Why do you doubt?"

If you fall not merely seven times, but even ten and a hundred, you are not to lose your peace and confidence in God, but humble yourself sweetly with a loving sorrow and a sorrowing love. A word or two is sufficient; God will teach

you. Here is the short way to consume imperfections. Say that you are drawn by God to interior recollection in that divine solitude and sacred silence of faith and love, rich with every good. Then you find yourself wounded by some imperfection or dissipation of spirit. Then why not flee immediately into the bosom of the Highest Good with a loving flight of faith, losing yourself entirely in God with a loving and peaceful sorrow and allowing what is imperfect to be consumed in that immense furnace of charity? Acting in this way, not only are the imperfections consumed, but also you are reborn in the Divine Word, Christ Jesus, to a new godlike life, and the soul is divinized. Oh, how much I beg you to renew this with the eyes of faith and love, taking yourself deeper and deeper into that sacred desert where you remain face-to-face with your Divine Spouse! I have written this paragraph in these terms for it entirely shows the direction of your soul.

So, blessed daughter, put this into practice, for I see that God wants to make you holy if there is no failure on your part. Be within yourself, seal the doors of your senses in the face of all creatures, stay in your nothingness and allow this horrible nothing to disappear in Infinite All that is God. Make the sufferings of your Spouse your own and enter that sacred desert, always clothed for a feast. Do you know how? I mean you are to be clothed with Jesus, entirely penetrated with his sufferings. All this is done in pure faith and without images, and often takes place without a word being heard, and is entirely a teaching of holy love, which teaches this highest wisdom to the poor and humble of heart. Oh, what a hurry I am in! I have robbed time from my responsibilities to answer you. Pray much for me, for my calamities are not few. Jesus make you holy with the secret holiness of the cross and bless you. Amen.

Yesterday, I returned from Rome, where I was on a journey, and went to see our beautiful Retreat which is to be founded on a high mountain some miles distant from Rome. Pray the Lord to make all of us holy.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

1099

Thomas Fossi (87)

San Angelo
November 8, 1757
Leaving soon on an
affair for the service of God.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

Last night, totally soaked with rain, I arrived here in this Retreat. This morning I read your two letters, the one of October 6 and the other from September 1. Because of the rain, these letters arrived here just this morning. I have a lot to do, so I am briefly responding to both your letters. You have the clearest signs of being predestined for paradise. Since your soul is very dear to God, His Divine Majesty put it to the test, as he has done with his true servants,

by sufferings of many kinds within and without, as you point out in your letter. Oh, what precious signs are these! You need to humble yourself more and more before God and adore his Holy Will in every happening. The Love of God is strong as death. The loving soul keeps its heart always turned toward heaven and looks upon sufferings with the eye of faith as coming not from creatures, but from the loving hand of the Lord, and lets them disappear in the immense sea of divine love, which sweetens every bitterness. "So Father, since it was pleasing in your sight." That is what the gentle Jesus said.

Let us come to your second letter. With regard to the marriages, I ought not get into that because it is forbidden by the Rules. Take advice from wise, pious, prudent, and well-informed sources on the suitors asking to marry your daughters, and make your decision in the Lord as best you can. Do not have any doubts about having sufficient light.

Let us come to another point concerning sending your son to Roccasecca and having Father Thomas accompany him. Read carefully the just and prudent reasons that I set out in conscience.

In the presence of God, I tell you it is not good to send your son to Roccasecca, for it is twenty miles across horrible roads and that seminary is not so outstanding that your son would make good progress in his studies, seeing it is only a seminary in a small diocese. Father Thomas made his studies in our Congregation, not there.

Neither could I in conscience violate our holy Rule and permit such a trip for Father Thomas, about which for holy ends I pass over in order to be brief. The expense would be greater there than in a city nearer. In addition, in my opinion, the air at Roccasecca is very thin and humid because of the many rivers nearby, and in my judgment that would be unhealthy. So it seems to me such a decision will not stand examination. I even think it a temptation. See if you can persuade your uncle to revise his thinking toward another seminary or college where he can be well provided for in both piety and learning.

I do not know when I will be able to be at the Presentation because of this rainy weather. If I am able to come, I will stay only a few days due to heavy and important tasks and duties, which scarcely allow me to breathe.

Furthermore, the General Chapter is coming soon; so I beg you not to undertake a dangerous voyage on the sea in this weather. Once the Chapter is over, I hope to have a respite since I will be out of office. Then we will meet one another.

The benefits and great charity that you keep up for our poor Congregation ascend to God as a precious incense, and I hope that time will have you experience the plenteous blessing which will rain over your house. Greet your uncle for me in the Lord, as well as your wife, Victoria, your sons and daughters, whom I enclose in the holy Side of Jesus, where I affirm in haste that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

A Priest (2)

San Angelo
November 8, 1757

Reverend Father,

In testimony of my respectful servitude and true gratitude, I will gladly receive the young man recommended by you, even though we have too many lay brothers in the novitiate. So would you please have him come by way of Orbetello to the Retreat of the Presentation on Mount Argentario, about three miles from that city? He should bring with him his certificate of baptism, of confirmation, a declaration of upright moral life, of not being under legal indictment, and of not being married, as well as the expense for his vestition, which is twelve *scudi* due to the high cost of wool.

I am writing the master of novices to receive him and vest him with the rest. I am writing in great haste for the post is leaving. I just reached this Retreat and I was soaked by the rain. I ask the charity of your holy prayers, and with profound reverence I kiss your sacred hands.

The young man can travel by way of Civitavecchia, Corneto, Montalto, Orbetello, and thence to the Retreat.

Your humble, devoted, obligated [servant],

Paul of the Cross

Teresa Palozzi (6)

San Angelo
November 10, 1757

J.C.P.

Jesus be always with you.

I am answering your letter in haste because I came back to this Retreat the day before yesterday, and early tomorrow I am leaving.

I am sad over the sickness of your mother, and I will not fail to pray, and have prayers offered, for her and for all the household so that our good God will comfort her, as I wish to hope. Meanwhile, let her resign herself to the Holy Will of God and place all her suffering in the Wounds of Jesus as she suffers with patience and meekness. For in this way she will gain great merit from God and free herself from every evil.

You, Teresa, continue your exercises. Remain recollected in God. No suffering can take away your peace and recollection. Carry the gentle Jesus in the tabernacle of your heart and embrace him often with a holy spiritual communion, seeing that you cannot communicate sacramentally very often. Do not neglect prayer. Pray for me and God bless you.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

Paul of the Cross, General Superior,
To the General Consultors, Provincial, and Rectors of the Congregation of
the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Enduring Greetings in the Lord,
Dearest Fathers and Brothers in the Lord:

After having poured out continual and earnest prayers humbly at the Feet of Jesus Crucified, we have thought it opportune and even necessary to anticipate our General Chapter by an entire year in order to treat various, serious, and important matters of great weight, which need to be defined by the General Chapter and on which the advantage and progress of the newly born Congregation depends, both in spiritual and temporal areas.⁴²⁰

Therefore, after all aspects were discussed and weighed and with the advice of our general consultors, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we decree the General Chapter for February 22 of next year, 1758.

Therefore, we command in virtue of holy obedience that the general consultors, provincial, and rectors be at the Retreat of San Angelo for the Holy Triduum before the Blessed Sacrament on February 19. When that is over and when we have solemnly celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit and had our customary procession, we look forward to the General Chapter on the twenty-second of the month.

So that everything may proceed well and happily, we command that before leaving they do not neglect to remind and command that in their respective Retreats there be three days of supplication before the Blessed Sacrament, exposed for public veneration on the days prescribed, to seek divine aid for this great undertaking, and that on the morning of February 22 the conventual Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit be celebrated in accord with our intentions...

Moreover, we order that each and all the rectors bring with them the small subsidy, as enjoined by Chapter XXXII of the Constitutions and in letters from our interim secretary, for the expenses encountered in the Retreat that is heavily burdened with building expenses, also a faithful and honest account of the status of their respective Retreats, and a list or catalogue of the priests, clerics, and lay religious who form their families.

Finally, we ask those capitulars who are a long distance from this Retreat to start out as soon as the holy ashes have been distributed in order that they be in this Retreat in good time on the day specified above. Lastly, asking the help of

420. The reasons for this anticipation seem to be: the impressive number of fourteen dismissals, certain imprudences occurring in the community of San Sosio, and a certain resentment over the excessive rigidity of some superiors. We need to remember these were beginning experiences (Giorgini, *History*, pp. 152-153).

your prayers, we pray for one and all the fullest gifts of heavenly blessings from the Giver of all good gifts, and we impart our blessing.

Given at the holy Retreat of San Angelo on December 14, 1757.

1103

Joseph Sisti (5)

Toscanella

December 15, 1757

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I arrived the day before yesterday at this holy Retreat, reduced in strength because of the labors for souls in the city of Orbetello and the miserable journey. I found your letter in the packet. In replying to it, I tell you that I would willingly serve that convent, to which I admit I am infinitely obligated in Jesus Christ, around the first or second of the New Year since I have no other time, seeing my other obligations and the closeness of our little General Chapter.

I trust that the Mercy of God will bless your holy intentions and increase the fervor of spirit of these holy religious. Greet the Mother Prioress for me and all the religious, and I ask for their prayers as well as yours, especially in the current novena for Christmas, and I ask that you do that also with other souls confided to you by God, especially Cecilia and the other devout young woman we know of. I am in great haste and embrace you in the gentle Heart of Jesus. I kiss your sacred hand and with profound respect and honor am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

1104

Canon Francis Scarsella (1)

Toscanella

December 15, 1757

Leaving third day after Christmas.

Reverend Canon,

When I arrived at this Retreat the night before last, not a little worn out and sick because of the hardship encountered in the city of Orbetello with the public retreat, which went like a strong mission but for me more laborious, I found your letter here, sent to Father Anthony with the enclosure from the Mother Abbess, whom I have answered.

I repeat here what I wrote to the bishop. This is not a good time to have a mission there. To my mind it would be better to have the mission in May because of the condition already noted. Otherwise, there will be confusion and there will not be the profit that you want. Besides, I find myself more and more crushed; I have engagements for convents and the General Chapter is close.

If there is any danger in a delay, there are other more suitable preachers than I available to the bishop. If I am well and have no urgent impediments for the

Congregation, I will not fail to serve him in May. Let them notify me. I am writing in a hurry. I embrace you in the Heart of Jesus Christ and implore the charity of your prayers. With all respect I kiss your sacred hands.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1105

Dominic Costantini (9)

Toscanello

December 21, 1757

Leaving the third day after Christmas.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Signore Dominic,

The approach to the holy Solemnity of the Birth of Christ obliges me as a duty of true gratitude to give to your merits this devoted wish for ever more complete happiness, and so in the holy novena, neither on my part nor on the part of our religious, will there be missing petitions to our gentle sacramental Jesus for the fullness of every good, spiritual and temporal, for the greater glory of God for you and all your reverent household. We shall do this much more from the altar on the Holy Night, offering your heart and that of the others of your house through the hand of Mary Most Holy, so that she, as Sovereign Divine Lady, will place them in the swaddling clothes of the Divine Infant so that he may sanctify them, strengthen them, and bless them in time and in a blessed eternity.

May this poor tribute of my perpetual obligation be pleasing to you, Signore Dominic, and in the name of our entire poor Congregation I acknowledge you as our great and lovable benefactor and ask you to convey my devoted words of respect to the reverend canon, your worthy brother, and to your pious wife, Lucy, also on the part of Father John Baptist, Father Anthony and all the religious. I also ask you to do the same for your pious religious sisters, for whom I preserve always a respectful and devoted opinion which the Lord gave me a long time ago. If they were to continue the charity of their holy prayers, they will have great merit before God, for my needs are great. Here, enclosing you in the sacred Side of Jesus, I affirm once more that I am with all esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1106

Joseph Sisti (6)

San Angelo

December 30, 1757

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I trust you will have received my answer in the ordinary post about the retreat to be given by me in that convent, and that I said I would arrive on

January 2 or 3. Now I tell you that I will be able to come the Saturday after Epiphany to open the holy retreat about 22 hours, etc. This will be a guide for you to obtain the full faculties. In haste I kiss your sacred hands and am from the heart,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1107

Reverend Iacomini Brandeglio

San Angelo
1757⁴²¹

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

From Father Sebastian of the Purification, rector of our Retreat in Ceccano, I received your letter in which you request the acceptance of a young man from your town. He is twenty-eight years old, if I am not mistaken. If he is robust, that is, in good health and strong, and, above all, of good character, devout, etc., I have no difficulty in accepting him when the weather cools. But since I am loaded with duties for the government of the entire Congregation, you should, therefore, direct your letters to Father John Mary of Saint Ignatius, master of novices at the Retreat on Mount Argentario. Address the letter as follows: To M. Reverend Father John M., etc., Master of Novices - Viterbo for Orbetello - Retreat of the Presentation.

Deal with him and tell him what I have written. I ask for your devout prayers and enclose you in the sacred Side of Jesus and kiss your sacred hands and am with all respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

421. Amedeo places this letter in 1757.

Death of Paul's Greatest Benefactor (1758)

The new year began for Paul at San Angelo. He was confronted by the request from the bishop to serve the convent at Sutri, but he had already pledged himself to serve the Carmelite convent in Vetralla. He also wants to be back at San Angelo by January 23 to prepare for the General Chapter in mid-February. In his first letter of the new year to Father Sisti he discusses several choices open to him

Through March, April, and into May, Paul is concerned with the situation at Mount Cavo. There is also news from Father Thomas Struzzi in Rome that the Propagation of the Faith is offering the Passionists a foreign mission in the Caucasus Mountains in Asia Minor. But at the same time he is struggling to satisfy the bishop of Acquapendente with a mission at Castro di Ischia in spite of his lack of religious and his own weak health.

While Paul continued to preach, trying to provide for Mount Cavo and the demands of the Propagation of the Faith, he received news that the greatest benefactor to the Passionists has died, Pope Benedict XIV. Perhaps no one more than Paul himself realized how much Passionists owed this pope. It is strange then that in the letters Paul wrote at this time he does not add a word of eulogy that rose up all over the Christian world to the praise of Pope Benedict XIV. John Mary Cioni relates that Paul did remark that the one who established the Congregation of the Passion went to eternal glory on the feast of the "Finding of the Holy Cross," celebrated at that time on May 3.

Paul concludes his mission work by the beginning of June and remains at San Angelo for the next several months. He writes many letters of spiritual direction. He also follows the doctor's orders, even though he is planning further missions.

1108

Joseph Sisti (7)

San Angelo
January 2, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I need to notify you that it is very probable that I will need to go to serve the convent at Sutri. However, after I shall have served them, with God's grace, I will take on the one by you. Since the General Chapter is close, and I must necessarily be back here at least by January 22 or 23, so if by Wednesday morning notice comes to me that I must go to Sutri, I would want to begin there that same Wednesday evening, the fourth of this month, so as to end on Friday, January 13.

In that way I would be able to be here on the 22 or 23, as I mentioned above. I would like you, however, to take care and inform the Mother Prioress. If that notice does not come to me, I will come to your place on Saturday, in line with what was agreed, and granted that if I were to come on Wednesday, I would not want to neglect the Solemn Communion on the solemnity of Epiphany. But I leave her in her holy liberty to be able to do as she likes. In regard to faculties, we are already in agreement. Kissing your sacred hands, I implore more and more your pious and devout prayers, and those of other known devout persons, and from the heart I am,

Your unworthy, devoted servant,
Paul of the Cross

1109

Mary Clare of Saint Philip (8)

San Angelo
February 4, 1758

*May the holy Passion of Jesus
be always in our hearts.*

Sister Mary Clare,

You begin your letter, which I received last night, along with one from the Mother Abbess, you begin, I said, in a way that in no way pleases me. Why do you say that your soul has fallen without a cure?

What kind of talk is this? Perhaps there you have few proofs of the Divine Goodness toward your soul? Perhaps God has not given you stupendous graces? Oh, my blessed daughter! why such a lack of confidence in that Infinite Good who has given you so many signs of his holy love for you? But I sympathize with you, for I see well that such words come from a soul oppressed and in agony; therefore, His Divine Majesty is compassionate and at your depth you have not lost your filial confidence in God.

With regard to what you tell me of your new confessor, oh, how much I feel for your spirit! But why not make use of all the instructions that the blessed God has had me give in voice and writing? Perhaps I have not forbidden you to think of your past and remain very peaceful? Why have you not done so? When your confessor asks questions that, thanks be to God, you do not understand, answer him in this way: "Father, I do not understand. I do not know how to answer." If he asks about the past, reply this way: "Father, I have made an entire account of my conscience to a poor priest who was here for a retreat four times, and he has forbidden me to repeat a general confession. I am at peace." In this way I would think he will not ask anything more, and, if he continues his interrogation, be silent, or at most say: "Father, I do not know what to respond, except what I have already said."

Read him my letters and continue on your way. Be recollected in God according to the instructions you have and, much more, according to the attractions of the Holy Spirit.

The sufferings you are enduring from the devil and from other creatures are a great treasure for you. Be careful to suffer and be silent, and never justify

yourself, but in the midst of the greatest bitterness hide yourself in God, lose yourself in the immense sea of his holy love, caress the Divine Will that permits this, and you will see that everything turns to joy. Give your attention to acquiring solid virtues. I am writing with pain, for I am not very well, and there are days when I am in bed. Such is the way of my health. Pray for me and for my intentions. Jesus bless you and make you holy. Amen.

I have reread your letter, and in order that you may be more peaceful in God, I tell you in the Name of the Lord that you have the clearest signs that you are in the grace of God, and you know well that I know your soul through the Mercy of God, and that for a long time. The battles with the demon, the distress from creatures, and desolations of soul are loving tests that your Divine Spouse is sending you to make you holy and render you always purer in his divine eyes. Take great courage and be always more faithful, etc.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,
Paul of the Cross

1110

Passionist Religious (14)⁴²²

San Angelo
February 12, 1758

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Congregation of the Passion,
Notification to be Read on the First and Second Sundays of Lent:

The approach of our General Chapter strongly urges our poor spirit to cry out incessantly to the Lord, both in our poor prayers and from the holy altar, so that His Divine Majesty be moved with pity for us and for the whole Congregation so as to be pleased through his infinite mercy in pouring abundant light into our hearts to make right decisions in the election of superiors, especially that of the General Superior, to whom His Divine Majesty confides all the government of the Congregation, on which depends the good or evil outcome with regard to the regular observance, without which the spiritual edifice crashes mightily to the earth.

Since the most efficacious preparation to receive such lights and graces from the Lord consists principally in purity of spirit, profound humility of heart, and in perfect and fervent charity, which from many hearts makes one heart by a union of holy love in God and makes us docile, of one mind, one heart, peaceable in order to be well disposed to know the Divine Will in the election of the superiors, and so that result which we ardently desire in Jesus Christ will

422. This is a letter for the capitulars and all the religious to refrain from criticizing and even discussing the elections at the forthcoming General Chapter. This letter must be read in the light of the serious charge brought against Father Peter Vico of Saint John, the rector of San Sosio at Falvaterra (see earlier letter to him on December 28, 1756).

come out for his greater glory, we have believed that we are obliged in conscience to lay down the exact observance of the following points:

1. We ordain and command in the Name of the Lord that it is not lawful for any capitular, no one excepted, to lament and burst out over their sufferings or other happenings in the course of their administration, nor may they reveal happenings in their Retreats, with the exception of those that can lead to great edification and increase fervor and fraternal charity. In case they have had some hardships, distress, or anything else needing counsel for their greater peace of spirit and to get advice, they may in such a case consult only with the major superior. Leaving to each the freedom in case they think well to do so or do not have ease in doing that with the General, they may consult with the first or second general consultor and not with others. They are to hold such a conference with purity of intention in order to receive light and advice, and not burst out in passion or lamentation so as not to lose the great treasure of merits which are hidden in suffering.

2. We, likewise, command that it is not lawful for anyone, not merely for capitulars but for each of our religious, to hold useless conversations on the election of superiors, but with true peace, humility, and charity let them wait and cry out to the Lord, so that His Divine Majesty will provide holy candidates.

The conferences needed to work with prudence and circumspection will be held by the General and his consultors. When the proper time comes, they will be summoned by the Father Secretary. We exhort all by the heart of the Mercy of God and out of all the sufferings, pains, and holy death suffered by our Savior Jesus Christ to keep themselves in true peace, in fervent charity, and union with God, giving attention to what is proposed in holy prayer, asking His Divine Majesty to give them the light necessary to well discern in the election and all the other things concerned with the greater spiritual advantage and growth of our poor Congregation.

Given in this Retreat of San Angelo at Vetralla on February 12, 1758.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

Francis Anthony of the Crucified, Secretary

1111

Maria Magdalene Anselmi (2)

San Angelo
February 18, 1758

Reverend Mother,

I am answering in haste the kind letter I received from you last night. In the first place, I devoutly thank you for the charity you are pleased to continue toward me. My coming departure for another state that you refer to is something I neither know about nor understand. What I can tell you is that my intention and constant resolution have been to retire into the house of novitiate and there remain in profound silence in that solitude and prepare myself through meditation and weeping for my death. But all the care I have taken did not

succeed for me, even though for that purpose I anticipated our General Chapter by a little more than a year, and it will be celebrated next Wednesday with an apostolic indult. They wish unanimously to confirm me as General. So I need to bow my head and embrace the cross in silence.

With regard to the rest that you write to me, I cannot say more, and do not have time to say more, than that you should continue to feed yourself on the Divine Will at the great and royal banquet of the Cross, seeing every happening, whatever it might be, in the Divine Good Pleasure and continuing your exercises of prayer, withdrawal, silence, along with the exercise of virtues in the midst of whatever bitterness and desolation, rejoicing in spirit in leading a dying life. I recommend myself to your prayers, for my need is not small. Jesus enrich you with every blessing. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1112

Passionist Religious (15)

San Angelo
February 23, 1758

Paul of the Cross,
General Superior of the Discalced Clerics of the Holy Cross and Passion of
Jesus Christ,
To My Dearly Beloved Priests, Clerics, Lay Brothers and Oblates Who
Make Up This Congregation,
My Dear Ones:

I can only cry out in the presence of the Most High God: Just and true are your judgments, O Lord, and no one can resist your Will. You all well know that I endeavored to anticipate our General Chapter by one year and more, out of the lively desire I had to retire to one of our Retreats of greater solitude, so as to give attention to nothing other than keeping myself at the feet of our sacramental Jesus in order to weep day and night over my faults and to prepare myself in prayer and fasting, in silence, and in hope for a holy death. For this reason I worked to use all possible diligence so as not to have the smallest assignment. Notwithstanding this, in order not to resist the Divine Will given me by the General Chapter, I agreed to sacrifice myself anew to the weight of General Superior, imposed on me by the Chapter.

Yesterday morning I was once more elected anew as General of our Congregation, and immediately I adored in silence the Divine Will in this result, and in submission to that will I accepted the burden, and in embracing the holy Cross in spirit, at the same time, I embraced all of you in the holy Side of Jesus with a firm mind to serve your souls in the best way that the Mercy of God will grant me for all the time that the Lord will give me. Now with my face in the dust I have begged all of you, my dear brothers and sons in Jesus Christ, to accept in charity this attestation of my service and affection that I have always had and will always preserve for you by helping me with your fervent prayers

and holy sacrifices to ask the Lord to grant me a docile heart, a humble mind, meek, prudent, and very constant and strong to preserve the observance of our Rule and Constitutions inviolably, and to correct any abuses that might be allowed in, may God forbid, by admonishing delinquents with true charity and punishing with fairness and justice those who after charitable warnings persist in their vices and failures in observance.

I ask you then, O my dear ones, to help me carry this burden of the government of the Congregation with a life so observant to the Rules and so holy, so that I may cry out with jubilation with the Apostle: "You are my joy and my crown." All this will happen if in conformity with your external religious habit you grieve continually over the Passion and Death of our Divine Redeemer and in this way be dead to all that is not God, and if you will be a portrait of Jesus Christ with continual exercise of all the holy virtues.

Ah! my dear ones, above all, let there be a perfect charity among you, which will so unite your hearts that you may be but one single heart and one single will in God. Give yourselves in such a way into the hands of your superiors that they may do with you whatever they wish, when this is not contrary to divine law, and let that not happen, and to the holy observance of the Rules and Constitutions, for whose observance each of you must strive to the utmost. You know that Jesus Christ made himself obedient unto death and the death of the cross. So you must give yourselves to death, surrendering your personal judgment and understanding. Renounce, O dear ones, all your own opinion, wisdom, and wishes, yielding yourselves as dead to your superiors. If you do not yield yourselves as dead into the hands of obedience, you will not be able to savor what the service of God really is.

Be as thirsty that your will should be destroyed as the deer is thirsty for the running water. That day should seem a loss to you in which you did not break your will and subject it to everyone. Often offer your will as a sacrifice to God and be happy over that. To the extent that you are most obedient you will be quiet and indifferent with one assignment or another since you will be truly wedded to holy obedience and in love with it with the greatest tenderness and respect in Jesus Christ, who is the Sovereign King of the obedient. In this way you will make yourselves more able to help the Holy Church and our poor Congregation in prayer, for Jesus hears the prayers of the obedient.

I have extended myself to remind you of these aspects of holy obedience, since this is the foundation stone of the spiritual edifice. If you will be perfectly obedient, you will also be humble of heart, mind, and spirit; you will be meek, peaceful, silent; you will flee everything that could make you worldly, such as unnecessary treating with seculars, which is the pest of devotion; you will guard your external senses in order to maintain solitude and recollection of heart and keep your mind raised on high to the Most High God by means of continual prayer, which will be with you in your external work, journeys, and other functions you perform out of obedience; you will be a lover of suffering and of self-contempt, and your riches will be to see yourself the poorest, rejected, and despised. If you are truly obedient, you will pluck out the eyes of self-love — the right eye which is the one that looks out for one's own reputation, esteem,

and praise, and the left eye which seeks for one's ease. Pluck out these two interior eyes, see all is peaceful, and experience the great victory over self-love through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The rectors and all who preside in governing ought to be examples of all these virtues, and they will be such if they arm themselves with faith, confidence in God, and assiduous prayer. Then they will pluck out these eyes of this horrible self-love. Oh, what a disease is attachment to one's reputation, praise, and honor! O dear ones, dear ones, put all your endeavor here, for once you have conquered self-love, oh, how much light you will have in the interior eyes of your soul! Oh, how humble of heart you will be, meek, and charitable to your members! Oh, how far you will keep seculars from your Retreats, and, if you need to speak to them out of necessity, oh, how quickly you will break off from them to allow them to leave, filled with the good odor of Jesus Christ! Oh, how assiduous you will be in prayer, in choir, and in all that looks to divine worship and to the holy regular observance.

Since you will be examples of perfection, your members, seeing your holy example, will strive heroically to see who can be the most holy and make the Retreats true gardens of every virtue so that our Sovereign Divine Spouse, Jesus Christ, may take his delight there. Oh, how much you will rejoice my poor heart when I have news of your vigilance and your holy practice in maintaining inviolable the observance of her holy Rules and Constitutions!

But on the contrary, it would be an insupportable weight that the venerable Chapter has put upon me in giving me the government of the Congregation if I have contrary information — may God forbid that! Ah! that would make me eat the bread of sorrow and drink the water of tears, lamenting my unhappy days and crying out to the Lord to take me quickly from this life so as not to see so much ruin and devastation. So console my miserable old age and help me carry the cross of the heavy governing that I have willingly undertaken in submission to the Divine Will in order to serve you. And, together, let us work with great zeal and fidelity, with great purity of intention, and with humility of heart that all the Sons of the Congregation maintain in this Congregation the most exact observance of our holy Rules and Constitutions, and, likewise, the Regulations, which are a compendium of the Rules, as well as the decrees issued at the time of holy Visitations, for these are the walls and forewalls which serve to uphold the holy regular observance. In this way, in our holy life the Sovereign Giver of every good will be blessed, glorified, and praised by all people of all nations, and by seeking always more the charity of your holy prayers, oh, dearest brothers and sons in the Lord, I ask for you, and I will ask for you, the most abundant blessings and that true peace which surpasses all understanding so that it will guard your hearts in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Given at this holy Retreat of San Angelo, February 23, 1758.

The Father Rector is asked to have this read in the refectory each year on February 23.

Paul of the Cross, General and Servant

Sebastian Nicolini of the Sorrowful Virgin

San Angelo
February 25, 1758

Paul of the Cross, General Superior:

Whereas Brother Sebastian Nicolini in Paliano has requested profession as a lay brother and with the testimony of his excellent conduct we grant permission that he be admitted to that profession.

Given at the Retreat of San Angelo on February 25, 1758.

Paul of the Cross, General.

Francis Anthony of the Crucified, Secretary

Thomas Fossi (88)

San Angelo
March 1, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter, dated the seventh of last month. I truly see that your mind is a bit confused and that you explain yourself without order. At any rate, in the middle of my many occupations, I will say what will be more expedient and profitable for your soul, although it will in substance be a repetition of what I have said so many times. So pay attention.

You would like to live the life of a solitary monk and the blessed God wants you to be a good, secular married man. In the house of my Father, said the gentle Jesus, there are many mansions. So, my dear Thomas, put your heart at peace and do not let yourself be upset with so many useless reflections. You must practice virtue peacefully in accord with your station in life, and continuous occasions are not lacking. The most important for you are: humility of heart, patience, meekness, charity toward all, and seeing in your neighbor an image of God and loving him in God and for God. Have no worries about the future, but with peace and serenity of mind practice virtue as the occasion offers, keeping your heart always ready with a high confidence in God and diffidence in yourself. Go out dressed humbly and modestly in accord with your status, and make those visits that are necessary or proper to relatives and to others. This is not contrary to the virtue expected of your state in life, since you do it with purity of intention, with a recollected heart, and with a pure love of God. You can never commit a sin when you do not will it and give consent. You go around philosophizing upon one thing and another, or about one desire or a practice; why not thrust yourself entirely in God, protesting you want to do everything for his love?

For example, you are going to your business or to the country or on other affairs, why, without making all these reflections and desires of other virtues, do you not embrace the queen of all virtues, that is, holy charity, and with a holy interior affection, calmly and without strain of chest or head, say: "Ah, my

God! My Good God! You are all Charity, all Love, and I am doing all for charity, for love of you!" Etc. In that way you will stop all the useless desires and reflections which are breaking your head.

Desires for perfection are excellent, but you need to be careful because if they disturb you, they do not come from a good source.

You ought to desire and pray to be a good secular and ought not desire to be a holy solitary because that is useless. So do not be upset. Go ahead on the good path on which God has set you, and be resigned in your desolations and despoilments, see them as a help in the exercise of patience, humility, and resignation to the Will of God, without ever leaving your accustomed exercises of piety in line with your state in life. Pay close attention to fulfilling the obligations of your profession, especially in the holy upbringing of your children, preserving true peace and concord with your good wife and all the household. Here is the perfection that God wants from you, along with all the rest I have said in other letters and in this one.

As to what you bring up about your interests in boats and tuna, I do not know what to tell you since these are things not to be handled by me. Recommend yourself to God and take the advice of skilled, pious, and prudent men.

The thirty Masses have been celebrated, and the twenty-one, according to the intentions of your wife, will be celebrated soon. Father Rector, who now is Father Marcellino, elected at our General Chapter, will let you know when they will take place.

I am left almost alone. With the apostolic indult they have elected me as General again. Father Mark Aurelius is provincial for the Province of Campagna and Marittima. I will not name the rest so as not to carry on at length.

I have given up the missions, for I can scarcely take care of my office, seeing my continuous sickness. Pray much for me, for my needs are extreme. I leave you in the sacred Side of Jesus, along with all your house, and affirm I am always more,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1115

A Benefactor (2)

San Angelo
March 4, 1758

Dear Sir,

The Providence of the Lord is disposing that I be repeatedly subjected to the weight of being General of our Congregation. Father Mark Aurelius has the new position of provincial, and Father Thomas is our general procurator.

I have judged it to be my strict duty to inform you not only to reassert with a firm testimonial my true and perpetual sense of obligation that I hold toward you, but also to ask you to continue your usual charitable function as our

syndic, a position that on the one hand obliges the Congregation to recommend you in its poor prayers to the Most High and on the other will have me promise once more to move the Divine Goodness to rain over your pious house the fullness of heavenly mercies. This is what comes to me to say to you while I enclose you in the holy Wounds of Jesus Crucified, asking you to give my respects to the those of your house. I reaffirm my cordial esteem and respect.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1116

Dominic Costantini (10)

San Angelo
March 9, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

Shortly after I wrote about the coming of Father John Baptist to you, he began to have palpitations of the heart, along with not a small loss of strength. Nevertheless, he celebrated Mass at first light this morning in order to set out. But when Mass was over he felt himself exhausted in strength. So as not to put him in danger on a journey over bad roads, and since he has little or no ability to take a horse, and so as not to have to begin a work he could not finish, as happened at Vitorchiano and Sutri, where after two or three days he had to leave the convent unfinished, therefore, I am sending Father Secretary so the good sisters will not be deprived of their expectations. I believe in God that they will be very satisfied, as I am writing to the Mother Abbess in the enclosed letter. Would you please readdress it, and, if you wish, read it since it is unsealed. Afterward, seal it.

I feel keenly the death of Father Master Fabiani, who was, as I hope, a fruit ripe for heaven. His Divine Majesty wanted him to fall into the bosom of his mercies so he can sing forever. You have reason to console yourself with a lively belief in the happy lot given to this pious religious. I am writing in haste for the bearer is departing from here. With all esteem and respect, I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I see all your pious house. I also greet you on the part of Father John Baptist.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1117

Joseph Andrew Ruspantini of the Conception (3)

San Angelo
March 21, 1758

I am answering your letter briefly, for there are many others waiting for me. I do not have much time to share myself. I tell you that you will never again acquire peace without holy obedience. God does not want these confessions you

Speak of. Take note. Never again make one; otherwise, your perturbations and agitations of soul will so greatly increase that you will collapse in ruins. In place of mending, as you say, it will be for your loss, and that would always be greater and greater. Obedience, obedience, without so much back talk. This is the one drug and remedy for you. Otherwise, you are finished and will lose peace more and more. Now, enclosing you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I am truly,

Affectionately from my heart,
Paul of the Cross

1118

Luke Anthony Bianchini of Saint Joseph (1)

San Angelo
March 25, 1758

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Rector,

Your letter of March 20 was very welcome to me. I tell you that your account of the foundation of that Retreat⁴²³ filled me with edification and consolation, and I could not hold back the tears in reading it. Toward the end of the meal last evening, I had it read in the refectory for the edification and consolation of all for the greater glory of God. The details that you indicated to me on this foundation make me strongly hope for the happiest outcome, and that His Divine Majesty will be greatly glorified.

The difficulties that you are undergoing, along with your pious community, both in poverty and the rest, are precious gifts that His Divine Majesty imparts so that as living stones of that foundation are more deeply and strongly inserted into the gold ring of faith and love, they may be victims of holocaust in that fire of precious suffering to the glory of the Most High, and that sacrifice will give off the sweet smell of every virtue to all peoples near and far. Oh, how much I hope that this foundation with a view of Rome will bring much honor to the Lord and advantage to our Congregation. As for you in particular, who bear the weight, oh, how many graces and gifts God has prepared for your vigilance and the holy care that you employ so that all goes well and that the religious remain fervent, observant, and holy before the Lord.

I suppose you will be informed that I accepted this foundation with the understanding that an arm of cells would be provided for us in a spot sheltered from the sirocco and less humid. But the agreement was not met, and the person who had the obligation and made the promise claims that the benefactor for that wing is dead. But I have faith in God that he will use you and will open a way to get it done.

As for the strong winds and fog, they are here and elsewhere. You are aware of the fogs at Soriano. God will help them. Let them make supplications with a good fire and not fear anything, "for nothing shall harm you."

423. The foundation of Mount Cavo took place on Palm Sunday, March 19, 1758.

I am most grateful for the offer of chocolate, as is Father John Baptist, who greets you from his heart. Do not be anxious, for when it is possible and when there will be a way, it will always be on time.

I rejoice much for the good that the Mercy of God has brought about with the retreat you gave to the family of San Giorgio,⁴²⁴ and I was much pleased with the greetings sent me on the part of the Marquis Crescenzi. To God alone be honor and glory. I am writing the night of Holy Saturday. Greet all the community for me and at your convenience give me information on the religious, that is, who are the priests, clerics, lay brothers, etc.

Do not forget to provide yourselves with holy oil. I gave the small container to the Father General procurator, along with the ritual and martyrology.

I am in a hurry and from the heart embrace you in Christ. Pray much for us.

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

1119

Canon Francis Scarsella (2)

San Angelo
April 4, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

It is very true that the time has come to go out on missions, but it is also true that I am staying here in a corner because my sickness has prevented that. Therefore, I have sent Father John Baptist, along with the Father Rector of this place and another religious, to take my place in Bomarzo and Castiglione; from there they will go into the diocese of Todi. Would that I were able to come there, for I assure you that I place that area ahead of any other. I would like to believe that, knowing my present frailty, they would have obtained other missionaries, and I want to hope that they will do that so as to remedy the spiritual needs that are there. If Divine Providence disposes that before Pentecost the men mentioned are here, I will try to force myself to come and serve them, and by the middle of May the weather will better allow preaching outside. I want to write to Father John Baptist to strive to be here by Pentecost. As soon as I hear, I will inform you. Otherwise, it is necessary that you either provide yourselves with others or, if they wish me, they will need to wait. I believe I will be there without fail if I am alive and healthy and will give the mission after Easter in the diocese of Montefiascone and the vicinity. In that event they would be able to be served, but one should not rely on that hope.

If there are other missionaries at hand, they will do better to take advantage of them since it is very difficult for ours to be free at Pentecost, and then I reflect that they will be very worn out. I have no missionaries here to take with me; if there were, I would make every effort to arrive in the coming May. Enough. Let us abandon ourselves to the Divine Will. Now, acknowledging

424. It is not known to whom Paul is referring.

once more my gratitude to your merit, I end, signing myself with profound respect and devotion,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1120

Thomas Fossi (89)

San Angelo
April 6, 1758

Dear Thomas, My Son in Christ,

I received your letter, sent March 21. I am surprised that you did not receive my letters, for I have always answered and it is not long ago that I wrote an answer. You are right when you say that for some time your letters do not have the good order they had at first, but are full of things without substance, come to no conclusions, and are full of doubts, etc., and to that extent I do not know how to respond adequately. Nevertheless, I will do the best I can. Dear Thomas, it is necessary for you to solidify yourself and not try to fly without wings. I will explain. It is necessary to pursue our perfection not in our way, but in the way that is pleasing to the Lord, that is, a religious as a religious, a secular as a secular.

Lay out for yourself a prudent and discrete schedule. In the morning, for example, first make your prayer and meditation for a half-hour or a little more, and do this before leaving your room. Then a quick look at what you need to do in your profession, and determine to do it well with a pure intention, with your heart recollected, etc. If you can, hear Mass every day, then pursue your interests with a peaceful spirit, be cautious in dealing and speaking, and pay attention to the virtues of humility of heart, patience, meekness, and true resignation to the Divine Will. Visit the Blessed Sacrament as you do and as your state allows you, and keep your heart alive with the love of God with frequent ejaculatory prayers. In the evening make another half-hour prayer in church or at home. Dress modestly in accord with your state. Avoid ostentation and do not imitate the vanity of the miserable world.

It seems to me from what I hear that on the island they are much puffed up and they do not go about with their former simplicity. But whoever exalts himself shall be humbled. That is what the Holy Gospel says.

With regard to your children, you are obliged to allow them that state in life to which God calls them, not according to your mind. Try to continue to give them a good upbringing, but give them recreation, not with the poisonous manners of the present world, but with that honest, holy, decent recreation.

The mother should give some thought to this. It belongs to her to have them enjoy themselves, and that is best in the countryside, being safer, simpler, and more profitable to health. I am in a hurry. I have already offered the Masses, as I wrote you, and I think they have all been celebrated. But you can find out from Father Rector. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I beg you to

lighten up, to flee fixations and useless reflections, to live abandoned to the Divine Will, and to remain in peace. Pray for me, and I am always more,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

1121

Canon Francis Scarsella (3)

San Angelo

April 6, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

I trust you will have received my letter, sent with yesterday's post, in which I gave you a tentative hope regarding the mission because I would not have workers to take with me since they would be on missions elsewhere. Once I sent the letter, I had a merciful change of heart with strong impulses that made me decide to come and serve that holy people. To that end I will have two good workers come from Mount Argentario, who will join me there at the time of my arrival. Therefore, if nothing contrary shows up in my health or that of my companions, I will infallibly be there to begin the mission on the twenty-third of the present month after Vespers. To proceed with due caution and prudence, I am writing in this mail to the bishop to obtain the necessary faculties before my departure.

I have tried in that letter to proceed as prudently as possible. I have emphasized the strong desire and expectation of the people, hoping for this mission at the present season. Without mentioning who wrote, I will tell him I have an urgent letter that pushes my heart to do this good deed, seeing the great spiritual needs that they have claimed are there, etc.

I think it would be very useful if they were to write the bishop. I will write to the Archpriest Pazzaglia, as the older, and to the vicar forane. Such letters, if the bishop responds quickly, could be received by April 20 or 21, and they will have time to build the platform and announce the mission. I will write to you, but before then would you procure for us an available house near the church, that is, set aside for us. The house of Signore Aldobrandini is not convenient as it is too far away, does not have separate apartments, and there are women around.

There should be two platforms, one in the square that will be for our arrival and the other in the church. I will make that clear in the other letter. I am in a hurry, and with profound respect I kiss your sacred hands.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Sister Rose Mary Teresa of the Crucified Redeemer (1)⁴²⁵

San Angelo
April 8, 1758

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

I have much appreciated in the Lord the charity you have done me with the devout and beautiful Bambino, and I wish to profit by the symbols with which you have adorned it. Truly, to rest and sleep on the cross in the way you have modeled it calls for one to be an infant in innocence, simplicity, and annihilation by a true mystical death to all that is not God with total abandonment and perfect resignation on the bosom of the lovable Highest Good. In charity cry out to the Lord for me so that he may grant me the grace to be a true penitent, crucified through continual mortification, interiorly and exteriorly, since I am not an infant in innocence.

I am pleased that you have taken a vow to the holy Passion. I do not know the conditions you have put into that vow; holy love will teach you a formula for renewing it. Our lay brothers, clerics, and priests who are not active on missions or who are not destined for missions are obliged to fulfill their fourth vow by reciting with great devotion five Our Father's and Hail Mary's to the Wounds of Jesus, praying His Divine Majesty to spread in all the hearts of the faithful devotion to the holy Passion of Jesus, and to grant our missionaries the spirit to promote with great zeal this devotion, and to expand this poor Congregation of the holy Passion over the whole world. This is prescribed in the approved holy Rules, etc., and in that way they fulfill their vow as we do preaching to the people.

I am writing all morning and am alone because the Father Secretary is out on missions, and I am here in my worn-out condition. It is now 20 hours, and I need to put the letters in the post. Nevertheless, I cannot omit blessing and magnifying the mercies of God toward your soul. Your continual fevers and the other bodily ailments, which have also been there for a long time, are inestimable treasures and jewels with which the Lord enriches your soul.

So many virgins have become holy in the midst of lengthy sicknesses. Saint Lucrezia Cadamosti, our Lombard, was in bed for forty years and was a great saint. Saint Lutgard was sick for thirty-eight years and was a great saint. Oh, how many were devout seraphs of love in their sickness, which they accepted with great patience, discreet silence, and a prudent and deep resignation!

Sister Rose Mary, I recommend that you put in practice what I told you in the Name of Jesus Christ in our holy conferences. God wants you to be solitary; God wants you to be in the desert and in deepest interior solitude to speak to

425. Sister Rose Mary Teresa knew Paul at the mission in Vetralla in 1742. She held conferences with him. There are four letters addressed to her. She testified in the beatification Processes. This letter also tells us that she painted the picture of the Child Jesus asleep on the Cross. Note the paragraph in which Paul explains how those not assigned to mission ministry fulfill the Passion vow.

you words of life and to teach you the science of the saints. These words are not heard with the ear, but are divine impressions beyond explanation, etc. You understand me. Oh, holy faith!

So do not lose sight of your horrible nothingness. Let it dissolve in the Infinite All that is God. Remain in the interior closet and adore the Most High in spirit and in truth. Enter that vast solitude — I am speaking of the depth and center of your soul — and there lose yourself entirely in that Infinite Good. Enter there, but enter clothed completely with the holy sufferings of your Divine Spouse. All this is the work of faith and love. In that divine solitude you must be entirely lost. Love and be silent, be silent and love. Oh, silence! Oh, sacred silence of faith and holy love! Here, I lose myself, for I do not know what more to say. Jesus himself will teach you. If the Divine Spouse, when you are most lost in this holy interior desert, gives you permission to take a deep sleep, do so and do not wake up without his permission. Oh, sleep of faith and love! Oh, holy sleep that makes the ignorant wise! I would like you to spend some time fishing. How? Here is how. The holy suffering of Jesus is a sea of sorrows, but it is also a sea of love. Ask the Lord to teach you to fish in this sea. Immerse yourself in it, and, no matter how deeply you go, you will never reach the bottom. Allow yourself to be penetrated with love and sorrow. In this way you will make the sufferings of the gentle Jesus your own.

Fish for the pearls of the virtues of Jesus. This holy fishing is done without words; faith and love teach the way. The one who is most humble is the outstanding fisher. I do not have time for more because my pen has gone bad. The recollection that God gives me of the mercies done to your soul has made me write as I have; make use of this as it will please the Lord. Continue your prayers for me and also for my poor intentions. Jesus make you as holy as I wish but with the secret holiness of the Cross, which is the most precious. God bless you. Amen

You will have difficulty in reading this, for I have written quickly and poorly. Patience.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1123

Canon Francis Scarsella (4)

San Angelo
April 15, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

In last evening's post, along with your letter, I received the letter from the bishop in which he grants me all the faculties he can give me. So, if nothing happens to the contrary, on Sunday, the twenty-third of this month, I will be there around 14 or 15 hours, and I will stay in the village at the nuns' church so they should find a place for me to stay until the solemn entry for the holy mission, since it is not good for me to come into Ischia before coming in to start the mission.

I give thanks in Jesus Christ to Catherine for the charitable lodging she wishes to provide for me, but it is convenient for me to accept the one offered by Rosalinda because it is closer to the church. So I ask you to give my thanks in Jesus Christ to them as well as to Matthew. I also will do so in person and much more before God in prayer because this pious woman, along with her pious relative, have performed a work of charity for the missionaries and all the populace, and the greater merit will be theirs.

It will be good to send a man with two gentle ponies or donkeys as far as Pescia, and it would be good for the man to be there around 16 or 17 hours. Wait there for the arrival of the two priests who are to help me, and I will come with Brother Filipo.

In order to be safe in regard to sending the animals, await my letter to be sent on April 21, because with the office I hold, at any hour impediments can arise. Let us allow things to rest here.

If I can I will write to Parzochi and to the vicar, but, if I am hindered, you will do that. I hope to do it with Wednesday's post, for I will be leaving for Cerro, where I will wait until Saturday after dinner and go to sleep in Piansano.

I ask you to inform the Mother Abbess there that it is impossible for me to conduct a retreat for them as she requests in her letter. I will speak to her and tell her what can be done.

Pardon me, dear canon, for my impetuosity and taking advantage of your great charity. Oh, in what a rush I am in! Important letters need to be sent out and the secretary is away. Patience! Pray for us. Greet everyone in the household of Signore Catiglioni and Signora Catherine, etc., and I kiss your sacred hands.

Do not write any more, for I will write before leaving on Wednesday, and you will receive the letter Thursday or Friday. I will speak about the platform and everything else.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1124

Doctor Frederick Del Bene (3)

San Angelo
April 18, 1758
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

Dear Doctor,

Do not think it strange that you did not receive an answer from Father Rector since you wrote just when the Chapter was about to begin and rectors changed. Now there is no opening for a retreat. The workers are on missions. Even I, beaten down and so resolute about not going out, am forced to leave in a short time for this work. Blessed be God. You will be advised when there is time for you and when there are openings, either in the cool weather or in Lent.

In regard to the misfortunes that surround you, I can only say they are good news for you: "Because you were acceptable to God, it was necessary that

temptations try you.” So said the Archangel Rafael to Tobias. Dear Doctor, allow these things to disappear in the Divine Good Pleasure. Meditation on the holy sufferings of Jesus Christ is a very precious balsam of such great power that it sweetens every suffering. I am rushed. I embrace you in the holy Side of Jesus, and with all respect I affirm from the heart that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1125

Sister Anna Maria of Saint Joseph (1)

1758 ⁴²⁶

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

In reply to your letter, received last night, I reverently tell you that I will very willingly pray for the person you point out as well as for the Mother Prioress. I say the same thing for Monica, your niece, and for all the religious of the convent. I assure you that I do not let a day pass without making you part of my poor prayers, as well as from the holy altar, since we are much indebted in the Lord to your holy convent.

Regarding the foundation in Rome, I know nothing, although a Retreat was founded on Palm Sunday about fifteen miles from Rome on Mount Cavo and dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It was accomplished with great devotion. You should pray that they may be able to persevere, seeing the great harshness of the mountain and the extreme poverty these religious suffer. However, they are happy in Jesus Christ.

Let them pray much to His Divine Majesty that he will dispose in accord with his Divine Will for a mission for us among the infidels, which is under discussion in the Propagation of the Faith office in Rome. It is a population far distant, beneath the Caucasus Mountains in Asia, near Armenia and the very high mountains that divide Armenia and Asia from India. It is a people who await the light of the Gospel. They have self-rule, etc.

This, perhaps, will be the Retreat you are speaking about, but the one who referred to it was mistaken. That mission would be of great glory to God, but has not come through so far. On our part I have already accepted it and have designated the men. They are ready and rejoicing to be able to go soon, but who knows what the pope will decide. Let them pray strongly — say that to Mother Prioress and to the nuns — so that they will have part in the merit of the conversion of these infidels. It is an immense population, almost at the end of the earth. I end, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all the religious, and with profound respect and reverence affirm that I am,

426. Zoffoli (Vol. I, p.1070) says before April 19, 1758.

Your unworthy servant,
Paul of the Cross

Father John Thomas still has a fever. I wish that they speak of this mission only among themselves, since who knows if it will succeed? I myself am leaving on Wednesday for a large mission.

1126

Canon Francis Scarsella (5)

San Angelo
April 19, 1758
Leaving for your town.

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Canon,

If nothing to the contrary intervenes, as I hope, on Sunday, April 23, I will be there about 14 or 15 hours. Yesterday I had letters from Mount Argentario that my two companions are prepared to come and help me on the missions, and on Saturday, April 22, they will be at Pescia around 15 or 16 hours. So it is necessary that you take on the task, with the help of some pious benefactor over there, to send a servant with two tractable and gentle beasts, who should get to Pescia around 18 hours. I have written to them that on Saturday night they should come to sleep at Ponte della Badia, so as not to be too worn out and so that they can come on Sunday at the time I will arrive with Brother Filippo. All will stay in some house in the village until the time to make the entry for the mission. In this way we can rest, and the Fathers will wait there for their orders. So let them be sent soon. As for me, do not send anything, for I have no need for any reason.

I am writing to the vicar forane and the Archpriest Pazziaglia and sent the same letter to the other pastor, etc. I am asking them to announce the mission and have the platform built. They should understand how that is to be done as was stated by us: about eight palms high, at least, and very solid. You will take care of the square. I am in a hurry. From the heart I embrace you in Christ, and with all respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

A Religious Sister at Vetralla

San Angelo
 April 22, 1758⁴²⁷
 Leaving.

J.C.P.

Very Reverend Mother,

Your letter, which I received last night, edified me, and I am responding in haste since I am leaving this holy Retreat in three or four hours and do not know when I will return, though I hope to be back some time in May. It may be the case that I will have the chance to pay you and your closest, pious relatives a visit in the Lord. If I have the chance, I will do so.

Greet your Mother Prioress for me and ask her prayers, also those of the community, for me and for an affair for the glory of God that I have in hand.

Let us now come to our business. I read your letter with attention, and I see that you are causing crosses for yourself. But do you not see, my blessed daughter, that you are wasting time? All interior and exterior sufferings, believe me, are permitted by God in order to prepare you to receive treasures of grace. Therefore, put into practice this prescription.

1. The Most High Lord from eternity has willed, and it has pleased him, that you suffer these trials of spirit and body from the devil and from creatures. As to their origin, look at them, therefore, with an eye of faith and embrace the Good Pleasure of God with ejaculatory affections or arousal of your soul.

2. Keep your heart peaceful, and three or four times a day, even more often, calm it down. Fill your poor heart with the good things and do not exacerbate it with quarrels or with depression, staying away from these as from the plague.

3. It is an excellent sign that you tell me of your repugnance for every good work. This is a test of fidelity that God asks of you so that in every moment you acquire new jewels and pearls of virtue to be inserted in your crown of glory.

Oh, if you understood that, I mean regarding this work that the Lord is doing in your soul! oh, how happy you would be! Now enough. After the storm will come a great calm and peace, and after the clouds will come a sun so hot that it will melt this mountain of snow. Then you will perform your works without repugnance, or at least with very little, and you will rejoice in God our Savior. Frequently embrace the Will of God in every sort of trial. This is the great prescription to reach perfection quickly. I am in a hurry, and I enclose you in the heart of holy Love. Jesus bless you. Amen. Pray for me.

I have done what you asked and have issued a command against the enemy.

Above all, set aside reflections on yourself and keep yourself from fixations.

Your unworthy servant,

Paul of the Cross

427. Amedeo suggests this date from "internal evidence."

A Bishop (2)

Ischia
April 24, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Bishop,

Although I had decided to stay in the Retreat during this spring campaign, I was forced by strong requests to go out on the mission to this numerous populace of Ischia in the diocese of Acquapendente. Your respected letter, sent the nineteenth of this month, was forwarded to me here.

I embrace with all my heart the decision to send only two members for the new mission, for which I have conceived more and more high hopes. Would that they were destined for the conversion of that numerous populace in the Caucasus, since His Divine Majesty seems to give greater impulses toward that, especially in one of those destined, and he is a great servant of God. He is entirely abandoned to the Divine Will to accept with indifference and without demur that mission that will be chosen. I have complete trust that your great enduring care will find a way with the holy light of the Lord to find help for that populace by means of our poor workers. I hope that the cardinal will give five or six months of preparation for this great work as ... Father Thomas.

I will begin to have prayers offered for you, even from the contrite people here, that His Divine Majesty will enrich you always more with his graces and heavenly gifts and grant you an eternal reward for the great charity you do to our Congregation and to those poor people who are seated in darkness and the shadow of death.

I will be here until May 1 and will immediately return to the Retreat of San Angelo. I will be able to receive your venerated commands there, for my letters are sent to me from Viterbo. Now, kneeling, I kiss your sacred hands. I implore the charity of your holy prayers, and with profound reverence affirm I am,

Your humble, devoted, unworthy,
Paul of the Cross

A Monsignor (3)

Ischia
April 25, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Monsignor,

I have placed in the holy Wounds of Jesus the holy zeal with which you work for the advantage of this poor Congregation, especially in promoting the proposed mission, considering that even I, being the miserable one I am, have great hopes for the conversion of these poor people.

As I take up once more your esteemed letter, received last night, I see that Cardinal Spinelli has withheld his decision. This makes me abandon the affair all the more into the arms of the divine mercy so that His Divine Majesty may dispose the matter for his greater glory.

As for the candidates destined, they are prepared to undergo the examination whenever they may be called, that is, whether at the beginning or end of the six months that the cardinal granted them. If Divine Providence disposes that these candidates be destined and chosen for this mission, I have great confidence in God that they will produce excellent results, and that His Divine Majesty will make them great instruments of his glory for the spiritual advantage of those poor peoples. They have always been given to virtue, to much prayer and recollection, and to the studies required. I would do an injury to your continued concern and charity were I to be so bold as to recommend this project because I am certain that you have it much at heart since it is a question of bringing into the sheepfold of Jesus Christ so many lost sheep.

I assure you that our entire Congregation will continue to make you part of its prayers, sacrifices, and all other exercises that are practiced in it by the grace of God, and I will add my cold prayers to those of our good religious, asking the Divine Goodness to enrich your pious spirit with all fullness of grace and heavenly gifts by making you a great saint, as I strongly hope. Now, kneeling to offer a reverential kiss to your sacred hands and imploring the charity of your holy prayers, with profound respect and veneration I say I am,

Your devoted, obedient, and respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

1130
A Bishop (3)

Toscanella
May 9, 1758
Leaving for San Angelo.

Your Excellency,

I have placed in the holy Wounds of Jesus the donations given by your continued great concern for one of our most needy Retreats, to be designated by me, as Signore Costantini directed me in a letter sent to me yesterday on my arrival at this Retreat. Since the Retreat on Mount Cavo, founded on last Palm Sunday, is the most needy, I will send it to those poor religious, who will not fail to be grateful in their prayers and sacrifices, beseeching the Divine Goodness to grant you an eternal reward.

I am writing with no little difficulty because of a great loss of strength, and I have been much weakened by the heavy mission in Ischia, which was blessed by His Divine Majesty with an abundant treasure of grace. Now, imploring the always great charity of your prayers and strong protection, I kneel with profound reverence and kiss your sacred pastoral vestments and ask your holy blessing.

Your humble, devoted, obligated, respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

A Monsignor (4)

San Angelo
May 12, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Monsignor,

I adore the divine disposition regarding the destination of our religious for the mission in Wallachia and Moldavia, not in the Caucasus, where I hoped for great fruit since it will be freer for the preaching of the Gospel and where our men can go more voluntarily with a strong heart and willing spirit and with greater hopes. May the Will of the Lord be done in all things, for he wills only the best. One of those destined helped me in the laborious mission at Ischia, which was greatly blessed by God. He is a great servant of God, a man of great recollection and union. Now he is waiting for the examination, and as soon as he is called, he will be ready. I say the same of the one who will go with him. On Wednesday after Pentecost I should begin a mission in Barbarano, feudatory of the Roman Senate. I will end, please God, on the twenty-eighth of this month and will immediately return to this Retreat and will stay here during the summer.

I ask you to kindly pardon my mistakes since I am writing with not a little difficulty, seeing I am greatly reduced in strength. Now on my knees I kiss your sacred hands, ask the charity of your holy prayers, and with profound respect sign myself,

Your humble, devoted, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Marianna of Jesus (4)⁴²⁸

San Angelo
May 13, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Mother,

I am answering your letter, received on my return from a large mission. Briefly, I tell you that any office that comes to you from obedience is always best. So you need to see in the Divine Will your office as gatekeeper, for that has been assigned you under holy obedience. You can remain united to God everywhere, provided that you do not dissipate yourself, but maintain a holy recollection with profound humility of heart, dispatching your duties with fewness of words, keeping your exterior senses well guarded, especially your eyes and your tongue, and maintaining in your behavior a great modesty, meekness, and peace with all. In this way you will be in a continual loving

428. Paul, perhaps writing from his own experience of being reelected to the office of General Superior, advises Marianna of Jesus to see the Divine Will in her new office.

conversation with God, carrying on the altar of your heart a bundle of myrrh of the holy sufferings of the gentle Jesus.

Pray much for me, for I have great need. Do not write to me, for I have too many duties. Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire. Amen.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1133

Canon Francis Scarsella (6)

San Angelo
May 30, 1758

Reverend Canon,

When I returned Sunday night from the holy mission at Barbarano, not a little worn out and battered, I had the consolation of your letter, and I am very happy that the cultivation of fervor continues among your people with devotion, piety, the use of the Divine Word, and prayer, especially by the clergy and, likewise, those young women who have entered the convent. I will not fail to keep them recommended in my prayers to the Most High in a special manner, with the end that he would grant them that grace of graces, a holy and final perseverance, reserving for myself a better time to write them with my own hand. For now I find myself impeded with a recurrence of my maladies. Meanwhile, let them take more heart in the way of the Lord. Let them continue the building of the church as started. Meanwhile, praying for all the copious riches of heaven and asking you to give my particular respects to the benefactors who lodged us, and to the others, and reverently kissing your hands, I am with truth and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1134

Thomas Fossi (90)

San Angelo
June 3, 1758

J.C.P.

My Dear Thomas,

I returned a few days ago from the holy missions, and I find myself not a little worn out by a variety of ills. I am replying to let you know I received your two welcome letters, and I am sending you a thousand thanks for the charity of the tuna that you meant for me and for this Retreat. As to whether you have, as you assert, introduced ostentation and vanity into the region, get that discouraging thought out of your mind. It is not true, and I have never imagined that about you. Having said that, never bring it up to me again.

With regard to the Masses and the alms, you can find out from Father Rector, whose name is Father Marcelliano of Saint Lawrence. For all the rest,

I would say that you abide by what will be said to you by your ordinary confessor from time to time. In this way you will discover the best way to direct yourself under holy obedience.

Finally, live all absorbed in God and try to have the marriage bed of your heart more adorned every day with the exercise of true virtues and the sweet balsam of the suffering of Jesus Christ for that Divine Spouse. Greet your pious household for me, whom I enclose in the holy Wounds of Jesus Crucified, and with my accustomed truth and esteem and affection I am,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

1135

Teresa Palozzi (7)

San Angelo

June 8, 1758

J.C.P.

May Jesus be always in your heart.

Just now I received your letter, sent to me by the doctor. Regarding the penance you speak about, it is certain it is not a sacramental penance, but a simple counsel. So you can do it or let it go on your own discretion. You did well to let it go on the occasion of your sickness. You should not resume it until you feel yourself back in your normal strength.

Teresa, listen to me with attention and put into practice what I am telling you in the Name of the Lord.

Place all your effort in being well resigned to the Will of God in all the sufferings that God permits and in all the fatigues and work in which you find yourself. Keep your heart well guarded and recollected, and do not let yourself be upset. If you can go to church, do so; if not, remain quiet and recollected at home, and do the Will of God in the work you have in hand.

Make your heart a living tabernacle of the sweet sacramental Jesus, keep him with you always, and embrace him often with holy affections because these are the arms of the soul.

Be careful not to allow your spirit to be attached to anything created, and see to it that you are always detached from everyone and everything, taking your pleasure only in doing the Will of God in naked suffering, without seeking any comfort from anyone. I beg you not to seek consolation, not in prayer nor in any exercise of devotion, but take care to have a pure intention of only pleasing God and giving him alone the glory at all times and in all your works.

When you go to confession, go to accuse yourself of your defects with humility and simplicity, and do not seek consolation from the confessor. Once you have made your confession, recollect yourself entirely within yourself, and humbled at the feet of God, pray to him with the simplicity of a child that he instruct you, that he teach you his Holy Will, and that he give you to drink at his divine font, the living water that he gives to his beloved souls.

“Oh, dear Jesus! Let me drink at your sacred Side the living water of your holy love! Oh, how much I thirst, my dear God. Allow me to drink.” Go to

receive your sacramental Jesus and drink to satiety at that divine font. Make use of these or like affections, which will help you much. Take great courage in God, for the time will come when God will take you from the Babylon of this world. Be faithful and doubt not, for the great mercy that God wishes to bring about for you is not far away. Now is the time of trial, a time to stay crucified with Jesus Christ. But this is a great treasure. Make much of suffering in silence because that is a great grace that God gives you. Pray for me. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus and pray copious blessings for you.

Greet Anna Cecilia for me when you see her. Tell her to be faithful in God's service, for His Divine Majesty has prepared for her also a great grace, and I hope you will be companions in becoming saints for the greater glory of our good God.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1136
Cecilia Costanzi

San Angelo
June 16, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Lady,

I received your letter yesterday, forwarded to me by Sister Maria Agnes. I assure you that I will not fail to pray and have others pray to the Lord for the conversion of your husband, seeing how evil is his conduct. With regard to calling him here, that does not seem convenient for many reasons, all just and prudent, among which he could not set aside the imminent grain harvest that would demand his presence. Furthermore, what could I ever accomplish with a simple correction?

If he were to come here of his own will and make a retreat, then we might expect a happy outcome! I would not know how else we could hope for anything. When the weather cools or in the coming Lent, there will be a change of retreatants, and we could invite your husband if he will be willing to come.

If it were to happen that he comes by here, be certain that I will try to enlighten him that he attends to his duties. You can try to accustom yourself to suffering and cease your crying, but pray much to His Divine Majesty for him that he amend. This is the path taken by so many holy women for the conversion of their husbands, and they have obtained what they asked through the Mercy of God, not by lamenting and quarreling because these do not help except to multiply sins and cause sins to be multiplied.

Signora Cecilia, take care of yourself and the good upbringing of your family and supply what is wanting in your husband. In daily meditation on the suffering of Jesus Christ and in devout reception of the holy sacraments you will learn charity, patience, and meekness toward your husband and others.

Jesus bless you and all your household, and I enclose you in the holy Wounds of Jesus, and with all respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

1137

George Melata (10)

San Angelo

June 18, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Gratitude, which is so much in line with the heart of God, obliges me to render my humble thanks to your merit, also on behalf of the Father Rector, who is out of the Retreat, for the great charity you practice toward us by sending the materials for this building. For that you will have great merit before God, and we will not fail to be always grateful in our prayers and holy sacrifices. I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with your pious household, and end by affirming my profound respect and esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

1138

Canon Francis Scarsella (7)

San Angelo

June 20, 1758

Reverend Canon,

Blessed be the Divine Goodness, whose Providence is as gentle as it is strong and has finally brought your work to its devout end. I am happy that the bishop has solemnly celebrated the blessing of the new church, and that the devil, for his part, has not won the victory. I am glad to hear that the people have continued in the fervor with which they began. May God grant that it be persevering. As I rejoiced, I have high hopes that they will maintain their work in the spirit with the use of meditation and the other exercises.

Pray for me and I will not fail to reciprocate for you. I return all the cordial greetings from all those worthy men, and I kiss your sacred hands and affectionately declare myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

San Angelo
June 23, 1758

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

Dear Sir,

The great obligations that I owe to your house for having lodged us, along with the demonstration and courteous and charitable treatment experienced three times on the three mission in Ischia, the last of which ended in May on the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension of the Lord, are a continuous stimulus to me to offer my true thankfulness in Jesus to you. Likewise, it forces me to desire for all and to pray to the Highest Giver of every good to grant you the most copious blessings from heaven, both temporal and, much more, spiritual.

Because I see you in the Lord, along with your worthy brothers, heirs of the piety, devotion, and good example of your blessed forebears, especially your pious father, Fabio, "whose memory is in blessing," as I confidently hope, so I want to hope you will cultivate that holy heredity that you acquired with your holy upbringing, both from your deceased father and from your mother, who is still living. For I know she does not cease to cry out to the Lord for you so that you may be holy in body and spirit! That will happen if you gentlemen will make use of the efficacious means which lead there, principally the devout frequentation of the holy sacraments, at least each week or a bit more, and not allow a day to pass without meditating for a half-hour on the holy Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, not ever missing the examination of one's conscience, at least once in the day, along with reading some spiritual book, fleeing like the plague evil companions, libertines, and the malicious who are more harmful than the devils themselves, mortifying your passions, especially the two dominant ones, the irascible and concupiscible.

To that end it is most necessary to have guard over the external senses, especially the eyes and the others, etc, making a gift of these to Mary Most holy. To her it is necessary to have a tender devotion, especially to her sorrows, keeping your heart recollected and arousing it often with a lively faith in the presence of God in every place and with holy affections of love for God. In that way you will secure a holy life and a holy death, of which you should not lose sight, that is, in memory, since it may be closer than we believe. For Jesus Christ said: "Be prepared ... watch." And, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, where I always see you in my poor prayers, I end by affirming I am with profound respect and esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Canon Ubaldo Cipolletti (1)⁴²⁹

San Angelo

July 1, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

A short time ago I completed the regimen ordered by my doctor, especially for the dangerous headaches that came upon me on the mission in Ischia because of the low church and the blasts of wet, salty air hitting me in the head. "Blessed be God, who works his mercy for us." Now, I must inform you that since I have the engagement you know about, the missions for all the diocese of Montefiascone, which I have already accepted, including the city of Corneto, which I will begin in November, it is not possible for me to conduct a mission in Visso and the other large towns in the mountains which were offered by the bishop of Spoleto, whose hands I wish to kiss on my knees before I die. Enough. "What is delayed is not denied." If God wills it, he will open the way.

Now, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus and asking the charity of your devout prayers and asking you to convey my cordial greeting in the Lord to Stephen Cosimelli, I affirm that I am with profound respect and esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Canon Francis Scarsella (8)

San Angelo

July 13, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Canon,

I am answering your welcome letter in haste to thank you always more in the Lord for the charity you continue toward our poor Congregation. There is reason to thank greatly His Divine Majesty for the exaltation to the Highest Pontificate of the person of Cardinal Rezzonico, and all the Christian world should give thanks for the Lord has provided us with a holy pastor.⁴³⁰ I have the same filial servitude toward him as have all the sons of the Church, and there is no stronger.

Getting help for the building there will not be so easy for many reasons. If a way opens I will not fail to cooperate as much as I am able. I will not fail to

429. This letter is addressed to the canon at Canino, but the mission Paul writes about is at Visso. Later there will be mention of a foundation at Visso (1772). The Stephen Cosimelli mentioned here is a native of Ischia di Castro. He was a benefactor and testified at the beatification Processes.

430. Cardinal Rezzonico takes the name Pope Clement XIII.

pray His Divine Majesty for Signora Catherine and for her household that the Lord may console her in her affliction. Now I enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, and affirm I am from the heart and in haste,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

“The Pope Will Be Favorable To Us” (1758)

In the very first letters, after the news of the election of Cardinal Rezzonico as pope on July 7, Paul again and again mentions how hopeful he is. He feels that time has come to establish the Congregation more solidly and to hasten to Rome to greet the pope and to renew conversations with friendly contacts in the papal court. He also begins a campaign of prayer as he had done earlier when struggling with the Mendicants.

On the same July 15 that Paul wrote to Fossi he also wrote to the Abbess of the Capuchins to request prayers, especially to Saint Bibiana, implying he might receive that church in Rome. In the letter of July 29 to Fossi he explained why he could not give a mission on the island of Elba. To the friend of his youth, Paul Sardi (July 29), he explains more clearly his hopes for solemn vows. He also mentions the possibility of a foreign mission and explains why he cannot give missions in Lombardy. He also thanks him for his care of his family in Castellazzo. On August 1 he wrote to a benefactor and mentioned the possibility of constructing “a new building for the novitiate.” It has been a long time since the novitiate building was mentioned in a letter. Paul certainly feels that this is a favorable time!

Paul had tried to keep himself free to go to Rome when called. Finally, in letters to Sister Rose Mary Teresa on October 26 and to Fossi on October 27, he writes that he is going to Rome for important business. He is back at San Angelo on November 24, when he writes to Father Joseph Sisti, but offers no word about his reception in Rome. He did give a short mission to assist people preparing for the extraordinary Jubilee. As the year ends, Paul plans a mission in early January 1759. He is also trusting that Clement XIII will be “favorable to us,” but Paul realizes that the pope will act slowly and carefully because of the situation with the Jesuits.

A Priest-Director of Souls (1)⁴³¹

San Angelo
July 14, 1758

J.X.P.

Very Reverend Father,

I did not reply to your welcome letter before now since I hoped to see you here. Besides, what you already told me is what I would have said is happening to that person.

Truly, these material sensible things are subject to great deception, and they demand close examination in the light of God to know them. It is best always to show yourself as not making much out of them and to be cautious with those who receive them without showing you have any idea of it. These are women and subject more than others to illusions.

I was to Rome at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, who I hope will be very favorable to the Congregation. Now is the time to pray much to His Divine Majesty. So I ask you to have the prayers of those devout souls multiplied, especially by N. Let her cry out to God and offer to the great Father the sufferings of his Son so that the pope will be favorable and establish this little work.

I am in a hurry and kiss, etc.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (91)⁴³²

San Angelo
July 15, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

In the current post I received your welcome letter, sent the first of this month, in which I see that you never tire in showing charity to us poor ones and "your reward will be great indeed." If Divine Providence has the fish in oil reach us here, as you mention, it will be just in time and will be a fine restorative for us old men as we were getting pale from eating dry cod and tuna, more than a little spoiled.

I will not fail to let Father Rector know what you said about the Masses.

Regarding the mission at Marciana and for the rest of the island, it is morally impossible for me to come there. I now find myself in the most serious business of the Congregation with the election of the new Sovereign Pontiff,

431. Paul went to Rome with John Baptist. He asks this priest, probably Joseph Sisti, the chaplain of the Carmelite convent at Vetralla, to "have those devout souls" pray that the pope will be favorable and establish this little work." His campaign of prayer has already begun!

432. Paul has canceled the missions at Corneto and the diocese of Montefiascone to take care of "necessary business in Rome."

and I hope he will be favorable to us to establish this work most deeply. For that reason I am constrained to defer the missions in Corneto and for all the rest of the diocese of Montefiascone, for which I accepted the burden. so that I can carry on this necessary business in Rome. Therefore, they can delay in asking the permission or faculties.

The general of Orbetello has strongly requested a mission for Longone, and I will see whom I can appoint, but I think the members I will send will not be able do anything else.

With regard to the advice you want in the negotiations and marriages, why do you want me to involve myself in such affairs since, in addition to the prohibition in the Rules, I know nothing whatever about these things. You ought to take your advice from your uncle and others who are experienced, and then decide what is most to the advantage of your household. If the fishing nets can be useful to you, why not accept them?

Regarding the marriages of your daughters, you need to inform yourself regarding the upright conduct of those who are asking for them, but get your information from pious and prudent persons as to whether they have sufficient means to maintain them in their state, and then decide in the Lord.

Your present conduct is better than it was in the past, for at first the sweet was in abundance and now it is the bitter. That is more conformable to the holy Life of Jesus Christ. Be faithful to God, do not leave off your usual practices, be resigned in internal and external suffering, be silent and accept everything from God. Kiss the loving hand of the great Father, who strikes you with a whip rich with love. He wounds you to cure you and lead you to a dying life so that you may reach the mystical death, which is rich in every good because it brings with it a strong detachment from everything created in order to bring you to a perfect union with the Highest Good.

Do not allow yourself to be surprised by fears and griefs, so that they upset your peace of heart. He who is in the bosom of the Highest Good ought to fear nothing except sin, and this, thanks be to God, is always far away from you. "O you of little faith, why do you doubt? What do you fear?" That is what the Lord said to Saint Peter when Peter was in the storm, and Jesus took him by the hand, etc. I am in a hurry and enclose you in the holy Side of Jesus, also with all your devout household, where I pray for copious blessings for you in spiritual and temporal things, and I am from the heart with all respect,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

1144

Prioress of the Monastery of the Holy Rosary (2)

San Angelo
July 15, 1758

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Mother,

In the greater needs it is necessary to have recourse to the friends of God so that they will intercede to His Divine Majesty in order to obtain the help from

the Highest Good. I find myself involved in one of the most important affairs that I have had in many years. It is that I must work for the solid establishment of our poor Congregation with the approval of solemn vows. I have hopes that the new Sovereign Pontiff will be favorable to us in this regard.

Therefore, I am asking with my face in the dust that all your pious religious will offer incessant prayers to our Lord, to Mary Most holy, and to all the saints so that His Divine Majesty will dispose that which is for his greater glory and the profit of our neighbor. I would desire that you cry out in a special way to Saint Bibiana, that glorious virgin and martyr, that she be propitious to us in this matter since she is in God and she sees what is desired and sought. I do not wish to tire you more, so I ask you to pardon the trouble I am bringing you. Now, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all your religious, I end and affirm my profound respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1145

Abbess Maria Elizabeth (2)

San Angelo
July 15, 1758

J.X.P.

Most Reverend Mother,

Since in great needs it is the best plan to have recourse to the help of God's male and female servants, so finding myself engaged in the most important affairs I have had for many years, that is, the solemn establishment of our poor Congregation on the occasion of the election of a new Sovereign Pontiff, who I am hoping will be very favorable, I am having recourse to your charity and that of your holy religious as I ask with my face in the dust that you would be willing to offer fervent and incessant prayers so that the Lord may dispose what is for his greater glory and the profit of our neighbor by giving the necessary light to us and especially to his vicar.

I ask you again to cry out to the glorious virgin and martyr, Saint Bibiana, so that she will intercede with God for the business she is much aware of since she sees it in God. Now I enclose you and your religious in the holy Side of Jesus and affirm again my profound respect.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (92)

San Angelo
July 29, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, Beloved in Christ,

I received you last welcome letter and offer you a thousand thanks for the favor you did for us with the fish in oil, which I sent to be taken from Civitavecchia. May the Lord reward you for me.

I judge that coming to the island for the missions is difficult, not to say impossible. I am getting up in years, and I have other worries besides the weight of the Congregation on my shoulders, which do not allow me, especially in the present circumstances, to be away from them. That should be enough for you. I have celebrated the Masses for the Feasts of Saint James and Saint Anne that you sent me to take care of. I suppose you have received my other letter; therefore, it is not necessary for me to go on further. Make yourself holy and pray for me. Meanwhile, I enclose you, along with your pious household, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Crucified, and I am always,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Blessed be the Lord, who has restored your health. I rejoice in the Lord over that. So let go of all your hesitation and have a filial trust in God now that you have had a sign of his holy love for you. I sent my earlier letter, written a little while back, by post. The two Masses were celebrated on the Feast Days of Saints James and Saint Anne.

Canon Paul Sardi (2)

San Angelo
July 29, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend and Dear Canon,

Your esteemed letter, received in yesterday evening's post, was very dear to me, and I am grateful in Jesus Christ for the always greater charity that you continue toward me. May the Lord reward you in everything.

It is very true that the coming to the Highest Pontificate of the person of Cardinal Rezzonico can be helpful if the blessed God will bring on, as I hope, a rain of his abundant graces. For this end we must cry out with assiduous prayer, as is being done by all our poor Congregation and by other pious souls, so that this holy work be well rooted and established in the evangelical field and in the vineyard of the Church with solemn vows. This still needs to be done and is being sought now.

For you know after our first approval, there was a more solemn confirmation with issuance of the apostolic brief in which the Rules and Constitutions were inserted. The Rules had been examined by three cardinals who were commissioned by the pope: Albani, Gentili, and Besozzi.

Pray much that His Divine Majesty will raise it to solemn vows so that it may expand over the Christian world and even among infidels, all the more so since now our Congregation is destined for a mission to the infidels. The candidates have already been chosen by me and await the call from the Propagation of the Faith, etc. This is certainly a great grace and privilege for a newly-born Congregation. "Blessed be God who alone works great things."

In regard to the nephew of Canon Panizza, I have replied to him some time back that right now the novitiate is full and there is no room. I told him that the young man must show himself capable in his studies and be finished with rhetoric because in the Congregation our only studies are philosophy and theology. So my poor thought would be that he study some more, as stated above, while in time the present novitiate will end, and with the reception of other candidates he would certainly be admitted.

Believe me, there is no room in the Retreats; all are full. Within another year we need to open another, and I would hope for two. In such circumstances we can vest more; otherwise, etc. If up there, there are candidates with true vocations, with good character and appearance, not melancholic or hypochondriac, which only harm religious life and ordinarily these types never succeed — if, I said, there are such candidates who are endowed as mentioned above, certainly in time I would be able to receive them, and they could come with the young man mentioned above. But if they are not endowed with a true vocation, there is no way they can be received. Enough. Time will tell.

I rejoiced in the Lord in the news you gave me of our poor relatives. As they are tried by the Lord in the furnace of poverty, so I hope they will be rich in faith. You have the great merit before the Most High of showing them charity, and I have strong hope that your holy charity is ascending to your memory in the sight of the Lord. What consoles me most in the Lord is that they live in fear of God. I pray they will often be mindful of that so that they be "the good odor of Christ in every place."

With regard to my coming there to do missions, God knows how willingly I would be to serve that people by cooperating for their eternal salvation. But, believe me, that it is not possible for many reasons: I have the government of the entire Congregation, which I am obliged in justice to take care of, especially in the present circumstances and the negotiations in Rome; I am advanced in age, sixty-four years and more; I am afflicted with swelling in my joints; and I have too many assignments in these regions that I must undertake since there are few workers. You can gather from this my inability and make my excuses.

Finally, I ask the charity of your holy prayers. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, I end and affirm, once more, all my esteem and admiration. With profound respect I kiss your sacred hands.

Thanks to God, we are all in moderately good health. Since I am loaded with letters and have written in haste, I forgot to return cordial greetings to the ones you mentioned, thanking them in the Lord. I will not forget to make you part of my poor, cold prayers, and I sign myself,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Joseph Sisti (8)

San Angelo
July 31, 1758

Paul of the Cross is replying with all respect to Reverend Sisti and assures him that when Father Thomas came there, I allowed him full liberty to go where he wished. I am displeased with him in that he did not go to Signore Paul Emil. Now that Father has a swollen cheek, he asserts that at his first opportunity to come by there, he will make that visit. His main concern will be to visit our sick man, and he affirms he is your true servant.

Things go as usual. Blessed be God.

A Benefactor (3)⁴³³

San Angelo
August 1, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Sir,

In compliance with your esteemed commands, there is enclosed the letter of response, which you will please give to the one to whom it is addressed. I suppose it is to the commander of the artillery. If I am not too bold, I would also ask you to extend him my reverential greetings in the Lord.

I rejoiced in Jesus Christ to hear that you went with Signore Curzio to our holy Retreat on the mountain, and I would wish that your charitable visits were not so rare since they are always profitable, especially for the new building for the novitiate, which, I hope, will soon be completed for the glory of the Lord, as I hope that divine mercy will provide strong support as has always happened with our ventures, seeing that you are procurator and administrator of Jesus Christ for his holy works. Take as important what I am telling you. I do not fail, nor shall I ever fail, to see you in the Side of Jesus, along with your pious wife and devout family, for whom I pray the most copious blessing from heaven. Meanwhile, affirming once more my true servitude and gratitude, and greeting Signore Curzio, I end and sign myself with profound respect, esteem, and admiration as your,

Unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

433. Possibly to John Francis Sancez.

1150

Sister Anna Teresa of the Incarnate Word

San Angelo
August 4, 1758

J.C.P.

Paul of the Cross forwards the enclosed letter as the Mother Prioress⁴³⁴ requested him and recommends himself to your prayers. The *Salve Regina* that Sister N. desires will be recited. I am in haste.

Your useless servant,
Paul of †

1151

Canon Ubaldo Cipolletti (2)

San Angelo
August 5, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

I received to my edification your esteemed letter, sent July 26. My duties and infirmities keep growing rather than diminishing, and they keep me from coming there for holy missions. Would that I had the strength, for God knows how willing I would be. If the Mercy of God has me succeed in an affair for the great glory of His Divine Majesty, I wish to make a journey as an act of religion to the holy House⁴³⁵ to offer thanks to the Most High through Mary Most holy, our Lady and our Mother. In that event, which I do not know when it will happen, on my return I could make a short visit there to serve that populace with a mission. But in everything may the Will of the blessed God be done.

With regard to using me to obtain the exemption requested by the convent, it is not possible for me to do that for holy reasons. I do not know when I will have occasion to be at the feet of His Holiness, to whom I have the same servitude and obedience as have the other sons of the Church. The best plan and the right channel is to go by way of the bishop, with whom everything will succeed happily.

Meanwhile, ask the bishop and give him the information for all else that is needed. You are taking the short and efficacious path. That is all I can say in reply. Here, enclosing your in the holy Side of Jesus and asking the favor of your devout prayer, I end and affirm I am with all esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

434. For the prioress of the Carmel convent of Vetralla.

435. House of Loreto.

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (14)

San Angelo
August 10, 1758

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Master,

I have already written to Signore Costantini⁴³⁶ for our known design, and I rejoice that Confrater Joachim⁴³⁷ is in the house to take care of it. I bless the Lord, who keeps them in good health and fervor.

Father Charles⁴³⁸ writes me that the mission to the infidels has gone up in smoke, while the one who is managing the business with Cardinal Spinelli has had a reply from the Cardinal Prefect that for now there is no place for us. These are his very words. I adore and bless the Divine Providence, and I am conceiving greater hopes for a more glorious outcome when the Congregation will have made its flight.

These are secret, providential happenings, and God, who knows our needs, is not allowing us to be deprived of members whom we need so badly. So you can rest from your endeavors and once in while take a break. Father Charles gave me the enclosed note to receive the two members indicated.

I do not know what to decide. Have an understanding with Father Rector, and let them see what can be done. If you can comfort them, as I would like, give notice of this to Father Charles.

I am in a hurry and embrace you in Jesus Christ and am always,

Your affectionate servant,

Paul of the Cross

Pray for us and greet everyone in the Lord.

Signora Frances Zelli (10)

San Angelo
August 11, 1758

Paul of the Cross is replying with all respect to Signora Frances Zelli and offers her liveliest thanks in Jesus Christ for the charity done this Retreat with the precious wine, and asks the Sovereign Giver of all good gifts to give her an eternal reward. So, too, will all pray to His Divine Majesty. Now, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus as our loving benefactress, the one who writes affirms with all respect his humble servitude.

436. Dominic Costantini was the main benefactor for the first convent of the Passionist nuns.

437. Confrater Joachim of Saint Michael.

438. Father Charles Joseph Marchiandi of Saint Gertrude was designated by Paul, along with Father John Mary, to be a missionary (Zoffoli, Vol. 1, pp. 1068-1075).

Girolama Ercolani (37)

San Angelo
August 17, 1758

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am replying to your letter, which until now I could not answer because my usual swelling had forced me to stay on my straw mattress for days. Even now I am not free. I say then that, if you were looking to the greater glory and service of God in sending away the person you mentioned to me, with the understanding that you did it with prudence and circumspection so as not to arouse the anger of anyone, in such a case you did well. You should not be pained with any complaint that was made. With regard to dismissing that poor handicapped person, it seems to me that charity would not desire that, all the more so since she serves well in the household.

In regard to your usual thoughts and scruples, I ask you to continue more and more with the advice given you; you know how much it has helped your state. You are not obliged to confess these thoughts that come to you on the occasions you mention to me in your letter because you have not consented. But good God! why do you wish to give place to scruples when you never will to consent and never consent to the importunity of all these many thoughts that run through your head? Is it not better that you do as I have always told you, that is, make acts of love of God, protest that you do not wish to consent to the evil, and continue to keep your heart in peace? So do that, Girolama, and you will stay in peace and quiet, and will be better disposed for the care of your house and of your good daughters. I assure you that I am not neglecting to make you part of my cold prayers so that they may all be persevering in the good they have begun by meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ and in their other exercises of piety. Now, enclosing you in the holy Wounds of Jesus, along with all your family, I end and affirm once more with all esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (40)

San Angelo
August 26, 1758

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Mother,

I am robbing this time from my duties to respond to your letter, received yesterday. Only with the usual difficulty did I read it because you write with mistakes and disjointed letters. Enough. I hope you will have concern for some not small affairs for the service of God that I have in hand. Either write me rarely or try to write better, clearly, and distinctly. Since I have so many letters to read, I do not have time to concentrate long on yours.

I rejoice in the Lord that the storm has abated somewhat. I hope that you will remain always more on guard and cautious, fleeing every shadow of distraction, not carrying on long, unnecessary discourses, and not wanting in the custody of your senses, external and internal, especially your eyes.

With regard to your internal treating with God, that is, the prayer you speak about, I would like to say something about the terms in which you express yourself, from which it comes to me that you have read or spoken about mystical things with another director.

Be vigilant and do not be reexamining the operation in your interior, but walk well with a great childlike simplicity, and, above all, do not lose sight of your nothingness: having nothing, knowing nothing, able to do nothing. The good is all from God, the evil is all ours.

Continue to remain hidden in God, letting your nothing disappear in the Infinite All. Be very faithful in staying at home, that is, within your interior solitude, reposing on the bosom of God, and feeding yourself on the holy milk of holy love so as to come out fortified for the exercise of every virtue, especially humility of heart, meekness, an equal charity for your neighbor, etc. To do this, a glance of love to the Great Father suffices. The holy Spirit will give you directions.

Recommend our Congregation much, much, for now a move is on to establish it solemnly and to have a Retreat in Rome. I confide this to you; let it stay with you. But pray much and make the holy sufferings of your Divine Spouse your own. Be of great heart. I have great hopes for your soul.

Jesus bless you and make you as holy as I desire.

Your unworthy servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1156

Teresa Palozzi (8)

San Angelo
August 31, 1758

*May the pure love of Jesus
be always in your heart.*

In reply to your letter, which was given to me by one of our religious who was over there, I tell you that you could not do a better thing more pleasing to God than to resign yourself in everything to his Holy Will and to do everything for his greater glory as you say in your letter.

Continue in this way and, believe me, you will merit more and give greater satisfaction to the Lord when you are resigned in aridity and darkness than if you were to have the highest heavenly consolations. When prayer is more pure and freer of imaginations, proceeding in pure and naked faith, then prayer is the more perfect.

So when you cannot meditate and proceed discursively interiorly, stay in the Presence of God within you, in the temple of your soul, reposing like a baby on the breast of the Lord in a sacred silence of faith and holy love. Oh, if you knew what a great prayer this is! Accustom yourself to this interior recollection.

Remind yourself that it is a truth of holy faith that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, closer than our very flesh. So lose yourself completely in God, repose on his divine breast, adore him, love him, and, if you cannot say a word, that is not important; that is even better. I am speaking about your present condition and, if you persevere, you will see that your soul will find greater sustenance and you will accustom yourself to remain in a continual prayer, being always recollected in God. Love will permit you to speak little and express yourself more in silence. One word of love is enough. "Oh, Father! Oh, great Father! Oh, Goodness! Oh, Love!" One of these ejaculations is enough to hold a loving soul for a long time in prayer.

Teresa, I have told you mighty things, for I know that the Lord wills to make you his true servant and spouse. Be faithful, my daughter, be faithful, especially in the practice of the solid virtues of humility of heart and in the recognition of your own nothingness. Be meek, modest, day and night, a lover of silence, love to remain alone and treat one-on-one with your Divine Spouse, and maintain your interior solitude in the midst of people, in your work, and in taking care of the house. Suffer and be silent; always deny your own will. I cannot come to give the retreat for them in the convent. It is probable that Father John Baptist will come, and he will do better than I. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

1157

Canon Francis Scarsella (9)

San Angelo
September 5, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Canon,

I am responding in haste to your welcome letter, as I find myself loaded down with letters and duties. I have not neglected, nor will I neglect, to recommend the soul of our deceased bishop in my prayers. With regard to my seeking the help of the pope for the building of that church, at this time those paths are closed for me since I have on hand a project for the great glory of God to take up with His Holiness. It would not be prudent to take on other assignments. His Divine Majesty will not fail to open ways for you to bring to a conclusion the work you have begun. Now, enclosing you in the holy Wounds of Jesus Christ, I affirm once more with all respect I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the †

A Priest (3)

San Angelo
September 5, 1758

Reverend Canon,

Kneeling with my face in the dust at your feet, I offer you my heartfelt thanks in Jesus Christ for the exceedingly great charity shown to our poor religious who have had the good fortune to be in that venerable monastery, especially for the very charitable assistance given to Father Thomas during his sickness. I have not failed to offer to the Most High Giver of every good this work of great mercy, extended by your great care and that of your holy religious, to the sick man and his companion. I have high hopes that these good deeds have been received in the Divine Presence as a sweet-smelling perfume, and I hope they will bring down a rain of divine clemency and generosity and the most plentiful blessing of heavenly favors and rich gifts of every virtue so that they be always the holier. I do not have the words to express my true gratitude, which I profess and will always profess to you and to all your holy sons, except by crying out to the Lord with the weak resource of my cold prayers so that he may grant you a temporal and eternal reward for the great charity manifested toward us. Now on my knees with a reverential kiss on your holy habit, I implore your holy prayers as well as your holy blessing, and with profound reverence I sign myself,

Your humble, devoted, obligated, and respectful servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (93)

San Angelo
September 9, 1758

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

I received in the ordinary post your welcome letter, sent August 17. I am very pleased with your decision to try to pay off your debts. This is an act of justice and should be put before works of mercy, such as giving alms. The latter should be cut back in order to meet one's debts. Some donations needing special consideration cannot be made, for that would defraud your creditors. Act in this way and cut back as much as you can, holding on to what is necessary to live according to your status. By cutting down on superfluous expenses, you can pay your debts, and you will be doing something pleasing to God and unburdening your conscience. When that is done, you will live more quietly.

Continue to live recollected in God in peacefulness of soul without allowing yourself to be upset by anything whatever. See to it that you maintain your health and strength by taking proper food to preserve your health to the glory of God and the welfare of your family.

If our religious are still there, greet them for me. Especially greet in the Lord your wife and all your pious household, whom I see in the Wounds of Jesus, whence I affirm I am with all respect, asking the Lord to give you plentiful blessings and a temporal as well as an eternal reward for the great good you have done us poor ones,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

1160

George Melata (11)

San Angelo
September 10, 1758

Most Reverend Father,

I wish to thank you very much for the charity done us with the onions, the flour, and the canopy.⁴³⁹ I do not have the words to express the gratitude that you ought to receive from me. Certainly, as I have always done, I will never cease to include you and all your household in my poor, cold prayers.

Enclosed, you will find responses for the two nuns. Would you do me the favor of giving them to the ones concerned? Finally, I ask you to convey my greetings to all the men of your household, especially to your sick brother, whom I am recommending to God so that he may restore him to health in accord with his good pleasure.

Enclosing you in the holy Wounds of Christ Crucified, I am with full esteem,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

The tiles are enough; there is no need of more. I thank you all the more for your good will.

Pardon me, beloved archpriest, if I do not write with my own hand. The reason is I am preoccupied with spiritual business, which I cannot set aside. Jesus reward you always for your heartfelt charity.

1161

Thomas Fossi (94)

San Angelo
September 12, 1758

J.C.P.

My Dearly Beloved Thomas in Christ,

I am quickly answering your welcome letter of August 2, which I received last night precisely at the last post. I had begun another reply in regard to the

439. Covering for the altar or for the Blessed Sacrament in procession.

gift of tuna in oil that we received, etc. "For all of this may the sweet, omnipotent, merciful Lord reward you," as I profoundly hope.

At this time I will not repeat anything except to recommend that you keep your spirit peaceful in great trust in God. I wish you would read *Spiritual Combat* by Father Scupoli; there is another entitled *Pathway to Paradise*. Oh, how much I desire you should read these treatises! How much they would benefit you!

In regard to renting the tuna nets, leave the affair to God for the results; everything works out for our good.

Father Raymond wrote that goodbye in the Valley of Jehosaphat because he was indicating that he did not want any further thought of a rectorship, and his desire has been satisfied. He is not the type to be a rector.

Father Thomas is general procurator and has returned to the Retreats of Campagna-Marittima and is now recovering from a serious illness he suffered.

As for the Sovereign Pontiff, I have no further reliance than that which all the sons of the Church have, and I believe that I will find great difficulty for our affairs. As for a Retreat in Rome, there is not the least opening.

I desire only that the Will of God be done in everything, and I desire to live abandoned in that way, in life and in death, in time and in eternity. Here, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with all your pious household, I end and affirm I am from the heart,

Your affectionate, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

I add something I forgot. There is no hope that I can come there for missions. I have the weight of the Congregation, and I have a project of great importance that will not permit me to be away, and I have very little health and strength. Let that serve you as a rule.

1162

Thomas Mary Struzziери of the Side of Jesus (5)

San Angelo
September 19, 1758

J.C.P.

Dearly Beloved Father Procurator,

I feel keenly the relapse you experienced in Anagni. You may well believe how much concern for your health weighs upon me. I am offering continual prayers to the Lord to obtain this favor. The season is dangerous, so it is necessary to take all possible means to regain your health as I believe you are doing there. It is clear that our good God is treating you as a great friend and son by having you pass through many tribulations which hold a great treasure of graces for your soul. I have all the more reason because I have no doubt that you are remaining on the cross of your sickness with a complete abandonment in the bosom of the Father, feeding yourself on his most Holy Will.

I have managed to have our case begin to move in Rome, so as not to be forced to remain so long when I go after the cool weather sets in. I see that they move slowly, and it seems to me there is some coldness. For a long time now

there have been no meetings. From that I conclude there is a chill, as I mentioned. I live abandoned to the Holy Will of God. Leaving you in the holy Side of Jesus, I affirm once more I am with complete affection,

Your loving servant,
Paul of the Cross

1163

Bonaventure Magnasco of the Assumption

San Angelo
September 19, 1758

J.C.P.

Dear Confrater Bonaventure,

I received your welcome letter, in which I learn of the sickness of Brother Dominic.⁴⁴⁰ Your letter was the cause of much joy because of your spirit and, much more, that you are exercising so much charity in assisting him. I will not fail to pray His Divine Majesty for the health of the sick one, and I hope he will regain his health soon. I felt keenly the loss encountered by Signore Girolamo and will cry out to the Lord that he will provide for his great need. Try to comfort him and encourage him to trust in God from his heart, for one who hopes in the Lord is never abandoned. Enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus, along with the sick one, I pray every blessing of the Lord for you.

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

1164

Sister Maria Magdalene of Saint Joseph⁴⁴¹

San Angelo
September 25, 1758

*May the holy Passion of Jesus and Sorrows of Mary Most holy
be always in our hearts. Amen.*

I took great joy in Jesus Christ in the pious letter from you, which was given me last evening. I read it with attention, especially with regard to the vision you have had. Regarding these, from the effects they have produced in your soul, they do not indicate deception, but rather much spiritual advantage, and that would indicate the workings of the Mercy of God. Nevertheless, I will relate to you the teaching of Saint John of the Cross, a great master of the spirit, in which he tells us that visions, revelations, locutions, especially when they are frequent,

440. There were at that time Brothers Dominic Macciocchi and Dominic Casaretto. We do not know to whom Paul is making reference.

441. Sister Maria Magdalene was a nun of the Carmelite convent of Vetralla. Paul follows the teaching of Saint John of the Cross on visions. He writes about the Congregation's "woes," as also the brusque announcement that there is not room for Passionists in the missions to the infidels. It seems that Paul is realizing that Clement XIII will make it his policy to rule through the various Congregations of the Holy See and not directly on his own, as Benedict XIV had frequently done.

ought to be cast off in order to free oneself from deceit, and, if ever — seldom, says the saint — they are of God, even if they are rejected, they will leave their good effects and divine impressions on the soul. If they are from the enemy, by getting rid of them the soul is free from deception.

You do well to rule yourself by obedience, for obedient souls are never deceived. What I recommend to you is that you make great account of prayer in pure faith, remaining in the solitude of your interior, adoring the Most High in spirit and in truth, taking your repose on his bosom like an infant, and feeding yourself on holy love. I notice the great quiet that you tell me you experience, and that your soul is drawn into that divine solitude and repose of love in God, whence comes that quiet you experience. I would wish that you make much of that and cultivate it by keeping yourself very recollected in God and in being grateful for the great charity he gives you.

Regarding our poor Congregation, I can say there is a good beginning and there is no lack of woes to sigh over, which cause me to make more frequent acts of resignation to the Divine Good Pleasure since I see things just a little favorable or not at all favorable.

Regarding the infidels that you mention whom God would wish to convert by means of us, I can tell you that, although two of our religious were chosen for the missions for the infidels, now the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith has excluded them, saying there is no room for them. That is a sign that great troubles and coldness are ahead of us, so do not neglect to pray the Lord in accord with these pious intentions. Continue to cry out to the Lord for our great needs, for you will have merit before the Highest Good.

I do not know how to express the infinite obligations in Jesus Christ that we acknowledge to your venerable convent. It seems to me I have written to the Mother Prioress when she sent the canopy, which right now is being used for the first time for the Novena to Saint Michael the Archangel in this church. I have not failed to pray to the Lord for all in the convent, especially for those who did the work, and this will be done always more. Give my thanks to the Mother Prioress, to whom I acknowledge my great obligations for the charity of your convent, which continues for us. I hope that His Divine Majesty will enrich you always more with graces and spiritual gifts, as well as temporal. Now enclosing you in the holy Wounds of Jesus, I pray for you the most plentiful blessings.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (15)

San Angelo
September 27, 1758

J.C.P.

I am sending you the enclosed letter, directed to the novice Fumosi⁴⁴² It was given me by Canon De Rossi. Read it and give it to him.

Greet everyone for me and pray for us. Greet Father Candido Donato for me and ask him if he has the mind and spirit to compose an Office for the Solemn Commemoration of the Passion to be celebrated September 16, etc.⁴⁴³ The lessons for the second nocturne of the feast will be found in a small work of Saint Bonaventure; Therefore, they will be the work of a saintly doctor, etc.

Let everyone help with the work to have it approved at the same time as the approval of the Rules — if God wills that. I have not a little trepidation on several counts. "May the Will of God be done." The prayer can be the one that I will obtain. I will send it in time.

I am in a hurry. I have a dazed head from my writing. "No day without a line."

Your affectionate servant,
P. of the †

Girolama Ercolani (38)

San Angelo
September 30, 1758

J.C.P.

My Esteemed Girolama,

I am answering your letter in haste; it was given me just now by our canon. In it I read of your affliction over the sickness of your daughter, which I judge is nothing at all, even a gift from the Lord.

You should know how to take this from the hand of God and conform yourself to the Divine Will, in which you will find peace and your upset will vanish. I say the same things about your other adversities. The remedy is the balsam of the Divine Will, which you ought to embrace and love as much in prosperity as adversity. You can be entirely sure of my poor prayers and those of all our Congregation, for there is a great obligation for us to do that since you

442. Confrater Celestine Fumosi of Saint Ann was from the diocese of Como, vested on July 26, 1758, but left before profession of vows (see letter of February 7, 1759).

443. John Mary Cioni is now novice master. Paul suggests that Father Candido Donato, a novice, might begin work on an Office for the Solemn Commemoration of the Passion. It would be presented to the Holy See for approval at the same time the Rules are solemnly approved. Father Candido did not judge himself able to undertake this task, so Paul turned it over to Father Thomas Struzzieri. The Office was approved in 1776. Today it is observed by Passionists on the Friday preceding Ash Wednesday.

are such a loving benefactress. Now, enclosing you in the holy Side of Jesus,
I affirm in haste and with all respect that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

1167

Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (41)

San Angelo
September 30, 1758

J.C.P.

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

Very Reverend Mother,

In reply to your letter, received last night, I need to tell you that it seems to me that your interior conduct is always more according to God, and all the signs are good. That is true, but you did not explain yourself well; you have even been much in error in saying that in this divine transforming embrace the soul loses its being and lives with the divine being, and it seems that the divine nature communicates its divine nature to the soul.

All this is erroneous because the soul never loses its being, even though in that divine embrace His Divine Majesty unites himself to such an extent by love that they appear to be one spirit. "He who clings to the Lord is one spirit," so writes Saint Paul, who had experienced this to the highest degree. Now I have understood and accepted your words, so be at peace, but be instructed on this and do not speak or write such an error. It was born of ignorance and without any fault of yours. I know that the soul in certain transports of love utters exaggerations, but you did not err in faith.

Be always more faithful to God and always deeper in your knowledge of your nothingness, and know that the deeper you go into the depths of that nothing, the higher you will go in your flights in God in your interior tabernacle. Give to that prayer that you described to me, give to it all the time you can. This divine embrace seeks for holy leisure. So carry that prayer everywhere in every work so that all your work remains perfumed by the fire of holy love. All good flows from this center.

I thank you in Jesus Christ for the charity you do me in praying His Divine Majesty for me and for the Congregation. May God have it succeed as you hope. Continue that charity more than ever, for it is very pleasing to the Lord.

With regard to your sickness, I am certain that it is working to undermine the walls of your prison so that the prisoner will go to her homeland. I would believe that it will not be so soon. But you should always be ready and have the intention of taking your communion as Viaticum. Jesus bless you. Amen.

Your useless servant in the Lord,
Paul of the Cross

Joseph Danei (4)

San Angelo
October 7, 1758

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

I received your letter in the current post, and I bless the Mercy of God, who is pleased to have you nailed to the cross of poverty, which is an efficacious means to flee sin and to keep oneself observant of the divine precepts, granting it is taken from the loving hand of God with true resignation to the Divine Will, strengthening oneself to suffer all the hardships by approaching the holy sacraments often with a devout and fervent preparation and without ever leaving off the devout meditation on the holy sufferings of our Savior. By persevering in this way you will pass from temporal poverty to the eternal riches of heaven.

Oh! how much you ought to thank the Lord that he keeps you exercised in this way! Who knows that if you had abundant temporal goods, whether you would run in the way of libertines and land yourself in hell? So thank God and suffer in patience, for your suffering will soon be over and there will be an eternity to enjoy.

I read what you tell me about three people who are helping you out. I know that Canon Sardi entertains charitable thoughts for you, but I did not know of the others, especially Cardinal Delle Lanze. I would have always believed that with only two you could have maintained yourselves with the little you have. But since God is allowing this, may he be forever praised. This makes me more humble of heart and keeps my head down and in love with our abjection. But the truth of the matter is that I would never have advised you to seek help at that distance as you have with Cardinal Delle Lanze. If you had taken mature reflection, you would have discovered that taking such a step was not very prudent at all. Blessed be God forever, for it gives me a chance to embrace my abjection, which I hug to my heart.

We are moderately well. With regard to our affairs, we leave the care to God and do not speak about them and will not speak about them. It would be far better if you also do that and rejoice in God and remain in greater humility. It is the advice of the saints not to speak in praise of one's self or one's relatives. Regarding self or relatives, it is better to be silent or to say only what is necessary with humble sentiments, humble and with self-contempt.

Now enough. I thank the Lord that you are getting along moderately well, and I hope that you are hidden in perfect peace without treating with the world, except for what is truly necessary, which especially applies to you. As for Teresa, I have no doubt that she is very withdrawn and never lazy. Do that yourself. Flee from all libertines, stay further from women than from the plague, and stay out of taverns and their conversations. Always be ready for death as if every day were your last.

Do this and write only very rarely. I am often occupied with missions or with the Congregation or on the road for the service of God. Just today I am leaving here. Fathers. John Baptist and Anthony greet you in the Lord, and we

all pray for you all the time so that you save your soul, as I strongly hope. I do not forget those who are helping you, especially the pious Canon Sardi; I never forget him. Jesus make you as holy as I desire and bless you. Enclosing you in the Side of Christ, I am in the Lord,

Your affectionate servant,
Paul of the Cross

1169

Sister Rose Mary Teresa of the Crucified Redeemer (2)

San Angelo
October 26, 1758

J.C.P.

Most Reverend Mother,

Your confessor from over there has given me your letter and the beautiful and devout Bambino. I do not have the words to express my gratitude that I owe you in Jesus Christ, along with the religious here. But the Lord will act for us by enriching your spirit with the fullness of his graces, as I confidently hope.

With regard to your illness and fevers, as the body is weakened so the spirit is sharpened, so that with the wings of faith and love it may fly high to the bosom of the Divine Father. Never more let there come from your mouth or from your pen the statement that God does not want to be loved by you. It is of faith that God wills and commands that he is to be loved by everyone with all one's soul, mind, heart, and strength. But I have taken in good part your outburst that comes from a thirst for love. Have a little patience, for God will satisfy you. Meanwhile, do not leave off remaining in your poverty and nakedness of spirit, for that is the state that God gives you now. In that nakedness you will be clothed with the suffering Jesus and with the noblest interior clothing. Jesus will lead you to his sheepfold, that is, the bosom of the Divine Father. Take your repose there, sleep there, love there, and make your way more deeply into the sacred desert and remember then that you are in the most profound solitude in God when you are deprived of all feeling of sensible devotion. I am in a hurry and enclose you in the Heart of the gentle Jesus, both Infant and Crucified. Pray to him for me, especially on my coming journey to Rome, so that the Will of God be accomplished. Jesus bless you and make you a great saint, as I hope, but with the secret sanctity of the Cross, which is most precious. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (95)

San Angelo
October 27, 1758
Leaving soon.

J.C.P.

Dear Thomas, My Beloved Son in Christ,

On my return from a retreat at a convent, I received your welcome letter, forwarded from the Presentation. I rejoice in the Lord that you make your prayer in faith in your interior tabernacle, allowing your fears and worries to burn up in the flame of holy love. Carry the sufferings of Jesus Christ with you. This is done in a moment. His Divine Majesty will teach you if you keep yourself humble of heart, as I hope.

I am writing in haste for I have much to do and am close to leaving on a journey of much service to God and the Congregation. It may be that I will be away until around Christmas, so do not undertake the hardship and expense of the long trip of about a hundred miles from Siena to here.⁴⁴⁴ However, God knows how much I would enjoy seeing you and embracing you in the Lord. His Divine Majesty will open the way when it pleases him.

I do not know how to express the thanks that I and all the Congregation owe you in Jesus Christ for the great charity that you continue toward us. I hope that His Divine Majesty will supply you with a copious reward, both spiritual and temporal, as we pray. Father Clement writes me that he will send here the donation you sent them.

I ask you to give my reverent greetings in Jesus Christ to your wife, sons, and daughters. I see all of you in the Wounds of Jesus Christ, especially from the holy altar every morning. And, once again, acknowledging my true obligations and gratitude, I close with all respect as your,

Unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Thomas Fossi (96)

San Angelo
November 2, 1758
Leaving Saturday.

My Dear Thomas and Son in Christ,

I returned to this Retreat on the Vigil of All Saints after fifty-four days of incessant labor on holy missions in Sabina, and on Saturday, the sixth of this month, I am leaving for more missions. I do not know when I will be back. I have need of much help from God for my many ailments, crosses, etc. As I found, among the many letters sent me by post, your three welcome letters, so

444. Paul refers to "miles" because kilometers came after the French Revolution.

I am robbing a bit of time to respond as best I can, for all the more reason since I have so much to do and my departure is imminent.

I have seen in your letters a good foundation of fear of God which has born so many holy aspirations which should be guarded with a peaceful repose in God without the least anxiety to see them realized until it shall please the Lord. In the meantime, you need to use all your effort to be faithful to the vocation in which God has placed you: taking care to be faithful with all diligence to the good control of your family in regard to both spiritual and temporal affairs by maintaining an unbroken peace in the home; giving complete and charitable attention to keeping your wife and children happy in God; and taking care that in their dress and in everything else they are provided for in accord with their state, since it is not granted to everyone to practice total self-contempt and no one cannot fly without wings.

Consequently, you should make only such charitable donations that your present situation allows so that you do not give an occasion for the household to complain about what is lacking to them. In this way, by being at peace they will be better disposed to pursue spiritual things in accord with the state in which they are, since not all are able nor called to extraordinary behavior. I have stated all this casually and as I see it in the Lord. However, I am sure you will take it to heart.

With regard to your manner of dressing as you relate in your letters, I cannot disapprove. In regard to so many holy desires that the goodness of God reveals in your heart, I tell you to place them all in the fire of holy love, which the great Lord has given you, and let them burn. But avoid all anxiety, since when God wishes, he will make you know that. In the meantime, remain at peace, turned toward the inner temple of your spirit, without the least strain of head or chest. If God grants you feelings of devotion, receive them as a poor man and give him back what he has given you as a sacrifice of holocaust and thanksgiving. When you find yourself arid, cold, and dry, wait in silence and hope for the rain from heaven without making the least effort to stir up devotion. That is a mistake and an attachment to one's own spiritual satisfaction. Love to be poor of spirit and in your nothingness, allowing this nothing to be lost in God, who is the true All. Encourage yourself often with sweet affections but without the least strain, as I said above.

I am most grateful in God to you for your great charity toward our Retreats, and I ask you to give my thanks as well to Signora Victoria for the charity done us. Oh, what a hurry I am in! Jesus make you all holy and bless you. Amen.

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

Joseph Sisti (9)

San Angelo
November 24, 1758

Paul of the Cross pays his reverence with all respect to Father Joseph Sisti and informs him that he has received his letter in response to the one in which he notified him that Father John Baptist will come there to open the retreat on Wednesday evening, the vigil of Saint Andrew, as long as no impediment arises. But if it should happen that he would have to go to Ronciglione for a public retreat because of the lack of an Advent preacher, then Father John Baptist would come tomorrow, begin before dinner, and end the Sunday before Advent. So as we now are situated, if that impediment does not arise, he will be there Wednesday evening, otherwise, tomorrow morning. He who writes affirms he is your true servant from the heart and asks your prayers, etc.

George Melata (12)

San Angelo
November 25, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

I feel keenly the news that you were pleased to send of the your sorrow caused by the death of your pious sister-in-law. I want to hope that your tears will have been tempered a bit, if not completely removed, by the strong hope that the devout departed, as a mature fruit for the table of glory, has already been received into the bosom of the Divine Mercies. You have very strong motives for such a belief: first from the infinite goodness of the Lord and then from the devout life led by your sister-in-law. When I was there on a journey, I held a spiritual conference with her, and to my great edification I found a true depth of fear of God and piety. But none of us will fail to offer devout suffrages for her, as we are obligated to do. Now, enclosing you and all your household in the sacred Side of Jesus, I end, affirming with all esteem, veneration, and respect that I am,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,
Paul of the Cross

George Melata (13)

San Angelo
December 24, 1758

J.C.P.

Reverend Father,

Along with your best wishes for the holy Feast of Christmas, which you were pleased to offer me in your letter, I also received your gift of candles and the other charities sent by your pious household — all the products of your

continuous great concern and heartfelt charity, which is never finished with doing good to us poor ones. For that I have the strongest hope that you will receive from the Highest Giver of all good things an overflow of divine blessings, both spiritual and temporal, as we all will cry out to the Lord.

I have been sending you best wishes for the holy feast from the altar ever since the Day of Mary's Expectation of Birth. United with these religious, I will do much more on the coming night of the solemn celebration of this tremendously holy mystery and will pray the gentle Infant Christ to enrich your pious spirit with all the heavenly gifts and graces which will make you more and more a fit minister of the Church and a fervent worker in the vineyard of Jesus Christ so that with many souls guided on the path to heaven you may sing with them in eternity the mercies of the Savior. Amen.

I already heard from the bishop about your destination for the convent of Saint Bernard; there are few assignments of greater importance than the duty of guiding nuns. It is both laborious and dangerous, so in every way I hope that God will increase his helps and graces that you succeed well. Go cautiously, and do not be over credulous. Examine everything in depth, look for the fruits of solid virtue and not at the leaves, for there are certain fantasies, imaginations, fixations, and elevated illusions that are believed to be lights and graces and turn out to be false.

I cannot assure you that I can be there for the retreat since, in addition to being not very well, I have an imminent mission in Corneto and a large and numerous convent, for which Cardinal Oddi of Viterbo has requested me. I could not refuse him this work. If God keeps me in health, I will do as much as I can to come and serve you. I will write you in time. It is important to me to serve you in this, to the extent my weak abilities allow me, as testimony of my infinite obligations that I profess and will always profess to you. Now, enclosing you in the gentle Heart of Jesus, along with all your pious household, I end, affirming again my esteem and respect,

Your unworthy, obligated servant,

Paul of the Cross

Father John Baptist, Father Rector, and all the others join me.

1175

Bishop Anthony Leli⁴⁴⁵

San Angelo
December 30, 1758

Very Reverend Bishop,

Seeing the responsibility that the piety of the bishop was pleased to share with me by asking me to come to this city to conduct the holy mission, I believed it my strict obligation to communicate with you for the purpose of

445. Bishop of Sabina and vicar general of Montefiascone.

having you have the announcements made in the parochial churches so as to inform the people that the mission will open the evening of January 7, the first Sunday of the month. I would also ask your charitable competence to take care that there be erected in the cathedral a platform in the form that was raised there the last time. Ten years ago I had the happy lot to exercise this holy apostolic ministry there. The good and orderly procedure normally practiced by us for the entry and welcome of the holy mission in small places, as well as in cities, is as follows:

“When word comes of our arrival to the place, the signal is given by the festive ringing of the bells by all the churches for the space of a half-hour, so that the majority of the people may be moved and stirred to value the mission highly and come willingly to attend it. When the people and clergy have come together in the major church, they will go in procession and assemble in the piazza that is closest and most commodious to the church to receive not only us poor ones, but also the inestimable treasure of the holy mission. As they come they will sing in the sixth tone the psalm *Benedixisti Domine terram tuam*, and the people will answer each verse with *Lodato sempre sia, Il Nome di Gesù e di Maria*. The procession will be arranged in the following manner:

“The priest of highest dignity comes first with the Crucifix, after him come the clergy, then the people, first the men and the women last. They divide to the sides in the piazza with the clergy in the middle. The missionary will deliver the first colloquy to the Crucified. When that is over, he will take the Crucifix from the hands of the priest and walk to the church at the head of the clergy, followed by the clergy in order, and then the people, as before, singing the canticle *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel* in the customary sixth tone, and all will answer each verse with the praise *Lodato sempre sia*.

“When the procession starts, the bells are not rung so as not to conflict with the singing and colloquy. The first discourse will then take place in the church, and at the end of the discourse the missionary will intone *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which will be taken up on alternate sides and accompanied by the organ.”

May you in your kindness pardon the tedium of such minute details; however, in this way confusion is avoided and greater glory to God results, as well as the decorum of the sacred ceremony and the fervor of the people.

Now I ask for the suffrage of your holy prayers, and I reverently kiss your holy hands and have the honor to affirm I am,

Pardon me for not writing with my own hand. I find myself not a little preoccupied. I am always more,

Your humble, obligated servant in the Lord,

Paul of the Cross

Passionist Religious (16)

San Angelo
Possibly 1758

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

Instruction: What Needs to be Done at Present, Regarding the Tertiaries⁴⁴⁶ of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Those who will be called to serve His Divine Majesty in this our poor Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ in the habits as tertiaries ought to conform themselves as much as possible to the professed lay brothers, observing our holy Rules as they do, although they do not have that specific obligation. They shall not speak in the Retreat without necessity, keeping silence as do the rest, except when it is necessary to speak about what needs to be done, and, above all, they shall be humble, pleasant, respectful, and, what is most important, obedient and submissive, especially toward superiors, promptly doing what will be commanded them. When they are out of the Retreat for journeys, they shall use all diligence to observe great modesty and composure, both in treating with others, especially with women, and in eating, etc, striving to show that they, too, live with the sons of the holy Passion of Jesus Christ and study to learn by their example, since in that way they will not give scandal to anyone, but will be very pleasing to God and able to become holy in their state.

The habit of tertiaries will be the same as that of the professed lay brothers, but it should be three fingers shorter, with a mantle with collar, and they shall not wear the holy sign except when they go out, and that should be a smaller one since this is distinctive for the professed. They will not wear shirts of linen, but a poor undershirt of wool like the others except at time of quest. Let them have footwear with two straps open above so that the bare feet can be seen.

Their work excuses them from the fast. When they are fatigued, they shall have a collation in the morning and in the evening sufficient food to satisfy their needs.

Since they wear the habit of our Congregation, they may be seated in the refectory with our religious in the last place after the lay brothers, but they are not to be admitted to the common recreation. After death they shall have the same suffrages as the lay brothers.

Since this Congregation has as its purpose to spread the forgotten memory of the Passion of our Redeemer, therefore, it is reasonable that everyone who wears the habit in any form should try to have a tender devotion to the Passion. Therefore, the tertiaries who do not have such heavy work that excuses them from the fast of holy Church will fast every Friday, dedicated to the memory of the Passion of Christ. They are asked to do this with great exactness.

446. Tertiaries were persons who wished to share in the spirituality of the Congregation and offered their work for the religious and received in compensation security in their old age and sickness (Giorgini, *Storia*, pp. 266-268).

Moreover, they shall attend holy Mass in the morning and make a half-hour mental prayer, which they will do once more at Compline, or before, as turns out best.

Let them recite the vocal prayers that are recited by the professed lay brothers in memory of the Passion of Crucified Love, and let them go to Communion every week or even more often according to the judgment of the Father Superior.

Finally, let them stay away from every contradiction with the brothers, which can happen at times, for in that way they offend holy charity. But let them give place to all, exercising themselves in virtues in order to enjoy the merit of that in paradise.

Paul of the Cross, General Superior

1177

John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius (16)

—
447

I forgot to tell you and ask you to transcribe for me the thoughts from the first lesson in the first volume of Father Gregory of Jesus and Mary, in which you will find the Latin text of the Fathers, expressing that our Sacred Solemnity has had its origin from the Passion of Jesus Christ.

I would like you to transcribe the thoughts of that good Father on a card, separately and very distinctly, since I wish to make use of them in forming a petition to the pope as motivating causes for the desired favor. Would that before going to the infidels, we could make solemn vows. Ask this grace from God with faith, and it will be granted you.

I would add that further prayers be offered by all, especially at holy Mass. After reciting Matins and before beginning mental prayer, let them kneel and recite in the choir the litany of the saints. The entire community should be present. This recitation should continue until a new word from me. Tell Father Rector to announce this in Chapter and have it published. From the heart I am always more,

I find myself in great internal contradictions, coldness, fears, etc., and great coming apart in undertaking this affair. I do not know why, but I fear much. In charity give me your opinion.

447. This letter was probably written after the letter of September 27, 1758.

INDEXES

Volume Two

NAMES OF CORRESPONDENTS

Francis Cosimelli of Jesus and Mary, *see Cosimelli, Francis*
 Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus, *see Pastorelli, Fulgentius*
 John Mary Cioni of Saint Ignatius, *see Cioni, John Mary*
 John Iacomini of Saint Raphael, *see Iacomini, John*
 Mark Aurelius Pastorelli of the Blessed Sacrament, *see Pastorelli, Mark Aurelius*
 Raymond Viti of the Sorrowful Heart of Mary, *see Viti, Raymond*
 Stephen Barberi of Saint Gioacchino, *see Barberi, Stephen*
 Thomas Mary Struzzieri of the Side of Jesus, *see Struzzieri, Thomas*

Abdess of Nepi Monastery, 292

Aldobrandini

Maria, 528

Aloysius Mary of Saint Dominic, 226

Angeletti

Pompey, 290

Anguillara

Anna Cecilia, 385, 389, 411, 504

James, 341

Anna Maria of Saint Joseph, 611

Anna Teresa of the Incarnate Word, 631

Anselmi

Maria Magdalene, 458, 597

Appiani

Francis Anthony, 447

Avvolta

Anna M. dei Nobili, 511, 513

Barberi

Stephen, 118

Bella

Cyprian, 349

Benci

John, 370

Benedict XIV

Pope, 241, 368, 472, 556

Benefactor, 471, 602, 630

Bertolotti

Vincent, 439

Bianchini

Luke Anthony, 604

Bigatti

Anthony, 366

Bishop (Unknown), 614, 615

Bishop of Corneto and Montefiascone, 585

Bono

Augustine, 250

Borgia

Fabrizio, 7, 9, 12, 16, 22, 80, 94, 98, 110, 116, 120, 129, 137, 140, 143, 153, 158,
 172, 181, 183, 185, 190, 193, 195, 199, 203, 209, 222, 223, 225, 227, 240-242,
 244, 245, 251-253, 260, 282, 296, 323, 325, 333, 336, 346

Brandeglio
 Iacomini, 593
 Bresciani
 Maria Cherubina, 160, 233, 318, 337, 376, 401, 451, 483, 498, 536
 Bubalari
 Joseph, 382
 Burlini
 Lucy, 43, 179, 255, 273, 294
 Calderoni
 Bartholomew, 435
 Calzelli
 Isidore, 218, 260, 291, 298, 303, 362, 473
 Cappelli
 Andrew, 367
 Cerrini
 Canon, 163, 167
 Chiatti
 Joseph, 350, 352
 Ciaralli
 Dominic, 31, 69
 Cioni
 John Mary, 352, 420, 427, 514, 528, 534, 543, 548, 559, 566, 570, 572, 581, 632,
 641, 651
 Cipolletti
 Ubaldo, 622, 631
 Coli
 Alexis, 484
 Colonna
 Grand Constable, 12, 359
 Prospero Sciarra, 381
 Coppelli
 Nicholas, 421
 Cosimelli
 Francis, 108, 121, 133
 Costantini, 329
 Dominic, 122, 186, 189, 238, 388, 501, 550, 553, 592, 603
 Lucy, 334, 426
 Mother Mary Crucified, 414
 Costanzi
 Cecilia, 619
 John Baptist, 455
 Danei
 Joseph, 525, 527, 643
 Teresa, 370, 445
 De Angelis
 Elizabeth, 561
 Felicia Maria Candida, 503
 De Scalzi
 Lawrence, 348
 Del Bene
 Frederick, 187, 212, 610

Dorascenzi
 John Baptist, 419

Ercolani
 Dominic Anthony, 75, 136, 157, 162, 189, 196, 197, 199, 235
 Girolama, 60, 87, 105, 123, 156, 175, 200, 205, 219, 229, 230, 243, 245, 246, 269,
 280, 286, 297, 309, 340, 348, 360, 388, 397, 405, 417, 444, 464, 497, 515,
 545, 583, 633, 641

Falandi
 Philip, 378

Falasca
 Peter, 341

Fedele
 John, 289

Feliziani
 Anna, 446

Ferrari
 Joseph, 462

Forlani
 Frances, 290, 305, 306
 John, 32, 39, 71, 78, 125, 188, 201, 267, 357, 363

Formaliari
 Bishop, 509

Fossi
 Teresa, 410
 Thomas, 10, 18, 32, 50, 104, 114, 124, 144, 154, 165, 177, 194, 210, 216, 220, 224,
 229, 233, 262, 264, 270, 286, 291, 299, 304, 307, 320, 330, 338, 350, 355,
 357, 364, 369, 373, 376, 387, 391, 392, 396, 408, 412, 422, 428, 436, 452,
 454, 457, 463, 476, 487, 493, 498, 500, 506, 507, 510, 522, 538, 541, 552,
 558, 575, 577, 587, 601, 606, 617, 625, 628, 636, 637, 645

Gandolfi
 Colomba Gertrude, 40, 345, 365, 389, 392, 394, 402, 405, 410, 423-425, 431, 437,
 442, 443, 448, 466, 470, 474, 477, 489, 492, 499, 513, 516-518, 520, 523, 524,
 578, 633, 642

Gentleman (Unknown), 212, 246, 281, 373

Giannini
 Cajetan, 4

Giannotti
 Faustina, 219
 Francis, 340

Gigli
 Canon, 235

Girolami
 Dominic, 6

Grazi
 Maria Johanna Venturi, 268, 295, 432, 495

Guadagni
 Cardinal, 192

Guasta
 Ursula, 398

Iacomini
 John, 354, 404, 468

Ildephonse of St. Charles, 173
 John
 Brother, 323
 Joseph Boniface, 382
 of Saint Hyacinth, 382
 King of the Two Sicilies, 380
 Leli
 Anthony, 648
 Lippici
 Joseph, 152
 Lucattini
 John Anthony, 181, 257, 266, 272, 276, 279, 283, 293, 307, 311, 313, 321, 324,
 336, 393
 Luke, 621
 Macali
 Caesar, 228, 232
 Magnasco
 Bonaventure, 639
 Marchiandi
 Charles Joseph, 441
 Maria Colomba of Jesus and Mary, 461
 Maria Elizabeth
 Abbess of the Capuchines, 41, 627
 Maria Gertrude Teresa of the Infant Jesus, 361
 Maria Innocenza of the Sorrowful Mother, 563, 586
 Maria Magdalene of Saint Joseph, 639
 Marianna of Jesus, 73, 107, 247, 616
 Mary Clare of Saint Philip, 533, 534, 540, 546, 551, 557, 584, 595
 Masi
 Augustine, 48, 231
 Mattoli
 John Anthony, 61
 Melata
 George, 442, 450, 459, 474, 481, 484, 503, 525, 572, 620, 637, 647
 Members of the General Council of Terracina, 19
 Merli
 James, 250
 Monsignor (Unknown), 614, 616
 Mugnani
 Master General, 261, 284
 Nardecchia
 Matthew, 8
 Nardini
 Matthias, 216
 Nicolini
 Sebastian, 601
 Notari
 Lawrence, 287
 Oldo
 Joachim M., 20, 30, 35, 45, 56, 62, 69, 79, 82, 88, 93, 95, 96, 109, 111, 113, 119,
 121, 126, 132, 139, 142, 143, 152, 156, 168, 180

Orlandi
 Clement, 469, 554

Orsini
 Mamelta, 453

Pagliari
 Felix, 496

Pagliaricci
 Andrew, 3, 48, 49, 51, 60, 339

Palleschi
 Alexander, 202

Palomba
 Dolcissima, 505
 Thomas, 243, 259

Palombella
 Callistus, 296

Palozzi
 Teresa, 485, 521, 561, 568, 574, 589, 618, 634

Panizza
 Dominic, 208
 Thomas Anthony, 506

Passionist
 Newly Ordained, 580

Passionist Missionaries, 206

Passionist Rector, 386, 420, 459

Passionist Religious, 198, 213, 277, 309, 315, 326, 332, 478, 579, 590, 596, 598, 650

Passionist Religious (10), 342

Passionist Religious (Unknown), 490

Passionists at Terracina, 301

Pastor, Paul's Benefactor (Unknown), 483

Pastorelli
 Fulgentius, 11, 14, 21, 23, 26, 29, 36, 37, 53, 57, 63, 66, 74, 76, 83, 89, 91-93, 99,
 106, 117, 130, 134, 138, 141, 145, 149, 159, 163, 169, 174, 431
 Mark Aurelius, 206

Paul of the Cross to:
 Priest (Unknown), 589
 A Benefactor, 630
 A Religious at Civita Castellana, 37
 Abbess of Nepi Monastery, 292
 Benefactor (Unknown), 471, 602, 630
 Bishop (Unknown), 614, 615
 Bishop of Corneto and Montefiascone, 585
 Gentleman (Unknown), 212, 246, 281, 373
 King of the Two Sicilies, 380
 Members of the General Council of Terracina, 19
 Monsignor (Unknown), 614, 616
 Newly Ordained Passionist, 580
 Passionist Missionaries, 206
 Passionist Rector, 386, 420, 459
 Passionist Religious (03), 198
 Passionist Religious (04), 213
 Passionist Religious (05), 277

Passionist Religious (06), 309
 Passionist Religious (07), 315
 Passionist Religious (08), 326
 Passionist Religious (09), 332
 Passionist Religious (10), 342
 Passionist Religious (11), 478
 Passionist Religious (12), 579
 Passionist Religious (13), 590
 Passionist Religious (14), 596
 Passionist Religious (15), 598
 Passionist Religious (16), 650
 Passionist Religious (Unknown), 490
 Passionists at Terracina, 301
 Pastor, Paul's Benefactor (Unknown), 483
 Priest (Unknown), 636
 Priest-Director of Souls (Unknown), 625
 Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla, 263, 391, 490, 494, 501
 Prioress of the Monastery of the Holy Rosary, 537, 626
 Prioress of Vetralla Monastery, 263
 Rector of the Congregation, 420
 Religious Sister, 176, 211, 224, 380, 575
 Religious Sister at Civita Castellana, 34, 37, 79, 509
 Religious Sister at Vetralla, 613
 Representatives of the Castellazzo Commune, 135
 Syndic for Our Lady of the Oak, 148
 Trustees of Vetralla, 368
 Vicar General of Orbetello, 377
 Vicar General of Sutri, 384, 385
 Young Ladies, 482

Pepino
 Bartholomew, 467

Petrarca
 Generoso, 204, 209, 237, 259, 314

Pettirosi
 Ippolita, 312
 John Baptist, 237, 282

Piccarilli, 312

Priest (Unknown), 589, 636
 Possibly Fr. Giannotti, 340

Priest-Director of Souls (Unknown), 625

Primoticci
 Caspar, 349

Prioress of Mount Carmel at Vetralla, 263, 391, 490, 494, 501
 Prioress of the Monastery of the Holy Rosary, 537, 626

Randone
 John Baptist, 66, 71

Ranieri
 George, 111

Rattazzi
 John Augustine, 254

Rector of the Congregation, 420

Rector of Toscanella (The Oak), 417
 Religious Sister, 176, 211, 224, 380, 575
 Religious Sister at Civita Castellana, 34, 37, 79, 509
 Religious Sister at Vetralla, 613
 Representatives of the Castellazzo Commune, 135
 Ricci
 Father, 90, 100
 Rose Mary Teresa of the Crucified Redeemer, 608, 644
 Rotondi
 Joseph, 504
 Ruberi
 Joseph Hyacinth, 400

 Ruspantini
 Bernardine, 394
 Joseph Andrew, 399, 465, 603
 Sancez
 John Francis, 103, 185, 191, 236, 285, 347, 373, 379, 383, 440, 475, 542, 545, 553, 568, 630
 Sardi
 Paul, 314, 628
 Scagliosi
 Nicholas, 83, 505
 Scarsella
 Francis, 591, 605, 607, 609, 612, 617, 620, 622, 635
 Scitini
 M. Aurora, 433
 Silvestroni
 Benigno, 124
 Simonelli
 Frances, 586
 Sisti
 Joseph, 395, 416, 455, 570, 591, 592, 594, 630
 Sparziani
 Julian, 55
 Struzzieri
 Thomas Mary, 100, 127, 249, 465, 638
 Suscioli
 Dorothy, 496
 Joseph, 450, 451
 Maria, 456, 460
 Syndic for Our Lady of the Oak, 148
 Tani
 Francis, 14
 Tartagni
 Lawrence, 289
 Trustees of Vetralla, 368
 Vicar General of Orbetello, 377
 Vicar General of Sutri, 384, 385
 Vico
 Peter, 530, 539, 555

Viti

Raymond, 374

Young Ladies, 482

Zaniel

Nicholas, 270, 367

Zazzera

Joseph, 34

Zelli

Frances, 205, 230, 254, 288, 358, 395, 481, 565, 632

Leopold, 221, 258, 311, 486, 487

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

1748 - 1758

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

1748					
511	—	—	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (4)	II	564
512	January 25	Ceccano	Cajetan Giannini	II	644
513	January 26	Ceccano	Dominic Girolami	II	647
514	January 27	Ceccano	B Fabrizio Borgia (11)	V	73
515	January 31	Ceccano	Matthew Nardecchia (1)	II	649
516	February 1	Ceccano	B Fabrizio Borgia (12)	V	74
517	February 8	Ceccano	Thomas Fossi (21)	I	562
518	February 8	Ceccano	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (27)	II	131
519	[February]	Ceccano	Prince Colonna (1)	V	143
520	February 17	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (13)	V	76
521	February 21	San Angelo	Marquis Francis Tani (1)	V	145
522	February 22	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (28)	II	133
523	February 28	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (14)	V	77
524	March 14	Presentation	B Fabrizio Borgia (15)	V	78
525	March 16	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (22)	I	563
526	March 20	Presentation	General Council of Terracina	II	651
527	March 20	Presentation	B Joachim Oldo (1)	II	653
528	March 28	Toscanello	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (29)	II	135
529	April 9	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (16)	V	80
530	April 12	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (30)	II	137
531	April 17	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (31)	II	140
532	May 18	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (32)	II	143
533	May 18	Soriano	B Joachim Oldo (2)	II	655
534	June 1	San Angelo	Dominic Ciaralli (4)	II	641
535	June 7	San Angelo	John B Forlani (1)	II	703
536	June 8	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (23)	I	566
537	June 12	Soriano	Religious Sister-Civita Castellana (1)	II	260
538	June 12	Soriano	Joseph Zazzera	II	714
539	June 14	Soriano	B Joachim Oldo (3)	II	657
540	June 15	Soriano	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (33)	II	145
541	June 23	Soriano	Religious Sister-Civita Castellana (2)	II	261
542	June 26	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (34)	II	146
543	June 30	San Angelo	John B Forlani (2)	II	704
544	July 2	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (5)	II	447
545	July 3	San Angelo	Abbess Maria Elizabeth (1)	V	148
546	July 4	San Angelo	Lucy Burlini (1)	II	715
547	July 9	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (4)	II	658
548	July 13	San Angelo	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (5)	II	565
549	July 13	San Angelo	Augustine Masi (1)	II	727
550	July 20	Viterbo	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (6)	II	566
551	July 24	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (24)	I	569

552	July 30	San Angelo	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (7)	II	568
553	July 31	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (35)	II	149
554	August 1	San Angelo	Julian Sparziani (3)	II	633
555	August 3	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (5)	II	663
556	August 7	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (36)	II	152
557	August 13	San Angelo	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (8)	II	570
558	August 17	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (5)	II	576
559	August 19	San Angelo	John A Mattoli	V	156
560	August 20	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (6)	II	664
561	August 22	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (37)	II	156
562	August 22	San Angelo	Canon John Baptist Randone (3)	II	255
563	August 30	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (38)	II	159
564	September 3	San Angelo	Dominic Ciaralli (5)	II	642
565	September 3	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (7)	II	666
566	September 4	San Angelo	John B Forlani (3)	II	705
567	September 7	San Angelo	Canon John Baptist Randone (4)	II	256
568	September 7	San Angelo	Marianna of Jesus (1)	II	729
569	September 10	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (39)	II	161
570	September 11	San Angelo	Dominic Ercolani (1)	II	739
571	September 19	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (40)	II	162
572	September 20	San Angelo	John B Forlani (4)	II	706
573	September 22	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (8)	II	669
574	September 24	San Angelo	Religious Sister-Civita Castellana (3)	II	262
575	September 24	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (17)	V	81
576	September 24	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (9)	II	670
577	September 25	San Angelo	Nicholas Scagliosi (1)	II	749
578	September 26	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (41)	II	165
579	September 28	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (6)	II	577
580	October 1	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (10)	II	671
581	October 5	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (42)	II	169
582	October 9	San Angelo	Don Ricci (1)	II	765
583	October 20	Ferentino	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (43)	II	171
584	October 26	Ceccano	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (44)	II	172
585	October 31	Ceccano	B Joachim Oldo (11)	II	673
586	November 9	Rome	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (45)	II	174
587	November 16	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (18)	V	83
588	November 16	Rome	B Joachim Oldo (12)	II	674
589	November 22	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (13)	II	676
590	November 22	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (19)	V	85
591	December 1	Cerveteri	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (46)	II	175
592	December 31	San Angelo	Don Ricci (2)	II	766
593	—	—	Thomas Struzzi (1)	II	751

1749

594	January 4	San Angelo	John F Sancez (6)	II	375
595	January 10	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (25)	I	571
596	January 10	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (7)	II	578
597	January 11	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (47)	II	176
598	January 14	San Angelo	Marianna of Jesus (2)	II	731
599	January 14	San Angelo	Francis Cosimelli of Jesus/Mary (1)	II	767
600	January 18	Rome	B Joachim Oldo (14)	II	678
601	January 20	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (20)	V	86
602	January 28	San Angelo	George Ranieri	II	771
603	February 6	Presentation	B Joachim Oldo (15)	II	680
604	February 12	Presentation	B Joachim Oldo (16)	II	682
605	February 20	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (26)	I	573
606	February 20	Presentation	B Fabrizio Borgia (21)	V	88

607	March 8	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (48)	II	181
608	March 8	San Angelo	Stephen Barberi of S Joachim	II	772
609	March 11	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (17)	II	685
610	March 11	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (22)	V	89
611	March 12	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (18)	II	686
612	March 12	San Angelo	Francis Cosimelli of Jesus/Mary (2)	II	768
613	March 12	San Angelo	Dominic Costantini (1)	II	774
614	March 15	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (8)	II	580
615	March 16	San Angelo	Benigno Silvestroni	II	795
616	March 20	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (27)	I	576
617	March 21	San Angelo	John B Forlani (5)	II	707
618	March 25	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (19)	II	687
619	March 25	San Angelo	Thomas Struzzieri (2)	II	754
620	March 27	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (23)	V	90
621	March -	—	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (49)	II	178
622	April 11	Soriano	B Joachim Oldo (20)	II	688
623	April 14	Soriano	Francis Cosimelli of Jesus/Mary (3)	II	770
624	April 19	Rome	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (50)	II	183
625	April 19	Rome	Representatives of Castellazzo	II	796
626	April 23	Viterbo	Dominic Ercolani (2)	II	740
627	April 23	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (24)	V	91
628	April 26	Rome	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (51)	II	184
629	April 26	Rome	B Joachim Oldo (21)	II	691
630	April 30	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (25)	V	93
631	May 3	Rome	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (52)	II	186
632	May 3	Rome	B Joachim Oldo (22)	II	693
633	May 12	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (26)	V	95
634	May 13	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (23)	II	694
635	May 14	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (28)	I	577
636	May 14	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (53)	II	187
637	May 19	Toscanello	Syndic for Our Lady of the Oak	II	798
638	May 23	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (54)	II	190
639	May 23	San Angelo	Joseph Lippici	II	799
640	May 27	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (24)	II	696
641	May 27	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (27)	V	96
642	May 30	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (29)	I	579
643	May 31	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (9)	II	581
644	June 7	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (25)	II	697
645	June 7	San Angelo	Dominic Ercolani (3)	II	742
646	June 10	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (28)	V	97
647	June 17	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (55)	II	194
648	June 18	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (34)	I	503
649	June 28	San Angelo	Dominic Ercolani (4)	II	743
650	June 28	San Angelo	Canon Cerrini (1)	II	800
651	July 4	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (56)	II	196
652	July 5	Viterbo	Thomas Fossi (30)	I	582
653	July 12	San Angelo	Canon Cerrini (2)	II	801
654	July 15	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (26)	II	699
655	July 17	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (57)	II	199
656	July 26	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (29)	V	99
657	July 29	San Angelo	Ildephonse of S Charles	II	802
658	July 30	San Angelo	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (58)	II	203
659	August 2	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (10)	II	582
660	August 2	San Angelo	A Religious Sister (3)	II	804
661	August 6	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (31)	I	585
662	August 9	San Angelo	Lucy Burlini (2)	II	719
663	August 12	San Angelo	B Joachim Oldo (27)	II	701

664	August 12	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (30)	V	100
665	August 13	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (1)	I	805
666	August 26	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (31)	V	101
667	September 28	San Angelo	John F Sancez (7)	II	376
668	September 28	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (32)	V	104
669	September 30	San Angelo	Dominic Costantini (2)	II	775
670	September 30	San Angelo	Frederick Del Bene (1)	II	834
671	October 1	San Angelo	John B Forlani (6)	II	708
672	October 28	Corchiano	Dominic Ercolani (5)	II	744
673	October 28	Corchiano	Dominic Costantini (3)	II	776
674	October 30	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (33)	V	106
675	November 1	San Angelo	John F Sancez (8)	II	377
676	November 15	Corneto	Cardinal Guadagni	II	841
677	December 3	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (34)	V	107
678	December 5	Rome	Thomas Fossi (32)	I	587
679	December 17	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (35)	V	108
680	December 27	Rome	Dominic Ercolani (6)	II	745
681	December 31	Rome	Dominic Ercolani (7)	II	746

1750

682	January 7	Rome	Passionist Religious (3)	V	253
683	January 14	Rome	Dominic Ercolani (8)	II	747
684	January 17	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (36)	V	110
685	February 22	Soriano	Girolama Ercolani (11)	II	584
686	March 8	San Angelo	John B Forlani (7)	II	709
687	March 10	San Angelo	Alexander Palleschi	II	844
688	March 17	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (37)	V	111
689	March 21	San Angelo	Generoso Petrarca (1)	III	3
690	March 23	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (2)	II	353
691	March 28	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (12)	II	585
692	March 28	San Angelo	Mark Aurelius Pastorelli (1)	IV	301
693	March 29	San Angelo	Passionist Missionaries	III	15
694	April 2	Rome	Dominic Panizza	III	17
695	April 11	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (38)	V	113
696	April 13	Angeletti's	Generoso Petrarca (2)	III	5
697	April 21	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (33)	III	667
698	April 21	San Angelo	A Religious Sister (4)	III	48
699	April 28	San Angelo	Frederick Del Bene (2)	II	835
700	April 28	San Angelo	A Gentleman (1)	III	49
701	May 2	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (4)	IV	225
702	May 11	San Angelo	Matthias Nardini	III	50
703	May 16	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (34)	I	589
704	June 28	San Angelo	Isidore Calzelli (1)	III	52
705	June 30	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (13)	II	586
706	June 30	San Angelo	Faustina Giannotti (1)	III	64
707	July 3	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (35)	I	591
708	July 3	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (1)	III	18
709	July 7	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (2)	III	19
710	July 9	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (39)	V	114
711	July 21	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (40)	V	115
712	July 24	San Angelo	A Religious Sister (5)	III	66
713	July 25	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (36)	I	593
714	July 29	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (41)	V	117
715	July 30	San Angelo	Aloysius M of S Dominic	III	67
716	August 8	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (42)	V	118
717	August 15	San Angelo	Caesar Macali (1)	III	69
718	August 31	Canepina	Girolama Ercolani (14)	II	587

719	September 4	Canepina	Thomas Fossi (37)	I	595
720	September 16	Vallerano	Frances Zelli (3)	II	354
721	September 16	Vallerano	Girolama Ercolani (15)	II	588
722	September 21	Vallerano	Augustine Masi (2)	II	728
723	October 2	San Angelo	Caesar Macali (2)	III	71
724	October 2	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (35)	I	506
725	October 6	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (38)	I	596
726	November 11	Rome	Canon Gigli	III	73
727	December 2	Presentation	Dominic Ercolani (9)	II	748
728	December 10	Presentation	John F Sancez (9)	II	379
729	December 23	Presentation	Generoso Petrarca (3)	III	5
730	December 26	Montalto	John Baptist Pettirossi (1)	III	74
731	—	San Angelo	Dominic Costantini (4)	II	777

1751

732	January 9	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (43)	V	119
733	January 14	—	Pope Benedict XIV (6)	V	228
734	January 20	Rome	B Fabrizio Borgia (44)	V	120
735	February 6	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (45)	V	121
736	February 16	San Angelo	Thomas Palomba (1)	III	76
737	February 20	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (16)	II	589
738	February 20	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (46)	V	123
739	February 24	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (17)	II	590
740	February 27	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (47)	V	124
741	March 16	Ferentino	Girolama Ercolani (18)	II	591
742	March 28	Ceccano	A Gentleman (2)	III	81
743	March 31	Ceccano	Marianna of Jesus (3)	II	732
744	April 12	Ceccano	Thomas Fossi (39)	I	598
745	April 13	Ceccano	Thomas Struzzieri (3)	II	758
746	April 13	Ceccano	A Bono and J Merli	III	82
747	April 22	Ceccano	B Fabrizio Borgia (48)	V	125
748	April 29	Patrica	B Fabrizio Borgia (49)	V	127
749	May 4	Patrica	B Fabrizio Borgia (50)	V	129
750	May 19	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (4)	II	355
751	May 19	San Angelo	John A Rattazzi	III	84
752	May 25	San Angelo	Lucy Burlini (3)	II	720
753	May 25	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (2)	II	807
754	May 30	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (3)	III	20
755	May 31	San Angelo	Generoso Petrarca (4)	III	6
756	June 13	San Angelo	Thomas Palomba (2)	III	77
757	June 19	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (51)	V	130
758	June 19	San Angelo	Isidore Calzelli (2)	III	53
759	June 24	Soriano	Master General Mugnani OP (1)	III	85
760	June 25	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (40)	I	600
761	June 27	San Angelo	Prioress of Carmel, Vetralla (1)	III	89
762	June	—	Thomas Fossi (41)	I	602
763	July 3	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (3)	II	809
764	July 20	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (4)	II	810
765	July 24	San Angelo	John B Forlani (8)	II	711
766	July 29	San Angelo	M Johanna Venturi Grazi (2)	II	22
767	July 31	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (19)	II	592
768	July 31	San Angelo	Nicholas Zaniel (1)	III	103
769	August 4	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (42)	I	605
770	August 7	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (5)	II	812
771	August 17	San Angelo	Lucy Burlini (4)	II	724
772	August 17	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (6)	II	813
773	August 19	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (5)	IV	229

774	August 28	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (7)	II	816
775	August 31	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (20)	II	593
776	September 2	San Angelo	A Gentleman (3)	III	107
777	September 7	San Angelo	John Baptist Pettirossi (2)	III	75
778	September 7	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (52)	V	131
779	September 9	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (8)	II	818
780	September 11	San Angelo	Master General Mugnani, OP (2)	III	87
781	September 15	San Angelo	John F Sancez (10)	II	380
782	September 18	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (21)	II	594
783	September 21	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (43)	I	608
784	September 25	San Angelo	Canon Lawrence Notari	III	105
785	October 1	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (5)	II	356
786	October 13	Falvaterra	B Lawrence Tartagni	III	108
787	October 15	Ceccano	John Fedele	V	157
788	October 21	Giuliano	Pompey Angeletti	III	113
789	November 17	Valmontone	Frances Forlani (1)	I	109
790	November 19	Valmontone	Isidore Calzelli (3)	III	54
791	December 6	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (44)	I	609
792	December 7	San Angelo	Abess of Nepi Monastery	III	114
793	December 16	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (9)	II	819
794	—	—	Lucy Burlini (5)	IV	340

1752

795	January 15	San Angelo	M Johanna Venturi Grazi (3)	II	24
796	January	—	B Callistus M Palombella	V	158
797	February 8	Terracina	B Fabrizio Borgia (53)	V	132
798	February 8	Terracina	Girolama Ercolani (22)	II	595
799	February 8	Terracina	Isidore Calzelli (4)	III	55
800	February 14	Terracina	Thomas Fossi (45)	I	611
801	March 15	Terracina	Thomas Fossi (46)	I	612
802	March 23	Terracina	Passionist at Terracina	IV	292
803	March 25	Terracina	Isidore Calzelli (5)	XI	56
804	May 30	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (47)	I	615
805	June 4	Soriano	Frances Forlani (2)	III	110
806	June 12	Soriano	Frances Forlani (3)	III	111
807	July 1	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (10)	II	821
808	July 6	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (48)	I	616
809	July 18	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (23)	II	596
810	July 25	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (6)	IV	232
811	July 29	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (11)	II	822
812	August 3	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (4)	III	21
813	August 4	San Angelo	Ippolita Piccarilli (Pettirossi)	III	115
814	August 8	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (12)	II	823
815	August 19	San Angelo	Generoso Petrarca (5)	III	9
816	August 19	San Angelo	Canon Paul Sardi (1)	III	116
817	August 20	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (7)	IV	233
818	September 1	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (36)	I	508
819	September 4	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (49)	I	618
820	September 16	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (13)	II	825
821	September 16	San Angelo	Brother John	III	131
822	September 23	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (54)	V	135
823	September 26	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (14)	II	826
824	October 13	Ceccano	B Fabrizio Borgia (55)	V	136
825	October 28	Ceccano	B Fabrizio Borgia (56)	V	137
826	November 3	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (8)	IV	238
827	November 15	Presentation	Lucy Costantini (1)	III	132
828	November 29	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (50)	I	620

829	December 10	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (9)	IV	242
830	December 16	Toscanella	B Fabrizio Borgia (57)	V	138
831	—	—	Lucy Costantini (2)	III	134

1753

832	January 12	Toscanella	John A Lucattini (15)	II	827
833	January 15	San Angelo	B Fabrizio Borgia (58)	V	139
834	January 18	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (37)	I	511
835	January 18	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (51)	I	623
836	January 23	San Angelo	Canon Andrew Pagliaricci (9)	II	571
837	February 17	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (24)	II	597
838	February 19	San Angelo	A Priest (1)	III	135
839	February 23	San Angelo	James Anguillara	III	136
840	February 27	San Angelo	Peter Falasca	III	137
841	March 12	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (10)	IV	244
842	March 26	Toscanella	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (6)	II	449
843	April 22	Ceccano	B Fabrizio Borgia (59)	V	140
844	April 24	Ceccano	John F Sancez (11)	II	382
845	April 24	Ceccano	Girolama Ercolani (25)	II	598
846	April 24	Ceccano	Lawrence De Scalzi	III	139
847	May 12	S Lorenzo	Cyprian Bella	III	140
848	May 13	S Lorenzo	Caspar Primoticci	III	141
849	May 15	Ceccano	Joseph Chiatti (1)	III	143
850	June 2	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (52)	I	624
851	June 9	San Angelo	Joseph Chiatti (2)	III	141
852	June 12	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (1)	III	144
853	June 12	San Angelo	John Iacomini of S Raphael (1)	III	188
854	June 23	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (53)	I	626
855	July 8	San Angelo	John B Forlani (9)	II	712
856	July 10	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (54)	I	629
857	July 10	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (6)	II	357
858	July 10	San Angelo	Prince Colonna (2)	V	144
859	July 13	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (26)	II	599
860	July 14	San Angelo	M Gertrude Teresa	III	192
861	July 17	San Angelo	Isidore Calzelli (6)	III	58
862	August 2	San Angelo	John B Forlani (10)	II	713
863	August 14	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (55)	I	631
864	August 10	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (7)	II	451
865	August 21	San Angelo	Anthony Bigatti	III	194
866	August 23	San Angelo	Nicholas Zaniel (2)	III	104
867	August 23	San Angelo	Andrew Cappelli	V	159
868	August 24	—	Pope Benedict XIV (7)	V	229
869	September 13	San Angelo	Trustees of Vetralla	III	195
870	September 17	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (56)	I	633
871	October 12	San Angelo	John Benci	III	196
872	October 20	Soriano	Teresa Danei (1)	III	197
873	November 5	Presentation	A Gentleman (4)	III	203
874	November 9	Orbetello	Thomas Fossi (57)	I	634
875	December 11	Toscanella	Raymond Viti of the Heart of Mary	III	204
876	December 16	Toscanella	Cherubina Bresciani (38)	I	512
877	December 16	Toscanella	Thomas Fossi (58)	I	636
878	December 17	Toscanella	Vicar General of Orbetello	IV	329
879	December 18	Toscanella	Philip Falandi (1)	III	206
880	December 25	Toscanella	John F Sancez (12)	II	383
881	December 28	Civitella	A Religious Sister (6)	III	209
882	—	—	The King of the Two Sicilies (1)	IV	212
883	—	—	Cardinal Sciarra Colonna	IV	213

1754

884	—	San Angelo	Joseph Bonifazi of S Hyacinth	FG	488
885	January 15	San Angelo	Joseph Bupalari	V	160
886	January 19	San Angelo	John Francis Sancez (13)	II	385
887	January 20	San Angelo	Vicar General of Sutri (1)	III	210
888	January 28	Mount Romano	Vicar General of Sutri (2)	III	211
889	February 6	Home: Valerani	Anna C Anguillara (1)	III	212
890	February 8	San Angelo	A Rector of the Congregation (1)	III	219
891	February 19	Soriano	Thomas Fossi (59)	I	637
892	February 21	Magliano	Girolama Ercolani (27)	II	601
893	February 24	San Angelo	Dominic Costantini (5)	II	779
894	March 9	Toscanelia	Anna C Anguillara (2)	III	213
895	March 19	Toscanelia	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (8)	II	453
896	April 9	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (60)	I	638
897	May 18	San Angelo	Prioress of Mount Carmel, Vetralla (2)	III	91
898	May 21	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (61)	I	639
899	June 4	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (9)	II	454
900	June 8	San Angelo	John A Lucattini (16)	II	828
901	June 13	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (10)	II	456
902	June 15	San Angelo	Bernardine Ruspantini (1)	III	220
903	June 18	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (7)	II	358
904	June 18	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (1)	III	222
905	June 22	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (62)	I	640
906	June 26	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (28)	II	602
907	July 5	San Angelo	Ursula Guasta	III	242
908	July 5	San Angelo	Joseph Andrew Ruspantini (1)	III	243
909	July 12	San Angelo	Joseph Hyacinth Ruberi (1)	III	270
910	July 13	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (39)	I	513
911	July 16	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (11)	II	457
912	July 16	San Angelo	John Iacomini of S Raphael (2)	III	189
913	July 20	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (29)	II	603
914	July 23	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (12)	II	460
915	July 25	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (63)	I	642
916	[July 25]	[San Angelo]	Teresa Fossi	V	55
917	July 30	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (13)	II	463
918	August 27	San Angelo	Anna C Anguillara (3)	III	214
919	August 31	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (64)	I	645
920	September 3	San Angelo	Mother M Crucified Costantini (2)	II	291
921	September 14	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (2)	III	224
922	November 7	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (30)	II	604
923	November 15	San Angelo	Rector of Toscanella	III	279
924	November 15	San Angelo	John Baptist Dorascenzi	III	282
925	November	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (2)	III	283
926	December 12	San Angelo	Nicholas Coppelli	III	285
927	December 15	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (65)	I	647
928	December 15	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (14)	II	465
929	December 21	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (15)	II	466
930	December 24	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (16)	II	468
931	—	—	Lucy Costantini (3)	III	134

1755

932	January 8	Presentation	John Mary Cioni (3)	III	147
933	January 11	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (66)	I	649
934	January 25	Toscanelia	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (17)	II	469
935	January 26	Toscanelia	Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (59)	II	205
936	January 28	Toscanelia	M Johanna Venturi Grazi (4)	II	25

937	January 28	Toscanello	Aurora Scitini	III	286
938	January 30	Toscanello	Bartholomew Calderoni (1)	III	289
939	February 2	Toscanello	Thomas Fossi (67)	I	560
940	February 3	Toscanello	Colomba Gandolfi (18)	II	470
941	February 4	Toscanello	Vincent Bertolotti of S Augustine (1)	III	299
942	February 13	Toscanello	John Francis Sancez (14)	II	386
943	February 20	San Angelo	Charles Marchiandi of S Gertrude	IV	302
944	March 11	San Angelo	George Melata (1)	III	309
945	March 18	Toscanello	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (19)	II	473
946	March 22	Toscanello	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (20)	II	474
947	March 22	Toscanello	Girolama Ercolani (31)	II	605
948	March 25	Toscanello	Teresa Danei (2)	III	201
949	March 25	Toscanello	Anna M Feliziani	III	330
950	March 29	Toscanello	Francis Anthony Appiani (27)	I	434
951	March 30	Toscanello	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (21)	II	475
952	April 26	Corneto	Canon Joseph Suscioli (1)	III	331
953	May 5	San Angelo	George Melata (2)	III	311
954	May 5	San Angelo	Canon Joseph Suscioli (2)	III	332
955	May 21	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (40)	I	515
956	May 24	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (68)	I	652
957	May 24	San Angelo	Mamelta Orsini (1)	V	161
958	May 31	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (69)	I	653
959	June 3	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (3)	III	225
960	June 7	San Angelo	John B Costanzi	III	335
961	June 9	San Angelo	Maria Suscioli (1)	V	165
962	June 10	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (70)	I	655
963	June 21	San Angelo	M Magdalene Anselmi (1)	III	336
964	June 22	San Angelo	George Melata (3)	III	312
965	July 5	San Angelo	A Rector of the Congregation (2)	III	340
966	July 6	San Angelo	Maria Suscioli (2)	V	167
967	July 14	San Angelo	M Colomba of Jesus/Mary	III	341
968	July 24	San Angelo	Joseph Ferrari	III	343
969	July 25	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (71)	I	656
970	July 26	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (32)	II	607
971	July 28	San Angelo	Thomas Mary Struzzieri (4)	FG	633
972	August 2	San Angelo	Joseph Andrew Ruspantini (2)	III	245
973	August 12	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (22)	II	478
974	August 12	San Angelo	Bartholomew Pepino of S John (1)	III	345
975	August 16	San Angelo	John Iacomini of S Raphael (3)	III	191
976	August 16	San Angelo	Clement Orlandi (1)	V	169
977	August 26	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (23)	II	480
978	August 31	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (24)	II	481
979	September 21	San Angelo	A Benefactor (1)	III	349
980	September	—	Pope Benedict XIV (8)	V	230
981	September 27	San Angelo	Isidore Calzelli (7)	III	60
982	September 28	Capranica	George Melata (4)	III	312
983	October 7	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (25)	II	482
984	October 8	Toscanello	John Francis Sancez (15)	II	388
985	October 14	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (72)	I	658
986	October 14	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (26)	II	483
987	October 14	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (11)	IV	250
988	October 21	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (8)	II	359
989	October 23	Ronciglione	George Melata (5)	III	313
990	November 4	Nepi	Young Ladies	III	350
991	November 29	Bracciano	A Pastor, His Benefactor	III	352
992	December 4	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (41)	I	516
993	December 4	San Angelo	Alexis Coli	III	353

994	December 6	San Angelo	George Melata (6)	III	314
995	December 7	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (1)	III	354
996	December 8	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (5)	III	22
997	December 16	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (6)	III	23
998	December 19	San Angelo	Leopold Zelli (7)	III	23
999	December 20	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (73)	I	660
1000	December 20	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (27)	II	485
1001	December 21	San Angelo	Prioress of Carmel, Vetralla (3)	III	92
1002	—	—	One of His Religious	III	351

1756

1003	January 31	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (28)	II	486
1004	February 3	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (74)	I	663
1005	February 9	San Angelo	Prioress of Mount Carmel, Vetralla (4)	III	93
1006	February 14	Toscanello	M Johanna Venturi Grazi (5)	II	26
1007	February 29	San Angelo	Dorothy Suscioli	III	415
1008	March 1	San Angelo	Canon Felix Pagliari (1)	III	416
1009	March 2	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (33)	II	609
1010	March 25	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (75)	I	664
1011	April 1	San Angelo	M Cherubina Bresciani (42)	I	517
1012	April 1	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (29)	II	488
1013	April 2	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (76)	I	665
1014	April 2	San Angelo	Prioress of Carmel, Vetralla (5)	III	94
1015	April 5	San Angelo	Dominic Costantini (6)	II	780
1016	April 6	San Angelo	Felicia De Angelis	III	421
1017	April 13	San Angelo	George Melata (7)	III	315
1018	April 13	San Angelo	Canon Joseph Rotondi	III	42
1019	June 1	San Angelo	Anna C Anguillara (4)	III	216
1020	June 2	San Angelo	Nicholas Scagliosi (2)	II	750
1021	June 10	San Angelo	Dolcissima Palombo	III	423
1022	June 10	San Angelo	Thomas Panizza (1)	III	424
1023	June 12	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (77)	I	669
1024	June 16	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (78)	I	670
1025	June 19	San Angelo	Religious Sister-Civita Castellana (4)	II	263
1026	June 22	San Angelo	B Formaliari	III	428
1027	June 26	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (79)	I	673
1028	June 26	San Angelo	Anna dei Nobili Avvolta (1)	III	426
1029	July 6	San Angelo	Anna dei Nobili Avvolta (2)	III	428
1030	July 13	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (30)	II	489
1031	July 14	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (4)	III	148
1032	July 17	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (34)	II	610
1033	July 20	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (31)	II	491
1034	July 27	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (32)	II	493
1035	August 1	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (33)	II	494
1036	August 3	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (34)	II	495
1037	August 10	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (35)	II	498
1038	August 21	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (36)	II	499
1039	August 22	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (2)	III	356
1040	August 24	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (80)	I	674
1041	August 25	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (37)	II	500
1042	September 4	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (38)	II	501
1043	September 20	Cantalupo	George Melata (8)	III	316
1044	November 2	San Angelo	Joseph Danei (2)	II	552
1045	December 17	Toscanello	Joseph Danei (3)	II	554
1046	December 17	Toscanello	John Mary Cioni (5)	V	176
1047	December 23	San Angelo	Maria Aldobrandini	III	430
1048	December 28	Toscanello	Peter Vico of S John (1)	III	432

1757

1049	January 9	Ischia	Mary Clare of S Philip (1)	III	456
			Same Letter in Volume V	V	171
1050	January 13	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (6)	V	176
1051	January 18	Toscanello	Mary Clare of S Philip (2)	III	458
1052	January 19	Toscanello	M Cherubina Bresciani (43)	I	519
1053	January 21	Toscanello	Prioress of Holy Rosary, Valentano (1)	V	172
1054	February 15	Presentation	Thomas Fossi (81)	I	676
1055	February 15	Presentation	Peter Vico of S John (2)	III	434
1056	March 3	Toscanello	Mary Clare of S Philip (3)	III	461
1057	March 4	Toscanello	Thomas Fossi (82)	I	678
1058	March 4	Toscanello	John Francis Sancez (16)	II	390
1059	March 4	Toscanello	John Mary Cioni (7)	III	152
1060	March 9	Toscanello	Girolama Ercolani (35)	II	611
1061	March 14	Toscanello	John Francis Sancez (17)	II	391
1062	March 21	Toscanello	Mary Clare of S Philip (4)	III	463
1063	March 25	Toscanello	John Mary Cioni (8)	III	150
1064	March 26	Toscanello	Dominic Costantini (7)	II	782
1065	March 26	Toscanello	Mary Clare of S Philip (5)	III	466
1066	April 2	Toscanello	Thomas Fossi (83)	I	679
1067	April 2	Toscanello	John Francis Sancez (18)	II	392
1068	April 4	Toscanello	Dominic Costantini (8)	II	784
1069	April 4	Toscanello	Clement Orlandi (2)	III	476
1070	April 12	Toscanello	Peter Vico of S John (3)	III	435
1071	May	—	Pope Benedict XIV (9)	V	232
1072	June 3	San Angelo	Mary Clare of S Philip (6)	III	468
1073	June 4	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (84)	I	680
1074	June 15	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (9)	III	154
1075	June 18	San Angelo	Elizabeth De Angelis	III	477
1076	June 19	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (3)	III	358
1077	June 21	San Angelo	M Innocenza of Sorrowful Mother (1)	III	478
1078	June 25	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (9)	II	360
1079	June 30	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (10)	V	173
1080	July 2	San Angelo	John Francis Sancez (19)	II	393
1081	July 13	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (4)	III	361
1082	July 16	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (4)	III	226
1083	July 23	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (11)	III	157
1084	July 23	San Angelo	George Melata (9)	III	317
1085	July 25	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (12)	III	159
1086	July 26	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (5)	III	363
1087	August 9	San Angelo	A Religious Sister (7)	III	484
1088	August 10	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (85)	I	682
1089	August 13	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (86)	I	685
1090	August 13	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (39)	II	502
1091	August 16	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (12)	IV	253
1092	August 23	San Angelo	A Passionist Newly Ordained	III	485
1093	August 25	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (13)	III	162
1094	August 27	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (36)	II	612
1095	August 30	San Angelo	Mary Clare of S Philip (7)	III	469
1096	September 27	San Angelo	B of Corneto	III	486
1097	October 28	Soriano	Frances Simonelli	III	488
1098	November 5	San Angelo	M Innocenza of Sorrowful Mother (2)	III	482
1099	November 8	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (87)	I	686
1100	November 8	San Angelo	A Priest (2)	III	489
1101	November 10	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (6)	III	364
1102	December 14	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (13)	IV	255

1103	December 15	Toscanello	Joseph Sisti (5)	III	226
1104	December 15	Toscanello	Canon Francis Scarsella (1)	III	490
1105	December 21	Toscanello	Dominic Costantini (9)	II	785
1106	December 30	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (6)	III	227
1107	—	San Angelo	Iacomini Brandeglio	IV	330

1758

1108	January 2	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (7)	III	228
1109	February 4	San Angelo	Clare of S Philip (8)	III	471
1110	February 12	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (14)	IV	257
1111	February 18	San Angelo	M Magdalene Anselmi (2)	III	338
1112	February 23	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (15)	IV	259
1113	February 25	San Angelo	Sebastian Nicolini	V78 (n.3)	
1114	March 1	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (88)	I	688
1115	March 4	San Angelo	A Benefactor (2)	III	509
1116	March 9	San Angelo	Dominic Costantini (10)	II	787
1117	March 21	San Angelo	Joseph Andrew Ruspantini (3)	III	246
1118	March 25	San Angelo	Luke Anthony Bianchini (1)	III	510
1119	April 4	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (2)	III	491
1120	April 6	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (89)	I	691
1121	April 6	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (3)	III	492
1122	April 8	San Angelo	Rose Mary Teresa (1)	III	514
1123	April 15	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (4)	III	494
1124	April 18	San Angelo	Frederick Del Bene (3)	II	837
1125	—	—	Anna Maria of S Joseph (1)	IV	322
1126	April 19	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (5)	III	495
1127	April 22	San Angelo	A Religious Sister at Vetralla	IV	320
1128	April 24	Ischia	A B (2)	III	519
1129	April 25	Ischia	A Monsignor (3)	III	521
1130	May 9	Toscanello	A B (3)	III	523
1131	May 12	San Angelo	A Monsignor (4)	III	522
1132	May 13	San Angelo	Marianna of Jesus (4)	II	734
1133	May 30	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (6)	III	497
1134	June 3	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (90)	I	692
1135	June 8	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (7)	III	365
1136	June 16	San Angelo	Cecilia Costanzi	III	524
1137	June 18	San Angelo	George Melata (10)	III	318
1138	June 20	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (7)	III	498
1139	June 23	San Angelo	Luke	III	526
1140	July 1	San Angelo	Canon Ubaldo Cipoletti (1)	III	528
1141	July 13	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (8)	III	499
1142	July 14	San Angelo	A Priest Director of Souls (1)	V	177
1143	July 15	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (91)	I	694
1144	July 15	San Angelo	Prioress of Holy Rosary, Valentano (2)	III	537
1145	July 15	San Angelo	Maria Elizabeth (2)	V	151
1146	July 29	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (92)	I	696
1147	July 29	San Angelo	Canon Paul Sardi (2)	III	118
1148	July 31	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (8)	III	229
1149	August 1	San Angelo	A Benefactor (3)	III	538
1150	August 4	San Angelo	Anna Teresa	V	179
1151	August 5	San Angelo	Canon Ubaldo Cipoletti (2)	III	529
1152	August 10	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (14)	III	165
1153	August 11	San Angelo	Frances Zelli (10)	II	361
1154	August 17	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (37)	II	614
1155	August 26	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (40)	V	180
1156	August 31	San Angelo	Teresa Palozzi (8)	III	367
1157	September 5	San Angelo	Canon Francis Scarsella (9)	III	500

1158	September 5	San Angelo	A Priest (3)	IV	334
1159	September 9	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (93)	I	697
1160	September 10	San Angelo	George Melata (11)	III	319
1161	September 12	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (94)	I	698
1162	September 19	San Angelo	Thomas Struzzieri (5)	II	760
1163	September 19	San Angelo	Bonaventure Magnasco	III	539
1164	September 25	San Angelo	M Magdalene of S Joseph	III	540
1165	September 27	San Angelo	John Mary Cioni (15)	III	166
1166	September 30	San Angelo	Girolama Ercolani (38)	II	615
1167	September 30	San Angelo	Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi (41)	V	182
1168	October 7	San Angelo	Joseph Danei (4)	II	556
1169	October 26	San Angelo	Rose Mary Teresa (2)	III	516
1170	October 27	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (95)	I	699
1171	November 2	San Angelo	Thomas Fossi (96)	I	700
1172	November 24	San Angelo	Joseph Sisti (9)	III	230
1173	November 25	San Angelo	George Melata (12)	III	320
1174	December 24	San Angelo	George Melata (13)	III	321
1175	December 30	San Angelo	B Anthony Leli	III	542
1176	—	San Angelo	Passionist Religious (16)	IV	263
1177	—	—	John Mary Cioni (16)	IV	323

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



Benedict XIV



Clement XIII

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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	Toscanelia	March 27, 1748
Retreat of San Sosio	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

