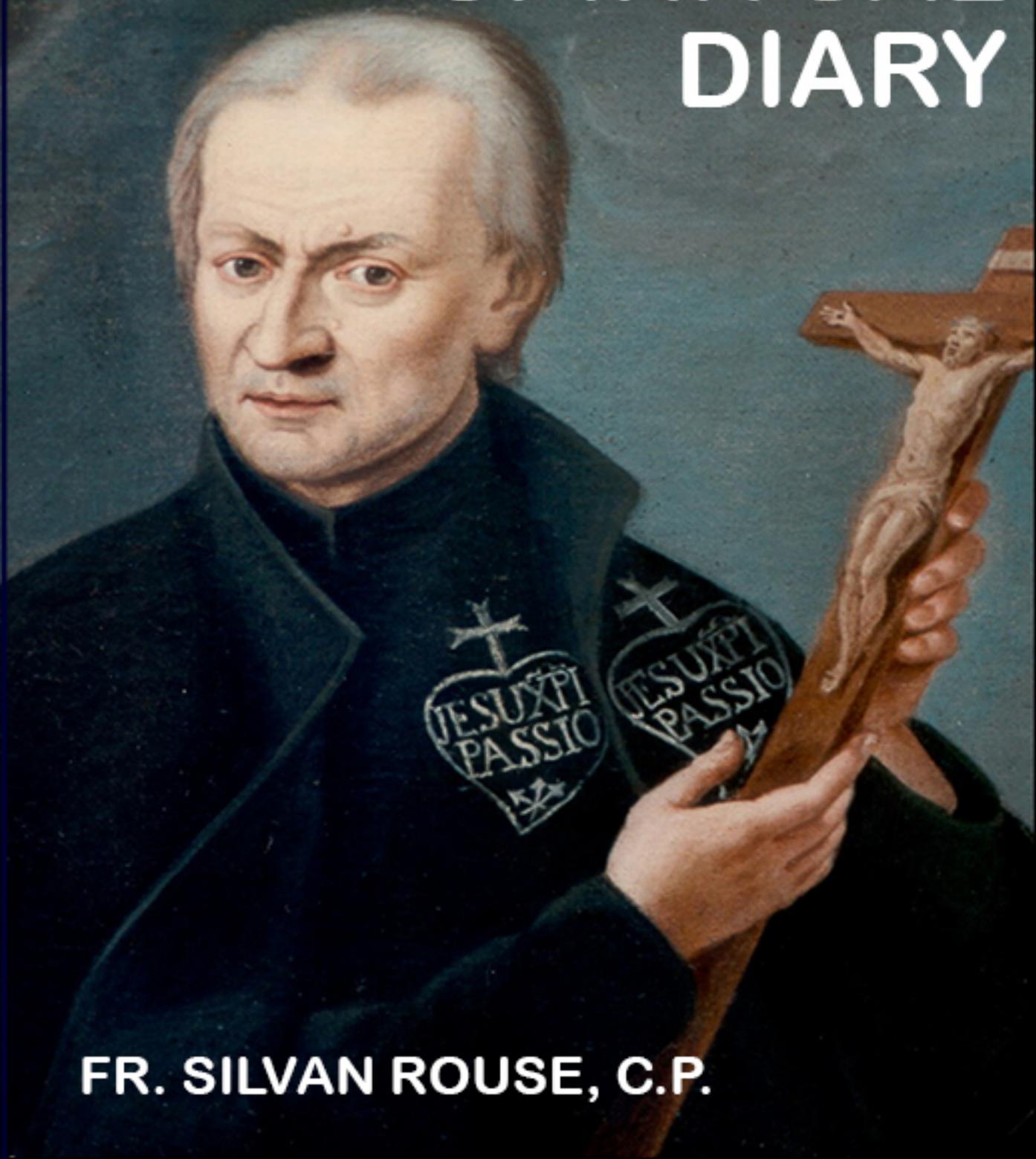


# SPIRITUAL DIARY



FR. SILVAN ROUSE, C.P.

**THE SPIRITUAL DIARY**  
**OF**  
**ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS**

**Translation, Introduction and Notes by**  
**Reverend Silvan Rouse C.P.**  
**Preface by Rev. Stanislaus Breton C.P.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council strongly encouraged religious communities to return to the original inspiration of their founders.<sup>1</sup> For this reason we are presenting a new translation of a spiritual classic<sup>2</sup> written by St. Paul of the Cross, Founder of the Passionists. This important and beautiful document of mystical literature – his SPIRITUAL DIARY – was written by Paul of the Cross when he was twenty-seven years old and had already arrived at a profound spiritual maturity.

In this Diary we discover the beginnings of Paulacrucian spirituality, enfolded in a man of deep spiritual awareness. Within the same period when Paul wrote his Diary, he also composed the First Rule of the Passionists.

The SPIRITUAL DIARY contains a day-by-day account of his inner experiences during his forty-day Retreat. The core elements of his spirituality are all to be found in it. Father Zoffoli rightfully refers to the Diary as the most authoritative document of the spirituality of St. Paul of the Cross and the basis of every possible interpretation of his mysticism.<sup>3</sup>

We shall include the following material in this Introduction: Origin of the Diary; Authenticity of Diary; History of Manuscripts; Editions; Translations; Style of Diary; Overview of its Content and its Relevance. After the Introduction, there is a Preface by Reverend Stanislaus Breton C.P. The translation of the Diary follows and it is based on the most recent critical edition by Father Enrico Zoffoli C.P., to whom we are deeply indebted for this excellent edition and for his many helpful insights.<sup>4</sup> We have included some notes within the text which may be of help in reading the Diary.

### *Origin of Diary*

Grace touched the spirit of Paul Danei in a special way when he was twenty years old. Paul refers to this experience as “conversion”. He led an extraordinarily exemplary life and experienced an intense period of mystical graces. Prior to the forty-day retreat, Paul had already been gifted with ecstatic union.

Bishop Francis M. Arborio di Gattinara, Ordinary of Alessandria, recognized the supernatural character of Paul’s vocation and vested him with the habit of penance on November 22, 1720. Under the authorization of the Bishop, Paul withdrew into a damp, narrow room adjacent to the sacristy of the Church of Sts. Charles and Anna in Castellazzo. He remained there from November 23, 1720, until January 1, 1721. During that time, Paul fasted on bread and water and slept on vine branches. Every night he arose for Matins and prayer and spent about three hours with the Lord. Each morning he served Mass and received Communion. With dedicated care, he swept the Church and cleaned the altars. Throughout the day he spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament, seeking wisdom from the wounds of Jesus. In response to the Bishop’s request, he wrote down “all the lights which the Lord communicated to him at that time.”<sup>5</sup>

No reason is given in the sources for the choice of a forty-day period. However, we can

suppose some relationship existed in Paul's mind with Christ's forty-day sojourn in the desert before his public ministry (Mt. 4:2). The story of Moses (Ex. 24: 12-18), of the Ninevites (Jn. 3) and of Elijah (I K 19:6-8) might also have come to mind.

These forty days will intensify the purification of Paul's spirit through the mysterious participation in the Passion of Christ. As Paul is immersed in the contemplation of Jesus Crucified, he is led "to imitate in all things His holy virtues and to copy His holy life".<sup>6</sup> This desert experience prepares Paul to become Father and Lawgiver of a new Congregation in the Church destined to proclaim the Gospel of the Passion in word and deed.

### ***Authenticity of Diary***

Canon Paul Sardi, a distant relative, intimate friend and disciple of Paul, was the first to speak of the Diary. Sardi never became a Passionist, though he desired it deeply, but later became a priest and then a Canon of the Collegiate Chapter of Sts. Peter and Dalmatius in Alessandria. The most important of Canon Sardi's documents is the copy he made of the Spiritual Diary: Referring to it, Sardi wrote: "What happened to him," referring to Paul's sojourn at St. Charles, "he wrote it and sent it to Bishop di Gattinara, as Paul himself told me, and I myself saw the manuscript which contained that, all written in the handwriting of the Servant of God, three or four sheets, and it was consigned to me by the same Bishop di Gattinara and I read it and reread it various times, and I even copied it and I have a copy of it." (Paulus Sardi, POA f. 240v).

Many other witnesses and contemporaries referred to the Diary and its content. St. Vincent Mary Strambi sums up the content of the Diary in this way: "Great were the graces and extraordinary the communications with which God was pleased to favor him in that place; and he gave an account of all these things to his Bishop and Director in order to proceed free from every deception, with an exact Diary. . ." (Strambi, Vita, I c. 7, p. 27f).

### ***History of Manuscript***

At the end of the forty-day retreat, Paul gave the Diary and the Rule to Bishop di Gattinara. Unfortunately the original manuscript of the Diary has been lost. After the death of Paul, Father John Mary of St. Ignatius asked for the manuscript. In 1776 Canon Sardi sent it to Count Cannefri who in turn consigned it to Father John Baptist Stortiglione, ex-Provincial of the Capuchins. The Capuchin sent it via mail (on the Turin-to-Rome coach) to Father Agnelli, a Capuchin who was preaching in the Cathedral of Todi where Thomas Struzzieri was Bishop. These in turn would have seen that it reached Rome. Unfortunately, the manuscript was never received at Todi and all attempts to trace it failed. Fortunately, Canon Sardi had made a copy of the manuscript, and this was finally sent to Rome, where it is kept in the General Archives.

### ***Editions of the Diary***

1. Diary According to the Copy of Sardi -- first published in 1867 by the Postulation Office. It is precisely the 13th among 168 Letters of St. Paul of the Cross to ecclesiastics contained in a beautiful volume: *Lettere scelte di S. Paolo della croce. Vol. I, Agli Ecclesiastici*, Roma,

1867, pp. 340. This edition is faithful to the original.

2. Edition by Father Stanislaus dell'Addolorata, C.P., which appeared in the *Bollettino della Congregazione* from 1920 to 1922. This edition has a very beautiful and ample commentary. However, the text is altered here and there. It is this edition which is found in the First Volume of the *Lettere* published in 1924 by Father Amedeo C.P.
3. Father Enrico Zoffoli, C.P., published a critical text in 1964: *Diario Spirituale*, Testo Critico, Introduzione e Note-Commissione Storica PP. Passionisti. SS. Giovanni e . Paolo, Roma 1964. Father Zoffoli presents the text from Sardi along with what Pere de Guibert desired: "notes properly exegetical, destined to clarify the precise meaning of obscure passages which are found in this condensed text." (P.J. de Guibert, S.J., "Le Journal de Retraite de S. Paul de la Croix" in *Revue d'Ascetique et Mystique*, t. VI, (Janv. 1925, p. 27, note 4). Our translation will be made from the critical text of Zoffoli. We owe many of our observations in the Introduction and in the Notes to the insightful remarks of Father Zoffoli.

### ***Translations***

The following translations have appeared in various languages:

FRENCH: Fr. P.G. De Guibert, S.J., "Le Journal de retraite de Saint Paul de la Croix" in *Revue d'Ascetique et Mystique*, t. VI, Janv. 1925, pp. 26-48. This translation followed the edition of Father Stanislaus and therefore has the defects of the 1920-22 edition.

SPANISH: The Spanish translation appeared in the *El Pasionario, 1929-30*, edited by our Spanish Passionist Fathers.

-P. Bernardo Monsegu, C.P., *Cartas y Diario Espiritual*, ediciones "El Pasionario" Madrid, 1968, pp. 1174.

ENGLISH: Fr. Columban Browning, C.P., *Cross and Crown*, June 1954, pp. 127-146.

GERMAN: Fr. Martin Bialas, C.P., *Das geistliche Tagebuch des leiligen Paul vom Kreuz*, Paul Pattloch, Verlag Aschaffenburg, 1976.

### ***Style***

Though written for Bishop di Gattinara, the Diary does not have the characteristics of a letter. Later on it will be more accurately referred to as a Diary.

Paul simply writes down what happened within himself from day to day. He will write only one line on some days, as, for example, on December 22nd. At other times he will group several days together as, for example, December 10-13 and December 15-18.

His style is unstudied, dry, rapid, descriptive, detached, Sometimes sentences and thoughts are left incomplete. At times he will resort to the use of "etc." At other times his style will manifest the enormous difficulty he experiences in expressing his intuition.

Paul limits himself to what is noteworthy. Almost always he will speak of prayer and Holy Communion.

In order to explain himself more clearly he will at times expand and develop his ideas. In these instances he will show an astounding theological culture which he thoroughly assimilated from contact with his spiritual Directors. Among the most noteworthy Directors were Bishop di Gattinara, the Capuchin Father Columban of Genoa and Father Francis Anthony Cipriata, who reminds us of Paul's expertise in the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales.

Paul moves with ease in the technical language of the spiritual classics. So many of his expressions (which best describe his experiences) are taken from "distractions," "aridity," "melancholy," "sweetness," "tenderness," "motions of the faculties," "loving attention," "holy food of divine love," "loving and Sorrowful vision," "interior peace," "deep and experiential knowledge of the divinity," "liquefaction," etc.

### ***Overview of Diary***

The *Spiritual Diary* is a description of the intimate happenings of Paul's spirit during his forty-day Retreat. Therein we discover the intimate dialogue between God and Paul. Therein is revealed the breathtaking experience of the Crucified Word of God, as Paul's experience alternates between the deep purifications of the spirit and his loving communion with the Suffering Christ.

The characteristic features of Paul's spirituality all appear in the Diary. As Pere Breton expressed it so well: "Paul of the Cross was then twenty-seven years of age. We emphasize this last detail which shows to what extent this very young man was in possession of his 'way,' in a memory still very warm with the original emotion, he distinguishes no precise image. He only knows that in these inspired moments "the soul has the very deep awareness of being in the Immense" (*Lettere IV, p. 219*). This first impression of the Immense will never leave him. It was his way of summing up in a word the theology of the Encounter. . . . At this time of the *Spiritual Diary*, the thrust toward the eremitical life . . . shows an over-stepping of its boundaries. A kind of "creative hope" penetrates his aspirations. Paul will be the father of a multitude. The contemplation will flow over into action: a still fragile synthesis in search of its point of equilibrium. It is then that the interior voices specify their call. From this moment participation in the Passion manifests its communitarian exigency in order to testify in its way to the dynamism of the Cross, to its unfathomable riches. It is in these sentiments that Paul of the Cross writes his Diary. . ." (Stanislaus Breton C.P., *La Mystique de la Passion*, Desclee and Co., Tournai, 1962, pp. 52, 54, 55).

Significantly the Diary is written in a Eucharistic context. The first and last references are to the Eucharist. Each day is centered in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the prolongation of his Eucharistic encounter in hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Passion.

The key phrase of the Diary -- a phrase which clearly and succinctly describes Paul's basic charism -- is: *I desire only to be crucified with Jesus* (November 23). The whole of the *Spiritual*

Diary is but the unfolding of this experience in his heart, an experience intimately linked with his doctrine on abandonment. The Passion is the dominant element in Paul's life. "The mystery of God is contemplated through and in the Passion. It would not be a question of going beyond it to the other bank. It is, despite its night, this light in which God appears to us in what He is, this clear-obscure which nothing in this life can dissipate or replace. The Cross sums up all the possibilities of the spiritual life." (Breton, op. cit., pp. 50-51).

Paul desires "to feel His sufferings and to be on the cross with Him" (December 6). God fulfills that desire by infusing in Paul a deep "understanding of the sufferings of. . . Jesus" (December 6). This experience begets an apostolic anguish in Paul who desires to "be torn to pieces for one soul" (December 4). All of this suffering fructifies for Paul in joy, self-forgetfulness and participation in the filial abandonment of Jesus.

Paul envisioned the whole life of Christ as a cross and martyrdom, and this assumed for him an absolute value. To be on the cross with Jesus is for Paul a way of life and a norm for direction. "Is it the perfection of love to be tempted in so many ways, to find myself in such darkness, without devotion in my spiritual exercises? Yes, my son, these are the greatest heights of the love of God. The greatest trials are for the most loved soul. . . . The servant is not greater than his Master. The whole life of Christ was a cross. The whole life of the servant of God therefore should be to remain with Christ on the cross." (*Lettere II*, p. 468.)

During his desert experience Paul learns that Jesus Crucified is the Way to communion with the Father and communion with men and women. His desire to be crucified with Jesus is the way to intimate communion with the Father. In his communion with the Father Paul sees with, in, and through Christ, the redemptive needs of mankind in the heart of the Father. Thus from his experience of "crucifixion with Jesus," Paul is called to found a Congregation to commune with men and women. There is, then, an intimate connection between his mystical experience and his apostolate.

In the forty-day retreat, Jesus Crucified gives Himself to Paul through Word and Eucharist. The Diary clearly attests that the Word of God and the Eucharist are the primary sources of Paul's spirituality. The Word of God is the living reality Paul is called to proclaim in his life and ministry; and the Eucharist contains the power of Christ's Passion which is the *raison d'être* of Paul's existence. The Eucharist-Passion motif is particularly evident in Paul's desire to die as a martyr where the Blessed Sacrament is denied (December 26). From his early years Paul identifies union with the Passion through the Blessed Sacrament and through his own life of suffering. He often said that he hungered for only two things: Communion and suffering. (POR f. 111v.).

Within the Diary the salient characteristics of Paul's Passion-spirit will emerge-the spirit of prayer, penance, poverty and solitude-all informed by charity, the primal fruit.

The Passion-prayer of Paul will be an agonizing prayer-a prayer full of the light of Christ's Passion and an intercessory prayer.

Paul's spirit of penance will be expressed in terms of self-emptying, that complete

forgetfulness of self which will draw him to enter more intimately into the Victimhood of Jesus.

Paul's ideal is the Poor Man of the Passion. A deep relationship between poverty and the Cross emerges in Paul's doctrine. His experience of poverty is to be seen in the scriptural-theological context of Philippians II, 5:11. There are two key moments in Christ's poverty: the first is that of the Incarnation when the Word empties Himself and accepts the limitations of human nature. St. Bernard describes this as the Abbreviation – the cutting short of the Word. The second moment is the Passion, which is the culminating point of poverty. One of the manifestations of Paul's poverty in the Diary is his struggle with temptations to impatience and horrible blasphemies against God.

The whole setting of the Diary (the cell of San Carlo) is a symbol of Paul's commitment to solitude which will fructify in communion between God and man via the Cross. The manifestation of solitude in the Diary is to be found principally in his abandonment and desolation – a share in Christ's abandonment and desolation on the cross. But this abandonment and desolation are experienced and suffered in peace and with great trust as he commends himself to the Will of the Father.

While the Diary obviously manifests a deep Franciscan influence, it also points in some way to the future encounter with the Rhineland mystics. As Pere Breton expresses it, "it announces by certain features the possibility of another dimension. Insistence on the "beyond of discourse and imaginary forms," the sense of the "Immense" prepares down deep, without prefiguring the content of it, the providential encounter with the gold of the Rhineland mystics." (Breton, *op. cit.*, p. 71).

### ***Relevance***

Finally, a word on the relevance of Paul's doctrine. Paul of the Cross is relevant because of his concern for the essential. Marcel Viller, S.J. went so far as to say: "What strikes me most in him is what I would gladly call the sense of the essential which I have never met to an equal degree in any other spiritual." (Marcel Viller, S.J. "La Volonte de Dieu dans les lettres de saint Paul de la Croix," *Revue d'Ascetique et de Mystique*, 1951, p. 134). Paul could zero in on real values and evaluate them in terms of priorities. The dynamism of his spirituality is such that it is always reducing things to the essential. His doctrine is contemporary because of its concern for man's adjustment to ultimate reality-to God. His spirituality deals with the radical realities of life: GOD, THE PASSION, and MAN'S RESPONSE TO AND COMMUNION WITH GOD AND MANKIND. Paul did not fear to become a credible witness to Christ's Passion by allowing Christ to relive it in him. He did not fear the revolutionary consequences which follow when a man is deeply touched by the Cross.

Paul's doctrine is relevant because of his realistic approach to suffering. In Paul the emphasis is always on God--on Christ--on others--and not on self. He does not indulge in a morbid attention to his own sufferings. At the same time Paul's theology of the cross was in no wise alien to Paschal joy. He was taught by the Spirit to sing "Alleluia" in the midst of his deepest sufferings.

In a world in which it seems that God is ever more absent, Paul of the Cross reminds us that Christ Himself first suffered abandonment (Mark 15:34), but that He conquered it by completely abandoning himself to the Father. Paul of the Cross proclaims to the world that one must suffer extreme abandonment in order to become capable of loving deeply.

Paul emerges from his forty-day retreat deeply matured by the Cross. He has the basic experience and ideas of his own spirituality, his own program for life. He is a man learned in suffering divine things—a man who proclaims the Power and Wisdom of God in Jesus Crucified.<sup>7</sup>

## NOTES

1. The Documents of Vatican II, “Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life” (Perfectae Caritatis), America Press, New York, 1966, p. 468.
2. J. De Guilbert S.M., “Le Journal de retraite de Saint Paul de la Croix” in *Revue d’Ascetique et de Mystique*, t. VI, Janvier 1925, p. 27: “Je crois meilleur de reproduire integralement le document de premier ordre. . . Je serais fort etonne que cet ecrit de quelques pages ne prit pas vite place parmi les textes classiques de la mystique catholique.”
3. P. Enrico Zoffoli, C.P., *S. Paolo della Croce*, Roma, 1965, II, p. 1011.
4. *Diario Spirituale*, Testo critico, Introduzione et Note a cura del P. Enrico Zoffoli, C.P., Commissione Storica PP. Passionisti, Roma, 1964.
5. Luci Casciola--Costantini, Ordinary Process of Corneto, f. 593v.-4.
6. Father John Mary, Ordinary Process of Vetralla, F. 132, p. 42.
7. It is interesting to note that Paul counseled one of his spiritual daughters to write a Prayer Diary. Quite probably he was imitating the procedure given to him by Bishop di Gattinara. On December 23, 1734, fourteen years after his own Diary, he instructed Agnes Grazi to write a daily journal of prayer. This is what he told her to do:  
“I am going to give a Mission in places near here (i.e., Monte Argentario) and I am going to remain outside the Monastery until Lent. During this time I would like you to write down day by day what happens to you in prayer, and, if not every day, at least write down your deepest recollections, so that I can examine them, as your Spiritual Father, to see if there is any deception or not. Up to now everything is going well (thanks be to God) and there is no deception.  
“In writing what happens to you, say it this way: Today, on such a day, of such a month, this happened to me in prayer, etc. Tell everything with the greatest brevity, after the manner of a letter which you are writing to your Spiritual Father because you must not trust in yourself.  
“Write down the desires which God gives you, tell him the inspirations, the knowledge and understanding which God gives you in prayer--as if you were at my feet in the Confessional I don’t want you to be thinking about what you are going to write down during prayer, but afterwards. It will give me a general idea of the other things, as you are doing now. Send me the journal when I shall have returned.” (*Lettere I*, p. 121).

## PREFACE

by

Reverend Stanislaus Breton, C.P., Ph.D.

My friend, Father Silvan Rouse, C.P., had the excellent idea of offering the English-speaking world a new translation of the latest critical edition of the Diary of St Paul of the Cross. For the past fifty years this text has been unanimously esteemed as one of the jewels of the history of spirituality. Written without literary concern, the Diary of St. Paul of the Cross owes its powerful impact only to his interior fire and at the same time to the Spirit Who “cries out in the desert” with “groaning” which the Apostle Paul describes as “unutterable.” It is just because they are unutterable that they must express their content in a word which, through its anguish and its uncertainties, bespeaks the necessity of the impossible. That is the reason why this text of blood and fire defies every definite category, every academic classification. It is what it is, in the image of the imperative “I am who I am,” which, in a critical moment of the biblical Exodus, inscribed the transcendence and the unexpected Law of the Eternal on our daily life.

The originality of the work, however, will not conceal the probable dependencies which the translator has pointed out in his discreet scholarship. These reiterate certain constants of the Catholic tradition in which the Diary is inserted, and shed light on the most obscure passages through the doctrinal influences of St. Francis de Sales, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. The solitary of Castellazzo recognizes the relevance of these authors in clarifying his interior journey.

There is nothing alien to the spiritual master than the claim of private properly, which we associate today, under the pressure of law, with the ordinary idea we have of an author. Paul of the Cross is not an author. This is so not because of anonymity of Weakness which would protect the inconsistency of a thought under the shadow of consecrated authorities. Nor is it because of a kind of morbid taste for pseudonymity which, in a plurality of names, conceals an interior richness too conscious of itself. Paul is not an author quite simply because the spiritual man is too convinced of his radical poverty and so effaces his name from the book which he ought to sign. He knows that he is penetrated by a spirit’ which comes from a source far beyond himself, and which enables him to disregard what he adds to that common treasure from which he believes he has received everything. That is why when he says “I”, and he must say it as one can see throughout the whole of this Diary, he shows less a pretension than a charge of weakness. This is likewise verified in the inevitable limitation which the personal pronoun imposes on the *Immense* who sustains him. But this weakness renders homage and gives thanks. In the discovery of God as the “first to be served,” he learns the first knowledge of self.

This work must be read in the same spirit in which it was conceived. Its brevity must not deceive us. The shorter it is, the more difficult it is. Unlike so many contemporary books, the Diary of St Paul invites us to simplicity and peaceful contemplation. The slimness of the volume imposes on the reader a concern for reducing life to essentials. It calls for an analytical study which sends him back to his inner depths. Accordingly, I shall refrain from offering an introduction which would dispense one from preparation. I am certainly aware of

the usefulness of preliminaries. On the origins and vicissitudes of the manuscript, on the commentaries and doctrinal explanations which it has occasioned, this indispensable information will be found in the work of the translator. I have no intention of adding to them. But as regards the text; I will venture some remarks which might facilitate access to it.

It is a question of a Diary, more precisely, of day-to-day notations in which “successive events” are experienced around an interior center. One will not try to look for its equivalent in our “psychological diaries,” where the sharpness of analyses sometimes joins the vivacity of impressions. Still less is it similar to a “metaphysical journal” which gives us the quest of a thinker in search of his intellectual balance. Strictly speaking, one could compare it to that *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum* which St. Bonaventure left us as a model in the Middle Ages. But this comparison would perhaps be incorrect. For St. Paul of the Cross is neither a philosopher nor a theologian. Neither is he the ‘mystical doctor’ who writes treatises or who systematizes an experience. He writes only letters of direction which, in a “connatural knowledge” of the trials of the directee, extend an experiential knowledge which he acquired at twenty-seven years of age by much hardship, in the solitude of the Cross and of the night. If, at any cost, one wants to compare homogeneous greatness, it is in the Diary of St. Ignatius of Loyola that one would doubtlessly find the most impressive likenesses. In both instances, we are at the beginning of a foundation; and we observe the same work of active and passive purification which models the soul according to the unlimited demands of the Absolute.

The retreat of forty days, of which the Diary of the founder of the Passionists is a reminiscence (at least to its essentials), suggests however a more decisive reference. As Father Silvan reminds us; the chronological outline which arranges the vicissitudes of a spiritual nocturne over forty days evokes both the Exodus and the biblical “desert.” The Gospel of the temptations and the desert where Christ withdraws in order to “proceed” to his ministry. The beginnings do not always have the serene calmness of the Source which flows over and sings. The Life-Principle of the new world is under the sign of the Passion. . In the beginning, in this nothingness which determines everything, the sign of the Son of Man envelopes the “from nothingness” of the Creation with its shadow. The soul then becomes “life-giving spirit,” on the necessary and sufficient condition of *abiding* in the density of the cross until the day which it will not determine. It is what the “entry” for Christmas Day emphasizes with an admirable power: it is “dry” like the dryness which it describes. The reader expects a wonderful night which would be the decisive light. But nothing we would have anticipated happens. Christmas confirms the austerity of the Origin. Every birth commemorates a wound which never closes again. The Resurrection transfigures the wounds of the Savior. It suppresses them only to conserve them in a “sublimation” which opens them to the fruitfulness of the universal. Now and then someone asks whether Paul of the Cross was interested in the joyful mysteries of Christianity. A futile question, which certainly would have surprised him. For Paul was a man who knew, with a nonscientific knowledge, the coincidence of opposites, of being and nothingness, in the profound joy which unites the nakedness of the soul to the mystery of God. You might as well ask yourself whether Christ in Gethsemane had to come between “the sadness unto death” and the beatific vision which illuminated his desolation. The Diary of the desert accentuates, it is true, the harshness of the negative. But you would be deceived if you saw there only a morbid predilection for suffering; what the English formerly called “the luxury of pity.” We must understand that the desert account describes for a twofold process; in which each of the moments delineates the royal way toward the One Thing Necessary by their reciprocity, in one same becoming.

This is an austere lesson certainly intolerable for a frenzied world which also knows the aridity of a new desert. But the world knows the aridity of a new desert only to experience there, in the diversion of its wanderings, the savor of an Ash Wednesday, as definitive as its despair. Nevertheless, it can happen that other voices summon the passerby, and invite him to run another risk: the risk of “the unheard of” which no human ear has heard, and which does not allow one to anticipate any calculation of human probabilities or possibilities. It is to this ready, tired of our noise and our importance that the Diary of the venerable master addresses its improbably appeal. And it does this in order to lead him “where he would not wish to go”: to that summit of the soul where the beatitudes of the Cross shine forth.

## TEXT OF THE SPIRITUAL DIARY

St. Paul of the Cross

### *THANKS BE TO GOD AND TO THE EVER-VIRGIN MARY<sup>1</sup>*

1720

*November 23, Saturday:* which was the first day of my retreat<sup>2</sup> at St. Charles.<sup>3</sup> Though unworthy,<sup>4</sup> I went to Holy Communion:<sup>5</sup> I was neither particularly recollected nor distracted. During the rest of the day I was interiorly afflicted with a particular kind of melancholy,<sup>6</sup> which is not like that which one experiences in the troubles of the world. Rather it is a certain interior suffering in spirit and heart, mingled with hidden temptations which are hardly recognized as such. For this reason, they afflict the soul very much. One does not know whether one is here or there, so to speak, the more so because there is no sensible sign of prayer during that time.<sup>7</sup> I realize that God enables me to understand that they purify the soul. Through the mercy of our good God, I know that I do not desire to know anything else, nor to taste any consolation. I desire only to be crucified with Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

*November 24, Sunday:* Though unworthy, I made prayer. I did not experience any particular spiritual uplift, but I had my usual interior peace, that is to say, the pure loving attentiveness to God in general, which was infused into my spirit.<sup>9</sup> Then, though unworthy, I received Holy Communion and was recollected for some time, and then it ended that way.

*November 25, Monday:* I had no feeling in prayer, and I was also distracted. During Holy Communion I was recollected at first and then that ceased. Most of the fervor which , I experienced-and there were also some tears<sup>10</sup> occurred during the night<sup>11</sup> while I was praying to the Lord for the Church and for sinners<sup>12</sup> so that He might be appeased as regards this imminent chastisement,<sup>13</sup> which my sins deserve,<sup>14</sup> and other prayers which I am not writing down here. During the rest of the day I was full of distress and melancholy and I was also tempted by pity for my family.<sup>15</sup> It annoyed me to see people, to hear them passing by, and to hear the sound of the bells.<sup>16</sup> In short, I seemed to have a heart that was buried, without any feeling of prayer.<sup>17</sup> Still I do not recall that I desired relief from it, and in my mind I am content to have them. But this contentment is not felt, since at this time there is distress of a particular kind. It is a certain contentment that the Most Holy Will of our good God is being done,<sup>18</sup> And this contentment<sup>19</sup> lies buried as it were beneath the ashes, in the most hidden part of the spirit. I know that it is hard to explain myself because one who has not experienced this finds it difficult to understand.

*November 26, Tuesday:* Though unworthy, I made prayer during the night and was dry except at the beginning, when I experienced some interior delight, which was very subtle and delicate.<sup>20</sup> Afterwards I received Holy Communion and was particularly drawn up into God with a very deep delight and certain fervor of heart, which even affected my stomach. I felt that this was supernatural and this gave me great consolation.<sup>21</sup> I know that I also had some colloquies on the sorrowful<sup>22</sup> passion of my beloved Jesus.<sup>23</sup> When I speak to Him about His sufferings,<sup>24</sup> I say, for example: "O my Good God, when you were scourged, what did you

feel in your Most Sacred Heart?<sup>25</sup> My beloved Spouse, how much did the vision of my great<sup>26</sup> sins and my ingratitude afflict you? O my Love, why do I not die for you? Why am I not overcome with sorrow? Then I feel that sometimes my soul can no longer speak, and it remains thus in God with His sufferings into the soul<sup>27</sup> and sometimes it seems that my heart would break.”<sup>28</sup> During the rest of the day, and especially in the evening, I was particularly afflicted and melancholic in that above-mentioned way.<sup>29</sup> Though this melancholy does not take away peace of heart, one feels great affliction when he no longer recalls either spiritual consolations or anything else, and it seems as if they had never been present. I know that I tell my Jesus that His crosses are the joys of my heart.<sup>30</sup>

*November 27, Wednesday:* I prayed during the night. In the beginning I was very recollected and that continued for a little while. Then I experienced some disturbing thoughts and some temptations, which lasted a little while. At Holy Communion, I experienced a deep sweetness,<sup>31</sup> and a spiritual uplift in, God along with tears. Then I remembered hearing that people had said that I would not be able to put up with this deprivation.<sup>32</sup> At that moment so great was my joy in and desire for suffering<sup>33</sup> that the cold, the snow and the ice seemed delightful to me, and I desired them with great fervor, saying to my beloved Jesus: “Your afflictions, dear God, are the pledges of your love.”<sup>34</sup> I remained thus, rejoicing in my beloved Jesus in very deep sweetness and peace without any movements of the faculties, but in silence.<sup>35</sup> Fervor in praying for the above-mentioned needs did not cease; I know that I also had a particular impulse to go to Rome for this great wonder of God.<sup>36</sup> I also asked my Sovereign Good whether He wanted me to write the Rule for the Poor of Jesus,<sup>37</sup> and I felt a strong urge to do so with great delight. I rejoiced that our great God should wish to make use of this great sinner; on the other hand, I knew not where to turn, realizing that I am so wretched. Enough! I know that I tell my beloved Jesus that all creatures shall sing his mercies.

*November 28, Thursday:* In prayer I was dry and a little distracted. At Holy Communion I was recollected. Afterwards, that is, during thanksgiving and prayer, I experienced much tenderness and even tears, especially while praying to the Sovereign Good for the successful outcome of the holy inspirations which; through His Infinite Goodness, He has given to me and continually gives to me.<sup>38</sup> I remember that I kept praying to the Blessed Virgin<sup>39</sup> in union with all the Angels and Saints, and especially the Holy Founders.<sup>40</sup> In an instant it seemed to me that I saw them in spirit prostrate before the Most High<sup>41</sup> Majesty of God praying for this intention. This happened to me in an instant like a flash of lightning in delight mingled with tears. I did not see them in bodily form, but I saw them in spirit with the understanding of the soul.<sup>42</sup> I do not know how to explain this, and it disappeared quite suddenly.<sup>43</sup>

*November 29, Friday:* Though unworthy, I made prayer and received Holy Communion. I was dry and during prayer I was distracted. I want to explain what happens to me in the distractions. When I am distracted, my soul remains neither more nor less in peace with God, despite the fact that it is troubled with thoughts which molest me. Sometimes I say to my mind, which strays here or there: “Go where you will as long as you always walk in God.” I cannot express what happens to me during these distractions, that is, what kind of thoughts have passed through my mind in the time of prayer-except when they are evident temptations. I only know that they are indifferent things and sometimes I recall that spiritual

thoughts also come to me. Nevertheless, through the understanding which God gives to me (and I am aware of it), I know that the soul always remains fixed in God with His peace, but it remains more unfeeling and hidden. And the will, which is the mouth through which the holy food of God's love enters, perceives this. The soul, however, continues to be nourished secretly, because of the hindrance which these two faculties memory and understanding-cause it, for they wander off into distractions. Nevertheless it does not fail to remain totally attentive to its nourishment, which is the holy love of God, all the more so since it does not enjoy it as much as when united to the other two faculties. And this, in my opinion, is like an infant who has its mouth on its mother's breast and swallows the milk. He squirms and fidgets with his hands and feet, he turns his head and makes other similar movements, but he is always taking milk, because he never takes his mouth away from his mother's breast. He would certainly do much better for himself if he remained quiet instead of acting as I have just described. Nevertheless the milk goes down the throat because the infant never takes his mouth away from his mother's breast. So it is with the soul. The will is the mouth which never fails to suck the milk of holy love, even though the faculties of memory and understanding wander off. It is certain, however, that it experiences more help when the faculties of memory and understanding are quiet and united with it. I do not know how to explain myself better, because the Lord does not enable me to understand it in any other way.<sup>44</sup>

*November 30, Saturday, Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle:* I was dry and distracted during prayer. During Holy Communion I was recollected; afterwards I shed many tears. I recall that I kept praying to my Jesus to grant me the highest degree of humility. I desired to be the last of men, the scum of the earth, and I kept praying to the Blessed Virgin with many tears to obtain this grace for me.<sup>45</sup> I remember that I asked my Jesus to teach me what degree of humility is most pleasing to Him and I heard it said in my heart:<sup>46</sup> "When you cast yourself in spirit under the feet of every creature, even beneath the feet of demons, this is what, pleases me most." I had already understood that when one goes lower than hell, beneath the feet of demons, then God raises the soul to Paradise. For just as the devil wanted the highest place in Paradise and was cast down to the deepest pit of hell because of his pride, so, on the contrary, the soul which humbles itself below hell, makes the devil tremble, confounds him, and the Sovereign Good raises the soul up to Paradise. I know that everything is from my God; to Him be honor and glory forever. Amen.<sup>47</sup>

*December 1, Sunday:* I was dry and distracted during prayer as well as during Holy Communion, and I also experienced some of that melancholy which I mentioned before.

*December 2, Monday:*<sup>48</sup> I was without feeling and distracted both in holy prayer and during Holy Communion, with this difference: at the moment of Holy Communion I was not distracted. In fact, I am hardly ever distracted at that moment.<sup>49</sup> Dry and arid, yes, but I nearly always more or less feel some movement of the heart, either before or after. This comes and goes in an instant, so that I scarcely perceive it. Then I remain like the stump of a tree,<sup>50</sup> or else this movement of the heart continues longer. In all things, blessed be the sweet Giver of every good.<sup>51</sup>

*December 3, Tuesday:* I was afflicted all day long with great sufferings.<sup>52</sup> I had some

experience of them when I was a secular, but they were not as notable and vehement. Although I am in this condition, I feel a great desire for them to continue. I can tell you<sup>53</sup> that when this kind of anguish or affliction comes to me (I don't know what to call it), I seem to be buried in an abyss of miseries, to be the most miserable and desolate man alive. However, my soul embraces them because she knows that this is God's Will, and that there are the joys of Jesus.<sup>54</sup> I feel like saying with St. Teresa; "To suffer or to die."<sup>55</sup>

*December, 4, Wednesday:* I was recollected in prayer, and I also experienced a mild restlessness in my thoughts. During Holy Communion I experienced much delight. My beloved God gave me an infused understanding of the joy which the soul will have when we shall see Him face to face,<sup>56</sup> and shall be united with Him in holy love. Then sorrow came over me at seeing Him offended and I told Him that I desired to be torn to pieces for one soul. Alas, I felt that I would die at seeing the loss of so many souls, who do not experience the fruit of the Passion of my Jesus.<sup>57</sup> When God gives me this very deep understanding of the joy one will experience when he will see Him face to face, that is, when united to Him, the soul can no longer bear to remain in the body, so to speak, because with a deep light of faith, she sees herself in the Infinite Love of her God.<sup>58</sup> She has the desire to be released from the body. I know that I really felt like saying that the body is a chain of the soul,<sup>59</sup> which holds her in bondage, and until God breaks it by the death of the body, the soul cannot fly to union with and perfect vision of her beloved Good.<sup>60</sup>

*December 5, Thursday:* I was peaceful<sup>61</sup> in prayer and during Communion. I also experienced much self-knowledge,<sup>62</sup> and I told the Angels who assist at the Most Adorable Mystery, to drive me out of the church, since I am worse than a demon.<sup>63</sup> However, I did not lose the special<sup>64</sup> confidence in my Sacramental Spouse.<sup>65</sup> I asked Him to keep in mind the Gospel message He had just left me-that He came not to call the just, but sinners.<sup>66</sup>

*December 6, Friday:* I was particularly recollected, especially during Holy Communion.<sup>67</sup> Afterwards I experienced great peace and consolation with very tender affections. I felt a special fervor in asking God to hasten the foundation of this holy<sup>68</sup> congregation in Holy Mother Church, and in praying for sinners.<sup>69</sup> I received a deep infused<sup>70</sup> understanding of the sufferings of my Jesus and I had such an ardent desire for perfect union with Him that I actually longed to feel His sufferings and to be on the cross with Him.<sup>71</sup> These wonderful things cannot be explained by any bodily comparisons,<sup>72</sup> because God makes them understood in the depths of the soul with movements so spiritual that they cannot be explained, and the soul understands them in an instant, etc,<sup>73</sup> For the rest of the day I was dry and also bothered by thoughts, but in peace.

*December 7, Saturday:* I was peaceful during morning prayer and then I was also bothered by thoughts. At Holy Communion I was particularly recollected and graced with tears until I became sick to my stomach, for I was shivering somewhat from the cold, but then afterwards<sup>74</sup> it disappeared completely. This often happens to me. I know that I have at times felt bodily weakness before (Oh: the Infinite Mercy of our Sovereign God), but after Holy Communion I feel better and strong.<sup>75</sup> According to the understanding which God gives me, this comes from the great strength which the soul receives from that Angelic Food, a strength

which likewise fortifies the body. I also experienced great fervor and tears in praying for the conversion of poor sinners.<sup>76</sup> I kept telling my God that I could no longer bear to see Him offended. I also experienced a special love in asking God, through His mercy, to establish the Holy Congregation quickly, and to send people forth for His greater glory and the profit of the neighbor. I prayed for this with great desire and fervor.<sup>77</sup> As for myself, I asked Him to accept me as the least servant of His poor.<sup>78</sup> To myself I seemed utterly unworthy (as indeed I am) to serve Him as a scullion. I have received great self-knowledge, and when God gives me this very deep knowledge, it seems to me that I am worse than a demon, that I am a very dirty cesspool (and it is really so).<sup>79</sup> But I never lost my very great and tender confidence in my Sacramental Spouse.<sup>80</sup> I tell Him that in giving me so many graces and such innumerable favors, He only manifests His infinite mercies all the more because He gives them to the greatest of sinners. May His Most Holy Name be praised in all things.<sup>81</sup>

*December 8, Sunday:* At prayer I was in peace as usual. When I offered up the sufferings which my Jesus endured,<sup>82</sup> I felt moved to tears, and likewise in praying for all the needs of my neighbor. During Holy Communion I was particularly recollected, especially in talking to my Jesus with sorrow and love about His sufferings.<sup>83</sup> I do not know how to explain this deep grace which the good God gives to me at this time, because I cannot. Know<sup>84</sup> that in talking to my Jesus about His own sufferings, sometimes as soon as I have repeated one or two of them, I have to stop there because the soul can say no more and feels that she is melting away.<sup>85</sup> She remains thus, languishing<sup>86</sup> with deep delight mingled with tears and with the sufferings of her Spouse infused into her; or indeed, to explain myself better, the soul is plunged into the Heart and into the holy sorrow of her beloved Spouse, Jesus.<sup>87</sup> Sometimes she has an understanding of everything, and she remains thus in God<sup>88</sup> with that loving and sorrowful contemplation.<sup>89</sup> This is very difficult to explain, and it seems to me to be always something new.<sup>90</sup>

*December 9, Monday:* I was very troubled and bothered by thoughts. During Holy Communion I was recollected and then dry, and also bothered again by thoughts. In the petitions I made to my God<sup>91</sup> in my prayer at night, I felt great fervor, especially in praying for the conversion of sinners.<sup>92</sup>

*December 10, 11, 12,13:* I was dry distracted, tempted, and I forced myself to remain at prayer.<sup>93</sup> I was tempted to gluttony, and I was hungry.<sup>94</sup> I felt the cold more than usual and my body desired relief, and for that reason I wanted to run away from prayer.<sup>95</sup> The spirit, by the grace of our dear God, resisted both the violence and the assaults which came from the flesh and the devil.<sup>96</sup> For my part, I believe that the devil<sup>97</sup> had a hand in it because I know that he is very jealous of one who prays. Then, as I have said, the resistance made my heart leap; I shook from head to foot. I had pains in my back and stomach but, through the mercy of God, I kept saying that I wanted to remain so – even were it necessary to carry me away in small pieces. This happened because the body wanted to take its rest before the time which I had arranged to spend in prayer. When the hour came for me to leave, I was calm and peaceful, desirous of suffering always more. Then I asked my God never to take my sufferings from me. This has happened to me at other times, and often; and may the Good God be blessed for it. I know that I have understood that this kind of suffering-prayer is a great gift,<sup>98</sup> which God grants a soul to make it an ermine of purity,<sup>99</sup> a rock amidst

sufferings, to such an extent that she no longer takes any account of them.<sup>100</sup> When, by the grace of God she shall have attained this state, the Sovereign Good will consume her with love. One must be careful not to leave prayer at so painful a time as this, because the suffering would not diminish but, on the contrary, the soul would be afflicted even more and without profit, because she would see herself falling into tepidity. That is why I know that God enables me to understand that the soul whom He wants to draw to deepest union with Him by means of holy prayer, must pass through this way of suffering during prayer.<sup>101</sup> And she must suffer, I say, without any sensible consolation, so that the soul knows not where she is, so to speak, but has a very deep infused understanding, which God gives to her, that she is always in the arms of her Spouse, nourished with the milk of His Infinite Charity. I know as I have always understood, but in a hidden way, when I was experiencing a particular suffering, that to him who shall conquer there will be given the hidden manna which is what Holy Scripture says.<sup>102</sup> The hidden manna, I understood, will be the very delightful food of holy love, that is, the soul in deepest repose with her most gentle Spouse in holy prayer: thanks be to God.

*December 14: Saturday:* I was recollected and was also dry and distracted in my thoughts. I also experienced the above-mentioned sufferings, but they were not so violent. During Holy Communion I was recollected and experienced some tenderness while making acts of love to my Sacramental Jesus.<sup>103</sup> May He be praised and loved by all. Amen.

*December 15; 16, 17, 18:* During these days I was dry, distracted, by some restlessness, and by struggles between the flesh and the spirit in the way I explained above. I was also afflicted – sometimes more, sometimes less – by assaults or impatience and inclinations to leave prayer, by temptations to eat when I felt moved by a particular desire for food, and this also happened to me during prayer.<sup>104</sup> But I kept asking my Jesus not to deliver me from them, but rather to make me walk the road of suffering. Whence it follows by a special grace of God, that, although I feel particular desolations and temptations and interior afflictions, it did not occur to me to seek relief from them. During these days I experienced a certain sudden movement of my heart to shed tears, but they ceased immediately or at least they remained only a short while, and then I was in the state mentioned above. But through the mercy of the Sovereign Good, peace of heart did not leave me. I mean that I did not feel my heart disturbed by scruples, but rather it was at peace with God. It seems to me that I do nothing good, as is indeed true, but I entrust myself to the supreme kindness of the Sovereign Good. May He be loved by all: Amen.<sup>105</sup> The continual desire for the conversion of all sinners does not leave me, and I feel moved to pray to my God especially for that because I do not want Him to be offended anymore.<sup>106</sup>

*December 19, Thursday:* I experienced delight along with tears of special contrition for my sins, and this happened before and after making my confession<sup>107</sup> and then it disappeared.

*December 20, Friday:* I had some dryness, and was also somewhat recollected especially<sup>108</sup> as regards the sufferings of my Jesus. I recall that on the previous Thursday night<sup>109</sup> I was saying that the remembrance of the sad and sorrowful day of Friday was something to cause great suffering and to make one collapse with sorrow.<sup>110</sup> I kept on asking my Jesus to make me collapse with sorrow.<sup>111</sup>

*December 21, Saturday, Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle:* I was afflicted very much by assaults and struggles of the kind mentioned above. This is how it happened. Just as the spirit, by God's grace, wants to master the flesh and make it stay submissive and obedient by uniting it with reason, the flesh, on the contrary, finds this hard to bear and consequently when it feels hungry, it wants to eat. When it is weary from staying at work or kneeling for a long time at prayer, it wants to rest. If it is cold, it wants to warm itself, etc. For this reason, I say that I experienced a very vehement disturbance by most of these things on that particular day. My spirit kept resisting and wanted to remain with God in holy prayer,<sup>112</sup> although I felt afflicted and desolate. The flesh, on the contrary, did not want to. For this reason, the passions were stirred up with such intensity of distress that my heart kept palpitating and made me tremble from head to foot until my bones ached. I reached the point<sup>113</sup> where it seemed that I could bear no more. Then the enemy appeared at the same time<sup>114</sup> with temptations to impatience.<sup>115</sup> He moved me to indignation even against the priests who were coming to say Mass,<sup>116</sup> pointing out to me that they were coming too late, and it seemed to me that I would be forced to make unbecoming remarks to them. Then I prayed to God and to Mary to help me. I kept on saying that I would remain until all the Masses were said, so as to resist the temptations, for it seemed to me that I was being forced to leave. When that was over, I experienced temptations to the most horrible blasphemies against God. I seemed to hear myself interiorly saying the, most loathsome and wicked things.<sup>117</sup> Then I kept calling upon Mary to help me.<sup>118</sup> Knowing that in this state the soul is in abandonment; she no longer feels any movement of her heart toward God;<sup>119</sup> she no longer recalls anything spiritual. She seems to be reduced to an abyss of miseries.<sup>120</sup> It is true, however, that although the soul is in great desolation, the aforesaid temptations against God disappear in a flash, and the Sovereign Good does not allow the poor soul to remain in these horrible temptations. In the depth of one's heart there is a certain hidden and almost unfelt desire to be always immersed in suffering<sup>121</sup> of one kind or another. It is true, however, that I beg God to deliver me from these temptations against God. These diabolical locutions slay the heart and soul. To suffer matters little, but what the soul cannot endure is to be tempted against her God. However, I know that the glory of God shines forth therein and that the devil is confounded, because in that resistance which the soul makes and in those sufferings (according to the understanding God gives to me), the Sovereign Good is pleased and the devil is mocked and then put to flight. I also know that God holds the soul in His arms, but she is not aware of it. Hence, she seems to be utterly abandoned and in great misery, and all this is mixed up with the above-mentioned assaults. If God, in His Infinite Mercy, did not give her special help, these things would terrify the soul. I must add one thing for the greater glory of God, namely, that when I am in this state, in which I have already been a few times and that for a considerable period of time, but not with such vehemence I beg for my Crucified Jesus not to deliver me from it. On the contrary, I desire them in order to suffer, and I have a certain hidden fear that they will depart,<sup>122</sup> excepting, of course, those temptations against God, unless God permits them for my greater mortification. The aforesaid fear arises from the soul's desire to follow Jesus in His sufferings.<sup>123</sup> The profit which the soul gains thereby cannot be overestimated, but it does not seek this. For love seeks not its own advantage, but only the glory of her Sovereign Good. I conferred with my brother who is very spiritual (I am not worthy to be called his brother)<sup>124</sup> and the conference was on the spiritual sufferings which one experiences. I told him that I did not dare<sup>125</sup> to confer with him on sufferings

because I feared that they might disappear if I felt any relief from them, although such is not the case. I kept saying that I had a greater fear of seeing my sufferings taken away from me than another would have for the loss of his wealth. It is true that fear sometimes afflicts the soul, but for my part I am afraid of losing my sufferings, but I am not so troubled as to lose peace of heart about it. For that reason, I recount them only to him to whom I owe holy obedience. I have sufficient courage to say how delightful the sufferings are, when I am speaking with one who suffers; but to tell him all the sufferings which the Lord sends me, I cannot do this. I would like to be able to say that everyone would experience this great grace<sup>126</sup> which God, in His mercy, grants when He sends suffering to us, and especially when the suffering is devoid of consolation. Then the soul is purified like gold in the furnace,<sup>127</sup> and becomes beautiful and agile so as to take flight to her Good God,<sup>128</sup> that is, to the blessed transformation without even perceiving it. The soul carries her cross with Jesus<sup>129</sup> and does not know it. This arises because of the number and variety of her sufferings, which make her forget and no longer remember that she suffers.<sup>130</sup> I understand that this is a great way to suffer fruitfully, and that it pleases God very much because the soul becomes indifferent to such an extent that she no longer considers whether she is in pain or in joy. She remains attached only to the Most Holy Will of her beloved Spouse, Jesus<sup>131</sup> wanting rather to be crucified with Him,<sup>132</sup> because that is more conformable to her beloved God, Who, during all his holy life did nothing else but suffer.<sup>133</sup> In everything, praised to be the Sovereign God, Who, in His infinite goodness, has designed to give this infused understanding to such a great sinner.<sup>134</sup>

*December 22, Sunday:* I was recollected with such sensible fervor.

*December 23, Monday:* While at prayer during the night I had great peace, delight and tears, with a very deep understanding of the infinite perfections, especially the Infinite Goodness of God. Then for the rest of the day I was buried in desolation and disturbed exteriorly by thoughts about the future caused by the devil.<sup>135</sup> By the word “exteriorly” I mean that the thoughts come in this way: When the waters of the sea are very stormy, they are tossed by the winds, and wanted to break them up and smash them to pieces. But this does not happen. They strike them but they do not penetrate them nor smash them to pieces. They knock off a small piece, but because the rocks are so hard there is no danger that the big waves will break them.<sup>136</sup> This is what happens to the soul in prayer. The soul is a rock because God sustains her in His Infinite Charity, and therefore she can be called a rock of strength because the Sovereign Good gives this to her. Now the devil, envious of this deep Immense God,<sup>137</sup> attempts however to disturb her to some degree. He does this by assailing her now with temptations, now with phantasies, at times with a variety of thoughts and at other times by trying to deceive her with his infamous lies. He does all this to tear her away from her deep attention to God. But in the midst of these stormy waves of the devil, the soul stands firm as a rock,<sup>138</sup> provided she always remains united to her beloved Good. These waves of thoughts then serve no other purpose than to chip her a little, and to detach her for a few moments from that singular and deep continuous contemplation of her Beloved, even though, as I understand it, the union is not diminished at such a time. I have said this in order to explain myself better, because the soul is united to God neither more nor less. It only appears that way to the soul. In struggling against these attacks and rejecting

them, the soul may appear to lose a little of her loving attention: In her poverty, she seems to be no longer in the arms of her loving Spouse.<sup>139</sup> But God makes me understand that she is there, and that He is pleased to see the soul struggling. That is more profitable for her because, through that suffering which she experiences in the struggle, she is purified like a rock which before the storm may have been covered with dirt but after the storm is a little cleaner because the waves have washed it. Therefore we must realize that when these storms of disturbing thoughts come, the soul must remain always fixed in God without taking any notice of them. When the enemy sees that he gains nothing, he is put to flight in derision, because he sees that the soul, by God's help, does not fear him. When I experience these stormy thoughts and other troubles, I turn to God and say to Him: "My God, cast a little glance at the condition of my poor soul." Then I ask Him to deliver me from them if it is His Most Holy Will, and I remain in that attitude. I do not deny that they bother me very much, but may all be for the love of the Sovereign Good, to Whom be honor and glory forever. Amen.

*December 24, Tuesday:* I was particularly<sup>140</sup> recollected and shed tears, especially during Holy Communion. On this most holy night, I was also recollected, but not in such a particular way. I also experienced much tenderness, especially as I recalled the Infinite Love of our good God in becoming Man, in being born amid such lack of comfort and in such great poverty. Then I remained thus restfully in my God.<sup>141</sup>

*December 25, Christmas Day:* At daybreak I went to Confession with particular tenderness of contrition and great self-knowledge. Afterwards during Holy Communion I was as dry as a stump and remained that way practically the whole day.<sup>142</sup>

*December 26, Thursday, Feast of St. Stephen, Martyr:* I experienced a particular spiritual uplift, especially during Holy Communion. I desired to go and die as a martyr where the most adorable mystery of the Most Blessed Sacrament is denied. The Infinite Goodness has given me this desire for some time, but today I experienced it in a special way.<sup>143</sup> I had the desire for the conversion of heretics, especially those of England and the neighboring kingdoms,<sup>144</sup> and I offered a special prayer for this intention during Holy Communion. I also had a special understanding of the Infinite Mercy of God as our Sovereign Good enabled me to perceive how great is the Infinite Love with which He punishes, here on earth, so that we might be spared an eternity of torments. And because His Infinite Majesty knows the place which His Infinite Justice has prepared for the just and well-deserved punishment of sin, His Infinite Mercy is moved by compassion to inflict loving chastisements. With these, He urges His sinful creatures to correct themselves<sup>145</sup> so that they may avoid that eternal punishment and serve Him in the first place.<sup>146</sup> I understood all this in an instant with many tears and a very deep delight.<sup>146</sup>

*December 27, Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist:* By the Infinite Goodness of God I have been moved toward great repose and delight, especially during Holy Communion. Through infused understanding and the deepest consolation of the Spirit I experienced a certain spiritual repose, mingled with the sufferings of my Redeemer, in which the soul takes its delight.<sup>148</sup> Love and sorrow were blended: On this point I do not know how to make myself understood because I cannot explain it. While I was serving Mass and whilst I saw

my Sacramental Jesus with my bodily eyes,<sup>149</sup> I kept asking Him to send the Seraphim to pierce me through with arrows of love.<sup>150</sup> This comes from the loving impulses which Infinite Mercy grants to my heart. I also asked Him to let me satisfy my thirst for His holy love by allowing me to drink at the Infinite source of His most Sacred Heart,<sup>151</sup> but this last happened to me in Holy Communion.<sup>152</sup>

*December 28, Feast of Holy Innocents:* In the morning I was dry and my head felt weary. I remained that way for a little while, until the longed-for moment of Holy Communion arrived.<sup>153</sup> After Communion I was led by the Infinite Goodness into a very deep recollection, and to long, loving affections with colloquies of our beloved Spouse. Then I recalled the Flight into Egypt with all its lack of comfort and also the suffering and sorrow of Mary and Joseph,<sup>154</sup> but especially of the Blessed Virgin. In my own poor soul, there was a mingling of sorrow and love, with many tears and much delight. The soul has a very deep infused knowledge of all this-sometimes of all at the same time, sometimes of one mystery only. But the soul understands this in an instant, without bodily or imaginary forms. God infuses them into the soul by a work of His Infinite Charity and Mercy. At the very same moment in which the soul understands this in the deepest way, she either takes delight in it or grieves over it, according to the nature of the mysteries. For the most part there is always a mingling of holy delight.<sup>155</sup> In the evening, I had a special sense of sorrow for my great sins, imperfections and countless failures, knowing that I was an abyss of ingratitude.<sup>156</sup> During the day I also had a special knowledge of myself. I know that I told my Divine Savior that I could call myself nothing other than a miracle of His. Infinite Mercy. May His Holy Name be praised and glorified by all. Amen.<sup>157</sup>

*December 29, Sunday:* At prayer during the night I was in peace, and also a little distracted. I felt a particular recollection in offering His Most Holy Life, Death and Passion,<sup>158</sup> also in my petitions, especially for heretics.<sup>159</sup> I had a particular inspiration<sup>160</sup> to pray for the conversion of England,<sup>161</sup> especially since I wanted the standard of the faith to be raised . there so that the devotion, reverence, homage, love and frequent adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament-the ineffable mystery of the Most Holy Charity of God-would be in-creased, that thus His Holy Name might be glorified in a more special way. The desire to die as a martyr never leaves me, especially for the Blessed Sacrament, that is, in places where people do not believe.<sup>162</sup> At Holy Communion, I was almost without feeling and then distractions came to me as well. In the evening I was recollected and felt moved to make reparation for irreverences, especially in the Church,<sup>163</sup> feeling inspired to correct these, as indeed, by God's grace, I have been doing.<sup>164</sup> I felt inspired to say to my beloved Jesus: "Would that we could flee immediately from this church and that angels would carry away the Most Blessed Sacrament to a place where it would not be profaned by such irreverences and grave offenses!" I ask Him to give me the graces to shed tears of blood, which I desire so much.<sup>166</sup>

*December 30, Monday:* I was recollected before Communion and I was also recollected during Holy Communion in a very special way, and even moved to tears. During the rest of the day I experienced the aforementioned<sup>167</sup> distractions, especially thoughts about the future. The enemy indicated to me that great trials must come because of my family.<sup>168</sup> I also experienced a particular desolation. In all things may the Will of our beloved God be done.

Amen.<sup>169</sup>

*December 31, Feast of St. Sylvester:* I was dry and distracted but I did enjoy interior peace, even though I was bothered by the aforementioned thoughts. During Holy Communion I was in peace, yes, but was almost without feeling and was unmoved in my affections. Toward evening, I was particularly recollected.

*First Wednesday of January 1, 1721:* By the Infinite Charity of our Loving God, I was raised to a very high degree of recollection and there were copious tears, especially after Communion.<sup>170</sup> At Communion I experienced very sensible affections of holy love, and I seemed to be melting away in God.<sup>171</sup> With great confidence and delight I was telling my Jesus about my miseries without growing tired. I told Him about the scruples which I had experienced as regards a vow I had made to deprive my body of all superfluous pleasures.<sup>172</sup> Then I told Him what He already knows, that when I am hungry I feel pleasure in eating even a piece of dry bread. Then I heard an interior voice say gently: "But that is necessary." I felt then that my heart would break, and I burst into most tender tears, mingled with deep affections of love. I also knew that my soul was being united in a bond of love to the Most Sacred Humanity,<sup>173</sup> and at the same time liquefied and raised to a very deep and experiential knowledge of the Divinity.<sup>174</sup> Since Jesus is both God and Man, the soul cannot be united by love to the Most Sacred Humanity without being at the same time liquefied and raised to a very deep and experiential knowledge of the Divinity. This stupendous and most sublime marvel cannot be procured by oneself,<sup>175</sup> nor can it be explained even by one who experienced it. It is impossible because the soul understands it only insofar as God wants it to understand. The soul experiences very delightful and profound marvels because He who is the Immense enables her to understand. But then it is utterly impossible to articulate it. These are things which are experienced and understood for a thousand years, it would not seem, in my opinion, to be an instant, because the soul is in her Infinite Good. She desires nothing other than His glory and His Love and that He be feared and loved by all.<sup>176</sup> I have had other very special graces, especially in contemplating the holy mystery of the Circumcision.<sup>177</sup> Likewise, when serving Mass, I had such a deep light on the great charity which God shows me, and on my misery, my ingratitude and my life in general, that I did not even dare<sup>178</sup> to raise my eyes to look at the picture of Mary. All this was accompanied with many tears along with great delight, especially on seeing my Spouse, Jesus, present in the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>179</sup>

## NOTES AND COMMENTARY

1. It is significant that Mary's name appears at the beginning of the Diary, and She is referred to six other times within the Diary. A true son of the Passion will always undergo a deep Marian influence. Since Mary is a type of the Church, She is now what the Church is to become. All spirituality then, if it is Christian will be Marian. The handmaid of the Lord always surrenders in love to the redemptive work of the Word-made-Flesh.

It is important, then, to note the profound influence of Mary in the beginning of Paul's life-before he wrote the Diary. From the Processes we learn that Mary appeared to Paul twice during the second half of 1720. In the first vision, Mary shows Paul the black habit of mourning and the sign (with only the name "Jesus" on it). The second vision occurred sometime between September and November of 1720 and at that time Mary appeared to Paul clothed in the habit, and with the complete sign on it. Paul makes it very clear that he realized and understood the presence of Mary but, that he did not see Her with his bodily eyes. As Paul contemplates the maternal mourning of Mary over the death of her First-Born, he perceives his vocation ever more clearly. (Cfr. Costante Brovetto C.P., "La Madonna agli albori della vocazione di S. Paolo della Croce" in *Fonti Vive, Rivista di Spiritualita della Passione*, N. 28, Dicembre 1961, pp. 477-492).

2. Note that Paul refers to his forty-day experience as a "retreat"-the same word he will later use to designate his religious houses as places of solitude.
3. The full name of the Church where Paul resided (in a poor room near the sacristy) was St. Charles and St. Anna, in Castellazzo.
4. Paul's intense awareness of his unworthiness before the Lord is a 'constant' in his spirituality. It is his way of expressing that basic poverty which is the fundamental requisite for all prayer and for growth in the life of the spirit.
5. The whole Diary is written in a Eucharistic context. The first and last reference is to the Eucharist. Here, as on most days, Paul speaks of his Communion, but his references to Communion should be understood in the context of the whole Eucharistic Action. His frequent reference to Communion is significant for two reasons: a) it indicates the importance of the Eucharist in his daily experience, and b) daily communion was not common in those days. There is then a strong, sacramental emphasis in Paul's spiritual experience. The primary reality of his daily life is his encounter with Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and his long hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. From his earliest years, Paul's life was oriented toward the Eucharist. Paul's sister, Teresa Danei, testified that as a youth he spent much time in the presence of the Eucharistic Christ (PA 130). After his so-called 'conversion' at the age of twenty, his personal relationship to the Eucharistic Lord is intensified in an extraordinary way. On Sunday mornings he would spend five hours kneeling before the Tabernacle and another hour in the evening (POV, 108). His hunger for the Eucharist induced Paul's confessor to allow him daily Communion. But in order to avoid curious eyes and comment, Paul alternated and went to different churches each day (POV 113). After joining the army at

Crema, a Eucharistic encounter gave Paul's life another direction-one directed toward spiritual warfare (T. Danei PA, 115). Paul's inspiration to found the Congregation took place in a Eucharistic milieu. His vision of Mary and the habit occurred after receiving Holy Communion, on the way home from Church. As the Diary will make evident, Paul's forty days were filled with the presence of the Eucharistic Christ. He passes many hours, day and night, before the Blessed Sacrament, receives Holy Communion daily and serves all the Masses at St. Charles each day. With this background it is easily understandable why Paul places such great emphasis on the Eucharist in his Congregation.

6. Paul is careful to note that the melancholy he suffers is not the same as it is understood in the ordinary sense. It is an interior suffering of spirit and heart, a mystical suffering. Ernest Henau, C.P., has some insightful remarks on this melancholy which is more than "that tragic feeling of life sealed with-in existence itself." Cfr. Ernest Henau, C.P., "The Naked Suffering" (Nudo-Patire) in the Mystical experience of Paul of the Cross. *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 43 (1967) pp. 210-221.
7. During his forty-day retreat, Paul experiences the kenotic quality of agonizing prayer. Crucified with Christ, he will share deeply in the agonizing prayer of Jesus, God enables Paul to understand the purifying power of these interior sufferings.
8. This expression is a strong affirmation of Paul's mystical experience of Christ's Passion. That experience is a gift-a charism-which will always manifest itself in Paul's life, in his prayer, and in his apostolate. For Paul, it is a gift of God's Mercy, a divine attribute which Paul frequently mentions. This same expression is an early attestation of his doctrine on abandonment, which he envisions as a - participation in the abandonment of Jesus on the Cross. Extreme desolation emerges in the heart of Paul during these forty days-a sharing in the abandonment and desolation of Jesus on the Cross and a foreshadowing of what is to come. But the desolation and abandonment always terminate in the commending of his spirit to the Father. As Father Viller, S.J., pointed out, we will find Paul's complete doctrine on abandonment as well as on the Passion of Christ in his very earliest doctrine on abandonment as well as on the Passion of Christ in his very earliest writings. From the very first day of his retreat of 1720, during which he wrote the First Rule, Paul manifested his burning desire to unite his sufferings to those of Christ. Cfr. Marcel Viller, S.J., "La volonté de Dieu dans les lettres de S. Paul de la Croix" in *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* t. 27, (1951) pp. 172ff.
9. Paul here refers to a gift of prayer "infused" into his spirit. In his early years Paul was deeply influenced by his reading of St. Francis de Sales. Compare Paul's reflections here with the notion of contemplative activity in *The Love of God* Book VI, Chapter VI "Such a pursuit goes by the name of a contemplative life, on account of the activity of our minds-gazing at the truth of God's beauty and goodness with loving attentiveness resulting from, and adding to, the love we have for our Lord's infinite charms." (*The Love of God*, Translated by Vincent Kerns, Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1962, p. 236).
10. The gift of tears at times accompanies mystical experiences. St. Teresa speaks of tears as a sign of deep contemplation (Cfr. *LIFE*, Chapter 19 and *Interior Castle*, Sixth

Mansion, Chapter 6). According to Poulain, “a person has the gift of tears when certain pious thoughts cause him to weep often and abundantly, and when this facility can only be attributed to the divine action.... Tears may, in fact, come from other causes than the divine action. The devil can produce them, either to enfeeble the health or to give rise to pride. Much more frequently they may be the result of an oversensitive nature...” (A. Poulain, S.J., *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, London, 1949, p. 378).

The supernatural origin of tears is recognized in the effects they produce. According to St. Teresa, these effects are strength and peace (Cfr. *Interior Castle Sixth Mansion*, Chapter 6), and a great desire to serve God and to help the neighbor (Cfr. *Life*, Chapter 19).

Paul of the Cross disposed himself for the gift of tears by his deep spirit of compunction and by his long and arduous asceticism. Father Cajetan discovers three types of tears in the experience of Paul: a) Tears of Love which are caused by the thought of God’s Infinite Love and by the desire to be more and more united with Him (e.g., November 25, November 30, December 7, December 23, December 30, and January 1); b) Tears of Regret which are caused by the consideration of his own ingratitude and that of sinners toward God (e.g., December 26 and January 1); c) Tears of Compassion which are shed at the sight of our Lord’s sufferings and the sorrows of Mary (e.g., December 29). (Cfr. P. Gaetan du Saint Nom de Marie, C.P., *Oraison et Ascension Mystique de St. Paul de la Croix Louvain*, 1930, pp. 103-104).

The gift of tears was an important aspect of Eastern spirituality and this teaching was accepted in the Roman West and found in a special way in St. Gregory the Great. In St. Gregory’s words: “Who does good works and has been deemed worthy to have received some gifts from God but has not yet received tears, he must pray for this in order to weep, either thinking about the last judgment or longing for the heavenly kingdom or repenting over the evil past deeds or kneeling before the Cross of Christ, seeing Him suffering for us, our Crucified Savior” [Cited in Nil Sorsky, *Ustav (Rule)* p. 73]. The same division of tears as above can be found in this text e.g., Tears of Love-longing for Heaven; Tears of Regret-thinking of the last judgment and repenting over past evil deeds; Tears of Compassion-kneeling before the Cross of Christ, seeing Him suffering for us, our Crucified Savior. For an interesting treatment on tears, cfr. George A. Maloney, S.J., “Tears and Enlightenment” in *Review for Religious*, Vol. 33, (6, November 1974, pp. 1397-1404).

11. Paul had a great attraction for praying during the night; as a youngster he often prayed during the night. This same practice occurs during this retreat and it is a constant in his life afterwards. By this practice Paul was entering into the spirit of the Church, Who, by her nature, is Vigil always waiting for Jesus and for the Great Trial which precedes His Final Coming. Paul expresses his experience of Christian Vigil in terms of singing the praises of God and making atonement for the sins of mankind. (cfr. P.G. Giacinto PAR 1854v).
12. This is apostolic prayer – for the Church and for sinners. Intercessory prayer for others is a strong facet of Paul’s spiritual life and the life of his future Congregation. It is noteworthy that from the beginning, Paul’s prayer had a strong ecclesial thrust.
13. We do not know to what chastisement Paul refers. However, at Castellazzo on March

11, 1721, after preaching in the country there, Paul asked permission from Bishop di Gattinara to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain of Varallo; when he returned “to instruct the people on general doctrine inviting them more and more to perseverance... to imitate to them a most atrocious calamity, because I felt myself inspired thus... (Letters I, p. 22). In the *Diario Bolla* by Giuseppe Bolla written at that time, words are recorded which reached Castellazzo regarding the cholera epidemic which broke out in regions not far from Alessandria.

14. Paul had a deep sense of sin and personal responsibility, which developed and matured throughout his life.
15. Detached though he was, Paul always had a great sense of concern and compassion for his family. We know that he delayed following his vocation in order to help the family financially. Filial piety was a salient characteristic of Paul’s spirituality.
16. Note how very human Paul was and how he was afflicted by the same kind of annoyances which disturb us. In this passage he is referring to seeing people in the Church or on the street outside his window, hearing them pass by, and hearing the noises and the church bells.
17. Pere Breton expresses the meaning of the “buried heart” so well when he writes: “The detachment must go...beyond suffering and joy which are the extremes of one same genre and which have this in common – attaching us to ourselves. Indifference and union with the Divine Will raise the soul above its “passions” in a kind of kenosis which configures it to Christ on the Cross. With much finesse, this young man of twenty-seven years notes that the variety and multitude of sufferings experienced in this Christological spirit contribute to balancing them in a kind of neutral point where the subject is no longer aware of what affects him. Transition point of all that it experiences, the soul is indeed this potens omnia pa# this universality of suffering, which confers on it a kind of anonymity. The Diary translates this anonymity by a meaningful metaphor – that of a “buried heart... “ (P. Stanislaus Breton, *La Mystique de la Passion*, pp. 60-61).
18. From the beginning Paul was deeply espoused to the Will of God. Abandonment to the Will of God is one of the constants in his spiritual doctrine. Note how Paul always conceives the Will of God in terms of love-”the Most Holy Will of our good God...” Cf. Viller, *ibid*.
19. Paul’s contentment is a sign of his deep participation in the Self-emptying spirit of Christ. This experience of contentment is beautifully expressed by St. Francis de Sales in the *Love of God*: “But the state of tranquility where the will’s sole activity is simply a consent to God’s permissive will content at prayer merely to be in God’s sight, if He cares to look-is the best tranquility of all. It is free from all self-seeking. The soul’s faculties find no satisfaction there-not even the will, except in its highest point, where it is content to be contented with having no contentment out of love for the contentment of God’s permissive will in which it rests. The peak of love’s ecstasy, after all, is to long for God’s contentment, not our own; is to gratify, not our wishes, but God’s.” *Love of God*, Book Vi, Chapter XI, pp. 249-250.
20. The terminology here is definitely Salesian and serves best to translate the experience

of Paul. St. Francis de Sales and Paul are indeed kindred spirits.

21. It is noteworthy that Paul's most characteristic interior perceptions are realized at the time of Communion.
22. The edition of Father Stanislaus's, which is not as authentic as Sardi's, omits this important adjective 'sorrowful.'
23. Paul speaks of the Passion for the first time, and it is at Communion time: Note also the intimacy of the expression: "sorrowful Passion of my beloved Jesus." On November 24, Paul spoke of pure loving attentiveness to God in general, but here a new element appears-the Passion of Jesus.
24. Note the prayer of Paul: it is Passion-centered and the accent is on the sufferings of Christ, not on Paul's sufferings.
25. Here Paul teaches us how to meditate on the Passion. He shows that we are not to stop at the external sufferings but that we are to look to the interior ones, to the Heart of Christ.
26. Sardi's autograph has the adjective "great" before "sins" while the less accurate editions have only "my sins." Note Paul's use of word "Spouse" to indicate the intimate relationship with Christ. "Spouse" is used 11 times in the Diary.
27. Note that the Passion-experience here is expressed in terms of Christ's sufferings being infused into Paul. The "infused sufferings" which cause "love and sorrow" are the formal means which realize the mystical experience of Paul. In other words, the infused sufferings are the connatural touch which renders God present to and experienced by the soul. They are the light under which and through which Paul touched the Divinity in the Crucified. Here Paul experiences the reality expressed by St. Thomas when he says: "Through this sacrament we are made participants of the Lord's Passion (S.T. III, 83, 1). Paul discovered and experienced in the Mass the substance of his devotion to the Passion. Note that when Paul communes with the interior dispositions of the Suffering Christ, he then attains the contemplative act, penetrates into God and feels the sufferings of Jesus infused into his soul. This causes in him an experience of the blending of love and sorrow. Paul's devotion to the Passion is a true interior devotion. He makes his own the interior sentiments and dispositions of his Beloved. Paul sees in the Suffering Christ not only a moral exemplar to imitate, but a deifying power to attain. This profound life-giving experience, grafted on to the ontological virtualities of the Sufferings of Christ, enable Paul to experience vitally the Divinity in the Passion of Christ.

The infused wisdom (light and love) in Paul are the sufferings of Jesus which, penetrating his spirit, immerse him in the Unique Divine Person Who suffers them in his human nature. Thus, Paul, through the infinite sorrow of the sufferings of Jesus, is immersed in the Infinite Love of God Who has decreed and willed the Passion. The humanity of Jesus, even when immersed in sorrow, reveals and leads to the love of the Divinity and this sanctifies, divinizes, and raises sorrow to a salvific value. Paul penetrates the Love of God through the Passion of Christ.

The infused prayer of Paul reaches a marvelous theological depth. If Paul discovers, knows, and experiences the love of God and contact with Him in and through the

Sorrows of Christ, these can only be the “objectum quo,” the specific contemplative light under which and in virtue of which Paul is immersed in God and experiences that He is “an immense Sea of Infinite Charity” (Lettere I, 404).

This infused experience, this touch of connaturality excludes every distinct analogous concept. It is a simple sapiential knowledge actuated by the Holy Spirit through His gifts in the substance of the soul, by which He is actually perceived.

28. There are many examples of this type of colloquy in the Letters of Paul. Cfr. e.g., Letters, p. 401 and p. 108.
29. i.e., as on November 23 and November 25.
30. Paul was not a victim of dolorism, but had a very positive attitude toward the Cross, He always saw suffering in the integral Paschal context of joy as a way to become more deeply identified with Christ. The Passion is not only a night, it is also a light. And in the prayer-agony Paul endured, he received many lights in prayer.
31. The word “sweetness” in English has lost much of its strength, but the idea is a deeply biblical one. It is a concept which Paul encountered often in St. Francis de Sales. At times, we shall use the word “delight” instead of “sweetness.”
32. The deprivation of which Paul speaks was real, notwithstanding the rigor of the winter, he wore only a rough tunic and went barefooted.
33. Paul refers to a special grace-great joy in suffering.
34. This strophe is very probably Paul’s own--and we know that he authored other poetical compositions of mystical inspiration. Cfr. Lettere I, pp. 260 ff., I, 341 and 665.

“Your crosses, dear God are the joys of my heart.” This variant of the strophe is repeated a couple of months afterwards in a letter to Sister Teresa Costanza Pontas, an Augustinian Nun of the Monastery of Castellazzo. “How beautiful to suffer with Jesus! I would want to have a heart of the Seraphim to explain the loving anxieties of suffering which the dear friends of the Crucified desire; since if there are crosses here, then there will be crowns in Paradise... Keep your heart good, since the more you will suffer, the more you will be likened to our dear Spouse Jesus...” (Lettere I, p. 24).

Note that this advice of Paul sets suffering immediately in the context of love. It is also interesting to note his expression--so Pauline--“to suffer with Jesus.”

35. Cfr. the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales, The Love of God, Book VI, Chapter VIII, pp. 239-240: “When the soul is inwardly recollected like that, in God or in his presence, it occasionally becomes so secretly attentive to its beloved’s goodness as to give the appearance of scarcely being attentive at all--so artless its attention, so unobtrusive... Even in a human love affair, after all, a man is often content merely to be near, or in the sight of his sweetheart. He does not talk to her, he does not even really think about her, or her qualities; he is gratified, it seems, quite content to enjoy her beloved presence, not be reflecting on it, but simply by resting his mind in the peace and quiet it affords... So completely peaceful does this stillness sometimes become, the soul with all its powers seems to have been lulled to sleep. There is no movement, no activity whatever, except in the will; yet even the will does no more than accept the gratification, the contentment, which the beloved’s presence affords.”

36. This “great wonder of God” refers to the foundation of the new Congregation of the Passion. Paul wanted to go to Rome in order to obtain the Holy See’s approbation of the new Institute. On March 11 of the following year (1721) Paul wrote thus to Bishop di Gattinara:”... I want to explain to Your Excellency my reasons for thinking that I am more and more inspired to go to Rome. My most dear and reverend Pastor, I beg you for the love of Jesus Christ to console me by giving me permission so that I can follow the holy inspirations of my dear Spouse Jesus... ; when I shall find myself at the feet of His Holiness, God will make the whole world see his mercies. I trust so much in my Crucified Lord, that I am more than certain that everything will succeed... “ (Lettere I, p. 22). But the first trip to Rome was a total failure. Only 48 years later, under Clement XIV, will God make the whole world see his mercies. Note again the evangelical language of Paul when he refers to his future Congregation as a “great wonder of God.”
37. The “Poor of Jesus” is the first name Paul gave to his future religious. Cfr. Lettere IV, p. 220. This is significant in view of the fact that the greatest manifestation of poverty in Jesus was in the Mystery of His Passion, wherein He was stripped of everything and abandoned to suffering by His Father. Note also that it was in prayer, after Communion, that Paul received light to write the Rule for the poor of Jesus.
38. The “holy inspirations” occupy Paul’s mind and heart this day. He refers to the Congregation he intends to found, a congregation which will be the fruit of Paul’s love and suffering.
39. This is the first reference to Mary (After the Title) and it is in a Eucharistic context. Note that Mary is seen here as a praying Mother- interceding for the foundation of the Congregation. Mary continues her work for the Church in heaven.
40. From the beginning, Paul had a deep sense of communion with other founders. There was no sense of jealous competition in Paul. In an era of division, this was certainly noteworthy. From later history in Paul’s life, we know that he suffered much from other religious institutes as they worked to prevent his new foundations.
41. The Sardi autograph has “Most High Majesty”-a preferred reading to the less accurate editions.
42. It is remarkable that such a young man speaks with such precision about mystical experience. Paul indicates very definitely that his vision was an intellectual one. Cfr. Ascent of Mount Carmel, II, c. 23. Note that Paul’s vision took place “during thanksgiving and prayer.”
43. It is important to note this experience of Paul in view of that opinion which would exaggerate the emotional aspect of Paul’s psychology. Paul himself tells us: “Know that after my God withdrew me from the exercise of meditation, that is, from discursive reflection on the mysteries, going from one thing to another, I do not have imaginary forms any more, as my Father Director can testify.. ;” (Lettere IV, p. 219). He is referring to some years before.
44. The doctrine and example given here manifest another Salesian influence. St. Francis de Sales expresses it in this way: “Once the will has been captivated by God’s presence, it never gives up enjoying the happiness of it, even though intellect or memory turns deserter, stealing away in pursuit of irrelevant worthless thoughts.

Obviously, on such occasions, tranquillity of soul is not so deep as when intellect and memory act in concert with the will. For all that, it is still a genuine spiritual peace; its influence pervades the will, and the will has control of all the other faculties. Like a tiny child, than, seemed that soul I am talking about. Only her will was occupied; intellect, memory, hearing and imagination were free. For a child, while being suckled, can see, and hear, and even wave its arms.

Peace of soul, however, would be all the greater, all the sweeter for a man, if there were no external noise around him, if he had no need to make any exertion of body or mind, his heart set on concentrating solely on God's presence.... " (Love of God, Book VI, Chapter X, pp. 245-46). Cfr. also St. Teresa of Avila, Way of Perfection, Chapter 31, pp. 130-31.

45. Notice the connection Paul makes between Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, and the virtue of humility.
46. The expression: "I heard it said in my heart..." could be what St. John of the Cross calls interior formal locution. "The second kind of interior locution is called formal and is produced supernaturally in the spirit without the use of the senses. Its origin is independent of any spiritual recollection. I give it the name 'formal locution' because another person formally utters it to the spirit without intervention of the soul:" (The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. 2, Chapter 30, p. 208. The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, trans. by 'Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICM Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington, D.C. 1973.

The words of God are never empty; they are always operative words. Therefore the Divine locutions are operative and express the great maxim of humility. Lucifer exalted himself more than all creatures and therefore becomes the lowest. The Saints had such a low opinion of themselves because they looked at themselves in the mirror of Divinity. St. Teresa of Avila speaks of it in this way: "When it looks upon this Divine Sun, the brightness dazzles it; when it looks at itself, its eyes are blinded by clay. The little dove is blind, absorbed, amazed and dazzled by all the wonders it sees. From this it acquires true humility, which will never allow it to say anything good of itself, nor will it permit others to do so. It is the Lord of the garden, and not the soul, that distributes the fruit of the garden, and so nothing remains in its hands, but all the good that 'is in it is directed toward God; if it says anything about itself, it is for His glory. It knows that it possesses nothing here; and even if it so wishes, it cannot ignore this; for it sees it by direct vision, and, willy-nilly, shuts its eyes to things of the world; and opens them to an understanding of the truth."

47. Paul has received deep infused humility and experiences that, apart from the Mercy of God, he would not be able to be better than Satan.
48. Paul began the composition of his Rule on this day. He described his experience in this way: "I began to write this Holy Rule in the year 1720 on December 2 and finished it on December 7. Before writing I said Matins before daylight and then I made mental prayer and, full of courage, I went to write. The infernal enemy was at hand to assault me by putting repugnances and even difficulties in my way: but as it was something inspired by God and ordained by God, I entered into the work neither more nor less (with the grace of God). Know that when I began to write, I wrote as fast as if someone

had been dictating to me from a professor's chair. I felt that the words came from my heart. But I have written this so that you might know that all this is a particular inspiration of God, because, as for myself, I have nothing but sin and ignorance. In everything, however, I put myself under the examination of my Superiors. May the Most Blessed Sacrament be praised and adored by all on all the altars of the world." (Lettere, IV, p. 221).

49. The power of the Eucharist in the spirit of Paul at the moment of Communion is remarkable. Despite all the struggles before and after, he is hardly ever distracted at that moment. St. Teresa of Avila notes a similar experience: cfr, *Life*, Chapter 30, n. 14.
50. This is a cogent image. Like a tree stump, Paul ordinarily feels hard, inert, dry and heavy.
51. At times Paul's expressions are awkward and he leaves sentences unfinished, much as we at times do in talking. Note here that in the Sardi autograph, the text is: "o dura piu, in tutto sia benedetto," while the less accurate editions read: "o dura piu, o meno."
52. During this forty-day experience, Paul speaks of various physical sufferings, e.g., cold and hunger, but he refers primarily to the interior sufferings of mind and heart-psychological and mystical sufferings. 53. The "you" refers to Bishop di Gattinara, to whom Paul is addressing the Diary.
54. Paul's positive attitude toward sufferings and trials is again indicated here. This affirming attitude toward the cross is a fruit of his faith-experience-that it is the Will of God and this Will is identified with the Love of God.
55. Paul inverts the order of St. Teresa's words. She has: "either to die or to suffer." Cfr. *Life*, Chapter 40, p. 297.
56. Cfr. I Corinthians 13:12.
57. Paul had an extraordinary sense of the Mystery of God and the mystery of sin. Note Paul's apostolic anguish. Transformation in God implies participation in the love through which He wills to immolate Himself for men. This apostolic anguish in Paul manifests the fruitfulness of his contemplation.
58. Note the attractiveness of God for Paul.
59. This does not deny the present "body-person" approach. Paul was a man of his time and culture, and so his expressions will be influenced by that background.
60. Note again the deep insights Paul receives at Communion time. This section reminds us of Paul the Apostle's "life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more... I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much better... " (Philippians I, 21-23). To the infused understanding of the beatific vision, Paul contrasts the unhappy lot of so many souls who are lost, rendering the Redemptive Passion fruitless. The apostolic anguish, with the desire for martyrdom, stems from the depths of mystical union.

The spiritual account of this day is implicit in the 206th article of the Ordinary Process of Orbetello: "It is true that, from the time the Venerable Father Paul gave himself to a penitential life, he was enlightened by God in a special way while making

prayer. The Lord infused into him so much and such great knowledge and lights about the truths of faith that he would need a room full of books to be able to explain all that he understood (this is the way that the Servant of God expressed himself to his Confessor). He understood through such lights; rather, he had at one time lights so particular on the Divinity that every created thing disappeared and his soul desired ardently and vehemently to be dissolved from the ties of the body in order to be united to the supreme and eternal Good so clearly and vividly known..." (f. 747).

St. Teresa of Avila describes a similar experience in Spiritual Relation V: "... As the soul finds itself tied and bound so that it cannot have fruition of God as it would wish, it conceives a great hatred for the body, which seems like a great world standing between it and the fruition of something of which it seems to realize that it is in fact having fruition within itself when untrammelled by the body..." Cfr. The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus, trans. from critical edition of Fr. Silverio De Santa Teresa, O.C.D., and edited by E. Allison Peers Sheed and Ward, New York, 1946, V, p. 332. '61. Sardi's autograph simply says. in pace while the less accurate editions have "very peaceful" (molto in pace).

62. On November 30, Paul asked for the highest degree of humility. Part of Paul's self-emptying experience came as a result of his own self-knowledge.
63. Note Paul's familiarity with the angels--and his deep sense of sin.
64. Sardi's autograph specifies a "special confidence" (La particular confidenza), while the less accurate editions simply have pure la confidenza.
65. Note Paul's deep confidence in the Eucharist coupled with the sense of his deep, personal inner poverty.
66. Cfr. Matthew 9:13. Note the intimate character of the dialogue between God and Paul in prayer. It is noteworthy that the Word of God and the Eucharist are primary sources of Paul's spirituality. The Word of God is the living reality Paul is to proclaim in his life and ministry, and the Eucharist contains the power of Christ's Passion.

Paul received light and consolation from the Word of God during these forty days, especially as he prayed the Divine Office and listened to the Word of God in the Mass. Even though the above text is the only explicit Scriptural reference in the Diary, there are many implicit references, e.g.,: Nov. 23: Gal. 2:29; Nov.27: Psalm 89:2 and Esther 10:6; Nov. 30: Matt. 23:12 and Revelation 5:11; Dec. 4: I Cor. 13:12; Dec. 4: Philippians I, 21, 23; Dec. 5: Matt. 9:13; Dec. 6: Gal. 2:19-20; Dec. 10-13: Revelation 2:17; Dec. 21: Revelation 21:23, I Peter 2:21, I Peter, 1:7, Gal. 2:19; Dec. 23: Revelation 5:13; Dec. 26: Proverbs 3:12; Dec. 27: John 7:38; Dec. 28: Matt. 2:13, etc.

67. The Sardi autograph has SS. Communion while the less accurate editions read nell orazione.
68. The Sardi autograph has "holy congregation, while the less accurate editions read simply this congregation."
69. Note the two-fold petition: for the foundation of the Congregation and for sinners. In Paul's mind, 'sinners' are those in need of God; he does not judge or condemn them. He simply sees them as persons in need of God. This is another example of Paul's

intercessory prayer.

70. Paul realized that his knowledge of Christ's sufferings is infused—a gift from above.
71. This is a most significant expression of Paul's mystical experience of Jesus Crucified. He explicitly states that it is infused. He can re-echo the words of St. Paul the Apostle: "I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body I live in faith: faith in the Son of God who loved me and who sacrificed himself for my sake." Gal. 2:19-20. Paul's desire to feel the sufferings of Christ and to be on the cross with Him is a sign of a way of life and not a mere transitory wish or velleity.
72. "Bodily comparisons" i.e., material or sensible likenesses or examples taken from contemporary life. God's infused understanding transcends our acquired ideas, transcends all created reality and therefore is ineffable.
73. The less accurate editions omit the "etc." It is interesting to note the many times Paul uses "etc." in his writings, and often he would wish that he had continued his thoughts. But his experience is at times so overwhelming that human speech is inadequate and he simply concludes with an "etc."
74. The Sardi autograph has *ma poi doppo tutto spari* while the less accurate editions simply read: *ma poi tutto spari*.
75. Note the somatic effect of the Eucharist. St. Teresa of Avila also has an interesting experience in this regard: "Do you suppose that this most holy food is not ample sustenance even for the body and a potent medicine for bodily ills? I am sure that it is. I know a person who was subject to serious illnesses and often suffered great pain, and this pain was taken away from her in a flash and she became quite well again. This often occurs, I believe, and cures are recorded from quite definite illnesses which could not be counterfeited..." Way of Perfection Chapter XXXIV, Vol. II, pp. 146-7.
76. Another instance of Paul's intercessory prayer.
77. A clear affirmation of the apostolic thrust of the future Congregation. In Paul's communion with God in prayer, he sees with, in and through Christ, in the Heart of the Father are all the redemptive needs of mankind: Thus from his experience of "crucifixion with Jesus" and "communing with the Father," he is called to found a Congregation—to commune with men and women. There is an intimate connection between Paul's mystical experience and his apostolate. It is significant that this reference to the apostolic thrust of the Congregation occurs on the last day of his writing of the Rule.
78. Contemporary theology puts great emphasis on the concept of service, especially as regards authority. Paul wanted to be servant at all times—and God chose him to be General of the Congregation until the end of his life.
79. This deep self-knowledge is part of his self-emptying—that spirit of penance which can be very painful. 80. Note again the connection between deep inner poverty and confidence in the Eucharist. Cfr. Diary for December 5.
81. Paul finished the Rule on this day, and note his great sense of inner poverty and nothingness.

82. Note the terminology: speaking to Jesus about HIS sufferings. There is no dolorism in Paul, no self-pity. It is not his personal sufferings he talks about, but those of Jesus. This is a very important aspect of Paul's spirituality; there is no accent on self. Note also that his takes place at Communion time:
84. The Italian form is *sapi j* and is addressed to Bishop di Gattinara, the Spiritual Director of Paul.
85. The term "liquefy" or "melt away" is consecrated by a long tradition. It expresses the first effect of love very well. Cfr. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 28:5:"... melting denotes a softening of the heart whereby the heart shows itself to be ready for the entrance of the beloved." (*Summa Theologica*, English Translation, Benziger Brothers, Inc. New York, 1947). St. Paul of the Cross also probably remembered the words of St. Francis de Sales: "But not death itself is so strong as love; love it is that mollifies, softens and melts hearts far more quickly than all the other passions." *Love of God*, Book VI, Chapter XII, p. 251.

Note the contemplative method of Paul – few words suffice. The mystical experience of Paul is characterized by "infused sufferings" and the "liquefaction of love." It is therefore perfected precisely in the Eucharist which is the Sacrament of Love and at the same time the 'visible sacrifice' of Christ in which He is immolated in an unbloody way.

86. The "languor" is another effect of love, Cfr. St. Thomas S.T. I-II, 28, 5. St. Francis de Sales speaks of "the wounded heart that pines away with love" and of "love-sickness," recalling the heart-sickness of St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Angela of Foligno, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Christine and St. Teresa. (cfr. *Love of God*, Book VI, Chapter XV, pp. 260-262). Paul of the Cross, from his reading of St. Francis de Sales, must have been informed about it. He must have experienced it many times, referring as he does to the "sufferings of his Spouse infused into him" as he writes immediately afterwards: "Sufferings" which-as he will say on December 20-"cause him great pain and total prostration. Cfr. *Lettere* II, p, 830; *Interior Castle*, Sixth Mansion, Ch, XI.
87. It is an intimate, personal experience, and takes place at Communion time. Note the Eucharist-Passion motif.
88. Cfr. St. Francis de Sales, *Love of God*, Book VI, Chapter V, p. 230ff: "Contemplation takes a single concentrated look at what we love, a concentrated reflection that has greater energy, greater power to move the will... Blessed are those who reduce all their motives for loving God to one, who gathers all the thoughts of their meditation. into one conclusion, who engage their minds in the unity of contemplation." Paul, later on, will be most eloquent with souls called to this high degree of prayer. 89. "Loving and sorrowful vision"-this expression will appear many times in Paul's letters. He learned it first in St. Francis de Sales. The "vision" is "loving and sorrowful": sorrowful because the soul participates in the anguish of Jesus Crucified; loving because it experiences wonder, complacency and gratitude in its intuition of the Infinite Mercy which motivated the Redemptive work of the Passion, Cfr. St. Francis de Sales, *Love of God*, Book V, Chapter V: "Could a loyal lover see such torments in one who is laved more than life itself, and not change color, cloud with anguish? That is how it is with me; at

the mercy of sorrow—a sorrow born of sympathy with my Savior’s untold suffering—distress overwhelms me, tears me with grief. Since love, however, is the source to which all my beloved’s grief may be traced, his plight gives me cause for gratification in exact proportion as it fills me with pity. What true lover, faced with proof of such tremendous love on the part of the heavenly bridegroom, could fail to experience unutterable content? Unbearable are the torments He suffers, this divine lover of mine; that is what grieves me, leaves me senseless with pain. Yet He is glad to suffer; He welcomes the agony; death is a joy to Him, because all its pains are for me. That is why, saddened as I am by His sufferings, I am beside myself with joy at His love; not only do I grieve with Him, I also boast of Him... “ (pp. 193-194). The infusion of the sufferings of Christ in Paul is a divine touch in the substance of the soul and provokes absorption in God—a loving and sorrowful ecstasy.

On December 27, Paul, in reference to the “sufferings of the Redeemer” will say that the soul “takes delight” in them:”... “Love and sorrow were blended,” He says the same thing on the following day, December 28. Paul will communicate this same doctrine throughout his life, For example, he will write to Sister Columba Geltrude Gandolfi on July 10, 1743: “Love is a unitive power and makes the sufferings of the Beloved its own, If you feel totally penetrated within and without by the sufferings of the Spouse, celebrate a feast, but I can tell you that this feast is celebrated in the furnace of Divine Love because the fire which penetrates even to the marrow of one’s bones, transforms the lover into the beloved, and, blending love with sorrow in a deep way, and the sorrow with the love, there is made a loving and sorrowful blend, but so united that one cannot distinguish love from sorrow nor sorrow from love, so much so that the loving soul rejoices in its sorrow and makes festival in its sorrowful love, I think you will understand my madness... “ (Lettere, II, p. 440). This is exactly the same way St. Francis de Sales expressed it: cfr. Love of God, p. 194.

90. Note the creative power of this spiritual experience. The agonizing prayer of Paul and his talking to Christ about HIS sufferings become a creative experience. This method of thanking the Lord after Communion by recounting His sorrowful Passion to Him is an excellent practice. Every time Paul uses it, he admits that he feels himself “melting away” with love. Afterwards he will counsel persons whom he is directing to pray in this way. Cfr. Lettere, I, p. 612.
91. Note the intimacy of Paul with God. So often he speaks of “my God,”—“my Jesus.” Along with his deep experience of the Transcendence of God, we find in Paul a deep sense and experience of the Immanence of God.
92. Another example of intercessory prayer. Paul had a deep call to pray for sinners, Cfr. Diary, Dec. 15-18; Nov. 25; Dec. 6; Dec, 7.
93. Note that Paul’s agonizing prayer is a struggle. He disciplines and forces himself to remain at prayer, difficult though it be. Even though he had already reached a high degree of prayer, Paul never relaxed his personal asceticism,
94. Paul is living on bread and water for the forty days; yet he is tempted to gluttony more.
95. Note how very human are Paul’s temptations: the desire to run away from prayer when it became difficult.

96. In solitude, when one is searching for God, it is normal to experience assaults from the flesh and the devil, just as Jesus did in the desert.
97. Paul's awareness of the devil would be an interesting study in itself, especially in view of contemporary trends.
98. Like Paul the Apostle, who speaks of suffering as a charism, Paul of the Cross speaks of suffering-prayer as a great gift.
99. The "ermine of purity" is an image drawn from the metamorphosis which takes place in the ermine's skin: in winter, it changes from brown to clear white.
100. Paul suffers so much that he does not even know the extent of his suffering; neither do others know it. Only God knows the full story of his participation in the Lord's Passion.
101. Note that suffering during prayer as a way to God harmonized with the key point in Paul's doctrine: that the Passion is the door to contemplation.
102. Cfr. Revelation 2:17: "to those who prove victorious I will give the hidden manna and a white stone.... "
103. Paul's approach to the Eucharist is very personal and intimate as noted in his expression: "my Sacramental Jesus."
104. Note the ordinary human temptations to which Paul is subjected: to impatience, gluttony, and temptation to leave prayer.
105. Paul did not have a poor image of himself. We are dealing here with a deep infused gift of humility. Paul was never crushed and was always at peace: Therefore he had a good self-image: He tells us that he wanted his religious to be "living portraits of Jesus Crucified"-a very positive and affirmative image. This experience also indicates Paul's profound spirit of solitude and his trust in the midst of abandonment.
106. Here again we note Paul's intercessory prayers and his deep sense of sin and sense of the Mystery of God. In the Diary, penance-apart from the obvious physical trials-is expressed in terms of self-emptying. His deep sense of the Mystery of God and the mystery of sin impels him to do penance.
107. Note reference to the Sacrament of Penance.
108. Sardi's text has e massime, which is lacking in the less accurate editions.
109. That is, the evening itself of Thursday.
110. In the Primitive Rule, written in the cell of St. Charles fifteen days before, Paul had written: "I beg you that on Friday each one will perform all the pious exercises he can and especially of particular mortification... Oh, dear brethren!... in recalling Friday, there are things, which could cause one who truly loves, to die; because it is a day when the God-Man has suffered ~so much for me that He laid down His Own most Holy Life, dying on the hard wood of the cross.. , and know then, my Brethren, that the principal purpose of being clothed in black (according to the particular inspiration God gave me) is to be clothed for mourning in memory of the Passion and Death of Jesus, and in order that we might never forget to remain in a continual and sorrowful remembrance of it. And therefore let each of the Poor of Jesus take care to suggest to

whomever he can the pious meditation on the sufferings of our Most Loving Jesus.. , “ (Lettere IV, pp. 220-21). Unfortunately the sentence above the word “cross” is not finished. Here Paul reveals ever so slightly the great sufferings he endures as he participates ever more deeply in the Mystery of the Passion, which he once described as “the greatest and most stupendous work of Divine Love.” (Lettere, II, p, 499.

111. The Sardi text has *per il dolore* at the end; this phrase is lacking in the less accurate editions.
112. The Sardi text has “holy prayer.”
113. Perhaps he means *Svenivo* or *venivo meno*. , i.e., “I fainted...”
114. The Sardi text has *sortiva fuori assieme l’inimico*.
115. Part of Paul’s experience of poverty in San Carlo was his temptation of impatience-feeling lack of resources in patience.
116. The reference is to visiting priests who came to offer Mass.
117. This is another kind of poverty which Paul experiences. It is a matter of diabolical suggestions-one of the most dreadful of the passive purifications. Paul, who loves God with his whole being, feels himself forced as it were to blaspheme God. St. John of the Cross describes this kind of suffering: “At other times the blasphemous spirit is added: it commingles intolerable blasphemies with all their thoughts and ideas. Sometimes these blasphemies are so strongly suggested to the imagination that the soul is almost made to pronounce them, which is a grave torment to it.” (The Dark Night, Book I, Chapter 14 #2, p. 328). Pere Breton expresses Paul’s experience in a forceful way when he writes: “Paul Danei expresses himself in terms of struggle... The Absolute who liberates, appears as the oppressor at the moment itself when faith affirms it as Love. This ambivalence renews, in an endless circle, the tearing to pieces of conscience. Everything happens as if the blasphemy punished for his daring him who cannot but believe in Love: and as if love rejected the poor soul distracted by the blasphemy “beneath the feet of the demon.” (Breton, op.cit., pp. 67-68).
118. This is the third time in the Diary that an invocation to the Blessed Virgin appears (cfr. November 28 and November 30). Paul invokes Mary in the midst of his great temptations, We know the major role Mary played in the vocation of Paul; cfr. P. Sardi, POA, f. 237-v; Rosa Calabresi POR ff. 199-v, 009-9 ).
119. The Sardi text has *de mozioni di cuore* (movements of the heart) while the less accurate editions read *divozione de cuore* (devotions of the heart). The Sardi reading is to be preferred.
120. This is Paul’s vivid description of his experience of abandonment. His self-knowledge and self-emptying experience express one aspect of his penitential spirit.
121. Note Paul’s terminology: he speaks of a desire “To be always in Suffering”-a state of being rather than a transient experience.
122. This is not a morbid desire to suffer. Rather it issues from Paul’s basic drive to “follow Jesus in His sufferings”-the great grace of his life.
123. This is another expression of Paul’s basic charism.

124. Paul is referring to his brother, the Venerable John Baptist of St. Michael the Archangel; who will follow Paul all throughout his life and will be the co-founder of the Congregation.
125. Non m'incalo-dialectical form of the verb calere that is, to press, to be very anxious to etc. 126. Paul wants to share his charism with everybody and especially with the brethren.
127. Note the biblical expression; Paul's language is evangelical.
128. Note the dynamism of Paul's language; for him the life of the spirit is never static; it is always moving forward.
129. Note the phrase "with Jesus.." Suffering and the cross in Paul's doctrine never foster self-introspection. For him it is always a matter of suffering "with Jesus" or of Jesus suffering in us.
130. Nor do others know that he is suffering. The soul transcends suffering as such.
131. In Paul's experience and doctrine, the Will of God is always intimately united with His Love. Theologically they are identical.
132. This is another expression of Paul's basic charism.
133. The sign of perfect love-of "blessed transformation" of the soul in God is indifference in everything, except for the Will of God. This indifference is experienced not only through joy but also through sorrow. Paul's desire to be crucified must be understood in terms of "with Him," for his ideal is to follow Jesus in His sufferings. There is no sign of dolorism in Paul. Love always has the primacy. He makes his own the sufferings of Jesus whom he loves. This is a principle he pondered many times as he read it in St. Francis de Sales: "Love makes lovers equal." Love of God, Book V, Chapter V, p. 194.
134. Note again the infused understanding given to Paul. The donal operation of the Spirit of Understanding is particularly pronounced in Paul's perception of the Mystery of the Passion. His con-crucifixion with Christ is also accompanied--significantly-by his praise of God.
135. Paul is very much aware of the devil's activity and this Christian awareness and vigilance is a 'constant' in Christian spirituality.
136. This is a beautiful example. The use of the words dar colpi (strike), disgranare (dislodge), penetrare (penetrate), rompere (break), disfare (destroy), fracassare (smash to pieces) is very descriptive and effective. Paul could have observed this scene many times when he passed by the Ligurian shore. This particular example made a deep impression on him. We find him using it years later in his direction,, e.g., in writing to a Carmelite Nun on July 9, 1769: "... As for the distress and contradictions of spirit, which you experience, I can say, according as I understand them, that the condition of your spirit is getting better all the time. You have to do nothing more than to remain in the depths of your heart and stay there like a rock in the arms of God's mercy. If the tempests of the ocean waves strike the rock, it doesn't make any difference. Have you ever seen the rocks of the sea when they are battered in a storm? A furious wave comes and strikes the rock! Another more furious wave comes and strikes it from every side, When the storm is over, look at the rock and you will see that the waves of the storm

have made it cleaner and have cleansed it of that dirt which the poor rock had at the time of calm. Mother Prioress, you are alarmed; and yet the Blessed God enriches you with His graces and great gifts, when you think that you are more abandoned. From now on I want you to be a rock; when the waves of the tempest come, remain silent; when more come, when ten come, a hundred or a thousand, remain quiet; and at most I give you permission to say in the midst of the tempest: ‘my Father, my Father, I am yours! O loving, O most tender Will of my God. I adore you, etc., and then remain silent and alone... ‘ (Lettere IV, p. 52ff).

137. Note how Paul speaks of God as The Infinite, The Immense, whom he will constantly compare to the sea, in which the soul is immersed in an ecstasy of love. On December 4 he wrote that “the soul sees herself in the Infinite Love of her God.” On December 7, he wrote of the “Infinite Mercy of... the Sovereign Good.” On December 8, the soul melts and languishes “plunged into the Heart and into the holy sorrow of her most loving Spouse.. , and remains in God”... absorbed in “that loving and sorrowful vision,” From December 1-13, despite his trials Paul frees himself always “in the arms of his Spouse,” “nourished with the milk of His Infinite Charity”.. , in deepest repose.” On December 24, he contemplates the “Infinite Love.” On December 26, the “Infinite Goodness,” the “Infinite Mercy,” the “Infinite Majesty”-and thus up to the last day of the Retreat. The Infinite Love of God is manifested particularly in the humiliating Passion of Christ... The “immense sea of the Sufferings of Our Lord Jesus” (Lettere I, p. 268) is born of that “bottomless abyss of Divine Love” (Lettere I, p. 267). Paul envisions two seas: the Love of God and the Passion of Christ. These two make one Immensity which calls forth ecstasy. From the viewpoint of the creature, there are two other seas: one’s own sufferings and one’s own nothingness. From these two seas one passes into the Immense Sea of the Uncreated Immense Love, Cfr. Lettere II, p. 443). Paul uses the work nuotare (to swim) figuratively for “contemplate.” Cfr. M. Viller S.J., “Contemplation du XVII e au XIX siecle, 5, S. Paul de la Croix” in Dictionnaire de Spiritualite, II, 2041).
138. Paul again uses the deeply biblical symbol of “rock.”
139. The Sardi text has *al suo caro sposo* -”her loving Spouse “-using the more personal and intimate *suo* (“her”), whereas the less accurate editions simply have *al caro Sposo*.
140. The Sardi text reads *con particolare reccoglimento* while the less accurate editions have *con maggior raccoglimento*.
141. The loving and sorrowful contemplation of Paul begins with the Mystery of Christmas, which inaugurates the loving and sorrowful history of the Word-made-Flesh who was obedient even unto death. “What a great light, what a great fire burns in the stable of Bethlehem! Woe to me if at the sight of such a great light, at the ardors of such a great fire, I am not consumed by holy love...” (Lettere II, p. 130ff). St. Vincent Strambi notes Paul’s extraordinary love of and reverence for the Mystery of the Incarnation. Cfr. P. Vincenzo M, di S. Paolo (Strambi), *Vita del Ven. Servo di Dio P, Paolo della Croce*, Lazzarini, Roma, MDCCLXXXVI, p. 217.
142. Paul’s scriptural experience on Christmas is described by himself as “dry as a stump.” Perhaps God wanted him to experience deeply the mystery of poverty in the Incarnation as a preparation for his future experience of poverty in the Mystery of the Passion.

143. The Eucharist-Passion motif is manifested here in Paul's desire to die as a martyr where the Blessed Sacrament is denied, and significantly this desire is experienced on the Feast of the Martyr, St. Stephen. While Paul had this desire before, it struck him in a special way at this time.
144. Paul's intercessory prayer shows his great love for England. His prayer will fructify later in the work of Blessed Dominic Barberi, C.P., who will receive John Newman into the Church. Another Passionist, Father Ignatius Spencer, C.P., will ask Pope Leo XIII to substitute the phrase "separated brothers" for heretics."
145. Suffering, for Paul, is not a good in itself, but a purifying, corrective action issuing from the love of God.
146. The Sardi text reads: ed in primo luogo lo servant ("Serve Him in the first place") while the less accurate editions simply say "serve Him."
147. The theme of "Infinite Mercy" is always dominant in Paul.
148. Note infused experience of joy and sorrow-and it takes place at Communion.
149. The Sardi text reads: e che vedevo con li ochj corporali il mio Sagramentato Gesu while the less accurate editions omit two phrases and include only: e che vedevo Gesu, gli dicevo, Note the immediate passage from the contemplation of the "sufferings of the Redeemer," in which the soul takes delight by the love and sorrow together-to the Eucharistic Mystery which is a living symbol of those sufferings. Paul's devotion to the Sacramental Jesus takes place in the Mass action.
150. The Eucharist, the perennial and living image of the immolation of the Cross, evokes in Paul the desire to respond as generously as possible. Infused love is communicated to Paul with the vehemence of an arrow, as he had read in or heard said of St. Teresa. Cfr. St. Francis de Sales, Love of God, Book VI, Chap. 15 and St. Teresa, Life, c. 29).
151. Note the Johannine imagery.
152. The Eucharistic Heart of Jesus appeased his thirst-then and for his whole life. Paul knows Very well what he is saying when he writes to Sister Cherubina Bresciani: he exhorts her to fly "in spirit to that beautiful Heart.. in the Heart of the Sacramental Jesus..." "But when," he continues, "the soul tastes remaining in the silence of love, let yourself remain there, and meanwhile drink at that divine source, those most holy waters of grace, which flow from His Heart; but know that he who drinks here, needs to drink deep draughts, I mean that he needs to drink Love in rivers, in a sea of fire, and let everything else fall into ashes..." (Lettere I, p. 473).
153. Paul's thirst for the Eucharist is extraordinary.
154. This is the first reference to the Sorrows of Mary and of Joseph, and to Paul's participation in them. 155. Paul emphasizes the positive aspect of mystical union. For him, the love which enjoys prevails over the love which suffers,-delight over compassion-as it is certain that the blessings understood by God in decreeing the Passion prevail over the sorrows of Christ and the guilt of man. Jesus is a strong Man who combats and conquers.
156. An indication of Paul's deep sense of sin and spirit of penance.

157. Here we discover overtones of the ‘Magnificat.’
158. Note how deeply united to the Mystery of Christ Paul is: he is so involved in the Mystery of Jesus that he speaks of offering HIS sufferings.
159. Paul’s attitude toward heretics is never one of condemnation but of compassion and concern.
160. The Sardi text has **moto** while the less accurate editions have **modo**.
161. Paul’s love for England began with his mother, who read to him as a child the history of so many saints who flourished there. throughout his life he prayed for England.
162. Through the grace of the Spirit, Paul has been transformed into the Crucified and desires martyrdom as a sign of his intimate participation in the Sacrifice of the Cross.
163. Paul alludes to the Church of Sts. Charles and Anna, where he lived during his retreat. It was located away from the center of town and at certain hours must have been frequented little. The animals could enter and roam about freely. Sardi writes: “I say and I attest that Fr. Paul...cleaned the dirt left there by the dogs...” (Doc. autogr, kept in the General Archives of the Congregation).
164. Paul’s sister, Teresa, attests: “I remember especially how he scolded the women whose heads were uncovered.” (Teresa Danei, POA, f. 135f). One of my brothers and also some ladies referred to this, that when he noticed someone speaking in Church, he came over to them, knelt before them and begged them to show respect in the House of God (Ibid., f. 119f).
165. The Sardi text has: *mi dij grazia piangere*, while the less accurate editions used the word *forza* (*mi dia forza di piangere*).
166. Paul’s love for the Eucharist is profound. Father Zoffoli offers an interesting observation at this point of the Diary. He writes: “No data authorizes us to affirm that Paul was ignorant of the Paray-le-Monial revelations which, upon the death of St. Mary (1690) will be propagated throughout the world with incredible speed. It is even probable that in Piedmont he would have been informed by various priests and confessors whom he could approach. But what is more important is that in the Diary, he already speaks of the Sacred Heart (December 27) and, in examining an extract, he speaks of “the Most Blessed Sacrament,” of the “irreverences” to which it exposed, and of his inspiration to “make reparation for them,” weeping over them with “tears of blood.” These are precisely the essential data which return with absolute clarity in the exhortations he will give to souls—documenting a surprising continuity of thought in this matter. “Do not leave the Sancta Sanctorum of the Most Pure Heart of Jesus: love Him with His own Heart; let yourself be penetrated by a living sorrow for the insults which He has received in the most adorable Sacrament and make reparation for them with humiliations, adoration, love, praise and thanksgiving...” (Letter to Agnes Grazi, July 22, 1741 Lettere I, p. 272f). On August 9, 1740, he wrote to Sister Cherubina Bresciani: “It is necessary to note that this flight of the spirit must be made in the Heart of the Sacramental Jesus and here suffer the sorrows for the irreverences which He receives from bad Christians and from worse ecclesiastics and religious men and women who respond to so great a love by ingratitude and sacrilege, and to make reparation for so many insults. The loving soul should offer herself as a victim, totally reduced to ashes

in the fire of holy love, and to love Him and praise Him and visit Him often for those who maltreat Him especially visiting Him at certain hours when there is no one to honor Him etc. Oh! how much I have to say on this matter etc., but time does not permit” (Lettere I, p, 473). Cfr. Bollettino 1928, p. 91ff. The meaning of these invitations is unequivocal. Informed or not on the message of Paray-le-Monial, Paul is in perfect harmony with the revelations of the Sacred Heart which have played such a significant role in the spirituality of the following centuries.

Even for this, the Diary presents the character of a magnificent prelude to his life and teaching of tomorrow,” (P. Enrico Zoffoli C.P.; S. Paolo della Croce, Diario Spirituale, Roma, 1964, p. 84 note 4).

167. The Sardi text has the word “aforementioned” (distrazioni sopradette massime) while the less accurate editions omit it.
168. Reference to his future Congregation and the trials which will afflict it, because of Paul’s sensitivity toward his family.
169. The supreme rule of Paul’s life will be: the Will of God. Every problem and difficulty will be clarified in the light of God’s Will. He will reduce the highest sanctity to this: fulfilling the Will of God with perfection,
170. The mystical Eucharistic experiences of these forty days reach a point of ecstatic fullness on the last day-and especially after Holy Communion,
171. Cfr. December 8, Note 85.
172. Paul alludes to a heroic vow he made after a light fault of gluttony-eating a grape while still at home in the family. At Rome he obtained a commutation from the vow a few years before his death. (Deposition extra. proc. of Father Thomas of the Crucified, written in 1867 and kept in the General Archives of the Congregation).
173. In Paul’s thought and experience, the Sacred Humanity of Jesus is always the door to the contemplation of the Divinity. Later on he will write: “It is not possible to pass to the contemplation of the Infinite and Limitless Divinity without entering by the door of the most divine Humanity of our Saviour” (Lettere I, p. 256).
174. Paul speaks of a *cognizione...sensible*. We have translated this as “experiential knowledge,” for it transcends the senses and reason. Paul contemplated the Infinite Love of God in the light of Christ’s Suffering Humanity which had produced “his own loving and sorrowful vision. St: Francis de Sales expressed the same experience in this way: “... There we must stop, for, believe me, Philothea, we can approach God the Father by no other door; just as we could see no reflection in a mirror were it not covered at the back with lead or tin, so should we be unable in this world to contemplate the Divinity were it not united to our Blessed Lord’s Sacred Humanity, His Life and Death being the most suitable, sweet, blessed and profitable subject which we can choose for our constant meditation. He did not call Himself “the Bread which cometh down from heaven” without a meaning; just as men eat bread, with whatever other meat they may have, so in all our prayers and actions we should seek, dwell upon, and meditate on our Saviour... “ An Introduction to a Devout Life, (The Peter Reilly Company, Philadelphia, 1942, Part Second, Chapter I, p. 56). Paul must have read the following page from St. Francis de Sales which describes so well the last great mystical

experience of his forty days: “How does the soul flow into God? The lover is so gratified by what he loves that a form of spiritual powerlessness results; this causes the soul to feel that it can no longer contain itself. That is why, like molten balm, soft and running, it lets itself go, lets itself flow into what it loves. Here is no soaring flight, no close embrace of union; the soul, as though it were a liquid flowing, glides gently unto the God it loves,... Clearly then, you see, this flowing of the soul out of itself into God is an actual ecstasy, in which the soul utterly transcends the limits of its natural state, until it is blended, absorbed and swallowed up in God...” (Love of God, Book VI, Chapter 12, pp. 251-252).

175. Sardi’s text reads *Dirsi* (be procured or given) whereas the less accurate edition has *Dirsi* (be expressed or articulated). The Sardi text has a more profound implication: the reality described is so transcendent that it cannot be procured by oneself. This deep mystical grace will mark all of Paul’s spirituality. It is a prelude to mystical marriage. The infused sufferings of Jesus have given clarity to Paul’s spiritual vision and enable him to penetrate the abyss of Divinity.
176. Paul indicates the effects of this sublime knowledge of God. Note that the glory of God, in the manifestation of His attributes and especially of His love, appears in the final pages of the Diary.
177. Paul’s meditation is intimately linked to the liturgical feast.
178. *Non m’incallavo* in Piedmontese dialect means “I did not dare,”
179. The last words of the Diary refer to the great grace received in the Eucharist. The Eucharistic experiences of Paul during these forty days are a precious confirmation of the wonderful mystical lights emanating from the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist is the cause of the Passion-centered experiences of Paul. In the Eucharist Paul encounters Jesus the Mediator Who leads him to the bosom of the Father.

## **FURTHER READINGS**

Diaries, Journals, Methods and Experience.

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