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THE OATH AND THE WITNESS <sup>1</sup>

I, Sister Maria Giuseppa Pitorri, professed nun in the venerable Monastery of the Ursulines in Rome, having touched the holy Gospels of God placed before me, swear and promise to tell the truth both in regard to the questions asked as well as to the articles concerning which I shall be examined in the cause and process which is being undertaken here in Rome by the ordinary authority relative to the reputation of holiness of life, the virtues, the supernatural gifts and the miracles of the Servant of God, Father Gaspar Canon Del Bufalo, founder of the Congregation of the Mission under the title of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, I swear and promise to religiously observe secrecy and not to reveal to anyone at all whatever is contained in the questions asked, in the answers that will be given by me, as well as whatever pertains to the articles concerning which I will be examined, under pain of committing perjury and of being excommunicated *lata sententia*, from which I cannot be absolved except by the Supreme Pontiff, even to the exclusion of the Major Penitentiary, except in the case of death. I do so promise and do so swear, and may God assist me and these, his holy Gospel.

I have been instructed as to the nature and force of the oath and the penalties annexed to the guilt of perjury.

My name is Maria Giuseppa and, in the world, Teresa Pitorri. My parents were Nicola Pitorri and Elisabetta Albertini, both now deceased. I am a Roman, and in the completed fifty-first year of age. I am a professed choir-nun in this Monastery of the Ursulines and prefect of the external schools of this Monastery by which I am maintained, since a perfect life in common is observed.

Not only have I satisfied the so-called double precept to be observed at this period of time, which I was capable of doing, but I have even frequented the sacraments of confession and communion many times during the month. In view of being a nun, ordinarily I approach holy communion each day.

Already a couple of years ago, I was asked by Father Francesco Verili, the postulator for the cause of the Servant of God, Canon Father Gaspar Del Bufalo, to give my deposition for this very cause. I refused him. However, during the recent past days, I received a citation in which, in the name of your most illustrious and reverend lordship, I was cited to appear in this place of examination in order to give my deposition relative to this cause and I was called in officially;<sup>2</sup> I have noted this same approach in the formula of the oath which I pronounced just a short while ago.

I know that Monsignor Santelli, Canon of Santa Anastasia and honorary chamberlain to His Holiness, has compiled a part of the life of the Servant of God and I,

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<sup>1</sup> We are publishing 24 extracts of letters of St. Gaspar contained in the deposition at the *Procasso Ordinario Romano*, II, of the Ursuline Sr. Maria Giuseppa Pitorri. The extracts of the letters are numbered progressively and transcribed in italics. The deposition, which began on July 9, 1847 with the 231st session and ended with the 136th session on August 6, 1847, was taken in the Chapel of the SS. Crocifisso in the Monastero S. Orsola in Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gasparian History and Trivia: Cause of Beatification and Canonization (Sr. M. Giuseppe Pitorri)

indeed, remember that he sent it to me to read; I read the manuscript. I do not know whether he was commissioned to do this work by the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood or whether, because of his own devotion, it was done to leave remembrances relative to the virtues and labors of that same Servant of God.

Being acquainted with the ability, the uprightness, the good faith and the good judgment of this recent author, I can have no doubt that he has, in his work, embodied the facts concerning the Servant of God in accordance with his knowledge and good conscience and with complete sagacity. Convinced of the aforementioned qualities of this Santelli, I have, more than once, urged him to complete the aforementioned biography. I recall that in the part that I read, the above-mentioned author related the life and virtues of the Servant of God from the time of his birth up to the time of his deportation which occurred during the time of the French Government.

Likewise, it seems to me that he might have also treated the founding of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood. From what I have read, I am unable to make a judgment since the facts pertaining to the Servant of God relative to that period of time, were not known to me. I believe that these writings are preserved by the author himself, Monsignor Santelli. As I see it, since the above-mentioned Monsignor was a contemporary of the Servant of God and a close friend of his from their earliest age, he was in a position to know, even minutely and in detail, the life of that man. I also know that this friendship between them was cultivated until the death of the Servant of God. Consequently, I can have no doubt that he must have been acquainted with the entire course of the edifying life of the Servant of God.

I have not been coached nor prepared beforehand by anyone at all, neither vocally nor in writing, as to what I am to say in my deposition concerning the life, virtues and gifts of the Servant of God. In fact, after interrogating a priest in whom I place my trust as to how I was to conduct myself during the examination to which I had been summoned, he said to me that I should answer the questions addressed to me in the examination that what I would state should be in keeping with my knowledge and my conscience, expressing doubtful things as doubtful and things that are certain, as certain.

No human motivation nor purpose is forcing me to make this deposition in this examination. In fact, I can sincerely say that I would not have so easily condescended to offer myself for it, if it were not because of the authority's pressure which obliged me to submit. So, it is only out of obedience, accompanied also by a love for truth that is the sole reason inducing me to give this deposition.

#### HER CONTACTS WITH GASPAR

From the time I was a little girl, as far as I can recall, I had the opportunity of hearing about the Servant of God, Father Gaspar Del Bufalo, due to the close relationship that existed between my uncle, Monsignor Albertini, now deceased, and the Servant of God. It seems to me that I heard him preach in the church of San Nicola in Carcere a fervorino after the recitation of the Chaplet of the most Precious Blood. Also, during the period of deportation, the aforementioned uncle of mine, Monsignor Albertini, wrote to me from time to time and I would discover at the foot of his letters the handwriting of the Servant of God himself in which he encouraged me to be fervent in the service of God. Since he frequently visited in my uncle's house, he must have seen me, at one time or another, when I would be there, without my paying too much attention to him, for I was, at the time, somewhere around thirteen or fourteen years old.

After returning to Rome from deportation, the Servant of God came to visit me in the Monastery of Santa Rufina where I had been entered as a student before my previously-mentioned uncle was deported. Meeting with him again on that occasion, I conceived the desire of having him as my spiritual director and confessor, foreseeing, I did not know exactly, just what enlightenment his direction would be for me to gain great profit for my soul. So, it happened that, taking advantage of this opportunity and allowing my interior impulse to express itself; I made known to him my desire and I begged him please to be my spiritual director. He consented to my request and I began to profit from his spiritual direction by going, around once a week, to the church of San Marco where he had the faculties to hear confessions. I continued with this frequency as long as he was in Rome.

I must, however, point out that, after my uncle returned to Rome, he requested and obtained the faculty that Canon Del Bufalo would be able to hear my confession in the aforementioned Monastery of Santa Rufina, so that I would not have to make that trip. Ordinarily, during his stay in Rome, he would come every eight days or so to hear my confession. When he was away, in order that I would not be deprived of his direction, he initiated a letter-correspondence between us, in which he demonstrated to me both charity and zeal for the benefit of my soul.

From the ranks of the students, following mainly my own impulse toward a religious vocation as well as the will of my uncle together with the approval of the Servant of God, I went on to become an oblate nun in that same Monastery, because, on their part, they had made plans for founding an institute of nuns under the title of the most Precious Blood and wanted to make use of my cooperation. I remained almost five years in the Monastery of Santa Rufina as an oblate, while Canon Del Bufalo continued to provide the same assistance for me. But, when I manifested that I was no longer content with being a simple oblate in that monastery and not seeing any progress made relative to the new foundation which was supposed to be set up, I was transferred, after the death of my uncle and upon the advice given me by the Servant of God, as though at a precarious time and out of condescension to the Canon himself, to the Monastery of Divino Amore, because there was a previous understanding that with the Countess Bentivoglio Orsi in residence there, she would be selected to put into motion the founding of the Institute of the Sisters of the most Precious Blood.

Seeing that there was no initiation of that foundation and at the same time not feeling at ease with staying in that place, I made known my sentiments to Canon Del Bufalo who in agreement with Monsignor [Gregorio] Muccioli, bishop of Agatopoli, had me transferred, after almost five months to this Monastery of the Ursuline nuns where I made my profession in 1823.

The Servant of God continued to be my director and, in person and by letter, kept on doing so while I was in this monastery as long as he lived. I point out that he did this despite the fact that, more than once, I made known to him that because of his frequent and lengthy absences from Rome to do mission work, I remained, in a certain way, deprived of that satisfaction of soul that I wished to have. In fact, he, upon noting these manifestations of mine, used to repeat to me that I was the boss and could freely place myself under the spiritual direction of others, though he did not believe that to be a necessary move, assuring me that my soul was not in danger of losing anything; likewise,

that if he had observed that from his absences some harm would come to my soul, he would be the very first one to suggest a change of confessor and spiritual director.

During this whole period of time which covered years, I must confess that his direction was very level-headed and that I discerned in him the spirit of the Lord and that through his direction, he brought encouragement to my soul. I always found that through his direction I achieved a peace of mind and a spiritual satisfaction; however, ultimately, I was always saddened for a time when he would be obliged to be away from Rome because of his mission work.

I cannot deny that I have felt and still do feel devotion, veneration and esteem for the Servant of God. Even though I have not shown this in my community to any one of our sisters, still, I have cultivated it interiorly, turning to the Servant of God for his intercession in behalf of my particular needs, and feeling confident of obtaining it. This devotion and these sentiments are within me and are firmly set there based on the experience and the remembrance of the virtues that he demonstrated while he lived and that I came to acknowledge. Likewise, these sentiments, to tell the whole truth, were confirmed and given even greater force when, after his death, I received information concerning graces and miracles received through his intercession. Thus, it so happened that after I had been suffering since 1840 from a painful condition in one of my legs that required me to walk only with great difficulty, I turned to praying to different saints to be relieved of it. Among them, I also turned to the Servant of God. I applied an image of him to the aching part of my leg and I was cured. It must be clearly understood that I am incapable of saying with certainty that this was a grace obtained through him rather than from the concerted work of the other saints whom I invoked.

Likewise, I cannot deny that I have the desire that Canon Del Bufalo be raised to the honors of the altar, a thing that would be most consoling to me, both because I was very well acquainted with his virtues as well as because I am deeply obligated to him for all the good work that he did for my soul's welfare. I hereby declare, however, that I wish to submit myself to the decrees of the Holy See to which the investigation and the decision of these cases belongs. [...]

#### GASPAR'S LIFE AS A YOUTH

I learned from the Servant of God himself, as I clearly recall, that he was born on the day of the Epiphany in the year 1786 in Rome.

Only once did I have the occasion of seeing the father of the Servant of God, and maybe a second time, but I never got to know his name. I was told, however, that he was the cook for the very outstanding Altieri family. I never got to know his mother at all, but I heard it said that she died during the time of the deportation of her son with whom I still, at that time, did not have the connection which I later had, as I mentioned before.

I heard it said, I cannot say precisely by whom but perhaps it was by the sister-in-law of the Servant of God, that his parents were Catholic people, leading good lives and were diligent in seeing to the education of their children, who were two in number, that is, Luigi the older one and our Servant of God. I have no doubt that they were prompt in arranging for the administration of Baptism and Confirmation for their children, but I cannot state the times when those things took place.

I believe that he spent the time of his childhood with his parents who, because of what I mentioned above, must not have failed to see that the Servant of God, at the proper time, should be prepared for his first confession and communion.

I believe, too, that the Servant of God spent his adolescent years in his parental home. He, himself, confided to me one time, speaking of his early years, that his mother, had given him a training that was true and solid in piety and in Christian education and that he corresponded to it by applying himself to the exercise of prayer both at home as well as, and especially, in the nearby church of the Gesu which he frequently visited. Furthermore, he told me that he had as his confessor a certain Father Pegna, formerly of the Society of Jesus, and he added that this priest, in rescuing him from scruples and doubts which had not been overcome with the help of another confessor, had restored him to a tranquil state.

The Servant of God put on the ecclesiastical garb while he was still a young boy. I believe that it was done upon the counsel and direction of his confessor, notwithstanding the fact, as he himself remarked, that there was a certain individual who was dissuading him from embracing the ecclesiastical state. So, to me he expressed this thought, saying: "If I had listened to that person who was dissuading me (he was a confessor) how much good would I have lost?"

Since my uncle, Monsignor Albertini, promoted the devotion to the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by instituting an Archconfraternity in the collegiate church of San Nicola in Carcere where he was a Canon, the Servant of God joined in those sentiments expressed by my uncle and he dedicated himself to that devotion with such zeal that if the former was its initiator, the latter, with all good reason, could be identified as its propagator, having sold himself, so to speak, for the glories of the most Precious Blood. In one of his letters to me, he wrote:

1. *"I feel that I am growing in my devotion to most holy Mary: but the one to the divine Blood is truly indescribable. Oh! if I could only propagate this devotion with the shedding of my own blood."*

From that letter, one can perceive what I was saying, namely, that he was the great propagator of the aforementioned devotion. I maintain that he, in the Society bearing the title of the Divine Blood, was the most powerful mainspring that the Congregation itself possessed; my uncle, who was its initiator, gave notable praise to the Servant of God, even to the point of comparing him to St. Francis Xavier.

I cannot state precisely what studies he made nor where, but I think it was in the schools of the Collegio Romano. I did, however, notice that he was well-trained and learned. He was endowed with talents and a surprisingly good memory. I believe that these were gifts acquired through his prayers in the school of Jesus Crucified.

I heard from an ex-Jesuit that he frequently went to hear Monsignor Baccolo, bishop of Famagosta and a celebrated preacher, in order to be trained in preaching. It seems to me, also, that someone told me that he used to go to Monsignor Giovanni Marchetti, very well-known among theologians and orators, in whose school the Servant of God was able to get the very best direction for his ministry. When that man died, the Servant of God wrote a letter to me expressing his condolences, and letting me know that the loss of that man was very deeply felt by him, since he was one of the finest workers in Rome.

With the recurrence of the date of his ordination to the priesthood, he, himself, would remind me that he was privately promoted to the priesthood by Cardinal Despuis, Pro-Vicar of Rome, on the morning of the feast of St. Ignatius and that he celebrated his first Mass on the day of the pardon of Assisi, August 2nd of the year 1808. For this ordination, he demonstrated to God his gratitude, urging me also to give God thanks for this benefit which he had received.

I know for certain that he was a Canon in the collegiate church of San Marco. I knew him when he was appointed there, but I do not know by whom, or how, or when he was summoned to that canonry. He was very, very exact in the fulfillment of everything and, therefore, he must have been exact also in his choir-duty. As a matter of fact, I saw him there in San Marco during all those months when I used to go there for confession. Ordinarily, he was punctual.

The Servant of God was unwilling to take the oath required by Napoleon. Indeed, I was told that he replied with utmost courage and openness of spirit to the questions put to him by the commissioners, making them realize that he was not obliged to do so, nor could he do so, and in such a way that they remained stupefied. So, as a result of that rejection of his, he was ordered into exile, which he suffered generously.

I know that he was taken from one place to another and that eventually he was put in prison; I know that in Piacenza he suffered a severe illness from which he was, as it were, prodigiously cured after having made some sort of promise to the Lord, though I do not know what. I was told that from that period of time, he contracted a nervous disorder as a consequence of those ill-treatments and that sickness.

With the cessation of the Napoleonic empire and the accompanying persecution of priests, he returned immediately a free man to Rome where he arrived either toward the end of January or the early part of February of 1814.

In reference to his deportation, I remember that he had, for a certain period of time, the companionship of my uncle Albertini and Canon Gambini who, during the time of their exile, used to send me news about themselves and in one or the other letter from my uncle, I got the handwriting of the Servant of God, as I mentioned previously.

#### MISSIONARY AND FOUNDER

The Servant of God, being determined to apply himself entirely to the work of the Missions, renounced his canonry in San Marco, retaining the title and the choir stall; this reservation was made upon the advice of Monsignor Albertini and Monsignor Cristaldi.

I have somewhat of an unclear idea that it may, in some way, have been mentioned to me that the Holy See wanted to promote him to some higher dignity or responsibility but that he disengaged himself from that in order to attend solely to giving Missions. I know that Pius VII wished to declare him an Apostolic Missionary.

As far as I know from the connection that I had with both individuals that I have just named, Monsignor Albertini was the one who was making plans for the pious work of giving Missions, but without taking part in them himself either because he was in charge of the aforementioned Archconfraternity or because he was made bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Piperno, where he died. It was the Servant of God who instituted, in accordance with the plan of Monsignor Albertini, the Congregation of Missionaries of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He began setting the foundation one year after his return from exile along with the priest, Father Gaetano Bonanni, later bishop of

Norcia, who is still living. He did that to give glory to God, to bring sinners back to the bosom of grace and to give honor to the price of our eternal salvation. He sought and obtained beforehand the necessary faculties from the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII as well as the protection and support of the excellent Monsignor Cristaldi, who at that time was the general treasurer of the *Reverenda Camera Apostolica* and later became a cardinal of holy Church.

It is not doubtful that the Servant of God took on companions for this work and, I believe, in selecting them he used the fullest sagacity. He, both in writing and in person, gave me information about one or the other of his companions, among whom he made mention of Father Biagio Valentini as a priest truly dedicated to God and Father Giovanni Merlini whom he deeply esteemed. He added that he had other men whose lives could be written and that he was indeed very, very happy. The only thing that was still lacking was the firmer establishment or the Institute's regulations, which was something that he kept working on gradually.

I think that the Servant of God received some grants through the assistance of Monsignor Crisialdi, general treasurer of the *Reverenda Camera Apostolica*, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, for the sustenance of his Society, as I heard him say. I know, too, that he obtained Houses in which to place his Missionaries, for example, the ones in Giano, Albano, Rimini and many others.

I have in my possession many more letters from the Servant of God from which one can note the very great work that he accomplished along with his companions in conducting Missions. Thus, he wrote:

2. *"I am so consoled to see so many of my priest-confreres joined together in the name of God. occupying themselves for his glory and I say: that does not come about nisi ex gratia Dei.<sup>3</sup> In regard to our Institute, with God's help, I see the great work that has yet to be done, but crosses will never be lacking. I have detached myself in such a way that I can say without difficulty: "O Lord, I love our Institute because it is yours; if it were not to give you glory, you do as you will" Yes. All our men are working hard and without respite, or at least very scarce is any rest for our Missionaries. It seems to me that they keep well in mind that saying of St. Ignatius: the greater glory of God. I love our Institute beyond any possible imagination and at the same time I say to God: "if it does not glorify you, then I no longer love it" It seems to me, likewise, that the devil would devour me if it were not for a crown of chalices which, it appears to me, have overwhelmed my spirit. The Society, with which I identify myself, I see as a miniature of prayer. The oppositional works of the devil confirm that it is from God: I cannot help but persuade myself so to speak, that it will be loved by all. Oh! if only everyone could come to know it. I feel that my position is such that I would be ready to leave it if that were the will of God. This House of San Felice in Giano is a veritable garden spot, without prejudice to the others. Oh! how the love of God is at work! Our workers are growing more numerous, but there are still not enough. Our Society is a great one and the true basis for reform: I will dare to say this to my very last breath."*

In another of his letters, he openly expressed to me this observation:

3. *"Zeal for divine glory is ever increasing in me. But, oh! how many things yet to be done does the ministry present. The evangelization of the poor is something dear to me, and I am ready to do whatever God wills."*

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<sup>3</sup> Except for the grace of God

Indeed, he wished to demand no temporal gains from the labors of his Missions and those of his Missionaries, nothing more than what was needed for giving the Missions and the work of the ministry. A certain priest, who knew how disinterested he was in this regard, told me how the Servant of God conducted himself when it was a question of doing a good work, even without having human support, and that the Servant of God would not be worried about that but went right on preparing for the good work to be done.

It is certain that the Supreme Pontiffs Pius VII, Leo XII and Gregory XVI held him in high esteem and with deeds demonstrated their acceptance of him. The first two popes named wanted to promote him to higher dignities to which he would have arisen if it were not that, with all of his energy, he renounced them. They provided his Institute with the granting of several Houses which would serve as places of residence for his Missionaries. Those Houses were used, as I have heard it said, in the Province of Marittima and Campagna during the period of brigandry in order to reclaim those people from any connections with the brigands themselves and, indeed, through preaching, to induce even the evil-doers themselves to conversion. Gregory XVI made use of the efforts of the Servant of God in various situations, appointing him to preaching jobs, especially during the period of cholera.

For the Servant of God, there was an occasion of deep affliction; that was when, after Pius VIII was raised to the pontificate, the Servant of God went to prostrate himself at his feet to offer himself and his Society. It was then that, contrary to all expectation, he was received with words of reproof and humiliation, so much so, that after that incident he himself confided to me that so deeply was he wounded in his heart that he had to call upon every possible religious motive to bring tranquility to his soul. In St. Peter's square, it was feared that he would suffer a fainting-spell. He remarked to me that, among the bitter words spoken to him by that Pope, were that he always did things according to his own head; to this, he answered submissively that he had done nothing, but that they had made him do them. I know, however, that he was not suspended from any work of his ministry, for the Servant of God continued peacefully the course of his mission work.

In regard to bishops, I know that Monsignor Basilici, a man of God, had the greatest esteem for the Canon.

Very many are the Missions conducted by the Servant of God, not only in the towns of the Papal States, but also outside them; they were replete with fruitful spiritual results. As I have been told, there were those that were accompanied with some prodigy or other which I am not able to describe precisely. His companions and other people who were present could supply the details. I am not in a position to enumerate all of the cities and areas in which he did Mission work, but I can say that he never stayed still or took a bit of rest and that his entire life was dedicated to the continuous labors of the ministry, despite the fact that he suffered from stomach troubles and nervous disorders in such a way that it seemed to me, and no less to others, that it was a miracle that he could carry such an enormous burden and never interrupt his apostolic preaching.

In this regard, I now remember that a certain Father Paolo from Fabriano, a confessor in the church, *Nome di Maria*, told me that the Servant of God, while preaching in that region, made himself heard, at the same time, in an area notably distant from the place where he was speaking. When he came to Rome, instead of taking a bit of rest, he occupied himself wherever he was asked to preach.

As far as I am concerned, I can say that I am greatly obliged to him because of the kindness that he showed to me in being the spiritual director of my soul. I always found that to be most just, persuasive and tranquilizing. In it, I also acknowledged a great amount of discretion and prudence. I have heard the same thing from some learned people who went to confession to him.

I likewise know and have heard it said that, during Missions, he made himself available for confessions for every group of individuals, and that, in a certain way, with his gentleness, stole the hearts of those individuals who knelt before him. He wrote to me once:

4. *"I am writing to you having just returned from penitents."*

I have heard nothing contrary to this. Nor have I ever, in his treatment either in person or in writing, noticed even the slightest thing that could be considered contrary to the holy law of God and of the Church. I know that he, despite the distresses of health and of very hard work, observed exactly the prescribed fasting of the Church. Being a lover of good order as I myself experienced, I have no doubt that he observed order in everything that was required, because of the holy character with which he was endowed.

#### HIS SANCTITY

To the degree that I was able to learn and know something about him, I think that I can say that he was endowed with all the theological and cardinal virtues as well as their related virtues.

In reference to faith, here are the sentiments he expressed in joining to his faith his practice of trust in and love for God.

5. *"My zeal for the divine glory is increasing within me were it not for the ministry and the work of God, which I love more than myself. I would yearn for a life of solitude as a hermit. The noise of the city causes me anguish. And I seem to be very close to death, and this is my meditation. Devotion to the divine Blood is the weapon for our times. If you have the opportunity to propagate this devotion of ours, then write to me for any booklets at all as well as for any other good materials. Let us do great, good work for the glory of God. Help me and get as many others as possible to be of assistance with their many and abundant prayers. In those prayers I have trust for they will open the gates of paradise, obtaining for us enlightenment, courage, faith, patience and a spiritual death to everything. Oh God! When will we be irrevocably yours? This work of yours is not a matter of just a day but for all life-long, which passes by with unspeakable swiftness. While praying one day and while contemplating the Crucifix, it seemed that I heard these words: "Look, my son, at my divine Blood. Through sufferings, I poured it out and through sufferings will its adoration be promoted". Humankind shudders at the word suffering, but it is nevertheless necessary for one to learn to carry the Cross. It is the great ladder to heaven! Perhaps it was only an illusion, but during my Mass it seemed to me that St. Joseph was handing over to me the pastoral staff with which he is customarily depicted by the Church. Just what this meant, I do not know. I thought that I heard it say that I had preserved my virginity, but poor me, I am totally wrapped in confusion. I did, however, come to this firm conviction: after Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph will be the special protector of my ministry."*

I point out here that he used to call this Saint "the missionary of his soul" and that he began to show honor to him from the time that he came to the use of reason. His

devotion to most holy Mary was very, very great, especially under the title of the Immaculate Conception; as he used to say, he cultivated it and described it as exceedingly dear to him. Among other things that he wrote to me, in one letter there was this statement:

6. *"I feel that I am growing in my devotion to most holy Mary, but the one to the divine Blood is truly indescribable. Oh! if I could only propagate this devotion with the shedding of my own blood."*

In regard to hope, he wrote to me:

7. *"I would like to become a saint, but up to now it is only a presumption of mine. What I notice in myself is indeed a great desire for perfection, for establishing myself firmly in the practice of virtues and for giving myself over to prayer."*

In another letter that he wrote to me toward the end of his life, he said:

8. *"A certain fear about the tribunal of God assails me at times, but the divine Blood is my comfort. Pray that I will be able to prepare myself for death which I always have before my mind and which I have perhaps only too soon to face, but that is meaningless. What God wills is what counts. I can say that the Lord, through my meditations has always led me to contemplate the grave, despite other themes that I have proposed for myself."*

On another occasion, he wrote:

9. *"What am I to say with regard to prayer? I have little time: I am helped by thinking of the presence of God and offering ejaculatory prayers. Albertini gave his approval to all of this. Oh Lord! When I begin speaking about the divine Blood, I feel my soul experiencing a special emotion. This is the most tender attestation of God's love."*

With regard to his exercise of love for God, I can say that when he spoke to me about that, I considered him to be an angel. His letters addressed to me are filled with the most outstanding examples of that love. In this letter, he remarked:

10. *"I love withdrawal and solitude. I would like it to be just God and I. Depending on the inclination I would be pleased to be a Trappist, but the vocation ... Souls are calling me to remain in the open field. Oh the need! ... Oh the souls that are giving themselves to God. I do not think of relatives nor of fatherland. Here God is opening up for me a great field of work so, let us move forward. I feel in myself the desire to fortify myself against even venial faults. Do nothing against God. Oh! if only I could acquire a great love of God which would purify my soul. Sins are flooding the world and indeed everything in the world is breathing out languor and coldness. Presently I am praying with greater fervor for the Holy Father so that he will be enlightened with regard to the reform desired by God. (He wrote this to me during the Pontificate of Leo XII). How can one not suffer in seeing the glory of God so persecuted? San Gaetano died from the suffering he endured in seeing the situations of his time in such a state of derangement. I feel so distressed that I see only a miracle to straighten it out. The distress lies in the sufferings of my soul; virtue itself does not remove them: all it can do is hold them in check and sustain them. Zeal for divine glory is ever increasing in me, but oh! how many things yet to be done does the ministry present. My meditations are about suffering and about gaining victory over myself. It all ends up with the thought of death. This thought ordinarily occupies my mind just as it did with a disciple of St. Philip Neri,*

concerning whom I read that he always had death in mind: 'Cogitante vilescent omnia'.<sup>4</sup>

After conducting a shift of Retreats, he wrote to me as follows:

11. "Here is the fruit that I experience within myself as the result of this visitation of God. First, a more intimate devotion to the divine Blood, to Mary most holy, to St. Joseph and to St. Francis Xavier. Second, to dedicate myself entirely to God wherever he wishes to make use of my miserable being, even to the ends of the earth. Third, an inexpressible love for our Institute. Fourth, a desire to lead a hidden life, one deprived of honors. Fifth, a pursuit of virtue and perfection. I have come to realize more and more how needful I am of establishing myself in God's ways and how urgent prayer is, even though I must also say that it has always been my delight. I would like to help sanctify the whole world."

Indeed, as he indicated to me, he handled that shift of Retreats amid various troubles and tribulations which were heaped upon him unexpectedly. There were sick members in the House; he had to take care of the work of the economist and at the same time, had to preach several times each day. In another of his letters, he wrote:

12. "Prayer that God will allow me to bear fruit from my devotion to St Joseph, not only in loving, but also in the development of my interior life, hidden away, very deeply hidden away. I do not love the external. Amo nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.<sup>5</sup> Devotion to the divine Blood is being wondrously propagated and I cannot express how rapidly it is being done nor how fruitful it has been for souls. From this, we will be rewarded with every good thing. I ask that on whatever occasion that presents itself, you propagate its glories. Do not hesitate to request from me whatever may be needed, since I have the firmest trust that my Lord, pouring out his Blood, will provide me with a way of corresponding in this work for whatever may be needed. In short I am so to speak sold on giving glory to the divine Blood, the price of eternal salvation. Nothing more need be said. Oh! what a treasure this salutary devotion is. I would like to have a thousand tongues to draw everyheart tenderly to it and I wish that my own soul would be totally penetrated with it."

During the time when cholera was threatening lives, he was disappointed that nothing by way of an extraordinary devotion was ordered and he felt that people should be drawn toward the Crucified Lord. He was in favor of having prayers offered, visits and processions made to invoke the protection of most holy Mary, but he also wanted the devotion to the most Precious Blood kept in view so that through this devotion we would be able to call down upon us every blessing. In writing to me, he said:

13. "I am so consoled to see so many of my priest-confreres joined together in the name of God, occupying themselves for his glory and I say - that does not come about nisi ex gratia Dei."<sup>6</sup>

He wrote that he had had the following vision on a night during the holy Christmas season:

14. "It seemed to me that on that night I had two heavy crosses weighing down on my shoulders, one on each shoulder. Do you suppose that this was an illusion? I do not

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<sup>4</sup> To the thinking person all things become worthless.

<sup>5</sup> I love to be ignored and to be considered as nothing.

<sup>6</sup> Except by the grace of God.

*think so, but rather an announcement of new crosses. What a great word is the word suffering."*

In another letter, he manifested the following desire:

15. *"Great simplicity, great order, great neatness! These are my delights."*

With reference to charity toward his neighbor, it is impossible for me to mention how much difficult work he undertook, day and night, over many years, giving himself to preaching, hearing confessions without interruption in order to bring souls to God. This was done in such a way that to me it appeared miraculous that he was able to withstand all that he endured, especially because his make-up had been notably weakened already for some time. He mentioned that with certain changes in the weather, he could scarcely remain on his feet.

He confessed that several times during the execution of his ministry, he had experienced an extraordinary, supernatural vigor without which he would not have been able, simply using human powers and his own courage, to accomplish anything. His companions in the ministry will be able to give you a detailed report of the immense number of Missions that he conducted, of the hardships faced in his labors because of liberals, as well as the dangers by which he was severely tested. All of these things form a most abundant example of his truly apostolic fortitude.

One day I asked him how, during the time of the revolutions which occurred in 1831, he had the courage to continue going on with the Missions in the midst of all those troubles. His reply to me was: "Now, indeed, is the time when we must demonstrate that we are faithful and generous ministers of the Lord".

I know that great were the conversions that he effected and it was told to me that God had accompanied his labors from time to time with a miraculous occurrence or so - and I remember that I was told by someone who was trustworthy, though right now I cannot remember the name, that his preaching was heard by persons who were quite distant from the place where he was actually preaching.

In his well-known restrictions, he was still very generous and I believe that, inasmuch as he was able, he supported with alms people who were needy. Concerning this, I remember being told that he once ran into a very poor woman who asked him for an alms and that he, unable to do more, had given her four or five *paoli*.

To this, you can add the difficulties that he had to endure with regard to maintaining a letter-correspondence with all of the Houses as well as with bishops that were asking for the services of his Society. On this topic, he wrote to me:

16. *"Anyone who is supposed to help me in matters dealing with the desk God permits him to be continuously forgetful about things. In writing it is necessary to repeat things many times; and the continuous exercise of patience is never lacking. I really have a need for acquiring more of that. Pray in particular on the feast of St Ignatius Loyola, the anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. The older I get the more aware do I become of what it means to be a priest."*

Whenever he returned to Rome, instead of taking a bit of rest, he rushed about preaching and hearing confessions wherever he was called. Certainly I can give witness to the great charity that he showed towards me in never losing concern for the state of my soul whether he was here in Rome or outside it, and of that charity I will always be mindful and grateful.

In reference to the virtue of prudence, I knew him to be well-endowed and practiced in it. The observations which have been expressed up to now demonstrate evidently and totally the harmony found in his speech and in his conduct. From this, I have concluded that he must have made use of all the opportune and apt means available for being a truly perfect priest.

He showed caution whenever he spoke and observed the lessons of holy Scripture which teach that one must maintain before one's eyes a scale, so as not to be imbalanced either by speaking ill, or by gossiping or by using improper language; everything should be balanced out by the use of justice and charity.

Going on now to the virtue of Justice which, I believe, is the virtue that renders to God, to one's neighbor and to oneself whatever is respectively due. I can say that with regard to these three aspects of justice, as far as I know, were fulfilled in the life of the Servant of God.

As for the first one, namely, to adore God, to honor God, to love God, to offer oneself to God, to be grateful and cognizant of the benefits received from him, to respect all of the divine attributes, it seems to me that all of these were the concern of the Servant of God. I deduce this from the letters he wrote, from his speeches and from the activities that I have spoken of before.

As for the second, there is no need for me to repeat how much he did for his neighbor. Witness of this is found in his continuous preaching, hearing confessions, giving Missions without ever taking a rest, conducting Retreats, establishing organizations for the care of souls and for preserving the good work derived from the Missions. He was very, very exact in making payments and satisfying incomes; in fact, he was exceedingly averse to taking on debts. I know that he had a generous heart.

As for the final point, it seems to me that he had for himself a very exact and laborious method of life, all directed to achieving perfection of soul.

I go on now to the virtue of temperance. I noted that, even though, as he used to say, he had a character that was rather lively, fiery and sensitive, he did not show it as such and, as a consequence, I concluded that he had become master of his passions. He was very cautious in his speech and, as I have already mentioned; he scorned every form of diversion, even the legitimate, most legitimate ones. Whenever he was invited to he was accustomed to reply: "I will imagine some relaxation, what that amusement would be as I might have experienced it". He was extremely modest in using his eyes and in expressing his feelings. In regard to food, two or three times, upon the circumstance of the death of my sister, when I had the opportunity of having dinner in his house, I noticed that he was most abstemious in drinking and eating. I know that he was used to getting up early in the morning and he told me that he slept very little. He was deeply interested in neatness and cleanliness and, as a consequence, whatever he could contribute along this line in his state of life, he used to carry out in imitation of St. Francis de Sales.

Since I must say something about the Servant of God's fortitude, I limit myself to mentioning simply the labors he endured throughout his ministry. There were conflicts with individuals, many dangers and fears; there was aversion to traveling; there was patience and constancy needed in maintaining his perpetual letter-correspondence, despite the fact that his right arm, for a number of years now, had become weakened and constantly gave him pain, something that he attributed to the work of the devil, as he frequently wrote in his letters to me. It is likewise to be noted that his labors were

accompanied with disturbances of nerves, stomach afflictions and hoarseness of voice, all of which he disregarded. He used to say to me that in carrying out his ministry, he had experienced a vigor that he recognized as coming from the special assistance of God. To the work of preaching and of conducting Missions, he added also the teaching in the classrooms of his young Missionaries so that they could be well-prepared to fulfill their good work in the ministry. He demonstrated to them how to treat the various topics in the so-called field of preaching.

Finally, quite abundant in him was the virtue of humility, in such a way that I was completely edified and astounded. In fact, he wrote to me as follows:

17. *"Humility is the thing dearest to me but it is a teacher that gives lengthy lessons. I recognize my own miserable qualities and I wish to know them better. I do not sense a great problem with humility."*

He often repeated the words of Jeremiah: "Ego vir videns paupertatem meam".<sup>7</sup> On another occasion, he said in one of his letters:

18. *"Please, help me and have others do so too. Great are my responsibilities, great the obligations I have to God, and inexpressible is the desire that I have to become a saint. Whenever I pray, my entire prayer reduces itself to this: Miserere mei."<sup>8</sup> However only with ingenuousness do I say that as long as I have been living, I still have yet to be able to have the ease of saying prayers in my own way. Come now, indeed, doing the will of God will be our bed of repose. So, you are not to stop praying so that the will of God will be carried out by me. And pray in a special way that the Lord will always keep me insignificant, neglected, hidden from the eyes of the world and grant me the doing of much good work, but in a hidden way. Oh my God! How backward I am when it comes to the school of love. I am filled with imperfections and defects. I do however keep yearning for perfection and I earnestly long for it."*

With certain knowledge, I know that a devout person was inspired to pray to God so that the entire Catholic world would obtain the favor of celebrating the feast of the most Precious Blood, just as so many others are celebrated, such as that of the *Caroline*. When this person wrote to the Servant of God, the latter replied: "I, too, would die content if I could bring about that fact and then I could say: *Nunc dimittis Servum tuum*."<sup>9</sup>

In another letter, he expressed these sentiments of humility:

19. *"Oh my! what a miserable thing I am, how little practiced I am in virtues, how lacking in fervor, and this is a confession of truth. A certain habit of suffering, and a resolution to await patience but having to confess that I am always in anguish in acting as the Superior, and to do so patiently and even more so to have to demonstrate it with an openly generous heart."*

Along this line he added further that it would have pleased him to be a simple individual in the Congregation. However, when God gives the piloting of a ship to a man, this is not to be set aside but only when it is taken away from him. An infinite number of sentiments of humility has he expressed to me in the course of his spiritual direction of my soul. They are all substantially similar in their expressions and are reducible to the ones just referred to by me.

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<sup>7</sup> I am a man seeing my poverty.

<sup>8</sup> Have mercy on me.

<sup>9</sup> Now dismiss your servant.

I have heard it said that the virtues exercised by the Servant of God were heroic. I heard it said by Father Biagio Valentini who was the first companion of the Servant of God in the work of giving Missions. Hence, after the latter's death, he became his successor in the office of General Superior. I, however, cannot form a judgment as to the heroism of his virtues since I have not had that sort of training that would allow me to either affirm it or exclude it. Still, I do not deny that I can be affirmative because of those occasions when there was an interrelationship between me and him and I did note distinctive signs of his great and solid virtue.

I noticed that the Servant of God was subjected to contradictions, persecutions and injuries from the very beginning of the foundation of his Institute. He asserted to me that he was never relieved of them and that it appeared to him that the devil had taken a good part in them. He pointed out that those situations arose especially with the recurrence of the month of the most Precious Blood. However, since he has not given me a single detail about those persecutions and contradictions, neither can I, therefore, give you details. What I do know is that he suffered them with resignation and patience; he admitted and confessed this in his letters examples of which I have reported before. I recall that he told me once that he had received a note full of insults; he did not tell me from whom it came nor to whom he had given a reply with these precise words: "The situation is not at all as you think it to be. I am with esteem etc." I know also that the Servant of God endured contradictions from one of his own Missionaries<sup>10</sup> who should have been submissive to his decisions. The disagreement arose because that Missionary did not want the Brothers to wear the cassock, whereas the Servant of God, with good reason, judged it to be necessary. This contradiction went on for quite a long time and, I think, it was until his death. In this and in other occasions, he made use of patience. I deduce this from one of his explicit observations:

20. *"My meditations are on suffering. On the Vigil of the Exaltation of the Cross, while saying Mass it seemed that I saw a large cross descending upon me. My poor humanity fled from it. God will govern me in any and every event."*

In another letter, he said:

21. *"Recently he wrote to me telling me that I had said something that I would not even have dreamt of saying. So on and on it goes; everything passes away with each day.."*

In another letter, he wrote:

22. *"Pray so that I will be able to guide this little mystical ship of mine which hell is trying so hard to send astray; it is written however: 'Ipsi vicerunt draconem propter Sanguinem Agni'.<sup>11</sup> Before Jesus returns as judge he calls back to us the memory of the price of our salvation. And so I count this to be the last age of the Church. God indeed has reserved that information to himself: non est nostrum nosse tempora vel momenta."<sup>12</sup>*

In another, he exclaimed:

23. *"Oh God! it appears to me that I am seeing the spirit of education collapsing just like a building that is falling to pieces."*

I recall what I said in reply to other questions [those concerning his supernatural gifts]. I add, however, that in regard to me he made a pronouncement which I, at that time

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<sup>10</sup> This is a reference, as is known, to Father Innocenzo Betti, as can be verified by reading the letters of St. Gaspar addressed to Betti, beginning from December of 1830.

<sup>11</sup> They conquered the dragon because of the blood of the Lamb.

<sup>12</sup> It is not for us to know the times or the moments.

when he made the prediction, would never have imagined it. I was accustomed to practice, with due permission, some supererogatory fasting which never did cause any trouble to my physical being. But one day I received a letter from him in which, among other things, he wrote:

24. *"I am excusing you from your devotional fastings and I leave for you only those called for by the Church and your rule; indeed, you will be able to do them for just only a bit longer."*

As a matter of fact, that prediction of "just only a bit longer" was verified when difficulties of health overtook me and I was no longer capable of practicing in its entirety the observance of the fasts called for by the Church and the rule.

I know that it was his desire to be able to produce some small ascetical works of his own composition, but I know also that they were never readied for print. He wished to do that in order to be of help to the souls of different groups of people.

### HIS DEATH

The Servant of God died from a chest illness on the 28th of December, 1837 in his house in the Palazzo Orsini. As I mentioned before, the Servant of God, in a general way, predicted his approaching death, that is to say, he did not indicate the precise time. The last time that he came to visit me in October of that same year he spoke these words to me: "I consider myself to be more in the beyond than here".

In the month of May of that same year he wrote to me that he had been afflicted with an obstinate cold and became somewhat apprehensive about it. However, he was always resigned to doing the will of the Lord, and also that at the time of his writing that letter, he was feeling better. That improvement, however, was of short duration; indeed, he continued laboring in the vineyard of the Lord and that congestion in his chest became worse, to such an extent that he was constrained, for the final days of his life, to be confined to bed. During those days, he asked for and received all of the holy sacraments.

The body of the Servant of God was transported to the parochial church of Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, where, on the following day, it was placed for viewing, as I was told.

The Servant of God's helper told me that on that occasion there was a huge concourse of people in that venerable church of Sant'Angelo in Pescheria.

From that church of Sant'Angelo, his body was transported immediately to the church of San Paolo in Albano where, as I have been told, it remained for several days during which a few wondrous cures occurred which I do not know about.

From what I have heard said, the body of the Servant of God is buried in a chapel of that church.

Generally speaking, the Servant of God enjoyed the esteem and reputation of being a holy missionary during his lifetime. After his death, it seems to me, that esteem has been augmented. I deduce this after discovering that many, many people have become interested and wished to have in their possession some image or relic of him. Even in our own monastery there was a nun who, making use of an image of the Servant of God, received some sort of spiritual grace. Several others have asked me for relics. While he was living, I, of course, regarded him as a holy soul and after his death, my opinion that he is found among the saints has become even firmer.

I have heard it said that various miracles have been brought about through the intercession of the Servant of God in different places, but since I do not know the circumstances, I am unable to give any further information.

I have nothing more to say.

OTHER CITATIONS FROM THE LETTERS TO  
SISTER MARIA GIUSEPPA PITORRI<sup>13</sup>

1 SA: "Pray that I can always celebrate holy Mass".

2 SA: "Oh Lord! when I begin speaking about the divine Blood, I feel my soul experiencing a special emotion. This is the most tender attestation of God's love: *Christus dilexit nos, et lavit nos in Sanguine suo.*<sup>14</sup> Oh how happy I would be if I could manage to bring about that result (that is, that the divine Blood would be honored by public cult), then I would be able to say: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum.*<sup>15</sup>

3 SA: "I feel in myself a deeper devotion to St. Joseph whom I have selected as my protector for this new year."

4 SA: "Here is the fruit that I experience within myself as the result of this visitation of God. First, a more intimate devotion to the divine Blood, to Mary most holy, to St. Joseph, and to St. Francis Xavier. Second, to dedicate myself entirely to God wherever he wishes to make use of my miserable being, even to the ends of the earth. Third, an inexpressible love for our Institute. Fourth, a desire to lead a hidden life, one free of honors. Fifth, a pursuit of virtue and perfection. I have come to realize more and more how needful I am of establishing myself in God's ways and how urgent prayer is, even though I must also say that it has always been my delight."<sup>16</sup>

5 SA: "What I notice in myself is indeed a great desire for perfection, for establishing myself firmly in the practice of the virtues. I do not sense a great problem with humility. I love our Institute beyond any possible imagination and at the same time I say to God: 'if it does not glorify you, then I no longer love it'. It seems to me, likewise, that the devil would devour me if it were not for a crown of chalices which, it appears to me, have overwhelmed my spirit. I love the interior life, the hidden life a lot, a whole lot, and I turn down offers of positions and things similar. I am so consoled to see so many of my priest-confreeres joined together in the name of God, occupying themselves for his glory, and I say: that does not come about *nisi ex gratia Dei.*"<sup>17 18</sup>

6 SA: "I, indeed, wish that your fear would not be isolated, but, allow the mystical framework of confidence, which provides the soul with an image of God, to be what must necessarily be emphasized. God is faithful and remains with us in our tribulations; nor does he fail to give us his loving comfort in every one of our doings."

7 SA: "Let us take care to become saints starting now. God is a good father; he cares for our souls. I confess to you the truth, that even though I may have been bothered

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<sup>13</sup> Forty-five more citations from the letters of St. Gaspar to Sr. Maria Giuseppa Pitorri, quoted by Msgr. Antonio Santelli in his deposition of 1843 at the *Processo Ordinario di Albano (POA)* for the beatification and canonization of St. Gaspar. In order to distinguish these quotations from those cited from Pitorri, the number 1 to 45 are followed by the letters SA (= Santelli).

<sup>14</sup> Christ loved us and washed us in his blood.

<sup>15</sup> Now dismiss your servant

<sup>16</sup> Cf. No. 11 of Letter n. 3785 [same citation].

<sup>17</sup> Except for the grace of God.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. No. 13 of Letter n. 3785 [same citation].

by what I wrote to you (the person adds that those were vexations of the devil, sufferings and moments of anguish for the spirit) still I feel within my heart a certain peace, despite one or the other attack into which the enemy seeks to plunge me along with my fears. However, through the merits of the divine Blood, we continue our battle. Help me and let as many others as possible to be of assistance with their many and abundant prayers. In those prayers I have trust for they will open the gates of paradise, obtaining for us enlightenment, courage, faith, patience, and spiritual death to everything. Oh God! When will we be irrevocably yours? This work of yours is not a matter of just a day but of all life-long which passes by with unspeakable swiftness. So, in the meantime, trust in the goodness of a most lovable God."

8 SA: "For anyone who wishes to imitate Jesus Christ, there is nothing else but crosses, sufferings and hardships. However, the cross is the ladder to heaven and the mysterious tree of life as well as the shield of defense against the devil. Let us cling forcefully to the cross and let us accept sweet things as bitter and bitter things as sweet. This morning, while celebrating Mass, it seemed to me that I saw a large cross descending upon me. God will govern me in any and every event."

9 SA: "On a night during the holy Christmas season of the year 1827, it seemed to me that I had two heavy crosses weighing down on my shoulders, one on each shoulder. Do you suppose that this was an illusion? I do not think so, but rather the announcement of new crosses. What a great word is the word suffering, but is not suffering a grace? Oh! is one ever able to be, for just one moment, without crosses which are the glorious identification of Christianity? It seems to my imagination that St. Francis Xavier is saying to me: Crosses. Oh Lord, look down upon me with pity and make me victorious with the help of your mercy."

10 SA: "Oh how external things weigh on me. You understand, the duties and the writing and the governing, etc. Enough; using the scale of doing the will of God makes everything sweet".

11 SA: "I propose three things for myself. First, a great purity and always a firmer intention in God. Second, a purity of conscience with greater exclusion of venial faults. Third, a love for sufferings."

12 SA: "Ah! Implore for me an ardent, hard-working, eager, courageous, magnanimous, extensive, persevering love for Jesus. Oh my God! How backward I am in the schooling of love. Ah! When will it be that we can say: *Ego vincit Christum? Quis me separabit a charitate Christi?*<sup>19</sup> Oh holy love! Oh divine heavenly fire, deign to purify us, lift us high, transform us into God himself, our only desire and the center of every good thing. *Deus meus et omnia.*<sup>20</sup> What beautiful words those are! That love constitutes the furnace wherein our love is tested: *Probasti cor meum, igne me examinasti, et non est.*<sup>21</sup> And oh! happy is the one who seeks its verification in the nighttime of this age: *Visitasti nocte et non est inventa in me iniquitas.*<sup>22</sup> Amen, oh Lord. May Jesus fill it with his love, especially since I am lacking in love so very, very much. May I see to it that there will be at least one generous loving heart for God."

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<sup>19</sup> Am I a prisoner of Christ? Who will separate me from the Love of Christ?

<sup>20</sup> My God and my all.

<sup>21</sup> You tested my heart, you tried me with fire, and it is not.

<sup>22</sup> Your visited at night and iniquity was not found in me.

13 SA: "Preaching the great month has kept me occupied; this is a month for which I have a special devotion. I was ordained priest on the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola. I said my first Mass on the day of the pardon, August 2nd, and the Gospel reading touched me: *Quid prodest?*<sup>23</sup> It was Xavier's maxim and the ruddy apparel of martyrs. How many are the beautiful thoughts that can be pondered on this occasion! I am writing all of this to you for no other reason than to have you keep all of this in your prayers so that, since up to now my life has been full of defects and shortcomings, I may truly now begin to raise myself to that level which ought to be the sole intent of my heart. Ah, yes! Let us love God and let us be incessantly united to his heart. That heart is the furnace through which our soul gains a tender love for Jesus. That heart is the mystic ark of salvation, the delightful dwelling place of our souls."

14 SA: During Retreat-time, I prayed to God for a profound humility, for zeal and for patience, for love toward my neighbor, and for a spiritual death to everything, especially in my very self. I did not think about relatives nor my fatherland. Oh! if only I could acquire a great love for God which would thoroughly purify my spirit! To do nothing contrary to God. God is working and I see that he is raising my heart toward perfection. But, alas! what confusion, what wonderment it is for me! Prayers. It will be only through the supreme mercy of God that I will be saved. All of my demerits stand in the way of any advancement in the works of the Lord. *In Domino autem confido.*<sup>24</sup>

15 SA: "I desire, for if St. Francis Xavier used to say: *Satis est, satis est,*<sup>25</sup> that we would be able to say: Not only is that not enough, but *plura,*<sup>26</sup> in speaking of the love for God.

16 SA: The only thing that I can say is that I see it [the devotion to the Divine Blood] being propagated more and more. Praise be to God, as long as he is glorified through my abjection; patience. While praying one day and while contemplating a Crucifix, it seemed that I heard these words: "Look, my son, at my divine Blood. Through sufferings, I poured it out and through sufferings will its adoration be promoted". Humankind shudders at the word suffering, but it is nevertheless necessary for one to learn to carry the Cross. It is the great ladder to heaven. I am hopeful for salvation through this devotion, otherwise, poor me! Pray, therefore, that it be increased in me. On the sacred pages, it is written: *Ipsi vicerunt draconem propter Sanguinem Agni.*<sup>27</sup> For that

reason, the divine Blood is our comfort. Our Institute is of great interest to me and it is a Society which is doing so much good work in the church of Jesus Christ."

17 SA: "Pray that I will be able to prepare myself for death, which I always have before my mind and which I have, perhaps only too soon, to face; but that is meaningless. What God wills is what counts. I can say that the Lord, through my meditations, has always led me to contemplate the grave, despite other themes that I have proposed for myself." [ Letter of June 9, 1827]

18 SA: "The thought of death presently is causing me a bit of dejection, but it is not such that it overwhelms my spirit. I am realizing what a great thing the thought of

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<sup>23</sup> What is successful?

<sup>24</sup> However, in the Lord I trust.

<sup>25</sup> It is enough, it is enough.

<sup>26</sup> More.

<sup>27</sup> They conquered the dragon because of the blood of the Lamb.

eternity is! Recommend me to St. Joseph for I am so fearful of that last day. The closer I get to it, the more I tremble. However, I do not lose trust in God. A certain fear about the tribunal of God assails me at times, but the divine Blood is my comfort." [the letter of June 9, 1827]

19 SA: "In regard to Missions, this one is the fourth of this trip; the labors are not few, the blessings of God come in floods. I am noticing the fulfillment of that *tabescere me fecit zelus meus*."<sup>28</sup>

20 SA: "The good is always contradicted, and oh! how *malignatus est inimicus in sancta*.<sup>29</sup> I keep spending my days busily, always very busily. I desire nothing and I feel a loathing for everything, especially of external relationships. Were it not for the ministry and the work of God which I love more than myself, I would yearn for a life of solitude as a hermit. The noise of the city causes me anguish; the evangelization of the poor is very dear to me, and I am ready to do whatever God wills. My health is always weak and afflicted by the usual difficulties. However, I always have strength to take care of my responsibilities, and, in the ministry, even greater things. I would like good work to be done everywhere. Even in just writing a letter, my arm gets tired, but I nevertheless have a lot of that desk-work to do. The pains in my stomach and my nerves are a torment, but still I am all right. I can say that early in the morning I do not feel too good and the same is true for the evening at which time I am able to do very little since my vision is getting weaker. In short, there is a bit of misery everywhere. My heart, so to speak, is kneaded, as it desires to be of help to everyone."

21 SA; "It is true that *tabescere me fecit zelus meus*.<sup>30</sup> Nowadays, everything is confusion, coldness, torpor, decadence. Just how things are going to end up, I simply do not know. In this year [it was 1827] the number of my crosses have rather increased; still, I feel courageous in suffering them and I have a feeling of magnanimity in serving God as he wills. Sufficient will it be if I gain salvation, and, bearing those sufferings gives me greater assurance. Up to now, the little that has been accomplished is equal to a moth-eaten piece of cloth. How much more has yet to be polished in order to reach that dear, most dear homeland where *nihil coinquatum introibit*.<sup>31</sup> It seems that my heart is equally well-disposed and content to be on the preaching-platform or to be just a door-keeper for a convent. Paradise is the homeland for those who are despised".

22 SA: "Let us diligently promote the devotion for the persons in Purgatory so that those souls will quickly reach heaven to pray for us."

23 SA: "The situation is not what you think it to be. I remain, with esteem. ..." <sup>32</sup>

24 SA: "You acted very correctly in not justifying yourself with regard to what has taken place. In certain instances, we leave things to God. I find myself continuously in that position. Recently, you wrote that I had said something that I would not even have dreamed of saying. So, on and on it goes! Everything passes by with the passing of the day."

25 SA: "This community [he is referring to S. Felice in Giano] is a veritable garden-spot, without prejudice to the others. Oh! how the love of God is at work! Our

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<sup>28</sup> My zeal has made me waste away.

<sup>29</sup> My enemy is ill-disposed towards things holy.

<sup>30</sup> My zeal has made me waste away.

<sup>31</sup> Nothing evil will enter.

<sup>32</sup> This is the simple reply that St. Gaspar gave to "a note filled with insults".

workers are growing more numerous, but there are still not enough. Our Society is a great one and the true basis for reform; I will dare to say this to my very last breath."

26 SA: "Oh! what a great thing is this, our devotion; the devil trembles at it, and he will never defeat it."

27 SA: "Here in Albano, I have passed a few days not feeling too well, but now I am doing better. I say this to you so that you will keep this in mind with the Lord, so that he will regard me with a merciful eye as I carry out my sacred duties. These things are so numerous, so varied, so insistent and so frequent, so demanding and urgent that they call for special helps both for spirit and body. I feel within myself a continual battle between the life of Martha and Magdalene, so to speak. I try to unify it, but only God knows how! What I am trying to say is that I seek to steal time for prayer, but my soul would like to have more and in such a way that it desires to be unburdened from my position so as to have a more regulated life, more methodical, more at peace. However, if God wants to lead me along this path surrounded by thorns, here I am ready. So my status is as follows. First, a detachment from everything and from everyone. Second, a disesteem for things of the world and a desire for God and his glory. Third, an abhorrence for traveling (something I have almost always had) but still always ready for it when God so wills it. Fourth, a hunger and a thirst for justice and holiness. Fifth, a suffering, but at the same time a peaceful one, while not achieving that mature sanctity which my heart yearns for. Sixth, a certain habit of suffering and a resolution to await patience, but having to confess that I am always in anguish in acting as the Superior, and to do so patiently and even more so to have to demonstrate it with an overly generous heart."

28 SA: "Let us look up to heaven! That is the homeland for anyone who, in life, is troubled and afflicted: *Si compatimur et conglorificamur*.<sup>33</sup> With regard to the soul that you know about, here is what is noticed. First, internal sufferings and external tribulations, but, at the same time, a detachment from everyone and from everything. A love for the solitary life, safeguarding what is of obligation. An increasing zeal for the glory of God, a fear of profiting little. Depending on the inclination, I would be pleased to be a Trappist, but the vocation. ... Souls are calling me to remain in the open field. Oh! the need. Oh! the souls that are giving themselves to God. I would like to sanctify the entire world. I do not waste time. I dedicate my life to the ministry, though I am not worthy of it. I care nothing for the temporal except insofar as it relates to God and to his glory. My stomach grows weaker, but not when someone helps me or draws close to me; others think that I am strong and of robust make-up. I am always not too well and in this regard I try to adapt myself. My nervous condition assails me. At times [I say this to you] I can hardly remain on my feet with the changes in weather; still, I go ahead bearing the sufferings involved with traveling that are so bothersome. Would that I could have a more mature practice of virtue."

29 SA: "The devotion that I feel for the Divine Blood is inexpressible. Oh! if I could only propagate this beautiful devotion with the shedding of my own blood."

30 SA: "It seems that I am accomplishing nothing, or almost nothing. ... I am, more or less, in a furnace. God gives me very, very little time of calm; I am always battling. However, all is internal; outside of the guide, nothing shows up externally. There are sufferings, there are crosses, but that is the nature of our present condition. We are pilgrims, we live in a temporary inn, we are in transit and this is not our homeland.

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<sup>33</sup> If we suffer with him we are also glorified with him.

Temptations within me, like a small lance, lead me to seek an explanation for the great suffering. It appears that I must be obedient to my director. One who is on board a ship has a pilot, but he cannot escape the storm. Jesus is in the ship, but he is sleeping, for our own good, and may it never happen that he will have to say: *Quid timetis?*<sup>34</sup>"

31 SA: "Perhaps it was only an illusion, but, during my Mass, it seemed to me that St. Joseph was handing over to me the pastoral staff with which that Saint is customarily depicted by the Church. I thought I heard it say that I had preserved my virginity. I see, in higher degree, the noble motives for devotion to him. I would, however, like to feel enraptured, drawn in and completely penetrated by it; and, by the grace of God, that I could say that I had received that gift. Yes, that is the gift I yearn for and implore. In the meantime, I shall say along with St. Francis de Sales: "I am completely St. Joseph's." I love this devotion, in keeping with the general principles of our Catholic faith, because it promotes the interior life, the hidden life which is so vary, very dear to me. I shall, therefore, make an effort to recommend to that Saint this very important matter. Indeed, at the present time, I often invoke the help of this dear Saint and I expect wondrous results from this devotion to him. I did, therefore, come to this firm conviction: after Jesus and Mary, St. Joseph will be the special protector of my soul. St. Francis Xavier, whom I certainly cannot forget, will be the special protector of my ministry."

32 SA: "I also will be pleased to be singular in not having singularity. *Vita communis*.<sup>35</sup> What beautiful words! An ordinary life with regard to externals and one most perfect in regard to the goal and the means thereto. *Simile est regnum coelorum thesauro abscondito*.<sup>36</sup> Those words are applicable, also, in this sense. Even to the degree that a worker applies himself to the bowels of the earth, it still does not offer the totality which exists in that inner workplace. He has to dig diligently in those mines. ... Oh! may our souls be like a mine from which something will be extracted only by the one who is its guide. It makes no difference whether or not we recognize the great value involved, but only that which is the common practice of virtue. As for me, I see that God would like to set up a mine in my heart. On the Lord's part, there would be only an abundance of gifts; but, perhaps he will find there only appearances, just like stones that look beautiful but do not have great value. So, one may come to feel that he has something of value, but in reality it is only a misery. What a great grace is the hidden life, good example which is uncomplicated, unencumbered, adorned by a naturalness especially in the spiritual aspect. Oh! what a great good! Even in earth, of all the things created by God, the most beautiful is in the depths of the earth itself."

33 SA: ""Poor me! How needful I am of prayers! Still, I am full of trust in God whom alone I wish to love. Pray, therefore, that the world will forget me and that the Lord will grant me that hidden life in Christ. I have, indeed, acknowledged the beauty of our Institute which I shall love to the grave, but with a love that is raised up by every spiritual attack, and this, it seems to me, is what I possess."

34 SA: "Furthermore, I feel more deeply penetrated by humility. That is a virtue that I would like to possess in the highest degree."

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<sup>34</sup> What do you fear?

<sup>35</sup> Common life.

<sup>36</sup> The kingdom of heaven is like a hidden treasure.

35 SA: "Humility is the thing dearest to me, but it is a teacher that gives lengthy lessons."

36 SA: "I would like to be just an individual in the Society, but at the same time to do good work. However, the prohibition of Monsignor Albertini keeps me from making any renunciation which in some cases never should be allowed *ad instar*<sup>37</sup> other corporations. Oh! otherwise I would hope to look after myself more closely. The devil keeps on bothering me, and business matters, all of them very, very important, keep pressing on me. You ask me how I am doing. I do not have time even for necessary sleep. And, because of my nervous disorders, I experience a certain sensitiveness which I think will shorten my life. Still, my heart is in a rather calm state. Up to now, I simply have not done what I ought to have accomplished. I am, as it were, just a ringing bell. Oh! how well I recognize my own wretchedness. *Ego sum vir videns paupertatem meam*.<sup>38</sup> I would enjoy, yes, I would enjoy having my life neglected, forgotten and hidden away, and with that I would be very notably pleased. Oh my! how wretched I am, how lacking in fervor, how short in the practice of virtue. That is a confession in truth, and because of that, the Lord is allowing me a bit more time so that I can mature. I feel no other desire in myself than to do the pure and simple will of God. I beg him never to look at certain inclinations of mine, but only his glory and his will. I experience, furthermore, a greater feeling of health when I am involved in the ministry; however, that is never free of difficulties. Seeing myself so wanting in virtue, so desirous of prayer and so unable to use all of the time as I would like, all of this gives me reasons for looking at myself with greater concentration. *Ego sum vir videns paupertatem meam*.<sup>39</sup> I do not lose peace of mind in what is substantial; the more I am afflicted, the more I see that those many disorders will be preparing me for another crisis."

37 SA: "I see in myself nothing other than my miseries, my lack of gratitude, my fears and doubts. So many problems faced ... so many souls helped ... so many transactions directed; it is true that this was done with the direction and counsel that was able to be had. But, if the apostle could say: *Non in hoc justificatus sum*,<sup>40</sup> and was fearful that in preaching to others he might become the worst of all, what am I, a miserable thing, the most miserable wretch, to say? So, please, continuous, numerous and fervent prayers for me so that I might well be able to say these words: *Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam. Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui*."<sup>41</sup>

38 SA: "I have prayed firmly to the Lord that he keep me hidden away, at least from positions of dignity, and, except for a clear precept of obedience (let this be between us), I will say no to all of them. I hope that the Madonna will have obtained this grace for me. Help me to thank her. I love to be hidden away, at least insofar as it is possible."

39 SA: "Seeing myself so wanting in virtue, so desirous of prayer and so unable to use all of the time as I would like, all of this gives me reasons for looking at myself with greater concentration."

40 SA: "I seek to steal time for prayer but my soul would like to have more."

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<sup>37</sup> After the fashion of.

<sup>38</sup> I am a man viewing my poverty.

<sup>39</sup> I am a man viewing my poverty.

<sup>40</sup> Not in this am I justified.

<sup>41</sup> Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy. Give to me the joy of your salvation.

41 SA: "Right now, I am in the forties; the final period of my life remains, and with tears I pray to God that it will be filled with works meritorious for heaven."

42 SA: "Just between us as a secret, I say to you that my health is no longer robust and my illness of nerves has become more sensitive. In general, I am always counting on not having a long life. As long as God takes me at a good time, I do not care to keep living and I will die content. Fear is not absent, nor can I say fully what impression the idea of death makes upon me. Meanwhile, the years move on. So, let us pray that the love of God will adorn our lives, will purify us and will lift us in such a way that we will be saved."

43 SA: "In great prayer the desire for perfection. My fear of death is the same as you have, but in me it is greater because of so many enterprises, both spiritual and temporal, involved in being at the head of our new Institute: *quid dicam; quid dicam?*<sup>42</sup> Up to now, what have I accomplished? Nothing or almost nothing. I have the name but not the essence of an apostolic man and the more advanced I get in years the more do I recognize what it means to be a Missionary. As for the fear of death, God permits that so that we can better prepare ourselves for it, for *Dominus opem ferat illi super lectum doloris eius. ... Pretiosa in conspectu mors Sanctorum.*<sup>43</sup> The thought of death is a thought which ordinarily occupies my mind just as it did for a disciple of St. Philip Neri concerning whom I read that he always had death before his mind. *Cogitanti vilescent omnia.*<sup>44</sup> And oh! how lovable God is who keeps us here below to become mature. Time passes and eternity is the great thought which directs us and draws us to the good."

44 SA: "I nourish an inner desire for an angelic life. I am pleased by nobility of thoughts relative to virtue and, in particular, I cultivate my very, very dear devotion to the Immaculate Mary".

45 SA: "You will be receiving the two books of the Divine Blood, a devotion which one cannot deny is the weapon of our times. Whatever you might need in order to diffuse this great devotion, feel free to let me know and immediately you will have whatever is necessary. With reference to our Institute, in God I see the great good that it will have to do, but the crosses will never be lacking. I have detached myself in such a way that I can say without difficulty: "O Lord, I love our Institute because it is yours; if it were not to give you glory, you do as you will. I use these words in imitation of St. Ignatius. Yes, all our men are working hard and without respite, or at least very scarce is any rest for our Missionaries. It seems to me, likewise, that they keep well in mind that saying of St. Ignatius: the greater glory of God. The Society, with which I identify myself, I see as a miniature of prayer. The oppositional works of the devil confirm that it is from God. I feel that my position is such that I would be ready to leave it, if that were the will of God, for I love it in its relationship to good work. How I greatly envy, though without altering my tranquility in God, the status of one who is a mere individual and subject to obedience. How rugged it is to have to govern. Oh Lord, help me; oh how the pains of the soul assail my humanness! There is always an endless supply of them. However, while God is opening up for me a pathway to great sanctity, I still remain weary and weak. So, pray that the Lord will look mercifully upon me. Whoever is in

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<sup>42</sup> What shall I say? What shall I say?

<sup>43</sup> May the Lord give him strength on his bed of sorrows. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

<sup>44</sup> To the thinking person all things become worthless.

God's service must not abandon the steering of the ship except only when God takes it away from him.”