

FORWORD

It has been a year and a half since the publication of *Pinceladas 1808-1823* (Strokes of the Pen 1808-1823) and now with pleasure I present to those interested the continuation of that collection of phrases taken from the letters of our Founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo. The letters read in the period embracing this publication, that is, of the years 1824 and 1825, are 467. Responding to the suggestions of some readers, in this edition I have eliminated some of the references where the letter can be found today, since these references are not of interest to most of the readers. I have chosen to indicate only the number of the letter in the recent publication of the Italian Province, Epistolario III, to whom the letter was written and the date of the writing of the letter.

This was a period of a lot of activity for Gaspar but also of a lot of suffering. His "Work," i.e., the Society, and he himself were the targets of many attacks by the enemies of the Reform. This is born out by the many references that speak of suffering and the defense of his Work. In the midst of this situation of conflict, Gaspar recommends to his companions humility, the virtue he considers fundamental for every missionary. But not all was pain. This was also a period of growth of his Institute and of the establishment of the first seminary for the preparation of future missionaries. This seminary was one of the great satisfactions and consolation for Gaspar.

Again, I hope the "strokes" can help you to know better our Founder in his innermost being and spirituality, and at the same time, that it become for us a standard for our reflection and an inspiration for our following of the Lord.

Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

Feast of the Most Precious Blood,
1 July 1990
Guatemala City, Guatemala, Centroamerica

I. HAPPINESS

1. I, however, want you to be perfectly happy in God. I do not want you to have any bad feelings. Are we not serving a very great master? Whom should we fear?

(from Letter 891 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, May 13, 1824)

II. THE LOVE OF GOD

1. I excuse everyone's intention, and may God free me from a lack of charity, but, oh! With just a bit of love for God in our hearts, what energetic and impressive achievements in the field of religion would be experienced in the world!

(from Letter 878 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, April 24, 1824)

2. What a marvellous thing is the love of God.

(from Letter 1097 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, April 13, 1825)

III. THE APOSTOLATE

1. Oh, my God, what a pleasant and sweet thing it is to work for love of you!
(from Letter 830 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, January 30, 1824)

2. In practice, things look quite different when they are viewed from a distance.

(from Letter 1035 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, January 22, 1825)

3. Our principle is that of St. Vincent de Paul: apostles out in the field, Carthusians at home.

(from Letter 1040 to Fr. Luigi Locatelli, January 24, 1825)

IV. AUTHORITY

1. *Occasionaliter* I say that many times I say nothing because all I want to do is to be concerned about the matters of the ministry. But, sometimes, it seems to me that is the will of God that I should speak out, not as a satisfaction to my human feelings, but for the sake of the truth. Thus, it has been quite some time that I have been able to note that certain people are not fit to rule the Province, and yet things go on in a certain fashion. God does not endow everyone with levelness of mind, with logical reasoning, with orderliness, or with a certain pleasant, external mode of governing things. This also helps us in our pursuit of humility. So, let us pray a great deal that God will give such members to his church who are dedicated to the urgent needs of our times, for this is truly a gift of the Lord, *a quo omne bonum*.

(from Letter 1080 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, March 24, 1825)

V. BRIGANDAGE

1. Also see that public prayers are offered so that God will free this Province from the scourge of brigandage, and arouse in the people a horror for such enormous misdeeds, bidding them to pray likewise that those misled wanderers will convert, as you are assured of paradise through docility, etc. Take good care of yourself. In Jesus crucified, consider me as your humble, etc.

(from Letter 1085 to Fr. Pasquale De Nardis, March 27, 1825)

2. Whatever is expressed here is always in accordance with the customary rules of respect, and precise adherence to the real objective, the glory of God, as well as to bring an end to the scourges.

(from Letter 1166 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

3. Hence, by drawing up an edict, composed in such a way that it does not overlook anyone (and there are plenty), including also an indirect invitation to anyone who has been delinquent up to now, urging them to place themselves in the arms of the Church and peacefully submitting themselves to those measures which the ruler, who is also a father, would know how to apply in those cases, all of this would, in every way, remove this evil form of life. Likewise, one must adhere to a certain decisive action and from among the various possibilities available, to select the one which balances best what is spiritual and eternal with the temporal and external world! What a painful experience it is to be informed that there are poor people who are about to die without even pronouncing the word: *Jesus*. Indeed, this is a matter of eternal fire and of souls that have cost the Blood of our suffering Lord! Whatever may be the principle of the *jus publico* to be taken into consideration, it is certain that we should examine those principles of law, not in a restricted fashion but in a *composite sense*, that is to say, with mercy, with charity, with zeal for the salvation of souls.

(from Letter 1168 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1824)

VI. THE COMMUNITY

1. I am surprised that Canon Aloysi does not work out well. Indeed, I shall send him to Giano. I will pray over this. Since he is a newcomer among the recent arrivals, it will be necessary to stimulate him.

(from Letter 917 to Fr. Pietro Torsani, July 8, 1824)

2. ... since we are not permitted to go or to remain without a companion.

(from Letter 1015 to Msgr. Francesco Bonomo, December 20, 1824)

3. Do not fail to gather in assembly at least once a month.

(from Letter 1018 to Canon Giannoni, December 22, 1824)

VII. CHRIST CRUCIFIED

1. Indeed, how many tears are being shed during these days at the foot of the Cross; how many sighs are released, how many good resolutions are made. Here is where the repentant sinner finds comfort, where the troubled soul finds courage, where the soul already sanctified finds the tenderness of love. Here, from that pulpit, the wrathful learn meekness, the proud learn humility, the shameless learn mortification. *Mihi absit gloriari nisi in Cruce*. In looking at this sacred monument, oh my beloved faithful, you will remember the mercy shown to you during these days, you will be given courage to face your sufferings, and you will wage war against the tyrannical kingdom.

(from Letter 834 to Fr. Vincenzo Maria Fontana, February, 1824)

2. Oh, how much we owe to the Cross of Jesus Christ! It is the symbol of our glory; it is the standard of our salvation, the mystical tree of life. Blessed is the one who nourishes himself with the fruit of the plant! So, let us glory in the Cross, the ladder to heaven, the weapon of Christianity, the miraculous branch against the power of the demon.

(from Letter 834 to Fr. Vincenzo Maria Fontana, February, 1824)

3. Remain at the foot of the Cross and pray for me who, in a special way, must sustain the glory of the Cross ... hail to the Cross ... hail to the Cross.

(from Letter 834 to Fr. Vincenzo Maria Fontana, February, 1824)

4. Let us all be united in Jesus crucified.

(from Letter 1009 to Fr. Vincenzo Ceccacci, December 9, 1824)

5. Let us carefully read the wounds of Jesus Christ during these holy days, and let us discover in them the haven of safety, of peace and of victory. May Jesus be with us.

(from Letter 1088 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, March 28, 1825)

6. I would like to have a clear, prompt and decisive reply. Cast a glance at the wounds of Jesus Christ and you will hear a yes. He is our primary director.

(from Letter 1113 to Fr. Angelo Primavera, May 8, 1825)

7. May you remain very tranquil and make advancement. Do not be daunted by the warfare of the enemy. We possess the standard of the Cross and that is sufficient. You may ask! What do we have? We have Jesus with us. I love to see in souls great courage and trust. Pray also for our Society which is so insignificant in the house of God. I hope, however, that it will be accepted in the eyes of the Lord.

(from Letter 1187 to Mother Maria Nazzarena de Castris, July 2, 1825)

8. For us, the Crucifix is a mystical tree of salvation; blessed is the soul that stands in the shadow of this plant, gathering in its fruits of holiness and paradise. It is, at one and the same time, the book in which we read of the love of a redeeming God. Finally, it is a weapon against the devil, while also being the ladder to heaven.
(from Letter 1188 to Luigia del Bufalo, July 3, 1825)

9. Let us encourage each other evermore toward the pursuit of perfection and let us not cease studying the great book of the Crucifix. From that book, we learn profound humility, indomitable patience and gentle, industrious charity so that we are able to attract souls to his love. Yes, let us pray very much for the reform of our times that is so necessary. Let us try to make everyone see that serving God is sweet and that by word and deed we can stimulate in each person a love for the holy Cross. With beginners we should adapt the burden in accordance with the strengths of their spirit; by corroborating these interior strengths of spirit, they will begin to make progress. May the life of Jesus Christ always remain fully before our eyes. All of this should serve to enkindle fervor within us reciprocally and assist us in our mutual striving for paradise.
(from Letter 1203 to Fr. Pasquale De Nardis, July 10, 1825)

VIII. THE CROSS – SUFFERING

1. Through crosses, we draw closer to Jesus
(from Letter 849 to Mother Maria Saveria of S. Agostino, March 7, 1824)

2. Let us not be stymied by the difficulties that arise. Let us put our trust in God and make every effort to overcome them, ... so that the glory of God is in no way retarded.
(from Letter 888 to the Mayor of Benevento, May 12, 1824)

3. I beg you, however, not to show such bewilderment, for that is the work of the devil. Be more courageous. You already know that the good is accomplished only with suffering.
(from Letter 893 to Fr. Pietrantonio Veradi, May 14, 1824)

4. More and more have the missions been blessed by God; but, pray to the Lord that the missionary who is writing may truly become entirely God's. With respect to his spirit, do not be distressed. God is a God of peace; we are in service to a good master who prefers a gentle spirit. Indeed, internal sufferings are signs of the refinement of love. So, should we not always be ready with the scalpel of mortification? Is not a helmsman who steers his ship safely through violent winds more worthy of greater reward than one who indeed fulfills his duty, but through favorable winds? Therefore, be courageous. *Confortamini in Domino, et potentia virtutis eius.*

(from Letter 911 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, June 24, 1824)

5. From various letters, I have gotten word of the imprudent rumors spread about concerning Pievetorina. I forgive everyone. I have had to see verified what has been foretold to me (and I could not believe it) that my own confreres would have spoken ill of the Institute. I repeat, I forgive everyone and I love them all in Jesus Christ. I did not go about looking for those letters, but, accidentally, they got into my hands. I join this to all the other crosses that the ministry bears along with it. I do not complain about any of them. I kiss the holy Cross, and I plant it deeply into my heart. God's works are born only among thorns.

(from Letter 917 to Fr. Pietro Torsani, July 8, 1824)

6. As long as we are here below, there will never be a scarcity of suffering. The way of the Cross is the royal road to heaven. As soon as I can, I shall try to get to Albano. In the meanwhile, make use of that prudence which distinguishes a priest in seeking God alone, just as these must surely be your sentiments. Little by little, everything will be worked out satisfactorily. Be tranquil and calm. Love of God makes everything gentler. I am consoled to learn that you are supported by wise counsel to remain confirmed in the Society which is indeed God's work.

(from Letter 927 to Fr. Luigi Moscatelli, July 22, 1824)

7. Above all, let us pray and not lose courage. In general, good works are displeasing to evil people and sometimes even to good people, not, I say, out of malice but because they allow themselves to be overwhelmed by error. So, prayers, patience and industrious action.

(from Letter 952 to Mr. Donato Quartaroli, August 22, 1824)

8. The only thing I can say is that charity is benign. ... In charity, let us forgive everyone and go forward.

(from Letter 972 to Msgr. Gregorio Muccioli, October 11, 1824)

9. This is something that is beneficial for anyone who has not been called to take the solemn vows, but to live in holy community-life and thus become more closely united to God in the practice of prayer in particular as well as of holy humility. If the works of God are born in thorns, that does not frighten us, but rather brings us to recognize that patience, longsuffering and trust in the help of the Almighty are the very basis and foundation of all good works.

(from Letter 991 to Msgr. Nicola Mattei, Middle of November, 1824)

10. Do not be frightened by the exercise of your office, nor lose courage in the face of any untoward encounter, but *signa apostolatus in multa patientia*.

(from Letter 1012 to Fr. Pasquale De Nardis, December 22, 1824)

11. Let us be united in the heart of Jesus, and let us become saints. The sacrifices that we present to the Almighty from here below will spare us from purgatory and we will be showered with blessings.

(from Letter 1018 to Canon Giannoni, December 22, 1824)

12. So, everything that is being hurled at us by the powers of hell only helps to confirm that the Society is God's work and that it cannot be solidly founded except through opposition and suffering. Thus, for example, the Archbishop of Spoleto, who, though perhaps unwillingly, carries on with me.

(from Letter 1035 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, January 22, 1825)

13. In my own poor heart, I love the crosses upon which the works of God are brought forth; and, while they are consoling on the spiritual level, they open the way to the practice of special virtues on the temporal level.

(from Letter 1128 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, May 24, 1825)

14. Our life, indeed, is growing shorter. The tribulations of this exile are the things that produce our crown of glory. Let us adore the crosses that God sends to us and let us embrace them tenderly.

(from Letter 1182 to Fr. Vincenzo Giovannelli, June 30, 1825)

15. Rumors have been spread around in that area both about me and about our Institute, rumors that are without foundation or reasonable cause. I am quite aware of the confusion aroused by the enemy of every good work; I adore the divine dispositions and I peacefully endure the distress and bitterness which is all part of our inheritance of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

(from Letter 1199 to Msgr. Giuseppe Maria Pezzella, July 8, 1825)

16. Crosses do not frighten us. In fact, in our hearts, we love them with the assurance given in the statement: "*cum ipso sum in tribulatione eripiam eum, et glorificabo eum*".

(from Letter 1270 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, November 11, 1825)

17. Winter will pass and the Lord will have us enjoy a smiling springtime. *Omnia enim fortiter et suaviter disponit.*

(from Letter 1277 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, December 2, 1825)

18. Our Institute, by divine mercy, is progressing well. There must, of course, be crosses; but the love of God sweetens everything.

(from Letter 1277 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, December 2, 1825)

19. Why get all upset about everything that you see or notice around you externally? Let us think of ourselves and let us preach to others by our good example, excusing our neighbor's intentions and thanking God who illuminates us. Let us leave the judging to God in all things. The humble soul recognizes only its own wretchedness.

(from Letter 1202 to Tommaso Meloni, July 10, 1825)

IX. THE DIGNITY OF MAN

1. I would like to ask you to have the Holy Father remove the abuse of having heads cut off and the dismembering of the bodies of those who died after being condemned in justice. It is quite enough that the guilty one be justly judged; then, Christian burial should be allowed for anyone of them who, through the sacraments, has been reconciled to God. What is going on now is inhuman. In this Province, in certain locales, the skeletons appended to the gates are more numerous, so to speak, than the stones. Alos, in this matter, the saying is verified: *ab assuetis non fit passio*. If one severs the head from a criminal, all the people go around, *nemine excepto*, in a sort of repulsive indifference; at least, they should go about praying. It is a great agony to find oneself continuously in the face of this *practice*, which I, in no way at all, can reconcile with the spirit of religious piety toward the deceased.

(from Letter to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, Middle of September, 1824)

X. SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

1. I have understood *everything*; those people are off the track, and I have no scruples in saying so. God does not communicate his illumination to all, but to a single *guide* to be selected. So many feel that way, but I do not know how they can be happy with that method. This does not diminish the esteem shown toward all. I love them in Jesus Christ; but their way of operating has been a real lesson for me. They have been given advice ever since the time of Monsignor Albertini. So be it. But the job of direction is not a bread that can be chewed by all teeth.

(from Letter 938 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, August 6, 1824)

2. One notes that he acted with little sagacity. There are, however, the sacred writings which the author put out in compensation for the profane ones. It would be a better idea if you were to consult with a person who is knowledgeable and versed in this matter if you need to have further counsel.

(from Letter 1148 to Mr. Domenico Antonio Gagliardi, June 10, 1825)

3. In reply to your most esteemed letter, I say to you that you should not cease removing those thoughts from your mind. Select a single director upon whom you can depend, according to the advice of de Sales, for in doing this you make him the basis for your peace and tranquility in God. The devil would like to have you at one time make a judgment about this matter in one way and at another time, in another way. You must do nothing else than make an act of humility in the presence of God. Turn your thought to Paradise, to the divine loveableness, and nothing more. In short, may I express myself in this way, down with your intellectual rationalizations. Surrender your heart to God, for in this lies everything.

(from Letter 1202 to Tommaso Meloni, July 10, 1825)

XI. ERRORS

1. Sometimes, even among the best people, certain misunderstandings arise, not for the heart but for the mind, thus allowing the most lovable God to remind us to acknowledge the profound abyss of our lowly status.

(from Letter 927 to Fr. Luigi Moscatelli, July 22, 1824)

XII. SCRUPLES

1. If Father Vincenzo di Nicola does not get rid of certain trifling attitudes, he will always remain in a state of perplexity. Whoever dedicates himself to the Society does not pay attention to the walls within which he is staying nor does he get upset if he is in this mission house instead of another. The saints show us the way. God wishes to have our hearts to be generous, our minds to be submissive. I am not all pleased to be flattered, and I write and speak with complete evangelical liberty. But that does not remove the esteem I hold for all; anyone who dedicates himself to the Society should see the need for having those sentiments. ... Let us not multiply crosses with the working of our imaginations.

(from Letter 984 to Fr. Pasquale De Nardis, October 31, 1824)

2. Remember that God is a peace. Let anxieties be removed far from ourselves. I love perfection, but we should shun scrupulosity. In your reconciliation, say whatever has come to your mind and then leave your soul in tranquility. ... Serve God with joy.

(from Letter 990 to a Gentleman of Penne, November 14, 1824)

3. Let us not be discouraged, for medicine is meant to be applied to the sick, and the worse the affliction gets, so much more is our charity necessary in applying the remedy. I shall be ready to assist you as you request, since this is a question of the salvation of a soul.

(from Letter 1026 to Fr. Pietro Butti, January 9, 1825)

XII. STUDIES

1. Do not cease cultivating your studies. More and more will God manifest to you his own divine will.

(from Letter 1054 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, February 11, 1825)

XIV. HUMILITY

1. Humility and indifference are the basis for the spiritual life ... I wish only harmony and unity for all.

(from Letter 879 to Fr. Luigi Moscatelli, April 26, 1824)

2. If God gives me life, I must put someone else at the head of the Institute who can act for it and promote its glory. I forgive everyone, I love everyone, and I would rather be the sacristan of the Institute than its director. Let us do the will of God. ... Charity will be rewarded. ... Here, the good is immense, the Work we do for God is blessed, and the Institute is acclaimed.

(from Letter 972 to Msgr. Muccioli (Gregorio), October 11, 1824)

3. I would like to do much good work, but not to be named in person. So, you would be doing me a favor and a charitable act by saying, in general, that a priest representing the Holy Father etc. Ultimately, I am hopeful of completing my days in Giano, that most beloved place of solitude etc.

(from Letter 999 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi End of November 1824)

4. Likewise, to find out whether *it is the will of God that I should withdraw to the place*, but not from the ministry. If you are able to *be of help to me*, this would be the greatest proof of your loving kindness.

(from Letter 1035 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, January 22, 1825)

5. I am not worthy to offer myself for the welfare of souls that I love in Jesus Christ crucified. You, however, starting from this moment, should pray and have others pray for this wretched person so that the Lord *det voci meae, vocem virtutis*.

(from Letter 1065 to Fr. Francesco Saverio Lanna, March 3, 1825)

6. My heart, shall we say, is like a ship. I am not worthy to offer myself for the welfare of souls. But, God, who is the author of every good work, supplies for my miserable person.

(from Letter 1066 to Giovanni Calvi, March 3, 1825)

7. My wholehearted congratulations on being promoted to the priesthood. My most beloved, what a great dignity this is! Let us establish ourselves incessantly in that beautiful virtue, and may you not cease praying a great deal for me in the divine Sacrifice so that I can ready myself for eternity. I beg you fervently for this

act of charity.

(from Letter 1071 to Fr. Ferdinando Angelici, March 12, 1825)

8. But also I would like to add to your responsibilities the general direction of the Institute, since I am a lover of obeying and not of presiding. You know that we are not destined to remain here on earth forever. Hence, others will follow us. That is why it is necessary now to set up the principles, worked out together, for the good government of the Society in general and of its various ramifications.

(from Letter 1124 to Fr. Ferdinando Angelici, May 20, 1825)

9. I prefer talking with God about the good than with men.

(from Letter 1124 to Fr. Ferdinando Angelici, May 20, 1825)

10. You are the instrument which God utilizes for governing our Institute. I am fearful that my own demerits impede even greater blessings. Pray a lot, a lot for me, as I remain constantly, your humble etc.

(from Letter 1128 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, May 24, 1825)

11. I would like you, *ut ex se*, to write an ascetical letter to him on developing equilibrium of character and an uninterrupted pursuit of humility, the basis for the priesthood. The information that I have is that basically he is a good man, but that he is variable *ut luna*. This does not surprise me. We are in this world to acquire virtue. Keep all of this between us.

(from Letter 1143 to Fr. Pietro Butti, June 8, 1825)

12. In the history of the Church, we find no small number of people who, though laymen, have dedicated themselves through virtue to various offices which, in the judgement of the world appear menial, but in the spirit of religion and the spiritual life, are great and special in the eyes of God.

(from Letter 1157 to Fr. Luigi Gonnelli, June 17, 1825)

13. If my abasement serves to give him glory, I offer myself to the glory of being scorned. As the Apostle says: I shall glory in my infirmities so that the virtue of Jesus Christ may dwell in me. What virtue of Jesus Christ? His humility, the delight in being scorned.

(from Letter 1165 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

14. The second reason is to let you know confidentially, *et in communicatione spiritus*, a thought of mine, and it is this: Because of my deportation and because of the missions, and surely *not to escape the crosses, for then I would have scruples, but* perhaps for the sake of a greater good, I would like, through your intervention, to propose to His Holiness three of the primary leaders in our Institute, together with the gifts found in those being proposed, given to them respectively by God for his glory so that from those three names he would select a director of our Society, which is in its tribulations so dear to God. I, then, would withdraw to S. Felice in Giano, since I am already in my 40's, and there I would work with our young men, though still not

abandoning Mission work, and also have a bit more peace and quiet. What do you say to this? Then, in regard to our Institute, I say to you sincerely that *if the sacrifice* of my life would be helpful to give it an ever stronger foundation, here, O Lord, am I: *paratum cor meum Deus*. I must not, however, deny that my natural sensitiveness is extreme in learning of the weight of human miseries, but de Sales says that, by controlling oneself, that is what will bring about a double merit, as the saint points out, to the benefit of the soul. My dearest Monsignore, up to now we have carried the cross as far as Mount Calvary. Now it will be necessary to climb that mountain and then die with Jesus crucified at the top of that same mountain of myrrh and bitterness.
(from Letter 1181 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 29, 1825)

15. However, to guard and to increase the holy gifts granted to us by God, let us not cease, my dearest in Jesus Christ, to ground ourselves in holy humility. This virtue is the basis for every good work, the source of every heavenly blessing and the ladder to heaven. We are worth something only because of the aggregate of God's gifts given to us. ... God wants us to cultivate those gifts that he has given to us. So, continue to advance both in your spiritual life as well as in your acquisition of knowledge, since we, as priests, must be *lux mundi et sal terrae*. ... I wish that your days, as well as my own, will be days full of merit, virtue and holiness.

May Jesus be our delight, our peace, our comfort.
(from Letter 1206 to Fr. Antonio Loffreda, July 15, 1825)

16. Finally, I am intending not to return ever to Rome, or, if I do return, not to go to the Holy Father in person; that, because, in one's own case, someone else must act as apologist; etc. giving them the chance to say what is not so. *Ama nesciri, et pro nihilo reputari*. I do not care to hear about dignities, positions, nor nay other embarrassing thing. I love the missions, the ministry etc. You, in particular, must help me with your prayers. When I return to the Province of Campagna, I shall pass through the walls. This is what I am planning to do, and I pray that it will be blessed by God. O, what holy solitude here in S. Felice etc.
(from Letter 1241 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 1, 1825)

17. My heart is there in Giano; I would like to retire to that place as soon as possible to make my own retreat. the Madonna del Fosco is my delight and my spirit gets a special anointing when I visit that sanctuary. Our primary house of studies is located there and I must go there to write many things before I die, and, at the same time, to direct the entire Society from this first house of ours.
(Letter No. 1248 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 10, 1825)

18. Prayers, along with the most profound humility before God. He wants our Society, he will defend it. ... I wish to do good work, but, *in abscondito*, and, in particular, to work in the formation of our excellent young men there in Giano. The Church is in great need for assistance to the clergy, etc. ... *Die ac nocte*, keep our Society in mind, for it will be the thing that will lift you to the heights of paradise.
(Letter No. 1254 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September, 1825)

19. However, when you discuss zealously our situations which are, ultimately, of prime concern for the greater glory of God, I beg that you speak of the Society in general and never mention my name. Let this in *communicatione spiritus coactus imprevisita necessitate*. ... The greatest act of charity that you can exercise now in my regard will be that of influencing my private and hidden life which I so deeply desire and ask God *et fuis praecibus. Satis haec sint*.

(from Letter 1270 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, November 11, 1825)

20. Cultivate the virtue of humility, a virtue which I greatly urge you to develop.

(from Letter 1281 to Luigi del Bufalo, December 9, 1825)

21. In regard to this same person, I tell you that he has good background, but a very difficult trait (keep this between ourselves) has arisen in him; however, that, with the grace of God, can be overcome. We are miserable creatures and sickly *et beatus qui minimis urgetur*.

(from Letter 1284 to Fr. Pietro Butti, December 18, 1825)

XV. MARY

1. Trust in Mary most holy and may there be peace in your heart.
(from Letter 1101 to Fr. Domenico Silvestri, April 19, 1825)

2. I do not know who the painter was, in Rome, who depicted my Madonna. The one that added the chalice to it is Mr. Pozzi; but the image was carried on the missions by other missionaries who are already deceased. So, you make an effort on your own to look into this most tender matter.

(from Letter 1271 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, November 13,
1825)

XVI. FOREIGN MISSIONS

1. You can be certain of the fitness, the practicality and the experience of the ones who will be sent there.

(from Letter 1065 to Msgr. Foscolo, December 1, 1824)

2. Wherever you may be, be of assistance, as you have been doing, both with your advice and with your work for the good of the Institute. Also, stress the observance of our rule. If, some day, we would have to send one or the other of our men to the Propaganda to establish one of our houses in Goa, would you feel inspired to go? Pray over it. This is not an urgent matter, now; but in time, I would be happy to know what you think.

(from Letter 1046 to Fr. Gaspare Carboneri, January 1825)

3. O how I pray that the Lord will bless our care of souls! With the passing of time, this holy Society will be able to offer help in the missions of the Propaganda, where the needs are so great, and in that way promote even more the glory of the Lord. If you should have a priest who could be trained for our ministry, do not fail to encourage him so that we can stir up even more the apostolic spirit among the clergy as well as fervent zeal for the salvation of souls.

(from Letter 1087 to Msgr. Ottavio Zolio, March 28 1825)

4. With this mystical growth being supported, they will produce the noble fruit of vocations to the missions of the Propaganda Fide. The evangelical workers, who will be well fortified in solid virtue, in adequate learning, in detachment from everything, will go forth. The glory of God will be wondrously promoted.

(from Letter 1214 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)

XVII. DEATH

1. What a great thought it is for all of us to be mindful of death!
(from Letter 1178 to Fr. Giuseppe Maria Silvestri, June 24, 1825)

XVIII. OBEDIENCE

1. Be exact in fulfilling what I mention to you for the glory of God.
(from Letter 965 to Fr. Giacomo Giorgi, September 2, 1824)
2. Form a number of questions and submit them to Canon Betti, the President, and pay attention to his conclusions so as to gain the merit of obedience and counsel which are the bases of sanctity. He, who is a man well acquainted with Benevento, will help you in doing good work, with order, peace and tranquility in common. I am referring to those things which can relieve you of every small annoyance and give you the pleasure of seeing accomplished those things that are in keeping with the greater glory of God.
(from Letter 1012 to Fr. Pasquale De Nardis, December 16, 1824)
3. Unlike statues, missionaries are not motionless. They serve wherever God wills to call them. ... You will never have to render an account for having obeyed.

There is no doubt about that. When you encounter divine blessing in Sermoneta, it shows that the matter is being handled well. You went there after all in obedience. Even though I am still the miserable thing that I am, it is nevertheless a point of faith that, since God has called me to this Society, he must provide me with the inspirations pertinent to my office. I hope that you accept in good spirit these items of counsel because of the love that I have for you in Jesus Christ. To set things right, at present, place your trust in God and once again be courageous. Stand firmly behind our rules: whether he is upset or not is not the point of concern. Be like a German in adhering steadily to the established policies.

(from Letter 1063 to Fr. D. Domenico Silvestri, February 24, 1825)

XIX. THE SOCIETY (THE WORK)

1. You will not cease praying and cooperating by giving a helping hand to our Society which I would like to see, before my death, in a secure state for carrying out its sole purpose of continuing the good work that is now being done.

(from Letter 830 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, January 30, 1824)

2. I pray to God that soon the temporal matters will be straightened out for these foundations, as I still nourish the desire to withdraw to become the sacristan in Giano, for God knows how sincerely I wish that.

(from Letter 867 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, April 9, 1824)

3. Still, despite the deep hurt that this is produced in me, it has not alienated me from doing the will of God which I shall always adore.

The Cross is the beautiful ladder to heaven and the works of the Lord are the fruit of tears, privations, disparagements and humiliations. However, we are consoled by the good work that is being accomplished. ... I mention this because the need is so great; and, abstracting from miracles, the work of reform is a matter of days and days. Recommend me always to God so that I will do his will and be able to meditate on the text: *fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus*. ... In my wretchedness, I am content only to pray. ... Oh, would that with his Blood he would see to the firm establishment of the Society, a true miniature, may I express myself thus. And, since our Society is one dedicated to the reform, it therefore is not one wanted by the devil. ... What are we to do? It is necessary to suffer.

(from Letter 876 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, April 24, 1824)

4. What great blindness of intellect it is not to admit in principle the goodness of something that is such a bulwark against hell! Let us humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord, *et provoluti coram Domino, sine intermissione oremus*. May you extend your ardent charity also toward the other places covered by the Missions, *ut fructus maneat*. Above all let us not cease to promote our devotion and

that of our St. Xavier.

(from Letter 932 to D. Nicola Palma, July 28, 1824)

5. God, indeed, who brings things to maturity, requires us to be patient for his works are generated and cultivated through thorns, crosses and all sorts of hardships that accompany a ministry of the primary and essential relationship in the Church of Jesus Christ. *Fides enim ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi.*

(from Letter 946 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, August 20, 1824)

6. Good work has been done, is being done, and will always continue to increase even more, as long as they drop the idea of providing just an occasional subsidy which (as some people say) would not bring about stability for the Institute, as God would have it be. Therefore, if I am speaking out now with certain amount of openness, it is indeed because God is impelling me to do so, and I am not to omit putting forth every indication of my concern for God's cause, which is the primary concern, and I do so with all my energy and with evangelical freedom.

(from Letter 947 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, August 20, 1824)

7. Here the work is immense and the needs extreme. Let us offer prayers. It appears to me that things are still not taking on that state of progress that is so deeply desired. Our sins are what delays the mercy of God.

(from Letter 987 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, November 4, 1824)

8. God's works are the fruit of tears, humiliations and sufferings. Ordinarily, it is impossible (for that is how God disposes things) to see the best results in a new plant. *Omnia cum tempore.* You are giving me a lesson. Yet, let us not cease praying.

(from Letter 1004 to Msgr. Nicola Mattei, December 12, 1824)

9. So, what is necessary now is that all of us as one seek to improve the progress that has been initiated by the Society. In your wisdom, you can give this further consideration at the foot of the Crucifix.

(from Letter 1010 to Msgr. Ottavio Zolio, December 12, 1824)

10. This is not a question of vows etc. but of leading a holy life and of receiving a holy and ecclesiastical training.

(from Letter 1012 to Fr. Pasquale De Nardis, December 16, 1824)

11. In every ministry, ... there is a certain gradation. But as for the catechists, the preachers of the principal sermon, only capable men have always been selected. ... This is why I am fearful of ungrounded rumors, yet certain and secure of your affection for our Society, which is God's work, and for your wisdom in coming to its defense against the diabolical assaults, to the glory of God. Thus, evermore firmly will this tender, mystical plant continue to set its roots deeper and deeper. ... Do not

cease praying for this important objective.

(from Letter 1031 to Msgr. Giuseppe Lais, January 13, 1825)

12. A mission of eight days is not feasible since there is a lack of furnishings, and nothing would be accomplished; scarcely underway, the missionaries would be departing.

(from Letter 1061 to Fr. Luigi Moscatelli, Middle of February, 1824)

13. Pray and have others pray that the longed for reform among the people will be achieved. ... You probably know already that, by divine mercy, our Society is making great progress. Praise be to the Lord a *quo omne bonum*.

(from Letter 1073 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, March 13, 1825)

14. In general, I say that here we are moving along according to plans and projects, and yet the true plan has been fully executed, ... by way of a discrete appendix, shall we say, everything will be brought to a conclusion, namely, a civilized morality.

(from Letter 1080 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, March 24, 1825)

15. The Society, by the grace of God, is making progress, and the good that it promotes is immense. We have an immense number of petitions for the ministry from everywhere.

(from Letter 1099 to Msgr. Gregorio Muccioli, April 17, 1825)

16. Our houses are open missions; our workers have a choice in our ministry and hence are always busy.

(from Letter 1123 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, May 19, 1825)

17. I pray to the Lord that he grant me the favor to see well-established the Society which, through his diving mercy, is setting evermore deeper roots. For me, the expenses increase with the increase of membership, but you can be assured that we pay close attention to the strictest economy. Indeed, I think that sometimes God is working miracles since not even I know how we keep making progress. You do a great deal, a very great deal, but you can be assured that poor and abandoned churches have been located, countless needy people have been contacted, sacred functions have been maintained, food, clothing and beds provided, etc. etc. and this is a sea of activity. Among certain peoples, the poverty is such that, during the missions it is up to us to provide for many things, otherwise we could not carry out the necessary education.

(from Letter 1128 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, May 24, 1825)

18. All I want is the true good, and I weep in the presence of God when I see the wretched situation of our times. *Videntes non vident, intelligentes non intelligunt*. Enough of this.

(from Letter 1165 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

19. ... we must set up the means to achieve it. What is that means? Workers who will begin by tearing down the walls of division, etc. etc. Later on, more will be undertaken. In the meantime, I repeat, let us initiate the great means for reform with *missions* and spiritual retreats.

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

20. Do not cease praying for me, and have others do so too, and also for our Institute which later on will be providing great assistance to the work of the missions, even those under the Propaganda Fide.

(from Letter 1183 to Fr. Giovanni Chiodi, June 30, 1825)

21. Registering complaints of this type has never been my mode of acting and even the rules of our Institute direct us in such things. We take care of the matters that pertain to us and, in order to keep the fruits of the holy missions enduring, the only things we do not continue that good work are the things which have first been submitted to the judgement of the Ordinaries.

(from Letter 1199 to Msgr. Giuseppe Maria Pezzella, July 8, 1825)

22. But the ministry ... the missions ... oh God ... Priests who have left their own homes, their possessions, their small comforts and have joined a society where, except for their daily living, they have nothing more ... how can anyone say they have no spirit?

(from Letter 1207 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, July 20, 1825)

23. Please do me the favor of telling the Holy Father that perhaps he, one day, will realize what he does not presently see. I am not speaking about myself but about the Society. He will weep for having used during an audience a procedure which was not in accordance with God. Only God knows whether I shall survive all of the bitter things that have occurred. I have not lost sight of my conformity to his divine will, for doing his most loveable divine will is my total pursuit. However, I am not made of iron or of bronze. To face continuous, baseless rebukes and invectives, without due process, both of my conduct and that of others, is a very bitter chalice to drink. All of this, however, is very little, considering my own demerits. Still, I glory in being a son of the Church and, wretched though I may be, I have not lost my faith. Excuse this outburst of mine which is meant for you *alone*, for I am besieged with sadness, yet I have not allowed any of this to leak out even to my companions, realizing that the war that is being waged is brought on by the enemy, and in the most despicable way.

(from Letter 1207 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, July 20, 1825)

24. In these times of upheaval, which it has pleased God to reserve for us, there is a great need for a reform of the people. The Lord, *in misericordia dives*, wished to provide an effective means for curbing the torrent of iniquity and for restoring order in the hearts of the people by furnishing them with helps that are most suitable for the sanctification of their souls and for their continuous and lasting

improvement. One such means is the establishing of more mission and spiritual retreat houses for the secular clergy, to revive in them a sense of dignity, of good example, as well as an eagerness for study and holiness, all of which is in line with the spirit of that ancient discipline in which community living of ecclesiastics was eagerly fostered. St. Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, treated this matter in a special way.

(from Letter 1214 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)

25. But in our present foundations, we are taking into consideration, as a whole, everything that could be needed by the pastors in the respective dioceses, so that we can be immediate help to the urgent needs of the people to effect the reform of their daily lives. While other institutes, such as the Fathers of the Company of Jesus, have as their primary objective the education of youth, our mission and retreat houses offer whatever is necessary to bring about, with the greatest possible rapidity, the conversion of souls, good example from the grownups, and, in short an apostolate directed towards every sort of grouping of people in the various dioceses which will then evaluate, facilitate and consolidate the education given.

(from Letter 1214 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)

26. There will be no fear that the clergy will fall into a state of inertia ... and they will activate this apostolate which is so very necessary for the greater glory of God. Their own personal affairs will not deter them, since we do not forbid proper ecclesiastical assistance. Nor can being advanced in age make them at times fearful of the fulfillment of their sacred duties, since those who are more vigorous will apply themselves to the giving of missions and those who are not so strong in health can take care of the internal forum, thus enjoying that peace which the houses of our foundation can offer. In this house, in a special way, the soul is lifted to God in prayer ... So, we conclude that in these foundations, already put into motion by the now deceased Supreme Pontiff Pope Pius VII, the clergy find a haven and the longed for reform of the clergy itself is promoted so that they can become a beacon of holiness for the people.

(from Letter 1214 to Pope Leo VII, July 29, 1825)

27. The holy missions and retreats, as well as other pious works, which are currently being accomplished by the Society, are surely the principle basis for the reform. Whereas other institutes cultivate young people, the apostolate which our ministry is providing takes care of the needs of the people in general and outstanding good example is given by grownups, who have been educated, to the young people who comprise the future most concerned objective of our loving mother, the Church.

(from Letter 1240 to Pope Leo XII, September 1, 1825)

28. Excuse me if I have written lengthily, but my love for the Society, which I would like to solidify with the shedding of my own blood, as well as the fact that I foresee that I will not be having another opportunity for expressing myself so fully, all of this has led me to come to this decision. I point out, with regard to my intention of not including *Rome for me*, that this *is something which is just between you and me*. I desire that the Institute be spoken of as well as our companions, and, insofar as possible, nothing be said about me. I speak to you with open heart. I repeat, *ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari, etc.*

(from Letter 1241 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 1, 1825)

29. I give thanks to God for the spiritual good work that our Society is achieving everywhere; this gives consolation to my poor spirit.

(from Letter 1241 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 1, 1825)

30. Time may be unavailable, but not the will to go there.

(from Letter 1245 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 7, 1825)

31. Oh, how often I think of you to whom I owe so very much! I also think that it must be the source of great consolation to your spirit to realize all the good work that is being accomplished. Praise for all of this to God, whom we must love tenderly and perfectly. You, for the love of God, must prevent me, *always and energetically*, from making any alteration in my way of life through which I must come face to face with death. This will be the greatest favor you can do for me, and I will thank you, not only now but for all eternity. Be assured that this is the will of God.

(from Letter 1248 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 10, 1825)

32. All praise to the Almighty for whose glory we must untiringly work. I cannot tell you how many requests for the ministry have been arriving from everywhere.

(from Letter 1248 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, September 10, 1825)

33. In the meantime, our Society has been receiving, up to now, not a few requests. Who can decide whether it is the will of God or not that we should be established there? Prayers.

(from Letter 1271 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, November 13, 1825)

34. The good work is immense; yet, the temporal problems wear down one's humanity; but, then, God will take care of that. May Jesus be our delight, our peace, our all.

(from Letter 1279 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, December 9, 1825)

XX. PRAYER

1. Therefore, I prefer to pray than to speak.
(from Letter 867 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, April 9, 1824)
2. Continue to ground yourself in prayer, humility and study. Later on, God will manifest his divine will to you. Pray for me, who, with esteem, remains
(from Letter 897 to Fr. Ferdinando Angelici, May 25, 1824)
3. The answer lies in the thought: what may one not await from prayer etc. Perhaps you may not feel that you can hold to your mode of life, and, if that is the will of God, why get upset? The basic consideration is that in aspiring towards God, with whatever inner groanings there may be, in being convinced of divine presence, the substantial nature of prayer is not lost. What is necessary is that we maintain the intention of serving God without becoming discouraged. I conclude by saying that you are like a person who sings out, but at the same time being deaf, does not hear the harmony. Think about this etc. God is strengthening you in humility, so, with his grace, work hard; and, I repeat, be courageous.
(from Letter 911 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, June 24, 1824)
4. Pray over this and you will hear more clearly the voice of God.
(from Letter 948 to Canon Marchioni, August 21, 1824)
5. Let us give life to everything through prayer, *fons omium bonorum*.
(from Letter 1088 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, March 28, 1825)
6. But, prayers are the principal means to be used so that the Lord will bestow special blessings.
(from Letter 1091 to Mr. Luigi Baldi, April 1, 1825)
7. I, especially, am most needful of many prayers, so that in seeking the salvation of others, I myself may be saved. I beg you for this act of charity, even asking other souls to whom you will also recommend my beloved Institute.
(from Letter 1129 to Mother Mario Nazzarena de Castris, May 27, 1825)
8. Let us continue to be of full assistance to each other through our assiduous prayers: *Oremus ad invicem*. What a beautiful thing it is to be spiritually united here below and then reach the everlasting and indivisible union in heaven! What sweet thoughts these are!
(from Letter 1182 to P. Giovannelli (Vincenzo) June 30, 1825)

9. So, do not cease praying for me. Through prayer, God will make known to you the urgency there is for prayer in behalf of this poor soul of mine which I hope will be saved. Pray to Jesus Christ to give me the spirit of prayer, of humility, of long-suffering, of love for him.
(from Letter 1187 to Mother Maria Nazzarena de Castris, July 2, 1825)

10. Aridity in prayer is ordained by God so that we might recognize that: *anima nostra, sicut terra sine aqua tibi*. God sees that our intent is to serve him and love him, so as to enjoy him eternally. He, who has begun the work in us, will bring it to perfection. *Qui coepit opus, ipse perficiet consolidabitque*. Courage, therefore ... There will never be a lack of crosses, for we are even crosses to ourselves. Our holy religion, however, is the great balance that shows us how to govern ourselves and make our wills consonant with the supreme will of God.
(from Letter 1070 to Fr. Giuseppe Stani, March 12, 1825)

XXI. THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

1. The Lord will assist you in doing great work. Insist on the pious organizations and devotion to the divine Blood.
(from Letter 1014 to Fr. Pietrantonio Verardi, December 20, 1824)

2. Do not fail to propagate devotion to the divine Blood.
(from Letter 1015 to Msgr. Francesco Bonomo, December 20, 1824)

3. I conclude by saying that to utter the name Jesus is to make known the *dignitas Redemptoris* ... by referring to the Blood of Jesus Christ is to make known the *dignitas Redemptionis* ...
(from Letter 1133 to Fr. Innocenzo Betti, End of May, 1825)

4. I desire, however, that you continue evermore the propagation of this very important and most beneficial devotion from which one derives every good gift. Let us be consoled that the substantial effect *is assured* and that you should be pleased as the principal promoter of so great a devotion.
(from Letter 1160 to Fr. Vincenzo Martinez, June 17, 1825)

5. Become attached in fervor to the devotion to the divine Blood which softens every heart, and do not fail to turn frequently to the most holy Mary Immaculate under whose protection it is most helpful to remain.
(from Letter 1183 to Fr. Giovanni Chiodi, June 30, 1825)

6. How deeply interested I am in this devotion. I must confess what lies within me with all my limitations, namely, that I shall put myself out completely for this very great work! This is the price of our redemption, this the reason for my confidence in being saved; to this devotion, I wish to consecrate my life; for this am I a priest, to apply the divine Blood.
(from Letter 1184 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, June 30, 1825)
7. Oh! How much we owe to Jesus who has redeemed us with his Blood!
(from Letter 1187 to Mother Maria Mazzarena de Castris, July 2, 1825)
8. Here we are at the feast of the divine Blood ... What a great feast of love for Jesus is this feast of ours! Yes, let us love Jesus incessantly, irrevocably, so that we can love him eternally in paradise. To look at Jesus as he pours out his Blood is an act of religion which helps us do great work for our own eternal salvation as well as that of our neighbors, praying in a special way for the success of the missions and for the apostolic work that is being promoted throughout the Catholic world.
(from Letter 1188 to Luigia del Bufalo, July 3, 1825)
9. The Archconfraternity needs to have missionaries who are capable of propagating this very important devotion, which is the price of redemption and of salvation ... I am speaking of the divine Blood, and also of propagating what is clearly proposed in its Constitutions.
(from Letter 1200 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, July 8, 1825)
10. This title does not present anything novel, since it flows from what we see in the sacred scriptures: "*Redemisti nos Domini in Sanguine tuo, et fecisti nos Deo nostro regnum et sacerdotes.*" We priests, therefore, are marked with the sacerdotal character in order to apply the divine Blood of souls. It is his Blood that is offered in the divine Sacrifice; it is his Blood that is the price of redemption. This is what we can present to the heavenly Father for the reconciliation of sinners. "*Te ergo quaesumus tuis famulis subveni quos pretioso Sanguine redemisti.*" Whereas the devil would like all to be victims of justice, we ministers of the sanctuary must make known the depths of God's mercy so that *justificati in Sanguine ipsius salvi simus ab ira per ipsum*. In this devotion, we have the treasures of wisdom and holiness; in it we find comfort, peace and salvation.
(Letter No. 1215 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)
11. It is, therefore, the divine Blood that will placate the divine eternal Father, that will purify our hearts and will inebriate us with love for Jesus who *dilexit nos, et lavit nos in Sanguine suo*.
(from Letter No. 1214 to Pope Leo XII, July, 29, 1825)

12. Prescinding from the first centuries of the Church, centuries productive of martyrs, in the following epochs which history records for us, we note how one or the other dogma was attacked, how sacred things were subjected to scorn in one or the other part of the Catholic world. In our miserable times, the crisis in the people is a general one, with indescribable perversion of basic principles and of proper living so as to hurl an insult at the redemptive act and, through human malice to frustrate the application of the merits of Jesus Christ who has redeemed us by the price of his Blood. Now, blessed Father, is it not necessary to rekindle apostolic zeal and follow the inspirations of soul that are so favored by God so that we can revive in the memories of these people the inestimable price of our redemption and attempt to stir them to repentance and to tears? Is it not also a fact that Sacred Scripture itself gives us the steps to take for a reform? *Pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis eius sive quae in coelis, sive quae in terris sunt?* Do we ourselves not know that *Christus dilexit ecclesiam tradidit semetipsum pro ea ... acquisivit in Sanguine suo?* Does not divine Wisdom tell us that *justificati in Sanguine salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum?* It is not sufficient simply to utter the name of the Lord to be saved: *Non qui dixerit Domine Domine hic salvus erit, but qui fecerit voluntatem Patris mei, hic salvus erit.* Therefore, there are two things that must necessarily be done nowadays. The first is to find a way of placating the divine eternal Father; and that we have in the merits of the divine Blood: *Calicem salutaris accipiam.* The other is to try to find a way of effectively applying those merits to souls, and this can be done particularly through holy missions and spiritual retreats, as well as other pious programs that are proportionately salubrious for our times. In fact, these are the very same reasons that motivated the holy Pontiff Pius VII to erect the Archconfraternity, bearing this most august title of the divine Blood. Sinners continue to be horrendously abusive and the Lord, in the transports of his love, keeps crying out: *Quae utilitas in Sanguine meo?* So is there not anyone who will, through this sacred, solemn cult, procure adoration in compensation, and preach to the people its glories, bringing to their attention that in this devotion we have a compendium of faith itself; that is why, in the consecration of the chalice, we say “mysterium fidei,” and, consequently therein lies the salvation of souls.

(from Letter 1215 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)

13. One should add only that by means of this devotion the remembrance of our baptism, through which our souls were purged, is revived; we are reminded of penance and the other sacraments. And when asked why, we conclude that it was because: *redemisti in Sanguine, fecisti nos Deo nostrum regnum et sacerdotes.* Other devotions are all means for facilitating Catholic piety, but this devotion is the basis, the sustenance, the essence of all. Other devotions, coming forth at various times, signal a

period of time, ever holy, ever praiseworthy, but this devotion of ours is so antique that it goes back to the very moment when Adam sinned; that is why Jesus was called the *agnus occisus a constitutione mundi*.

(from Letter 1215 to Pope Leo VII, July 29, 1825)

14. This is the language of truth, and it is well-known fact that hell itself trembles at the very mention of “divine Blood”. Furthermore, because of this confusion of mind, one is led to erroneously judge the good people who then disturb the peace of Your Holiness’ magnanimous heart.
(from Letter 1215 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)
15. At the same time, to the anger of the devil who has never ceased nor does he now cease from waging a special war against this very expression: “Precious Blood of Jesus Christ”.
(from Letter 1216 to Pope Leo XII, July 29, 1825)
16. Nevertheless, continue zealously to diffuse the Chaplet of the divine Blood.
(from Letter 1277 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, December 2, 1825)
17. I cannot help but express to you my very deep delight in God to see that you are so enthusiastic for the devotion to the most precious Blood. Great will be the divine blessings upon you.
(from Letter 1289 to Fr. Francesco Meletti, December 23, 1825)

XXII. THE REFORM

1. Oh my! what need there is with regard to the clergy, both in learning and in sanctity! How urgent it is for us to set up our mission and retreat houses in order to jar them from their inertia, to raise their estimation in the eyes of the people, to detach them from their relatives, their properties, and their laziness!
(from Letter 1167 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
2. With regard to free trade, there is much that could be said, but at least three should be an avoidance of so many unscrupulous practices. In as far as it is plausible, there should be fixed prices etc. etc. along with many other aspects treated in the preceding pages.
(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
3. If the *pen* and *sword* concerns are not reduced in number, we shall no longer have a scientific culture. A certain treatment of generosity with regard to *ad tempus* boarding, or something similar, should be offered to

those presently involved, and a fundamental procedure should set down for the benefit of poor young people.

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

4. It would be a good idea for the Holy Father to restore the cavalrymen with the uniform of their times, free of luxury, remaining on foot, judicious individuals who can, with little money, be salaried. Get rid of the Noble Guards who give the impression of excessive pomp and who ordinarily are only young men given to laziness. So many of them, instead of pursuing the fine arts, the legal profession or sacred studies, say: I am getting a position with the Noble Guards, etc. and then move forward.

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

5. Furthermore, when one has reached an age when he can no longer handle an office, he should resign, as we have been directed by the saints. Each one (except for an extraordinary gift given by God) is to bear that burden of which he is capable, in proportion to the talents which the Lord gives to his children; otherwise, *plurimis intentus minor est ad singula sensus*.

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

6. It is a miracle of mercy that the earth still stands under our feet; in practice, I have discovered the people in a way of life that is *truly deplorable*. *Orabimus igitur provoluti coram Domino*, etc. The reasons to pray and to weep before God are very many, and all together we must occupy ourselves *verbo, consilio et opere* for the work of the reform.

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

7. Orders should be issued that everywhere the military people are to be given a sermon at least monthly, etc. etc. With just a line or two, certain matters can be taken care of the people in authority, whereas words of persuasion sometimes have no worth at all for certain ones.

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

8. The Lord is not happy with his sacred ministers. Ordinations are too greatly accelerated; in short, and generally speaking, the clergy are not formed for the life of the spirit. Therefore, note the following:

(from Letter 1170 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

9. Monsignor Albertini has already provided us with the basic rules that will govern all of this noble effort. It is the fruit of great enlightenment communicated to him by God who wants the mission and retreat houses *sub titulo pretiosissimi Sanguinis*. It is through this inestimable price that we come to acknowledgement of the great means of redemption whereby we are reconciled to the divine eternal Father and by which we can purge the earth *in Sanguine Agni*. Thus we find written: "*justificati in Sanguine ipsius, salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum ... pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis*

eitas sive quae in caelis sive quae interris sunt.” The world is stained with sin and therefore it needs to have workers who will apply the redemption since it was precisely: *redemisti in Sanguine and fecisti nos Deo nostro regnum et sacerdotes.* Here we have the great work in behalf of the clergy that will raise them out of their interia, elevate their spirits and their learning and restore to them the idea of the primitive Church where we find the clergy joined together in order to spread the spirit of fervor and zeal for the greater glory of God.

(from Letter 1171 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

10. The education of the young is indeed necessary, but if we do not arrange for a group who will particularly be concerned about the pruning of adult plants and the great work of the ministry, then we will never achieve that interrelationship of things that is so very, very urgent in our time.
(from Letter 1171 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
11. The confraternities, then, will take charge of those churches under the condition that if, one day, some particular institute should return there, they must be reliant on it, and the continuation of their functions to be carried out at appropriate hours, but their actual possession will be conditional.
(from Letter 1174 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
12. It is certain that this work will gradually be effective in removing inertia from the clergy as well as everything else that flows from the inertia. This is how the people will be edified *et vita Jesu manifestabitur in nobis.*
(from Letter 1276 to Msgr. Nicola Mattei December 1, 1825)

XXIII. THE PRIESTHOOD

1. So, here we have, in a dangerous state, souls that are bound by the vows, who, because they are lacking in virtue, stand in need of guidance, special vigilance, and a religious program, so as to prevent them from falling into more serious fallings in the eyes of God, to whom they must render what they promised at the foot of the altar. In practice, (speaking generally of regulars who have come out of the sacred cloisters) we see the anguish to which their consciences are subjected!
(from Letter 1167 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
2. Herein lies the glory of the priesthood, instituted for applying the price of

redemption to souls, so that the divine Blood will not have been shed in vain, due to our own fault, as we note in the Holy Scriptures: “Quae utilitas in Sanguine meo? ... Sanguis Jesu Christi emendabit conscientias nostras ab operibus mortuis.”

(from Letter 1240 to Pope Leo XII, September 1, 1825)

XXIV. HEALTH

1. I cannot express to you how moved I am whenever I visit the sick who always bring home to me another new example of human frailness.
(from Letter 921 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, July 12, 1824)
2. Recommend me often to God; take good care of your health, and do not overdo it. A forced good work can impede a greater good that is done with order, except when there is an extraordinary inspiration from God.
(from Letter 1125 to Fr. Giuseppe Maria Silvestri, May 21, 1825)
3. Thanks be to God, I am feeling quite well. The minor inconveniences that I have are nothing more than a residue of the deportation which I experienced in times past.
(from Letter 1125 to Fr. Giuseppe Maria Silvestri, May 21, 1825)
4. I am sorry to hear that you have not been feeling well and that you are still convalescing. Because of that, I now seize the opportunity to draw to your attention what you must hold with regard to the will of God and your getting well, otherwise it could be a tempting of God.
(from Letter 1187 to Mother Maria Nazzarena de Castris, July 2, 1825)
5. Indeed, it is more praiseworthy to endure what God sends than anything we might select, inspired by the virtue of religion. ... If, in the things ordered by God, we turn to something else, then, once could fall into another state of anguish which could render us incapable of serving religion. So be of help to your humanness: let your choice of the quality and the quantity of food be such as to bring about a cure and restoration of health, but, at the same time pray quietly to God to increase your strength and ability to do even more, if it so pleases with the desires. I truly hold in high esteem this kind of virtuous action and this sort of freedom of spirit; in it there is great pursuit of perfection. I will be very pleased to get a copy of the extract from St. John of the Cross that you promised me. Without mentioning my name, tell your sister in Sezze, in general, that she should enlist whatever is possible in spiritual matters in her monastery. If

God will give me life, I am hoping to draw up a good collection of things,

an ascetical dictionary.

(from Letter 1187 to Mother Maria Nazzarena de Castris, July 2, 1825)

XXV. HOLINESS

1. I have no doubt about this since I am trustful of your good conduct which you will bring to greater and greater perfection by uniting yourself to God in the search for that very perfection to which, according to each one's state and vocation, must all respectively aspire.
(from Letter 881 to Lugia del Bufalo, April 28, 1824)
2. Let us do every bit of good work possible for the glory of God, and let us become saints.
(from Letter 998 to Fr. Placido Paperello, November 30, 1824)
3. Jesus be with us; let us become saints; let us love each other in the Lord.
(from Letter 1011 to Msgr. Gregorio Muccioli, December 15, 1824)
4. Pray a lot to Jesus for me. Now is the time when I should unite myself completely to Jesus, the only delight of my heart.
(from Letter 1022 to I. P. Vincenzo Giovannelli December 29, 1824)
5. The thought of eternity is a great thought.
(from Letter 1124 to Msgr. Gregorio Muccioli, May 20, 1825)
6. In the meantime, let us renew our most intimate union in Jesus Christ, the only delight of our hearts.
(from Letter 1139 to Fr. Giovanni Mimmi, June 5, 1825)
7. Let us do great work, and let us become saints.
(from Letter 1141 to Fr. Andrea Antenangelo, June 6, 1825)
8. We know that there are degrees in virtue and one must not demand of a younger person that which is more proper to souls which are further advanced in sanctity. ... I shall not fail to pray for the person mentioned, who, standing beneath the Cross, stands with Jesus.
(from Letter 1145 to Fr. Pietro Butti, June 9, 1825)
9. Let us aspire more and more of heaven, and let us become saints.
(from Letter 1165 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
10. For whatever you may desire, surely, you want that fullness of merits which is the foundation of our great elevation to glory. But *ad magna praemia perveniri non potest nisi per magno labores*. (You cannot get great prizes except through great efforts.)

(from Letter 1181 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)

11. May Jesus be our delight, our peace, our love. In his divine heart, I leave you while saying what I am ...
(from Letter 1183 to Fr. Giovanni Chiodi, June 29, 1825)
12. May Jesus be our delight and our joy; one day, he will be our reward in paradise.
(from Letter 1263 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, October 16, 1825)
13. May Jesus be our delight, our joy in this miserable world, and, one day, be our reward in heaven.
(from Letter 1285 to Mr. Antonio Sarto, December 18, 1825)

XXVI. SEMINARIANS

1. I am very pleased with this seminary and the edification of the young men is quite distinct. For everything, may praise be given to God, who, in his most bountiful mercy supplies for my insufficiencies.
(from Letter 1078 to Fr. Filippo Bonderl, March 17, 1825)
2. But, in order to achieve this great end, which is the pupil of God's eye, it is necessary to convene the young priests who have recently come out of the seminaries and who need to be formed for parish work, for the various ministries in the cultivation of the vineyard of Jesus Christ.
(from Letter 1167 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, June 20, 1825)
3. With enthusiasm, I read again about the wonderful progress of things relative to our Institute and I came to the conclusion that God who *coepit opus, ipse perficiet consolidabitque*. And since the Lord *miscet gaudia fletibus, fortitior et suaviter cuncta disponens*, inexpressible is my joy in seeing here in S. Felice a community so full of young ecclesiastics who, after having completed their work in the seminaries, are now preparing themselves as the hope of the Church, and are maturing both in piety and knowledge, a work that offers the first stone, so to speak, of the Reform: *sic populus, sic sacerdos*. These are the new olive plants that surround the table, the altar; and God is glorified and blessed. I realize that the greatest occupation that I can assume at this time, which is advancing, and in the short while that might still remain as yet for me as a pilgrim *in hac lacrymarum valle* is the training of these young men, with the exception of one or the other mission that I will be able to take on, but less often, now that there are in our Institute members who are *omni exceptione majores* for this line of work. In that way, too, I shall be able to write down what I have been able to learn, and, in the most intimate union with my Lord, I

can prepare myself for the eternal years.

(from Letter 1270 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, November 11, 1825)

4. The house of studies for the priests is my delight and is progressing well.
(from Letter 1272 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, November 18, 1825)
5. Let us become saints. Oh, what a beautiful house of studies we have here in Giano! The members are growing in numbers. The devil is growling; but the most precious Blood will silence him.
(from Letter 1284 to Fr. Pietro Butti, December 18, 1825)

XXVII. VOCATION

1. I am hopeful, indeed, that Fr. Vitale will stay in the Institute. That you wish to be away for a short while because of the reasons you stated to me with regard to your relatives is the will of God, and I say nothing more. But, if you are running away from inevitable crosses leading to holiness of life, I do not see how I could approve of your decision. I recognize, however, that the first reason could arouse you, but not the second one, since *Calicem quem dedit mihi pater*, etc. These words are addressed to all, and wherever we may be, Jesus Christ will offer the chalice to us. The place or anything else will not exempt us.
(from Letter 917 to Fr. Pietro Torsani, July 8, 1824)
2. With regard to the young cleric who has gone to Albano for retreat, I would never advise you to place him as the cleric in charge of the sacristies. Perhaps God might be calling him to be a Jesuit or a member of some other institute. There, without much expense, he could go to begin a beautiful career. I would not offer him our training center in Giano, which is accomplishing very good work, since the family will not be able to afford it. So, in order that he does not lose out in his studies during the time of the retreat, you try to find a way of settling things. I, too, am of the opinion that he should not be made to return to Alatri.
(from Letter 1013 to Fr. Pietro Butti, December 18, 1824)
3. Let us allow the plant to set its own roots and then we shall reap the fruits; with interest, I shall be hopeful. You should keep on questioning her with regard to her impression of grace, *quasi aliud agens*, and I hope that she will be a plant for the cloister.
(from Letter 1013 to Fr. Pietro Butti, December 18, 1824)
4. With regard to your question, *in insipientia* I would suggest the following. Sometimes the inclination will be in harmony with the vocation, and other times the vocation does not agree with the inclination. For example, Baronio would have liked to become a Capuchin, but St. Philip dissuaded

him from that. So, it is prayer that makes the divine call recognizable through withdrawal, silence and recollection. It makes little difference, outside of prayer, if one hears other voices that would seek to weaken the spirit. That means that blind obedience in such a case will decide what the penitent is to do, and it is in the words of the director that one finds the basis on which one is to act. So, taking into consideration everything as a whole, it will be necessary to discover where God is calling her and whether she should rather prefer to seek perfection in an institute of common life. Once she has selected an institute, she will be able to begin devoting herself to its minimum observance and thus await the movement of God.

(from Letter 1016 to Fr. Pietro Butti, December 21, 1824)

5. After all, no one can oppose God's calling, and furthermore, ... To do this (make a change), since it deals with a vocation, courage is needed.
(from Letter 1054 to Mr. Camillo Possenti, February 11, 1825)
6. If God is calling you to join us, do not resist the divine call.
(from Letter 1147 to Fr. Crescenzo Antenagelo, June 9, 1825)
7. With regard to Emidio, I declare to you that it is a matter of principle that anyone who leaves our midst is not readmitted. Nevertheless, having recognized a certain immaturity in him as he thoughtlessly left our Society, I have readmitted him.
(from Letter 1159 to Fr. Andrea Antenangelo, June 17, 1825)
8. You know that vocations demand courage and firmness ... Vocations come from God.
(from Letter 1231 to Fr. Giovanni Chiodi, August 21, 1825)

XXVIII. THE WILL OF GOD

1. I adore the will of God.
(from Letter 873 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, April 14, 1824)
2. That is your decision to be made at the foot of the Crucifix. ... If you give our reasoning a bit of thought, I hope that you will reconcile things to the holy glory of God. ... Whatever will be the outcome, I am offering my prayers that the will of God be done, as I blindly surrender myself to whatever dispositions he wills.
(from Letter 1004 to Msgr. Nicola Mattei, December 1, 1824)
3. Likewise, I would like you to be assured of the will of God in regard to your vocation. Excessive fear causes agitation too, as one can readily

imagine. Oh, my beloved friend, why become anxious as long as we are in the hands of God? Is he not a most loving Father? Does he not take care of us? Does he not dispose all things for our own good? He used Moses to humiliate Pharaoh and, in general, *infima eligit, ut fortia quaeque confundat*. When we use the 24 hours of the day for God, in the mystical bed of his will, we have done everything. This does not deny, however, the necessity of prayer and faith in God.

(from Letter 1101 to D. Domenico Silvestri April 19, 1825)

4. Oh how sorry I am to hear that you are indisposed. God loves you and his will is the most comfortable bed upon which we can rest.
(from Letter 1145 to Fr. Pietro Butti, June 9, 1825)
5. I am not exceedingly upset and I offer it all to God. I put myself in his hands, and seek to prepare myself for the years of eternity ... Pray to Jesus that he make me holy.
(from Letter 1161 to P. Vincenzo Giovannelli, June 17, 1825)
6. I conclude by saying that in your humble and fervent prayers before God, you will come to see what is of most interest for the greater glory of God.
(from Letter 1199 to Msgr. Giuseppe Maria Pezzella, July 8, 1825)
7. For a bit of quiet, I would like to withdraw to S. Felice. But, my will does not allow me to do that. Try to find a moment here or there to send me your reply. I do not deserve it, I know, and I am quite aware of my nothingness. Nevertheless, the glory of God, the defense of innocence and of truth are the beautiful causes to be dealt with here.
(from Letter 1207 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, July 20, 1825)
8. His will is for us everything.
(from Letter 1223 to Mr. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci, August 9, 1825)
9. Furthermore, in all things, let us do the divine will and let us not cease studying the great book of the Crucifix.
(from Letter 1255 to Fr. Antonio Loffreda, September 20, 1825)
10. All that I need is *to identify the will of God*, and consequently I do not overlook those means whereby I can recognize it etc. ... I pray that the Lord will give me strength of spirit and of body so that I can assist it to my very last breath. ... So, prayers, and humility. ... May Jesus be our delight, our joy, our consolation.
(from Letter 1275 to Msgr. Bellisario Cristaldi, November 27, 1825)