

CHAPTER III

HOPE

In regard to the virtue of hope, I can say, from what I know factually from my own experience whereby I am able to form a firm judgment, that the Servant of God was truly filled with it. Hope is the theological virtue by which one, here on earth as a pilgrim, can with firm trust expect from God himself eternal happiness and the means of attaining it.

Factually speaking, it is evident to me that the Servant of God always was a tireless evangelical worker, a fervent Christian, a very edifying priest and no matter how much he may have been tempted (which is not something known to me) against the virtue of hope, still I know him to have been solid, always a fervent worker, always tranquil In God. This is something that cannot exist in a pilgrim here on earth unless he has a full and perfect hope of gaining eternal life and the means thereto from God. Hence I am compelled to form in my mind the definite conviction that the Servant of God was wonderfully endowed with the virtue of hope and that not only faith but also hope motivated him, comforted him and inspired him with courage to operate untiringly in a Christian manner and in keeping with the true spirit of the holy Gospel. Indeed, in having been able to speak to him and work with him in matters relating to God's interests and having witnessed him in the exercise of Christian, sacerdotal and evangelical works, I can factually state that the Servant of God was fully endowed with the virtue of hope. He reached sublime heights in its practice so much so that he became an instrument in God's hands, sent by God to the Church to promote in the hearts of her children those dispositions toward the virtue of hope and its practice. He showed them how to have a vivid confidence in divine mercy at a time when, because of the deceptive lies so forcefully promoted during the invasion of the Papal States by the French government, the hearts of the Church's children were hardened and were made less responsive to the ordinary graces, thus making their hope for eternal salvation more difficult. Hence it must be said that God, the Father of mercies, wished to show special mercy toward his ungrateful children and so he sent them the Servant of God, Canon Gaspar Del Bufalo, to dispose them through his preaching, through prayer and every other means of the ministry that was introduced and practiced by the Servant of God.

The Servant of God was enriched with admirable gifts of knowledge about the value and infinite power of the most Precious Blood of the Redeemer as well as a desire to preach this to the people in order to arouse all of them, of whatever class, with sentiments of faith, of hope and love and a veneration for the Blood of Christ, promoting devotion to it with daily and monthly practices. That preaching and those devotional practices were most vivid means of disposing their hearts for gaining the gift of rejecting those lies by which their hearts were rendered unmoved to the flow of ordinary graces. So, too, that preaching and those devotional practices were most efficacious means of removing from their hearts those impediments to God's mercy so needed by the sinner for developing a living and firm hope for eternal life and the means granted by God for achieving it

The preaching carried out by the Servant of God as well as the devotional practices instituted, promoted and propagated by him for the veneration of the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ did have the sought-after effects and can be substantiated by the number of sinners who were converted, the lukewarm who were inflamed and by the just who were confirmed in their doing of good works.

Furthermore, I must say that the Servant of God, as I knew him and as everyone knew him as the founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, so pleased God with the exercise of the virtue of hope, that God, in selecting him, Canon Del Bufalo, as the founder of that Congregation, made him the servant of his goals of infinite mercy and clemency. The Congregation that was founded by him would become in God's church quite distinct from other moral bodies and a perennial means of maintaining among the children of the church a vibrant exercise of the virtue of hope. That work is being done and will continue to be done through the encouragement of his Missionaries in their preaching about the ineffable treasures of the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, as well as by the diffusion and exercise of the devotional practices in veneration of that same most Precious Blood

Even though it can be evidently concluded from everything said up to now, I must also point out that the virtue of hope in the Servant of God was accompanied by virtuous acts. I am able to say that I observed those acts in his spotless life which was in conformity with the life of a true Christian and even more so in the life of a priest engaged in the holy ministry as a Missionary, as the propagator of pious organizations and especially as the special promoter of aggregating the people to the venerable Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood, and finally as the founder of the Congregation of Missionaries. As I knew him personally, I must say that he lived fully dedicated to this work, demonstrating that his Christian hope was a true and perfect one, free, indeed, from any suggestion of presumption. The devil had no reason or motive for tempting him to despair.

Virtues annexed to hope

After speaking about the virtue of hope which I saw resplendently practiced by the Servant of God, it is proper now for me to speak about two virtues that are annexed to that virtue, namely, trust and salutary fear

Trust

First, we consider the Servant of God's trust. Even though, after his death, I learned many things about him, I do believe that he must have shown that trust in those activities which are usually referred to as miracles. However, since these occurrences are not directly known by me as factual, but may be so for the witnesses who made their deposition. I shall not speak about that and I shall steer completely away from referring to that type of trust.

Still, from the very beginning of the institution of his Congregation and from what I have noted in his preparing for, dealing with and in carrying out evangelical undertakings, I must speak of that trust which filled him in reference to those things. His trust had as its objective the destruction of the reign of sin and the propagation and restoration of the reign of Christian virtues, thus a matter of a deep concern for him in so far as the spiritual and the eternal were more highly valued than anything temporal and earthly, and because of which those things usually referred to as miracles occur. So, to the extent that I knew the Servant of God in his evangelical undertakings, I am able to say that I knew him to be filled with trust shown in the objectives which he was promoting as well as in the means that he used therein and likewise in the final goal that he intended as their objective. I say that the Servant of God in this matter was filled with trust in the sense that God would accompany him in all of them with his graces to achieve success.

What I have said about the Servant of God's trust in its relationship to his objective and goal for his evangelical undertakings can be seen in the effects resulting from those activities. For the sake of brevity and because he was the distinctive promotor and propagator of the aggregation of people to the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood and the founder of the Congregation of Missionaries, I believe that I must demonstrate his trust particularly in reference to these two great evangelical undertakings which, with a very distinctive character marked his apostolic life.

The first of the two evangelical undertakings referred to had as its objective the aforementioned aggregating. The Servant of God was able and had to realize the difficulty and the impediments to be faced in spreading this work as fully as he desired. He had set in his heart the making use of every form of preaching and to have the preaching done in the very best ways possible. He could and must have realized too the difficulties involved in achieving effects from that preaching because of the ease with which people succumbed to a bad seed that was so easily dispersed by the enemy of souls bringing about their rejection of this good work as being simply a novelty. Nevertheless, the Servant of God did not withdraw from these evangelical undertakings. Working hard on his preaching, he kept inviting the people to accept this aggregation and always animated by that living trust, he continued it to the end of his life. In the course of just a few years, he was consoled to see an increase in the propagation of that aggregation and the number of propagators increased likewise, observing the devotions practiced in veneration of the most Precious Blood. This occurred not only in Rome and its environs but also in all areas of the Papal States, even into other areas, embracing too those children of the Church who live in infidel areas. So, it can be said that his trust did not remain unrewarded in the task that he had undertaken. Taking everything into consideration, we can see that the Servant of God maintained a great and firm trust toward that objective, the means to be used and the final goal for the undertaking. Through that work of aggregating, many people experienced an increase in their fervor and became more dedicated to that devotion.

In reference to the Servant of God's trust with which he was filled for the founding of his Congregation. I must again give my conviction that here too he showed trust in achieving the objective, the means and the goal in the same way as mentioned before. An evangelical undertaking of that sort bears all of the characteristics of the works of God including circumstances that could be said to be the most difficult and thus be regarded as something unable to be done except through an extraordinary intervention by the Omnipotent God. Such an intervention, in the ordinary way of life and in keeping with the economy of grace, calls for a vivid trust from the man who is a wayfarer seeking to promote a work of that nature. Since the undertaking of founding an institution has been done and promoted in the Church of God. I must therefore confess that the trust which I observed in the Servant of God in reference to the founding of his Congregation was a true one, a firm and persevering one. I must assert that same thing with regard to the Servant of God's trust in the means and objectives set down. The means, though not superabundant, were obtained and were sufficient for the institution and the propagation of that Congregation. The objective of that same Congregation, namely the preaching of the glories of the most Precious Blood, the spread of aggregation to the Archconfraternity of the Divine Blood, the missions for the people, the retreats and other activities that form the institution's purpose, was achieved. This was carried out by promoting the glory of God and the conversion of hearts. All of this demonstrates that the Servant of God's trust was a true and constant one in regard to the means and the objective of that Congregation.

Fear of God

Even though I mentioned before that the Servant of God was filled with the virtue of hope, quite evident in the fulfilment of his activities, still I must not fail to indicate that he also had a salutary fear which is likewise a virtue annexed to the virtue of hope. When he was near the completion of his mortal life on this earth, I remember noticing him as one fearful of being able to offend God. Therefore, he was very cautious about what was done to him in the assistance that was being given to him as he found himself in the latter stages of his illness.