

CHAPTER XIII

REMINDERS AND FINAL TOUCHES

To the extent that I knew the Servant of God, I can say that he was truly a man who nourished his soul with the exercise of holy prayer and meditation. As I learned from one of his letters addressed to his excellency the most reverend Monsignor, later Cardinal, Cristaldi, he made use of time, whenever he found the opportunity, to apply himself to meditation. In that letter, he found himself in the apostolic palace in order to discuss the affairs of his Institute with the Monsignor, now Cardinal, Soglia. Since he had to wait for a considerable time, he indeed made use of it to make a meditation. Furthermore, I now repeat all that I said when I spoke about the virtue of meditation as a virtue annexed to faith.

With regard to vocal prayer, he was a true lover of it and held it in esteem with such trust that, as I learned from some of his men, it was his custom to make decisions about what he had to do, especially in reference to the works of his Institute, only after having celebrated the unbloody sacrifice. On one occasion, in a state of indecision and deep doubt about the assignment of one of the members of his Institute to become part of the community in a particular house, he delayed the making of that decision until the following day after he had celebrated the divine sacrifice. So, also, on another occasion, in making a determination also referring to his Institute and about which he was in doubt, he wished to consult God through prayer. He gave the order that he was not to be disturbed, if I am not in error, no matter what happened, for one or two days when he retired to a private room to pray. He came out only after he had made the due determination.

The Servant of God was not content only with his own prayers but often implored the favor of prayers from others. His letters, which he wrote copiously, ordinarily included this request for prayers for his needs, as I have seen.

With reference to the amount of time that he was occupied in vocal or mental prayer, that is something which I am not able to assert with precision, because I was not his spiritual director, even though I heard his confession many times. But, to the extent that I knew him, the tenor of the life that he led was such that I can rightly judge that the time that might freely have been left over from the works of the ministry, he would apply, as much as he could, to the exercise of mental and vocal prayer. I saw him to be a man always ready to pray with his mind and heart ever lifted up to God.

The Poor

I repeat what I said when I spoke about the charity exercised by the Servant of God toward his neighbor in relationship to works of mercy, and, I remember that from the earliest years of his priesthood he was so animated toward the poor that, as I read in a letter written by the Servant of God while he was in exile, addressed to the very reverend Fr. Luigi Canon

Gonnelli, his intimate companion in the works of the ministry, in which he spoke with such concern and with many suggestions about the spiritual and corporal benefits to be offered to the poor of Santa Galla. I noticed therein the fruits of a charity and compassion that was truly heroic. He demonstrated that he was persuaded and deeply resolved to dedicate his life for the poor and said that the poor would carry him to heaven, if I am not mistaken, these were the words or similar ones that he used.

Furthermore, I recall that the Servant of God received a letter that was falsely written in my name in which the Servant of God was being asked for an alms to be given to the bearer of that letter. I was ignorant of this whole situation because I did not write that letter. However, the Servant of God in his charity was led to give that man a small alms, as best he could. With modesty, he sent me a note¹ informing me that he was not able to give him more. So, I had still another opportunity to recognize the promptness of the Servant of God's charity.

With regard to his exercise of the mortification of the flesh and the methods used by him, I repeat all that I said when I spoke of the virtue of mortification as annexed to the virtue of temperance. Also, the same applies in reference to what pertains to perseverance and fervor in the aforesaid works.

Defects

In regard to defects, I can say that from what I observed in the Servant of God it seemed to me that he might have been more in conformity with poverty if he had written his letters on a half-sheet of stationery if the matter could be sufficiently handled by that and if the status of the addressee would allow it. I made bold to write to the Servant of God to give him this bit of advice. However, I think that if he did not always write on a half-sheet of stationery, it might have been because of his concern for the preservation of the letter and also because, in his humility, he showed esteem for everyone. Later I found out from one of the lay-brothers of his Congregation that the Servant of God, a lover of poverty, used to save and keep an account of even small pieces of paper, and by doing that it was required and proper that he should not claim any lack thereof

Heroism in the exercise of virtues

¹ This note, which is not dated, is found in copy form in Volume IX, f 297, of the writings of St. Gaspar. It says: Fr. Vincenzo, I would like to know whether the enclosed was written by you. I was able to give the one presenting it only 5 baiocchi. The feast of All Saints is approaching. What answer do you give me concerning the church of the miracles? Will instructions to the peasants be activated in accordance with what was agreed on by word? This was one of the principal works carried out by the Venerable De Rossi. I kiss your hands; pray for me who remains"... etc.

In regard to the heroism in the practice of virtues by the Servant of God, I repeat everything that I said when I spoke of the virtue of magnanimity, annexed to the virtue of fortitude, as exercised by the same Servant of God. There, I recalled what heroic virtue is and, as far as I can remember, in speaking to the very reverend Fr. Biagio Valentini, spiritual director of the Servant of God, I found out that he was intimately convinced that the Servant of God had practiced the virtues in an heroic degree. If anyone thought that the Servant of God did not exercise the virtues in an heroic degree, from the knowledge that I have of the Servant of God, I would have to judge that anyone who thought so did not have a full knowledge of Canon Del Bufalo. This is particularly true because the Servant of God, in being truly humble, was very careful to keep himself hidden. In the exercise of this life of withdrawal, many who did not know him well formed the opinion that he was indeed an evangelical worker, but not that he was a saint. I say this because, in general, I knew that some people did think in this way that I just described. If, however, there was anyone with a full knowledge of the Servant of God who said that the Servant of God did not exercise the virtues in an heroic degree, I do not know.

In view of the fact that in previous sessions of questioning I often had the occasion of speaking of the persecutions and contradictions that the Servant of God endured with great resignation and patience, I now simply repeat all that I stated before.

Pious Organizations

I must say that among the pious works which the Servant of God promoted there was particularly the one of Santa Galla. I know that he had a special concern about it, even during the time of his exile, as I learned from a letter of his to the very Reverend Canon Fr. Luigi Gonnelli. It referred to the special work of the first communion for the poor children cared for in that hospice.

I know that he was enrolled in the so-called association of St. Francis de Sales for which, I am told, that he wore the cross signifying that very same association. In Rome, I heard that after the death of the Servant of God, the most Reverend Father Mazzani, who had been weakened by intellectual ordeals which had threatened him with dementia, was given a piece of the small cord that the Servant of God had used to suspend that cross from his neck. When he took that piece of cord into his mouth, he felt, that night, a sort of whirling in his head. Then, to his surprise, he realized that he had been freed of that weakness in his head. He returned to the exercise of his ministry as well as to his other occupations.

Furthermore, from my own knowledge, I know that the Servant of God was enrolled in a Pious Society erected in Rome under the special protection of Mary most holy, Queen of the Apostles, instituted for the increase, the defense and the propagation of the pious and catholic faith. He likewise supported it with an alms or so and, as far as I know, he was anxious for its continued success.

A Predicted Founder

To the extent that I can remember, I must add here what I heard from Fr. Biagio Valentini after the death of the Servant of God. Canon Albertini, later bishop of Terracina, before his exile with some of the clergy of Rome, had received from a Paolotta nun (a footnote identifies her as Sr. Maria Agnese del Verbo Incarnato { 1757-1810} this prediction: "You will be exiled. In that exile, you will meet a young priest who is particularly devoted to St. Francis Xavier. He will become your spiritual son and he will be the trumpet of the Divine Blood and the founder of a Congregation of Missionaries of the most Precious Blood". Canon Albertini was not acquainted with Canon Del Bufalo before his deportation. Albertini was exiled and in time was located in the same place where Canon Del Bufalo was in exile. At that time, the Servant of God was assailed with a very grave and mortal illness. In that circumstance, Canon Albertini attended the sick man and on that occasion noticed the first signs of what had been indicated to him by that nun of St. Francis de Paola. He became the spiritual son of Canon Albertini and remained so in Rome even after the period of deportation. To be noted here is that even though Albertini had been informed by that often-named religious that Canon Del Bufalo would be the founder of a Congregation of Missionaries, nevertheless Albertini directed him in an ordinary way as though he had not received any such prediction. Indeed, when the Company of Jesus was re4nstituted, the Servant of God wanted to join them and, in fact, had already set the day for his entrance into the novitiate. However, for things to take place for the verification of the final points in the prophecy of the ofi4ferred to Paolotta nun, God inspired the heart of the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII, of holy memory, to appoint the Servant of God as an Apostolic Missionary to take care, in a special way, of the works of the holy ministry by providing for the great and overwhelming spiritual needs of the people in the Papal States.

Vow to St. Appolonia

In one of the files containing the writings of the Servant of God which is preserved in the Mission House in Albano, I found, I believe it was on a half-sheet of stationery, a vow made in honor of St. Apollonia. The terms with which this vow is expressed demonstrate the trust, the religion and the prudence of the Servant of God. Later on, each year thereafter he again signed in his own handwriting the satisfaction of that vow by the Mass celebrated by him, and during the final year of his life, he had it signed by someone else since he himself was not able to make that satisfaction.

Various items

I read the article 110² concerning which I must particularly discuss the exactness with which it is expressed. In support of the truth, what Canon Del Bufalo did was not to reserve to himself the giving of instructions, spoken of in that article. In fact, I know that he used to say to his Mission companions that he wished that they would give them. Ordinarily, it happened that his companions, out of esteem for him and his zeal, experience, prudence and mastery of the doctrine, not to overlook the delicacy with which he treated this most important material, were disposed to allow that he rather than others should handle the instructions. I learned this from original Mission companions of the Servant of God.

I believe that with regard to Article 116³ one must also point out in particular the prudence of the Servant of God in directing his Missionaries to be zealous, active and, so to speak, in perpetual spiritual motion during the Missions. I know that he wished, in the reading at table that is observed during the evening meal, that ordinarily the life of some male saint, engaged in the apostolic style of life, should be read. He wanted to exclude the reading of the lives of those male or female saints whose style of life was more of a spiritual nature which would inspire one to the contemplative life, and hence, to distance one from or at least diminish in the Missionaries their dedication to the apostolic life. I learned this from Missionary Fr. Francesco Virili.

In Article 119⁴ I point out that in the terms used for expressing this notion there is a confusion about the virtue of veracity, that is to say openness of language, with the virtue of simplicity, in such a way that in the terms of the article, openness of language comes to be considered as the virtue of simplicity when one should clearly distinguish one from the other, since the Servant of God was endowed with both virtues, as I stated in the places and sessions that were directed by the interrogators.

With regard to his devotion toward the Saints, I learned from one of his Missionaries, namely, Fr. Francesco Virili, Missionary, that when he was in one of his Mission Houses, out of a special and tender devotion toward St. Philomena, and it seems to me that it was also with another Missionary, if I am not mistaken, Fr. Gentili, that they ardently desired to celebrate in their church with every possible solemnity the feast of that Saint. But, no matter how much they

² This and other articles [1-201] were presented to the witnesses by the postulator for the cause of beatification. Article 110 says: "In accepting Missions together with other evangelical workers, most of the time he would reserve for himself the giving of instructions to the priests, to the men, to the women, to nuns as though this were the most delicate part, the most difficult part to be handled and the one that required the greatest application of prudence."

³ The Article says: "guided by the highest prudence, he would recommend in a special way to his Missionaries reading at table, which he wanted practiced even in the small communities."

⁴ Article 119 says: "The Servant of God coupled together the highest prudence with a high degree of the simplicity of a dove. Of this virtue he achieved the most beautiful and highest form to his delight. In every way, he worked hard to impress it on the hearts of others by word and by example. Hence, at no time does one see in him the darkness of duplicity."

begged, he let them know firmly that he could not permit them to have that celebration. He was firm in his response: "I venerate all of the saints, but we must celebrate the feasts of the Saints of apostolic life". He made this statement in a direct fashion in order always to stimulate his Missionaries in the spirit of their vocation. That same Fr. Francesco Virili also told me that he was so saddened by this that he cried. Furthermore, after the death of the Servant of God, he was then thoroughly impressed by everything that Canon Del Bufalo had prohibited. I was given to understand that he finally had come to the point of acknowledging the very, very prudent reasoning that the Servant of God showed by the firmness of his making that prohibition.

I recall that one day, while speaking with the Missionary Reverend Fr. Francesco Virili concerning the Mission House in Sermoneta, founded by the Servant of God, where three Missionaries had died, this same Virili told me that for one of those three men, the Servant of God had predicted the time of his death, and it happened just as he said. The Servant of God, one day, was speaking to two or three Missionaries, among whom was one whose family name was Agostini. The Servant of God spoke of the great moment of death and said: "Who among us will be the first to die?" Then he continued his remarks and turning toward Reverend Fr. Agostini, he said: "Agostini, prepare yourself. As a matter of fact, among those men who were present there, he was the first to die and it was in that very house in Sermoneta.