

CHAPTER I

The Formation of the Missionary

Gaspar's Youth

The Servant of God was born on January 6, 1786 and was baptized in the parochial church of San Martino ai Monti on the following day. On that occasion, he was given the names of the Holy Magi since the solemnity of the Epiphany was being celebrated. I received this information from the Servant of God himself during our familiar conversations.

The Servant of God's parents were Antonio Del Bufalo and Annunziata Quartieronì. I likewise learned from conversation with the father of the Servant of God as well as from him that at first Antonio was engaged in work in the fields but later, when his income was running short, he applied as a cook in service to the most excellent Altieri house. The Del Bufalos were upright people and were endowed sufficiently for their own maintenance as well as that of the family. They had two sons: one was named Luigi who married the upright young lady Paolina Castellini and were the parents of a daughter whose name was Luigia. The other son, our Servant of God. Luigi and Gaspar's sister-in-law, as well as his father and mother, are now deceased.

As far as I know, the aforementioned parents were full of faith, piety and other virtues made know to me not only by the Servant of God, honoring his father and mother, but also by Monsignor [Antonio] Santelli who was the confessor of his mother and a close friend of the Del Bufalo family. I was personally acquainted with Antonio and I observed his Christian piety. They made every effort to give their sons a good education and were very concerned in seeing that the sacrament of confirmation was conferred upon their son Gaspar when, at about four or five years of age, he became gravely ill and they feared that they might lose him. However, I do not know who administered that sacrament nor who his godparent was.

The Servant of God spent his young years in his parents' home and together with his brother Luigi. When he was almost seven years old, he made his first confession to Fr. [Giacomo] Marchetti. From his earliest years he gave signs of aspiring to the sacred ministry, using his periods of recreation in making small altars and accompanying ornaments. He spent long periods of time in prayer, especially in the church of the Gesu', not only while serving at a number of Masses, but during the day to often make visits to the most Blessed Sacrament and most holy Mary and in front of the altar of St. Francis Xavier, pouring out his deep-felt affection for that Saint. Often he was swept away almost beside himself as he spent two or three hours there lifted up to paradise, as he expressed himself in his own youthful exuberance. Furthermore, I know that, when one eye was threatened by an attack of small pox, he obtained, through the prayers of his mother and his own devotion, a somewhat miraculous cure. As a result of that, he became more and more deeply grateful to that Saint, his benefactor. I testify to this just as I heard it from the sister-in-law and from the Servant of God himself on various occasions, particularly in our spiritual conversations, as he used to call them,

when he would open up his heart, clearly manifesting his eagerness for doing good works and avoiding evil, so as not to cover up anything on his conscience. He continued in that manner until the very end, as I was able to observe.

Likewise, I know that when he was around eleven years old, he went on retreat at the Cappellette, that is, of San Luigi in the Collegio Romano, in order to prepare himself for his first communion which he then received with great fervor and many times each month, he did so again with a similar devotion.

I know that he attended school at the Collegio Romano and that he had at home as a tutor the Reverend Fr. Ludovico Ponzileoni who had been strongly recommended by his father, Antonio as well as by his excellency Mr. Girolamo Altieri, in a special way.

His natural make-up showed him to be of a melancholic, peevish character, but under the spiritual direction of Fr. Marchetti, who suggested the means of virtuous action to be used, he adopted them and was able to moderate and overcome them, becoming affable, well-behaved and friendly.

On the way to the Priesthood

While continuing to live with his parents, he spent his adolescence likewise under the direction of Fr. Marchetti and applied himself to the regular course of studies in the Collegio Romano. He demonstrated great piety and very soon declared his vocation toward the clerical state. His parents did not oppose this and he, with joy in his heart, received the first tonsure. It was at the period of time that he occupied himself by frequenting the Congregation of Ecclesiastical Subsidy in which he participated by giving brief discourses in keeping with its aims. I know that he was docile and obedient towards his parents as well as towards his older brother.

He had a strong tendency to practice penance and to flagellate himself, taking as his example Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, of whose life the Servant of God had made a compendium in his own handwriting. I presume that that may have indeed moderated and softened his vibrant temperament. I know that he would have continued this austere way of life on his own if he had not been prevented from doing so by his aforementioned spiritual director, Fr. Marchetti.

Each day he was accustomed to recite the holy rosary while kneeling in his own room. While the others in the house were having a bit of recreation, he, adroitly excusing himself, would withdraw to his room to pray. For this, he received words of praise and love not only from the members of his family but also from those who were associated with him, among whom was Fr. Ponzileoni who recalled this delightful and honorable recollection for me.

At the same period of time, he was visited by wonderful and exemplary young people among whom, as best as I can remember, were Monsignor [Antonio] Santelli, Canon Fr. Luigi Gonnelli and his two brothers Fr. Giuseppe and Fr. Filippo Gonnelli, and Canon Girometti, all of whom happily worked with the Servant of God, admiring his piety and talent.

Furthermore, I know that when he was around eighteen years old, he kept growing in fervor and wished also to become involved in helping others. With the permission of the parish priest and the monks of Santa Pudenziana who provided him with a chapel in the area of their novitiate, he brought together a group, that is a congregation, of young people, all of them laity. Under his special direction, they would meet particularly on Thursdays and for their vacations to spend some time together in exercises of piety. He would present a few brief, edifying discourses depending on the feasts that were occurring. In order for the young people to escape the hoopla and the dangers of carnival time, he sought to find the means whereby he could set up a little indoor theater in that area of Santa Pudenziana in order to occupy those youngsters in presenting a play. When he expressed this aim of his to his folks at home, the Servant of God's father himself arranged the scenery. They presented sacred theme from the Old Testament scriptures, namely, the sacrifice of Iephtah. The Servant of God took upon himself the responsibility of overseeing the work so that nothing bad would happen to the youngsters. De facto, nothing bad ever happened.

I was asked, ex officio, to tell them whether I knew or had ever heard someone say that the Servant of God during that period of his youth had ever entertained at home or outside it, any definite young lady. If I knew about that, I was to indicate the reason and the purpose for which he was doing that.

People have told me that just as in his youthful years, this Servant of God helped to make little altars, that he used to serve Mass and listen to the sermons, so also in that home of his did he converse of spiritual things with a great simplicity and fervor of spirit. If I am not mistaken, I also heard people say that a young girl there later dedicated herself to the service of God with the Maestre Pie and that he dedicated himself to the apostolic life. That young girl, with whom I have never, up to now, made her personal acquaintance, is still living and her name is Maria Tamini. Some time ago, I learned that she was in residence with the Maestre Pie in San Tommaso in Parione.

From the time of his initiation with the first tonsure, as far as I know, he persevered constantly in his ecclesiastical vocation and gave manifest signs of it without any indications of inconstancy. In fact, if there were any doubt about the selection he made of this state in life with respect to some human goal, I can say that I learned that he had embraced this state of life with the intention of going abroad to preach to the infidels, and precisely, to Turkey, bringing them faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed, he even revealed this to one or the other of his companions that I heard about. His vocation was approved and confirmed by the ever praiseworthy Fr. Marchetti who had developed a particular concern in directing that soul. From the very moment, he foresaw that he would be one who would be very useful to the Church.

At this point, in regard to the development of the Servant of God's soul, I must testify that after his seventh year of age and thereafter, he did not in practice commit any evil of a grave or slight nature, as I learned from the sincere confessions of conscience that he would make each month on a day of recollection. From time to time, regularly, he would manifest to me on various occasions during his life, that he suffered

within himself difficulties and setbacks, as he used to call them, because of scruples, perplexities and wanderings of his mind in reference to chastity. During these hardships, he was helped immensely by his noted spiritual director who was mentioned before. He led him out of his feelings of shame so that very tranquilly he was able to move on to the sacred order of deacon and then the priesthood. With these terrifying and bothersome battles, I can testify that he not only adhered fully to the directions given to him, but he did not even, in the eye's sight, commit deliberate venial sins.

As was pointed out to me from the reports that left by him, the Servant of God from his youthful years was enrolled in various confraternities among which I remember that of the Sacconi in San Teodoro, in the most holy name of Mary in Santa Maria alle Tre Cannelle and the oratory in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. I think that he became enrolled in them because of his particular devotion to the most holy Virgin and because of the program that was followed by each one of those associations. Inasmuch as he could, he would be present for the sacred functions that were held in accordance with their customs. I only know that the confreres of those associations were very clearly grateful to have the Servant of God as one of their members.

Both in literature and in philosophy, studies which he pursued in the school of the Collegio Romano, he did not show extraordinary talents. Later, it was evident that he became well-acquainted to his advantage with great authors in oratory and metaphysics. In reference to his knowledge of logic, there were some sectarians who wanted to question him. They were stunned when, by a single reply or at most two, he overthrew their objections and arguments that they have prepared. He himself would speak about the other branches of philosophy such as mathematics, physics and chemistry and would say that he learned about them from famous professors, but that only a smattering of them had remained with him. However, the ethics that he studied was an exception insofar as he retained an excellent recollection of that as was judged to be so by learned men who had tested him; I, too, was able to recognize that. I remember that some very learned Romans, both secular and ecclesiastical, upon hearing him preach, stood in admiration when the Servant of God, at the time a fellow disciple of theirs, showed in his speech such knowledge, while it did not appear at all during his course of studies. Furthermore, I recall that certain others asserted that he had been received by outstanding professors and teachers, especially for his apologetical sermons, his talks on religion, and his ecclesiastical conferences to the clergy. They likened him to an ever-flowing river of knowledge, and with reference to his conferences to the clergy, he was likened to the sea. What I know with precision is that when he was learning his lessons in school, he was always most attentive and diligent, to such an extent that his other schoolmates and friends tried to shake him up or playfully irritate him to lose his temper or be distracted. He always remained unmoved, keeping still and attentive to the teacher, suffering invincibly. I learned this from Monsignor, later his Eminence, [Francesco] Capaccini, who is now deceased, and from Canon [Carlo] Valletta, who were at that time his fellow students.

I do not precisely know whether the Servant of God was able to apply himself, in accordance with the norms of the Collegio Romano, to theological studies because of his health. He was suspected and viewed externally as one inclined toward tuberculosis. In consequence of that, his uncle, Fr. Eugenio Pecchi, a Cistercian monk, now deceased, in agreement with the Servant of God's parents, tried many times having him undergo a change of climate to the air of Arsoli and elsewhere. There, he would occupy himself instructing the children in Christian doctrine and awarding them with holy cards of the saints in order to encourage them to come to the sessions attentively. I remember him speaking with praise of Fr. Giovanni, Fr. Guidi and Fr. Caprano: the first one was his first professor of dogmatic theology, the second of moral theology and the third of church history in the Collegio Romano. From this I infer that he attended their classes as long as the situation of his health permitted him. He received their instructions with gusto.

I recall having learned that in the school of moral theology, he won some prize or other on the occasion of a competition. What is for me certain is that he mastered dogmatic theology to such an extent that his memory of the most difficult and abstruse material was kept fresh even when he had to come face to face with the very great theologians who were examining him. His responses were satisfactorily given with a full development, thus surprising and astounding his interrogators. This very thing took place in the city of Meldola with the outstanding Archpriest Traversari. In Ancona, it happened with Canon Benedetti and with Monsignor Pauri, the former being a professor of church history, the latter of theology. In moral theology, he was well-founded in the basic principles, prescinding from the various, human systems such as probabilism, and wished for people to follow the Church's interpretation, declaring that in questionable matters "*unusquisque abundet in sensu suo*", and that one should distinguish what is certain from what is doubtful and, in practice, to follow the example of the saints, namely, St. Thomas, St. Alphonsus, Blessed Leonard, the Venerable Canon [Giovanni Battista] De Rossi.

With these basic principles and practices he wanted his own your students of the Congregation to be taught, both in moral and dogmatic theology, as he would frequently say: "*Sentio quod sentit Ecclesia*", accepting the systems which were approved of by Holy Mother Church. To that end he also wanted to leave as his rule of action that each day, with the exception of feastsdays and Fridays, the missionaries should gather together in the respective Mission Houses, when missions were not being given, and have conferences in turn on matters of the Sacred Scriptures, of dogmatic and moral theology, of mystical theology taken from St. Thomas, or of sacred eloquence. It was his concern that even for those in mature years, ordained for the apostolic ministry, the sacred studies should be continued. He himself seized the opportunity many time to teach his young students as well as those advanced in age, in order for them to learn clearly the sacred doctrine. For this reason, smilingly he would say that the Jesuit Fathers, at the time when he showed interest in joining the Company, wanted to assign him to a chair of teaching. This was stated by Fr. [Alfonso] Muzzarelli and other Fathers

of the Company of Jesus.

I know that when he was in Rome, the famous preacher Monsignor [Giovanni] Baccolo, the bishop of Famagosta, was present. The Servant of God, moved by the famous reputation of this great man, went to visit him. That prelate had been informed of the good disposition of the Servant of God toward the art of oratory and so lovingly and with concern, offered to be of assistance in perfecting the Servant of God's ability. I know that Monsignor Baccolo became greatly fond of him and that the Servant of God, because of the schooling received from that great man, derived immeasurable profit from it.

At this very same time, as I was informed by my association with Monsignor Santelli and with Fr. Filippo Gonnelli, it happened that Cardinal [Giulio] Della Somaglia, the Vicar of Rome, was occupied in preparing a solid catechism for the clerics assigned to various oratories and churches in Rome. He wanted all of those clerics to come together and wanted the Servant of God to act as the secretary.

From that same source I must have learned that the Servant of God at that very same time would frequently go to the Vincentian Mission House in the Montecitorio area in order to learn about the sacred ceremonies. I know that because of this schooling in those ceremonies under the tutelage of Fr. Bistolfi, he learned how to carry them out with exactitude, thus in close imitation of his teacher. As a result, we have experienced this in our Mission Houses where, in addition to the other exercises, he insisted that this be studied precisely on Fridays so that the Missionaries would be well-instructed and capable of doing them.

At the same time that the Servant of God was present at the Vincentian Mission House in the Montecitorio area to learn about the sacred ceremonies, he also went to the house of the Gesù where Fr. Marchetti was the superior. There he attended the study conferences, that is, on dogmatic and moral theology, as well as church history. There, when the opportunity arose, he would be reconciled by Fr. Della Pegna, an ex-Jesuit. In associating with those respectable priests, he became very fond of that Company, readying himself from that moment on along with Fr. Carlo Odescalchi, later a cardinal of holy Church and a Jesuit, and submitted his name and offered himself just as he had always yearned.

The Servant of God enrolled in the literary academy instituted by the aforementioned Fr. Marchetti in the house of the Gesù' where the students worked on the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, on the art of preaching and on the solution of moral cases.

Likewise, he enrolled in the Union of St. Paul in which, following the aims that were offered to him by its superiors, he was of assistance to the priests of that Union itself and also dedicated himself to the instruction of poor people of various levels.

He was also enlisted in the Congregation of Santa Maria del Pianto in which he trained in piety the young people who were members thereof. He worked along with Canon Santelli, offering his efforts and zeal to the spiritual advantage of the young people involved in the fine arts in the church of San Luca.

In 1806, while still a young subdeacon, with the permission of his superiors, he, as its director, reactivated the Pious Union in the church of Santa Galla erected by Venerable Canon [Giovanni Battista] De Rossi and was also frequented by the Servant of God Giovanni Andrea Parisi. The Servant of God brought together again the old timers of that Pious Union for the execution of good works, for preaching, and for hearing the confessions of those very poor people. They were and still are being cared for in the adjoining hospice. When he was ordained a priest, he became the administrator of that hospice and zealously promoted its interests to the great satisfaction of the Odescalchi family and the benefits to the hospice itself. For the first time, he set up the program for the poor, abandoned youngsters to make their first holy communion, even supplying them with clothing, feeding them as well as providing them with the principles of reform and meditation. In sharing his labors with other fellow priests and because of his friendship with Fr. Settimio Costanzi, of happy memory, a man of great learning and piety, the Servant of God would often invite him to give inspirational conferences to the priest members of that same Pious Union, so that they would grow evermore diligent in their help to the poor, especially in matters spiritual.

Furthermore, along with Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, later bishop of Norcia, with Fr. Antonio Santelli and Fr. Luigi Gonnelli, he tried to open a nightly oratory in the neighborhood of the Piazza Montanara. After several rejections, they still did not cease in the efforts to be helpful to the poor people in that area, insisting on using the church of Sant'Omobono or Santa Maria in Vincis. At this point, it is a notable thing to point out the humorous incident that occurred in those circumstances. It was told to me by the aforementioned Monsignor Bonanni and by Monsignor Santelli. Here it is. Those four priests requested an audience with a certain prelate. At the reception room, they ran into an elderly servant with a very bad temperament who, while eyeing them suspiciously, refused to welcome them. He kept them outside the reception room, asking them, with a patronizing sound of voice, what they were looking for and that his employer was very, very busy. They responded that they simply wanted to talk to his secretary. "That's not possible", was the reply, "he too is very, very busy. Just let me know what you want." At that point, those good priests humbly expressed their request, explaining in short the objective that they had in mind and beseeching him to present it to his employer for an answer. Then, he went, or pretended to go into his employer's room and then returned with an ever gloomier approach and told them to get out, gesturing to them the exit of the apartment. While Bonanni was going down the stairway, he could not contain himself, resenting the misfortune that they had endured for God's sake, but displaying his zeal and energy to bring this work to realization. In the meantime, the Servant of God, completely jovial and cheerful, was smiling warmly and said that the Lord had found them worthy to suffer something in his Name. The others were edified and comforted by those words in such a way that they were encouraged to continue. Finally, they achieved what they were seeking for the glory of God. A locale was opened for working in the vineyard of the Lord and the labors were shared by each one in that nightly oratory established according to the norms set up for the one initiated

by Fr. [Pietro] Caravita to the tremendous benefit of those poor people.

I recall, likewise, of hearing from those aforementioned companions of his, that even before being ordained a priest, he was fully approved by his teacher and spiritual director, Fr. Marchetti. He was chosen before all others because of his ability of giving instructions, at the church of the Gesù, based on the Scriptures. That was, in fact, something that he did many times to the edification and admiration of people. His ability in oratory, his bearing, his mannerisms were all perfect imitations of his teacher. There were some people who suspected that the lessons that he gave had been composed by his teacher. But that was never shown to be so. He was quite capable of imitating even other preachers.

Sacred Orders and Canon of St. Mark's in Rome

I previously spoke about the Servant of God's first tonsure. Then learned that he regularly received the minor orders, that is, porter and lector on June 7th of the year 1800 in the Lateran Basilica by Monsignor Niccola Buschi, archbishop of Efeso. In the following year, 1801, he received exorcist and acolyte on April 4th, likewise in the Lateran Basilica by the archbishop of Filippi [Msgr. Benedetto Fenaia], the vicegerent. On February 21, 1807 in that same Lateran Basilica, he was promoted to the subdiaconate with a chaplaincy and patrimony title, afforded to him by his father. On March 12, 1808, again in that same basilica, he was ordained deacon by his Eminence and most revered Cardinal [Giulio] Della Somaglia, Vicar. On July 31st of that same year, in the church of the Santissima Trinita' belonging to the Vincentian Fathers in the Montecitorio area, he was promoted to the priesthood by his Eminence and most reverend Cardinal Antonio Despuig, the pro-Vicar, after receiving an apostolic brief dispensing him from the canonical regulation of time and a sacred rescript of dispensation to be ordained *extra tempora*. He had successfully passed the examinations and was approved for ordination and had preceded it by making a retreat, by having the banns announced and other requirements stipulated by the sacred canons. This is all verified in the documents which I have inspected.

I know that the Servant of God was made a coadjutor in the basilica of San Marco, of the canonry held by Canon Fr. Carlo Pace. He took possession of it on November 24, 1807 in accordance with due canonical forms. After the death of the aforementioned Canon Pace, he became its owner. In regard to his attendance at choir, I have been assured, by the Canons there who checked into the records of the Chapter, that the Servant of God had never been late. From information that I received, I know that he was elected by that Chapter as the principal sacristan and in that capacity he distinguished himself by the exactness of its execution in the church, resplendent with proper decorum, with cleanliness and neat care of its furnishings as well as the good order maintained in every regard. I do not know, however, whether he had other duties.

I was asked, ex officio, whether he ambitiously sought the position as a Canon, since that appeared to be his move and nothing else. At that time he was just a young

individual who should have been concentrating with all his abilities on his courses of study. An adjutorship, always requested or sought after, would have been for him only an obstacle to his regular attendance at school, which was something very necessary for a priesthood student who wanted to be of service to the Church and have the proper intention of giving glory to God in the sacred, ministerial state. Likewise, he was resisting his vocation to the Company of Jesus to which he claimed to have been called.

Well, at that period of time, I was not as yet acquainted with Canon Del Bufalo nor Gonnelli. I know that these two young men, exemplary in their ecclesiastical spirit as well as being well-instructed in the sacred ceremonies, were watched closely by their fellow-workers, especially because they lived close to each other in that area and because, as subdeacons, they frequented that church. That was the case because of their participation in the vocal chorale and the strong voice that the Servant of God had. Everywhere else there was a scarcity of goods of fortune and Fr. Carlo Pace was one who was very eager to provide things, in particular that service in the basilica of San Marco.

In reference to studies, I recall having said elsewhere that he effectively handled them with zeal, especially in the field of ecclesiastical ministry. Frequently, he was assiduously present for the literary gathering headed by Fr. Marchetti and Monsignor Baccolo. I am not aware of any other purpose than the Servant of God's attraction to the sacred functions, to his service in the choir, and his aim to maintain splendor in the church. That he should overlook altogether those necessary and useful studies pertinent to his career, one can quickly see that such is not the case, from all that has been said previously in regard to the studies that he handled with great zeal and concern, and because he backed them up with extra hours of work, as can be derived from his frequent contacts with the Jesuit Fathers, with the private lessons that he had, and the very learned explanations given him.

His spiritual director Marchetti, when he noticed this nice young man was inclined to join the Company of Jesus, he came to the judgment that he was not yet mature enough to make that decision and that Divine Providence was shaping him for another career. Things simply were not fully developed and the Servant of God's tendency toward this goal was judged to be an inclination that had to be thoroughly tested first to see whether that was truly his vocation. Thus, in the meantime, they were not to cut off the spontaneous means afforded for their upkeep, remembering the conditions in which his own family existed.

The Napoleonic Oath

The Servant of God kept preparing himself against the common opposition shown toward the head of the Church and, as a consequence, likewise against its members, especially against the sacred ministers who were dedicated to the divine service. Hence, he strongly desired to be elevated to the priesthood in order to offer the Blood of the Divine Lamb as well as himself as a victim in the sacrifice entirely

consecrated to God. He heard only too well the dire reports about and foresaw the invasion of the French already quite imminent. So, he became ever more enkindled with zeal and fervor through his pious exercises, in his apostolic ministry while stimulating others of his colleagues to do the same. He encouraged people to attend the nightly oratories for instructions in Christian doctrine and he preached in the public squares at night in order to bring people to the nocturnal oratories to pray that the clergy would be free of those fears that were impending over zealous workers who at that time, along with him, were laboring without consideration of human regards in the Lord's vineyard, so clearly demonstrated by all the Roman clergy at that period of time. Consequently, he sought and obtained the dispensation from age in order to be promoted to the priesthood. In the meanwhile, through fervent prayer and regular spiritual exercises, he disposed himself to be ready to fight bravely God's war.

Finally, when his time came, he was summoned by the officer and informed that he was required to take the oath of fidelity and obedience to Emperor Napoleon and his government. He had been well-instructed in this matter and, in his very own handwriting, had made a copy of the directions which had been issued by his Holiness Pope Pius VII. With extraordinary diligence, he had absorbed the true and legitimate understanding of it and with the advice of very capable and mature priests to whom he had recourse [474] in order not to fall into error in his deliberations, he remained faithful and exceedingly firm in his refusal to take the illegitimate oath. He replied to the officer and to others who tried to lead him otherwise: "*Petrus locutus est. Causa finita est, utinam finiatur error*". He pronounced that sentence with such determination and faithfulness to the Holy See that the officer, after uttering a few groans and then threats, turned to the father who had accompanied the Servant of God. He urged the father, because of the generosity of his spirit and his power of reasoning, to be concerned about his son, still in the flower of his youth and with such a great future, to talk to him to take the oath of fidelity to the Emperor. At that point, the father responded: "Citizen, shoot me first and then my son and don't say that to me."

At that point, the officer informed him of his departure in exile to the city of Piacenza at his own expense. This same lot of being sent into exile to the same place also fell upon Canon Albertini, Canon [Francesco] Gambini and Canon [Giovanni] Marchetti. This news spread throughout Rome and also get to the ears of the Servant of God's relatives. They were deeply afflicted by that news, but all were supportive, even his most loving mother who preferred to see him dead than see him take that oath. They disposed themselves with great sorrow and at the same time with great resignation, to that painful separation. So, they gathered together in the Piazza San Marco where the condemned would mount a carriage. The Servant of God bid farewell to his beloved parents who gave him their blessing and kissed his hand. Accompanying him until he got into the coach, they poured out warm tears, particularly his very dear mother. Just a short time before this sad occasion, she had lost her other son who had married, and now she would be left with her daughter-in-law who had given birth to a lovely little girl. As an act of veneration for his priesthood and the virtues that she witnessed growing each day in her most beloved son, she waited to kiss his hand, saying to him these final

words: “Son, allow me, at least this very last time, to kiss your sacerdotal hand, for at this moment, I foresee that I shall never see you again on this earth.” And, as a matter of fact, it so happened. The Servant of God made every effort to control himself as best he could, but his heart wished to give vent to a natural outburst of love with a controlled outpouring of spontaneous tears. In that emotional state of grief, he departed. Comforted and courageous in God, he offered everything in sacrifice for the glory of God and for his fidelity to the supreme leader.

The Exile

After a disastrous journey, the deportees, accompanied by the military personnel, arrived in Piacenza. They were lodged, at least for the first evening, in a certain inn where the following incident occurred. Exhausted from the trip and retired for the night which was July 15, 1810, Canon Albertini felt something or other that had insidiously entered his mouth – for surely he must have fallen asleep with his mouth open – and it was slowly going down into his throat. Because of that disgusting and frightful intrusion, he awoke from his deep sleep and cried out for help with his suffocating and muffled voice. He was heard by the Servant of God he was asleep in another bed in the same room and he, too, let out a scream: “Innkeeper!” as the room remained in darkness. The innkeeper, completely impassive, answered: “Now, now, what’s the matter?” At that moment, freed from that discomfort since he, with his own hand had thrown the animal away, Albertini said: “It’s a mouse!” “So what?” replied the innkeeper. “That’s nothing!” Then, it took about a half-hour to get some light in the room. In the meantime, the two roomers kept moaning, but not blaming the phlegmatic and cold-blooded innkeeper. From that occurrence and for long after, the Servant of God, experienced a disturbance to his nervous system which affected his total temperament. Any appearance of that sort of animal which cause him to feel convulsive. No matter what reasonable means he used to get rid of that sensitivity in his human make-up, he was never able to achieve that. As a result, when later he would have to travel, he had to suffer that shattering of nerves or similar very sensitive reactions. The deportees, then, moved into the parochial house where they were welcomed with great affection and veneration by the pastor and his parishioners who looked upon these exiled priests as martyrs. The aforementioned parish was that of San Matteo.

But the young Del Bufalo, unaccustomed to traveling through a very overcast and humid climate during a very, very hot summer season, fell into a gravely serious illness accompanied with an extreme weakness in his stomach so that he was not even able to pass broth. The doctors who had been summoned by concerned citizens, did not know what remedy to apply and were desperate about his condition of health. It was then that Canon Albertini, remembered that this man was the one who had been referred to previously in a prediction made to him in Rome by one of his penitents, by God greatly

avored, whose name was Sister Agnes of the Incarnate Word,¹ a Paolotta laysister, in their monastery in Rome. With a very determined attitude, he said: “Please know that, as I fervently hope in God, you are not going to die from this infirmity. However, let us pray, making a triduum to St. Aloysius Gonzaga, offering with faith to God the eternal Father the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ that you will be cured and will then become an instrument of God’s glory through an Institute that will be established after this deportation. It will promote decorum among the secular clergy; through Missions and Retreats, it will restore people to a love of the Crucified Lord; it will combat the indifferentism and unbelief of perverted individuals; ultimately, it will do everything possible to achieve good work through the apostolic ministry, all through the invocation to and under the title of the most Precious Blood. That Institute will forcefully renew the memory of the great price of our redemption, of our reconciliation and salvation, in order to placate the wrath of God who is justly angry. And, as it were, it will be like a deluge of mercy washing away the sins of the world and restoring those things that were lost through foul living and the lack of religion. In time, you will be its sounding trumpet.” The signs that were pointed out to Albertini by that blessed Sister identifying the Servant of God were the following: that in exile, because of the upheaval of the calamitous times for Holy Mother Church and for its visible head on earth, he would make the acquaintance of a young priest who was very devoted to St. Francis Xavier, who was naturally gifted with eloquence, dedicated to preaching zealously for the salvation of souls, one who was deliberate and resolute in maintaining the basic principles of religion and faith, as well as the purity of Catholic teaching, ready at any time to give his own blood and life for Jesus Christ. Thus, for Albertini, this man must be his beloved spiritual son who, in the designs of God, must be led by him to reach that goal and perfect his soul in the process.

The Servant of God had already been given Viaticum and was ready to receive Extreme Unction. But when he learned of what I described up to now and after our prayers to St. Aloysius with the offering of the Divine Blood, little by little he began to take a bit of food brought to him and to show improvement in his stomach so that after a few days he was able to get up and be perfectly healed and, along with his new spiritual director Albertini, to be transferred to Bologna.

There, he took up residence in the very edifying household of the Filippini Fathers and later, urged by the most respectful Bentivoglio and Tanari families, he had to accept their most courteous invitations, especially to conduct retreats for those families of most noble persons. They derived a marvelous fruit from that service and their attestations acclaimed his work as a wholesome and holy young man. Those nobles of Bologna vied to have the deported Roman priests in their homes and the Servant of God stated that the apostolic Roman priests, located there for a good cause, were all filled with the spirit of the Lord. The people were accustomed to speak of the

¹ Sister Mary Agnes of the Incarnate Word (born Barbara Schiavi) was born in 1757 in Corese (Fara Sabina). She was an active Paolotta nun located in the Monastery of St. Francis of Paola in Rome where she died on March 15, 1810.

young Del Bufalo saying that they perceived in him an indescribable joviality and a particular form of courage similar to the ancient Christians who had been persecuted and confined for their faith in Jesus Christ. Because of the reputation of the Servant of God, the Marquesa Tanari asked Monsignor Albertini and obtained from him, in addition to the retreat conducted by the Servant of God for her family, that he also, at that period of time, give scientific and educational lessons to her own children. This was done to her complete contentment because of the profit that they gained up until the 13th of September. After four months of detention in that city, he was taken away secretly and, as the rumor got around more than once, that it was done by order of the Emperor Napoleon that they were to be questioned once again. In fact, they were summoned to take the oath of allegiance to him under pain of being sent to the guillotine. All of them showed up, dressed in their cassocks. They were joyful and fearless in the presence of the presiding officer and other governmental personnel, as though they were going to a wedding celebration. They knew exactly what response they would give to the suggestive questions put to them. Some of the judges or employees, who were more sensitive of heart, began to shed tears and to demonstrate their desire to be of whatever help they could provide. So also did the children for having been given useful instructions and school lessons.

During their stay in Bologna, the deported priests learned from the young people who were students at the university there that they were publicly teaching lessons in materialism and other gross errors. But, dexterously, the Servant of God along with the other well-educated companions of his drew up dissertations completely opposed to those errors. They had them copied by the young scholars and had them recited to their teachers in school or had them summarized for those same professors whenever they did not want to listen to them. Those professors, convinced but confused and angered, immediately suspected the deported priests so that they had recourse to the police to be more strictly vigilant over the exiled priests.

As a matter of fact, some of those priests were transferred to Corsica, others were confined in the prisons of Bologna, and some of the remainder were sent to other places. The Servant of God was sent to Imola later, after a new order. I know that in those circumstances with the students or thereabouts, he, along with the others, effectively worked for the conversion of some young Protestant students and eventually they repudiated their errors. I cannot give you precise details because Del Bufalo, with great modesty and reserve, would speak to me about the fruits of his exceptional zeal. However, I do recall that the now-deceased Canon Fr. Antonio Muccioli, while conducting the Mission in Romagna, related this fact and other similar conversations dealing with things that happened during the period of exile, principally concerning those of our Servant of God.

He had to exercise great virtue upon the very sorrowful separation, more pitiful than from his other colleagues, when he found himself torn away from the side of his most beloved teacher and spiritual director, Canon Albertini, who conferred with great frequency with him deepening greatly his knowledge of moral and ascetical theology for

his own perfection as well as that of others.

As the Servant of God continued his stay in Imola, just as he did in Bologna, he always persevered in a methodical style of life in prayer, in study, and in an exemplary conduct and zeal in behalf of the salvation of his neighbor. In that regard, in addition to the sufferings and setbacks of prison life and treatment that at times was barbarous, he continued to progress in virtue and amassed a rich deposit of merits for heaven, while adjusting himself to bear the inconveniences and difficulties to be faced in conducting missions, just as God had disposed for him.

After the simple detention in the city of Bologna,² the Servant of God, along with other arrested priests, was all of a sudden, while in residence in the Bentivoglio house, taken secretly to the prison of San Giovanni in Monte. There, he was given the ration provided for the other malefactors and even worse. It consisted of a daily soup made up of black bread and tallow fat, and a round piece of bread that was also black, weighing some sixteen ounces. As for his rest, they prepared there for him a rag of a mattress filled with vile insects that tormented the poor prisoners all night long. When the prison keeper appeared around midnight, he was accustomed to surprising the poor men, unused to hearing noise like that, with his shouts and yells. As a result, once their quiet was disturbed, they remained there vexed and convulsive. Likewise, the officers, loyal to the illegitimate government, from time to time would let the more dedicated exiled priests who were confined in different locations know that others of their group had taken the oath and were obedient to the orders of the Emperor, admitting that they finally realized how false their reasoning had been and how licit the oath was. However, the prisoners did not put any faith in the reports of those people who produced humbug, ruses and gossip. Thus, they remained firm and persevering in their fidelity and obedience to the Holy See. As they increased their firmness and constancy in their holy intent, so also did the persecution of their enemies increase. Those who acknowledged the truth maintained their edifying posture.

While in Bologna, the Servant of God realized, through the enlightenment given by that nun to Canon Albertini, that there was to be an Institute of Missions still to be founded along with an Institute for nuns under the same title of the most Precious Blood. However, he himself would not be called upon to direct the latter but someone else would substitute for him. That nun, a Servant of God, is the same one who is mentioned in the life of the Venerable Fr. Paul of the Cross, written by the Venerable Monsignor Strambi. While she was still a very young girl, she pronounced her vows to that same Venerable Fr. Paul of the Cross who in Corneto would have a monastery

² Valentini adds “and of Imola”, but Imola, in this review of the discussion on Bologna at the beginning of this session, is out of place.

erected for the Passionist nuns as has already been seen and verified.³

The Servant of God, having endured the disdain and furor of his persecutors, was sent, after four months of strict and secret imprisonment in Bologna, with other exiled priests to the public prison in Imola. In Imola, he was greeted warmly and helped with whatever he might need by Monsignor Annibale Ginnasi. After a few days, he was transferred to the prison of that city, assisted again by the mediation of Monsignor Ginnasi. In that prison, he formed a sort of ecclesiastical school with the other exiled companions and he himself took on the position of leader and conductor in the matter of prayer, study and an appropriate and orderly method of life. Nor did he overlook giving instructions in things dealing with piety and faith to those also confined in the prison as well as to the workers and others there.

After three months and twenty-eight days of retention in the prison of Imola, his constancy was once again tested when he was transferred to the prison of Lugo where the officers were even fiercer in their threats using frequently the *perquiratur* and other ill-treatments possible. In these circumstances of confinement and intimidation, all of the exiled priests always demonstrated the most virtuous attitudes and, as some of those most worthy priests have written, it was the case especially with the Servant of God who continued to distinguish himself in a special way by his patience and courage, by his vivid faith, by his praying, his study and by his zeal for the glory of God.

Finally, the police order came to have the exiled priests returned to Bologna, then to Piacenza, and finally to Firenze for a new deportation. However, instead of that, once the French Empire and Emperor had fallen, the Servant of God was given his freedom and he returned immediately by the mail carriage to Rome, his home town.

³ At this point of the manuscript, a small note is attached to it with a Nota Bene by Fr. Nicola Pagliuca, archivist for the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood, making reference to Sister Agnes. It says: "From the biography of St. Paul of the Cross, written by the Venerable Strambi, it appears that the Agnes, who is mentioned there, died before St. Paul and consequently cannot be the one directed by Albertini. That one died in 1810. It might be that this second Agnes, at the age of ten or twelve, that is, previous to 1770 when the foundation of Corneto took place, may have foretold to St. Paul the aforementioned foundation in Corneto, but that does not appear in the biography written by Strambi. If that prediction were true, Albertini must have heard it from the lips of his penitent, Agnes, and then must have communicated it to Fr. Biagio through the Venerable Del Bufalo. I point out also that the first Agnes was from Orbetello and was already a young lady in 1730. Albertini's penitent was born in 1757 in Corese."