

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDER

The mission work of Bonanni

While Canon Del Bufalo was disposing himself under the counsel of Monsignor Albertini for the foundation of a new Institute, Fr. Gaetano Bonanni had already set things into motion in Rome by instituting certain pious works in the oratory of Santa Maria in Vincis, a service which the Servant of God greatly supported with Monsignor Santelli, Frs. Gaetano Bonanni and Gonnelli as well as other zealous priests who would gather together in that oratory and in Santa Galla. This latter place was also delivered into the special care of Monsignor Santelli's administration and Fr. Gaetano Bonanni's direction of the pious works. It was the latter who, eager to be giving missions, set this idea into motion and while the Servant of God was in exile, wrote to him about it to see whether he would be interested in the project and whether he would be willing to join with him. The Servant of God accepted it, since he had no other desire than that very goal and would be following the direction of his spiritual guide, Canon Albertini. He had received so much assurance of a future of even greater extension than just the work in Rome and elsewhere, that he replied with great exuberance as well as humility of heart. This offer coincided with the desires of his own heart, with divine providence which he deeply admired, and with the very things that he wished to share with the hearts of others who would be not only his helpers but even his teachers because of his youthfulness.

In the meantime, Bonanni, under the protection and zealous care of Monsignor Bellisario) Cristaldi, scheduled a meeting with missionary priests interested in this Institute who were located in Toscanella. Because of several difficulties, it was not actually carried out. Nevertheless, Fr. Gaetano Bonanni himself was able to satisfy his zeal by conducting various missions either alone or almost alone.

In search of vocations

As we stated before, when the Servant of God returned from exile, he continued to consult with his spiritual director Monsignor Albertini who, likewise, had just returned from his period of exile. With clarity of conscience, he opened himself up wholeheartedly to him making known his own inclination to join the Company of Jesus.

That great spiritual master did not oppose his expressed desire but, reminding him of the things that had been spoken by that great servant of God, Sister Mary Agnes of the Incarnate Word, he advised him not to pay too much attention to those words since such extraordinary things should not be the basis of governing one's life, neither of belief nor of action. Rather, basing one's life on the rules of faith and in adhering to the basic principles of action, one must move forward always in accordance with good

counsel and prayer. In that way, one will discover the pure will of God and not make a mistake in regard to one's vocation upon which depends every step of our lives, our predestination, our salvation. Completely satisfied with those fundamental principles, although still others were advanced for his well-being, the Servant of God did not cease tending toward joining the Company of Jesus. He even sought to be admitted there along with Fr. Carlo Odescalchi. However, the Lord, who had other things planned for him, as did Albertini also, though I am not able to say whether it was through the concern of Monsignor Cristaldi or through some other supernatural intervention that made the situation known, he was assured that even though he and Odescalchi had submitted their names to the aforementioned Company, they would not enter. And, as a matter of fact, around the following day, they received news by means of a short note that they had been summoned by the supreme Pontiff Pius VII to an audience when he would assign them to mission work. The Servant of God bowed his head to this wish of the supreme authority and knew decisively from that moment on that it was the most holy will of God that he should accept the apostolic career of conducting missions.

Even before all of this that I have said about the call issued by the Holy Father, I know that Cardinal [Francesco] Fontana had offered him a position, providing him with an income, with the Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. The Servant of God declined the offer in favor of his apostolic ministry; he also renounced his position as Canon for the very same reason. In place of them, he obtained a provisional subsidy of 12 *scudi* a month to help support his family which consisted of a widowed sister-in-law and a niece, left behind upon the death of his brother, to assist them in their sustenance, a quasi title of justice, along with the support of his father who had remarried. The sister-in-law, the daughter-in-law and the step-daughter together were not capable by nature nor by education to handle things. So, *pro bono pacis*, the Servant of God agreed, out of obedience and duty, to provide for them through his own sacrifices. This challenging relationship, namely, his father and his stepmother was a burden that he had to bear in addition to the other two women related to him by blood. Thus, he also was given a simple benefice in Perugia with an annual income of around fifty *scudi* without the obligation of residence as a Canon and maintaining his freedom to work in the mission ministry. He reserved for himself the title of honorary Canon and his place in the choir so that when there was free time from the missions he could assist at the sacred functions whose decorum and magnificence of holy worship to the glory of God he loved so much.

The Founding of his Congregation

In the year 1814 he got together with Monsignor Cristaldi and his companion Fr. Gaetano Bonanni to obtain a foundation for the Institute of Missionaries in San Felice in Giano, diocese of Spoleto in Umbria. The aforementioned project in Toscanella was no longer active. After the return of Monsignor [Agostino] Rivarola, he received, in fact, some unclaimed ecclesiastical benefits as an income along with a nother endowment and pious legacy from the devoted Lawyer [Giuseppe] Paolucci consisting of fifty *scudi*

per year. The total came to around three hundred scudi. Then, with those same endowments, the Servant of God together with Fr. Gaetano Bonanni toward the end of the year 1814 obtained an audience with Pope Pius VII, of glorious memory, who bestowed on them a special blessing for their work in a rescript issued by the Congregation for the Reform which was operating then under the direction of its secretary, Monsignor [Francesco] Canali, who later was made a cardinal of Holy Church.

Later, Canon Fr. Luigi Gonnelli was sent to the bishop of Spoleto, Monsignor Francesco] Canali, for the execution and possession of the locale assigned to them. But, Gonnelli was frightened by the opposition raised to this action by the people of Spoleto and that locality which gave the appearance of being a horrible sight of vast and profound solitude. Gonnelli returned to Rome without achieving anything.

Then Canon Del Bufalo, himself, went there and through the effectiveness of his speech and his actions he managed to get everything done. For fifteen days, that is, from July 28th to August 11th of 1815, all alone in that broken-down place, abandoned to the use of filthy animals, with the church virtually abandoned, he set to work cleaning up the place from top to bottom. He, along with some help of some of the local peasants, got the house and the church back into a workable condition thus converting a place of horror into a reasonable and pleasant state. From the very beginning, he determined to make that place a place for exercises of piety and devotion. With proper faculties granted, he planned to invite to come there the clergy of that diocese to celebrate Mass, hear confessions, especially on festive days. He, himself, preached with such zeal and eloquence that the priests and the people were positively enchanted, stating that it seemed to them that he was endowed with the spirit of St. Paul, for such was the gentle but strong impression made upon them. He was like a fresh, spring flower blooming in that rustic surrounding. He spent some forty days with them, rejuvenating and helping them, and they were unable ever to forget him.

In the meanwhile, all of those zealous priests whom Fr. Gaetano Bonanni had gathered together for his pious organization which he named the Evangelical Workers, withdrew from the plan to go to the foundation in Giano, one for this reason, the other for another reason. Even the superior himself, Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, had to make a stringent effort to associate himself with that undertaking, even though he felt strongly in favor of it.¹ Because of that, and certainly as part of the devil's work to annoy the Servant of God, the locale remained without any subjects there. On the other hand, Del Bufalo, instead of being upset about this situation, stirred up his enthusiasm against the powers of hell and, with prayer, with exhortations and gentle reproaches to his good companions, he stimulated them to accept the assignment to that sacred place of

¹ In all truth, Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, only during the first years covering the granting of an Felice, seemed to be opposed to the official opening of the house and hence to initiate the work. But, from August of 1815 he firmly resided at San Felice until the time when he was named bishop of Norcia in 1821.

solitude, crying out with St. Bernard: “*O solitudo, o sola beatitudo*”. Thus, there they could prepare themselves better for their apostolic ministry and be able to spread their work abroad to the nearby places and cities from their center there in Umbria where the sanctuary of San Felice was located. Furthermore, the local citizens and farm owners made their way to this place as their haven of special protection, especially on festive days when the bread of the divine word would be broken for thousands of people who would come from the neighboring villages as devotees and as people seeking the sacraments whenever zealous ministers were available. The Servant of God also managed to convince Bonanni and others of the great good that could be accomplished there, despite being out in the vast open areas, through the giving of retreats and missions. In addition, many times people would be drawn there by traveling preachers such as the Marquis Fr. Vincenzo Tani from Ferentino but resident then in Rome; Fr. Adriano Giampedi, Fr. Luigi Achille and the aforementioned Fr. Gaetano Bonanni serving as the Superior of the locale which was granted by papal rescript through the intervention of Monsignor Cristaldi to the Servant of God. He was given the faculty to bring together other companions with the knowledge of their bishops, thus forming a central place for missions and retreats.

Indeed, much good work was accomplished by those exemplary priests, full of zeal and very active. However, for different reasons, some of them did not take long to return to Rome with the aforementioned superior remaining there with Fr. Vincenzo Tani and Fr. Luigi Achille.

Later, the Servant of God, in keeping with the advice of Albertini his spiritual director, as well as that of Monsignor [Giovanni Francesco) Falzacappa, of Monsignor Cristaldi and others who had formed in Rome a gathering of men dedicated to helping this pious Institute, devoted himself to the active ministry of conducting holy missions, not only to the advantage of the people, but even more to consolidate his priest-companions who were called by God to participate in this pious endeavor and to a career as missionaries, as eventually they became.

The Servant of God was named the director general of the Institute by the aforementioned most zealous Monsignor Cristaldi as a result of a special audience granted by Pius VII. That declaration was mentioned in a letter of Canon Albertini which is preserved in the archives of San Paolo in Albano. It says: “The most worthy Monsignor Cristaldi wants your Institute and its works and the social groups that it establishes at the time of the holy missions, have the expressed title of the most Precious Blood.”² As a matter of fact, in 1814, by apostolic rescript, the Pious Union of the most Precious Blood was erected in favor of all the brothers and sisters who had been enrolled and granted very many indulgences to the faithful enlisted and

² Here, Valentini is probably referring to the letter of St. Gaspar to Fr. Gaetano Bonanni dated March 1, 1815, in which he says: “Monsignor Cristaldi urges me to place our society under the title of the most Precious Blood” (Cfr. Epistolario, I, 140). As a matter of fact, as far as I know, in the archives of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood, there is no such letter to Albertini.

aggregated. Included in that number also were the missionary priests of the Institute. Then, in 1815, that Pious Union, together with all the others, was elevated to the level of an Archconfraternity with privileges granted in the papal bulls, and the missionaries, included within the Constitutions of that Archconfraternity, were confirmed and declared as the principal members and propagators of the devotion of the most Precious Blood. Consequently, those men who were formerly referred to by Bonanni as Evangelical Workers were now called Missionaries of the most Precious Blood and were sent forth by His Holiness as Apostolic Missionaries.³

Who is the real Founder?

At this point, we turn to removing a mistake which could arise concerning Monsignor Albertini, consecrated bishop of Terracina and the founder of the aforementioned Archconfraternity together with Canon Del Bufalo, the Apostolic Missionary and founder of the Institute bearing the same title. Monsignor Albertini himself told me that the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood had three branches: the first was that of the Institute of the missionary priests, the second was that of the nuns, and the third was that of all the faithful of both genders who were enrolled in that devotion. St. Bernardine of Siena, in his time, preached and propagated the devotion to the most holy Name of Jesus and many confraternities were instituted by pious founders under that very same title. Likewise, St. Ignatius of Loyola assumed the title for his own Company, as is very well known. So it is not unusual to see that Albertini was the originator of the title for the Archconfraternity and Del Bufalo was the founder of the Institute of missionaries bearing that same title. This is clearly shown clearly by the very history that is made known.

I was asked, ex officio, to state whether it was true that the Servant of God had, on many occasions, manifested that he was not the founder of the Institute of missionaries; also, whether it was true that Monsignor Cristaldi, a spokesman for His Holiness Pope Pius VII, recognized Fr. Gaetano Bonanni as the founder of that same Institute insofar as it was to him and not to Canon Del Bufalo that the decree granting apostolic authority was addressed, endowing him with the power to initiate the Institute by the conferral of the locale of San Felice in Giano; finally, whether it was true that Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, for no other reason, withdrew from the aforementioned Institute since he could not come to an agreement with the ideas and projects of Canon Del Bufalo; the latter had a plan that Bonanni considered too vast and gigantic and too extensive, and, as a result he was able to foresee only a short duration for the Institute on the

³ In all probability, Valentini is referring to the election of St. Gaspar as “the prime promotor and missionary” of the missions of the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood. This nomination was communicated to St. Gaspar by the secretary of the Archconfraternity, Pietro Zucchetti on December 28, 1817. In consequence of that, also the other missionaries were enrolled in the Archconfraternity and therefore were called Missionaries of the most Precious Blood, as is rightly asserted by Valentini. G. Merlini, *Gaspare Del Bufalo, un santo scruta un santo*, Albano, 1984, 196-197).

basis that there simply was a lack of necessary means.

As I mentioned previously, it is very, very true that the Servant of God, being still a young man and a person of humility, with holy eagerness, always shied away from the honor and the title of founder. Because of that, without being guilty of lying, he was able to keep the Institute functioning without the necessity of his signature, humbly reasoning that he might rather do harm to its name than to help it. It was he himself who requested that the supplication for the papal grant be issued in Fr. Gaetano Bonanni's name and that the name of Bonanni be on the rescript. He, himself, the Servant of God, requested that he, along with Bonanni, could go to get the blessing of the Holy Father on the Institute, thus, recognizing preferentially and the seniority of Bonanni and, as a child, his profound respect for the Holy Father. The rescript was benignly granted, as I mentioned previously. That rescript refers to Bonanni as the superior of the locale and church of San Felice in Giano, not of the Institute of the Missions. So, while Monsignor Albertini was still alive, he kept encouraging Del Bufalo and myself, when Bonanni arrived in the area of Giano, to absolutely continue to seek after his spontaneous and prudent renunciation of the position of local superior. Bonanni was truly a very saintly man when it came to preaching and hearing confessions, but he was not one who could form other companions who would be applying to this Institute, nor did he have the God-given gifts for regulating and forming an institution as was seen in the spirit and foresight of Canon Del Bufalo. In addition, Venerable Monsignor Strambi, who was Bonanni's spiritual director, was in agreement and came to the same judgment given by Albertini. In fact, he himself advised his spiritual son to conscientiously renounce it. So, Bonanni was asked to either set aside his assiduous ministry of preaching missions or renounce his position as superior. As eventuated, it was evident that he was unable to give up his great work of preaching missions and preferred rather to surrender his appointment. Practically speaking, he knew that he could not face the task of recruiting new members and forming them for work in the pious institution. With outstanding humility, Bonanni listened to and fully adhered to the advice of his Venerable spiritual director as well as that of the beloved Albertini. Because of his humility, he was exalted by God to the ranks of the episcopacy as bishop of Norcia while he was in the act of preaching holy missions in that diocese of Spoleto. That is where he received from the most holy Auditor who, at that time was the aforementioned Monsignor Cristaldi, the notification of his election to that dignity.

For the above-stated reasons and without lying, more than once did the Servant of God assert at that time that the founder was Bonanni and much later that it was Monsignor Albertini, especially after his death. He stated that Bonanni was the superior and Albertini the founder since the former was actually the superior of the locale of Giano, the first foundation, and the latter was the founder of the Archconfraternity from which the Institute was derived, as I have mentioned previously.

But it is also true that both the internal order of that pious house as well as the external method observed in missions and retreats was not altogether that which was observed in the group established by Bonanni when compared with what Canon Del

Bufalo had set up. Bonanni's was too restrictive and not all of the activities of his ministry were as extensive, restricted as they were to Rome itself. Hence we have already noted that Bonanni's plan could not be described as the work of the Roman clergy, as the Servant of God Del Bufalo truthfully and constantly declared, as he regularly shied from the title of founder. He used to say: "This is the work of the Roman clergy. Hence, it must be extended to all the pious works of the external ministry." Furthermore, Bonanni was not accustomed to instituting the pious work of the nightly oratories, nor societies for the people and similar things. That was something that occupied our Servant of God both during the missions as well as in our established houses. In some true sense of the word, however, the remarks about Bonanni have a ring of truth.

The Servant of God, relying upon the help of his members as well as the providence of God, together with the efforts that he made in obtaining temporal means in behalf of the Institute with little concern about his own welfare, gradually succeeded in getting whatever was needed. I noted this just as I had witnessed the same method used by other servants of God who preceded him in setting up their foundations and projects for their ministry. It is certainly true that his great trust in God as well as his own strong heart, would not allow him to run away from difficulties but rather to meet them directly and overcome them. Indeed, even though he was firmly founded in the virtue of humility, he was unable to be pusillanimous which, if not kept from excess could become very harmful, as he himself frequently said. Thus, through the mercy of God, God's work came into existence and it continues to spread even abroad, as the facts show.

I must add here that some people attributed to the Servant of God the trip that was made for the renunciation of the superiorship of the house in Giano into my hands and personally given to me by Fr. Gaetano Bonanni and by the episcopal authority which was conferred upon the aforementioned Bonanni. But from my own knowledge I must reply, repeating what I said before, that the episcopacy was conferred a bit of time after the renunciation of the aforementioned superior's position. Consequently, that was not done really in order to get him promoted to the episcopacy, but that promotion was something suggested by Monsignor Cristaldi for that diocese which was a very mountainous region through which he had already traveled extensively, giving missions and was more familiar with it than anyone else and would be more capable of governing it. That was the real reason and purpose for his being elected to that position as bishop. The renunciation, then, was made by Fr. Gaetano Bonanni upon the advice of Monsignor Strambi, bishop of Macerata and Tolentino, who acknowledged that Bonanni did not have the appropriate qualities for founding an Institute of this nature, but nevertheless had other excellent qualities as gifts of God: "*Unusquisque secundum mensuram donationis Christi*" – as the Venerable Monsignor Strambi put it - "*et alius sic, alius autem sic.*" Then, he suggested that I prepare myself to carry that burden and be very careful not to abandon it. This all seemed to work out well since, shortly after Bonanni took over, many companions came to the Institute even though some of them

declined to dedicate themselves to it despite their sojourn there for a short time in San Felice in Giano under the direction of Bonanni.

Finally, Monsignor Albertini was the constant stimulator, along with Monsignor Cristaldi, of Canon Del Bufalo and the others. He exhorted and encouraged them to pray and to gather together the necessary and effective means to offset each impediment and peacefully and harmoniously seek to increase the pious work under the egis of the most Precious Blood. Bonanni preferred to give it the title of Evangelical Workers, or the Pious Workers of the most Blessed Sacrament or of the most Holy Savior. Actually, he was listened to, as is evident from what has been stated previously. But Canon Del Bufalo acted as the director general of the missions, always concealing his status as founder.

I was asked, ex officio, if I knew or if I had heard whether there was a distinction, and just what it was, between the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood and the work of the missions; whether these two institutions were united or separate; whether the Servant of God performed some ministry for the Archconfraternity and just what connection all this had with Santa Maria in Vincis, a thing referred to by another person who was interrogated.

Above, I already stated that the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood, instituted by Canon Albertini and approved by Pope Pius VII, of holy memory. Among others, it included, as the primary members, the missionary priests who were the propagators of that devotion. They conducted missions under the name of the same Archconfraternity. However, the Mission Houses and places of retreat, founded by Canon Del Bufalo, as I likewise stated, only have the title of the most Precious Blood without dependence on those members nor their founder. Monsignor Albertini himself wrote to the Canon that the groups of people, enrolled through the promotional work of the Servant of God wherever the Mission Houses were set up and missions conducted, were a real source of consolation for him. Then, when he was elected bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Priverno, he predicted that in the province of Marittima and Campagna the Servant of God would found many Mission Houses which was something that eventually took place. Of course, everybody knows that Monsignor Albertini did not found any of those Mission Houses and only Canon Del Bufalo was recognized by the glorious Pope Pius VII, of happy memory, as their founder in a special rescript which is still extant in our Archives. He was authoritatively acknowledged as the founder of six Mission Houses in that province for the removal of the famous brigandry in that area and was cited by Pius VII for that project. The rescript was issued by his Eminence [Ercole] Consalvi, Secretary of State, and by Monsignor Cristaldi as a result of the fruitful results achieved in the mission work done especially in the Marche. It even goes so far as to give him the title of apostle.

In the Archconfraternity, the Servant of God worked very hard by calling together during the missions in Rome a concourse of people to the church of San Nicola in Carcere where it was instituted. A great multitude of people were enrolled as he reminded them of the great price the Jesus offered to rescue them and reconcile them to God. Then, too, within the provinces of the Papal States and in the Kingdom of

Naples as well as other outside kingdoms he increased the number of aggregations, that were almost unable to be counted, to the aforementioned Archconfraternity.

Since he had already set up the previously referred-to Santa Maria in Vincis, he also wished to aggregate in Rome itself the Pious Union of the brethren of St. Francis Xavier to the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood so that they, too, could gain the indulgences and the privileges. This would augment the number of people in attendance at the Oratory and the reception of the holy sacraments. It would, likewise, promote among the members the holy observance of feastdays with the recitation of the seven penitential psalms and other devout exercises. In this fraternal organization, in imitation of the brethren of the Oratory of Fr. [Pietro] Caravita, called the Collaroni, he hoped for and eventually obtained for them a distinctive, pilgrim's garb and the standard of St. Francis Xavier which was not the same as the red one of the Archconfraternity established at San Nicola in Carcere. He called this fraternity "The St. Francis Xavier Association" and wanted them to zealously draw others to the Oratory by leading a procession through the squares and the streets with the Crucified Lord on feastdays, accompanied by a priest who would give "pep talks" along the way, just as he himself did. Thus, after making these arrangements, he proceeded then to get them a cardinal protector in the person of his Eminence Fransoni. He appointed Vincenzo Severini to serve as the presiding officer of that association. When the Servant of God, who was its director, was absent, Fr. Luigi Gonnelli substituted for him as its vice-director. While the Servant of God was traveling on mission work outside of Rome, the members of that association thought that they should revise the official structure making it different from the one that was found in their printed regulations and to adopt other exercises that were in conformity with other confraternities in existence in Rome and consequently in opposition to those of the association which the Servant of God had instituted. When its director, or better said its institutor, was informed of this, he replied that they should retain the association's title along with the practices already established and not otherwise. Canon Gonnelli, the vice-director, and Severini, its presiding officer, insisted that he should yield to the will of the members, otherwise, they would satisfy their intent in some other way. Then, with total humility, the Servant of God replied that, as a matter of procedure and principle, he could not agree with that and still adhere to the purpose and end which had been designed for that pious institution. If they wished to follow their own desires, it would not be the precise, good work that had been proposed but something altogether distinct. Therefore, he felt constrained to cease being the leader and director of a confraternity which he never had the intention of founding. At the same time, he wrote to the presiding officer that he should not leave since he was a man who remained steadily in Rome and should be of assistance to that brotherhood. Later, Severini learned that Canon Gonnelli, submitting to the desires of the members, proceeded to obtain a rescript, which truly was an irregular procedure. As a result, Severini renounced his position. His Eminence Fransoni, its protector, although urged by Canon Gonnelli to continue his position as cardinal-protector, also refused and renounced his position as protector saying that it was a new example of affrontery to the

Servant of God and an illegitimate action. He, too, was constrained to reject the proposal as long as they continued in opposing the purpose and the pious intent of its founder who was still living. At this point, it must be noted that from the letters of the Servant of God which are still preserved one can see how he showed a great meekness while zealously adhering to his firm decision but would not have wanted the cardinal-protector to have done what he did, but let the pious work take on whatever form it could.

The Servant of God, in behalf of that pious association, had begged some benefactors to contribute some amounts of money and succeeded in getting them, but without interfering in the administration of those funds. He allowed the aforementioned Severini to restore the church and to rent a nearby garden. He wished, likewise, to satisfy Mr. Ignazio Lesinelli, a principal donor, for the alms that he gave for Masses to be said. Those Masses were celebrated and were kept recorded as can be seen in the office held by the aforementioned benefactor, still living. Fully resigned to the divine dispositions with regard to this affair as in many others, he treated his opponents benignly saying that, ultimately, all the good work was done in honor of Mary most holy and of St. Francis Xavier and redounded to the glory of God himself and to the benefit of the souls who were enrolled.

The Title of the Congregation

I was asked, ex officio, to say whether I knew or have heard that the aforementioned Archconfraternity as well as the work of the missions was given the title of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ because of a certain relic which was supposed to be a part of the most Precious Blood of the Savior, preserved and on occasions exposed in the collegiate church of San Nicola in Carcere or whether it was for some other reason.

I, indeed, have heard that some have assumed that this is the reason for that title, but I also know certainly that this is false. The only thing, to my knowledge, is that the miraculous crucifix which is preserved in San Nicola in Carcere, presumed to be the one that spoke to St. Brigida, along with the famous relic that is conserved there, were simply opportunities for Monsignor Albertini to bring back to the minds of the faithful the Blood that was shed out of love by our Lord Jesus Christ. In keeping with that thought, he began the recitation of the chaplet and renewed among the people that most ancient devotion to the most Precious Blood. Both the admired Albertini as well as Canon Del Bufalo, as I know from my own personal experience, had the intention of using this title to spread, not the devotion to that relic, but to the unique price paid for our redemption, the only means of reconciliation and the pledge of our salvation.

Approval of the Congregation

The Institute with the title of the most Precious Blood was approved, even before

beginning its work, with a rescript issued by the Congregation for the Reform in 1814, by the then secretary Monsignor [Giuseppe Antonio] Sala, later made a cardinal of Holy Church. He is now deceased. Then, outwardly, on July 26, 1815, it was confirmed by the Pope himself with Fr. Gaetano Bonanni and Canon Del Bufalo in attendance after he, Pius VII, had, on that very day, celebrated Mass with the two above-named missionaries present. He gave them and the Institute his apostolic blessing for the work of the reform of the clergy as he himself, the leader of this institution, had just returned from exile. Then, the Servant of God went hurriedly by mail-carriage to Spoleto in order to effectively bring into service the foundation set up in San Felice in Giano. This he succeeded happily in doing on the day of the glorious assumption of most holy Mary after a triduum in preparation for that day. That feast of Mary most Holy is observed solemnly, not only in the ritual of the universal church, but also as the birthday of our Institute.

Furthermore, in the headquarters of the Company of Jesus in Spoleto, there is a memorandum kept of a Brief issued by Leo XII containing a separate paragraph specifying the income that the schools of Spoleto would have to pay to the Institute of the most Precious Blood in San Felice in Giano. That payment is to be made to those who have this rightful position in view of the fact that this Institute would bring special fruits to the advantage of souls. The Pope calls it the: "*Institutum cui nomen a pretiosissimo sanguine*".

Finally in 1821, wishing to give backing to the memory of Pius VII , by providing an effective remedy to bring about the extirpation of the brigands who infested the province of Marittima and Campagna, despite the weapons and soldiers used by the authorities at a heavy expense, he planned, along with the support of Monsignor Cristaldi, at that time the papal treasurer, and with the help of his Eminence Consalvi, the Secretary of State, to renew those people by the use of the spiritual weaponry of the missions. The Servant of God had been acknowledged in a notable way as the head man. The plan was put into operation and copious fruits of blessings from heaven were witnessed to such an extent that the brigands themselves were ready to abandon their evil and barbaric gangs on the condition that they would be able to attain the thing that they always asked for, a place of complete protection, that is, a place of detention, but without having to undergo the penalty of death. But this work was not accomplished quickly because of various circumstances, namely, because of previous unacceptable offers of liberty and because of the poor pension that was peremptorily given. As a result, there was fear of even worse activity. After several years of hard, apostolic and noticeably profitable work among those people, whom Monsignor Cristaldi used to refer to as brutalized, one of the more courageous men, who had left the Congregation of the Missions, made bold to get involved in the situation when he saw that those people were disposed. He managed to get their spontaneous agreement. However, that individual perhaps maneuvered this agreement too soon since he was not able to follow through with it. The weightiness of the undertaking, the possibility of an unhappy outcome, his own ardent zeal prevented him from thorough reflection of the unpleasant

consequences that could result for the brigands and their relatives.

It is very certain that, by order of the supreme ruler in his *motu proprio*, the establishment of the mission houses in behalf of this undertaking was promoted and brought to happy fulfillment. Therefore, it is quite clear that the Institute directed and founded by the Servant of God was then confirmed and approved in an even more dignified and solemn manner in view of the fact that the Supreme Pontiff, in addition to promoting the pious work, set up endowments to support it and continue it perennially in giving religious instructions for the spiritual development of that truly untrained people. Within a few years, it became docile and adequately instructed in Christian doctrine and in their societal obligations.

Defense of the Congregation and Its Title

The Servant of God, in the meantime, through his preaching and other religious exercises which were wonderfully followed by the people but also by the mere mention of his name, continued to awaken veneration and arouse tenderness in even the most hardened of hearts. That was so, even on those occasions, while traveling, that he would run into the brigands themselves. They, too, would fall to their knees with their faces to the ground showing their willingness to abandon their infamous profession and wishing to kiss his hand. They would also want to go to confession if that could be done without making them swallow the horrible things that they had done. Trusting in God, the Servant of God showed no fear of them as he witnessed them kneeling along the roadway and holding their weapons. He would quickly speak to them of the things of God as best he could and would exhort them to set aside their wicked life that weighed so heavily upon their consciences and made them appear hateful to everyone. In that way, therefore, the Institute was making progress and was being approved in a factual way along with the official papal rescripts and endowments granted to them with such kindness and favor. Thus, greater and greater opposition to it was being raised just as was experienced from its very beginning. He, however, never became discouraged, and, in fact, always took on more energy and bravado, saying that a good work is not really a good work unless it has been opposed. Another of his basic principles was: "*Signa apostolatus in multa patientia.*"

The accomplices in favor of the brigandry in the provinces at that time maintained that those missionaries, along with their leader Del Bufalo, were a gang of ignoramuses, the discards from dioceses, those who were starving and similar things. They even wrote unsigned letters to the Secretary of State, his Eminence Consalvi, who deigned to send them on to Canon Del Bufalo. He simply drank from the chalice of bitterness, saying: "*Bonum mihi quia humiliasti me.*" But then, he also wrote to his Eminence Consalvi, begging him in holy, apostolic liberty, to keep in view the penal laws of the Church against unsigned memoranda and similar improprieties, so as to extirpate, inasmuch as possible, this very predominant vice. Thus, for himself he willingly bore these insults. But, when it came to a matter of public order, it would be a

better thing that this be made known and that all should see that the ecclesiastical authorities in particular do not give any value at all to these allegations and that their authors, when discovered, should be punished in accordance with the laws. Otherwise, neither bishops, nor delegates, nor the most worthy priests would be respected and those evil people would think that they can take over by such illegitimate and blameworthy proceedings. As a matter of fact, with the greatest gentility, his Eminence sent his reply that he, himself, would bring this contemptible action of a blameworthy recourse to authority made by those unsigned memoranda, to the knowledge of anyone who should be informed. Finally, that he himself, in the meantime, would toss them under his desk without even taking the trouble to read them as soon as he discovered that this was what they dealt with.

On the one hand, those favoring brigandry were shaking in their boots, while, on the other hand, the sectarians were furiously against this good work saying that the zeal of those missionaries was nothing but fanaticism. Joined to their voices were those of the Jansenists, both speculative and practical, as well as those of the quietists, raising their voices against the devotion of the most Precious Blood by saying that it was a profanation and a blasphemy even to pronounce the words: "Hail to the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ." They also invented other similar calumnies.

The good people, too, both superiors and competitors in the ecclesiastical ministry paid attention as this work was being represented under the aspect of a good work, that is, showing greater respect and veneration for the great price of our redemption, our salvation, and by saving the word of God for special times such as Advent and Lent, explaining the gospel without any depth in the oratories and catechetical sessions. They allowed themselves to be cautioned against that aforesaid devotion and propagation and soon a war was being waged even within the Holy See itself in an effort to prevent the Institute from being approved with the due formalities that were accustomed to be made by the Holy See with regard to other congregations.

Hence, the Servant of God humbly pointed out that what was being said about his missionary companions was substantially false. It may have been shown that some of them were not fit, even though they were recommended to him by some bishop, possibly just to get them out of his sight, As is the case in every other institute, even the most exemplary, there are those who are acknowledged to be inept or not so good. More so is it in this the case of a pious union that does not have the binding force of the vows, allowing them to drop out without a special process. However, in reference to the majority of the corporation, he himself had seen to it that it led a life of sacrifice, depriving itself of the conveniences proper to their state and, practically speaking, observing the vows just like the regulars without having the honors thereof and still bearing the burdens. Both in writing and in speech, furthermore, he presented various defenses for the devotion to the most Precious Blood especially in the presence of Pope Leo XII and Cardinal [Francesco] Bertazzoli, of happy memory and they were both convinced and moved to tears. However, when he made his presentations to Leo himself and to the members of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, he was still

not listened to.

I was asked, ex officio, to say what the arguments were in the aforementioned defenses made by the Servant of God; whether there was, in one area or another of the defense, any indication of exaggerated fervor, or a lack of prudence, or respect; finally, whether there was any exaggeration in the terms that he used or in the development of his thoughts.

The arguments that the Servant of God made on this topic were the same ones that were employed in favor of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by his director and teacher, Monsignor Marchetti, against the synod of Pistoia. He pointed out the usefulness as well as the antiquity of this very devotion together with the opportunity it affords, in the difficult times and upheavals in the Church itself, to take action against the predominating indifferentism, thus arousing, as he said, the people from their torpor, lifting up those who had fallen into sins and turning sectarians from their errors. In speaking of the antiquity of this devotion, he repeated these words: "*Agnus occisus ab origine mundi*", from the Apocalypse. With regard to its usefulness and the opportunity it affords, he exclaimed the words of St. Paul: "*Nondum usque ad sanguinem restitistis adversus peccatum repugnantes etc.; Dilexit nos, et lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo; Beati qui lavant stolas suas in sanguine agni; Accessit ad mediatorem Jesum et sanguinis aspersionem melius loquentem quam Abel; quem proposuit Deus propitiationem in sanguine ipsius ad ostensionem iustitiae suae.*" To those divine utterances he added the reflections and the interpretations given by the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church who have treated it diffusively.

The burning zeal with which he spoke to them and treated them did not fail to arouse in his listeners a feeling of respect as the ecclesiastics and the employees of the government themselves declared. But that was the case even when the gathering was restricted to just a few or when he was preaching to all the people or just to individuals, superiors or equals.

The virtue of prudence in him was resplendent. He would write with manly eloquence; he would attract and draw out a feeling of love and devotion without the least pressure on charity or due homage. This was something acknowledged by all of his companions in his letters even when they corrected people, and even more so, when he dealt with older men or superiors.

The aforementioned Cardinal Bertazzoli and other cardinals as well as supreme pontiffs, while they lauded his zeal, remained edified [507] by his ingratiating manners that would win them over. Some of these individuals claimed that the title was presented to them as something profane and sacredly horrible, rather than something edifying and fruitful.

Coming back now to the question of the title and its applicability to the Institute, in addition to the two briefs issued by Pius VII which we referred to previously, which regarded the lay brothers and sisters of the Precious Blood and, of course, more strictly to the missionary priests, the Servant of God offered proof for all of this from ancient approvals given in bulls or briefs by other previous pontiffs, such as, Innocent XI, Sixtus

IV, Gregory XIII and Paul IV, who instituted the most noble Order of Cavaliers in Mantua under the title of the most Precious Blood. That took place on the occasion when a vial containing miraculous blood was wondrously discovered. It is still preserved in that city where it was found in the ruins and is exposed for public veneration. Finally, he argued that if this title was fitting for anyone of the laity who fought against the Turks, then all the more so is it fittingly applicable to missionary priests who fight against hell and against the kingdom of sin, since it has been written: "*Vicerunt draconem propter sanguinem agni.*" So, the glorious Pius VII gave his approval of this very title in those two briefs, along with the granting of very many indulgences and privileges available to all the faithful and expressly to the priests who were charged with the directing of the Archconfraternity and propagating that devotion. Consequently, they, too, were to be regarded as the militant missionaries under that same title.

From all that has been said up to this point, it is clear that, with truth and justice, the Servant of God proved, both in speech and in writing, the use of the aforementioned title as fit for the pious Institute. He confirmed it without using exaggeration or imprudence.

I was asked, ex officio, to speak of what the opposition was that people aroused in Rome against the Institute at that stated time.

That opposition, referred to above, took place after the death of Pope Pius VII, of holy memory. It occurred after the elevation of Leo XII to the supreme pontificate by way of complaints made to him, as happened with every new pope, by those in controlling positions, already referred to, as well as by the sectarians throughout the provinces. They made use of the good people who were involved in the life of the papal court, under the appearance of doing something good. It was precisely at this time that many institutes and older orders were not as yet fully settled either spiritually or temporally. Even Leo himself manifested this attitude to the Servant of God in a rather long audience in which he demonstrated that he was, for those reasons, ready to suppress the new Institute on the basis that the Church of God was not at all in need of it and much less of the promotion of a devotion that was not well understood, namely, that of the most Precious Blood, with missionaries assuming that title as a name that was deemed respectful and good. Those were the things put into the ears of the aforementioned pope as a matter of sacred horror and justly to be avoided as using the Holy Name of God, Yahweh, was in the Old Testament. To those arguments, the Servant of God, with complete respect and devotion, gave his reply, drawing tears from the eyes of the pope who had been so badly informed, not only against the use of the title but even more so against the devotion itself.

If, at this period of time, there had been an imprudent renovation of vesture for the lay helpers (as will be seen shortly), that too would have exacerbated the minds of the enemies even though just a minor innovation and it would also arouse in them new rumors and tribulations for the Institute. It is quite true that the supreme head was quieted down but not the enemies of good who continued their restless activity under the inspiration of the devil. The Servant of God would say that one is not to tempt God in that circumstance, just because of a thing of little importance.

The Congregation's Rules

The Servant of God, Canon Del Bufalo, had gotten the approval of the Institute along with Monsignor Bonanni – an approval from the beginning of the Institute and its progress. However, he was not able to obtain the solemn approval until he had propagated and spread it throughout the different provinces in accordance with the laudable requirements of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars which called for a long experimentation and a notable progress in many areas and provinces. Hence, only after examining all things was it the customary procedure to submit the request for approval by adhering to all the formalities. Up to now, we have made mention of the two briefs, the rescript issued by the Congregation for the Reform and the blessing and approbation, *vivae vocis oraculo*, of Pope Pius VII, of happy memory. Therefore, comforted by this, the Servant of God was encouraged to work ever harder in this career that he had embraced and continued to invite companions who were not obliged by residence to join with him. With the growth in number of companions as well as the number of foundations, the glory of God was promoted through the giving of missions and retreats and the establishment of mission houses wherever possible.

With this end in mind, he wrote and published in print some regulations around the year 1819 in order to maintain a certain order in the distribution of various offices and even more so to achieve concord and harmony in the various active works undertaken, both within the mission houses themselves as well as outside them in the missions and popular functions conducted within the area of the established houses.

Furthermore, the initial companions, around ten in number, were called together by him after they had tried out the regulations that he had issued. In fact, he had all of them study the regulations to see whether they were the same ones observed as pious customs in the respective houses. With all in agreement, in 1822, the so-called *Transunto* of the regulations was published and were observed by the Institute of the most Precious Blood. It was for the use of the individual members as well as for the people who attended the sacred functions and went to confession.

Next, Fr. Settimio Costanzi, at one time the auditor for Cardinal [Giacinto Sigismondo] Gerdil, brought to light a small work entitled “Various exercises of piety and pious institutions existing in Rome”. He expressly treated, for example, the Company of San Giulianello and its missions as well as the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood and its missionaries, and produced a few learned studies on that topic. Together with the one concerning that ancient congregation of aggregation to Gonfalone, he dealt with the Confraternity under that same title of the most Precious Blood erected by Gregory XIII and Sixtus V, stating that their priest-members were missionaries joined together and known by the name of the most Precious Blood. However, perhaps because of a lack of growth in numbers, it is not known why, they ceased meeting together. Then, he moves on to speak of the new institute established with the approval of Pius VII and the mission houses erected under that title, including their principal

regulations as presented by our Servant of God.

I mentioned before that those regulations were nothing more than the summary of their practices and pious activities as observed from their very beginning. Those rules were brought forth by the Servant of God along with his companions and consisted in the exact observance of the canonical legislation governing the life of the clergy, but including also the examination of conscience and a period of meditation in order to preserve the life of the spirit and increase it in both the missionaries and the lay helpers.

In the beginning, these lay helpers dressed modestly in secular clothes since no idea of incorporation had yet been formed. With the passage of time, the Servant of God thought, in view of the good desires expressed by some of his companions and because of the service that these lay helpers gave in the sacred functions of the church, that they too should be clothed in keeping with what normally was done in other institutes. Thus, they should be dressed just like the priests, except for the collar, the buckles and the other distinguishing signs for missionaries. He was very convinced about doing this because he knew that at a certain time in history Pius VI had ordered the missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul, called the Fathers of the Mission, to do this when their lay helpers were dressed in secular clothes. Consequently, the Servant of God sent out a circular letter, filled with prudence and discretion, to all the mission houses, directing them to gradually introduce this practice without overburdening the economy with expenses. Since worn-out clothes had to be replaced, so also, on occasion, should this habit be replaced.

As a result of that move, some objections were raised by the members in the house in Benevento where this same vesture had been introduced previously but the Servant of God had judged, at that time, that it was not fitting because of certain prudential reasons, namely, an open opposition being waged in Rome against the Institute and the very vesture of the missionaries themselves. That permission was not granted also because that innovation was introduced without any recourse to the director general as should have been done. But later, when the tempest had subsided in God's good time, the matter was settled through counsel and prayer and the Servant of God determined that it was the opportune time to set up a balanced form for all of the houses both in the rules and in the vesture. So, in the *Transunto*, where it said that the lay helpers were dressed in secular clothes, it stated now in the circular letter that, from that moment on, they are to be dressed like the missionaries with the distinctive collar, buckles and cassock, but one that is not as long. The Servant of God insisted that, with full discretion and at an opportune time, the men in Benevento should get in line with the entire Institute who had harmoniously accepted the directions of the circular letter. But the missionaries there thought that they should not agree with the change of vesture for those individual lay helpers that was sought after. They did not advert to the fact that they were opposing a quite essential point in the rule, namely, the dependence on and obedience to the general director that had already been set up. So, the Servant of God had the aforementioned *Transunto* published anew, proclaiming that there was no desire shown for another set of rules, in view of the fact that this one came from the

Founder, still living, though not as yet approved by the Holy See. Hence, the norm, that is to say, the existing rule was his will and he was still living. With this in mind, God, in order to test the virtue of his Servant, actually disposed that he should exercise it to no less than a supreme degree. I, myself, observed him during this trial to endure offense to his own modesty and humility, yielding humbly to those confreres, who *aliquid humani passi sunt*. However, I, out of obedience, kept urging them that if they did not wish to be convinced that he is the Founder, they should, at least, not ignore him directly. In conscience, I had to state this, even writing to them and gently, yet forcefully, seeking to bring them back together by defeating them and showing them up for what they were. I did this out of charity, also, the very virtue which just a short time previously they had acknowledged along with me. Eventually, with total peace, those good and zealous companions finally submitted, asking only that, as a favor, the lay helpers of that house be replaced by others who were already invested in the new manner which the Servant of God had ordered. This was to be done in order not to scandalize the citizens there by their seeing those same individual all of a sudden vested in a different manner. This favor was willingly granted and those somewhat embittered souls were reconciled.

Thus, the Servant of God, even to the end of his life, was accustomed to say that laws, namely the rules, are to be few in number and easy to observe, particularly in a Congregation without the binding force of vows, and one that is held together only by the bond of charity. Therefore, he ordered that a compendium of the rules, drawn up by himself principally and all of the others who observed them, be put into good Latin language until their solemn approval. First, however, they were produced in Italian. That Latin compendium, which embraced everything practiced, was reviewed by the famous Latin scholar Montalti from Cesena. It was commended not only for its language but also for the arrangement of the material and the prudence of its Institutor. He declared that they were so many lines wondrously leading toward a central point with an amazing harmony. He did not want to change anything.

Finally, after the death of the Servant of God, it was brought out and submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and it then submitted it to the Holy Father. Nothing out of order was discovered, either in the totality of its parts or in any one particular part. It was approved by the full Congregation and confirmed by His Holiness with praise being expressed for the Servant of God's prudence.

The Missionary Companions

In recruiting and gathering together his companions, he would first check with their respective bishops, who, at times, would point out some deficiency or lack in their formation. However, they would urge the Servant of God to restore them to a better status and perfecting them through spiritual exercises and an active life style. But, he was not always successful in doing that, as often is the case, despite his most industrious zeal. Some of them, given to laziness of life because of a sort of pusillanimity, were yielded by the ordinaries to the Institute. Then, when the ordinaries

saw them changed into zealous and indefatigable workers, they would recall them to their service. The Servant of God legitimately defended them by pointing out that theirs was a decisive vocation to live, in exact accordance with the Church's sacred canons, a community style of life. He graciously pleaded that the bishops should cease upsetting those men and removing them from their status which was in keeping with the quest for greater perfection and more advantageous to the universal Church. Whenever he noted that there was a strong need in certain dioceses, he would say that he had done this good deed of training an effective worker only for the glory of God. Sometimes, however, when he discovered that some were still incorrigible after their training or appeared as such in the ministry either because of a lack of interest or because of not giving good example even in the slightest degree, he would thank them, after giving them some fatherly corrections, then he would send them back to the places from which they had come. In some instances, they showed a steady improvement or repaired any scandal that they had given and began a new life based on withdrawal and detachment from the world, occupying themselves in study and the practice of mental prayer.

I was asked, *ex officio*, to say whether I knew of a disagreement that had arisen between two of the Servant of God's companions that was a scandal for the entire town where they were located and what was the action taken by the Servant of God to remedy it.

From the beginning of the foundation, two companions of the Servant of God, who were in residence in Pievetorina, diocese of Camerino, got into an argument because of a conference on a moral case. One of these men was a Neapolitan and raised his voice in the heat of the question and aroused the same reaction in the other man. The people of that town heard the shouting and soon spread the news around that the missionaries were beating each other. This report got to the ears of the most reverend archbishop who wanted to check with the local pastor. Having learned that the fact had been given quite a bit of publicity, he decided that those two men should withdraw to the Capuchin's monastery for a retreat. The Servant of God was not present in Pievetorina, since he was occupied with the mission in Velletri, where I was also assigned. However, the fact is that those two men, regretting the scandalous publicity that had been caused by their arguing, presented themselves to the Servant of God, when he was on his way from Foligno to conduct a mission in Spello. They sought his pardon and permission to come back to the Institute, since after that argumentation he had removed them from the number of his colleagues. To that act of humiliation and to their request, the Servant of God replied that he pardoned their failing, but that the Institute no longer was for them and he did not readmit them.

Financial help for the Foundations

I have already testified that approval was obtained for the first foundation and for the spiritual means as well as the apostolic blessing of the Supreme Pontiff along with the required permissions and faculties obtained from the ordinary. The temporal means

were supplied from the endowment granted to that sanctuary of San Felice in Giano, which was applicable for the maintenance of two individual chaplaincies for the celebration of Masses. Now that meager amount was being offered for the missionary workers, together with an additional amount in cash donated by Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi and by Lawyer Paolucci, a benefactor from that town.

Later, the second house in Pievetorina, diocese of Camerino, was opened with a renewed apostolic good pleasure and with an income agreed upon with the ordinary. That income was to be used for the ordinary services in that church just as it had been given previously to the Passionist Fathers, similar to what the ordinary of the diocese of Giano did, covering the church, the house and all of the buildings and property. With trust in God, there was always the hope that the amount would be increased when the number of members grew.

Likewise, in Albano, in the church of San Paolo, a mission and retreat house was founded with the donation made by its patron, Duke Sforza Cesarini, who, in making a petition to the glorious Pius VII, obtained for the Institute two pontifical rescripts. The first one declared that they would replace the Congregation of the Girolamini Monks who had already gone and the second one granted them possession, including the buildings and surroundings of that venerable monastery. Furthermore, that highly-praised Supreme Pontiff, through the cooperation of Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi, the General Treasurer at that time, permitted them to repair the church and house of the Monastery of San Paolo in Albano and to buy back the garden and its surroundings which had been transferred at the time when the French Government was there.

Thereafter, when the plans were approved by his Eminence Consalvi and by the most reverend Treasurer Cristaldi and the agreement of the Delegation in Frosinone headed by the then Monsignor [Giuseppe Antonio] Zacchia, now a Cardinal of the Church, six other mission and retreat houses were established with the acceptance and faculties for spiritual jurisdiction given by the local ordinaries. With the first foundation, one thousand [518] scudi were assigned for each foundation by the Supreme Pontiff himself, Pius VII. However, in view of the previously referred-to claims that were made by the usual opponents and because of the armed forces that were employed for the extirpation of brigandry, a double amount of money was needed. Considerable sums of booty were being demanded by each brigand leader. To be added here, finally, is that the Extraordinary Commission in charge of the public treasury as well as that of each respective Commune, reduced the amount to almost half, placing on the Institute the burden of maintenance of the locales, the churches and the houses, plus the expenses for religious services and the necessary furnishings. As a result, many of the members became discouraged by the horror of this Italian Africa, the privation of things necessary for life and even the fear of losing one's life at the hands of the brigands. In these difficult times, the Servant of God revived their confidence in the Lord and in the help of Divine Providence. He even deprived himself of necessary things in order to be of assistance to his companions. He encouraged all to suffer anything for the love of Jesus Christ crucified, recalling to them the difficulties that Xavier faced in the Indies and of so

many other very zealous missionaries at the hands of barbarians. Many suffered hunger, fevers and pestilence in unhealthy climates, just as some of our men were enduring in Sermoneta, Priverno and Terracina where the houses of our Institute were established. Precisely, in addition to Terracina and Sermoneta, our houses were located in Frosinone, Vallecorsa, Sonnino and, temporarily in Velletri and one already promised for Sant'Apollonia, but covered by the house in Albano, close to Velletri. The provisions were not sufficient and were very sparse in the very area where Leo XII wished to have the most numerous group, including, especially, young men who were to be trained for missionary work in the Institute. From that time on, as the subsidies were cut down, the order was issued that in reference to missions in Marittima and Campagna, there be no consideration for the individual houses, but only, in a general way, to provide help and sustenance for the missionaries who were traveling in those provinces.

After those houses, the one in Rimini was opened at the request of Monsignor Marchetti who, at that time was the administrator of that bishopric. For this purpose, he had set aside some funds which were not able to be used then since he was recalled to Rome. Nevertheless, according to set regulations, the church and the monastery of Santa Chiara, suppressed and not re-opened, was given to the Institute. In place of those funds that had been set aside, it was the faithful who gave them support, with the consent of the ordinary, together with the stipends that were customarily given on the occasion of a retreat, Lenten series in the area and other emoluments: "*Dignus est enim operarius mercede sua*".

Two other houses were opened in Monte Feltria, one in Pennabilli, the episcopal see, and the other in Maceratafeltria. In keeping with the usual regularities, in Maceratafeltria, they took over a house and church which at one time belonged to the Friars Minor and later suppressed. The bishop, Monsignor [Antonio] Begni, of happy memory, considered endowing this foundation with sufficient income from the pious places as well as from ecclesiastical benefices that were assigned for the maintenance of the convent and the church. Likewise, in Pennabilli, the house and church of the Filippini Fathers was gotten back by the bishop himself with the cooperation of a certain Father Luca [Masi] who remained there together with a lay helper to officiate in the church. The approval of the pontifical authority was obtained, just as was done in all the other foundations, including all the privileges and goods, indulgences etc. that had been granted to the Filippini Fathers.

Finally, in Cesena, a foundation was made in the house and church that one time belonged to the Servants of Mary. It was granted by a rescript of the Supreme Pontiff, Pius VIII, as a retreat house, with all the income attached to it and controlled by the hand of the ordinary. The then bishop of Cesena himself, now his Eminence Cardinal [Antonio] Cadolini, bishop of Ancona, added some of the money he had from the Aguselli legacy of which he was the fiduciary inheritor. Part of those finances were contributed in favor of that mission house.

The house in Albano and the brigands

I was asked, *ex officio*, first of all, whether it was true that as soon as the Servant of God set foot in the house in Albano, arguments arose from the Lateran Chapter and from the Girolamini Monks of Sant'Alessio; likewise, whether these two corporate groups came to the judgment that the Servant of God was a usurper of their rights to that foundation. Secondly, whether, in the presence of great problems, fears, dangers and discomforts, just as described in the testimony concerning the status faced at the time by the missionaries sent by him into the Province of Campagna, the Servant of God had the nerve to write to them to give them support, while he, instead of going there to be present with them, kept himself safely distant from them and well-supplied with conveniences. Thirdly, how is it possible for the testimonies to assert that the missionaries, sent into the aforementioned Provinces, feared for their lives at the hands of the armed forces assigned by the government and whom the Servant of God, with his influence on the governmental authorities, should have gotten them to come to the defense of the missionaries? Was this not a supporting of his missionaries in word and an abandonment of them in actuality?

As soon as the Servant of God took legitimate possession of the house and church of San Paolo in Albano, he had a solemn entrance for the missionaries by conducting a triduum of spiritual exercises authorized by the Cardinal Bishop [Pietro Francesco] Galeffi. The solemn entrance was made by carrying in the uplifted Crucifix followed by the various confraternities and by the missionaries themselves. Thus, with great edification and benefit to the faithful who had gathered in large numbers in the Church of San Paolo, was begun the apostolic ministry in preparation for the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Then, the Servant of God, first vocally and later in writing, began arranging, with the cooperation of the Vicar General, for all the things needed for the locale and for the provision of food. All that they found there were the bare walls – no food, no utensils for eating, no furniture in the house. So, they begged for a bit of bread and wine and, wearied and exhausted as they were, they were fortunate enough to be able to get some soup bowls that were loaned to them by a few benefactors. Having eaten that bit of food, all of the missionaries were joyful and happy to have suffered those few discomforts at the opening of this new foundation as they drank wine from those same bowls. Eventually, several benefactors were found, especially the Clarini family, who provided them very cordially with necessary objects. Legitimate and public possession of the entire locale, the church, the surroundings, things annexed or attached, was taken later, with Canon Gonnelli acting in the Servant of God's place. Those aforementioned, usual protests relative to the chaplaincies erected there were also made to him -- chaplaincies that should have terminated as soon as the missionaries took possession. However, he tolerated this situation as long as those individuals lived, even though they no longer provided services in the church, leaving to their discretion the profit-sharing and not getting into further argumentation with the very reverend Chapter of St. John Lateran. He was content simply to assert the

rights granted to the Institute in the pontifical rescripts and his repeated requests that they recognize those rights as legitimate and clear. After quite a number of attempts for settlement, a few questions were asked before initiating a formal litigation in the presence of the Congregation of the Council. Even though favorable answers to those questions came back, still the Servant of God did not wish to push the cause and arouse more litigation, but was content to wait for a favorable circumstance by which the most reverend Chapter of St. John Lateran would obtain another compensation in place of the one that was inalienably set for that locale in a bull issued by Honorius IV to the Cesarini house who, in turn, ceded that total right to the missionaries.

It is not true, therefore, that the Servant of God was eager to engage in an argumentation or a protest with the very Rev. Father Monza, who, for quite a number of years out of a feeling of condescension was permitted to live in peace in his quarters. However, with the increase in number of the individuals belonging to our Institute, the Servant of God, in all graciousness, asked him if he would be willing to yield what was really no longer serviceable for him all year long, except for a few days in October. He offered him the hospitality which would be to his full pleasure. Then, noticing that Fr. Monza was not about to make any deals, for fear of prejudicing the imagined rights of the Monastery of Sant'Alessio without having a clear declaration and decree issued by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, the Servant of God continued to be patient. Later, I, the successor to the rights, after making the proper preparations that were called for, was forced out of necessity to cite him before the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Without any problem at all, a rescript to our favor was obtained since there were no reasons or motives to the contrary that were acceptable.

On trips made for the opening of the mission houses in the Province, he was the first one to go to visit those locales, even the ones in the mountains. He would take along a single companion in order to check to see whether the locales were vacant and adaptable for the upcoming foundations. He, the Servant of God, was the first one who, filled with courage and trust in God, went there to conduct holy missions even though so many good and brave companions from the Marche and from Romagna who had offered themselves to assist with this noble endeavor had abandoned him and withdrawn at a most critical time. He, himself, did not withdraw from this work but became even more enthused and continued to encourage the companions, who still remained with him, to carry on the career which they had undertaken for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, maintaining the legitimate mission given to them by the Pope himself. If lay people, the military and other noble souls exposed themselves to the same risks for their own base interests or personal sustenance, how much more should the Evangelical Workers do to glorify the divine Name and to suffer out of love for Jesus Christ who gave his blood and his life for the salvation of our souls and the souls of our neighbors?

Other obstacles were raised against him by the people involved in the provinces as they flung back into his face the charge that his work to overcome brigandage was nothing but fanaticism and personal ambition. This accusation arose from those

politically involved as well as from those who were leaders in the military, and finally from those who said that even the Pope himself might have done a lot better by sending some executioners there or at least some teachers who could straighten out that barbaric province and civilize them. To these heated allegations, after the Servant of God had first obtained the permission of the bishops present in the area to set up the foundations, he responded on different occasions that those who were being paid by his Holiness were not paying attention at all to the wise directions of the supreme leader and that only religion, which has such a connatural influence on the hearts of men, was the thing that could, through apostolic ministry, in a very short time straighten out and civilize the people rather than that simple solution of printed literature which is indifferent to both good and evil. This literature was seen to be more harmful than useful in the very reactions of the brigands themselves, using it to write to those being paid by the government, to their relatives; those who were most literate were the worse ones. However, it is surprising how the communes, at the suggestion of some people, even outsiders, would undertake heavy expenses for dance halls and for new, sumptuous theaters but for a pious undertaking such as was being suggested by the Holy Father, not even the slightest amount of subsidy, say forty *scudi*, would be granted a single time. So, in a sort of profane way and out of vanity, the communes would rather allow themselves to suffer poverty and then seek the help of the good government to prevent that from happening. It was learned later on that the very person who had publicly caused difficulty for the foundation being set up there, even at such a low cost, was the same person, though naturally not known by the Servant of God, who was an emissary of a sectarian group which, in another area of the Papal States, had brought destruction to the communes and was now seeking to accomplish the same thing. This individual argued that it was believed to be a legitimate procedure to expound contrary reasons and to face the difficulties arising therefrom. The Servant of God saw that these false representations would be easily embraced by the people of the communes and that the bishop would be distressed by those difficulties. So, zealously, he pointed out that it was actually a good thing to be conscious of the difficulties and obstacles being propounded so as to overcome and get rid of them. It was necessary to face them with reason and not the opposite; to abide by and not to scorn the orders of the sovereign ruler; not to act foolishly and childishly in something that was proposed by the authorities with full assurance, but to use the most available and efficacious means to bring about the greatest good for the provinces. When an ill-intentioned person tried, ultimately, to show the futility of preaching the Gospel, the Servant of God begged the bishop to silence him since the citizens in the area were being scandalized and were being exposed to the danger of adopting the false, Voltaireian principles and, perhaps, even practice them.

So great was his courage that he did not fear at all the power of the sectarians or of the brigands, nor that interference which he knew was being continuously carried out in Rome to prevent those foundations and the conducting of missions. So, the Servant of God together with one companion continued to conduct missions; whenever coaches

were not available for travel, they would go on foot. Since he was not accustomed to mountain-travel, at times he would crawl on all fours without ever stopping or without giving up on the good work he had planned and had set out to do. Rumors had been spread about that the Servant of God traveled only by coach and not otherwise, but now he would walk twelve even twenty miles on foot and get used to it as though it were nothing at all. After he would get the necessary faculties from the ordinaries through the assistance of the pastors, he at times would arrive in the towns after the *Ave Maria* hour when he would have the pastor present the crucifix to him, the sign of Christian doctrine, as the children themselves would refer to it. Then, he carried it in procession throughout the town while he had his traveling companion follow him and leading the people in the songs sung during a mission. In that way, a huge number of people joined the group and when they got to the church it was filled. Thus, the very zealous servant was compensated by the Lord with many heavenly blessings. On one occasion, when the weather was rainy and a wintry wind was blustering, he arrived unexpectedly in the city. Instead of the usual carriage, this time he came in a cart drawn by donkeys. It was a surprise to all the people who had heard the rumors about him and so, from this occurrence, they dissipated and removed all the false rumors that accused him of always seeking his own convenience and importance. This proved to them that for him hardships and challenges were more dear to him than any offer of delights, which for him were the enemies of the apostolic ministry. Thus, those people, though ill-trained and uncultured, simply by seeing him bathed in sweat and rain, seeing him ascend the preaching platform, were moved to tenderness just at the sight of this youthful and noble-appearing man. From the very beginning moments, they were drawn to him and hurried to him to make their confessions even though they had delayed it for fifty or sixty years, not ever having come face to face with a confessor, as they themselves asserted. This is what happened in Vallecorsa, Acuto, Sonnino, Priverno, Roccasecca, Roccaforte, Sezze. Together with one of his companions, having first obtained the necessary faculties, he traveled either on foot, on horseback, or on a donkey and always adhered firmly to the principle of not accepting any prepared, special dish delicacies either in the cities or in the small rural towns, not for himself, nor for his companions, excluding likewise any liquors or imported foreign wines. All he asked for was a bit of soup, a serving of boiled meat and some other healthy food, as long as it was not something exquisite.

From all that I have said up to this point, one can see that, even though he was not always present in every area of the provinces, he was, however, subjected to all of the usual sufferings with all the other companions and he kept letter-contact from one point to another to prepare them for dangerous trips either with him or with other companions so that they would keep up the preaching which he had planned for the spiritual cultivation of those people and even the brigands themselves who wanted to hear once again the sermons and the missions given by the missionaries. Whenever they heard the sermons given by those who knew what they were talking about, they would shed tears of tenderness, as I was informed by the local people themselves who were connected with the brigands. Several times, I, myself, saw the Servant of God

seized by high fever in Terracina, a fever that was very dangerous and very pernicious, still continue to exercise the ministry without taking any sort of medicine except when he was required to take it under obedience. He offered prayers that the ministry that had been begun could be completed and then would take something in the form of a remedy. However, it was evident that the labors became more numerous than the available medicinal cures. At that point, then, it was recommended to him by someone that he should not be exposed to those unhealthy conditions of climate. He would reply in the words of Pius VI: "Find me a climate where no one dies and I will go there voluntarily". He did not fail to add that our great protector, Xavier, was subjected to very serious illnesses, even pestilence, as he continued his labors to the best of his abilities, and that in facing his infirmities and hardships, it was, for him, nothing at all. His final observation was that the apostolic man must not live completely dependent on doctors or medicines.

From the very beginning of the giving of missions and retreats, it was the military who evaluated this sacred ministry as something useless, at least for those who were inhabiting the mountains and forests unable to hear the divine word. But then, they realized that if the brigandage was being reduced little by little, they feared that also the double stipends and the extraordinary subsidies would likewise be reduced especially if the brigandage were to cease altogether. I myself heard some complaints about this situation and I was insulted for making a trip to Campagna for mission work as they made efforts to prevent my continuing on this trip. Since they were unable to do any direct violence to me because of the presence of some of the forces standing by, the captain, who was angered, arrested the lay brother who was accompanying me and to spite me, put him in jail in Priverno. I tried to justify his presence with me with the superior officers, but I was summarily denied the possibility. I registered my objections and finally managed to get the release of that poor fellow after several days. Other companions also suffered various sorts of annoyances, insults, threats, even having been shot at along the way. Furthermore, as they made their way through the forests, they had to be aware that on the one hand there were the brigands and on the other hand the military forces, with the fear that either the one or the other could make them the victims of violence. As a final move, the armed forces tried to have the Servant of God recalled to Rome under the pretext that the brigands might take him as a hostage in order to obtain their pardon and liberty just as happened previously at a time before the giving of missions. The military did succeed in having the Canon sent back to Rome and the missionaries to seek asylum in private homes since the outlying monasteries were too far removed from the towns, as I was assured afterwards by one of the colonels assigned as his post there. Then the Servant of God wrote a letter to Monsignor Cristaldi relating this painful maneuver and trick by those in power and by the forces when he presented himself in Rome, but then he returned quickly to the Province of Campagna where he was allowed to be free in doing his good work as he had been doing before. However, those who were more fearful, abandoned the area.

Connections with the popes and the ecclesiastical hierarchy

The Servant of God and his Institute for the missions so pleased Pius VII, of holy memory, that with all good reason it can be said that this pontiff, with his donations and with his generous grant of faculties gave it stability. He protected it and forwarded its growth even to the point of calling the Servant of God and the members of the Institute, his missionaries. He honored all of those aggregated to the Institute with the title of Apostolic Missionary.

Leo XII, of holy memory, had a very deep esteem and affection for the Servant of God, but, after he received an unfavorable piece of information about him from one of the members of the Congregation itself, for quite some time he did not show his usual propensity toward the Institute. Then, when he learned that the Servant of God had dismissed someone from the Institute who did not show respect toward it and was insubordinate, Leo XII approved the decision made by the Servant of God, restored the Institute itself into his favor. This was all made known by his Eminence [Ludovico] Micara who approved the facts and supported the priest-students of the Congregation as fit good workers. I cannot overlook the fact that this Pontiff had some difficulty accepting the title of the Congregation but in an audience that the Servant of God had with him, they discussed the question and the Servant of God was so effective in the presence of the Holy Father with praise for that very title that the Holy Father then shed tender tears and said: "We'll have a clean slate." Pius VIII, of holy memory, had formed a negative opinion of the missionaries of our Congregation as a result of false and exaggerated reports and also because he had learned that the Servant of God had admitted into his Institute a certain [Gaetano] Zapponi, former archpriest in Frascati. The Holy Father had been his bishop immediately before his elevation to the papacy. The Servant of God was informed about what the charge was in reference to Zapponi when he was exercising his position of archpriest. Having gotten that information, in a final, but praiseworthy and opportune manner, he granted him a release, something that I was commissioned to do. I fulfilled the command by writing a letter directly addressed to Zapponi. Coming from Rimini to Rome, the Servant of God presented himself at the feet of the esteemed, new Pontiff, [Pius VIII] who was seated on his throne. He was ready to give the Canon a test in humiliation as he said: "Your Institute was born out of pride". Then, he proceeded rapidly to repeat some unfounded things that had been reported to him about the Servant of God's companions. He refused to hear any sort of reply and if he did have something to say, he should put it in writing. On that same occasion, he told him that he was withdrawing all of their faculties that had been granted to them by his predecessor Leo XII and then dismissed the Servant of God with a blessing. Later on, however, when he got more accurate information about the work of the Congregation as well as a simple memorandum justifying the Institute written by the Servant of God, he retracted his former opinion and re-wrote a confirmation returning all of the previous faculties and grants which the Institute had been formerly given.

The reigning Supreme Pontiff, Gregory XVI was informed, by whom I do not

know, that the Canon had become very, very rich from the inheritance left to him by Cardinal Cristaldi and that his Institute enjoyed many grants from the public treasury. He made it known to his Eminence Cardinal Odescalchi that he had the intention of withdrawing the Canon and his Institute from the above-mentioned subsidies. Having learned this, his Eminence judged that it would be a good thing to advise the Servant of God not to appear before the Holy Father ill-prepared. Later, while the Canon was conducting missions in the area of Genazzano, he received a letter from his Eminence Zurla, the vicar, in which he was communicating, in the name of His Holiness, that those subsidies were being withdrawn after he was informed of the acquisition left to him by Cardinal Cristaldi. It was deemed that there was no further reason for receiving a grant from the Reverenda Camera. The Servant of God, resigned to this decision of the sovereign, simply made his intention known to His Holiness that he wanted to show that he had not become any more substantially rich beyond what had previously been willed to him in Cardinal Cristaldi's will. With that in mind, he wrote a simple and humble explanation in which he put forth the truth that he had received not a single baiocco in that inheritance and that he had no expectations of getting anything. Furthermore, it was known that other things were left to Canon Don Antonio Muccioli, the nephew of his Eminence, and there were many others who were making claims among whom was Baron de Noha. Those individuals were making their claims at which point, the esteemed Supreme Pontiff then was completely convinced of the Servant of God's position and did not execute the order that he had issued.

The Servant of God was, furthermore, generally speaking, highly esteemed by the following list of Eminent Cardinals whom I wish to list: their Eminences: [Giacomo] Giustiniani, [Giovanni] Franzoni, [Giovanni Francesco] Falzacappa, [Carlo] Odescalchi, [Costantino] Patrizi, [Nicola] Riganti, [Francesco] Cesarei, [Fabrizio] Testaferrata, [Bellisario] Cristaldi, [Antonio Gabriele] Severoli, [Chiarissimo] Falconieri, [Carlo Maria] Pedicini, [Bartolomeo] Pacca, [Ludovico] Micara, [Ercole] Consalvi, [Luigi] Ercolani, [Giovanni Maria] Mastai and others. Among the bishops, he was highly regarded by Monsignor [Francesco] Albertini, the Venerable Monsignor [Vincenzo Maria] Strambi, Monsignor [Carlo] Manasse, bishop of Terracina, Monsignor [Nicola] Mattei, archbishop of Camerino, Monsignor [Francesco] Cipriani, bishop of Veroli, Monsignor [Giuseppe Maria] Lais, bishop of Ferentino, Monsignor [Anselmo] Basilici, bishop of Sutri and Nepi, Monsignor Bellini, bishop of Loreto and Recanati, Monsignor [Luigi] Ercolani, bishop of Civita Castellana, Monsignor [Carlo Filesio] Cittadini, bishop of Perugia, Monsignor [Francesco] Bonomo and [Luigi Maria] Parisi, bishops of Gaeta and others whom I pass over for the sake of brevity.