

CHAPTER III

THE MISSIONARY

A. The method observed in conducting Missions

Missionary strategy

The Servant of God was extremely careful in regard to the jurisdiction of bishops both for himself and for his companions. He always made sure that not only the necessary faculties were obtained but also the particular call given to them by the ordinary, hence not satisfied with just the approval of the pastors in the bishop's name. For his own peace of mind and security, he required at least a line in writing from the episcopal see and maintained this position for himself and for his men by saying: "*Quomodo praedicabunt, nisi mittantur?*" He insisted that all and each individual should adhere to this method and, previous to any mission or retreat even if only a few days long, he wanted it understood that everything should proceed with regularity in each case and for each occasion.

Beginning already in 1819, the Servant of God had *Un Metodo*, or the regulations for holy missions and retreats, printed so that his companions would not go wrong by acting otherwise. It was a method selected from the patterns of the Venerable Father Paolo Segneri, of Blessed Leonard, of St. Alphonsus Liguori and the Venerable Canon De Rossi.

He recommended the discreet and ordinary usage of the sacred functions that were in conformity with the rites that are in regular usage in Holy Church. Furthermore, he recommended that they should not accept alms for Masses during the time of their ministry or on that occasion to accept gifts under the pretext of devotion. They were to return any such item that may have been received in good faith, such as relics or objects of a similar nature. This is what happened in the case of Monsignor [Francesco Luigi] Piervisani, the very outstanding bishop of Nocera. According to the direction observed in the method dictated by the Servant of God, he, with great edification and satisfaction, was required, in the city of Fabriano, to return a precious cloak which belonged to Blessed Leonard. While there, on the occasion of a mission being conducted under the direction of Canon Del Bufalo, Monsignor Piervisani, a co-worker on the mission with the Servant of God, had accepted it in good faith. This regulation was applicable also with reference to food, as I have already mentioned previously. He stressed discreet parsimony, both in regard to quantity and quality, and he would request the ordinaries not to assume extraordinary expenses for them and to inform the pastors and the people of the communes not to change the established practices of the missionaries. As a matter of fact, in several missions, with bishops in attendance as co-workers, when the Servant of God noticed the serving of more food than usual, or the employment of

special chefs preparing creams, tarts and pastries, special jams, liquors and imported wines, he gently reproved the Monsignor Mattei, archbishop of Camerino, of happy memory, at the mission given in his diocese in Pievetorina. That is where this took place and where, politely, he refused all the other things contrary to their practice which the pastor in that area had prepared at great expense. The Servant of God was heard to suggest that all those superfluous things be sold and the income be distributed to the poor. This occurrence produced a tremendous spiritual and temporal impression on the people there who had already spread the rumor that the missionaries had come there for a real fun time with the bishops rather than to conduct a mission and preach penance. However, once they noted the power of the Servant of God in refusing this special treatment and showing favor for the poor, as well as the mortification shown by his companions as they brought about great success in the mission, then a truly healthy atmosphere was produced for the people there. I was present when all of this took place.

The Servant of God was not satisfied with ordinary results achieved through the legitimately shared word of God, but he would use every sort of charitable or zealous means available so as to extend the good work to all classes and groups of people and, as far as possible, to make that good work stable and permanent.

Hence, from a study of the Crucified Lord, he came up with the most opportune means conducive to that goal and adopted a method which had no other presentation than a summary of everything that had been practiced by the greatest servants of God in the exercise of their apostolic ministry. In particular, it was based on the work of the Venerable Father Antonio Baldinucci, of Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, of St. Alphonsus Liguori, adapting the sacred rites to the diversity of the peoples served, the places visited and the other circumstances. It helped to break the monotony experienced by neighboring peoples, providing them with a variety of things which, for sensitive persons, offered them a bit of surprise, more effective emotions aroused in their hearts, all based on the nature of the activity as well as the diversity of practices observed in the different cities, towns and villages.

The method for giving sermons was patterned after the exercises of St. Ignatius. Never omitted was the instructions on the decalogue given in the mornings after Mass, which took place *summo mane*, along with the recitation of the chaplet of the most Precious Blood. Then, if they were in a large city, after the explanation of the decalogue, another Mass was offered [533] in which a section of the Gospel treating of an incident from the most holy Madonna's life is read. Specific effort was made to avoid apocryphal narrations, insisting rather on the examples from the lives of the saints or the bollandists. The morning services were concluded with a blessing with a relic of the most holy Madonna.

Then, they arranged for hearing the confessions of men and women until noon, assigning ordinarily the confessions of the female sex to the older and more experienced priests and the other members for the men, either in the house or in the church as the opportunity or the need called for. He, then, as the director of the

mission, had to deal with the pastors and the leaders of the town in setting up conferences for the clergy and for the nobility. He also worked to establish the organization for women, known as the sisters of charity; the group for young girls, the so-called children of Mary, in order to edify them and lead them to devotion to Mary most holy. Finally, there were likewise organizations set up for the young boys, the group under St. Aloysius Gonzaga as well as for the men under the patronage of St. Francis Xavier. He himself heard the confessions principally of the men either in the house or in the church. Similarly, he revived those confraternities which had died out and he would restore them to a vigorous state. That was true likewise of what he did for some of the other pious works that had been established and then faded away. All of this was to be sort of a protective hedge that would preserve the fruits derived from the missions. In fact, I myself saw, after ten, twenty and thirty years, this spirit maintained by a large part of the people who had experienced a mission given by the Servant of God. With the grace of God, they continued to frequent the sacraments, as was encouraged by those pious societies, and the people cultivated their faith and became very careful practitioners of it. Many of the ladies became cloistered nuns or active sisters while others became good mothers of exemplary families, ever giving thanks to God for providing them with a holy mission at a most opportune time directed by the Servant of God.

The conferences to the clergy and other special groups respectively were usually given in the morning sometime before noon and he would assign them to his companions when time was not available to him. He wanted all groups to be led toward sanctity whether they were in hospitals, prisons or military barracks, customarily during the first days of a mission since after that time the work of confessions occupied his time, as he used to say, in an effort to gather the fruits of the mission.

Around noontime, all the missionaries were to join together for a period of meditation in common, preceded by a reading of a chapter or a few verses from the Sacred Scripture of the New Testament. Then, they proceeded to the dining table where they listened to spiritual reading until the main course was served, and then dealt with matters pertaining to the ministry.

He strongly urged the observance of these regulations and quoted the apostle, St. Paul: "Omnia honeste et secundum ordinem fiant"; and the other saying attributed to St. Bernard: "*Serva ordinem et ordo servabit te*".

After dinner, at a precise time, some of the members, and often he himself, would leave the house in order to give lessons in Christian doctrine, not only preparing the boys and girls for their first holy communion when they were capable, but also to remind parents and indirectly the pastors as well, of the value of this holy activity. This special and most precious time of the mission was a valuable opportunity for not overlooking but firmly establishing a salutary practice.

As a benefit to the people who were interested in making their confessions, he would invite outside confessors so that the people would not be embarrassed in opening up their consciences to the pastor of their and have difficulty in disclosing

their consciences, when unable to get to one of the missionaries.

Then, too, after the dinner meal, in the afternoon, announcing the approaching sermon with the usual signals, it was preceded by a short instruction on how to make, in a practical way, one's confession. After that was completed, the sermon dealing with a basic principles of faith, along the method set up by St. Ignatius, was begun. After the sermon came the blessing, begging the people not to give way to dissipation in order not to lose the fruits gained from the divine word. They should rather recommend themselves to the most holy Madonna, reciting the holy rosary as they go back home, thus fleeing from the occasions and the dangers encountered in the gatherings and crowds of people. He especially saw to it that the women got back to their homes before the *Ave Maria* hour.

At the latter part of the day, the missionaries, along with some members of the nocturnal oratory, would leave the church in order to go out to give the "svegliarini" or pep talks, inviting the men to come to the oratory for a brief review of the day's main sermon and to gain the fruit of the day by an act of contrition. Finally, [he wanted] those men (always to the exclusion of the women) who had heard the main sermon to be confirmed in the truths that they had heard. The poor people from the countryside or the people who were shy were to show up during the daytime so that in their needs they would not be lacking the good results achieved through the missions. Both at the time for the oratory as well as after it, he, the Servant of God, would willingly offer his assistance in hearing the confessions of the men. As a rule, he also preferred to hear the confession of women himself.

During this acceptable time set aside for the holy missions, the aforementioned servants of God would hold some extraordinary services, but something always in conformity with the rites of holy Church. He would say: since a human is made up of soul and body, the external cult has an impressive effect on the interior spirit and moves the whole person. The Church herself presents a sumptuous variety of times and majestic sacred functions in giving just a very small idea of the grandeur of God and the merit which is available to the adoring person, including things that are respected and loved in the magnificence of its external cult. That was the goal that he aimed at as he tried, through the duration of the holy missions, to conduct decorously processions and other magnificent functions in honor of the most holy Virgin, the passion of our Lord and his death as an expression of our love for him and for our holy advocates, particularly the patrons of the cities and the diverse areas. He did this in order to increase their piety, the worship and their veneration for the Church triumphant, as is proper for all Catholics in beseeching divine help, for true conversion and perseverance in doing good.

He reserved the use of the discipline ordinarily for the procession of repentance, first disposing the people with a pertinent fervorino. At times, he would make use of the discipline on the preaching platform. Many conversions were witnessed as a result of this practice, even of unbelievers who, upon witnessing these exercises of penance, would first ridicule them, but then, when they heard the

sermon and saw the compunction displayed by the people, they were sorry and were moved and threw themselves at the foot of the Crucifix which was publicly exposed. With penitential tears, they embraced it and wanted to apply to themselves the discipline itself if the Servant of God would not impede them. He later stopped using the discipline and prevented others from doing so also, but on occasions they, as a proof of their sincere repentance, refused to stop. They would put on ragged sackcloth, go barefoot and, to overcome human respect, would publicly carry in a raised position the Crucified Lord during the time of the mission. I, myself, have seen those people after many years – those who had deserted the sect in which they had been enrolled and now engaged in the strictest profession of their religion. Others of that same group joined the priesthood, others completely and firmly changed their lives. Everything that I have said up to now, I now testify to as something that I have seen.

The method that I have described above concerning missions he, with due proportion, observed likewise in the conducting of retreats given to the people or to religious communities with the exception of the use of the discipline and other more exciting functions.

Poverty in the ministry

For his missions, the Servant of God had established an unchangeable method which he inserted into his rule, brought to light in 1819, that is, that his missionaries would ask for nothing more from the communes to whom they gave the missions than the cost of their travel to and from there and their food which was also determined with very great care and parsimony. His missionaries were likewise forbidden to accept and even more forbidden to demand any sort of gift, compensation or alms even for Masses. I know that the Servant of God, whenever he got news that one of his men had accepted some gift or loan of money, he released him from the Congregation. If some benefactors showed toward the missionaries a spirit of almsgiving, he ordered his men not to accept it, but rather to insist that the benefactor send it, if he so agreed, to one of the nearest mission houses of the Congregation. From these decisions which he always held to, one can surely deduce that the communes were never burdened by the ministry of the missionaries, beyond the simple and pure expenses for the coaches and the food, as mentioned before. If any complaint was ever raised or alleged that the mission was too costly, it was a wrong committed against the missionaries who did not handle the money used to pay for the food or anything else. That was taken care of by those who were appointed either by the bishop or by the authorities of the commune. As a matter of fact, just by way of an example, in the mission given in Marino, it was said that the cost amounted somewhere between four and five hundred *scudi*. This information alarmed the neighboring communes. The Servant of God, in order to free those people from this deceit and lift them from their

discouragement of inviting the missionaries for missions, had to demonstrate to them the fact that a mission of some twenty days in Albano, including the cost of the coach, in its totality did not exceed the sum of eighteen scudi and the one in Genzano was even less expensive. It was learned later that the expenses endured in that mission in Marino had reached such a high level because those in charge had given funds to companies and committees from neighboring towns who had participated in the mission. The mission given in Pratojanni was covered by only twelve paoli to the admiration of the head of that commune.

I deny completely that the Servant of God or his missionaries ever gave rise, either directly or indirectly, to dissidence, problems or troubles for the respective bishops, for the clergy or for the local authorities since he maintained as a basic principle the showing of respect toward the representatives of a locale where they would go to conduct a mission or retreat. Indeed, he never wished to exercise his ministry basing it solely on the invitation of the respective pastors, toward whom he always showed the greatest respect. However, he would insist on having in writing the invitation and the appointment made by the bishops, or at least by their vicar generals or capitular members of the diocese.

Gaspar's eloquence

I was asked, *ex officio*, whether I knew or had heard it said as true that the Servant of God showed himself ungrateful toward Monsignor Baccolo¹ who had treated him in a very friendly and confident way during all the time that the Monsignor had him as a student of sacred eloquence; I say, whether, he was ungrateful to such a degree that the very same prelate was made unhappy several times, as it was commonly bandied about. Furthermore, whether I knew or heard it said that this same Servant of God, in his panegyrics and sermons plagiarized some of Monsignor Baccolo's material, as was likewise commonly rumored about.

I know that, unfortunately, this very same rumor was spread about even during the mission in Camerino, that is, that what was preached was also plagiarized. The fact is that in his writings, not even in copies of them, did I myself ever see the sermons written out completely, but just a few notes jotted down, or brief snatches, or short ideas that were to be developed by some vastly capable mind. This was the conclusion reached also by the famous [Francesco] Amici, an Olivetan Father, professor of sacred eloquence in the Ascoli seminary, after the mission given in Camerino. He asserted that it was not possible that the sermons given by the Servant of God were written by anyone or even by him, but was really the word of God developed right there in the very act of preaching. On occasion, when I myself was en route with him, I would hear him recite, with his own mouth and with the most vivid memory, entire sections of Monsignor Baccolo's sermons,

¹ Cf. Above, p 41.

but then, when preaching to the people, which I listened to with very close attention, either in the church or in the piazza, none of the ideas nor the style of Baccolo were exactly reproduced.

Finally, since I was left as the fiduciary caretaker of all of his things, I have not found any such writings. When his companions and friends were asked to submit writings of the Servant of God, or things given to them, or things dictated to them as material for preaching, I had to conclude that there was no basis at all for the opinion that was rumored. Rather, it was shown that he was influenced by suggestions made by the highly regarded Fr. Marchetti. Likewise, I know that the Servant of God had to dextrously escape being in the presence of Monsignor Baccolo because of certain gossip and occurrences that had taken place, perhaps even because, I do not really know, of some imprudence on the part of Monsignor Baccolo himself. The Servant of God personally and with great charity told me these things, always respecting and excusing his teacher. Later, however, from Monsignor Santelli and Fr. Gonnelli, I learned the truth more clearly.

I was asked, *ex officio*, to say whether what was being and is still being said by some ecclesiastics of note as true, namely, that he preached as something of his own material and style what was someone else's, not only evident in his writings, but also as tenaciously remembered. In other words, as some had said, that he tempted God by his preaching even though important people have observed in the Servant of God a memory and power of recollection that was extraordinary, but discoverable among the common run of people. They added that only too often did he, in his youth, transcribe sermons given by the most celebrated preachers of Lenten series in the church of the Gesù, having usually heard the sermon only on that occasion and then when he returned home would write it down in its entirety. Other critics have pointed out certain errors that demonstrate either that he was not well-founded in theology or that he preached without making any preparation.

It cannot be denied that the Servant of God was endowed with a great memory and power of recall as has already been noted in the objection referred to previously and will be treated in its place. That is a gift and prerogative necessary for a man responsible for establishing so many pious places and in so many varied locales in the world. As regards his preaching, he surely followed and imitated the great orators, not in a material sense or mechanically, as is usually the case. He would take the theme or the proofs and present them in an entirely new way. This was noticeable in the sermons or reform talks that he spoke or dictated to others, selecting the themes from varied authors and then masterfully developing them with his own manner in order to bear the greatest amount of fruit. I observed this in the oratory conferences that he gave to us his companions on various occasions. In them, he treated the mode of putting a sermon together, of showing how to give reform talks or catechetical instructions, stressing at one time the style, at another time the theme or the proofs. However, never repeating the exact words or the very same sermon. I testify to this from my own knowledge. Also, based on my own

personal knowledge, I must testify that in accordance with the direction of the previously-mentioned Fr. Marchetti and Monsignor Albertini, he was accustomed to first make an outline or set up succinctly the complete order of presenting the material and then offer a prayer at the foot of the crucifix so that he could continue to improve the work. Every once in a while, he was constrained to do it all over again and even better, with God's help, than what he had originally contemplated. So it was that the highly-esteemed Monsignor Albertini, bishop of Terracina, had always counseled him to prepare himself well and be as concentrated as possible for this work, dependent on the time that was available to him, and then trust in God who would then help him after he had exerted due diligence.

With reference to theology, I spoke of that previously and noted how well-instructed he was himself and how effective he was in instructing others. It would be more accurate to say rather that some people misjudged him upon hearing him while very educated people in various cities of Italy along with highly enlightened and learned clergy heard him on several occasions treat the same topics and have admired his ever new presentation of clear doctrines, avoiding uncertain and unproved positions. This is what, as a matter of principle and procedure he recommended to us his missionaries, directing us to adhere to the accepted and certain doctrines, as he so often urged us and as he himself developed with a wonderful mastery. So, regardless of the wrong judgments that have been made about him, the certain fact is that he was neither rash nor uneducated, as I have tried to demonstrate, and as a result, did not tempt God.

I add that also within my knowledge as well as that of my companions, are the rumors of some individuals, even good priests, that spoke negatively of the Servant of God's preaching, that is, that they heard him make numerous mistakes. I and all my companions were greatly stunned by these reports for we had on many occasions heard him being very exact in his teaching and very strict with regard to it, so much so that he did not want the least inexactness in expressing oneself with equivocation or uncertainly. We looked upon those assertions as falsehoods, directly in opposition to the truth that was proved in so many different ways and by so many different well-trained people. So, I am fully convinced that he never uttered any mistaken material, nor much less any erroneous teaching. I have not heard any specific item of error mentioned by those individuals, except that his Eminence [Pietro] Ostini did say that he noticed very little knowledge in the Canon, whom he still regarded as a saint, just because the Servant of God had related that famous incident of the conversion of St. Bruno on the occasion of the death of a certain doctor in Paris. That had critically baffled his Eminence the Cardinal. Perhaps the other criticisms of the Servant of God were similar to this one. Each one sees things with diverse values and one would not wish to find guilty of ignorance or error the Venerable Father Paolo Segneri and so many others who looked upon the aforementioned incident as certain.

Furthermore, I was asked, *ex officio*, to say whether it was true that the

Servant of God's sermons were like a flowing river, that is to say, abundant, but that he, because of the velocity of his delivery, made them appear to be short, so that if another preacher had to give one of the Servant of God's sermons, he would have to take two hours whereas the Servant of God would have used only one hour. Also, whether it is true that all of his sermons were apologetical so that even his sermons on the eternal, basic principles were treated apologetically, and, because of those two reasons just mentioned, very few people were able to understand them and very many people did not understand them at all.

Since I had heard him preach both in cities and in small towns and in country parishes where he, like Father Segneri, would draw together the people from the neighboring towns, I have observed well his apologetics, even discreetly applied to those basic principles, was used in the places that were more highly educated and at times involved more than one sermon. Vigorously was it delivered so as to confirm the believers and at the same time convinced and eventually converted the non-believers. I remember some striking examples of entire lodges that were dissipated and dissolved by the divine word alone. That happened in Meldola, the center in Forlì grande, in Toscana, in Forlimpopoli and in Rimini where the opponents were among the most obstinate. "*Est Cicero pro domo sua*". Finally, they surrendered to the overwhelming light of truth. The Servant of God used to say that those arguments either need not be treated publicly or they need to be treated publicly with clarity and fullness of presentation in order to convince anyone and that truth will shine forth and will defend itself, just as is clearly enunciated in the saying: "*Testimonia tua credibilia facta sunt nimis*". Likewise, he used to say that the proofs are to be abundant, indeed so abundant that it would be a harmful thing to truth to be fearful or to demonstrate a fear that would make them fall short. So, with prudence, where there was a mixed audience with the ordinary people more numerous than the educated, he would give his apologetical conferences to the leaders among those citizens in some small chapel or little out-of-the-way church. In the small towns, he would work hard to make his sermons understandable even to the simplest, old lady, quoting examples from the scripture that were popular, as we note, for example, that he did in Boccadero in his homilies to the people there. In the Kingdom of Naples, precisely in the provinces of Atri and Penne, depending on the opportunities, he would send out an invitation before bringing together the educated element and then would preach to them with arguments against the modern sects. They, in turn, as leaders of the place where the sermon was delivered to them in an area set-aside for them, would keep alive and exchange among themselves the saying: "Doesn't evident truth speak out without directly upsetting us? Have we not been truly deceived by our own errors? Behold! Here is our own vice-savior who has come to enlighten us". The people there would cry out in their customary way: "Hail to Jesus! Hail to Mary!" after hearing his fervent prayers. And, that special group of people would repeat: "Hail to the Catholic religion". Priests,

who received the same conferences or reform talks given to them in private and in places set apart as was usually done out of respect for particular groups, would come out saying: “this fellow explains the whole book at one time”. They would derive such terrific profit that some bishops, as I myself know, imposed on me the obligation of giving thanks to Canon Del Bufalo who, by the grace of God, had restored the clergy to be almost totally apostolic. For example, the archbishop of Camerino, also Monsignor [Cesare] Nembrini, later Cardinal-bishop of Ancona, likewise the Venerable Monsignor Strambi who because of the fruitful results received and the jolt that he caused by his zealous presentation called him “the spiritual earthquake”. This very same Servant of God (Strambi) in the city of Camerino where he was present for the mission and participate without missing a single sermon given by Canon Del Bufalo, told me in the presence of a number of Canons from Foligno, in the Mazzagalli house: “God is speaking through Canon Del Bufalo. I, myself, have heard him” he said. “He cannot limit himself to just one hour.” He, then, added: “The two ravens of the Venerable Father Anchieta used to limit him to one hour as they kept up a raucous screeching in order to get him to stop”.

Furthermore, in his preaching in cities, he was very pithy and erudite and sometimes even obscure because of some intermediate ideas that remained concealed in his brain without his having had time to develop them. By divine grace, he used to produce magnificent results. In fact, I recall that in the city of Camerino, in the Marche, in addition to the universal conquest testified to by the excellent archbishop, now deceased, Monsignor [Nicola] Mattei, along with the testimonies of many from the entire city, two things, I know, happened. One dealt with a libertine and unbeliever who, on hearing the sermon on heaven, displaying his masculine eloquence, shouted out: “If there is happiness for human beings, this is the true one” and he was sincerely converted. The other dealt with a peasant who, when that same sermon came to an end, in tears approached a confessor, cried out for mercy as he felt his heart breaking. The confessor, who was a certain famous person in that city, a Father Fedeli, teacher of moral theology and a tireless worker, asked the penitent what it was that aroused his compunction and what words of the sermon had moved him. The man replied: “He talked Latin and I, an ignorant man, did not understand him. I heard only the word paradise and that one word, along with his gesture and voice, struck my heart so that I really felt that I was in heaven. I, a great sinner, am unworthy, but I do want to make my confession and save my soul”. In another city, likewise in the Marche, in the diocese of Fermo, the Servant of God felt inspired to deliver apologetical sermons and talks on religion. An unbeliever, whom he did not know, was in attendance out of curiosity and a desire to make fun of the mission, as a result stayed on moved by his curiosity to hear him afterwards. Once those talks were completed, to his surprise the man felt persuaded and deeply affected. Still it seemed to him impossible to be so thoroughly cleared in his mind of his countless doubts and difficulties, especially since he had formerly read the most famous apologists and had questioned very learned men in these same materials and never was fully convinced. Finally, he presented himself to the Servant of God

and offered him two insuperable objections as he himself had judged them to be. With other learned priests he had brought up many, many objections, but here he had gotten a reply with such promptness to his first and second objection that he no longer had reason to rebut, even losing belief in himself. Next, he asked to make his confession and when he was told that he had to make reparation for the scandal given, especially to young people in the whole province by promoting his errors, he immediately resolved to make reparation. Mounted on horseback, he made every effort possible to contact the young people he had deceived, publicly declaring first of all that he was wrong in the false principles that he had adopted and that he had been straightened out by the few words of the missionary in his previous sermons. Then, returning to the feet of the Servant of God who was yet to conclude the mission, he made his general confession and to the edification of the public, he knelt to receive holy communion in the general service. So, it is most true that the Servant of God's preaching was clearly understood and, with the help of divine grace, was most fruitful. I noted this in that very same act of conversion.

In regard to his fluency and the velocity of his speech, he himself admitted that so much material presented itself to his mind and so many ideas to be developed, that he was scarcely able to give them verbal expression. Indeed, at times, it felt like a torrent rushing down from his head to his jaws, so many things coming at the same time that they had to be broken down in a hurry. Then, too, it happened that even some intermediate thoughts, as might be described, remained, and consequently that produced some obscurity. It seems to me, if I am permitted to make a comparison, the same thing that occurred to St. Ambrose, not only in his preaching but also in his writing. Nevertheless, the experience demonstrated that this did not prejudice in any way at all the substantial knowledge contained in his sermons, nor the practicality found in his sermons.

His confessional ministry

When the Servant of God returned from his deportation, he was approved for hearing confessions by Monsignor [Candido Maria] Frattini, Vicegerent of Rome, but he had not asked for those faculties since he felt, in the delicacy of his mind, a certain difficulty in assuming that sort of ministry.

An incident that happened to him in the oratory located in the Arco dei Saponari, gave the notion to the renowned Monsignor Vicegerent, once he was informed about it, to give the Servant of God that obligation. The incident was this: after the Servant of God had presented his usual *ferverino* one evening in that oratory, a man, who looked like a sheriff, approached him and asked the Servant of God to hear his confession. However, the Servant of God refused him saying that he did not have the jurisdiction. The penitent replied: "What! You say Mass, you preach – but you don't hear confessions? Let me think something else – rather that you want to go out and get some fresh air, but don't tell me that you can't hear

confessions. I want to make my confession to you!” The Servant of God did not assume this ministry of hearing confessions until he had completed the regular course of moral theology under the famous Fr. Guidi and after having done exercises in the academy of Monsignor Marchetti, set up and maintained in the house attached to the Gesu where he had given clear and praiseworthy proof of his knowledge of moral theology. All of this was well-known to Monsignor Frattini.

Once he assumed this ministry, the Servant of God had the practice of showing preference to hearing the confessions of men, but he did not refuse to hear the confessions of women likewise after he had completed hearing those of the men. His mannerisms and his applications were benign, avoiding both extremes, too lenient or too strict. His directives were made with such efficacy, such unction and such charity that, as far as I know, all those who knelt at his feet to make their confessions, were satisfied as they publicly testified. Not only in Rome did he exercise this office, but also anywhere the missions took him. I know very well that the first thing that he requested from the respective diocesan bishops or whoever was in charge, was the faculty of hearing confessions. He likewise wanted to be informed of the reserved cases by the respective diocesan bishops and how they were reserved so that there would be no error in the granting of absolution. In cases when penitents had to be obliged to make denunciations in keeping with the pontifical constitutions, he, always very cautious about making the ministry of hearing confessions odious in the missions that he conducted, adopted the principle of obliging the penitents to present themselves either to the bishops or to their vicar generals or their agents. He did so especially since he knew well that those denunciations, without a special commission granted by the superiors, could not be received by the confessors. Also, he was fortified by extraordinary faculties spontaneously granted to him by the Holy Father, Pius VII. In certain particular cases, he received the denunciations and in other cases he would in particular request the faculty to dispense from making the denunciations, depending on the number of cases involved. He was careful in using them, making sure that all of the circumstances were valid before deciding that the case merited dispensation. He was also diligent and circumspect in requesting, from the respective ordinaries of the places, the necessary and appropriate faculties needed where the mission was being conducted, not only for the priests of his own Congregation but also for the other confessors who were invited to assist in the ministry. In order that the instructions and the advice given in the confessional were uniform, he was accustomed to give the confessors an exhortation beforehand and also a befitting instruction to be united in this holy league, that is, urging them to adopt the method that he himself was following.

It is to be noted that the Servant of God learned that in different dioceses there were some confessors who were either very lax or very rigorous, that is, suspected of practicing Jansenism. The former did not lead the penitents to reform their ways and the latter dissuaded the souls from frequenting the sacraments. So,

the Servant of God had the job of alerting the respective bishops by suggesting and promoting the adoption of the theology of St. Alphonsus of Liguori, a theology that was secure inasmuch as the Holy See had declared that it had not discovered anything in it worthy of censure. Experience had shown that in certain towns, penitents had been driven out of the confessional and consequently had made the decision not to go back to the tribunal of penance (among these people, some twenty, thirty and even forty years had gone by since they had gone to confession for the above mentioned reason). Others told him that after having confessed certain sins and given absolution, they received no admonition nor any obligation of making atonement. These were very serious considerations that stood in opposition to the ardent desires of the Servant of God who was working so hard to achieve the complete emendation of the evils and the frequenting of the reception of the sacraments, that is to say, the real means for achieving reform and maintaining it in sinners.

It is likewise to be noted that the Servant of God observed unchangeably the practice of not showing in any way whatsoever not only what was heard in confession but also not make known any cases that were made known to him before confession. Several times, while in the process of conducting a mission, there were people who appeared and loudly announced that they were either masons or liberals or sinners for many, many years, declaring openly: "I am a mason, I am a liberal, I have not been to confession for some thirty years." The Servant of God would quickly ask them to be silent. He wanted his missionaries to show that same delicacy toward those persons and it was such a point of interest for him that he included this point in the regulations that he laid down for the conducting of missions.

Finally, it is to be noted that among the very practical suggestions that he made for the proper procedure in preaching and for hearing confessions, he included that every day, except Fridays and feastsdays, in every mission house, around a half-hour of Scripture reading be done and meditated on and for another half-hour, a moral case be presented for review. Hence, both exercises were to take one hour. On Fridays, a half-hour was to be set aside for the study of the sacred liturgy, having based it on the Scriptures following the practice of Father Zucconi and Father Granelli. For the study of moral theology, the works of St. Alphonsus of Liguori. Also for the study of the liturgy, the work of Monsignor Gardellini. With these important directions and suggestions, the Servant of God managed to persuade one or the other bishop to adopt them for his diocese. For others, in good faith, he managed to have the opinion of Folgori and of Stanislaus Hampo adopted and, may I say, also persuade them to accept the doctrine and practices of St. Alphonsus, as not too long afterwards, was seen to be effected

B. His Missionary Activities²

Ministries in 1814

Frascati and Rome

In 1814 he was assigned by his Eminence Cardinal [Giulio] Della Somaglia for the renewal of the monastery of the Augustinian nuns in Frascati preceded by a few days of retreat in preparation for it. Those religious still retain a vivid memory of

² For the chronology of St. Gaspar's ministry up to 1820, cfr. *Epistolario I*, pp. 17-20.

the Servant of God, of his prudence, zeal and eloquence that penetrated their hearts as they all remained most edified.

In that same year, around Christmas time, the Servant of God's still living director, Canon Albertini wanted the apostolic ministry of the holy missions to begin under his own supervision. Therefore, he requested [537] the pertinent faculties and the missions in San Nicola in Carcere were initiated to restore and to increase the devotion of the most Precious Blood in that parish and its environs. Monsignor Santelli, Canon La Monaca, Fr. Antonio Muccioli and Canon [Giuseppe Maria] Visconti were his fellow workers. In that ministry the Servant of God made use of the moving service of most holy Mary Mother of Perpetual Help who was brought into the church with great solemnity after a sermon on the final universal judgment that produced a great reaction together with the service involving the deceased Christ which also was very impressive. However, because of various reports given to Monsignor [Candido Maria] Frattini, Vicegerent of Rome at the time, it was deemed inopportune to do this in Rome. Consequently, the Servant of God had to defend himself, showing that the method of the missions was that of the Company of Jesus just as the Jesuits themselves did in the missions held during the recent jubilee observance in Santa Maria in Trastevere and were even repeated in that same year in Santa Maria ai Monti. In the aforementioned mission in San Nicola in Carcere, it also happened that, after the exposition of the image of most holy Mary of Perpetual Help, somehow or other, no one knows how, the canopy which adorned it, suddenly began to burn, but the image itself and its frame remained untouched. The Servant of God had to withstand some bitter reactions also because of this occurrence. Nevertheless, the mission turned out to be exceedingly fruitful and even all of these extra side happenings are remembered with tenderness.

Ministries of 1815

Ministries in Rome

In the following year of 1815, in Santa Galla and elsewhere, as in the primary church, efforts were made to set up retreats, pious works, tridua in the form of retreats for the noble guards in association with Monsignor Cristaldi at the Academy of St. Luke, which, at that time, had a strict connection with the famous [Antonio] Canova who supported that very praiseworthy institution that was later entrusted to the Pious Union of St. Paul.

In the meantime, in addition to the occupations which the Servant of God had in Rome, he did not overlook the foundation in San Felice in Giano. As a matter of fact, he encouraged and exhorted Fr. Gaetano Bonanni to look after the foundation there, and sent him several companions. In Rome, he urged others to join his Institute of the Missions under the title of the most Precious Blood.

In Lent of that same year 1815 his ministry, more than ever, was exercised with frequency and with admirable zeal until the time when, by order of Pius VII, he

was sent along with Fr. [Filippo] Fontana, of happy memory, with Fr. Carlo Odescalchi, later a Cardinal of holy Church, with Serra Cassano, later a Cardinal, with Fr. Antonio Muccioli, Father Mazio, the monk Basiliano, to Benevento, to Frosinone and other places, as we will point out later.

In 1815, the Servant of God, together with Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, founded and opened the mission house of San Felice in Giano, in the diocese of Spoleto. He returned to Rome to take care of other important business affairs for the progress of the foundation. The Servant of God was [540] summoned by Pius VII, together with the aforementioned companions, and was assigned to the missions in Benevento and Frosinone.

Benevento

On their trip there, they discovered that the bridge of Garigliano was broken down, but with the help of God, they overcame each obstacle and this apostolic task-force arrived in the city of Benevento, where from the earliest hours the entire populace, cooperating with the divine call and grateful to the Supreme Pontiff for the missionaries he had sent, began exclaiming: "Blessed be the Holy Father eternally for sending us this holy mission!" All shed tears profusely even those in the positions of leadership and people were seen going in large crowds in search of the missionaries so that they could go to confession, even though the delegate there, Monsignor [Luigi] Bottiglia had asserted that these people for years and years, perhaps even as many as forty, had neglected the sacraments and were suspected as being members of masonic sects. As the mission progressed, the crowds going to confession became so numerous and the conversions of sinners so notable, that the confessors were busy both day and night in this occupation that they were unable to satisfy all the people. So, upon the direction given by the archbishop and the outstanding delegate Monsignor Bottiglia, the confessors had to continue working a lot longer than usual. Fr. Mazio, who was the director of this mission, did not know how to maintain order and also allow the missionaries some rest. So, with the permission of His Holiness, the mission that was to be given soon in Frosinone was temporarily postponed.

In the meantime, those evangelical workers, giving glory to God for the copious fruits achieved there, returned to Rome. Among those men was the Servant of God more than ever enthusiastic about those apostolic labors and the conquest of souls. People had noticed how diligently he had worked for many individuals and they did not know whether he ever took any rest.

Ministries in 1816

Frosinone

He was busy in Rome with other occupations, but made himself available to the Supreme Pontiff, along with other Roman priests, to undertake the mission in the province of Frosinone after Christmas, that is, in January of 1816. His companions for that mission were Fr. Fortuna, Canon Fr. Antonio Muccioli, Monsignor Piatti, Fr. Butirroni and along with the Servant of God, another whom I do not now remember. They were divided into two groups in two churches because of the lack of space and the Servant of God worked in the church of St. Benedict where he became well-known because of his sermons on the basic truths. He so moved those people that one night, when the sermon was completed by his use of the discipline, the pastor, over-whelmed with fervor, was unable to contain himself and he himself took a discipline and mounting the preacher's platform, begged the forgiveness of all the people who had been in disagreement with him. Peace was restored with them and he was the source of deep edification as the situation was restored to a stable and permanent condition. During this mission, many prohibited books were burned, many forbidden armaments were surrendered and destroyed, even more numerous than the ones in Benevento so that the bishop and the delegate there had to send a report to Rome of the wondrous things that had occurred.

Monsignor Albertini, the Servant of God's spiritual director, wanted him to return to Rome, his hometown, with the approach of the holy season of Lent so that he could continue his apostolic work there during that sacred time, conducting retreats, giving catechetical instructions to the people and various other functions in the monasteries. In blind obedience, he did not fail to participate in these different branches of the ministry. After the feast of holy Easter, once again he would resume his work in the open fields of the missions, assuming the job of their directorship.

Civitavecchia

The terrific successes with those missions in Benevento and Frosinone moved the soul of the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII and the companions themselves so deeply that they initiated many others, for example, on May 3rd, 1816, dedicated to the glory of the Holy Cross, they started the holy apostolic mission in Civitavecchia, in the church of San Francesco, equipped with the usual faculties. Three other companions of the Servant of God joined with him. They were Fr. Antonio Muccioli, Monsignor Fr. Antonio Piatti and Fr. Andrea Butirroni, Roman priests. Also helping out willingly was Cardinal [Antonio Gabriele] Severoli, then bishop of that city who, in a special way, wanted to keep an eye on the sacred ceremonies that were usually practiced by the Servant of God, about which he had heard many complimentary comments and to which he wished to happily contribute some splendor giving glory to God and bringing about, in that way copious advantages to the souls in his diocese. The particular blessings from heaven that were bestowed upon this particular ministry were printed publicly in the daily paper of Rome in the May 15th issue in an article on Civitavecchia, about which the missionaries knew nothing. In

addition to the notable things that were the fruits of their marvelous work in behalf of every level of persons, there was the restitution of seventy-four thousand Roman scudi prudently returned in so many bills of exchange. In keeping with their usual system, they did not overlook the scheduling of a bonfire for the burning of many harmful books and the destruction of prohibited weaponry. This event always aroused the greatest excitement since it was carried out in the public piazza just before the preaching of the final reminders. It was an offering and a sacrifice not only for the removal of sin but also the removal of further occasions of sin and the temptations for new failings.

Rieti

Monsignor [Carlo] Fioravanti, recently elected bishop of Rieti, had heard about the tremendous success that was achieved in the aforementioned mission in Civitavecchia, and was filled with zeal for the people of his own diocese or at least for those in its principle city. The Servant of God and his companions were quite exhausted after completing that recent mission but renewed in spirit by the special assistance of God and seeking to provide benefits for souls, were back in Rome. On May 22 of that same year 1816, the Servant of God gave his usual introductory sermon in the cathedral of Rieti, joined by his companions, and stimulated the compunction of the huge concourse of people who had gathered there.

An incident occurred there during the jolting sermon on the universal judgment. It happened toward the end of the sermon, the peroration, when suddenly there was a bolt of lightning over the audience, though the skies outdoors were perfectly clear. It flashed back and forth over the people inside the church but did not harm anyone. One cannot imagine the fright and the pity felt for those people brought on by this unexpected meteor. It was commonly regarded as a warning from heaven. However, some people, reflecting about the incident that had taken place, wanted to propose that it was all a trick worked out by the missionaries using some sort of artificial fireworks. They took the liberty to question Canon Fr. Antonio Muccioli who handled that interrogation by saying that, with the grace of God, they had never had recourse to nor would they ever make use of such deceptions and that the missionaries themselves were equally astounded and alarmed by it, whatever was the cause of this extraordinary occurrence.

In keeping with his usual practice, the Servant of God instituted certain pious organizations, as I mentioned before, as the mystical hedge protecting the Lord's vine, and daily increasing in the clergy and in the people a spirit of edification and fervor. He wrote of the many unusual things that happened. Among other things, Canon [Simeone] Simeoni, resident of that cathedral and therefore an eyewitness, wrote that Canon Del Bufalo was regarded as an apostle by the people there, that he preached very forcefully, that he was zealous and filled with unction, that he was assiduous in his confessional work both day and night, offering himself tirelessly to

the spiritual benefit of his neighbors and that, when he departed, he left them with a desire for his return. Finally, that he crowned his work of that holy mission in Rieti by restoring order to a congregation of priests established by Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, with the title of Mother of God, and approved by Benedict XIV. He cleared up the questions that alienated the members and caused the group to lose interest. He re-assigned the offices and transferred this same congregation from the church of San Giovenale to that of St. Scholastica. Furthermore, when he got back to Rome, he continued his work so that he obtained from Pius VII the re-union of that congregation to the one of St. Aloysius Gonzaga along with a annual subsidy for that group of two hundred scudi coming from the funds that were donated to it. That congregation was something very close to the heart of the Servant of God because of the great good work that it offered for souls. It kept up the nocturnal oratories through the course of the entire year; it took care of providing retreats and even feeding for ten days young people who had gathered together there in their pious house in preparation for making their first communion. The priests in that same group gave retreats to the imprisoned during Lent, spiritually assisted the students in the public school, preached during Carnival time, celebrated an octave of prayers before the feast of the Sorrowful Mother Mary and the glories of St. Aloysius observing the usual number of Sundays and the preceding tridua. Hence, it is not at all surprising that the Servant of God would show that much concern for them and for many, many other pious groups as he went about giving missions following the method that he established, as described previously.

Toward the middle of June, having returned to Rome after the aforementioned mission, and giving the impression that up to then he had been quietly in repose, he took up again, with his usual enthusiasm, the apostolic ministry of supporting the pious organizations and other important projects.

Ancona

In the meantime, Pius VII who had returned from his exile, was completely intent on reviving the faith and recalling the faithful to the love of the Crucified Lord. After giving the orders for the missions in Civitavecchia, he did not overlook the other principal port of the Papal States on the Adriatic Sea, the populated city of Ancona. So, in agreement with the bishop Cardinal [Nicola] Riganti, who frequently showed an interest in this project, they proceeded together with the Servant of God, as its director, to bring together for the mission the well-trained Roman priests joined by Monsignor Fr. Carlo Odescalchi and Canon Fr. Pietro Antonio Cristianopoli.

It was more than twenty years that this city, under the dominion of the French, found itself with the episcopal seat vacant. You can imagine how great was the need for a holy mission because of the anti-religion teachings that had been spread about and as a consequence for the lack of morality found there. Necessarily there were innumerable acts of opposition, but still no reason to be discouraged. The Servant of God and his companions, on the day of the Nativity of the most holy

Madonna, September 8, 1816, opened the mission. It is necessary to know that a person of ecclesiastical dignity, with a good intention in mind, as he said, kept dissuading him, acting directly in opposition to him, pointing out the greater disorders that would follow if the mission were undertaken, and that it would be more prudent to go back home. But Canon Del Bufalo, trusting in God, did not waver at all and, giving thanks to that counselor for his advice, just went right on with his projected work.

He was received formally by the clergy, by the confraternities and by the people and he proceeded to give his customary opening sermon. Because of the huge crowds, he was compelled to divide the work of his companions into two churches having the sermons delivered in both of them. In the church of St. Dominic, he himself did the preaching after the catechetical instructions given by Monsignor Piatti. In the church of St. Augustine, after the catechetical instructions given by Canon Cristianopoli, the sermon was delivered by Monsignor Odescalchi. Furthermore, he divided the work of the companions in giving conferences to the clergy, to the nobility and to other groups, not sparing himself when any of the others, because of inability, did not do some assignment.

There is a report of this particular mission written by the people of Ancona themselves in gratitude and remembrance of the Servant of God, not to mention the extraordinary benefits that were received through that mission in every group and in every level of persons. Indeed, those citizens would have liked to have kept those Roman priests there always to sanctify the people. Thus, at the time of the departure of the Servant of God and his companions. He, in union with the other companions, asked their forgiveness for any offense that they may have given them during the course of that mission and suddenly a unanimous acclamation broke out. The leaders of that city, the clergy and the people, shedding tears, accompanied them for miles. Not satisfied with all of that, they erected a monument in stone as a perpetual remembrance of the great good achieved for the glory of God through the Roman clergy who were holy men and sanctifiers.

Everything that I have testified to up to this point I myself heard personally from people who are worthy of credence, from the clergy and from the leaders of that city. In regard to the missions given in Benevento, Frosinone, Civitavecchia and Rieti, I got that information from the Servant of God's companions themselves and, in particular, from Canon Muccioli, of happy memory. They also gave me many other particular details about his missionary system.

Even though the missions were effective for the ordinary people, they were odious to the common enemy and to the wicked-minded who never tired in doing harm through invective language, sarcastic speeches and with stones thrown at the Servant of God. But that was all in vain. When the Servant of God brought the missions to a close, there would be an effort made by them to discredit him, placing before the view of the people the amount of expenses involved, which they altered considerably, in the maintenance of the missionaries, and hence placing a notable

burden on the citizenry. However, the Servant of God was invited on another occasion by the fervent Anconians to give a retreat and he offered them the same wholehearted attention for their welfare by preaching as often as sixteen times in one day and hearing confessions whenever the opportunity arose. He asked no compensation for the expenses of his travel nor for the food. Furthermore, he did the same when he was invited by Monsignor [Cesare] Nembrini, then a cardinal of holy Church, to conduct a spiritual retreat for all the clergy in several shifts.

Bagnaia

After the mission in Ancona, he returned to Rome in October of that same year. He did not remain idle but rather was occupied in those ordinary tasks of giving spiritual assistance to the pious works that were already established there as well as devoting new acts of care and solicitude for the foundation in Giano in an attempt to increase the number of members and broaden the work of the ministry. Furthermore, he got involved in arranging other missions for Bagnaia near Viterbo, for Nettuno, for Porto d'Anzio and Andea.

With reference to the first two of that listing, there are some notable incidents, though the others are not lacking effects of his apostolic zeal. Canon Miglioni, friend and companion of the Servant of God with whom he maintained a letter-correspondence, advised the people to have a mission in Bagnaia. All, willingly, agreed to the idea, but when it was learned that it was being set for the month of November, they all registered their objection to it, submitting as the reason for their objection that the people at that time would be busy with work in the fields. The general agreement, then, was to set it up for Lent. The noted Canon Miglioni kept trying to persuade them but it was not possible to get them to change their minds, so he had to give in to them for the time being, but reserved the right to keep communicating with the Servant of God by letter. When he did write, the good Canon Miglioni got a reply from his friend Del Bufalo that the reason alleged was probably a diabolical maneuver to impede this good work altogether and that it should be undertaken as first proposed. Then, the Servant of God continued discussing the matter through letters and concluded that nothing could be done to overcome the difficulty. He was convinced that the mission should still be held in November, that it should be publicized by the pastors with clarity and the day set when the Servant of God would arrive there with his company of men. He informed him of the things that were to be prepared so that everything would go along in good order and urged him to have public and private prayers offered for that intention. He predicted that this apostolic ministry would be greatly profitable for the people there. This sort of decisive way of speaking in opposition to everyone's way of thinking and acting, in some way or other, must have been irritating to their minds and must have aroused even more opposition. However, realizing actually that the wiles of the enemy of every good work would be overcome, things went along in accordance with the will

of God and all of the people and the council unanimously agreed to accept it quite happily. In fact, as Canon Miglioni himself reported in a letter and as he himself expressed vocally to me: "Once I received the letter, I showed it to the pastors and to the council and in no time at all, their minds were in agreement and they were disposed to accept that ministry at the very time suggested by the Servant of God. Then, the announcement was made to the people by the pastors and each one begot a sincere desire to accept the holy ministry so as to derive rich profit from the divine word.

The other notable and astounding thing that took place in regard to this mission in Bagnaia was the hardship endured and the many labors of the Servant of God, director of the mission, despite his being ill. As Miglioni himself wrote, the Servant of God himself gave the main sermon even though he was seized with a fever and he continued and completed the mission as though he had not been assailed with anything harmful. He did not omit the usual exercises of preaching, hearing confessions, giving conferences. He kept assuring all that this illness did not prevent him in any way at all of accomplishing the good work of the mission. Every so often, Miglioni adds, the Servant of God would mount the preaching platform to preach with such eagerness and zeal that he enraptured the hearts of all as though he were perfectly healthy and robust. That apostolic ministry in Bagnaia lasted for fifteen days and the benefits were such and so many that for the longest time it gave evidence of the total reform of the people in the continuous and extraordinary frequency of the reception of the sacraments.

Nettuno

Shortly after the Servant of God returned to Rome, he accepted the mission for Nettuno, Porto d'Anzio and Ardea. Departing Rome with his companions, they got lost because of an error made by the coachman and found themselves in the rural area of Campomorto. Then, by adjusting their route that got back quite a bit late to Nettuno. On the following morning, they initiated the mission which eventually turned out to be beyond belief fruitful. Not to be overlooked is the following incident, that is, that the coachman's boss, quite angered because of the coachman's mistake and for his delayed arrival, not only maltreated the young fellow erupted in an exaggerated fashion against the servants of God who had nothing to do with the matter. That poor fellow, perhaps because of his lack of respect, without the least resentment on the part of those same individuals, on that very same night, died, no one knows how.

Porto d'Anzio

After giving the final blessing to the people of Nettuno, the Servant of God, together with Canon Muccioli, went to Porto d'Anzio, leaving behind the other two

companions to finish the other ceremonies and to hear confessions to the satisfaction of all the people there with this their first mission. Here, also, in Porto d'Anzio it was a very long time that they were deprived of such a ministry. The Servant of God was also very interested in helping through his preaching the people of the military as well as the unfortunate individuals who had been sentenced to prisons. Through his ministry of hearing confessions, he brought consolation to all of them. Thus, in doing this work, the missionaries continued to stand out in this marshy area, not allowing a single area to be without the heavenly blessings of God.

Ardea

Finally, getting back together again in Nettuno, on December 11, they left for Ardea. There, the Servant of God and Muccioli assumed the task of announcing the divine word and the other two, for the same objective, went to Pratica at the disposition and order of the Servant of God, the director. Just what alacrity of soul and zeal was that of the Servant of God as well as of his companions in bringing spiritual assistance to those people who lacked every sort of spirituality, cannot be fully realized. Still, there were people who testified to it, even after twenty years, by the more elderly eyewitnesses, as a wonderful tribute of the general reform achieved. The Servant of God and his companion, Muccioli, gave the final blessing in Ardea and then moved on to Pratica. On December 16, they joined up again with the other two missionaries and returned to Rome.

Ministries in Rome

Despite the many and difficult labors endured by the Servant of God in behalf of souls, particularly as the promoter and director of all this good work, nevertheless he still found a way, even with all these cares, to maintain an uninterrupted correspondence with Fr. Gaetano Bonanni and his fellow workers in Giano, with the clergy in Rome, always finding new recruits, confirming those that were the first ones in the group and providing them with means of sustenance. He also wrote letters in order to direct and preserve the good work that had been done through past missions. In that correspondence which was brief, juicy and stimulating, he showed a singular talent when in one night they estimated that he had written some one hundred letters. He made extremely profitable use of this divine help in promoting his foundations, in spreading the devotion to the most Precious Blood everywhere that he could, to attract new co-workers, to encourage others to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, to promote the presence of the Institute in different provinces and to extend the glory of God throughout the world. For him, however, this all seemed so little and practically nothing for his Crucified Lord who was insatiable in his labors and suffering.

The Lord was pleased, in a way, for the Servant of God's ceaseless concerns

by granting him the opening of a Mission House in the diocese of Camerino, in the town of Pievevitorina. Consequently, in October of the year 1816, he, trusting fully in God, and following the advice and agreement of Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, he decided to accept this foundation. However, to bring things to a successful conclusion and be provided with the means which evangelical prudence would require, he postponed the actual foundation there until the year 1819. By the bishops, he was offered many other locales and convents that had been renounced by the religious during the upheaval of the time. He judged it to be a wiser procedure to set up first an orderly arrangement of everything in the foundation in Giano and then, with the help of God, to proceed with further new foundations for God's greater glory and for the salvation of souls which he deeply desired.

Ministries of 1817

Velletri

At the end of that very same year and at the beginning of 1817, the Servant of God was invited by Cardinal Alessandro Mattei, bishop of Velletri and Dean of the Sacred College, to give the spiritual retreat in that city together with his companion, Fr. Antonio Canon Muccioli, because that Cardinal Bishop had heard favorable reports of the missions given in Nettuno and Porto d'Anzio which had been requested by the Cardinal Bishop of Albano. The Servant of God was obedient to the wishes of the Cardinal Dean and began the retreat which quite soon turned into a mission since the good people of Velletri in a certain way were amused by the appearance of the two young priests, Del Bufalo and Muccioli, but were also stricken by the fluidity of their speech, the ardor of their zeal and the salutary effects that were brought about in every level of persons in that city. The two missionaries were regarded with an extraordinary esteem in such a way that the clergy, the nuns, the nobility and the members of the Stigmati, who were their special assistants along with the numerous citizens, looked upon them as two angels sent from heaven for their sanctification and salvation. The Servant of God preached in his usual method at this time to the clergy, to the nuns, to the people, to the active sisters, to the various organizations and to all without showing any signs of exhaustion. Always fresh as a rose, as Canon Mazzoni was accustomed to say, the Servant of God would go from one sermon to another, from one theme to another different one with a certain smoothness, a vivacity of ideas and wonderful concepts. Confirming this true evaluation was the very worthy Canon Fr. Michele Cella in a letter which is an eyewitness testimony: "In 1816, in December, the Servant of God Canon Del Bufalo, came here to conduct the retreat for the people in the Cathedral Basilica. After his sermon in honor of most holy Mary, the retreat turned into a very fruitful mission under his sole leadership since there was very little work done by Canon Muccioli, his companion. During a penitential procession at night, the city became a

converted Nineveh. The termination came with a procession in which the Chapter participated and the fruitful results gathered from the planting of the divine word were openly demonstrated when forbidden books were burned and illegal arms were destroyed as the fervent missionary kept on preaching and urging the people to repent.

With carnival time coming to an end, the Servant of God was fearful that there might be damage done to the souls of the recently converted individuals, so he spoke to all the people asking them convincingly to abstain from certain diversions and to generously deprive themselves. In order, then, to make the copious fruits of this retreat, or better-said, mission in Velletri, continue for a long period of time, with the grace of God, he set up two very useful and well-ordered establishments. The first one was a nocturnal oratory in the church of San Martino, supported by the pastors and all of the clergy there. The second was an organization of the male brethren under the patronage of St. Francis Xavier to sustain the work of the oratory as well as to give honor to and spread the devotion to the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ in that splendidly built church.

Cisterna

Meanwhile, the time came for the Servant of God's departure from Velletri and after concluding the apostolic work there by giving the blessing to that immense crowd of people who tearfully awaited his departure, he descended the preaching platform and around evening time, he mounted the carriage together with his companion. The people of Cisterna were fervently expecting further exercises in their area and he headed in that direction around the second hour (Italian time).³ There was a great celebration of the people there upon hearing of his arrival and everyone was overtaken with a surge of joy. The roadways were illuminated, the church doors opened, the bells rung and the people gathering in large numbers. The Servant of God, on that evening, was obliged to give the introductory sermon. The people of Cisterna, in general, are occupied in the work of the fields and forests of that marshy land, and at night they return to their homes. Ordinarily, they are looked upon as uncultivated people and very needful of instructions in Christian principles. They are regarded as being victimized by a certain torpor due to the heaviness of the climate and the natural unhealthiness of the area which is aggravating. So, the spirit of these people was greatly moved and revived and well-

³ Here and in other places the computation of the hours of the day are in "the Italian method" in which the 24 hours of the day begin with the Ave Maria hour (the 24th hour) in the evening, which was signaled by the ringing of a bell one half-hour after the setting of the sun.. The "23rd hour" that Valentini refers to here in his *Deposition* – was "a half-hour before the setting of the sun". Consequently, the second hour of the night was two hours and a half after the setting of the sun. The French method of computing time began with midnight, just as we do it nowadays.

instructed by this mission. Finally, with the people revitalized by the duly prepared reception of the holy sacraments, they felt renewed and restored in the Lord. At the time when the missionaries were due to return to Rome, the weather became continuously rainy so that the preaching platform set up in the piazza was unable to be used for the special service of giving the final, salutary reminders and the papal blessing. The function had to be done in the new church which was not yet ready and their return to Rome became more difficult and dangerous on that night. The Servant of God, aroused by his faith, took the devout image of Mary most holy, mother of perpetual help, which he was accustomed to take along with him, and blessed the horizon. Then, he handed it over to the brethren there and urged them to raise it aloft, accompany it with many candles and bring it back to Velletri. What a wonder! Suddenly the heavy rain ceased falling and as long as it remained aloft, through the entire journey from Cisterna to Velletri, though people were afraid of a torrential downpour, it did not rain at all even though the trip was around ten to twelve miles in length. Upon arriving there, they gave thanks to God for this grace that was granted to them as all of them entered the church of San Martino. There, the Servant of God presented another rousing sermon to the people, reviving the spirit that they had developed during the recent mission. So, then, once within the safe confines of that church, the sluice-gates of heaven broke loose and all that rain fell that should have come down in that space of time that it took for the Servant of God and all those devout Christians who accompanied him in completing that processional journey on foot.

The events and everything else that I have already stated above have been made known to me by the now-deceased Canon Muccioli, by the people of Velletri and especially by Mr. Ignazio Lesinelli and the Servant of God himself, to inspire trust in most holy Mary and to overcome the obstacles to having missions which he at times was accustomed to refer to.

To be noted here is what has come to my knowledge in this regard. After handing over to the brethren in Cisterna the image of the most holy madonna, accompanied with candles, as I mentioned before, and making the procession back to Velletri, the missionaries returned to their rooms to pack their baggage, to change their clothes, etc. The coach arrived to transport the two of them. They got into the coach and had gone a fair distance, but then, when nearing Velletri, they noticed that a crowd of people from that city, carrying torches, had come to meet them at that hour of the night. To their surprise and displeasure, they saw the horses being stopped and a struggle ensue between the people of Cisterna and those of Velletri to see who would triumphantly lead the coach that was transporting them into Velletri. The Servant of God spoke gently to those good citizens and asked them to desist, but they would hear nothing of that. So, he then made his decision, opportunely, and along with his companion, he got out of the coach with the speed of lightning, removed himself from that crowd of good people, taking a short cut on foot, getting soaked and sullied with mud, he escaped that honor. Finally, exhausted and worn out, they rejoined that procession that had made its way to San Martino, as

mentioned before, and the Servant of God preached, as I indicated before from the knowledge that I received from the people that I previously named.

There is also another notable thing to mention in regard to this circumstance. It is this: the Cisterna Confraternity for Death, aggregated to the one in Rome, is honored to have had as its founder Canon Del Bufalo at the time when these exercises were conducted. The occasion was that at the time when the Servant of God was lodged in Cisterna, it so happened that a certain body of the customs-house in Piscinara, in the territory of Cisterna itself, was being transported at that time on a cart to be buried in a sacred place, without a priest, without candles, without any accompaniment or special ceremony by the church. This greatly disturbed the Servant of God who got word of this displeasing situation which, in that marshy area, often occurred for those poor Christians living and dying in that unhealthy climate. Their bodies were left to the voracious appetites of wild animals and even before that the stench of their decay greatly upset passersby. Furthermore, those bodies, half-consumed either by dogs or wild boars or snakes, presented a horrifying scene. So, zealously, the Servant of God decided to make every possible effort to set up in Cisterna a central location for that aforementioned confraternity and thus prevent further similar disorders. He asked the Cardinal Bishop for help by a letter in which he rationally demonstrated the extreme necessity for repairing that unacceptable situation. Immediately, he received canonical approval and, to the best of his ability, he set up an orderly arrangement and aggregated it to the Archconfraternity of Death in Rome in that same year. It brought joy to all of the people in that area and he gave great glory to God for this great work of mercy brought about through the effectiveness of his Servant.

Ministries in Rome

Following his usual practice, the Servant of God, under the direction of Canon Albertini, returned to Rome for the Lenten season during which he occupied himself in many public exercises of pious works, in giving catechetical instructions or other devout services to the benefit of his neighbors. It is impossible to describe the work that the Servant of God withstood in the year 1817 after he returned exhausted from the mission work done in Velletri and Cisterna. Thus, he wrote to Monsignor Cristaldi: "If you hear someone say that I work too much, don't give any credence to what you hear. Whenever I stick to the rules that I have been taught by the holy efforts of my spiritual director, I have no fear of making a wrong move and my health, by divine mercy, assists me."

Two activities, wisely promoted during the Lenten season of that year, and actually one could even say three, were all accomplished through the mediation of Monsignor Cristaldi, with the mercy of God, and with the zeal of the Roman clergy. The first was the setting-up of a spiritual retreat for the noble guard of the Supreme Pontiff in the Cappelletta of San Luigi; the other, the exercises and the spiritual

meeting in Sant'Apollina for the students of fine arts for every Sunday; the third one, for the scholars in the University bearing the name Sapienza. During this Lenten season, he gave two shifts of retreats to the noble, military guards, he conducted the meditation for the academic group of San Luca, the Lenten series in the venerable Monastery of Tor de' Specchi, public catechetical instructions in the Basilica of San Marco, the retreat for the ladies of rank in the Oratory of the Caravita, then later to other special people during the first days of Holy Week in the Cappellette of San Luigi, and the Three Hours Agony sermons on Good Friday. Along with all this activity, he maintained his steady letter-correspondence for the new foundations of Mission Houses, continued his directing of his usual pious organizations, the administration of the sacraments, the spiritual direction of nuns, tireless dedication to every sort of good work for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. He wondrously overcame every type of difficulty. Indeed, he wrote to his beloved Monsignor Cristaldi: "We must be victims for the glory of God, and not be worried at all about other things".

Quite often, when the Canon was in Rome, he would go to visit Monsignor Cristaldi and both of them, animated by the same spirit, would have very useful discussions for the sustenance of their pious works as well as the initiation of new ones, adapting them to the times and circumstances with the energy and sagacity that were so fully his. Then, when the Servant of God was located outside of Rome, he would keep up a steady correspondence with that same individual for the very same motives.

For a long time, through the services of Monsignor Cristaldi, he had dealt with the most reverend majordomo, at the time Monsignor Agostino Rivarola and with Pope Pius VII to conduct the exercises during Lent for the noble guards. Already, everything had been set in order so that as soon as the Servant of God arrived in the capital, he himself, upon the direction of Cristaldi, went directly to the majordomo, with whom he had a rather long discussion, and removed all of the annoyances and difficulties which the common enemy of good works usually creates under those circumstances, as he indeed writes of it to Monsignor Cristaldi:

"With this letter I am sending you a report concerning the meeting with Monsignor the majordomo. The opening for the first shift of retreats will be next Monday after the noon meal, and the communion day will be observed on Saturday morning. We also came to the agreement that this initial system of retreats be followed again for the closing days of Lent etc., and on this matter nothing more need be said. I would have liked to have had only one shift of retreats, which I strongly suggested to Monsignor the majordomo. However, the reasons were such that a second shift was indispensable; so, the opening will be set for Monday of the 4th week in Lent, closing then on the Saturday before Passion Sunday. With regard to our members who will conduct this second shift, we will work that out tomorrow morning with Canon Muccioli, and you will be kept informed of everything. Monsignor Rivarola will send you a note, letting you know whether there are any

linens available in the Pope's cabinet that could be used during these retreats, since he wants the retreatants to find everything there where the retreat is being held. He has charged me to ask that you, yourself, take care of what remains yet to be done and to see that nothing is lacking. ...”

My most beloved Monsignor, I know very well that this is placing upon you another heavy burden – upon one who should really be relieved of them. But, at the same time, it is so important that an organization which is just beginning its work, so acceptable to the Lord, should then do everything with good order so that each retreatant will (in a manner of speaking) leave his heart there at the Cappelletti of St. Aloysius. So, be courageous and let us carry out the work *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.”

Thus, successfully overcoming every difficulty, on Monday of the second week of Lent, in that year, on the 10th of March, the noble guards entered into the first shift of retreats and on Saturday, the 15th, they observed the general communion.

While he was immersed in the apostolic labors of that retreat, he wrote again to his friend and patron Cristaldi with an outburst of zeal:

“I simply do not know how to express to you the joy that I feel upon seeing an undertaking, or better said, various undertakings being initiated that all tend to the good of souls. God is keeping an account of the efforts that you have made in a cause that promotes so greatly his glory. And Oh! How I would like to be profuse and say more, except that I fear that I might offend your humility! I shall say only that many other things have got to be done, little by little, and at the right time.”

We know how much more he tried to do. He never succeeded in exhausting his zeal. He, on his own, never left untested any way that would prudently promote and efficaciously achieve any beneficial thing giving glory to God or bringing about spiritual benefit to the souls of his neighbor. Twenty-four young noblemen, papal guards, entered thereafter into the Cappelletti of St. Aloysius for a retreat on Monday, March 17th of the third week in Lent and on the following Saturday, with many tender tears, observed the general communion. All of this is verified in the Servant of God's letter-correspondence with Monsignor Cristaldi who preserved the letters of the Servant of God. Because of the benefits that he derived from his beginning associations with the Servant of God and his basic principles, the highly-regarded Monsignor Cristaldi continued to grow and develop further, eventually becoming a Cardinal in holy Mother Church.

Together with Fr. [Pietro] Ostini, cardinal emeritus of Holy Church, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and also bishop of Albano, Cristaldi founded a spiritual group for the professors and students of fine arts of the Academy of St. Luke to observe feastdays and the same for the Roman Archgymnasium of the Sapienza. He provided retreats for both of them during the Lenten period. From Pius VII, he obtained permission for their canonical establishment together with the granting of many indulgences. On that occasion, when the Servant of God was conducting the retreat for the professors and students

of fine arts, mentioned before, he sealed his cordial friendship and special relationship with the famous [Antonio] Canova, the man who greatly contributed to the welfare of that pious undertaking.

Cori

Having completed the Lenten series in Tor de' Specchi and the sacred ministry for all the people there, the Servant of God was summoned again by Cardinal Alessandro Mattei who had been thoroughly pleased with the two missions given in Velletri and Cisterna. He wanted him to continue giving missions in his diocese and precisely a mission in Cori. The Servant of God, together with the beloved Canon Muccioli went to Cori. After the introductory ceremonies that were done with huge success, the Servant of God made an effort to bring together the people of the upper and the lower sections of Cori, which appeared to be two different cities. So, one day he decided to preach in the so-called valley and on another day upon the mountain-top. Everyone seemed to be pleased with this arrangement and admired the prudence shown by the young missionary. The profitable results of this apostolic ministry and the very distinct fame of the Servant of God's special sanctity spread about, not only in Cori, but throughout the entire province.

Two things, beyond the usual, were noted during this mission. The first was that while the service using the image of the most holy Mary of Perpetual Help was being held and it was being solemnly exposed, a certain gentleman named Cataldi, who was selected as one of those assisting with the exposition, was affixing a candle to the pointed hook of the candleholder and accidentally and painfully punctured his finger. He went to the Servant of God to ask him to pray for him. With great faith, the Servant of God said: "Let us pray to Mary most holy and trust that it is nothing serious". He blessed the wound and added: "Today, keep in mind that it is her procession". As a matter of fact, on that very day, he said to the man who was standing there now with his finger bandaged that he should take hold of the rather large mission Crucifix and carry it courageously. The man sought to excuse himself, saying that he was unable to carry it because of that injured hand that was too torn and painful. Then, the Servant of God said to him: "Let us repeat our prayer, and go ahead, grab hold of the Crucifix without hesitation". After a short prayer, the bandaging fell off the wound which was completely healed, with all pain gone. The Crucifix was raised high as he proceeded to carry it throughout the entire procession. As far as I know, nothing else was used, no remedy of any sort that is usually applied in such cases. Likewise, no further complication appeared as a result of it. The second thing was that while the Servant of God was giving the final salutary reminders and the burning of forbidden books and the smashing of weapons was being conducted, they discovered, among other things, a hand-bag which was thought to be filled with objects of evil witchcraft. The zealous missionary, at this point, inveighed generally against the evil usage of such objects and then all

of a sudden he himself felt a sharp pain in his shoulder that was so forceful that he fell headfirst from the preacher's platform to the ground, banging against the piazza pavement and causing a tooth to break loose and blood to flow. However, he was not upset by all this, but simply washing out his mouth to stop the bleeding, he then returned to the preacher's platform as before, continued his sermon for a rather long period of time as if nothing at all had happened. All the people who were gathered there for the final blessing, let out a loud, compassionate cheer when he got up from the fall and were positively stunned in observing the courage and the unshakeable zeal that he showed for the welfare of all.

Sermoneta

He was invited by the bishop Monsignor [Francesco Saverio] Pereira, then bishop of Terracina, who had gotten word of the edifying results of the missions, to go to the neighboring city of Sermoneta. He went there with the hope of quickly setting things up with the help of other workers, especially Fr. Michelangelo Riccelli whom he had met in Rome. Riccelli participated in the work in Cori where the fame of that mission become well-known particularly because of the work of Canon [Luigi] Locatelli of Terracina and Canon Mancini of Velletri. This mission was likewise greatly blessed by God in a special way. However, he was not able to leave there as soon as he wanted to. As a result, he was unable to follow the directions of his spiritual director, Albertini, to return to Rome on that day and hence he did not arrive there at the appointed time. So, instead of a reward for all of the labors and sufferings that he endured in the aforementioned missions, he received, from his good spiritual father, a rather severe rebuke without his being given the chance to give his excuses or have his reasons heard.

During the above-mentioned mission in Sermoneta, it happened that a poor man who for some forty years had not made his confession, sought the Servant of God so that he could make his confession. But, he could not even get close to him because of the crowds of penitents. So, he went to one of the Servant of God's other companions, saying that he could no longer contain himself because of the impression which the preaching of Canon Del Bufalo had made upon his soul. But, while shedding tears, he nevertheless made a general confession and derived the full fruits of the sacraments which he continued, with the help of divine grace, to practice for some time afterwards. Whenever that missionary who heard his confession passed through that city, that penitent, recognizing him, mounted his horse and headed toward the place where the missionary was in order to kiss his hand devoutly, and assuring him that, with God's grace, he had still preserved his soul from sin and that he was leading a devout life. This took place in that area of marshy swamps. This item was recounted to me by the now-deceased Canon Muccioli along with several other special fruits of produced during that mission. Likewise, Canon Fr. Onorato Civetti of Sermoneta released a testimony that during

the meditation on death, at which he himself was present, the Servant of God uttered in a sonorous voice: “Who knows whether one of you who is listening to me at this moment this evening will be here to hear me tomorrow evening?” As a matter of fact, a certain Pasquale Tomarosi, who was present there on that day for that sermon, passed from this life to the next and on that following night was laid out in the church, as the audience looked on with fear and horror. Furthermore, in that same city of Sermoneta, a person near death who had received the sacraments and who was deeply moved just from listening to the fervor with which the Servant of God preached and the universal compunction that he aroused, now reacted by calling for any missionary to come to him to let him know that he had made a bad confession, that he had received the eucharist sacrilegiously. With a copious outpouring of tears, he confessed that this mission had freed him from the pains of hell.

On the final day of the mission in Sermoneta, a group of representatives arrived from the city of Cori where the Servant of God had already conducted a mission. The clergy and the nobility warmly invited him to return for at least one sermon to feed the people there who were starving and thirsting for the divine word that he had shared with them. The Servant of God could not refuse such courteous and repeated pleas made by those gentlemen.

The Servant of God, with tears of tenderness, carried out his office from one area to the next with his companion Muccioli, without at all stopping off at an inn or a private house ready to welcome him, but made his trip back to Rome as quickly as possible, all the time fearing that, like before, he might not get there at the time set for arriving there where he again had been summoned by his spiritual director, Albertini, as we mentioned previously.

Ministries in Rome and in Civitavecchia

Having arrived in Rome, he turned his attention to the concerns that he had assumed with respect to pious groups in that capital. After meeting with Monsignor Cristaldi, around the middle of June as seems to be very probable⁴ in regard to the administration for those groups as well as the concerns that he had about the progress of the Institute for his missionaries, he departed with Canon Muccioli to undertake the spiritual exercises for the people of Civitavecchia. I have already

⁴ Rightly does Fr. Nicola Pagliuca at this point make the following observation: “He says *it seems*, because he (Fr. Valentini) at that time had not as yet entered the Congregation. Furthermore, almost thirty years had gone by when he made this deposition, so he was not at all certain about precise dates. To this we add that that he did not concern himself about the listing of the ministries of Gaspar carried out in Rome where it is registered that he, in June 1817, preached the Month (of the most Precious Blood) in S. Nicola in Carcere. Hence, his trip to Civitavecchia occurred around fifteen days later, that is, after the feast of the most Precious Blood.”

mentioned the great success of the mission, the year before, that the Servant of God enjoyed with his companions in that city, but no less clamorous was the retreat given in this year, a retreat that was sought after and awaited because of the esteem and notable reputation that was achieved there by Canon Del Bufalo. So, for the ten days that the missionaries dwelt there, the spirit of fervor was revived and confirmed that had been aroused during the course of that previous mission so much so that Canon Muccioli and the Servant of God himself, could speak of it with great enthusiasm. From this, they came to the conclusion of the great benefits that are derived each year from the retreat by all the people and that every three to five years, in accordance with the suggestions of St. Alphonsus Liguori, all the people will be fortunate in receiving those benefits through the giving of missions. Extraordinary conversions occurred to the glory of God, but because of the Servant of God's reluctance to talk about the things that happened during the missions, they were not made public, for his fear that, in some way, he would be credited with them because of his tireless zeal.

Loreto, Recanati and Fr. Biagio Valentini

In the meantime, this task was completed and he quickly returned to Rome where he once again looked after his usual occupations and the care of souls. He was then summoned by the bishop of Loreto, at that time Monsignor [Stefano] Bellini. He had been so moved by the reports of the successes of the missions, especially the one in Ancona, that he kept up his letter-correspondence in his attempt to have a mission first of all in the renowned shrine of Loreto and next in the neighboring city of Recanati, providing his diocesan people there with this apostolic ministry. On July 27, 1817, the Servant of God wrote to Monsignor Cristaldi as follows:

“I have just received a letter from the most reverend bishop of Loreto and Recanati in which he invites me to give holy missions in the two aforementioned cities. Since he would like me to hasten my arrival in his diocese in order to be there before the time for vacations and harvest time, he writes as follows: ‘I recommend that the Mission be held during the opening days of next month; then, after a short rest, continue on to Recanati after the Mission in Loreto. This arrangement will forestall a variety of excuses that might arise or come up unexpectedly. So, I have decided on this procedure for the good of my flock as well as to make atonement to the Lord for these present chastisements. I will take care of the expenses incurred’.”

So, Canon Del Bufalo and Canon Muccioli left Rome for Loreto during the last days of July. Luckily, they found there Monsignor Cristianopoli, equally enthusiastic with the spirit of the Lord, who joined them for the giving of that mission. Great was the joy that inundated the heart of the Servant of God as he found himself there in the shrine of the Holy House, now able to give honor to the most holy Mother of God and our mother Mary and to be her most tender devotee. It is not possible to describe the spirit and the zeal with which he preached there her glories. This loving

Mother rewarded her most devoted Servant by granting him an extraordinary peace of spirit in his soul that was so anguished with internal temptations, tribulations and tests, as he called out to her and uttered thousands of words of praise and thanksgiving to his dearest benefactor.

I myself asked him in a spiritual conference how he could withstand so many troubles and tempestuous temptations that even St. Paul mentioned. He replied, candidly, that his soul no longer was disturbed as it was at first after the grace given to him by the Blessed Virgin, the grace of an inner imperturbability.

It was on this occasion that I made his acquaintance after he had preached on the feast of the most holy Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. That made a very, very special impression on my soul and it seemed to me that I had listened to a St. Bernard of Siena or the mellifluous voice of Chiaravalle. No sooner was that sermon finished, I, together with my friend Fr. Anacleto Gigliucci, who was acquainted with him before I got to meet him, went to visit him in the house where, though he was thoroughly bathed in sweat and exhausted from his labors, he welcomed us courteously as though he had known us for a very long time. He was also scheduled to give a conference to the clergy of the cathedral there around the Ave Maria hour, but he still he showed me the greatest warmth of conversation up until the precise time he was supposed to preach. He did not want me to leave him until I first set a date for a return appointment. I was amazed that, after such a moving and tiring sermon, he would still be going to preach again with such a fresh and invigorated spirit to such an elite group as were those noted clergy and their bishop. They were not able to fully express their praise for the pertinent instructions that he gave, so apt for these priests and so replete with profound teaching, vast erudition and heavenly unction that penetrated to the depths of their hearts that they themselves openly declared and which I myself also noted. In fact, this was his own particular gift, that is, preaching to his own “venerable confreres”, the priests, since that was the title he used in speaking to them. He likewise referred to them as his “masters” out of due respect for them since he was so much younger. He showed himself to be moved, to be deeply affected and governed by what he was saying and did not, in the least, give the slightest notion or feeling of critical judgment even towards the priests who were blameworthy, if any were present. With flashing clarity, he openly proclaimed the eternal truths but without offending anyone. All agreed, both the learned and the pious, that he was one endowed with the special gift of drawing the priests to lead a more perfect life and one who could industriously involve them in doing pious works, along with his Institute, where there was a void in the dioceses in which they were incardinated.

In Loreto, he did all that he could to remove the abuse that was being perpetrated in that city by men and women sellers of rosaries, crucifixes etc. by making use of charming young ladies who would get hold of outsiders, either priests or religious or laypeople, taking them by the arm and with a sort of gentle violence lead them into the taverns to spend their money, all of which was contrary to

modesty and decency. The most reverend bishop worked especially hard and efficaciously following the industrious and zealous example of the missionaries and he removed that abuse as best he could. After the mission, people talked about the Servant of God as an indefatigable apostle, most zealous for the honor of God and the salvation of souls.

In this mission, too, he worked as tirelessly as he had in the others, reviving all of the old organizations, confraternities and also instituted the nightly oratory. The holy bishop, venerably aged, was completely captivated with the Servant of God and wanted him to travel about his entire diocese which was quite extensive. However, for that year, the Servant of God was unable to do so but they did discuss the possibility for the upcoming year, which was something that actually did take place.

The Servant of God deigned even to invite me to participate in this mission and he provided me with the document of aggregator for the devotion of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, dated August 17, 1817. However, I was unable to go since I was still undergoing convalescence from an atrocious infection in my chest. As a matter of fact, the clear prognosis of Doctor Calvani of Ancona was that he hoped that I would survive a few more days. [569] Doctor Bellini, the doctor in our town, had forbidden me to undertake any assignments or work. When he saw the invitation that the Servant of God had given me, he was greatly astounded since he was quite aware of how laborious those missions were. Considering that as something undesirable, he informed my parents and made them worried about my accepting it. Nevertheless, I continued discussing this with my friend, the Servant of God, and I also consulted with the Venerable Monsignor Strambi who was there to meet the Servant of God and talk with him. It was decided, with the permission of my own bishop, to take part in the mission that would follow in Recanati despite the grim prognosis uttered by the doctor and the concerns of my parents and relatives. The doctor in charge then said: "You go right ahead, but, after three days, you will be dead". The Servant of God was aware of all of this, but, relying greatly on the advice given by Monsignor Strambi in addition to his own inner feelings that agreed perfectly with that advice, he took me aside and together we recited three Hail Marys to the most holy virgin. He said: "Let us proceed in the name of Jesus and Mary and do not be afraid". The facts showed that he was inspired by God since after fifteen days of mission work in Recanati and just as many more in Montefano, when I returned to my home town while on my way to the mission in Civitanova, the doctor in charge was summoned in the presence of my parents who had invited the missionaries to our home for some refreshments and all together, including the doctor, declared that I was like a dead man arisen. All of them were happy and eager to continue with the mission in Civitanova which was imminent. In confirmation of this truth, the granting of a special grace through the intercession of the most blessed Virgin and through the prayer offered by the Servant of God, all that needs to be said that from that time on, I have been completely dedicated to preaching and hearing confessions in the missions that were even more laborious than the first

ones. No longer did I experience pains in the chest whereas previously I had even expectorated pus and blood. Indeed, even while climbing steep mountains and difficult mounds, I went along singing the hymns and prayers that were customarily sung during the missions, yes, singing for miles without the least bit of annoyance.

Once the mission in Loreto was completed, a mission that was greatly blessed by God, there arose, by the work of the common enemy, a great argument between the canons and the town-leaders of Recanati because of the welcoming ceremony that was asked for in keeping with the printed requirements - as if Canon Del Bufalo were a pope or a bishop - a voluntary welcoming for a divine ambassador that is usually carried out in order to encourage the people and prepare them better for beneficial results from the mission. After several discussions and convincing arguments which the bishop himself sought to present to his Chapter and to the town-leaders, he, a man of wisdom and experience and one who had taken part in mission-work, made his way to the Cathedral in Recanati. There, in his pontifical robes, he called the Chapter together and, while putting a rope around his neck, he raised the Crucifix into the air and, followed by all of the canons, made his way to the gateway of the city and met the ambassador of the great God. This was such a moving, unexpected scene of devotion toward the apostolic ministry that it could only be the source of a deep impression on the souls of all present, producing an entirely different idea than that which had been aroused at first in the minds of the canons and the town-leaders.

Then, the solemn entrance for the mission in Recanati was made and the Servant of God's majestic appearance and lovable personality were made evident to all the priests, the nobility, the ladies who looked upon him as a true saint and a most eloquent missionary. He showed his zeal not only to the lower class of people, but also to those with distinctive positions so that the latter, by their good example, could influence the common folk and establish them firmly in good living. Since his fellow missionary, Fr. Antonio Muccioli, did not want to take on hearing the confessions of women, often the Servant of God had to substitute in the confessional himself even though in his regulations for the system to be followed in conducting missions directed that the one in charge of the mission would be involved only to a small degree or not at all in this particular aspect of the ministry. He was especially constrained to come to a very definite decision not to get involved, except in an absolute necessity, with any particular case. The reason for this determination was based on the following. Since he was obliged, several hours before noon, to give the conferences to the clergy of the city, the women of the nobility who were pretty shrewd, would make all sorts of efforts to prevent him from leaving the confession, but only at their convenience. They would gather some chairs into a circle so that he could not get through or be able to move elsewhere. He would beg them, he would tell them that the bishop and the clergy would be expecting him and only by using his dexterity could he reach any success. In view of that, he was delayed for a bit of time thus causing the clergy to be waiting. So, both there and

elsewhere, he tried to keep himself from the situation of being held back in public, for example in the confessional for women. Only in rare cases, as I mentioned before, would he do so. He would regularly supply a third member of the group or some other priests who were on hand, as, for example, he did in this special case, by asking Monsignor Cristianopoli to supply. Whenever he was on a mission with only Muccioli, he would always call another from the area to be on hand.

The mission was marvellously fruitful and on September 8th of that same year 1817, he gave the apostolic blessing to an immense crowd of people who had attended. However, in order that all would be able to go to confession, he was required to remain there three extra days. Finally, he left on the 11th of that month to go a make a day of recollection for himself and his companion Muccioli in Montefiore. He stayed in the parish house in that small town which had the appearance of a place of retreat. The pastor, an old and virtuous fellow, wanted the Servant of God to give a sermon to his flock. The pastor was overwhelmed not only by the ease with which the Servant of God presented the divine word but also by the vehemence of his spirit. The young, truly apostolic, youth uttered such great things that he wanted to be able to see this young man again before his own death. As a matter of fact, he was heard again as he passed by there later and once again produced a very generous fruitful result as he sowed the divine seed in the hearts of those people.

Montefano

In the meantime, in Montefiore, he received a reply from the bishop of Osimo, Cardinal [Carlo Andrea] Pelagallo, for a mission in Montefano, a dependency of that diocese. He quickly gathered together three other young priests in order to prepare them for that apostolic ministry. They were: the parish priest [Filippo Saverio] Grimaldi, now the bishop of San Severino, Fr. Anacleto Gigliucci of Ancona and myself, the one making this deposition. Joining up with Canon Muccioli, we carried out the mission with the usual good results, although there was nothing particular or extraordinary that occurred.

While the Servant of God was working on the mission here, he met with a special deputation of priests and town leaders from Civitanova with a letter sent from Cardinal Cesare Brancadoro, of notable memory, in which he was courteously inviting him for a mission in his diocese where his reputation for apostolic and fruitful results had become widespread. Even though harvest season was near, he could not resist the request of these people who were anxiously awaiting his arrival. The Servant of God also invited the most reverend bishop of Nocera to lend a hand since he, on other occasions, had deigned to offer his services to the Servant of God as a companion during his open time. Making his way there through Porto di Recanati, the Servant of God was invited to give a visiting sermon there. So, in passing through, he found the people there very desirous of hearing him in the church where

they had all gotten together. From the platform set-up for preaching, he gave them an extraordinary and moving message, reviving within them the good resolutions which they had made during the time of the neighboring missions. After he finished his sermon, he continued his journey with the most reverend Francesco Luigi Piervisani, bishop of Nocera, with Muccioli, Grimaldi, Gigliucci and myself, this testifying witness.

Civitanova

At the 22nd hour of September 29th, under the protection of St. Michael the Archangel, the entrance into Civitanova took place. The Servant of God made the introduction with great fervor and thus dedicated himself to these apostolic labors with his whole heart. Each morning, before daybreak, he went to the gates of Civitanova to preach to the poor sinners there, but he did not overlook his usual conferences to the various groups of people. As his faithful servant was given blessings by his God, he brought forth wondrous fruits from that mystical vineyard, driving out secret societies promoted by some evil ones, already known by the government, by drawing these ill-doers to those special functions which they had criticized as being too sentimental such as the penitential processions and the use of the discipline. They thought to themselves: how is it ever possible for a person with outstanding abilities, brilliant of mind and eloquent of speech, be moved so wholeheartedly if it were not supernatural as could be seen. According to them, it was not a question of gaining bodily health and much less a hankering for dignity, but in that ministry, they were given something which removed every eagerness for personal ambition. How was it possible for such a man to produce, with his preaching of those unshakeable truths, such inner conviction and persuasion, the quieting of the passions and the cleansing away of those evil inclinations if not by the power of God. That appeared to move very clearly from his very visage which was being challenged by so many and so varied forces of opposition, as he generously gave of himself for the welfare of his neighbor. Hence, they had to come to the conclusion: it is we who have been misled and have followed other diverse and misleading principles. So, they gave themselves over to the external demonstrations of repentance and participated in the sacred ceremonies that were carried out with religious decorum and singular modesty.

I remember two occurrences that happened during that mission. One was terrifying and frightful, the other edifying and very consoling. A young girl who had a bad reputation, but was quite attractive and alluring, went about speaking pejoratively of the divine word, using her own perverse and rowdy ways, ridiculing and making fun of the Servant of God and advising both companions and male suitors, to listen to, as she referred to it, that farcical nonsense. That poor thing, as she became more and more insulting, suddenly dropped dead in her house. They discovered her in the condition of a maddened person, so hideously had she

changed in her appearance. The faithful tried to show charity toward her by improving her appearance since she was to be shown the next day in church. When the Servant of God was informed about her, he was prepared, in keeping with the method of St. Ignatius, to give the sermon on death. Without going into any particulars about the deceased girl, just seeing the dead girl and preaching about death in general was enough to fill the listeners with horror insofar as in that unfortunate person one might see the effects of the wrath of God. That in itself was a mute sermon, a most eloquent one that could move the heart of anyone. The other occurrence is one that took place during that same mission. It dealt with a young girl, a companion and friend of the aforementioned deceased one, who had changed in quite a different way. After making her confession and receiving holy communion, she became mortally ill. Dressed in a white dress and with a crown of thorns on her head, she gave praise to God during her illness, thanking him for the mercy shown toward her in bringing her to a sincere conversion. She then begged all of her companions and friends to see that she would be kept dressed in white and wearing that crown of thorns after her death and that she be shown publicly in church in that fashion in reparation for all the scandal that she had given. With tears, she implored God's pardon and the forgiveness of all the people. This, too, was an extraordinary grace for maintaining the good results of that holy mission alive. It was beautiful to see that young girl shortly afterwards, her face beaming with heavenly peace as she was shown in the church, still dressed in that dress which was the edifying sign of her being a true follower of the Crucified Lord.

At this point, we must not overlook the fact that during the progress of the mission, the harvesting was underway and the Servant of God begged the owners and the managers of the fields to allow [the workers] to take at least one hour off from work each day in order to derive benefit from the mission by going to confession and receiving communion at their convenience during that acceptable time of mercy and grace. Some less considerate owners refused to go along with this request offering a thousand excuses and pretexts based only on their own self-interests. Others, however, unhappy with that sort of harshness, gave the harvesters and the people of the area full liberty. God, the ultimate judge and remunerator, caused things to go in such a way that the former, so filled with self-interests, took in only a half less than the second group who took in double, no one knows how. I know this very well, and I have no doubts, since I heard it myself from those owners. So, the happy results were extraordinary and the benefits were enjoyed by that city of Civitanova as well as its port. When Canon Del Bufalo and Muccioli returned to Rome and the other priests to their own dioceses, I remained there as a witness of the perseverance of so many people who went in large crowds to frequent the holy sacraments at the places conducted by the religious or the priests of their own home towns. They also went to Loreto and to Porto di Recanati where they had the convenience of going to confession to me and to others.

Norma, Roccamassima and Giulianello

The Servant of God had contracted a certain obligation with Cardinal Alessandro Mattei, bishop of Velletri, to arrange a course of missions for the other towns of his diocese at an opportune time, and he wished to keep his word. So, not concerned at all about the exhaustion that he surely must have felt after those preceding missions, he consulted with his spiritual director Albertini. He came to a decision around the first days of November, together with the blessing of the highly-regarded Cardinal Bishop, to go to Norma, Roccamassima and Giulianello to conduct the missions there along with his companion Fr. Antonio Muccioli.

He arrived in Norma precisely on the 8th when the Servant of God made the usual introductory services. They both remained there fifteen days even though it was a small population. With Norma situated between Cori and Sermoneta, the neighboring people also attended the mission with great fervor. Mutually, they helped each other to promote the glory of God. There are no more details available in regard to this mission except that on the 23rd of that same month, the day that celebrates the feast of the pope and martyr, St. Clement, the protector of the diocese of Velletri, the papal blessing was imparted.

Then, he went on to Roccamassima with his companion always fearful of falling down precipitously along those steep roadways of the mountainous areas. But, trusting in God's protection, they arrived safe and sound and filled with spiritual joy, ready to instruct in everything necessary those illiterate folks. The Servant of God's soul was totally filled with God's spiritual consolations.

Finally, then, to Giulianello, located between Norma and Cori, situated on level land, where they stayed to the contentment not only of the people of that desolate town, but also for the people of Cori and of Norma who attended here as a sort of revival and confirmation of the good that they had achieved in the previous missions.

Ministries in Rome

Around the middle of December, the Servant of God returned to Rome with the great satisfaction of that Cardinal Bishop who noted again the workers in both the cities and in the towns who were very happy there to bring benefits to the redeemed children of God. Canon Muccioli, of happy memory, told me that with those poor people the Servant of God was like a brother, a friend, a father to them, restoring peace to those who were vengeful, gentleness to the bullies and brutes, giving courage to the fearful and lowly to serve God with simplicity and holy joy. He did not fail to establish the nocturnal oratories to preserve the good fruits earned during the holy mission, as well as other pious organizations under the guidance of the few priests who were in charge of these faithful. He distinguished himself especially with his work for the people of Norma, among others, leading them incessantly to continue their frequenting of the nightly oratories, but also their

frequent reception of the sacraments.

Ministries of 1818

Ministries in Rome and San Felice in Giano

In Rome, the Servant of God applied himself to the usual ministries as well as to his letter-correspondence pertaining to the new foundation to be established for the reunion of the missionaries under the title of the most Precious Blood. He animated and encouraged all of them to help with the maintenance of the oldest house, namely, the one in Giano, providing it with the necessary means. In various circumstances, he himself assisted for the support of the buildings by collecting from benefactors more than one thousand four scudi, as can be seen in the books showing income and outlay. It is obvious that the supply of this temporal means was attributable to benefactors who lived in the area since he himself did not have any such fortune. Neither did he accept a donation or gift, as I mentioned elsewhere, when conducting missions, except for the expenses of travel, food and lodging. He did not possess other ecclesiastical benefices except those that were necessary for his sustenance and that of his family members. The lawyer, Paolucci, and Monsignor Cristaldi were the ones who helped him and insisted that he seek subsidies besides the personal offerings they made themselves for the Servant of God's great concern for the welfare of that first foundation. Also, later, for the concern that he had in 1817 and 1818 for the neighboring shrine of our most Blessed Mother del Fosco in that same area of Giano, because of the report of some miracles that had occurred there in that shrine. The people of the entire area of Umbria would frequently go there in devout processions, seeking graces and favors. Thus, the Servant of God became involved there in hearing confessions. Then, too, in order to arouse the faithful to a devotion to the most holy Virgin, he would assign companion workers there, an area with a shortage of confessors, in order to administer the sacraments to the faithful who gathered there in large numbers. He sent there a certain Fr. Giacomo Blasini, a native of Corsica, who, after successfully completing his studies in Rome, was trained by the Servant of God in the art of preaching and in hearing confessions when he was in charge of the poor of Santa Galla. On that occasion, when the image in that shrine worked a miracle, he was stimulated to join the Institute and to get involved in the sacred ministry at that shrine. He remained there for several years until he was called back to Corsica because of some family matters and other things dealing with his bishop and the title of some other foundations there. The Servant of God then sent Canon Fr. Luigi Moscatelli to that foundation of Giano as a fourth worker, together with Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, later bishop of Norcia, and Fr. Luigi Achille, who died as an exemplary member of the Institute.

We also know that each year, just as in this one, at carnival time he was accustomed to withdraw in retreat, together with Albertini, his spiritual director, to

Sancti Giovanni e Paolo in the care of the Passionist Fathers. There, with an exemplary spirit of recollection, he poured out his affections on a one to one basis with God, purifying his soul ever more and more so as to give himself entirely to his beloved Lord. I recall that before the spread of the mission houses, especially before the one in Albano, he even invited me to join him in retreat. He was very much interested in taking part in all of the doings held in common with his other companions in retreat, except that, after the noon meal, and with the approval of his spiritual director, he would deprive himself of the period of recreation. At first, he would spend that time with Canon Albertini, then later, with me, after the death of Albertini, discussing matters pertaining to the soul and the steps to be taken for progress in spiritual perfection, including the ways to give greater glory to God by means of the missions and the foundations. Still alive is his reputation for mature virtue shown during that retreat and so admired by those outstanding religious living there. They consider themselves as singularly honored that year in having with them an apostolic man of quality, such a beautiful memory. Each year, he himself, along with his fellow members, would withdraw into retreat in their own mission houses in preparation for the feast of St. Francis Xavier, the protector of our Institute.

With the arrival of Lent in the year 1818, he took on his customary work of the burdensome ministry. A retreat for the young people of the apostolic hospice of San Michele and another for the military in Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. Likewise, meditations for the academic corps in Sant'Apollinare, the public catechetical instructions in Sant'Agnese in Piazza Navona, the retreat for the students of law at at the Capellette di San Luigi at the Collegio Romano. The Three Hours agony services on Good Friday also occupied the Servant of God at that sacred time of special mercy. So, as in every other year, this resume of activities shows that the Servant of God was proclaiming the divine word every day and many times each day to the admiration and contentment of the various superiors who requested his work.

Nocera Umbria

The solemnity of Easter in that year of 1818 fell on March 22nd and the Servant of God had quite a number of requests from bishops for missions, taking with him his companion Fr. Antonio Muccioli, Canon Fr. Luigi Moscatelli, who returned from Giano, and Vincenzo Severini, his aide, on the Monday after the Sunday in Albis, namely, March 30th, on his trip to Nocera. They arrived there on the 4th of April and were joined there by two other companions, namely, Fr. Guglielmo Sillani, later bishop of Terracina, and Canon Moroni, of happy memory.

The missionaries were greeted by the bishop, the clergy and the people at the gates of the city as the Servant of God quickly handled the solemn introduction held in the cathedral. As usual, the apostolic work were incalculable as was the corresponding benefits to the souls. We recall that here, too, in order to satisfy every level of person, on one day alone, the Servant of God preached fourteen times, and

not just sparingly. The ceremonies were carried out devoutly and with great fanfare; the compunction, the tears, the advancement in holiness of everyone was truly admirable, as Monsignor Sillani, bishop of Terracina, as well as Monsignor Piervisani, bishop of Nocera, both related to me with ineffable joy.

The Servant of God stayed fifteen days in Nocera. In the spacious piazza, outside the Porta Romana, they set up for the final papal benediction and the concluding spiritual reminders. On that day, the horizon was overcast with dark clouds and it was feared that rain was very imminent. The holy image of Mary the Mother of perpetual help and the patroness of the mission was raised over the preacher's platform. The sky became frighteningly black and strong winds began to beat furiously threatening to shred to pieces that image and forcing it closer and closer to the candles burning there. Everyone is fearful that that majestic cloak would be devoured by flames. Ultimately, what really terrified the people was the heavy downpour that began to fall, as they all stood there in the open menaced by this fierce storm. Naturally, one could see a general movement of the multitude of people, even though the Servant of God had begun his sermon. He, then, said to them: "Do not be afraid. Let no one move from his place, for this is simply a device of the devil to impede the good work being done. It is an attack of hellish power against this most holy image! Do not be afraid for Mary will defeat the powers of hell and overcome them!" Then, with great faith he seized the banner, raised it up high and waved it in blessing upon the clouds and the people standing there in horrible darkness. Behold! Instantly the downpour ceased, the winds were quieted and even though the sky still remained a bit dismal until nightfall perhaps to call for a still stronger act of faith from the people, the multitudes gathered there heard those spiritual reminders, received the papal blessing, threw down their weapons, burned forbidden books and chanted their praises to Jesus and Mary for the grace given to them there, to the neighboring towns. And, without getting a bit soaked, they returned to their own families filled with a holy joy for having had in their midst such a great Servant of God, so holy and beneficent. Vincenzo Severini, a witness of this occurrence, a man who is rather the timid type and present at a mission for the first time, when he saw the emotion of the thousands of individuals ready to flee in confusion and complaints, he stayed behind the preacher's platform and the Madonna's banner, hidden, bewildered and uncertain, not knowing just what to do. He saw the courage of the Servant of God, he saw the docility of the people and the grace that was given to them and he then came out into the open full of courage and faith, shouting "*Eviva Maria*", being much more confident of the powerful intercession of the most blessed Virgin, of the help of the missionary Fr. Gaspar Del Bufalo and regarded this whole event as something sacred.

Monsignor Francesco Piervisani, the bishop of Nocera, as I mentioned, was also present along with his Vicar General [Lorenzo] Parigini, later bishop of Urbania. They, too, were very content with the holy mission. The former wished to join the Servant of God as a companion in the mission in Fabriano and the latter sought to

tighten his friendship with the Servant of God and spoke of him as a second St. Francis Xavier.

Fabriano

When that mission in Nocera was finished, the Servant of God had to take care of the concerns of Monsignor Domenico Buttaoni, bishop of Matelica and Fabriano. He went there with the admired Piervisani and his regular companion Muccioli and with Canon Moroni and Fr. Antonio Pascucci, outstanding priests of the diocese of Monsignor Piervisani. They made the solemn entrance into Fabriano on April 20th. As to just what happened during the course of that mission we have in a description given by Canon Peracci, the pro-Vicar General of that diocese, in one of his letters:

“It was the zeal of the tireless Canon Del Bufalo who distinguished himself in the exercises given in separate sessions to the clergy, to the nobility, to the artists. In order that the fruits of the holy mission would remain permanent, he erected, among all the other pious associations, the nightly oratory which is still preserved. With his learned and moving sermons great benefit resulted in the form of significant changes in their mode of life.”

In regard to this mission, the priest Fr. Francesco Pierantoni, a native of Matelica, told me that some bad-intentioned people offered the Servant of God some valuable gold coins as a gift, just as wax for candles and other valuable objects were contributed to most holy Mary, these were in gratitude and appreciation to him. But, very, very quickly, he replied that he had come there to win souls and not for money. Hence, he thanked them saying that, as a matter of principle and in keeping with their rule, he was unable to accept any sort of gift. Those men, of course, were very stunned and deeply edified. Other people offered copious and sizeable amounts for Masses to be celebrated both there and elsewhere, to which he likewise replied that during the time of a mission it was not proper for them to accept anything so as not to deprive the alms that the poor clergy of the various dioceses would receive as part of their sustenance.

That same Fr. Francesco Pierantoni related to me that precisely in Fabriano, while the Canon was preaching, he learned about a gift of God insofar as the Canon was able to make his voice heard for miles away so that some shepherds who were out in the countryside, quite distant from the city, were able to repeat the words that they had heard from the Servant of God who was preaching in the city limits. This fact is also confirmed by Mr. Camillo Possenti, a very close friend of the Servant of God and a citizen of Fabriano. Later on, this same marvelous phenomenon was noted on other occasions as when, in Matelica, the aged and hard-of-hearing mother of Fr. Francesco Pierantoni was able to relate to her son the priest the sermon that had been delivered by the Canon in that city, which he himself had heard. She, however, was out in the countryside several miles away.

Here, one might point out that frequently the Servant of God preached with a hoarse voice due to the exhaustion and tiredness that was perfectly natural. Often, therefore, in order to second the Servant of God's zeal, the Lord would allow him to be heard from a distance. However, on some occasions, when he lost his voice completely, he could not be heard even nearby. But, then, all of a sudden, when the image of the most holy Mother Mary was brought in, he would recover his voice that became so much more sonorous that it jarred and stunned the people present. It is also true that the Lord, from time to time, would humble him and cause him to suffer the loss of his voice and have to make himself understood only by the use of gestures.

Matelica and Fr. Biagio Valentini

From Fabriano, the Servant of God moved on to Matelica on May 4, 1818 with the same companions except for the bishop of Nocera. In his place, the Servant of God had summoned me, having informed me before his departure from Rome that if I should be at my home I should join up with him again for that mission. I sent my answer to him in Rome that in order to take care of all of the Easter confessions I did not feel that it was right to leave my home town which was short of priests for hearing the confessions of the people. But, after a period of time, when he wrote to me again asking me whether I would like to join up with him in Cerreto, a town located between Matelica and Fabriano, and to be there for the introductory ceremonies of the mission in Matelica, I replied that I would willingly join up with him. Despite the dissuasion of my relatives and friends, I weathered that situation by saying that I could no longer be doubtful of my vocation in view of the miraculous cure that I experienced, judged by all to be something inexplicable, worked by the intercession of most holy Mary as well as the prayer and blessing of the Servant of God. At that get-together, the talks that we had in Loreto about my spiritual advancement and his, including my vocation were resumed. He, however, was very reserved so as not to give the impression that he was the founder since he rather spoke to me about Doctor Del Monte, about the Marquis Imperiali, about the oblates of St. Charles, of the Company of Jesus and others. He wanted me to imitate their example by drawing together the diocesan priests from any locale to get involved in mission work with them. Finally, he told me that a certain Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, a Roman, was the superior in San Felice in Giano along with a couple other priest-companions. He, too, has been doing great work. The Servant of God wondered whether I would be interested in joining with them there and that he was able to make those arrangements. I had indicated to him that while I was in the seminary I read about the re-establishment of the Company of Jesus and that I was somewhat interested and inspired to become a part of them. He replied that he himself was entire Jesuit and that he, too, had those same intentions, but that now that he was already a priest and involved in the ministry, he had to be very careful about

abandoning his vocation inconsiderately for, as was stated by St. Philip, one moves from doing evil to doing good with quick steps, but from doing good to doing something better one must use mature judgment for one can be easily deceived so that one does neither the one nor the other. He emphasized that I should be grateful for the favor granted by the most holy Madonna of Loreto in the cure obtained and that, finally, he had consulted with an outstanding spiritual director in Rome with regard to the spiritual situation that was dealt with in Loreto and that spiritual director stated this: the doing of universal good through the missions is preferable to that of doing good in one's own home town, and, that now that I was engaged in that work, I should not turn back.

There was a great deal of opposition shown in this city of Matelica, a city that was almost totally indifferent to the arrival of the missionaries. However, as soon as they heard the voice of the Servant of God and witnessed the beautiful order observed in the sacred functions as well as the magnificence of the practices of religion so decorously carried out that the citizens began to show their interest and compunction. The bad folks, of course, shuddered and tried to discredit the noisy and unacceptable fuss made against the spirit of the age by the missionaries. They invented all sorts of stories such as the effect their work was having on pregnant women causing them to abort when witnessing the use of the discipline. I myself was a witness when this was reported with great anxiety to the Servant of God by a good priest. Canon Del Bufalo replied immediately that no such thing had ever occurred in even noisier missions given elsewhere; he encouraged the priest not to be disturbed by those reports for they were the inventions of overly delicate people, and that none of it was true. He asked the Vicar General to dextrously deny these untraceable rumors by checking with the local surgical doctors and also to prudently check with the midwives. It was discovered eventually that this whole thing was false and in a short while the rumors disappeared.

The triumph of religion was preached effectively in apologetical sermons without arousing the least doubts but rather confirming the faith of the people. Embarrassing to the nonbelievers for their principles of action, it was like surrounding the city of Jericho with solemn processions, especially the procession on the feast of Corpus Domini which was observed during the course of this mission. It was directed by the Servant of God with such beautiful order that it was described by the citizens of that town as something that had never been seen there before. Filled with a deep-felt compunction and holy joy, all were changed in the depths of their hearts by that devout, external function as well as in the thoughts of their minds evidenced in their outward conduct. Thus, in this fashion one could see the general change that had occurred, accompanied by one or the other rather notable act of conversion of individuals who were nonbelievers and people who ridiculed holy things. Among them there was a lady, the leading dancer for the women-gardeners and scandalous females. She prided herself in not allowing her way of life to be spoiled by the missionaries. However, after hearing a stirring sermon, she was the

first one to change her conduct. She was quite voluptuous in her manner of dress but then she began to dress modestly like a true believer and admitted that she was deserving of a thousand hells. She finally surrendered to that warm invitation and consoling conviction which brought her to have faith in all and each one of the truths of religion and particularly the teaching about hell which she previously had boastfully ridiculed. Now, she was quite fearful because of her former sinfulness, knowing that by remaining in sin she was in a veritable hell, as she had already experienced. Achieving peace with God and being in his friendship surpassed all of the delights of the world. After making her general confession with total perseverance she renewed her duties toward her husband and family so that even after many years, when I met her again at another mission, I found her still a most exemplary lady who had led her husband and all of her family toward holiness by her own suggestions and good example. Furthermore, her very well-known conversion was the cause of the restoration to the faith of many other women as she used her well-cultivated and productive talents to influence them by the fresh aroma of her virtuous life.

The Servant of God erected in Matelica various associations for the nobility, for the women and for the merchants, in addition to the usual associations. He gave several visiting sermons in the different small towns in that neighborhood. In Collamato, he instituted the devotion of the most Precious Blood. The benefits that those people derived from it is to be noted as having been truly marvelous. Lastly, it should be noted that one of the pastors in Fabriano, by the name of Fr. Gregorio Ambrosi, a Silvestrian monk, was sent a horse so that he could get to Matelica to hear confessions. When he was a short distance from the city around the 22nd and a half hour, and despite the noise and movement of his mount, he heard the clear and sonorous voice of the Servant of God who was preaching in the piazza quite some distance away. He was amazed and stupefied and immediately got off the horse to attentively listen to the sermon. He asserts furthermore that priests and lay people have spoken of this gift as well as of other gifts showered upon the Servant of God. Different country-folks claim that they heard his sermons delivered publicly while they were out working in the open countryside.

San Severino

That mission was brought to its completion around May 20th. The Servant of God left those people who appeared to be inconsolable in seeing their dear father going away. Even though he begged them to stay in their city and refrain from paying him any compliments, as many of them who were able wished to follow him all the way to the city of San Severino where he was scheduled to begin another mission. The Servant of God was distressed to see so many people following his departure and was unable to get them to turn back. As a matter of fact, there was a troop of soldiers on foot and another on horseback whom the civil authorities had

assigned to this duty. Half way down the route they were met by several carriages transporting some of the nobility from San Severino who wanted to be there to greet the Servant of God. Gradually, the crowd of people grew larger and he was welcomed like a triumphant victor. He, however, in order to avoid confusion, immediately began to set in order the various confraternities that had gathered there along with their secular and regular clergy. Then, at the gate of the city, he knelt at the feet of the bishop together with the other missionaries and proceeded with the customary ceremony of introduction. When they got to the piazza where the preacher's platform was erected he made his introductory sermon dealing with eternal salvation, following the pattern set by the famous Fr. Termanini of the Company of Jesus. During that sermon, both he and his fellow missionaries placed a crown of thorns on their heads and a rope around their necks and finally they brandished the discipline, as the people reacted with shouts of repentance as they applied the strokes while praying for mercy for themselves and for the people. The Servant of God would use this practice at the well-attended missions in order to arouse repentance and a desire to make their confessions early. The most reverend bishop Giacomo Ranghiasi wrote the following on June 4th of that year 1818:

“The mission was begun with a very impressive entrance. Later, the sermons were delivered and catechetical instructions and other ceremonies were carried out for ten days. They gave ten or fifteen sermons each day. During that same period of time, they led spiritual exercises for the clergy, the nuns, the noble ladies and men, the artists, men and women, all in separate groupings in addition to their sermons delivered in public. The attendance of the people was most numerous so that no one could ever recall having seen such a huge assembly in San Severino since they had come from all of the neighboring towns and cities. They conducted three beautiful processions with a grand display of candles. One night, a procession was held with fervorinos given from time to time and was handled with excellent quiet and order. The thing the I liked most was the general expression of compunction shown by the people. From morning to night, more than fifty priests were on hand hearing confessions and many were unable to get in because of the huge number of general confessions being made. There were four occasions when the ceremony of general communion was observed, one for the young unmarried girls, one for the married women, one for the men, and the fourth one for the boys and girls being prepared for their first communion. Incidentally, in that group there was a man, twenty-six years old, who had never made his first communion. Every morning there were more than a thousand people who received communion, and, as I said, crowds from the countryside and the neighboring towns. One could see that the people were thirsting (after so many years of disorder) for the divine word. It was so in all of the cities that were visited by these missionaries up to this time. The faithful were inspired to make sizable offerings for the purchase of wax for candles, as for example, more than a thousand pounds of wax were offered to the Madonna brought by those missionaries and burned before her image. Likewise, you can imagine those that were used in the lamps and candleholders on the altar. Many

precious articles of silver, namely, rings, necklaces and other things of value were offered and were left behind by the missionaries for another miraculous Madonna venerated here. In the public piazza, they burned a quantity of forbidden books that were surrendered by the penitents and many weapons that were destroyed were handed over to the missionaries. In short, they did an infinite amount of good work. The city has remained completely satisfied and the missionaries were welcomed and treated in good fashion, so that I, personally, give thanks to the Lord for having made possible this great good work.”

Sant’Elpidio

Meanwhile, with solicitous letters, the archbishop of Fermo, Cardinal Cesare Brancadoro invited the Servant of God to conduct missions in Sant’Elpidio. The latter, mindful of the successful outcome in San Severino, had tried, as secretly as he could and with the cooperation of his companions, to avoid the honors that the people were wont to show at the time of the departure of the missionaries by leaving very early in the morning but witnessing the tears and the shouts of the people who were aware of their departure.

The Servant of God was truly impressed by the fact that after the very fruitful success achieved in Civitanova, the noted cardinal archbishop of Fermo, while requesting him for missions for Sant’Elpidio, forbade him to give the usual “pep talks” that he was accustomed to do as part of his mission-system, as I mentioned before. Since the Servant of God would be passing through Macerata, he discussed this problem with the great Servant of God, Monsignor [Vincenzo] Strambi. It appeared to him that this was a strange decision made by the court of that great man of the purple. However, he decided that this mandate should be accepted [594] in order not to prevent the doing of this great work from which the people could derive immense benefit despite the elimination of those very opportune sermons of invitation. He urged him to continue to freely follow his mission-system wherever he was able to carry it out in its fullest extension. The Servant of God substituted for those sermons of invitation by making recommendations during his preaching and having his other companions ask for attendance at the nightly oratory, forcefully urging the men not to fail to be present for the nightly oratory as it was already being conducted in the church of the Filippini Fathers in that locale. He also left a reminder for the future that the men should frequent the sacraments and offer a bit of prayer in thanksgiving to God who provided such a wonderful day for them.

This mission in Sant’Elpidio began on May 29th. It achieved outstandingly fruitful results as God compensated for the disappointments that the faithful Servant of God had experienced. There was an immense turnout for the processions as people came from as far away as forty miles. They were drawn there to see, once again, their dear father. From Matelica, San Severino, Civitanova and every part of

those surroundings, the bustling mobs of people came to visit with the missionaries and give spirit to the mission being held there which was a moving experience not only for obstinate sinners but also for the most disbelieving sectarians. During this mission, the Lord required the Servant of God to suffer both in his spirit as well as in his body. In his spirit, insofar as his Eminence the cardinal archbishop reproved him because of the excessive ceremonies and processions besides his ban of visiting-sermons. In his body, insofar as the heated wine there brought about a return of the stomach ailment which he contracted during the time of his exile. Nevertheless, he preached tirelessly and worked beyond the usual, though he admitted to me that he felt violent pains in his stomach which brought on a feeling of extreme weakness. In all of his previous missions, he had not suffered thus since his deportation. In friendship and in order that it would not leak out, he asked me to say nothing about what was the cause of his distress. I, personally, was aware of the harmfulness of that type of wine that was cooked for a long time, and I suggested to him that he should have them provide him with a less stimulating type. One that was not so crude, one that would not cause surprise, one that was not looked upon as so vile. Like a child, he was blindly obedient and he then felt better. In addition to all sorts of conversions, here likewise they witnessed the extraordinary conversion of that leader of the sectarians that I referred to previously.⁵ He, too, then converted as many as possible of the young people of the province whom he had led away from the faith. This fact was made known to me by my brother, Simone Valentini, now deceased. He assured me that that sectarian, upon hearing the Servant of God, felt an inner compulsion that caused him to recognize the Servant of God's preaching as something that was not human but rather heavenly and divine.

Ancona

Fifteen days of time were given for the holy mission in that city of Sant'Elpidio. He left three of his companions there to handle the confessions of the people while he left with Canon Muccioli to go to Ancona. Before getting to that city, he stopped off at the seashore of the Adriatic Sea, a very pleasant and delightful scene. Around noontime, he took a bit of refreshment in the home of my parents with a view on one side of the Shrine of Loreto situated on a small hill and on the other side the tranquil sea crowded with fishing boats. He was eager, for the first time, to go aboard one of those small sailing boats or rowboats, and set out to sea. When he came close to the fishermen who were casting for fish from their small vessels, he said to them: "Allow me to be the fisherman of your souls, just as you are seeking to catch fish from the sea. What a satisfaction it would be for me (he continued to say) if from among you I could land a huge sturgeon!" Then, as those poor men suddenly came to recognize him, they began shouting: "Hail Jesus, hail Mary, hail the holy mission, hail all of heaven!" Next, in the form of an instructive sermon, the Servant of God

⁵ Cf. Above, p. 101.

seized the opportunity of speaking against blasphemous language, urging them to set that evil practice aside since it caused so insulting to the Lord and his saints. With this, those poor fellows began to shed tears as they resolved not to utter blasphemies, at least under some circumstances. The Servant of God urged them to develop the habit rather of using other words, words of prayer, of praise to God, of utterances against sin. Thereupon those men, completely happy, blessed God for having sent them this favor at a most opportune time so that they could be freed from their failings and mistakes. The Servant of God gave them a blessing with the small crucifix that he wore over his chest and they were very grateful for having come in contact with that man of God and having heard that sermon that was so clear and fruitful.

Cardinal [Nicola] Riganti, bishop of Ancona, who was thoroughly pleased with the mission that was so fruitful the previous year,⁶ decided to invite the Servant of God, on this occasion, to conduct the exercises in the cathedral for the people upon the recurrence of the upcoming feast of the so-called Madonna di San Ciriaco, a miraculous image that was particularly venerated by all the people of Ancona. The Servant of God made use of that circumstance to remind the people of the resolutions they had made during that past mission and now to revive them, carrying them out promptly and resolutely. This ministry had its beginning on June 14th of 1818 around eventide with Canon Muccioli, while two other companions came two days later to be of help. During that mission of the past year, it was pointed out that after the departure of the missionaries, "*inimicus homo superseminavit zizania*". So, the Servant of God determined that it would be good to remove from the minds of the people that calumnious attitude which arose despite the good intentions of the mission, by sincerely stressing the fact that the missionaries were not there seeking to satisfy their own interests, but were there only for the salvation of souls. Hence, the missionaries would accept nothing other than lodging in the seminary. Their own maintenance would be at their own expense. This posture was considered to be singularly prudent and wise, and the removal of false impressions from the people could be done more quickly by facts rather than words. The people of Ancona, seeing their dear priests and hearing their words once again, were confirmed in their good mode of life and with great joy gave praise to God. They simply could not hear enough of their preaching in church, in the various oratories, in the monasteries, in the places of devotion, in the prisons, in the ceremonies of the general communions, and finally, in the instructions given to the small children being prepared for their first communion.

Forlimpopoli

Once those apostolic labors were completed, the Servant of God turned to

⁶ The mission was held in 1816. Hence, two years previous.

the missions agreed upon with the Chapter of St. Peter in the Vatican for the Abbacy in Forlimpopoli and the one in Meldola. Before his departure, however, he received unsigned letters containing the first names, the family names and the home town of each missionary showing that they knew all the details about them and the letters maligned everything about them along with blasphemies against heaven, religion and everything good, threatening terrible and horrible things for them in an effort to keep them from coming and frightening them away from that appointment; furthermore, they promised them additional massacres and death to cause public infamy. The Servant of God was displeased with their profanation of the divine name, but he was filled with the fire of a saintly zeal and he informed his companions of those letters, encouraging all of them by saying: "We are not worthy of such an honor, to suffer something for Jesus Christ: *Digni habiti sumus pro nomine lesu contumeliam pati*". The trip was made with great joy particularly for that reason and it could be said about the Servant of God that: "*exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam*".

They arrived in Cesena, a city near to the place of the first mission in Forlimpopoli. There, a deputation of priests and good-intentioned lay people met them, assuring us that our lives were precious to them and that they wished to preserve them just a bit longer. At that very time, they were in danger because of the gathering of sectarians from Forli the greater, from Meldola and from Forlimpopoli itself. They were ready to murder us. When we heard of this approaching danger and the surrender of our lives for Jesus Christ, the Servant of God replied: "This mission is legitimate because it was arranged for by the ecclesiastical authority of Rome and hence is a good thing for us since it is for a just cause, we can sacrifice our lives: *mihi vivere Christus est et mori lucrum*". When those people witnessed this gallant man, the Servant of God along with his companions, with such resolution, they modestly added that they have given us this early warning for our own good. This all took place on the morning of the feast of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and, therefore, increased in the hearts of those missionaries their motivation for showing an even greater trust in God and a desire to offer their blood in exchange for blood in honor of Jesus Christ and his holy Apostles. When Mass was offered that morning, with civility and with warm charity, those ambassadors were drawn together and were requested to prepare every item in an orderly fashion so that the opening of the Mission could take place.

As a matter of fact, after the noon meal, at the appointed hour after the vesper prayer, the missionaries presented themselves at the gate of the city of Forlimpopoli and, while kneeling before the Crucifix, the clergy and the people, they asked for the blessing and the prayers of all for a fruitful and successful Mission. Devoutly and fearlessly, they began the procession. After singing the Ave Maria, the Servant of God then mounted the preaching platform and began the introductory ceremony using the very words of the Apostle that were cited before: "*Mihi vivere Christus est et mori lucrum*". He developed that theme so brilliantly that anyone who

had heard it and had come there with the idea of doing something dreadful, was obviously captured by it. All demonstrated a full reaction of zeal on the occasion of that solemnity of the holy Apostles. It seemed to be not only an example of labor for the divine glory and the benefit of souls, but also the readiness of generously giving one's blood and one's life. As a result, the people were moved and stunned by such fervor which was so openly noticeable in the Servant of God. Willingly were they disposed to see and listen as their apostolic ministry progressed, a ministry which they, in their day, did not recall.

There was here, among others, a certain man who in his conversations, whether in the sacristies or in the families made fun of everything and prevented anyone from showing compunction. Though very averse to listening to any sermon on the basic principles of life, it was he and his ill-disposed companions who, when they heard the very eloquent and moving sermon on hell, began to be frightened and feel ugly. Then when the sermon was concluded, they saw the four missionaries on the platform apply the discipline to themselves as the people, moved by the words of the sermon, kept shouting "mercy and pardon". That man, along with his companions, as though wounded by fiery darts issuing from the strokes that the missionaries gave themselves, could no longer contain himself and, together with his companions, jumped up on the preacher's platform and begged to have the disciplines applied to them as a penance as they groaned from the vehemence of their pain. Then, kneeling down on the platform and kissing it devoutly, they asked that they be given the large Crucifix to carry, tenderly embracing it at the foot and crying out that they never wanted to abandon it ever again nor offend it in any way. From that moment on, that gentleman, every day, barefooted and dressed in sackcloth, wished to carry that cross in order to make compensation for all the scandal that he had caused. Changed in every way, he then led all of his companions to change their lives, drawing to himself all of those who had been led away by him.

Once the news got around of the benefit that the people derived and the great commotion that was aroused, four hired assassins were sent from the greater Forli with the precise orders to get ride of the missionaries and break up the mission as was realized by those who had been converted as soon as they saw them arrive and were put on guard. But their plans were foiled when they divided up so as to have one missionary for each attacker. One of them entered the room where Canon Del Bufalo, who had been forewarned, was located. With holy courage, the Servant of God confronted him and simply asked him what he wanted. That unfortunate cutthroat, as though he had no strength at all nor any weapons, stood there in total astonishment, uttering mumbled and garbled words. And, as though he were unable to bear the sight of this holy man, he just ran out of the room, disturbed and confused. Another one went after Canon Muccioli who was hearing confessions. After the attacker made several slight moves approaching the campanile which was close to where the Canon was, it is not know just why, but all of a sudden, he fled.

The third thug was going after Fr. Antonio Pascucci, the third missionary, but noticing that he was on his way to give a sermon, he did not dare to bother him. In fact, he listened to the sermon and then returned to seek out his other companions. The fourth assailant paid me a visit. I was hearing the confessions of the men in church around evening and this fellow also got in line as though he wanted to go to confession. He was a bit afraid of the gathering of men who were around me and when it came time for him to confess, the members of our confraternity came quickly to call me to hurry because it was time for the scheduled "pep talk". Softly, they whispered in my ear that very nearby to me there was a certain fellow waiting, pretending to go to confession, but was one of the assassins sent there. Really, when I got this information, instead of getting jumpy, I was inspired suddenly and I answered them by saying to my brethren that I was not at all concerned about the unfortunate fellow and that all that I wanted to do was to embrace him as he made his confession. In view of the scheduled preaching, I would go there directly and then return. When that fellow saw me come out of the confessional, he faced me directly and he griped because I had not heard his confession also. I very calmly explained to him that I was scheduled to give a short fervorino at the time and then I would be back to willingly hear his confession. Finally, when he saw that I was fully occupied with preaching, he disdainfully departed. When our work in the oratory was completed and we had returned home, we asked each other about what had happened with those unfortunate intruders and the simple answer was that they were gone. On the following morning, along with the Servant of God, we wondered what had become of them, we were informed that on their return trip their carriage had broken down and they had catapulted into the river, and we learned nothing more about them. The Servant of God felt pity and regretted what had happened to them, saying: "Oh Lord, have mercy on them". That is how this attempt on our lives came to an end, and it helped to bring many to conversion as well as fear to the surrounding towns. In the meanwhile, that fellow who was considered to have been the leader of those sectarians continued to give good example, blessing and praising the Lord. He shed tears and detested his sins, following the Mission until its completion, including the papal blessing and all the time appearing in public dressed in sackcloth and being barefooted, carrying the mission Crucifix before an immense number of the faithful from the neighboring areas. However, not content with doing that, he wanted to go in procession with the missionaries as they went from Forlimpopoli to Meldola, where the next mission was about to begin.

I must not fail to mention here that during the aforementioned mission in Forlimpopoli, it was harvest time for the maize and the Servant of God, wishing to please everyone, kept up his preaching, going through the countryside from place to place while the harvesters would be having their lunch, telling them that since they were unable to leave their work, they could listen to him there, and then, with the permission of their bosses, they could later come to receive the holy sacraments as the mission progressed. Thereupon, he would later give them instructions in

sermons that they could understand. Many of the bosses had the generosity of allowing their farmhands and colonists to receive the sacraments and, as I testified before about Civitanova, the Lord rewarded them in such a way that the more generous they were the more abundant was their harvest of grain as well as maize compared with the less generous. Count Giorgio Golfarelli, the number one owner in that area and other gentlemen, in my presence testified to this very truthful fact with tears in their eyes. After that, they wanted to set up a perpetual mission fund for the Institute of the most Precious Blood.

Meldola and Castelfidardo

The sectarians of the lodge in Meldola continue to antagonize the missionaries by writing crazy, insulting and threatening things to them about massacres and death, and looking upon them as prey before their eyes. That city was the heart of the greater Forli in the Toscana region and the other neighboring areas because of the greater membership in their public lodge. Despite their opposition to the missionaries, armed with their powerful style of preaching, after the services of introduction during which the people were heard to shout “Long live our religion”, the sectarians would fall to the ground at the same time as those canons did and with a profound plea for divine mercy, were overcome and defeated. That assailants were themselves assailed by the work of the missionaries to whom all the people had surrendered their weapons.

In Meldola, very notable things occurred in reference to the Servant of God who had dissipated and terminated the power of the lodge. During the opening days of the mission, a certain apothecary who had converted and made his confession to Canon Muccioli, also told him that he had been misguided and was asked to prepare a certain deadly poison. Later, he found out that it was to be used to poison a certain barley-water drink that the Servant of God used to take during the very warm part of the summer before preaching. He was just about to take that drink when Canon Muccioli, in my presence and that of the lay helper Vincenzo Severini and Fr. Antonio Pascucci, who I believe was also present, shouted out to Canon Del Bufalo not to take that drink which he himself had refused to take because of the poison. Then, demonstrating an extraordinary faith, the Servant of God exclaimed with a strong voice: “It has been written: *si mortiferum quid biberint non eis nocebit*”. He then blessed the glass, drank it down, causing all of us present there to grow pale at the very sight of it. Actually, we did not know for certain whether the drink was really poisoned, but the Servant of God confided to me that he felt interiorly inspired not to believe the report. Also, he felt that, whatever the situation was, he was motivated by charity to do that in order to avoid suspicions being aroused about the upright owners of the house where he and the others were being hospitably lodged and that they would be accused of taking part in this act of betrayal, along with the local archpriest Brunori.

The other thing that happened and is still a famous occurrence in Meldola, was that during the act of the Servant of God's preaching in the public square to an immense crowd of people, several people asserted that at the very same time the Servant of God was hearing confessions in the church. I, myself, was a witness of the people going about with great anxiety and curiosity, uttering with great wonder: "No, he's out there preaching in the square", while others were saying, "No, he's hearing confessions in church and I just went to confession to him". Facing this question of being one and the same time that he was hearing confessions in church and preaching in the public square, it is certain that in church I alone was there in the confessional, but, I did not hear the confessions of those people, as the people asserted. So everyone looked upon this as a miraculous thing, that is, bilocation. That was the conviction of the priests and repeated by the peasants. Thus, both the outsiders that came from Bertinoro in the Toscana region etc. as well as the local citizens still remain convinced of this miraculous occurrence even to this day.

The famous panegyrist Traversari, now old, decrepit, when returning from a sermon that he had listened to up to the very end, said that he never could recall a mission that was so well organized and systematic and so fruitful in its spiritual success in converting every level of society as this one, including the ordinary level of people.

Finally, in a effort to erect the cross as a reminder of the mission as is our custom, the Servant of God, along with a deputized group of people, looked over the area and then selected a place that was truly magnificent because of the width of the path leading to it and the location itself which seemed to have been arranged just for the erection of that cross which had been prepared as an extra large size. After it was finally set up there, it was learned that there was a masonic lodge in the area. It was a source of desperation for those neighboring sectarians as well as an inspiration for the conversion of some of the citizenry, and eventually that masonic lodge was removed and only that symbol of the triumphant cross remained.

Likewise impressive was the way that, during this mission, the two groups of people from Forlimpopoli and Meldola showed their gratitude to the Servant of God for the spiritual benefits provided for them and especially for the removal of dissension, discord and hatred that had endured for lengthy periods of time which had arisen from the upheavals of illegitimate governments. Meanwhile, now, almost as a angel of peace, in every place and in particular, here, every evil, especially in the governing council, was extinguished. So, it was truly a joyous spectacle to see up to twenty or more individuals ascend the preaching platform to exchange the embrace of peace, of charity, of concord for all time.

The conclusion of the mission came with the giving of the papal benediction, the destroying of lethal weapons, the hurrahs for religion and shouting out of the holy names of Jesus and Mary. The Servant of God made every effort to conceal the time of their departure, jealously giving secret orders that nothing should be done to alert the people and the settlers there, and that the people, so enthusiastic about him,

should avoid all demonstrations of showing him any honor or esteem. But, despite all that, everything turned out to be just the opposite. Secretly he and his companions, among whom I was numbered, tried to leave by coach and flee the area. After we got settled in the coach and all set for the departure, from every nook and cranny and equipped with burning torches came the people around an hour and a half before midnight. Among them were the clergy, the neighboring settlers and the local people along with a musical band. Shouts of exultation broke out and a platoon of soldiers were there to be an accompaniment for the missionaries, hailed as heroes and being taken away triumphantly from Meldola to Forlimpopoli. All of a sudden the town could be seen fully illuminated especially the main square where a preaching platform had been set up for the Servant of God to give a sermon in the middle of the night. The Servant of God did not refuse to speak to the people of both towns joined together, calling to their minds again and confirming the stable peace which had been restored to them. Here, it is not possible to describe the outbreak of tears and the mood of love that was sensed in the houses, in the piazza, on the roads and rising heavenward to express the final farewell that the people who had traveled long distances wanted to give to the Servant of God. The weeping of both peoples upon the departure of the missionaries, upon the leaving of their dearly beloved fathers and teachers, as they liked to call them, was copiously evident. All the way to Cesena, despite our words of discouragement and our begging, they wanted to keep following us, as it seemed to them that his heart would burst out of his chest.

In those places, also, they instituted the usual associations, that of St. Francis Xavier, that of the sisters of charity, that of the children of Mary and that of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. We finally got to Castelfidardo for the mission there. Suddenly, three pilgrims, wearing the uniforms of the St. Francis Xavier association, members of noble and distinguished families of Forlimpopoli, arrived to visit with the missionary fathers and the express their gratitude to most holy Mary in the shrine of Loreto for the blessing of having their holy mission. That meeting was a reciprocal exchange of tenderness and of profound feelings and was the source of enthusiastic response on the part of the people there in Castelfidardo. The mission that took place there was also one of very copious fruits to the delight of the aged Monsignor Bellini, the bishop, who attended all the functions of the mission.

We have a letter from Fr. Michelangelo of Forlimpopoli, a friar minor reformed, who during that mission conducted by the Servant of God in Forlimpopoli was touched by divine grace. He wrote the following in a letter dated January 21, 1839: "The tremendous fruit brought about by that apostolic man is a very luminous proof of God's good pleasure with him. I am not speaking of the tears and laments that were heard in the churches and the public squares where he preached. I am speaking of the many souls who were followers of the spirit of that time and who, upon hearing the powerful sound of that voice that was divinely inspired, then abandoned their spirit of vanity, said farewell to their attachment to worldly things and, in order to serve Jesus Christ with greater constancy, withdrew from their

families to go into the solitude of the cloister where they earn their eternal salvation. The individuals that are numbered in that group was the present Abbess of the Capuchin nuns of Cesena who withdrew to the very strict monastery. Also, there was her cousin, Teresa Vittoria Bazzoli who withdrew to the monastery of the Augustinian nuns of Urbino. Likewise it included Michele Artufi who withdrew to the Friars Minor of the Observance. And, in order to give full glory to God, it is now some twenty years that I am still unworthily wearing the habit of the Patriarch of Assisi”.

Montelupone and Montecassino

From Castelfidardo, we moved on for the mission given in the same diocese of Loreto, namely, Montelupone, which succeeded in displaying extraordinary sorrow. In preparation for the first communion service for the boys and girls, the Servant of God gave them little fervorinos. From the very first words that he spoke to them, he brought tears to their eyes as well as to the eyes of the people who were in attendance. Those tears did not stop flowing until the moving service came to a conclusion. The usual associations were also instituted here, feelings of hatred were wiped out together with the discord and dissension that existed between families. At the time of the papal benediction, forbidden weapons were smashed, forbidden books were burned and many scandalous situations were brought to an end through the zealous work of our Servant of God.

From there we moved on to Montecassiano thus covering the entire diocese of Monsignor Bellini. The Servant of God's preaching in this land was considered to be considered miraculous by the peasants who proclaimed that it was something impossible for a man to be able to handle so many objectives, give so many different sermons in a single day from morning until till late into the night, in addition to hearing confessions continually, setting up those pious associations and also writing letters in behalf of the many foundations that he had made as well as being concerned about the missions that had been given in order to keep alive the fruit that had been produced through divine grace. One of the leading men of this area assured me that he had attended all of the sermons given by the Servant of God our of devotion but also out of curiosity from the beginning to the end, and he, himself, scarcely had time to take a bit of refreshment and breathe. Therefore, he had no way at all of explaining how our man, the Servant of God, managed to find the time and the opportunity if it were not an extraordinary help from God to preach night and day without being exhausted. On the last day of the mission, especially, it appeared to this man that the Servant of God was occupied in preaching continually from an hour before daybreak to one o'clock that night. That covered sermons to various and different classes of people, instructions, the establishment of pious associations which was done up to noontime, then, after the noon meal, the sermon of reminders which lasted a good three hours. The final nightly oratory was held for that mission in order to set it up firmly as a permanent fixture. When two o'clock sounded, you could

still here his melodious voice as he was giving a “pep talk”, planting the seed for the spread of the divine word even for some obstinate person still hovering there waiting for it to bear fruit.

Present here to listen to the Servant of God was a certain priest who at the time of the occupation of the French government had lied terribly, giving public scandal and sorely grieving his bishop, the Venerable Monsignor Strambi. I had made this man’s acquaintance while in the seminary of Recanati where, unfortunately, he had been ordained a priest. At the time of the French domination, he had been appointed as the prefect of the students. He ruined all of the youth and with his conniving manners and underhandedness had drawn others along with him to utter lies. He had lined up with Gioacchino Murat in the new political set-up in Italy and in many ways resisted his venerable bishop, despite being given warnings of censure as well as paternal invitations. Finally, luckily he met the Servant of God in the mission of Montecassiano. The Servant of God reconciled with God and with his bishop and obtained for him a means of livelihood. This was a conquest that greatly consoled the Servant of God as well as his good Shepherd and friend, the Venerable Fr. Strambi. However, the man abused the goodness of his two benefactors, he went back to his vomit after about a year, abandoning his good pastor Monsignor Strambi and, with all his might, spoke derisively of both his bishop and the Servant of God, declaring to the scandal of the people that they were both hypocrites. With such vile ingratitude, he was very displeasing to the Lord who punished him severely with an unexpected death in the diocese of Senigallia where he was enjoying himself at a house of ill-repute. I learned this at the time of another mission, that is, the one in Chiaravalle in the diocese of Iesi. When I informed the Servant of God about him, I saw him become completely afflicted and with great humility exclaim: “May God take hold of his hand. I am not regretful for having done as much as I could for his welfare, but the judgments of God are inscrutable.”

The missionary, Fr. Raffaele Brandimarte

In this year of 1818, during the course of missions, before returning to Rome, the Servant of God made the acquisition of a good missionary. In the difficult mission given in Sant’Elpidio, a young priest was found by the name of Fr. Raffaele Brandimarte who, instructed well by the Servant of God, became a very effective and extraordinarily fruitful missionary during the very laborious missions that he endured. He wrote to our Servant of God that he felt inspired to go to the Indies, putting himself under the direction of the Propaganda Fide. However, he was not listened to and he was left with only the merit of a good desire. In fact, it was shown clearly that the fulfillment of that mission to the Indies was not the divine will, but simply an excessive fervor. It was not long before he began to suffer palpitations of the heart. After the death of the Servant of God, he began to press me about carrying out that desire of conducting a mission abroad, since he had a strong

devotion to St. Francis Xavier. For his own consolation, I gave him permission to go to Rome and present himself to the Propaganda which had already selected him as a Vicar General in one of those foreign missions as a helper to one of the bishops. But when the time came for him to leave, his palpitations returned so that the Propaganda, fearing that he might die in the voyage, canceled his departure. He then requested to be sent back to the city of Frosinone where the climate had been favorable for him. Indeed, the Servant of God had written to him several times that God was pleased with his affection but not the result of it. Thus it so happened that while he was in that city, his physical condition was being cared for but, unfortunately, it did not work and, mourned by the good people of Frosinone who had had him among them as a missionary from the beginning of his career for many months, he was sent to his Creator.

Cerreto

From Montecassiano, the Servant of God and his companions moved on to San Severino on their way to the mission in Cerreto, awaited there by Monsignor Buttaoni, bishop of Fabriano. On the trip to San Severino, they were accompanied by those good men who asked the bishop's permission for him to remind them in a sermon of their propositions and resolutions made in the foregoing mission. With very tender and affectionate sentiments, he renewed in them their willingness to extend the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Then, even more to bring them consolation and to stimulate their spirits, the Servant of God made a devout visit to San Pacifico, a friar minor of the observance, missionary. From that spot he then went to Cerreto which is just a small town within the diocese of Fabriano and is the center of a number of other little hamlets.

Here, the beloved, most reverend bishop wished to be present for the solemn entrance and he received them with the customary delivery of the Crucifix, as he was escorted by the clergy and the people with great jubilation. The setting, though somewhat mountainous, offered a beautiful, spiritual battlefield that was penetrated by a most zealous enthusiasm, where the Servant of God found a place where he could direct a stimulating mission. Very early in the morning, before the break of dawn, he made his way mounted on a small donkey, over crags and precipices, to those nearby hamlets, namely, Colleamato, Albacina, Porcarella, Domo, Precicchie, Castelletta, Rocchetta, Argignano and San Michele, to extend to them an invitation to the mission. A number of times he fell; since he was poorly experienced in horseback riding and somewhat weak in the muscles of his legs, he found himself cascading, donkey and all, down the slopes but without injuring himself and without being frightened by the occurrence. Those residents, aroused by his appeals, went in crowds to the center where the mission was held and it was a beautiful sight, now from one area, now from another, the groups of people dotting the mountainside in processions, bearing the standards of their confraternities. Together with them were

their clergy in surplice and stole, leading the men and women who were bearing the standards while singing the hymns used during holy missions. They all took their respective positions in good order as the Servant of God had directed them and thus continued on their way without the least bit of confusion.

Here, in order to adapt himself to the country people, as he had done in other locations, he led the Way of the Cross in a solemn fashion with hymns and fervorinos at each station, in addition to the preceding sermons treating of basic principles of life in keeping with the method of St. Ignatius. This service, the Way of the Cross, which those poor country people had never heard or seen before, made such a vehement and penetrating impression on them that it had its good effect on hundreds of those souls. The older generation that had come from those localities shed profuse tears of tenderness and asserted that they could not remember any other mission that was done with such enthusiasm.

Furthermore, the Servant of God's conduct and his bearing were, as such was the case everywhere, so inspirational that they looked upon him as a living saint and many of them wanted to have something that belonged to him to keep as their own as a relic. One of those in charge of the mission managed somehow to get hold of some of his hair when he went to the barber. Other people saved his letters as was the case with the letters of great servants of God. Whenever he would mount the preaching platform, just his appearance would bring forth from the audience a flood of tears and a loud enthusiastic shout. Often they were heard shouting: "Here is the saint!" In the trip that he made to Collamato to give a visiting sermon, amidst tears and moaning, the women were heard exclaiming: "Don't you see? That is a San Luigi who, by his presence, is straightening us out and bringing us to repentance".

One day he was asked to hear the confession of a noble lady who had come from one of the neighboring cities. He started out to go to hear her confession but then he found himself unexpectedly surrounded by many men and especially by poor country people who were likewise requesting him to hear their confessions. He then turned back, saying to those who had contacted him in behalf of the lady: "*Deus non est acceptator personarum*" and with no further ado he brought consolation and satisfaction to those poor people, completely sure that the pious lady would have the time, the convenience and the opportunity for going to confession on another day.

In all truth, it is truly a most notable thing and something of amazing edification to observe that the people in every locale where news had reached about the Servant of God and where a mission had been conducted, that people rushed to see him and listen to him as though he were a Blessed Leonard, whom the older people remembered, or some other famous missionary. Here, where I was present, the ecclesiastical personnel, even the most learned ones, came from Fabriano, Matelica, San Severino, Castelraimondo and other places, to hear him again to their total satisfaction and edification. Also, many men and women, crowds of people, numbering almost some twenty thousand, gathered together in this small place with its own population of around six hundred souls.

In his sermon of reminders, during which weapons of all types were broken into pieces and forbidden books were burned, the Servant of God was heard from a distance of four to five miles. A certain gentleman, Carlo Malatesta, among others, distinctly heard all of the words at that same distance. Another poor fellow, who wanted to hear the message of the mission, was just a little too far away, but among other things he did hear these words which deeply moved his heart: "My beloved people, convert and give yourselves completely to God with all your heart", or words similar to that. These few words made such an impression upon him that from that moment on he conceived the ardent desire to consecrate himself to the Lord in a religious house, which he eventually did by being vested in the habit of the Friars Minor of the Observance, leading a life of good example and innocence. He himself related this event to me as well as to another missionary.

A fake devotee who had heard the Servant of God preach at other missions was anxiously asking for him to hear her confession. He summoned me and told me to hear her confession since he then did not have the time. I listened to her and to my great displeasure I discovered that she was deceived and at the same time a deceiver. Four bishops had been her directors without one knowing about the other. She pretended having the stigmata, visions and ecstasies. She prided in her having infused knowledge. However, when she got to a tavern she would get drunk. On the day when I was to hear her confession, she got to a tavern and got drunk. She had conducted herself vilely and very immodestly and boastingly claimed to have the power, in a moment's time, to fly a distance of fifteen or twenty miles, there and back. Very cunningly she made her way here saying that she wanted to talk to Canon Del Bufalo to find out whether the things she was experiencing were from God or the devil, otherwise, she would go to the Pope. After listening to her two or three times with reference to the conduct of her life, through the prayer of the Servant of God, I realized that she was just a bundle of open contradictions and I felt that I had to tell her very simply that here stigmata, her ecstasies and her visions were neither from God nor the devil but the result of her spiritual pride and vanity. Thus it happened that the Lord had gotten her to come to this mission since her soul was the one most in need and that this was and had been a sign of God's divine mercy, calling her to repentance. Eventually, she should begin making preparations for a sincere general confession and abstain from receiving communion until she had fully satisfied divine justice, at least with a heartfelt conversion. Laughingly, she replied that she had gone through a number of testings by at least four bishops. To that, I replied, that this is not a matter of testing, but an effort to avoid the commission of a sacrilege, hence, abstaining from the reception of communion in the meanwhile, and that I myself do not end up being a cooperator. The more she turned these things over in her mind, the more she demonstrated her pride. As a final thing, I just told her that I did not have time to hear her confession, but, if she truly wanted to make a good confession, I would be ready to hear her. Otherwise,

she would simply have to await the tribunal of God and judgment day. May she be moved once and for all and renounce her hypocrisy which I had pointed out to her in the several discussions I had with her. Then, she broke out into a sneering laughter, manifesting the complete devastation of any spirit of humility. However, I did not fail to point out to her the falseness of her spirit, the error of her ways, while encouraging her by telling her that she was not the first one and that the cure would be indeed most difficult for her to achieve that reconciliation. I even told her the thing that happened to a bigotted lady who pretended to observe a perfect fast, that is, not taking any sort of food on Fridays and Saturdays. Yet, through the keyhole in the door, she was seen by her little grandson eating some smoked ham and swigging some good wine. In the meantime she claimed that she was in the lion's lake, etc. Finally, when she came to the point of death and had had her biography written, in desperation, she was very close to death. Another priest, who had known her well during her life, was moved with pity for her and went to her side. As he heard her hopeless groans, he went in to comfort her. That miserable woman then began to cry out that she would be damned if that priest who had known her well would not hear her confession. That good priest had the aforesaid biography which was filled with fraudulent facts in reference to her confessor and those who looked upon her as a saint. She seemed to repent for all of her acts of hypocrisy and pride and God accepted her truthful and deeply-felt humility in his infinite mercy. But that poor individual was overly hard-hearted and she acted like a madwoman. I gave her time to reflect since she appeared to want to be able to mature her judgment and really be reconciled with divine help. However, no matter what I tried, she kept shaking and crying because of her ruin, and I could do nothing to help her except at the very end to assure her that what I was saying was the truth and not a test for her. Again she broke out in a thousand invectives and imprecations against me and all of the missionaries, showing exactly what she was really made of. I gave her some final pieces of advice as forcefully and compassionately as I could and I ended up by telling her that I had to depart shortly no more to return for her until the final judgment day and that if she wished, there was still time to be converted, otherwise I would weep for her as one lost.

Serra San Quirico

It was because of the earnest concern of the most reverend Archbishop Mattei that the Servant of God was invited and called to conduct the holy mission in Serra San Quirico, a part of his diocese which is not too far from Cerreto. The Servant of God did not have the heart to refuse the request because of his acquaintance with this old friend of his. With the beginning of the entrance ceremonies involving Fr. Termanini of the Company of Jesus, the Servant of God began his attack on that population since he had such a short time, a period of only ten days to lead them to making a sincere repentance. That introductory service, after the usual solemn entrance, consisted of the presentation of the mission director

vested in surplice and a richly ornamented stole on the preacher's platform. He gave a full explanation of the significance of those sacred vestments, pointing out the purity of grace, the availability of the indescribable supernatural benefits and the saving effects of the holy mission. He suggested that the ordinary means for acquiring the beneficial results of divine grace and the heavenly riches are penitential tears and the detestation of one's sins joined with a sincere conversion. Then, after removing the surplice and stole, the signs of the joy and the peace of the Holy Spirit resulting from sincere repentance, each missionary then puts a rope around his neck and a crown of thorns on his head as a sign of penance. Then, after a fervent appeal and words of encouragement for a heartfelt repentance as well as a change in the outer man, there followed the *unctio pectoris et flagellatio corporis* to demonstrate outwardly the signs of one's interior repentance. This introductory service aroused universal compunction in the people and within a few days, with the grace of God, there was an extraordinary change in their daily living.

Sassoferrato

From Serra San Quirico, they returned to the diocese of Nocera, to Sassoferrato, where the mission conducted by the Venerable Fr. Leopoldo from Gaiche⁷ was remembered. That Venerable Father rightly complained about Sassoferrato because they were people who did not externalize their compunction, even though they were deeply moved. The older people were the ones who recalled those complaints, especially when that holy man whipped himself harshly without arousing any tears or moans of any sort. But on this occasion when the Servant of God was there they humorously remarked that it no longer was Sassoferrato, materially speaking, but a place that had become as soft as wax since the Lord had diffused his gift of tears not only to the women but even to the most hard-hearted men.

Gualdo Tadino and Fr. Valentini's mother

Next, they went on to Gualdo Tadino accompanied by the diocesan bishop and the trip turned out to be quite disastrous because of a heavy downpour. Nevertheless through the grace of God there was a very abundant fruit produced during this mission. In witness of this, I must report an event that was altogether attributable to the merits of the Servant of God. Ever since the mission conducted in Serra San Quirico, I had gotten news from him that my own dear mother was deathly ill. He himself, with great delicacy, informed me of this very unexpected situation. He showed that he was completely eager for me to go and console her before her death

⁷ An Apostolic Missionary of the Friars Minor, born in Gaiche (Perugia) on October 30, 1732 and died in Monteluco (Spoleto) on April 2, 1815.

since she kept urging me to come to her. I told him that I was not sure whether I should go or stay and only that I wanted to be obedient to him and rely entirely on his advice. Even more dire news arrived and ever more urgent appeals uttered by my mother that she wanted me to be with her for these final moments of life. However, since the mission in Serra San Quirico was at its peak, I did not want to leave it at that crucial time. The Servant of God was pleased to hear that response and he said to me: "Let us recommend her to God and let's get the people to pray for her, and God will provide". As a matter of fact, after we arrived in Gualdo Tadino and the prayers for a dying person continued to be offered by the people, just a few days after those prayers, news came to me via a letter addressed to me from the lay brother he had been present with my mother until the moment of death. It reported that my mother, in the presence of the priest attending her, expressed how completely happy she was to surrender her soul into the bosom of God, as we all hoped she would, and how happy she was that before dying she had spoken to me of some scruples that she had and how I had given her an explanation of them, point for point, bringing her such total peace that she called out immediately to my brother in the outer room where he was and with great tenderness said: Now, I can die content. Did you see Fr. Biagio who came from Gualdo Tadino to visit with me? He just left a moment ago. I made known to him these doubts that I had and he answered this and that. The Lord really wished to console me and the most holy Madonna gave me her help". When I got that letter, I turned it over to the Servant of God and he, blushing just a bit, joyfully replied: "Blessed by God who has provided".⁸

Ministries in Rome

From Gualdo Tadino the Servant of God returned to Rome. Later, when he arrived in Spoleto, he asked me to go to San Felice in Giano together with Fr. Antonio Pascucci, to conduct a triduum in preparation for the solemnity of All Saints in accordance with the last will of Lawyer Paolucci, of happy memory, as well as for the feast of San Felice, the protector of that area and of the entire commune. The Servant of God gave us all of the necessary facts about that foundation as well as the preaching material for the poor people there. As he left Spoleto to return to Rome together with Canon Muccioli, he recommended that sanctuary to us and our vocation to the Institute.

It is well known that during that year the Servant of God had worked hard for the benefit of that pious house of San Felice, pointing out that his motivation was the increase of membership. Through the intervention of Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi, at that time the Papal Treasurer and close friend of Monsignor Bellini, my diocesan bishop, he managed for me permanent residence in that beloved place of solitude. Soon, however, that good pastor of mine, with great concern, was calling me back to

⁸ Even St. Gaspar, in a letter to Fr. Domenico Silvestri, on June 15, 1827, alludes covertly to this episode.

my own home town. The Servant of God wrote from Rome to San Felice encouraging the brethren to remain there, courageously carrying on the work that had been begun. Shortly thereafter, Fr. Raffaele Brandimarte arrived there. The Servant of God's letters always brought joy to all as though they were prophecies uttered by the divine will. Thus, the esteem, the veneration and the reputation for the Servant of God and his apostolic ministry among the people kept growing more and more because of the virtues that were so resplendent in him and because of his most ardent zeal that he exercised everywhere and anywhere that he could diffuse the glories of the divine Name and work for the benefit of his neighbor.

Ministries of 1819

In 1819, we know from reliable sources that the Servant of God was occupied in various works of the ministry also in Rome. In particular, I can attest that he gave retreats in the Oratory of Father Caravita as well as catechetical instructions to the people.

As soon as the solemn days of Easter had been celebrated, he left Rome once again, invited by bishops to conduct a long series of missions. The most reverend Archbishop Mattei of Camerino insisted upon his leading his entire diocese to sanctification as he recalled the tremendous success of the aforementioned mission in Serra San Quirico where the clergy and the people of the towns wanted to see him once again, particularly since they had not been able to keep him there permanently, despite their efforts to lock the gates of the city to treat him, so to speak, with a gentle act of violence.

Pievettorina

The first mission in that diocese was conducted in Pievetorina where the Servant of God, since 1816, had maintained a letter-correspondence for the establishment of a foundation. For that mission, he sent for the most reverend bishop of Norcia and his secretary Sillani, Canon [Adriano] Tarulli of Matelica as helpers. He also sent for me from San Felice in Giano. It was in Pievetorina where that incident that I related before⁹ took place, namely, the preparation of a superfluously abundant meal at which I was present and which was rejected by the Servant of God to the edification of all the public. The mission at that time turned out to be extremely fruitful as did all the others. In the course of that mission, a very sick person was recommended to his attention. He prayed for that person and with surety predicted that that individual would die shortly after receiving the papal benediction. And, indeed, it so occurred causing the public to hold that extraordinary man of God in deep veneration. The plans for the foundation of a Mission House there were concluded along with the church of Sant'Agostino which had been abandoned by the

⁹ Cf. p. 90.

Passionist Fathers. With the agreement of the most reverend archbishop, an authentic rescript of possession was obtained from Pius VII, of glorious memory.

Caldarola

Then, getting back to the course of giving missions, from Pievetorina the Servant of God, together with his companions, went to Caldarola in the aforementioned diocese of Camerino. The opening took place on May 7th and appeared to be something altogether new in his method. Because of its proximity to Pievetorina, the Servant of God altered the method of his apostolic ministry. The people there had never seen a service that was so distinctive. The enthusiasm for the ministry resounded throughout the entire neighborhood as well as into the more remote areas from which people came to hear the Servant of God. They came from Tolentino, Macerata, Camerino and San Severino and from other locales. Both priests and lay people of note and education gathered there eager to observe this method and to listen to the weaving together of the sermons and the development of the themes presented by the Servant of God. Also present was the most reverend diocesan bishop. It is not easy to describe the orderly and variously presented services consisting of a mixture of penitential devotions, those arousing tears and others producing a holy joy. Every day had something surprising. At the request of the pastor and the vicar forane, two apologetic sermons on religion were given which were, in the judgment of the experts, masterpieces. The conversions that ensued from them were numerous and even people who were publicly great sinners resumed a truly exemplary Christian life. This fact contributed even more to the already marvelous esteem that the Servant of God enjoyed because of his abilities to draw souls to God and to bring consolation even to those who seemed to be totally lost.

The Servant of God was not content with just evangelizing Caldarola, where there was indeed a large open field, but even went beyond before completing the mission there. He went to Pievefavera where he gave a visiting sermon and also revived the nightly oratory for men and another held during the day for women.

It appeared to be miraculous, in the estimation of everyone, how he was able to handle so much work. He seemed to be in constant motion, preaching many times each day. And, when he was supposed to be taking a bit of rest, he would satisfy the request of good people who sought him in a special way to hear their confessions. One day, when he was preaching in the public square to a good number of people, the sky became dark and threatened a furious torrential rain. The people began to show signs of worry when the Servant of God made for all of them an authoritative gesture indicating that no one should move away. With his arms uplifted and his eyes turned heavenward, he remained there for a few moments in silent prayer. Amazing! In an instant, the entire audience all quieted down wrapped in a profound silence. The clouds above seemed to have been nailed still until the

Servant of God finished the sermon and the service. Then, the storm immediately broke loose.

What people of good judgment noted in a particular way, during this mission was that the Servant of God, who was applauded exuberantly by so many, drowned in an extremely popular aura of esteem, shown preference above all other missionaries, always maintained an indescribable gracefulness and an equilibrium that could not be sustained were it not that he was firmly founded in solid virtue.

On the 13th this apostolic ministry was completed with the placement of the crosses as a perpetual reminder of the mission and to maintain its results alive. He also set up the usual organizations here. In addition to the nightly oratory, always maintained here, there were the distinguished groups of the sisters of charity, the children of Mary giving good example and showing zeal for the glory of God and for the benefit of their neighbors. There was a man here who had forcefully made up his mind never to eat again. The doctors and concerned friends urged him to eat so as not to die since he had really gotten into a sorrowful state. They brought him to the Servant of God who looked at him kindly. Then, he picked up a slice of prosciutto which had been prepared in an antipasto for the missionaries, jovially he brought it with a small piece of bread to the man's mouth and then, while blessing it, he said: "Eat this with happiness and get well". The man willingly ate it and was cured.

San Ginesio

From Caldarola, they went on to San Ginesio which turned out to be as successful as the one in Caldarola. It also happened that a certain man who had been sick for a number of years and who had not made his confession for a long time did not even consider it and never again wanted to confess his sins. The Servant of God learned this just at the time when he himself was about to give his sermon, as he was scheduled to do. On that particular day, he assigned the preaching to another of his companions who had an already prepared sermon. Without wasting a moment, the Servant of God went to pay a visit to that unfortunate man. After some words of suggestion, exhortation and some prayers to induce him to make his confession, the Servant of God noticed that all of his words were useless so he had to turn to deeds: he knelt down prostrate in the middle of the room and, while uttering a few moving words, he brought out the discipline and began to thrash himself vigorously. With that, the hardened heart of that individual began to melt and he began to sob. Finally, he sat up, making his confession sincerely and with a vehemence of contrition. Having thus cleansed his conscience and while the substitute preacher finished his sermon, the sick man peacefully died with the Servant of God assisting him in his final moments.

I remember that (this same incident) was narrated to me by Fr. Canon Innocenzo Betti, our missionary colleague, as it occurred in the mission of San Ginesio, which was the home town of the aforementioned Betti. On another day, the

Servant of God was inspired to commission the preaching of the main sermon to another missionary. This was something that he would not do customarily since it was not in keeping with the direction of his spiritual father Monsignor Albertini. He did this as he left the house where he was lodged in order to go and visit a person who was dying. After entering the sick person's room, he pointed out the danger that his soul was facing with death imminent. He was showing the man the necessity of not delaying a good and sincere confession. The sick man, despite the urgent exhortation made by the Servant of God, refused to do so, asserting that there was still plenty of time and he was not convinced that such a necessity existed. Realizing that his words were being ignored and wanting nevertheless at any cost to save that soul, the Servant of God again took out his discipline and while holding the Crucifix aloft in his other hand, he proceeded with the thrashing on his back. The dying man was so moved that with great compunction he began making his confession. Since he had borne a long-seated interior hatred for one of his neighbors, he then shouted out his pardon and sought immediate reconciliation with him. Shortly after that, the man died tranquilly, fortified with the other sacraments.

Sant'Anatolia, Apiro and Treia

From San Ginesio, on the way to Sant'Anatolia, he again passed through Caldarola he stayed overnight and directed the oratory in the evening in order to refresh that pious institution as well as to remind the people to be persevering in their resolution to do good works. Once he arrived in Sant'Anatolia with his companions, he exercised the ministry there with equally tireless zeal. He did the same next in Apiro, which was likewise in the diocese of Camerino. Then, moving on to Treia, he set up the nightly oratory there and awaited the arrival there of Monsignor Strambi and Monsignor Piervisani who were to join the Servant of God for the mission in Camerino.

Camerino

We must not overlook what, by the just permission of God, happened here, and it was this: because of the solemnity of the entrance, a whispering campaign was aroused by the lord canons and the leaders of the town. They did not want to show opposition to the outside bishops nor to the Servant of God, but they stuck to their attitude that this function was something due to only a diocesan archbishop or to the pope, even though the most reverend archbishop was the first one who moved with the Crucifix in hand to meet the missionaries as extraordinary ambassadors of the divine word. The reasonableness shown in the printed invitation, the suggestions offered, the prayers that were said even by the most revered Mattei were sufficient to persuade the souls of those clergy and leaders of the town. Add to all that the impression made by a certain person who lived in that area and was highly regarded

by the archbishop himself and by the clergy who asserted that God does not select weak instruments for his glory, but individuals of dignity and fame in order to deeply impress the people, especially in a city that was very much on its own, as it claimed. Hence, it was necessary that its missionaries for that reason should be at least bishops. It was for that reason that the bishop of Nocera and the bishop of Macerata were called with the consent of the humble Servant of God and the diocesan archbishop. So, it was too that the Venerable Monsignor Strambi, being already aged, worn-out as he used to say, could not be present for the Servant of God's entrance. People said, however, that it was due to the pride and vanity of the Servant of God alone that the most worthy Venerable Monsignor Strambi was not present there. Furthermore, the approach to Camerino, at that time, was very steep and craggy so that the carriage would have to stop from time to time since the driver was afraid that the horses would turn back. With strength, he would forcefully whip them to move forward, without paying any attention to the confraternities that were coming to meet them at the gates of the city, including the fraternal groups in uniform. That action was looked upon as an insult to the shame of the canons and of the archbishop even though it had not really even occurred as such to the mind of the Servant of God. Furthermore, those holy shepherds had come in the company of the Canon, the Servant of God and it was thought that the proper thing to do was to give them the most noble portion of the sacred ministry. Hence the conferences to the clergy that were assigned to the Venerable Monsignor Strambi and the conferences to the workers that were assigned to Monsignor Piervisani. The Servant of God, the director of the mission, unable to easily satisfy the souls of those clergymen and the big time operators of the city, was quite uneasy with the apostolic ministry there. The Servant of God could not be happy just to give the sermons treating the basic principles. He perceived clearly that those visions and those underhanded remarks were truly the work of the devil in an effort to prevent the achievement of great work. It is indeed most true that the two very exemplary and zealous bishops who had come to be of assistance at this mission showed honor in a special way our Servant of God by never failing to listen attentively to his sermons, but listening to them devoutly each day by setting aside everything else and saying to the people of Camerino and everyone else that through the mouth of Canon Del Bufalo, God himself was preaching to them. So, despite all of the aforementioned difficulties, the mission in general was extraordinarily fruitful as attested to the most celebrated confessors in that city and the surrounding locales who were beneficiaries of his work. Those two famous conversions mentioned before¹⁰ took place here indicating the manner with which the Servant of God preached, that is, to a very well-educated individual, but a non-believer and a foolish peasant, a great sinner. Yet the two of them were converted by his sermon on heaven. Likewise, occurring in this same locale, were other varied public satirical criticisms of the sermons or the services handled by the Servant of God frequently repeated with

¹⁰ Cf. p. 100.

ignorance to its own capricious enjoyment.

I was officially asked to say whether testimony has ever shown that the Servant of God, called to the confessional by a woman, refused to go there and that he made her say that she would go to another companion, and then, that it was learned later that the woman was brought in to make an accusation against him for solicitation.

It is true that the Servant of God in the mission of Camerino, at which I was present also, was called to the confessional by a woman and he refused, making her respond that she should go confession to another of the companions. But it is likewise true that he answered in that fashion because he was indeed very busy with other matters dealing with the ministry at that very time. The woman, as she herself later declared, was ready to accuse him of solicitation, not because there was any form at all of a solicitation made, but with the sole purpose of calumniating him, of showing him disrespect, and because she had been given this suggestion by some liberals. This was not the first time that this woman had the opportunity to go to confession to the Servant of God and was impeded. She had tried before when she found him already seated in the confessional. It was on that occasion that she wanted to engage in a conversation that smacked of solicitation, but he did not allow her to succeed since he dismissed her by quickly closing the sliding door. After that attempt, this woman looked at herself and repented, deploring her evil deed, and asked for forgiveness. She declared that it was all a concocted effort to create a calumny and to injure the innocence of the Servant of God.

Sarnano

From Camerino the Servant of God, together with his missionary companions, moved on to Sarnano, also in the diocese of Camerino. This mission was also most successful and I can say that it was the cause of a general reform in the way of living. Among the benefits resulting from it, notable was that of the Servant of God removing from the mind of the people errors that were present in that area supported by a certain group of lazy non-believers. They taught that the Council of Trent, *ex proprio Marte*, had introduced and sanctioned among their decrees and canons new doctrines and new dogmas, especially opposing dishonesty, in their own opinion, and the obligations of celibacy. The Servant of God did not decide to put together a special dissertation in opposition to their errors and, so to speak, come face to face with them and let them know that he was directly attacking the teachers and the promoters of those errors. However, in one of his sermons, the topic of which was general, he did seize the opportunity to declare that what had been decreed and defined by the Sacred Council of Trent was not something new, by a teaching based on the Sacred Scriptures, on tradition, on the teaching of the Fathers of the Church and other councils held before the one in Trent. In this way, he removed from the minds of the people the deception and the

misguidance of those evil people. During the course of this mission, the Servant of God did not omit the establishment of the so-called nightly oratory as the source of sustenance through the divine word for the men, including the usual practices of piety to keep them firm in their good intentions and resolutions. To be sure that these benefits would be permanent, he made sure that after the mission was completed, it would continue in force through the fervor of the clergy who would look after it perseveringly. Great was our own consolation when, upon returning to that area some twelve years after that mission, we still found the aforementioned oratory functioning and continuing to do its work through the zealous attention given to it by those priests who were encouraged by the Servant of God.

Comacchio

From Sarnano we went to Foligno in order to get on the road that leads to Comacchio. However, during the night that we spent in Foligno, it happened that our domestic helper Vincenzo Severini had such a large outpouring of blood that we called the Servant of God who doubted whether he would be able to hold on to life. He helped all night long providing everything that this emergency called for in bringing relief to the patient. He would have kept at it also during the hole following day if he had not been obliged to defer his trip to Comacchio for the mission that was scheduled to begin on that day. His complete attention and concern was for Severini, getting the help of reliable people and providing all the means and accepting all the expenses that had to be met for his benefit.

It was already the month of August when the Servant of God set to work on the mission in Comacchio. In a letter, Monsignor Albertini had led the Servant of God to realize that conducting a mission in that locale with bad air was risky for his own health as well as that of his companions. However, after getting word that the hot summer there was the best time to be located in that area for the care of the souls, he allowed him to go there with the blessing of the Lord. As a matter of fact, we had been already informed that during the preceding mission, conducted by other missionaries during that same season of the year, it had caused the death of several of the individual preachers. So, with trust in God and in the advice of Monsignor Albertini, courageously he initiated the mission, continued it and brought it to a conclusion and it turned out to be truly blessed by God both with spiritual benefit of the people and the personal preservation of health for the missionaries.

In order to give you some facts and some things that happened on that occasion, I must testify that the trip to get to Comacchio was disastrous. The coachman, who was not acquainted with the route, had lost his way and had taken us into a sandy byway along the sea shore. It was pitiful, likewise, because we could find no place for lodging. Furthermore, there was really no convenient place or time to have our noon meal or supper. As a result, one whole day was spent in that way including the following day until the evening. It is remarkable that the Servant of

God, still fasting, spiritedly and with a strong voice gave the sermon of introduction in the vast temple of the cathedral at the twenty-first hour of the day as though he had eaten the usual meals of the day.

Almost thirty years had gone by since the people of Comacchio had had a formal mission since the one that I referred to before did not go through because of the sickness and death of the preachers. That ancient mission had been given by Fr. Girolamo Trento,¹¹ famous orator of the Company of Jesus, who had as a companion the cleric Onofrio Minzoni. In the recollection of the older people of the city, it was the seal, the teaching and the eloquence of that father that brought forth much fruit. Divine Providence has disposed that within that very same notable space of time the same task would be put on the shoulders of our own Servant of God who with no less zeal, teaching and eloquence, as was attested to by the canons and other priests of the locale, would undertake the laborious job of conducting this mission.

From among those canons came the vicar general Monsignor [Carlo] Manasse who had previously been the president of studies in Bologna. When he heard the Servant of God's preaching and having seen his industriousness during the ministry, he developed a strong admiration for him and making a comparison between the eloquence of Fr. Trento and that of the Servant of God, he came to the opinion that the famous Fr. Trento's eloquence was virile in quality, while that of the Canon Del Bufalo had a wonderful quality of convincing power which captured the hearts of people drawing them toward conversion and salvation. At that time, Monsignor Manasse noted that one of his penitents, considered by him to be a Servant of God, had predicted to him that when a bolt of light would issue from the Vatican upon Comacchio, he would be elected a bishop. Up to that time, he was unable to interpret the meaning of that statement and much less the meaning of that bolt of light. However, after having seen and heard the Servant of God who had come to Comacchio, it struck him that he must be that predicted bolt of light. In fact, he was not far from right since after the death of Monsignor Albertini, he was actually made bishop of Terracina. That all took place just a few months after this mission.

Among the conversions that took place, most notable was that of a very well-educated person, who, at the time of the mission given by Fr. Trento led a very shameful life without ever getting up enough courage to make a good and general confession. This man, upon witnessing the zeal of the Servant of God, felt in his heart an up to that time untested feeling of confidence to bare his own conscience in a general confession. In reality, he did this with such precision and clarity that within the period of just a half hour, to the sincere consolation of his soul, he was able to be absolved in the charity of this same Servant of God. This fallen sinner had no difficulty at all appearing before the aforementioned Monsignor Manasse, congratulating him for the mission and for making Canon Del Bufalo available to him

¹¹ He was born in Padua, January 13, 1713 and died in Venice on April 19, 1784.

as a very special grace that God had shown toward him there in his own home town.

Because of the good news that had spread around in regard to the Servant of God, many people from the neighboring towns made their way to this mission. Those who were inhabitants in the locales that belonged to the Pontifical States also came to hear the Servant of God in Comacchio. Others who lived in the areas belonging to the state of Venice who were unable to leave their confines, made their way to the shore of the river, Mesola, in order to listen to him who had been requested to share the divine word with them from the opposite side. As in the other places, so also here, he set up the nightly oratory for the men, the association of the sisters of charity, the special group under the patronage of St. Aloysius for the young boys and other usual pious associations found in other places.

When the final day of the mission arrived and the time for their departure, the emotion of the people there was generally shown in their feelings of gratitude for the benefits received during the mission conducted by the Servant of God as well as their regrets in losing him. As they crowded around him, trying to kiss his hands and his feet or trying to tear away a piece of his clothing, he masterfully withdrew himself from the crowd, taking a different way through a canal where they could not get.

Canonica

Immediately after Comacchio, the Servant of God and his companions went to Canonica, a country parish in the diocese of Rimini. He was invited to go there by the capitular vicar of that diocese at the time when the see was vacant. All the inhabitants of the surrounding bergs would gather in this place and as a result that in attendance for this mission there were around twenty thousand coming from their respective parishes. On this occasion, it happened that one of the pastors, namely the pastor of Canonica itself, was assailed during one night by, I cannot say what precisely, but an illness in the chest. It was feared that he would suffocate and die. Since he personally had a deep appreciation for our Servant of God, he wished to go to confession to him and receive his blessing. Canon Del Bufalo went to him immediately to satisfy his wishes. On the following morning, the man felt cured and said that he attributed the grace of his healing to the blessing given to him by the Servant of God.

Sant'Arcangelo and Savignano

Next, the Servant of God was invited by the Capitular Vicar of Rimini to conduct the holy mission in the city of Sant'Arcangelo and in the region of Savignano at the same time. He replied to this invitation with the same zeal that he had showed to the previous invitation, but it was a bit more inconvenient insofar as he had to split his time preaching at the two places facing the difficulty of having to travel each day to both areas which were about three miles apart. Likewise, he had

to divide his co-workers into two squadrons.

With regard to the mission in Sant'Arcangelo it is to be noted that when the Servant of God, as was his custom, erected the cross at the conclusion of the mission, some sectarians had the boldness to smear it mud as a sign of their displeasure – something that truly brought sorrow to the heart of the Servant of God. But, at the same time, he was consoled insofar as he realized that it was not the work of the people who had shown him respect and devotion. During this same mission, it is remarkable that in attendance was an old man, ninety-six years old, who had the practice of receiving communion three times a week. After listening to an incident from the life of the most holy Madonna, narrated by Blessed Leonard, pointing out that through the intercession of the Mother of God, the conversion of a soul that had concealed, because of shame, its sins for a very long time was obtained, that old man himself came to the decision to make his confession. Since we were fully crowded with penitents, he came to me to ask me for an appointment on the following morning in the locale where we, the missionaries were lodged. Punctually, he showed up and warned me before his confession that he had always concealed certain sins of shame whenever he went to confession. This time, with great sorrow and trust in the mercy of God, he made a general confession.

The mission was also very fruitful in Savignano, but, since that area was filled with so many prejudicial people, the Servant of God had to face a lot of opposition to his establishing a nightly oratory for men. They said it would be a dangerous gathering of men since it was done at night. With good graces and with sound reasons he won the battle along with his missionaries by relating it, for example, to the foundations of nightly oratories by St. Philip Neri in Rome. There they never reached the status of being a gathering of ill-intentioned individuals, but actually was the convocation of Christian men interested in doing good works.

To be noted, likewise, is that a few inhabitants from these two locales had reacted to the use that the Servant of God made of the discipline. They claimed that it was something to be disapproved because of the delicacy of the times and the mode of thought adhered to by the people of Romagna. The Servant of God, however, did not put too much weight on those reflections. In regard to this same question, a short time later, when these same people brought the matter up again to Monsignor Marchetti, elected administrator of the church in Rimini, this learned prelate, after assuring those people of his acquaintanceship with the Servant of God from his earliest years and of having been his confessor, pointed out that the use of the discipline was not something introduced by the Servant of God, but was a practice exercised by other pious missionaries, among who were Fr. Segneri, the Venerable Fr. Paolo and the Blessed Leonard. Hence, the Servant of God had nothing other than to follow and imitate zealously what they had done. Thus, he assured them that in the Servant of God's ministry, he showed no concern about human politics.

As I said before, there were, between the two settlements of Sant'Arcangelo

and Savignano, common borders and hence a certain interchange of animosities and hatreds was evident and had unpleasant consequences. Filled with charity, the Servant of God, being aware of this and in keeping with the objectives of his ministry came to the decision that he did not want this scandalous situation to continue there after the completion of the mission and therefore he saw to it that the opposing factions among the inhabitants of both those towns were brought together to be reconciled. And, in order to bring that about, in addition to his many appeals and exhortations, during the procession in which the most blessed Madonna was carried, the uniformed members of the associations of each town were asked to handle the carrying of the Madonna, each group from Sant'Arcangelo and Savignano taking alternate turns. This was the source of great edification for the people and it brought about the desired results.

I was officially asked to say if I knew whether a certain Fr. Luigi Nardi had written a small work which censured the gift-giving to the Madonna by the women, namely, their combs and their mirrors as a result of what was known to have been obtained from the Servant of God.

It is my understanding that that small work, I think, may, indeed, have been written because of something that was heard from one of our missionaries, not yet very experienced in the ministry, who urged the women of Savignano to make an offering of their combs and mirrors to the most holy Mary, and, that after getting them in his hands, he, in the presence of the people, broke them into pieces at the same time when the weapons were being destroyed. The amount of money that was gotten from the spoils was used to purchase wax for candles to be burned before the image of the most holy Mary. It is not at all true in any way whatsoever that the Servant of God had the least part in that action. Rather, when he learned about it, he made it very clear to that young companions that that was not something practiced in his Institute for the missions, that is, to ask for such things as combs and mirrors.

Rimini and Moscosi

When those two missions came to a conclusion, the Servant of God went to Rimini where he was asked by the ecclesiastical authority to give a few spiritual conferences to different groups of people. He submitted himself to this request and delivered those conferences to men, then to women, and finally to the clergy. They all turned out to be to the total satisfaction of the participants.

The Servant of God was invited by Monsignor Mattei, the archbishop of Camerino, to give a mission in a country parish near the city of Cingoli with the nickname of "I Moscosi". In that invitation the archbishop stated that just as he had made his voice heard in the big city of Camerino, so also should it be heard evangelizing the very poor, namely, the inhabitants of the small parish. The Servant of God responded willingly and, from beginning to end, brought forth in that mission much fruit for those peasants.

Moved by the Servant of God's reputation, many people of every level came from the neighboring city of Cingoli. It is to be noted that on the day and in the very act in which the people were gathered together out in the open to hear the final sermon disposing the people to receive the papal blessing, that massive crowd of people faced the real possibility of being surprised by a torrential downpour. As a matter of fact, the sky was overcast with heavy, rain-laden clouds. The Servant of God, mounted on the speaker's platform, recited three Hail Marys with the people. Immediately the sky appeared to open up and release a beam of light over the locale where those people were assembled. They were able to be present for that ceremony, which lasted some two hours, without getting wet. At that very time, a severe downpour of rain fell in the surrounding area on the people who were not listening to the Servant of God. Because of this, in the area where they had prepared and loaded firecrackers to be shot at the time of the papal blessing, something in opposition to the express advice of the Servant of God, those firecrackers ultimately were useless because of the rainfall. It also turned out that many people who had come there simply out of curiosity were so deeply touched by the sermon given by the Servant of God that, with compunction, they sought the missionaries to hear their confessions, as actually did occur.

Belforte, Terracina and the death of Mons. Albertini

When the mission in the parish of the Moscosi was concluded, the Servant of God was invited by the same most reverend archbishop of Camerino to conduct a mission in Belforte. That turned out to be as fruitful as the others from the very beginning since the Canon made use of the circumstance of using a very practical theme on the day when the body of a recently deceased person was being viewed.

When Monsignor Albertini was elected bishop of Terracina, he summoned the Servant of God to come to Rome to make arrangements for missions to be given throughout his entire diocese. The Servant of God went immediately to Rome. He agreed with the bishop to initiate the missions there in Terracina in the month of November. Then, in accordance with the agreement made, the Servant of God and his companions went there where they found a huge field for doing good works and achieving great results.

He was just about ready to begin the mission in Priverno when Monsignor Albertini directed him to go to Rome. To this unexpected announcement, the Servant of God wanted to make some suggestions so that the prelate would withdraw his command since he was all set to begin work in Priverno. However, Monsignor Albertini insisted that, just as he had always been obedient before, so he should now be the same in this situation. He asked him for his prayers to the Lord since he felt physically gravely ill. The Servant of God was obedient and on his way to Rome he got the news of the death of the bishop. But, not putting any credence in that report and recalling that just a few hours previously he had left him with no sign of an

impending death, he continued with his trip. He arrived in Rome where the news was then confirmed and, deeply sorrowful, he resigned himself to it exclaiming: “May the will of God be done”. It was then that he wrote a letter to me from Rome when I was located in the House in Giano. In that letter, he conveyed to me the news of the death of Monsignor Albertini, referring to him as our father in common. He urged me to be brave and to continue, with equal zeal, my missionary career, and to help the Institute advance which was opening up a new house in Pievevitorina, diocese of Camerino. That I did.¹²

It was also on this occasion that Canon Fr. Giuseppe Visconti, now deceased, who attended Monsignor Albertini during his final illness and death, related that the prelate, enlightened by a celestial light, foresaw the approaching death of the Servant of God and prayed to the Lord to deign to prolong the Servant of God’s life as he offered up his own instead. His prayer was heard.

The ministries of 1820

Velletri

In 1820,¹³ continuing the course of missions, the Servant of God was invited by his eminence Cardinal Della Somaglia, of famed memory, then the bishop of Velletri, to give a mission in that city. Upon his entrance into that city, the people of Velletri, inspired by the veneration and fame of the Servant of God, went out to meet him, and, after unhitching the horses of the coach that was transporting him, they themselves pulled it all the way to the cathedral of San Clemente. This was an event that Canon Del Bufalo in his modesty and humility, never expected to happen.

In Velletri there was an association or membership of the St. Francis Xavier group, already set up by the Servant of God during a previous mission there with the authority of his eminence Mattei, the former bishop. These members had their own uniforms, operating just like the practice followed in the Oratory of Caravita in Rome, that is, being in attendance at the functions of the nightly oratory and being on hand for the missions conducted in the city. Also, in Velletri, there was a confraternity under the title of the Sacred Stigmata of St. Francis which, as an ancient association, had the responsibility of assisting at the functions of the missions that took place in their city. Between these two associations, the first belonging to the ordinary people, the other to the nobility, there was a feeling of antipathy so that

¹² Cfr. *Epistolario I*, letter n. 235, p. 365.

¹³ In the manuscript it has “1819” but that is certainly an error because the missions in Velletri, Fabrica etc. referred to here, were all held in the year 1820, beginning with the month of April. (Cfr. *Epistolario, I*, p. 20).

neither one of them wanted to yield to the other any part of their participation during the actual mission. When the Servant of God was informed of this situation, in order to break down that antipathy from the very outset of the mission, he seized the first opportunity. He knew that the nobility would not be able to handle the functions held *summo mane* nor the ones held at night, something that he had experienced during the previous mission. So he directed the organization of the Stigmata to handle the more noble functions, those during the daytime and the other group to take care of the functions of the early morning and the nighttime. It was expected that this would have quelled the antipathy, but that is not what happened. Contemporaneously, arguments arose between the members of the St. Francis Xavier group and some of those of the Stigmata, among whom was the archpriest Mazzoni, now deceased. In trying to correct one of his opposition, he smacked a member of that group and as a result, the other members of that group protested and refused to be of service any longer in that mission. The other members of the Stigmata group, however, in order to offer some sort of satisfaction to the offended group, solemnly dismissed from their confraternity the aforementioned archpriest Mazzoni and in this way, minds were set at ease and both outfits participated in the mission just as the Servant of God had established.

The mission, in general, turned out to be fruitful and there were some notable conversions. Between the archpriest Mazzoni and the Servant of God there was harmony and the former lent his hand to our missionaries by admitting them to exercise their ministry perennially by procuring for them a temporary lodging in the seminary. He also assisted in the job of preaching and of handling the nightly oratory. He often expressed how much good was attained through their work, along with other benefits, particularly the lessening of homicides which up to then had been frequent.

On the other hand, later and with prudence, the Servant of God determined to withdraw *sensim sine sensu* from that temporary lodging for his missionaries for he foresaw that it would not be possible in the future to have a permanent and stable location in that city, even though the people of Velletri were concerned in procuring one for him. In withdrawing his men, therefore, he used great caution since he knew that it would have upset the people enormously if they had seen them depart as a group. Likewise, even more so, he showed caution since a house in Albano had just recently been opened and the missionaries there could easily get to Velletri, offering their work and zeal, for any circumstance if the need arose.

Fabrica

After the mission in Velletri, the Servant of God moved on to the area of Fabrica, diocese of Civita Castellana, having been invited by the bishop, at that time Monsignor [Lorenzo] de Dominicis who was at the decrepit age of ninety-six. Meeting the Canon and his companions were some gentlemen from that locale who

joined them on the way that still had to be traversed to get to Fabrica. On the way, they discussed the method that would be observed for the mission. They expressed their preference of not having the discipline used, saying to the Servant of God: "The leaders do not want to have that buffoonery that is accustomed to be done in the missions conducted by the Passionists!" Upon that observation, the Servant of God, after defending the method used by the Passionist Fathers and their zeal, he opened the way for them to comprehend the reasons for the method of using the discipline, explaining that the time of the mission was a time in which God calls the people to repentance. and hence it is reasonable, useful and even necessary to make utilize this method. To gain interior repentance, that body must be castigated in order to offer satisfaction for the many sins that it causes. This instruction given by the Canon along the way was so effective that they not only returned to their hometown convinced of it themselves, but they even persuaded others, and, during those days, they were seen subjected to the discipline.

This mission brought about a very consoling effect on them. It was a notable thing that at the point of the final fervent suggestions given by the Canon during his concluding sermons, when he lifted up the Crucifix to bless the people, the people, as they did each night, broke out in a torrent of tears. Later, the Servant of God went to the nearby area of Carbognano which had had a mission one or two years before. There he delivered a visiting sermon intended to recall those people to a renewed fervor and to invite them to receive the sacraments, gathering together with the folks of Fabrica. As a result of this sermon, a large crowd of the people of Carbognano made their way to Fabrica and there made their confessions and received communion at the holy altar on the day when they held the observance of general communion.

Spello

In order to satisfy the desire of Monsignor [Stanislao] Lucchesi, bishop of Foligno, the Servant of God and his companions went to conduct missions in the city of Spello. Here, in addition to the great universal benefits achieved, two events worthy of note took place particularly during the procession of repentance.

The first one was that since the associations of the city were invited to attend carrying candles during the process of the most holy Madonna and the members making it known that their income was not sufficient for them to ever be able to pay this quite notable expense, the Servant of God replied that they should be generous and go ahead and purchase the wax in accordance to the amount used and the most holy Madonna would take it from there. Nothing else had to be done and the three associations provided their need of wax from three different dealers. When the ceremony was over, a ceremony that lasted three hours with the candles burning all the while, the amount then was reported to the respective dealers, calculations were made. No matter how often they checked the results, it was noted to the surprise of the members as well as the dealers, that the wax that was to be paid for depending

on how much was used, had actually not diminished in amount as it naturally should have, but, on the contrary had increased three pounds for each dealer and the dealers had accordingly to reimburse each association for the additional amount.

The other astounding thing that happened was the following. A nobleman who was assigned to help with the mission, a citizen of the place, during the beginning days of the mission had devoutly attended the services and assisted the missionaries with great courtesy. When the Servant of God learned that this man had become ill he declared that the Lord was calling him back to himself as a reward for his labors. He repeated the same thing several times as the time of the illness continued. On the last day of the mission, the Servant of God was informed that the sick man had improved. In the presence of two curates who were giving him this information, he told them to pay close attention because after he gave the final benediction, that sick man would pass on to eternity. The local pastors, though not overly concerned or interested about their presence at that final blessing, however, when they heard that statement, they decided that the sick man should not be left unattended by the priests, if that prediction of the hour of his dying would turn out to be true. As a matter of fact, one of them was there attending to him, giving him a final blessing when the sick man died just as the Servant of God had predicted. Furthermore, those pastors have related that various sick persons, making use of a piece of clothing or something else belonging to the Servant of God, given to them secretly, cured them.

It has been noted and written by the people that while the Servant of God was giving the final benediction in the public square around the twenty-third hour, they had seen two brilliant stars hovering over the Servant of God's head. I was present and standing there among the people, trying to keep good order, but I did not see those two stars. I, indeed, heard the gasps of surprise that the people uttered and I noticed the commotion that was shown also by the bishop who was present. I believe that the apparition of those two stars was a true occurrence because it is altogether not presumable that all of those people could have been deluded. Still, I cannot make this a part of my testimony as something that I myself saw, because I did not make any special effort to inspect it.

As he had done in many other places, here too he established the association of St. Francis Xavier. I can recall in this regard that a month or so after this mission, I think about six months, the members of this same group had a misunderstanding among themselves and even came dangerously close to physical blows. I do not know the reasons for this but in the heat of their altercation, the Servant of God made an appearance with them. He settled them down and calmed their spirits, declaring to them that he had instituted this association for the sake of peace. On the day when they contacted the Servant of God, the very hour [649]of his appearance and at the exact time when he dealt with their problem, it is known that the Servant of God was preaching in the province of the Marca about one hundred miles away. This fact was narrated to me by Fr. Francesco Pierantoni from Matelica

who presently is the ordinary confessor for the Salesian nuns in Offagna near Osimo. He was a companion with the Servant of God in the mission in Spello. It has likewise been confirmed by Canon [Michele] Perrucchini, not deceased, from the city of Spello who at that time was the director of the aforementioned association.

Fiammenga

After that mission, the Servant of God moved on to the one in Fiammenga, a country parish near Foligno where there was quite a large gathering of people both from the parishes nearby as well as from the city of Foligno. It happened here that a man, who had listened to a sermon delivered by the Servant of God and who had not gone to confession for twelve years or more, came to the decision that he would never again go to confession as he recalled an imprudent act of a confessor while he was making his confession, that is to say, that in order to correct him, he gave him a slap in the face. But, then, seeing the charity that the Servant of God displayed with his companions in dealing with penitents, he approached the Canon and bared to him the state of his conscience setting himself back on the straight path. Likewise, it happened here that a woman was suffering from a hemorrhaging of blood from the nose and in danger of suffocation. Her pastor informed the Servant of God about her and asked him to pray for her and pay her a visit. The Canon did go to see her and brought along an image of St. Francis Xavier. This he applied to her forehead and the hemorrhaging ceased. That aforementioned pastor expressed his regrets to the Servant of God that his parishioners were not attending the catechetical instructions. The Servant of God took hold of his crucifix and a little bell and made his way through the parish limits followed by me who sang some verses from one of our mission hymns. The people then began attending the teaching of the doctrine and from that time on, as far as I know, present for the lessons were not only the children but also their parents.

Mergo

From the parish of Fiammenga, the Servant of God moved on, at the urging of his Eminence [Francesco] Cesarei, bishop of Iesi, to the settlement of Mergo in that same diocese of Iesi, where the Servant of God's reputation of sanctity had spread about. He acquired that reputation in the mission given the previous year in Serra San Quirico, in the diocese of Camerino, a town neighboring the outskirts of Mergo. Two wondrous occurrences took place during that mission and they are the following.

At the beginning part of that mission, while the Servant of God was in the confessional in the church where he had put on public exposition with a certain amount of solemnity an image of St. Francis Xavier, selected as the protector of that actual mission, a woman, afflicted with rickets, appeared before him in a special

way, that is to say, unable herself to move, she was carried there by other women. Making known the unfortunate condition of her health, she asked the Servant of God for his blessing. To this, he replied as follows: "Over there is St. Francis Xavier, go there and recommend yourself to him. God will bless you". With merely those words, as she later asserted, she immediately felt invigorated and without the assistance of anyone, she approached the altar where that aforementioned image was displayed. She realized at that moment the grace that she had received which she attributed to the intercession of Canon Del Bufalo, since she obtained it before she recommended herself to St. Francis Xavier.

The other astounding incident happened in the person of a small boy, the only son of a man of wealth in that area. For some time, this little fellow had been gravely ill and it was getting to the point of threatening death. In view of this threat, the father, after making use of all the things prescribed by the doctors, all of which turned out to be futile, he turned to the use of supernatural means. With deep trust in the Servant of God, he asked the Vicar Forane, the boy's godfather, to beg the Servant of God to come to visit and bless the sick boy. The Vicar Forane came to see us, while we were in the process of making our examination of conscience before the noon meal. He made his appeal to the Servant of God who, at that time, was trying to establish in that locale the association of St. Francis Xavier. He asked whether the father was financially able to pay for the preparation of twelve uniforms for those members of the association who were unable to meet the cost of the uniforms that had been adopted. The Vicar Forane assured that he indeed was capable of taking on that expense. So, the Servant of God said that he should tell the father of the child to have those twelve uniforms made at his expense and that when that was done, his son would be cured. When the father was made aware of that reply, he quickly had six uniforms made for that society, promising to have the other six done later. So, those six uniforms were provided and the child showed improvement. The Vicar Forane brought this information to the Servant of God. However, on the following day, the Vicar Forane returned with the news that the little fellow had had a relapse. To this, the Servant of God asked whether the father had twelve uniforms made, to which the Vicar Forane answered that only six had been done. At that point, the Servant of God replied: "Have those other six made and the boy will get well, otherwise, he will die". It was strange that since the man had the means of doing it and had made a promise to God to do it, that he was so reluctant to have the full number of uniforms made. Therefore, the father finally had the other six sewed and the boy was perfectly and permanently healed. I do not remember the Vicar Forane's name nor do I know the name of the father of the little boy who was healed. But you could check with Fr. Francesco Pierantoni who came to assist at this mission and was present with me for the dealings with the Vicar Forane.

During this mission, which turned out to be a fruitful one, the Servant of God, previous to the invitation of the most reverend archbishop of Camerino, gave a visiting sermon in Serra San Quirico where he revived that old spirit of fervor that the

people there brought to Mergo to hear the preaching of the Servant of God. There was also a joining in the solemn procession held on the final day which was the source of great edification to the people of Mergo.

Torricchio and Monte Martano

At the request of the esteemed reverend archbishop of Camerino, the Servant of God went to conduct the mission in Torricchio, a country parish. The mission was blessed by God in a particular way so that the pastor, already an old man, asserted that he could not recall any other mission as fruitful as this one because of the huge concourse of people who attended the sermons and made use of the confessional.

After that mission, he went on to Monte Martano, in the diocese of Todi, invited by the bishop there, and the missions were conducted as usual. Contributing to the success of the mission was a prodigious occurrence which, only after the death of the Servant of God, was documented and registered as a perpetual memory in the commune of Giano. It was a miraculous event that took place immediately after this mission.

The Servant of God, along with Canon Betti was moving from Monte Martano in the direction of Giano when a woman in a nearby farm-house approached him. She held a small child of five or six years of age in her arms. Because of a wound on his knee caused by a small sickle, the little fellow suffered spasms from the gash and was unable to walk. The doctor claimed that it was incurable. The lady asked the Servant of God to bless him. He extended his hand over the place of the wound which was wrapped in a cloth sheet and without even looking at him, he cured him on the spot in such a way that the boy asked his mother to release him for he no longer felt any pain, saying that he was cured, and wanted to climb the steps by himself, which he actually did. This prodigious happening had an effect on the people from the neighboring towns like a fire spreading around as they sought to see and hear the Servant of God.

Terzo della Pieve, Grutti and Cannara

Next, upon the urging of that same bishop, the Servant of God proceeded to Terzo della Pieve, to Grutti and to Cannara upon the invitation of the bishop of Assisi where he conducted missions.

Then, upon the invitation of the most reverend archbishop of Spoleto, the Servant of God gave a series of retreats to the clergy in the Mission House of San Felice in Giano. Also, soon after the mission given in Torricchio, at the insistence of the most reverend archbishop of Camerino, he gave retreats likewise to the clergy of Pievetorina.

The archpriest of San Terenziano, a priest of notable merit and quite advanced in aged, for a long time had desired to meet and hear the Servant of God.

He seized the opportunity at the mission in Grutti, a town close to Todi, to satisfy his desire. He went there and this is the decision that he came to, as he expressed his feeling with complete joy: "I give thanks to God that I got to know this man, most outstanding in eloquence and learning, for his zeal and his love for a hidden life in Jesus Christ".

Ministries in Rome

[Toward the end] of the year 1820, the Servant of God returned to Rome and it was then that he gave the holy missions in the church of San Nicola in Carcere where a large number of people attended and many conversions were reported. The Canon felt that in this mission the ceremony and the procession in honor of the dead Christ just as practiced in the Province of Marittima and Campagna would be fittingly done since in that area removed from the center of the city many of the residents there were country people. The procession took place but it did not please Monsignor [Candido Maria] Frattini, at that time the Vicegerent of Rome, and he made this known to the Servant of God and that despite the impression that this ceremony may have on other people, it was not to be done in Rome. The Servant of God agreed to his direction and when he, without showing any opposition, informed me of the Vicegerent's feelings, he remarked: "In Rome, this ceremony is not a prudent practice".

Oriolo, Subiaco and Spoleto

After that mission¹⁴ conducted in Rome, the Servant of God was invited to conduct another in the territory of Oriolo, in the Province of Patrimonio, in the diocese of Sutri. There, in addition to the great good that was reported, a remarkable thing happened to a young girl who, after hearing a sermon given by the Servant of God, broke out into a copious flow of tears as the people cried out that they wanted to go to confession. She was quietly led away to another church by one of the Servant of God's companions and her confession was heard. She settled down.

After that, his Eminence Cardinal [Pietro Francesco] Galeffi wanted the Servant of God in Subiaco for a mission. There, he set up the nightly oratory which is still in operation, as well as the association of St. Francis Xavier. During this mission an incident similar to the one that occurred in Oriolo happened, as I just reported above. In particular, we must also point out that many weapons were publicly destroyed and decks of playing cards burned.

¹⁴ Actually the mission in Oriolo took place before the one in Rome in S. Nicola in Carcere, and, precisely at the end of September-October 1820, as also the one in Subiaco which was held in November of 1820, while the retreats in Spoleto were held in the middle of September 1820 (Cfr. *Epistolario I*, p. 20).

In this same year, he likewise gave a mission, or maybe it was a mission in the form of a retreat to prisoners in the Rocca of Spoleto, where, to give the opportunity to everyone to participate in the fruitful benefits, they held to general communion days, with a break of eight days between the two functions.

Ministries of 1821

Ministries of 1821¹⁵

In 1821 he assumed the giving of missions in the diocese of Albano, spreading the seed of the word of God in Albano, Ariccia, Genzano, Marino, Castel Gandolfo, Civita Lavinia¹⁶ and Nemi. That seed produced in all of those locations an abundant harvest of conversions and good deeds.

Ascoli Piceno

Then, the Servant of God moved on to Ascoli, having been called by the most reverend Cappelletti, bishop of that city. On the way, he passed through Montefalco to pay a visit to Blessed Clare. After having celebrated Mass at her altar, the Servant of God said to me that he had heard inside himself a voice that said to him: “Prepare yourself for some suffering”. When he arrived in Offida, he got word from the above-mentioned bishop that he should not make a move until they had had a meeting. The reason for this suspension of activity, we found out later when the Servant of God sent me and Canon Betti to find out just what was going on. It was then that the bishop declared that he did not want any external show during the mission since he had heard some things that we have practiced in other missions. He considered those things to be sheer buffoonery; things such as displaying serpents and devils in order to impress the people. But, he had also heard other things that were falsely attributed to us. Still, he insisted that some of those public functions, such as processions and the use of the discipline, should likewise be avoided and that they should simply preach in the manner of the holy Apostles. We defended ourselves by saying that if we had the power to work miracles like the Apostles, we would abstain from those external activities and would restrict ourselves simply to preaching. We assured him of our obedience to his will and set aside our system of conducting missions. We would be content, if he so permitted, to arrange a shift of spiritual

¹⁵ From this point on, the deposition of Fr. Valentini in regard to the ministries of St. Gaspar do not adhere accurately to the chronological succession. So, anyone who wishes to be in line with the actual succession of St. Gaspar’s ministries – something that was not of importance to Valentini who was more interested in relating the unusual things that happened during the missions – can consult the volumes of the *Epistolario di San Gaspare* where at the beginning of each volume there is an essential chronology of the life of St. Gaspar and his ministries.

¹⁶ Nowadays it is called *Lanuvio*.

retreats for each level of local residents, beginning with the clergy. In the meantime, contacting that bishop was Fr. [Vincenzo] Giovannelli, an Oratorian priest, a man who enjoyed a good reputation with the bishop and the people. He convinced that prelate to allow the missionaries to adhere to their system of conducting public missions, since there would be nothing that would be displeasing. He showed the bishop that he was so sure of his position about this that he was willing to back it with his own guarantee. Furthermore, he added that having those retreats would not be as efficacious and that if he did not allow the mission to be held, the people would be scandalized and would spread the rumor that it was the bishop who denied their having a mission and the presence of those missionaries whom he himself had invited. When the bishop showed that he was reluctant about being present for the entrance ceremony, during which he, in behalf of the people and in keeping with the methods observed by the missionaries, would greet the missionaries and hand over to them the Crucifix, this obstacle, too, was handled successfully by the Servant of God when he said that one of the curates or some members of the association of the Crucifix could substitute for him and perform that particular part of the ceremony. This solution pleased the bishop and only then did he grant the missionaries entry into Ascoli.

During the mission in Ascoli, according to the report of Fr. Maestro Ventura, a Conventual who was present there, the Servant of God set up a rampart in defense of the entire city. In addition to the customary mission for the people, he did not, in his tireless zeal, overlook any level of individuals, least of all, those in prison, spreading the word of God through the use of retreats. Likewise, during this mission, it was noted that many freethinkers who had their residences facing the square where the mission was held, left the city without causing any sinister activities. Fr. [Francesco] Amici, an Olivetan priest, pastor of one of the parishes there, told me that toward the beginning of the mission, one of the sectarians stopped by to listen to the Servant of God preaching. After shouting out some scornful words, he returned to his house since a light rain began to fall and there, he died suddenly. We also were witnesses of the conversion of a lady who was suspected of being a freethinker. She watched the activities of the missionaries, noticing the hardships, the difficult work that they sustained, the suffering that they imposed on themselves. She could think nothing else than attributed that only to their zeal to win souls for God. Thus, she had a change of mind and heart, threw herself at the feet of the Servant of God, sincerely confessed her wrongs and showed that now she had turned back to faith and devotion and was ready to spend the rest of her life living as a good Christian.

Offida

When the mission in Ascoli was concluded, he moved on to Offida where the Servant of God exhausted all of the energy of his zeal so that in explaining the eternal truths to the people in attendance, for just an unaccustomed moment he

began to tremble as several priests, both learned and worthy of belief testified to me.

On that occasion, the Servant of God learned that, in the cathedral in Offida, they religiously conserve a consecrated particle wrapped in a line cloth tinted with blood that was miraculously poured out by that particle, around two hundred years before. That took place when a Jewish person asked the Christian lady, who had received it in communion, to give him that particle which he wanted to use for reasons of superstition. She, however, hid the particle under some earth in her animal barn. When she saw that the mules would genuflect whenever they entered the barn and did a thousand other strange things, she informed the ecclesiastical authorities and all the prodigious happenings were made known. The clergy solemnly transferred that particle wrapped in a linen cloth to the church now kept between two pieces of tile. I say that the Servant of God thought about carrying this miraculous relic in procession, going through the entire city in an orderly fashion so that even when the streets grew very narrow, still the procession could continue without confusion, to the great admiration and consolation of all those in attendance.

At this point, I must point out that the Servant of God knew that he was dealing with a public ceremony and therefore did not want to fail to use diligence and care in deciding what to do. So, before undertaking this ceremony, not only did he want to make sure of the pious and constant tradition regarding the fact, but he also wished to personally see definite signs of the authenticity of the relic. Only then did he allow preparations to be made for the procession, namely, after he was completely convinced of the truth and authenticity of the seals that were imprinted on that relic. A huge concourse of people from Ascoli were present for the final, solemn benediction which the Servant of God gave to the people of Offida.

Chiaravalle

After that, the Servant of God gave several visiting sermons in different regions neighboring on Chiaravalle where he then conducted a mission. Those visiting sermons were given by him not only to revive the spirits of the inhabitants of those parishes, but also to invite them to the mission in Chiaravalle where he, at the twenty-second hour would give the main sermon. The inhabitants of those areas responded and made their way in processions from their homes. Many, many of them came from Iesi, among whom was his Eminence Cesarei, bishop of the city of Iesi.

It happened during this mission that one day, while the faithful were gathering together from every direction, a raging wind that knocked things down arose and even threatened to damage the preaching platform where the Servant of God was scheduled to preach. But, when the time for the sermon came, he, filled with trust in the God whom all the winds obey, gave the order for the Crucifix to be brought forth by the clergy who accompanied him. As soon as that Crucifix made its appearance, the wind calmed down and the air became tranquil. The people were stunned by that

and looked upon it as a miraculous work that he did to dissipate the skills of the devil who was attempting to impede the work of the mission on that day.

Then, the Servant of God, wishing to satisfy his own devotion, made his way to Loreto where he celebrated holy Mass in the shrine and gave thanks to the Mother of God for all of the help that she had given him in the course of the holy missions.

Barbarano and Bieda

From Loreto he moved on to Barbarano, a town in the diocese of Viterbo. He had been invited there by the archpriest acting for the bishop. That archpriest was so surprised in seeing and hearing the Servant of God that he was compelled to say that he had never before heard any such preacher showing such zeal and eloquence. He made this report also to his Eminence Cardinal [Antonio Gabriele] Severoli who replied that he was acquainted already with that zeal and eloquence.

Immediately after or almost contemporaneously with that mission in Barbarano was the mission conducted in Bieda, a town just a short distance from the other town and one that was equally fruitful.

Ariccina and Civita Lavinia

Next, he went to the diocese of Albano, which I referred to before. First, he worked in Ariccina then in Marino, then in Castel Gandolfo, Albano, Genzano, Civita Lavinia and Porto d'Anzio.

In Ariccina, it happened that a woman, sick with sciatica, asked for a visit from the Servant of God. She was told that she should attend the mission. The woman obeyed and when she made her appearance to hear the Servant of God at the mission, she was cured. This same woman had a son who was ailing for several months from a nervous fever. She brought him to the mission and, to the amazement of the people who had carried the sick boy there, she admitted that she had brought him there precisely to be cured. That's what happened later.

Toward the conclusion of the mission in Civita Lavinia, he was surrounded by the people who had traveled from neighboring areas to the place where the mission was being conducted, and, in his concluding sermon, the Servant of God emphatically exclaimed: "*Domine, pati et contemni pro te*". An individual present there, who was aware of the efforts being made to close two of the Mission Houses,

namely in Sonnino and Terracina,¹⁷ and who, I suspect, was a member of the Frezza family, uttered in a low voice: “That takes a strong stomach and a solid foundation in virtue”. As a matter of fact, not too long after this, those two houses were closed by order of the bishop who had the intention of granting those locales to the mendicant religious so as to provide a large number of Masses on feast days. By confession of that same bishop who was Monsignor [Luigi] Frezza, later made a Cardinal, nothing could be done about his having the occasion to close those two houses. Indeed, he even showed deep regret in having closed them, making this known to me when I unexpectedly ran into that most reverend bishop in Albano, and he wanted me to make this known to the Servant of God.

Albano

In Albano, around the end of the mission, the Servant of God decided to have a planting of the seed pep-talk given a half-hour before nightfall. I immediately offered to handle it myself independently of the suggestions of the members there and follow the pattern set down by the Servant of God. So I went to where there was a flight of stairs which opened out onto the street and I spoke just a few words inviting the people to go to confession since the end of the mission was just about to take place. Accompanied by the members and the people from the church of Rotonda, where they had a nightly oratory, a man, pouring out tears and showing great compunction, came forth and said to me: “For thirty years now I have sworn not to listen to any mission and never to go to confession, but, I saw Jesus Christ who came to visit me in my home. I felt my heart break and that is why I have come here to make my confession”. Indeed, he did make his confession with great sorrow.

In that same city of Albano, a young lady, around seventeen or eighteen years old, heard Canon Del Bufalo preach. She was inspired to become a religious and every time she heard him preach in the course of that mission, she became more and more convinced of her vocation. Then, following through with this impulse, she tried to join the Capuchin sisters of that city, but, upon being rejected because she lacked the required dowry, she then turned to the Institute of the so-called Monachelle who were located also in that city. She was accepted by them and is still with them, making herself greatly useful in their pious shrine, and being a source of edification to all of her religious sisters.

Genzano

¹⁷ Here, Valentini confuses the order given by the Secretariat of State on December 19, 1821 to the missionaries in Sonnino, Terracina and Sermoneta, requiring them to abandon their houses since, being located out in the countryside, (Cfr. p. 201 of the Italian edition) they were then exposed to raids by the brigands, and the closing of the houses of Sonnino and Terracina in February of 1828 when Mons. Luigi Frezza, a native of Civita Lavinia, was bishop.

In the mission given in Genzano, the following incident is noteworthy. That commune, through the services of the magistrature, presented to the Servant of God the sum of forty scudi to cover the expenses of the mission. They made it known to him that if there was need for a further sum of money for this same objective, it was ready to meet that expense. The Servant of God, however, accepted only ten *scudi* which he was convinced would be sufficient, as actually turned out to be the case.

In that place, there was a married man in residence, commonly regarded suspiciously as one belonging to a particular sect. With his insinuating speech, he did everything he could to impede the entry of the missionaries into Genzano. However, in failing to succeed in that, he ordered everyone in his family to stay away from and not dare to attend any part of the mission. While the mission was in progress, one night, while he was sleeping, he thought that he saw two missionaries, recognizing one as being the Servant of God, who proclaimed in a loud voice the following words: "Hail Jesus! Hail Mary!" and then urged the man to go to confession quickly. The man awoke, turned to his wife and asked her whether she had heard anything or seen two missionaries. She answered that she had not, though he kept on insisting that he did. He was so moved by this experience that early that morning he went to see the Servant of God and at his feet made a fully sorrowful general confession, accompanied with an effusion of tears. He related to the Servant of God everything that he had felt within himself, especially an intense hatred toward the missionaries and especially toward him. He now gave thanks to the Lord for having been there for him when he least expected him and for calling him to repentance. Otherwise, he would have been lost.

In that city, the Servant of God set up the usual pious organizations that I have referred to on other occasions. They are still functioning. The Servant of God himself informed me of this.

Porto d'Anzio and Albano

In Porto d'Anzio, with the agreement of the cardinal bishop as well as with Monsignor Cristaldi, the papal treasurer, the Servant of God gave three missions, that is, one to the prisoners, another to the soldiers and the other to the people. On this occasion, he also went to Nettuno and there gave a visiting sermon. The mission turned out to be greatly fruitful.

At this period of time, in Rome, Monsignor Cristaldi and the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII were in discussion about substituting the Girolomini Monks situated in the church of San Paolo in Albano but who had abandoned the place because of a lack of personnel, with the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood. The Servant of God, therefore, had the consolation of accepting for his brand new Congregation that locale which would become so helpful to his Institute. Before he received the rescript that enabled him to take possession, he wished first to have a three-day retreat for

the people of that church of San Paolo, immediately preceding the feast of the Annunciation of the most holy Mary. On that occasion, accompanied by his companions in procession, they made their way from the small church of the Congregation of the Sacrament and proceed, together with the people, to the church of San Paolo. There, he took possession of the church and the annexed monastery. Even though there was an adequate provision of needed furnishings for the church and the house, still, the spontaneous generosity of the people provided them with many necessary things. Once the possession was done, the Servant of God took on setting up and instructing various organizations, namely, of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, of the children of Mary, and that of St. Francis Xavier. From these organizations, there were some who left the world and embraced religious life. He also established the sisters of charity for older women who would give assistance and help to the poor and the sick. This group was so spiritually well-motivated that their members and generous contributors made this charitable work so effective that these sisters, animated by a fervent zeal, accomplished magnificent results in supplying relief to the ill. They never grew tired nor ran short of enthusiasm. That spirit and work is still preserved there under the direction of the missionaries.

Terracina

In the following November, the Servant of God, invited by the bishop, went to Terracina, to give a mission. While there, shortly after the mission, he contracted a pernicious fever which he tried to keep hidden for a day or so, but then it obliged him to go to bed and await a cure. In the course of that illness, I took him to Rome in order to escape the unhealthy air of that city. While making that trip, he managed to feel a bit relieved of the illness and, after arriving in Rome without a fever, he presumed that he had fully recovered. But, a new attack of fever developed and caused his skin to turn dark. Seeing himself reduced to this disabling situation, he asked for a blessing with the relic of St. Francis Xavier for whom he had a strong devotion. After he received that blessing, he resolved to continue the work of the missions. Moved by a strong feeling of courage, he sent his companions for the founding of the houses in Sermoneta, Sonnino and Frosinone. The Servant of God himself went to Albano to preach the novena for the feast of Christmas in the church of San Paolo. During the days of that novena, we see this holy man at night attacked with that fever and in the morning at the time for his sermon, he would be freed of the fever and was able to carry out his ministry of preaching.

Ministries of 1822-1824

Segni

At the beginning of the following year, after he had recovered his health, he went to visitate the aforementioned three houses of Sermoneta, Sonnino and

Frosinone to see how they were getting along.

After doing that, he proceeded to give the mission in the city of Segni, where Monsignor [Francesco] Stracchini, the bishop of that diocese, had invited him. During our journey there, a very violent storm broke out with evident danger of being thrown from our horses on those steep mountainsides. However, by divine providence and God's help, we arrived in Segni safe and sound. We contacted the most reverend bishop who was surprised to see that we had managed to get there on a day that had such horrible weather, declaring that not even the wolves would have left their dens. The Servant of God let him know that through the goodness of the Lord we were all rescued from every danger and were all set to begin our ministry. The mission turned out to be very successful. The procession of the dead Christ was held and it was carried out magnificently by the people of Segni since it was the practice there in that city to do it every year on Good Friday. The older people who for many, many years had participated in that procession declared that they had never been able to see it done with lighted candles, because the wind there was always so strong that they would be immediately extinguished and the procession would be held in the dark. However, now during this mission they were consoled to see it done for the first time with very great illumination as the weather was calm and the sky serene as though it was already the beautiful season of spring.

During this time, a notable conversion took place, namely, of a certain man who for some thirty years had in his confessions concealed some of his sins. One morning, in his sermon, the Servant of God spoke of that type of sinner. From his confessor he had gotten the encouragement not to sin again and at the same time, the blessed Virgin appeared to him warning him to abstain from his bad habit. She warned him that he could be lost. After he fell into sin again, one night he felt himself being throttled by the devil. He called for help from the Mother of God and, since he could not use his voice, he called out to her with his heart and then shortly after also with his voice when his throat was set free. When that sinner in Segni, heard this description, he said to himself: "This is a call that the Lord is giving to me through the words of the Canon." Then he fell down at the knees of a companion of the Servant of God, that is to say, at my feet, to make his confession. He remarked to me that he had been led to Segni by some of those people called wizards to find my treasure. He joined up with them and went with them out to the countryside where they performed all sorts of signs and witchcraft. At that point, two ugly monsters appeared beckoned by the witches. This made him feel foolish and then they all disappeared, as he stood there frightened and mystified. Because of that, he returned immediately to his home and as soon as he got to the doorway, he felt himself being grabbed by one of those monsters who said to him: "You are mine!" At that trying moment, he turned directly to beseech Mary most holy, with all his heart, and suddenly the monster disappeared. He was still in a state of fright and once again turned to the Mother of God who consoled him. Later, during the catechetical instructions, he

learned that such superstitions and wicked acts were reserved cases and he was determined more and more to go to confession. But whenever he approached the sacrament, he always lacked the courage to mention this. Finally, he did make his confession to me, as I mentioned, and he asked me to make his case known publicly as an example for any other sinner in that condition and also to give glory to the Mother of God. After his confession, made with all the proper dispositions, he told me that now he felt completely consoled and happy.

Brigandage in Marittima and Campagna

As I mentioned before, the house in Albano was opened and Monsignor Cristaldi, the Treasurer, got together with his Eminence Consalvi, the Secretary of State, in order to find an opportune means of providing for the dissolution of the brigandage that was so dominant in the Provinces of Marittima and Campagna. They planned to make use of the zeal of Canon Del Bufalo whom his Eminence held in high esteem because of his connections with him as the Apostle of the Marche as well as because his labors and enthusiasm had become well known throughout Italy. Thus, with unanimous consent, they wished to put this project into operation. So, they sent the Servant of God into those two provinces which the people there themselves characterized as brutal and called it the Italian Africa. The Servant of God was given the official notice and, trusting in God, he accepted this assignment. He made up his mind that he was going to do everything that he could within his powers and those of his missionaries at various places in those provinces through preaching, pious organizations, instructions and the confessional, together with other evangelical means, to bring about a change in their mode of life. As a matter of fact, he set up posts in Vallecorsa, in Sonnino, in Frosinone, and in Sermoneta by way of Bassiano, a place that was closest to and most frequented by the brigands. In each one of these posts the Servant of God gave missions as the means most effective for jarring the respective inhabitant, while at the same time emphasizing the organizations and the nightly oratory, the pious groupings and other works to keep the people and their activities closely allied with God's providence. Little by little, they began adopting new good habits, so different from those that they had been accustomed to. Even the youngsters, as a consequence of the mission work, became instruments for maintaining the older people in a hatred for sin and opposition to brigandage in particular.

When the mission in Terracina was completed with general compunction shown by all the people, the Servant of God took possession of a locale there that used to be a retreat place run by the Passionist Fathers but now renounced. This act of possession was done in a public ceremony as the people accompanied the missionaries from the city to that place of retreat. There, as a reminder of the mission and of the act of possession, they erected a large cross. After all of this, the Canon contracted that illness, which I referred to before. Then, recovered from that fever, he left Albano and went immediately to the mission in Segni, as I said before,

and from Segni he returned to Sermoneta¹⁸ where he conducted the mission which turned out to be very successful.

From Sermoneta, he went to Carpineto where he preached a holy mission which helped greatly to bring reconciliation to the souls of many people there who were feuding against each other, especially as a result of the brigandage. From Carpineto he went to Sonnino and did the same thing.

It was at this time that the Secretariat of State issued an order that the missionaries should move into the central part of the towns. In the event that they were unable to find a place of lodging, they should return to the capital. This order was deeply felt by the Servant of God, especially since around that same time he had received a letter from the most reverend Treasurer informing him that one of his missionary companions, called to be of help in the Province of Campagna, offered as a better solution the founding of a certain conservatory in Romagna rather than use missionaries in the province of Campagna against brigandage. However, the Servant of God did obey the order issued by the government and withdrew to Veroli, summoned by the bishop to give a retreat at the seminary. He figured that it would be better for him to remain in that area so as to prevent the arousal of vile action or fear as well as not to expose to difficulties his companions who were courageously gathered together there in the area of Sonnino, Sermoneta, Terracina and Vallecorsa. He sent back to Rome three of his missionaries who, because of the governmental order, fled from that place of lodging in Terracina and had taken up residence in the bishop's quarters. In this very sensitive situation, he also decided to remove his companions from the place of lodging they had in Sermoneta which was exposed to danger out in the countryside or in the mountainous area and set them up in an old Capuchin convent, or hospice, within the confines of the city.

When the Servant of God went from that lodging in the mountains to the aforementioned hospice, some of the brigands, thinking that the Servant of God was still in that elevated area, came into the garden of that place at night in order to talk with him. When they did not find him they sent him one of the representatives to Sermoneta, informing him that they needed to have a meeting with him. The Servant of God went down to the entryway and met with those fellows who were sent by the brigands. The substance of the discussion was that he should intervene for them to obtain liberty from the government because they were moved and felt deeply the consequences of the news that they had gotten as a result of the missions given in that section of the country. Likewise, that they felt a desire among themselves to be a part of the good works that were introduced into their respective towns by the missionaries. With sincerity, the Canon replied that he could give them his word that they would be dispensed from capital punishment, but not from being imprisoned or put into a place of confinement. He advised them to surrender themselves into the

¹⁸ Among the ministries of St. Gaspar, this mission in Sermoneta does not appear; after the one in Segni the mission in Carpineto follows immediately (Cfr. *Epistolario II*, p. 6 and 150 ff.)

hands of the government who surely did not have hate for them but wished to put an end to brigandage. Since the suggestion of seeking their liberty was not altogether something obtainable and somewhat arrogant, the Servant of God also made clear to them that he was convinced that it was an act of justice to detain them in a place of security because experience showed that giving them liberty was harmful for them and for public order. The Servant of God had received a similar representation coming from Veroli. He replied to them with the same consistency as he had done with the previous group. What is notable here is that the brigands had no plans for taking the Servant of God nor his companions as hostages since they had such a deep respect and veneration for them. Just at the bidding of the missionaries, they would have thrown themselves at their feet as a sign of their devotion. As a matter of fact, when the missionaries would be traveling through their terrain, they never made themselves seen armed with their weapons in order not to frighten them.

After the retreat conducted in Veroli, he went to Anagni and then to the mission in Frosinone. It turned out to be a solid reform for the population there which demonstrated its deep affection by supporting the establishment of a new mission house.

In the meantime, Vallecorsa was hopeful of having this same good work done there. The most reverend bishop of Gaeta, who was the authority for that town, invited the Servant of God to satisfy the desires of the people and a mission was held there. Plans for the erection of a mission house in that locale were made and were carried out by the Servant of God with the assistance of all the people who volunteered their own personal labor.

From Vallecorsa, he moved on to Piglio. When he was about to leave, all the Vallecorsans, the priests, men, women and children wept loads of tears. The Servant of God was so affected by this, that he promised to return and that he would leave his companions there, which was then done. The fruits of the mission in Piglio were singular and the Servant of God experienced the same type of touching departure as had taken place in Vallecorsa.

Next, he conducted a mission in Morolo and after that in Norma where, most highly revered, in addition to other organizations, is that of St. Francis Xavier and the nightly oratory. The Servant of God was requested to give a special blessing on the olive groves in Vallecorsa and in Bassiano. That blessing brought about a marvelous effect insofar as from that moment on there was always an abundant crop of olives and for the upcoming years the inhabitants of those confines would go about their locale singing the praises of the holy mission.

He moved on to Roccagorga, in the diocese of Anagni, then to Bassiano where in addition to the restoration of public peace and reconciliations between dissident families, there too they experienced an very abundant crop, just as I described above.

Later, he conducted a mission in Sezze as well as retreats in the two monasteries

of St. Clare and the Holy Family.

While going through the diocese of Anagni, he gave a mission in Acuto and the inhabitants there still remember the extraordinary labors of the Servant of God and the many fruits that were received both from the work of the pious organizations there as well as the foundation of a house of the Maestre Pie.¹⁹

In the diocese of Priverno, he conducted a mission in Maenza along with a retreat for the nuns of St. Clare in Priverno itself.

Teramo and Dioceses

In 1822, summoned by the bishop of Teramo in the Kingdom of Naples, the Servant of God made his way through that diocese with many companions called to assist him and he never grew tired giving missions and retreats. Hence, one mission was really the preparation for the next one and the ministry accomplished in the second one was, as it were, a rest from the preceding one. This was a source of marvel to all the people and the clergy. Even the unbelievers themselves were astounded and many converted by the instructions that flowed from the apologetic conferences that he gave to the employees, to the nobility and to the clergy. The fruitful results were so copious that many of the lettered people, and in particular a certain Canon [Nicola] Palma, wrote a description of the aforesaid missions, saying that they were extraordinary things accomplished by a man who, in their words, was doing them all at the same time. Some confided to their friends that this man of God had divined the secrets of their consciences, some about their own homes, pointing out to them their major problems as well as about themselves privately, indicating to each one individually things that he were previously unknown to him. In short, his ministry was so richly blessed by God that it appeared to be a continual miracle.

After completing his ministry through many tribulations, calumnies and crosses, all of which he suffered without showing the least external disturbance, the Lord rewarded his Servant, just as he had always done in all the other places, by instituting those pious organizations that I have so often mentioned, among them, the nightly oratory. The sectarians, seeing how the people were attracted to these associations, realized how they interfered with their own plots and began to describe those institutions established by the Servant of God as groupings of badly informed people and were so successful in their attack that the bishop himself, so ready to give credence to them, allowed himself to be misguided and subsequently ordered those associations to be suppressed. God permitted this work of the sectarians and allowed the bishop himself to be deceived by them. He permitted this evil deed in order to manifest that his Eminence Cardinal [Bartolomeo] Pacca was the author of

¹⁹ Cf. P. 274.

the promotion of that bishop²⁰ who was formerly a canon of the cathedral in Benevento, his home town. His conduct at this time was considered reprehensible as the supporter of wicked things and greatly harmful to the welfare of the Christian people, a discredit to the ministry of the Servant of God. Everything was tried until he renounced his episcopacy. The aforementioned Eminence, speaking to me one day when I was conducting the missions in Porto and Santa Rufina, in his diocese, he revealed to me his surprise that after all that had happened to the Servant of God in that aforesaid diocese, the Servant of God never referred back to it. I confided to the Servant of God everything that his Eminence Pacca had said to me. He replied that he always had the principle of action in such circumstances to pray, to suffer and to be quiet, a principle that many times he urged for the nuns to observe and even more so, did he practice it himself.

Montalto

Next, he gave missions in the episcopal city of Montalto in the Marca where, with only one companion who was not experienced to this apostolic work, he had to sustain the entire burden of the mission, getting a bit of rest only when he paid a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. While in prayer there, his face was lit up and he was so enrapt that those who were there with him in the mission had to call out to him and shake him when the scheduled time for his talk arrived. This was related to me by that same companion whom he had brought with him, namely, Canon Moscatelli, now deceased. It was confirmed by others who were present at that mission which turned out to be most abundant in the harvest of souls.

Acuto

After that mission, the Servant of God returned to the Province of Marittima and Campagna to the town of Acuto. The most reverend bishop of Ferentino had forgotten the appointment and had not alerted the archpriest. Hence, the Servant of God and his companion, namely yours truly, were obliged to walk from Anagni to the aforementioned area of Acuto. It was snowing since it was in the month of December.²¹ As a result, no one came to meet the Servant of God and the usual solemn ceremony of entrance could not be held. He, then, himself supplied by lifting up a crucifix while summoning the people by ringing a small bell and singing the customary mission hymns. With that sound the people began to gather immediately in the parish church even though it was late in the evening, around the *Ave Maria*

²⁰ Msgr. Giuseppe Maria Pezzella, of the Order of Augustinian Hermits, was born in Benevento in 1763, was bishop of Teramo from November 24, 1823 to June 18, 1828.

²¹ Actually the mission in Acuto was held from the end of January to February 10, 1822.

hour. This unexpected arrival of ours ended up being a useful thing for the mission since it turned out to be something of a supernatural shock for the people there. The all moved with agility either to hear the word of God or to go to confession. The results were amazing and were continued afterwards since the Servant of God established there in that town those organizations that I have spoken about so frequently before, including the nightly oratory.

Various other missions

In the year 1823²² he moved on to Forlimpopoli to fulfill a legacy drawn up by a pious benefactor five years previously. For this mission, he made use of a more familiar method of preaching, not used before in others. It wondrously opened up the way to many resources which, in that more or less abundantly enriched area, indeed with liberal spirits, produced very notable effects and drew large audiences. On that occasion there were many sincere abjurations and a general spirit of revival was witnessed.

During the previous year, he had exchanged letters with the respective bishops of Teramo, of Atri and of Penne, in order to set up holy missions there and in that same year he carried out his apostolic ministry in the remainder of the dioceses of Teramo, Atri and Penne including these towns of those dioceses: Giulia, Canzano, Guardia, Castel Basso and Nereto in the way that I have mentioned above.

Next, in the year 1823 and the following year of 1824, the Servant of God went to conduct missions in Sezze, Prossedi and Priverno. On that occasion, he saw to it that the collegiate church of Prossedi should be repaired, encouraging the people, Prince Colonna, the landowner, and also the government to contribute to this work. The Servant of God took it upon himself each year during Lent to send one of his missionaries to preach gratuitously so that the stipend usually given to the Lenten preacher could be used for the reconstruction of the church. He had the consolation of seeing that work of repair completed at the end of around five years. He wanted to go see it, which he actually did, and preached there.

All those missions turned out successfully. In that same town there was a pious benefactor who left a sum of money and its earning for five or six years to cover the expenses of having the missions conducted by the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood.

His Eminence Cardinal Bussi, archbishop of Benevento, invited the Servant of

²² According to the chronology of the missions conducted by St. Gaspar, the mission in Forlimpopoli was held in 1822 from the 4th to the 18th of August.

God to conduct the missions there for the third time.²³ He went there with his companions and solidified the good results that followed from the missions which he had undertaken there previously.

I was officially asked whether I knew about the testimony of what happened in Terracina between the Servant of God and one of his companions when he was forced to remain there in that area of very unhealthy climate.

On that occasion, the Servant of God was supposed to move on to Benevento, but was unable to do so because he lacked a passport which Monsignor Cristaldi was to supply but was late in sending it. In the meanwhile, Monsignor Manasse, the bishop of Terracina and a missionary companion, did not bear this delay at all well and was concerned about the delay in that area of most unhealthy climate. He was restless because he feared that the Servant of God might contract a fatal illness. He worried about the Servant of God trying in every way possible to be of help to him and treating him with kindness ad nauseam, while the Servant of God bore very peacefully all of the extravagant care shown to him by the most reverend bishop Manasse who, though a man of great virtue, could not help but show his disapproval for the impertinent reaction of his missionary companion. It is only the full truth that with total peace the Servant of God said to that upset man what Pius VI, of holy memory, would usually say to the bishops selected for Terracina and who were afraid to accept that office because they feared that they might not survive: "Find me an area where you cannot die and I will send you there immediately".

On his way to Benevento, the Servant of God wanted to make good use of the time available and, upon the invitation of the bishop of Gaeta, he stopped off to conduct a mission in Itri, Castellone and Lenola which resulted in a general feeling of excitement.

After the mission in Benevento, he continued on to Alatri, invited by the most reverend bishop Domeniconi. Then, next, to Guarcino, located in the same diocese where he also directed a retreat for the nuns. After that, to Campoli, in the diocese of Sora, invited likewise by its bishop who requested that he also give a holy retreat for the people of that same city. It produced its effects as though it had been given as a mission.

When these works of evangelization were completed, in keeping with the wishes of the bishop, he went to Gaeta for a mission and sent companions and others as assistants to give missions on the island of Ponza and of Ventotene since he was unable to go there because he had to be obedient to the directions of Monsignor Cristaldi who, in a letter, recalled him to work in the Papal States.

After all of that, in the city of Ancona, he had the assignment from the most reverend Treasurer to give the retreats to the prisoners, to the military and other special groups. But, he also was occupied in giving a retreat to the nuns as

²³ In truth, St. Gaspar preached only two missions in Benevento and the second one, which is the one spoken of here, was held in June of 1822 (Cfr. Epistolario II, 6).

requested by the bishop. It was here in this city that Canon Del Bufalo was seen giving as many as sixteen sermons in one day, always with a fresh and inalterable spirit, so that the Venerable Monsignor Strambi would refer to the Servant of God as a spiritual earthquake.

When he got back from Ancona, he conducted the missions in the city of Ferentino, then in Pofi, of the diocese of Veroli, upon the invitation of the most reverend bishop Cipriano.

Ministries of 1825-1837

In the year 1825 the Supreme Pontiff Leo XII, through Monsignor Cristaldi, made known to the Servant of God that he wished to have him in Rome for the jubilee year, and there to conduct a more involved, a more difficult mission but one that was highly complimentary. Thus it was that as soon as he completed the missions in Roccagorga, in Sant'Angelo and Visso, as well as the retreats in Castelforte in the Marche and others, he returned to Rome where he was told about a mission that he was to assume abroad where the Holy Father would be sending him with the faculty of being an Apostolic Vicar and with episcopal dignity.²⁴ The Servant of God, in regard to these pontifical intentions, after obtaining the advice of Monsignor Marchetti and others, humbly gave his reply to the Holy Father, thanking him for the immense kindness shown toward him, but begging him to dispense him especially from the weight of the episcopacy, the very thought of which caused him to tremble. In support of this petition were the highly esteemed Monsignor Marchetti and Monsignor Cristaldi who intervened for him with the Holy Father. Thus, the Servant of God was excused from this appointment but had to remain in Rome. He was given permission by the Holy Father to go to Assisi in the following year, 1826, where he had been invited by that bishop.

In 1827, the Servant of God gave missions in Ariano, Puglia, Carsoli, in the diocese of Marsi; in Pietrasecca, Poggio Cinolfo and Pereto. Then he went to the Abbey of Farfa, that is, to Pratojanni, Varco, Vaccareccia, Capradosso, Converniano and Poggio Mirteto. In that same year, he gave retreats to the clergy and seminarians of San Salvatore Maggiore. In those apostolic works, the Servant of God demonstrated his wonderful wisdom, his evangelical prudence. He did not lose sight of the purpose and the aim and made use of the means available which were apt and efficacious in bringing his efforts to an excellent result. As a result of that, the reform in the way of life was made very evident and the good relationships between the people and the clergy grew. He then completed his tour around the Abbey of Farfa with missions given in Castelnuovo and Fara, and ordering his companions to cover the remainder of the area in the following year, 1828.

²⁴ This refers to the proposal made by Leo XII in February of 1826 to St. Gaspar, namely, to send him as a nuncio to Brazil.

Invited by Monsignor [Antonio Maria] Cadolini, bishop of Cervia, the Servant of God occupied himself in giving a series of retreats in that same city. After completing them, he went in the suburban church of Soanne, in the diocese of Pennabilli, close to the aforesaid city and conducted a mission which could be regarded as a mission given to the entire diocese, judging from the number of people in attendance as well as from the benefits resulting therefrom still held warmly in the memory of those people. Next, he undertook the missions in Sant'Agata and of Misano, in the diocese of Montefeltro.

During the time of the mission in Sant'Agata [682] and precisely on July 2, 1828 around noontime, the atmosphere became so terrifying that the people ran in droves toward our place of residence which was in the higher level of the town. Soon followed the rumbling of thunder and the frequent flashes of lightning which hurt a number of people in the market place. One was thought to be dead and this news was brought to the Servant of God. He immediately directed me to go with the relic of the Holy Cross to where the man presumed to be dead was lying. When I got there, I blessed him with the relic as I was told to do and the man still appeared to me to be dead. Shortly after the blessing, he let out a cry asking where he was and asked for his belongings. When he was told what had happened, that he did not have a recollection of any of that and he kept asking for his belongings. Then, realizing really what had taken place, he said with horror: "Poor me – and I was in sin!" Fully recovered and seeing the things that he had bought, some small trinkets that had been completely ruined by the bolts of lightning. He felt deep remorse and make a sincere confession. That day, for the people there and for the entire diocese, was a sign that God was giving them a special call to renewal and to repentance.

After the mission in Sant'Agata, the Servant of God went back to Rome where he remained for some time to take care of the affairs of his Congregation, writing the memorandum to Pius VIII. Then, when all the problems were settled, he went to Frosinone and from Frosinone, making the trip on foot, he entered Roccagorga in the diocese of Anagni, to conduct a second mission which turned out to be very fruitful. After that, he went to Maenza, in the diocese of Priverno, where he gave a shift of retreats for the people. He went on to Alatri for the second time to give retreats there to the people and to the diverse groups of inhabitants of that city, all of whom were thereby benefitted. After these works, he moved on to give a mission in Sermoneta where he revived the confraternities that had grown inactive.

In 1829, he returned to Gaeta to give a mission to the people, to the soldiers, and to the suburb and then on to Castelforte in the same diocese where he was unable to find lodging. He wanted to remain in the church near the most blessed Sacrament in prayer, even though, while he prayed, the curate pointed out to him the house of a lady in the town who was willing to give him lodging. On the following morning, he accepted the invitation and began the mission by preaching that morning, during the day and at night, bringing forth abundant fruit.

Next, taking the road to Naples, he discussed the establishment of a mission

house there with the prime minister, Medici, who seemed to be in favor of it. He went then to Ariano for the second time, being invited by the bishop to give a mission to the people. Being successful there, he moved on to Carsoli, in the diocese of the Marsi, where he likewise conducted a mission that was extraordinary in its results. He did the same in Petrasecca, Poggio Cinolfo, Pereto and Tufo and finally in Oricola, all of them in the diocese of Marsi. Finished with all of those missions, he made his way to the Papal States and give missions in Poggio Mirteto and on Concerviano in the Abbacy of Farfa.

In the aforementioned year of 1829, when he got back to Rome, he dealt with all the problems up until the year 1831, handling all of the political matters of that time.

In 1832 he was asked by the bishop of Orte to give the mission in his entire diocese. He remained there preaching many days in Orte and scattered his companions in the surrounding areas for the same purposes. In Orte, on that occasion, the Servant of God called back to memory the beautiful and useful institutions that were set up by the Venerable Monsignor [Giovanni Francesco] Tenderini, a former bishop of that city, and made every effort to resurrect them. This was something that was deeply appreciated by the people there and they looked upon him as another Monsignor Tenderini because of the zeal that he shown for those pious works.

With the completion of those missions, he continued on to Visso, at that time in the diocese of Spoleto. Then, on to the neighboring city of Sant'Angelo where he brought about an immensely important fruit by restoring peace to the families and the towns that were feuding. They began calling him the angel from heaven.

In 1833, invited by his Eminence [Carlo Maria] Pedicini, bishop of Palestrina, he gave the missions in that city, in Zagarolo and in Genazzano. To be noted is the remarkable effect that the zeal of the Servant of God produced in Palestrina in bringing about peace among the clergy as well as the people. In Zagarolo, he aroused the interest for religious vocations in many persons of both sexes which resulted in successful responses. In Genazzano the Servant of God tightened his friendship with another Servant of God, Fr. [Stefano] Bellesini, an Augustinian and pastor of the church of the shrine of most holy Mary of Good Counsel, as they joined together to set up pious organizations and to give help to the poor of the parish. Canon Del Bufalo held him in great esteem and referred to him as a true man of God because of his deep spirit of prayer, his charity and his zeal. This mission, likewise, had excellent results.

The Servant of God, then, went to Rome, being invited by his Eminence [Placido] Zurla, Rome's Vicar, to conduct the retreat for the Camaldolese nuns of Sant'Antonio church on the Esquiline hill. After a short interval, he moved on to Veroli for missions there which aroused a tremendous reaction because of the numerous conversions. Then, again to Poggio Mirteto and Concerviano which, as I said before, belong to the Abbacy of Farfa.

When the Servant of God was in Concerviano, he received a letter from the most reverend bishop of Nepi who was inviting him to his diocese. So, when the mission in Concerviano was finished, he went to the city of Ronciglione where he held a mission that demanded much work and effort since there he lost the use of his voice and suffered complications in his chest.

In 1834, he conducted the missions in Forlimpopoli and Meldola where he had to make use of all of his zeal in his sermons to people in places that were infested with freethinkers, many of whom, on that occasion, had a change of heart. Particularly in Meldola, a den of people belonging to a particular sect looked upon him as a true apostle. He succeeded in breaking up that lodge in such a way that even those who did not want to convert, decided to depart and made their way to the neighboring Republic of San Marino.

In 1836, he went to Todi to give a mission, then on to Priverno, next to Nepi and finally [in 1837] to Bassiano where he got so seriously ill that I thought that we would lose him. This illness was brought on during the trip to Bassiano since the carriage broke down in a downpour of rain and hail from the heavens and the roadways were inundated. He got soaking wet and, at the same time, had to listen, much to his displeasure, to the complaints that his helper, Bartolomeo [Panzini] was uttering in an odd fashion in an effort to be of help to the Servant of God in that unfortunate situation, but not doing it well. In regard to the mission given in Todi, I was told that extraordinary things happened and it turned out to be, as it were, a place reflecting the glory of God. In the mission given in Nepi, I learned from the people of Nepi itself that when the Servant of God went to pay his first visit to the gonfalonier, he found the man to be completely opposed to the mission and he clearly declared that he did not want it. However, the Servant of God, without batting an eyelash at the very uncomplimentary and insulting treatment shown to him by that authority, meekly replied that he had come there to visit him as an act of respect and felt obliged to acknowledge his position, but that as far as the mission was concerned, that was a thing that he settled with the bishop who had invited him – and then left.

As a matter of fact, as the Servant of God continued his ministry there, the gonfalonier became gravely ill. When the Canon learned about this, in his public preaching he did not cease asking the people to pray for the cure and the good health of that fellow. He even went to visit the man thus giving an open demonstration of his charity and his gentleness. In Bassiano, he preached several times, but, since he was lacking in strength, he charged me to supply for him, though he kept on hearing confessions in his own room for those who approached him. After he recovered a bit from that illness, he was taken to Albano where he remained for a day or so in our mission house there. Then, he returned to Rome where he gave a series of retreats for the organization of the most reverend [Antonio] Piatti on the Janiculum hill. After that, he made his way to Porto d'Anzio to once again give the retreat to the prisoners there, to the soldiers and to the people. Stricken with illness

once again in his chest and with asthma, he went back to Albano where he remained for a short time to heal and to rest. But, he did not cease exercising the ministry, giving a retreat to the nuns of the Holy Family. Then, when the year 1837 arrived, the period of the cholera epidemic, he went to Rome where he was scheduled to give a retreat in the Chiesa Nuova, despite the fact that his health was weakened. He tried to the best of his ability to carry out that assignment.