

CHAPTER IV

THE SAINT

The Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church

The Servant of God was most faithful in the observance of both the commandments of God and of the Church as well as of the canonical laws. This was true for himself and for his companions. He was enthusiastic in defending them for himself and for others. As I have been informed and as I have learned from his father, he acknowledged in the persons of his parents and his superiors, the authority of God himself. He maintained this respect in the highest degree for the Supreme Pontiff. He offered very clear arguments in proof of his position. I point out this one example that the Baron of Noha claimed to have and possess the rights to the inheritance of Cardinal Cristaldi, contrary to the last will and testament dispositions and fiduciary wishes of the Cardinal himself, which favored Canon Del Bufalo. The Servant of God had recourse to the Holy Father, Gregory XVI who, after consulting with Monsignor Bartoli and another lawyer and without hearing the two interested parties, sent out a written message that ordered the one-half of the entire inheritance of Cristaldi should be given to the aforementioned Baron. The Servant of God unexpectedly got word of this decision when he was on his way one day to visit the prisoners. Without showing the least bit of resentment or complaint, with immediate resignation, he said: "The Holy Father did that and that's that".

Faith

There is no doubt at all that the Servant of God exercised all of the virtues about which I have been questioned, but in speaking of them in particular, I give my testimony in the first place about the virtue of faith.

The Servant of God not only always manifested his belief in and profession of all the dogmas that Holy Mother Church proposes to the faithful for belief, but he also spoke of them in such a firm and enthusiastic fashion that he made it clearly known that faith was deeply rooted in him in such a way that he would have sacrificed his blood and his life in defense of it.

In all of his instructions and sermons, not only did he not stray away from the doctrines of the Catholic Church, as I am a witness of this, but he developed them clearly, zealously and effectively for the faithful.

Very, very often he recited that Christian prayers among which was the act of faith, together with the expressed desire of living and dying in that faith and even to give his life for that faith. Morning and night he would give thanks to God for having given

him that faith, an act of thanksgiving that he would repeat before beginning a sermon. He laid out in his regulations that this should be done also by his missionaries. I noticed a number of times that when he made these acts of thanksgiving or when he inculcated this practice for his colleagues, his heart would light up with such fervor that even externally his whole person seemed to be moved in a certain way that I could easily describe it as a holy tremor. This firm belief and profession of his Catholic faith provided him with the advantage of overcoming any temptation against that faith and, as a result, his faith had all of the characteristics of stability that rendered him to be fully generous in any undertaking in favor of holy religion.

So vivid was his faith that another advantage was forthcoming and it was that of always walking in the presence of God. It appeared that what was said by the Lord to Abraham applied to him, namely, *ambula coram me et esto perfectus*. From time to time, he would repeat these very words. There was also another advantage flowing from the vivacity of his faith and it was that he never moved to accept a secondary goal nor was he moved by human considerations, either in speech or in action. He only kept God and his glory as his goal. Hence, he had assumed the habit of referring to any of his undertaking by saying: "Let us do this for the glory of God". He would have a similar expression in his mouth even when he was giving time to a bit of recreation or expressing relief for his soul with the following words: "Let us laugh to the glory of God".

Many times he would say that our Catholic faith is the only true one. That was so especially when he was encouraging others to give thanks to the Lord for having allowed them to be born in the womb of the Roman, Catholic, Apostolic, Church, and bemoaning the miserable condition of so many people who were born in the darkness of ignorance, Gentilism and heresy, finding themselves outside the care of the only Church where eternal salvation can be found. At this point, I remember that in 1824¹ he was commissioned by Leo XII, of happy memory, to draw up a letter to be sent to the secular and religious clergy in the entire Catholic world, to number themselves among the apostolic missionaries associated with the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide by bringing to infidels and heretics the truths of our holy religion. He obeyed the Holy Father and presented him with the outline of that letter. It so pleased His Holiness that he had to say: "This is the way to write the letter and to have the best effect". The letter, composed by him, was publicly printed and I know that those who took the time to read it were deeply moved even though they did not know that the Servant of God was the author deputized by the Pontiff.

Furthermore, he manifested clearly not only his desire but the full zeal of his work so that the Catholic religion would be considered pure and unstained by Catholics themselves. He found himself in a time when the faith of Catholics was attacked by Catholics themselves who in a notable number had shamefully given their names to the ungodliness of many sects that in various towns of the Papal States themselves had reached high peaks of influence with secret and even barbarous attacks, all intended to

¹ With great probability, this deals with the task given by Leo XII to St. Gaspar in February of 1826 when he told him to look for subjects for the foreign missions (cfr. *Epistolario*, IV, p. 63ff.)

destroy true religion and the legitimacy of government. The Servant of God recognized the dreadful situation in which the faith existed in our towns as the devastation of the way of life was carried on. Hence, with this situation in mind, a gigantic one calling for correction, with the help of God and insofar as he was capable, the Servant of God worked to save many souls from the ruination to their faith and especially to keep them from increasing the number of the followers of the sects. This was the principal objective that he laid down in the founding of his Congregation and this was the objective that he set before the colleagues who became associates of his.

I know that the Servant of God, in his adolescence, gave instructions to the roughnecks in the parish of San Marco, in the hospice of Santa Galla and also, when for the sake of his own health, he traveled to the area of Arsoli. In the regulations that he drew up for his Congregation, he included the directions dealing with the doctrine to be taught in those places where missions would be given. Many times I was a witness of the fact that he devoted himself to instructing the upper class of citizens and the intelligentia, giving customarily apologetical sermons in defense of our holy religion in an effort to draw their attention to the bases and the motives for Catholic belief. They were alerted to the errors of their times, the perverted individuals and the perverted activities being used and were grounded in the fundamental truths. In that way, they could protect themselves from errors that were so easily propagated in the society of those times, and reaffirmed in their faith, they were able to keep themselves from being swallowed up in the nets of error.

It is amazing what I learned from a certain Risca from Foligno, a companion in exile with the Servant of God. He reported how the Servant of God had been summoned for incarceration by the French commissioners in Piacenza, Bologna, Imola and Lugo as well as being threatened with deportation and prison in an attempt to instigate him to take the oath required by Napoleon. The Servant of God offered a defense of his faith fearlessly so that those who suggested reasons for him to submit to the demands of the French got a reply with such enthusiasm and energy that one could see that even those officials were moved and confused, but always defeated in their efforts. In the prisons themselves and in the places where he was given lodging in place of the prisons, he was regretful of not being able to preach in public. Still he would hold conferences in private treating moral themes and used his time reading the classical authors as a means of developing his knowledge of the saints and enrich his preaching abilities. It is well-known that he, during that time, wrote a dissertation against the professors who publicly were teaching materialism to the young.

I have noticed that ordinarily he was cheerful in association with us; still, he would show his displeasure and disturbance whenever he would hear talk about the sorrowful upheaval within the Church, and he would usually remark: *“Heu mihi quia incolatus meus prolongatus est; habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar; multum incola fuit anima mea”*.

He always manifested in various ways how grateful he was to God for the vocation given to him to the priesthood. As the years bore down on his shoulders, he

would acknowledge to that extent the greatness of the grace of the priesthood and never doubted that God had called him to the sacred ministry. This gratitude was so distinct that he set aside any idea whatsoever of an ecclesiastical dignity and remained content only with the dignity of the priesthood. Often he would kiss his black habit showing his affection for the ministry of giving missions and his disdain of any ambition to be promoted to a position of dignity.

He was deeply devoted to the mystery of the most blessed Trinity. As a matter of fact, I heard him exclaim frequently: "*Oh Sanctissima Trinitas; oh beata Trinitas*" etc. I noticed how entirely rapt he was with the grandeur of this mystery. He would bow his head profoundly and with exactness at the recitation of the words *Gloria Patri*. When he spoke of the cult which the Church has established annually for the recurrence of the solemnity of this mystery, he would emphasize the august magnificence of this same mystery, pointing out that the Church itself was not able to demonstrate here on earth a cult that was proportionate to the mystery. He urged his companions to have this same devotion and exhorted them to repeat from time to time the threefold praise *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus* as well as that scriptural passage referring to Abraham: "*Tres vidit et unum adoravit*". Also, when he was out in the countryside and he would see the plant or the flower called the trefoil, he would call to mind immediately the mystery of the most holy Trinity symbolized in that plant and dwelt on that thought.

He was also deeply devoted to the mystery of the Incarnation. He demonstrated this devotion up until the last moment of his life when he asked to have near his bedside during his final illness the image of the Holy Infant which he had always had in his house. It looked like the Baby Jesus wanted to reward him for this devotion by drawing him to the end of his life with the recurrence of the feast of Christmas.

That he was a profound devotee of the mystery of redemption I need not go into detail to prove since it is fully and clearly evident in his public works. I need only to refer to this fact, since it can be seen in a flash. First of all, it is known that he was aggregated to the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood directed by Monsignor Albertini in the collegiate church of San Nicola in Carcere. Secondly, that he founded the Congregation of Missionaries, aggregating them to the aforementioned Archconfraternity and giving them its title of the most Precious Blood. Thirdly, defending with great firmness but always in obedience, that very same title in the face of all sorts of opposition, to which I referred to before. Fourthly, arranging that in every mission given by his colleagues and successors, inevitably a sermon was to be given on this mystery as he himself never failed to do in the missions that he conducted. Fifthly, the exercise promoted by his men with regard to the Way of the Cross every Friday in their respective mission houses. Sixthly, the practice of observing an entire month of preaching about and promoting devotional practices in honor of this mystery throughout the Catholic world, achieved through the services of the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, through letters and through personal contacts made in the various nations, through printed materials and enrollments. So effective was this that an English bishop both vocally and in writing assured us that in the towns of his diocese this

devotion, promoted by the Servant of God, had turned out to be exceedingly efficacious for the conversion of heretics.

He was greatly devoted to the most Blessed Sacrament, demonstrating in various way how vivid his faith was in the real and substantial presence of Jesus in the most Blessed Eucharistic Sacrament. In the first place, he maintained the practice when he was in Rome to visit the most Blessed Sacrament wherever it was exposed for public adoration and would spend long periods of time in prayer. To do that he would make use of the time available for a walk after the noon meal. Furthermore, while traveling to the places where he was to conduct a mission and time was needed for a stop, he would frequently go to the local church to pay a visit and to adore the most august Sacrament. Also, he set up in his regulations that his colleagues should do their praying before the altar where the most Blessed Sacrament was preserved. Finally, he had the custom, during the time of the missions that he gave, to carry the most Blessed Sacrament in procession and to bless the farmlands and the people. Such was his spirit of recollection, contemplation and attention in the presence of the most Blessed Sacrament that it happened more than once that he was found profoundly absorbed in God as though he was outside himself. To my knowledge, this happened one time when he was in Todi giving a mission. He had just preached to the people outdoors and he had gone back into the church to pray before the sacred tabernacle. The time came for closing the church. The cleric arrived there to close it and he made noise with the keys to indicate to the people there that it was time to leave. He did not notice that the Servant of God was praying before the Sacrament. The fact is that he did not hear the noise made with the keys and he did not interrupt his prayer. Finally, the cleric did see him and shook him firmly to let him know that it was time to leave the church. The Canon returned to his senses when he was thus shaken and then after just a moment, he departed. This incident was made known to me by the companions who assisted him at that mission. On another occasion, almost the same thing happened in Priverno in the nuns' church where he was giving a retreat. He was praying before the Blessed Sacrament for a rather lengthy period of time, almost forgetting that the time that he was supposed to go to the Church of Santa Maria which is the cathedral to give a sermon. They called him and his sermon that day was considered to have been done with such enthusiasm and special spirit that had never been done before. We just guessed that it was he was reflecting the union of his spirit with the Sacrament of love and spoke after being moved by an inner fire given to him by Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. People noted in particular the special selection of words in that sermon as well as in the exhortations he would give in the confessional after he had spent some time praying before the most blessed Sacrament or after having celebrated Mass.

Very great was his devotion and not ordinary the fervor with which he celebrated the sacrifice of the altar. He would never allow a day to go by without celebrating it unless he were seriously ill or gravely impeded. Before saying Mass he would prepare himself with the recitation of the acts of the theological virtues and other prayers. With great exactitude he observed all of the rubrics. Speaking about them, he would say

along with Saint Teresa that he would have given his life in proper observance of the ceremonies and rituals of holy Mother Church. In the act of celebration, his sacerdotal gravity, his modesty, his piety, his spirit of recollection, his fervor would inspire those who were present for the devotion. In fact, the nuns of Cori, of Priverno, of Sezze and of other monasteries who had the occasion of attending the celebration of the holy Mass by the Servant of God, told me that it seemed to be an angel celebrating it. One year ago, a novice from Corneto, belonging to the Monastery of the Passionists and who in the secular world had the surname Carsidoni, the niece of Monsignor [Luigi] Carsidoni, bishop of Fano, wrote to me. She told me that she had attended a Mass celebrated by the Servant of God in the Church of Sant'Agostino in Pievetorina before she entered the monastery. She noted that the Servant of God, after the elevation of the Mass, had himself been raised from the floor a notable distance. She was ready to back this statement with an oath. That Mass of his lasted about a half-hour. His thanksgiving was a bit longer than his preparation because of his special respect and devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and he made his thanksgiving kneeling in a poised position.

Very close to his heart was the decorum to be observed for the house of God. In the churches of his Congregation he insisted on the greatest decency and neatness possible, maintaining the furnishings very clean and the sacred vessels decorously and the altars tastefully decorated. He himself would often be occupied in cleaning the churches, joining with his colleagues whom he always encouraged to be exact in the worship of God and care of his temples, to look after the altars and keep them decorated, to arrange the candles and other things beautifully. In this way he demonstrated that the worship of God was something that was his special delight. He had a regulation printed that was a direction for the ministers and the sacristans of his churches as to how they were to treat the altar furnishings and carry out the sacred functions, emphasizing the matters of neatness and propriety in handling those things that were used in the divine sacrifice. I believe that this regulation had its source in Monsignor Piervisani, bishop of Nocera, extracted from the one published previously in the time of Pope Benedict XIII, of holy memory. When the Servant of God would go out on mission work he would distribute copies of this regulation to the sacristans of the churches in the various towns of the Kingdom. Often, during the course of a mission, he would give a talk on the respect due to churches. I recall that he also would urge the people themselves to be respectful when the most holy Viaticum was being brought to the sick.

He was a dedicated devotee of the most holy Virgin. From his earliest years, he had cultivated this devotion and was enrolled in the association of the most Holy Rosary, that of our Lady of Carmel, that of the most Holy Name of Mary, that of the Immaculate Conception. He would regularly recite the prayer which was used by St. Aloysius Gonzaga. This devotion to Mary increased admirably when he was able to preach the praises, the gifts and the glories of the BVM. In every mission, he always set aside one sermon on this theme which he preached with great tenderness, moving

and inspiring the hearts of his listeners in such a way that often it happened that individuals who had not derived benefit from the other sermons that the Servant of God delivered, were deeply touched and moved to repentance and changed to a life of conversion. In order to lead young people to cultivate this devotion to the Mother of God, he formed those associations that I mentioned before, that is, for the young boys the group under the tutelage of St. Aloysius and for the young girls that of the children of Mary. Through them, it was his objective to accustom the young people to have frequent recourse to the maternal protection of Mary most holy. He would do similar work with the adults, especially fathers and mothers, so that they in turn would train their children even when still young to be devoted to the Mother of God. He wanted all of the churches of his Congregation of Missionaries on every Saturday to relate an incident from the most holy Madonna's life or from her intervention in the lives of the saints. His devotion was directed in a most particular way to the great Virgin under the title of the Immaculate Conception and the title of Sorrowful Mother. In as many different ways as possible, he tried to diffuse and spread the cult and devotion to Mary by urging the people to wear blessed images. I remember that, in order to be able to distribute those images more easily, he obtained the faculty of blessing them. He pointed out that through the protection of most holy Mary many, many graces were received from God and I heard him say, speaking of himself, what Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice used to say, namely, that whatever good that he accomplished or was accomplishing had to be attributed to most holy Mary through whose hands God administered his graces, his strength, his enlightenment that were of such help. I also recall what was told to me by the Servant of God's father, namely, that at the time when the miraculous movement of the Mother of God's eyes took place in Rome and the Servant of God was still a youngster, he would gather others of his age and would lead them, each night, to pray before the Madonna dell'Archetto the litanies and the praises of the Virgin. Even his father, who would follow after that group, could not hold back his tears. He wanted his Missionaries, in every mission, to feel obligated to deliver an appropriate sermon on the Madonna for two reasons: to call sinners to conversion and to obtain the grace of perseverance for the just. They were to observe this direction also when they were conducting retreats both in public and in private. It was his custom to recommend to the Blessed Mother his apostolic ministry of giving missions each time that he would begin one, addressing the Mother of God as the leader of the Mission. In every location that he preached, he would urge the daily recitation of the holy Rosary in the family. He introduced, into our Mission Houses, the recitation of the five Psalms that are associated with the most holy Name of Mary on every Saturday and on the vigils and feasts of the Madonna. He did not fail to greet the Virgin three times a day with the recitation of the Angelus Domini no matter where he was located.

The Servant of God gave clear indications of honor for the angels and saints in heaven. I remember that when I traveled with him he had the practice of having us recite one *Pater* and *Ave* to St. Michael the Archangel, another to St. Raphael, another to the Guardian Angel. To all of them he would add the recitation of a holy rosary.

He had a very strong devotion to St. Francis Xavier. He called him the special protector of the holy missions. He spoke of this saint with great tenderness and affection and made him the example for his missionaries in overcoming laziness and showing courage in their meeting with difficulties in the ministry. In order to show honor to this saint, he established nightly oratories and confraternities who invoked his help. This devotion was born in the Servant of God from his earliest years when his vision was threatened by small pox and he obtained the grace of the preservation of his sight through the intercession of this saint. Only a slight scar remained after his cure. From that moment on, with gratitude to his benefactor, he remained a firm devotee and a most tender client, propagating his praises and arousing many others to become devotees.

Furthermore, he showed a particular attention to Sant'Apollonia. He prayed to her to obtain the preservation of his teeth, so necessary for preaching. I know that he made a vow to her to offer each year one Mass in her honor or have someone else offer it when he was unable. He also prayed to the virgin and martyr, St. Lucy, for the preservation of his sight.

He was very devoted to the souls in Purgatory. As a matter of fact, while traveling with his companions, he would offer the *De profundis* and a rosary every mile of the journey in suffrage for them. He himself offered Mass for them or had Masses celebrated for them. He was very careful about the exact fulfillment of the requests made to the missionaries for the celebration of Masses for the suffering souls. So concerned was he about this that if he observed any delay in fulfilling them, he was accustomed to say: "How is that? Those souls are suffering for us and should we delay in making suffrage for them?" Then he would see that those Masses were said immediately, even if it meant his own contribution of a stipend. One time, when he was not definitely certain about the listing of those Masses to be celebrated and whether they had been celebrated or not, he ordered one of his Missionaries to see that thirty Masses were listed in the sacristies of the churches in Rome, surely to be celebrated.

The Servant of God demonstrated his faith likewise in the concern he showed for the building of new churches and the repair of those that were in ruins. As a matter of fact, in Vallecorsa he encouraged those inhabitants to cooperate and contribute to the foundation of a new church and house for the Missionaries. It was brought to completion after the passing of several years. In Sonnino, he worked for the construction of a church to which the title of Santa Maria delle Canne was given. In Frosinone, he directed the building of a new church dedicated to St. Francis Xavier. In regard to repairs, I testify that he was engaged in the restoration of churches in the area of Vallecorsa. One was the church of the Annunziata and the other, Buon Ritorno. In the Province of Campagna, where he found abandoned or dismantled chapels, he assumed the responsibility of seeing them restored and made usable for worship.

He had a profound respect for and gave blind obedience to the supreme pontiffs. He did not want people to speak about them, at least not critically of the temporal government of the Church State, only in praise. He showed similar respect for cardinals

and prelates of holy Church. He frequently prayed to God to give them illumination for governing Christianity as well as constancy and courage to fulfill exactly their sacerdotal ministry. In speaking of bishops, I must point out that the first thing he would do in setting foot in a new diocese for a holy mission was to prostrate himself and his companions at the feet of the respective bishop or his vicar in order to get their blessing, ask them for their prayers as well as the prayers of the clergy and the people. He showed this same respect for the priestly ministers of God, speaking of them with great esteem. He could not bear to hear any vile talk against the dignity of the sacerdotal character. When he addressed the priests, he would refer to them as “my venerable brothers”. Even though, in his conferences, he would speak very clearly of the duties of a priest and spoke firmly against those bad habits that stand in the way of holiness and priestly dignity, still he always did this with total respect and in such a way that they were completely aware of his veneration for them. Among some of the pieces of advice that he gave to his Missionaries, there was that of forbidding them, in their sermons to the people, of ever making mention of bad situations or incidents involving priests so as not to arouse in the listeners the least lack of esteem for priests. He himself adhered to this basic principle and I can say that I never heard him in any of his sermons to the people make mention of any unfortunate activities of wayward priests who had disregarded their duties. In a word, the Servant of God showed his affection for his fellow priests and when he was informed about one of them doing something reprehensible, he showed a completely compassionate character.

Finally, in reference to the Servant of God’s faith, I noted that he had a spirit of prayer and was so rapt up in prayer that I have no difficulty in asserting that he was continuously begging God for light, for graces, for helps both for the success of his ministry as well as for the conversion of sinners. Not content with his own assiduous involvement in prayers, he urged this same eagerness for the practice of prayer in others.

I was officially asked to say whether in my testimony concerning faith there was anything said that the Servant of God had on occasion shown a certain degree of infused contemplation.

I do not recall ever having said anything like that. On the other hand, I can say that the Servant of God, in certain moments of fervent prayer, had, in a fleeting way like a flash of lightning, some illumination during which he simply was taken up in God. Others could see that his heart was penetrated by the situation and that something might occur. I can say this because I knew of the things that he revealed to me concerning the status of his spirit. I can add, furthermore, that some of his penitents at times noticed that in the very act of the sacramental confession, he would become, as it were, beyond his own senses and would reveal to them the internal status of their consciences.

Hope

Moving on now to the topic of hope, I testify that this virtue in the life of the Servant of God was very solid. All of his trust, as he regularly asserted, was placed in God, in his grace and mercy. He was distrustful about his own abilities and the doing of good. To demonstrate to the people these two aspects of his virtue of hope, he made it a point, as a prelude to his preaching, to kneel prostrate at the foot of the preaching platform and kiss it. He sought to show that like a small insect, he was a simple created thing, useless for sure, but who, nevertheless, was able to do anything with the grace of God in whom he placed his entire trust. As far as I know and from what I have heard, when he would be speaking publicly, he did not refer to himself as a sinner or say that he was worthy of hell-fire as was said by many of the preachers of his time in order to show their humility. In fact, he said to me in regard to that sort of talk that he had never used it nor would ever use it since he considered those terms as being an affectation of humility. He felt that those who used it were forcing the people to speak and to judge the preacher who spoke in that fashion to be a man of profound humility. He simply could not make use of such a contrivance. Indeed, he would say that only with the help of God and his mercy could he be hopeful of salvation. Only by the goodness of God, his loving kindness, the promises of the Lord based on the merits of Jesus Christ, the protection of most holy Mary, could his spirit of hope keep him from falling into hell. On his lips were the words of Scripture: *“Propitius esto mihi maximo peccatori”*; *“Ego vir videns paupertatem meam”*. Likewise, the expression used by Fr. Segneri: *“Abyssus miseriae invocatur abissum misericordiae”*. He hoped for God’s forgiveness of his sins, the acquisition of paradise, the means for gaining it and the grace of being freed from the pains of Purgatory, all, as he cooperated in the tireless labors of the ministry, the constant struggle to practice virtue, his correspondence to the illumination given to him by God. He worked hard for the delicate preservation of the state of sanctifying grace by the exact custody of his senses, the mortification that he would have spontaneously ignored were it not for the careful direction of his soul given to him by his spiritual director. Through the total sacrifice of himself that he made to God and to the ministry to which God himself had called him, he would often exclaim: *“Festinemus ingredi in illam requiem”*. This clearly showed that he, in his own good will and pleasure, made every effort to make good use of the graces and the favors of the Lord.

To strengthen his trust in divine mercy, he made use of a particular practice, namely, to offer to the eternal Father the most Precious Blood of his Divine Son. I

believe that these offerings² were printed, put in a particular order and were used by the Servant of God in union with Monsignor Albertini for retreats, in particular in the retreat held in the church of the Saints John and Paul, fortified with the indulgences granted by the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII for the benefit of those who recited them as well as for the relief of the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory. A rescript of those indulgences was preserved for a time in the archives of the Passionist Fathers and another in the Archconfraternity of the most Precious Blood in San Nicola in Carcere where it is still found.

Whenever he would read or recall those texts of Sacred Scripture which inspire confidence in God, for example: *“In te speraverunt patres nostri et non sunt confusi”*; *“In te speraverunt et liberasti eos”*; *“In te speraverunt et salvi facti sunt”*, he would be filled with joy and extraordinary confidence that showed on his face. With this feeling of trust in God, the Servant of God would meditate especially on the notion of death. This meditation served for him not only for scorning the things of this world that vanish in a moment, but also served to arouse desire for eternal things that he would share with others, namely, to be united with Christ, following the example of the desire felt and demonstrated by the Apostle St. Paul.

When someone would ask him how his health was, he would regularly respond: *“Good, thanks be to God”*. If he was ill, he would use similarly clear words of resignation and would reply: *“As the Lord wills”*.

To more effectively reach his ultimate goal, he determined, from his earliest youth, to travel resolutely the ways of hardship faced by the evangelical worker, humbling himself and rejecting the honors that are so highly valued by the world. Only too often do they stand as a hindrance, at least for one who is seeking perfection in the ecclesiastical life.

This trust in God showed up again in the founding and the progress of his Congregation because many times the Servant of God found himself faced with critical situations, either in the carrying out of his ministry or in caring for his Congregation. So,

² At this point in the originals there is added a note written by the archivist Fr. Nicola Pagliuca which says: “It is clearly seen that in saying ‘these printed offerings’, it is speaking of the *Seven Offerings* and not of the ejaculatory prayer *Eternal Father* etc. The indulgence referred to here is the one annexed to the ejaculatory prayer *Eternal Father*, whose rescript, received *vivae vocis oraculo*, is found in the Archives of the Passionist Fathers. I went to the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo to find out about this, and the copy was given to S. Nicola. The indulgences for the Seven Offerings were obtained from the Archconfraternity. The ejaculatory prayer *Eternal Father* was always repeated by Mons. Strambi as is read in his *Vita* on p. 316: “He often had on his lips the affectionate offering of the Blood of Jesus Christ, and at the close of almost every one of his talks he would use this very devout practice”. So, by that offering one intends to refer only to that ejaculatory prayer *Eternal Father* etc. since that was they Passionists used and they obtained the indulgence for it in 1817. Strambi was, as a matter of fact, made a bishop in 1801, hence the ejaculatory prayer *Eternal Father* is much older than the institution of our Congregation. In fact, in the ancient booklets of the Chaplet the *Eternal Father* prayer is not found. The Seven Offerings, however, were printed in 1817. See Volume *Arciconfraternita del prez. Sangue e temporalita*, pages 33-35.”

over and beyond human considerations, he did not surrender, for the least moment, as I myself witnessed, his firm and steady spirit of hope in divine Providence. At the beginning of his Institute, he could not find a sufficient number of companions to meet the many and urgent demands of the ministry. He was forced to see himself suddenly quite alone in the face of the requests for missions, especially at the time of brigandage, when his companions who had previously given their word to help him, left. Still, he did not lose courage, saying that even if he had to do it alone, with the help of Divine Providence, he would assume the responsibility of conducting missions. With that as his prayerful request, he would be given the necessary means. Adhering, therefore, to that trustful confidence in God's providence, he established several foundations despite the human difficulties involved. And, when criticized by some for assuming the task of propagating his Congregation with more houses and in more towns, he would simply reply: "I would have scruples if I were to refuse to set up a foundation or to abandon one already set up when I see that God is providing the means that are available for the attainment of the goal. We just work along with the orders of Providence." As a matter of fact, everything turned out just as he had wished. Many times he showed his concern when, because he did not open houses of the Congregation in the different provinces, his Institute was not getting to be known by the people, and as a result, they were losing that benefit. When circumstances of dire need arose for the continuation of erecting houses of the Congregation and he was being counseled to ask for subsidies from people of means, he would recall the words of St. Philip Neri: "Whoever wishes to do good works, let him not seek the purses of others". That, too, was the Servant of God's opinion, namely, not being dependent on that expedient, but rather to wait for God to move the hearts of well-heeled people to come spontaneously to the assistance of God's work. Consequently, he would remark that the human means provided and willed by God were used by him precisely because God had willed them, and that everything depended on help from above.

So great was his trust in God that he paid little attention to the distresses of sickness when it came to giving a mission. Indeed, when he was invited to give a mission in Patrica, diocese of Albano, he felt weakened and afflicted by a continuous fever. However, making an act of courage and offering a prayer, he went from Rome to Patrica where he began, continued and completed that mission, all the while still feverish, and yet bringing forth many fruitful results. On another occasion, when he was scheduled to leave Rome to go to Bagnaia, in the diocese of Viterbo, to conduct a mission, in the act of his departure he felt an impediment in the use of one arm. But regarding it as nothing and relying on prayer, he began his trip in the carriage. That distress left him and he had no more pain. Many times it happened that during the Servant of God's preaching in the course of a mission he would suffer the loss of his voice. When that happened, he would have the people recite with him an *Ave Maria*, or turn to the image of St. Francis Xavier in warm prayer and instantly his voice would come back to the astonishment of his audience. He would finish his sermon with a strong voice, giving thanks to the Lord. That particular thing happened in Todi and in

Castellone in the diocese of Gaeta.

He spoke to his companions as well as to all his listeners urging them to have hope in God and most holy Mary, submitting themselves as children into their hands. He would urge others to practice meditating on death as something capable of disposing one to resignation, to detachment from earthly things and something that will open the doors of eternity. He would exhort the poor to be patient and place all their confidence in God, leading them to reflect that God never fails to favor those who have recourse to him. He would use this same procedure with those who found themselves in the grasp of tribulations or of sickness.

I was officially asked to speak in regard to the virtue of hope as practiced by the Servant of God, and whether I knew about a testimony concerning him in Giano that something extraordinary happened there from which people learned about the power of divine Providence through something achieved by the Servant of God.

I remember that when I was in Giano we were short of funds and provisions and burdened with debts incurred in maintaining things that were necessary. I did not know how to move ahead in supporting the community which consisted of around twenty individuals, both missionaries and young students. I wrote to the Servant of God who was in Rome. He replied that with faith I should bless the stones and I would see surprising things happen. I obeyed him. When the time came to send someone to Foligno to make the necessary purchases, I opened our little money box in the presence of Alessandro Pontoni, our Brother shopper, and we saw that in that little container there were only around five *paoli*, made up of half-*paolis* and *baiocchi*. Pontoni said to me: "How are we going to manage? We need at least fifty-five paoli to pay for what we owe and to buy the things that are needed!" Once again I counted the coins and to my astonishment and that of Pontoni, this time there were the needed fifty-five paoli present. Pontoni, fully content, left to do the shopping.

Another time, also in Giano, when the time for the repast had arrived, we noted that there was no wine nor could any be obtained since in that area there were no places where wine was sold. So, the meal began with just plain water. During that time, while a reading from Rodriguez was being read, reference was made to the wedding feast of Cana and the particular passage was heard: "Vinum non habent". Suddenly, at that moment, unexpectedly entering into the refectory was a donkey laden with a small keg of wine. The donkey was being handled by a peasant who had been sent there by a well-to-do person to carry out this presentation of an alms. I point out that they came into the refectory because it was necessary for them to go through this area in order to get to the store-room. This incident caused great amazement and joy for the entire community.

Love toward God

In reference to charity, I testify that I learned both from Antonio Del Bufalo, the Servant of God's father, as well as from Paolina Castellini, the Servant of God's sister-

in-law, now deceased, that from his earliest years his interest was centered on being near the altars of the most Blessed Sacrament, of the most holy Madonna under the title of the Streetways, and that of St. Francis Xavier in the church of the Gesù where he would spend hours kneeling in prayer. In his house, where he had set up a small altar, he would do the same. At times, when the family was gathered together, he would get up on a chair and give a sermon, repeating the ones that he had heard. At that early age, he venerated a sacred image that was set up for the meetings that were held at the church of Santa Pudentiana. It was at that time that the church was under the care of the Cistercian monks. Along with his father, he worked to provide the things that were needed for the theatrical presentations put on during carnival time for the entertainment of the young people. With the exception of this good and legitimate involvement in a recreational project, he usually kept himself detached from things that were worldly. Gradually, as he grew older, his detachment from things of the world increased as did his love for divine things. In time, then, he joined in the militant life of the church by receiving his first tonsure and moving on into the minor orders, thus consecrating himself entirely to the service of God.

Once he became a missionary, as I have pointed out before, he occupied himself in nothing else but giving glory to God, teaching others why he loved God, and then leading them to a love of God. So certain was it that this intention was the single object of his heart, that he took absolutely no delight in things of grandeur, of beauty or other attractive things that are so esteemed by the worldly, and he even should a disgust for them. So, he was most happy when he could be alone and removed from the chatter of secular people. I say even more: I always observed in the Servant of God an insatiable desire to work for the glory of God, for the love of God. Ordinarily, others were also able to observe this in the course of the indefatigable labors he endured and the suffering he underwent in his apostolic ministry. In the ardor of that charity, he would often exclaim in scriptural language, such as: *“Portio mea, Dominus, Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in aeternum”*; *“Cor meum, et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum”*. With full attention, devotion and propriety, he recited the Divine Office, pronouncing the words with precision and observing the rites of the Church. Never did he omit it even though he had received a dispensation from the recitation of the Office while giving a mission by Pope Pius VII, of happy memory. This, for us, was the source of deep admiration as we heard him reciting the Psalms which he had committed to memory, especially the office for Saturday and Sunday.

Whenever he meditated on the mystery of the most Precious Blood shed by our Lord, his mind appeared to be completely enraptured in God, almost ecstatic in this contemplation. This, too, was very deeply admired by us, even though he would try to conceal or dissimulate his internal captivation by God. This internal application of himself in prayer and union with God was not something sterile in the Servant of God, but it brought about effects in his external activities, particularly in his persevering method of speaking to and dealing with others.

Hence, he showed absolute order in all of his activities while repeating the words of St. Bernard: *“Serva ordinem et ordo servabit te”*, as well as the words of St. Paul

“Omnia honeste, secundum ordinem fiant”. In accordance with those words, his actions and his externalized sentiments became for us a model of how we were to love God wholeheartedly, with all of our strength, all of our soul.

He had the practice of dedicating several days each year for a spiritual retreat. While Monsignor Albertini was still alive, he would withdraw here in Rome to the place of retreat in Sancti Giovanni e Paolo. After the death of that prelate, ordinarily he would make his retreat in one of the Mission Houses of his own Congregation. In making those retreats, the conferences were directed usually toward the benefit of his own soul, then that of his confreres and ultimately for the external ministry of giving missions. He tried to establish as a rule in each of the houses that each missionary should take a few days off for retreat in order to renew his own spiritual life. Many times did he himself preach those recurring retreats to his missionaries and Brothers. Those retreats usually took place in the nine days that preceded the feast of St. Francis Xavier and he would alert all of the houses by sending out a circular letter so that the missionaries would not fail to take care of this most important work of renewing their spiritual lives. He would remind them of their duty to acknowledge the necessity of having divine illumination, the gift of God, how to love him, give him glory and be pleasing to him, as well as gaining comfort in the trying labors that are so much a part of the apostolic ministry.

Likewise, he had a very sensitive conscience, so that the slightest imperfection aroused in him a holy fear of having offended God, saying in the words of Job: *“Verebar omnia opera mea”*. Such was the testimony of some of his confessors and I, too, could find in him, only with great difficulty, any deliberate commitment of a venial sin. He would go to confession very often. His first confessor was a Father Pegna, then a Fr. Gaspare, an ex-Jesuit, then Monsignor Marchetti, followed by Monsignor Albertini, and finally by me.

Every month he set aside one day, called a day of recollection, in preparation for death. He would review everything that he had done during that month and would make repeatedly his general confession to me for peace in his own mind. I was able to note how well he had preserved the stole of his baptismal innocence. The Servant of God told me that one day when I was outside of Rome, he went to the Caravita to make his confession to a confessor there who, in the Servant of God's confession did not find certain sufficient matter for absolution. He was asked whether, in the course of his past life, he had committed some grave sins. He replied that his mode of making his confession as required by his regular confessor was the same as the one he was using on that occasion. That confessor then pointed out to him that he had to know whether his regular confessor was a man trained in the doctrine, whether he was a man with experience and prudence. To that the Servant of God replied that he was more than well furnished with those qualities. The man then asked him whether he could know who the man was. The Servant of God told him that it was I and emphasizing that I was a good friend of his and that he should give him absolution, which he finally did. The fact is clear that even though the man struggled to find matter in the Servant of God's confession, he really did not find anything.

The horror and the inalterable hatred that he had for sin caused him to be very dedicated to convincing others in every way possible to have this same attitude. It was especially in his preaching that he drove home those basic points, namely, that since God is the supreme good, sin consequently is the greatest evil and since God is infinitely lovable, thus sin is a totally abominable thing: *“Summum bonum Deus, summum malum peccatum”*. Furthermore, for the same reasons, he was inflamed with zeal in his efforts to prevent any offense against God whether that was something private or public. Then, too, in order to lead Christians away from the occasions of sin already committed, he sought, by repeated admonitions, to keep the delinquent aware of his condition, not forcing him but doing it with dexterity and efficiency.

Likewise, I noticed that the Servant of God in exercising charity toward God showed all those characteristics that make one's exercise of charity perfect and heroic. As a matter of fact there was in him a preferential love for God since pleasing God was for him greater than any other spiritual or temporal delight. Hence, his pleasure in being with God occupied all hours of the day in the conversion of a sinner was something that he preferred doing than the delights that he might have enjoyed by spending some time in prayer.

His love was a benevolent love. A type of love that he would delight in not only for himself but would be used in drawing all creatures to love God, to praise him, etc. With this in mind, he promoted the glory of God by using, on the one hand, those ejaculatory prayers intended for extirpating blasphemies against God and, on the other hand, to praise and love God in his saints: *“May God be blessed”*. His love was a generous love in virtue of which he did not seek those spiritual delights for himself but purely for God's glory, submitting himself entirely to God's will. His love was a tender love for God. I noted this not only when he himself was in prayer, but also in the compunction that he aroused in the people to whom he preached as well as in the dispositions shown by a repentant sinner for whom he would even shed tears. Finally, I noticed that his love was solid and constant, not one subject to changes because of circumstances. It was in him an unshakeable love and at the same time a love that made deep impressions on others as though it were a two-edged sword, as he himself would refer to it. It was love that wounded his own heart and the hearts of others.

Love for his neighbor

Moving on now to speak of the Servant of God's love for his neighbor, I testify that I was informed by his father that from the time of Gaspar's earliest years he had manifested his inclination of doing good for his neighbor by sharing his meals with the poor.

When he reached adulthood, that charity was magnified in countless acts of mercy both spiritual and temporal. Indeed, during this adolescence he asked his pastor for permission to instruct the children of the parish in sacred doctrine. Given that permission, he would go, on feasts days, to give those instructions. He did the same in

the hospice of Santa Galla for the poor gathered there, feeling perfectly at home with those people that were in tatters and in poor health. He gave catechetical instructions to the servers selected by his Eminence, the Cardinal-Vicar, after he himself, as a server, had given convincing proof of his ability for giving lessons from the catechism. He also arranged and set up particular times for instructions to be given to the children during missions, for both boys and girls being prepared for their first communion, as well as for other categories of persons as a reminder of the necessary things required including the precepts. For the Brothers in our Congregation, in addition to giving them spiritual talks, our missionaries were to give them instructions in Christian doctrine every Saturday. Even when he was in exile and in prison, he gave lessons in Christian doctrine to the people hired in the prisons who were very low in knowledge of the catechism. He himself gave me this information when he spoke to me about the situations during the period of his deportation.

Full of zeal and free of any feelings of human respect, he would opportunely give warnings to sinners, whenever the circumstances allowed. I am not going to take time now to make reference to how hard he worked and sweat in preparing his sermons, in delivering them with love for the conversion of sinners, or how notable some of those conversions were that he brought about during his missions. It would be almost impossible to make a full listing of them even though I have already made several references to them when I spoke of the missions that he had conducted.

I pause now to note that he, in the time of the French invasion, without showing any fear of being castigated by the powerful hand of Napoleon and with evangelical liberty gave warnings to those who were in power and were the executors of the French domination. He drew to their attention that we had to be obedient to the commands and orders of their sovereign but not in those things that were opposed to the commandments of God and to the rights of the Holy Church. That would make them, in the eyes of God, guilty of a serious crime of laying their hands on the sacred ministers of God, imprisoning them, exiling them and judging them. It would be an illegitimate seizure for a secular government to do that to the ministers who were being obedient to them. He would bring this lesson to those whom he knew were in the process of doing just that in fidelity to the position they held and not because of a bad-intentioned heart on his part. But this observation had no effect at all on them before God nor in the judgments they made. The reflection that they were to first show obedience to God and to please him rather than to please his fellowmen, no matter who they were, meant nothing. His admonitions were heard and in many cases even aroused tears from those employed in the French government as they heard him as he spoke. These facts were brought to my attention by a certain Canon Risca of Foligno, who was a companion in exile with the Servant of God in Piacenza, Imola and Lugo.

The year before his death, there was in Porto d'Anzio a fellow who absolutely refused to make peace with his supposed offenders. When the Servant of God learned of this, he sent one of his missionaries there precisely to reconcile him to God and the men involved. But the effort was fruitless. So, the Servant of God himself went in

person and with few but effective words brought peace to the man's heart, led him to be reconciled and admitted peacefully with his supposed offenders and establishing a lasting effect. I have reviewed this case right now in particular since it was such an outstanding achievement even though the Servant of God was so busily occupied in the many, many works of the ministry. He took the time in a special way, as he did in so many instances of charity before in different places and on different occasions such as in Alatri, Ancona, Frosinone and elsewhere. Whenever he learned of marriages going on the rocks because of feelings of dissidence, he would, with all his ability, do everything he could to restore order and peace for the couples. I know of cases of this sort that he worked on in Forlimpopoli, Meldola. Sant'Arcangelo, Savignano and in Ancona.

In the Romagna, he encountered people that were charged by the Papal government for the extirpation of existing sectarian groups. Those individuals, who received a stipend from the papal government, were also getting a double payment of money from the sectarians, thus actually fomenting their spread. The Servant of God spoke very convincingly to those people and they quickly abandoned their association with the sectarians. They were converted and a settlement was made with the papal government for their ill-gained money and they were led to be more faithful in their service to the Supreme Pontiff. Whenever the Servant of God ran into priests who had disobeyed the orders of Pius VII by taking the illegitimate oath of fidelity to Napoleon and placing themselves in service to that government of invaders, the Servant of God gave them warnings, advising them to look into their consciences, and he even made efforts to obtain the necessary faculties for granting absolution from the censures incurred and dispensations from irregularity. Upon obtaining those faculties, he would have the recalcitrant priests make a public retraction, reconciling them to the Lord and imposing upon them, as an act of compensation for the scandal given, the obligation to lead an edifying and exemplary life.

Once when he stopped off in Porto di Recanati on his way to Ancona, he got into one of the boats of the fishermen and moving a bit offshore, he entered into a discussion with them concerning blasphemy. He brought to their attention the seriousness and the enormity of those sins. The fishermen offered their excuses by saying that it was necessary for them to blaspheme because it had become a habit and was something that was called for in their occupation. However, the Servant of God recalled to them that fishermen were the ones chosen by Jesus Christ as his followers for the ministry of our Lord. Even after he had selected them as his followers he permitted them to continue with their occupation unlike what he did with Matthew, the publican, who exercised an occupation that did not fit in with his conscience. He moved them, he persuaded them to live in a Christ-like manner, abandoning their vice of blaspheming and he pointed out the means for living a Christian life, especially by the regular reception of the holy sacraments. Whenever he was traveling about for the missions and he would run into people who were using blasphemous language, he would immediately put his head outside the carriage and, with a thundering voice, he

would silence them saying: “Do not blaspheme!” and then would give an instruction of how to get rid of that abominable vice. He promised a bit of a helping hand to the carriage-drivers as long as they did not use blasphemous language.

Whenever he would run into individuals who were suspected of being adherents of Jansenism or of rigorism, the Servant of God was not silent, but, with due respect he would point out the opposite attitude, that is, to enlighten them with the doctrine of the Church. One day he related to me that once he was discussing with a bishop the teaching concerning God’s giving of actual graces. He noted that the prelate was putting on the scale the various degrees of grace and weighing them against the degrees of concupiscence. He came to the conclusion that the winner would be the one that was heavier, either the graces or the acts of concupiscence. When the Servant of God heard that, he said: “Pardon me, my dear Monsignor, if I point out to you that your interpretation is contrary to the teaching of Holy Church. The human being, who is not to be considered an automaton, always has the free will to correspond with or not to correspond with the grace that is given to him. As a consequence, when he does accept the grace, despite the huge number of degrees of concupiscence he may be faced with, he can be justified.” As the Servant of God informed me, then, that reply convinced the bishop who was not added to the number of Jansenists with bad faith, and, being now enlightened, he set aside those principles that were so out of line with his being a shepherd, one placed in that position by divine providence.

Other circumstances of this sort were offered to him when individuals who had doubts were brought to him for his advice. Not only did he not refuse to welcome them, but, I noticed that he did not fail to use his dexterity in removing their doubts and scrupulosity. In speaking of this topic, many times when I would approach him with my doubts, he would calm me down and I felt capable of resolving them without hesitation. Once the Servant of God told me about a certain prelate who approached him perplexed about the exercise of his position. When he expressed an opinion that was contrary to what was being held by his colleagues he nevertheless felt that his interpretation was in keeping with truth and justice. He asked the Servant of God whether he should, out of respect for his colleagues, maintain silence or whether he should make known his own position without considering human respect. To this, the Servant of God replied that in that, or any other situation, one was to unite the spirit of humility and the spirit of truth, that is, making known his own judgment but subordinating it to that of the others with humility and respect.

In giving advice in the confessional, he governed his practice on the guidance of great and holy men such as St. Alphonsus of Ligouri, Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice and the Venerable Canon De Rossi. With regard to things that were still speculative, he left the penitent free. I also learned that he knew very well how to distinguish things that fell under the topic of Christian perfection from those that were matters of precept. Thus, in keeping with that knowledge, his advice was always in keeping with reason, were appropriate, useful and satisfying.

The Servant of God nourished a compassionate and tender heart toward

unfortunate people who were afflicted. He never let them out of his sight when they were brought to him and with just a few, brief, but touching words he would console them and comfort them, urging them to be trusting in God and be resigned to his will. As a result, they were so pleased with his attention and his words that they would assert that he had given them the comforts of heaven.

He was generous in granting pardon for any offense that might have been given to him whether that was from his own men or from outsiders. In fact there was a period of time, namely, that of the brigandage, when some ill-intentioned people gave reports to their superiors that were against the Servant of God and his companions. They were criticisms saying that the missionaries were not preaching against brigandage. He could easily have found out who those people were putting him in a bad light with the pontifical government. However, instead of delving into that situation, he preferred to practice a perfect meekness. Indeed, in having discussions with the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII and with his successor Leo XII, he defended himself against his accusers and spoke very convincingly about those provinces where they worked. He showed clearly that this was the object of his zeal and his affection. A Canon from the city of Camerino had, though his conversations and loose talk, aroused a feeling of discredit toward Canon Del Bufalo, and as a result aroused the people of that area. Even though the Servant of God was aware of those foul rumors being advanced by the aforementioned Canon, he still remained meek and peaceful when he entered the city of Camerino to conduct a mission. After arriving in that city and initiating the mission, the Servant of God made his way to his place of lodging. He introduced himself to the aforementioned Canon who questioned him whether he was truly Canon Del Bufalo. The Servant of God assured him that he was the very same and was at his service. That Canon then repeated that same question and once again the Servant of God declared that he was the very same person. Then, surprisingly, that Canon then uttered: "I thought that Canon Del Bufalo would be a proud individual, a terrorist, overbearing, old, with an evil appearance, an enemy of society. Now that I see him, he has all of the opposite qualities of affability and kindness, a marvelous appearance, and now I am ready to apologize to all for what I have said." The Servant of God embraced him and from that moment on they got along well together during the mission and the man continued to look upon the Servant of God as though he had always been his great benefactor. A gendarme from Bologna, who during the French occupation had put the Servant of God under arrest and had been treated with kindness by the Servant of God, recalled that confrontation when he saw the Servant of God in Camerino during that same mission there. He immediately recognized the Servant of God and recalled the treatment and the virtue that the Servant of God showed. He was unable to hold back his tears when he met the Servant of God again. He wanted to throw himself at his feet and make a general confession of his life for the sake of the consolation of his own soul. That gendarme simply wanted to repeat with compunction that he had had the boldness to arrest an angel in the flesh, namely, the Servant of God. So great was his generosity to pardon anyone who had offended him that there was, among his missionaries, the

proverbial saying that one had to do some sort of harm to the Servant of God in order to receive benefits from him.

Furthermore, he aimed for no inferior goals, for no worldly glory, for no desire of temporal or ambitious gain, for no honor to his name or of being admitted to ecclesiastical dignities. In short, no passion governed him in instituting his Congregation, in laboring zealously in his ministry of preaching and conducting missions but only the delight and joy of winning souls to God, of drawing them away from sin and from eternal castigation. In fact, when the idea of being raised to the episcopate was proposed, he showed his opposition to this destiny which he described as one that did not fit his makeup in any way whatsoever. That he said, would give the public the opportunity to suspect that he, in working laboriously in the public ministry of giving missions, was doing so only to obtain that dignity as a reward for that work. Hence, he made it known to his friends and benefactors that he was satisfied to be kept distant from any such promotions. In addition, I would say that he was so far removed from being looking for public acclaim, even as a minister of the sanctuary, that he would have loved to persevere in his inclinations to live a life of solitude. He revealed this hidden inclination of his to Monsignor Albertini, his spiritual director, but he received the reply that he was to also be cognizant of his vocation. He felt quite deeply about that inclination, but he was obliged to set it aside when it became quite clear that God had called him to the public ministry of giving missions. The Servant of God added: "You are speaking correctly, so, in the meantime, it is to be kept off to the side!" To which Monsignor Albertini immediately said: "Are you the boss? That's what God wants!" The Servant of God humbly lowered his head.

His zeal for gaining souls for God was insatiable and was the source of great joy especially when he was invited to preach a mission. Upon accepting those invitations, people would inevitably say to him: "Aren't you ever going to take a little rest?" He would invariably answer: "Our rest must be in heaven". The inconveniences of ill-health, the variations in seasonal weather conditions, the lengthiness of travels, the fear of encountering dangers and assaults by ill-intentioned freethinkers, none of these things were capable of impeding him from fulfilling those invitations that were given to him by the duly-authorized bishops. He looked upon them as being so many direct calls from God himself.

At this point, we must also note that he had a nature that was more or less timid, sensitive and apprehensive. As a consequence, those aforementioned situations must have aroused in him a sort of a block to his being so frank in embracing each new laborious mission. Even the matter of traveling by coach was for him a torment. Yet, the thirst for souls gave him the courage to do gentle violence to himself in overcoming those feeling and his own natural timidity. I always noticed that, despite all these situations, he continued to be generous, jovial and tranquil as though nothing were bothering him. It was really a joy to see him, in the midst of his labors, to always be fresh in the preaching and in his conduct as though he were a human being incapable of ever getting tired. This truly wonderful gift of tirelessness was the subject of talk on the part of all his companions who were fully cognizant of his zeal for souls. They

eagerly joined their own labors with his in providing good for souls without sparing themselves. The Servant of God, on the other hand, while not sparing himself, showed discreet concern for the welfare of his companions, looking after their health and their need for rest.

Just as he was tireless in his preaching, so also was he in the administration of the sacrament of penance as I was able to see both during missions as well as outside them. Indeed, with the utmost charity he would receive penitents of every kind, even the worst imaginable. With gentle and well-measured treatment he would welcome them as well as zealous penitents whom he would try, by means of effective words of exhortation, to lead to compunction and to a detestation of their own sins. He would include helpful admonitions that were adaptable to the status and quality of the penitent. When he encountered poor people and people of lower status who were waiting to go to confession to him, he showed that he preferred to help them before the others. I remember that when the Servant of God was conducting missions in the area of Farfa and was occupied in hearing the confessions of the people, there was a person there who asked the Servant of God to hear the confession of a woman in a different confessional. He could not be convinced to do that saying that he did not feel that he had the courage to leave so many poor people awaiting him for confession as well as to demonstrate that in his own ministry he did not want to show any sort of singularity which was something so alien to his desires.

During the labors that he endured in giving missions by which he attracted people to God, he did not fail, at the same time, to provide encouragement for his own missionaries along with the means of directing them to perfection and holiness of life. So, from time to time, he would prepare for them words of exhortation and would even send out circular letters to all the Mission Houses. They had as their objective to afford the missionaries with suggestions and stimuli for the exercise of the holy virtues. As though that were not enough to show his interest in their souls, from time to time, he would put them to a test, but in such a way that they did not look upon it as a testing. At one time he would he would beg them, at another time he would order them to assume some particular action or make some small sacrifice, showing him their spirit of cooperation in practicing a particular virtue. Still, on other occasions, showing them himself as their superior and the founder of his Congregation, he would mingle often with those who were below him and he would help them in doing their menial jobs, alleviating their labors, such as sweeping, serving at Mass, serving at table, cleaning off the table and washing the dishes and pans, making beds and other daily chores. When those under him wanted to stop him from doing these tasks of theirs, he would say to them that this was something that he had learned way back as a child under the tutoring of his mother. Furthermore, he was always ready to be helpful with the needs that each one had whenever he was making a visitation of his Mission Houses, especially in behalf of the sick for whom he made sure nothing was lacking. Hence, he would visit them regularly and was seen at their bedside helping them to be resigned to and trusting in God's mercy.

When giving a mission, he would set aside time to visit the sick poor, hear their confessions and bring them communion, since he had been supplied with faculties from the Supreme Pontiff for them to gain plenary indulgences. Also, to provide them with temporal assistance, he would have a collection taken up and then would distribute those alms among them. He would offer these same acts of love to those who were in prison.

Once, when the Servant of God was giving a mission in a little town of the Abbacy of Farfa, he came upon an abandoned corpse in a coffin along the public roadway, left there by the grave-digger who wanted to be paid by the relatives of the deceased who were very poor people. So, the Servant of God first begged the grave-digger to do his job, but he steadfastly refused. Then, he urged me to go along with him on this act of charity. He proceeded to inform the local pastor and the Servant of God and I carried the body to the church.

He had also given the direction to each of his Mission Houses that hospitality should be shown to anyone who was not suspected of treacherous action. But even if they presented themselves charity should be shown them by giving them an alms. They were not to be allowed into the house but that alms was to help them find lodging elsewhere. It was also a practice, introduced by him in those same Mission Houses, that after the main meal, the *minestra*, some bread and other food was also to be shared with the poor.

I never heard issuing from his mouth a single critical word against anyone, not even against Napoleon, the persecutor of the clergy and the one who had ordered him in exile from Rome. If he would talk about him, the term that he would use to refer to him was: "That unfortunate fellow". Indeed, he would moan a bit when he would hear someone gossiping about him. In his sermons, in his missions, in his confessional work, he inveighed against gossiping, against calumny and made it very well known that to obtain pardon from God it was necessary to return and restore the good name of those that were deprived of it through gossip. He also taught that bad actions done by one's neighbor were to be excused and, if that couldn't be done, then at least excuse their intentions.

With his mind set on leading all to holiness, to be of help to all, to bring consolation to all, he put into operation all of the means that he could to fulfill those intentions. Hence his missions, his catechetical instructions, his setting-up of various associations for the people, his promoting of frequent reception of the sacraments, his giving of advice, his prayers, his exhortations along with his mortifications and penances, all these things were the means that he adopted zealously and perseveringly, without concern for himself, all of these things were used to bring about the spiritual and temporal welfare of his neighbor.

Prudence

We move on now to the topic of prudence. The Servant of God gave clear indications that he subordinated all the usable means to the ultimate goal, that is to say, to God and the possession of God. As I remarked on other occasions, he was used to saying: "All for the glory of God" which indicated that all of his actions, prayers, sermons, travels, labors and undertakings had no other purpose than the glory of God and that he acted for no other end than the supernatural one. In this regard, I can say that I noticed in his many labors for the missions, if I am not mistaken, he studied and imitated the holiest missionaries that have ever been recognized and honored by the Church. In order to achieve perfection in his spiritual life, he made use of and handled all the means available, while using solid prudence, leading a life of mortification, practicing each and every virtue. He began and followed this style of life from his earliest years during which, as I have stated before, that he gave evidence of his fear of offending God, of his delight in praying, of his humble respect for and love of most holy Mary, of his frequent reception of the sacraments, of his acts of mortification and purification of conscience. Not only did he guard himself from any offense of God but whenever the opportunity offered itself he made strides forward in living a good Christian and virtuous life. He dedicated himself totally to the ecclesiastical state of life with the intention and the resolution of not being a useless minister in the Church. Because of that he had a deep detestation of laziness which he considered to be a capital enemy. With complete dedication he placed himself unalterably at the service of those occupations that were apt to the ecclesiastical state that he had chosen and each day spent his life in performing them. Thus, in a certain way and quite often the people that were acquainted with him observed that he got involved in many, many different projects without seeking repose or being worried about his own health or life. He regularly manifested his attitude of being of service to God with all of his strength and all of his heart and talent which he considered to be so little as a return for what God deserved. His principle was one must do much for God, one must do it quickly, and one must do it well. Much, because God is deserving of much; quickly, because life is so short; well, because God wants the work to be done with order, as is seen in the words of St. Paul: *"Omnia honeste et secundum ordinem fiant"*. Likewise, when it came to occupying his colleagues in the ministry, he measured out his advice with a bit of salt and discretion taking into account their strength, their talents and each one's individual make-up.

As I recalled some of his familiar discussions, I noted that those talks were never boring nor useless. Even when they were discussions that occurred during recreation periods, they were always something very edifying, divinely inspired and ascetical. Whenever it happened that someone in his company engaged in an offensive type of conversation against his neighbor, he would use a particular sort of appropriate dexterity by switching the discussion and directing the talk to something applicable to the soul and to the practice of virtue. He was a very eloquent speaker and the eloquence was one that was terse and energetic and was capable of holding the attention of his listeners so that they could always derive a useful lesson from what he said.

Many acts of prudence were exercised by the Servant of God in the founding of

his Congregation, in its spread and in the internal government of the same. As a matter of fact, from its very beginnings, he accompanied Fr. Bonanni as though he himself were a subject of his, allowing himself to be regulated by what the former thought was needed. He thought that it was not prudent, during that beginning time, for the brothers to be given an ecclesiastical garb since he figured that his own congregation was just a toddling infant compared to others that were well-established. He made that decision only after they were set up in several of the provinces with Mission Houses, namely, that it was not prudent to have at his service and that of his companions, lay helpers dressed in secular clothing. That seemed to give the impression that the missionaries had servants like the well-to-do of the time. He ordered that the Brothers should wear a simple cassock with a simple cincture which was an arrangement in keeping with the circumstances in which he and his missionaries would take them along on mission work when, dressed in a surplice they would assist with the ceremonies. To accomplish this new arrangement, he sent a circular letter to all of the Mission Houses informing them of his decision, but trying to prudently bring it about gradually in the respective houses, so that when the clothing that the Brothers were presently wearing wore out, they would provide them with this new garb, all in an effort to avoid burdening the economy of each house. All of the houses went along with this arrangement with the exception of the house in Benevento whose superior opposed it. His explanation was that once before the cassock was worn by the Brothers and they had to remove them and that now was not the right time for doing this. With great prudence, the Servant of God replied to that superior that he permitted him to allow the Brothers in that house to continue to wear secular garb until he would send a change of Brothers there who would be wearing the cassock as he had ordered. In that way the public would not be jarred by the change. Thus, he kept peace and unity in his Congregation.

He used exceptional prudence when, during the early years when he dedicated himself to the ministry of conducting missions, he had as companions some of his evangelical workers who were not members of his Congregation. Because of that, he allowed himself to take on the assignments during those missions that involved the hardest and roughest ministry, such as for example preaching reform to the clergy. Likewise, in the course of those missions, he would ordinarily reserve to himself the giving of the grand sermon, not because he preferred himself to others, but because Monsignor Albertini, he knew well the Servant of God's soul, talents, knowledge, zeal and even his special natural endowments, required him always to assume that task of giving the grand sermon for each mission. Hence, respectful and docile as he was to the directions of his spiritual director, he constantly was obedient despite the fact that it was the major work and the most challenging one of the ministry and must have been the most demanding on his make-up and health.

In the projects undertaken by his Congregation, in the governing of his Mission Houses, in his general business affairs, in the admission of candidates, in the arranging of missions, in the control of himself, he did not omit seeking advice; first, in prayer before God, then seeking the advice of his first colleagues after the disappointment of

losing his director and advisor, Monsignor Albertini, in death. Hence, if it was a matter dealing with his soul and his own self control he would particularly consult his confessor; if it was a matter pertaining to his Congregation and the admission of new subjects he would discuss these things with his first and more reliable colleagues in his Congregation. In fact, he would call meetings to treat of those things relating to the Congregation and his fellow members, often repeating: "*Saepius de rebus agendis*".

I mentioned before the prudence that he used whenever it was a matter of admitting someone into his Congregation making sure not only of the talents but also obtaining the permission of their respective bishops to whom they were subject. He used similar prudence whenever he felt constrained by duty and the propriety of his Congregation to dismiss a subject who showed himself inept for mission work or for living in his Mission Houses. With gentle treatment and with dexterity, he would thank them for their assistance, comforting them and exhorting them do continue doing good work in their own dioceses.

Directed by the spirit of prudence, the Servant of God, in a special way, recommend spiritual reading during meal time, even if the community gathering was a small one. In that way, they would be provided not only with corporal food but also spiritual food.

With supreme dexterity, almost without being noticed, he made efforts to prevent unwanted situations. So, inasmuch as possible, he would personally visit the houses of his Congregation already set-up and also when he could he would contact them by mail and would expect a full report. At night, when he was unable to sleep, he would call to mind all of the needs of his mission houses as though he were visiting them in his mind and then would write to them to review the needs and would take care of things, even the most insignificant, in the manner that he felt was most appropriate and opportune. When I discussed things with him, he would show me what to do and I learned how to do them just as he did in time.

Then, too, when he found that some missionaries naturally could not get along with the others in a particular house or when a missionary was not liked by the public or approved of by the bishop in his preaching, he would handle things beautifully by sending them the man out for a mission or giving him a duty in one of the other mission houses. These changes were frequently necessary and because of that the Servant of God was subjected to criticism and regarded by some as being too fickle. To this, he would reply: "*They say that I am fickle, because I do not find a place for my companions, because I move them too frequently, because I easily make changes of their tasks. But God knows why I work in that fashion. I am not worried about what they say, as long as God is served. I am not obliged to give my reasons, and I need to carry out my duties with prudence so that unpleasant and bitter things do not occur and so that our colleagues are not vilified.*"

He was strong and firm when he had to be, but also gentle and condescending when he was called to be so. I know that some individuals were amazed when, with notable strength, he defended the practices sensibly adopted by his Institute. I know

that he learned from his own spiritual director, Monsignor Albertini, how to be decisive, how to take advice, how to teach and counsel, despite the criticism he got about the way he conducted missions, which, as I explained before was a method based on various holy missionaries. I know that in maintaining his own system he never used manners that were disagreeable or harsh which might be offensive to others or for him to lose the respect that he held toward all. There was one or the other bishop who, after inviting him to conduct a mission in his diocese, instructed the Servant of God beforehand to change something in his method and that he, the bishop, was basing this advice on suggestions made to him by certain holy members of his diocese. Upon receiving this bit of advice, the Servant of God, with due respect, replied to the bishop that any change in the method which has been thoroughly tested, namely, in giving glory to God and in converting souls, would reduce its effectiveness and in some way impede its good results. He expressed his respect for those devout souls who had given the bishop this advice although he had never had the honor of making their acquaintance. He asked the bishop to reflect that those devout and holy souls could not have been given the same illumination as that which God usually grants to those whom he has called to the preaching of the Gospel and for saving souls; that the vocation granted to those pious souls was completely different from the one granted to his ministers. Having made his position clear, the Servant of God conducted the mission without making any change in his method and the bishop, enlightened by God, came to know better that those persons who had given the advice to the bishop in opposition to the Servant of God had been deluded.

A short time after Canon Betti had been admitted into our Institute, he asserted to the Servant of God, that he felt called to embrace the religious life of the Capuchins. To this, the Servant of God replied that it was a temptation of the devil and not a vocation from God, for God had obviously given the Canon the spirit, the talents and the ability for conducting missions by calling him to become a member of our Congregation, and hence, he was not to set aside this ministry. Things, thus, went on in that fashion for a while. A short time later, the Servant of God took Canon Betti and some other companions along with him to the town of Canonica, in the diocese of Rimini. He arranged for lodging in the parish house. When it came time to give a room to each missionary, he assigned Canon Betti to a very narrow room which was quite similar to the small cells occupied by Capuchins. After spending the night cramped in that room, Canon Betti, on the following morning, gave a detailed report to the Servant of God of how much he had suffered because of the cramped quarters of the room that had been assigned to him and begged him to switch him to another. The Servant of God seized that opportunity to point out to him that if he had experienced that discomfort for only one night, how much more challenging would it be to have that arrangement for life which would be the case if he went to the Capuchins. Betti now could clearly see that God was not really calling him to follow that way of life. He was firmly convinced of that now and not only did not speak of becoming a Capuchin, but determined to remove it as a temptation out of his mind completely. As a matter of fact, Canon Betti achieved such

success in our Congregation that he has become almost an oracle in the city and diocese of Benevento where he has worked tirelessly for many years, spiritually cultivating every project, every level of persons and from where it has been virtually impossible to move him since the people of Benevento, who love and esteem him as a father, would be up in arms.

Justice

Moving on now to the topic of the virtue of justice, I can testify that, in general, the Servant of God rendered justice in its fullest extension to God, to men and to himself insofar as it was respectively due to them.

Speaking more specifically, I add to what I have stated in the previous session with reference to the charity exercised by him, that he attributed to God acts of acknowledgment for the gifts, graces and favors, both singularly spiritual and temporal, that he had received from him. He acknowledged as gifts flowing from the generosity of God, his own good mother from whom he had been given his first excellent education, the teachers who had instructed and guided him in the fields of learning and in piety, the inspirational spiritual directors of his soul who led him down the path to the Lord, and for so any other things that were beneficial. He showed special gratitude to God for the blessing of his vocation to the ecclesiastical life, and in that state of life, for the call to the ministry of conducting missions. With St. Augustine, he was accustomed to repeat: "*Gratiae tuae deputo quaecumque non feci mala*". To these acts of acknowledgment and gratitude which he expressed in words, which I can attest to as a witness, he joined the performance of deeds which I will not go into detail about now because in the course of other sessions, those details have been given and I will treat those details in a separate session. He also encouraged others to render acts of gratitude and acknowledgment to God whether they were members of his Congregation or outsiders, including those who served as coachmen on his trips.

While I and the others of his companions were witnesses of his hard work, of his concern, his zeal and fidelity which gave evidence that his actions corresponded to the graces received from God, he always judged himself internally not only of not having corresponded well with God and his favorable treatment, but that he did not cooperate at all. On a number of occasions I heard him say that which led me to conclude that it was his humility that made him think and say that. This judgment that he made about himself could well have been an expression of that virtue which is so pleasing to the Lord, namely, not to consider oneself, in the eyes of God, as being worthy of his extensive favors. In this regard, I can recall that he had the habit of saying to his colleagues, in the words of Thomas a Kempis: "*Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*" - a principle that he regularly applied to himself.

In regard to the tribute of adoration which is due to God, I testify that the Servant of God fervently and frequently paid him that tribute by adoring God several times each day, repeating *Glory be* and kneeling before the most Blessed Sacrament, turning his mind and heart to God and making him present to himself through his acts of faith which

I presumed he was doing as I witnessed the external acts that he did. As a matter of fact, he would often repeat one or the other of the following prayers: “God sees us, God hears us, God is going to judge us;” “Substantia mea tamquam nihilum ante te;” “lumentum factus sum apud te, et ego semper tecum.”.

In regard to the praise that is to be given to God, I assert that the Servant of God satisfied those duties continually in many ways. In addition to what I have just stated concerning the way that he prayed and gave praise to God with the recitation of the Psalms and his divine Office, it was his particular concern to stimulate the people with whom he shared the divine word to praise and bless God, Jesus Christ our Lord, most holy Mary and the Saints so as to abolish blasphemies which he attacked with all the strength of his eloquence and zeal. Ordinarily, he brought about a forceful result in the people. Therefore, many pastors mentioned to me that after a mission conducted by the Servant of God in their respective parishes, they noted the elimination of blasphemies and heard the people uttering the prayer: “Praised be Jesus and Mary” and singing the hymns honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary in place of the profane songs that are heard sung by the peasants.

In regard to his tribute of prayer, I add to what I have already mentioned above, that the Servant of God had the practice of reciting each day the *Miserere* and the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, the former to obtain pardon from the Lord for all his faults, as he used to say, and the other one to implore enlightenment and the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that he could effectively carry out his ministry and to become a saint. He also had the practice, in imitation of Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, of frequently repeating these words to himself: “My Jesus, mercy”, intending not only to make an act of contrition, with those words, but also to use them as a petition and as an act of love. He also had the people repeat those words as he preached, explaining to them the intentions for that prayer and urging them to use it as a defense against temptations and victory over the passions.

The Servant of God continuously gave praise to the Lord and at the same time never attributed honors or glory to himself. I noticed this from the frequency with which he used the scriptural expression: “*Soli Deo honor et gloria, nobis autem confusio faciei*”. He emphatically drilled this expression into our ears with great frequency so that his own colleagues would adopt it and put it into practice. Even with regard to indifferent things, the Servant of God still promoted the idea of giving honor and glory to God stressing the words: “*Servi inutiles sumus*” as stated in the holy Gospel.

In the service of God, as I have pointed out previously, both in general and in particular, he was very industrious, interested and repentant, not paying attention at all to created things. In fact, if I just briefly recall to memory his undertakings in the service of God, I find myself incapable of describing the zeal, the joy and the generosity with which he would take hold of a heavy work in the ministry. Someone else, even an impartial individual, would have predicted that the Servant of God would immediately collapse under its weight. That holy man, Monsignor Albertini, enlightened by God, used to say that God wanted the Servant of God to take on those heavy burdens which were

not meant for his other colleagues. To be noted is that this judgment made by Monsignor Albertini, was supported by the opinions of the bishops who wanted that type of work in their cities or towns, helping the people to be enriched by the benefits derived from his missions. It is likewise to be noted that the Servant of God made use of the counsel and direction of others – which leads me to the certain conclusion that he delighted in using the manner and the number of those laborious projects that were dependent on the decisions of others.

We move on now to the virtue of justice as exercised by the Servant of God toward his neighbor. I testify that he always rendered to each one what was his due. Notable is the great respect he showed toward priests even when he was in the very act of preaching the truths to them. He did so with such foresight and prudence that they delighted in hearing him speak to them without in any way offending them. On the occasion of the conferences given by the Servant of God to the top-level people and to the employees of the Delegation in Frosinone, there was someone who said that if any other individual had spoken those truths to them that the Servant of God preached, they would have been upset. However, as they were presented by him, they were willingly accepted. Furthermore, he was very exact in paying for the things that he had purchased and was very cautious about making debts. He did not want his missionaries taking on debts as he would say: “I do not want any debts”. Just as he was exact in the payment for goods purchased or the payment due to creditors or artists, so too was he discreet in satisfying them by not demanding bargains or cuts. In addition, I noted that he never abused his authority as superior general. He never mistreated any of his missionaries and was very careful that none of them would do things thoughtlessly or involuntarily. When he observed that when the brethren were gathered together for a bit of correction and he noticed a weak person there, rather than revile him, he would speak words of courage to him, a treatment that infused into that weak person something of great value. As a matter of fact, our fellow colleague Fr. Betti used to say that the Servant of God did not want his men to hide themselves away, but he would use the phrase that “he wanted those who are cramped to dance.” He showed no partiality to anyone, not even to me, even though I was in spiritual communication with him. He did show particular concern for the furnishing of houses that were exposed to unhealthy air, providing that those missionaries who were sent there did not remain there too long, but by making use of a round of appointments, the health of no one missionary was jeopardized. He treated everyone with a deep love and joviality, as though he were a loving blood-brother and he would provide for each one as a considerate father would do, even in assisting them from his own pocket for their needs.

As I mentioned in another place, he had charge of the administration of the hospice of Santa Galla which had been so poorly handled that he had to use every bit of attention and dexterity to get it back in working order. That he did, in fact, in such a way that there were no more loose holes or confusing items. Indeed, he learned from Canon Gonnelli, who was his helper, as well as from others, that during this period of administration when the Servant of God was located in Rome, he kept everyone of the

participants quiet and content.

When he was outside of Rome, the contrary happened, when nobody knew how the situation would be handled. Those who took care of the administration when he was absent were prone to be unjust in their treatment of things. He had drawn up a very extensive and helpful memorandum which was greatly admired. But, despite the fact that this piece of work was advantageous, he still had the custom of carefully making a note of every little thing in order not to be criticized or blamed by anyone for having overlooked something. This was the same attitude that he had toward the running of his Mission Houses as he was vigilant and made a note of everything in calculating whatever had to be provided.

In this regard, he insisted that no partiality be shown. In fact, everyone was treated equally in keeping with his direction: himself, the priests and the brothers. He forbade anyone to ask for or receive a loan of money. However, in case of need, they were to ask him because he did not want, as he used to express it, someone's else's purse to be touched. By experience, he had learned how harmful that was in the ministry of the missionaries who, just as they were to be concerned about the spiritual good of others so also were they to be disinterested in temporal things. To get this point across, he used to make use of a saying of St. Francis Xavier who used to say: "He who is a grabber will be grabbed." Furthermore, if the men who had left the Congregation forgot to take with them some object or other of theirs left in the respective houses, he returned those things to them, not wanting to keep anything that belonged to them, unless, of course, where they spontaneously donated them to our houses or churches.

Likewise to be noted is that he was not interested in procuring for his missionaries the consignment of any ecclesiastical benefice, even though he may have foreseen some utility provided for the respective mission houses, saying that he desired and wished them to be run gratuitously. It is quite true, however, that in certain cases for his young missionaries he tried to provide them with outside help. This happened when there was question of supplying them with a title for sacred orders for those who did not have anything or when it was a question of a reduction of the synodal tax for that same purpose. Indeed, in reference to this second case, I remember that the Servant of God made an appeal to Leo XII, of happy memory, to obtain this in behalf of several men and he did obtain the grant.

I was asked ex officio whether I knew how the Servant of God treated those who served him and what was the pay that he gave them.

He treated them with equity and justice in keeping with their status and with the amount of work they did. He would never allow them to be lacking in anything pertaining to their sustenance or their clothing. In reference to their monthly payment, he saw to it that they would not waste their money on gambling or other vices. He was vigilant over their conduct, making sure that they frequented the sacraments and nurtured piety. I never heard any of them complain, except for that Bartolomeo Panzini, who by nature was extravagant and tried the Servant of God's patience and humility, even though he had no reason at all to gripe.

In regard to Bartolomeo, once I was asked by the Servant of God just what might be the cause for Bartolomeo's strange conduct. I replied: "From having allowed him to win too often and from having treated him with too much kindness". The man was by character an honest man and a faithful worker, but since he was uneducated and quite rough, instead of learning something from the conduct of the Servant of God and learn something from his kindness and patience, he abused the situation in such a way that Monsignor Parisi, the bishop of Gaeta, used to say: "I realize that the Canon is a saint because of the patience that he shows toward Bartolomeo". Despite the fact that the Servant of God did not fail to give him corrections, especially when his colleague were abused, still Bartolomeo never lost his volubility, his extravagant behavior nor his irrationality.

In his sermons, the Servant of God would inveigh against usurers, monopolists, frauds in an effort to open their eyes to seek after justice and equity in their contracts of sale and their negotiations. He urged his colleagues to treat these questions in the instructions that he had made a rule to be observed in the sermons given in the course of a mission.

Now that we are speaking of justice as practiced by the Servant of God in regard to himself, I can say that he not only would repeat that saying of the Gospel which was capable of making St. Francis Xavier an apostle, namely: "*Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur?*" but he himself put it into practice. Hence, rather than give way to ambition, to self-love, he dedicated himself completely to the perfection of his heart and his life and sought to acquire those heavenly blessings which never perish. I noted that whenever the Servant of God detected in himself some imperfection, he concentrated all his efforts to remove that imperfection, preferring to do that than any other good work. This principle of his was so dear to his heart that he did everything he could in his exhortations to make it fully understood also by his missionaries.

He also had as a matter of principle, one that became more and more apparent, that a man of the Church is to seek for himself the greatest perfection and not be satisfied with a lesser degree that he may have acquired and attained. He used to say that the priest must be regarded as perfectible. He must realize and learn that the virtue of perfection has ascending degrees and therefore he must never stop at the degree that he has reached, but continue to advance. He made this doctrine his own and tried to get others to follow the same. To this end, he prescribed that every month his missionaries were to make a day of retreat in preparation for death and on every day, to make an examination of the good done and the good to be done.

Temperance

Moving on now to the virtue of temperance, I testify that the Servant of God abstained from even upright conversations with women and did not deal with them except when the ministry obliged him to do so. In that event, he observed the rule of St.

Bernard: "*Sermo brevis et durus*". A rather charming woman, the sister-in-law of Fr. Luigi Achille, one of our missionaries, stopped the Servant of God in Civita Castellana when he was traveling. She asked him whether he was Canon Del Bufalo. When he answered that he was, she took him by the arm to lead him to her house. However, he, without fixing his eyes on her, said: "I cannot, since I am traveling" and immediately broke loose from her and departed. He never traveled with women present.

Furthermore, I am a witness that in the mission houses, he demonstrated great parsimony in the use of food, always taking foods that were frugal and in keeping with a benign religious community. He used to abstain from sweets and did not seek to satisfy his taste, whereas, on the other hand, he did permit his young ecclesiastical students to enjoy some things on the greater solemnities as recreational treats. He himself was an example of modesty and composure even in the presence of his companions. He observed with exactness, the days of fast ordered by the Church but he counseled his missionaries not to do extraordinary things in community in order to avoid, as he would say, singularity. His own fast was a continual practice of restricted intake both in the consumption of food as well as drink, having adopted the principle set forth on this matter by St. Francis de Sales, which De Sales used to refer to in practice as spiritual florets.

It was clear to me that the Servant of God controlled the concupiscence of the flesh in such a way that he was able to maintain spotless the lily of chastity. He mortified all of his senses, always maintaining a strict custody of them. He restrained the use of his eyes, never fixing them on objects that were dangerous, nor on vain or curious things. He kept his tongue in check, adhering to the regular system observed by the saints, namely, to speak little, to speak kindly, to speak when it was time to speak. He regulated the function of his ears, holding himself aloof from listening to discussions about novelties and worldly things. From the things that he said to me, I learned that from his earliest age he had subjected his passions and inclinations to the soul and particularly avoided his natural temperament to anger which he used to call his bilious melancholy. Those movements of sensitivity which quite ordinarily showed on his face and which he knew how to virtuously and wondrously keep in check and to moderate soon turned into an edifying gentleness. I can add that a smile on his face, a friendliness of treatment became his inseparable companions.

I mentioned before that he partook of the foods set out for the community, but I must also remark that this was for him a double exercise of temperance since it must be kept in mind that heavy foods never did fit his gentle and delicate physical condition and that during the time of his deportation, it was that that subjected him to a serious illness, since they were not at all conducive to his health. Consequently, if after that he was offered food at table which was harmful to his stomach, he would express a mild disapproval, as, for example, would happen when a special wine or liquor was served.

He insisted on observing the fasts ordered by the Church even though he was dispensed because of his ill-health. He wished to continue observing them until he was ordered by the doctor expressly to no longer practice them.

In order to avoid the cold, he was not accustomed to making use of the hand warmer even though during that season and in places where it was colder, he felt stiff. Only, during later years of his life, did he make use of warmers, that is, when he was afflicted with a life-threatening illness. Whenever he was stricken by the intense heat of the summer, which affected the asthma and the difficulty in breathing that he suffered, he would say that he prayed to God that he would accept this suffering in suffrage for his time in purgatory, never failing to convey the idea that the life of a missionary must be, in every sense of the word, a life of sacrifice.

He had established as a practice for all the individuals of his Congregation to make use of the discipline during missions. I can say that he did not just pretend to use it, but with all his heart would flagellate himself bitterly and often would spare his companions from using it as he would then take that action on himself.

He was also sparing in his sleep, for he slept very little. Even though his body needed a great deal of rest, nevertheless, he was ordinarily the first one to get up in the morning. He would say that the apostolic man must be a dedicated man and would repeat that saying: "*Cibaria, virga, et onus asino*".

Many times he arrived at one or the other of the houses of his Congregation tired and quite exhausted of strength. Still, without giving rest to his body, he would immediately begin dealing with the matters pertaining to that house, setting aside any consideration of himself. I recall that even when he was in his own home in Rome where I, too, was living, he would delay put off going to bed and would be the first one up in the morning.

Even his laughter was moderate and modest. He did not make use of lotions or scented waters, no perfumes, nor any delicacies, but if there were lilies with their very sharp aroma available, he would not reject them nor would he harm them. He did not use face powder. I can recall that he set aside the use of red handkerchiefs for the nose when a certain Monsignor [Francesco Maria] Giampe', bishop of Assisi, told him that the priests of old did not make use of such handkerchiefs. He used refined cloths only because they lasted longer and were neater. There was nothing made of silk in his usage. He had several cassocks so that he could change them when needed. He was very deeply concerned about cleanliness and, as he used to say, cleanliness produces order first in the soul then in the body. Thus, he carried in his mind the quotation found in the Canticle: "*Vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum,*" alluding to the fact that the eye indicates the purity of intention and as the center of order and that the method of wearing a hat was something pleasing to the eye of the Almighty. Still, there was no involvement of luxury nor effeminacy. He would say that he wanted to be an imitator of St. Bernard and St. Francis de Sales, models of holiness and neatness. He urged this same exterior purity along with interior purity for others also. In this regard, I remember that there was a priest in the Province of Campagna who, in seeing the Servant of God handling himself with such orderliness, at first was somewhat shocked, but then when he paid closer attention to the Servant of God's conduct, he had to change his mind and to admit that the neatness observed by the Servant of God was truly a sign of the good

order that he maintained in all of his actions, both internal and external. The man's concept was greatly elevated.

Fortitude

I move on now to the virtue of fortitude which, in the Servant of God, was truly massive. He was accustomed to saying: "One needs to acknowledge difficulties in order to overcome them, in order not to be fearful of them or much less give in to them." At this point I must say that he always adhered strongly to basic and just principles, not meaningless ones. He never appeared to be obstinate, but rather firm, facing the situation with courage whenever he estimated it as being something just. Another maxim that the Servant of God practiced was: "In moving forward, it is necessary to use fortitude, adhering to the principle followed by St. Charles Borromeo, but blending it, that is with the gentleness of St. Francis de Sales". The Servant of God always used this procedure in asking his men to fulfill their duties or some particular assignment involving obedience and submission. He would not jolt them face to face or browbeat them, as some say, but after having reflected for a while on what he was about to ask of them, he would use a just and reasonable approach, including proper manners and persuasion, thus winning them over to his side.

His practice of fortitude, therefore, appeared to be extraordinary. From his earliest years, as I learned from the things he told me as his spiritual director, he undertook the pursuit of virtues and Christian perfection, continuing it in his life with promptness, joy and constancy until the time of his death, despite all the difficulties that he was called upon to face.

His fortitude showed up in an extraordinary way in the peaceful resignation that he showed during the time of his deportation and in the hardships that I have already referred to dealing with the founding of his new Congregation, together with the apostolic ministry undertaken with such courage up to his death. Likewise, it is seen as extraordinary in the firmness with which he upheld the rules of his Congregation even to the point of being regarded as too rigid and of being the source of astonishment and wonder for the more critical missionaries and all the others who were observers of his deep concern and perseverance.

His extraordinary fortitude appeared in his continuous struggle against the temptations with which the devil assailed him; a continuous battle that I came to know as his spiritual director and from the groans that he would often release *sotto voce*, many times invoking the most holy name of Jesus, saying: "My Jesus, mercy; my Jesus, help me".

I noticed his fortitude likewise as he overcame so many difficulties, challenges and sufferings in the trips that he made for the missions, not to mention the inconveniences that he endured from the poverty of the places where he stayed, so often terribly restricted in space, and yet never complaining nor hunting for something better.

His fortitude was evident likewise in the manner in which he vigorously followed

the practices of renowned missionaries that he acknowledged as most efficacious for the work. He sustained them rather than refuse to conduct a mission or retreat or change one single point in that method. Whenever he was told that he would have to do something in a different way because of the change in times and the education of the people, he would regularly reply that in the former times those same objections were registered.

His fortitude gleamed likewise in the way he made use of his freedom of spirit. As a matter of fact, on one occasion, he ordered a certain personage from Montecasciano to yield the position that he exercised since he did not have the necessary knowledge. Another time, while conducting a mission in Camerino, where an assigned person had initiated opposition to the Servant of God's arrangements, he calmly endured that person's presence during that mission, but afterwards he advised him not to resume that position because God was simply not calling him to it. This freedom of spirit was used by him in other similar situations. A proof of his fortitude can be found likewise in the resignation and the lack of worry that he demonstrated at the time when a couple of the mission houses of his Institute, recently set up in Terracina and Sonnino, were closed and when, in Frosinone, the church of Sant'Agostino, run by his missionaries, was taken away from them.

Finally, his fortitude was seen in the patience he exhibited in being totally resigned and patient with ailments of the stomach and internal convulsions to which he was subject. Under those harsh circumstances, he still showed joy, did not open his mouth in laments, nor did he give signs of being upset.

Humility

It remains yet for me to testify what pertains to the humility exercised by the Servant of God, even though in the past depositions there are remarks interspersed which could be put together as a report on this virtue. I noted that the Servant of God was, as it were, submerged in his nothingness. He looked upon himself as the lowest creature on earth and referred to himself in the lowliest terms, such as a jackass and similar things and wanted people to form the basest evaluation of him. Whenever someone pointed out the fruits of his labors, his zeal, his prudence, he would inevitably reply using from memory texts taken from the Divine Scriptures which were applicable: *"Dominus illuminatio mea, et salus mea; ego vir videns paupertatem meam; substantia mea tamquam nihilum ante Te; ut iumentum factus sum apud te et ego semper tecum."* On the other hand, he always spoke with respect about others, he yielded to the feelings of others even those of the Brothers when it was something that was indifferent for in such cases he likewise was obedient to the layman.

Furthermore, I must point out that the Servant of God, even though he was very well versed in the theological disciplines and the knowledge of the saints, nevertheless he never uttered an expression that could redound to his advantage, nor did he ever show off his knowledge. When people went to him for counsel or direction, he ordinarily

would remain wrapped in thought and, after a period of recollection and prayer, he would offer a well-thought-out response, showing that in giving his advice, he always implored enlightenment from God to which he subjected his own thoughts. If someone, on occasion, would praise him or some act of his would turn out happily in a successful result, he would dextrously evade the situation, changing the subject to something else or at least make those words of praise more obscure by moving himself out of the picture.

Evidence of his humility can be seen in his renunciation of the honors that were offered to him by the Supreme Pontiffs and especially Leo XII to which I have already made reference.³ Also, in his rejection of promotions offered in Rome. A sign of his humility was observed also in his holding himself out of the sight of great ones, preferring thereby to remain incognito. As a matter of fact, we recall a blessed memory of Gregory XVI who was spending his vacation in Castel Gandolfo. The Servant of God, in residence in Albano, was urged to pay a visit to the Holy Father, just as the other groups of religious were doing. He ultimately condescended to do it even though at the beginning he was reluctant to do so because he did not want to put himself forward. So, accompanied by his colleague Fr. Camillo Rossi, he was warmly received by His Beatitude, without his identifying himself as the superior of the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood. He was content just to have the name of the community of missionaries in Albano identified. He was even more content that the Pope did not give his identification until the Servant of God had departed from his presence.

Finally, the Servant of God stood out in humility by frequently making himself available for even the lowliest tasks in the houses of the Institute, as I spoke of previously.

The heroism of his virtue

In my judgment, heroic virtue is that type of virtue that is accompanied with the characteristics of promptness, continuation, constancy, joy, and a facility for the person who exercises virtue, also including a generosity for overcoming hardships. I am of the opinion that the Servant of God practiced all of the virtues that I have spoken of in an heroic degree since I observed in him all of those characteristics that make up that particular degree of virtue.

I was officially asked whether I know it to be so or have heard people say that the Servant of God did not show joy on his face; whether he was overly concerned about viewing his life, using quite a bit of delicacy in his demeanor; whether he had particular difficulty in promptly submitting his judgment or difficulty in overcoming feelings of cupidity. Even though he showed signs of having overcome certain dispositions, nevertheless did one notice in him an obvious sort of violence; all of this appears to be something opposed to joy or to the spirit of magnanimity which are characteristics to be

³ Cfr. p. 210 (*Gaspare del Bufalo, quasi un oracolo divino*).

included as qualities marking the heroism of virtue.

It would totally false to say that the Servant of God was either gruff toward or inclined seriously toward alienating himself from anyone. Rather he was most affable and during periods of recreation, as well as his general conduct with society, he would encourage his companions and students to be cheerful, permitting even some witticism as well as offering a bit of it himself. Among the funny stories told, I remember that when he was in the mission of Forlimpopoli, where I too took part, one day during the recreation period, he noticed that Canon Father Antonio Muccioli looked melancholy. He was afraid that he was going to be promoted to the prelacy since his uncle, Msgr. Cristaldi, was at that time the pope's treasurer who really loved this nephew of his. The Servant of God took a napkin and fixed it around the Father's neck, while laughingly saying to him: "Here is his most holy nephew, let us all be happy, let us serve God joyously". When traveling, moving from place to place for the ministry, if he gave the appearance of being overly serious, weighed down and not at all virtuous, it would be good to know, as I myself noticed in the spiritual discussions that we had, that in those circumstances he was always deeply recollected and wrapped in the presence of God or with matters dealing with the management of the Congregation, and all pertaining to the glory of God and love of neighbor. I do not deny, therefore, that in his person there was a certain truly ecclesiastical gravity, a most exemplary modesty. However, those qualities, rather than being contrary to heroism, very wonderfully supported it. If it is true, and I do not see how it can be doubted, that every action has its own time, then the Servant of God was most orderly in all of his actions; he knew how to come from one time to another conforming himself to the teaching of Sacred Scripture. That was why he prohibited, during recreation in common, the proposal of any moral case or other serious problem, since that would be a most inopportune time. The Servant of God certainly did not have any suicidal tendency since he very well knew that precept of self-preservation and that the life of man must remain in the hands of God in keeping with the repeated lessons found in Sacred Scripture: "*Mors et vita in manu Domini.*" Indeed, to the Province of Campagna, infested with brigands, he, in obedience to the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII, of happy memory, had to go to preach missions and to restore spiritual soundness to the inhabitants of that area. He did so voluntarily exposing himself and his companions to the danger of being taken captive and mistreated by the brigands themselves. But, prudently shunning the dangers, he traveled freely thereabouts and carried out the purposes of his mission. In doing that he had the consolation of seeing them repentant and devoutly prostrate at his feet in the many unexpected encounters that he had with those brigands.

Thinking back to how generous he, in fact, was and how often he was tested, I would like to recall what happened once upon his entrance to Priverno. The weather was rainy and very inclement and all the people of Priverno thought that the Servant of God would be arriving by coach. But it was not so, for, despite the heavy downfall of rain, he made the trip on foot from Ticchiana to Priverno. He arrived there soaking wet to the surprise and edification of its inhabitants. Then, without even changing clothes,

he mounted the preaching platform and gave the introductory sermon with great success and all of them asked to go to confession. Furthermore, I learned from Canon Muccioli, of happy memory, that when the Servant of God went to the mission in Ancona in 1816, in the company of Monsignor Odescalchi, Piatti, Butirroni and Frs. Muccioli and Cristianopoli, these reverend missionaries found out that in Ancona their lives were in danger. Fearful therefore, and noticing that a multitude of people had gathered to meet them near Le Grazie, a suburban parish of that same city, and because all were stricken with fear, no one had the courage to intone the Litany of the most blessed Virgin, saying: "These people have come together to kill all of them". But then the Servant of God said to his companions: "If the Lord has determined that we are to lose our lives here, let us go to heaven gloriously – for, if we lose them, we lose them for him". Then, all as one got into their carriages and the Servant of God began the chanting of the Litany, saying: "We are going to sing; and if the people respond to our voices, it will be a sign that the Lord wishes this good work for the people. If we do not hear their response, it will be a sign of their rejection. Sit nomen Domini benedictum." When the Litany started, the people began to respond and it kept on growing as the Servant of God's voice grew louder. Then, upon intoning the "Santa Maria" which he did with a very strong voice, the people responded even louder. Thus the Servant of God knew that the mission would be fruitful as it actually turned out to be. When he got to the church of San Domenico he gave the opening talk of the mission and the attendance of the people was so numerous on that day that the church, even though quite spacious, was not sufficiently large to hold all the people, despite the fact that they were crowded into it and many, many more remained out in the open square.

As I know definitely from having lived with the Servant of God for some thirty years⁴ and especially because I shared secrets of his spiritual life, he showed a very, very sensitive nature but he still succeeded in controlling every passion. But, of course, he was not made of wood or marble, so that he was devoid of any sensitivity; in fact, it was that very sensitiveness that made up the heroism of his temperate nature, namely to act at each moment against his natural sensitiveness. Consequently, you cannot say that he was not a generous and outgoing hero in achieving triumph over his passions. If, externally, it appeared just the opposite at times, in the very act of his victory, there was a change of color, and, though that may seem a defect, it was, on the contrary, a sign of his virtuous generosity. A short while ago I related the facts upon which I based my knowledge and the truth of the response that I have given to the question that was asked of me, officially.

Opposition

From the time when he consecrated himself to the giving of holy missions the

⁴ Valentini lived with St. Gaspar from 1818 to 1837, that is, 19 years. He first got to know him in 1816 on the occasion of the mission given in Ancona when he heard people talking about him.

Servant of God was almost always subjected to opposition and persecution. The strongest one was the one that he endured from the liberals who saw that the missions conducted by the Servant of God was an obstruction to the perfidious opinions. They made him the butt of calumnies while threatening him and his companions and also claiming to have them under the control of the Holy Office. I remember also that there was a certain ecclesiastic who bragged to have solid connections with the so-called Tribunal of the Inquisition who maintained that it would not be at peace until it saw the Servant of God and his companions before the Holy Office as it publicly stated. Those claims of the liberals were spread abroad in the Marche to such an extent that the people themselves were well-informed of that activity and, for a period of time, quite fearful. However, after hearing the sermons and witnessing the hard work done so virtuously and zealously by the Servant of God, they would kiss the ground over which the missionaries walked and declared that it was impossible for a man of such holiness, along with his companions, to be the subject of such persecution, the target of the Holy Office's investigations. But, the Servant of God, in the midst of a persecution of the magnitude which might readily be qualified as shocking held on to his spirit of tranquility, cheerfulness, and joy and often he was heard to say: *"Eamus gaudentes quoniam digni habiti sumus pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati"*. I, of course, am an eyewitness that he, neither in private nor in public, neither in deed nor in word ever inveighed against the liberals, the masons or others, but, in general, he did inveigh against heretics without naming any particular sect. As an instruction to his companions, he taught them that it was a far better thing not to evaluate them and that by naming them in particular you would rather be honoring them. He pointed out that they were capable only of causing confusion, to make a big show and to have people turn away from authority. I have already specified previously some of the acts of persecution that they concocted and the happy outcome of that mistreatment since one is always able to see the hand of divine providence as a help in his victory over his enemies without the Servant of God ever undergoing any change.

He also ran into opposition when he was in the Province of Campagna, but I have already spoken of the things that happened there and what the unjust reasons were that were alleged by the accomplices of the brigands. The fact still remains that one is to dispel any suspicion that might arise that the Servant of God could in any way be the cause of such persecution and I must testify that any act of imprudence on his part is to be excluded. When Pius VII, of happy memory, planned to remedy the serious disorders in the Province of Campagna and to establish means for restoring that province to safety and tranquility, rather than having recourse to the use of arms on the part of the government, he decided that it would be a better solution to send Canon Del Bufalo there, stating: "We are sending to that province the Apostle of the Marche", and then put it in writing, preserved in our archives, namely, the handwritten message of His Holiness. Amongst other things he said that just as Canon Del Bufalo had been deported as the Apostle of the March, so he would be known also in that province under the same title. And that is what took place when the people there did an about-face.

Moved by his forceful preaching, in the by-ways of that area , homicides and betrayals were erased, ancient antipathies abolished and families restored to peaceful coexistence, begetting many works of blessing upon the Servant of God. I can say in all truth that with him depending totally upon God's help, *erat potens in opere et sermone*.

There were, indeed, some ecclesiastics, admired for their conduct and learning who engaged in saying things against the Servant of God and his society under the title of the most Precious Blood. Their comments were brought all the way to the throne of Leo XII and Pius VIII, of happy memory. They, in turn, opened their ears to the comments of some of those people who came from Rome as well as from elsewhere and as a result Leo XII looked at the Canon and his Congregation with some reserve. Later, when he was fully informed about the virtues of the Canon and the good work that he was accomplishing, together with the favorable report of Monsignor Strambi, he had to make a different judgment. Not only did he express his favor toward him, but honored the work that the Canon had done with words of praise expressed in a brief that he sent to the Jesuits in Spoleto. In it, he exhorted the people of Spoleto to support the pious society whose title was that of the "most Precious Blood" from whom they would be the beneficiaries of many spiritual fruits in their territory.

In reference to the holy memory of Pius VIII, I do not think that it is necessary for me to repeat what I have already said. He, too, at the beginning was misinformed but later, when he got to know better and in particular the virtues of the Canon and the progress of his Congregation, he withdrew his criticism both in word and deed. In confirmation of this I add that when the Servant of God presented himself to Pius VIII for an audience concerning his Institute, the Holy Father made him understand that he was withdrawing all that had been granted previously by way of faculties and grants from Leo XII. However, at that point, the Servant of God replied that he had not received those faculties and grants from Leo XII but from Pius VII, and he presented to Pius VIII the document that was signed by the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII. With that, Pius VIII got hold of himself, and with tears in his eyes kissed the signature of Pius VII, as he concluded things in favor of the Servant of God and his Institute. The Servant of God himself related this incident to me. Furthermore, he wanted immediately to confirm for me the visit, for once the Canon had come out of the audience and I had entered to bend down to kiss his feet for myself and for my Father whom he had just acknowledged, I noted that he was completely cheerful and smiling. Last of all, I had to acknowledge the things that had taken place since all the faculties and grants had been confirmed.

Supernatural occurrences and prodigies

I have no doubt that the Servant of God was adorned with those supernatural gifts which theologians call graces *gratis date*.

The gift of the Word

Speaking now in particular, I pause to refer to the gift of the Word of God which was evident in his preaching. Some very learned people, who listened to him, had to confess that he would not have been able to say what he was saying about the Servant of God unless he had had the gift of the Word, since it contained more than just words. Monsignor Strambi, now Venerable, wanted to hear the sermons given by the Canon during the mission in Camerino, at which he wished to be a companion. He conceived such a profound concept of the preaching that he had to say: "It is God who is preaching through the Canon". The Servant of God, himself, used to say to me in reference to his preaching that, once he had mounted the preaching platform, he was overwhelmed with such an influx of ideas that he scarcely had time to make a selection from them, and they were things that he had not previously prepared at all by reading or thought.

On another occasion, I mentioned that the Servant of God, while giving a sermon was heard by people who were quite distant and in particular by a an old lady who was deaf and was some three miles away from Matelica.

Just as with the Apostles, it also happened that the Servant of God, while preaching, was heard and understood by people who knew no Italian. That happened especially during the mission in Comacchio where some German soldiers were present, one of whom was a Protestant who decided to change his religion. I personally was present for that mission and I now recall that I learned this fact from one of the citizens of Comacchio, a friend of the German official who assured us that no sooner had that man heard and understood the Canon's preaching, he was convinced that he would abjure his Protestant faith.

The gift of healing

The Servant of God showed that he had the gift of healing. I have already spoken of what happened in Mergo, in the diocese of Jesi, to a father who made his way to see the Servant of God in order to ask him to heal his little son, following the advice of the vicar in that town who was the boy's godfather and who had requested this cure from the Servant of God. However, the Servant of God had ordered the priest to pay for the preparation of twelve uniforms for the members of St. Francis Xavier association of the nightly oratory. Only after all twelve of them were made was the little fellow cured of that problem which was commonly referred to as a "*scimiotto*". (Monkey-like?)

In Sant'Anatolia in the Marche, a deranged person was presented to the Servant of God to obtain a cure from his dementia. The Servant of God was in the room where they had prepared the meal and gave a slice of prosciutto (preserved ham) to the young man to eat, which he did. He was perfectly healed. This incident was narrated to me by the archpriest of that town who was the man who had presented the deranged person to the Canon. After several months, he confirmed the fact assuring me that he was still perfectly healed.

On the occasion when he was conducting the mission in Spello, where he gave the papal blessing in its amphitheater, the people standing around saw three stars hovering over the head of the Servant of God. The people were stunned and moved to compunction. I was present when that commotion took place together with Monsignor Lucchesi, bishop of Foligno who wept profusely since both of us were eyewitness observers of that vision. Those three stars, as I myself saw⁵ stood perpendicularly over the head of the Servant of God in the form of a triangle, or a an imperfectly formed cross, that is, one star elevated and to laterally parallel beneath. As I recall very well, it was the 23rd hour, that is, a half-hour before the setting of the sun. I noted, as did also the people, that those stars in the form of a semi-cross could not be taken as natural stars, but miraculous ones since they stood only three or four palm measurements above his head. They did not sparkle much like a phosphorus star or the evening star, but they did have a noticeable light quality which were reflected in the eyes of everyone. Their measurement was similar to the size of a gold doppia piece. Because of that vision, the devotion and the reverence of the people was doubled toward the Servant of God. They began calling him a saint and it was through their devotion for him that they took away his handkerchief. However, as soon as that happened, he politely asked them to return it and he successfully managed to get it back from the person who was holding it, and said: "What nonsense! What kind of faith some people have." So, since they were not able to go any further about the handkerchief, some of the men who were visiting at the house of the missionaries, got hold of some water that had been used to shave the Servant of God as well as some of the shaven hair which, when applied to people who were ill, resulted in cures. His reputation for cures kept increasing and here again he repeated: "What nonsense! What kind of faith some people have".

I learned from public knowledge that in the Province of Campagna, in Sezze, there was a gravely sick person, whose name I do not remember, but when the Servant of God attended a meeting of the association of St. Francis Xavier, he learned about that gravely ill person and went to that person's house. There, he blessed him with the relic of St. Francis Xavier and the result was that the infirm person was restored to full health and joined the association.

When I was assigned by the Servant of God to give the retreat in the monastery in Priverno where he was conducting a mission, there was a young girl who was hoping to be invested as an active nun. However, since she suffered frequent convulsions that were accompanied by groans and violent movements arousing restlessness among the community, she was not able to be invested with the sacred habit. I was informed about

⁵ In another session (cfr. p. 185 of the Italian of this volume), in contrast to what he is testifying to here, Valentini states that he did not see the stars (whether two or three) and hence, he was not able to testify as a fact what he saw concerning the stars. I am not able to give an explanation for the divergence in his deposition. This is reminiscent of an analogous situation that occurred in another place and was something erroneously reported as having occurred in "Spello" In fact, it is known that the apparition of stars over the head of St. Gaspar was sworn to in another place.

this and I replied that I would give the information to the Servant of God. I kept my word and after conferring with him about the case, he replied that I should tell the nuns that they should go ahead and confer the nun's habit on the young girl. So, they went ahead and then gave her the name of Sr. Francesca Saveria so that she would be relieved of those convulsions. As a matter of fact, when they carried out the Servant of God's advice and invested her as a nun, the convulsions never returned.

During the mission given by the Servant of God in Mergo, diocese of Iesi, where I also was present, a woman, impeded by some nerve disorder which made it impossible for her to walk, she asked to be taken to the confessional where the Servant of God was ministering. When she got there, she asked him for the grace of a cure. He said to her that she should go and commend herself to St. Francis Xavier whose image was exposed on one of the side altars of the church. The woman obeyed and, on her way to get there, she found that she was going there with no need of help, for she had already been relieved. That same lady stated that the grace of the cure was due to the Servant of God and not to St. Francis Xavier, alleging as her reason for saying so was that as soon as she received the Servant of God's blessing, he was already freed of her difficulty.

Infused contemplation

I have also had some indication from which I was able to conclude that he enjoyed the gift of contemplation, at least to some extent infused. In fact, when he was conducting a mission in Montalto, one day he was so rapt in contemplation before the most blessed Sacrament that he did not react at all to the call of his brethren who were alerting him that it was time for him to mount the preacher's platform for the scheduled sermon. To the repeated shakings, he replied: "May the will of God be done" and with no further problem, he mounted the preacher's platform.

In the Monastery of Santa Chiara in Priverno, before giving the first sermon he went to the church to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. He remained there rapt in silence and was seen by the nuns from their choir stalls as though in ecstasy. Later, they listened to his sermon which were words instilled with fire. This occurrence was related to me by the abbess and some of the other nuns.

When Sister Maria Giuseppa dei Sacri Cuori, an adorer in the Monastery of Santa Anna in Rome, conferred with the Servant of God for a rather lengthy period of time, she told me that in the discussion at that time, she had experienced things that were from heaven.

Several times he was seen, also by me, when he was rapt in contemplation before the Blessed Sacrament, with his face glowing noticeably, but then when he arose, he showed indifference.

It appeared that the Servant of God began to enjoy this gift from his childhood. He confided to me that, one day, when he was trying to pray in front of the altar of St. Francis Xavier in the church of the Gesù at about seven or eight years of age, he

suddenly felt swept outside of himself.

Multiplication of goods

Furthermore, I noticed in the Servant of God the supernatural gift of providence and of the multiplication of foodstuffs and money. Indeed, while I was stationed in the house of San Felice in Giano along with other companions and students numbering some twenty individuals, all with good appetites, I found myself faced with a great need for temporal means to take care of all of them. So, I wrote to the Servant of God, urging him to send me some money since all I had was a small income from the sale of rocks that are so abundant in that area. He answered: "Bless the rocks and you will see some money appear". I, of course, took those words as a joke, but with the anguish in me growing stronger and finding that I would soon have to go to Foligno to shop, I gave that order to one of the brethren who is now Fr. Alessandro Pontoni. Together with Pontoni, I looked into the box that was kept in a little case and I saw that there were only fifty-five *baiocchi* there. Pontoni said: "We need more than that". I said: "Let's do what the Canon says". A blessing was given to the money there, and, after counting it we observed that there were five *piastres* and five *paoli*. To that, Pontoni said: "Just what we needed for our shopping expenses!" Pontoni started laughing and together we gave thanks to God who had provided so surprisingly for us, really a miracle right before our eyes. The bronze coins were no longer bronze but converted into Roman *piastres* with the stamp, it appears to me, of Pius VII, along with two *papetti* and two *grossetti*. I point out that the little box with the five *paoli* and a half did not move into the hands of anyone else and that it remained in my presence. It had been opened shortly before when I had counted the coins with Pontoni. There were five *paoli* and a half and no more. After I gave the benediction on those *baiocchi*, it was opened by me and Pontoni did not touch it. Consequently, in this whole experience, I must exclude altogether any intervention on the part of Pontoni, either immediately or mediately, since he did not possess as his own even one *quattrino*

Bilocation

The Servant of God likewise enjoyed the gift of bilocation. In the mission he conducted in Meldola around the year 1818, one day it happened that, around the middle of the mission, around the twenty-third hour, he was occupied in hearing confessions in the archpriest's church in that city, but was also preaching in the piazza, some distance away from that church. I was present with him for that mission and in that same church where I too was occupied in hearing confessions. While I was taking care of that ministry, I observed, at the aforementioned hour, people coming in and leaving that church curiously wondering whether the Servant of God was on hand to hear confessions. The kept leaving and returning to the piazza and to the church in order to be perfectly certain that this wondrous occurrence was really happening. Those

individuals, with their own eyes, were sure that they had seen the Servant of God present in both places. They could not help but make this miraculous event publicly known. Hence both groups of people, those listening to his sermon and those going to confession to him, could not be in error. The fact of the bilocation was something known with certainty. So, not only was it made known by the witnesses in Meldola but also by the people of the neighboring towns.

I set aside mentioned other wondrous occasions of his bilocating, since I have referred to them in other periods of questioning.

Predictions

In regard to predictions, I remember that while I was in the mission house in Albano and I was recovering from a mortal illness, a discussion arose between me and the Servant of God concerning the city of Ancona and the good work that could be done by setting up a mission house there. He said that that mission house would be established by me as, indeed, it did happen a couple of years after the death of the Servant of God, namely, in 1839. This prediction can be found in a few letters written by him, one of which was addressed to Canon Ottaviano Fr. Giuseppe which I read previously in which he said: "Remember, Fr. Giuseppe, to conduct the service of the Chaplet of the most Precious Blood when that mission house of the Gesu' will be opened".

Then, too, when I was in Loreto in 1817 on the 15th of August, called there by the Servant of God to participate in the mission and to be numbered among the missionaries, a Mrs. Eleonora Politi of Recanati wrote a letter to the Servant of God complaining to him for having taken me away from my hometown. The Servant of God replied that it was a much more useful thing to be with the missionaries than to remain a particular individual. He added that she would not be disappointed after she saw the mission house opened in Porto di Recanati. As a matter of fact, during the following year of 1846, under the sponsorship of his Eminence Franson, a mission house was opened in Porto di Recanati, upon a piece of property left to me by my father. Both the house and the church were beautifully constructed and a garden, donated by the commune, was attached to it. Presently, there are three missionaries in residence and are affording spiritual benefits to the people there. Thus, the lady, Countess Eleanora Politi, mentioned above, saw completely verified the prediction made by the Servant of God.

The Servant of God was capable of discerning who was possessed and who was not whenever they presented to him those individuals who were presumed to be possessed by the devil. Although he went along with the opinion of St. Francis of Girolamo not to get involved with those possessed, since it really was not proper for missionaries, nevertheless he did permit them to present to him a nun of the monastery of Priverno where the Servant of God was engaged in taking care of their extraordinary confession date. She was considered to be obsessed. After seeing her, he said that she was not possessed but deranged. Her extravagant behavior led him to say that she

would be confined with the deranged people in Rome, not to be readmitted to the monastery, as it actually happened. This incident was told to me by the nuns themselves when I, during the following year, was there to handle the day for extraordinary confessions in that aforementioned monastery. I add that I myself saw that nun when she fled from the cloistered area. I say that I saw her on the occasion when I was there for the date of the extraordinary confessions and I recognized that she was really deranged.

When I was stationed in the mission house in Vallecorsa, I received a letter from the Servant of God in which he charged me to contact Maria de Mattias, a native of Vallecorsa, to give her a blessing and to send her on to Acuto in the diocese of Anagni, to be a teacher and there she would do a lot of good work. I carried out that commission. I contacted the lady Maria in the small chapel of that church connected to our mission house and I conveyed to her the same message that I had received and gave her the blessing. She departed punctually and arrived in the town of Acuto where she produced much fruitful work by impressively changing the attitudes of the people there in that town, both for the women and the men, the grown-ups and the children, by means of the foundation that she set up there, as has been attested to also at present by the bishop of Anagni, Monsignor [Pier Paolo] Trucchi.

At the beginning of his ministry, the Servant of God, for prudential reasons, showed that he was against setting up those foundations of teachers under the title of the most Precious Blood because his main interest was the implantation, the establishment and the perfecting of his Institute of missionaries. During the later years of his life, in seeing that his Institute of missionaries was progressing in its membership as a result of his labors, he felt better disposed to set the other Institute of women teachers in motion through the cooperation of Fr. Giovanni Merlini and me. This was blessed by God as we are presently receiving very satisfying news of the good work that is being done by them in our towns where they have set up ten houses. However, they have also gone abroad to America, namely, to the Cincinnati diocese where they have joined their efforts with those of our missionaries and have won the esteem and veneration not only of Catholics but also of Protestants. Their progress in those settlements has also brought forth the praises of our present Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX.

At the time when the Servant of God was occupied in giving the mission in Cannara near Ascoli, he was in the company of other missionaries of his, and said: "Anyone who decides to depart from our Institute will leave and will never return". Among those was Fr. Francesco Pierantoni who was considering departure from the Institute, but kept still about it. When he got back to his room, he began to cry. Later, he did leave the Institute and he never did return. Pierantoni, himself, gave me this information.

During the mission given in Veroli, the Servant of God was accompanied by two young missionaries, namely, Canon [Don Luigi] Rienzi from Sora and Fr. [Sebastiano] Agostini from Pennabilli, together with other older missionaries. The Servant of God,

jokingly said: “Who would suspect it? This year, some of our youngest members will be passing on to eternity”. As a matter of fact, the two above-mentioned, Rienzi and Agostini, died, one after the other in Sermoneta. This fact was given to me by Fr. Giovanni Chiodi, another missionary who was present when that prophecy was made.

When his Eminence Franzoni decided to go to the baths of Nocera for reasons of health, he indicated this to the Servant of God. The latter assured his Eminence that the baths would do him notable harm. The Cardinal paid no attention to the advice given by the Servant of God. He went there and had to undergo the effects of the prediction made to him. The Cardinal, himself, told me about this prediction.

During the mission of Alatri, Fr. Pasquale Aloisi, a priest of that city, presented himself to the Servant of God to be admitted into the Congregation. However, since he was quite advanced in age and quite worn out from attacks to his health as well as having severe gout, the Servant of God and I, who did so out of obedience, playfully took hold of the old man and walked him around in the room. He was freed of every pain and as a result was accepted into the Institute. For many years, he worked in the missions and died in Sermoneta of an illness of the chest, from which he had never suffered during all of his health problems.

The Servant of God foresaw the building of a new house to be done in Vallecorsa for the benefit of the missionaries, even though the means for doing this were lacking. But it happened that he, convinced of a successful outcome, sent there Fr. Pietro de Victoriis, one of our missionaries, with the direct order to build a house and a church for the Congregation. He went there wondering just how he was ever going to get things started. But, with trust in the word of the Servant of God who had predicted that nothing would be lacking, he set to work and, as the efforts progressed, he died. But the work was concluded by Fr. Giovanni Merlini and the Servant of God was there for the opening. All of this work was actually done gratuitously by the manual labor of the people, by generous donations, not excluding a sizable sum contributed by the Servant of God himself.

More than once, in discussing with the Servant of God, the manner of seeing Fr. Vincenzo Pallotti⁶ and Fr. Bernardo [Maria Clausi] Paolotta,⁷ he would say to me that they were both very spiritual men, but one different from the other, since the former always saw the affairs of the church and the state in a black way, whereas the other looked upon the things of the church as flattering and triumphant. He would say of the

⁶ Fr. Vincenzo Pallotti, now a saint, was a friend of St. Gaspar and also his confessor in Rome during his final illness. He was present at his death. Pallotti was born in Rome on April 21, 1795 and died there on January 22, 1850. He is the Founder of the Societa' dell'Apostolato Cattolico.

⁷ A member of the Friars Minor, Fr. Bernardo was born in Montalto Uffugo (Cosenza) on November 26, 1789 and died in the Santuario di Paola on December 20, 1849. He lived in Rome but with several periods of more or less lengthy absences from November of 1830 to November-December of 1849. He is a Venerable.

first one that he should be allowed to be involved in works of zeal, but since he had the spirit of a Capuchin, he did not consider him to be equipped for handling the reform of the ecclesiastics since he appeared to be externally overly rigoristic. As for Fr. Bernardo, he would say that he was filled with charity, lacking in bigotry, loose and amenable with everyone, and sharing the spirit of a St. Philip. Hence, with regard to the differences between these two spirits, the Servant of God had the opinion to follow the middle path which was his method in matter of this sort, following the principles of St. Francis de Sales and St. Philip Neri. This judgment, formed by the Servant of God, in regard to those two men was based on the maxims of the Holy Fathers of the church and especially of St. Augustine [809], St. Jerome and St. Bernard.

One day he said to me that a great pontiff would come who would give rise to the reform and who would lay down the bases for the reform, stating: *“Superbos depressit, oppressos recreavit, errantes correxit”*. He added that the reform would not be brought about by the shedding of blood, nor with a revolution nor with means of that sort, since we are living in a time of the testament of grace, and those in error are to be led *in funiculis Adam, in vinculis charitatis*.

He, in my presence at his spiritual conferences, explained his prophecy, namely: “After the feast of St. Anthony a great disturbance will be heard etc.” He said that this would occur after the suppression of convents and monasteries and everything else that would happen during that time of upheaval, namely, the deportation of the Holy Father, cardinals etc., pointing out that on the 14th of June, which immediately followed the feast of St. Anthony, there would be the publication of the order for that suppression and in those days more orders would be issued by the government for further deportations.

I recall that he also said that after the pontificate of the aforementioned pope another would follow who would set straight all the affairs of the Church and hence there would be a stable peace for the space of fifty years. After that, another series of disorders would recur and reference would be made to prophecies regarding the end of things. He suggested, however: “Do not put any belief in those statements of mine because I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but these are the sentiments of Monsignor Albertini”.

I remember, likewise, that he made known to me, before he went on the mission to Ascoli, that he had had a private talk with Blessed Chiara from Montefalco, to whom he was most devoted. She assured him that in that mission special acts of opposition would be shown toward him and he would suffer. Those things, in fact, kept on happening to him until the death of Pius VIII, of holy memory, as I indicated in a previous investigative session.

While he was conducting the retreat to the priests of Ancona, the Servant of God said that Pius VIII would die during that year, as indeed did happen. This was told to me by the Curate Gigliucci and by Fr. Giuseppe Ottaviani, a resident of Ancona.

During the period of the cholera, when the Servant of God returned to his home in the Palazzo Orsini, he learned that they were carrying out fumigations and he immediately ordered them to be done there so that cholera would not hit that apartment.

That was done.

With me present, one day Monsignor Santelli came to pay a visit to the Servant of God and Santelli said: "Here is our most worthy Monsignor Pianella (slipper?) [he is alluding to the Servant of God's phlegmatic character and is chuckling]. If this fellow were wearing a mantlet or were a bishop, he would die consoled; but that will never be".

I add that one day he said to me, while we were discussing the Institute, that Monsignor Albertini had told him that he would die with his armament in his hand. Likewise, that he would continue on for a number of years in the work of the missions, and then would no longer be involved with them but would be concerned with something more than the missions themselves. Furthermore, he said: "What do you say to me about this, Fr. Biagio?" I, of course, did not know what to reply. After the death of the Servant of God which followed shortly after he gave his final sermons at the Chiesa Nuova, I had to realize that there were more remarkable things than the missions themselves, namely, the graces won and the miracles achieved through his intercession in France, in Nice and elsewhere. I point out that he related these things to me with simplicity, giving them to me for my information as he unburdened his spirit.

His Writings

I know that he composed an ascetical work to which he gave the title *Il direttore diretto* which was submitted for printing by the publishers Contedini by Fr. Canon Betti, our colleague. It is a work instructing spiritual directors on the methods that they are to use in the spiritual direction of the faithful of every level.

Furthermore, he compiled *Il Metodo*, the method to be observed in conducting missions by the members of his own Congregation. It likewise was put in print in Rome by the same publishing company. In this *Metodo*, one can see his prudence and his learning and his spirit of conformity with the method that was followed by the greatest masters of mission work.

Finally, he put out a *Compendio della vita di San Francesco Saverio* for the use of organizations founded by him under the title of that Saint. This work was also put into print by the same publishers.

These aforementioned works, as far as I know, were praised by ecclesiastical people as well as lay people learned in doctrine and practiced in piety, along with people of literary knowledge. All of these works are in harmony not only with the commandments of God and of the Church, but also with the evangelical counsels and teachings leading to perfection.

As for what he preached, how he preached, and where he preached, as well as with the level of success and merit with which he preached, always with due permissions I believe that I have testified as accurately as possible in all of my previous sessions.